

Life Transitions of Young Women and the Influence of Older Sisters: Adolescent Sexual Behavior and Childbearing in South Africa

University of KwaZulu-Natal
School of Development Studies

Crystal Munthree

Agenda

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- Background
- Theoretical Framework
- Study Objectives
- Data
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- Discussion
- Conclusion

Trends in Early Childbearing in South Africa

- Fewer than 3 births per women (SADHS, 1998)
- High levels of early childbearing among adolescent females
 - 35% of the 19 year old girls have given birth

Census data

- Teenage fertility (15-19 years old) has declined by 10% between 1996 (78 per 1000) and 2001 (65 per 1000) (Moultrie and McGrath, 2007)
- Mean age at first birth has **not** increased (18 years)
- Two-thirds of cases, teenage pregnancies are unplanned and unwanted.

Determinants of Age of Childbearing in South Africa

- **Demographic:**

 - Age at sexual debut

 - Race/ethnicity

 - Urban vs. rural

- **Biological:**

 - Physical ability to reproduce (fecundity)

Household Determinants of Early Childbearing

- Mother's education (McDevitt, 1996)
- Father's presence (Timeaus,2007)
- Mothers age at first childbirth (Miller,2004)
- Household socio-economic status (Brent, 2000)

Why Care About Timing of Childbirth?

- **Sexual Reproductive Health:**
 - High maternal mortality among young child bearers
 - Exposure to HIV infection and other STIs
- **Education:**
 - Evidence suggests that although girls are allowed to attend school before and after childbearing, this does not happen due to child-care responsibilities (Kaufman, 1998)

Why Care About Timing of Childbirth?

- **Economic Security/Stability:**
 - Childbearing limits educational attainment of young mothers limiting economic opportunities later in life
- **Well-Being of the Child:**
 - Children of young women tend to have high school drop-out rate, high drug use and generally higher risky behavior (McLanahan and Sandefure, 1989)

Are Siblings' Pregnancy and Childbearing Behaviour Correlated?

- Research suggests that one's siblings outcome or event has a direct effect on other siblings outcome.
- According to East (1996), sisters of teenage mothers:
 - Are younger at sexual debut
 - Have higher rates of adolescent sexual activity and early childbearing.
 - Also possess particular psychosocial characteristics known to be associated with early fertility

Are Siblings' Pregnancy and Childbearing Behaviour Correlated?

Younger Sisters of Teenage Mothers:

- Are highly accepting of early sexual activity
- Perceive especially young ages as appropriate for life course transitions such as marriage and first birth.
- Very pessimistic about school and career options
- Higher than average rates of school truancy, school suspension and cigarette use.

Theoretical Framework

- **Social Learning Theory:**
 - Behaviour is learned in a process of group interaction.
 - Family provides a major social context within which the mechanisms of social learning operate.
 - Older siblings are often admired and emulated by younger siblings because of the greater freedom, privileges and resources they experience.

Evidence from South Africa

- In depth qualitative research done by Preston-Whyte and Zondi (1992) in the area of Durban, Kwa-Mashu and Mpumulanga shows how friends can influence sexual behavior,

“Schoolchildren laugh at you and say that you are old fashioned not to sleep with a boy ...”

(Preston-Whyte, 1990)

- Research conducted by Khoza (1988) most parents specified:
 - Poverty as a result of teenage pregnancy.
 - Poverty experience of despair (Preston-Whyte, 1990)

Study Objectives

- To explore the key **determinants** of sexual and reproductive behavior of girls growing up in the same household, net of usually studied factors
- To determine the influence of older siblings **sexual debut** on resident younger siblings sexual behavior
- To determine if **childbearing** behavior correlated among sisters in the same household

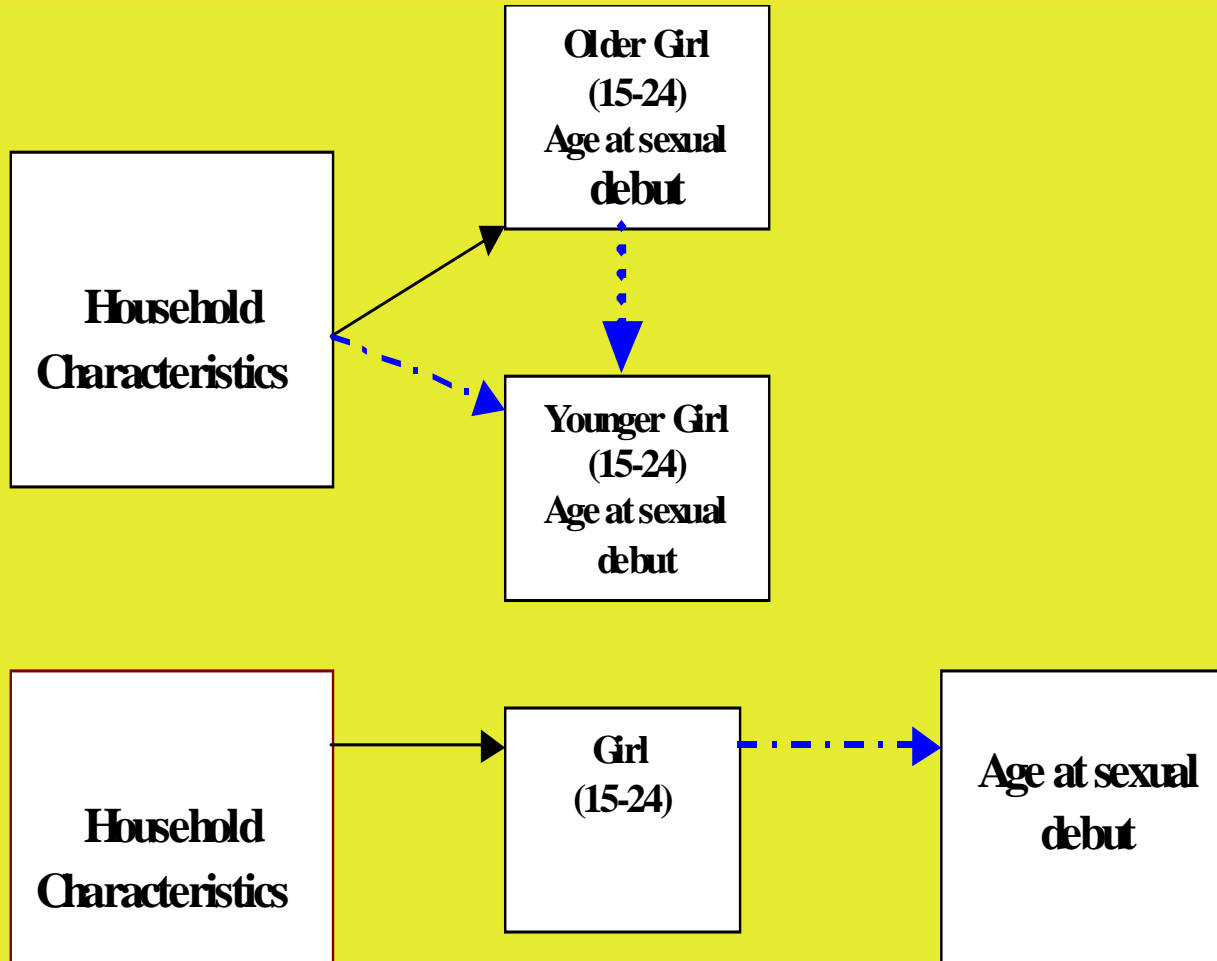
Separating the Effect of Sister's Influence and That of Household/Neighborhood

- For the purpose of this study sisters will be defined as females between the ages 15-24 living in the same household, i.e. non-resident sisters are not captured.
- Studies have shown that there are two factors to consider:
 1. Sexual behavior is reproduced within households. That is, girls in the same household are likely to have correlated sexual behavior because of exposure similar household norms and values
 2. Correlation between sexual behavior of sisters is observed net of common household factors
- It is a challenge to identify this selection effect

Data Source

- South African Demographic and Health Survey (SADHS)
 - 1998
 - Nationally representative survey of households
 - 11,735 women between the ages 15-49
 - 4,407 women 15-24

Analytical Framework



Methods

- **Kaplan Maier Estimator:**

- Non parametric technique that uses the exact survival time (e.g. age at first sex) for each individual in a sample instead of grouping the times into intervals
- A more accurate way to analyze timing of events, i.e. sexual debut and childbearing
- Takes into account censoring: that some girls may not have experienced the event by the time of the interview
- Survivorship probabilities will be presented, which is the probability that a woman may not have started sexual activity at a specific given age between age 15 and 24

Findings from SADHS 1998

% having had sex by age 16 by sibling status

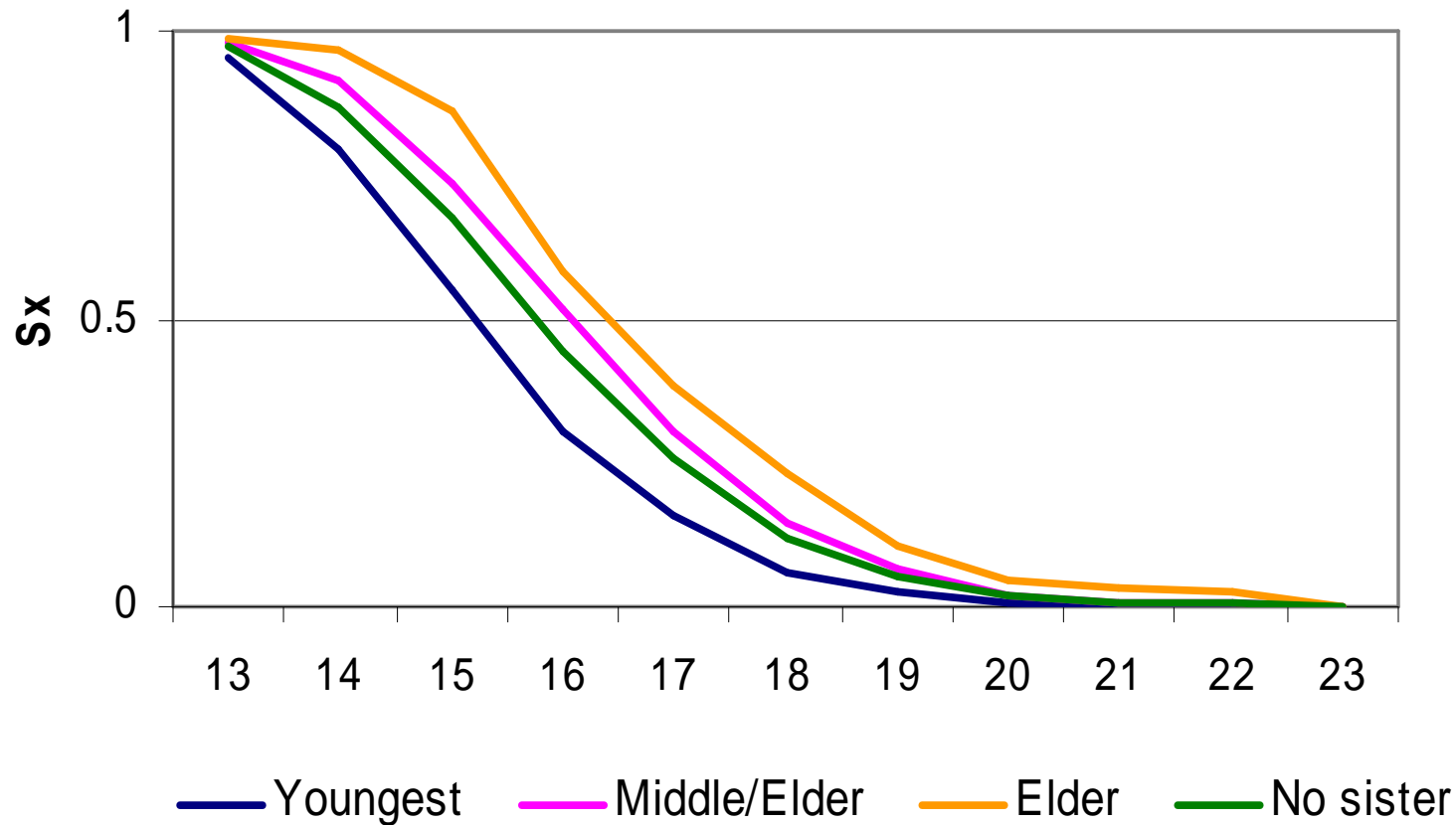


Findings from SADHS 1998 cont.

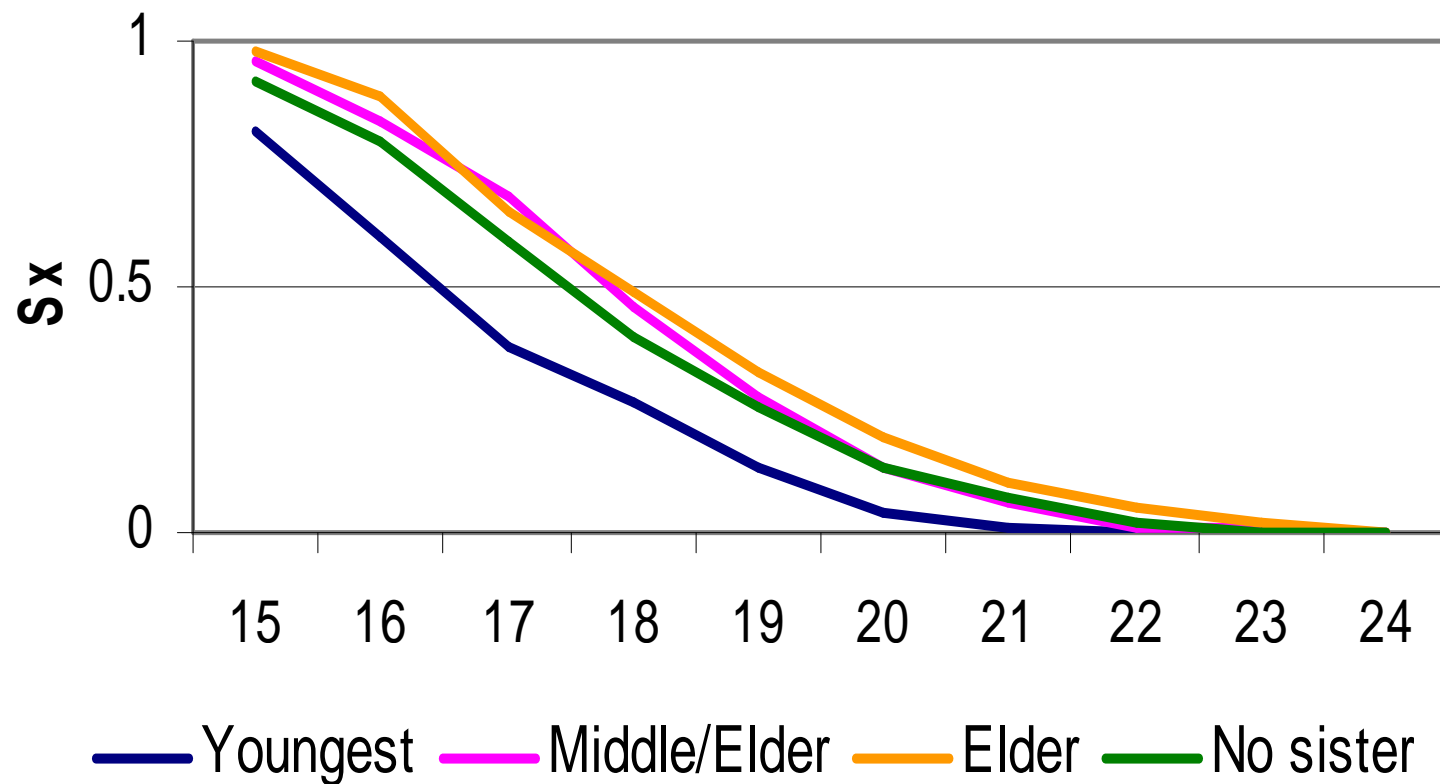
% who had sex by age 18 by sibling status



Age at Sexual Debut By Order of Girl in the Household



Timing of childbearing by order if have more than 1 other girl in the household



Discussion

- Evidence of older sisters effect
- Further research:
 - Explore parametric methods (Cox Regression analysis) to control for other effects
 - Explore the panel nature of CAPS (Cape Area panel Study) , to see effects over time

Conclusion

- Teenage pregnancy complex and varied
- Importance of Delaying First sex
 - Reduce the incidence and prevalence of unwanted pregnancies and STIs
 - Reduce HIV infection
 - Negative physical, social, cultural and economic consequences
- **Sisters:** New Strategic Target population for pregnancy prevention

Famous Sisters: The *Spears Sisters*



The William Sisters



Thank You

Crystal Munthree

cmunthree@hsrc.ac.za