The Impact of Families on Young Women’s Sexual Behaviors

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NIH-The role of relationships in HIV prevention among young women in Africa
Overview

• Families in sub-Saharan Africa

• Evidence that families matter for adolescent girls’ sexual behaviors

• What can we do better?
Household Composition of Girls Aged 15-18

- Other relative
- Grandparent only
- Dad only
- Mom only
- Both parents
Household Composition of Girls Aged 15-18

- Married
- Non-relative
- Other relative
- Grandparent only
- Dad only
- Mom only
- Both parents

Countries included: Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Uganda, Liberia, Malawi, Senegal, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, Mali, Burkina Faso.
Why are African families so fluid?

1) Diverse and changing hh compositions

The 3 M’s

- Marriage (premarital births, divorce, & remarriage)
- Migration (mother, father, and child)
- Mortality
Figure 1. Probability of Premarital Birth
Figure 1. Divorce by Union Duration 15-19 Years

Legend
- <20%
- 20 - <30%
- 30 - <40%
- 30 - <40%
- >= 40%
Why are African families so fluid?

1) Diverse and changing hh compositions
   
   The 3 M’s
   – Marriage (premarital births, divorce, & remarriage)
   – Migration (mother, father, and child)
   – Mortality

2) Strong kinship ties beyond the hh walls
   – Financial, physical, and emotional support from non-residential family members
Previous Research on Family Effects

1) Family Dynamics

2) Parent-Child Relationship
Previous Research on Family Dynamics

Current HH composition
- Fathers decrease sexual activity and pregnancy (Ngom et al. 2003)
- Fathers delay sexual debut (Babalola et al. 2002)
- Both parents delays sexual debut, but no effect on # of partners or contraception (Karim et al. 2003)
- No effect of living with both parents on sexual debut (Kumi-Kyereme et al. 2007)
- Not a strong or significant predictor of adolescent sexual behaviors (Biddlecom et al. 2009)

HH composition during childhood
- Co-residence with fathers delays sexual debut (Babalola et al. 2005)

Parental death
- Double orphans marry earlier, maternal orphans marry later (Tambashe and Shapiro 1996)
- Paternal orphans marry earlier (Beegle and Krutikova 2008)
- Maternal and paternal orphans (< age 12) earlier sexual debut (Birdthistle et al. 2008)
- Double orphans higher risk of sexual debut in all four countries (Chae 2013)
- Double and paternal orphans marry earlier only in Uganda (Chae 2013)

Family instability
- Early sexually active (Goldberg 2013a)
- Adolescent parenthood (Goldberg 2013b)
Previous Research on Parent-Child Relationship

Quality/closeness of relationship
- Reduces risky sexual behavior (Dimbuene & Defo 2011)

Parental communication about sexual issues
- Delays sexual debut (Babalola et al. 2005)
- Limited effect on sexual debut (Kumi-Kyereme et al. 2007)
- Increased sexual activity for Uganda girls, no effect 3 other countries (Biddlecom et al. 2009)
- Not significant (Dimbuene & Defo 2011)

Degree of monitoring
- Strong effect on sexual debut (Kumi-Kyereme et al. 2007)
- Delays sexual debut, but no effect on condom use (Biddlecom et al. 2009)
- Only matters in 2-parent households (Dimbuene & Defo 2011)

Parental attitudes about sexual behaviors
- Parental disapproval of pregnancy delays sexual debut (Babalola et al. 2005)

Parental neglect and exploitation
Research Priorities

Better data

Better measures

Better models
Better Data

• Longitudinal studies are essential

• For measures of hh composition, we need to measure 1) hh composition *before* the outcome and 2) *changes* in hh composition over time

• For parent-child relationships, parental monitoring and discussion may be the *consequence* of adolescents’ sexual behaviors.
Better Measures

• Households $\neq$ Families

• Indicators for non-residential family members

• Collection through a family support tree
Family Support Tree

- Mother’s partner (2)
  - Siblings (half/step)
  - Siblings (half/step)
  - Sisters (full)
  - Child
  - Brothers (full)
  - Siblings (half/step)
- Mother
  - Maternal Aunts
  - Maternal Uncles
  - Maternal Grandmother
  - Maternal Grandfather
- Father
  - Paternal Aunts
  - Paternal Uncles
  - Paternal Grandmother
  - Paternal Grandfather
- Father’s partner (1)
  - Father’s partner (2)
- Others
Better Measures

• Households ≠ Families

• Indicators for *non-residential family members*

• Collection through a *family support tree*

• Different types of family support
  – Culturally relevant
  – Include economic support and physical care
Better Models

Family Dynamics

Parent-Child Relationships

Sexual debut
Use of condoms or other contraception
Number of partners
Age of first marriage
Better Models

Family Dynamics

Parent-Child Relationships

Sexual debut
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Better Models

- Family Dynamics
- Parent-Child Relationships
  - Economic and material support
  - Education
  - Migration
  - Self-esteem/life goals

- Sexual debut
  - Use of condoms or other contraception
  - Number of partners
  - Age of first marriage
Final Comments

• Family composition, monitoring, and communication MATTER for girls.
• Implementation of WHO recommendations to engage parents to improve adolescent sexual and reproductive health
• Parents may first need to be convinced of the value of investing in girls
References


