

BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY

**The Relationship between Peers and Parents' Involvement to  
Adolescents Risk-Taking: A Comparison between Young  
and Older Adolescents**

Coral Goldbaum

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between parent involvement and peer presence in adolescent risk-taking, in two adolescent age groups: young adolescents (ages 12-14) and older adolescents (ages 16-18). Many researches over the years deal with adolescent risk taking and tried to find the factors that influence risk taking. In the present study two factors were chosen that were found in correlation with adolescent risk taking in many other studies, but only a few studies examined the differences between the age groups over the adolescence period, and the findings in these studies were not consistent.

The study involved 106 students from Jewish national schools, including 58 students in the young adolescents group and 48 older adolescents. This study explores four hypotheses. The first two deal with the variable of the parents' involvement, and hypothesize that, first, more parent involvement leads to less risk-taking among adolescents, and, second, this negative correlation is stronger among older adolescents. These hypotheses were measured through self-reported questionnaires completed by the adolescents (risk-taking questionnaire and parents' involvement questionnaire).

The two final hypotheses of the study deal with the connection between peers presence to risk taking among adolescence, and hypothesize that risk-taking will be higher in the presence of peers, and that among young adolescents, this correlation will be stronger. These hypotheses were measured through an experiment using a computer game ("chicken").

The results support the first two hypotheses and indicate that, as parent involvement increases, adolescents are less involved in risk-taking behaviors, and that this correlation is stronger among older adolescents. On the other hand, the findings do not support the two last hypotheses, and no correlation was found between peer presence to adolescent's risk-taking.

The first finding is in line with other research that has found that parent involvement in adolescent life decreases adolescent involvement in risk-taking

behaviors. The second finding, which found a difference in parental influence on younger and older adolescents, can be explained with development theories.

According to those theories, adolescent risk-taking is partially necessary for achieving adolescent assignments including the achievement of autonomy, independence and separation from parents. It may be that in the end of adolescence, those tasks have already been achieved, which explains why older adolescents are more attentive to their parents.

The little evidence of peer influence on adolescent risk-taking can be explained in some ways and by some studies which will be discussed in detail in the Discussion chapter. First, it may be that there is no direct and clear connection between peers and all adolescent behavior, and in particular risk taking behavior. Second, it may be that peers have connection to risk taking only when the friend and the adolescent have a similar behavior background. Third, it may be that peers and risk taking are correlated only when peers are actively encouraging the adolescent to take risk. Finally, it may be that peers and risk taking are correlated only when the adolescent has a predisposition to risk taking.