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[TITLE:] CONCORDANCE OF MOTHER, FATHER, AND PREADOLESCENT REPORTS OF SEXUALITY COMMUNICATIONS

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BACKGROUND: Research has shown the positive impact parental communication can have on the reduction of youth sexual risk behavior, particularly when these messages are delivered prior to onset of sexual behaviors. Most studies in the area of parent-child communication have focused on communications between mothers and older youth and have found low to moderate degrees of concordance, with more mothers than adolescents reporting that sexuality communications have occurred. Furthermore, few studies have examined sexual communication in families with preadolescents and the inclusion of reports by fathers has rarely occurred. The current study examines reports of sexuality communications from mothers, fathers, and preadolescents.

METHODS: Baseline computer survey data were collected from 138 African American triads (mother-father-child) enrolled in the Parents Matter program, a multi-site community-based intervention designed to increase effective parent-child communication about sexuality and related issues. Each parent and their preadolescent (aged 9-12) were assessed to gauge reports of communication on 11 topics (alcohol, drugs, puberty, menstruation, reproduction, dating, what sex is, abstinence, condoms, HIV, STDs). Mother's and father's reports were compared to the preadolescent's report of communications with each parent. Reports of communication were analyzed using χ squares.

Four analyses were conducted for each of the 11 topics (44 comparisons total):

1) boys' reports of conversations with mothers versus mothers' reports of conversations with sons;

2) boys' reports of conversations with fathers versus fathers' reports of conversations with sons;

3) girls' reports of conversations with mothers' versus mothers' reports of conversations with daughters; and

4) girls' reports of conversations with fathers versus fathers' reports of conversations with daughters.

RESULTS: Of the 11 topics, 7 (alcohol, drugs, puberty, reproduction, dating, what sex is, and HIV/AIDS) had been discussed by the majority of parent-child dyads. For 39 of the 44 comparisons concordance rates were high (no significant differences were found) between parent and preadolescent report, regardless of gender. Significant differences emerged for 5 of the 44 comparisons: sons versus mothers (abstinence: $\chi^2(1) = 9.00$, $P < .01$); sons versus fathers (dating: $\chi^2(1) = 3.95$; $P < .05$; abstinence: $\chi^2(1) = 8.27$, $P < .01$); daughters versus mothers (HIV/AIDS = 17.02, $P < .01$); and daughters versus fathers (HIV/AIDS = 10.49, $P < .01$) with significant differences reflecting higher parental report in all 5 comparisons.

CONCLUSIONS: The majority of parents are communicating about most sexual topics with their preadolescents. Contrary to previous research with older youth, this study found high concordance between parents' (both mothers and fathers) and preadolescents' reports of sexuality communication. This high level of agreement suggests that preadolescents are receiving the messages their parents report conveying. Thus, preadolescence may be the optimal time for parents to provide primary HIV prevention messages to their youth prior to the initiation of sexual behaviors.



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