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UPDATED

**ADOLESCENT DATING RELATIONSHIPS AND
CONSISTENCY OF CONDOM USE**

Wendy D. Manning

Christine M. Flanigan

Peggy C. Giordano

Monica A. Longmore

Department of Sociology

and Center for Family and Demographic Research

Bowling Green State University

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Wendy D. Manning

Christine M. Flanigan

Peggy C. Giordano

Monica A. Longmore

Department of Sociology
and Center for Family and Demographic Research
Bowling Green State University
Bowling Green, Ohio 43403
wmannin@bgsu.edu

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Adolescent Dating Relationships and Consistency of Condom Use

Context: Research on teen condom use often focuses on the influence of parents, peers, and environmental factors. Although most sexually active teens have sex within dating relationships, we know little about how the characteristics of dating relationships are associated with consistent condom use.

Methods: Data on 269 teens in Wave 1 of the Toledo Adolescent Relationship Study who had sex in their most recent relationships were analyzed to examine how qualities of their relationship are associated with condom use. Odds ratios based on logistic regression models predicting consistent condom use are presented.

Results: Drawing on the analytic sample of teens who had sex with their dating partner, relationship qualities are significantly related to the consistency of condom use. Both negative relationship dynamics (conflict, control, mistrust, jealousy, partner inferiority) and positive qualities (love, enmeshment, salience, self disclosure) are statistically significantly associated with consistency of condom use (OR .65-.89). Similar to prior studies, demographic asymmetries (age, race, neighborhood) are not related to consistent condom use. Relationship duration is negatively associated with consistent condom use (OR .98-.99), but the effect of duration is explained by feelings of relationship importance. The role of relationship qualities is similar for boys and girls.

Conclusions: Although the relationship processes associated with consistent condom use are complex, such processes appear to be more strongly associated with consistent condom use than are sociodemographic characteristics. The findings suggest programs should focus on relationship qualities and dynamics, recognizing that both negative and positive relationship features are associated with consistent condom use.

Adolescent Dating Relationships and Consistency of Condom Use

It is well recognized that teen contraceptive use is increasing and that most of the increase stems from increased use of condoms.¹ Yet adolescents are, on average, inconsistent in their condom use.² Less than one-half of boys and just 28% of girls reported using a condom every time they had sexual intercourse.² Inconsistent condom use puts teens at increased risk for sexually transmitted infections. In fact, each year more than nine million young people in the U.S. become infected with an STI.³ While many factors may influence youths' decisions regarding condom use, such decisions are made within the context of their sexual relationships. One of the most proximate factors associated with condom use is the nature of the relationship with the romantic partner. For example, teens shift contraceptive use patterns across sexual relationships, indicating that teens must navigate sexual decisions in each new relationship. Thus, the qualities and characteristics of dating and sexual relationships are expected to influence their assessment of sexual risk and condom use.⁴

BACKGROUND

Recent research has recognized the importance of considering the relationship context for understanding adolescent sexual behavior and contraceptive use.^{5, 6, 7, 8} Studies show that the vast majority of teens have their first sexual experience with a boyfriend or girlfriend and almost all teens have had sex at some point within the confines of dating relationships.^{9, 10}

The evidence, however, regarding the association between relationship type and contraceptive use is mixed.¹¹ Some research shows that condom and contraceptive use is greater in dating relationships relative to more casual sexual relationships.^{4, 6, 10, 12} One plausible explanation is that contraceptive use is greater with dating partners because sex may more often be planned, and may be tied to feelings of love and trust. Another potential explanation is ease

of rapport or comfort in discussing contraception; for example, daters who express more of a 'couple orientation' report higher odds of discussing contraception.¹³ Such discussions about contraception are associated positively with greater odds of contraceptive use.¹⁴

At the same time, there is conflicting research documenting greater odds of contraceptive use in more casual relationships.^{12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20} These findings are consistent with the notion that teens perceive greater sexual risk with more casual partners and act accordingly to protect themselves. Also, teens' greater contraceptive use in casual sexual relationships may be associated with less trust and commitment to their sexual partners resulting in more need to protect oneself from the potential risk of a sexually transmitted infection. Some of the explanations for the mixed findings about the link between relationship type and contraceptive use may be due to differences in definitions of relationships (e.g., romantic, liked, casual, non-romantic, non-dating), whether the focus is on first sexual partnership or most recent experience, as well as the gender of the respondent.

Although it has been important to examine contraceptive use based on dating status (e.g., casual versus romantic), it is also critical to explore in greater depth dating relationships themselves, because such relationships have been shown to be the most common context for sexual activity in adolescence. Apart from relationship type, there has been little attention to the characteristics of relationships. Prior studies have examined how demographic heterogeneity (e.g., age, race, and school or neighborhood characteristics of respondents and dating partners) is associated with contraceptive use. The demographic measures of heterogeneity, however, in terms of age, race, ethnicity, and neighborhood generally are not related to contraceptive use or condom use in dating relationships.^{6, 7} Yet, respondents who report that their boyfriend or girlfriend is not in school or goes to a different school have lower odds of condom use.⁶

Another way the character of dating relationships is measured is with respect to duration. The effect of duration in dating relationships depends on sexual history, measure of contraceptive use, and definition of duration. The sawtooth hypothesis developed by Ku et al. finds that among young men (ages 17-22) condom use is greater early on in a dating relationship and then diminishes with relationship duration, which then increases again at the start of the subsequent relationship.^{17, 21} However, some recent empirical evidence that evaluates condom use across relationships finds that longer relationship durations are positively associated with ever using condoms or contraception in the relationship. Longer relationship durations (measured from first intercourse to last intercourse) are associated with high odds of condom and contraceptive use,^{6, 7, 22} but a negative relationship exists between duration and consistently using contraception.^{7, 21, 22} It appears that duration is positively associated with whether teens use contraception, but is negatively linked to consistently using contraception. This is not surprising from an ‘exposure’ argument. The longer the relationship progresses, the odds of using some contraception increases simply because the couple is together longer, which increases the opportunities for using some contraceptive method. Similarly, as relationship duration increases, the opportunities to stop using a method increase leading to more inconsistent method use. Thus, researchers should be careful about imputing subjective meaning to duration. Rather, it may be more useful to examine the meaning of relationships from the perspective of the sexually active daters.

Specifically, we argue that research focusing on duration of the relationship or basic distinctions such as casual versus primary sex partners may not fully capture variation in the qualities and dynamics of adolescent romantic relationships. Thus, it is important to examine further how relationship dynamics and characteristics influence condom use. For example,

certainly not all adolescent dating relationships share similar levels of love, trust, and commitment. A focus on the qualities of dating relationships may also help elucidate the mechanisms that are underlying the associations between relationship type and contraceptive use.²³

There has been some recent attention to the nature of the dating relationships and contraceptive use. Researchers have used the Add Health as a new source of nationally representative data on couple relationship behaviors (e.g., meet parents, exchange gifts, tell others a couple, spend less time with peers, and say I love you), violence in the relationship, and exclusivity. Overall, there is a positive relationship between the number of couple activities and contraceptive use.⁴ Yet, only among boys is there a positive relationship between the number of couple activities and the odds of using and consistently using contraception. A similar relationship is not observed among sexually experienced girls in dating sexual relationships.¹⁴ A limitation of the strategy of summing the number of enacted behaviors is that this treats all relationship features equally, when in fact some factors could potentially be of greater relative importance (e.g., love rather than exchange of gifts). Although recent⁴ analyses do document an association between romantic behaviors and contraceptive use, more subjectively experienced aspects of these relationships are not assessed.¹⁴ There is some evidence from small scale studies of sexual relationships that relationship qualities influence condom use. For example, research focusing on sexual relationships among young adults (daters as well as cohabitators) suggests that emotional closeness¹⁵ and higher relationship quality among young adults with a STD¹⁶ are associated with lower condom use. The importance of a particular relationship is also negatively related to consistent condom use for some subgroups of teens (white females).²⁴ Additionally other studies emphasize the importance of communication or self disclosure with

greater communication among sexual partners being linked to increased odds of consistent contraceptive or condom use.^{25, 26, 27, 28, 29}

In addition to examining a range of positive relationship qualities that are associated with contraceptive use, it is also important to determine whether negative relationship dynamics are also associated with contraceptive use patterns. For example, relationship violence or abuse is not tied to use or consistent use of contraception among sexually inexperienced teenagers.⁷ Among sexually experienced teens violence is related to consistency of contraceptive use only for girls.¹⁴ In addition, the majority of teens do not report engaging in romantic partner violence; thus attention should be paid to a wider array of more negative or troubling dynamics that could potentially be linked to contraceptive consistency (e.g., jealousy, conflict, or controlling behaviors). Research based on teens participating in a STD clinic finds that the partner with the greater power or control was more able to enforce his/her wishes regarding condom use.³⁰

Another potentially important negative relationship quality is non-exclusivity. Although adolescents in non-exclusive sexual relationships perceive or have higher risks of STDs,^{31, 32} they do not always protect themselves. For instance, exclusivity in dating relationships is tied to greater use of contraception and condoms.^{33, 34} Analysis of sexually experienced girls and boys indicates that although non-exclusivity ‘should’ motivate greater risk prevention, it is not necessarily related to use or consistency of contraceptive use,⁴ even among sexually active girls in romantic relationships.²² In brief, this array of findings suggests that further assessments of exclusivity and perhaps trust are warranted.

CURRENT INVESTIGATION

This paper builds on prior research on adolescent contraceptive use in three key ways. First, prior studies on the relationship context of adolescent condom use have not included a comprehensive range of relationship qualities. We evaluate how specific relationship qualities as experienced and reported by teenagers are associated with consistent condom use. Second, this work will help to understand the connection between relationship duration and consistent condom use. Rather than impute the meanings of relationships based on duration (e.g., longer relationships may not mean greater love and commitment), we are able to control for duration and directly evaluate how specific relationship qualities are associated with consistency of condom use. This may help untangle the confounding results regarding relationship duration and condom use reported in prior work. Third, we focus on consistent condom use because it is the most effective way to avoid sexually transmitted infections, and adolescent consistency of condom use is quite low.

We examine two sets of hypotheses. First, based on prior work we anticipate that positive aspects of relationships (e.g., love, relationship salience, intimate self disclosure, and feelings of enmeshment) will be associated with less consistent condom use. As dating couples become emotionally intimate, their perceptions of the need to protect themselves against sexually transmitted infections could be weakened. An alternative hypothesis is that couples with more positive relationships may want to protect their relationships and their own sexual health by consistently using condoms. Next, focusing on more problematic aspects of romantic relationships, we expect that dating relationships characterized by negative features (e.g., jealousy, mistrust, conflict, lack of exclusivity, partner inferiority, and control) will be associated with inconsistent condom use. The negative interactions and feelings may impair the couple's ability to effectively use condoms every time they have sexual intercourse. A competing

hypothesis, however, is that negative feelings and interactions may be linked with more concerns, particularly about the partner's sexual behavior outside of the relationship, and hence result in greater consistency of condom use.

METHODS

Data

We draw on the Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study (TARS), a representative survey of 1,321 7th, 9th, and 11th graders in 2002. The sample was drawn from school rosters from 62 schools in the Toledo area (Lucas County, OH) and respondents did not need to be attending school to be interviewed. The interviews were conducted in person and respondents entered most of their responses directly into a laptop computer to ensure privacy for sensitive questions. A paper and pencil parent questionnaire was administered to a parent or guardian (primarily mothers) at the same time the adolescent was interviewed. Although the TARS sample is not nationally representative, Lucas County does resemble national averages on characteristics of households with teenage children, such as median income (\$53,000 in Lucas County vs. \$52,770 for the U.S.) and education levels (87% of Lucas County household heads are high school graduates, compared to 82% of U.S. household heads). Similarly, 69% of Lucas County teens are non-Hispanic White and 63% of U.S. teens are non-Hispanic White and 69% of teens in Lucas County live in married couple households and 72% of teens nationwide.

The analytic sample consists of teenagers who report having sexual intercourse with the current or most recent boyfriend or girlfriend. The data include a rich array of questions about the qualities of dating relationships. Dating in this study is defined as "liking someone who likes you back." Most teens in our sample (972) reported on their most recent relationship, which may have been ongoing at the time of the interview or may have ended. Among teens who reported

on a recent relationship, 273 (28%) had sex with their more recent dating partner. This is similar to levels among similarly aged daters in the National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health.³⁵ Our sample contains 269 girls and boys who had sex with their current or most recent dating partner and who did not have missing data on relationship qualities or contraceptive use.

Measures

Dependent Variable. The dependent variable is consistency of condom use. Those who never used contraception with the partner, or never used a condom specifically, are recoded as “no” on consistent condom use. Those who said they used a condom as their primary contraceptive method or in addition to some other primary method were asked about consistency of use, with six response options ranging from “every time we have sex” to “a few times” (1-10%). These responses are used to form a dichotomous variable contrasting those who use condoms “every time we have sex” with all categories of condom use.

Relationship Qualities. We include six negative relationship qualities. *Control* is based on two statements including, partner “sometimes wants to control what I do,” and partner “always tries to change me.”³⁶ The five-item response category ranges from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The alpha for the control scale is .71. Level of *conflict* is measured with the following two questions, which ask about how often the respondent and partner: “have disagreements or arguments;” and “yell or shout at each other.” The five-item response category ranges from never to very often and the alpha is .86. *Mistrust* of partner is measured with the following statement: “there are times when {partner’s name} cannot be trusted.”³⁷ The five response options are strongly disagree to strongly agree. *Partner inferiority* is measured by the statement: “{partner’s name} is not good enough for me,” with five response options ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. *Jealousy* is measured by a single statement with five

response options (strongly disagree to strongly agree): “when {partner’s name} is around other girls/guys, I get jealous.” *Non-exclusivity agreement* is a yes/no variable comparing those couples who agreed it was okay to see other people with those couples who do not have such an agreement.

This study includes four positive relationship qualities. *Intimate self-disclosure* draws on three questions that ask how often the respondent and partner talk about the following things: “something really bad that happened;” “your home life and family;” and “your private thoughts and feelings.”³⁸ The five-item responses range from never to very often and the alpha is .86. *Enmeshment* is measured with the following item: “{partner’s name} and I are practically inseparable.” The five response options range from strongly disagree to strongly agree. *Passionate love* is measured with four statements: “I am very attracted to {partner’s name};” “the sight of {partner’s name} turns me on;” “I would rather be with {partner’s name} than anyone else;” and “{partner’s name} always seems to be on my mind.”³⁹ The five responses range from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The alpha is .84. *Relationship salience* is based on the item: “how important is your relationship with {partner’s name},” with the five possible responses ranging from not at all important to very important.

We include five demographic characteristics of the relationship. First, we include a dichotomous variable that indicates whether the *relationship was ongoing* at interview or had ended. Second, *duration* is measured as: “How long have you been (were you) together?” with eight response options ranging from “less than a week” to “a year or more,” and is recoded into constant units (weeks). The asymmetry measures include age, race, school, and sexual experience. Age heterogamy reflects whether the *male partner was older* by three or more years and is calculated by subtracting the female partner’s age from the male partner’s age, and then

dichotomizing the variable based on a three year differential. *Racial/ethnic heterogamy* is dichotomous and is generated by comparing the respondent's and partner's reported racial/ethnic group(s). The dichotomous variable measuring whether the respondent and partner *did not attend the same school* is based on the question: "Did you and {partner's name} attend the same school?" *Sexual experience asymmetry* is measured as whether only one member of the couple was a virgin prior to this relationship.

Sociodemographic Characteristics. The multivariate models include sociodemographic and family indicators commonly used to predict condom use among teens. *Age* is measured in years at the time of the interview. *Gender* is coded so that 0 = male and 1 = female. The respondent's *race/ethnicity* is based on two questions, the first on Hispanic/Latino ethnicity, and the second on race. These responses are combined to form four mutually exclusive race/ethnicity categories: Hispanic/Latino, non-Hispanic White, non-Hispanic Black, and non-Hispanic Other. *Self-esteem* is measured using six statements with five category responses (strongly disagree to strongly agree): "I am able to do things as well as other people;" "I feel that I have a number of good qualities;" "I feel I do not have much to be proud of" (reversed); "At times I think I am no good at all" (reversed); "I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others;" and "I take a positive attitude toward myself."⁴⁰ The alpha for the self-esteem scale is .72. School performance is based on a single item: "What grades did you get in school this year?" with 9 possible responses ranging from "mostly A's" to "mostly F's," with higher values reflecting higher grades. We measure whether the respondent was a *virgin prior to this relationship*, based on reported sexual histories. *Delinquency* is measured as the frequency of engaging in 10 delinquent acts (drank alcohol, carried a weapon, destroyed

property, etc.) in the past 12 months, with nine possible responses from “never” to “almost daily.”⁴¹ The alpha for the delinquency scale is .86.

There are five measures of family characteristics. *Family structure* is based on the family living situation as reported by the teen collapsed into four categories: single parent; two (biological) parents; stepfamily; and other (grandparent, other relatives, etc.). *Parent’s education* is drawn from the parent’s questionnaire (the vast majority completed by mother/female caregiver). Responses are collapsed into four categories: less than a high school education; high school graduate/GED; some training beyond high school but no 4-year degree; and 4-year college degree or more. *Parental monitoring* is a scale of six items asking the adolescent how often (five category responses, never to very often) he/she is allowed to make decisions on: “the time you must be home on weekend nights;” “the people you hang around with;” “what you wear;” “your social life;” “who you date;” and “how often you date.” This form of monitoring reflects adolescent decision-making. The alpha is .88. *Parental Communication about Dating/Sex* is a scale of the following six statements with five category responses (strongly disagree to strongly agree): “I can go to my parents when I have concerns or questions about the opposite sex;” “my parents sometimes talk to me about sex;” “my parents are really into my social life;” “my parents like to hear about the girl [guy] I like;” “my parents sometimes talk to me about birth control;” and “my parents sometimes talk to me about waiting to have sex until I am married.” The alpha on this scale is quite strong, .76.

Analysis

We use logistic regression to estimate the odds ratio of consistent condom use versus inconsistent or no condom use. Table 2 presents zero-order models for each relationship quality separately and Tables 3 and 4 present models that include the full set of covariates. We test

intermediate models with just sociodemographic or relationship characteristics, but only present the final model. Based on prior work we investigate whether the qualities of relationships are associated with condom use in different or are similar ways for boys and girls. We estimate interaction terms of gender and relationship qualities and discuss significant findings.

RESULTS

As shown in Table 1 nearly half (45%) of teens in our sample consistently use condoms with their boyfriend or girlfriend. Our estimates are slightly higher than national estimates of sexually active 15-19 year olds who may be in dating or non-dating sexual relationships.²

The zero-order models in Table 2 indicate that almost all of the positive relationship qualities (intimate self disclosure, passionate love, salience, enmeshment) are statistically significant and negatively associated with consistent condom use (OR=.78-.92). Teenagers who report greater self disclosure, express greater love, feel the relationship is quite important, and believe they are inseparable experience lower odds of consistent condom use.

The zero order models indicate that most of the negative relationship qualities (control, conflict, mistrust, partner inferiority, and jealousy) are negatively and statistically significantly associated with consistency of condom use (OR=.65-.87). Adolescents whose dating relationships are characterized by greater levels of control or influence by partner, higher levels of conflict, elevated feelings of mistrust, greater feelings of jealousy, and who believe that the partner is inferior, all experience lower odds of consistent condom use. Taken together, both positive and negative dating relationship qualities are associated with consistent condom use. The one exception is that teens who have agreed that their dating relationships can be non-monogamous experience 227% higher odds of consistent condom use. This subgroup of

teenagers are most likely accurately assessing their sexual risk and thus consistently using condoms.

The zero-order models in Table 2 show that teens in longer relationships have lower odds of consistent condom use (OR=.99) and teens who do not both attend the same school have lower odds of consistently using condoms (OR=.61). The remaining asymmetry measures (age, race, and sexual experience) are not associated with the consistency of condom use. The final set of covariates are the sociodemographic characteristics. Consistent with prior studies, girls report lower odds of consistent condom use than do boys (OR=.64). We do not find significant associations between age or race/ethnicity and consistency of condom use. Adolescents living in stepfamilies (OR=.55) and with highly educated parents (OR=.46) have lower odds of consistent condom use. Parental monitoring and communication about sex are not related to consistent condom use. Finally, the higher the delinquency score the lower the odds of consistent condom use (OR=.96). Teen's self esteem, grades, and sexual experience are not significantly associated with consistent condom use.

Multivariate models showcasing the relationships between negative relationship qualities and consistent condom use are presented in Table 3. The significant associations between consistent condom use and the negative relationship qualities (control, conflict, jealousy, mistrust, partner inferiority, and non-exclusivity) persist in multivariate models (OR=.65-3.27). Notably, the association between relationship qualities and consistency of condom use is not mediated by either sociodemographic variables or relationship characteristics. The relationship demographics which influence consistency of condom use are intact status and duration. Teens who are in intact relationships at time of interview have similar odds of consistent condom use as teens reporting on relationships that had ended in most of the multivariate models ($p < .10$ in

jealousy and exclusivity, OR=1.87-2.18). Duration is associated with lower odds of consistent condom use in each of the models (OR=.98-.99). Heterogamy in terms of age, race/ethnicity, attend the same school, and sexual experience is not associated with consistent condom use in the multivariate models. In the multivariate models the only sociodemographic characteristics related to consistent condom use are gender (OR=.46-.57), family structure (ORs range from .34 to .52 for those in stepfamilies and “other” living situations), parent’s education (ORs .34-.54 for those with some college or more), and delinquency (OR=.95-.96). Age, race/ethnicity, parental monitoring and communication, self-esteem, grades, and whether this is the teen’s first sexual relationship are not significantly related to consistency of condom use in any of the final models.

Table 4 presents the set of multivariate models showing that the positive relationship characteristics continue to be negatively associated with consistent condom use (OR=.67-.89) even after controlling for sociodemographic factors as well as descriptive characteristics of the relationship (demographic heterogamy and duration). Teens who are in intact relationships at time of interview have higher odds of consistent condom use (OR=1.76-2.01) than teens reporting on relationships that had ended in most of the multivariate models (the exception is $p > .10$ for model 2 including enmeshment). Relationship duration is significantly and negatively related to consistent condom use in almost all of the models (OR=.99). The only exception is the multivariate model predicting consistent condom use with relationship salience as the focal independent variable. In this model the salience of the relationship mediates the effect of relationship duration. Thus, the effect of duration on consistency of condom use is explained by feelings of importance of the relationship. The measures of heterogamy and sociodemographic characteristics have similar associations with consistent condom use in Table 4 as prior multivariate models.

We include interaction terms to evaluate whether relationship qualities are related in similar ways for boys and girls and find that the associations between relationship qualities and consistency of condom use are generally similar for boys and girls (results not shown). The one exception is that conflict has a significantly greater effect for girls than boys. Thus, as the amount of conflict increases, the odds of consistent condom use decrease for girls (OR=.66), but the effect of conflict in the relationship is not statistically significant for boys.

DISCUSSION

The findings from this paper move our understanding of adolescents' condom use consistency forward by focusing on dating relationship qualities and characteristics. Relationship qualities are significantly associated with the consistency of condom use even when sociodemographic and other basic relationship features (relationship duration and demographic heterogeneity) are included in the model. Even though girls report lower consistency of condom use in dating relationships our analyses indicate that the relationship qualities play a similar role boys and girls.

We find that both positive and negative relationship qualities are associated with inconsistent condom use. Teens who report higher levels of self-disclosure and stronger feelings of enmeshment, love, and salience experience less consistent condom use. Thus, adolescents who may be in higher quality relationships are in fact facing greater sexual risk by not using condoms consistently. At the same time, adolescents who report more conflict and control in their relationships and feelings of mistrust, jealousy and superiority have lower odds of consistently using condoms. Prior work has focused on relationship violence, but our study shows that more subtle negative relationship processes are also associated with inconsistent condom use. Adolescents in relationships in which the partners agree that the relationship is not

exclusive experience significantly greater odds of consistently using condoms. This suggests that this subgroup of teens are responding to potential sexual risks and engaging in safer sexual practices.

The findings also help to clarify prior confounding results in the literature. Due to the availability of duration data, the duration of relationships is often included as a measure of the character of a particular relationship. Relationships of longer duration are typically viewed as relationships with greater commitment or love because they have not been terminated. Yet, we find that the effect of duration on consistency of condom use can be explained by the inclusion of a covariate measuring importance of the relationship. Rather than impute meaning based on duration, future work should consider importance of the relationship or a similar measure as a key predictor of contraceptive use. Moreover, duration of the relationship does not explain the association between any of the relationship qualities and condom use.

Our work also may help explain why there are inconsistent findings about the association between relationship type and contraceptive use. We show that there is considerable variation in terms of both negative and positive relationship qualities. Additionally, prior work indicates that there is great variation in how non-dating sexual partners feel about their relationships.⁸ The basic distinction of casual and primary sexual partners may not be the best way to distinguish or understand adolescent sexual relationships and their sexual risk-taking behavior.

Study Limitations

This paper is limited to findings from one county of the United States. Although the study population is similar to national level samples of adolescents in terms of the distribution of the sample according to race and ethnicity, social class, and family structure,[†] it is important to replicate these findings with larger nationally representative samples. The study is also limited

to a cross-sectional analysis of the association between relationship qualities and consistency of condom use. Research that relies on longitudinal data may be better able to address causality issues. However, the time frame needs to be short between interviews to overcome selection issues that may arise from the relatively short duration of adolescent relationships. These results are an important first step in broadening our understanding of how adolescent relationships influence condom use. Further attention to how relationship qualities over the course of adolescence, not just at one time point, influence condom use is warranted. This study was not able to assess motivation for condom use that has been found to be related to method choice and dual use.²⁰ Future work should consider how qualities of the relationship and motivations relate. Finally, an important next step is to examine the role of condom use desires of individuals and partners in relationships and not just consistent condom use.³⁰

Policy and Program Implications

Sex education programs should include a greater focus on the relationship context of decision making. Many programs emphasize either abstinence or protection using contraception or condoms without much attention to relationships.¹¹ Programs may miss teens who are at risk if attention is limited to those in casual relationships. Certainly, teens in relationships that are characterized by control, high conflict and jealousy may be prone to less consistent condom use. At the same time other programs focus on building positive relationships.⁴² However, even features of positive adolescent relationships (high levels of trust and love) are associated with less consistent condom use. A programmatic emphasis should include the potential for multiple partners (non-exclusive) sexual relationships, which place the teens at heightened risk. Thus, prevention programs should work to heighten awareness of these complex links to relationship dynamics and the likelihood of maintaining a consistent pattern of condom use.

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FOOTNOTE

- + The TARS respondents are representative of teenagers in Lucas County, Ohio. At the same time, the respondents in the TARS are similar to similarly aged teenagers at the national level. The TARS includes 66% non-Hispanic white, 25% non-Hispanic African American teens while nationally 63% of 11-18 year olds are non-Hispanic white and 14% are non-Hispanic African American. In the TARS 65% of respondents live in married couple households and 21% live in single mother households. In contrast, nationally 72% of 11-18 olds live in married couple households and 19.5% live in single mother households. In terms of highest level of education, 88% of household heads in the TARS have a high school degree and nationwide 82% of household heads with children 11-18 have a high school degree. In the TARS data 23% of household heads have a college degree, and nationally 24% of household heads with children 11-18 have a college degree.

TABLE 1. Distribution of Dependent and Independent Variables Among Teens in Sexually Active Dating Relationships

	Mean/%	Range
<i>Consistent Condom Use (Dependent Var.)</i>	45.4%	0-1
<i>Relationship Qualities</i>		
Negative Qualities:		
Control	4.2	2-10
Conflict	5.1	2-10
Mistrust of Partner	2.4	1-5
Partner Inferior	2.3	1-5
Jealousy (Respondent)	2.9	1-5
Non-exclusivity Agreement	17.4%	0-1
Positive Qualities:		
Intimate Self Disclosure	11.2	3-15
Enmeshment	3.2	1-5
Passionate Love	15.1	4-20
Relationship Saliency	4.1	1-5
<i>Relationship Demographics</i>		
Relationship is Current (vs. Ended)	74.6%	0-1
Duration (Est. in Weeks)	39.7	0.5-78
Age Asymmetry	15.0%	0-1
Racial/Ethnic Asymmetry	20.6%	0-1
School Asymmetry	47.1%	0-1
Sexual Experience Asymmetry	34.3%	0-1
<i>Respondent's Sociodemographic Characteristics</i>		
Age	16.5	12-19
Gender:		
Male	54.2%	0-1
Female	45.8%	0-1
Race Ethnicity:		
Hispanic	9.5%	0-1
Non-Hispanic White	56.2%	0-1
Non-Hispanic Black	31.9%	0-1
Non-Hispanic Other	2.4%	0-1
Family Structure:		
Single Parent	29.3%	0-1
Two Biological Parents	40.6%	0-1
Stepfamily	17.2%	0-1
Other Living Situation	12.9%	0-1
Parent's Education:		
Less than High School	18.6%	0-1
High School	32.6%	0-1
>High School, No 4-Year Degree	33.4%	0-1
4-Year College Degree+	15.4%	0-1
Parental Monitoring	11.3	6-30
Parental Communication Re. Sex	19.2	7-30
Self-Esteem	24.2	10-30
Grades	5.7	1-9
Virgin Before This Relationship	45.2%	0-1
Delinquency	15.8	10-90

† $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Source: Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study Wave 1, N=269

TABLE 2. Zero-Order Models, Logistic Regression Predicting Consistent Condom Use Among Teens in Sexually Active Dating Relationships

	Zero Orders OR	
<i>Negative Relationship Qualities</i>		
Control	0.84	*
Conflict	0.84	**
Mistrust of Partner	0.78	*
Partner Inferior	0.70	**
Jealousy (Respondent)	0.65	***
Non-exclusivity Agreement	1.87	†
<i>Positive Relationship Qualities</i>		
Intimate Self Disclosure	0.92	*
Enmeshment	0.78	*
Passionate Love	0.92	*
Relationship Salience	0.78	†
<i>Relationship Demographics</i>		
Relationship is Current (vs. Ended)	1.39	
Duration (Est. in Weeks)	0.99	*
Age Asymmetry	0.73	
Racial/Ethnic Asymmetry	0.96	
School Asymmetry	0.61	*
Sexual Experience Asymmetry	1.11	
<i>Respondent's Sociodemographic Characteristics</i>		
Age	0.95	
Gender (Female)	0.64	†
Race Ethnicity:		
Hispanic	0.84	
Non-Hispanic White	---	
Non-Hispanic Black	1.02	
Non-Hispanic Other	0.40	
Family Structure:		
Single Parent	0.63	
Two Biological Parents	---	
Stepfamily	0.55	†
Other Living Situation	0.65	
Parent's Education:		
Less than High School	0.71	
High School	---	
>High School, No 4-Year Degree	0.63	
4-Year College Degree+	0.46	*
Parental Monitoring	1.00	
Parental Communication Re. Sex	1.02	
Self-Esteem	0.97	
Grades	1.01	
Virgin Before This Relationship	1.16	
Delinquency	0.96	*

† $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Source: Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study Wave 1, N=269

TABLE 3. Logistic Regression Using *Negative* Relationship Qualities to Predict Consistent Condom Use Among Teens in Sexually Active Dating Relationships

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	OR	OR	OR
<i>Intercept</i>	6.12	8.20	12.21
<i>Negative Relationship Qualities</i>			
Control	0.81 *		
Conflict		0.88 †	
Mistrust of Partner			0.76 *
Partner Inferior			
Jealousy (Respondent)			
Non-exclusivity Agreement			
<i>Relationship Demographics</i>			
Relationship is Current (vs. Ended)	1.36	1.56	1.35
Duration (Est. in Weeks)	0.99 *	0.99 *	0.98 **
Age Asymmetry	1.21	1.22	1.14
Racial/Ethnic Asymmetry	1.54	1.59	1.46
School Asymmetry	0.72	0.71	0.69
Sexual Experience Asymmetry	1.05	1.11	1.09
<i>Respondent's Sociodemographic Characteristics</i>			
Age	1.00	0.98	0.96
Gender (Female)	0.46 *	0.52 *	0.53 *
Race Ethnicity:			
Hispanic	0.69	0.64	0.70
Non-Hispanic White	---	---	---
Non-Hispanic Black	1.45	1.52	1.56
Non-Hispanic Other	0.38	0.36	0.42
Family Structure:			
Single Parent	0.82	0.81	0.84
Two Biological Parents	---	---	---
Stepfamily	0.43 *	0.50 †	0.51
Other Living Situation	0.41 †	0.46	0.51
Parent's Education:			
Less than High School	0.70	0.73	0.70
High School	---	---	---
>High School, No 4-Year Degree	0.48 *	0.47 *	0.47 *
4-Year College Degree+	0.37 *	0.42 *	0.41 *
Parental Monitoring	1.00	0.99	1.00
Parental Communication Re. Sex	1.04	1.02	1.02
Self-Esteem	0.94	0.95	0.95
Grades	1.03	1.04	1.03
Virgin Before This Relationship	1.32	1.28	1.38
Delinquency	0.96 *	0.96 *	0.96 *

† $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Source: Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study Wave 1, N=269

TABLE 3, Continued. Logistic Regression Using *Negative* Relationship Qualities to Predict Consistent Condom Use Among Teens in Sexually Active Dating Relationships

	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	OR	OR	OR
<i>Intercept</i>	11.66	6.21	7.69
<i>Relationship Qualities</i>			
Control			
Conflict			
Mistrust of Partner			
Partner Inferior	0.71 **		
Jealousy (Respondent)		0.65 **	
Non-exclusivity Agreement			3.27 **
<i>Relationship Demographics</i>			
Relationship is Current (vs. Ended)	1.42	1.87 †	2.18 *
Duration (Est. in Weeks)	0.98 **	0.99 *	0.99 **
Age Asymmetry	1.11	1.11	1.33
Racial/Ethnic Asymmetry	1.47	1.49	1.32
School Asymmetry	0.74	0.79	0.73
Sexual Experience Asymmetry	1.04	1.16	1.22
<i>Respondent's Sociodemographic Characteristics</i>			
Age	0.98	0.97	0.96
Gender (Female)	0.55 †	0.57 †	0.53 *
Race Ethnicity:			
Hispanic	0.74	0.60	0.89
Non-Hispanic White	---	---	---
Non-Hispanic Black	1.40	1.30	1.66
Non-Hispanic Other	0.41	0.35	0.28
Family Structure:			
Single Parent	0.83	0.87	0.74
Two Biological Parents	---	---	---
Stepfamily	0.46 †	0.52	0.52
Other Living Situation	0.52	0.50	0.34 *
Parent's Education:			
Less than High School	0.70	0.66	0.64
High School	---	---	---
>High School, No 4-Year Degree	0.49 *	0.46 *	0.54 †
4-Year College Degree+	0.43 †	0.38 *	0.34 *
Parental Monitoring	1.00	1.00	0.98
Parental Communication Re. Sex	1.02	1.02	1.02
Self-Esteem	0.94	0.95	0.95
Grades	1.02	1.05	1.06
Virgin Before This Relationship	1.40	1.32	1.33
Delinquency	0.96 *	0.96 *	0.95 **

† $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Source: Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study Wave 1, N=269

TABLE 4. Logistic Regression Using *Positive* Relationship Qualities to Predict Consistent Condom Use Among Teens in Sexually Active Dating Relationships

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	OR	OR	OR	OR
<i>Intercept</i>	3.41	6.83	5.73	11.76
<i>Positive Relationship Qualities</i>				
Intimate Self Disclosure	0.89 *			
Enmeshment		0.75 *		
Passionate Love			0.89 *	
Relationship Salience				0.67 *
<i>Relationship Demographics</i>				
Relationship is Current (vs. Ended)	2.00 †	1.76	2.01 †	1.97 †
Duration (Est. in Weeks)	0.99 *	0.99 †	0.99 *	0.99
Age Asymmetry	1.18	1.13	1.28	1.31
Racial/Ethnic Asymmetry	1.36	1.42	1.38	1.42
School Asymmetry	0.73	0.73	0.72	0.70
Sexual Experience Asymmetry	1.17	1.07	1.11	1.12
<i>Respondent's Sociodemographic Characteristics</i>				
Age	1.00	0.97	0.98	0.96
Gender (Female)	0.56 †	0.53 *	0.53 *	0.58 †
Race Ethnicity:				
Hispanic	0.73	0.77	0.82	0.76
Non-Hispanic White	---	---	---	---
Non-Hispanic Black	1.30	1.47	1.41	1.36
Non-Hispanic Other	0.35	0.34	0.35	0.31
Family Structure:				
Single Parent	0.73	0.73	0.72	0.70
Two Biological Parents	---	---	---	---
Stepfamily	0.51	0.49 †	0.45 †	0.54
Other Living Situation	0.42 †	0.49	0.39 *	0.44 †
Parent's Education:				
Less than High School	0.70	0.73	0.65	0.67
High School	---	---	---	---
>High School, No 4-Year Degree	0.50 *	0.48 *	0.47 *	0.48 *
4-Year College Degree+	0.40 *	0.40 *	0.39 *	0.38 *
Parental Monitoring	0.99	0.98	0.98	0.98
Parental Communication Re. Sex	1.03	1.03	1.03	1.02
Self-Esteem	0.96	0.95	0.96	0.95
Grades	1.06	1.07	1.06	1.05
Virgin Before This Relationship	1.26	1.30	1.32	1.32
Delinquency	0.95 **	0.95 **	0.95 *	0.95 **

† $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Source: Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study Wave 1, N=269