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Demographic and Developmental Differences in the Content and Sequence of Adolescents' Ideal Romantic Relationship Behaviors

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Abstract

This study utilizes data from 18,392 respondents (aged 12–19) in Wave 1 of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health) to provide a detailed descriptive analysis of U.S. adolescents' desired behaviors in their ideal romantic relationships. Age, gender, and ethnic group differences in the desire for—and preferred sequence of—a set of activities that could occur in a hypothetical romantic relationship were explored within subsets of heterosexual ($n=17,274$) and sexual minority adolescents ($n=1,118$). Non-sexual behaviors were more commonly desired compared to sexual behaviors. The typical desired behavioral sequence was: holding hands, going out alone, telling others they were a couple, kissing, saying “I love you,” sexual touching, and finally having sex. Overall, more similarities than differences emerged across groups, with some notable differences in the percentages who desired sexual behaviors. Results provide a nuanced picture of adolescent relationship scripts, with implications for education and prevention.

Keywords

Adolescence; romantic relationships; sexual behavior; gender differences; racial and ethnic differences; sexual minority youth

Adolescent romantic relationships are both normative and developmentally significant. They play a crucial role in adolescents' emotional, social, and sexual lives, and contribute to the

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development of several key competencies, such as the expression of intimacy and management of conflict (Collins, 2003). Nationally representative data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health) indicate that roughly a quarter of 12-year-olds, approximately half of 15-year-olds, and more than 70% of 18-year-olds report a romantic relationship in the prior 18 months (Carver, Joyner, & Udry, 2003). Despite their significance, until the 1990s, little research attention was given to adolescent romantic relationships (Collins, 2003). Since then, great strides have been made toward understanding their prevalence and characteristics, particularly among heterosexual youth (see Collins, Welsh, & Furman, 2009). However, relatively little is known about what romantic and sexual activities adolescents *desire* in their intimate relationships.

Understanding the normative behavioral scripts for adolescents' desired relationships is an important avenue of research. However, there has been a trend in the adolescent literature away from providing normative descriptive information, and toward testing causal pathways of behavior, primarily within a risk reduction framework. Although casual models are important, basic descriptive research is necessary to provide a contextual frame for the study of adolescent development (Shanahan, Erickson, & Bauer, 2005). To understand motivation and to successfully assess, guide and promote adolescents' healthy sexual and romantic development, we require foundational knowledge about normative patterns of desired behavior (Diamond & Savin-Williams, 2009), as well as how patterns may vary across different segments of the population.

Previous studies that have attempted to understand adolescents' desired romantic and sexual behavior scripts have often conflated *actual* behaviors with *desired* behaviors. Yet, as enacted behavior requires opportunity, agency, and interest (e.g., Gibbons, Gerrard, Blanton, & Russell, 1998), it is not possible to understand what adolescents desire simply by examining their actual sexual and romantic behaviors. For example, one adolescent may desire to abstain from sexual behavior but lack the agency to assert his or her wishes, while another may desire to engage in particular romantic or sexual behaviors but lack the opportunity or confidence to initiate them. In both of these cases, it would be impossible to determine the adolescent's internal desires based solely on observable behaviors. To understand the motivations underlying behavior, direct and thorough assessments of desired romantic and sexual scripts are sorely needed. Such assessments may also inform prevention efforts (e.g., sexual education programs contextualized within romantic relationships), particularly if differences in desired relationship behaviors emerge across demographic and developmental groups of youth. To address this gap, the current study used the Add Health sample to examine normative scripts for heterosexual and sexual minority adolescents' desired behaviors in their ideal romantic relationships, with a focus on age, gender, and ethnic group differences in the content and sequence of desired activities.

Age Differences in Adolescents' Actual and Ideal Relationships

Any thorough examination of adolescents' desired romantic relationship activities must consider potential developmental differences. Adolescence is a formative period during which sexual and romantic behaviors typically develop; as a result, the nature of relationship behaviors and scripts change as youth mature. Age differences have been documented in the

duration, content, quality, and function of adolescents' relationship behaviors (see Carver et al., 2003; Collins, 2003; Furman, 2002). For instance, compared to early adolescents, older youth report higher rates of intimate romantic behaviors and sexual behaviors within their relationships (Carver et al., 2003; Fortenberry, 2013). However, age differences in adolescents' desired relationship behaviors remain understudied, raising important questions about if, and how, adolescents' interests in sexual and non-sexual intimate behaviors (e.g., holding hands, saying "I love you") differ across adolescence. The desire (or lack thereof) for specific activities may have different implications based on age. Research is therefore needed on basic differences in ideal romantic relationships across early, middle, and late adolescence.

Gender Differences in Adolescents' Actual and Ideal Relationships

Little is currently known about whether relationship desires differ by gender. Instead, gender differences in both behaviors and desires are often *assumed* based on commonly accepted stereotypes and sexual scripts, such as that boys are more interested in sex, whereas girls are more interested in romantic activities (e.g., Maccoby, 1998). Due to internalized gender roles and traditional sexual scripts, boys are encouraged to be sexually experienced in order to prove their masculinity, while girls are encouraged to restrict sexual behavior and are subject to more negative social sanctions after sexual debut (Tolman, 2013). Extant research on gender differences in sexual and romantic desires is further limited by a lack of attention to the roles of age and relationship context. For example, whereas several empirical studies have found males to have a stronger desire than females for sexual behavior, these studies have typically used adult samples and/or focused on casual sex rather than sex in the context of romantic relationships (Bradshaw, Kahn, & Saville, 2010; Clark & Hatfield, 1989; Lehmiller, VanderDrift, & Kelly, 2011; see also Crawford & Popp, 2003).

Several studies have used Add Health data to directly assess gender differences in adolescents' romantic relationship behaviors, offering preliminary findings. First, whereas more similarities than differences were found between males' and females' *actual* romantic relationship behavior (Carver et al., 2003), potential gender differences emerged in adolescents' *desired* behaviors. Collapsing across age, Cavanagh (2007) found that male respondents scored higher than females on desire for a sexual behavior factor (i.e., derived from factor analysis) compared to a romantic behavior factor. Similarly, Cleveland (2003) found that adolescent males were more likely than females to desire sexual intercourse earlier in the sequence of ideal relationship activities. While these studies offer important insights, they focused solely on sexual intercourse (Cleveland, 2003) or combined multiple behaviors into one single factor (i.e., the sexual factor examined by Cavanagh included intercourse, touching, sexual communication, and pregnancy). A more detailed examination of boys' and girls' endorsement of specific behaviors (e.g., sexual touching versus intercourse), with attention to potential age differences, may offer a more informative description of adolescents' desired behaviors.

Ethnic Group Differences in Adolescents' Actual and Ideal Relationships

Although little is known about gender differences in adolescents' ideal romantic relationships, even less is known about potential differences across racial and ethnic groups, as available data have predominantly come from racially homogenous (often White) samples. Data from the Add Health sample suggest there are generally more similarities than differences across ethnic groups in the content and sequence of *actual* romantic relationship behaviors (O'Sullivan, Cheng, Harris, & Brooks-Gunn, 2007); however, some key differences have been noted. For instance, within romantic relationships, White adolescents are more likely than other adolescents to hold hands and tell others that they are a couple, whereas Black adolescents are more likely to report sexual intercourse (O'Sullivan et al., 2007). Studies that have used qualitative analyses to explore relationship desires in non-White populations have found additional differences: For instance, qualitative work comparing Black and Latino adolescents' perceptions of romantic relationships suggest that Latinos may be more likely than Black adolescents to discuss relationships in the context of traditional family and moral values (e.g., pressure to postpone sexual activity) and in more romanticized ways (e.g., discussing courtship and acts of care; Milbrath, Ohlson, & Eyre, 2009; O'Sullivan & Meyer-Bahlburg, 2003). In contrast, these studies indicate that Black youth tend to describe romantic relationships in more "adversarial" and pragmatic terms (e.g., negotiation of expectations with potential partners; verbal gamesmanship) and may be less likely than Latinos to expect romantic behaviors reflecting affection or commitment (Milbrath et al., 2009; O'Sullivan & Meyer-Bahlburg, 2003). However, other recent qualitative studies indicate that Black youth may strongly value respect within romantic relationships (Debnam, Howard, & Garza, 2014; Gowen, Catania, Dolcini, & Harper, 2014). While these studies suggest potential differences in desire, they rely on small samples of predominantly urban, low-income youth, raising questions about generalizability. Therefore, important empirical questions remain about ethnic differences in the content and sequence of adolescents' desired relationship behaviors.

Sexual Minority Adolescents' Actual and Ideal Relationships

The vast majority of extant studies on adolescents' actual and ideal romantic relationships – including the studies discussed up to this point – has focused on heterosexual youth, or has not specified the sexual orientation of the sample. Thus, very little is known about the scripts of sexual minority youth. Moreover, most research on the lives of sexual minority youth has examined psychological, social, and health *problems*, rather than aiming to understand normative developmental processes, including romantic relationships (see Mustanski, 2015).

The lack of attention to sexual minority adolescents' conceptualization of love is concerning, given the developmental importance of romantic relationships during adolescence (Bauermeister, Johns, Pingel, Eisenberg, Santana, & Zimmerman, 2011; Mustanski, 2015). It is critical to understand the desired relationship behaviors of sexual minority youth, given that special challenges and constraints on their dating lives may lead to greater discrepancies between their ideal and actual relationships. Among sexual minority adolescents with an interest in romantic relationships, opportunity may be limited and agency may be complicated. For instance, lower proportions of homosexual and bisexual

peers in one's social network (relative to heterosexual peers) may restrict opportunities to date same-sex peers (Mustanski, 2015). Additionally, given the social stigma and risks of harassment, discrimination, or even violence based on sexual orientation, developing the agency needed to initiate a same-sex relationship may be challenging and complex. Further, once a sexual minority adolescent has successfully initiated a same-sex relationship, he/she may engage in secretive behaviors to hide the relationship, due to the aforementioned stigma and risks. Thus, behaviors that most heterosexual youth take for granted, such as telling others they are a couple or going on dates, may involve special challenges for sexual minority adolescents – and may also carry special meaning. However, whereas *actual* relationships may be influenced by special factors for sexual minority youth that are not relevant to heterosexual youth – such as fear of coming out, anxieties about determining whether a potential partner is gay, and concerns about public displays of affection (e.g., Elze, 2002) – it is unknown if and how sexual minority adolescents differ from their heterosexual peers in what they would like in their *ideal* relationships.

Of the studies that have aimed to understand the actual and ideal relationships of sexual minority individuals, past research has generally relied on adult male samples, and focused on sexual rather than romantic interests (Mustanski, 2015). One study that utilized a community sample of sexual minority males aged 18–24 found that, consistent with studies of heterosexual youth, the participants rated emotional intimacy, commitment, and passion as being extremely important components of an ideal relationship (Bauermeister et al., 2011). Questions still remain, however, regarding the ideal relationships of sexual minority males under the age of 18, and whether existent findings extend to females. Additionally, studies are needed that include heterosexual and sexual minority youth in the same sample, in order to integrate these traditionally separate fields of study (see Diamond & Savin-Williams, 2009) and better assess how sexual orientation influences relationship desires. Thus, the current study is expected to provide important insight into sexual minority youths' desired relationships.

The Current Study

This study uses the Add Health dataset to provide the first detailed descriptive analysis of demographic differences in U.S. adolescents' desired romantic relationship behaviors. Specifically, youth reported which activities they would desire in a hypothetical "ideal relationship" in the next year, along with the preferred sequence in which the behaviors would occur. Additionally, these scripts were explored across groups based on sexual orientation, age (i.e., early, middle, late adolescence), gender, and ethnicity. It should be noted that data for the current study are drawn from Wave I of Add Health, collected roughly 20 years ago. The sociopolitical and historical context of these data should thus be acknowledged, especially with regard to the sample of youth who expressed same-sex attraction. However, Wave I of Add Health remains the only nationally representative source of data on adolescents' ideal relationship behaviors, and the current study provides a much-needed descriptive analysis of what adolescents desire in their romantic relationships.

Method

Participants

We utilized data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health), an ongoing prospective study of a nationally representative probability sample of adolescents in grades 7–12 during the 1994–1995 school year (see Harris, 2013, for further details about the study design). This dataset is uniquely positioned to provide nationally representative data regarding what adolescents desire in their ideal relationships. To date, four waves of data have been collected; data for the present study came from the Wave I in-home interview. All Add Health procedures were approved by the non-Biomedical Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; present analyses were deemed exempt.

Eligible respondents for the main analysis were those who participated in Wave I ($n = 20,745$), had a valid sampling weight ($n = 18,922$), completed the ideal relationship card sort activity ($n = 18,580$), and had complete data on analytic variables ($n = 18,392$). As one aim of the current study was to examine patterns of romantic relationship scripts within heterosexual youth and within sexual minority youth, we included two separate samples in the study: a sample of adolescents who reported any same-sex attraction ($n = 1,118$ [619 males, 499 females]), and a sample who did not ($n = 17,274$ [8,368 males, 8,906 females]). For parsimony, throughout this paper these samples will be referred to as the “sexual minority sample” and the “heterosexual sample,” respectively.

Measures

Description of card sort activity—An interactive section was included in the Wave I in-home interview that aimed to identify (a) the activities that adolescents would want in their ideal relationships (“ideal relationship activities”), and (b) the sequence in which adolescents would want those activities to occur (“sequence of ideal activities”). Respondents were presented with a set of 17 cards, each displaying a relationship behavior (e.g., “*we would hold hands*”; “*we would kiss*”). To determine their ideal relationship activities, respondents were first asked to indicate whether they would want each behavior in their “*ideal romantic relationship in the next year*,” by either keeping the card (i.e., indicating that they would like to do this behavior) or rejecting the card (i.e., indicating that they would not like to do this behavior). Then, to determine the sequence of ideal activities, respondents were asked to sort all the cards they kept, based on “*which should happen first (then second, third, and so forth) in [their] perfect relationship*.”

Cards included—In the interest of parsimony, the present analyses focused on a representative subset of activities deemed to be developmentally appropriate, given evidence from previous self-reports regarding the typical behaviors that occur (or are desired) in adolescent and young adult romantic relationships (Bartoli & Clark, 2006; Eaton & Rose, 2011; Laner & Ventrone, 2000; O’Sullivan et al., 2007; Rose & Frieze, 1993). This subset included the following seven desired behaviors: “*We would hold hands*” (abbreviated as “Hold Hands”); “*We would go out together alone*” (“Go Out Alone”); “*I would tell other people that we were a couple*” (“Tell Others”); “*We would kiss*” (“Kiss”); “*I would tell my*

partner that I loved him or her” and “My partner would tell me that he or she loved me” (“Say ‘I Love You’”; two cards combined into a single response for parsimony); *“We would touch each other under our clothing or with no clothes on” (“Sexual Touching”;* *“We would have sex” (“Have Sex”).*

Demographic groups—The following demographic variables were used to create the comparison groups for analysis: (1) sexual orientation (categorized into two groups: sexual minority [defined as reporting any attraction to same-sex peers], or heterosexual [defined as reporting no attraction to same-sex peers]); (2) respondent age (categorized into three groups: early adolescents [13 years old], middle adolescents [ages 14–16], and late adolescents [ages 17–19]); (3) gender (based on interviewer report; dichotomized as female or male); and (4) ethnicity. Ethnicity was defined based on respondent self-report, and was categorized as “Hispanic ethnicity, any race” (abbreviated as “Hispanic”); “Non-Hispanic White” (“White”); “Non-Hispanic Black” (“Black”); and “Non-Hispanic Other” (“Other-race”), which collapsed Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian, and other racial groups, due to small cell sizes. Throughout this paper, the term “ethnicity” will be used to capture all racial and ethnic groups that were examined.

Analysis Plan

To account for potential developmental differences in sexual and romantic desire, respondents within the heterosexual and sexual minority samples were first stratified by age (i.e., early, middle, or late adolescence), so that differences were compared among same-aged peers. Then, within each age group, respondents were stratified by gender and ethnicity, resulting in age-by-gender and age-by-gender-by-ethnicity comparison groups.

To compare *differences in ideal relationship activities* within the sexual minority and heterosexual samples separately, descriptive cross-tabulations and Pearson’s chi-squared tests were used to determine whether the percentages of youth who kept each card were significantly different across each age-by-gender group (e.g., heterosexual early adolescent males vs. heterosexual early adolescent females), and age-by-gender-by-ethnicity group (e.g., sexual minority late adolescent Hispanic males vs. sexual minority late adolescent White males). To compare *differences in the sequence of ideal activities*, we examined the sequence of cards among the subsample of participants who kept all cards. Specifically, we computed the mean temporal sequencing of each card (e.g., on average, card “x” was the 1st and card “y” was the 2nd activity that would occur), and then rank-ordered each card’s average placement to create a relative ordering of the seven cards. Since two cards were combined to form the Say “I Love You” activity, for respondents who kept both cards, the average order of the two cards was used. Within the sexual minority and heterosexual samples separately, the sequence of ideal activities was then compared across the age-specific gender and ethnicity strata used for the ideal relationship activities analyses.

All analyses were computed in STATA 13.0, with results adjusted to account for Add Health sampling weights and study design.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Overview of Findings

Participants in the final sample ranged in age from 12 to 19 (13 = 18.2%; 14–16 = 50.3%; 17–19 = 31.5%). They were approximately equally divided by gender (50.6% male), and were ethnically diverse (White = 65.6%; Black = 15.8%; Hispanic = 11.7%; Other-race = 7.0%). Among the full analytic sample of 17,274 heterosexual and 1,118 sexual minority respondents, the percentage of youth who desired to engage in romantic and sexual activities varied by topic. Whereas each of the non-sexual behaviors was desired by the vast majority of participants, desire for sexual behaviors was much lower. While this was true for both the heterosexual and sexual minority samples, sexual minority adolescents tended to endorse a desire to engage in sexual behaviors at higher rates than heterosexual youth; collapsing across gender and age, sexual minority middle and late adolescents were more likely to report desiring Sexual Touching and to Have Sex ($ps < .01$).¹ With regard to the desired sequence of activities, among the 5,850 heterosexual respondents who kept all cards, the average sequence was: Hold Hands, Go Out Alone, Tell Others, Kiss, Say “I Love You,” Sexual Touching, Have Sex. Among the 466 sexual minority adolescents who kept all cards, a highly similar sequence emerged, with the exception that the first two behaviors were flipped, such that Go Out Alone preceded Holding Hands as the first activity. As shown in Tables 1–7, within both the heterosexual and sexual minority samples, there were generally more similarities than differences across age, gender, and ethnic groups, in both the ideal relationship activities and the sequence of ideal activities. However, several key differences emerged. For parsimony, only broad patterns are discussed in the text below; the tables should be consulted for specific comparisons by age, gender, and ethnicity, within the heterosexual and sexual minority samples. Note also that for some of the tables (e.g., average ideal sequence among early adolescent sexual minorities), results are not presented for the sexual minority sample due to small cell sizes.

Age Differences in Ideal Relationship Activities and Sequence

For each ideal relationship activity, the percentage of youth who desired the activity was higher among older age groups (Table 1). The largest increases occurred for Sexual Touching and Have Sex. As shown in Table 2, there were only a few age-group differences in the sequence of ideal activities (e.g., heterosexual early adolescents were more likely to want to Tell Others earlier in the sequence). Across all age groups, the last three activities desired in a relationship occurred in the same order (Say “I Love You,” Sexual Touching, Have Sex).

Gender Differences in Ideal Relationship Activities and Sequence

With regard to the content of ideal relationship activities, few gender differences emerged (Table 1). Within the heterosexual sample, for every age group, higher percentages of males than females desired Sexual Touching and to Have Sex. For sexual minority youth, the same

¹These results do not appear in the tables. To compare differences in card endorsement by sexual orientation, we tested whether the within-group average percentage endorsing each card was significantly different between the sexual minority and heterosexual samples, using survey-adjusted t-statistics and corresponding p-values.

pattern generally emerged, but did not reach statistical significance. Gender differences in other activities were less consistent. For example, within the heterosexual sample, higher percentages of males than females wanted to Go Out Alone (in early and middle adolescence), whereas a higher percentage of females than males wanted to Tell Others (at all ages). Within the sexual minority sample, higher percentages of early adolescent females than males wanted to Kiss and Say “I Love You”; in contrast, within the heterosexual sample, early adolescent *males* were more likely than females to want to Kiss and Say “I Love You.” Few gender differences were observed in the sequence of desired activities for heterosexual adolescents, but within the sexual minority sample, there was more variability in the order of the first three activities – Hold Hands, Tell Others, and Go Out Alone (Table 2).

Ethnic Differences in Ideal Relationship Activities and Sequence

Differences in ideal activities across age-by-gender-by-ethnicity groups are shown in Table 3 (early adolescents), Table 4 (middle adolescents), and Table 5 (late adolescents). In general, Black males and females were less likely than others to want to Hold Hands, and White males and females were generally more likely than other youth to want to Tell Others. Among females in particular, Black females were less likely than other races to want to Kiss, and White females were more likely than other races to want to Go Out Alone. In late adolescence only, Black females were less likely than others to want to Say “I Love You.” In general, there were no significant differences in desire to Have Sex for females, but in early adolescence, Hispanic females were more likely than Whites to want to Have Sex. In contrast, ethnic differences in desire to Have Sex among males were much more consistent: Black and Hispanic males were generally more likely than White and Other-race males to want to Have Sex, with Black males more likely than all other races to want to Have Sex, regardless of age.

In general, these patterns were similar between the heterosexual and sexual minority samples, though differences generally did not reach significance among sexual minority youth. One notable exception was for Sexual Touching: in middle and late adolescence, White females were more likely than other ethnic groups to want Sexual Touching, regardless of sexual orientation. In contrast, among heterosexual males, non-Whites were generally more likely than Whites to desire Sexual Touching, with non-significant differences for sexual minority males.

Tables 6 and 7 show the sequence of ideal activities for each age-by-gender-by-ethnicity group for the heterosexual and sexual minority samples, respectively. More similarities than differences were observed across groups, but many small differences emerged (e.g., whether Hold Hands, Tell Others, or Go Out Alone was the first desired activity). Notably, among heterosexual youth, early and middle adolescent Black males were the only groups who wanted to Say “I Love You” before Kissing.

Discussion

This study provides novel and much-needed descriptive information about adolescents’ desired activities within their ideal romantic relationships, using data from the Add Health

sample. Understanding what adolescents desire in their relationships is critical, because it is impossible to determine youths' internal desires based solely on their observable behaviors, given that their romantic and sexual behavior is driven in large part by agency and opportunity.

Overall, more similarities than differences emerged across age, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation groups in the content and sequence of ideal relationship behaviors. Results revealed that, within both the sexual minority and heterosexual samples, non-sexual behaviors were more commonly desired than sexual behaviors. For example, sexual touching and having sex were always the activities desired with the least frequency and always appeared last in the ideal sequence; notably, adolescents preferred to say "I love you" before engaging in these behaviors. With regard to the desired sequence of activities, the average sequence among heterosexual youth was: holding hands, going out alone, telling others they were a couple, kissing, saying "I love you," sexual touching, and finally having sex; the pattern was identical among sexual minority youth, with the exception that going out alone was the first behavior and holding hands was second.

These findings are generally consistent with the relative frequency and order of behaviors that heterosexual adolescents have reported in their *actual* romantic relationships in Add Health (O'Sullivan et al., 2007). Results also replicate – in a nationally representative sample – prior reports from a community sample that show the typical adolescent relationship script values emotional intimacy over sexual activity (Ott, Millstein, Ofner, & Halpern-Felsher, 2006). However, despite the generally consistent pattern of activities that adolescents desired in their relationships, several interesting differences emerged by age, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation.

Age Differences

Consistent with Add Health data on actual romantic relationship behaviors (e.g., Carver et al., 2003), every behavior in question was desired more frequently among older age groups. The most significant age differences were revealed in the percentages of youth who desired sexual touching and sex (e.g., in the heterosexual sample, 16% of early adolescents compared to 65% of late adolescents desired to have sex). This consistency between desired and actual scripts may reflect the tendency of youth to enact behaviors based on their desires or intentions, and/or may reflect adolescents' tendency to desire activities that are perceived to be normative among same-aged peers. These findings also are consistent with developmental theories regarding the different functions of adolescent romantic relationships in early versus late adolescence. Relationships in late adolescence are more likely to resemble adult relationships with regard to needs for intimacy and passion, whereas in early adolescence, relationships are focused more on socializing and peer recognition (Collins, 2003; Collins et al., 2009; Furman, 2002). Relatedly, early adolescents in this sample were more likely than late adolescents to want to tell others about their relationship earlier in the sequence of activities, perhaps to demonstrate maturity and improve peer status (see Collins et al., 2009). Future research will need to rigorously examine adolescents' motivations underlying their desired relationship activities.

Gender Differences

The most notable gender differences pertained to sexual behaviors. Specifically, across age groups, higher percentages of males than females reported wanting to engage in sexual touching and sex in their ideal romantic relationships. Our findings are consistent with the gender differences reported by Cavanagh (2007), but are not consistent with the finding by Cleveland (2003) that adolescent boys desired sex earlier than did girls in their ideal sequence of relationship behaviors. Current findings provide additional support for long-held assumptions that boys are more eager to engage in sexual behavior than girls within their romantic relationships (Maccoby, 1998). Sexual script theory (Byers, 1996; Simon & Gagnon, 1984) might help explain the observed gender differences. For instance, boys may feel pressure to engage in sexual behavior to prove their masculinity, whereas girls' scripts discourage their recognition of their own sexual desires or the accumulation of "too many" sexual partners (Tolman, 2013). Alternatively, several other theories could help explain the current findings regarding gender differences. For example, biological, ethological, and behavioral theories propose higher motivation and fewer consequences for males' pursuit of sexual behavior, compared to females' (see Oliver & Hyde, 1993). Although recent data suggest that males and females may be more similar than different with regard to actual sexual behaviors (Katz-Wise & Hyde, 2014), it is quite possible that boys believe they have "more to gain and less to lose" from engaging in sexual behavior. Relatedly, if boys believe the social and physical consequences of sex will be more favorable, the theory of reasoned action suggests this could lead to higher intentions to engage in sexual behavior, resulting in gender differences in desire to have sex (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). While the descriptive nature of the present study precludes testing each of these theories, future studies should assess how these theoretical frameworks are related to adolescent relationship desires.

Ethnic Differences

Several interesting ethnicity differences emerged in desires for both sexual and non-sexual behaviors. For sexual behaviors, observed differences in desired relationship activities by ethnicity were consistent with prior studies of adolescents' self-reported actual behaviors within romantic relationships. For example, the present study found Black males were more likely than others to want to have sex, and O'Sullivan and colleagues (2007) found that (collapsing across gender and age) Black adolescents were more likely than all other groups to actually have had sex in a recent romantic relationship. Additionally, White females were generally more likely than other females to want to engage in sexual touching, consistent with prior findings of higher rates of noncoital behaviors among Whites compared to others (Chandra, Mosher, & Copen, 2011). White females may experience familial and cultural pressures to protect their social and educational aspirations, causing them to avoid the heightened risks of intercourse, and to instead engage in non-coital behaviors that carry fewer negative physical, social, and emotional risks than intercourse (Brady & Halpern-Felsher, 2007; Brewster & Tillman, 2008; Crockett, Raffaelli, & Moilanen, 2003).

Several notable ethnic differences emerged in desire for non-sexual behaviors, particularly for Black youth. For instance, Black adolescents were generally less likely than other ethnic groups to want to hold hands, and late adolescent Black females specifically were less likely to want to kiss and say "I love you" than White and Other-race females. With regard to the

ideal sequence, in contrast to other ethnicity and gender groups, heterosexual early adolescent Black males and females wanted to tell others they were a couple before engaging in any other relationship activity, and heterosexual early and middle adolescent Black males wanted to say “I love you” before kissing. Thus, while the findings regarding *percentages* suggested that Black adolescents were more likely than White adolescents to desire sexual behaviors and less likely to desire some of the behaviors related to affection and commitment, findings regarding the *sequence* tell a different story – wherein Black adolescents wanted to tell others they were a couple and say “I love you” earlier in the sequence of ideal activities, relative to White youth.

Taken together, these findings may help provide a nuanced picture of Black adolescents’ romantic relationships. Qualitative work suggests that Black youth may approach relationships with a pragmatic or even adversarial approach, characterized by “gamesmanship” and a “conquest approach” of males toward females (Milbrath et al., 2009; O’Sullivan & Meyer-Bahlburg, 2003). In contrast, we found that Black adolescents desired behaviors that mark commitment and intimacy prior to engaging in sexual activities. It is possible that the qualitative findings, as drawn from largely low-income and urban samples, are only applicable to particular subsets of Black adolescents in the U.S.; in contrast, the nationally representative data presented in this study may be capturing the typical scripts across a broader swath of the Black population. Alternatively, more recent qualitative work suggests that this apparent discrepancy may actually reflect two sides of the same coin, such that the relationship scripts and dating experiences of Black youth may lead sexual and romantic behaviors to carry qualitatively different meanings compared to other ethnic groups. For example, studies have found that Black adolescents highly value (in both previous and ideal relationships) public displays of commitment and affection, respect of sexual boundaries, and appropriate conduct among peers and family (Debnam et al., 2014; Gowen et al., 2014), perhaps especially *because* of awareness of gamesmanship, conquest, and gendered mismatch in sexual desires.

Relative to the number of differences between Black and White adolescents in ideal relationship activities, fewer differences emerged between Hispanic and White adolescents, and between Hispanic and Black adolescents. Prior qualitative work suggested Hispanic youth often describe highly romanticized and idealized views of relationships. For example, two qualitative studies have documented Hispanic adolescents’ desire for acts of care and courtship (especially males’ performance of such acts for female partners) in their romantic relationships (Milbrath et al., 2009; O’Sullivan & Meyer-Bahlburg, 2003). However, findings do not suggest a high level of desire for the intimate and affectionate activities examined in the current study among Hispanic youth, relative to other adolescents. Thus, future research will need to further examine the desired romantic relationship behaviors of Hispanic youth.

Desired Behaviors of Sexual Minority Adolescents

The pattern of ideal relationship behaviors endorsed by sexual minority youth was similar to that observed among heterosexual adolescents. Overall, findings indicate that sexual minority adolescents value non-sexual romantic activities related to affection and intimacy.

For instance, in all age-by-gender groups collapsed across ethnicity, higher percentages of sexual minority adolescents endorsed wanting to engage in each of the non-sexual behaviors, compared to each of the sexual behaviors. Additionally, for all age-by-gender-by-ethnicity groups, sexual touching and having sex were included last in the ideal sequence of behaviors. These findings are consistent with prior work on sexual minority adults regarding the importance of emotional intimacy to relationship scripts (Bauermeister et al., 2011; Bourne et al., 2013; Rose & Zand, 2000). However, as a focus on these behaviors had been neglected in past research on adolescents, the current findings offer new support for the importance of non-sexual romantic behaviors to the relationship scripts of sexual minority youth.

There also was evidence in the current sample that, in middle and late adolescence, sexual minority youth desired to engage in sexual behaviors at higher rates than heterosexual youth. The majority of past work on the dating experiences of sexual minority youth has focused on sexual rather than romantic behaviors, and the current findings suggest that sexual behavior may indeed be important to sexual minority youth within their relationships. However, given that age-related trends in heterosexual youths' desires (i.e., the substantial increase in desire to have sex between the early and late adolescent age groups) were replicated in the sexual minority sample, the current findings highlight the importance of studying sexual minority adolescents' romantic relationships through a developmental lens.

Practical Implications

In addition to providing much-needed descriptive information, the current study may help inform education and prevention efforts. Collectively, findings indicate that – across demographic groups – adolescents desire romantic behaviors more strongly than sexual behaviors, and suggest that youth would benefit from programs that enhance their agency to assert or initiate what they truly desire. (If results had instead revealed that some groups of adolescents endorsed riskier scripts for their ideal relationships – for example, if subgroups of early adolescents had endorsed desiring to have sex – then prevention programs may have been wise to educate youth about the risks of early sexual behavior and attempt to change risky desires.) In other words, the current findings highlight the need for programs that teach adolescents how to realize their desired behaviors.

Several specific points and foci of prevention efforts are suggested by the findings. First, a key finding from the current study is that adolescents of all demographic groups are interested in romantic, non-sexual behaviors that indicate affection and commitment. A fruitful avenue for efforts to promote positive sexual decision-making could thus emphasize the context of sexual behavior, with a focus on healthy romantic relationships (e.g., involving respect, safety, and communication about romantic and sexual needs). Romantic behaviors and relationships have largely been ignored in education and prevention efforts related to adolescents' sexuality. Most U.S. sexual education programs either promote abstinence from sexual activity or emphasize physical safety precautions (see Kirby, 2008) without addressing the context of adolescent sexual behavior (e.g., romantic relationships versus casual sexual encounters). Yet, most adolescents initiate sexual activity within romantic relationships (Diamond & Savin-Williams, 2009) and the current findings

highlight the importance to adolescents of non-sexual, romantic behaviors as part of sexual relationships. While some sexual health interventions have included units on sexual communication and healthy relationships (e.g., DiClemente et al., 2004), and some teen dating violence programs have promoted healthy relationships (e.g., CDC, 2012), we are unaware of relationship-focused sexual health prevention programs for adolescents. The bridging of sexual education and relationship education efforts should be a priority for interventionists and school policy-makers.

Second, findings suggest that only a small percentage of early adolescents are interested in sexual behavior in their ideal relationships. Prevention efforts may benefit from targeting those early adolescents who *do* report a desire for sexual activity, given that engagement in sexual behavior (particularly intercourse) prior to age 15 is associated with higher levels of risk (Dixon-Mueller, 2008). Additionally, prevention efforts that teach assertiveness skills may be important for early adolescents, given that the majority of youth did not desire sexual behavior at this developmental stage, but may experience pressure to become sexually active. It also seems critical for sexual education and prevention programs to adopt a developmental lens, and for programs tailored to early adolescents to emphasize the non-sexual aspects of romantic relationships (e.g., the role of affectionate behaviors in developing intimacy).

Third, findings indicate that the majority of adolescents prefer engaging in sexual touching before having sex. This desire could be promoted in sexual health campaigns, given the lower risks associated with noncoital versus coital behaviors (Brady & Halpern-Felsher, 2007; Reese, Haydon, Herring, & Halpern, 2013).

Finally, at present, many sexual education and prevention programs adopt a heteronormative stance, rather than being fully inclusive of the range of sexual and romantic behaviors adolescents may desire (see Greene, Fisher, Kuper, Andrews, & Mustanski, 2015). The current study findings suggest that sexual minority youth may desire a similar set and sequence of relationship behaviors as their heterosexual peers, yet past work notes that these youth may struggle to find the opportunity to engage in romantic relationships with other sexual minority adolescents (Elze, 2002; Mustanski, 2015). Future work will be needed to understand how sexual minority youth navigate their relationship desires in the context of majority-heterosexual peer networks and a complex and changing sociopolitical landscape. Additionally, future work must examine how sexual education programs can best meet the needs of these adolescents (Mustanski, 2015); the integration of sexual and romantic relationship education may be a particularly fruitful avenue (Greene et al., 2015).

Limitations and Future Directions

This study has several strengths, including the use of a nationally representative sample, attention to questions about adolescents' desires that have not been adequately addressed in the literature, and a nuanced and detailed examination of group differences in specific desired relationship behaviors. However, results should be interpreted in light of several study limitations. First, data from Wave I of Add Health were collected in 1994–1995, and it is possible that desired relationship behaviors have changed over time. Yet, while the specific forms or modes of these behaviors may have shifted (e.g., today's youth may inform

others of their relationship status through social media rather than in person), evidence from the literature has consistently noted the endurance and sustained nature of dating and romantic relationship scripts, particularly gender and ethnic differences in those scripts (Eaton & Rose, 2011; Morr Serewicz & Gale, 2008; Rose & Frieze, 1993). It is therefore unlikely that adolescents' desires for these behaviors have substantially changed, and Wave 1 of Add Health remains the only nationally representative source of data on adolescents' desired relationship behaviors. A nationally representative study of *today's* youth, with detailed information about desired and actual romantic and sexual behaviors, as well as a wider range of desired relationship behaviors, would provide extremely valuable data regarding the stability of adolescents' relationship scripts.

Second, findings for sexual minority adolescents should be interpreted with caution. Although use of the Add Health Wave 1 sample allowed the examination of large numbers of both heterosexual and sexual minority adolescents, some cell sizes were small (especially among sexual minority early adolescents). Moreover, because the sexual minority sample was defined based on sexual attraction, this group may also be heterogeneous, and future studies will need to examine the ideal relationship behaviors of adolescents who explicitly report a sexual minority identity (e.g., gay, lesbian, bisexual); identity data are not available at Wave I. Additionally, in comparing the percentages of sexual minority versus heterosexual youth who endorsed wanting to have sex, it is important to consider the possibility that sexual minority youth may define "having sex" differently or more broadly than their heterosexual peers (e.g., including oral sex in addition to intercourse; Horowitz & Spicer, 2013). Furthermore, sexual minority youth may not have had examples of same-sex couples from whom to learn scripts for ideal relationships (see Greene et al., 2015), and the scripts reported by same-sex youth in this sample may have been based on their perceptions of heterosexual relationships. Given recent social changes in the United States regarding the acceptance of non-heterosexual relationships (Mustanski, 2015), an updated, nationally representative study of the ideal and actual romantic relationships of sexual minority youth would be a tremendous contribution to the field.

Additionally, results should be interpreted with caution for the Other-race group; it was a heterogeneous group (comprising Asian, American Indian, and self-described "Other" racial groups), with often small cell sizes. Furthermore, while the current study provides the first detailed descriptive analysis of differences in desired relationship behaviors across developmental and demographic aggregate groups of adolescents, the field would benefit from attention to individual differences across desired relationship behaviors. For example, individual adolescents' actual relationship experiences (e.g., number, type, and quality of prior relationships) may inform their ideal relationship behaviors. Finally, future work should examine how adolescents reconcile their desired behaviors with those of their partners.

In conclusion, the current study provides a detailed and nuanced picture of adolescents' desired romantic and sexual activities within their ideal romantic relationships. Findings suggest a normative set and sequence of behaviors, with more similarities than differences across groups based on age, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Adolescents of all demographic groups are interested in romantic, non-sexual behaviors that indicate affection

and commitment. Results have implications for education and prevention programs aimed at helping adolescents develop healthy romantic and sexual relationships.

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Percentages (and Numbers) of Respondents Who Desired Each Ideal Relationship Activity, Stratified by Sexual Attraction, Age, and Gender ($n=18,392$)

Table 1

Heterosexual Adolescents (n=17,274)												
	EARLY ADOLESCENTS (13)				MIDDLE ADOLESCENTS (14-16)				LATE ADOLESCENTS (17-19)			
	Total	Male	Female	p†	Total	Male	Female	p†	Total	Male	Female	p†
	(n=2,463)	(n=1,096)	(n=1,367)		(n=8,857)	(n=4,237)	(n=4,620)		(n=5,954)	(n=3,035)	(n=2,919)	
	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)		% (n)	% (n)	% (n)		% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	
Hold Hands	93.5 (2,291)	92.9 (1,020)	94.1 (1,271)		95.7 (8,450)	95.2 (4,030)	96.1 (4,420)		95.1 (5,669)	94.2 (2,861)	96.2 (2,808)	*
Go Out Alone	76.0 (1,867)	81.6 (893)	70.9 (974)	***	90.5 (8,037)	92.1 (3,921)	89.0 (4,116)	**	94.5 (5,635)	95.0 (2,880)	93.9 (2,755)	
Tell Others	89.8 (2,175)	88.0 (944)	91.5 (1,231)	*	92.5 (8,125)	91.6 (3,849)	93.4 (4,276)	*	93.4 (5,532)	92.4 (2,786)	94.4 (2,746)	**
Kiss	84.4 (2,049)	86.8 (946)	82.3 (1,103)	**	94.6 (8,371)	95.0 (4,027)	94.3 (4,344)		96.1 (5,721)	96.3 (2,913)	95.9 (2,808)	
Say "I Love You"	87.1 (2,118)	90.4 (985)	84.2 (1,133)	***	91.2 (8,115)	93.3 (3,957)	89.1 (4,158)	***	93.5 (5,566)	94.0 (2,851)	93.0 (2,715)	
Sexual Touching	17.8 (471)	23.1 (265)	12.9 (206)	***	49.9 (4,581)	56.7 (2,555)	43.4 (2,026)	***	72.4 (4,140)	78.3 (2,330)	65.6 (1,810)	***
Have Sex	15.5 (381)	21.0 (229)	10.5 (152)	***	40.0 (3,713)	48.7 (2,209)	31.7 (1,504)	***	64.7 (3,692)	72.5 (2,162)	55.7 (1,530)	***
Sexual Minority Adolescents (n=1,118)												
	EARLY ADOLESCENTS (13)				MIDDLE ADOLESCENTS (14-16)				LATE ADOLESCENTS (17-19)			
	Total	Male	Female	p†	Total	Male	Female	p†	Total	Male	Female	p†
	(n=103)	(n=66)	(n=37)		(n=558)	(n=312)	(n=246)		(n=457)	(n=241)	(n=216)	
	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)		% (n)	% (n)	% (n)		% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	
Hold Hands	93.3 (98)	90.3 (61)	100.0 (37)		96.0 (527)	96.4 (296)	95.4 (231)		95.8 (437)	94.5 (229)	97.1 (208)	
Go Out Alone	86.6 (86)	88.2 (58)	82.2 (28)		93.0 (519)	94.5 (292)	90.6 (227)		96.0 (432)	93.6 (222)	98.6 (210)	*
Tell Others	88.3 (90)	84.5 (55)	97.0 (35)	*	92.8 (508)	93.7 (289)	91.4 (219)		93.4 (415)	91.2 (212)	95.6 (203)	
Kiss	86.5 (90)	81.3 (55)	98.2 (35)	**	94.6 (525)	94.5 (295)	94.8 (230)		95.8 (440)	97.1 (232)	94.5 (208)	
Say "I Love You"	89.1 (93)	84.6 (57)	99.0 (36)	***	94.3 (513)	96.1 (293)	91.6 (220)		93.6 (424)	94.7 (226)	92.5 (198)	
Sexual Touching	24.8 (27)	28.9 (20)	15.7 (7)		62.5 (341)	63.8 (199)	60.4 (142)		79.3 (344)	81.3 (187)	77.2 (157)	
Have Sex	15.0 (21)	14.9 (14)	15.2 (7)		54.2 (297)	59.7 (183)	45.6 (114)	*	77.1 (331)	81.7 (182)	72.3 (149)	

* $p<.05$;

** $p<.01$;

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100%

Percentages may not add up to 100% as they are weighted to reflect the Add Health sampling design, and rounded to nearest decimal; N represents the unweighted count.
p-value from Pearson's chi-square test of significance of overall association between age-by-gender group (within sexual orientation sample) and card status (kept vs. rejected).

Table 2

Ideal Sequence of Relationship Activities Among Subsample[†], Stratified by Sexual Attraction, Age and Gender (n=6,316)

<i>Heterosexual Adolescents (n=5,850)</i>									
EARLY ADOLESCENTS (13)			MIDDLE ADOLESCENTS (14-16)			LATE ADOLESCENTS (17-19)			
Total (n=209)	Male (n=130)	Female (n=79)	Total (n=2,724)	Male (n=1,641)	Female (n=1,083)	Total (n=2,917)	Male (n=1,673)	Female (n=1,244)	
1 st	Hold Hands	Hold Hands	Hold Hands	Hold Hands	Hold Hands	Hold Hands	Hold Hands	Hold Hands/ Go	
2 nd	Tell Others	Tell Others	Go Out Alone	Tell Others	Go Out Alone	Go Out Alone	Go Out Alone	Out Alone (<i>tie</i>)	
3 rd	Go Out Alone	Go Out Alone	Tell Others	Go Out Alone	Tell Others	Tell Others	Tell Others	Tell Others	
4 th	Kiss	Kiss	Kiss	Kiss	Kiss	Kiss	Kiss	Kiss	
5 th	Say "I Love You"	Say "I Love You"	Say "I Love You"	Say "I Love You"	Say "I Love You"	Say "I Love You"	Say "I Love You"	Say "I Love You"	
6 th	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	
7 th	Have Sex	Have Sex	Have Sex	Have Sex	Have Sex	Have Sex	Have Sex	Have Sex	
<i>Sexual Minority Adolescents (n=466)</i>									
EARLY ADOLESCENTS (13)			MIDDLE ADOLESCENTS (14-16)			LATE ADOLESCENTS (17-19)			
Total (n=13)	Male (n=7)	Female (n=6)	Total (n=211)	Male (n=126)	Female (n=85)	Total (n=242)	Male (n=123)	Female (n=119)	
1 st			Hold Hands	Tell Others	Hold Hands	Go Out Alone	Go Out Alone	Hold Hands	
2 nd			Go Out Alone	Go Out Alone	Go Out Alone	Hold Hands	Hold Hands	Go Out Alone	
3 rd			Tell Others	Hold hands	Tell Others	Tell Others	Tell Others	Kiss	
4 th	Findings not presented due to small cell sizes		Kiss	Kiss	Kiss	Kiss	Kiss	Tell Others	
5 th			Say "I love you"	Say "I love you"	Say "I love you"	Say "I love you"	Say "I love you"	Say "I love you"	
6 th			Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	
7 th			Have sex	Have sex	Have Sex	Have sex	Have sex	Have sex	

[†] Subsample defined as respondents who desired all 7 ideal relationship activities (i.e., kept all 7 cards)

Table 3

Percentages (and Numbers) of Early Adolescent Respondents (Aged 13) Who Desired Each Ideal Relationship Activity, Stratified by Gender and Ethnicity

<i>Heterosexual Adolescents[†] (n=2,463)</i>									
MALE (n=1,096)					FEMALE (n=1,367)				
NH-White (n=604)	Hispanic (n=139)	NH-Black (n=248)	NH-Other (n=105)	<i>p^{††}</i>	NH-White (n=792)	Hispanic (n=168)	NH-Black (n=304)	NH-Other (n=103)	<i>p^{††}</i>
% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)		% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	
Hold Hands	95.3 (576) ^b	89.8 (130)	84.7 (218) ^w	***	94.2 (743)	95.9 (160)	91.5 (273)	94.9 (95)	
Go Out Alone	83.6 (502)	82.1 (117)	75.4 (194)		71.5 (576)	69.5 (116)	67.0 (208)	74.2 (74)	
Tell Others	89.7 (541) ^b	86.3 (120)	79.8 (198) ^{w,o}	*	93.3 (730) ^{b,o}	92.0 (156)	85.4 (261) ^w	84.1 (84) ^w	**
Kiss	88.3 (530)	86.3 (126)	84.6 (211)		82.2 (648)	86.6 (143)	79.7 (231)	80.7 (81)	
Say "I Love You"	90.0 (544)	94.2 (131)	88.7 (216)		82.6 (646)	88.6 (150)	88.1 (255)	84.9 (82)	
Sexual Touching	19.6 (129) ^{h,b}	33.0 (36) ^w	35.0 (81) ^w	**	12.0 (107)	16.1 (30)	16.6 (56)	8.6 (13)	
Have Sex	18.0 (102) ^b	25.6 (31) ^b	39.0 (82) ^{w,h,o}	***	8.9 (69) ^h	17.7 (31) ^w	12.8 (43)	9.5 (9)	*

* $p < .05$;
** $p < .01$;
*** $p < .001$

NH= Non-Hispanic

Percentages may not add up to 100% as they are weighted to reflect the Add Health sampling design, and rounded to the nearest decimal; N represents unweighted count

[†] Parallel tables are not presented for sexual minority early adolescents owing to gender-by-ethnicity cell sizes too small to report (66 sexual minority males [33 NH-White, 10 Hispanic, 21 NH-Black, 2 NH-Other]; 37 sexual minority females [16 NH-White, 6 Hispanic, 12 NH-Black, 3 NH-Other]).

^{††} *p*-value from Pearson's chi-square test of significance of overall association between gender-by-ethnicity group and card status (kept vs. rejected).

^b Percentage of age-by-gender-by-ethnicity group desiring activity is significantly different (at $p < .05$) than Blacks (of same age-by-gender);

^w than Whites (of same age-by-gender);

^h than Hispanics (of same age-by-gender);

^o than Other-races (of same age-by-gender)

Table 4

Percentages (and Numbers) of Middle Adolescent Respondents (Aged 14–16) Who Desired Each Ideal Relationship Activity, Stratified by Gender, Sexual Attraction, and Ethnicity ($n=9,415$)

<i>Heterosexual Adolescents (n=8,857)</i>										
	MALE (n=4,237)				FEMALE (n=4,620)				$p^{\dagger}$	
	NH-White (n=2,215)	Hispanic (n=674)	NH-Black (n=903)	NH-Other (n=445)	NH-White (n=2,404)	Hispanic (n=728)	Black (n=1,076)	NH-Other (n=412)		
	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)		
Hold Hands	96.3 (2,132) ^b	94.7 (640)	91.0 (839) ^w	94.8 (419)	97.1 (2,327) ^b	94.4 (696)	92.3 (997) ^{w,o}	97.7 (400) ^b	***	
Go Out Alone	93.1 (2,061)	90.1 (624)	88.6 (825)	93.0 (411)	91.3 (2,199) ^{h,b}	83.1 (626) ^w	84.0 (917) ^w	88.2 (374)	***	
Tell Others	92.9 (2,055) ^{b,o}	91.3 (610)	88.5 (792) ^w	86.6 (392) ^w	95.1 (2,277) ^{b,o}	92.3 (677)	88.4 (961) ^w	89.2 (361) ^w	***	
Kiss	95.3 (2,111)	96.0 (645)	94.3 (859)	91.7 (412)	95.7 (2,287) ^b	92.5 (692)	89.5 (971) ^{w,o}	95.1 (394) ^b	***	
Say "I Love You"	93.0 (2,060)	94.6 (633)	92.9 (840)	94.6 (424)	88.5 (2,146)	91.3 (668)	89.8 (968)	89.8 (376)		
Sexual Touching	55.1 (1,306) ^b	54.6 (413) ^b	67.5 (596) ^{w,h,o}	51.9 (240) ^b	47.1 (1,159) ^{h,b,o}	33.6 (290) ^w	37.9 (423) ^w	36.2 (154) ^w	***	
Have Sex	43.9 (1,033) ^{h,b}	55.1 (396) ^{w,b,o}	67.2 (585) ^{w,h,o}	44.4 (195) ^{h,b}	30.5 (747) ^b	30.1 (233) ^b	38.3 (402) ^{w,h}	30.1 (122)	*	

<i>Sexual Minority Adolescents (n=558)</i>										
	MALE (n=312)				FEMALE (n=246)				$p^{\dagger}$	
	NH-White (n=157)	Hispanic (n=58)	NH-Black (n=71)	NH-Other (n=26)	NH-White (n=100)	Hispanic (n=58)	NH-Black (n=54)	NH-Other (n=34)		
	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)		
Hold Hands	96.6 (148)	99.8 (56)	91.3 (66)	100.0 (26)	99.5 (98) ^h	87.6 (50) ^w	95.4 (52)	87.5 (31)	*	
Go Out Alone	94.0 (146)	95.8 (55)	93.5 (66)	99.8 (25)	98.3 (97) ^h	78.2 (51) ^w	92.2 (50)	71.5 (29)	*	
Tell Others	93.9 (147)	94.9 (54)	89.7 (62)	100.0 (26)	95.5 (94)	93.9 (53)	86.8 (47)	79.2 (25)		
Kiss	93.4 (147)	95.9 (56)	94.8 (66)	100.0 (26)	99.4 (97)	88.0 (52)	90.8 (51)	90.0 (30)	*	
Say "I Love You"	95.1 (144)	99.4 (57)	95.3 (66)	100.0 (26)	95.5 (95)	88.0 (51)	89.8 (47)	82.5 (27)		
Sexual Touching	64.6 (104)	50.7 (33)	73.5 (47)	61.5 (15)	75.5 (72) ^{h,b,o}	48.4 (28) ^w	47.3 (24) ^w	32.5 (18) ^w	**	
Have Sex	55.4 (91)	59.6 (30)	78.5 (50)	53.1 (12)	45.7 (49)	42.7 (27)	53.7 (25)	36.9 (13)		

* $p < .05$;

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**
 $p<.01$;

 $p<.001$

NH= Non-Hispanic

Percentages may not add up to 100% as they are weighted to reflect the Add Health sampling design, and rounded to the nearest decimal. N represents unweighted count

χ^2 p-value from Pearson's chi-square test of significance of overall association between gender-by-ethnicity group and card status (kept vs. rejected).

b Percentage of age-by-gender-by-ethnicity group desiring activity is significantly different (at $p<.05$) than Blacks (of same age-by-gender);

w than Whites (of same age-by-gender);

h than Hispanics (of same age-by-gender);

o than Other-races (of same age-by-gender)

Table 5

Percentages (and Numbers) of Late Adolescent Respondents (Aged 17–19) Who Desired Each Ideal Relationship Activity, Stratified by Sexual Attraction, Gender and Ethnicity (n=6,051)

<i>Heterosexual Adolescents (n=5,594)</i>										
	MALE (n=3,035)			<i>p</i> [†]	FEMALE (n=2,919)			<i>p</i> [†]		
	NH-White (n=1,509)	Hispanic (n=613)	NH-Black (n=553)		NH-White (n=1,393)	Hispanic (n=561)	NH-Black (n=629)		NH-Other (n=336)	
	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)		% (n)	% (n)	% (n)		% (n)	
Hold Hands	95.5 (1,438) ^b	96.7 (587) ^b	86.8 (492) ^{w,h,o}	***	97.0 (1,353)	94.4 (539)	94.6 (595)		95.4 (321)	
Go Out Alone	95.3 (1,442)	94.7 (575)	93.6 (518)		96.5 (1,350) ^{h,b,o}	88.3 (514) ^w	90.1 (579) ^w		90.5 (312) ^w	***
Tell Others	93.7 (1,415) ^{h,b}	89.3 (556) ^w	89.3 (498) ^w	**	96.6 (1,343) ^{h,b,o}	89.7 (519) ^w	90.9 (576) ^w		92.3 (308) ^w	***
Kiss	96.9 (1,459)	97.2 (589)	93.9 (524)		97.3 (1,358) ^b	93.8 (537)	93.9 (597) ^w		92.5 (316)	*
Say "I Love You"	93.8 (1,412)	94.5 (580)	93.5 (516)		94.1 (1,300) ^b	92.0 (532)	89.6 (569) ^{w,o}		94.4 (314) ^b	*
Sexual Touching	79.6 (1,197)	80.5 (477)	74.6 (432)		70.4 (961) ^{h,b,o}	60.0 (311) ^w	57.3 (365) ^w		54.6 (173) ^w	***
Have Sex	70.6 (1,056) ^{b,o}	76.7 (456) ^o	81.9 (444) ^{w,o}	***	57.8 (775) ^o	53.3 (278) ^o	55.8 (346) ^o		40.8 (131) ^{w,h,b}	**

<i>Sexual Minority Adolescents (n=457)</i>										
	MALE (n = 241)			<i>p</i> [†]	FEMALE (n = 216)			<i>p</i> [†]		
	NH-White (n=105)	Hispanic (n=50)	NH-Black (n=53)		NH-White (n=123)	Hispanic (n=44)	NH-Black (n=29)		NH-Other (n=20)	
	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)		% (n)	% (n)	% (n)		% (n)	
Hold Hands	92.9 (100)	99.7 (48)	94.6 (48)		97.3 (119)	97.7 (42)	94.4 (28)		98.7 (19)	
Go Out Alone	95.0 (101)	92.5 (42)	89.0 (48)		99.4 (121)	97.3 (42)	94.4 (28)		99.7 (19)	
Tell Others	95.8 (100)	83.3 (40)	82.4 (42)	*	95.9 (117)	93.1 (40)	94.4 (28)		98.7 (18)	
Kiss	99.3 (104)	95.0 (46)	95.6 (51)	*	97.3 (119)	83.4 (42)	86.9 (27)		100.0 (27)	
Say "I Love You"	95.6 (100)	97.7 (47)	88.9 (46)		92.8 (112)	86.2 (39)	92.3 (27)		100.0 (27)	
Sexual Touching	80.4 (85)	72.0 (37)	91.8 (45)		83.4 (100) ^h	55.4 (28) ^w	69.9 (20)		71.7 (9)	*
Have Sex	84.1 (81) ^o	76.9 (38)	85.6 (45) ^o	*	73.7 (88)	66.2 (28)	72.7 (23)		70.4 (10)	

* *p*<.05;

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 $p<.01$;

 $p<.001$

NH= Non-Hispanic

Percentages may not add up to 100% as they are weighted to reflect the Add Health sampling design, and rounded to the nearest decimal; N represents unweighted count.

$\dagger$ p-value from Pearson's chi-square test of significance of overall association between gender-by-ethnicity group and card status (kept vs. rejected).

b_i indicates percentage of age-by-gender-by-ethnicity group desiring activity is significantly different (at $p<.05$) than Blacks (of same age-by-gender);

w_i than Whites (of same age-by-gender);

h_i than Hispanics (of same age-by-gender);

o_i than Other-races (of same age-by-gender)

Table 6

Ideal Sequence of Relationship Activities Among Heterosexual Subsample[†], Stratified by Gender, Age and Ethnicity ($n=5,850$)

	MALES				FEMALES			
	NH-White	Hispanic	NH-Black	NH-Other	NH-White	Hispanic	NH-Black	NH-Other
<i>Early Adolescents 13 (n=209)</i>								
	N=59	n=19	n=45	n=7	n=35	n=16	n=24	n=4
1 st	Hold Hands	Hold Hands	Tell Others	Hold Hands	Hold Hands	Tell Others	Tell Others	Hold Hands
2 nd	Tell Others	Go Out Alone	Go Out Alone	Go Out Alone	Tell Others	Hold Hands	Go Out Alone	Go Out Alone
3 rd	Go Out Alone	Tell Others	Hold Hands	Kiss	Go Out Alone	Go Out Alone	Hold Hands	Kiss
4 th	Kiss	Kiss	Say "I Love You"	Tell Others	Kiss	Kiss	Kiss	Say "I Love You"
5 th	Say "I Love You"	Say "I Love You"	Kiss	Say "I Love You"	Say "I Love You"	Say "I Love You"	Say "I Love You"	Tell Others
6 th	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching
7 th	Have Sex	Have Sex	Have Sex	Have Sex	Have Sex	Have Sex	Have Sex	Have Sex
<i>Middle Adolescents 14-16 (n=2,724)</i>								
	N=829	n=283	n=379	n=150	n=589	n=171	n=249	n=74
1 st	Hold Hands	Hold Hands	Hold Hands	Hold Hands	Hold Hands	Hold Hands	Tell Others	Hold Hands
2 nd	Tell Others	Tell Others	Go Out Alone	Tell Others	Go Out Alone	Tell Others	Hold Hands	Tell Others
3 rd	Go Out Alone	Go Out Alone	Tell Others	Go Out Alone	Tell Others	Go Out Alone	Go Out Alone	Go Out Alone
4 th	Kiss	Kiss	Say "I Love You"	Kiss	Kiss	Kiss	Kiss	Kiss
5 th	Say "I Love You"	Say "I Love You"	Kiss	Say "I Love You"	Say "I Love You"	Say "I Love You"	Say "I Love You"	Say "I Love You"
6 th	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching
7 th	Have Sex	Have Sex	Have Sex	Have Sex	Have Sex	Have Sex	Have Sex	Have Sex
<i>Late Adolescents 17-19 (n=2,917)</i>								
	N=872	n=349	n=305	n=147	n=676	n=211	n=254	n=103
1 st	Hold Hands	Go Out Alone	Go Out Alone	Hold Hands	Go Out Alone	Hold Hands	Go Out Alone	Hold Hands
2 nd	Go Out Alone	Hold Hands	Tell Others	Go Out Alone	Hold Hands	Tell Others	Hold Hands	Go Out Alone

Early Adolescents 13 (n=209)									
FEMALES					MALES				
	NH-Other	NH-Black	Hispanic	NH-White	NH-Other	NH-Black	Hispanic	NH-White	
	n=4	n=24	n=16	n=35	n=7	n=45	n=19	N=59	
3 rd	Tell Others	Tell Others	Go Out Alone	Tell Others	Tell Others	Hold Hands	Tell Others	Tell Others	
4 th	Kiss	Kiss	Kiss	Kiss	Kiss	Kiss	Kiss	Kiss	
5 th	Say "I Love You"	Say "I Love You"	Say "I Love You"	Say "I Love You"	Say "I Love You"	Say "I Love You"	Say "I Love You"	Say "I Love You"	
6 th	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	
7 th	Have Sex	Have Sex	Have Sex	Have Sex	Have Sex	Have Sex	Have Sex	Have Sex	

[†] Subsample defined as respondents who desired all 7 ideal relationship activities (i.e., kept all 7 cards).

NH= Non-Hispanic

Table 7

Ideal Sequence of Relationship Activities Among Sexual Minority Subsample[†], Stratified by Gender, Age and Ethnicity ($n=453$)^{††}

	MALES				FEMALES			
	NH-White	Hispanic	NH-Black	NH-Other	NH-White	Hispanic	NH-Black	NH-Other
<i>Middle Adolescents 14–16 (n=211)</i>								
	N=65	n=19	n=31	n=11	n=46	n=15	n=14	n=10
1 st	Tell Others	Go Out Alone	Go Out Alone	Hold Hands	Hold Hands	Hold Hands	Hold Hands	Hold Hands
2 nd	Go Out Alone	Tell Others	Tell Others	Go Out Alone	Go Out Alone	Tell Others	Go Out Alone	Go Out Alone
3 rd	Hold Hands	Hold Hands	Hold Hands	Tell Others	Tell Others	Kiss	Say “I love you”	Tell Others
4 th	Kiss	Kiss	Kiss	Kiss	Kiss	Go Out Alone	Kiss	Kiss
5 th	Say “I Love You”	Say “I Love You”	Say “I Love You”	Say “I Love You”	Say “I Love You”	Say “I Love You”	Tell Others	Say “I Love You”
6 th	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Have Sex	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching
7 th	Have Sex	Have Sex	Have Sex	Have Sex	Have Sex	Sexual Touching	Have Sex	Have Sex
<i>Late Adolescents 17–19 (n=242)</i>								
	N=63	n=23	n=25	n=12	n=76	n=19	n=17	n=7
1 st	Go Out Alone	Go Out Alone	Go Out Alone	Hold Hands	Hold Hands	Hold Hands	Go Out Alone	Hold Hands
2 nd	Hold Hands	Hold Hands	Hold Hands	Go Out Alone	Go Out Alone	Go Out Alone	Hold Hands	Go Out Alone
3 rd	Tell Others	Kiss	Tell Others	Tell Others	Kiss	Kiss	Tell Others	Tell Others
4 th	Kiss	Tell Others	Kiss	Kiss	Tell Others	Tell Others	Kiss	Kiss
5 th	Say “I Love You”	Say “I Love You”	Say “I Love You”	Say “I Love You”	Say “I Love You”	Say “I Love You”	Say “I Love You”	Say “I Love You”
6 th	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching	Sexual Touching
7 th	Have Sex/sex	Have Sex	Have Sex	Have Sex	Have Sex	Have Sex	Have Sex	Have Sex

[†] Subsample defined as respondents who desired all 7 ideal relationship activities (i.e., kept all 7 cards).

^{††} While there were an additional 13 sexual minority early adolescent respondents in the complete-card “subsample,” results are not presented here owing to gender-by-ethnicity cell sizes too small to report.

NH= Non-Hispanic