

# Extended Family Talk about Sex & Teen Sexual Behavior

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# TALKING & RISK BEHAVIOR

- Talking about sex with parents can:
  - delay teen sex
  - reduce unprotected sex
  - reduce number of sexual partners
- Less than 50% of teens and parents talk about sex
  - Some parents lack knowledge, skills, and confidence
  - Some teens avoid talking with parents

# TALKING WITH EXTENDED FAMILY

- Close to half of teens talk with extended family about sex
  - e.g. aunts and uncles, siblings, cousins, grandparents, godparents
- Talk with extended family is particularly important after teens become sexually active
  - Teens don't want to disappoint or be judged by parents
  - Parents often focus on delaying sex, not safer sex
- Few studies assess whether extended family talk about sex can support teens' sexual health
  - use a single item to assess sexuality communication
  - don't assess under what conditions talk about sex can be protective

# CONTEXTS OF EXTENDED FAMILY COMMUNICATION

- *Generation: Who* teens talk to about sex
  - Research is mixed as to whether talk with younger generations (e.g. siblings) can protect teens from risky sexual behaviors
- *Teen gender*
  - Research is mixed as to whether parent-teen talk about sex is more protective for boys or girls
  - No studies assess whether teen gender shapes effects of sexuality communication with extended family on teens' sexual behavior

# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Does extended-family sexuality communication (about protection, risks of sex, relational sex) predict teens' delay of sex and safer sex behaviors?

- Hypotheses:

- Communication about protection will negatively predict safer sex behavior
- Communication about risks of sex will positively predict safer sex behavior

2. Does the effect of extended family sexuality communication differ based on the generation of extended family teen talks with (i.e., teens' generation, parents' generation, grandparents' generation)?

- Exploratory

3. Does the effect of extended family sexuality communication differ based on the teen's gender?

- Exploratory

# PARTICIPANTS

- Survey of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders at six urban schools (n=952)
  - 55% female
  - 54% Latino, 17% Black, 16% White, 7% Asian, 4% Middle Eastern, 2% Biracial/Multiracial
  - Mean age = 17
  - Average mothers' education = finished high school
  - 71% of parents were immigrants to the U.S.
  - 35% had vaginal sex

# MEASURES

## ■ Direct communication

- Protection
- Risks of Sex
- Relational sex

## ■ Generation of extended family

- Teens' generation, parents' generation, grandparents' generation

## ■ Teens' sexual behavior

- Vaginal sex
- Condom use
- Number of sexual partners

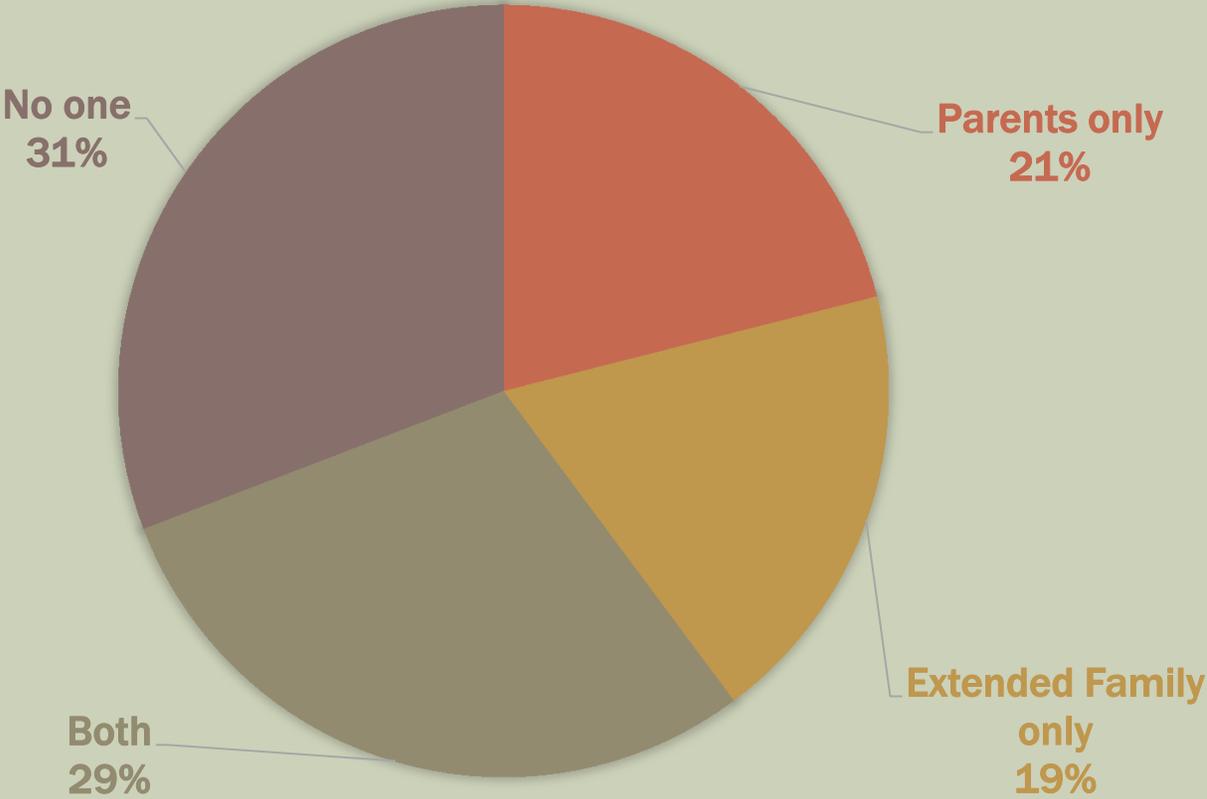
## ■ Demographic controls

- Teens' gender, age, and race/ethnicity
- Two-parent household
- Religiosity
- Mothers' education
- Parent immigration
- Offspring of teen parent
- Parent communication

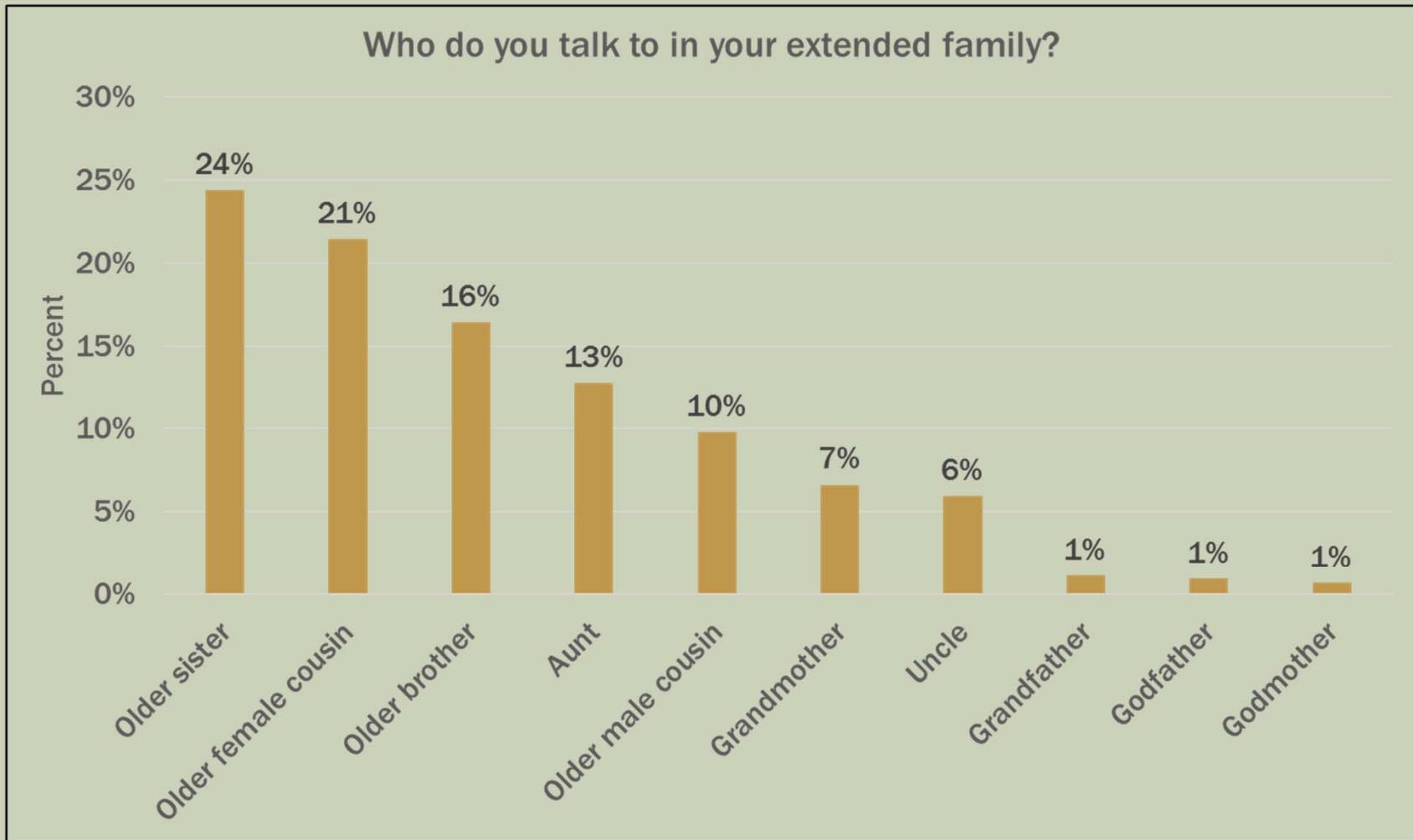
# ANALYSIS

- Structural Equation Models (SEM) used to test the relationships between extended family sexuality communication and sexual behavior outcomes
- Separate SEMs were used to examine whether youth gender and the generation of the extended family member moderated these associations

# WHO TEENS TALKED TO ABOUT SEX



# WHO TEENS TALK TO ABOUT SEX: EXTENDED FAMILY



# RESULTS: RESEARCH QUESTION 1

Does extended-family sexuality communication (about protection, risks of sex, relational sex) predict teens' delay of sex and safer sex behaviors?

- Communication about **protection** predicted *fewer* sexual partners ( $\beta = -.502$ ,  $SE = .164$ )
- Communication about **risks of sex** predicted *more* sexual partners ( $\beta = .656$ ,  $SE = .237$ )
- Models predicting delay of sex and condom use were not significant.

# RESULTS:

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS 2 & 3

Does the effect of extended family sexuality communication differ based on the generation of extended family teen talks with?

Does the effect of extended family sexuality communication differ based on the teen's gender?

- Models examining the moderating roles of youth gender and generation of EF, had no significant findings
  - The link between extended-family communication and teens' sexual behaviors is stable regardless of teen gender or the generation of the extended family member

# DISCUSSION

- For sexually active teens, conversations about safer sex fit with their developmental stage and experience and may encourage them to make thoughtful decisions about their sexual activity
- Extended family may take on a larger role for sexually active teens due to:
  - teens' concerns about parent judgement regarding their sexual behavior
  - openness among extended family to discussing safer sex behaviors

# DISCUSSION

- For sexually active teens, messages about delaying sex
  - do not acknowledge their sexual behavior
  - may suggest that sexual behavior is bad or inappropriate
  - do not provide tools or information to support safer sex behaviors.
- Extended-family sexuality communication may have less of a role for teens who are not yet sexually active
  - may reflect parents' key role in talking with teens about the dangers of sex, which is associated with delayed sex among teens who are not yet sexually active

# DISCUSSION

- Lack of significant moderation findings for generation of extended family suggest that the effects of extended family messages about sex do not depend on the age of the extended family member
  - This runs counter to findings that siblings can promote risky sexual behavior among their younger teen relatives
- Non-significant moderation findings for teen gender indicate that the effects of extended family messages do not differ for teen boys and girls.

# CONCLUSIONS

- Extended family communication may make a difference in teens' sexual behavior, particularly for sexually active teens
- The content of family communication is critical and needs to match teens' development and experiences
- Given the frequency and potential health effects of teens' communication with extended family, these relationships should be recognized in teen health programs, which primarily focus on parents
- Education is needed to support extended family members regarding which types of communication can effectively support the health of sexually active teens