



African American Girls' Ideal Dating Relationship Now and in the Future

WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH ABOUT?

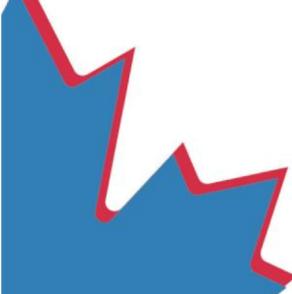
Compared to girls of other races/ethnicities, adolescent African American girls are at risk of experiencing higher levels of violence in their dating relationships. Teens' dating relationships are important for the development of beliefs, values, identity, and social skills that shape their future relationships. This study investigated adolescent African American girls' preferences in current and future romantic relationships in order to understand their ideas about healthy relationships and factors that may influence their dating behaviours.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

- African American girls desired healthy relationship characteristics for both current dating relationships and future relationships
- Girls saw high school dating relationships as temporary, but explained that they would take their relationships more seriously in the future and expressed a desire to get married
- Girls wanted their partner to be their “best friend” that they could depend on, and discussed family, financial stability and goals as important dating considerations

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS DO?

The researchers interviewed 33 15- to 18 year-old African American girls from public and private schools in the United States. The majority of participants came from families with a lower-middle to high socio-economic status. The interviewers asked the girls how they would describe the “perfect” relationship now, and if it is different from how they would describe the “perfect” relationship in the future. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, then read repeatedly to identify common themes.



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WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS FIND?

This study also showed that African American girls were aware of healthy relationship characteristics, unlike previous findings. All of the girls in this study saw high school relationships as temporary and did not believe that they would last in the long term. They explained that they would take their relationships more seriously in the future, and when asked about their ideal future partner, they discussed a desire to get married. Girls wanted their current partner to be someone who has similar values, family backgrounds, academics, and goals.

Family was another important consideration for girls' ideal current partner. Girls wanted their parents to approve of their partner, but they also wanted a partner who was respectful to their own parents. Girls described that both their ideal current and future partner should be their "best friend" who is there for them, and discussed the importance of qualities like good communication, honesty and trust. When asked about their ideal future partner, girls wanted someone who is financially stable and goal-oriented.

HOW CAN YOU USE THIS RESEARCH?

By uncovering what girls value in dating relationships, this study identifies areas that researchers could focus on when developing initiatives to promote healthy relationships and prevent teen dating violence. For example, family had an influence on girls' dating preferences, suggesting it would be beneficial to involve families in dating violence prevention efforts. Girls wanted a partner who is their "best friend," so initiatives could also focus on identifying and promoting positive "best friend" qualities. Finally, this study showed that African American girls may be more aware of healthy relationship characteristics than was previously believed. More research is needed to determine how relationship values develop.

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