



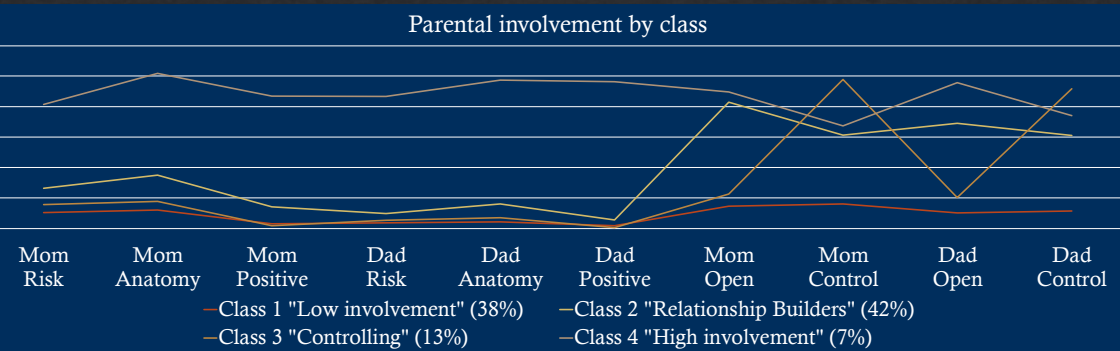
# Parents vs. Peers:

## A latent-profile analysis showing the power of parents to offset sexualized messages from peers

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**Introduction:** 67% of American adolescents engage in some level of sexual behavior during high school (CDC, 012, Manning et al., 2006). Prior research has suggested the peers have a big impact on adolescents' sexual decision making (Bulat et al., 2016), specifically leading adolescents to engage in riskier (Epstein & Ward, 2008) and more casual sexual behavior (Bleakley et al., 2009). This is concerning for many parents who encourage abstinence or focus on safe sex behaviors (Rogers, 2017; Widman et al., 2017). However, parents choose to teach their children about sex in different ways and their different levels of involvement may have a differential impact on their ability to combat the risky messages of their children's peers during adolescence. Therefore, the current study used a latent profile analysis to identify different types of peers and then used class membership as a moderator of the regression path between peer influence and sexual attitudes and behaviors.



- Analysis steps:**
- In Mplus, perform a latent profile analysis using the 10 indicators of parental sex communication. Save that class membership to use as a moderator in subsequent analyses.
  - In Stata, examine how the associations between perceptions of peers' sexual behaviors and three sexual attitudes (e.g., willingness to engage in casual sex) and behaviors (e.g., sexual risk and sexual debut) change based on the type of parent each child has (i.e., by moderating by class membership)

- Results**
- Note: The graph above shows the means for the indicators based on class membership. The table to the right includes results of the regression analyses. The general column shows the results of an unmoderated regression, and the columns for each of the different classes shows the results of the moderated regression for each of the different parental profiles.
  - Latent Profile Analysis**
    - Parents separated into 4 groups. The *Low-involvement* parents showed low frequency of all types of sexual communication, while also showing low levels of both open and controlling communication about sexuality. The *Relationship builders* were similar to the *Low-involvement* except they had higher levels of both open and controlling communication. The *Controlling* parents only showed high levels of controlling communication while the *High involvement* parents were the only class that showed high levels of communication and had more open than controlling communication in their families.
  - Moderated Regression Analysis**
    - Parents who are highly involved seem to make the most difference when they are paired with teens who have low levels of peer involvement. These parents appear to have the most power when they are proactive, meaning they talk early and talk often about the unique challenges their adolescents are facing.
    - Parents who are very controlling may have some impact in the short-term but further research should examine their influence on the long-term as well as the differential impact of adolescent age.
    - Parents should be talking more about sexuality and tailoring it to their individual child.

**Participants:** Data were drawn from a larger study entitled the Healthy Sexuality project and were collected in 2018. The final sample included 2,044 adolescents (21.48% ages 13-14; 27.99% ages 15-16; 50.54% ages 17-18) with an equal representation of each gender (50.39% male, 49.61% female), with well-distributed income (31.26% low; 46.87% middle; 21.87% high) and fairly nationally representative race characteristics (53.18% white, 14.92% African American, 13.45% Latino).

- Measures:**
- Parental Sex Communication:
    - Frequency: Children answered questions about how often their parents discuss the risks of sexuality (e.g., pregnancy, STDs), the anatomy of sexuality (e.g., how to perform intercourse) and the benefits of sexuality (e.g., pleasure, relationship-building)
    - Quality: Children answered questions about if they believe their conversations about sexuality are open (i.e., with mutual discussion) or controlling (i.e., by lecturing or by using scare tactics)
  - Peer influence: Adolescents reported their perception of how many of their best friends have had sex or believe that sex is appropriate for their age group
  - Casual Sex: Adolescents reported on their beliefs about hook-ups versus waiting till marriage
  - Sexual Risk: Adolescents reported their use of condoms and their number of oral, anal, and intercourse sexual partners in the last 6 months
  - Sexual debut: Adolescents reported on their age at first intercourse

Child Gender	Outcomes	Peer Influence				
		General	Class 1: Low Involvement	Class 2: Relationship Builders	Class 3: Controlling	Class 4: High Involvement
Boys	Casual Sex	Higher peer influence is associated with higher willingness to engage in casual sex	Same as general	Same as general	Same as general	Stronger effect than classes 1 & 2. However, weakest effect of all classes at low levels of peer influence.
	Sexual Risk	Higher peer influence is associated with higher sexual risk	Same as general	Same as general	<b>Weaker effect</b>	Weakest association at low levels of peer influence but same as general at high levels
	Sexual Debut	No effect	No effect	No effect	No effect	No effect
Girls	Casual Sex	Higher peer influence is associated with higher willingness to engage in casual sex	Same as general	Same as general	Same as general	<b>Weaker effect</b>
	Sexual Risk	Higher peer influence is associated with higher sexual risk	Same as general	Same as general	Same as general	No effect
	Sexual Debut	No effect	No effect	No effect	Higher peer influence is associated with lower age of sexual debut	No effect