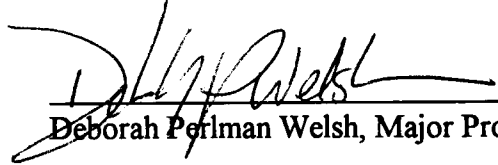
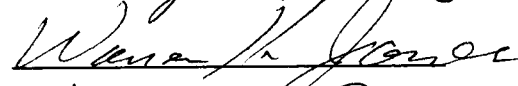
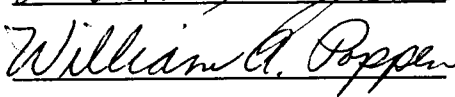


To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Sharon Scales Rostosky entitled "Power, Sex, and Relationship Quality in Late Adolescent Dating Relationships." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Education.


Deborah Perlman Welsh, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:


Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of The Graduate School

**POWER, SEX, AND RELATIONSHIP QUALITY IN LATE ADOLESCENT
DATING RELATIONSHIPS**

**A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville**

Sharon Scales Rostosky

May 1998

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband,

Mr. Michael John Rostosky,

who made it happen,

and

to my mentor and friend,

Dr. Deborah Welsh,

who made it fun.

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ABSTRACT

This project explored the associations between gendered power relations, sexual behaviors, and relationship quality in adolescent dating relationships. Drawing on adolescent developmental theory, social constructionism, and feminist theories of gendered-power relations, this project examined the relationship between the sexual behaviors of adolescent couples, the power dynamics embedded in their verbal interactions, and their individual perceptions of commitment, support, conflict, and depth in the couple relationship.

This study analyzes data from 60 couples between 16 and 20 years of age who had been dating for a minimum of four weeks. Couples were videotaped having two 11-minute conversations. A video-recall procedure was used to obtain couple members' perceptions of power (persuading and conceding behaviors) in their verbal interactions. Additionally, trained coders watched the video-tapes and coded the couples' persuading and conceding behaviors. Finally, the coders categorized each couple as male-dominant, egalitarian, or female-dominant. In addition to the video-recall procedure, the dating partners each completed questionnaires assessing sexual behaviors and relationship qualities including commitment, support, depth, and conflict. Follow-up data were obtained on 45 couples to determine their dating status and the longevity of the relationship.

Results indicated different patterns of associations between sexual behaviors and relationship qualities depending on the power dynamics of the couple. Likewise, in

terms of condom-use, different patterns of correlations were found for couples who were consistent condom users, inconsistent condom users, or engaging in abstinence from sexual intercourse. Logistic regression analyses indicated that when couples perceive less conflict in their relationship, they are more likely to use condoms consistently. Additionally, for female partners, more feelings of entrapment in the relationship increase the likelihood that she will use condoms consistently. Multiple regression analyses indicated that, for males, the amount of sexual activity and commitment to the partner predicted relationship longevity. For females, the amount of sexual activity and increased feelings of entrapment predicted relationship longevity. Results are discussed in terms of gendered power relations and the sexual health of adolescents.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this project is to increase our understanding of adolescent sexual behavior by examining these behaviors in the context of the dating relationship. Previous research on adolescent sexuality has focused on the individual, most often the female, and has emphasized the negative and problematic consequences of adolescent sexual intercourse. Consequently, there is a paucity of studies examining a range of adolescent sexual behaviors occurring in a dyadic relationship. Therefore, this project explores a range of sexual behaviors in addition to sexual intercourse and contraceptive behavior, and locates these sexual behaviors within the context of a dating relationship.

Drawing on adolescent developmental theory, social constructionism, and feminist theories of gendered-power relations, this project explores the relationship between the sexual behaviors of adolescent couples, the power dynamics imbedded in their verbal interactions, and their individual perceptions of commitment, support, conflict, and depth in the couple relationship. Specifically, this project will (1) examine a range of sexual behaviors in addition to sexual intercourse and the contraceptive behaviors of adolescent couples; (2) examine power in the adolescent couples' verbal interactions; (3) examine dating partners' individual perceptions of the qualities of the relationship.

In the remaining sections of this chapter I establish the framework and rationale for this project by first reviewing the theoretical and empirical literature on adolescent sexual behavior using a social constructionist framework. Based on the critique of this literature, I argue for the importance of studying adolescent sexuality within the context of the dating relationship. Following this, I further “contextualize” adolescent sexuality by arguing that the dating relationships in which sexual behaviors are occurring are themselves embedded in socially-constructed gendered power relations, and that these gendered power relationships must also be considered if we are to understand adolescent sexual behavior. Finally, I summarize the critique of the extant literature and delineate the specific hypotheses explored in this study.

Adolescent Sexual Behavior

The medicalization of women’s sexuality across the lifespan has been a subject of analysis and critique by feminist scholars across disciplines such as sociology, psychology, and medicine (e.g., Nathanson, 1991; Rostosky & Travis, 1996; in press; Welsh, Rostosky, & Kawaguchi, in press; Sherwin, 1992; Tiefer, 1995.) Central to this critique is an analysis of power structures in which dominant heterosexist male values are institutionalized and used to control the sexual lives of women (Foucault, 1978). Gerda Lerner (1986) has argued that the social control of female sexuality is the foundation of male dominance.

Applied to adolescent sexuality, institutionalized heterosexist male values have resulted in a very narrow research agenda. The emphasis on sexual intercourse, for instance, indicates a construction of sexuality built on the primacy of the male sexual response. That is, if there is no penis, there is no sexual behavior. As a result, many studies have focused only on sexual intercourse and used global terms such as “sexual activity” and “sexual behavior” to mean coital activity (e.g. DiBlasio & Benda, 1992; Foshee & Bauman, 1992). Despite this phallic preoccupation, adolescent male sexual behavior and sexuality is the “missing link” in adolescent research. Where are the young men who are attached to all this pathological coital activity? Since male sexuality is considered normal and nonproblematic, male sexuality and male sexual behavior are ignored. Others have noted that historically, when “normal” processes are studied, white middle-class males are the subjects (Bleier, 1986; Crawford & Maracek, 1989; Welsh, Rostosky, & Kawaguchi, in press). When pathology or social problems are studied, subordinate groups (women, minorities) are the subjects.

Currently, major federal funding and fervor are being directed toward the problem of adolescent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS. The magnitude of the social problems resulting from unplanned pregnancies and STDs is uncontested. Each year, one million girls become pregnant and \$25 million dollars are spent on providing social, health, and welfare services to families begun by adolescents (Alan Guttmacher, 1994). Currently, one million Americans are infected with HIV, and there is evidence to suggest that the numbers are increasing among

adolescents (Center for Disease Control, 1994). Thus, the potential deleterious effects of adolescent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases continue to fuel a national panic over the sexual behaviors of adolescents, particularly the sexual behaviors of adolescent girls (Irvine, 1994; Wilcox, in press).

As a result of this state of panic, research has focused on: (1) documenting the prevalence of sexual intercourse among various demographic groups of adolescents (Harvey & Spigner, 1995; Hayes, 1987; Hofferth, Kahn, & Baldwin, 1987; Zabin, Smith, Hirsch, & Hardy, 1986; Zelnik & Shah, 1983;); (2) correlating the sexual behaviors of adolescents with a host of individual characteristics such as personal values (Zabin, Hirsch, Smith & Hardy, 1984), religiosity (Forste & Heaton, 1988; Thornton & Camburn, 1989), self esteem (Orr, Wilbrant, Back, Rauch, & Ingersoll, 1989; Winter, 1988), attachment styles (Shaver & Hazen, 1987) and sexual attitudes (Gilbert, Bauman, & Udry, 1986); (3) linking sexual behavior to characteristics of the individual's environment, including socio-economic status (Robbins, Kaplan, & Martin, 1985), parents' marital status (Forste & Heaton, 1988; Miller, Higginson, McCoy, & Olson, 1987; Newcomer & Udry, 1987), family size (Hogan & Kitagawa, 1985), and friends' sexual behaviors (Billy & Udry, 1985; DiBlasio & Benda, 1992); and, (4) providing, perfecting, and promoting "safe sex" technology (diMauro, 1995). In summary, the undeniable health risk potential of some forms of sexual activity has resulted in a limited focus on demographic, technologic, and "pathologic" acts, divorced from the larger social contexts which shape them (diMauro, 1995).

Recognizing the limitations of the biomedical model, some historians, social scientists, and feminist scholars committed to sexuality research have reconceptualized sexuality as a social and relational process rather than isolated acts of the individual (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Gagnon & Simon 1973; Tiefer, 1995; Weeks, 1986). That is, sexual behavior includes roles, identities, thoughts, feelings, behaviors and relationships that involve ethical, spiritual, and moral issues (SIECUS, 1991) constructed within a sociohistorical context (Gagnon and Simon, 1973).

This project begins with the basic assumption that persons are first and foremost relational selves. These selves-in-relationship are situated in a socio-cultural context with prescribed and institutionalized beliefs and “scripts” as to how people ought to interact and relate (Fitch, 1994; Gagnon & Simon, 1973). Therefore, when a young adolescent couple interacts sexually or otherwise, they are not two self-contained individuals, but social actors who re-enact, reinforce, recreate, resist, and re-negotiate prescribed cultural and interpersonal scripts.

From this perspective, adolescent sexuality is not assumed to be inherently pathological or deviant. Instead, it is considered a necessary part of normal, healthy development which unfolds in the relational contexts of family, peers (including dating partners), community, and culture. In this normative framework, sexuality is more than the individual “virginity status” of young women (Kawaguchi, Welsh, Rostosky & Vickerman, in review). Instead, sexual behavior includes the range of sexual

expressions that occur in intimate relationships which are shaped by particular sociocultural contexts.

In conclusion, many of the limitations of the research on adolescent sexuality have arisen from institutionalized heterosexuality and power hierarchies that have constructed female sexuality around the primacy of the male sexual response (Sherwin, 1992) and the apparent need to control the sexual behaviors of women (Foucault, 1978). This study addresses some of the gaps in the empirical literature reviewed above in the following three ways: (1) This project uses a normative framework that recognizes the socially constructed nature of adolescent dating relationships and sexuality; (2) This project examines a range of sexual expressions occurring in a particular relationship between a male and female partner; (3) This project includes male sexual behavior as a legitimate focus of inquiry; and, (4) This project considers the adolescent dating relationship in a larger sociocultural context structured by male dominance and gendered power relationships. The following section reviews the literature on dating relationships as an important context for adolescent development.

The Importance of Dating Relationships

Adolescents spend enormous amounts of time contemplating, initiating, maintaining, and (often) dissolving dating relationships. Over three decades ago, developmental theorists (Erickson, 1968; Sullivan, 1953) acknowledged the

importance of dating relationships to adolescent development. Whereas the social world of childhood is marked by same-gender, collaborative "chumships" (Sullivan, 1953), adolescents are expected to cross gender lines in pursuit of romantic relationships. Often these relationships provide a testing ground where young people experiment with and then establish the patterns of relating that will characterize their interactions in adulthood (Cate & Lloyd, 1988; Kelly, Huston, & Cate, 1985; Loyd & Cate, 1985; Erikson, 1968; Sullivan, 1953). In fact, the ability to form successful romantic relationships is considered a hallmark of the maturation process (Chilman, 1983; 1990; Furman & Wehner, 1994; Montemayor & Gregg, 1994; Whyte, 1990). Young adults, themselves, also report that satisfying intimate relationships are of utmost importance and priority to their sense of meaning and purpose in life (Harlow & Newcomb, 1990).

Despite theoretical agreement that the dating relationships of adolescents are highly significant events in the developmental trajectory, there has been little empirical attention given to them until recently. In the last few years, researchers have validated that adolescent dating relationships are important contexts for social support and intimacy (Burhmester & Furman, 1987; Dowdy & Kliwer, 1996; Furman & Burhmester, 1992; Laursen, 1996). Whereas the influence of the peer context has been documented as highly significant to adolescents' sexual values and behavior, only a few research programs beyond our own (e.g., Rostosky, Welsh, Kawaguchi, & Vickerman, in press; Kawaguchi, Welsh, Rostosky, & Vickerman, in review) have

focused on the dating relationships of adolescents (e.g., Capaldi, Crosby, & Clark, 1997; Furman, 1997).

Furman & Wehner's (1994) theory of adolescent romantic relationships expands on Sullivan's interpersonal theory and attachment theory. In this theory, adolescents bring to their romantic relationships subjective "views" about how to relate, what relationships are, and what they mean. These "views" are constructed over time through socialization processes in the family and the culture. As a result, adolescents' views of their romantic relationships are influenced by parents, friends, previous romantic relationships, gender-role expectations, cultural scripts, values, and beliefs. An adolescent's "view" will, in turn, influence her behaviors and interactions, as well as her interpretations of both her own and her partner's behaviors and interactions.

Others have noted the importance of understanding the differing perceptions of intimate partners. Jessie Bernard (1972), for example, maintained that gender-role socialization results in "his" marriage and "her" marriage. While there is an extensive literature (using both self-report and observational methodologies) on the interactions of marriage partners (see Gray-Little & Burks, 1983 for a review of this literature), only a few studies (Christopher & Cate, 1985; Critelli & Waid, 1980; Hendrick, Hendrick, & Adler, 1988; Sprecher, 1985) have documented the differing perceptions of young dating couples. Virtually all of these studies of young dating couples have been limited to self-report questionnaire data.

Perhaps the most extensive and well known of these surveys is The Boston Couples Study of 231 college-age dating couples that was initiated in 1972, with follow-up data collected two-years and 15 years later (Hill, Rubin, & Peplau, 1976; Hill, Peplau, & Rubin, 1981; Peplau & Gordon, 1985; Peplau, Rubin, & Hill, 1977; Peplau, Hill, & Rubin, 1993; Rubin, Peplau, & Hill, 1981). Findings emphasize the discrepancies in perceptions of relationship qualities, self-disclosure, sexual attitudes and beliefs, and conclusions emphasize the centrality of sex role socialization and power dynamics in dating relationships. This project extends Hill, Rubin, & Peplau's work examining differences in perceptions of relationship qualities and power dynamics by incorporating a behavioral observation component in addition to self-report measures. Though recent research has examined high-risk adolescent couples' interactions in relation to psychological and physical aggression and depressive symptoms (Capaldi, Crosby, & Clark, 1997), no studies to date have incorporated observed ratings of interpersonal power dynamics in the verbal interactions of adolescent couples.

In sum, dating relationships are important contexts for adolescent sexual behavior, yet, only the few studies described above have explicitly studied the dyad. Though studies like the landmark Boston Couples Study in the 1970s have contributed enormously to our understanding of dyads, multi-method research on couples will extend this research beyond that of questionnaire data. Therefore, in addition to collecting questionnaire data, this project uses a video-recall methodology, described

in the next chapter, in which couples provide microanalytic ratings of their own and their partners' behaviors and trained observers provide both global and microanalytic ratings of couples' behaviors. By focusing on the actual behavior of dating couples and the couples' perceptions of their behaviors, this project explores a neglected context of adolescent development and sexual expression.

Gendered Power Relations

Heterosexual dating relationships are, themselves, embedded in a sociocultural context characterized by gendered power relations. Power, in this context, is one partner's ability to influence the thoughts, attitudes or behaviors of the other partner. Though power can not be directly observed, it can be inferred from observed behaviors and the subjective meanings attached to those behaviors (Michener & Suchner, 1972). This subtle use of power, through verbal persuasion or influence strategies, as opposed to more overtly coercive forms, is the construct of interest in this project.

Power in interpersonal relationships has traditionally been studied from the perspective of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; French & Raven, 1959; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). In this framework, power is defined as the ability to direct one's resources, whether material or psychological, toward influencing or altering the behavior of the other (Howard, Blumstein, & Schwartz, 1986). From this perspective, research has focused on decision-making power, status, and the balance of resources.

Some feminists have critiqued the social-exchange perspective as being based on male dominance, control, and market-place values of "power-over" others while ignoring important relational power bases, or "power-to" mobilize others to achieve mutual outcomes (Bakan, 1966; Eisler & Loe, 1983). Other feminists assert that in any relationship, until the subordinate partner has equal access and equal entitlement to the status, resources, legal and institutional supports, and favorable social norms of the dominant partner, inequalities in the relationship remain (Bergstrom, 1996; England, 1997).

Though these groups disagree on whether the power imbalance is best corrected through valuing women's power bases more or through increasing female entitlement and access to male power bases, there is no dispute over the fact that power is central to understanding gender, sexuality, and heterosexual intimate relationships. It is also uncontested that all major institutions in the public and private spheres are characterized by a general and pervasive power imbalance that favors males (Blau, 1964; Buss, 1996; Gillespie, 1971; Kahn, 1984; Lipman-Blumen, 1984).

Feminist theoretical and socio-political analyses have given considerable attention to the social construction of sexuality, gender, and power (Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe, & Thomson, 1990, 1992; Holland, Ramazanoglu, & Scott, 1990; Kitzinger, 1991; McCormick, 1994; Shulman, 1980; Travis & White, in press). Despite abundant rhetoric concerning the centrality of the concept of power to the

social sciences, surprisingly little research directly examines contexts in which power is enacted (Kitzinger, 1991).

Taking a more systemic perspective than traditional social exchange models, power in romantic relationships is understood to be negotiated through dyadic interactions that are embedded in a cultural context (DiIorio, 1989; Meyer, 1991).

Certainly, little is known about the politics of sex at the level of interpersonal interactions between dating partners. Recent indications of "a new conservatism" have led many to speculate that the power imbalance between women and men remains or has even increased in the last decade, despite feminist efforts toward institutional and personal empowerment for women (Faludi, 1991).

On the other hand, egalitarian relationships have become the ideal to which American couples aspire (Scanzoni & Scanzoni, 1988), though they remain an ideal largely unactualized (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Peplau, 1979; Schwartz, 1994). Likewise, adolescents have reported that they reject the traditional patriarchal model of male dominance and fully endorse egalitarian ideals for their intimate relationships (Hatfield, 1983; McCormick & Jessor, 1983; Peplau, 1985). Some findings have suggested that women place a greater value on autonomy and equal power in a relationship than men do, and are more likely to report that their relationship has an egalitarian balance of power (Falbo & Peplau, 1980; Cochran & Peplau, 1985).

Believing in equality as an ideal may affect adolescents' likelihood of portraying themselves as less powerful or more domineering than their romantic

✱ partners. For instance, in describing their dating experiences rather than ideal attitudes toward dating, adolescents often indicate that relationships between young males and females are far from equal, with males still coming out "on top" (Felmlee, 1994). Alternately, some surveys of college students (O'Sullivan & Byers, 1993) and retrospective reports of married females (Whyte, 1990) conclude that adolescents perceive an equal balance of power in their dating relationships. Perhaps late adolescent dating relationships are more egalitarian than the majority of heterosexual marriages, which seem to over benefit men and under benefit women (see review by vanYperen & Buunk, 1994). Since this gender difference has not been replicated in studies of dating individuals (Michaels, Edwards, & Acock, 1984), it may be that power structures or power bases change or impinge on the heterosexual relationship over time as matters of economics, status, and the division of labor become salient within the institution of marriage. Alternately, perhaps heterosexual dating relationships are characterized by power imbalances, despite the lipservice paid to egalitarian values.

Despite blanket endorsements of egalitarian attitudes, empirical evidence suggests that late adolescent heterosexual couples continue to endorse traditional sexual scripts constructed according to gender-stereotyped roles. Specifically, young men still adopt the initiator role and young women still adopt the refusal or 'gatekeeper' role in sexual encounters (Grauerholz & Serpe, 1985; McCormick, 1979; McCormick & Jessor, 1983; Perper & Weis, 1987). Although "veto power" may give

women some control over interactions with male partners, it is an indirect and passive form of power (Falbo & Peplau, 1980) which diminishes self-esteem and prevents women from taking direct responsibility for their own sexual behaviors and expressions, while encouraging them to view themselves as sex objects in the encounter (Lips, 1981).

Alluding to this social construction in which power and conflict are structured into intimate interactions, Lloyd (1991) suggests a conceptual model she calls the "dark side of courtship" which posits that the predominant theme for males in romantic relationships is "staying in control" while the predominant theme for females is "dependence on the relationship". These themes, which pervade notions of romantic love, provide a mechanism for maintaining dyadic power imbalances (Cate & Lloyd, 1992).

Other findings lend more support to the notion that traditional sexual scripts prevail in heterosexual relationships. Whitley (1988), for instance, found that young men and women continue to cite different motivations for having sexual intercourse, with men citing physical gratification and women citing emotional gratification/expression. In contrast to these findings, however, some researchers have found that physical pleasure is just as important to young women as it is to young men (Kalof, 1995; Thompson, 1990; 1995; Tolman, 1991; 1994) and, conversely, that emotional gratification is just as important to young men as it is to young women (Cochran & Peplau, 1985; Hendrick & Hendrick, 1994; Kalof, 1995). Other

qualitative studies have documented that couples define equality according to relationship characteristics such as equal commitment and support, rather than by the equitable distribution of resources (see review by Steil, 1994).

Similarly, surveys have found correlations between relationship qualities such as commitment and dependency and perceived egalitarianism (Cook & Emerson, 1978; Grauerholz, 1987). For example, Grauerholz (1987) studied college student's dating relationships and concluded that when trust, commitment and dependency are high, individuals are more likely to perceive their dating relationship as egalitarian. Likewise, perceiving one's dating relationship as egalitarian fosters the growth of trust, commitment and dependency.

In contrast to these findings, others have found that power is inversely related to relationships qualities such as commitment and dependency. That is, the more committed or more dependent partner is the less powerful partner in the dating relationship. Sprecher (1985), for example, found no significant differences in perceived power in her sample of 50 dating couples; however, she found evidence of different power bases for male and female partners. Specifically, females seemed to gain power through the control of emotional resources (i.e. love) in the relationship and males seemed to gain power by having the potential to attract alternate partners. Likewise, Kalof (1995) tested a model to predict sexual activity from power and dependency in 288 adolescents between 13 and 19 years of age. She found no direct relationships between power and sexual activity, but did find indirect effects for the

males. She concluded that dependency, defined in this study as the need for emotional and physical closeness through sex and the need for self-disclosure and intimacy, to be more of a determinant of male sexual behavior than female sexual behavior. These findings support Cancian's (1987) theory regarding male dependency on the emotional support of females. In her analysis, however, the devaluation of female emotional work results in male dependency remaining covert and women's dependency on male resources remaining overt.

In summary, this study examines the interactions of young adolescent couples engaged in conversation to understand associations between perceived power, defined as attempts to persuade, and the sexual behaviors of the couple. Additionally, the global dominance exhibited in the conversations is determined by trained observers. Finally, because of the likelihood that power may be related to other interpersonal aspects of the relationship, this project examines couples' perceptions of the commitment, supportiveness, and depth in their dating relationship for a more comprehensive understanding of the negotiation and balance of power.

Summary and Research Hypotheses

The preceding review highlights certain gaps in the research on adolescent sexuality that primarily stem from the dominance of the biomedical model and the dominance of a political agenda bent on controlling female sexual behaviors. These two primary influences on research have resulted in studies that focus on prevalence

rates of sexual intercourse and sexually-transmitted diseases among young women.

Few studies have examined sexuality as a normative part of the development of both young men and young women. Likewise, few studies have examined sexual behavior in the relational context in which it most often occurs, that of the dating couple.

In summary, this project addresses the aforementioned gaps in the literature by focusing on the couple as the unit of analysis, by considering the impact of the dating relationship on both male and female sexual behavior, by examining a wider continuum of sexual expression that includes affectionate as well as "potential reproductive events", and by attending to the wider sociocultural process of gendered power relations within which adolescent couples negotiate their relationships.

Therefore, this project assumes that adolescent sexuality is an aspect of normal adolescent biopsychosocial development which is often enacted in dyadic relationships. These dyadic relationships themselves are, in turn, strongly impacted by social constructions of gendered power relations, which result in differing perceptions of the relationship. With this conceptual foundation, this project explores the associations between the sexual behaviors, power dynamics, and relationships qualities of 61 late adolescent couples. Building on findings presented in the preceding review of the empirical literature, I hypothesized that: (1) male and female dating partners would differ in their perceptions of the power dynamics, commitment, support, conflict, and depth of their relationship; (2) the power dynamics in the verbal interactions would moderate the relationship between the sexual behaviors of the

couples and their perceptions of the relationship qualities; (3) Dating partners' perceptions of the power dynamics and relationship qualities of their relationship would predict their contraceptive behaviors; and (4) Couples who are still dating one year later would differ from those who break up in terms of their sexual behaviors, power dynamics, and relationship qualities.

CHAPTER 2

METHODS

This project uses a cross-sectional, correlational design to explore the relationship qualities and sexual behaviors of late adolescent dating couples. The following sections describe the study participants, procedures, and measures that were used in the project.

Participants

Heterosexual adolescent couples between 16 and 20 years of age who had been dating for a minimum of four weeks were located through the following two means. First, the names of high school students and recent high school graduates were obtained from yearbooks and lists of graduates published in local newspapers. Randomly selected individuals were then contacted by telephone and asked if they would be interested in participating in a study on dating relationships. Those who expressed interest were asked if they were currently dating anyone. If they indicated that they were not, we thanked them for their interest and told them this particular study was about young couples. Then we asked if we might call them again regarding future research studies. If they said they were dating someone, we asked them if we could mail two letters and consent forms (one for each member of the couple) which described the nature and purpose of the study. We also asked if either partner was

under the age of 18 so that we could include a parental consent form if necessary. After couples had time to receive and read the information (usually about 3-4 days), they were called to see if they had any questions about the study or the printed information. If they were interested in participating, an appointment was made at their convenience and directions were given to our lab on the university campus. Thirty-seven couples agreed to participate and were each paid 60 dollars to compensate them for their time.

Another 24 couples were located through the second strategy. Introductory psychology classes at the university were given a brief description of the study and invited to participate for extra-credit. A sign up sheet was posted in a central location in the psychology building for those who were interested in receiving more information by phone. Students who signed this list were contacted by phone and told about the nature and purpose of the study. They were also given a chance to ask any questions they had about the study. If their dating partner was under 18 years of age, a letter and parental consent form were mailed. Couples who were interested in participating scheduled an appointment at their convenience and were provided directions to our research lab.

This project analyzes portions of the data collected from the combined sample of 61 late adolescent couples. The mean age for the sample was 18.3 years. The length of time that couples had been dating each other ranged from four weeks to five years. The median length of relationship, however, was eight months. Most of the

participants reported that they lived with their parents (72% of the females, 57% of the males) or with same-gender friends (18% of the females, 38% of the males). Sixty-two percent of the females and 70% of the males reported that their biological parents were currently married to each other. An additional 33% of the females and 21% of the males reported that their biological parents were divorced. Although many of the participants held part-time jobs (49% of the females; 28% of the males), most indicated that they were enrolled in either high school or college (80% of the females, 74% of the males). The couples in the sample were primarily European-American (90% of the females, 93% of the males), with the remainder of the sample comprised of approximately 2-3% each of Native American, Asian, African-American, and Hispanic participants. Over half of the participants (62% of the females, 59% of the males) listed their religious affiliation as Protestant.

Procedure and Measures

Each couple was scheduled to meet two members of our research team for one or two sessions, depending on the couples' schedules and preferences. A total time commitment of 4 ½ to 5 hours was required from each couple to complete the data collection. Couples came to our research lab (a suite of three rooms) at the university. After greeting the couple and making introductions, we described again the purpose of the research, the procedures that would be used, and the confidential and voluntary

nature of the research. Any questions that the couple had were answered and they were given consent forms to read and sign.

Next, the couple was taken to the video-interaction room. This room was furnished with comfortable chairs positioned to resemble a living room to create an atmosphere designed to make participants comfortable and relaxed. The walls behind the chairs were painted a deep grey color and halogen lamps were situated to optimize the visual video image. A video camera was unobtrusively positioned in the opposite corner to record the couples' conversations. This project used an observational/video-recall procedure adapted from work with married couples (Gottman, 1979; Gottman & Levenson, 1985; Levenson & Gottman, 1983; 1985; Margolin, Hattem, John & Yost, 1985) and parent-child dyads (Callan & Noller, 1986; Powers, Welsh, & Wright, 1994; Sanders & Dadds, 1992; Sanders, Dadds, Johnston & Cash, 1992).

Extending this procedure to adolescent dating couples, we chose topics that would elicit engaging conversation. Couples were given the (written and verbal) instructions for the first 11-minute conversation. For this first conversation, couples were asked to imagine that it was 20 years in the future and they were married to each other and had adolescent children of their own. They were instructed to discuss how they would parent their own adolescent children, what they would like their relationship with each other to be like, and how their imagined family would be similar or different to their own families of origin. After answering any questions they had,

the research staff started the videotaping and then left the room while the couple discussed the topic. When 9 minutes had lapsed, a staff member knocked on the door of the video-interaction room to signal to the couple that they had two minutes left to wind up their conversation. At the end of the 11th minute, the staff member knocked once more and entered the room to give the instructions for the second conversation.

For the second conversation, the couples were asked to discuss a hypothetical dilemma developed and used by others (Gilligan, Kohlberg, Lerner, & Belenky, 1971) and modified only slightly to fit within contemporary adolescent language norms. The dilemma involved a high school female whose parents were out of town for the weekend. While she was home alone, her boyfriend unexpectedly visited. A series of questions asked about how they should behave under a variety of circumstances. For example, they are asked to discuss if it would be right or wrong for the hypothetical couple to have sexual intercourse and what would make it right or wrong. They are also asked to discuss what the couple should do if the parents return home unexpectedly and find that the couple has had sex. This conversation was also videotaped and timed in the same manner as the first.

Once both conversation tasks had been recorded, one member of the couple left the video-interaction room and went to another room to be interviewed and to complete a packet of questionnaires. To circumvent order effects, we alternated asking the male or female partner to complete the questionnaires first. Meanwhile, the other partner remained in the video-interaction room to view the taped conversations.

On the first viewing of the conversations, the participant rated him or herself for each 25-second segment of conversation according to the six dimensions (support, conflict, humor, frustration, persuading, being persuaded). That is, at the end of each 25-second segment of videotaped conversation, the computer was programmed to automatically pause the tape and the six dimensions of behavior would appear, one at a time, on the computer screen. The participant then rated the extent to which he or she engaged in each behavior using a five-point likert-type scale ranging from "not at all" to "very much so." (See copy of rating scale in Appendix.) Data were immediately electronically entered into the computer by the participant to avoid error associated with experimenter data entry.

After participants finished rating themselves on all six dimensions for that segment of tape, the computer automatically played the next 25-second segment. This same procedure continued for the 36 segments corresponding to the middle 7 ½ minutes of the two conversations.¹ After completing the 36 segments, participants then did the entire procedure a second time, this time rating the extent to which they perceived that their partner displayed each of the 6 behaviors in each of the 36 segments. Thus, a total of 15 minutes of conversation was rated two times by each participant. Participants' ratings for themselves and for their partner were separately aggregated and a mean score was calculated for each of the six behaviors.

¹The middle 36 segments of conversation were selected for rating to allow for some conversational "warm-up" time as the couple settled into the task.

In sum, at the end of the data collection period, both couples had completed all questionnaires and interviews and rated their own and their partner's behaviors in the conversations. At no time during data collection were partners privy to each other's answers on any of the instruments. Because of the length of data collection, we supplied snacks and sodas for the couples to enjoy and to keep them alert, motivated, and attentive as they completed the questionnaires, interviews, and video-recall procedures.

At the end of data collection, couples rejoined each other and were debriefed about the study. They received letters of appreciation, monetary or extra-credit compensation, and were invited to leave permanent addresses if they wished to receive a summary of the results or if they would be willing to be contacted in the future. This project used data from the videotaped interaction ratings and from five of the questionnaires (See Appendix.) Each of these measures are described in detail below.

Demographic Form

This 23 item questionnaire was designed for use in the larger research project. It elicits basic demographic information such as gender, age, ethnicity, education, employment and religion.

Power

Interpersonal power was measured from the perspectives of the participants and from the perspective of the trained observers. Ratings from each couple member and

the trained observers of persuading/giving-in behaviors in the video-recall procedure were used as the data. That is, in addition to each dating partner rating him or herself and his or her partner, two female graduate student coders (aged 25 and 44) also rated the videotapes using the same codes and following the same technical procedure as the couples (except that they watched the conversation once before coding it rather than participating in the conversation as the couples did). The coders spent 10 hours a week for a total of four months learning the coding system for all of the six dimensions (see Appendix for the coding instructions for the dimensions used in this study.) At the conclusion of this training, they obtained adequate levels of inter-rater reliability. Intra-class correlation coefficients were .85 for trying to persuade and .51 for being persuaded (conceding).² Tapes were coded by the observers in random order, using a computer-generated random numbers table.

Finally, after the third viewing of the tape, the two trained coders independently completed a rating sheet that assessed the coders' perceptions of the dominance, support, and connectedness of the couple (see Appendix.) In this project, the dominance codes were used as an indicator of the power dynamics in the interaction, based on Pearson's (1985) review of interaction research which documents that persons of higher status in an interaction (most often males), tend to talk, interrupt, and overlap more frequently than persons of lower status (most often females).

² Being persuaded had an extremely low frequency of occurrence, which markedly reduced the likelihood of achieving high levels of reliability.

Therefore, for each couple, the trained coders used the relative amount of 'talk-time' for each partner to categorize the dyad as either male-dominant, female-dominant, or egalitarian in their interaction style. Thirty percent of the tapes were coded by both coders to establish the inter-rater reliability. The coders reached intercoder reliability of .74 for the dominance dimension using Cohen's (1960) kappa, indicating a high rate of agreement between coders.

Sexual Behaviors

The Sexual Behaviors Inventory (SBI) consisted of 51 items and was based on the 43-item behavioral subscale of the Sex Knowledge and Attitude Test for Adolescents (SKAT-A; Lief, Fullard, & Devlin, 1990). Included were questions about pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, dating behavior, and contraceptive use. The formats of scale items varied from frequency ranges to fill-in the blank and checklists. Since the SKAT-A inquires about sexual behaviors in general, several questions directly assessing the sexual behaviors in the current dating relationship were added for the purposes of this project. Thus, each participant indicated the behaviors that they and their dating partner had engaged in during the past month. The behaviors included holding hands, kissing, fondling with clothes on, fondling with clothes off, oral sex, and genital intercourse. Each behavior was reported on a six point likert scale ranging from never to 51 or more time during the past month. In addition to considering these behaviors separately, an overall weighted and summed sexual activity score was computed by first multiplying each item response on the likert scale

by a weight (1-6) for each of the six behaviors from holding hands to intercourse.³ These products were then summed across the six behaviors to produce an overall sexual activity score for each participant with a possible range of 21 to 126.

Relationship Qualities

Relationship qualities assessed in this project included the support, depth, conflict, and commitment that individuals perceived in their dating relationship. The first three constructs were assessed by the Quality of Relationships Inventory (QRI; Pierce, Sarason, & Sarason, 1991). This 25 item questionnaire inquired about perceptions of a specific relationship in the individual's life. Each item was answered on a four point likert scale ranging from "not at all" to "very much." For this project, participants completed the items in reference to their current dating partner.

The support subscale of the QRI measured the extent to which the individual can rely on his or her dating partner for help in various circumstances. Sample items included, "To what extent could you count on this person for advice about problems?" and "If you wanted to go out and do something this evening, how confident are you that this person would be willing to do something with you?" Reliability (Cohen's alpha) for the sample was .80 for the females and .82 for the males.

³ By weighting the sexual behaviors in this manner, we broadened the notion of sexuality without sacrificing the cultural significance placed on sexual intercourse (see Kawaguchi, Welsh, Rostosky, & Vickerman, in review).

The depth dimension of the QRI assessed the degree to which individuals believe that the relationship is of value. Sample items from this subscale included, “How significant is this relationship in your life?” and “How much do you depend on this person?” Reliability (Cohen’s alpha) measured .85 for both males and females in this sample.

Finally, the conflict subscale contained items that assessed feelings of anger or ambivalence toward the dating partner. Subscale items included, “How upset does this person sometimes make you feel?” and “How much would you like this person to change?” Reliability (Cohen’s alpha) for the females was .92 and .87 for the males in this sample.

Commitment was assessed using the 45 item Dimensions of Commitment Inventory (DCI; Adams & Jones, 1997) adapted for use with unmarried, romantically-involved couples. Individuals answered each item on a 5 point likert scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” The original DCI assessed the degree to which an individual intended to maintain his or her marriage. This intention is manifested in three primary ways: (a) as an individual’s devotion to and satisfaction with his/her spouse; (b) an individual’s belief in the sanctity of marriage and a personal sense of obligation to honor his/her marriage vows; and (c) an individual’s desire to avoid financial or social penalties that might result from divorce or separation.

Because the DCI was designed to assess commitment within the context of marriage, it was necessary to reword several of the items so that the measure was

more appropriate for use with an adolescent sample. The most pervasive change involved substituting the terms “relationship” for “marriage,” “partner” for “spouse,” and “break-up” or “split-up” for “divorce.” Reflecting these changes, two of the three DCI subscales were renamed. Thus, Commitment to Spouse and Commitment to Marriage became Commitment to Partner and Commitment to Relationship. The name of the third subscale, Feelings of Entrapment, remained unchanged. Each of these 15 item subscales are further described below.

The Commitment to Partner subscale measured the extent that an individual is satisfied with and devoted to his or her romantic partner. Sample items from this scale included, “When I imagine what my life will be like in the future, I always see my partner standing next to me,” and “I’m dedicated to making my relationship as fulfilling as it can be.” The Commitment to Relationship subscale measured the extent to which an individual feels a sense of moral obligation or duty to maintain the relationship. Sample items from this subscale included, “I believe that partners should remain devoted to one another in good times and bad, “ and “A romantic relationship should be protected at all costs.” Finally, The Feelings of Entrapment subscale assessed the individual perception that one must remain in the relationship because of the negative ramifications involved if the relationship were dissolved. Items from this subscale included, “I don’t think I could handle the shame of breaking up,” and “My friends would disapprove if I ended my relationship.”

Reliability analyses were performed on the adapted version of each of the three subscales of the DCI. The Commitment to Partner scale showed solid evidence of internal consistency (coefficient $\alpha = .89$, with all 15 original items yielding a corrected item-total correlation greater than .30). These values were quite similar to those reported by Adams and Jones (1997) for the original version of this scale. The Commitment to Relationship scale yielded a reliability coefficient of .80, which was slightly lower than the value of .86 found for the original version.⁴ Finally, the Feelings of Entrapment scale yielded an α of .82, and four items were found with item-total correlations under .30. Thus, although it is apparent that some items lost a degree of information value as a result of rewriting, the three subscales nevertheless showed quite acceptable levels of reliability.

One-year Follow-up

One year after the completion of data collection, participants who had given permission to be contacted and had left a permanent address were mailed a newsletter summarizing the general findings from the study. Included in this mailing was a 5-item follow-up questionnaire and a consent form to be signed by the participant. Follow-up calls were made to participants who did not return the questionnaire to make sure that

⁴It may be that this scale lost some of its coherence because the moral sanctions around dating relationships are much less elaborated and articulated than those around marriage.

they had received the information. Data on 75% of the couples were collected and used to calculate the status and longevity of the relationship.

As data were collected, they were entered into a database created with the SPSS for Windows Statistical package, Release 7.0. Each dating couple constituted one case. Two research assistants entered all data into the database and two other research assistants checked all printouts for data entry errors. Two members of the graduate research team corrected any errors that were found by the data reviewers. All research team members that collected and handled data in any way were trained in procedures for guarding the confidentiality of research participants. Data were stored in file cabinets in the locked laboratory and were solely identifiable by assigned number. Signed consent forms were kept separately, also in locked files. Once all data had been entered and checked, preliminary and primary analyses were conducted. These are described in the chapter to follow.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

Demographic Information

Couples in this sample had dated between four weeks and five years with a median length of eight months. Most participants (72% of females and 57% of males) lived with their parents. 82% of the females and 78% of the males were currently attending school. 55% of the females and 43% of the males were also working part-time or more. 62% of the females and 70% of the males reported that their biological parents were still married to each other. 62% of the females and 70% of the males described their religious affiliation as Protestant. 56% of the females and 61% of the males described their current home setting as 'suburban,' rather than rural or urban, each of which received endorsements from approximately 20% of the females and males. The sample is over 90% European-American with the remainder being comprised of approximately 2-3% each Native American, Asian American, African American, and Hispanic individuals.

Sexual Behaviors

There were no significant differences in partners' reports of their sexual behaviors with each other in the previous four weeks (See Table 1¹ for frequencies for each gender). In other words, without conferring or knowing ahead of time that these questions would be asked, partners' reports were consistent regarding the kind and frequency of sexual behaviors that they had engaged in.

These couples reported that they held hands and kissed quite frequently, as much as 50 times on average in the past month. They fondled with their clothes on over 15 times on average in the past month, and with their clothes off over six times. They engaged in oral sex and genital intercourse, on average, more than three times in the past month. Within this sample there are some diverse subgroups, however. For example, 33% of these couples reported that they had not had sexual intercourse in the past month. On the other end of the spectrum, about 20% reported having intercourse at a rate of four times or more a week. Of the 37 couples having sexual intercourse with each other, the median frequency was 2-4 times per week. Over 80% of both male and female participants indicated that they were comfortable initiating and refusing sexual activity with their partner and comfortable talking with their partner about sexual issues.

In terms of their sexual histories, females most frequently reported that they learned about sex from friends (33%) or parents (30%). Males reported that they

¹ All tables are located in the appendix.

learned about sex from friends (25%), dating partners (20%), parents (18%), siblings (11%) or the media (8%). A very small percentage thought that they knew less about sex than their friends. Though the majority of both genders felt that they were as knowledgeable as their friends, 23% of the females and 38% of the males thought they knew more about sex than their peers.

Two-thirds of the females reported that they began dating at age 14 or 15. There was more age range in the males. Approximately one-fourth of the males began dating at age 12-13, one-fourth began dating at 14-15, and another one-fourth began dating at age 16-17. The other one-fourth of the sample either began dating before age 13 or after age 17. Eighty-two percent of the males and 77% of the females reported that dating was moderately to extremely important to them. The median and modal age for both males and females for first sexual intercourse was between age 15 and 16. Twenty-five percent (n=15) of the females and 18% (n=10) of the males reported that they had never had sexual intercourse with anyone. Most often, these participants indicated that "religious beliefs" and "not being ready" were the reasons they chose not to engage in sexual intercourse. There were nine couples in the study in which both partners had never engaged in sexual intercourse. In six more cases, the male had sexual intercourse with a previous partner, but the female had never had sex; in one case, the female partner had sexual intercourse with a previous partner, but the male had not. Each of these 16 couples reported that they were not having sex with each other. Thirty-six percent (n=22) of the females and 31% (n=19) of the males

reported that they had sexual intercourse with only one partner. Fifteen of these females and 16 of the males reported that their first partner was their current dating partner. Another 36% of males and females reported having between 2 and 7 previous partners. Over 90% of the participants reported that their first sex partner was a previous or current boyfriend or girlfriend.

When asked why they had sex the first time, the most frequent answer for both males (38%) and females (37%) was, "I was in love." The second most frequent answer was, "I was ready" (females, 20%; males, 19%).

Contraceptive Behavior

Of those who have had sexual intercourse in the past, only 15% of the females and 16% of the males reported that they use condoms consistently. The majority of both females (61%) and males (67%) reported that they do not use condoms every time they have sex. Though they do not use condoms consistently, 60% of the females and 52% of the males reported that they do use some form of birth control every time they have sex. When asked to report all of the methods of contraceptives they had used during the previous month, 36% reported they had used only birth control pills; 34% reported they had only used condoms; 12% reported that they had only used the "withdrawal" method. The remainder reported some combination. When asked why they don't use contraception consistently, the participants most frequently listed "not having it" with them (females, 11%; males 20%) and "not liking to use it" (females, 13%; males, 11%). Finally, of the entire sample of participants,

53% of the females and 14% of the males reported that they had visited a health care clinic at some time for issues related to sexual activity.

To determine the number of couples in our sample who agreed or disagreed in their reports of contraceptive behavior, we performed Wilcoxon Signed Ranks tests. Thirty-three of the 45 couples, who had engaged in sexual intercourse with each other and/or a previous partner, independently agreed on their contraceptive behavior. In nine cases, the female reported that she and her partner always used birth control and the male partner reported that they did not. In three cases, the male reported that he and his partner always used birth control and the female partner reported that they did not. For reported condom use, 36 of the 45 sexually active couples agreed. In 5 cases, the female reported that she and her partner always used condoms and the male reported that they did not. In 4 cases, the male reported that they always used condoms and the female reported that they did not.

Power in Verbal Interactions

Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations for the male, female, and observer perceptions of power in the two video-taped conversations. Paired t-tests revealed that the dating partners' mean ratings were significantly higher for the second conversation than the first. That is, both male ($t(58)=-3.34$, $p=.001$) and female ($t(58)=-4.00$, $p=.001$) dating partners perceived more persuading behaviors in themselves in the conversation about the sexual dilemma than in the conversation about how they'd like to parent their own adolescents. Likewise, both male ($t(58)=-$

2.29, $p=.02$) and female ($t(60)=-2.68$, $p=.01$) dating partners rated significantly more persuading behaviors in their partner in the second conversation.

For giving-in behavior, female dating partners rated themselves as more conceding in the conversation about the sexual dilemma ($t(60)=-2.71$, $p=.01$) but there were no significant differences in male partners' ratings of giving-in behaviors between the two conversations ($t(58)=1.09$, $p=.28$). Finally, females rated their male partners as giving-in more during the second conversation about the sexual dilemma ($t(60)=-2.15$, $p=.04$). Likewise, males perceived significantly more conceding behavior in their female partners during the second conversation ($t(58)=-2.49$, $p=.02$).

Observers coded significantly more persuading behavior for both male partners ($t(58)=4.86$, $p=.001$) and female partners ($t(58)=1.83$, $p=.07$) in the first conversation about parenting adolescents. There were no significant differences in observer ratings of giving-in behaviors between conversations for either male ($t(58)=-.49$, $p=.62$) or female ($t(58)=1.13$, $p=.26$) partners.

There were also gender differences in the mean ratings of persuading and conceding behaviors. Aggregating across both conversations, female partners rated themselves as being both more persuasive ($t(58)=1.96$, $p=.05$) and more conceding ($t(58)=-2.28$, $p=.03$) in their interactions than male partners rated themselves. Neither female partners ($t(59)=-1.60$, $p=.11$) nor male partners ($t(57)=1.01$, $p=.32$) saw themselves as significantly more persuasive than their partners. However, female partners perceived themselves as giving in significantly more than their male partners

give in ($t(58)=-2.28$, $p=.03$), though male partners did not perceive differences in giving-in behaviors ($t(57)=.53$, $p=.60$). Both male ($t(58)=-5.19$, $p=.001$) and female partners ($t(59)=-5.53$, $p=.001$) perceived themselves to do more persuading than conceding.

One-way analyses of variance (ANOVAS) were performed to determine differences in perceptions of power (persuading/conceding behaviors) in the male partners' interactions. In conversation one, significant differences were found for persuading ($F(2, 177)=15.00$, $p<.001$) and conceding ($F(2, 177)=30.02$, $p<.001$). Significant differences were likewise found in conversation two for persuading ($F(2, 176)=4.84$, $p<.01$) and conceding ($F(2, 174)=16.19$, $p<.001$).

As a follow-up to the significant analyses of variance, multiple comparisons were performed to determine the pattern of differences. In conversation one, when rating the males' efforts to persuade their partners, males rated themselves significantly lower than either the trained observers or their girlfriends rated them. The girlfriends rated their boyfriends lower on persuading than the observers did. In the second conversation, observers and girlfriends rated the males significantly higher on persuading than the males rated themselves. There were no significant differences between the girlfriends' and the observers' rating of the males in the second conversation.

In the first conversation, females perceived that males gave in to them more than the males perceived they gave in to their girlfriends. In the second conversation,

however, there were no significant differences between dating partners' perceptions of the males' conceding behaviors. Observers perceived few conceding behaviors in the male partners in either the first or second conversation.

One-way analyses of variance were also performed to determine differences in perceptions of the females' persuading/conceding behaviors for each conversation. In the first conversation, significant ANOVAS were found for trying to persuade ($F(2, 176)=8.62, p<.001$) and conceding ($F(2, 176)=14.98, p<.001$). Likewise, for the second conversation, significant ANOVAS were found for trying to persuade ($F(2, 176)=2.98, p<.05$) and for conceding ($F(2, 176)=23.87, p<.001$)

To follow-up the ANOVA, multiple comparisons were again conducted to determine patterns of difference. When rating the females' efforts to persuade their partners in conversation one, the trained observers perceived significantly more persuading in the females' behaviors than either the male or female partners perceived. There were no significant differences between the dating partners' ratings of the females' persuading behaviors. In the second conversation, there were no significant differences in the observers', the females' or the males' perceptions of the females' persuading behaviors.

Finally, for both conversations, there were no significant differences in the females' and males' perceptions of the female partners' conceding behaviors. Both partners perceived significantly more conceding in the female than did the observers.

Global Dominance in Verbal Interactions

Trained coders determined whether couples were male-dominant, female dominant or egalitarian in their verbal interactions based on the relative amount of talk-time for each member of the couple over the course of the two conversations. Of the 59 tapes codes, 33 couples were determined to be egalitarian in their interactions; 16 were male-dominated dyads, and 10 were female-dominated dyads.

Follow-up Data

Seventy-five percent of the couples returned the follow-up questionnaire. Forty-seven percent of these couples were still dating each other one year later; fifty-three percent had broken up. The mean length of the dating relationships was 24.3 months (SD=14.4 months), with a range of approximately 2 months to 5 years. Thirteen of the couples in the follow-up group were male-dominant couples, 25 were egalitarian couples, and 5 were female-dominant couples. Sixty-four percent of the couples in the follow-up sample were inconsistent condom users, 13 % were consistent condom users, and 23 % were abstinent. Of those who were still dating one year later, 71% do not use condoms consistently, 24% do use condoms consistently, and 5% are abstinent. In the group who had broken up during the year, 56% did not use condoms consistently, 4% did use condoms consistently, and 39% were abstinent. The Chi-Square test for independence indicated that these variables are not independent of each other ($X^2(2)=9.137, p=.01$).

Relationship Qualities

Paired t-tests were computed to determine whether adolescent female and male dating partners reported different levels of commitment (see Table 3 for means and standard deviations). No significant differences between partners were obtained on any of the three commitment subscales.

Paired t-tests were computed to determine whether adolescent female and male dating partners reported different levels of support, depth, and conflict in their relationship to each other. (See Table 4 for means and standard deviations). Female partners perceived more depth in their relationships than male partners perceived ($t(1,59)=2.21, p<.05$).

Analyses of the Relationship between Power, Sexual Behavior, and Relationship Qualities

Power Groups

Correlation analyses were performed to determine if couple members' perceptions of persuading and conceding were associated with their sexual behaviors (including condom-use) or relationship qualities. There were no significant correlations for females. For males, however, the longer they had been dating, the less conceding behavior they perceived in their girlfriends ($r=-.29, p<.05$) and the less persuading behavior they perceived in themselves ($r=-.28, p<.05$).

Next, one-way Analyses of Variance were performed to determine if there were differences in the sexual behaviors and relationship qualities of male-dominant, female-dominant and egalitarian couples. There were no differences in sexual behaviors or condom use among the three groups. Furthermore, the only relationship quality that differed among the dominance groups was the female partners' perception of depth in the dating relationship ($F(2, 55)=3.11, p=.05$). Post hoc comparisons indicated that females in egalitarian couples perceive significantly more depth in their dating relationships than females in male dominant couples. There were no significant differences between females' perception of depth in female-dominant couples and male dominant couples, or female dominated and egalitarian.

Finally, correlation analyses were performed to determine if there were different patterns of relationships between variables depending on whether the couple was male-dominant, female-dominant, or egalitarian.² In the male-dominant couples, the frequency of sexual intercourse was not significantly correlated with male partners' perceptions of the relationship. However, as the frequency of sexual intercourse increased, female partners in male-dominated couples reported more conflict ($r=.52, p<.05$) and less depth ($r=-.62, p<.01$) in the relationship. In female-dominated couples

²The small subsample sizes make these analyses preliminary and exploratory. It would have taken an N of 42 couples in each of the dominance groups to be able to detect a moderate effect size (.40) frequently enough to meet Cohen's criteria for 80% power (Borenstein, Rothstein, & Cohen, 1997). As a result, in the female-dominate group ($n=10$ couples), there was only a 23% chance of finding a significant correlation at the .40 effect size. Likewise, in the egalitarian group ($n=31$ couples), there was only 65% chance of finding an effect size of .40 or greater.

and egalitarian couples, there were no significant correlations between the frequency of sexual intercourse and relationship qualities for either the males or females.

Other interesting and differing patterns of relationships also emerged. For instance, in male-dominant couples, there was a positive relationship between the affectionate behaviors [holding hands ($r=.51$, $p<.05$) and kissing ($r=.59$, $p<.05$)] and males' perceptions of their partners' support. As the frequency of oral sex increased, male partners reported feeling both more committed to ($r=.52$, $p<.05$) and more entrapped in ($r=.87$, $p<.01$) the dating relationship. Overall, as the total amount of sexual activity increased, males reported increased feelings of entrapment ($r=.56$, $p<.06$). None of these associations reached statistical significance for the female partners.

However, for females in both the male-dominated ($r=-.53$, $p<.05$) and female-dominated ($r=-.91$, $p<.01$) groups, the number of previous sexual partners was negatively associated with the amount of depth that female partners perceived in their current dating relationships. Furthermore, in the female-dominant group, the number of previous sex partners was the only behavior associated with relationship qualities. For male partners in female-dominant couples, the number of previous sexual partners was negatively associated with their perceptions of depth ($r=-.88$, $p<.01$) and support ($r=-.71$, $p<.05$) in the current dating relationship. For female partners, in addition to perceiving less depth in their current relationships, having more previous sex partners was associated with less commitment to the current dating partner ($r=-.85$, $p<.01$).

Egalitarian couples presented still a different picture of sexual behavior and relationship qualities. Though there were some different gender patterns in the correlations, in general it was the affectionate behaviors that were significantly correlated with relationship qualities for both the male and female dating partners (see Table 5). Additionally, for the male partners in egalitarian couples, as overall sexual activity increased, their commitment to the relationship ($p=.35$, $p<.05$) and their perceptions of depth in their dating relationships ($p=.38$, $p<.05$) also increased.

Power as a Moderator

Based on the different patterns of correlations found among male-dominant, female-dominant, and egalitarian couples, a series of multiple regression analyses were performed to explore the possibility that power moderates the relationship between the sexual behaviors and relationship qualities. Despite the small sample sizes, especially for the male-dominant and female-dominant groups, one significant multiple regression equation pointed to the moderator effect of power on the relationship between sexual behavior and relationship quality ($Rsq=.33$, $F(3, 22)=3.55$, $p=.03$). In this equation, the female partners' commitment to her partner, power (male dominant or female dominant entered as a dummy variable), and the interaction between power and commitment were entered as independent variables. The females' number of previous sexual partners was the dependent variable. As shown in Table 6, female dating partners' reports of their commitment to their partner, observers' codings of dominance in the couples' interactions, and the interaction between dominance and

commitment were all significant predictors of the number of previous sexual partners the females had. That is, as females report more previous sex partners, they likewise report less commitment to their present partner, except when they are in a male-dominated relationship.

A second multiple regression equation pointed to power's moderating effect even though the overall regression model was not significant ($R^2=.20$, $F(3, 22)=1.84$, $p=.17$). In this equation, the female partners' perception of conflict, power, and the interaction between conflict and power were entered as independent variables. The frequency of sexual intercourse was the dependent variable. As can be seen in Table 7, there was a trend toward significance for the interaction term, indicating that in female dominant couples, the more conflict reported, the less sexual intercourse. But in male dominant couples, the reverse is true. That is, as females report more conflict in male-dominated couples, the frequency of sexual intercourse increases. Again, it must be emphasized that the small sample size of the various power groups mandate that interpretations be made exceedingly cautiously until replication of these findings can be made.

Contraceptive Behaviors

Patterns of correlations between relationship qualities and sexual behaviors were also examined for each contraceptive group. First, correlations were calculated for those couples abstaining from sexual intercourse. In this group, female partner's perceptions of the depth of the relationship increased as the affectionate sexual

behaviors increased (holding hands $r=.75$, $p<.01$; kissing, $r=.76$, $p<.01$; fondling with clothes on, $r=.69$, $p<.01$). For males in the abstinent group, the affectionate behaviors were not only related to perceived depth, but also to perceived support, commitment to the partner, commitment to the relationship, conflict, and feelings of entrapment. (See Table 8).

Correlations were next calculated for those couples who reported always using a condom when they had sexual intercourse. For females reporting consistent condom use, as the frequency of oral sex increased, the female partner perceived more conflict ($r=.77$, $p<.05$) and less support ($r=-.85$, $p<.01$) in the dating relationship. Again, for males, the pattern of correlations was much more complex, with every one of the sexual behaviors positively correlated with at least one of the relationship quality variables (See Table 9). Additionally, as the number of previous sexual partners increased, the male partners' perception of conflict in the current dating relationship increased ($r=.93$, $p<.01$).

Finally, correlations were calculated for those couples who reported that they did not use condoms consistently when engaging in sexual intercourse. For females and males in this group, the affectionate behaviors were related to their perceptions of relationship qualities in their current dating relationship (See Table 10). More specifically, as holding hands and kissing increased, female partners' commitment and perception of depth increased. For males, as kissing and fondling increased, perceptions of both the depth and support in the dating relationship increased. As

overall sexual activity increased in this group, male partners perceived more depth in the relationship ($r=.37, p<.05$) and female partners reported feeling more committed to their dating partner ($r=.35, p<.05$).

In addition to the relevance of affection to relationship quality, female partners in this group of inconsistent condom users reported that as the frequency of oral sex increased, so did their commitment to their partners ($r=.34, p<.05$). Also, for these females, the more previous sexual partners they had, the less depth they perceived in their current relationship ($r= -.51, p<.01$) and the fewer feelings of entrapment they reported ($r=-.33, p<.05$).

Predicting Contraceptive Behavior

To investigate the influence of dating partners' perceptions of their interactions and relationship quality on contraceptive behavior, two logistic regression models were specified for each gender. First, using condom-use as the dependent variable and the partner perceptions of power as predictor variables, a regression was specified for each gender. There were no significant effects. Second, the three commitment subscales and the three quality of relationship subscales were entered as predictors and a significant prediction model determined for each gender. The results of the predictor models are presented in Table 11. These logistic-regression models indicated that both females and males who perceive less conflict in their relationship are significantly more likely to use condoms every time they have sexual intercourse. Additionally, females'

feelings of entrapment in the relationship added to the model predicting her likelihood of using condoms every time she has sexual intercourse with her boyfriend.

Power, Sexual Behaviors, and Relationship Qualities at One-Year Follow-up

T-tests were performed to determine whether couples who were still dating a year later were significantly different from those who had broken up. In terms of their verbal interactions, there were no differences in persuading and conceding ratings between those the couples who broke up and the couples who were still together. The Kruskal-Wallis Test for non-parametric data indicated that couples who stayed together were not more likely to be in a particular dominance group ($X^2(2, 43)=2.59$, $p=.27$)

In terms of their sexual behaviors, the results of t-tests for differences in means indicated that couples who engaged in more frequent fondling with no clothes ($t(2, 43)=2.10$, $p=.04$), more frequent oral sex ($t(2, 43)=2.48$, $p=.02$), more frequent sexual intercourse ($t(2, 43)=2.81$, $p=.01$) and more overall sexual activity ($t(2, 43)=3.02$, $p=.004$) were more likely to be dating one year later.

In terms of their contraceptive behavior, out of 45 couples, 10 of them had reported being abstinent at the time of initial data collection. Nine of these couples had broken up one year later. Six of the 45 couples had indicated that they used condoms consistently. Five of these were still dating one year later. The remaining 29 couples who responded to the follow-up questionnaire had initially indicated that they

were inconsistent condom-users. Fifteen of these couples were still together one year later and 14 couples had broken up. The Kruskal-Wallis Test for non-parametric data, again, indicated that couples who stayed together were not more likely to be in a particular contraceptive group ($X^2(1, 45)=2.18, p=.14$).

T-tests were also performed to determine differences in relationship qualities. No significant mean differences were found in commitment, support, depth, or conflict between couples who were still dating and couples who had broken up.

The total length of the relationship for each couple was calculated and correlational analyses were performed to see if the sexual behaviors and relationship qualities correlated with how long the relationship actually lasted. As shown in Table 12 and Table 13, the length of the relationship was significantly correlated with sexual behaviors, commitment, and depth for both males and females.

One-way Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) were performed to determine if there were significant differences in the length of the relationship depending on whether the couples were male-dominated, female-dominated, or egalitarian. There were no significant differences between power groups ($F(2, 37)=.81, p=.45$). One-way Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) were also performed to see if there were significant differences in the length of the relationship depending on whether the couples used condoms consistently, inconsistently, or were abstinent. Again, there were no significant differences in the length of the relationship according to contraceptive behavior ($F(2, 39)=1.25, p=.30$).

Finally, multiple regression analyses were performed to determine a model that would best predict the length of the relationship. Using a stepwise procedure for each gender, the weighted sexual activity score and relationship qualities were entered as predictors. Table 14 shows that, for female partners, sexual activity, feelings of entrapment, and perception of relationship depth best predict the length of the dating relationship ($R^2 = .508$, $F(3, 40) = 13.77$, $p < .001$) Likewise, Table 15 shows that for male partners, sexual activity and commitment to the dating partner best predict relationship length ($R^2 = .483$, $F(2, 41) = 6.24$, $p = .004$).

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

This study explored the associations between sexual behaviors, power, relationship qualities (commitment, support, depth, and conflict), and relationship length in late adolescent dating relationships. In general, we found evidence that the associations among these aspects of adolescent relationships are complex and indirect. In the following sections, I will first summarize the main findings and then interpret these findings in the context of the theoretical and empirical literature on adolescent dating relationships. Finally, I will discuss the implications of my findings for promoting sexual health in adolescence and for refining social theories related to power, sex, and gender.

Summary of Findings

I hypothesized that there would be significant relationships between power, sexual behaviors, and relationship qualities and that these relationships would differ for male and female dating partners. There were very few direct associations between the reported sexual behaviors, power, and relationship qualities for either males or females. I did find the longer that males dated their girlfriends, the less they reported that they tried to persuade their girlfriends and the less they reported that their girlfriends conceded to them.

Secondly, I hypothesized that power moderates the relationship between sexual behaviors and relationship qualities. The only direct association found was that female partners in egalitarian couples perceive significantly more depth in their dating relationships than females in male-dominated or female-dominated dyads. Further exploration of each of the dominance-groups, however, hinted at more complex patterns of associations. Though our sample size in this exploratory study necessitates that these findings be considered preliminary until replicated, there was some evidence that sexual behavior and relationship qualities are differentially related depending both on the gender of the dating partner and the power dynamics of the couple.

More specifically, I found evidence that in male-dominated couples, there is an association between the frequency of sexual intercourse and the female partner's perception of more conflict and less depth in her dating relationship. As the number of her previous sex partners rose, the female dating partner in a male-dominated dyad reported less depth in her current relationship.

The males in these male-dominant dyads did not show these same associations. In contrast to the females, there were positive associations between male partners' reports of the frequency of affectionate behaviors (holding hands, kissing, fondling) and perceptions of support. Furthermore, male partners in male-dominated couples reported feeling both more committed to their relationships and more entrapped in those relationships as sexual activity increased in frequency and intensity.

In female-dominated couples, as the number of previous sex partners increased, both females and males reported less depth in their current dating relationship. Additionally, females with more previous partners reported less commitment to their current partner; males with more previous partners reported experiencing less support in their current relationship.

In egalitarian couples, there were positive associations between the amount of affection (holding hands, kissing, fondling) and both partners' perceptions of depth, support, and commitment in the relationship. Additionally, the overall sexual activity level was associated with the male partner's perceptions of commitment and depth.

Finally, there was some indication that conflict and the frequency of sexual intercourse was differentially related in male-dominant and non-male-dominant couples. That is, there was some evidence that as females' reported more conflict, the frequency of sexual intercourse declined in non-male dominated couples and increased in male-dominated couples.

The third hypothesis was that couples who consistently used condoms would report more commitment, depth, and support, and less conflict in their dating relationships. I expected that egalitarian and female-dominated couples would be more likely to use condoms consistently than male-dominated couples. Again, there were no direct associations between contraceptive behavior, relationship quality, and power in this sample of dating couples. However, when I examined patterns of

correlations in couples who always used condoms, who did not always use condoms, and who were practicing abstinence, I discovered differences.

For instance, in couples who always use condoms, increased frequency of oral sex was associated with the female partners' perceptions of more conflict and less support in the dating relationship. The male partners in these couples presented a much more complex picture. Virtually every sexual behavior was associated with relationship quality. That is, these male partners' reports of increased sexual activity were associated with their reports of relationship depth and commitment in their current dating relationship. Furthermore, the more sex partners these males had previously, the more conflict they reported in their current relationship.

Like the males in the consistent condom-using group, there were associations between the affectionate behaviors (holding hands, kissing, light fondling) and relationship qualities for both the males and females in the non-consistent condom-using group. Unlike the consistent condom-using group, however, there were very few associations between the more intense sexual behaviors (fondling without clothes, oral sex, and coitus) and relationship qualities in the non-consistent condom using group.

Next, I examined patterns in the couples who indicated they were not engaging in sexual intercourse. In these couples, as the two condom-use groups, there was a striking association between the affectionate behaviors and male perceptions of relationship depth and commitment. Additionally, for the male partners in these

couples, there was a positive association between affection and their perceptions of support. For females in the abstinent group, affection and perceived relationship depth were significantly correlated.

Examining gender patterns across the three groups, the affectionate behaviors in all three contraceptive groups were associated with male perceptions of relationship quality. Additionally, the more intense sexual behaviors (oral sex and coitus) were associated with males partners' perceptions of commitment and depth in the consistent-condom using group. For females in both the abstinent and non-consistent condom using groups, the affectionate behaviors were associated with relationship quality. The only association between the more intense sexual behaviors and relationship quality for the females was an association between oral sex, increased conflict, and decreased support in the consistent condom-using group and oral sex and increased commitment to the dating partner in the inconsistent condom-using group.

Finally, I tested a model that would predict the likelihood of couples using condoms consistently. This model indicates that when couples perceive less conflict in the relationship, they are more likely to use condoms consistently. Additionally, for female partners, more feelings of entrapment in the relationship increase the likelihood that she will use condoms consistently.

The fourth hypothesis was that couples who were still together a year later would differ from couples who had dissolved their dating relationship. Specifically, I expected that male-dominated and egalitarian couples would be more likely to endure

and female-dominated couples would be more likely to break-up. Furthermore, I expected to find differences in the sexual behaviors and relationship qualities of longer term dating relationships versus those of shorter duration. Again, my hypothesis that male-dominated and egalitarian couples might be more “stable” and therefore last longer was not supported. However, there were some significant differences in the sexual behaviors and relationship qualities. Specifically, the couples who initially reported higher rates of sexual activity were more likely to still be dating a year later. In terms of their contraceptive behaviors, it was the abstinent couples and the inconsistent condom users who tended to break up. The consistent condom users tended to stay together. Examining their relationship quality, the more depth and commitment that couples initially reported, the longer their relationships endured. The amount of sexual activity and the commitment to the partner that couples reported at the initial data collection predicted the length of their relationship.

In sum, it is clear that the relationships among sexual behavior, power, and relationship quality are complex, subtle, and indirect. The following sections turn to the extant theoretical and empirical literature on adolescent dating relationships to aid in further explication and interpretation of these findings.

Gendered Power in Verbal Interaction

In this sample of late adolescent dating couples, both partners perceived themselves as doing more persuading than conceding. This could be explained by the

self-attribution bias (Kelly & Thibaut, 1978) which predicts that an individual will tend to overestimate his or her own behaviors and underestimate those of the partner. Hill, Peplau, & Rubin (1981) found that the self-attribution bias, and not sex-role attitudes, accounted for differences in perceptions of power in their sample of couples. Likewise, Sprecher (1985) found a trend toward each partner seeing him or herself as the more powerful partner in the dating relationship. Alternately, Bernard (1972) stated that relationships come in “his” and “hers” and assumed that gender is a major source of discrepancy in perceptions of power in heterosexual relationships. Supporting this notion are the findings of the present study. That is, the females perceived their male partners as exhibiting more efforts to persuade them than males’ perceived in themselves, indicating more “attunement” to the use of power relative to their male partners. Further support for the salience of gender to perceiving power is the finding that the female coders of the video-taped conversations most often concurred with the female partners in rating persuading and conceding behaviors. Regardless of the source of differing views, it is the perception of power rather than “reality” that seems to drive partners’ behaviors (McDonald, 1977; Safilios-Rothschild, 1977).

Power, Sex, and Dependency

On the surface, these findings might indicate that perceived power, regardless of who perceives it, is unrelated to adolescent couples’ sexual behaviors and their

perceptions of commitment, depth, and conflict. This conclusion of a null effect is premature for three reasons. First, such an interpretation of a null effect is unwarranted until it has been replicated in a larger sample where the probability of detecting a moderate effect size is sufficient. Secondly, it could be that the lack of significant direct associations were due to measurement error. Previous research on power in intimate relations has focused on three aspects: decision-making power, dependency, and comparative resources (Peplau & Gordan, 1985). Though resources have often been defined as the traditionally male resources of money and status, recent work has included relationship skills as a potential resource that partners contribute. One of the resources that has been examined is strategies of influence (Christopher & Frandsen, 1990; Falbo, 1977; McCormick, 1979; Perper & Weis, 1987). Falbo (1977) defines persuasion as one type of bilateral power strategy used in romantic relationships. Since this was the only strategy that we examined, it may be that other power strategies (withdrawal, hinting) or other forms of power (decision-making) are more salient in adolescent dating couples. Though the findings in this study indicated that both male and female partners perceived themselves as the “persuaders” rather than the “conceders”, other studies have found that men are more likely to use this strategy and women are more likely to use indirect strategies such as manipulation and supplication (Falbo, 1977; Falbo & Peplau, 1980; Howard et al, 1986; McCormick, 1979). The third reason for not interpreting the initial null effects is the possibility that the power dynamics in the couple had a moderating effect on the

relationship between sex and relationship quality and this moderating effect was obscuring direct associations between variables.

Indeed, there was evidence to suggest that sexual behaviors and relationship qualities were related differently according to both gender and power. For instance, for males in both the male-dominant and egalitarian couples, more frequent affectionate behaviors were associated with higher levels of perceived support from the female dating partner. Likewise, male partners in male-dominant and egalitarian couples who reported more overall sexual activity were more committed to the dating relationship. Perhaps sexual expression functions the same way for males in male-dominant and egalitarian relationships. That is, sexual expression and particularly the expression of affection, is important for obtaining support and increasing commitment. Since these are correlational analyses, causality can not be determined. We do not know if higher levels of relationship quality increase affection and overall sexual activity among male-dominant and egalitarian couples, or if increased affection and sexual activity leads to perceptions of higher levels of relationship quality.

Our findings support Avery and Ridley's (1975) survey in which male and female college students ranked affection as the most important characteristic related to sexual expression in their dating relationships. Future studies should continue to examine the meanings of affectionate behaviors in adolescent relationships, given their associations with relationship quality for both genders. The paucity of research in this

area attests to the predominance of sociocultural scripts that relegate such behaviors to preliminary rather than primary status in the hierarchy of sexual expression.

Considering the importance of affection, the findings of this study appear to contradict those who have concluded that the enactment of traditional sexual scripts continues to predominate among contemporary young couples. For example, Whitley (1988) used open-ended questions to elicit reasons for engaging in sexual intercourse and found that college males most often cited lust/pleasure as the primary reason for having sex while college females most often cited love/emotion. Carroll, Volk, & Hyde (1985) also found strong gender stereotypes in their survey of motivations for sexual intercourse. Leonore Tiefer (1995) points out that because the script is so well defined, a couple can have intercourse with a minimum of communication. Fondling ("foreplay") is less scripted, however, and therefore requires partners to "be fond of" each other and enjoy interaction, since, unlike having sexual intercourse, there is no culturally defined beginning and endpoint.

Other research seems to support these findings regarding the importance of affection to adolescent couples, and particularly to males. Some, for instance, have suggested that adolescent males may rely on their girlfriends more than their girlfriends rely on them for support and intimacy (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Sherman & Thelen, 1996). Likewise, Kalof (1995) found that dependency (defined as need for emotional and physical closeness) was more of a determinant of male sexual activity than female sexual activity. Others have postulated that men may need

emotional love and connection to women more than women need emotional love and connection to men (Cancian, 1987). As a result, women may “control” love or sex in order to gain some power and access to other resources in relationships. Likewise, male dependency on the romantic relationship for emotional connection and love may increase the female partner’s perception of her power.

For females in egalitarian relationships, like their male partners, there was an association between more affection and greater depth, support, and commitment. It would seem, therefore, that in egalitarian dating relationships, couples perceive the relationship very similarly in terms of relationship quality. In male-dominant couples, however, there are indicators that the female partner perceives the relationship very differently from her partner. For her, higher frequencies of sexual intercourse are associated with higher levels of conflict and decreased levels of depth. Perhaps these male-dominant couples operate according to the traditional sexual script that is founded upon the enactment of power and conflict (Grauerholz & Serpe, 1985). That is, traditional couples are likely to enact scripts in which the male initiates sex and the female refuses sex (McCormick, 1979; McCormick & Jessor, 1983; Perper & Weis, 1987). Although Lips (1981) argues that this “veto power” is less powerful than the role of initiator, it may be one of the power bases that women in traditional male-dominated relationships employ, with the price being increased conflict and negative effects on relationship quality. Interestingly, for female dominated couples, there were no significant associations between sexual behaviors and relationship qualities for

either partner; but for both partners, the sexual history (number of previous partners) was associated with decreased relationship quality.

Condom-use and Relationship Quality

Only about 15% of the sexually active couples reported that they use condoms every time they had sexual intercourse. This is consistent with the equally low percentages found in other samples of sexually active high school and college students (e.g., Harlow, & Newcomb, 1990; Hernandez & Smith, 1990). In contrast to McCormick & Gaeddert's (1989) finding that 40% of sexually active college students use no birth control, approximately 60% of the sexually active couples in this study reported that they use some form of contraception. Of this 60%, about one third used birth control pills only, one third used condoms only, 12% used withdrawal, and the rest used some combination of methods. There was some reporting discrepancies among couples. Given the high consistency of their reporting on all other couple variables, it was curious that 20% of the couples disagreed about whether or not they had used condoms consistently or not in the previous month. Some discrepant reporting on use of "the pill" might have been expected, since that method does not require partner consent or cooperation. The use of a condom, however, requires the knowledge and consent of both partners.

Because of the negotiation inherent in condom use, I hypothesized that egalitarian and female-dominant couples would be more likely to use condoms

consistently. This hypothesis was not supported, however. Again, methodological reasons mandate that we not overly interpret the null findings. Examining the patterns of correlations between various contraceptive groups yielded some potential avenues for future exploration, however. For example, I found that less conflict was associated with sexual behaviors in the group of couples who reported consistent condom use. Also, the inconsistent condom users and the abstinent couples showed strong associations between affection and relationship quality. One hypothesis regarding these findings is that those inconsistently using condoms and those who are not engaging in intercourse must invest a higher level of trust in each other to be loyal to the relationship (in the case of inconsistent condom users) or to be loyal to a shared value commitment (in the abstinence group). As a result, relationship quality and affectionate expression of that quality are associated in both of these couple groups. On the other hand, the negotiation of condom use may require that couples have shared beliefs regarding safe sex, thus explaining the low level of conflict in consistent condom-using couples, or, alternately, these couples may have a level of communication and negotiation skill that allows consensus with minimal conflict.

Again, these are speculations that must remain empirical questions for future research to pursue, however, some have found that many young women who anticipate that their partners will react negatively to their requests for condom use do not assert their own position (Harlow & Newcomb, 1990; Morokoff, Harlow & Quina, 1995). The association between more conflict and sexual intercourse in male-

dominant couples and between less conflict and sexual behavior in consistent condom-using couples in this study indicate that managing conflict around sexual behavior is an important issue for young dating couples.

Longevity

Male-dominance, egalitarian, and female-dominance did not correspond with the dating status of the couple at the one-year follow up. This is in contrast to other studies that found male-dominant couples to be more enduring (Felmlee, 1994; Peplau, Hill, & Rubin 1993). Though evidence has suggested that egalitarian relationships are more satisfying both emotionally and sexually (Gray-Little & Burks, 1983; Peplau, 1979; Schwartz, 1994; Traupmann, Hatfield, & Wexler, 1983;), others have concluded that there is little evidence that equality in relationships is associated with longevity (Berg & McQuinn, 1986; Felmlee, Sprecher, & Bassin, 1990; Lujansky & Mikula, 1983).

Though the power dimension did not seem to influence the longevity of the relationship, the initial level of sexual activity and commitment did. That is, couples who reported more sexual activity and higher levels of commitment at the initial data collection were more likely to still be dating a year later. The following sections discuss these findings in relation to other research on sex and commitment in intimate relationships.

Sex as "Glue"

The association between more sexual activity and relationship maintenance could indicate that sexual expression serves as a type of "glue" that holds couples together. The fact that nearly all of the abstinent couples had broken up by the time of the one-year follow up could be viewed as evidence for this hypothesis. Alternately, perhaps abstinent couples were aware that their current dating relationship was likely to be short-lived, and therefore opted to restrict sexual expression in the relationship. Many of the couples in this study indicated that their current dating partner was the first (and only) person with whom they had ever had sexual intercourse. Given the sociocultural meanings surrounding sexual initiation/debut (Thompson, 1984), these couples may view sexual intercourse as indicative of their abiding commitment to each other, or, alternately, the fact that they have engaged in sexual intercourse may mean that they "ought" to ensure that the relationship continues. Certainly, these findings call into question sociocultural messages to young women admonishing them to withhold sex if they are interested in an enduring relationship.

Commitment

The other strong predictor of relationship longevity was the commitment level of the dating partners. Several researchers have substantiated the importance of commitment to the relationship longevity of college dating couples (Hendrick, Hendrick, & Adler, 1988; Lund, 1985; Rusbult, 1980; 1983; Simpson, 1987). Similar to Hendrick and colleagues (1988), I found no significant differences in the dating

partners' commitment levels. This is inconsistent with some research (Floyd & Wasner, 1994; Jemmott, Ashby, & Lindenfeld, 1989) as well as with common cultural stereotypes suggesting women experience and desire greater levels of commitment than men. It is unclear exactly why gender differences in commitment levels were not obtained in the present study. It may be that such differences are not present in adolescence, but surface in adulthood. Some have speculated that the gender differences in commitment may emerge in adult marital relationships because of the greater stress associated with being a divorced woman (i.e. child care issues, economic hardships, diminished social support networks, etc.) than that associated with being a divorced man (Heatherington, Stanley-Hagan, & Anderson, 1989).

Research based on social-exchange models has concluded that the less committed partner (most often the man) holds more power in the marriage relationship because he often less dependent on the relationship and has more alternatives (Bernard, 1972; Scanzoni, 1982). This "principle of least interest" (Waller, 1937) has been documented in dating relationships as well (Felmlee, 1994; Sprecher, 1985). In contrast to these findings, the majority of young couples in this study perceived themselves as egalitarian in terms of their interactions, were rated as egalitarian by trained outside observers, and individually reported highly similar levels of commitment in the relationship. Perhaps these findings are an artifact of the sample, or, alternately, perhaps these findings are evidence that the dating relationship is protected from certain power structures and processes that the marital relationship is

not. Whereas many of the couples in this study seemed to have egalitarian relationships, the extent to which they are able to maintain that egalitarianism in future marital relationships remains to be seen.

Though the couples in the study reported similar levels of commitment to each other, it is interesting that different commitment subscales predicted the length of the relationship for males and females. In the female partners, the feelings of entrapment subscale was most predictive. As noted previously, this subscale represents the “have to stay” dimension that indicates perceived barriers to the dissolution of the relationship. This was not the dimension that predicted the length of the dating relationship for male partners, however. For them, the “want to stay” dimension, which is assessed by the commitment to partner subscale was significant. Again, it is striking that the females who remained longest in their dating relationship experienced themselves as ‘trapped’ and with limited alternatives, certainly not indicative of a sense of power and resourcefulness relative to their male partners, who stayed in the relationship out of choice.

Implications

Promoting Adolescent Sexual Health

In heterosexual relationships, the safest sex practices currently available are abstinence, use of a latex condom with spermicidal cream or jelly during intercourse, and alternative sexual expressions in which ejaculate does not come into contact with

genital or anal orifices. The low percentage of sexually active couples who report consistently use condoms is a cause for concern. This concern is exacerbated by the finding that it was the inconsistent condom-users who were more likely to break-up, thereby, ensuring that they will go on to have future partners, increasing their risk for sexually transmitted diseases.

Young men and women have reported that condom-use is one of the most problematic issues in their romantic relationships (Noell, Biglan, Berendt, & Ochs, 1993). I agree with Quina, Harlow, Morokoff, & Saxon (in press) of the Women's Health Research Project that prevention and intervention in the sexual health of adolescents and young adults must go beyond providing basic knowledge. It also must go beyond the simplistic messages of abstinence-only sex education curricula that levy the mandate to "Just Say No." (Wilcox, 1997). The findings that less conflict increased the likelihood of consistent condom use supports this conclusion. Certainly, the ability to communicate the desire for safe sex has been shown to be positively associated with condom use (Cantania, Coates, Kegeles, & Fullilove, 1992). Before launching into communication skills training, however, we must help young people to ponder, question, and articulate the values and "sexual policies" that are implicit in their expectations for and behaviors in their romantic relationships (Allgeier & Turner-Royster, 1991) and then help them communicate these "policies" with their partners.

Certainly, a safe, effective female condom is needed because it does not require negotiation with the partner, but I see this as a "stop gap" measure on the way to the

larger and more complex goal of altering, changing, modifying, re-constructing the sexual scripts and sexual ideologies that currently make open, egalitarian sexual communication between partners more ideal than real. To accomplish this larger agenda, however, adolescent sexuality researchers must first undertake the kind of qualitative studies necessary to assess how adolescents assert (or fail to assert) their sexual rights in a culture saturated with conflicting messages about sex, power, and gender.

Conceptualizing Power in Late Adolescent Intimate Relationships

In contemporary western societies, adolescence marks the transitional phase between childhood and adulthood. It is a time when individuals establish their own values, beliefs, and behavioral patterns that will result in choices that can affect the rest of their lives. Hopefully, the denouement is a successful transition into a young adulthood that is characterized by psychological, social, and sexual maturity (Adams, Gullota & Montemayor, 1992) and healthy, constructive, collaborative intimate relationships. In young heterosexual couples, this optimal outcome requires the ability to use power in an equitable or egalitarian manner (Hatfield & Traupmann, 1980; Walster, Walster, & Traupmann, 1978) and the ability to negotiate sexual relationships that are life-enriching and mutually satisfying (Chilman, 1983; 1989; Reiss, Banwart, & Foreman, 1975). For all the reasons cited above, this is no small task.

In most theoretical frameworks, power and love have been conceptualized as dichotomous constructs with power representing conflicting-interest and love

representing mutual interest (Meyer, 1991) Likewise, both have been associated with heterosexual gender-role scripts. Men have power. Women have love. Rather than supporting the “powerholder” framework, the findings in this study lend support to the notion that power is a reciprocal relational process in which both partners seem to possess some degree of autonomy and some degree of dependency (Giddens, 1979; 1984). Therefore, future research should continue to focus on the specific contexts in which gender and power are intertwined to understand how these processes are enacted.

Conclusion

This project explored adolescent sexual behavior in the dating relationship which, in turn, is socially constructed within a context of gendered-power relations. This is one of the few studies that has examined adolescent sexual behavior in the context of dating couples. Using the relationship as the unit of analysis, I examined relational qualities such as commitment, support, conflict, and depth using a multi-method approach that included self-report instruments, video-recall procedures, and behavioral observations by trained coders.

I also extended the research on adolescent sexual behavior by inquiring about a range of behaviors including holding hands, kissing, and fondling rather than solely focusing on coitus. As a result, the importance of these behaviors to both males and females was documented. Additionally, the findings indicated a complex picture in

that different aspects of the dating relationship are related to sexual behaviors depending on the gender of the partner and the power dynamics of the couple. By initially looking at too aggregated a level, there was a confounding of radically different groups. By segregating couples according to dominance and according to contraceptive behavior, I was able to explore the complexity of associations between relationship variables. Due to the small sample size and the correlational design of this project, results should be considered exploratory and preliminary. Further research with larger sample sizes and more ethnic diversity should be undertaken to determine the generalizability of these results. Studies examining the operation of power and gender in same-sex adolescent dating couples would further extend our understanding of adolescent couples and complex relationship between gender, power, and sex. Nevertheless, it is clear that heterosexual couples bring to their dating relationships different meanings, views, interpretations, values, and needs, each of which is likely to impact the negotiation of sexual behaviors. Promoting adolescents' abilities to claim, communicate and assert these differing needs and values in the context of healthy, life enhancing, growth-promoting relationships will help ensure sexual and relational health throughout the lifespan.

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APPENDICES

Table A-1

**Sexual Behaviors of Late Adolescent Dating Partners
During the Previous Month
(N=60 males, 60 females)**

Frequency	Never		1-3 times		4-6 times		7-15 times		16-50 times		51 or more	
Sex Behav.	<u>M</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>F</u>
Holding Hands	0	1	2	2	4	3	9	6	20	19	24	28
Kissing	1	1	2	1	1	1	3	2	17	16	36	38
Fondling (clothes on)	2	2	7	5	5	6	13	14	22	22	10	10
Fondling (clothes off)	8	4	4	10	10	5	17	18	18	18	3	4
Oral sex	16	16	16	11	14	15	9	11	5	5	0	1
Sexual Intercourse	23	22	7	6	9	5	8	16	11	8	2	2

Table A-2

Mean Ratings for Video-taped Interactions

Conversation 1:

Power	Rater	Rating the Male Partner <u>Mean</u> (SD)	Rating the Female Partner <u>Mean</u> (SD)
Trying to Persuade			
	Male partner	1.27 (.92)	1.39 (.98)
	Female Partner	1.76 (.91)	1.55 (.90)
	Observer	2.09 (.46)	1.99 (.48)
Conceding			
	Male Partner	.92 (.81)	.93 (.82)
	Female Partner	1.33 (.81)	1.16 (.74)
	Observer	.37 (.27)	.51 (.31)

Conversation 2:

Power	Rater	Rating the Male Partner <u>Mean</u> (SD)	Rating the Female Partner <u>Mean</u> (SD)
Trying to Persuade			
	Male partner	1.48 (1.02)	1.54 (1.07)
	Female Partner	1.91 (.94)	1.87 (.93)
	Observer	1.89 (.45)	1.89 (.52)
Conceding			
	Male Partner	.98 (.78)	1.04 (.89)
	Female Partner	1.47 (.81)	1.37 (.84)
	Observer	.39 (.26)	.46 (.31)

Note. Means represent the aggregated sum of 18 segments of conversation, each rated on a 5-point likert scale from 0= "not at all" to 4= "very much so."

Table A-3

Mean Scores for Dimensions of Commitment

<u>Commitment Subscale</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
Commitment to Partner		
<u>M</u>	58.75	60.19
<u>SD</u>	11.12	10.42
Commitment to Relationship		
<u>M</u>	42.55	41.41
<u>SD</u>	9.70	8.46
Feelings of Entrapment		
<u>M</u>	25.85	25.53
<u>SD</u>	7.16	9.23

Table A-4

**Means and Standard Deviations for the
Quality of Relationships Inventory
(n=60 males, 60 females)**

<u>QRI Subscale</u>	<u>Males</u>		<u>Females</u>	
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Support	23.4	3.08	23.6	2.69
Depth	20.2	3.56	21.1	3.13
Conflict	21.1	5.63	22.1	7.13

Table A-5
Correlations between Sexual Behaviors and Relationship Qualities in Egalitarian Couples (n=31)

	Sexual Behaviors											
	Holding hands		Kissing		Fondling with clothes on		Fondling without clothes		Oral sex		Coitus	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F		
Relationship Qualities												
Commitment to partner	.23	.39*	.28	.41*	.28	.30	.17	.26	-.11	.11	.07	.15
Commitment to relationship	.51**	.49*	.50**	.55**	.48*	.45*	.41*	.26	.15	-.03	.15	.13
Feelings of Entrapment	.52**	.21	.36*	.16	.35	.07	.33	-.10	.11	.27	.02	.01
Support	.15	.43*	.20	.24	.36*	.15	.28	.13	-.06	.09	.11	.10
Depth	.22	.24	.36*	.36*	.51*	.46**	.47**	.30	.11	.32	.30	.06
Conflict	.13	-.15	.26	.09	.39*	.12	.31	.03	.21	.18	.07	.30

Note. *p<.05
**p<.01

Table A-6

**Summary of Regression Analyses Testing Moderator Effect of Power
on the Relationship between Females' Commitment to Partner
and the Number of Previous Sexual Partners**

<u>Variable</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>SE B</u>	Beta
Females' Commitment to Partner	-.170	.053	-.90**
Power (male or female dominant)	-8.40	3.95	-1.98*
Power x Commitment	.146	.068	2.09*

Note. * $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

Table A-7

**Summary of Regression Analyses Testing Moderator Effect of Power
on the Relationship between Females' Perception of Conflict
and the Frequency of Sexual Intercourse**

<u>Variable</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>SE B</u>	Beta
Females' Perception of Conflict	-.032	.065	-.142
Power (male or female dominant)	-4.04	2.14	-1.26*
Power x Conflict	.165	.088	1.25*

Note. * $p = .07$

Table A-8
Correlations between Sexual Behaviors and Relationship Qualities in Abstinent Couples (n=10)

	Sexual Behaviors									
	Holding hands		Kissing		Fondling with clothes on		Fondling without clothes		Oral sex	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Relationship Qualities										
Commitment to partner	.50	.45	.65*	.50	.62	.32	.43	.22	.09	.05
Commitment to relationship	.65*	.34	.88**	.43	.65*	.47	.52	.07	.11	-.25
Feelings of Entrapment	.54	.17	.70*	.32	.66*	.31	.44	-.05	-.01	-.30
Support	.70*	.35	.62	.20	.78**	-.06	.57	-.24	.22	-.16
Depth	.42	.75**	.84**	.76**	.80**	.70**	.76*	.47	.49	.31
Conflict	.13	-.17	.48	-.21	.74*	.02	.48	-.00	-.05	-.02

Note. *p<.05
**p<.01

Table A-9

Correlations between Sexual Behaviors and Relationship Qualities in Consistent Condom-Using Couples (n=10)

	Sexual Behaviors											
	Holding hands		Kissing		Fondling with clothes on		Fondling without clothes		Oral sex		Coitus	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Relationship Qualities												
Commitment to partner	.58	.37	.68*	.12	.80**	.02	.87**	.02	.78**	-.35	.65*	-.48
Commitment to relationship	.57	.40	.42	-.44	.76*	.18	.86**	.17	.75*	.50	.66*	-.02
Feelings of Entrapment	.67*	.02	.41	-.70	.53	-.51	.62	-.52	.90**	.65	.62	-.11
Support	.00	-.40	-.16	.41	.39	.18	.52	-.04	.22	-.85**	.22	-.45
Depth	.54	-.09	.66*	.02	.72*	-.02	.82**	-.16	.70*	-.69	.73*	-.67
Conflict	-.60	-.07	-.22	-.32	-.23	-.33	-.29	-.08	-.17	.77*	-.10	.62

Note. *p<.05

**p<.01

Table A-10

Correlations between Sexual Behaviors and Relationship Qualities in Non-Consistent Condom-Using Couples (n=40)

	Sexual Behaviors											
	Holding hands		Kissing		Fondling with clothes on		Fondling without clothes		Oral sex		Coitus	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Relationship Qualities												
Commitment to partner	.29	.50**	.30	.38*	.09	.27	.05	.24	.04	.34*	.08	.19
Commitment to relationship	.24	.34*	.16	.27	-.02	.29	-.04	.29	.09	.18	.04	.10
Feelings of Entrapment	.21	.26	.11	.16	.00	.04	.12	.04	.15	-.08	.07	.07
Support	.30	.29	.46**	.10	.32*	.12	.31	.23	.15	.29	.15	.09
Depth	.27	.39*	.37*	.10	.34*	.25	.39*	.08	.25	.25	.23	-.03
Conflict	-.20	-.05	-.17	-.08	-.08	.10	.01	.00	.11	.03	.12	.18

Note. *p<.05
**p<.01

Table A-11**Logistic-Regression Models Predicting Consistent Condom Use
for Male and Female Dating Partners**

Models/Predictors	Coefficient	SE	Significance	R	Exp(B)
Female Dating Partners					
Intercept	-1.51	1.63	.36	--	--
Perception of Conflict	-.21	.11	.05	-.20	.81
Feelings of Entrapment	.16	.06	.01	.32	1.17
Male Dating Partners					
Intercept	1.90	1.58	.23	--	--
Perception of Conflict	-.16	.08	.04	-.20	.85

Note. The R statistic corresponds to a partial correlation between the dependent variable and each of the independent variables. The Exp(B) reflects the odds of change for the dependent variable when the independent variable increases by one unit. Sample size was 61 male/female dating couples.

Table A-12

**Correlations between Relationship Length and Sex Behaviors
for Males and Females (n=45 couples)**

Sex Behaviors	Relationship Length	
	Males	Females
Holding hands	.09	.20
Kissing	.16	.34*
Fondling with clothes on	.34*	.40**
Fondling with clothes off	.31*	.42**
Oral sex	.22	.39**
Sexual intercourse	.34*	.36*
Weighted sex sum	.37*	.49**

Note. *p<.05

**p<.01

Table A-13

**Correlations between Relationship Length and Relationship Qualities
for Males and Females (N=45 couples)**

	Relationship Length	
Relationship Qualities	Males	Females
Commitment to partner	.33*	.31*
Commitment to relationship	.23	.43**
Feelings of Entrapment	.07	.40**
Support	.28	.05
Depth	.35*	.39**
Conflict	.10	.13

Note. *p<.05

**p<.01

Table A-14

Stepwise Multiple Regression Predicting How Long Female Dating Partners Stay in the Relationship (n=45 couples)

Predictor Variables	Beta	R-square	Rsquared change
Step 1			
Sexual activity	.49	.24	--
Step 2			
Sexual activity	.51		
Feelings of Entrapment	.43	.42	.18
Step 3			
Sexual activity	.47		
Feelings of Entrapment	.40		
Relationship Depth	.29	.51	.09

Table A-15

Stepwise Multiple Regression Predicting How Long Male Dating Partners Stay in the Relationship (n=45 couples)

Predictor Variables	Beta	R-square	Rsquared change
Step 1			
Sexual activity	.37	.14	
Step 2			
Sexual activity	.35		
Commitment to Dating partner	.31	.23	.09

Verbal Interaction Rating Scale

SEGMENT 1. I am:	<u>NOT AT ALL</u>			<u>VERY MUCH SO</u>	
a. being supportive of my partner	0	1	2	3	4
b. being conflictual with my partner	0	1	2	3	4
c. being humorous with my partner	0	1	2	3	4
d. trying to persuade my partner to see things my way	0	1	2	3	4
e. being persuaded by my partner	0	1	2	3	4
f. frustrated with my partner	0	1	2	3	4

SEGMENT 2. I am:	<u>NOT AT ALL</u>			<u>VERY MUCH SO</u>	
a. being supportive of my partner	0	1	2	3	4
b. being conflictual with my partner	0	1	2	3	4
c. being humorous with my partner	0	1	2	3	4
d. trying to persuade my partner to see things my way	0	1	2	3	4
e. being persuaded by my partner	0	1	2	3	4
f. frustrated with my partner	0	1	2	3	4

SEGMENT 3. I am:	<u>NOT AT ALL</u>			<u>VERY MUCH SO</u>	
a. being supportive of my partner	0	1	2	3	4
b. being conflictual with my partner	0	1	2	3	4
c. being humorous with my partner	0	1	2	3	4
d. trying to persuade my partner to see things my way	0	1	2	3	4
e. being persuaded by my partner	0	1	2	3	4
f. frustrated with my partner	0	1	2	3	4

SEGMENT 4. I am:	<u>NOT AT ALL</u>			<u>VERY MUCH SO</u>	
a. being supportive of my partner	0	1	2	3	4
b. being conflictual with my partner	0	1	2	3	4
c. being humorous with my partner	0	1	2	3	4
d. trying to persuade my partner to see things my way	0	1	2	3	4
e. being persuaded by my partner	0	1	2	3	4
f. frustrated with my partner	0	1	2	3	4

Verbal Interaction Rating Scale

SEGMENT 1. My partner is	<u>NOT AT ALL</u>			<u>VERY MUCH SO</u>	
a. being supportive to me	0	1	2	3	4
b. being conflictual with with me	0	1	2	3	4
c. being humorous with me	0	1	2	3	4
d. trying to persuade me to see things his/her way	0	1	2	3	4
e. being persuaded by me	0	1	2	3	4
f. feeling frustrated with me	0	1	2	3	4

SEGMENT 2. My partner is	<u>NOT AT ALL</u>			<u>VERY MUCH SO</u>	
a. being supportive to me	0	1	2	3	4
b. being conflictual with with me	0	1	2	3	4
c. being humorous with me	0	1	2	3	4
d. trying to persuade me to see things his/her way	0	1	2	3	4
e. being persuaded by me	0	1	2	3	4
f. feeling frustrated with me	0	1	2	3	4

SEGMENT 3. My partner is	<u>NOT AT ALL</u>			<u>VERY MUCH SO</u>	
a. being supportive to me	0	1	2	3	4
b. being conflictual with with me	0	1	2	3	4
c. being humorous with me	0	1	2	3	4
d. trying to persuade me to see things his/her way	0	1	2	3	4
e. being persuaded by me	0	1	2	3	4
f. feeling frustrated with me	0	1	2	3	4

SEGMENT 4. My partner is	<u>NOT AT ALL</u>			<u>VERY MUCH SO</u>	
a. being supportive to me	0	1	2	3	4
b. being conflictual with with me	0	1	2	3	4
c. being humorous with me	0	1	2	3	4
d. trying to persuade me to see things his/her way	0	1	2	3	4
e. being persuaded by me	0	1	2	3	4
f. feeling frustrated with me	0	1	2	3	4

Verbal Interaction Observer Coding Manual

PERSUADING

*** Score based on quality of verbalizations and voice tone.

QUALITIES MEASURED: influencing, convincing, coaxing.

SCORE

- 0 Code 0 if individual does not attempt to persuade during the segment.
- 1 a) **tone:** mild **content:** explanation
Relating own perspective or opinion in a matter of fact manner.
Eg., *I think we should raise our kids to have good values but I don't want to force them to agree with me.*
- 2 a) **tone:** mild/medium **content:** imploring
Asking other to see own view-point in a mild or medium imploring tone.
Eg., *Don't you see what I mean?*
- b) **tone:** mild/medium **content:** comparative/competitive clarification
Directly comparing own perspective to that of the other in an attempt to establish superiority of own perspective.
Eg., *Three kids? I was thinking four or five would be better?*
- 3 a) **tone:** medium **content:** convincing/lecturing
More emphatic attempt to make the other agree with own perspective. Supplying evidence for own position through examples or self disclosure.
E.g., *I'd like to be able to talk to my kids about anything. I want them to trust me. My mom treats me like I'm five and it drives me crazy.*
- b) **tone:** medium **content:** commanding/ordering
Directly ordering the other to perform a task or take a position.
E.g., *You hold the card and read the questions. I'll do the talking.*
- 4 a) **tone:** high **content:** demanding
Demanding that other agree with own perspective in a intense, emotional tone.
E.g., *Just listen to me. You have to understand what I'm saying.*
- b) **tone:** high **content:** pleading
Begging or pleading with other to accept own point of view in a high emotional tone.
E.g., *Please, can you just agree with me for once.*

Verbal Interaction Observer Coding Manual

BEING PERSUADED

*** Score based on quality of verbalizations and voice tone.

QUALITIES MEASURED: perspective taking; surrendering, giving in

* The code for being persuaded is unique in that it is somewhat dependent on the behavior of the partner. There must be an opinion or position that the individual is being persuaded to (i.e., the partner is trying to persuade). Also there is the assumption that the two partners are starting with opposite opinions and the ratee is moving towards agreement with the partner. If both participants start with the same position, support is the more likely code.

SCORE

- 0 Code 0 if individual is not giving in or taking the other's perspective at all during the segment.
- 1
 - a) **tone:** neutral/negative **content:** acknowledging
Begrudging or perfunctory acknowledgment of other's perspective.
E.g., *I guess I can see that.*
 - b) **tone:** neutral/negative **content:** surrendering
Surrendering a little bit with a begrudging or resentful tone.
E.g., *Alright-whatever you say.*
- 2
 - a) **tone:** mild positive **content:** acknowledging; backing off
More genuine or amiable acknowledgment of other's perspective, but not full acceptance of other's view.
E.g., *Yes, but....*
- 3
 - a) **tone:** genuine **content:** acknowledging; affirming
Completely genuine acknowledgment of the other's perspective with a surrendering or conceding quality.
E.g., *Yeah-I see. That actually makes sense.*
- 4
 - a) **tone:** conciliatory **content:** adoption of the other's perspective
Genuine endorsement of the other's perspective, forsaking own perspective.
E.g., *You're right. That makes more sense than what I was saying.*

Verbal Interaction Observer Coding Manual

GLOBAL CODES

POSITIVE CONNECTEDNESS/AFFECTION

Qualities measured:

- a) Physical affection: holding hands, kissing, sprawling legs over on the other, any positive physical contact
- b) Affectionate speech, responsiveness, warmth, connection
- c) Self-disclosure

Score:

- 1 Not positively connected/affectionate - distant
- 2 Somewhat positively connected/affectionate - moderate affection or one person conveys closeness but the other does not
- 3 Highly positively connected/affectionate - reciprocity, closeness, familiarity

UNKINDNESS/SNOTTINESS

Qualities measured:

- a) negative physical interaction - slapping, pushing, hitting, any negative physical contact.
- b) unkind verbalizations - name calling, devaluing
- c) sarcastic or scornful responses to other's ideas/opinions

Score:

- 1 Not snotty or unkind
- 2 Somewhat snotty or unkind
- 3 Very snotty or unkind

DISTRIBUTION OF CONVERSATION

Qualities Measured: Relative control of course of conversation as evidenced by the amount of talking.

Score:

- 1 Male dominates the conversation - more than 50% of the talking is done by the male, the male dictates the course of the conversation
- 2 Equal conversation - both partners speak equally; the course of the conversation is mutually determined
- 3 Female dominates the conversation - more than 50% of the conversation is done by the female, the female dictates the course of the conversation

Verbal Interaction Observer Coding Manual

Global Codes Interaction Task Dating Couples Project

Coder _____

Couple ID _____

Date _____

Positive connectedness/affection

Circle one

- 1 Not positively connected; distant
- 2 Somewhat positively connected or affectionate; moderate affection or one person conveys closeness and the other doesn't
- 3 Highly positively connected or affectionate; reciprocity, closeness, familiarity

Unkindness/snottiness

Circle one

- 1 not snotty or unkind
- 2 somewhat snotty or unkind
- 3 very snotty or unkind

Distribution of Conversation

- 1 Male dominates the conversation
- 2 Equal amount of talking
- 3 Female dominates the conversation

1. Gender (Circle one): Male Female
2. Age: _____
3. Ethnic background:
- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ African American | ☐ Native American |
| ☐ White | ☐ Asian |
| ☐ Hispanic | |
4. Highest grade completed:
- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| ☐ 8th | ☐ 11th |
| ☐ 9th | ☐ 12th |
| ☐ 10th | ☐ Started college or technical school |
5. Are you currently enrolled in school?
- ☐ Yes, full time
☐ Yes, part time
☐ No
6. Are you currently employed?
- ☐ Yes, full time
☐ Yes, part time
☐ No
7. Educational goals (What do you plan to do?):
- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Finish high school | ☐ Graduate School |
| ☐ Some college courses | ☐ Technical School |
| ☐ College degree | ☐ Other _____ |
8. With whom do you live? (Check all that apply):
- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Parents (biological, step, or foster) | ☐ Male friends |
| ☐ Brothers/sisters | ☐ Female friends |
| ☐ Other adult relatives | ☐ Boyfriend or girlfriend |
| ☐ Non-related adults | |
9. What is your parents' marital status?
- ☐ Married to each other
☐ Separated from each other
☐ Divorced from each other
☐ Never married to each other
☐ Deceased
10. Religious Affiliation:
- ☐ Protestant (specify denomination) _____
☐ Catholic
☐ Jewish
☐ Muslim
☐ Other (please specify) _____
☐ None
11. What is the highest grade your mother completed?
- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| ☐ 8th | ☐ Some college |
| ☐ 9th | ☐ Technical school |
| ☐ 10th | ☐ College graduate |
| ☐ 11th | ☐ Graduate school |
| ☐ 12th | |

12. What is the highest grade your father completed?

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| ☐ 8th | ☐ Some college |
| ☐ 9th | ☐ Technical school |
| ☐ 10th | ☐ College graduate |
| ☐ 11th | ☐ Graduate school |
| ☐ 12th | |

13. What is your mother's occupation?

14. What is your father's occupation?

15. How would you describe where you live?

- ☐ Urban (city)
☐ Suburban (subdivision)
☐ Rural (country)

16. How many weeks have you and your partner been dating? _____

	<u>Never</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Once a month</u>	<u>2-4 times a month</u>	<u>5-8 times a month</u>	<u>9-15 times a month</u>	<u>Daily</u>
17. How often do you smoke cigarettes?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. How often do you drink alcohol (beer, wine, whiskey, etc.)?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. How often do you smoke pot (marijuana)?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. How often do you use cocaine or crack?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. How often do you use any other illegal drugs?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

22. Do you ever worry about having an addiction to drugs or alcohol?

- ☐ yes
☐ no

23. Have you ever gotten into legal trouble because of drugs or alcohol?

- ☐ yes
☐ no

1. How old were you when you went out on your first date? _____
2. How important is dating to you?
 - ☐ Not important at all
 - ☐ Slightly important
 - ☐ Moderately important
 - ☐ Extremely important
3. From whom did you learn the most about sex?

☐ Parent	☐ Dating Partner	☐ Sex Education at school
☐ Brother/Sister	☐ Friends	☐ Television/Movies
☐ Other relatives	☐ Church	☐ Books/Magazines
4. How does your knowledge about sex compare to the knowledge of your friends?
 - ☐ I know less about sex.
 - ☐ I know about the same.
 - ☐ I know more about sex.
5. How does your sexual experience compare to the experience of your friends?
 - ☐ I am less experienced.
 - ☐ I have the same amount of experience.
 - ☐ I am more experienced.
6. Have you ever had sexual intercourse?
 - ☐ No.
 - ☐ Yes.

IF YOU HAVE NEVER HAD SEXUAL INTERCOURSE, SKIP TO QUESTION #19.

7. How old were you when you had sex (intercourse) for the first time? _____
8. What was your relationship with this person?
 - ☐ boyfriend/girlfriend at the time
 - ☐ boyfriend/girlfriend (same as current partner)
 - ☐ friend
 - ☐ casual acquaintance (example: friend of a friend)
 - ☐ stranger (someone you had just met)
 - ☐ relative
 - ☐ other _____
9. Why did you decide to have sex the first time? (Check the most important reason.)

☐ I was ready.	☐ I was in love.
☐ All my friends were having sex.	☐ I was drunk or high.
☐ My girlfriend/boyfriend wanted to have sex.	☐ I was forced to have sex.
☐ I wanted to have a baby.	☐ I didn't know how to say no.
☐ I was horny.	☐ I was dared.
☐ I wanted the closeness.	☐ I don't know.
☐ Other _____	

10. How would you describe your first sexual intercourse experience?

Terrific										Disaster
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		10

11. How often do you use birth control (i.e., the pill, condoms, etc.)?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ About half the time
- ☐ Most times
- ☐ Always

12. Why don't you use birth control every time? (Check the most important reason.)

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ I do use it all the time. | ☐ Not important to me. |
| ☐ Can't afford it. | ☐ Don't want parents to find out. |
| ☐ Don't know where to get it. | ☐ Embarrassed to ask about it. |
| ☐ Don't know how to talk about it with my partner. | ☐ Against my religious beliefs. |
| ☐ Don't always have it with me. | ☐ Don't know how to use it. |
| ☐ Don't know which one to use. | ☐ Don't like to use it. |
| ☐ My partner doesn't like to use it. | ☐ Don't want to interrupt sex. |

13. Why do you use birth control? (Check the most important reason.)

- ☐ Don't want pregnancy to happen.
- ☐ Don't want to get STD (Sexually Transmitted Diseases).
- ☐ Don't want to get AIDS.
- ☐ My girlfriend/boyfriend wanted me to.
- ☐ Someone told me to use it.
- ☐ I don't use birth control.

14. How often do you use condoms (rubbers)?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ About half the time
- ☐ Most times
- ☐ Always

15. If you had a choice, what type of birth control would you like to use or have your girlfriend/boyfriend use? (Check one or more)

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| ☐ The Pill | ☐ Foam, Jelly | ☐ Sponges | ☐ Withdrawal | ☐ Rhythm |
| ☐ Condoms | ☐ Diaphragm | ☐ Douche | ☐ Norplant(patch) | ☐ I.U.D. |

16. During the last month, which of the following birth control methods have you or your current girlfriend/boyfriend actually used (check all that apply)?

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| ☐ The Pill | ☐ Foam, Jelly | ☐ Sponges | ☐ Withdrawal | ☐ Rhythm |
| ☐ Condoms | ☐ Diaphragm | ☐ Douche | ☐ Norplant(patch) | ☐ I.U.D. |

17. Have you ever been pregnant or have you ever gotten anyone pregnant?

- ☐ No.
- ☐ Yes.

18. If you answered yes,

a. How many times? _____Times.

b. What was the outcome of each pregnancy? (Enter the number of pregnancies that resulted in each of the following outcomes.)

- ☐ Birth
- ☐ Abortion
- ☐ Miscarriage

19. If you have never had sex (intercourse), why haven't you? (Check the most important reason).

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ I have had sex. | ☐ Religious beliefs. |
| ☐ Nobody wants to have sex with me. | ☐ I'm not ready. |
| ☐ I can't get birth control. | ☐ I'm not in love. |
| ☐ Pressure from my parents to wait. | ☐ Pressure from my friends to wait. |
| ☐ I don't want to. | ☐ Other _____ |

20. If you are female, how old were you when you had your first period? _____

21. Have you ever visited a health care professional or clinic for issues related to sexual activity?

- ☐ No.
☐ Yes.

How many times have you:

	Never	1-3 Times	4-6 Times	7-15 Times	16-50 Times	51 or More Times
22. Gone out on a date	1	2	3	4	5	6
23. Gone home with a stranger you have just met	1	2	3	4	5	6
24. Gone on a group date with several couples	1	2	3	4	5	6
25. Had sexual activity with a person of the same sex as you	1	2	3	4	5	6
26. Masturbated	1	2	3	4	5	6
27. Viewed a pornographic video/movie	1	2	3	4	5	6
28. Viewed a pornographic magazine	1	2	3	4	5	6
29. Talked with your parents about sex	1	2	3	4	5	6
30. Talked with your parents about contraception	1	2	3	4	5	6
31. Talked with a dating partner about sex	1	2	3	4	5	6
32. Talked with a dating partner about contraception	1	2	3	4	5	6
33. Talked with a friend about sex	1	2	3	4	5	6
34. Talked with a friend about contraception	1	2	3	4	5	6
35. Been turned down for sex	1	2	3	4	5	6
36. Felt embarrassed, sad, or ashamed about sex	1	2	3	4	5	6
37. Felt assured, happy, or proud about sex	1	2	3	4	5	6
38. Had sexual fantasies	1	2	3	4	5	6

Sexual Behaviors Questionnaire

ID# _____

In the past 1 MONTH, how many times have you and your current partner done the following:

How many times have you:

	<u>Never</u>	<u>1-3 Times</u>	<u>4-6 Times</u>	<u>7-15 Times</u>	<u>16-50 Times</u>	<u>51 or More Times</u>
39. Held hands	1	2	3	4	5	6
40. Kissed	1	2	3	4	5	6
41. Touched each other intimately with clothes on	1	2	3	4	5	6
42. Touched each other intimately with clothes off	1	2	3	4	5	6
43. Had oral sex	1	2	3	4	5	6
44. Had sexual intercourse	1	2	3	4	5	6

45. During the past six months, with how many different people have you had sexual intercourse? ____

46. During your lifetime, with how many different people have you had sexual intercourse? ____

47. Have you ever had any of the following?

___ AIDS
___ Herpes
___ Syphilis

___ Chlamydia
___ Gonorrhea
___ None of the above

48. How comfortable are you talking to your partner about sex?

Very Comfortable
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Extremely Uncomfortable
10

49. How comfortable are you initiating sexual activity (kissing, touching, intercourse, etc.) with your partner?

Very Comfortable
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Extremely Uncomfortable
10

50. How comfortable are you refusing sexual activity (kissing, touching, intercourse, etc.) with your partner?

Very Comfortable
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Extremely Uncomfortable
10

51. How would you describe the feelings between you and your boyfriend/girlfriend?

___ We like each other, but do not love each other.
___ I love him/her, but he/she does not love me.
___ He/She loves me, but I do not love him/her.
___ We love each other.

Directions: Please use the scale below to answer the following questions regarding your relationship with your Dating Partner.

	Not At All	A Little	Quite A Bit	Very Much
1. To what extent could you turn to this person for advice about problems?	1	2	3	4
2. How often do you need to work hard to avoid conflict with this person?	1	2	3	4
3. To what extent could you count on this person for help with a problem?	1	2	3	4
4. How upset does this person sometimes make you feel?	1	2	3	4
5. To what extent can you count on this person to give you honest feedback, even if you might not want to hear it?	1	2	3	4
6. How much does this person make you feel guilty?	1	2	3	4
7. How much do you have to "give in" in this relationship?	1	2	3	4
8. To what extent can you count on this person to help you if a family member very close to you died?	1	2	3	4
9. How much does this person want you to change?	1	2	3	4
10. How positive a role does this person play in your life?	1	2	3	4
11. How significant is this relationship in your life?	1	2	3	4
12. How close will your relationship be with this person in 10 years?	1	2	3	4
13. How much would you miss this person if the two of you could not see or talk with each other for a month?	1	2	3	4
14. How critical of you is this person?	1	2	3	4
15. If you wanted to go out and do something this evening, how confident are you that this person would be willing to do something with you?	1	2	3	4
16. How responsible do you feel for this person's well-being?	1	2	3	4
17. How much do you depend on this person?	1	2	3	4
18. To what extent can you count on this person to change?	1	2	3	4
19. How much would you like this person to change?	1	2	3	4
20. How angry does this person make you feel?	1	2	3	4
21. How much do you argue with this person?	1	2	3	4
22. To what extent can you really count on this person to distract you from your worries when you feel under stress?	1	2	3	4
23. How often does this person make you feel angry?	1	2	3	4
24. How often does this person try to control or influence your life?	1	2	3	4
25. How much more do you give than you get from this relationship?	1	2	3	4

Please circle the number to the right of each item that best describes your feelings about your current romantic relationship. Write the first name of your partner here. _____

	<u>Strongly Agree</u>		<u>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</u>		<u>Strongly Disagree</u>
1. I'm dedicated to making my relationship as fulfilling as it can be.	1	2	3	4	5
2. A break-up of my relationship would ruin my reputation.	1	2	3	4	5
3. It is morally wrong to leave your partner.	1	2	3	4	5
4. No matter what, my partner knows that I'll always be there for him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I have to stay with my partner or else my family will think badly of me.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I was raised to believe that once one gets involved in a romantic relationship, one doesn't leave, no matter how unsatisfying it may be.	1	2	3	4	5
7. It would be humiliating if my partner and I split up.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I am completely devoted to my partner.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Love relationships are suppose to last forever.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Even if I wanted to, it would be impossible for me to leave my partner.	1	2	3	4	5
11. When things go wrong in my relationship, I consider it okay to get out of it.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I would not be embarrassed about a break-up of my relationship.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I truly believe that partners should remain devoted to one another in good times and bad.	1	2	3	4	5
14. There is nothing that I wouldn't sacrifice for my partner.	1	2	3	4	5
15. My family would strongly disapprove if I left my partner.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I don't feel obligated to remain with my partner.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I've spent so much money on my relationship with my partner that I could never leave him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I want to grow old with my partner.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I would be shattered if my partner and I split up.	1	2	3	4	5
20. My friends would disapprove if I ended my relationship.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I could never leave my partner because it would go against everything I believe in.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I believe that romantic relationships are sacred.	1	2	3	4	5
23. A romantic relationship should be protected at all costs.	1	2	3	4	5
24. If there are too many problems in a relationship, it's okay to get out.	1	2	3	4	5
25. I like knowing that my partner and I form an inseparable unit.	1	2	3	4	5
26. When I imagine what my life will be like in the future, I always see my partner standing next to me.	1	2	3	4	5
27. Under no circumstances should the relationship bond be broken.	1	2	3	4	5

	<u>Strongly Agree</u>		<u>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</u>		<u>Strongly Disagree</u>
28. I frequently daydream about what it would be like to be with someone other than my partner.	1	2	3	4	5
29. I'm not very devoted to my partner.	1	2	3	4	5
30. I feel free to leave my partner if I so desire.	1	2	3	4	5
31. I can imagine several situations in which the romantic relationship should end.	1	2	3	4	5
32. When my partner and I first got together as a couple, we knew we would be together forever.	1	2	3	4	5
33. I often think that my partner and I have too many differences.	1	2	3	4	5
34. I don't think I could handle the shame of breaking-up.	1	2	3	4	5
35. I don't think it's morally wrong to leave your partner.	1	2	3	4	5
36. I don't believe that romantic relationships should last forever.	1	2	3	4	5
37. I am not confident that my relationship will last forever.	1	2	3	4	5
38. My partner and I remain together because we value the idea of a romantic partnership.	1	2	3	4	5
39. I often think about what it would be like to be romantically involved with someone other than my partner.	1	2	3	4	5
40. It would be shameful if my partner and I broke-up.	1	2	3	4	5
41. I could never leave my partner; I have too much invested in him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
42. I believe that a romantic relationship is for life regardless of what happens.	1	2	3	4	5
43. I'm afraid that if I were to leave my partner, God would punish me.	1	2	3	4	5
44. It would be particularly hard on my family and friends if my partner and I split up.	1	2	3	4	5
45. My future plans do not include my partner.	1	2	3	4	5

DATING COUPLES PROJECT FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Are you still dating the person with whom you participated in this study?

- a. Yes
- b. No

2. What are you doing now?

School:

- a. Not attending school right now
- b. High School
- c. Technical School
- d. College
- e. Graduate School

Employment:

- a. Not employed right now
- b. Employed part-time
- c. Employed full-time

Dating:

- a. Not seeing anyone right now
- b. Seeing several people right now
- c. In a relationship with one person
- d. Engaged
- e. Married

Living with:

- a. Parents
- b. Friends
- c. Girlfriend or Boyfriend
- d. Self only
- e. None of the choices listed

3. If you are dating someone right now, how satisfying is your relationship with your partner?

Not Much					A Little						A Great Deal
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		

4. If you are not currently dating the person you participated in our study with:

a. When did you break up? Month: Year:

b. Why?

c. How many people have you dated since? _____ people

5. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us (either about yourself or about our study):

VITA

Sharon Scales Rostosky was born in Knoxville, Tennessee on April 21, 1959. She received her Bachelors of Music degree in Piano Performance from Mars Hill College in Mars Hill, North Carolina in 1980. In 1982, she received a Masters of Church Music degree from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. After working as a youth minister, children's minister, and music minister in churches in Greensboro and Columbus, Georgia, she decided to pursue her interest in counseling and enrolled in an evening school program at Georgia State University. In 1990, she received the Masters of Community Counseling degree from Georgia State University. In 1993, she moved to Knoxville to pursue the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Education with a specialization in Counseling Psychology. While in graduate school, she has been a two time recipient of the Hilton A. Smith Fellowship and was inducted into the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society. The doctoral degree was received May, 1998.

Currently, Sharon Rostosky is a 1997-98 Sexuality Research Fellow with the Social Science Research Council.