



# Gender Differences in the Association between Perceived Family Understanding in Adolescence and Concurrent Sexual Partnerships in Adulthood



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## Introduction

- Adolescents' perceptions of parental care and family understanding significantly influence relationship behaviors in adulthood, shaping trust, communication, and relationship quality (Deptula et al. 2010; Hadiwijaya et al. 2020; Tartakovsky 2024).
- Negative family experiences, such as parental infidelity or poor parent-child relationships, may increase the likelihood of risky behaviors like infidelity in romantic relationships (Akcan et al. 2023; Jian 2023;).
- Gender differences in the impact of family dynamics on infidelity suggest males may be more influenced by external opportunities, while females may connect infidelity to emotional dissatisfaction or transitions (Brand et al. 2007; Emmers-Sommer et al. 2010; Fosse 2021).

## Research Questions

- Are individuals with lower levels of perceived family understanding during adolescence more likely to engage in infidelity in adulthood than those with higher levels of perceived family understanding?
- Does the relationship between perceived family understanding and infidelity differ between males and females?

## Methods

### Sample

- Respondents (n=3942) were drawn from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health), a nationally representative sample of U.S. adolescents in grades 7-12 during 1994-1995, followed into adulthood through 2016-2018.

### Measures

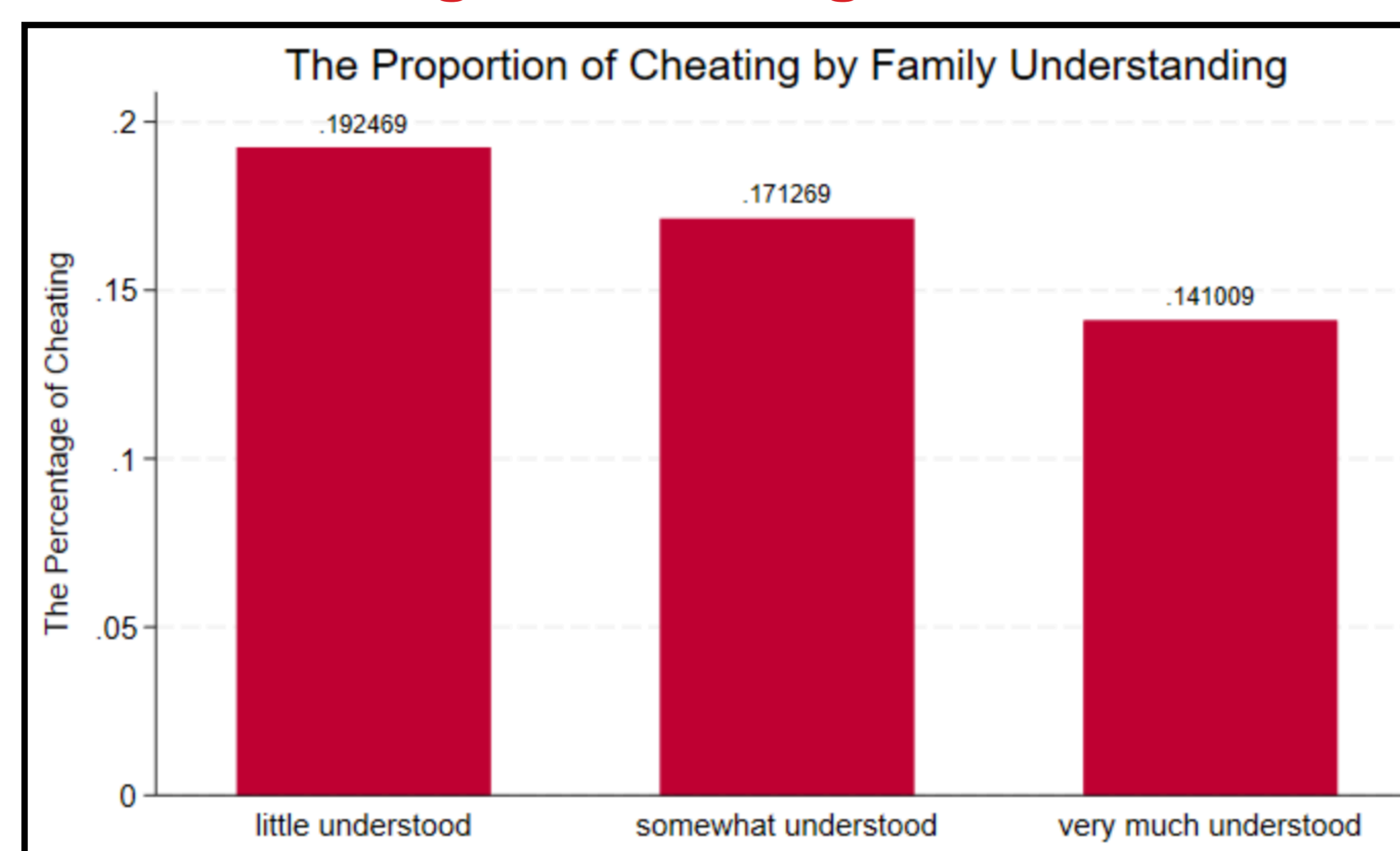
- Perceived Family Understanding was measured with the question: "How much do you feel people in your family understand you?" Originally, responses ranged from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much), however for the consistency of the scale, they were recoded to the scale from 1(little) to 3(very much)
- Infidelity in Adulthood was measured with the question: "During the time you and your partner have had a sexual relationship, has/did you ever had/have any other sexual partners?" Responses were binary: 1 (yes) and 0 (no).

## Results

### Bivariate

- Chi-Square analysis showed that perceived family understanding was significantly associated with concurrent partnerships in adulthood when comparing "little" to "very much" ( $p = .016$ ) and "somewhat" to "very much" ( $p = .046$ ), but not when comparing "little" to "somewhat" ( $p = .261$ ).
- Respondents reporting "little" family understanding were more likely to report concurrent partnerships compared to those reporting "very much" (19.25% vs. 14.10%). Similarly, those reporting "somewhat" family understanding were more likely to report concurrent partnerships than those reporting "very much" (17.13% vs. 14.10%). (Figure 1)

**Figure 1: The Relationship Between Family Understanding and Cheating**



### Multivariate

- Logistic regression analyses showed that individuals with lower perceived family understanding were significantly more likely to cheat compared to those with higher family understanding ( $p < 0.001$ ).
- Biological sex significantly moderated the relationship, with males exhibiting higher probabilities of cheating than females across all levels of family understanding ( $p < 0.001$ ).
- For males, the probability of cheating decreased from 22.2% for little family understanding to 17.8% for very much family understanding, while for females, it decreased from 17.3% to 10.8%. (Figure 2)

## Discussion

- Higher levels of perceived family understanding were associated with a lower likelihood of cheating, and this relationship was consistent across all analyses.
- Males were more likely to cheat than females at all levels of perceived family understanding, with the probability of cheating decreasing for both groups as family understanding increased.
- These findings contribute to research on family dynamics and romantic behavior, highlighting the enduring influence of early family relationships on adult decisions.
- Future research should explore additional factors such as cultural context, socioeconomic status, and relationship satisfaction to provide a more comprehensive understanding of cheating behavior.

## References

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**Figure 2: Predicted Probability of Cheating by Family Understanding and Biological Sex**

