

Methods and Practices of Urban Filipino Parents in Promoting *Mabuting Asal* among Preschool Children

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Abstract

This paper is a portion of an ethnographic study conducted in an urbanizing community in Valenzuela City. The study aimed to investigate and discuss the concepts and practices that parents have in promoting *mabuting asal* or positive social behavior among their preschool children. The participants were 15 two-parent families with at least two children, one of whom was between ages 3 and 6 years. Seven of the participating families were dual-earner while the rest were single-earner. They were visited at home for at least an hour twice a week for a period of six months. Afterwards, face-to-face interviews were conducted with the parents in each family. Results suggested that the methods that parents use to promote *mabuting asal* among the young ones can be categorized into three – physical, verbal, and cognitive types. Mothers in both income groups used the physical and cognitive types, although single-earner families would use physical methods more often than cognitive ones. On the other hand, fathers in both income groups would use verbal methods more, possibly as a result of their compensating behavior for their own experiences of harsh and coercive upbringing as young children. The study recommends comprehensive, integrative, sensitive, and flexible child-rearing seminars for parents as well as health and day care workers in the community. In terms of methodology, conducting the research in several localities, across different social groups, with a larger sample could provide another perspective to the relationships between variables utilized in this research.

Keywords: *parenting, child-rearing, prosocial behaviors, preschool children, socialization*

Social competence is a very important aspect in the social development of young children. Because of this, one of the many goals of socialization between parents and children is the transmission of prosocial behaviors, or those attitudes that would benefit other people (Beatty, 2002, p. 111; Schaffer, 1994, p. 364). Several studies have already documented the development of such behaviors among children in different contexts, the role that parents play in the said process (e.g., Baumrind, 1969; Chen et al., 2002; Cheong, 1976; Hawley, 2002), and the factors that affect their parenting practices in socializing prosocial behaviors to their young ones.

Although parents generally view themselves as facilitators of their children's development, different parents have different ways of performing their roles towards the achievement of their parenting goals. Through the years, men traditionally view their roles primarily as providers of their families' material needs. However, this perspective has evolved recently as they seek more involvement in child care and rearing (Harris & Marmer, 1996; Ishii-Kuntz, 1994; Marsiglio, 1991; Pleck, 1997). Meanwhile, the increasing need for women in the labor force allowed many of them to share the men's role of being the family's provider (Abell, Clawson, Washington, Bost, & Vaughn, 1996; Brayfield, 1995; Dunlop, 1981; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Vejar, Madison-Colemore, & Ter Maat, 2006); rather than simply perform their traditional roles of nurturing the family and maintaining the home.

Several studies abroad have also considered different factors that affect the performance of parenting roles and the socialization goals of parents. Factors intrinsic to the parent-child dyad include the parents' view of their child (Abell et al., 1996; Harris & Marmer, 1996; Keller & Zach, 2002; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Rothbart, 1971), their view of parenting roles (Keller & Zach, 2002; McBride & Mills, 1993), their experiences in their families of origin (Marsiglio, 1991; Pleck, 1997), their socialization goals and cultural beliefs (e.g., Park & Cheah, 2005; Xu et al., 2005), their level of education and occupation (Dunlop, 1981; McBride & Mills, 1993; Peterson & Hann, 1999), and the degree of their involvement in child-rearing (Harris & Marmer, 1996; Ishii-Kuntz, 1994; Marsiglio, 1991; Pleck, 1997). The ways by which parents express their involvement and practice their roles in child-rearing have also been investigated by a number of foreign social scientists (e.g., Harris & Marmer, 1996; Ishii-Kuntz, 1994; Marsiglio, 1991; Pleck, 1997). These are primarily done through different activities and interaction with their children, such as dining and playing with each other, studying together, and co-viewing television shows and movies.

Meanwhile, other related factors affecting the parent-child dyad and the socialization process within the family include socioeconomic status (Abell et al., 1996; Harris & Marmer, 1996; Zevalkink & Riksen-Walraven, 2001), and the quality of social network and support available to the family (Brayfield, 1995; Hawkins, Christiansen, Sargent, & Hill, 1993; Ishii-Kuntz, 1994; Marsiglio, 1991; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Pleck, 1997; Xu et al., 2005).

In the local setting, studies about the socialization of *mabuting asal* are mostly in the context of the Filipino culture and society rather than a direct investigation of parent-child relations. These studies include socialization of family values (e.g., Aguilong-Dalisay et al., 2000; Cheong, 1976; Convento-Diaz, 1976; Mendez & Jocano, 1974; Mendez, Jocano, Rolda, & Matela, 1984; Medina, 1991, 2001; Miralao, 1997), parents' perceptions of their roles in child development (Aguiling-Dalisay, 1983; Aguilong-Dalisay et al., 2000; David, 1994; Go, Imperio, & Juan, 1998; Mendez et al., 1984; Rodriguez, 2005), the roles that parents play in the family system (David, 1994; Liwag, 1998; Mendez & Jocano, 1974; Mendez et al., 1984; Miralao, 1992), the effect of parental education and socioeconomic status on their socialization goals (Bulatao, 1978; Lamberte, 1994; Mendez & Jocano, 1974; Porio, 1994), the perceived value of children to the family (Bulatao, 1978; Lamberte, 1994; Liwag, 1999; Orias, 1978; Porio, 1994), and the kin group and social network surrounding the family (Convento-Diaz, 1976; Mendez & Jocano, 1974; Mendez et al., 1984; Ramirez, 1993; Rodriguez, 2005).

Given these, the amount and scope of researches that directly investigate the socialization of positive social behaviors between parents and children in the local context is quite limited compared to that already done in foreign contexts. Although there is a good number of local researches on the Filipino family and values, it is still important to take note of the factors that affect the development of this basic unit of the society from within. This way, the uniqueness of the family and the relationships within could be better appreciated. It would help provide a greater understanding of the unique development of an individual in connection to his family and the larger society. In a more specific context, understanding how Filipino values are transmitted from one generation and internalized by the following generations could help in recognizing the development of prosocial behavior that makes an individual socially competent.

Mabuting Asal: Prosocial Behaviors in the Context of the Filipino Family

According to Beaty (2002, p. 111), “prosocial behavior is the positive aspect of moral development which allows humans to get along well with others.” As a collective term:

[P]rosocial conduct includes all behaviors that benefit others such as empathy, in which children express compassion by comforting someone in distress; generosity, in which children share or give things to someone who is in need; turn taking, in which children wait for a turn to use or have something; and caregiving, or aiding another who needs help. (Beaty, 2002, p. 129).

In the context of the Filipino family, mabuting asal may be inferred from values which the Filipino culture holds dear, such as respect, obedience, and filial love (Mendez et al., 1984). Thus, additional to the above-mentioned prosocial behaviors, mabuting asal may further include other Filipino-valued qualities such as being respectful of other people and their properties, being obedient to persons of authority, and displaying love towards one’s own family, especially the parents and younger siblings.

Given these, the construct of mabuting asal is used in the study to denote such behaviors as having good manners (i.e., being polite and respectful toward other people as well as their properties, being nice toward playmates) as well as being helpful, knowing how to share and take turns, and being yielding to and responsible for younger siblings. These attitudes and how they were socialized in the system of the home environment is the focus of the present research by using the framework of the microsystem in Urie Bronfenbrenner’s (1989) Bio-ecological Systems Theory.

Parent-Child Relations and the Bio-ecological Systems Theory

With the assumption that an individual’s natural environment is a very rich source of information regarding his development, Bronfenbrenner (1979) proposed the Bio-ecological Systems Theory. It asserts that “a person is situated in series of nested environments or systems that affect his development directly and indirectly and vice versa” (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). The immediate environment in which the person is a part of is called the *microsystem*. A person can have several microsystems in every stage of his lifetime. In a preschool child’s life, his microsystems could include his home environment, the day care center where he is enrolled, and his peer group in the neighborhood with whom

he plays. Meanwhile, his parents' microsystems could be the home environment, their work place, and their peer groups in the work place, in the neighborhood, and so on.

These microsystems interact with one another directly or indirectly thereby affecting each other and the persons in each system. When the day care center or preschool program holds parent-teacher conferences or school programs, the home environment is affected as the children's parents participate (or do not participate) in those activities. Likewise, when a family member gets sick—especially if it is one of the children—a mother typically takes a leave of absence from work to care for whomever is sick at home, thereby affecting the two microsystems.

Every microsystem has aspects that influence the development of its individual members. These are the *roles*, or the tasks, expected of an individual; the *activities* which the members engage in; and the *interpersonal structures* between its members (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). As the individual grows, he also contributes to his roles, the activities he participates in, and the quality of interpersonal structures he maintains in the microsystems.

Using the microsystem framework of the Bio-ecological Systems Theory, the present research investigated how positive social behavior, or mabuting asal, is socialized between the members of the family, especially among preschool children, and their parents in their home microsystem. Specifically, it aims to answer the following questions: (1) What are the different methods used by mothers and fathers as well as their reasons for employing such methods in instilling positive social behavior among their young ones, and (2) What are the challenges that parents face in the process of teaching positive social behaviors to their children.

Methodology

In this research, the families who participated were from a low-income urbanizing community in Valenzuela City. According to the National Statistics Office, the population of the city as of 2010 is 575,356. Meanwhile, the 93.9-hectare barangay where the study was conducted has a population of 17,348. Based on the records of the barangay office, the barangay has about 750 households with an average family size of six members.

The neighborhood is a densely populated area where old houses are converted into apartments and different families occupy one room each. Parents

in this community work as manual laborers in nearby factories, warehouses or junk shops, or as sidewalk vendors. Preschool children attend the local day care center while their school-aged siblings attend the nearby public school. During Sundays, it is common to see the women bring the children to the local parish to hear mass while the men are on a drinking spree even during day time. It is also not surprising to see quarreling neighbors cursing within everybody's earshot.

The most common pastime of the women is watching afternoon *telenovelas* or chatting with other mothers while the children are having their afternoon nap. In this context, one could see that media and the neighborhood are the major social influences to parenting practices of the participating families.

Given these, the research utilized an ethnographic approach in investigating the parent-child dyad and how *mabuting asal* is socialized within the context of the families, as well as the systems of social networks and structures surrounding their microsystem. Classical ethnography was chosen as the design of the study since it permitted the researcher to identify and understand the prevailing societal cultures, social linkages, behavior patterns, beliefs, and understandings of the people within the community being studied. Moreover, this design and the framework of the study facilitated a better exploration of the richness of individual histories and actual experiences of each participating family and its members in order to look at the participating families and their practices in a holistic manner.

Research Participants

The participants of the study were purposively selected in order to make sure that the selection criteria were met. These criteria include (1) families should be two-parent intact families, (2) they must be residents of the barangay being considered for the study, and (3) they must have at least two children, one of whom must be of preschool age. After the researcher was given clearance by the barangay to proceed with the data collection, she was referred by the local social worker to the day care teacher. It was the day care teacher who introduced her to a parent who helped her go around the neighborhood to look for possible participants for the research.

Fifteen intact families residing in an urbanizing area in Valenzuela City, with at least one preschool child between the ages of 3 and 6 years participated in the study. Eight of the families were single-earner, with only the fathers in the work force, and the remaining seven were dual-earners. Every participating

family had to have at least two children, one of whom had to be of preschool age, in order to control the only-child bias of child-rearing.

Eighteen preschool children from 15 families participated in the study. The mean age of the boys was 4.36 years while that of the girls was 4.8 years. Ten of the children were girls and eight were boys. Among the parents, 17 were considered young, with their ages falling between 25 years and 40 years. The mean age of the mothers was 33.2 years while that of the fathers was 36.67. In terms of education, dual-earner mothers had a higher level of education, with three of them having gone to high school and four having attended college. Meanwhile, seven mothers in the single-earner group only reached grade school and high school and only one of them reached college level. With respect to the fathers' education, only two from each group reached collegiate level and one from each group had grade school education only. The rest had attended high school only.

In terms of occupation, three of the seven employed mothers were in labor-intensive jobs working as street sweeper, factory canteen helper, and junkshop laborer, whereas 13 of the 15 fathers were involved in equally physically demanding jobs like being a farmer, tricycle driver, auto-mechanic, factory worker, and traffic enforcer. Given the nature of their jobs, one could infer that most of them lived in economic deprivation because they all have at least four mouths to feed every single day.

Data Collection and Analysis

The portion of the research involving the parents had three phases which utilized two instruments for data collection. All the instruments were written in Filipino and were personally administered by the researcher to all the respondents. The first phase included a preparatory survey which was conducted among 30 parents from the community to find out some of their present practices and opinions about teaching *mabuting asal* to their preschool children. The results of the survey were organized into categories per item to see specific themes in the responses. This information was then used to help give structure to the second and third phases of the study.

The second phase included home visits for six months to 15 families who were chosen purposively and consented to participate in the study. A three-week pre-data collection visit, with each visit lasting for 30 minutes to an hour, was done prior to the actual procedure to make the families get used to the presence of the researcher in their homes. Afterwards, regular visitation

was scheduled for an hour each visit and done twice a week for a period of 24 weeks. The home visits took place during times when either or both parents were home in order to document the interaction (i.e., activities, interpersonal structures, roles) between the mother-father-child triad as well as the parent-child dyad. Patterns of behavior were recorded using key words and phrases as guide for the anecdotal records. Pictures were also taken upon the consent of the parents.

From the transcripts of the data during the home visits, patterns of behavior, in terms of roles, activities, and interpersonal structures related to the method of socializing *mabuting asal* between the parent-child dyad, sibling dyad, and mother-father-child triad were identified and culled from the transcripts. These elements of interaction became the basic unit for data analysis of the home visit. Roles, activities, and interpersonal structures were categorized based on common arising themes. Communication patterns between members of the family were also considered to find out more specific patterns of socializing *mabuting asal* within the family system.

The third phase was a face-to-face interview with the parents which was set following the six-month home visit using a set of interview questions consisting of 12 main questions developed from the preparatory survey. The questions focused on four areas: (1) knowledge of and attitude towards teaching prosocial behavior to their young children, (2) factors which were perceived influential in their practices in promoting prosocial behavior, (3) methods they use in teaching prosocial behavior, and finally (4) challenges that they are facing in teaching prosocial behavior to their young children. After the interview records were transcribed, the data was summarized, tabulated, and categorized into different themes for later analysis.

Three colleagues from sociology, psychology, and child development were consulted in a group to see if the patterns and themes identified by the researcher were valid and appropriate. They checked upon the created typologies based on the objectives of the research, the methods, and the framework of the study. Their comments and suggestions were considered until they reached a consensus about the typologies as well as the elements under each typology.

Ethical Considerations of the Research

The research design chosen is one that may be considered intrusive since the researcher had to a certain degree immerse herself in the families who participated in the study. It was for this reason that, aside from the written consent forms signed by the heads of those families, their convenience was a

primary consideration in setting the schedule of the visits. The families were also given a brief description of the research, including its objectives and the methodology— especially the 6-month observation period— before being given the consent form. In this way, all the participants would have an idea of what to expect through the course of the next six months. They were assured of the confidentiality of the information from the research and they were also informed that they may withdraw from participation at any time when they feel uncomfortable or when they are already being inconvenienced by the research.

In order to make the families used to the presence of the researcher observing in their home, there was a three-week pre-data collection period. This period was also used to establish rapport with the family to make sure that they would be behaving in a more natural manner in the next six months. During the next six months, the researcher watched TV, chatted with the parents, played with the children, and performed simple chores alongside the other family members.

After the data analysis, the families were visited again and told of the primary results of the research. The families were each given a small token composed of story books for the children as a gesture of thanks for their participation and for accommodating the researcher in their homes.

Scope and Delimitation

This is an exploratory qualitative study which aimed to investigate socialization patterns that help promote positive social behavior among preschool children within the family. Given the enormity of literature in socialization, child-rearing and prosocial behavior, several topics are not covered by this research. The socialization being considered here is that which takes place only between the parent/s and the child/ren. Child-rearing practices, on the other hand, are limited only to those behaviors pertaining to the teaching of positive social conduct. Finally, it only covers social behavior that is pertinent to prosocial conduct particularly those which the parents in the participating families emphasize during socialization with their children.

Additionally, participants of this study consist only of two-parent families from an urbanizing community. To remove the only-child bias, only those who have at least two children, one of whom should be within the 3- to 6-year-old age group were included in the research. The bulk of the information from this research was gathered through self-reports using an interview and weekly home visits to 15 families.

For these reasons, the findings of this research are not universal and may not apply to populations and localities with socio-demographic characteristics different from that of the sample and the research locale, or in comparison with researches using a different method of data collection.

Results and Discussion

This paper discusses the portion of the study pertaining to the methods of teaching *mabuting asal* of parents towards their preschool-aged children. The methods of promoting *mabuting asal* to be discussed in this portion were deduced from the data gathered from the home visits and the interview with the parents.

The results of the study suggested that developing positive social behaviors in children is indeed one of the socialization goals of these parents. The parents who participated shared a number of these positive social behaviors or *mabuting asal* that they would want their children to learn. These include being (1) polite and respectful especially to adults, (2) obedient, (3) caring towards their siblings, (4) helpful, and (5) generous (i.e., share food and toys to siblings and playmates). They all believe that having these qualities would allow their children to become socially adjusted, well-mannered children who in the future will become competent adults capable of discerning what is right from wrong. These parents also agree that the home is where children should learn these qualities, and that the parents are the ones primarily responsible for teaching these behaviors to the young ones.

Moreover, these parents also know that their children, being young and lacking maturity, can be forgetful. A couple shared that oftentimes, their two preschool children get spankings because they easily forget rules at home such as “no fighting” and “being quiet when someone is sleeping”. Meanwhile, all the parents agree that outside their homes, children can learn undesirable behaviors such as violence, trying out different vices, cutting classes and so on. All the mothers in the single-earner families shared that the reason they opted not to work is because their husbands wanted to make sure that their children are guided well. One mother quoted her husband and said that, “*hindi mo kikitaing sa kakatrabaho ang ikakabuti ng mga bata.*” (No amount of monetary compensation can make up for the children’s well-being.) She added that their neighborhood is not an ideal place to raise children because of the violence, poverty, and observable vices indulged in by many people around them. She, along with the parents in the study, is fully aware that once her children step out of the house, she can no longer protect them from negative influences in the

neighborhood and even in the schools. This implies that parents recognize the limitations of their children's judgment as well as the pervasiveness of the undesirable factors in the social environment that could hinder the development of *mabuting asal* among the children. For them, the only way to fight those negative social factors is to equip their children with values which they can carry with them as they mature.

Because of these, parents also see that part of their role was to be vigilant in teaching, modeling, explaining, and reminding their children to be prosocial individuals even if it means being harsh. During one of the home visits, one father voiced the difficulty and the fears he experienced in teaching his two children to "do the right thing and make choices that will keep them from harm." He shared how he cried while spanking his son for being disrespectful after talking back to his mother and walking out on her. One could see how he was saddened when he hit his son, but he knew that he could not let him grow up not being respectful and not caring about the consequences of his actions. Here, it is obvious that such behaviors cannot be tolerated unless one does not care about the future of one's growing child. Because parents have more sophisticated knowledge than their children, it is important that they are careful and patient in explaining to the young ones such social rules as proper conduct and sensitivity to one's feelings as well as those of others. Thus, this father and many other parents in this study see teaching *mabuting asal* as parallel to establishing discipline in their children.

Parents' Methods of Teaching *Mabuting Asal* to Young Children

As part of their perceived role in teaching *mabuting asal* and in disciplining the children, the parents identified a number of methods which they employ. These were deduced and classified into three types namely, *physical*, *verbal*, and *cognitive* approaches. As the term implies, the physical method of teaching *mabuting asal* involves bodily punishment such as hitting, spanking, pinching, twitching the ears, or slapping. This is most often used to weaken the children's negative behavior such as disobedience, fighting with another child, or hurting another child. Meanwhile, the verbal approach involves use of words of affirmation (e.g., very good, *ang bait-bait naman*) and reminders (e.g., *laging magte*-thank you, *palaging magbe*-behave, *magbabait sa klase*) in order to strengthen the children's positive behaviors, or use of harsh words to weaken negative behaviors. Last is the cognitive approach which involves processing situations both vicarious (e.g., hearing morals from a story, witnessing a fight in school or in the street, watching an unpleasant scene on TV, etc.) and personal to the

children (e.g., the children themselves got into a fight or displayed crassness or rudeness towards an adult, etc.), to help the children understand what is wrong about the behaviors they displayed. The cognitive approach is used to weaken (assuming that transgression has already been committed) or to avoid developing negative behaviors as in the case of vicarious experiences.

While the verbal and cognitive methods seem overlapping as they both employ a “talk” approach to disciplining and teaching *mabuting asal*, there remains a primary difference between the two. The verbal method is unidirectional with only the parents telling their children about what to do and what not to do. The cognitive method, on the other hand, is bidirectional as it allows the parents to know why their children behave in a particular manner so that they could correct misunderstandings and consequently correct misbehaviors. Table 1 contains some of the responses of the parents under each category, and the following discussion will further elaborate on the different types or approaches of the parent participants to teaching *mabuting asal* to their young children.

Physical. Because hitting and spanking are generally accepted means of establishing discipline among children in the Filipino culture (e.g., Carunungan-Robles, 1981; Frias, 2003; Mendez & Jocano, 1974; Mendez et al., 1984), it was no surprise to find all the parents exercising this method. The findings further suggest that mothers in the dual-earner group seemed to exercise this method the most. Working mothers were observed to snap at the slightest provocation from the children even if it was an accident. There were also times when some parents would hit their children because they lost patience or they got frustrated over their children’s behavior. This is believed to happen because of the compounded stress which mothers experience from the demands of work and home management.

According to Dix (1991, as cited in Peterson & Hann, 1999), working parents who, during conflictual situations devote less energy reasoning with their children and instead use coercive or even punitive strategies to deal with their children’s misbehaviors, give importance to their own interest more than they do for the interest of their children. They are the kind who spend more time working on other tasks such as performing chores or earning a living rather than being sensitive to their children’s needs. However, if the mothers’ developmental characteristics and tasks are considered, one should see that the pressure upon them may indeed be too much to handle.

Table 1*Parents' Methods in Teaching Their Children Positive Social Behavior*

Methods	Single-Earner Families		Dual-Earner Families	
	Mother	Father	Mother	Father
Physical				
<input type="checkbox"/> Minsan namamalo kapag sobra na ang kasalanan (<i>I only spank [my child] when s/he commits grave transgressions</i>).	+	+		+
<input type="checkbox"/> Minsan namamalo rin ako kapag inulit pa hanggang sa third offense yung sinasabi kong huwag nilang gagawin (<i>Sometimes I spank [my child] when, after the third offense, s/he still commits the same transgressions</i>).			+	
<input type="checkbox"/> Namamalo ako kapag nananakit sila ng ibang kalaro para malaman nila yung pakiramdam ng sinasaktan na hindi ito maganda (<i>I spank [my child] when s/he hurts other children so that s/he would know that it is not nice</i>).			+	
Verbal				
<input type="checkbox"/> Kahit walang kasalanan kinakausap ko sila para paalalahanan (<i>I talk to them even when they did not do anything wrong</i>).	+	+	+	+
<input type="checkbox"/> Sinasabihan ng “very good” kapag may ginawang maganda (e.g., tumutulong sa gawaing-bahay, nag-aalaga ng kapatid, etc.) (<i>Tells them “very good” when they do something nice such as helping in household chores or looking after younger siblings</i>).	+	+	+	+
<input type="checkbox"/> Araw-araw pinapaalalahanan namin sila, umaga’t hapon pati bago matulog, para kung malimutan man sa kakalaro sa araw, sa gabi maalala, kung makalimutan sa pagtulog, paggising maaalala pa rin (<i>We remind them all the time, so that if they forget it during the day because they are playing, they would remember it at night, or if they forget it at night because they are sleeping, they would remember it again when they wake up</i>).				+
Cognitive				
<input type="checkbox"/> Pinapaliwanagang mabuti kapag may ginawang kasalanan (<i>We carefully explain [things] when they commit wrongdoings</i>).		+		
<input type="checkbox"/> Binabasahan ko sila ng mga kwentong may lesson na makukuha tapos ay pag-uusapan namin ang kwento para maintindihan nila yung aral (<i>I read stories with lessons to them then we would talk about the stories so that they'd understand the morals</i>).			+	
<input type="checkbox"/> Kapag may nakikitang hindi maganda sa labas tinatanong ko sila ng, “Gusto n’yo bang maging ganyan kayo?” Tapos pinapaliwanagan (<i>When we see unpleasant things outside, I ask them, “Would you want that to happen to you?” Then I’d explain things to them.</i>).	+			

Note. Symbol (+) means that at least one parent from each group reported using the stated method.

Among the seven participating dual-earner families, only one was capable of hiring a household helper while another one lived close enough to the mother's parents. The assistance provided by the grandparents in caring for the children, and that of the household helper in taking over household chores reportedly reduced the stress of the two working mothers. The remaining five mothers, however, had to start each day at dawn to prepare breakfast for the family and get the children ready for school before they could prepare to leave for work. At the end of the day, they had to rush home and prepare dinner, help the children with their homework, and get them ready for bed before they could rest. Their weekends were also spent on chores such as doing the laundry and cleaning the house while looking after the children.

Among the husbands in the dual-earner group, only two were able to stay at home on Sundays while the rest still had to work other jobs to make ends meet, and only two more took time to care for the children while their wives were busy doing chores. During the home visits, these parents were asked if they still could find time to relieve the stress from their daily routines. One husband reported that he spends every Sunday biking with his friends after having gone to church with the family. Meanwhile, four of them reported spending Saturday night drinking with their buddies from work. None of the mothers were able to take such regular times off from home to relax the way their husbands did. This, according to them, is primarily because they needed to budget the money for more important things, as well as to prevent the laundry from piling up. According to these mothers, they only manage to release stress when they find the time at work to chat with co-workers about their children or crises at home. In effect, only the fathers were able to regularly spend time to relieve themselves of stress while the mothers continued to take on the pressure of balancing work and home without the help or company of other people to share their burdens with.

These mothers' reports and perceptions of their roles were likewise consistent with Dunlop's (1981) suggestion that "caring for the children, doing household chores and attending to their husbands needs are historically the primary tasks of women" (pp. 67-75). Despite the changing culture and the advent of modern technology, mothers still perceived their roles traditionally. Thus, pressure coupled with financial problems, leads to mental and physical exhaustion that makes them emotionally vulnerable, thereby causing them to exercise coercion and harsh treatment towards their children at the slightest annoyance (Abell et al., 1996).

Conversely, only one of the seven fathers from dual-earner families reported exercising physical means of disciplining his children. This father believed that his children will be disciplined and be obedient to their parents if they experience harshness every now and then. He reported spanking his 4- and 5-year-old children when they misbehaved to make them associate negative behaviors with pain. He shared:

Minsan kasi yung sasawayin lang na hindi nakakatikim ng palo ang ginagawa ko. Binibilangan ko sila hanggang tatlo. Pero kapag hindi pa rin nagpasaway, ayun, makakatikim na sila. Kaya namin ginagawa yun para magtanda sila. Kasi yung mabuti sinasabi rin naman namin sa kanila. Kung tama ang ginagawa nila hindi naman sila napapalo. Pero kung mali, tapos hindi pa magpasaway, mapapalo talaga sila. (Often, we only reprimand them. I would count to three. If they don't stop, they would really get a spanking. We do it so that they will remember...that we won't hit them when they behave well, but when they don't and we've counted to three, they would get spanked.) [F06, male, 36 years old]

This father said that he spansks his children not to establish fear but rather discipline and obedience. Since the children could forget, and sometimes verbal reminders are not enough, he and his wife feel that their only recourse is hitting the children. They said that inflicting pain is effective in making the children remember to behave well. Still, they do their best so as not to always hit the children. Their children are young and the parents do not want them to get used to beating because it could emotionally detach the children from them and they would not want that to happen.

Among single-earner families, non-working mothers feel that they only need to administer physical punishment such as pinching, twitching the ear, or spanking when children misbehave terribly. That way, the children would remember not to misbehave. They added that if words were enough to stop the children's misbehavior, they would not have to spank them at all. Their husbands agree to that statement, too, because they would rather use diplomatic means of correcting misbehaviors rather than inflict pain since they had also already experienced being harshly disciplined in their youth.

Among single-earner fathers, only one reported that he uses spanking to discipline and establish proper conduct and social behavior in his children. For him, fear is important in disciplining and in teaching values to children; thus, it is the method that he uses on his five children. He said:

Kapag ako, sumusunod naman agad sila. Sa kanya hindi, kasi puro daldal sa kanya, ako namamalo. Walang takot. Importante kasi yung may takot kasi kapag walang takot, patuloy yung tigas ng ulo. (They always obey me. But with her [the mother] they don't, because she only nags at them. There is no fear. It is important for them to fear you, otherwise they'll just stay stubborn.) [F12, male, 38 years old]

This was the same father who reported that his priority was to earn a living rather than build his children's character because it was his wife's duty to do so. Again, as Dix (1991, in Peterson and Hann, 1999) argued, such belief suggests that this father gives more importance to his own interest rather than those of his children. According to Baumrind (1969):

[P]unishment when administered properly should be helpful in establishing proper behavior among children. However, if indiscriminately or brutally administered, or exercised without accompanying reason for doing so, punishment could also be harmful on the developing child and his relationship with his parents (p. 277).

Thus, Baumrind (1969) suggested that parents who employ physical means of disciplining their children must doubly exert an effort to reason with the latter so that they could learn better from their experiences. Unfortunately, some parents find reasoning with their children less important than physically punishing them in building the character of their young ones.

Still, for many of these parents who had experienced the physical and emotional pain of being disciplined in a punitive manner, they reported that they would rather not use punishments to teach proper behavior to their children. Among the working mothers, only two reported that they always had to be conscious of not laying a finger on their children. One said that she would not want her children to experience the same pain she underwent from her own parents whenever she committed something unacceptable to them. It was for this reason that she always had to weigh if the transgressions of her children warranted spanking, or if talking with them would suffice. She shared:

Kawawa kami noon sa palo. Sa tingin ko kasi, hindi naman sa labat ng oras pinapalo ang mga bata. Pwede rin silang sabihan...Namamalo rin ako pero depende naman sa kasalanan. May mabigat na kasalanan din, meron namang kasalanang pwedeng daanin sa salita. (As children we were always spanked. I think children should not always be spanked. They can also be just reminded...I spank [my children] depending

on the misbehavior. There are severe transgressions but some can be dealt with just by talking.) [M07, female, 33 years old]

Another mother reported that since her husband went to the province, she had to be very careful in using physical means to discipline her three children aged 4, 6, and 10 years. Somehow, she felt the need to compensate for the seeming loss of a father through emotional attachment rather than exercise harshness towards them. She added that she has heard several stories where children felt neglected and went astray. She reported that it was something which she would not want her children to go through. Someday, when there is enough money, she will immediately ask her husband and son to come home so that their family will be complete again. She shared:

Mula nung umalis si Papa nila, hindi ko na sila gaanong pinapalo...kasi baka magdamdam sa akin. Ayoko namang malayo na nga ang Papa nila, malayo pa ang loob nila sa akin. Baka kasi magloko. Hangga't maaari kinakausap ko na lang sila. Si Ate na lang ang dumidisciplina para siguradong magtatanda pa rin sila. (Ever since their father left, I spank them less now. I don't want them to feel detached especially that their father is away. They might go astray. I just talk to them. When they need disciplining, my older sister does it so that they would still remember to do what's right.) [M01, female, 36 years old]

This mother's husband had to leave for the province towards the end of the research because his mother suffered a stroke. He went home to help his father tend their farm so that there could be enough money to have his mother rehabilitated. Because earning money in the province was harder, this mother decided to stay in Manila along with her three children and continue working. Initially, her two younger children were asking if their father already left them for good and if their father still loves them. These questions bothered her so much that was why she had to make sure that she and the children stayed attached emotionally.

Verbal. Meanwhile, affirmations, reminders, and reprimands were among the other means used by parents in teaching their children mabuting asal. While both mothers and fathers in single- and dual-earner groups employ this method, this remains more evident among the fathers. They reportedly want to be less formal and choose to chat with their children in teaching virtues and good behaviors. One father shared that it was his way of finding out how much and what kind of information his children had been exposed to. When he learned that the children learned something not right, particularly about sexual behaviors or vices, he would immediately correct such misinformation. Meanwhile, another

father shared that he would horse around and joke with his daughters so that he would not be threatening to them and in return, they would open up to him.

Meanwhile, one father shared how he would use harsh words and withdrawal of affection to his 9- and 3-year-old children respectively so that they would remember to do only those that he deemed good behaviors.

Pinagsasalitaan ko talaga sila ng tagos sa buto. Yung alam kong makakasakit sa damdamin nila lalo kay K [9 years old]. Kasi malaki na siya dapat alam na niya yung hindi tama. Pero kay A [3 years old], hindi ko lang pinapansin. Pag hindi ko siya pinansin, alam na niyang galit ako. Bata eh, hindi mo pwedeng murabin. (I would really talk to them harshly, those that would really hurt their feelings especially with K. But with A, I just ignore her. I make her feel that I'm upset. You can't cuss because she's too young for it.) [F17, male, 33 years old]

As with the fathers, mothers in both groups shared that they always remind their children to behave well and take care of each other during meal and playtimes. Even when the children have not done anything wrong, they would still remind them to treat each other well. They also shared that they praise their children when they show gentleness and concern for their younger siblings. That way, the mothers said, the children would remember that being caring is a desired behavior. They would also tell the young ones “*very good*” when they help with simple chores like sweeping the floor, packing away their toys, cleaning up their bed, and so on. This was also to let the children know that mothers and fathers appreciate helpfulness.

This observation is consistent with earlier findings among Filipino fathers. Tan (1994) suggested that many Filipino fathers tend to be away from home often, but they maintain warm relationships with their children. Except for two, fathers who participated in this study only intervened in child-rearing when the mothers were already tired or exhausted. Even in their reports during the interview, most of the fathers admit to less involvement in child-rearing because of demands to earn a living. They also shared that when they have time to spare, they would rather use it to play with the children or share stories with them to establish the father-child bond. Except for one father from each group, all the rest described how they would gather the children in their bed and chat about what happened to them during the day or throughout the week. They would ask about the children's activities during the day. Hence, despite his increasing participation in child care, the father is still more of a playmate and companion. This suggests that the father's perception of his role

in teaching proper behavior and discipline is still limited to verbal reminders rather than reasoning with his children about their behaviors, a task which is expected to be done more by mothers.

Cognitive. Parke (1975) pointed out that parents should provide not only descriptions of untoward consequences of the children's improper behaviors on others, but also of examples, explicit instructions, and explanation of motives for wanting them to behave in a particular manner so that the latter could understand the parents' desire for restricting their behavior in certain situations. When parents take the time to reason with their young children about their emotions, emotion expression, and rules of proper social conduct, children tend to have a better self-concept (Abell & Gecas, 1997) and become more socially competent (Liu et al., 2005; Park & Cheah, 2005; Salisch, 2001). In the present study, this task was done mostly by mothers as earlier mentioned, since they were the ones who often explained and reasoned with their children about the implications of their behaviors. This is because the mothers are more involved in teaching the children mabuting asal and in establishing discipline in them. Fathers would only talk to the children as a reminder to follow or to obey their mothers or older siblings rather than process with them what was wrong or right about their behaviors. More often, it is the mothers who would reason with the children when they commit wrongdoings, or affirms them when they do something good.

These mothers' behavior is consistent with the findings of previous researches on the roles of the parents in their children's social and emotional development. Mendez and Jocano (1979), Lagmay (1983), Miñoza, Botor, & Tablante (1984), Corpuz (1985), and Liwag (1999) found that the mother is still considered the primary caretaker of the children who nurtures them physically, mentally and socio-emotionally.

Challenge to Parents: Consistency in Teaching Positive Behavior

One particular concern reported by several parents in terms of using the methods of teaching positive behavior as well as in disciplining the children is inconsistency. A number of fathers complained that their spouses often oppose them especially when dealing with their children's misbehaviors through corporal punishments. Two fathers report their experiences of inconsistencies with their wives in disciplining the children.

Magkasundo kami sa pangaral pero pagdating sa pamamalo doon kami hindi magkaintindiban. Minsan aawayin din niya ako kasi minsan kapag

pinapalo niya [ang mga bata] ako ang sumasangga eh. Tinatanggap ko na lang para huwag masaktan. Kaso kapag ako ang namamalo, hindi niya masangga kasi masakit eh. (We generally agree on what to teach the children except in spanking the children. Sometimes she fights with me whenever I try to protect the children from her spanking. I take the blows just so the children won't get hurt. But when I do the spanking, she couldn't take my blows because they're painful.) [F05, male, 35 years old]

Eto kasi, minsan kapag pinagsasabihan ko o kaya napalo ko yung mga bata, sinasabihan yung mga anak na "hindi natin bati si Papa, pinapalo kayo." Sana hindi ganon. Dapat parebo kami ng sinasabi sa mga bata kesa salungat kasi maguguluban sila. (Sometimes when I admonish or hit the children she would tell them, "Don't be friends with your Papa, he spansks you." I wish she wouldn't do that because the children could get confused.) [F15, male, 26 years old]

Both fathers expressed desire to be one with their wives in their methods of disciplining the children rather than be conflicting. They shared that when parents send conflicting messages to the children, the latter get confused and it could result in behaviors that would be even more difficult to control.

These fathers were correct in assuming that parents should always be consistent in administering disciplinary measures to their children because conflicting messages confuse the children. One father shared that it was important for him and his wife to talk about what behaviors to teach and what behaviors to be punished. He added that sometimes, when children need to be punished, no matter how much pity the other parent feels, he should just let the punishment be done and then process the situation with the children. That way there would always be agreement in disciplining the children. One father also added that threatening should not be done unless one is ready to administer the threat because it only worsens the child's behaviors. The child really pushes the parent to his/her limits because the former knows that the latter is just threatening to punish him or her anyway. These insights of the fathers were found to be consistent with the suggestions of Baumrind in her speech on parenting practices at the Children's Community Center in Berkeley, California in 1969. She said:

A parent who threatens to punish must be prepared to deal with escalation from the child by prompt administration of punishment. She cannot appease. Otherwise the threat of punishment will actually increase the incidence of undesirable behavior since it is just that undesirable behavior which will cause the parent to cancel the punishment in an attempt to appease the child. (Baumrind, 1969, p. 277)

Conclusion and Recommendations

The results of the study confirm the findings of several earlier researches among Filipino families particularly with respect to parenting and child-rearing practices. This implies that Filipino parents' child-rearing practices, whether single- or dual-earner, and their socialization goals are enduring and never changing. This further emphasizes the function of developing *mabuting asal* as part of their socialization goals for their children as well as the perceived significance of their role as parents in facilitating the development of the said behavior.

In summary, the study found that parents employ three types of methods in disciplining and teaching their children *mabuting asal* and these are physical, verbal, and cognitive methods. Furthermore, mothers and fathers in both dual- and single-earner groups employ the physical method in disciplining and in teaching their young children *mabuting asal*. However, it was interesting to note that among the groups of parents, it was the working mothers who used physical punishment more than parents in any other group. This could be attributed to the stress which they experience from work and household management. Meanwhile, the fathers' preference for the use of verbal and cognitive methods, for those in the single-earner group, were attributed to their compensating attitude for the negative experiences they had from their own parents. Thus, they were observed to maintain more affective means of teaching positive social conduct to their children.

Still, it is also important to mention that many of these parents, even if they all use the physical method of disciplining and instilling proper social conduct to their children, would also prefer to use the other two methods because they know that too much physical punishment may result in emotional detachment between children and parents. Unfortunately, the exhaustion which these parents experience from labor often creates a short temper in them, especially among working mothers.

Some parents also noted the importance of being consistent in implementing discipline styles. To them, the children benefit most when mothers and fathers agree when and how to use a certain type of disciplining and teaching method. As a recommendation, the parents' methods of teaching prosocial behaviors should be complementary, if not supplementary, to one another. When there are conflicts in their methods of disciplining and instilling certain behaviors to their children, escalation of undesirable behaviors could happen. For this reason, it is important for parents to take the time to discuss

the discipline style and the method which they would use in socializing positive social behavior among their children. In that way, they could facilitate learning of the desired behaviors better.

Among the other recommendations of the research based on these findings include coursing through the Social Welfare Office continuous seminars and trainings on family life and child development among parents, health, and day care workers. Seminars that could train the barangay workers and the parents, especially non-working mothers, regarding child development and how else parents can advance the growth of their children socially, emotionally, physically, and cognitively would certainly enhance child-rearing skills of these parents. Since most of the parents are usually present in day care programs, short parenting info-seminars could be inserted during their activities throughout the school year. Still, a parent education curriculum that is comprehensive, integrated, and sensitive and flexible to the needs of the community and the families will surely improve the quality of family life and, consequently, child development. Such seminars will help equip parents better with knowledge and skills to promote the development and competence of young children not only socially but also in all other domains of growth.

A series of Supervised Neighborhood Play (SNP) programs could also be implemented through the barangay. These are short programs that would involve non-working mothers and their preschool children in simple activities that could enhance the development of the children and the child-rearing practices of their parents at a very minimal cost. SNPs could also be done as a supplement to the day care program. This would keep the children busy with child-centered activities and keep them from the streets where they could learn many undesired behaviors.

The generalizability of the findings of this research is limited only to populations having similar socio-demographic characteristics as the sample. Performing the research in a larger sampling, while covering a spectrum of socioeconomic status, could further show similarities and differences in Filipino parents' child-rearing and disciplining practices that promote positive social behavior. A quantitative approach on the subject is also recommended to find out the relationships among the variables identified in this study.

For future researches, controlling the age of the parents could also provide significant information about their attitudes and practices in parenting. Moreover, since the parent-child relation is affected by the spousal relationship, marital satisfaction could also be one of the variables for consideration in succeeding studies.

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