

Male Focus Group Study



585 Joseph Avenue, Rochester, New York 14605
phone (585) 325-8123 fax (585) 546-1491
email: mctp585@hotmail.com

Male Focus Group Study

Regarding Relationships Between Adult Men and Teenage Partners

introduction

The Metro Council For Teen Potential

The Metro Council for Teen Potential (MCTP) is a community coalition that promotes a comprehensive, coordinated and community-wide strategy to foster youth development; and encourage young people to make healthier choices. MCTP members include many youth development organizations, the City School District, the City of Rochester, the Monroe County Health Department, the Rochester Monroe County Youth Bureau, and other concerned citizens and youth-serving institutions. Along with the University of Rochester and the City of Rochester, MCTP is a member of the Rochester Coalition Partnership for the Prevention of Teen Pregnancy, and receives major funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Baden Street Settlement is the host agency for MCTP.

MCTP assists its member agencies in incorporating “best practice” models into their existing youth programs, conducts research-based needs assessments and identifies gaps in service. It supports multi-agency collaboratives that deliver services to young people, provides staff training and program evaluation, and coordinates a faith leaders networking project. A media campaign to reach out to young people, to share information about healthy choices, relationships and sexuality; and to encourage young people to make full use of community resources is in production for release in the fall of 2002.

The Male Focus Group Study

MCTP requested research into relationships between adult men and teenage girls. Teenage child-bearing is inconsistent with societal norms for attaining adulthood through education, work experience and financial stability. Teens who have sex with older men are more likely to contract HIV or other STDs and are more likely to become pregnant. Sexual relationships with minors are frequently coercive and may pose detrimental consequences to the emotional, social and developmental health of the mother and her children.

The primary source of information about relationships between adult men and their teenage partners has traditionally come from young women when they present for prenatal care. This study, conducted as part of on-going community-based evaluation to inform teen pregnancy prevention programs, sheds light on how men in two City of Rochester neighborhoods with high rates of teen pregnancy regard relationships with women in general and teenage women in particular, as well as contraception. Focus groups and key informant interviews were used to gain a qualitative understanding of men’s thoughts on these issues. Additionally, service providers from health and human service agencies who have contact with adult fathers of children born to teens were questioned about the fathers they have met.

study summary

What Qualities Do Adult Men Seek in Their Relationships?

Men in study reported that *regardless of age*, they prefer women who are: intelligent, educated, spiritual, good communicators, non-judgmental, fun loving and/or good looking. Less desirable qualities include: disrespectful, verbally abusive, manipulating, controlling, stupid, too sexually experienced, unattractive.

Based on these characteristics, the men interviewed made a distinction between women that they dated and women that they would marry. Women with considerable previous sexual experience were seen as the least desirable marriage partners.

What Motivates Adult Men to Pursue Relationships with Teens?

Young women have less sexual experience
Youthful physical attributes
Young women make older men feel “idolized”
Less risk of disease
Easier to control
For casual relationships

NOTE: Some men reported feeling “duped” by younger women who dress to look older or mislead them concerning use of birth control.

What Do Adult Men Believe Motivates Young Women to Seek Relationships with Them?

Their mothers coach them to find an older male partner
They are seeking status, material goods and financial or emotional security
Lack of a father figure

NOTE: Health care workers reported that many young women enter into relationships with older men seeking “rescue” from “hideous” situations at home.

Attitudes Regarding Contraception

The men reported conflicting attitudes towards responsibility for contraception. Some felt it was incumbent on the women, some felt it was mutual, some felt it was incumbent on the man so that he wouldn't be “trapped — especially if he had a good job and a nice car.” All strongly agreed that men need to use contraception to protect themselves against STDs.

recommendations

A comprehensive strategy to prevent teen pregnancy should include efforts that target adult men. An effective message may be to encourage men to use contraception to protect themselves against sexually transmitted diseases, as avoiding pregnancy does not seem to be their primary motivation for using contraception.

This report was prepared by Nancy P. Chin, MD, MPH, Jonathan Klein, MD, MPH, Karen Wilson, MPH, and Christine Christopher, supported by a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Reproductive Health and the Rochester Coalition Partnership for the Prevention of Teen Pregnancy. For more information contact:

Sheila Driscoll, Director, Metro Council for Teen Potential, (585) 325-8123 x 210

Dr. Jonathan Klein, Division of Adolescent Medicine, Golisano Children's Hospital at Strong, (585) 275-7760

©2002 by Metro Council for Teen Potential, Baden Street Settlement of Rochester, Inc. All rights reserved.