

**The Second Adolescence: The Sex of Firstborn Adolescent Offspring and
Fathers' Sexual Behavior and Health in the Developing World**

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There are several reasons to believe that fathers heighten their sexual activity more often in the presence of sons than in the presence of daughters. First, fathers may use their own sexual conduct as a form of heteronormative gender socialization (Kane, 2006). Such socialization would not only validate fathers' identity as parents but their masculine identity as well. Second, fathers may feel competitive with their sons when these young men reach reproductive age. One way in which fathers would be able to affirm their elder status is through their sexual prowess (Connell, 1995). In addition, parents' ideologies may be influenced by the gendered experiences of their children (Shafer & Malhotra, 2011; Washington, 2008). If this is true, then fathers of firstborn sons may become less gender egalitarian than fathers of firstborn daughters, and thus potentially more likely to engage in or report heteronormative behaviors that portray an image of male sexual dominance.

Whether differences in fathers' sexual behavior are manifested through the socialization process, competition, or ideological sentiment, the underlying assumption remains the same—that fathers respond to the sexual debut of their children, which is often gendered. What differs between these theoretical mechanisms, however, is the possibility that sons' pubertal development amplifies fathers' behavior while daughters' development tempers it. Either way, the response to the sex of offspring likely corresponds with children's adolescence because adolescence is a stage of development in which bodies mature and sexual identities begin to emerge (Caldwell, Caldwell, Caldwell, & Pieris, 1998; K. Martin, 1996).

To date, the idea that sons and daughters affect parents' sexual behaviors differently has not been explored in the United States or elsewhere. I choose to study this

phenomenon in the developing world, where much of the existing scholarship on gender and reproductive health has overlooked sociological theories of gender (Jungar & Oinas, 2004; van den Wjingaard, 1997). Thus, while this study relies on the same data as many of its predecessors in demography, it highlights what demographers and epidemiologists have missed—how social structures, in this case the parent-child relationship—influence men’s reports of their sexual behavior and health.

With the use of a natural experiment, and data from thirty-seven Demographic and Health Surveys, this study shows that fathers with firstborn adolescent sons are more likely to report recent sexual activity and paying for sex, while less likely to report using condoms, than are fathers with firstborn adolescent daughters. Moreover, fathers with adolescent sons are also more likely to report experiencing STD symptoms such as genital warts. Through a series of additional analyses, this research further reveals that fathers’ elevated sexual activity corresponds with different sexual ideologies between fathers with sons and fathers with daughters, and that offspring sex has no comparable effect on mothers. Together these findings suggest several pathways by which children’s sex and development influence *fathers’* sexual behavior, and challenge a longstanding acceptance of scholarly conceptualizations of the family in which parents are treated as static and children as malleable. Furthermore, they highlight how men’s heteronormative sexual behavior, long taken for granted in public health studies, systematically varies with at least one social structure found in their daily lives—the family.