Findings from a National Survey about Abstinence Knowledge and Attitudes

Background
- Nationally representative sample of 1,000 adolescents and their "most knowledgeable parent" conducted in 2008
- Key research question: What factors are independently associated with differences in adolescent attitudes about sex and abstinence?
- Key outcomes:
  - Adolescent attitudes about sex and abstinence
  - Parent attitudes and communication
  - Peer attitudes and communication
  - Exposure to information about abstinence or sex in a class or program

Key Adolescent Outcomes: Attitudes about Having Sex
- All your age mates having sexual intercourse would create problems or make the relationship more difficult (94%)
- It would be okay for you to have sexual intercourse before you were 16 years old (91%)
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Parallel Parent Reports: Attitudes about Their Adolescent Having Sexual Intercourse
- All your age mates having sexual intercourse would create problems or make the relationship more difficult (94%)
- It would be okay for your adolescent to have sexual intercourse before he or she has left high school (90%)
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- It would be okay for your adolescent to have sexual intercourse before he or she has left high school (96%)

Key Outcomes: Parent and Adolescent Perceptions of Parental Control over Adolescent Engagement in Sexual Behavior
- Parent's age mates having sexual intercourse is something only married people should do (38%)
- More than 50% of parents said that their teenagers have engaged in sexual intercourse (61%)
- Adolescent's age mates having sexual intercourse is something only married people should do (38%)
- Less than 50% of parents said that their teenagers have engaged in sexual intercourse (41%)

Conceptual Model
- Parent characteristics
- Demographic similarity
- Household background characteristics
- Adolescents' characteristics
- Parent-adolescent relationship quality
- Parent-adolescent communication about sex and abstinence
- Adolescent attitudes about sex and abstinence
- Peer attitudes about sex and abstinence
- Peer-adolescent communication about sex and abstinence
- Abstinence education

Analytic Methods: Testing Conceptual Model
- Employed nested logistic regression specifications to test associations
- Direction of causality is assumed in conceptual model, but can only test correlations
- Built model sequentially
  - Direct associations
  - Indirect associations
  - Seemingly Unrelated Regression (SUR) techniques used for joint hypothesis testing for groups of outcome measures

Key Findings
- Demographics
  - Males and black/Hispanic adolescents expressed less restrictive views about sex.
  - Older adolescents were more conservative about sex in general, but had less restrictive attitudes about their own behavior.
- Parents
  - Conservative parent attitudes were strongly associated with conservative adolescent attitudes.
  - Higher levels of parent-adolescent communication about sex were not associated with any differences in adolescent attitudes.
- Peers
  - Adolescents with more conservative peers reported more conservative views.
  - Higher levels of peer-adolescent communication about sexual values were associated with less conservative adolescent attitudes.
- Classes/Programs
  - Though adolescent participation in classes/programs where messages about waiting to have sex until marriage were delivered increased parent-adolescent communication levels, it had no influence on adolescent attitudes.