

10. Daily Emotional and Behavioral Interactions in Young Men's and Young Women's Single and Multiple Partner Relationships

By: Devon J. Hensel and [Amanda E. Tanner](#)

DJ Hensel, AE Tanner. (2015). 10. Daily Emotional and Behavioral Interactions in Young Men's and Young Women's Single and Multiple Partner Relationships. *Journal of Adolescent Health* 56 (2), S5-S6.

Made available courtesy of Elsevier: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2014.10.013>



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](#).

Abstract:

Purpose: Public health risk reduction efforts commonly focus on avoiding multiple-partner relationships, as they can be associated with increased sexual risk behaviors (e.g. inconsistent condom-use). During adolescence, however, young people normatively participate in different romantic/sexual relationships – some of which occur simultaneously (e.g. dating two people). Since emerging relationships support learning to manage emotional and behavioral aspects of sexuality, it is possible that different types of relationships confer specific developmental skills. We compared day-to-day emotional and behavioral interaction differences between adolescent women's and men's single and multiple partner relationships.

Keywords: adolescence | sexual behavior | sexual development | published abstract

Articles:

Purpose: Public health risk reduction efforts commonly focus on avoiding multiple-partner relationships, as they can be associated with increased sexual risk behaviors (e.g. inconsistent condom-use). During adolescence, however, young people normatively participate in different romantic/sexual relationships – some of which occur simultaneously (e.g. dating two people). Since emerging relationships support learning to manage emotional and behavioral aspects of sexuality, it is possible that different types of relationships confer specific developmental skills. We compared day-to-day emotional and behavioral interaction differences between adolescent women's and men's single and multiple partner relationships.

Methods: Data were drawn from two distinct longitudinal sexual health cohort studies of middle-to-late adolescent women (AW: N=385, 14-17 years) and men (AM: N=72, 14-17 years) residing in areas of high rates of unintended pregnancy and STIs. Participants completed daily diaries measuring partner-specific affect and sexual behavior (up to five “partners” in one diary). We classified each diary period as associated with single or multiple (2+) partners; we then compared daily emotions and behaviors across these classifications. Daily partnered-behaviors (all: no/yes) were: kissing/holding hands (AM-study only), touching partners' genitals, partner touching genitals, receiving or giving oral sex, vaginal sex, anal sex and condom use during

vaginal sex and/or anal sex. Daily emotions were: sexual-interest (single, 5-pt item), feeling in-love (single, 5-pt item), partner-support (4-items, $\alpha=0.93$), partner-negativity (5-items, $\alpha=0.83$), and relationship-satisfaction and sexual-satisfaction (both single, 5-pt item; in AM study only). Generalized estimating equation (GEE) logistic regression analyzed differences in daily partnered-behavior frequency; GEE ordinal or linear regression examined differences in mean levels in daily emotions (Stata v.13). All models controlled for age/race; single-partner was the referent in all models.

Results: The majority of all day-to-day partnered interactions were associated with a single partner (AW's: 72%; AM: 88%); when multiple partners were reported, the modal number was two. AM's daily reports of kissing and hand-holding (OR=8.33-9.08) were eight-to-nine times more frequent with single compared to multiple-partners. Both AW's and AM's giving/receiving genital touching (AW: OR=2.63-2.71; AM: OR=3.74-3.78) and giving/receiving oral sex (AW: OR=2.27-2.45; AM: OR=2.86-3.78) occurred between three and four times more often with single-partners. Vaginal sex was about three times as frequent with single-partners among (AW: OR=3.20; AM: OR=2.82). Condom use during vaginal sex was significantly more likely when AW reported multiple-partners (OR=0.45). Neither anal sex nor condom use during anal sex were significantly associated with partner type. AW and AM noted significantly higher levels of love (OR=1.38-1.56) and partner support (OR=2.08-4.66), but lower levels of sexual interest (OR=0.51-0.59), on days with single partners. Single-partner interactions were associated with AM's significantly higher relationship satisfaction.

Conclusions: Adolescent men's and women's partnered behaviors – both “lighter” (e.g. genital touching) and more involved (e.g. vaginal sex) – occurred significantly more often with single-partners. Moreover, single-partner interactions were associated with higher levels of relationally-oriented emotions, while multiple-partner days were linked to sexual-interest. Our data support a model of normative sexual development in which varying relationship contexts may help young men and women learn to balance the complex emotions and behaviors associated with adult sexuality.

Sources of Support

U19 AI43924 and R01 HD044387.