

Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Attitudes and Knowledge and Sexual Partnerships in Young Adulthood: Variation by Gender

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Background

- There is a growing body of work demonstrating that adolescent attitudes influence behavior well into adulthood
- Teens' reproductive attitudes and knowledge predict adult contraceptive use and fertility
 - Likely influence adult sexual behaviors as well
- Teens' attitudes about sex are also probably a key predictor of adult sexual behaviors
- However, given gender differences in stigma about sex and in social views on pregnancy responsibility, associations between adolescent attitudes and knowledge and adult behavior likely differ for men and women

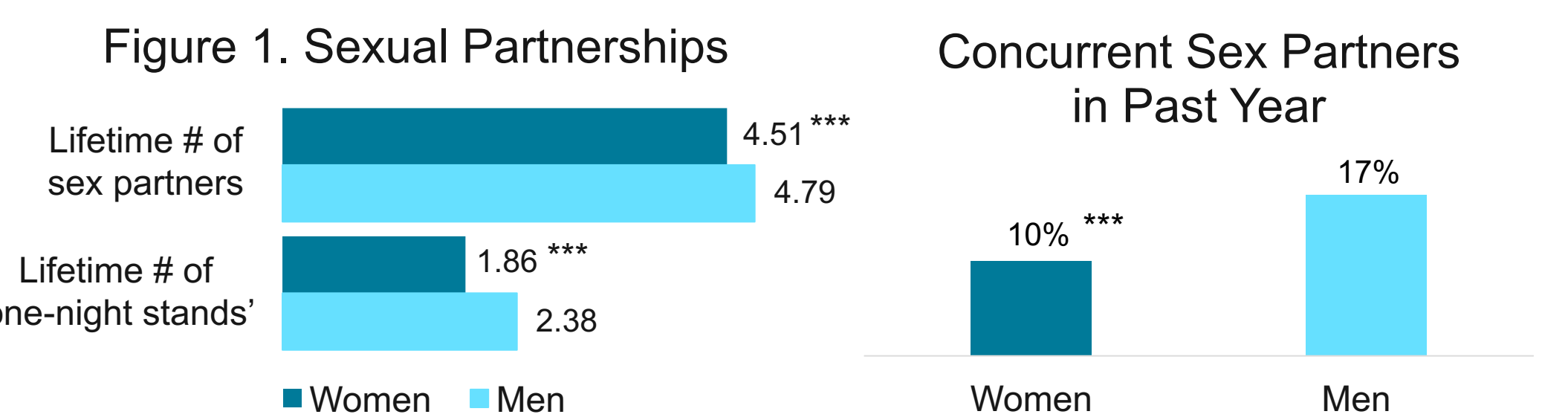
Research Question

- Do adolescents' knowledge and attitudes about sex and reproduction predict their sexual partnerships in adulthood, and does this association vary by gender?

Data & Methods

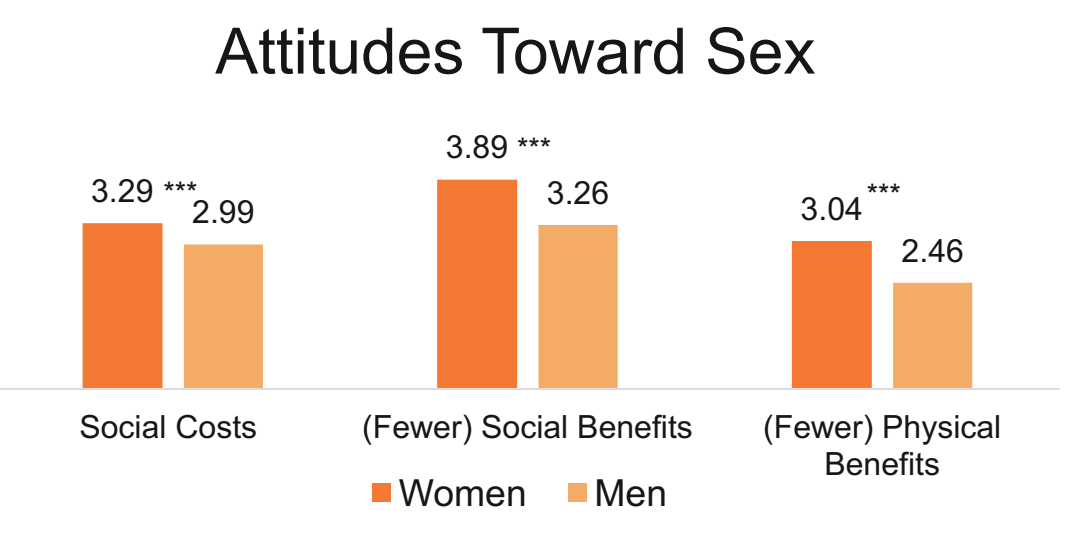
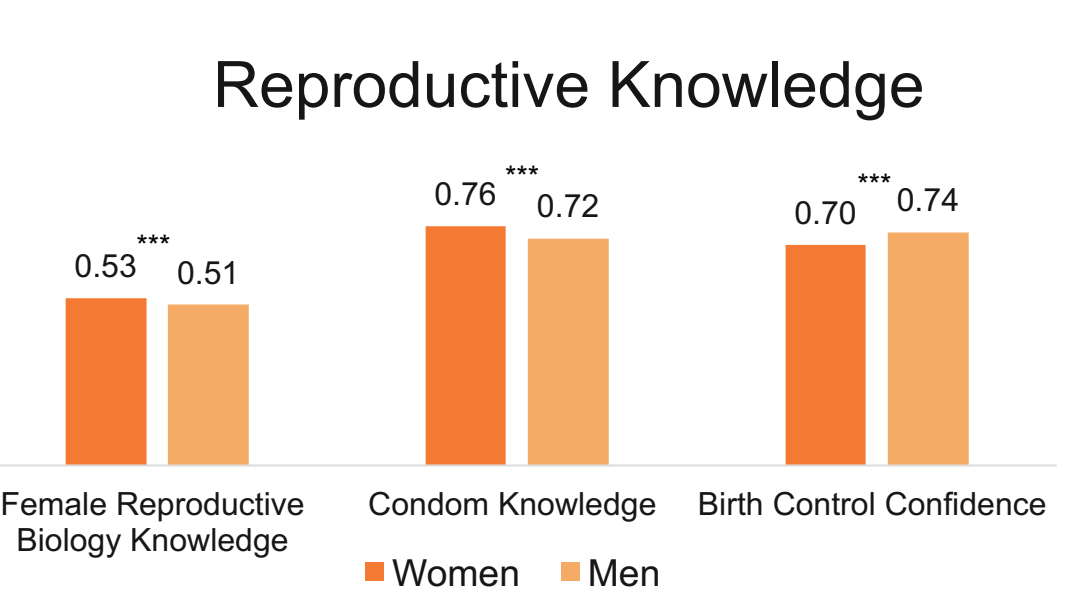
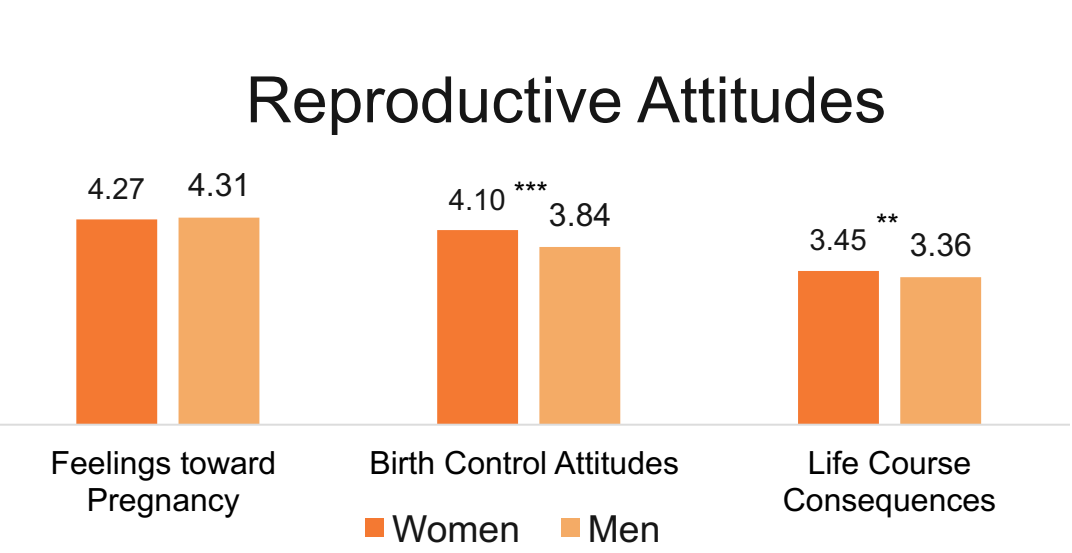
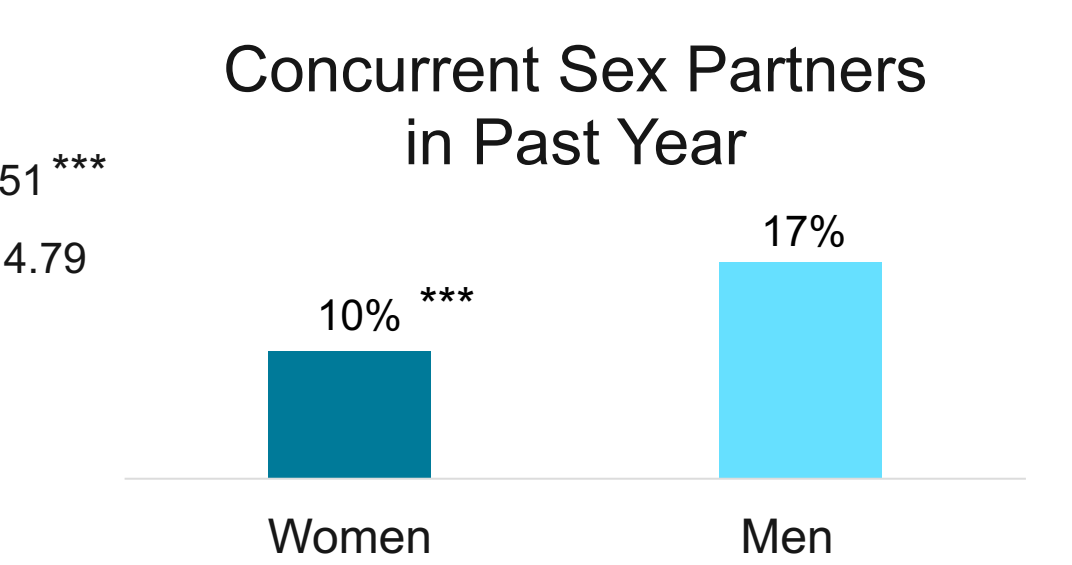
- The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health)
 - Aged ≥15 at Wave I, interviewed at Wave IV & had opposite-gender sexual partnerships (N=8,503)
- Dependent variables measured at Wave IV
 - Lifetime number of sex partners
 - Lifetime number of 'one-night stands'
 - Concurrent sex partners in last year (dichotomous)

Data & Methods, cont'd



- Adolescent attitudinal & knowledge predictors (averages based on constructs identified in factor analyses):

- **Reproductive Attitudes:** feelings toward pregnancy, birth control attitudes, life course consequences of early fertility
- **Reproductive Knowledge:** female reproductive biology knowledge, condom knowledge, birth control confidence
- **Attitudes Toward Sex:** social costs, (fewer) social benefits, (fewer) physical benefits
- Control for key sociodemographic and background characteristics
- OLS and logistic regression, run separately by gender



Multivariate Results

Table 1. OLS and logistic regression models for sexual partners for men and women by Wave IV of Add Health

	Lifetime number of sex partners				Lifetime number of 'one-night stands'				Concurrent sex partners in past year			
	Women		Men		Women		Men		Women		Men	
	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE
<i>WI Reproductive Attitudes</i>												
Feelings toward Pregnancy	0.05	0.06	0.05	0.06	-0.06	0.06	0.07	0.06	-0.14	0.10	0.08	0.08
Birth Control Attitudes	-0.03	0.05	-0.08	0.06	0.05	0.06	-0.19	0.07 **	0.01	0.11	-0.15	0.08
Life Course Consequences	-0.01	0.04	0.00	0.05	0.12	0.05 *	0.03	0.07	0.07	0.10	-0.02	0.08
<i>WI Reproductive Knowledge</i>												
Female Repro Bio Knowledge	0.04	0.09	-0.09	0.10	-0.06	0.10	0.10	0.10	-0.16	0.17	0.06	0.16
Condom Knowledge	0.37	0.14 *	0.14	0.14	0.32	0.20	0.33	0.18	0.22	0.33	0.22	0.26
Birth Control Confidence	0.28	0.09 **	0.14	0.11	0.09	0.10	0.13	0.12	-0.23	0.26	-0.53	0.22 *
<i>W1 Attitudes Toward Sex</i>												
Social Costs to sex	-0.10	0.05 *	-0.08	0.05	-0.07	0.05	-0.04	0.06	0.00	0.09	-0.17	0.11
(Fewer) Social Benefits to sex	-0.07	0.05	-0.11	0.06	-0.04	0.07	-0.08	0.08	-0.12	0.09	-0.01	0.10
(Fewer) Physical Benefits	-0.18	0.04 ***	-0.13	0.05 **	-0.20	0.05 ***	-0.27	0.06 ***	-0.14	0.11	-0.15	0.09

All models include control variables. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. Shading indicates significant gender differences.

- **Both men and women** who perceived fewer *physical benefits of sex* as adolescents had fewer lifetime partners and 'one-night stands' as adults
- **For women, but not men**
 - Greater adolescent *condom knowledge* and *birth control confidence*, more lifetime partners
 - Perceiving more *social costs to sex*, fewer lifetime partners
 - Perceiving greater *life course consequences to early pregnancy*, more 'one-night stands'
- **For men, but not women**
 - More positive attitudes toward *birth control attitudes*, fewer 'one-night stands'
 - Greater *birth control confidence*, reduced odds of having concurrent sex partners

Conclusions

- Teens' attitudes and knowledge about sex, reproduction, and contraception have long-term influences on behavior
- Teen boys and girls have different levels of knowledge and attitudes, AND these are related to outcomes differently

Implications

- Sex ed programs should acknowledge social influences on sexual activity
- Need to ensure boys are being taught about contraception and female reproductive biology
- May need to consider that comprehensive sex ed could increase the number of partners

This research was supported by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institutes of Child Health and Human Development (R01HD078412; Guzzo and Hayford, PIs) as well as center grants to BGSU's Center for Family and Demographic Research (P2CHD050959) and OSU's Institute for Population Research (P2CHD058484). This research uses Add Health, a project directed by Kathleen Mullan Harris and designed by J. Richard Udry, Peter S. Bearman, and Kathleen Mullan Harris at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and funded by grant P01-HD31921 from the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, with cooperative funding from 23 other federal agencies and foundations. Special acknowledgment is due Ronald R. Rindfuss and Barbara Entwisle for assistance in the original design. Information on how to obtain the data is available at <http://www.cpc.unc.edu/addhealth>