Another Look at Heterosocial Behaviors: One Side of the Early Intimate Sexual Behavior Coin

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The number of adolescent births is once again on the rise.

In 2006, the birth rate for teenagers 15-19 years increased by 3 percent (Martin et al., 2009).

The current increase interrupts a 14 year period of continuous decline between 1991 and 2005.
Introduction

- Researchers are exploring factors old and new to explain the increase.

- One factor that has been the focus of an emerging body of work (Grover et al., 2005; 2007) with respect to sexual behavior is heterosocial competence.

- Heterosocial competence is defined as successful interactions with members of the other sex.
Introduction
Specific Aims

- The aims of this study with African American middle school girls using the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) were to:

1. Describe the heterosocial behaviors endorsed by the girls.
2. Assess the level of intimate behaviors in which the girls engaged.
3. Examine the relationship between heterosocial behaviors and intimate sexual behaviors.
Theoretical Framework


- Attitude
- Norm
- Intention
- Behavior
Design

- A cross-sectional design was employed using baseline data from a randomized clinical trial (5RO1HD039757-05).

- The trial was designed to prevent/delay middle school girls from engaging in early intimate sexual behaviors.
Sample

- The sample was comprised of 173 young African American girls.

- Girls were drawn from five middle schools located in Western Pennsylvania.
Protocol

- Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained from the University of Pittsburgh.

- Upon receipt of parental consent and participant’s assent, each girl completed the baseline assessment comprised of six surveys after school.
Instruments

- **Heterosocial Behavior Questionnaire**, a self-report rating scale, comprised of 10 items (Westney, Jenkins, & Benjamine, 1983; modified by Doswell, 1999).

- The scale assesses social contexts and heterosexual behaviors.

- Scores on the scale range from 0 (Never) to 30 (Frequently; more than 5 times).
Instruments

- Heterosocial Behavior Questionnaire

  Example Items:

  * During the past year, did you ever spend time with a mixed group of boys and girls when there were no grown-ups around? (Social Context)

- During the past year, have you called boys on the phone more than twice a day? (Heterosocial Behavior)
Instruments

- **Sexual Behavior Inventory (SBI)**, a self-report rating scale with 8 items (Treboux & Busch-Rossnagel, 1995; modified by Doswell, Braxter, Taylor, & Ren, 2008); scores range from 0 (Never) to 24 (Frequently; greater than 5 times).

Example Item:
How often have you done the following things with a boy in the past year?
“Kissed with my tongue (French kissed) a boyfriend I really liked or we were going steady”
Analysis

- Descriptive statistics
- Linear regression models
**Demographics**

**N = 173**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>12.5 (0.93)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade (%)</td>
<td>6th - 28.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7th - 45.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8th - 25.6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Pubertal Maturity - Breast Tanner Stage Modal Response*

* Missing Data

*Missing Data*
Perceived Maturity
N=160

* Missing data
Results

- A majority of the girls (51.6%) during the past year had spent time with a group of boys and girls when no adults were around.

- Approximately 68% of the girls had never during the past year spent time with a mixed group of boys and girls inside a private place.

- During the past year, overwhelmingly (81.8%) girls had not spent time with just one boy in a private place without any grown-ups around.
Results

- Approximately 51.2% of the middle school girls during the past year had hugged boys which was the most prevalent heterosocial behavior.

- French kissing was the most prevalent intimate sexual behavior endorsed by the girls.
Results

The following predictor models were generated:

Sexual Behavior = 0.52 + 0.655 \cdot \text{Social contexts} \quad (p<.001)

Sexual Behavior = -0.51 = 0.531 \cdot \text{Heterosocial behaviors} \quad (p<.001)
Conclusions

- Girls had spent time alone with mixed groups of boys and girls. However, they had not spent time alone with mixed groups inside a private place.

- Hugging is a prevalent heterosocial behavior among middle school girls.

- French kissing is the most prevalent intimate sexual behavior.
Conclusions

- For this group of African American middle school girls, social contexts and heterosocial behaviors were both significant predictors associated with engaging in early intimate sexual behaviors.
Implications for Research

- Interventions designed to delay/prevent engagement in early intimate sexual behavior among early teen African American girls should assess heterosocial behaviors.

- To facilitate a better understanding of heterosocial behaviors and its link to engagement in early intimate sexual behavior, research targeting heterosocial competence among African American middle school girls appears warranted.
Implications for Practice

- Nurses and nurse practitioners providing health care services to African American middle school girls must be aware of the association between heterosocial behaviors and engagement in early intimate sexual behaviors.

- An assessment of the heterosocial behaviors during routine examination periods provides an opportunity for nurses/nurse practitioners to address engaging in early intimate sexual behaviors.
Limitations

- The study was conducted with a self selected sample of middle school girls enrolled in a clinical trial designed to prevent/delay engagement in early intimate sexual behaviors.

- Participants in the study were drawn from one geographical area in Western Pennsylvania.
Acknowledgements

- The African American middle school girls for participating in the clinical trial.

- The parents of our participants.

- The members of the research team.

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References


Questions