

What's Love Go to Do with It? Healthy Romantic Relationships and Teen Pregnancy Prevention

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Child Trends



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- Identify aspects of healthy and unhealthy adolescent romantic relationships
- Recognize the role of healthy romantic relationships in preventing teen pregnancies
- Identify linkages between relationship education and teen pregnancy prevention programs

- Interactive features of this webinar:
 - Polls
 - Q&A feature

What age group does your program serve?

Check all that apply

- Middle school age in clinic setting
- Middle school age in school
- High school age in clinic setting
- High school age in school
- Other

Why Relationships Matter



- Relationships are important for the healthy development of children and youth

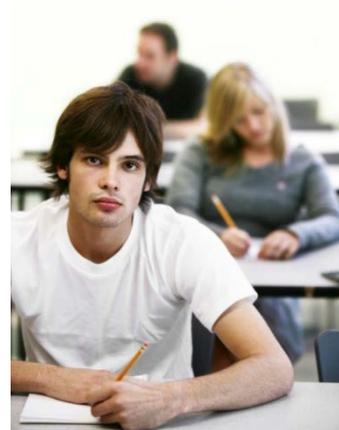
Infancy/ Early Childhood



Middle Childhood



Adolescence



Young Adulthood



- Romantic relationships during adolescence can set the stage for romantic relationships throughout life
- These relationships can influence youth decisions about:
 - School
 - Employment
 - Peer relationships
 - **Pregnancy prevention**

- Children with positive social skills are more likely to:
 - Have high self-esteem
 - Have positive relationships with peers
 - Achieve in school
- Deficits in social skills are associated with more aggressive behaviors, including:
 - Bullying
 - Fighting
 - Delinquency

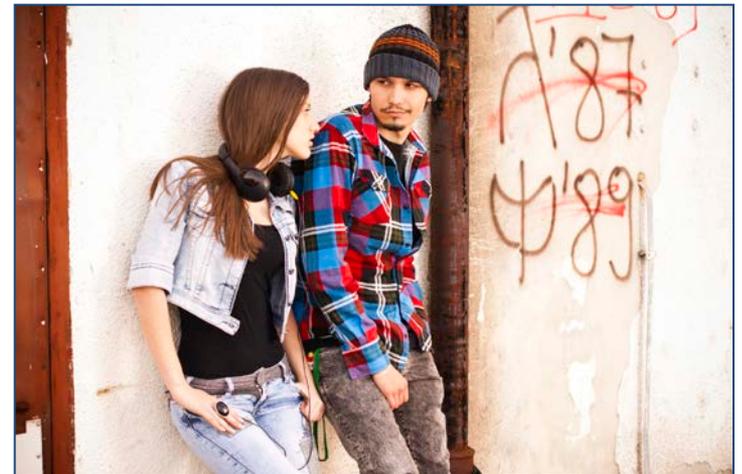
- There is evidence that social skills are malleable for adolescents
- Teen Pregnancy Prevention (TPP) and Relationship Education (RE) programs foster social skills by bringing together peer groups, teaching communication skills, and teaching teens to set boundaries

Are the majority of teens in your program involved with someone romantically?

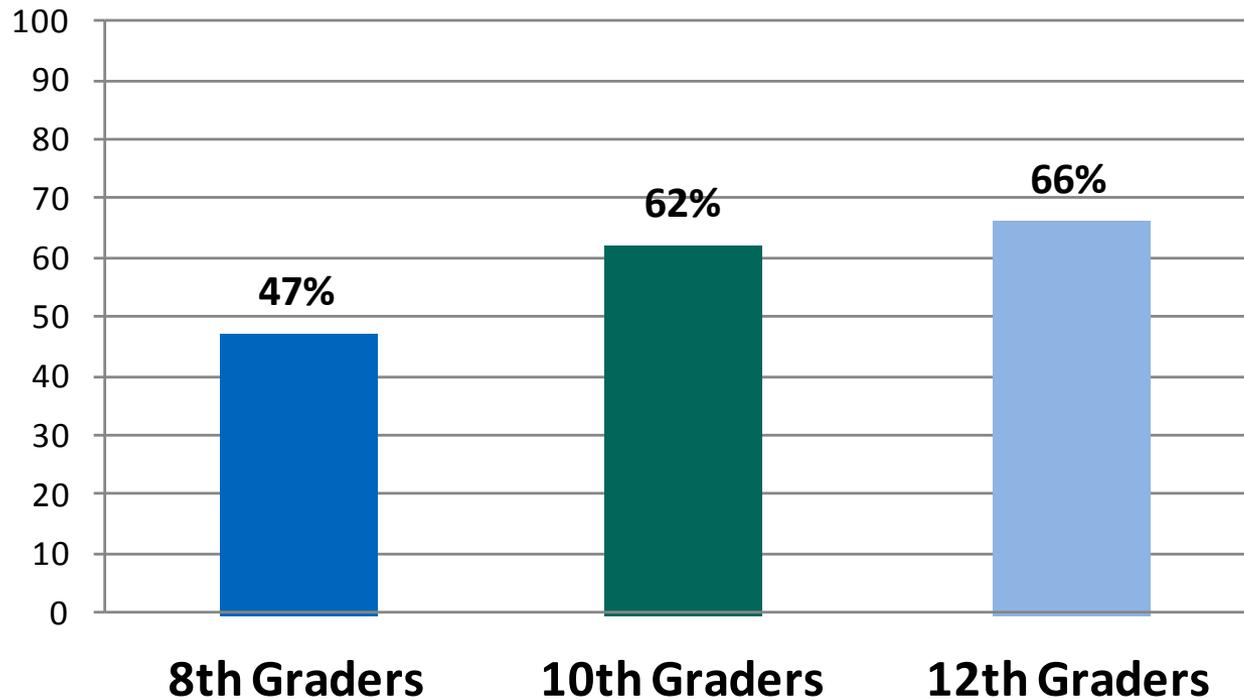
Yes

No

- Most teens would say they are single
- Casual dating peaks around age 16–17
- By 18 or 19, more teens who are dating are in serious relationships

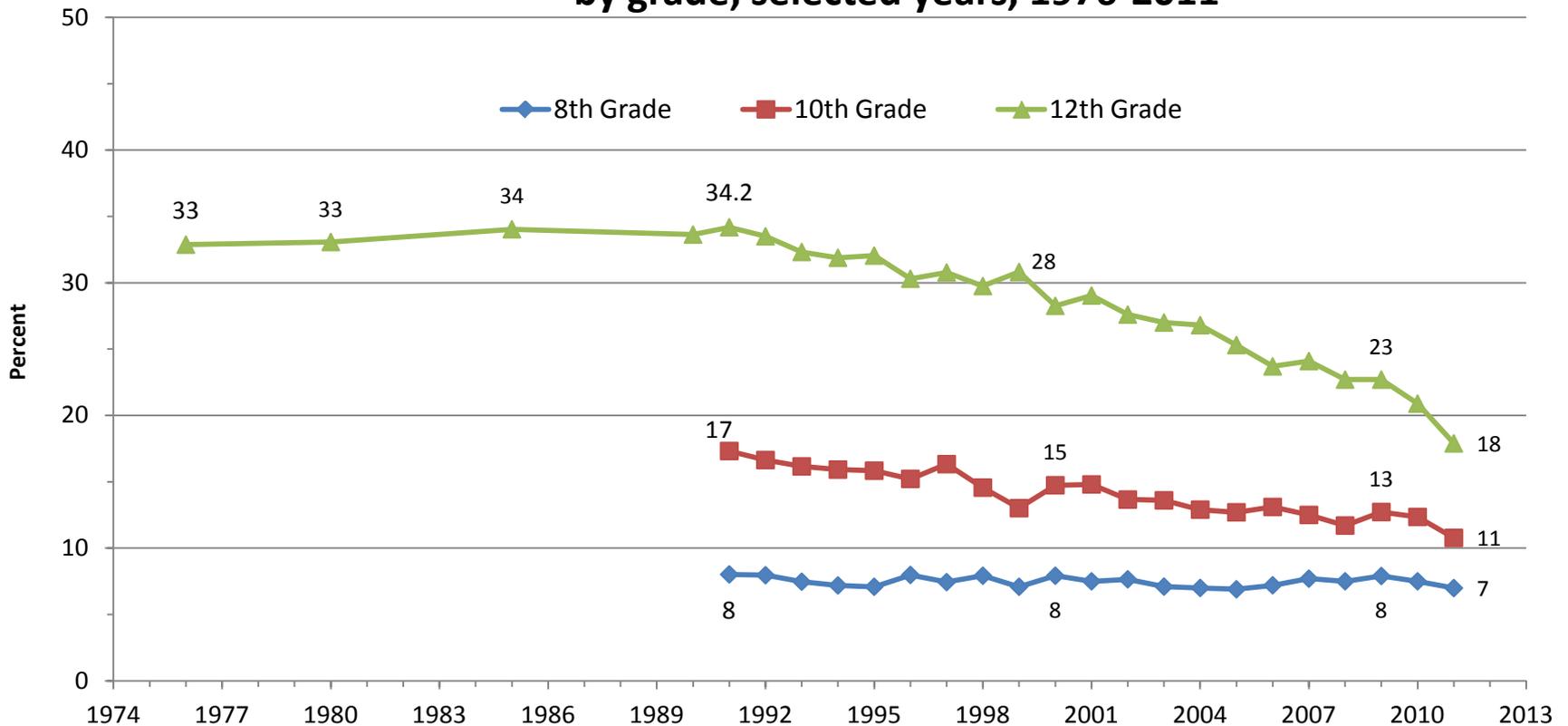


Percent of high school students who ever date, 2011



Source: Child Trends. (2013). *Child Trends Databank: Dating*. Bethesda, MD: Child Trends.

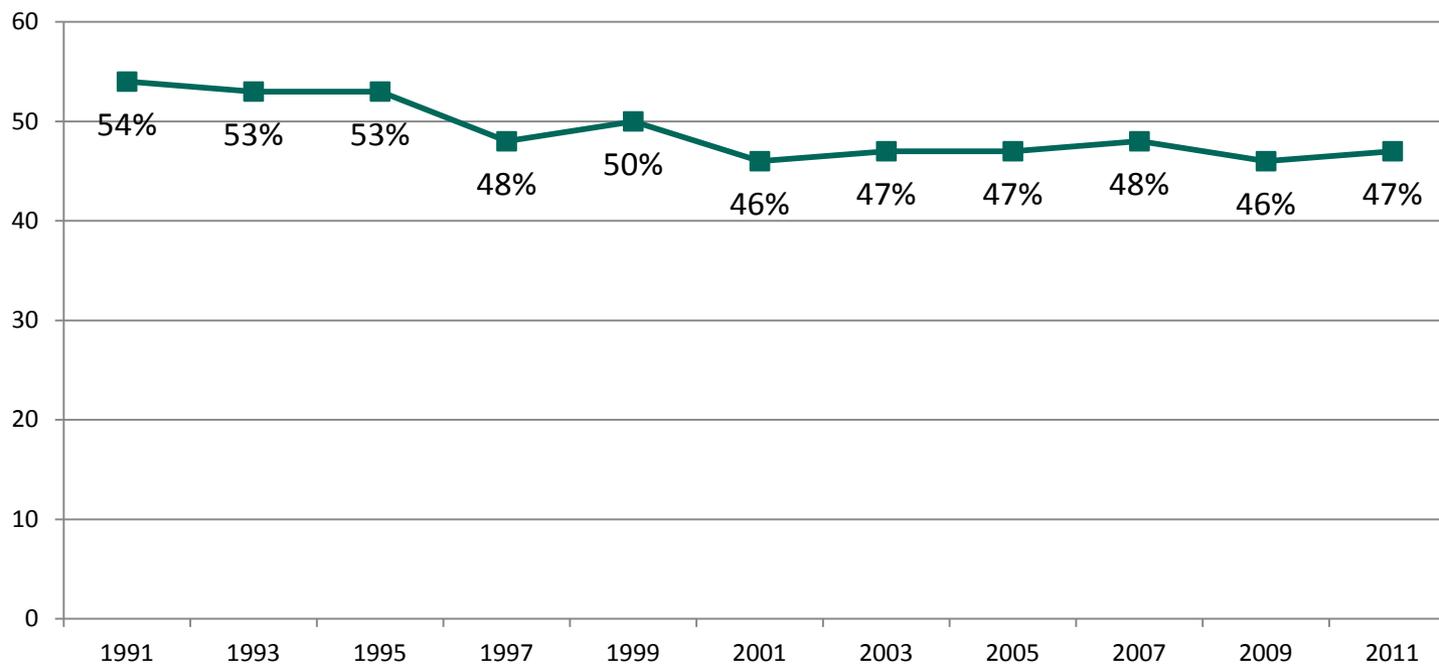
Percentage of 8th, 10th, and 12th grade students who date frequently, by grade, selected years, 1976-2011



Note: Frequent dating is used here to describe youth who report going out on more than one date a week.

Source: Child Trends analysis of Monitoring the Future Data, Selected Years, 1976-2011

Percent of high school students who have ever had sexual intercourse



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2012). *1991-2011 High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey data*.

- Dating is part of normal adolescent development
- Receiving support and affection from a partner can contribute to self-esteem and promote communication and conflict management



- Having multiple, very short-term relationships and being in relationships with high levels of aggression have been linked to:
 - Alcohol and drug use
 - Poor academic performance
 - Low self-esteem



Teen Dating Violence

- Four in ten teens report experiencing dating violence
 - 9% of teens report committing an act of sexual assault; half blame their victim
- Both genders are equally likely to report dating violence perpetration and victimization
 - This is true for both LGBT and heterosexual teens
 - Although the type and severity of abuse varies across males and females



Negative Effects of Dating Violence

- Teens who experience dating violence are more likely to be involved in abusive relationships as adults
- Other long-term effects of dating violence include:
 - Poor academic performance
 - Low self-esteem
 - Eating disorders
 - Depression
 - Suicidal behavior
 - Sexually transmitted diseases
 - **Pregnancy**



- Technology has created a new platform for dating violence to occur
- Between 10-25% of dating youth have experienced dating violence (in past year)

Examples:

- Sending threatening or emotionally abusive texts or emails
- Posting sexual photos online
- Monitoring phones, email, social media use

- Adolescents spend more time using media than engaging in any other activity
- Social media allows teens to connect with their partners via cell, chat, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.
- Opportunity to send positive messages to teens about healthy relationships
 - Many programs already doing this
 - Twitter chats, Facebook pages, Tumblr accounts, blogs



What do teens think about their relationships?

Findings from a qualitative study

Teen Perspectives on Healthy Romantic Relationships among Racial/Ethnic Minorities



Lina Guzman, PhD
Erum Ikramullah
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Kristen Peterson



This research was funded by the Office of Population Affairs through grant APRPA006012-01-01

- Teen years represent a critical phase of relationship development
- Relationship characteristics may influence sexual and contraceptive behaviors
- Most research focuses on adult populations
- Teen relationships differ from adult relationships
- Focus on racial/ethnic minorities

- What are the different types of teen romantic relationships and what characteristics distinguish them?
- What are the critical dimensions of healthy adolescent romantic relationships as defined by teens?
- Are the critical dimensions of healthy adolescent romantic relationships comparable to those of adults?

- Focus groups (N=7)
- Total males N=16; Total females N=36
- Age distribution
 - N=33: 12-to-14-year-olds
 - N=19: 15-to-17-year-olds
- Largely African-American (79%)
- Only 31% lived with 2 biological or adoptive parents
- 73% ever in a relationship that was more than just friends

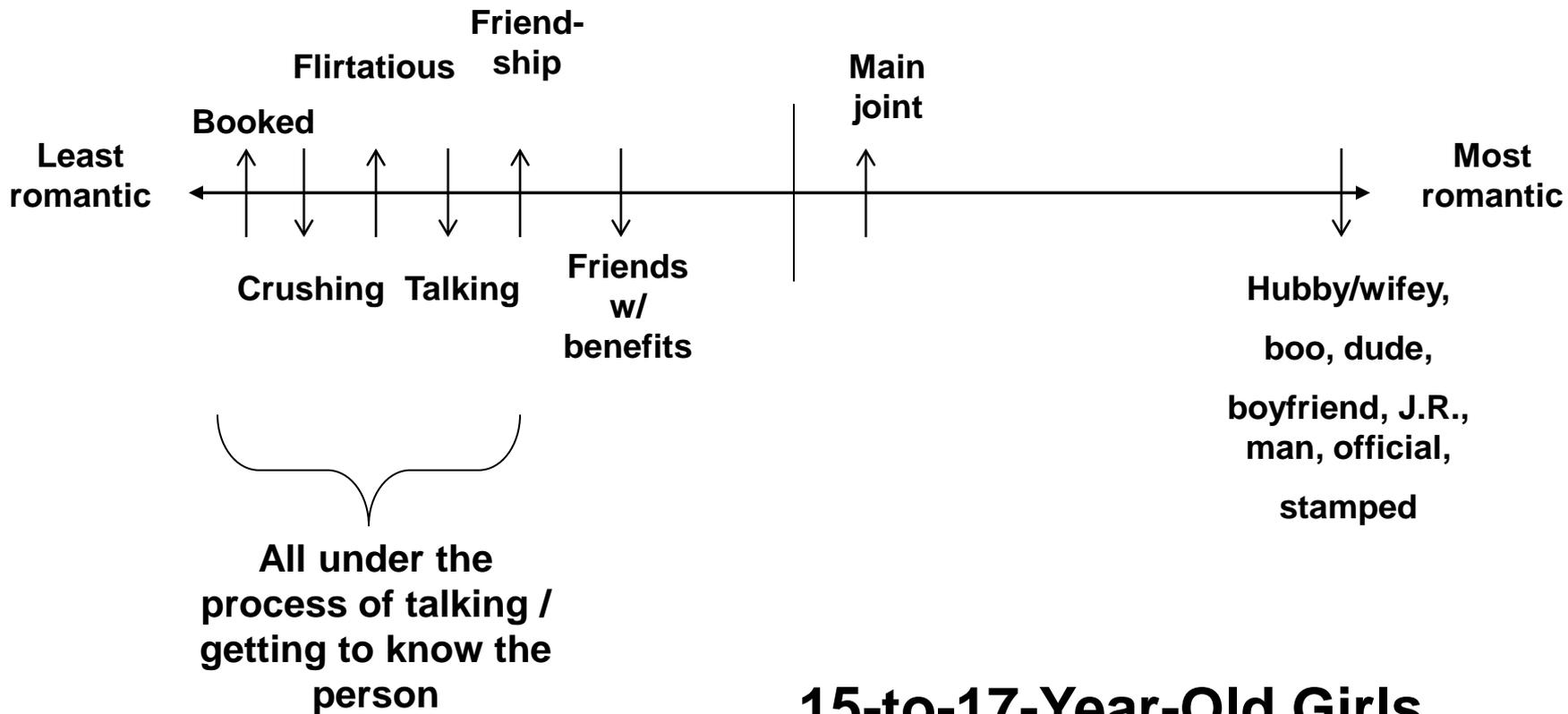


Major Themes

Theme 1: Teens Have a Rich and Complex Language to Describe Romantic Relationships

- Language reflects intensity, expectations, and behaviors
 - *“If somebody’s really serious about you, they may call you “wifey” or “that’s my hubby”. If they’re really, really serious. Another level, a lot down is “my boo”. Another level is “my girl, my dude...”*
 - 15-to-17-year-old female

Relationship Spectrum



15-to-17-Year-Old Girls

How do teens in your programs (or teens you know if you are not a provider) refer to their significant others? Check all that apply:

- Boyfriend/girlfriend
- Hubby/wifey
- Boo
- Friend
- Other?

Theme 2: Teens Have a Clear Definition of a Healthy Teen Romantic Relationship



- Girls' discussions about respect in teen relationships:
 - ***“I said respect, because you gotta have respect before anything...because you can't just walk up to a girl and be like, Hey yo, come here.”***
- 12-to-14-year-old girl
 - ***“... respect you for who you are is like, just because I have a butt doesn't mean you have to touch it and stuff. Just because I have a chest doesn't mean you go tell your friends oh this and that and the other. But you can respect me.”***
- 12-to-14-year-old girl

- Boys' discussions of respect in teen relationships:
 - ***“Respect...is like the most important key of the whole relationship.”***
 - ***“Y’all gotta have respect for each other in order for the relationship to work.”***

-15-to-17-year-old boys
- Self-Respect:
 - ***“Self-respect. Like, you don’t respect yourself, and you won’t learn to respect others.”***
 - ***“[Some girls] get treated bad and get called names and stuff, and they still go back to the same guy. Is that respect? ...You’ve gotta respect your own self in order to be with somebody that you actually love.”***

-15-to-17-year-old boys

- Girls concerned with how their partner behaves towards them and talks about their relationship in public
 - ***“Like if I’m here talking and you see one of your friends and you just walk off, while I’m sitting here talking...”***
 - ***“...[or] if he tells you how much he likes you and then when he gets around his friends, he like, ‘I never did like you!’”***
 - dialogue between two 12-to-14-year-old girls
- Boys more concerned with how being in a relationship defines their own personal image
 - ***“You just wanna look cool in front of your friends...All your friends, all they talk about is...who got that last night.”***
 - 15-to-17-year-old boy

- *“If you don’t love the person you’re with, then why are you with them? Love puts you together...”*
- *“You say you love them, but you don’t really mean it.”*
- ***“They think that love is like being with a girl, having sex with a girl, and then leaving her...They think that that’s love, when it’s not.”***

-15-to-17-year-old boys

- *“Ain’t nobody lookin’ for love, not teenagers.”*
- *“...I think we need to be more focused on what we need to be doing to get by in the future. I think for teenagers, you can have a committed relationship, you can love your boyfriend but...I don’t think you would be on adult terms. It would be simple.”*
- *“It’s more like puppy love...”*
-15-to-17-year-old girls

- ***“[Sex is important] because if you don’t have a good, sexual relationship with that person, then you won’t feel...some sort of connection.”***
- ***“[Sex] plays a highly important role, I mean, when it comes to having relationships...”***
-15-to-17-year-old boys

Healthy Romantic Relationships Were Often Defined by the Absence of Negative Behaviors

- “Not cheating or lying”
- “No abuse”
- “Not calling them names”
- “Don’t hit each other”



Theme 3: Teen Relationships Fall Short of their Own Standards

- Cheating
- Physical/verbal violence
- Lack of respect
- Poor communication
- Pessimism about adult relationships

- *“I doubt you can find all of them in one person.”*
- *“Good personality, maybe, but you’re gonna get liars; they’re not honest.”*
- ***“Like for example, okay, one boy can be, you know, honest, respectful, and you have a connection. But, then, he’ll be violent or something.”***
- *“...or he’ll be like, too jealous or something.”*
 - 15-to-17-year-old girls
- *“[Respect] is not really common...”*
 - 15-to-17-year-old boys

- *“Everybody cheating...”*
-15-to-17-year-old girl
- **“Cause you can’t find faithful in none of them; in none of the guys nowadays.”**
-15-to-17-year-old girl
- ***“Cause you might have a girl, and be goin with another girl...”*** -15-to-17-year-old boy
- *“Us boys, um, we lie to them, and we talk to other girls, telling them, ‘oh, you’re gonna be my girl’”*
-15-to-17-year-old boy

- Play-fighting is common and sometimes can escalate to violence
 - *“It all depends. Based on the level of maturity that the people in the relationship are in. They think it’s cool, or sexy... I know a lot of teens like to do playful fights... As far as hitting going out of proportion, that’s not good.”*
-15-to-17-year-old girl
 - ***“Cause sometimes, you like, just be playing....but then when you start goin for real and hittin each other on the face or the neck...then you want to fight. You should just be like, ‘chill out!’”***
-15-to-17-year-old boy

- Girls use violence as a way to express their anger or frustration
 - ***“...more like play-fighting, but like in an argument, you just want to get out your frustration, so you hit him, and he hits you back, that sort of fighting.”***
 - 12-to-14-year-old girl
 - ***“...in our relationships, the boys, they really don’t try to hit us...it’s usually the girls that are hittin.”***
 - ***“Like if a girl is mad, she just smack him..”***
 - Dialogue between 12-to-14-year-old girls

Why Isn't the Typical Teen Relationship Healthy?

- *"I don't think none of those qualities are all there because they're not taught to have those qualities. They don't know how to be gentle."*
- ***"Most females, if they don't have a father figure in their life, they don't have these qualities, or if they do have a father figure, they have little evidence."***
- *"Females may feel a sense of duty to follow the man and just play the same game that he's playing..."*
- *"Or they could just be loose. Because they don't have a father figure and they just want attention from a male."*

-15-to-17-year-old girls

Theme 4: Teens and Adults Describe Healthy Relationships Similarly

- Teens' constructs closely mirror adults
 - Lack of domestic violence
 - Intimacy and emotional support
 - Communication
 - Fidelity
 - Commitment
 - Conflict resolution
 - Time together
 - Satisfaction

- Small sample
- Mostly girls
- Mostly African-Americans
- All groups conducted in Washington, D.C.

- Program providers and policymakers:
 - For teen relationships that are sexual, relationship characteristics are associated with contraceptive use, thus teen pregnancy and STDs
 - Importance of relationship education programs
 - Low-intensity, “go-slow” approach to relationships
 - Building blocks of positive relationships
 - Effective communication
 - Conflict resolution
 - Handling pressures of sex
 - How to choose partners

- Parents:
 - Awareness and need to discuss full range of teen relationships
 - Promoting healthy relationship ideals from an early age
 - Importance of role models
- Mentors/Role Models

Do the themes from this study accurately reflect the relationships that you hear about from the teens in your program?

Yes

No



Putting it Together: Linking Relationship Education (RE) and Teen Pregnancy Prevention (TPP)

- The broad goal of relationship education for adolescents is to impart some combination of knowledge, values, and skills believed necessary to establish healthy romantic relationships
- Offered in a wide range of settings:
 - Schools, juvenile justice system, foster care, independent living facilities, programs for pregnant and parenting teens, camps, retreats, group homes, and after-school programs

- Relationship and Marriage Education
- Family and Consumer Sciences
 - Sometimes required in high school
- Abstinence Education
 - Effective way to get relationship education into schools
- Community-Based Initiatives
 - Relationship education as a secondary objective

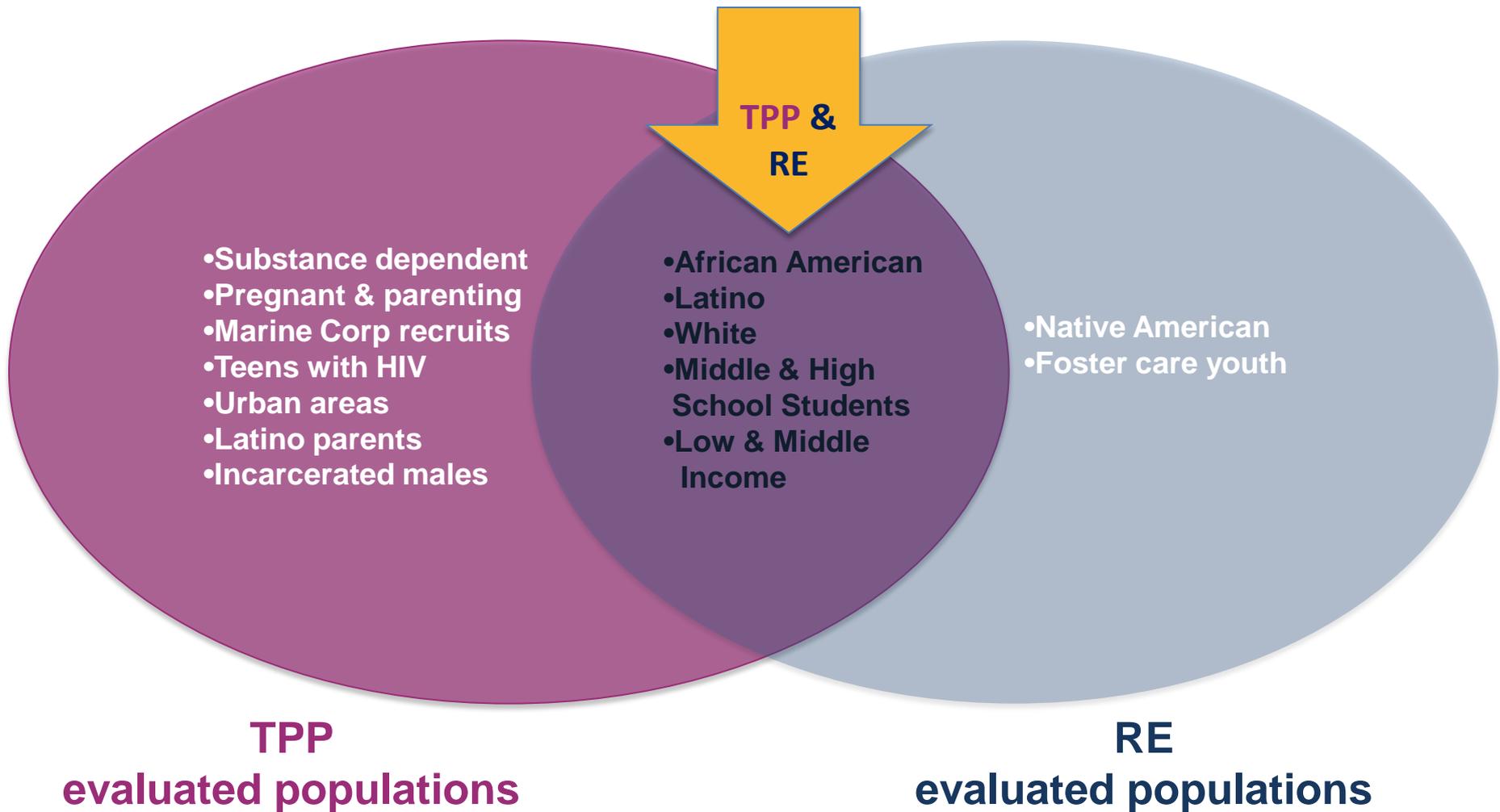
Do you incorporate relationship education into your program?

Yes

No

Relationship Education and Teen Pregnancy Prevention Objectives

- Similar goal: promote positive adolescent development
- Both types of programs foster resilience
 - Teens know how to identify accurate information
 - Skills such as condom negotiation or conflict resolution help teens realize they can overcome obstacles
 - This is particularly important for the most vulnerable teens



Relationship education components of TPP Programs

**Communicating with partners
Communicating with parents
Condom negotiation
Gender and power
Dating violence**

TPP components of Relationship Education Programs

**Avoiding risky sexual behaviors
STD/HIV prevention
Pregnancy prevention
Choosing a partner
Dating violence**

Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs	Relationship Education Programs
Delayed Sex	Recognize healthy vs. unhealthy relationships
Learn how to prevent STDs/HIV	Learn conflict resolution skills
Learn how to prevent pregnancy	Learn effective communication strategies
Use contraception carefully and consistently	Ability to resist sexual pressure

TPP Curricula

SIHLE

Healthy Choices, Healthy Relationships

Teen Outreach Program

Aban Aya Youth Project

Carrera Program

It's Your Game: Keep it Real

RE Curricula

Connections: Dating and Emotions

Love U2: Relationship Smarts
PLUS

Best Friends

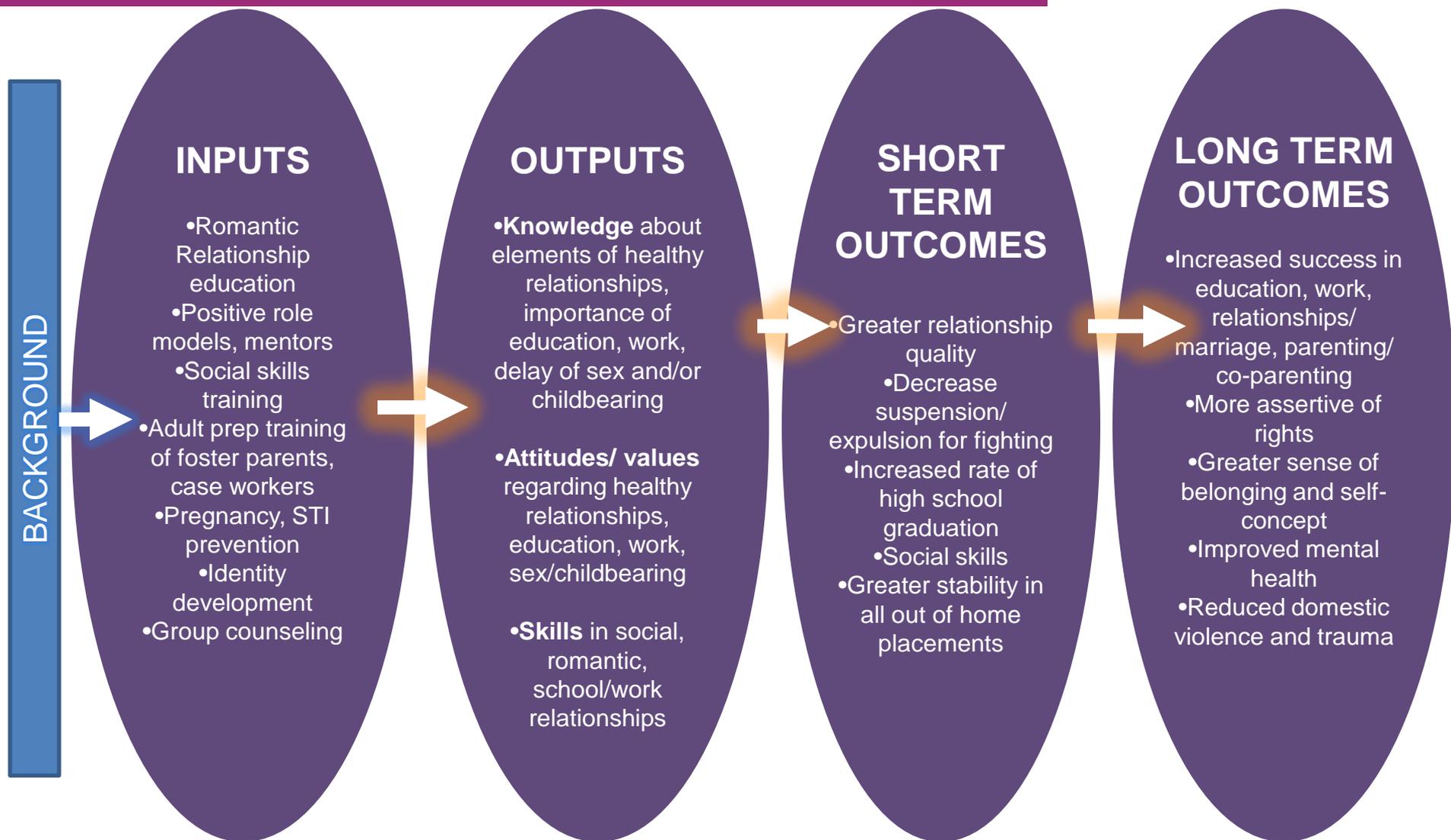
Choosing the Best

How important do you think relationship education is/could be for your program?

- Very important/critical
- Somewhat important
- Not very important
- Not at all important

- **Emphasis on Social Media and Technology**
 - Growing use of technology can be incorporated into programs
- **Understudied populations**
 - **LGBT Youth**
 - LGBT youth experience more dating violence than their heterosexual peers
 - **Racial/ethnic minority groups**
 - For example, American Indian youth have high rates of dating violence and teen pregnancy
 - **Youth in foster care**

Sample Logic Model



Source: Scott, M.E., Moore, K.A., Hawkins, A.J., Malm, K., & Beltz, M. (2012). Putting Youth Relationship Education on the Child Welfare Agenda: Findings from a Research and Evaluation Review. Washington, DC: Child Trends.

Questions?



- Preventing and responding to domestic violence among LGBT youth
 - <http://www.vawnet.org/special-collections/DVLGBTQ.php>
- Apps to prevent dating violence
 - <http://appsagainstabuse.challengepost.com/>
- The Dibble Institute provides resources to help youth create healthy romantic relationships.
 - <http://www.dibbleinstitute.org/>
- Adolescent Romantic Relationships as Precursors of Healthy Marriages: A Review of Theory, Research, and Programs
 - http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/2007/RAND_TR488.sum.pdf

- Making a Love Connection: Teen Relationships, Pregnancy and Marriage
 - http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/pubs/MALC_FINAL.pdf
- Kiss and Tell: What Teens Say About Love, Trust and Other Relationship Stuff
 - http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/pubs/kiss_tell.pdf
- National Healthy Marriage Resource Center – Marriage/Relationship Education for Youth
 - <http://www.healthymarriageinfo.org/find-resources/index.aspx#topic=9&subtopic=12&year=all>

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