Factors Affecting British Teenagers’ Contraceptive Use at First Intercourse

Our study also reveals the importance of parents in equipping their children with the skills to communicate and interact effectively with future sexual partners. Parents’ willingness and ability to discuss sexuality openly and portray it in a positive light throughout their children’s lives appear to impart both competence and confidence. In contrast, reluctance to talk about sexual matters and embarrassment in doing so reinforce negative messages of unacceptable and prohibition.

We also found that parents’ openness and warmth and availability during their children’s primary school years and early teenage years is key to young people’s future contraceptive behavior. This finding is particularly pertinent for young men living in especially deprived neighborhoods, who appear to be less skilled and less willing than their more affluent counterparts to communicate with a first sexual partner. For these young men, engaging in this type of dialogue may threaten and challenge the gender stereotypes that their social environment reinforces.

In light of these findings, efforts to increase young people’s competence to insist on contraceptive use, and thus reduce unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections, should be multifaceted. Our different results by