

“Boys want sex, girls want relationships”: Gendered Sex Scripts and Parent-Child Consent Communication

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Introduction

- Sexual consent, or, the eliciting of (Javidi et al., 2020) and expression of (Brady et al., 2022) agreement to engage in sexual activity, has been understudied within adolescence (Padilla-Walker et al., 2020) but has a major impact on healthy sexual practices and outcomes (Muehlenhard et al., 2016).
- Adolescent consent beliefs indicate early engagement in consent socialization, even prior to sexual debut (Richards et al., 2022).
- Gender is relevant in consent socialization as seen during emerging adulthood with gender differences in consent beliefs and practices (Brady et al., 2022; Javidi et al., 2020).
- Little is known about parent-child consent socialization and how gendered factors impact consent socialization and development.

Research Question and Hypothesis

- RQ1: How does belief in gendered sex scripts impact parents' consent beliefs?
 - ◆ H1: We hypothesized that parents' gendered sex scripts would be associated with their consent beliefs. Specifically, parents' who had strong gendered sex scripts would be negatively associated with parents' consent beliefs.
- RQ2: How do parents' gendered sex scripts and consent beliefs impact parent-child consent communication?
 - ◆ H2: We hypothesized that parents' consent beliefs would be associated with frequency of parent-child consent conversations. In particular, parents' strong belief in consent would be positively associated with parent-child consent communication.
 - ◆ H3: We hypothesized that parents' gendered sex scripts would moderate the relation between parent consent beliefs and the frequency of consent communication with their child.

Table 1
Correlations between child variables and parent variables for parent sample.

| | Fathers (N ₂ = 285) | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------|---------|----------|----------|---------|
| Mothers (N ₁ = 285) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 1. Child's Age | — | -0.05 | -0.02 | 0.04 | 0.05 | -0.11 |
| 2. Religiosity | 0.05 | — | 0.03 | 0.01 | 0.09 | 0.08 |
| 3. Parent GSS | -0.03 | 0.08 | — | -0.22*** | -0.21*** | -0.14* |
| 4. Parent Consent Beliefs | 0.04 | 0.04 | -0.19** | — | 0.22*** | 0.17** |
| 5. Self-Report of CCF | -0.05 | 0.10 | -0.11 | 0.20*** | — | 0.73*** |
| 6. Child Report of CCF | -0.002 | 0.10 | -0.15* | 0.15* | 0.75*** | — |

Note. CCF = Consent Communication Frequency. GSS = Gendered Sex Scripts. Mothers are below the Diagonal, fathers above. Data was separated based on biological sex at the birth of the parent.

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

Methods

The sample consisted of 275 family triads of mothers, fathers, and their adolescents from wave 3 of the Healthy Sexuality Project (HSP). Children reported on parent consent communication taken from larger scale on sex communication (Rogers & Padilla-Walker, 2020). Parents reported their own consent and gendered sex script beliefs.

Measures

- Frequency of Parent-Child Sexual Consent Conversations
 - Ex: “What it means to give and get consent before engaging in sexual behaviors” (1=Never, 2=Once, 3=2-3 Times, 4=About Once a Month, 5=About Once a Week, 6=More than Once a Week).
- Sexual Consent Beliefs
 - Ex: “I feel sexual consent should be obtained before the start of any sexual activity” (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree).
- Gendered Sex Scripts (Trinh et al., 2013)
 - Ex: “It is up to women to limit the sexual advances of men and keep men from ‘going too far’” (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree).



Results

Mother Model

- Accounted for a significant portion of variance, R² = .10, F (9, 265) = 3.14, p = .0013.
- Step 1: Mother's had slightly more frequent talks about consent with their daughters compared to sons. Latin mothers had slightly less consent talk with their children compared to White mothers.
- Step 2: Mothers' consent beliefs had a marginally positive link with mother-child consent communication whereas mothers' gendered sex scripts had a weakly negative connection to frequency of consent communication.
- Step 3: The interaction was non-significant.

Father Model

- Accounted for a significant portion of variance, R² = .11, F (9, 261) = 3.60, p < .001.
- Step 1: Black fathers had moderately more frequent consent discussions with their children compared to White fathers.

Table 2

Linear Regression Predicting Parent-Child Consent Communication Frequency by Parent

| | Mother Model | Father Model |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | b (SE) β | b (SE) β |
| Step 1: Control Variables | | |
| Female | 0.35 (0.15) 0.14* | -0.10 (0.16) -0.04 |
| Late Adolescence | -0.07 (0.16) -0.03 | 0.07 (0.16) 0.03 |
| Black | 0.30 (0.22) 0.09 | 0.69 (0.23) 0.22** |
| Latin@ | -0.55 (0.25) -0.14* | 0.16 (0.27) 0.04 |
| Other Ethnicity | -0.29 (0.28) -0.06 | -0.49 (0.30) -0.09 |
| Religiosity | 0.09 (0.06) 0.10 | 0.02 (0.06) 0.03 |
| Step 2: Main Effects | | |
| Parent Consent Beliefs | 0.15 (0.08) 0.11+ | 0.19 (0.11) 0.14+ |
| Parent GSS | -0.16 (0.08) -0.12* | -0.19 (0.10) -0.14+ |
| Step 3: Interactions | | |
| Parent Consent Beliefs x GSS | -0.01 (0.08) -0.01 | 0.03 (0.13) 0.02 |
| Final R ² | 0.10 | 0.11 |
| Final F test | 3.14** | 3.60*** |

Data: Healthy Sexuality Project Wave III. Notes. GSS = Gendered Sex Scripts.

+p < 0.1; *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

- Step 2: Father's consent beliefs and gendered sex scripts had marginal relations to frequency of consent communication. With consent beliefs linked to an increase and gendered sex scripts linked to a decrease in consent communication frequency.
- Step 3: Interaction was non-significant.

See Table 1 for Correlations and Table 2 for Regression Associations

Discussion

- Correlations support prior research deductions of mothers being the primary sex socialization agent within the home (Christensen et al., 2017). This is evident with adolescents in the study reporting significantly more frequent consent communication with their mothers than with fathers.
- **The results of our study suggest that although parents' consent beliefs and gendered sex scripts are independently relevant in predicting the frequency of consent communication with their child, the interaction of these two factors does not significantly relate to the frequency of consent communication.**
- **Limitations** included cross-sectional analysis, self-reporting of consent and gendered sex-script beliefs, and our outcome variable only accounting for frequency of discussions.
- **Future research** should focus on quality and content of parent-child consent talks to further understand how parent gendered-sex attitudes may influence consent socialization between parents and children.