



# **Understanding Adolescent Sexual Activity: An Exploration of Family Communication and Condom Use among Sexually Active Adolescents**

Carrie Pettler, BSW, MPH  
MCH Final Thesis Presentation  
Spring 2011



# Adolescent Sexual Behavior

National YRBS 2007:

- 47.8% high school students ever had sexual intercourse
  
- 38.5% students did not use condom during last sexual intercourse



## A Public Health Concern

- CDC estimates 19 million new STDs/yr
  - 50% among teens 15-19
- Almost 1 out of every 10 teens age 15-19 has had an STD (CDC Wonder, 2010)

# Why Study Family Communication and Condom Use among Adolescents?

- Teens say their parents have the most influence on their decision about sex (Coley 2009)
- Most studies on family communication focus on:
  - Delaying sexual initiation
  - Females

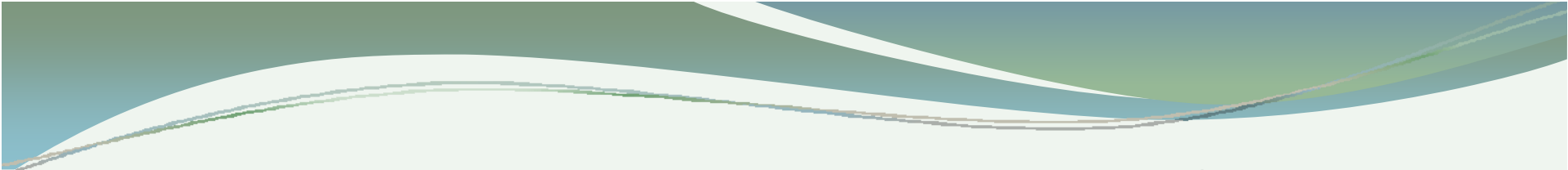
## What This Study Adds

- 1st study [known] to use a weighted, representative sample (M-YRBS)
  - Not a convenience sample
- Massachusetts equal risk of all sexual behaviors with the national sample of students (CDC)
- 1<sup>st</sup> study [known] to consider gender and family communication

## Study Aims

To Explore:

- The relationship between general family communication and condom use at last intercourse
- The relationship between sex-specific family communication and condom use at last intercourse
- Gender differences in the above aims



# **2007 Massachusetts YRBS Modifying Variables**

**Restriction:**  
Sexually Active  
Heterosexual

**Effect Modifier:**  
Gender

## 2007 Massachusetts YRBS Outcome Variable

### ➤ **Condom Use at Last Intercourse**

“The **last time** you had sexual intercourse, did you or your partner use a condom?”

- A. I have never had sexual intercourse
- B. Yes
- C. No



# 2007 Massachusetts YRBS Predictor Variables

## ➤ **General Family Communication**

“Can you talk with at least one of your parents or other adult family members about things that are important to you?”

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Not sure

# 2007 Massachusetts YRBS Predictor Variables

## ➤ **Sex-Specific Family Communication**

“How often did you talk with your parents or other adults in your family about sexuality or ways to prevent HIV infection, other STDs, or pregnancy?”

- A. Not at all
- B. About once during past yr
- C. About once every few mo
- D. About 1/mo    E. >1/mo

# Descriptive Statistics

## Sexually Active, Heterosexual Adolescents

1,126 Students (50% male and female)

- Condom Use: 67% (= for gender)
- General Communication: 80% (= for gender)
- Sex-Specific Comm:
  - 72% NEVER OR ONCE/YR
    - 45% never
    - 27% once/yr
  - Females more likely than males EVER (67% vs 47%)

# Logistic Regression Analysis

- Final model included:
  - age, gender, race/ethnicity, learned about condoms or HIV/AIDS in school, had general communication with adult/teacher in school
- No significant association between general or sex-specific family communication and condom use
- Significant predictors of condom use:
  - less likely if not didn't learn about condoms in school and older age (OR=0.74 and 0.44,  $p < .05$ )

## Conclusions

- Students reported sex-specific family communication rarely/never occurred
  - Explore potential for promoting this
  - Opportunity for guidance among parent/teen dyads
- May be related to limited scope of family communication measures on YRBS
  - Evidence to improve population-based survey measures

# Thesis Committee

➤ **Jane Rees, PhD, MS, RD, Thesis Chair**

Senior Lecturer, Depts of Health Services (Adjunct)  
and Pediatrics

MCH Program and Division of Adolescent Medicine,

➤ **Peggy Hannon, PhD, MPH**

Assistant Professor, Dept of Health Services  
General MPH Program

(Social and Behavioral Science Concentration)

➤ **Leslie Walker, MD, FSAM, FAAP**

Professor, Dept of Pediatrics,

Chief, Division of Adolescent Medicine

Affiliate Faculty, MCH Program



**Thank You.**

**Questions?**

## References

"YRBS-- United States, 2007." CDC. Web. 4/25/10  
<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5704a1.htm>

CDC Wonder. (2010). Sexually transmitted disease morbidity: selected STDs by age, gender, and Race/Ethnicity United States and Puerto Rico 1996 – 2008, 2010, from  
<http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/USTPtrends.pdf>

Coley, R. L., et al. (2009). Fathers' and mothers' parenting predicting and responding to adolescent sexual risk behaviors. *Child Devel*, 80(3), 808-827.