

Casual Sex among Young People

¹Jessica M. Avenido, ²Roberto M. Cabardo and ³Juanito B. Aliño Jr.

Date Submitted: April 12, 2013

Date Revised: July 3, 2013

Abstract

This paper examines the reasons why young people engage in casual sex by investigating the reasons why an individual gives in to transitory pleasure. It also examines of the psyche of those who do not indulge in. It also leads to the formulation of a Casual Sex Theory that individuals who are highly rational and are self-actualized are not prone to casual sex. Thus, an individual's orientation that is anchored on the physiological and sexual aspects make him vulnerable to casual sex. Persons with hedonistic and pragmatic orientation are likely to engage in casual sex. In conclusion, an elevation of the level of awareness among young people from their rational capacity has to be given primary importance for the youth are the most vulnerable in casual sex phenomenon.

Keywords: Casual sex, sex, non romantic relationship

1.0 Introduction

This paper examines the dynamics of casual sex among young people. In particular, this looks into their motivations in engaging such act, the causes of such occurrence and the contributory factors leading to it.

Casual sex is a consensual activity that is spontaneous, transitory, unplanned and devoid of commitment. It is an activity that happens among teenagers, young adults or even older ones. While at the surface, conservative societies abhor it, for it promotes promiscuity, but still it has continued to be practiced worldwide. In it, there are two parties, namely, the initiator who ignites and starts the move and the participant who submits to the invitation of the initiator.

For a better understanding of casual sex and how individuals and institutions view such social phenomenon, the following studies were examined and found to be of importance. As

to age range, studies made by the University of Minnesota (Eisenberg, 2009) revealed that young adults having a mean age of 20.5 years old, do not stand to suffer the harmful psychological effects of casual sex while the one made by Mendle, et al. (as ctd in Boscia, 2012) of Cornell University Department of Psychology showed that young teenagers aged 13-15 years old succumb more to depression after casual sex than those who had sex with persons they have a romantic relationship. Studies on other aspects that impact on casual sex were also read. These yielded additional revelations about the realities of casual sex. Researches made by the University of Michigan (Conley as ctd by Wadley, 2011) revealed that both sexes have equal interest in casual sex, and both noted an increase in the number of women who are initiators than participants of the non-romantic sexual act. Studies from Bowling Green University and Oakland University (Lyons, et al., 2010) that

¹ Faculty, Center for Religious Education

² Faculty, Department of Communication Languages and Literature

³ Faculty, Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy
University of San Jose-Recoletos

investigated the impact of education to casual sex among college enrollees found that those who were not enrolled engaged in it more often than those in college. A perception survey on how women and men would treat the said sociosexual issue also showed that the initiators of casual sex are judged fairly especially by those who also have multiple partners. However, the perception shift happens when the participant is a woman because she is then judged more harshly than a male participant. This must be an extended manifestation of the stereotyping of women to be a subservient gender. Another focus is on external factors, like the study made by Kathleen Miller (2008) of the University at Buffalo noted a correlation of alcohol and energy drink use to the incidence of risk taking behavior including casual sex in the U.S.

In general, the papers mentioned only examined the bearing of age, education, perception and prejudices others have on casual sex and the parties involved, and the external factors like alcohol and energy drink vis-à-vis social restrictions. Not one has looked into the reasons why individual engages in casual sex. Neither was there an examination of the psyche of those who refused to engage in casual sex.

This paper aims to answer this vacuum in the study of casual sex by dissecting it on a two-pronged approach. First, by investigating the reasons why a young individual gives in to a transitory pleasure that is casual sex. Second, by examining the psyche of those persons who are resistant to casual sex.

2.0 Casual Sex Theory Formulation

Presented in this part of the study are the self-evident truths or sufficient axioms that are used in generating the proposition and ultimately the main theory of the study. The axioms are based on studies and theories on the subject matter.

Axiom 1. Man has three levels of existence:

vegetative, sentient, and rational.

Aristotle's theory of Rationality presents living things as having three corresponding degrees of soul. These are the nutritive soul in plants, the sensitive soul in animals and the rational soul in human beings. Cohen (2004) referred to this schema as nested hierarchy since those belonging to a higher degree also possess the lower degrees. Like the plants, all living things possess nutritive or vegetative soul. Thus, they need nourishment in order to grow and reproduce. On the other hand, animals do not only grow and reproduce. They also move and perceive things because the animals possess senses. In like manner, human beings also possess the same qualities. They are also capable of what plants and animals can do. However, even though the human beings have in them the three degrees, it is understood that they operate with rationality and not just purely vegetative and sensitive soul in them. This is so because as human beings who are gifted with intellect, freedom and will, they are expected to act with knowledge, with choice and voluntariness and not solely on sensual stimulants. Hence, the reference to human acts as acts proper to man as man. Unfortunately, in some transactions of human beings, they choose to function on the lower level by transacting based on needs or wants over his rationality. When two people operate on this level, this will show that:

Axiom 2. Double coincidence of wants is present in relational transactions.

Double coincidence of wants means that each individual has the things or products that the other needs or wants, otherwise, no transaction (exchange of goods and service) can happen (Ackley, 1962). This is the convergence of both parties' needs or wants. When this synergy happens, the needs of the parties concerned, become sources of answers to the other party's need. There is a link between double coincidence of wants and that of sex. For this, we add:

Axiom 3. Propensity for sex is inherent in human nature.

Man's propensity for sex is already detected as early as three to five years of age. In Phallic stage, Freud opines that the child is already aware of the anatomic difference of man and woman. This knowledge ushers in conflicts between erotic attraction, rivalry, jealousy and fear. During this stage, a person's gratification is focused on his genitals. According to Freud, a person's sexual nature is highly observable in the Genital stage that starts from puberty to adulthood. This is a time for sexual experimentation. Since this stage starts at the onset of puberty characterized by growth spurts and energy surge, it is also in this stage that the presence of strong sexual drive in young people is greatly manifested. Freud refers to this sexual drive as libido. He refers to it as the energy of sexual instinct in man; the dynamic manifestation of the sexual instinct in mental life. Hence, libido, per se, is not something evil, but a reality of man as a psycho somatic being. Libido, contrary to a common understanding, is not something evil. It means sexual drive, or energy, and energy per se, is neither good nor bad. Since this is innate in man, this should not be suppressed nor repressed but channeled. With this, we claim that:

Proposition 1: There is an interplay of the three levels of man's existence, the double coincidence of wants, and man's propensity for sex.

By Axiom 1, the human being is presented as rational. He is someone who has the capacity to weigh things, to discern, and to see what is good or not. Yet, the way man operates in his day to day transactions show that he sometimes operates based solely on his nutritional, reproductive, or sensual needs. Thus, he has the tendency to relate

symbiotically with people whose needs or wants he can also meet or vice versa. The leaning towards sex unfolds throughout the stages of human development but is more manifest as the individual discovers more about his body and his sexuality. Coupled with influence from other factors, his new discoveries lead to questions and questions may lead to explorations. This would show that:

Axiom 4. Curiosity plays a role in young people's engagement in sex.

While it is true that those who engage in casual sex have the pleasurable outcome of the act in mind, Ruskin (cited in Litman, 2005) remarked that the gratification of curiosity frees persons from uneasiness and confers pleasure. This is worth noting since curiosity could be affecting people in two ways. First, it is the most important element that entices and leads individuals to find answers to questions that they hold regarding the sex act. Here, the pleasure that one derives from the act is but corollary to the answers that one gathers from the act. Second, curiosity magnifies man's propensity for sex. It can fan the fire that is already in man. In fact;

Axiom 5. People, with hedonistic orientation, hold that moral duty is fulfilled in the satisfaction of pleasure.

The theory of Utilitarianism by Jeremy Bentham sees the ethical value of conduct as determined solely by its consequences. The action with the highest total utility is adjudged as the correct action. As asserted by this theory, what matters for the people involved in the act is that it must result to happiness. In casual sex, happiness is oftentimes equated with sexual satisfaction, which is basically on the sentient level of man's existence. This is possible since the correctness of an action is anchored on the utility of the consequence as determined by the individual himself. In relation to this, we say;

Axiom 6. Culture shapes an individual's view

about casual sex.

The Ecological Theory of Child Development by Urie Bronfenbrenner (Cornell, 2004) states that the interactions between the developing child and the environment take place within nested systems, namely, the microsystem (such as family or classroom), the mesosystem (which is two microsystems in interaction), the exosystem (which is a system influencing development, such as a parental workplace), and the macrosystem (the larger cultural context). Each system contains roles, norms, and rules that powerfully shape development.

Culture shapes the norms of the society, manifested through taboos. Thus, what may be unacceptable in one society, may be acceptable in another. However, this is not always the case because culture also changes overtime, by way of education, and enhanced by the media. Since media plays a crucial role in society, we add that:

Axiom 7. Media can elicit sexual desire.

According to Ember and Ember (2004), the sources of all culture change are discoveries and invention. From these, the researchers deduce that the rapid advances in information technology are inevitably manifested through the media. Ryan (2010) has shown the process of how the media, the billboards and television commercials can elicit sexual desire. With this, we claim:

Proposition 2: Since culture constantly changes, an individual's view on sex also changes and is enhanced by curiosity and orientation.

As evidenced by axioms 4, 6 and 7, Culture, especially as to what it considers as taboo, can even fuel this curiosity in the young. The importance of channeling one's sexual desire cannot be ignored by human beings. The use of such sexual energy has to be seen in a broader perspective. An

example of which, is to view it from the perspective as to what man is. For this reason, we say that:

Axiom 8. Man is an embodiment of several dimensions: physical, intellectual, spiritual/moral, psychological, economic, social, and political.

The human person is a unity of body and spirit. These aspects of him are not separated but a unity. With his thoughts on dualism in relation to form and reality, Plato helped pave the understanding in the past that man as body and spirit has the capacity to hold the divine because of his spiritual dimension. On the other hand, his body, which is material, physical, and part of the world is viewed as worldly so it can be the avenue for what is mundane and not godly. With his view of the body as a shadow of the essence of man, Plato downplays the material or physical part of man and puts emphasis on his spiritual being. Aristotle believes otherwise. He sees man as a unity of body and spirit. Therefore, for his fulfillment both have to be taken into consideration by man in acting out his being. Man, being an embodied spirit has to consider the physical, relational, social, economic, political realities, as well as his intellectual, spiritual, moral, psychological truths. In fact:

Axiom 9. Man as a dynamic being, is an embodiment of several dimensions (Axiom 8) that are constantly interacting in response to the cyclical desirable and undesirable patterns of internal and external circumstances that confront him constantly.

Man is endowed with intellect to make a choice. Together with freedom and will, he executes choices that manifest a leaning towards a particular or several dimensions that compose him. The constant interaction of the external and internal forces, good or bad, influences his choices. But in choosing, according to Leroy Troutner (cited in Mills, 1972) man will either conform to what society expects of him or make a choice that is non-conforming to the rest of society but one that

pleases himself and face whatever consequences that come with it. In the development of this sense of self, we claim that:

Proposition 3: The dimensions that carry more weight largely influence man's decision to engage in a chosen activity.

Theory on Casual Sex

The rationality of man is in constant conflict with the vegetative and sentient levels of man's existence. The rationality aspect of man, however, is influenced by the circumstances that are embedded in his experiences, which in turn influence his philosophy, beliefs, orientation, and behavior. Thus, an individual's orientation that is anchored on the physiological and sexual aspects make him vulnerable to casual sex. Person with hedonistic and pragmatic orientation is likely to engage in casual sex. Individuals, on the other hand, who are highly rational, are not prone to casual sex.

3.0 Conclusions and Implications in the Real World

The elevation of the level of awareness among young people of their rational capacity is of primary importance for they are the most vulnerable in the casual sex phenomenon.

An individual operating on a high level of rationality is one who is conscious that he is a rational being. This brings about a more defined moral fiber that enables him to conduct himself more appropriately in relation to others in the society. Further, individuals shall be exhorted to observe consistency their cognition and action.

The decision of a person not to engage in casual sex creates a ripple effect because his decision has an impact on his family, friends, and even to his community. It simply proves the interconnectedness of humanity.

For instance, if a young student does not succumb to do the act, he will not be exposed to sexually transmitted disease nor contribute to teenage pregnancy, malnutrition, unemployment, dysfunctional and confused families, among other social ills that have overburdened many communities worldwide. Similarly, by doing so, he will not be responsible for creating another social problem like STD or HIV/AIDS that gives headache to his family and the family of his partner. He will not also be an addition to the unemployed being out of school. So, it is important that after all the discernment process and the decision created, the person has to support it with strong conviction by reaffirming it with concrete action.

The youth that comprise more than the majority of citizens of the Philippines and more than two thirds of the world cannot do it alone. The government, socio-civic organizations, academic institutions, lawmaking bodies, business, church, and media must converge and look at casual sex at a macrocosmic scale so a collaborative, holistic, and transformative solution that can provide a lasting and sustained effect on the young person and the whole community can be achieved. Otherwise, mankind will not be different from the dogs that litter and copulate with anybody anywhere because their focus is more on the basal instinct to have sex than on the capacity to think better and clearer which distinguishes a rational human being from the lower kind of animals.

As gleaned from the findings, casual sex does not only concern about the two consenting individuals—the initiator and the participant—who engage in it. Rather, it is a multilayered concern that is also dependent on the tolerance or intolerance of local and national government, schools, community, and mass media in all platforms. The media, both broadcast and print, plays a crucial role in this phenomenon since together with the social networking sites, they are

the most influential and most accessible sources of influence on the young. The call is for them to be more responsible by really looking at the possible consequence of their program contents than focus more on what is controversial and profitable.

There maybe no quick fixes to the problem of casual sex but if only every institution sees the interconnectedness of mankind from the east to the west, north to the south and anything in between, the youth will still have a better view of the world than just an opportunity to have casual sex in every nook and corner.

References

- Adams, A. and W. Holt. (2012). *The Effects of Gender and Orientation Perceptions of Casual Sex*. Hanover, IN: Hanover College
- Andrews, J. DePaul University, Finance, a student in College Year in Athens' Spring 2003 Philosophy class.
- Anissimov, Michael. *What is Moral Relativism?* USA: Conjecture Corporation.
- Boscia, Ted. (2012). *Study: Casual teen sex linked to higher depression rates*. Cornell Chronicle: Ithaca, NY USA
- Cornell University. (2004). *Guide to the Urie Bronfenbrenner Papers, [ca. 1960-2011]*.
- Cohen, Marc S. *Course Outline*. (2004).
- Ember, Carol R. & Ember Melvin. (2004). *Cultural Anthropology*
- Lyons, Heidi et.al. (2010) *Casual Sex Among Young Adults: Education Differentials*. Ohio, USA: Bowling Green University.
- McLeod, S. A. (2008). *Cognitive Dissonance Theory*. _____ (2008). *Freud: Psychosexual Stages*.
- McNulty, Jennifer. (May 3, 1999). *A lifetime of curiosity about human motivation garners Psychology's top prize for Elliot Aronson*.
- Miller, Kathleen. (2008). *College Students Use of Alcohol and Energy Drinks*. USA: Research Institute on Addictions - University at Buffalo.
- Partington, R. 2013. *What is Hedonism?* Sparks, NV USA: Conjecture Corporation,
- Wadley, J. (2011). *Women like Casual Sex just as much as men do*. USA: University Record Online - University of Michigan.
- Wilkes, Kathleen V. (Oct., 1978). *Mind: The Good Man and the Good for Man in Aristotle's Ethics*. New Series, Vol. 87, No. 348, pp. 553-571. UK: Oxford University Press.

Similarity Index: 4%
Grammarly: 99%