

## Parental Socialization of Moral Behaviors in the Context of Poverty

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Parents play a key role in promoting children's moral behaviors. However, other forces such as children's characteristics, and contextual and temporal factors are also at work (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). This study investigated parental socialization of children's moral behaviors and determined factors perceived to influence children's moral behaviors within the context of urban poverty using Bronfenbrenner's Person-Process-Context-Time (PPCT) Framework (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). To achieve these objectives, *pakikipagkwentuhan* was used among 12 children aged 7 to 14, while individual interviews were conducted with their respective mothers. Parental socialization practices were classified along two dimensions: verbal and behavioral, and punitive and non-punitive. Verbal socialization practices are predominantly used, especially among 10- to 14-year-olds, whereas punitive socialization practices are more salient among 7 to 9-year-olds and their mothers. Factors such as the child's age and gender, mother and child attributions, danger and negative influences in the community, cultural beliefs, and the changing times were also found to have an impact on parents' socialization practices and children's moral behaviors. Implications for research and practice in parenting are discussed in light of these multiple influences.

*Keywords:* parental socialization, moral behaviors, poverty, *pakikipagkwentuhan*

Time and again, morality has been discussed in psychology, be it in the cognitive developmental, social psychological, or even the evolutionary tradition (Haidt, 2008). That it is deemed relevant across different psychological perspectives emphasizes the importance that

morality plays in our human experiences. This then highlights the need to gain a deeper understanding of the forces that carve individuals' moral behaviors, such as parent socialization practices. Indeed, parents believe that childhood is a time to prepare for adulthood, making them responsible for teaching children to become good adults (Dela Cruz, Protacio, Balanon, Yacat, & Francisco, 2001). But what is moral in the first place?

In traditional conceptions of morality, individual rights and justice are typically emphasized (Kohlberg, 2008; Piaget, 1977; Turiel, 2008). However, more culturally-sensitive definitions of morality also consider the collective, as issues of loyalty, respect, and sanctity are also considered moral (Haidt, 2008). Given this more inclusive definition, the present study is concerned with how parents socialize their children's moral behaviors. At the same time, it acknowledges that children's moral behaviors and their parents' socialization are also influenced by factors within and around them both.

### **The Bioecological Model**

Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) is a comprehensive model that considers the interplay of Person, Process, Context, and Time (PPCT) in shaping human development. In the PPCT framework, proximal processes – increasingly complex reciprocal interactions between a person and the individuals, objects, and symbols within its immediate environment – have the greatest impact on development. However, personal characteristics, the context of the environment, and continuity and change over time also guide development while simultaneously affecting proximal processes. The succeeding sections discuss each element of this framework in relation to moral behaviors.

**Process.** Socialization is the process through which individuals acquire skills needed to function within their social group through the assistance of others, most notably their parents (Grusec, 2002). Discipline is perhaps most extensively explored in the realm of socializing moral behaviors with Hoffman's discipline styles of power assertion, love withdrawal, and induction at the forefront (Hoffman, 1994, 2000). In power assertion, parents use physical punishment,

expressions of anger, and material deprivation as punishment, emphasizing their authority over their children. Rather than producing positive outcomes, however, it induces anger in the child, excludes explanations for the punishment, and models expressions of hostility. Corporal punishment, in particular, is associated with children's anxiety and aggression (Lansford et al., 2005), and lower levels of empathy, principled morality (Lopez, Bonenberger, & Schneider, 2001), moral internalization, and mental health (Gershoff, 2002).

Love withdrawal involves nonphysical expressions of anger and disapproval. With this method, children may not necessarily learn correct behaviors as their anxiety over loss of love overpowers any messages accompanying the discipline experience. Indeed, parents' expressions of disappointment and shaming have been linked to anxiety in children (Gershoff et al., 2010). Finally, induction draws attention to the consequences of the child's actions to others. This is linked to the development of empathy, and facilitates children's internalization of their parents' rules due to its emphasis on consequences to one's victims rather than to one's self (De Leon, 2012; Hoffman, 1994, 2000; Lopez et al., 2001).

However, Grusec and Goodnow (1994) pointed out that each discipline style may produce different outcomes depending on the child's age, sex, mood and temperament, the nature of the misbehavior, the sex of the parent, and socioeconomic class. They likewise suggested turning attention to children's accurate perception of their parent's message and willingness to accept the message as well as other socialization practices (Grusec, Goodnow, & Kuczynski, 2000). For instance, modeling, moral exhortations, and assignment of responsibilities also contribute to children's prosocial behaviors (Eisenberg & Valiente, 2002). Parents' monitoring of children's activities is also linked to lower levels of aggression (Eisenberg & Valiente, 2002) and antisocial behaviors (Patterson & Fisher, 2002) as monitoring allows parents to apply contingent rewards and punishments and provide protection from negative influences (Grusec, 2002).

Within the local setting, discipline is often equated with punishment to set children straight (Dela Cruz et al., 2001). Commonly used by parents, punishment tends to cause children pain, fear,

discomfort, or humiliation (Parr, 2009; Save the Children, 2006). Typical physical punishments include pinching and spanking, while verbal punishments may involve reprimands, fear tactics, and making comparisons with other children (Dela Cruz et al., 2001). This is not to say that punishment is the only socialization practice used locally. Parents also reward their children for good behaviors and model correct behaviors, explain and reason with them, or give them advice (De Leon, 2012; Dela Cruz et al., 2001).

In understanding proximal processes, we recognize that children also play a role in their own and their parents' development through their behaviors. For instance, children's misbehaviors significantly predict negative parenting behaviors such as mothers' hostility and aggression (Garcia, 2012) and use of dysfunctional discipline (Del Vecchio & Rhoades, 2010). Likewise, the valence of mothers' control attempts on their children is influenced by the compliance or noncompliance, and social competence of their preschool children (Dumas, LaFreniere, & Serketich, 1995).

**Person.** Children's characteristics, such as age and gender, also affect both their development and the practices used by their parents. Corporal punishment is usually avoided for children two years and below (Dela Cruz et al., 2001), and reserved only for major offenses among preschoolers (De Leon, 2012). It becomes more common for school-aged children, particularly boys, and tapers off as they hit their teens when verbal reprimands become the main form of discipline. Adolescents, especially girls, are more likely to receive verbal abuse and humiliation or less severe measures such as grounding (Save the Children, 2006). Parents also employ different practices based on birth order. As firstborns are thought to be more responsible and the youngest more playful and carefree, parents are likely to be stricter with the former and more lenient with the latter (Dela Cruz et al., 2001).

People's cognitions, such as attributions, are also considered personal factors when they influence processes and developmental outcomes. Broadly speaking, attributions are explanations and evaluations of a person's behaviors (Miller, 1995). Parental attributions for children's behaviors may be proximal, with causality coming from immediate reasons such as the child's disposition or the characteristics

of the situation. They may also be distal, coming from long-term sources shaping the child's development. Weiner (1985) also discussed attributions in terms of dimensions – internal or external locus, stable or unstable, and controllable or uncontrollable. These differences in parental attributions are linked to their discipline techniques. For instance, mothers choose how to discipline children based on their perceived responsibility for misbehaviors (Dix, Ruble, & Zambarano, 1989). This, in turn, is informed by the child's age and knowledge of the child's understanding of the misdeed, as well as the nature of the transgression. Older children then are more likely to be held responsible for their misbehaviors and punished more heavily. Dix and Grusec (as cited in Miller, 1995) suggested that these differences lie in parents' belief that younger children have lower cognitive and self-regulation capacity, and are more likely to be controlled by others around them.

**Context.** The environmental context is also an important contributor to human development. The present study focuses on the context of poverty, which is potentially a chaotic environment contributing to dysfunctional psychosocial development (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). Chaotic environments have indeed been linked to outcomes such as learned helplessness, psychological distress, and lack of self-regulatory behavior in children (Evans, Connella, Marcynyszyn, Gentile, & Salpekar, 2005). Indirect aggression, emotional problems (Ross & Roberts, 1999), and other behavioral problems have also been more often observed among children from poor families, possibly because of parents' frequent use of harsh punishment and reduced displays of warmth (Aber, Bennett, Conley, & Li, 1997).

Such practices may be brought about by the stressful experience of poverty for parents. In a large-scale longitudinal study (Pinderhughes, Nix, Foster, Jones, & The Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 2007), neighborhood characteristics of poverty, dissatisfaction with public services, and danger uniquely account for lower levels of parental warmth, less appropriate and consistent discipline, and harsher interactions, perhaps due to the stress that these conditions bring to parents. Indeed, parents living in poverty exhibit less responsiveness and greater reliance on corporal punishment (Evans,

2004). They also exhibit greater control in their practices due to the danger and prospects of participation in antisocial activities faced by their children within their neighborhoods (Grusec, 2002).

Beyond the immediate environment, the larger context of culture also impacts socialization. Asian cultures place greater emphasis on respect for authority, making high levels of parental control a norm (Grusec, 2002). Indeed, Filipino parents believe that adults are stronger and more powerful, and children do not know any better. Thus, they need adults to tell them what is best for them (Dela Cruz et al., 2001). Such beliefs are perhaps manifested in the normativeness of corporal punishment in the Philippines compared with other countries (Lansford et al., 2010) as this form of discipline emphasizes the authority of the parent over the child.

**Time.** Changes unfolding through time, whether throughout the individual's lifespan or historical periods, also guide developmental outcomes (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). When each component of the system (i.e., person, process, and context) is stable, consistent, and predictable, proximal processes can better facilitate development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). However, even more distal changes over time, such as social and historical events, may shape a person's development (Elder, 1998) including parents' child-rearing practices (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

An interesting illustration comes from Lagmay's (1971) research conducted in Cruz-na-Ligas examining changes in child-rearing dynamics 15 years after Domingo's (1977) research in the area. Over years of increasing modernization, parents were more likely to train their children to be self-reliant, and punish their children less severely for disobedience and dominance expressions, even if children were more likely to disobey their parents. In a separate study around that time, Mendez and Jocano (1974) also found that the former infallibility of elders was slowly eroding as adults now felt the need to rationalize their punishments. While these studies were conducted decades ago, they do emphasize the evolving nature of parenting with larger-scale changes in society.

## **Present Study**

Given the research that has been discussed, there is no doubt that parents' socialization practices have already been extensively examined. However, recognizing the multiplicity of influences on human development requires greater elucidation of the interplay of these factors. Thus, the present study uses Bronfenbrenner's PPCT framework for a more integrated understanding of parents' socialization of moral behaviors within the specific context of poverty. By identifying the relevant elements within the developmental context, the next step of testing the relationships among the elements within this tapestry can be facilitated. Thus, this research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the proximal processes (i.e., parent socialization practices) used to promote children's moral behaviors?
2. How are person (child characteristics such as age and gender, mother and child attributions), context (urban poverty and Filipino culture), and time associated with parents' socialization and children's moral behaviors?

These questions are addressed through qualitative methods used among both mothers and their children from an urban poor context. With this, the research goes beyond a unidirectional focus on socialization (Kuczynski, Marshall, & Schell, 1997) and recognizes that children also take part in their development. Moreover, considering what is relevant within the context of the participants themselves facilitates building theory that is rooted in reality. This then paves the way to practical recommendations for parenting anchored on actual experiences. Given the ongoing deliberations on the anti-corporal punishment act (Anti-Corporal Punishment Act of 2013), the study also hopes to contribute to the dialogue on this issue, which certainly merits the scientific community and the public's attention.

## **METHOD**

### **Participants**

Twelve children aged 7-14, along with their respective mothers

from an urban poor area in Quezon City participated in the study. Participants were divided into groups of four members each for the sessions based on life stages of middle childhood (7-9), late childhood (10-12), and early adolescence (13-14), with each group having two boys and two girls each. Parents recruited in the study had to be the one with more involvement in caring for the child; in this case, mothers reported having the greater share of child-rearing responsibilities.

Participants were also required to meet the three poverty criteria: income, capability, and self-rated poverty. Income poverty was based on the 2012 Philippine poverty line estimate of P1,789 per family member (Ordinario, 2012). Self-rated poverty was measured using participants' rating of their income as insufficient for meeting their daily needs and their self-rating of their family as poor (Mangahas, 2008). Finally, capability poverty was based on parents' educational attainment, which must be at high school or below (Alkire & Santos, 2010; Sen, 1983, 1999).

To ensure that participants fit these qualifications, purposive sampling was done using an orally administered survey. After selecting participants, the researcher explained the objectives of the research and the procedure, and scheduled the interviews. The children's groups were set even later, as recruitment of each age group had to be completed before the sessions could be set.

## **Procedure**

**Data collection.** Different qualitative methods were employed among mothers and children. Individual interviews were conducted with the mothers, as adults are likely to be more expressive than children in a one-on-one setting. Interviews were conducted within participants' homes and lasted from 30 minutes to an hour. Before the interviews began, the researcher explained the objectives and procedure of the research, and asked for participants' informed consent. They were also assured of the confidentiality of their responses and given simple tokens for their participation.

The indigenous group discussion method of *pakikipagkwentuhan* was used among three groups of children of the same age group, with each group having four members. In this method, group discussions

are conducted among participants with an existing relationship. It is also less formal than a focus group discussion and is done within a setting familiar to the participants, in this case, within the housing community's activity areas (Javier, 2005). Through the use of this method, the researcher avoided the discomfort that children might experience from individually talking to an unfamiliar adult within a strange setting. Sessions were conducted in Filipino, and lasted for one and a half hours each.

Due to the children's limited literacy, the researcher gained their verbal assent by asking them if they were willing to become part of the study. She also oriented them about the process and repeatedly assured them of the confidentiality of their responses. Throughout the session, the researcher remained mindful of the children's non-verbal signals, making sure not to probe too insistently if anyone hesitated to respond. At the end of the sessions, snacks and school supplies were given as tokens for participation.

As the study is part of a larger research project, several questions were tackled in the sessions. The questions addressed for this paper were asked in relation to standards of moral behavior provided by the participants (but which are not reported here). Mothers were asked the following questions in Filipino, with the first two also asked in relation to spouses' practices (see Appendix for translated questions):

- How do you teach these good behaviors to your children/ How do you teach your children to avoid these bad behaviors?
- What do you do when your child is unable to do/engages in these?
- How would you gauge your child in his/her maintaining these good behaviors/avoiding these bad behaviors?
- Which behaviors does your child have difficulty maintaining/avoiding? Which behaviors does your child easily abide by/avoid?
- Why do you think is this the case?

Similar questions were posed to the children to find out about parent socialization and influences to moral behaviors:

- How do your parents teach you these good behaviors/to avoid these behaviors?
- What do they do when you fail to do/when you do these?
- How would you gauge yourself in your maintaining/avoiding these behaviors?

- Which behaviors do you have difficulty maintaining/avoiding?
- Why do you think is this the case?

While influences on moral behaviors and socialization practices were not directly asked, mothers' and children's attributions suggest factors believed to affect moral behaviors, and a clearer understanding of reasons behind practices.

**Data analysis.** The sessions were recorded and transcribed verbatim, and each transcript was analyzed thematically (Braun & Clark, 2006). Codes were assigned to each response using the Qqualyzer software, a free qualitative analysis tool developed by the McGill University School of Computer Science (Robillard, Dagenais, Faubert, & Zhang, 2011). They were then classified according to the research question addressed, and grouped according to thematic similarities. Comparisons were made between mothers and children as well as the three age groups by creating tables to mark which participants responded according to each code.

After analysis, validation sessions were held among the participants to give them feedback and ensure that their responses were understood correctly. Separate sessions were conducted with mothers and children where the researcher presented an outline of the findings through simplified tables. Upon showing them these results and summing them up, the researcher asked them whether they wanted to clarify, remove, or add some responses. Through this session, several points were more thoroughly discussed, and clarifications incorporated in the final analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Process: Parent Socialization Practices

From the mothers' interviews and the children's *pakikipagkwentuhan*, parenting practices were classified as punitive or non-punitive, and verbal or behavioral (see Table 1). Punitive practices are typically accompanied with expressions of anger or frustration toward a child's misbehavior, bringing undesirable emotions to the child (Hoffman, 1994, 2000). Thus, they may cause pain, fear, discomfort, or humiliation in children and highlight the

Table 1. Summary of Parent Socialization Practices

Method	Effect	
	Non-punitive	Punitive
Verbal	Direct instruction & frequent reminders	Scolding
	Explaining & reasoning out	Threatening
	Correction	Cursing
	Pointing out other children as example	Shouting
	Bonding with children	
Behavioral	Modeling	Corporal punishment
	Establishing rules	• Spanking
	Monitoring	• Pinching
	• Curfew	• Putting chili on lips
	• Keep away from negative influences	• Flicking ( <i>pitik</i> )
	• Control TV viewing	• Punching
	Assigning responsibilities	• Beating
	Direct assistance	
	Stopping child in the middle of misbehavior	
	Letting child learn from experience	

child's wrongdoings without actually teaching them the correct behaviors (Parr, 2009; Save the Children, 2006). In contrast, non-punitive practices have no such effect on children and tend to guide them to the desired behaviors.

**Non-punitive verbal.** Among the practices mentioned by mothers and children, direct instruction was the most frequently brought up. This involves telling children what they should or should not do, and includes giving frequent reminders of such instructions. Direct instruction may also be paired with explaining and reasoning out to children, where mothers explain consequences of actions to others and illustrate why a certain behavior is good or bad. Mothers also asked their children why they did or did not do something when they commit a transgression.

Another practice reported by mothers is using other children's behaviors as an example to follow or avoid. For instance, the mother of a 13-year-old girl instructs her children, "*O wag na kayong gumaya katulad ng mga nakikita ninyo. Wag na kayo gumaya sa mga bisyo.*" (Don't do what you're seeing out there. Don't start getting into vices like them.) [M13G] This method allows mothers to make their instruction more concrete. When children misbehave, children are typically corrected as their mothers tell them what they ought to do. Bonding times at home, whether over meals or just sitting all together and telling stories can be used as an opportunity for socialization.

**Non-punitive behavioral.** Mothers' own behaviors can also teach children how to act accordingly, as seen in the practice of modeling. Mothers know that their children may learn from their behaviors, and so are careful with what they do in front of their children. According to one mother, "*Iniiwasan ko sa sarili ko na magmura kasi paano ko sila sasawayin kung mismong sarili ko nagmumura ako?*" (I try to stop myself from cursing, because how can I reprimand them if I'm also the one cursing?) [M12G]

At the same time, mothers also attempt to control the influences that surround children through consistent monitoring. This includes keeping children at home, the imposition of a strict curfew, and regulation of television viewing to avoid exposure to sexual content. In general, these practices are aimed toward keeping children away from negative influences, who may eventually have a greater hold on

children's behaviors than their own parents.

Aside from monitoring, there are also specific practices for certain desired behaviors. For instance, mothers assign responsibilities to their children so that each child will be accountable for a certain task. Even 10- to 12-year-old children recognize this as a means for responsibility training. In doing so, mothers make sure that the tasks they assign to their children are not too difficult, and are appropriate for their age – younger children might be assigned to clear the tables but not to cook meals yet.

There are also other ways for mothers to respond to undesirable behaviors aside from punishment. Some mothers, especially those of 7 to 9-year-olds, simply tell their children to stop or restrain them in the middle of their misbehaviors. If the child does not stop, they then resort to other means such as scolding or corporal punishment. However, mothers of younger children are more likely to just let their children learn from experience and teach them afterwards, at least when the misbehavior does not bring immediate harm to the child. Still, mothers emphasized that it is important to avoid condoning bad behaviors because that may give children the impression that they approve of these misdemeanors and encourage them to continue.

**Punitive verbal.** When children misbehave, mothers initially resort to scolding, which is the most consistently reported type of punishment by both mothers and children across age groups. However, it is worth noting that this scolding comes in different degrees: *pinagsasabihan* (reprimanded), *sinasaway* (restrained), *sinesermonan* (given a sermon), and *pinapagalitan* (scolded). Several parents, especially of 7-9 year olds, threaten children to make them avoid bad behaviors. Different threats are used such as vague warnings alluding to future punishment (e.g., *malalagot, baka kung anong gawin ko*), threats of abandonment, and more creative ones like selling the child's things, pulling them out of school, or imposing unpleasant chores. More serious transgressions also receive more severe verbal punishments such as shouting and cursing. However, limits may be set on the use of scolding, as in the case of the mother of a 14-year-old boy who said that she avoids humiliating her children through public scolding.

**Punitive behavioral.** Aside from verbal punishments, corporal

punishment is also used across age groups but most notably among 7- to 9-year-olds. As with scolding, there are also varying degrees of the severity of corporal punishment for different transgressions (e.g., pinching, slapping the hand, spanking, punching, or beating). Children aged 7 to 12 are punished physically for similar misbehaviors: failure to take care of siblings, disobedience, and fighting with siblings and other kids. Resistance to attending school and doing one's homework, and roughhousing with siblings also merit corporal punishment among 7-9 year olds, whereas verbal transgressions such as cursing and answering back are punishable for 10-12 year olds. These verbal slights are given specific kinds of punishments directly associated with the misdemeanor (e.g., putting chili or flicking on the lips). In the oldest group, however, corporal punishment was rarely mentioned by children, who only recounted an incident of physical punishment with staying out too late.

It is notable that all mothers of 7-9 year olds report the use of corporal punishment, but it is less salient among mothers of older children. Mothers clarified that they use scolding as a first line and resorted to corporal punishment when their children remain stubborn. In the words of a 9-year-old boy's mother, "*Di lagi ako pumapalo. Mabunganga lang kasi ako sa kanila. Kapag sobra na talaga, saka lang ako namamalo.*" (I don't always spank them. I usually just nag a lot. But if it's too much, that's when I hit them.) [M9B] This is also more likely to happen when mothers are angry with their children, as when the wrongdoing is something that they particularly disapprove of.

While mothers claim that they do not always use corporal punishment, it is pronounced in the responses of 7- to 12-year-old children who say that they behave according to their parents' wishes in order to avoid spanking or other physical punishments. Still, they are also aware that the severity of punishments differs depending on the extent of the misbehavior. "*Pag mali iyong nagagawa namin pinagsasabihan kami. Pag malaki masama nagawa namin napapalo kami.*" (When we do something wrong we get reprimanded. But if we do something really bad we get spanked.) [C10-12] The application of punishment is also different in the case of fighting among siblings, as mothers may punish all of the children involved, regardless of who

started the fight. However, this was seen only in the two older age groups suggesting mothers' higher expectations of their elder children (Dix, et. al., 1989).

Even with the prevalence of corporal punishment, mothers from the two older groups pointed out that when they make use of corporal punishment, they give explanations afterwards and ask their children if they knew why they were being punished. The mother of an 8-year-old girl even mentioned that she would rather not use corporal punishment as she is aware that she could get carried away when angry and may drive her child to rebel against her.

Negative outcomes such as higher anxiety and aggression (Lansford et al., 2005), lower levels of empathy, principled morality (Lopez et al., 2001), moral internalization, and mental health (Gershoff, 2002) have consistently been associated with corporal punishment. These effects may partly be due to modeling of aggressive behaviors and the anger that such practices elicit (Hoffman, 1994, 2000). Thus, such measures may actually inhibit children's moral behaviors. Banzon-Librojo and Alampay (2010) also suggested that negative outcomes linked with the use of power assertion are mediated by adolescents' self-regulation. It is then possible that through harsh discipline, parents impede the development of adolescents' self-regulation, which then contributes to delinquent behaviors. Despite the slew of disadvantages linked to corporal punishment, it remains widely used among Filipino parents, which may be due to the immediate compliance brought about by this form of discipline (Gershoff, 2002). This advantage is more easily associated with corporal punishment than the long-term negative effects it produces.

Regardless of the practices that they use, mothers make sure that they are active in the socialization of their children as they believe that they can no longer undo the effects of negative behaviors when their children get older and have minds of their own. In the words of a 12-year-old girl's mother, "*Pag malalaki na may kanya-kanya na silang isip, yan ang hindi na namin kaya saklawan ang isip nila.*" (When they're older and they can think for themselves, you have no more say in how they think.) [M12G] With this belief, parents choose the appropriate practice depending on the nature of the target behavior and the child's response to other socialization attempts. This highlights

the point that parents do not just discipline their children based on set styles but instead choose an appropriate form of discipline for the type of misdeed and the child's characteristics (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994). Still, most practices discussed by mothers are more heavily oriented toward discipline as they prevent and punish misbehaviors rather than teach good behaviors. Of all the practices discussed, only direct instruction, pointing to other children as an example, modeling, and responsibility training socialize positive behaviors.

**Fathers' practices.** According to mothers, fathers also contribute to children's socialization, albeit less actively. Non-punitive verbal means such as direct instruction and reasoning are used by fathers of 7- to 9-year-olds. The mother of an 8-year-old boy shared, "*Tatanong niya, 'bakit matagal ka kapag umuwi?' Ganoon. Siya 'yung mahilig magturo, mangaral ng ganoon.*" (He'll ask, 'why do you take so long going home?' He's the one who likes to teach them, to give them advice.) [M8B] In the case of the mother of a 12-year-old boy, she leaves the explanation and instruction to her husband as he is more capable of keeping a cool head when their son commits an offense. Fathers of 10- to 15-year olds also play secondary roles by supporting their wives' explanations and reminding their children to listen to their mothers. Fathers may also step in when children misbehave by using corporal punishment or threatening children, whether with punishment or extra chores. These patterns suggest that as with the bulk of child-rearing responsibilities, mothers are more involved in the discipline of their children – a finding has been found consistently in local parenting research (De Leon, 2012; Liwag, dela Cruz, & Macapagal, 1999; Parr, 2009).

Although fathers are more involved in discipline compared to other child-rearing matters, some mothers complain that their husbands may sometimes be too lenient. Some would rather just let their children learn from experience, and one prohibits the use of corporal punishment on their son because he is the only boy and should be treated with extra care. However, this mother believes that this has made her son extremely spoiled and misbehaved, and would thus use corporal punishment when her husband is not around. In these responses, we see different parent socialization dynamics. In some cases, parents may complement each other based on their

strengths and weaknesses. In others, fathers just support their spouses and let them do most of the discipline and overall socialization. There are also those who disagree on the best methods to use. Husbands may also provide an example to their wives on child discipline, as is the case of one widow who took after her deceased husband's practices. Regardless of the partners' dynamics, mothers handle most of the socialization in the family, but would benefit with more support from their partners (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

### **Person**

**Child's age and gender.** Parenting practices vary depending on child factors, with age and gender most apparent. For instance, 7 to 9-year-olds are most likely to receive punitive measures such as corporal punishment, scolding, and threatening compared to their 10- to 15-year-old counterparts. Previous studies have also confirmed that parents begin to reduce the use of corporal punishment as children approach adolescence (Save the Children, 2006; Dela Cruz et. al., 2001). This may be rooted in the belief that younger children are believed to have more limited cognitive and self-regulatory capacity (Dix & Grusec, 1985; as cited in Miller, 1995). Thus, they may display more disruptive behaviors that bring more stress to mothers, and be less able to understand and remember their parents' instructions, making verbal reminders and explanations seem insufficient.

Mothers are also more likely to emphasize monitoring the youngest group's activities to prevent them from falling prey to danger and negative influences. In particular, they are more preoccupied with knowing their children's whereabouts and keeping them inside their homes where they can be closely monitored. This may be rooted in their beliefs that younger children are also more impressionable and vulnerable to danger (Dix & Grusec, 1985; as cited in Miller, 1995). Indeed, mothers said that children cannot always make the right decisions because they are still developing minds of their own.

Gender is another child factor that may influence parenting practices. In particular, reasons for setting limits and monitoring differ by gender. This particular practice is a means to distance boys from negative influences leading to vices and violence, while it keeps

girls away from danger and early pregnancy. Gender differences are also evident in the terms used by mothers. When boys stay out late, this is termed as *tambay* or *gala* (hanging out). However, when girls do the same, it is called *pamomokpok* (prostitution). This disparity confirms the claims by Liwag et. al. (1999) that boys and girls must be protected for different reasons: the former because of their vulnerability to aggression and negative influences, and the latter due to the risk of physical harm and pregnancy. It must be noted that gender comparisons could only be made with mothers' responses as distinctions among children's responses could not be made within the group setting. It is also possible that children at this age are not so keen on their parents' gendered socialization practices.

**Attributions for misbehaviors.** Mothers and children explain the latter's misbehaviors quite differently. In particular, children attribute their misbehaviors to temporal factors, whereas mothers are more focused on stable factors, particularly characteristics of the child and the environment.

*Children's attributions.* Children explain their misbehaviors as resulting from temporal elements that occur during the situation and are not necessarily from certain characteristics they possess. For instance, children say that they fight with other children when they are angry and provoked until they can no longer stop themselves from fighting back or cursing. "*Hindi ko po mapigilan minsan, biglaan ko na lang po nasasabi*" (Sometimes I can't help it, so I just blurt it out), admitted the children from the 10- to 12-year-old group. [C10-12] Similar explanations are given in relation to answering back – this tends to occur when provoked by parents' spanking or unreasonable requests. Thus, children justify their behaviors as reactions to provocation rather than something they initiated themselves.

Children also experience lapses in fulfilling household duties when these conflict with their desires, be it sleeping, playing, or watching TV. This also happens when their school and home responsibilities conflict, and they prioritize the former. Another reason for this failure is the difficulty of the task, such as taking care of hardheaded siblings or handling too many requests from parents. Given these responses from children, it appears that they do not believe themselves to be naturally disobedient but merely conflicted about their parents' orders and

other activities that they would rather be doing – which is not always recognized by their parents who expect their unfailing obedience.

Still, children do admit to their own shortcomings. For instance, failure to help in the household may result from occasional bouts of laziness. They may also fail to give elders traditional signs of respect simply because they forget to do so, or because they were not paying attention to their surroundings. While children take the blame in these cases, they still attribute these to temporary lapses rather than fundamental personal flaws. From these attributions, we see that children are aware of reasons behind their misbehaviors and recognize that there are both internal and external forces at work here. However, they all focus on temporary causes, and are not inclined to look at more enduring influences within and around them.

*Mothers' attributions.* A stark contrast is seen in mothers' attributions as they focus on relatively permanent, stable, and uncontrollable influences on their children's moral behaviors. At the individual level, mothers claim that children have innate characteristics preventing them from behaving morally, such as children's natural tendency for mischief and fighting. "*Natural naman sa bata na makulit*" (Kids are just naturally mischievous), claimed a 12-year-old boy's mother. [M12B] This belief is most pronounced among mothers of 7- to 9-year olds who may exhibit less maturity and self-control than the older children in the study. However, mothers believe that these natural tendencies should not be an excuse, but instead more reason to set children straight. As one mother said, "*Siyempre hindi ko rin naman kinukunsinte yong anak ko na maging [palaaway]. Sa magulang din naman yon e. Pag kinunsente niya, pabayaang lang. Di tama yong ginagawa nila at talagang mali.*" (Of course I wouldn't condone my child's fighting. That's also up to the parents. If you condone that, it's like you're just letting them be, even if what they're doing really is wrong.) [M14B1]. Beyond the child, there are also forces in the environment impeding parents' socialization. These include negative influences in the community, television programs showing sexual content, and the changing behaviors of children of this generation. These, however, will be discussed in greater detail under the succeeding sections on context and time.

To summarize the differences in children's and mothers'

attributions, the former explain their misbehaviors as temporary reactions to situations whereas the latter turn to stable environmental and child characteristics. This discrepancy may be linked to the actor-observer bias (Jones & Nisbett, 1971) where actors tend to attribute their behaviors to temporary factors triggered by the situation. This tendency may spring from a desire to justify misbehaviors but are also realistic, as one would be more aware of the different elements present in the situation. In contrast, observers typically attribute behaviors to personal and stable dispositions of the actor. This seems to contradict with some of the mothers' attributions, as mothers also blame environmental causes for their children's misbehaviors. Miller (1995) suggested that mothers' attribution of misbehaviors to external and uncontrollable factors may spring from their belief that their children's behaviors are a reflection of their parenting – if they attribute their misbehaviors to the child's characteristics, this also means acknowledging their shortcomings as parents. However, due to their frequent exposure to their children's misbehaviors, mothers did not completely overlook their children's internal characteristics. They also did not passively accept the circumstances leading their children to misbehave, as the different practices discussed highlight mothers' attempt to regulate their children's behaviors. Indeed, other research has shown that parents believe they can exert control over their children's negative behaviors (Alampay & Jocson, 2011). Still, external influences weigh heavily, as will be seen in the next section.

**Context.** Negative influences and danger in the neighborhood characterize contexts of poverty (Grusec, 2002). Based on mothers' descriptions, negative influences include individuals who engage in vices such as smoking, drinking, drugs and gambling, gangs fighting along the nearby streets, and even adults who curse in front of their children. "*Alam mo kung saan natututo ang mga bata? Mula sa mga matatanda*" (You know where kids pick that up? From the adults)," concluded the mother of a 7-year-old boy. [M7B] Peers also become increasingly influential as children get older and can eventually overpower parental control. This is especially worrisome for mothers, as peers can be the gateway to vices, violence, and crime.

Danger also takes center stage as neighborhood risks run abound: gang fights break out regularly, vices such as drinking, gambling, and

drug abuse lead to violence, and young girls get pregnant. According to one mother, “*Dito sa paligid namin andyan ang away, mga tambay. Wala nang ibang ginawa kung hindi magnakaw. Tapos yon, pag walang magawa, yun na nag riot riot.*” (All around us there are fights, people just hanging around. They do nothing but steal. So there, when they have nothing better to do, riots break out.). [M14B1] Given these neighborhood characteristics, mothers monitor their children closely so that they can keep their children away from those undesirable factors found outside the home. This echoes what Grusec (2002) had said: parents from low income communities tend to exhibit more control as their children face greater danger and prospects of participation in antisocial activities.

The immediate context of poverty is complemented by the larger-scale impact of culture in parents’ socialization. Similar findings have consistently been found in local research: discipline is primarily punitive, with verbal and physical punishment commonly used to address misbehaviors (Dela Cruz et al., 2001; Jocson, Alampay, & Lansford, 2012; Lansford et al., 2010; Parr, 2009; Save the Children, 2006). Given these patterns, it appears that culture weighs heavily in the choice of type of discipline, even if the motivations behind some of the practices are colored by the immediate environmental context.

This is perhaps a product of Filipino parents’ value for maintaining a social hierarchy rather than promoting children’s autonomy (Bulatao, 1973; Dela Cruz et al., 2001; Domingo, 1977; Guthrie & Azores, 1968; Save the Children, 2006; Torres, 1985). Because of their age, children are relatively powerless in this hierarchy, making the use of punitive practices more acceptable to parents. The use of these practices is often justified by Filipino parents as an expression of their love (Save the Children, 2006), making it relatively more acceptable in the Philippines compared with other countries (Lansford et al., 2010). As children get older, parents begin to acknowledge their increasing power by giving them more responsibility, and slowly reducing the emphasis on the dominance of the parent over the child and the use of corporal punishment.

**Time.** These changes in socialization practices as children get older highlight the influence of time in human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). While the study is not longitudinal,

the age differences in socialization suggest that mothers may alter their practices depending on the perceived or actual changes in the child's ability to understand their parents' explanations. After all, older children are believed to have greater cognitive and self-regulatory capacities (Dix & Grusec, 1985; as cited in Miller, 1995).

Alongside changes in the child are also changes taking place within mothers' own lifespan. When they were children, they had grown up receiving harsher punishments from their parents and were not allowed to speak their mind. However, they observed that children at present can no longer be disciplined in the same way. As one mother said, "*Nanay pa ngayon ang takot sa anak. Baka lumayas, magtampo o sumagot pag pagalitan masyado.*" (These days, it's the moms who are scared of their kids. They might run away, become upset or talk back if you scold them too much.) [M14B2] Thus, they adjust their practices based on these perceived generational shifts.

Forty years prior to this study, Filipino parents also expressed similar changes – elders were losing their infallibility and felt pressured to rationalize their punishments (Mendez & Jocano, 1974). Within a 15-year time span in Cruz-na-Ligas, changes in child-rearing had also been observed alongside increasing modernization in the community (Domingo, 1977; Lagmay, 1971). Self-reliance had become increasingly important in socialization, and disobedience was more likely to occur and less likely to be punished severely (Lagmay, 1971). Thus, we see how parenting also evolves over historical time alongside changes within one's society.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

This study determined parents' socialization practices used to promote children's moral behaviors, and identified other perceived influences on these practices and behaviors. These were examined through Bronfenbrenner's PPCT framework, which accounts for person, process, context, and time in understanding human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

The proximal process examined in the study is parents' socialization practices promoting children's moral behaviors. These practices were classified along two dimensions: verbal and behavioral,

and punitive and non-punitive. Rather than having a set discipline style (Hoffman, 1994, 2000), parents have various socialization practices and choose what to use depending on the situation and the child's characteristics. This highlights the interaction between mother and child where practices are meant to socialize children, but at the same time, children also exert their influence on their mothers.

Person factors include the child's age and gender, and mothers' and children's attributions. Younger children tend to be more strictly monitored and received more corporal punishment compared with older children. On the other hand, gender is considered a factor in mothers' reasons for their practices – girls must be protected from harm and boys must be shielded from negative influences. Mothers and children also attribute misbehaviors differently. Children blame their lapses of behavior on fleeting factors within the situation, which are influences beyond their parents' socialization in their behaviors. Mothers tend to attribute misbehaviors to more lasting sources – children's innate tendencies for mischief, negative influences within the community, and the changing times. Such attributions elucidate mothers' reasons for their practices, as well as other influences on children's moral behaviors.

The role of the poverty context was also apparent in mothers' attributions. Because of the danger and negative influences in their neighborhood, they emphasized the need to monitor their children, especially the younger ones, to shield them away from these elements. The larger context of Filipino culture also plays a role, as suggested by the normativeness of corporal punishment as a socialization practice. Finally, changes across time are highlighted in the age differences in socialization practices, as perceived changes in children's maturity may contribute to adjustments in socialization practices. Mothers' practices are also colored by the changes they have observed in their children's behaviors and parents' practices throughout their lifespan.

These findings remind us that there is no one-size-fits-all approach in matters of moral behaviors. Parents certainly want to lead their children to the right direction, but the path is not straightforward. Indeed, as this research has shown, person, process, context, and time jointly exert their forces on both parents and children. But this is just a glimpse in our understanding of socialization and moral behaviors.

The next challenge that we face is twofold: creating and testing a model of moral behaviors and socialization, and crafting programs rooted in the context of those whom they are created for.

### **Limitations**

The results of the study are not meant to generalize to the wider population of Filipinos as it focuses on a small sample size within a single urban poor community. As a qualitative study, it also does not measure the actual impact of the factors discussed on moral behaviors. Instead, it identifies influences relevant to the participants and analyzes these within Bronfenbrenner's framework to guide subsequent studies on moral behaviors and parental socialization practices. It also comes with the methods used that the findings are based only on what participants could verbalize. While this could be limiting, it also brings respondents' most salient thoughts about socialization of moral behaviors to the fore, rather than forcing them to respond within a scope limited by the researcher. Even as questions also tackled moral behaviors, these were only discussed briefly and can be better described through observations of children's actual behaviors.

Given these limitations, future research can advance understanding of children's socialization through comparisons between groups, such as poor and non-poor, as well as urban and rural populations. Gender comparisons may also be made as the findings of the present study on gender are only preliminary. Moreover, other contexts of socialization, (e.g. school, peers, and culture) may be examined, and the underlying processes within such contexts compared (Carlo, Fabes, Laible, & Kupanoff, 1999; Sta. Maria, Reyes, Mansukhani, & Garo-Santiago, 2009). Another possible area for exploration may involve generational differences – a formal investigation of what exactly makes “kids these days” different.

### **Implications for Theory and Practice**

The findings of the study identify elements within the person, process, context, and time relevant to moral behaviors. It also recognizes parents' socialization as a proximal process influenced by

the person, context, and time. With this identification comes the next challenge of creating a testable model that can further explain the relationships among these variables (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Future research can also go beyond moral behaviors as the outcome of interest. While this may be one goal that parents have for their children, there may also be variations in their socialization objectives (Grusec et al., 2000). Contrasts between outcomes of competence and dysfunction may be examined as they are influenced differently by person, process, context, and time (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Thus, promotion of moral behaviors and prevention of misbehaviors may involve different patterns within the given framework.

The common use of corporal punishment found in the study, coupled with its possible detrimental effects (Banzon-Librojo & Alampay, 2010; Hoffman, 1994, 2000; Lopez et al., 2001) draws attention to the need for practices that better promote moral behaviors. A promising approach is the positive discipline program developed by Durrant (2007), which is already being used in some Filipino communities. The program considers age-appropriateness in discipline, thus partly addressing person factors in development. However, this must also consider the context of parents and children. The context of poverty, for instance, comes with its unique demands and stressors that have an impact on parents' discipline practices. Given the beliefs underlying punitive parenting practices, programs may also target the beliefs of parents about their children, in order to guide parent socialization practices (Alampay, 2013). However, as the parents in the present study emphasized, parent trainings must be paired with parallel children's programs. In doing so, children's perspectives must also be taken into account as their interpretation of their experiences may differ from those of adults.

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## APPENDIX A: PARENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### Socialization Practices

1. *Paano niyo tinuturo ang mga mabuting asal/pag-iwas sa masamang asal na ito sa inyong anak?* (How do you teach these good behaviors to your children/ How do you teach your children to avoid these bad behaviors?)
2. *Ano ang ginagawa ninyo kapag hindi ito natutupad/ginagawa ito ng inyong anak?* (What do you do when your child is unable to do/ engages in these?)
3. Ask same questions for one's spouse.

### Moral Behaviors and Other Influences

1. *Kumusta naman ang pagtupad/pag-iwas ng inyong anak sa mga mabuting/masamang asal na ito?* (How would you gauge your child in his/her maintaining these good behaviors/avoiding these bad behaviors?)
2. *Aling mga asal ang nahihirapan siyang sundin/iwasan?* (Which behaviors does your child have difficulty maintaining/avoiding?)
3. *Alin ang mga madali niyang nasusundan/naiiwasan?* (Which behaviors does your child easily abide by/avoid?)
4. *Ano kaya ang dahilan para dito?* (Why do you think is this the case?)

## APPENDIX B: CHILD PAKIKIPAGKWENTUHAN QUESTIONS

### Socialization Practices

1. *Paano ito tinuturo sa 'yo ng iyong mga magulang/ Paano tinuturo sa 'yo ng iyong magulang na iwasan ito?* (How do your parents teach you these behaviors/to avoid these behaviors?)
2. *Ano ang ginagawa ng magulang mo kapag hindi mo nagagawa/ kapag ginagawa mo ito?* (What do they do when you fail to do/ when you do these?)

### Moral Behaviors and Other Influences

1. *Kumusta naman ang pagtupad/pag-iwas mo sa mga mabuting/ masamang asal na ito?* (How would you gauge yourself in your maintaining/avoiding these behaviors?)
2. *Aling mga asal ang nahhirapan kang sundin/iwasan?* (Which behaviors do you have difficulty maintaining/avoiding?)
3. *Ano kaya ang dahilan para dito?* (Why do you think is this the case?)