

RISKY SEXUAL INTERCOURSE ON ENTERTAINMENT TELEVISION:  
COMPARING AUDIENCE RESPONSES TO DIFFERENT TYPES OF  
NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCE PORTRAYALS

by

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## ABSTRACT

This study employed an experimental design to test the effects of exposure to televised portrayals of differing types of negative consequences of casual sex on emerging adults' sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions. Male and female undergraduates were randomly assigned to one of three viewing conditions. Participants either viewed a program that portrayed negative emotional/social consequences of casual sex (i.e., guilt, regret, embarrassment, disapproval of family and friends), a negative physical consequence of casual sex (i.e., an unplanned/unwanted pregnancy), or a program without any sexual content.

Outcomes were assessed immediately after exposure. Five outcome variables were examined: negative outcome expectancies of risky sex, attitudes toward casual sex, attitudes toward condoms, behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex, and behavioral intentions to use condoms. Driven by social cognitive theory, hypotheses address expected differences among the three conditions on these five outcome variables.

Hypotheses about the expected effects of portrayals of negative consequences of casual sex were not confirmed. Results indicate that exposure to negative consequences of casual sex on television does not uniformly influence emerging adults' sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions. Rather, the relationship between exposure and subsequent effects was found to be moderated by their sexual risk experience. Emerging adults with different amounts of sexual risk experience responded differently to the experimental stimuli. Participants who had extensive sexual risk experience were not influenced by the stimuli. However, effects of exposure to the negative consequence

conditions were identified among participants who had little to moderate amounts of sexual risk experience. Both the negative physical and emotional/social consequence conditions led these participants to report safer sex outcomes. Findings imply that portrayals of both negative emotional/social and negative physical consequences of casual sex on television have the potential to positively influence the sexual attitudes and behavioral intentions of young people who do not already have substantial sexual risk experience.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### Overview

Sexual risk-taking behaviors are common in emerging adulthood (Arnett, 1992, 2000; National Center for Health Statistics, 2000). A substantial amount of sexually active emerging adults put themselves at risk of experiencing potentially life-changing negative consequences of intercourse like unplanned pregnancies and/or contraction of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Studies show that between 24-28% of sexually active college students report that they never use condoms or birth control when having intercourse (DiIorio, Dudley, & Soet, 1998; Douglas et al., 1997; Wechsler, Lee, Kuo, & Lee, 2000), and that many engage in casual sexual intercourse with partners they have just met (Lambert, Kahn, & Apple, 2003; Paul & Hayes, 2002; Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000). In addition, sexually active emerging adults largely report that they have had few discussions about sexual precautions such as condoms and/or contraception with a partner and that they hold little knowledge about a partner's sexual history (Paul & Hayes, 2002; Seal, 1997). Male emerging adults, in particular, report much higher levels of engagement in, and positive attitudes toward, these risky sexual encounters than their female counterparts (Cubbins & Tanfer, 2000; Knox, Sturdivant & Zusman, 2001; Oliver & Hyde, 1993).

Exposure to sexual media content is a known contributor to an emerging adult's sexual socialization. Evidence increasingly suggests exposure to sexual television content contributes to the sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions of emerging adults (Aubrey, Harrison, Kramer, & Yellin, 2003; Taylor, 2005; Ward, 2002; Ward &

Rivadeneira, 1999). Specifically, both correlational and experimental studies have identified positive relationships between exposure to sexual television content and permissive sexual outcomes among emerging adults. Permissive outcomes include liberal beliefs about, and attitudes that are accepting of, sexual behaviors between partners who are not monogamously committed to one another. For example, one study of emerging adults found that greater exposure to sexual content is associated with more permissive behavioral expectations for sexual relationships (i.e., for females, expecting sex to occur earlier in a relationship, and for males, expecting partners to engage in a wider range of sexual behaviors) (Aubrey et al., 2003). Another showed that emerging adults exposed to television portrayals of casual sexual intercourse perceived to be realistic, reported a greater acceptance of casual sex than those exposed to non-sexual content (Taylor, 2005). The majority of emerging adults (73%) affirm these findings, reporting that they have learned “some” or “a lot” about sex from the media (Hoff et al., 2003). In sum, sexual television content can, and often does, influence emerging adult viewers. Because of this it is important to understand what they are learning about sexual intercourse from television.

Portrayals of sexual intercourse are prevalent on television (Kunkel, Eyal, Finnerty, Biely, & Donnerstein, 2005). Almost half of the sexual intercourse acts on television take place between characters that are not in an established sexual relationship with one another (Eyal & Finnerty, 2006). That is, most sex on television involves characters who are familiar with one another but not involved in a sexual relationship prior to engaging in intercourse, or characters who had just met prior to engaging in intercourse. Partners

on television who have just met prior to engaging in intercourse are no more likely to face negative physical consequences to intercourse, like unplanned pregnancies or contractions of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), than are couples who are in committed relationships (Eyal & Finnerty, 2006). In fact, across the television landscape, portrayals of such life-changing negative physical consequences of intercourse are rarely shown (Huston, Wartella, & Donnerstein, 1998; Kunkel, Cope, Farinola, Biely, Rollin, & Donnerstein, 1999; Kunkel, Cope-Farrar, Biely, Farinola, & Donnerstein, 2001; Will, Porter, Geler, & DePasquale, 2005).

Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory suggests that exposure to portrayals of behavioral consequences often mediates the relationship between observed sexual content and viewer effects. The theory explains that it is observation of the consequences to models' actions that can potentially promote or deter a viewer's inclination to engage in similar actions. People often refrain, or are inhibited, from engaging in or endorsing a behavior after they observe models who experience negative consequences for their actions (Bandura, 1994). To date, however, findings on the effects of sexual content are not sufficient to confirm theoretical expectations in this area. Only one study has explored the impact of televised consequence portrayals of sexual intercourse on emerging adult viewers. Eyal (2005) found that emerging adults exposed to negative emotional/social consequences of intercourse reported small but significant decreases in the positivity of their attitudes toward premarital sex. The small size of the decrease may be due to the fact that only negative emotional/social consequences of intercourse were

shown in this experiment. It is possible that negative physical consequences of sexual intercourse would yield stronger effects for observers.

Negative physical consequences of sex, like unplanned pregnancies or contractions of STIs, are the top concern of emerging adults (Hoff, Greene, & Davis, 2003). This is not surprising given that this type of consequence is potentially life-altering. Unplanned pregnancies have the potential to forever change the lives of both male and female emerging adults. Unplanned pregnancy can negatively affect their financial situation, their relationships with friends and family of origin, and their mental and physical health, among other impacts (Committee on Unintended Pregnancy, 1995; Witte, 1997). Many emerging adults report having personal experience with unplanned pregnancies; between 15-22% of single college students report that they or a partner have experienced an unplanned pregnancy (Douglas et al., 1997; Patrick, Covin, Fulop, Calfas, & Lovato, 1997; Wiley et al., 1996). To date, however, no study has examined the effect of exposure to televised portrayals of negative physical consequences of intercourse on emerging adult viewers. Perhaps they would lead to stronger inhibitory effects than portrayals of negative emotional and/or social consequences of sexual intercourse. Social cognitive theory suggests that this may be the case.

First, the theory asserts that it is difficult to inhibit behaviors that one already has personal experience with and finds rewarding (Bandura, 1986). Thus, with sexual exploration and pleasure seeking characteristic of the developmental stage of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000), it should not be easy to inhibit their sexual behavior vicariously through television programming. According to social cognitive theory “inhibitions are

more difficult to establish and sustain by either direct or vicarious sanctions when they require relinquishing behaviors that are personally functional” (Bandura, 1986, p. 290). As 80%-90% of college students report that they have already engaged in intercourse (Douglas et al., 1997; Hoff et al., 2003; Poulson, Eppler, Satterwhite, Wuensch, & Bass, 1998), the theory implies that it would be hard to inhibit their performance of this behavior. Thus, in the case of exposure to television portrayals of a rewarding behavior that the majority of emerging adults have already engaged in, like sexual intercourse, social cognitive theory would suggest that it must be met with potent negative consequences if it is to inhibit or deter modeling effects.

Social cognitive theory stresses the importance of a negative consequence’s severity in determining effects (Bandura, 1986). Strong, long-lasting, negative consequences of sexual intercourse with broad social impact should yield more potent effects than weaker, temporal consequences. For example, audiences’ own sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors should be less inhibited by an act of sexual intercourse that leads to embarrassment and social discomfort, than by an act that results in an unplanned pregnancy. Bandura explains that “an event that signifies diverse possible consequences will have greater potency than if it portends only a single effect” (p. 235). Again, negative physical consequences of sex, like unplanned pregnancies and STI contractions, often serve as a catalyst for a number of other negative consequences. Unplanned, or unwanted, pregnancy, in particular, is never purely a physical consequence. The terms “unplanned” or “unwanted” imply that one’s pregnancy is accompanied by some negative emotion (e.g., surprise, regret, fear, etc.). In reference to single young people, in

particular, a range of other negative emotional/social experiences are encompassed in the terms (Crosby, DiClemente, & Wingood, 2003; Mohllajee, Curtis, Morrow, & Marchbanks, 2007; Schinke, 1998; Witte, 1997). Therefore, according to social cognitive theory, observing a negative physical consequence of sex, like an unplanned and unwanted pregnancy, should be seen as a more potent inhibitor of modeling behaviors than observing negative emotional/social consequences of sex, such as embarrassment, guilt, regret, or the disapproval of family and friends. To date, however, this premise has not been tested. A better understanding of the role of differing types of televised negative consequence portrayals is now warranted.

Driven by the bodies of literature in the areas of emerging adulthood, sexual television content, social cognitive theory, and media effects, this study examines the impact of exposure to differing types of negative consequences of casual sexual intercourse on male and female emerging adults' sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions. The term "casual sex" can be used to refer to non-committal sexual intercourse (i.e., intercourse with a partner whom one is not in an established romantic relationship with) with a partner one has just met and/or non-committal sexual intercourse with a partner one is already familiar with (Gebhardt, Kuyper, & Greunsvan, 2003; Hennink, Cooper, & Diamond, 2000). Throughout this study, however, casual sex is operationalized solely as sexual intercourse between partners that occurs within 24 hours of their initial meeting (Herold, Maticka-Tyndale & Mewhinney, 1998; Maticka-Tyndale, Herold, & Oppermann, 2003). This study focuses on this particular type of casual sex, colloquially known as a "one-night-stand," because it puts participants at high

risk for unplanned pregnancy and contracting/transmitting STIs as they are not likely to know their partner's sexual and personal history (Catania et al., 1992; Johnson, Wadsworth, Wellings, & Field, 1994; Tanfer, Cubbins & Billy, 1995). From a sexual health perspective, it is important to know if exposure to televised negative consequence portrayals of casual sex can promote more responsible sexual behavior.

Thus, this study employs an experimental design to test the effects of exposure to differing types of televised negative consequences of casual sexual intercourse on emerging adult viewers. There are three experimental viewing conditions in the study: the negative emotional/social consequence condition, the negative physical consequence condition, and the control condition. Negative consequences of casual sex are manipulated between the first two conditions such that one condition features negative emotional/social consequences of an act of casual sexual intercourse, and the other, a negative physical consequence of an act of casual sexual intercourse. In the third condition, the control condition, a program that does not contain any sexual talk/behavior is shown.

It is important to note that a negative physical consequence of intercourse, like an unplanned/unwanted pregnancy, is never exclusively physical. In order to be considered negative, a pregnancy must elicit negative emotions from those personally experiencing it and/or other observers. Negative emotion is already built into the terminology used to describe unplanned/unwanted pregnancy among young people. Words like “negative,” “unplanned,” and “unwanted” are inherently emotional. And yet, research on sexual media content and media effects on young people's sexual behavior consistently

categorizes unplanned/unwanted pregnancy portrayals as a negative physical consequence of intercourse (Collins et al., 2004; Cope-Farrar & Kunkel, 2002; Gunasekera, Chapman, & Campbell, 2005; Will et al., 2005). Therefore, consistent with past research, this study will refer to the experimental condition featuring the unplanned/unwanted pregnancy as the “negative physical consequence condition,” albeit with the knowledge that a range of negative emotional/social consequences are encompassed in this term.

In an attempt to paint a comprehensive picture of the inhibitory effect of differing types of negative consequences associated with televised portrayals of casual sexual intercourse on emerging adults, many outcome variables are assessed in this study. Outcome variables measured upon exposure to experimental stimuli include: negative outcome expectancies for risky sexual intercourse, attitudes toward casual sexual intercourse, attitudes toward condoms, behavioral intentions to avoid risky sexual intercourse, and behavioral intentions to use condoms. Many potential moderating variables of the relationship between exposure to stimuli and viewer effects are explored in this study, including gender, television viewing amount, sexual intercourse experience, experienced negative emotional/social and physical consequences of intercourse, friends’ sexual beliefs, religiosity, perceptions of the stimuli, and attitudes toward casual sex and condoms. Special attention is given to the role that participants’ gender and sexual risk experience play as key moderators of this relationship.

The introduction to this dissertation is arranged in the following order. First, the developmental period of emerging adulthood is defined, and the sexual risk-taking

behaviors that occur in this period are detailed. Second, an overview of the findings from content analyses of television portrayals of sexual intercourse and their consequences is presented. Third, social cognitive theory, the theoretical framework of this dissertation, is introduced and detailed. Fourth, findings from research on the effects of sexual television content on young people are reviewed. Finally, outcome variables, hypotheses, and research questions employed in the study are explicated.

Following the introduction, the methodology employed in this study is detailed and then the results of data analysis conducted to test the hypotheses and research questions are presented. Conclusions are then drawn from these analyses, regarding the topic under investigation in this study – the inhibitory effect of exposure to portrayals of different types of negative consequences of casual sex. Finally, the implications and limitations of the study are discussed and future research directions are suggested.

### Emerging Adulthood

The population of interest for this dissertation is college students who are in the developmental stage of emerging adulthood. This section will first present a brief summary of emerging adulthood, followed by an overview of the risky sexual behaviors that make emerging adults the ideal population of study for this dissertation. The sexual attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of emerging adults that are of interest for the current study are examined below.

#### *What is emerging adulthood?*

Introduced by Arnett (1998, 2000), emerging adulthood is the period of development from the late teens to the mid-twenties, when young people have left adolescence but

have not yet gained complete adult standing. This developmental period exists primarily in modern industrialized societies. Emerging adulthood is defined as a transitional stage between adolescence and young adulthood. In emerging adulthood, young people work to develop the character traits, capacities, and skills that the culture claims necessary in order to attain full adult status. Past generations marked people as adults once they had married or became a parent. Today's emerging adults ages 18-24, however, do not view these role transitions as a move to adulthood and typically postpone such responsibilities until later in life. They assert that one becomes an adult when he or she is self-sufficient and independent from others (Arnett, 1994; 1998). Relatively independent from societal roles and parental influence, emerging adulthood is said to be a period characterized by changes, as emerging adults explore different worldviews, job options, and romantic endeavors (Arnett, 2000).

#### *Sexual Relationships in Emerging Adulthood*

As mentioned above, this study is specifically interested in examining the effect of observing media depictions of differing types of vicarious negative consequences of casual sexual intercourse on emerging adults' beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions with regards to casual and risky sexual intercourse. Emerging adults were chosen as the target of this investigation because they have been found to engage frequently in risky sexual intercourse, and to espouse more permissive sexual attitudes and beliefs than other demographic groups (Arnett, 1992; 2000). Moreover, many of their choices regarding sexual behavior put them at risk for experiencing life-changing negative consequences of

sexual intercourse, such as unplanned/unwanted pregnancy or contraction of STIs. These findings are detailed below.

The pattern of sexual behaviors of emerging adults looks different from that of adolescents. Primarily, their sexual activity is more intimate, both emotionally and physically, and more likely to involve sexual intercourse (Arnett, 2000; National Center for Health Statistics, 2000). Research shows that between 80%-90% of emerging adult college students have engaged in intercourse (Douglas et al., 1997; Hoff et al., 2003; Poulson et al., 1998). In comparison to adolescents, evidence also suggests that emerging adults experience less guilt over engagement in sexual behaviors, and that they are more accepting of (Chara & Keunnen, 1994; Lefkowitz, 2005) and apt to engage in (Arnett, 2000; National Center for Health Statistics, 2000) casual sexual intercourse with a partner they have just met. According to Arnett, “emerging adults can pursue novel and intense experiences more freely than adolescents because they are less likely to be monitored by parents and can pursue them more freely than adults because they are less constrained by roles” (p. 475). Mostly liberated from parental influence, sexual risk-taking behaviors (e.g., casual sex, multiple sexual partners, and failure to use contraception) are common among emerging adults (Arnett, 1992; 2000; Bishop & Lipzitz, 1991; Hawa, Munro, & Doherty-Poirier, 1998; National Center for Health Statistics, 2000; Wiederman, 1997). It is this propensity for sexual risk-taking that is the primary reason emerging adults were chosen as the population of interest for this study.

Specifically, studies have found that high numbers of emerging adults engage in casual sex (Lambert et al., 2003; Paul & Hayes, 2002; Paul et al., 2000). Casual sex puts

emerging adults at risk for negative emotional outcomes like guilt, depression and regret (Abbey, Ross, McDuffie, & McAuslan, 1996; Paul & Hayes, 2002), and negative physical outcomes like unplanned/unwanted pregnancies and/or contraction of STIs (Catania et al., 1992; SIECUS, 2003). These consequences come about in part because emerging adults who engage in casual sex typically have little to no knowledge about their partner's sexual history and do not discuss sexual precautions such as condoms and/or contraception (Paul & Hayes, 2002; Seal, 1997). In addition, research has established that between 24-28% of sexually active college students have never used condoms or birth control (DiIorio et al., 1998; Douglas et al., 1997; Wechsler et al., 2000). It should therefore come as no surprise that 70% of sexually active emerging adult college students report that they or a sexual partner have taken pregnancy tests (Hoff et al., 2003), and between 15-22% report that they or a partner have been pregnant (Douglas et al., 1997; Patrick et al., 1997; Wiley et al., 1996). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2004) also estimate that almost half of the estimated 19 million annual STI contractions occur to young people under the age of 24. When compared to adults, adolescents and emerging adults are more likely to experience negative physical consequences of intercourse because of their propensity to engage in risky sexual behavior (Catania et al., 1992; Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, 2004; National Center for HIV, STD and TB Prevention, 2002).

#### *Gender Differences in Emerging Adults' Treatment of Casual Sex*

There are many gender differences in emerging adults' treatment of casual sexual intercourse. Male and female emerging adults differ in their attitudes toward,

expectations to engage in, actual engagement in, and reasons to engage in, casual sex. First, males consistently report more positive attitudes toward casual sex (Knox et al., 2001; Oliver & Hyde, 1993; Wilson & Medora, 1990). They also express a greater willingness to engage in casual sex than females (Knox et al., 2001; Simpson & Gangestad, 1991; Yost & Zurbriggen, 2006). For example, one study on emerging adults' sexual attitudes found that men were significantly more likely than women to report that they were willing to have intercourse with someone they had known for only three hours (Knox et al., 2001). Research has also found that emerging adult men report much higher intentions to engage in casual sex than emerging adult women (Conner & Flesch, 2001; Herold et al., 1998; Maticka-Tyndale et al., 2003).

Actual reports of engagement in casual sex indicate that males follow through on these intentions. Research shows that males engage in more casual sex than females (Cubbins & Tanfer, 2000; Netting, 1992; Poulson et al., 1998). For instance, Cubbins and Tanfer found that females were only half as likely as males to ever have experienced casual sex. These gender differences also extend to all sexual risk taking behaviors. Overall, studies show that male emerging adults are more sexually permissive and engage in more risky sexual intercourse than female emerging adults. For example, 65% of sexually active females report using birth control or protection every time they have intercourse, but only 51% of males report using it (Hoff et al., 2003). In addition, males report less enactment of responsible, risk-preventative behaviors when having intercourse (Hoff et al., 2003; Poulson et al., 1998).

The reasons male and female emerging adults give for having engaged in casual sex are also different. Males largely report interpersonal or social motives as reasons for engaging in casual sex. They primarily choose to have casual sex to gain pleasure, sexual enjoyment, and a better reputation among their male peers (Cooper, Shapiro, & Powers, 1998; Regan & Dreyer, 1999; Rosengard, Adler, Millstein, Gurvey, & Ellen, 2004). Females, on the other hand, primarily emphasize the potential for a relationship with the casual sex partner, and seek casual sex to gain love and strengthen emotional bonds (Cooper et al., 1998; Regan & Dreyer, 1999; Rosengard et al., 2004). Because of this, they are more likely than males to feel ashamed and regretful after engaging in casual sex (Conner & Flesch, 2001; Herold & Mewhinney, 1993; Paul & Hayes, 2002).

As noted above, when compared to female emerging adults, research shows that male emerging adults are generally more driven by the pursuit of sexual pleasure, with more positive views of casual sex. Therefore, in this study it is probable that male and female emerging adults will respond differently upon exposure to the different types of televised negative consequences of casual sex portrayed in the stimuli (i.e., within the negative emotional/social consequence condition and the negative physical consequence condition). Research suggests that male and female emerging adults should exhibit different responses on the five outcome variables examined: negative outcome expectancies of risky sexual intercourse, attitudes toward casual sex, attitudes toward condoms, behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex, and behavioral intentions to use condoms. These gender differences will be an important focus of this dissertation.

In sum, research has established that emerging adults have a propensity toward engagement in risky sexual behaviors, and consequently, a high likelihood of experiencing enduring negative consequences of these behaviors. Male emerging adults, in particular, are especially apt to report engagement in both casual sex and unprotected sex. Therefore, it is evident that a study on the inhibitory effects of negative consequence portrayals of casual sexual intercourse on television is timely and important, particularly for this demographic group. Both media theory and effects research suggest that viewing permissive sexual behavior and sexual portrayals that rarely yield negative consequences for models contribute to more permissive sexual attitudes and stereotypical sexual beliefs for emerging adult viewers (Bandura, 1986; Taylor, 2005; Ward, 2002). Prior to discussing this body of effects research in greater detail, it is important to first examine two other areas that provide part of the critical foundation upon which this study is built: (a) the patterns of sexual content typically shown on television; and (b) the tenets of social cognitive theory which help to explain and predict the outcomes of exposure to sexual messages on television. Following these sections on content analytic research and social cognitive theory, the existing evidence of effects of exposure to sexual television content on viewers is detailed as a prelude to offering specific hypotheses and research questions, and explicating the methods for exploring them in the proposed experiment.

### Televised Sexual Messages

This study examines the effect of modeled sexual intercourse content on emerging adults. Thus, it is important to understand the ways intercourse is commonly portrayed on television in order to gain confidence in the external validity of the stimulus materials

to be used. Accordingly, this section will first identify the nature and extent of messages depicting sexual intercourse most common on television. As this study focuses on portrayals of negative consequences of sexual intercourse, content analytic findings on the portrayal of sexual consequences will receive special emphasis.

### *Portrayals of Sexual Intercourse*

Both the frequency of televised sexual intercourse acts and their contextual elements convey specific messages to viewers about this behavior. This can include messages about: when and with whom one should engage in sexual intercourse; the importance of sexual intercourse in our society; and the outcomes that can accompany sexual intercourse. Opportunities to glean this information from television are readily available to emerging adult viewers. Acts of sexual intercourse on television have steadily become more prevalent over time (Greenberg & Busselle, 1996; Kunkel et al., 2005). From the 1997-1998 television season to the 2004-2005 television season, portrayals of sexual intercourse increased significantly from 7% of programs to 11% of programs (Kunkel et al., 2005). In 2004-05, about one in every nine programs contained a scene with sexual intercourse either depicted on-screen, or strongly implied where it was evident to the viewers that sex would occur, or had just occurred. These numbers illustrate the ease with which an emerging adult television viewer can encounter a program containing characters who engage in intercourse.

In watching these particular programs, viewers can learn about the appropriateness of sexual intercourse through observing the relational status of the sexual partners, along with the consequences experienced by the partners as a result of the sexual intercourse.

Therefore, it is important to note the relationship status of the characters who engage in sexual intercourse on television, because outcomes of intercourse often differ amongst sexual partners in the real world. For example, it is expected that more deleterious consequences typically accompany acts of sexual intercourse that take place in casual relationships (Van Empelen & Kok, 2006). As mentioned above, for emerging adults in particular casual sex with a person they have just met puts them at risk for experiencing negative emotions, unplanned/unwanted pregnancies, and/or STI contractions (Hoff et al., 2003; Paul & Hayes, 2002; SIECUS, 2003). Because risk levels can vary amongst different types of sexual partnerships, most content analyses identify and report whether sex partners are married or unmarried, in a committed non-marital relationship, or just meeting for the first time.

In most studies, researchers find that less than 20% of intercourse acts on television involve married couples (Eyal & Finnerty, 2006; Greenberg & Busselle, 1994; Gunasekera et al., 2005). For example, Eyal and Finnerty found that there were almost equal proportions of married characters who had engaged in sexual intercourse acts (15%) as there were characters who had just met (14%). This could convey to young viewers that casual sex is equally as important and prevalent in society as married sexual intercourse. Within their sample of programs, the largest portion of characters who had engaged in sexual intercourse acts (32%) were those who were familiar with one another but were not involved in a sexual or romantic relationship prior to the act (e.g., a one-night stand among friends or co-workers, or friends who decide to start sleeping together). Nearly as common were portrayals in which unmarried characters with

established sexual relationships (i.e., partners who had engaged in sexual intercourse with one another at least once in the past) had intercourse (29%).

Additionally, Eyal and Finnerty (2006) found that among all of the sexual intercourse acts portrayed, both the valence and the number of consequences experienced by the characters involved did not differ across these groups. In other words, they did not find a specific couple type who stood out as experiencing a greater number of either positive or negative consequences to their sexual intercourse. In their sample, couples who had just met prior to engaging in intercourse were no more likely to face negative consequences to intercourse (e.g., unplanned/unwanted pregnancies or STI contractions) than were couples who were married or in committed relationships. This finding, in particular, plays a central role in driving the development of the current study. The lack of significant differences in consequences to intercourse portrayed on television among different couples could possibly convey to viewers that there is no type of sexual partnership that presents greater risks than another or, even any risk at all.

There is consistent evidence that portrayals of the potential negative physical consequences of intercourse, like STI contraction or unplanned/unwanted pregnancies, are scant on television (Huston et al., 1998; Kunkel et al., 1999, 2001; Will et al., 2005). The lack of portrayals of negative physical consequences, and the lack of distinction amongst sexual partnerships, on television, may help to enlighten the effects research. Studies on the effects of exposure to sexual television content have identified relationships between exposure to sexual content and permissive sexual outcomes for adolescents and emerging adults (Aubrey et al., 2003; Bryant & Rockwell, 1994; Taylor,

2005). It is possible that the lack of both negative physical consequences to sexual intercourse and distinctions in consequences experienced amongst different types of sexual partners are contributing to these permissive sexual outcomes. Therefore, it is important for researchers to understand the nature and types of consequences to sexual intercourse that are portrayed on television. The following section examines the existing content analytic findings on these consequences of sexual intercourse.

#### *Portrayals of Consequences of Sex*

Sexual intercourse can yield a variety of consequences for its participants, both positive and negative. Consequences can be physical like pregnancy, STI contraction, and/or experienced physical pleasure. They can also be social or emotional in nature, causing feelings of guilt, regret, embarrassment, happiness and/or self-confidence, and leading to the improvement or deterioration of relationships with others. On television, however, studies have found that the majority of sexual intercourse acts do not lead to any significant consequences, either positive or negative, for the characters involved (Gunasekera et al., 2005; Kunkel et al., 1999, 2001; Will et al., 2005). For example, a recent analysis of prime-time programming found that clear consequences followed only 25% of the total acts of sexual intercourse in the sample (Will et al., 2005). Possible instances where consequences can be difficult to distinguish on television include: portrayals of acts of intercourse aired immediately before commercial breaks or at the end of programs; scenes where characters simply mention they had sex with someone in the past without references to any consequences; and, portrayals that imply intercourse has just occurred, where characters are seen dressing and talking without making any

reference to the positivity or negativity of their sexual experience throughout the remainder of the program. In all of these examples, viewers would not be able to identify any clear positive or negative consequences experienced by characters. When consequences of sexual intercourse are clearly shown on television, the majority are positive, including expressions of happiness, personal satisfaction, enhancement of peer status, and the establishment of desired relationships (Cope-Farrar & Kunkel, 2002; Eyal & Finnerty, 2006; Kunkel et al., 1999). For instance, Kunkel et al. found that positive consequences to intercourse were presented nearly four times more often than negative consequences.

Conversely, negative consequences to sexual intercourse are much less frequent on television (Eyal & Finnerty, 2006; Kunkel et al., 1999; Will et al., 2005). Recently, Eyal and Finnerty found that among television programs from the 2004-2005 season that contained mentions and/or depictions of sexual intercourse acts, only 35% depicted any negative consequences of intercourse. Additionally, the negative consequences of intercourse that were included within these programs were largely emotional and social in nature, scarcely physical. This finding is consistent with results from other content analyses. When present, negative sexual consequences on television have been found to be largely emotional or social consequences (e.g., guilt or remorse, rejection, peer/partner relationship problems), and rarely physical (e.g., unplanned/unwanted pregnancy, STI contraction) (Cope-Farrar & Kunkel, 2002; Gunasekera et al., 2005; Will et al., 2005). For example, in their analysis of sexual intercourse portrayals in prime-time programming, Will et al. found that when negative social consequences were shown,

fewer than one in three such portrayals depicted pregnancy or AIDs and other STI contractions.

In conjunction with these findings on the typical presentation of negative consequences of sexual intercourse on television, it is important to consider additional contextual features of portrayals that have the potential to impact viewer outcomes. The majority of content analyses that have examined consequences of sexual intercourse have only considered the valence and type of consequences portrayed (Gunasekera et al., 2005; Kunkel et al., 1999, 2001; Will et al., 2005). But social cognitive theory, to be examined in depth in the subsequent section, stipulates that a number of variables may contribute to the effect of sexual intercourse portrayals on emerging adult viewers. These include the relationship status of the couple experiencing the consequences, the duration and strength of the consequences experienced, and the emphasis that the consequences receive throughout the program (Bandura, 1986). Therefore, in their analysis of televised portrayals of consequences to sexual intercourse, Eyal and Finnerty (2006) measured the presence of these specific contextual elements.

Eyal and Finnerty (2006) found the majority of the portrayed consequences of sexual intercourse typically received inconsequential or minor emphasis (84%) within television shows, rarely making meaningful contributions to the program storylines (16%). And, in the majority of the programs, the consequences to intercourse that characters experienced were transient in duration (61%). These findings are particularly important to the current study, as social cognitive theory stipulates that viewer outcomes can be influenced not only by the valence of the portrayals of consequences of sexual intercourse (i.e., if they

are positive, negative, or neutral), but also by the type of consequences experienced by models (e.g., emotional, social, or physical consequences) (Bandura, 1986). With this study specifically exploring the effect that different types of negative consequence portrayals have on emerging adults' own sexual outcomes, it is critical to have a thorough understanding of the theory's assertions. This allows for the prediction of specific outcomes for emerging adults who watch television programs containing sexual intercourse scenes like those cited above; programs where negative consequences are primarily emotional/social consequences that are transient in duration and focused upon minimally. These outcomes, the effects of exposure to different types of televised negative consequences on emerging adults, will be related and examined subsequently.

To recap, this section on content patterns identified a number of findings about sexual intercourse on television that establish important foundations that will be further explored in the following section on social cognitive theory. First, research shows that portrayals of sexual intercourse are fairly frequent on television. Second, when watching these sexual intercourse portrayals, viewers will find that most partners engaging in sexual intercourse are not involved in established sexual relationships with one another. And finally, content analyses show that emerging adult television viewers will very rarely encounter models experiencing meaningful, enduring negative physical consequences of sexual intercourse like unplanned/unwanted pregnancies and/or contractions of STIs. Social cognitive theory implies that it is exposure to this very type of negative consequence that should serve to most strongly inhibit the sexual attitudes, beliefs, and behavioral intentions of emerging adult viewers. Thus, building upon these findings

about sexual intercourse portrayals, the following section explicates the tenets of social cognitive theory that help to explain and predict the effects of exposure to messages of this type.

### Theoretical Framework: Social Cognitive Theory

Particularly informative to the study of the effect of televised vicarious consequences to modeled behavior, Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory is used to guide the current research. With its focus on observational learning, social cognitive theory explains how and why modeled actions on television contribute to a viewer's own thoughts and behaviors. Thus, the tenets of observational learning as they relate to the current research are detailed below. As this study examines the impact of televised negative sexual consequence portrayals on emerging adult viewers, the role of vicarious negative consequences specified by social cognitive theory is also discussed in depth. Emphasis is placed on the contextual features of negative consequence portrayals that should influence the inhibitory effects of sexual behaviors observed in the media.

#### *Observational Learning*

Social cognitive theory asserts that personal factors, behavioral patterns, and environmental events all operate as interacting determinants that influence each other bidirectionally (Bandura, 1986). This process is called triadic reciprocal causation. In light of these interactions, the major tenets of social cognitive theory are based upon a person's symbolizing capability, and show that people are producers as well as products of social systems. Bandura (1994) asserted that "people have advanced neural systems specialized for processing, retaining, and using coded information" (p. 122). The key to

the theory, first discussed in *Social Learning Theory* (Bandura, 1977), is the idea that people vicariously learn response expectations through watching others experience positive or negative consequences to their actions. Bandura stipulated that “by observing the different outcomes of their actions, [people] develop hypotheses about which responses are most appropriate in which settings,” and that it is this information that “serves as a guide for future action” (p. 17). The current study specifically examines television as a vehicle through which this observational learning can take place.

Social cognitive theory maintains that symbolic modeling on television can have strong motivational effects on viewers (Bandura, 1986). It also details a variety of conditions that can enhance the effectiveness of these modeling influences. For example, a model’s appearance and personal characteristics can influence viewer outcomes. Viewers are said to seek out models that they find attractive, interesting and similar to themselves, and to ignore or reject those that they feel lack these qualities (Bandura, 1986). Social cognitive theory recognizes that identification with television characters can influence the extent to which viewers attend to, and hence learn from, and imitate them. Thus, the experimental stimuli in the current study feature adolescent and emerging adult characters that are within the same age-range as the study participants. Although such variables as character attractiveness and similarity to participants play a role in a model’s effectiveness, social cognitive theory claims that the primary factor driving observer effects is the consequence associated with the observed behavior. As mentioned above, an observer’s own perspective on a behavior is said to be heavily

influenced by information conveyed by the punishing and rewarding consequences of modeled courses of action.

Social cognitive theory states that disinhibition of formerly inhibited behaviors, or motivation to engage in new behaviors, can occur when people view models performing behavior with positive outcomes. Conversely, people often are inhibited from engaging in a behavior when they observe models that experience negative consequences for their actions (Bandura, 1994). Media effects researchers have applied the theory in diverse areas to help explain and predict effects of viewer exposure to portrayals with varying behavioral consequences. These effects have been explored with regard to a number of behaviors, from violent aggressive behaviors (Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1963; Stoutemyer, 1998), to body image and figure enhancing behaviors (Hofschire & Greenberg, 2002), to parenting behaviors (Bundy, Thompson, & Strapp, 1997) among others. In general, these studies have confirmed that the valence of the consequences to modeled actions can influence viewer outcomes through either inhibiting or disinhibiting similar behavior. Though this area of investigation is highly applicable to the study of sexual content, minimal research has been conducted to date on the effects of both positive and negative portrayals of consequences to sexual behaviors on viewer outcomes. Examination of research on the effect of televised portrayals of sexual consequences will be pursued in the subsequent section on media effects. For the current study it is this social cognitive process, the effect of modeled consequences on viewers, which is central in understanding the effects that sexual content on television can have upon emerging adults.

Based on social cognitive theory, it is evident that the study of portrayed consequences to modeled actions should play a central role in understanding the effects that modeled sexual content can have on the sexual knowledge, attitudes, and behavior of emerging adults. With adolescents, it has been said that the theory predicts that observation of positive consequences of sexual messages on television influences them to have sex (Collins et al., 2004). This is called the disinhibitory effect. On the other hand, if observers choose to refrain from sexual behavior after seeing models experience negative consequences, inhibitory effects are said to occur. Social cognitive theory explains that “inhibitory effects are indicated when observers either reduce their performance of the kind of behavior being modeled or become generally more restrained in their actions as a result of seeing models experience negative consequences,” (Bandura, 1986, p. 49). Known for their permissive sexual attitudes and propensities to engage in sexual risk-taking behaviors, this study tests the inhibitory effects of exposure to varying types of negative consequences of casual sexual intercourse on emerging adults. Consequently, the following section will present a thorough explanation of the inhibitory process as stipulated by social cognitive theory. The contextual features of negative consequence portrayals that are said to influence inhibitory effects on viewers will be detailed.

### *Inhibitory Effects*

Bandura (1986) explains that “observers who have seen modeled behavior punished are much less likely to act on what they have learned than if they have seen the modeled behavior rewarded” (p. 288). More specifically, social cognitive theory stipulates that

inhibitory effects should occur when modeled behavior is seen punished physically or verbally, and/or when models punish themselves through self-critique. The theory further explains that these effects are not driven exclusively by the valence of the consequences to modeled behaviors, that is, whether they are positive, negative, or neutral, but that they are also dependent upon the types of negative consequences that are portrayed to viewers. For example, exposure to portrayals of negative emotional consequences of risky sexual intercourse, like expressions of guilt or self-loathing, will not necessarily inhibit an emerging adult viewer from engaging in similar behavior. In the case of behavior that is enjoyable yet generally discouraged, such as risky sexual intercourse, social cognitive theory explains that viewer effects cannot be predicted on the basis of a consequence's valence alone. In the case of portrayals of rewarding behavior, it is the type of the negative consequence portrayals that will influence viewer outcomes.

Simply put, it is difficult to inhibit behaviors that people already engage in and find rewarding, according to social cognitive theory. In the case of vicarious portrayals of consequences of behaviors that people already have experience with and enjoy, it is the type and severity of the consequences which are said to affect whether or not viewers are inhibited or deterred from engaging in similar behaviors. Sexual intercourse is one such rewarding behavior for emerging adults, sought primarily for physical pleasure and relational intimacy (Brigman & Knox, 1992; Cooper et al., 1998; Diamond, 1997; Pinkerton, Cecil, Bogart, & Abramson, 2003). And as previously mentioned, the majority of emerging adults (80-90%) are already sexually active (Douglas et al., 1997;

Hoff et al., 2003; Poulson et al., 1998). Additionally, research suggests that because of the rewarding nature of sexual behavior, adolescents and emerging adults must perceive strong negative consequences to risky sexual intercourse if their own risky sexual behavior is to be inhibited.

For emerging adults, expectations of rewards to self are more predictive of engagement in sexual risk-taking behaviors than are their perceptions of adverse consequences to self (Parsons, Siegel, & Cousins, 1997). And among adolescents, though negative outcome expectancies of intercourse do contribute to their sexual behavior, simply having perceptions of more costs to intercourse than benefits does not imply that they will abstain from engaging in it. Rather, adolescents choose to engage in intercourse even when their perceived costs slightly outweigh their perceived benefits from sex (Deptula, Henry, Shoeny, & Slavick, 2006). These findings illuminate social cognitive theory's claim that it is the type or severity of perceived negative consequences to rewarding behaviors, and behaviors that one is already familiar with, which determines inhibitory effects. They imply that both adolescents and emerging adults find sexual intercourse too rewarding to forego unless they perceive that potential negative consequences greatly exceed costs. Thus, in this study it is expected that the effects of exposure to portrayals of negative consequences to risky sexual intercourse will be contingent upon the severity of the consequence type.

There are a number of characteristics of modeled consequences that convey their severity to viewers. One characteristic of negative consequences that affects their severity is their social impact. Social cognitive theory explains that inhibitory effects are

influenced by the social ramifications of viewed negative consequences. Negative consequences that are seen as avoidable or easily tolerable may be less restraining than those that cause possible injuries to others (Bandura, 1986). The theory asserts that the probability that others will find out about a person's engagement in the behavior, thus yielding more negative consequences for the person, will affect how the individual will respond to negative consequences and restrictions upon the behavior. In the case of casual sexual intercourse portrayed on television, the inhibitory effect on viewers' own sexual opinions and behaviors should then be dependent not only upon the presence of negative consequences in general, but also on the specific type of negative consequences experienced by models.

Next, social cognitive theory asserts that a consequence's severity can also be indicated by its duration. For example, for the emerging adult viewer, watching a character experience negative emotional/social consequences to casual sex that may last only for a season in their lives such as transient regret, guilt, or social discomfort, should have weaker effects on their own sexual behavior than would watching a character experience a negative physical consequence like an unplanned/unwanted pregnancy. This is because the social ramifications and diversity of accompanying consequences of an unplanned/unwanted pregnancy are typically longer-lasting and more wide-ranging than the temporal negative emotions of guilt and embarrassment. A report by the Institute of Medicine's Committee on Unintended Pregnancy (1995) states that for single young mothers, pregnancy can lead to a number of adverse consequences including: elective abortion; failure to complete high school or college; poverty and need for

governmental assistance; and a reduced likelihood of getting or staying married. Because of the stress of their situation and a failure to seek prenatal care, many of these young women will find their children are at an increased risk for health and developmental problems (Committee on Unintended Pregnancy, 1995; Myhrman, 1988; Witte, 1997). Furthermore, it is important to note that the negative consequences of unintended pregnancies are not limited to the mother and child. For example, unplanned/unwanted pregnancies with childbirth not only lead to a greater likelihood that the young father and mother will suffer economic hardships (Neville, Parke, Hofferth, & Hayes, 1987), but they also negatively impact the nation's economy (Center for Population Options, 1992). It is not surprising, then, that these outcomes are a great fear of sexually active emerging adults (Hoff et al., 2003). Research shows that avoidance of pregnancy is a strong motivation for responsible sexual behavior amongst this age group (Cooper, Agocha, & Powers, 1999; Skidmore & Hayter, 2000). This is consistent with social cognitive theory's predictions.

In sum, social cognitive theory not only highlights the role that negative vicarious consequences can play in viewer outcomes, but also stresses the importance of their type in shaping effects. In the case of sexual behaviors, this is determined through the consequences' strength, duration, and social impact. The theory would suggest that exposure to television portrayals of negative physical consequences of casual sexual intercourse, because of their broad, potentially long-lasting impact, should yield different effects than exposure to portrayals of negative emotional/social consequences. Research on emerging adults' risky sexual intercourse behaviors also implies that they would

respond differently to the two types of portrayals of negative consequences of casual sexual intercourse. Male emerging adults, in particular, express little concern over the potential negative emotional/social consequences of casual sex (Knox et al., 2001; Oliver & Hyde, 1993), and are less likely than their female counterparts to feel ashamed and regretful about their casual sex experiences (Conner & Flesch, 2001; Herold & Mewhinney, 1993). And in the case of negative physical consequences of intercourse (e.g., HIV, STIs, and unplanned/unwanted pregnancies), the majority (83%) of both male and female emerging adults report being “very” or “somewhat” personally concerned about experiencing them (Hoff et al., 2003).

Therefore, this study explores the inhibitory effect of differing types of negative consequences of an instance of casual, unprotected sex between emerging adults. The negative consequences associated with this act of casual sex are manipulated experimentally. Informed by the social cognitive tenets discussed above, one of the experimental conditions features only negative emotional/social consequences of casual sex, and another presents a negative physical consequence. In the negative emotional/social consequence condition the emerging adult characters experience guilt and social discomfort because of their casual intercourse act. In the negative physical consequence condition, the characters are shown experiencing an unplanned pregnancy. Social cognitive theory would suggest that the more potent negative consequence condition, the negative physical consequence condition, should have a greater inhibitory effect on the expectations, attitudes, and behavioral intentions with regards to risky sexual intercourse of emerging adult participants.

Before introducing the study's specific hypotheses, a review of the existing effects research that helps to frame expectations is presented. The following section introduces research on the effects of sexual television content on adolescents and emerging adults.

#### Effects of Exposure to Televised Sexual Content

This study measures the effect of differing types of negative consequences that result from risky sexual intercourse portrayed in television dramas. More specifically, the study examines effects on male and female emerging adults' sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions. Thus, in this section, findings from research on the cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral effects of televised sexual content are reviewed and analyzed. When present, gender differences will be highlighted. The various effects studies reviewed in this section are not limited to emerging adults, but also include studies of adolescents. There are many reasons why research studies on adolescents and emerging adults are both relevant and included here. First, both developmental periods, adolescence and emerging adulthood, are characterized by sexual exploration, romantic pursuits, and a propensity to seek out sexual information from the media (Arnett, 2000; Hoff et al., 2003; Huston et al., 1998). Second, apart from a few minor differences, most of the measured effects for the two age groups are very similar and result from comparable processes. That said, any distinct differences between adolescents and emerging adults will be noted. Thus, the review will summarize the research on adolescence and emerging adulthood as a whole because to date there are very few studies focused exclusively on emerging adults. Until research in the area is developed further and effects on emerging adults are found to differ significantly from effects on

adolescents, it is important to consider all relevant evidence on the influence of sexual media content on young people in general.

After summarizing the relevant studies on the effects of televised sexual content on adolescent and emerging adult viewers, limitations in the research driving the need for the current study are then explored. Applications of social cognitive tenets are presented as a means of enlightening the existing research and framing future studies in the area. The importance of this particular experimental study will then be established in light of the limitations of the extant effects literature.

#### *Effects of Sexual Television Content on Adolescents and Emerging Adults*

First, both correlational and experimental studies have found exposure to sexual television content to be connected to the sexual beliefs of adolescent and emerging adult viewers. Sexual content encompasses a broad range of dramatic portrayals that go well beyond actual portrayals of intercourse, including portrayals of both sexual talk and sexual behavior. Studies have found that among adolescents and emerging adults, heavier viewing of sexual content is associated with higher estimates of the frequency with which sexual behaviors occur in society (Buerkel-Rothfuss & Strouse, 1993; Ward & Rivadeneyra, 1999), as well as heightened estimates that sexually permissive beliefs about intercourse are widely held (Aubrey et al., 2003; Pardun, L'Engle & Brown, 2005). For example, Aubrey et al. found that emerging adult females with a heavy diet of sexual television content expected sexual intercourse to occur earlier within relationships, whereas emerging adult males with greater exposure expected a more extensive range of sexual behaviors with their partners. Additionally, exposure to sexual content has been

found to contribute significantly to the sexual norms and assumptions of adolescents and emerging adults (Collins et al., 2004; Ward, 2002). Ward found that female emerging adults exposed to television clips expressing sexual stereotypes such as attitudes that sexual relationships are recreationally oriented, that men are sex-driven, and that women are sexual objects, were more likely to believe and endorse the stereotype than those exposed to nonsexual content.

Next, research clearly establishes that exposure to sexual content can influence the sexual attitudes of adolescents and emerging adults. According to Huston et al. (1998), these attitudes “are defined by the valence one puts on different sexual behaviors for oneself and for other people” (p. 50). Across studies on the effects of sexual television content, for example, one of the most consistent findings has been that exposure contributes to more liberal and permissive sexual attitudes (Bryant & Rockwell, 1994; Calfin, Carroll, & Schmidt, 1993; Taylor, 2005; Ward, 2002). For example, Taylor recently found that after viewing programs that portrayed casual sexual intercourse as acceptable, the attitudes of emerging adults who judged the programs to be more realistic became more accepting of casual sex, consistent with the programs’ portrayals. Additionally, correlational research has identified associations between exposure to sexual content and sexual attitudes. Greater exposure to sexual content has consistently correlated with stronger endorsements of liberal, recreational attitudes toward sex (Calfin et al., 1993; Strouse, Buerkel-Rothfuss, & Long, 1995; Ward, 2002), particularly amongst female adolescents and emerging adults (Ward & Rivadeneyra, 1999).

Finally, studies increasingly find that consumption of sexual content on television can yield behavioral effects on adolescent and emerging adult viewers. Because of the great difficulty in detecting the behavioral effects of exposure to sexual content in an experimental setting, this area of research is still the most underdeveloped of the three outcome variables considered in this review. Nonetheless, survey research has established that high consumption of sexual content by young adolescents is associated with earlier initiation of intercourse and intentions to initiate intercourse (Brown & Newcomer, 1991; L'Engle, Brown, & Kenneavy, 2006). And, for both adolescent and emerging adult viewers, high consumption of sexual content is also associated with engagement in a wider range of sexual behaviors than their counterparts who view less sexual content (Pardun et al., 2005, Ward & Rivadeneyra, 1999). Though these correlational studies add to the body of knowledge on the relationship between sex on television and real world sexual behavior, they cannot conclusively determine the order of causality. Therefore, researchers recently have begun conducting longitudinal studies on the effects of sexual content on adolescents. Significantly adding to the body of literature on the effects of sexual content, they have been able to show that a heavy diet of sexual media content can indeed accelerate the initiation of sexual intercourse and other advanced sexual activities among adolescents (Brown et al., 2006; Collins et al., 2004). Though more research is needed to confirm these claims, these recent findings are seen as an important development within this area of study, strengthening confidence in the conclusion that sexual content in entertainment television yields significant behavioral effects.

In sum, research increasingly provides evidence that adolescent and emerging adult exposure to sexual television content is related to sexually permissive outcomes, contributing to their sexual beliefs and expectations, attitudes, and behaviors. Informed by social cognitive theory, this study examines these varied effects of sexual television content on emerging adults. Specifically, it considers the effects of viewer exposure to different types of negative consequences of risky sexual intercourse. Based in social cognitive tenets, the study measures contributions of consequence portrayals of varying potency to the sexual expectations, attitudes and behaviors of emerging adult viewers. When applied to the effects research, social cognitive theory can help to elucidate the contextual features of sexual television messages likely to influence viewer outcomes. These include consequences to modeled actions and their characteristics. Thus, the following section highlights theoretical tenets that are central in understanding the role that exposure to vicarious consequences plays in the study of sexual media effects on young people.

#### *Application of Social Cognitive Theory to Effects Research*

As previously mentioned, social cognitive theory stipulates that observational learning is influenced by contextual features of modeled behaviors like the specific types of consequences to actions, attractiveness of models, and similarity to models, among other factors (Bandura, 1986). For example, social psychological studies have found that for adolescents and emerging adults, perceptions of the consequences of sexual intercourse can influence their sexual attitudes and behaviors (Afifi, 1999; Parsons et al., 1997; Stanton et al., 1996). And yet, media effects research is just beginning to explore

the role that sexual television content plays in contributing to these perceptions. Though many studies on the effects of violent mediated content have already shown that vicarious consequences influence viewer outcomes (Bandura et al., 1963; Bryant, Carveth, & Brown, 1981; Grusec, 1973; LaRose, Mastro, & Eastin, 2001; Walters & Brown, 1963; Wotring & Greenberg, 1973), empirical evidence assessing the role that consequences play in sexual portrayals is quite scant as will be discussed below. However, social cognitive theory and recent effects studies suggest that consequences to sexual television content can help explain how and why the messages yield viewer effects.

A recent study indicates that social cognitive processes are in fact mediating the relationship between exposure to sexual content on television and adolescent sexual behavior (Martino, Collins, Kanouse, Elliott, & Berry, 2005). Applying the principles of social cognitive theory, investigators found that adolescents with greater exposure to sexual content on television had fewer negative outcome expectancies (i.e., beliefs about the potential negative consequences of sexual activity) regarding the consequences of sexual intercourse. The study then established that for these adolescents, having fewer negative outcome expectancies predicted a higher likelihood of their subsequent initiation of intercourse. This finding is not surprising given the dearth of negative sexual consequences on television. As detailed above, content analyses have repeatedly demonstrated that negative physical consequences of sexual intercourse, like STIs or unplanned/unwanted pregnancies, are rarely shown (Aubrey, 2004; Cope-Farrar & Kunkel, 2002; Eyal & Finnerty, 2006; Kunkel et al., 2005; Lowry & Shidler, 1993). On television, the most frequently experienced consequence of sexual intercourse is

happiness (Eyal & Finnerty, 2006). Applying social cognitive theory to this realm of media effects would suggest that a diet of programs where acts of sexual intercourse occur frequently and primarily elicit happiness for those involved could in fact disinhibit viewers so that they would be more accepting of, and/or ready to engage in, sexual intercourse themselves (Bandura, 1986).

Why is this a concern? As previously mentioned, this is a concern because studies have established that television is a significant contributor to the information and norms that adolescents and emerging adults learn about issues regarding sex (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2001; Brown & Steele, 1995; Hoff et al., 2003). Negative consequences to acts of casual sex on television are rare. When sexual intercourse is shown on television, the consequences typically do not look any different whether or not the partners are strangers who have just met, or are a committed couple with an established sexual relationship (Eyal & Finnerty, 2006). This may explain why young viewers with heavier diets of sexual content view intercourse as a low risk behavior (Martino et al., 2005). Up to this point, however, only one study has specifically attempted to measure the inhibitory effects of vicarious negative sexual consequences on emerging adult viewers.

Upon exposing emerging adults to two prime-time dramas containing negative consequences of sexual intercourse with new partners, Eyal (2005) identified a small but significant decrease in the positivity of their attitudes toward premarital sex. One of the dramas featured a young man expressing guilt over cheating on his girlfriend in an act of casual sex with his female roommate, and the other showed a young woman regretting

having sex with a young man because he was an irresponsible person. As detailed above, social cognitive theory would suggest that this decrease in positivity was not stronger because the negative consequences portrayed were emotional/social consequences of sexual intercourse. The question now, in light of social cognitive theory's claims, is whether watching characters experience a negative physical consequence of casual sex will in fact be more powerful in influencing emerging adults' sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions, than portrayals that contain only negative emotional/social consequences. An examination of the effects of differing types of negative consequence portrayals to risky sexual intercourse is timely and necessary to advance knowledge about the effects of exposure to sexual media content.

It was established previously that messages on the negative physical consequences are sparse on television, and that adolescents with greater exposure to sexual content on television have fewer negative outcome expectancies regarding the consequences of sexual intercourse (Martino et al., 2005). Given that the majority of emerging adults (73%) claim they have learned "a lot" or "some" from the media about sex, it is possible that a lack of exposure to severe negative consequences has also contributed to a lack of negative sexual outcome expectancies amongst emerging adults (Hoff et al., 2003). In light of the sexual health risks that emerging adults commonly take, an exploration of the different effects that distinct types of negative consequence portrayals can have on emerging adult television viewers is warranted. Social cognitive theory explains that it is difficult to vicariously inhibit or deter viewers from engaging in rewarding behaviors and behaviors with which they are already familiar. It stipulates that portrayals of rewarding

behaviors that are met with enduring negative consequences are more likely to lead to inhibitory effects in viewers, than negative consequences that are more temporal. These specific social cognitive predictions are applied in this study to predict the effects of exposure to the negative consequences of risky sexual intercourse, as explicated in the section below.

### Dependent Variables, Hypotheses and Research Questions

In this section, the dependent variables that are measured in this study are defined; hypotheses and research questions are introduced.

#### *Dependent Variables*

Five dependent variables are measured in this study: negative outcome expectancies of risky sexual intercourse, attitudes toward casual sex, attitudes toward condoms, behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex, and behavioral intentions to use condoms. Each variable is introduced in the following paragraphs.

First, from a sexual health perspective it is important to measure *negative outcome expectancies of risky sexual intercourse*. Research has found positive correlations between perceived costs of intercourse and use of contraception among sexually active teens and emerging adults (Cooper et al., 1999; Skidmore & Hayter, 2000; Small, 1996). The greater one's negative outcome expectancies of sexual intercourse, the greater the likelihood that he/she will use some form of contraception when having intercourse. Emerging adults, in particular, claim that their motivation and choice to use condoms is driven by a fear of, and a desire to prevent, pregnancy and the spread of STIs (Cooper et al., 1999; Skidmore & Hayter, 2000). It is evident that avoidance of the potential

negative physical consequences of sexual intercourse is a strong motivation for responsible sexual behavior amongst this age group.

Previously mentioned, a recent longitudinal study (Martino et al., 2005) identified an inverse relationship between adolescents' exposure to sexual television content and their negative outcome expectancies of sexual intercourse. Specifically, it found that exposure to heavy amounts of sexual television content led adolescents to hold fewer negative outcome expectancies for intercourse than their counterparts who were exposed to less sexual television content. The authors suggested that this finding arose because sexual content on television is overwhelmingly portrayed in a positive light, whereas negative consequences of intercourse are rarely seen. These findings are in line with social cognitive theory's assertion that people learn response consequences vicariously through watching others experience positive or negative consequences to their actions (Bandura, 1977).

When exposed to vicarious positive consequences, social cognitive theory states that disinhibition of formerly inhibited behaviors, or motivation to engage in new behaviors, can occur. Conversely, when people observe models experiencing negative consequences of a behavior, it is likely that they may experience an inhibitory effect on their own behavior (Bandura, 1994). Inhibitory effects are indicated when observers reduce their own performance of the kind of behavior that they saw modeled (Bandura, 1986). To date, however, no study has examined the impact of exposure to television portrayals of negative consequences of sex on one's negative outcome expectancies of sexual intercourse. If exposure to positive sexual consequences on television may be

yielding few negative outcome expectancies for sexual intercourse, will exposure to negative sexual consequences yield more negative outcome expectancies of sexual intercourse? Social cognitive theory suggests that this should be the case. Therefore, this study specifically measures emerging adult participants' negative outcome expectancies for risky sexual intercourse.

Next, as detailed in the above review of the literature on the effects of sexual television content, experimental research has found that exposure to sexual content can influence the sexual attitudes of emerging adults. Specifically, adolescents and emerging adults exposed to content where permissive premarital and extra-marital sexual intercourse is portrayed to be acceptable, express significantly more permissive sexual attitudes than their counterparts who are exposed to non-sexual content and/or monogamous sexual content (Bryant & Rockwell, 1994; Taylor, 2005). Though not explicitly measured, this research suggests the presence of a disinhibitory effect on the participants' sexual attitudes. With regards to inhibitory effects on emerging adults' sexual attitudes, Farrar (2002) found that females reported more positive attitudes toward condoms after viewing television programs that contained messages emphasizing the risks and responsibilities associated with sexual intercourse. All of these studies help to confirm the tenets of social cognitive theory discussed above.

Thus, in light of the previously mentioned negative consequences that can result from casual sex, it is now important to fully examine the inhibitory effect of exposure to televised portrayals of differing types of negative consequences of casual sex on emerging adults' attitudes toward casual sex and attitudes toward condoms. An

understanding of these inhibitory effects is very important from both a social cognitive and sexual health perspective. From these perspectives, it would be beneficial to find out what type of vicarious negative consequences of casual sexual intercourse will lead emerging adults to report less favorable attitudes toward this risky sexual behavior and more favorable attitudes toward condoms. In turn, it is possible that less favorable attitudes toward casual sex and more favorable attitudes toward condoms could lead some emerging adults to avoid risky sexual intercourse behaviors, or to use protection while experiencing them. Though research on the attitude-behavior connection is quite complex and ultimately inconclusive, there have been studies on the impact of attitudes on behaviors that have identified moderate to strong correlations between attitudes and attitude-relevant behaviors (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1974, 1975). Therefore, the second dependent variable measured in this study is the emerging adult participants' *attitudes toward casual sex*, and the third, the emerging adult participants' *attitudes toward condoms*.

Lastly, as noted in the review of emerging adulthood, many emerging adults report having engaged in some form of risky sexual intercourse, including casual sex, unprotected sex, and/or sex in which the woman was not using contraception (Hoff et al., 2003; Lambert et al., 2003; Paul & Hayes, 2002). And yet, though research has established that exposure to sexual content can contribute to permissive sexual outcomes for emerging adults, no experiment has explicitly examined the potential for televised negative consequence portrayals to contribute to sexually responsible behavioral intentions in emerging adult viewers. Only one study has directly examined the influence

of consequences of sexual intercourse (Eyal, 2005), and that experiment explored only emotional/social consequences and did not measure behavioral level outcomes. Hence, in light of social cognitive projections on the potential impact of vicarious negative consequences, this study examines the effect that portrayals of negative consequences of casual sex can have on an emerging adult viewers' *behavioral intentions to avoid risky sexual intercourse* and *behavioral intentions to use condoms*. Behavioral intentions and expectations to practice safe sex (i.e., sex where protection is used and sexual partners who are familiar with one another) have been found to predict condom use (DeHart & Birkimer, 1997). Therefore, it would be invaluable to confirm that television portrayals can contribute to more sexually responsible behaviors amongst emerging adult viewers.

#### *Hypotheses and Research Questions*

The preceding review touches upon many different areas of research. It reviews the literature on emerging adulthood, content analytic studies of portrayals of sexual intercourse on television, media effects research, and tenets of social cognitive theory key to this dissertation study on the effects of exposure to different types of negative consequences of sex on television. The primary focus of the review is to illustrate the need for research on the differences in the inhibitory effects of television portrayals of negative emotional/social consequences of casual sexual intercourse and television portrayals of negative physical consequences of casual sexual intercourse on emerging adult viewers.

As noted above, negative physical consequences of sex are of top concern for sexually active emerging adults (Hoff et al., 2003). Therefore, they should be seen as

more potent than negative emotional/social consequences of sex. To date, however, this premise has not been tested with regard to the effect of exposure to negative consequences of sexual intercourse portrayals on television. A better understanding of the role of differing types of negative consequence portrayals is now warranted and thus, is investigated in this study. It is this comparison of the effects of exposure to different types of television portrayals of negative consequences of casual sex that will be the main empirical contribution of this study.

In light of social cognitive theory and the preceding literature review on emerging adulthood, sexual content on television, and the effects of exposure to sexual content on television, it is hypothesized that emerging adults' exposure to a negative physical consequence of casual sex will lead to stronger inhibitory effects on their sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions than will exposure to only negative emotional/social consequences of casual sex.

Specifically, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1a: Emerging adults who view the negative physical consequence condition will express significantly stronger *negative outcome expectancies of risky sexual intercourse* than emerging adults who view the negative emotional/social consequence condition.

H1b: Emerging adults who view the negative physical consequence condition will express significantly less positive *attitudes toward casual sex* than emerging adults who view the negative emotional/social consequence condition

H1c: Emerging adults who view the negative physical consequence condition will express significantly more positive *attitudes toward condoms* than emerging adults who view the negative emotional/social consequence condition.

H1d: Emerging adults who view the negative physical consequence condition will express significantly greater *behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex* than emerging adults who view the negative emotional/social consequence condition.

H1e: Emerging adults who view the negative physical consequence condition will express significantly greater *behavioral intentions to use condoms* than emerging adults who view the negative emotional/social consequence condition.

From a social cognitive perspective, it is also very important to consider the differences between outcomes of participants exposed to a control condition, which does not present any sexual content, and the two negative consequence conditions. To review, the theory explains that people often refrain from, or are inhibited from, supporting and/or engaging in a behavior to which they have seen models experience negative consequences (Bandura, 1986, 1994). More specifically, social cognitive theory stipulates that these inhibitory effects should occur when modeled behavior is seen punished physically or verbally, and/or when models punish themselves through self-critique. Thus, at its most basic level, an application of social cognitive theory suggests distinct outcomes between emerging adults exposed to television content that portrays negative consequences of casual sexual intercourse and emerging adults exposed to non-sexual television content. Specifically, emerging adults exposed to negative emotional/social and negative physical consequence portrayals should report different sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions, than their emerging adult counterparts in the control condition. That is, both of the groups exposed to the negative consequence treatments should differ significantly from the control group.

In this experiment, the control condition serves to provide a measure of the general negative outcome expectancies of risky sexual intercourse, attitudes toward casual sex, attitudes toward condoms, behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex, and behavioral intentions to use condoms of the broader emerging adult population. In light of social cognitive specifications, it is expected that significant differences should emerge between the emerging adults exposed to portrayals of negative consequences and emerging adults exposed to the control condition, which does not contain any sexual content.

Accordingly, it is hypothesized that exposure to the negative emotional/social consequence condition will lead to stronger inhibitory effects on participants' sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions than will exposure to the control condition.

Specifically, it is expected that:

H2a: Emerging adults who view the negative emotional/social consequence condition will express significantly stronger *negative outcome expectancies of risky sexual intercourse* than emerging adults who view the control condition.

H2b: Emerging adults who view the negative emotional/social consequence condition will express significantly less positive *attitudes toward casual sex* than emerging adults who view the control condition.

H2c: Emerging adults who view the negative emotional/social consequence condition will express significantly more positive *attitudes toward condoms* than emerging adults who view the control condition.

H2d: Emerging adults who view the negative emotional/social consequence condition will express significantly greater *behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex* than emerging adults who view the control condition.

H2e: Emerging adults who view the negative emotional/social consequence condition will express significantly greater *behavioral intentions to use condoms* than emerging adults who view the control condition.

Additionally, it is expected that exposure to the negative physical consequence condition will also lead to stronger inhibitory effects on participants' sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions than will exposure to the control condition.

H3a: Emerging adults who view the negative physical consequence condition will express significantly stronger *negative outcome expectancies of risky sexual intercourse* than emerging adults who view the control condition.

H3b: Emerging adults who view the negative physical consequence condition will express significantly less positive *attitudes toward casual sex* than emerging adults who view the control condition.

H3c: Emerging adults who view the negative physical consequence condition will express significantly more positive *attitudes toward condoms* than emerging adults who view the control condition.

H3d: Emerging adults who view the negative physical consequence condition will express significantly greater *behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex* than emerging adults who view the control condition.

H3e: Emerging adults who view the negative physical consequence condition will express significantly greater *behavioral intentions to use condoms* than emerging adults who view the control condition.

These three groups of hypotheses frame the investigation for this dissertation on the effects of exposure to differing types of television portrayals of negative consequences of casual sex on emerging adults' negative outcome expectancies for casual sex, attitudes toward casual sex, and behavioral intentions to avoid risky sexual intercourse. They serve primarily to test the role that distinct types of negative consequence portrayals play in influencing the sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions of emerging adult viewers.

As mentioned previously, participants' gender and sexual risk experience are also likely to influence the effects that exposure to the stimuli will have on them. The above literature review on emerging adulthood highlighted gender differences in emerging

adults' sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that could play a role in their responses to the study's outcome variable measures. In addition, the review of social cognitive theory suggested that a person's personal experience with a modeled behavior should influence the inhibitory effect that negative consequence portrayals have on them. Therefore, participant gender and sexual risk experience will be explored and analyzed as important potential moderating factors of the relationships explored in the latter groups of hypotheses.

To briefly review, there are notable gender differences in emerging adults' treatment of casual sexual intercourse. Research shows that emerging adult males are generally more driven by the pursuit of sexual pleasure, with more positive views of casual sex. Males consistently report more positive attitudes toward casual sex (Knox et al., 2001; Oliver & Hyde, 1993; Wilson & Medora, 1990), greater willingness to engage in casual sex (Knox et al., 2001; Simpson & Ganestad, 1991; Yost & Zurbriggen, 2006), and stronger intentions to engage in casual sex (Conner & Flesch, 2001; Herold et al., 1998; Maticka-Tyndale et al., 2003) than emerging adult females. Consistent with these findings, this study expects to identify main effects of gender across all three conditions, on each of the dependent variables. It is possible that participant gender will also interact with the experimental conditions. Yet a lack of previous research on gender differences in responses to negative emotional/social and physical consequences of casual sex prevents introducing specific hypotheses about possible interaction effects. At this point one cannot know if male and female emerging adults will respond similarly or differently

upon viewing other emerging adults experiencing the different types of negative consequences of casual sex. Therefore, the following research question is proposed:

RQ1: How does gender influence the effects of exposure to differing types of portrayals of negative consequences of casual sex?

According to social cognitive theory, participants' amount of sexual risk experience may also influence the effects that the stimuli have upon them. As previously explained in detail, the theory states that it is difficult to vicariously inhibit behaviors that viewers already find rewarding and personally functional (Bandura, 1986). Specifically, Bandura asserts that "to the extent that observers have already developed highly successful means of dealing with familiar situations, they will be guided more by their own knowledge than by the experiences of others" (p. 299). Conversely, observed consequences to modeled actions are said to be more instructive to people who are unfamiliar with the portrayed behavior and/or unsure about how to behave in similar situations. Thus, it is possible that the effect of exposure to differing types of negative consequences of casual sex in this study will be directly influenced by participants' amount of previous sexual risk experience. The theory would suggest that it will be more difficult to inhibit the sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions of participants with large amounts of sexual risk experience. However, this assumption has yet to be tested. Therefore, the following research question is proposed:

RQ2: How does participants' sexual risk experience influence the effects of exposure to differing types of portrayals of negative consequences of casual sex?

The proposed hypotheses and research questions introduced in this section provide the framework for this study's investigation of the effects of exposure to televised

portrayals of differing types of negative consequences of casual sex on emerging adults' sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions. To review, the central focus of this experiment is to conduct an initial examination of the differences in the inhibitory effects of portrayals of negative emotional/social consequences of casual sexual intercourse and negative physical consequences of casual sexual intercourse on emerging adult viewers. It is expected that findings on each dependent variable will differ based on the emerging adults' experimental condition. In addition, participants' gender and sexual risk experience will be explored as potential moderating variables of the examined relationship. All hypotheses and research questions introduced above address these issues.

In the following section, the methodology employed to test these hypotheses and research questions is explained. The procedure and sample are detailed, variables defined, and measures introduced.

## II. METHOD

### Overview

This study employed an experimental design to examine the influence of exposure to different types of televised negative consequences of casual sexual intercourse on male and female emerging adults' negative outcome expectancies for risky sexual intercourse, attitudes toward casual sex, attitudes toward condoms, behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex, and behavioral intentions to use condoms. Male and female emerging adult participants were randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions. In two of these experimental conditions, participants watched an hour-long television drama that portrayed two characters experiencing negative consequences of their single act of casual sexual intercourse. The type of negative consequences shown was uniquely manipulated between these two conditions. One condition portrayed only negative emotional/social consequences of the characters' act of casual sex and the other, a negative physical consequence of their act of casual sex. Participants who were assigned to the control condition watched a different hour-long drama (i.e., a different episode of the same series) that did not contain any references to sex or sexuality.

Participants also completed a survey. The survey assessed the dependent variables mentioned above, along with several potential moderating variables, including: television exposure, sexual experience, sexual risk communication with parents, friends' sexual beliefs, religiosity, perceived realism of the stimulus, and similarity to the program's main characters.

### Sample

A total of 330 emerging adult undergraduates (127 men and 203 women) participated in this study. Of these, 20 participants were dropped from data analyses. Fourteen subjects were dropped because they had previously seen the stimulus program to which they were exposed. The additional six participants were dropped because they were older than 24 years of age, and this study sought to only measure college-aged emerging adults. Ultimately, 310 subjects were included in the analyses. Of these, 121 were men (39% of the sample) and 189 women (61% of the sample). The average age of the participants was 20.6 ( $SD = 1.36$ ) with a range of 18 to 24 years. In terms of ethnicity, most participants identified themselves as Caucasian (78.7%). The remaining subjects identified themselves as Hispanic (11.6%), Asian-American (3.9%), African-American (2.3%), or other (3.2%). Lastly, participants in this sample reported being only moderately religious. The mean score on religiosity for the sample was 3.06 ( $SD = 1.54$ ) on a scale of 1 (*Not very religious*) to 7 (*Very religious*).

Participants were recruited from undergraduate courses in the Communication Department at the University of Arizona. For their participation in the experiment, they received modest extra-credit points in the course from which they were recruited.

### Design

Male and female undergraduates were randomly assigned to one of two treatment conditions created by manipulating the type of negative consequences of casual sexual intercourse, or to a control condition that did not feature any sexual content. An initial analysis determined that in order to have strong power (.80) to detect small effects, 240

participants (40 males and 40 females in each condition) were needed in this study. Thus, sampling continued until a minimum of 40 males and 40 females had been assigned to each experimental condition. As a result, the control condition contained 41 men and 65 women, the negative emotional/social consequence condition contained 40 men and 69 women, and the negative physical consequence condition contained 40 men and 55 women (see Table 1). Females outnumbered males in the study, as they comprise roughly 60-65% of the Communication Department's students/research pool participants.

#### Stimuli Materials

Each participant in each condition viewed a single hour-long television drama. The programs created for the conditions were derived from the 2005-2006 season of the *WB* network drama, *7<sup>th</sup> Heaven*. In order to appeal to the sample of emerging adult college students, this series was chosen as the stimuli for this study because it features older adolescents and emerging adults (late high school/early college age) as primary characters. This should help study participants to identify with and relate to the program's characters. In addition, *7<sup>th</sup> Heaven* has consistently appeared on the list of top 10 shows watched by teenagers in the Nielsen ratings in recent years (Kunkel et al., 2005).

This season of episodes followed the lives of two emerging adult characters who engaged in a single act of unprotected, heterosexual casual sex on the first day they met. This act of sex led to an unplanned/unwanted pregnancy. Consequently, these characters were frequently shown experiencing a range of negative emotional/social consequences, along with the negative physical consequence (i.e., the unplanned/unwanted pregnancy)

of their act of casual sexual intercourse. By editing together selected scenes drawn from 10 different episodes of *7<sup>th</sup> Heaven*, the type of negative consequence portrayals was uniquely manipulated within the two negative consequence conditions to show the two main characters experiencing only negative emotional/social consequences or a negative physical consequence of their act of casual sexual intercourse. The selected scenes from these episodes were carefully edited into a single, cohesive storyline. These storylines were produced with a computer program designed for advanced film-making, *Final Cut Pro 6.1*. Each stimulus was made to resemble a single episode of *7<sup>th</sup> Heaven*. All commercials and on screen advertisements were removed.

The negative consequence stimuli were essentially the same, except for the types of negative consequences portrayed within them. Both of the created programs featured the same characters (main and supporting), the same scene locations, and the same amount of sexual content. In the negative emotional/social condition, scenes were combined to show the main characters experiencing only negative emotional/social consequences to their act of casual sexual intercourse including: regret, frustration, embarrassment, guilt, and social discomfort. In the negative physical consequence condition, scenes are combined to show the characters facing an unplanned/unwanted pregnancy as a result of their act of casual sex. A manipulation check was conducted to establish that within these two negative consequence conditions there is an equal balance of sexual content and consequence portrayals; that is, an equivalent amount of time and emphasis was placed on the negative consequences portrayed in both the emotional/social and physical

conditions. Data from manipulation check questions will be explicated in subsequent sections.

The negative consequence conditions follow the story of Sandy, a junior in college, and Martin, an 18-year-old high school senior. Martin and Sandy had engaged in a single act of casual sexual intercourse over their summer vacation from school. The two had never met prior to that day, and Martin, in particular, never planned on seeing Sandy again. Each condition begins a few months after their act of casual sex, with Sandy approaching Martin to “talk about what happened.” At this point the two experimental conditions diverge. In the emotional/social condition, the characters are shown experiencing negative emotional and social consequences of the casual sex. In the physical condition, the characters are shown experiencing a negative physical consequence of their casual sex, as Sandy becomes pregnant from their “one-night stand.”

Descriptions of the plot of each stimulus are offered below.

#### *Negative Emotional/Social Consequence Condition*

In the emotional/social condition, Martin and Sandy experience negative emotional and social consequences of their casual sexual intercourse. Martin expresses guilt, embarrassment, and regret over his actions with Sandy. In turn, because of these strong negative emotions about their act of casual sex, he avoids Sandy at all costs. Martin does not answer his phone when Sandy calls, he avoids discussing her with friends and family, and he tries to pretend that nothing ever happened between them. As people learn about Martin’s act of casual sex with Sandy, he inevitably faces many uncomfortable social

interactions. Sandy, on the other hand, expresses attachment to Martin and desires that he show some romantic interest in her. Sandy repeatedly tries to contact Martin to discuss the night they engaged in casual sex, to no avail. Sandy feels rejected by Martin, and upset that he is ignoring her. She also expresses regret over the situation, and experiences social discomfort as people become aware that she and Martin engaged in casual sex.

#### *Negative Physical Consequence Condition*

In the negative physical consequence condition, Martin and Sandy experience an unplanned/unwanted pregnancy. Sandy informs Martin that she has become pregnant as a result of their act of casual sex, and both she and Martin are emotionally distraught. Martin expresses anger and deep regret about their act of casual sex upon learning that Sandy is pregnant. He expresses to Sandy that he wants nothing to do with her or the baby, and avoids all her subsequent attempts to contact him. Socially, Martin tries to act like he does not even know Sandy when questioned by friends about her attempts to speak with him. Inevitably, as Sandy becomes visibly pregnant, people begin to discover that Martin is the father of her baby, and Martin begins to experience substantial social discomfort and upheaval in his life. Because of the unplanned/unwanted pregnancy, Sandy also expresses anger and deep regret about her choice to engage in casual sex with Martin. Scared of the prospect of being a single mother, Sandy wants Martin's support and acknowledgement, and repeatedly, albeit unsuccessfully, tries to get him involved in her life. Feeling upset and alone, she seeks counsel and help from others. Sandy also

experiences many uncomfortable and upsetting social interactions because of her unplanned/unwanted pregnancy.

It is important to note that Martin and Sandy's unplanned/unwanted pregnancy is the catalyst for all of the negative emotions and social interactions that they experience within this condition. As previously noted, a physical consequence like an unplanned/unwanted pregnancy is never purely physical. That is, when a negative physical consequence of sexual intercourse occurs (e.g., unplanned pregnancy, contraction of AIDS), a necessary concomitant of it is emotional angst. Any portrayal that is reported as a negative physical consequence will necessarily incorporate emotional and/or social upset (e.g., guilt, regret, embarrassment, disapproval of family and friends). However, to label it as such would be cumbersome. Thus, though it is recognized that unplanned/unwanted pregnancy as a consequence of sexual intercourse is not exclusively physical, past research categorizes it as a negative physical consequence (Crosby et al., 2003; Mohllajee et al., 2007; Schinke, 1998; Witte, 1997). Therefore, this study has also adopted the term to describe this experimental condition.

#### *Control Condition*

The control condition did not contain any sexual talk or behavior. The stimulus was a single episode taken from the same television season of *7<sup>th</sup> Heaven* that was used to create the stimuli in the latter two conditions. Most of the characters featured in the latter two stimuli were also featured in this condition. In this condition, Martin and his classmates learn about prejudice in America and study great African-Americans like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

### Procedure

Participants were recruited from communication courses during the months of April and May in 2007. Participants completed the experiment in an on-campus research lab. The experiment was conducted in group sessions that included between one to nine people. The average group was comprised of four participants. First, participants were asked to read and sign a consent form (see Appendix A). In accordance with the guidelines of the University of Arizona Human Subjects Committee, the form explained the procedures of the experiment and informed participants that they might be viewing sexual content and that they would be asked questions about their sexual choices. All participants consented to do the study after reading the consent form. Once the participants had signed the consent form, they completed the instrument. Participants completed the survey privately on individual computers that were separated by partitioned walls. At no time could the participants see each others' computers and answers while completing the survey.

After completing the first half of the survey on their respective computers, subjects came together as a group to watch the hour-long television program to which they were assigned (e.g., the negative emotional/social consequence condition, the negative physical consequence condition, or the control condition). The first half of the survey exclusively measured moderating variables, including demographic variables, sexual experience, sexual risk communication with parents, friends' sexual beliefs, and religiosity. When the program ended, participants returned to their same computer, where they then completed the survey. The second half of the survey included measures

of the dependent variables (negative outcome expectancies of risky sex, attitudes toward casual sex, attitudes toward condoms, behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex, and behavioral intentions to use condoms), measures of participants' perceptions of the stimuli (perceived realism, similarity to main characters), and a series of manipulation check items. For a complete list of the variables measured before and after exposure to the stimuli, see Table 2. To ensure complete anonymity the survey automatically closed, upon completion of the final question, and it was sent directly to an online database. After they had completed the survey, participants were then debriefed by the experimenter who explained the nature and purpose of the study. Participants were asked not to discuss any details of the experiment with their classmates. They were then thanked for their help and their participation concluded. The entire experimental session took participants between 1 hour and 10 minutes to 1 hour and 15 minutes to complete.

### Measurement

This section presents detailed information on the five dependent variables, the moderating variables, and the manipulation check variables measured in this study. For a list of all variables measured in this study, see Table 3. The complete measures of each dependent variable can be found in Appendix B.

#### *Dependent Variables*

##### *Negative Outcome Expectancies of Risky Sexual Intercourse*

Participants' negative outcome expectancies of risky sexual intercourse were assessed. In this measure, participants were asked to rate the likelihood that a negative consequence (e.g., guilt, disease, unplanned/unwanted pregnancy, damaged reputation)

would occur to them if they were to personally engage in various types of risky sexual intercourse. Five items from Fromme, Katz, and Rivet's (1997) six-item scale, on the expected risk of risky sexual activities, were employed in this measure. Items assessed participants' expectations of negative consequences with regards to engagement in: sex without protection against pregnancy, sex without protection against STIs, casual sex, and sex with multiple partners. Response options ranged from *not at all likely* (1) to *extremely likely* (7). Responses to the five items were summed and averaged to create a final measure of negative outcome expectancies of risky sexual intercourse. The reliability achieved for this scale suggests the items are internally consistent ( $\alpha = .88$ ).

#### *Attitudes toward Casual Sex*

Participants' attitudes toward casual sex were measured with seven items from the Permissiveness subscale from the Brief Sexual Attitudes Scale by Hendrick, Hendrick, and Reich (2006). This measure included seven statements that reflect attitudes about permissive sexual intercourse. For example, two of the statements are "one-night stands are sometimes very enjoyable" and "the best sex is with no strings attached."

Participants responded to a 5-point scale with endpoints of *strongly agree* (1) and *strongly disagree* (5), to indicate their agreement or disagreement with each of the statements. Responses to the seven items were summed and averaged to create a final measure of attitudes toward casual sex. The reliability for the measure was  $\alpha = .89$ .

#### *Attitudes toward Condoms*

This measure assessed participants' attitudes toward condoms. The measure included six items and was adapted from a scale that measured attitudes toward contraception in

general (Bruckner, Martin, & Bearman, 2004). Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with six statements about condoms. Response options ranged from *strongly agree* (1) to *strongly disagree* (5), with higher numbers indicating more positive attitudes toward condoms. Two items were reverse coded. The initial reliability for this measure was  $\alpha = .62$ . To increase the reliability of the scale, three items were deleted (“condoms are very affordable,” “it is easy to get a sexual partner to use condoms with you,” and “if you have condoms with you, your friends might think that you are looking for sex”). These three items were deleted because they were very poorly correlated with the other scale items and each other. The final measure used was constructed from summing and averaging the responses to the three remaining items (“condoms are too much of a hassle to use,” “use of condoms takes too much planning” and “condoms interfere with sexual enjoyment”). The reliability for this scale indicates that the items are internally consistent ( $\alpha = .75$ ).

It is important to note, that as emerging adults’ attitudes toward casual sex and attitudes toward condoms have been found to predict their behavioral intentions to both engage in casual sex and use condoms (Basen-Engquist et al., 1999; Hardeman, Pierro, & Mannetti, 1997; Lewis, Malow, & Ireland, 1997; Parsons, Halkitis, Bimbi, & Borkowski, 2000; Terry, Galligan, & Conway, 1993). In addition to being analyzed as dependent variables, participants’ attitudes toward casual sex and attitudes toward condoms will also be examined as potential moderating variables in this study’s experiment.

### *Behavioral Intentions to Avoid Casual Sex*

Behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex were assessed using an adapted version of the Premarital Sexual Permissiveness Scale by Sprecher (1998). The measure includes four items with statements on the appropriateness of sexual intercourse for the participant at different casual relationship levels. Specifically, the statements asked participants if they agreed or disagreed that they would personally have sexual intercourse: with a person they have just met, on a first date, with a person they have dated only a few times, and with a person they are casually dating. Participants used a 6-point scale with endpoints of *strongly agree* (1) and *strongly disagree* (6), to indicate their agreement or disagreement with each statement. Responses were added and averaged to generate the measure of behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex. The reliability for this measure was  $\alpha = .94$ .

### *Behavioral Intentions to Use Condoms*

The final dependent variable measured participants' behavioral intentions to use condoms the next time they had sexual intercourse. This four-item measure asked participants if they agreed or disagreed that they would in fact use condoms the next time they had sex. Response options ranged from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7). One of the items was reverse coded. Two of the items included in the measure were taken from Agnew and Loving's (1998) measure of condom use intentions. Responses to the four items were summed and averaged to create a final measure of participants' behavioral intentions to use condoms. The reliability for this measure was  $\alpha = .92$ .

### *Moderating Variables*

As previously explained, research has established that there are a number of variables that may moderate the relationship between exposure to sexual television content and viewer outcomes. Several of these potential moderating variables were measured in this study, including: participants' gender, age, ethnicity, television exposure, sexual history, sexual risk communication with parents, friends' sexual beliefs, religiosity, perceptions of and familiarity with the stimuli. Moderators will be introduced in the order that they appear in the complete survey. All measures of moderating variables can be found in Appendix C.

### *Demographic Variables*

Demographic variables measured include participants' gender, age, and ethnicity. As explicated above, gender has been identified as a significant moderator of effects of sexual television content on emerging adult viewers (Aubrey et al., 2003; Farrar, 2002), as well as of the general sexual attitudes and behaviors of emerging adults (Knox et al., 2001; Oliver & Hyde, 1993). It is not likely that age will be a moderator within the participant pool in this study because the sample is constrained to emerging adults aged 18-24 years old. Significant differences in sexual attitudes and behaviors by age are found across developmental stages (Arnett, 2001; Collins, Elliott, Berry, Kanouse, & Hunter, 2003). However, participants will be asked to report their age in order to ensure that they are in fact emerging adults. Lastly, participants will also be asked to report their ethnicity, as some studies have found that a young person's ethnicity can influence the

effects that exposure to sexual television content has upon them (Brown et al., 2006; Rivadeneyra & Ward, 2005).

### *Television Exposure*

With research indicating a relationship between greater exposure to sexual content on television and more permissive sexual outcomes amongst emerging adults (Aubrey et al., 2003; Collins et al., 2004; Ward, 2002), participants' general pattern of television exposure was measured. Participants were asked to indicate how much television they watched on the average weekday and weekend day. Response options ranged from *Less than 1 hour* to *More than 6 hours*. A measure of general television exposure was created through weighting (i.e., multiplying the average weekday viewing by five and multiplying the average weekend viewing by two), summing the two items and then dividing the total sum by seven, the number of days in a week. In addition, participants were also asked to indicate how often they view television dramas, as this is the genre of television programming that was shown in all of the experimental conditions. The response options for this question ranged from *never* (1) to *very often* (7).

### *Sexual Experience*

As previously noted, social cognitive theory indicates that it is more difficult to inhibit behaviors that one has already performed and finds enjoyable (Bandura, 1986). Thus, it is important to comprehensively assess participants' sexual experience, as it has the potential to influence their sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions. Several sexual history variables were measured in this study. These variables are introduced below in the order that they appear in the survey.

Participants were initially asked if they had ever engaged in sexual intercourse. Sexual intercourse was defined as “sex in which the penis penetrates the vagina or anus.” Response options were dichotomous; participants selected either *yes* (1) or *no* (2). This item was asked of participants in light of social cognitive tenets which suggest that virgin and sexually active participants should be influenced differently by exposure to televised sexual content (Bandura, 1986). Upon answering this question, participants who had never engaged in sexual intercourse skipped the remaining sexual history measures.

*Sexual Risk Experience.* Participants were then asked to complete four sexual risk measures, including: 1) frequency of past condom use; 2) frequency of past contraception use; 3) amount of casual sex experience; and 4) number of sexual partners. Research has found that these past sexual risk behaviors can predict one’s sexual attitudes and behaviors (Conner & Flesch, 2001; Hardeman et al., 1997; Sheeran & Orbell, 1998; Sutton, 1994; Terry et al., 1993). For example, they have been found to negatively correlate with a young person’s intentions to avoid casual sex and intentions to use condoms (Conner & Flesch, 2001; Hardeman et al., 1997). Thus, these sexual risk measures are important potential moderators of the relationship explored in this experiment.

In the first sexual risk measure, participants were asked to indicate how frequently they had used condoms since becoming sexually active. Response options ranged from *never* (1) to *every time* (5). In the second, they were asked to indicate how frequently they, or their partner(s), had used a form of pharmaceutical contraception other than condoms when having sexual intercourse. Here, response options ranged from

*never/don't know* (1) to *every time* (5). Studies have found that intentions to use, and attitudes toward, condoms/contraception are positively correlated with past condom/contraception use (Hardeman et al., 1997; Sheeran & Orbell, 1998).

Emerging adults' past casual sex experience has also been found to influence their intentions to engage in casual sex (Conner & Flesch, 2001; Hardeman et al., 1997; Terry et al., 1993). Emerging adults who report that they have frequently engaged in the behavior are more likely to intend to have casual sex. Thus, the third sexual risk measure was an index of participants' casual sex experience. Participants were asked to indicate, on a 5-point scale, how often they had engaged in sex with someone they had just met (i.e., casual sex). Response options ranged from *never* to *four or more times*.

The fourth sexual risk measure asked participants, on a 5-point scale, to indicate the number of people they have ever had sexual intercourse with. Response options ranged from *one* to *four or more*. The lifetime number of sexual partners a person has had is an important measure of their sexual risk taking (Abraham, Sheeran, Spears, & Abrams, 1992; Huebner & Howell, 2003; Kosunen, Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpela, & Laippala, 2003). Young people who have had many sexual partners have been found to have lower intentions to use condoms (Abraham et al., 1992), greater depression (Kosunen et al., 2003), and a greater likelihood of contracting STIs (DiIorio et al., 1998) than their counterparts who have had few sexual partners.

*Experience with Negative Consequences of Sexual Intercourse.* Next, because the stimuli programs portray negative emotional/social consequences and negative physical consequences of sexual intercourse, participants' own experience with these negative

outcomes was assessed. In light of social cognitive' specifications, it was important to assess participants' experience with the negative consequences of intercourse. Social cognitive theory asserts that those who have had more personal experience with modeled behavioral consequences are less likely to be influenced by them (Bandura, 1986).

First, participants' experience with the emotional/social consequences of intercourse was measured. This measure included five items that asked participants to indicate the extent to which they had experienced the following consequences after having sexual intercourse: happiness, regret, guilt, improved relationship with partner(s), and damaged relationships with family and/or friends. Two items were reverse coded. Response options ranged from *never* (1) to *very often* (7). Responses were summed and averaged to create a measure of participants' experience of negative emotional/social consequences of intercourse. The reliability for this 5-item measure was  $\alpha = .67$ . To increase the reliability of this measure, the two positively valenced items were dropped from the scale. The final measure used was constructed from summing and averaging the responses to three items (i.e., items measuring regret, guilt, and damaged relationships). The reliability for this measure was .71.

Second, participants' experience with negative physical consequences of intercourse was measured. This was accomplished through two, 3-item scales. The first scale measured participants' experience with unplanned pregnancy. Participants were asked to indicate whether they, or a sexual partner, had ever experienced a pregnancy scare, a pregnancy test, or an actual unplanned pregnancy. Items were ordered and scaled by their intensity/negativity, thus those who had experienced a pregnancy scare received 1

point, those who had taken a pregnancy test received 2 points, and those who had actually experienced an unplanned pregnancy received 3 points. Scores for each person were not added together, but were treated as threshold values. For this measure, participants only received the score for their most intense pregnancy experience (i.e., either a 1, 2, or 3). Likewise, participants' experience with sexually transmitted infections was also measured. Participants were asked to indicate whether they had ever experienced an STI scare, an STI test, or an actual STI contraction. Responses to the three items were scored in the exact same manner as the pregnancy experience scale.

#### *Sexual Risk Communication with Parents*

The amount of sexual risk communication shared by participants' parents was also measured. Studies have found that higher rates of parent-child sexual communication are associated with lower rates of sexual risk-taking behaviors amongst adolescents and emerging adults (Hutchinson & Cooney, 1998; Jaccard & Dittus, 1991). Thus, parent sexual risk communication was assessed using six items from the Parent-Teen Sexual Risk Communication Scale (Hutchinson & Cooney, 1998). Participants were asked how much their parents shared with them on a variety of sexual risk topics (e.g., condoms, sexual pressure, diseases). Response options ranged from *none* (1) to *extensive* (5). Answers were summed and averaged to create a measure of the amount of participants' sexual risk communication with parents. This measure was found to be reliable ( $\alpha = .90$ ).

#### *Friends' Sexual Beliefs*

For adolescents and emerging adults, perceptions of peers' sexual attitudes have been found to influence their own sexual beliefs and behaviors (Irwin, 1993; Ward &

Rivadeneira, 1999). Thus, participants were asked to indicate how conservative or liberal their friends' sexual beliefs were. In this seven item scale, participants indicated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with various statements about their friends' sexual beliefs (e.g., "My friends believe that one-night stands are sometimes acceptable"). Response options ranged from *strongly agree* (1) to *strongly disagree* (7), with higher numbers indicating more conservative beliefs. Four items were reverse-coded. Items for the scale were adapted from measures on sexual attitudes and social norms about sex (Chia & Gunther, 2006; Fisher & Hall, 1988). Responses were summed and averaged to yield a measure of participants' friends' sexual beliefs. Reliability for this measure was  $\alpha = .81$ .

### *Religiosity*

Religiosity was assessed, as research has found that adolescent and emerging adult religiosity is associated with their sexual attitudes and behaviors (Bearman & Bruckner, 1999; Lefkowitz, Gillen, Shearer, & Boone, 2004; Sheeran, Abrams, Abraham, & Spears, 1993). This variable was measured through Eyal's (2005) four-question measure of religiosity. Participants were asked about the importance of religion in their lives and the role that it plays in their behavioral decisions. Response options to questions ranged from 1 (indicating religion did not play a role in their lives) to 7 (indicating religion played a strong role in their lives). Responses were summed and averaged to create this measure of religiosity. The reliability for this scale was  $\alpha = .91$ .

### *Perceived Realism*

After viewing the stimulus, participants were asked to indicate how realistic they believed the program to be. This item measured participants' perceived realism of the television program. Social cognitive theory highlights perceived realism as a potential contributor to viewer modeling outcomes (Bandura, 1986). Research has found that the perceived realism of a television stimulus plays a role in the relationship between exposure to sexual content and emerging adult viewer effects (Greenberg, Linsangan, & Soderman, 1993; Taylor, 2005). This four item scale was an adapted version of Rubin's (1981) measure of perceived realism. On a 5-point scale, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with statements about the realism of the stimulus (e.g., "The program I just watched showed realistic situations that young people have to deal with"). Higher numbers indicate greater perceived realism of the stimulus. One item was reverse-coded. Participants' responses were summed and averaged to create the measure of perceived realism. The reliability for this measure was  $\alpha = .81$ .

### *Similarity to the Main Characters*

Studies on the effects of sexual television content on emerging adults have found that similarity to media models can influence their sexual attitudes and beliefs (Ward & Friedman, 2006; Ward & Rivadeneyra, 1999). Social cognitive theory also asserts that "observers use model similarity as one piece of information for judging likely commonality of response outcomes" (Bandura, 1986, p. 297). Therefore, participants were also asked to report their level of similarity to the main character(s) of the television

programs they viewed. In the negative consequence conditions, participants reported similarity to both Martin and Sandy, the programs' main characters. In the control condition, however, participants only reported similarity to Martin, as Sandy played a peripheral role in this program. Similarity was assessed through McCroskey, Richmond, & Daly's (1975) eight item attitude and value homophily scale. Items measured similarity between participants' and characters' attitudes and values on a 7-point scale that indicates how different or similar participants are to the characters. Higher numbers indicate greater similarity to the main character. Four items were reverse-coded. Responses were summed and averaged to create a measure of the participants' similarity to each of the main characters. The reliability of the measure of similarity to Martin was  $\alpha = .87$ , and the reliability of the measure of similarity to Sandy was  $\alpha = .89$ .

#### *Familiarity with the Stimuli*

Finally, participants were asked to indicate if they had ever watched, and how frequently they had watched, the television series shown in the experimental stimuli, 7<sup>th</sup> *Heaven*. Participants in the two negative consequence conditions were also asked to report if they had previously seen any 7<sup>th</sup> *Heaven* episodes about the relationship between the two main characters of the stimulus, Martin and Sandy. Participants who reported that they had previously viewed an episode involving Martin and Sandy's relationship ( $N = 14$ ) were excluded from all data analyses.

#### *Manipulation Check*

A series of manipulation check questions were also included in participants' surveys after the measures of the dependent variables. These questions served to

determine if participants perceived the manipulation as it was intended. In this section, the five manipulation check measures employed in this study are detailed: (1) the perceived negativity of emotional/social vs. physical consequences of casual sex, (2) the consequences of casual sex experienced by the main characters within the two negative consequence conditions, (3) the duration of the negative consequences portrayed in the two negative consequence conditions, (4) the amount of sexual content within the two negative consequence conditions, and (5) the enjoyment of the stimuli. The manipulation check measures were included in the survey to ensure that participants perceived the manipulation of the type of negative consequences between conditions (i.e., either emotional/social or physical consequences), and to show that the two negative consequence conditions did not differ apart from this manipulation of the consequence type. Several measures were used to accomplish these objectives. Measures can be found in Appendix D. The results of the manipulation check are detailed below.

*Perceived Negativity of Emotional/Social vs. Physical Consequences of Casual Sex*

As noted above, social cognitive theory explains that one is more likely to vicariously inhibit behaviors that are rewarding and that people already have personal experience with, like sexual intercourse, if the negative consequence portrayals are severe and perceived to be very negative by viewers (Bandura, 1986). Based on this social cognitive tenet, and drawing upon past research on the negative consequences of intercourse experienced by adolescents and emerging adults, this study has asserted that for young people, physical consequences of intercourse (e.g., unplanned/unwanted pregnancy and STI contraction) are more negative and severe than emotional/social consequences of

intercourse (e.g., guilt, regret, embarrassment, social disapproval). Consequently, the stimuli were created to differentiate between these two types of negative consequences. And yet, though research strongly implies that emerging adults view negative physical consequences of intercourse to be more severe than negative emotional/social consequences, no study has ever explicitly measured this. Thus, as the manipulation in this study is based on the premise that emerging adults view negative physical consequences of intercourse as more severe/negative than negative emotional/social consequences, it was critical to confirm this in the study's sample of emerging adults.

Therefore, after viewing the stimulus participants in all three conditions were asked to indicate how positive or negative a variety of outcomes would be for the average person who had engaged in casual sex. Specifically, participants were asked to indicate the positivity or negativity of the following consequences: physical satisfaction, regret, unplanned pregnancy, happiness, embarrassment, sexually transmitted infections, and guilt. Response options ranged from *extremely positive* (1) to *extremely negative* (7). Two measures were created from these items, a measure of the perceived severity of negative emotional/social consequences of casual sex, and a measure of the perceived severity of negative physical consequences of casual sex. Items that measured positive consequences (i.e., happiness and physical satisfaction) were included only to counterbalance this manipulation check; such items were excluded from analyses and will not be discussed here.

The first measure included all of the negative emotional/social consequence items: regret, embarrassment, guilt, and disapproval. Items were summed and averaged to

create a measure of participants' perceptions of the negativity of emotional/social consequences of casual sex. Reliability for this measure was  $\alpha = .88$ . The measure of physical consequences of casual sex included two items, unplanned pregnancy and STI contractions. Reliability for this measure was also  $\alpha = .88$ . Overall, participants found the negative physical consequences of casual sex ( $M = 5.71, SD = 1.66$ ) to be significantly more negative and severe for the average person than negative emotional/social consequences of casual sex ( $M = 4.92, SD = 1.33$ ),  $t(297) = -12.62, p < .001, r^2 = .35$ .

Though these measures were completed after viewing the stimuli, no differences among the three conditions were found on participants' consequence ratings. That is, participants in each of the three experimental conditions reported roughly equivalent scores on the negativity of emotional/social consequences (control condition,  $M = 4.95, SD = 1.33$ ; negative emotional/social consequence condition,  $M = 4.90, SD = 1.30$ ; negative physical consequence condition,  $M = 4.93, SD = 1.39$ ), and physical consequences of casual sex (control condition,  $M = 5.70, SD = 1.69$ ; negative emotional/social consequence condition,  $M = 5.81, SD = 1.59$ ; negative physical consequence condition,  $M = 5.60, SD = 1.72$ ).

These measures tangibly confirm the implications of prior research, that emerging adults do in fact view negative physical consequences of casual sex as more negative/severe than negative emotional/social consequences of casual sex.

### *Negative Consequences Experienced by Main Characters*

Next, all participants in the two negative consequence conditions were asked to indicate which consequences of casual sex Martin and Sandy experienced in the program they viewed. Participants selected from a list of both positive and negative outcomes of casual sex. Because this manipulation check is solely concerned with the negative consequences present in the programs, positive consequences were not analyzed as they were only included to counterbalance the list. The negative consequences included were: regret, unplanned pregnancy, embarrassment, guilt, and disapproval from friends or family. It was expected that only participants in the negative physical consequence condition would note that the main characters experienced an unplanned pregnancy.

Though the two negative consequence conditions were created to differentiate between negative emotional/social and physical consequences of casual sex, as previously discussed, emotional upset is always associated with negative physical consequences of intercourse, like unplanned/unwanted pregnancy. Any television portrayals of unplanned/unwanted pregnancies will necessarily incorporate emotional and/or social upset (e.g., guilt, regret, embarrassment, disapproval of family and friends). From a social cognitive perspective, it is the wide-ranging impact of this negative physical consequence that makes it more potent. Thus, it was also expected that participants in both of the negative consequence conditions would indicate that the main characters experienced all of the latter emotional/social consequences of casual sex.

In the negative emotional/social consequence condition ( $N = 109$ ) nearly all of the participants reported that the characters were shown experiencing the negative

emotional/social consequences: regret ( $N = 107, 98.2\%$ ), embarrassment ( $N = 104, 95.4\%$ ), guilt ( $N = 104, 95.4\%$ ), and disapproval from friends or family ( $N = 103, 94.5\%$ ). None of the participants asserted that the characters experienced an unplanned pregnancy after viewing this condition. These results indicate that participants viewed the consequences experienced by characters in this condition to be solely emotional/social in nature.

In the negative physical consequence condition ( $N = 95$ ) all participants noted that the characters experienced an unplanned pregnancy ( $N = 95, 100\%$ ). As mentioned above, it was also expected that the majority of participants would also indicate that characters had experienced all of the emotional/social consequences listed in the manipulation check measure. The manipulation check data confirm this expectation. Participants largely asserted that they watched the main characters experience regret ( $N = 92, 96.8\%$ ), embarrassment ( $N = 90, 94.7\%$ ), guilt ( $N = 89, 93.7\%$ ), and disapproval from friends and family ( $N = 76, 80\%$ ).

These manipulation check items illustrated that participants successfully comprehended the consequences that were portrayed in the two programs shown in the negative consequence conditions. In addition to accurately noting that the characters experienced a range of negative emotional/social consequences, all participants correctly indicated either the presence or absence of the negative physical consequence – the unplanned/unwanted pregnancy. Thus, based on these findings, it can be concluded that the program shown in the negative physical consequence condition did in fact feature,

according to the emerging adults in this sample, a more severe type of negative consequence – an unplanned/unwanted pregnancy.

#### *Duration of the Portrayed Consequences*

To provide further confirmation that participants did perceive the program in the negative physical consequence condition as more severe than the program in the negative emotional/social consequence condition, participants in the two negative consequence conditions were also asked to indicate the expected duration of the consequences experienced in the programs. Specifically, a single item asked participants, “How long do you think that Martin and Sandy will continue to experience the consequences of their casual sex that were shown in the program?” Response options ranged from *extremely short amount of time – for a few days* (1) to *extremely long amount of time – for many years* (7).

The duration of consequences reported by participants was significantly less in the negative emotional/social consequence condition ( $M = 4.15$ ,  $SD = 1.44$ ) than it was in the negative physical consequence condition ( $M = 5.98$ ,  $SD = 1.50$ ),  $t(201) = -8.81$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $r^2 = .28$ . Participants in the negative physical consequence condition clearly believed that Martin and Sandy would be experiencing the effects of their act of casual sex for a much longer time than those who viewed the negative emotional/social consequence condition.

#### *Amount of Sexual Content*

The stimuli in the negative consequence conditions were created so that the same amount of time would be devoted to discussions of sexual topics and the consequences of casual sex. Thus, participants in the negative consequence conditions should have

perceived an equivalent amount of sexual content in the programs they were exposed to. To ensure that participants perceived an equivalent amount of sexual content across the conditions they were asked to indicate how often the characters discussed sexual topics, or consequences of sexual behaviors in the program they watched. Response options ranged from *not at all* (1) to *a lot* (7). Participants' scores on this item were compared between the two negative consequence conditions.

Participants in the negative emotional/social consequence condition ( $M = 5.76$ ,  $SD = 1.38$ ) and the negative physical consequence condition ( $M = 5.57$ ,  $SD = 1.56$ ) did not differ significantly in their perceptions of the amount of sexual content portrayed in the programs they watched,  $t(201) = .968$ ,  $p = .334$ . Participants' scores from both groups indicate that the programs contained a substantial amount of sexual content, and that the amount of content was perceived as equivalent across conditions. These findings help to confirm that the manipulation between the two conditions was in fact limited to the type of negative consequences portrayed, and that any results found will not be the result of an unbalanced amount of consequence portrayals across conditions.

#### *Program Enjoyment*

Lastly, it was expected that participants across all conditions would report an equal amount of enjoyment of the programs they were exposed to. Participants were asked to indicate how much or how little they enjoyed watching the programs. Response options for this item ranged from *not at all enjoyable* (1) to *very enjoyable* (7). As was expected, participants' enjoyment of the different stimuli did not differ between the three experimental conditions,  $F(2, 300) = .933$ ,  $p = .394$ . Participants in the negative

emotional/social consequence condition ( $M = 3.11$ ,  $SD = 1.67$ ), the negative physical consequence condition ( $M = 3.41$ ,  $SD = 1.67$ ), and the control condition ( $M = 3.15$ ,  $SD = 1.67$ ) reported a roughly equivalent amount of program enjoyment. On the whole, participants indicate that they slightly disliked the programs they watched. This finding also serves to illustrate equivalence across conditions and confirm the validity of the manipulation. No program was found to be more enjoyable than the others.

#### *Summary of Manipulation Check Results*

Support for the effectiveness of the intended manipulation of the type of negative consequences of casual sex was found across all manipulation check measures. First, across all three conditions, participants reported that negative physical consequences of casual sex were significantly more negative/severe than negative emotional/social consequences of casual sex. Second, as was expected, the manipulation check showed that only participants in the negative physical consequence conditions noted that the main characters experienced an unplanned pregnancy, whereas participants in both of the negative consequence conditions perceived that the main characters experienced all of the negative emotional/social consequences. Third, the manipulation check confirmed that the consequences shown in the negative physical consequence condition were seen by participants to last significantly longer than those shown in the negative emotional/social consequence condition. Fourth, it confirmed that the programs contained an equivalent amount of talk about sexual topics and consequences. Fifth, and finally, the manipulation check showed that characters reported enjoying all three experimental stimuli equally. All of these findings support the validity of the intended manipulation of the types of

negative consequences of casual sex. They also illustrate comparability across conditions apart from the manipulation employed.

#### *Missing Data*

Less than 5% of the sample had any missing data. Participants' occasional missing data appeared to be random and was therefore replaced with mean scores on each item.

### III. RESULTS

#### Overview

This chapter is divided into six main sections. The first section provides demographic and descriptive information about the sample. This includes information on the moderating variables discussed above. The second section addresses the study's hypotheses. The third section addresses potential moderating variables that may influence the effects that exposure to the negative consequence portrayals has on emerging adult participants. Accordingly, significant moderating variables are explicated and hypotheses are reanalyzed in this section. The fourth section addresses Research Question 1 regarding the influence of participant gender. The fifth section addresses Research Question 2 regarding the influence of participants' sexual risk experience. The sixth, and final, section summarizes the findings of this study.

#### Sample Characteristics

This section provides demographic and descriptive information on this study's sample of 310 emerging adults. It is divided into the following subsections: 1) television exposure demographics of the sample, 2) sexual demographics of the sample, and 3) sample perceptions related to the stimuli.

##### *Television Exposure Demographics of the Sample*

Most participants (75.5%) reported watching fewer than five hours of television per day. The sample average on hours of television watched per day was 3.88 ( $SD = 1.69$ ). There were no significant differences between male and female participants. These data are slightly higher than previous research findings on college students' television viewing

amounts, which have found that they generally watch less than three hours a day (Eyal, 2005; Farrar, 2002).

In addition, because the treatments in this study were television dramas, participants were asked to report, on a scale of 1 (never) to 7 (very often), how often they viewed programs from this genre. The sample fell below the scale mid-point, with a mean of 3.10 ( $SD = 1.90$ ), indicating that they watched television dramas only somewhat infrequently. Female participants ( $M = 3.75$ ,  $SD = 2.00$ ) reported watching significantly more television dramas than male participants ( $M = 2.09$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ ),  $t(306) = -8.26$ ,  $p < .001$ .

The majority of participants (70%), 46% of the male and 85% of the female participants in the study, reported that they had watched an episode of 7<sup>th</sup> *Heaven* before. Additionally, most ( $N = 142$ , 70%) of the participants who indicated they had previously viewed 7<sup>th</sup> *Heaven* reported that they were not regular viewers of the series. Fourteen participants (1 male and 13 females) reported that they had previously watched an episode of 7<sup>th</sup> *Heaven* that involved Martin and Sandy's (i.e., the main characters of the stimuli in the negative consequence conditions) relationship. These participants were excluded from all analyses.

#### *Sexual Demographics of the Sample*

This section provides sample demographics on the sex-related variables that were previously introduced as potential moderators of the relationship explored in this study: sexual experience, sexual risk communication with parents, and sexual beliefs of peers.

### *Sexual Experience*

Most participants reported having had sexual intercourse (87.4%). There were no significant differences by gender, with 90.9% of men reporting having had intercourse and 85.2% of women,  $\chi^2(1) = 2.20, p = .14$ .

Participants who had engaged in sexual intercourse before were asked to rate, on a scale of 1 (never) to 5 (every time), how frequently they have used condoms and how frequently they have used other forms of birth control since becoming sexually active. First, with regards to condom use, the sample mean is 2.96 ( $SD = 1.24$ ), indicating that participants claimed to have used condoms “most of the time.” There were no significant differences between men ( $M = 2.95, SD = 1.13$ ) and women ( $M = 2.99, SD = 1.31$ ) with regards to past condom use,  $t(267) = -.091, p = .927$ .

Additionally, participants reported using other forms of pharmaceutical contraception ( $M = 3.74, SD = 1.56$ ) more frequently than they used condoms ( $M = 2.96, SD = 1.24$ ),  $t(268) = -5.59, p < .001$ . They reported that either they or their partners have used birth control almost “every time except once.” Participants differed significantly by gender with women ( $M = 4.04, SD = 1.54$ ) reporting that they have used birth control “every time except once,” and men reporting that birth control was used by their partners slightly more frequently than “most of the time” ( $M = 3.32, SD = 1.50$ ),  $t(268) = -3.81, p < .001$ .

On average, participants reported having casual sex (i.e., sex with someone they had just met) with an average of 2.35 people ( $SD = 1.40$ ). Male participants ( $M = 2.97, SD = 1.48$ ) reported having engaged in significantly more casual sex than female participants ( $M = 1.92, SD = 1.16$ ),  $t(268) = 6.55, p < .001$ . Next, the mean number of sexual

partners was 3.73 ( $SD = 1.48$ ). Again, male participants ( $M = 3.95$ ,  $SD = 1.43$ ) reported having engaged in intercourse with significantly more partners than female participants ( $M = 3.58$ ,  $SD = 1.50$ ),  $t(266) = 2.05$ ,  $p = .041$ ,  $r^2 = .02$ . However, it is important to note that this difference is very small.

Participants reported rarely having experienced negative emotional/social consequences of intercourse ( $M = 2.21$ ,  $SD = .97$ ). There were no significant differences between men ( $M = 2.20$ ,  $SD = .96$ ) and women ( $M = 2.22$ ,  $SD = .97$ ) with regards to the amount of negative emotional/social consequences of intercourse they have experienced,  $t(267) = -.167$ ,  $p = .868$ .

Slightly less than half (42%,  $N = 114$ ) of the sexually active participants reported that they, or a sexual partner, had never experienced pregnancy scares, tests, or actual unplanned pregnancies. The majority of participants (58%,  $N = 157$ ) reported some type of experience involving this negative consequence of intercourse. That is, 11.3% ( $N = 35$ ) reported that they, or a sexual partner, have had a pregnancy scare, 35.8% ( $N = 111$ ) reported that they, or a sexual partner, have experienced a pregnancy scare and taken a pregnancy test, and 3.5% ( $N = 11$ ) claimed that they, or a sexual partner, actually had an unplanned pregnancy. There were marginally significant differences between men ( $M = .93$ ,  $SD = .99$ ) and women ( $M = 1.16$ ,  $SD = .99$ ) with regards to their experience with pregnancy scares, tests, and actual unplanned pregnancies,  $t(269) = -1.96$ ,  $p = .051$ . The majority of participants had only experienced a pregnancy scare.

With regard to sexually transmitted infections, only 25.5% ( $N = 69$ ) reported that they had never experienced an STI scare, test, or actual STI contraction. The remaining

participants (74.4%,  $N = 201$ ) reported either experiencing an STI scare ( $N = 33$ , 10.6%), having been tested for STIs ( $N = 133$ , 42.9%), or having been tested for, and actually contracting an STI 11.3% ( $N = 35$ ). Female participants ( $M = 1.71$ ,  $SD = .99$ ) reported having significantly more intense experiences with STIs than male participants ( $M = 1.17$ ,  $SD = .96$ ),  $t(268) = -4.10$ ,  $p < .001$ .

#### *Sexual Risk Communication with Parents*

Participants were also asked about the amount of sexual risk information their parents shared with them. The mean score for the sample on this variable was 2.55 ( $SD = 1.00$ ) on a scale of 1 (*none*) to 5 (*extensive*). This indicates that on average, participants reported that their parents shared between “a little” and “some” information with them about sexual risk topics. This finding is consistent with previous research, which indicates that parents rarely speak with their adolescent children about sexual topics (Andre, Frevert, & Schuchmann, 1989; Katchadourian, 1990; Rosenthal & Feldman, 1999). Female participants reported having received significantly more communication from their parents ( $M = 2.66$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ) than male participants ( $M = 2.38$ ,  $SD = .87$ ),  $t(308) = -2.43$ ,  $p = .016$ . Though this difference is small, it is also consistent with research findings on parent-child communication about sex. Studies have found that parents communicate more about sexual topics with their daughters than with their sons (Raffaelli, Bogenschneider, & Flood, 1998; Raffaelli & Green, 2003; Young & Core-Gebhart, 1993).

### *Sexual Beliefs of Peers*

Participants were asked several questions assessing their friends' sexual beliefs, as emerging adults who believe their friends endorse permissive sexual behavior may be more apt to adopt a similar perspective themselves (Ward & Rivadeneyra, 1999). These questions, measured on a 7-point scale, asked whether their friends endorsed certain viewpoints regarding sexual intercourse. Higher numbers on this scale indicate participants' opinion that their friends have very conservative sexual beliefs. The average for this sample was 2.86 ( $SD = 1.19$ ), indicating that most participants believed their friends had liberal/permissive views about sexual intercourse. For example, this means that most participants believed their friends found casual sexual relationships acceptable to engage in. Male participants friends' sexual beliefs ( $M = 2.45$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ) were significantly more liberal/permissive than the sexual beliefs of female participants' friends ( $M = 3.13$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ),  $t(307) = -5.06$ ,  $p < .001$ . This is consistent with previous research which has found that young men have more sexually permissive beliefs and attitudes than young women (Knox et al., 2001; Yost & Zurbriggen, 2006).

### *Sample Perceptions Related to the Stimuli*

After viewing their respective treatment programs, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they perceived the program to be realistic, and their similarity to the main characters. These variables are known moderators of the relationship between sexual media content and viewer effects (Taylor, 2005; Ward & Friedman, 2006).

### *Perceived Realism of Stimulus Program*

Participants were asked about the extent to which they perceived the program they viewed to be realistic. Perceived realism was measured on a 5-point scale, with higher numbers indicating that participants saw the program to be very realistic. There were some differences in participants' perceived realism scores among the three experimental conditions,  $F(2, 299) = 6.64, p = .002, \eta^2 = .043$ . Tukey pairwise comparisons indicated that participants perceived the television program shown in the negative physical consequence condition ( $M = 3.39, SD = .83$ ) to be significantly more realistic than the programs shown in the negative emotional/social consequence condition ( $M = 2.99, SD = .90$ ) and the control condition ( $M = 2.96, SD = 1.01$ ). No differences were found between participants' perceived realism of the program in the negative emotional/social condition and the program in the control condition. Participants in the negative physical consequence condition perceived the program they viewed to be slightly realistic, and participants in the negative emotional/social consequence condition and the control condition indicated that they did not find the programs they viewed to be strongly unrealistic or realistic.

Additionally, there was a significant interaction between gender and experimental condition,  $F(2, 296) = 3.43, p = .034, \eta^2 = .023$ . Men perceived the program in the control to be the least realistic ( $M = 2.53, SD = 1.03$ ), the program in the negative emotional/social consequence condition to be slightly unrealistic ( $M = 2.88, SD = .94$ ), and the program in the negative physical consequence condition as slightly realistic ( $M = 3.39, SD = .83$ ). Women, however, perceived the programs in the control ( $M = 3.20, SD$

= .93) and the negative physical consequence conditions ( $M = 3.39, SD = .83$ ) to be slightly realistic, and the program in the emotional/social consequence condition to be neither unrealistic nor realistic ( $M = 3.04, SD = .89$ ).

#### *Participant Similarity to Main Characters*

Similarity to both of the main characters was measured. On a 7-point scale, higher scores indicating a stronger similarity to the character, participants reported their similarity to both Sandy and Martin. Since Sandy was not a main character in the control condition, participants within this condition only reported their similarity to Martin.

First, with regards to Sandy, participants in the two negative consequence conditions scored below the scale's mid-point, reporting that they were slightly dissimilar to her ( $M = 3.01, SD = 1.24$ ). Differences between the negative emotional/social consequence condition ( $M = 3.05, SD = 1.33$ ) and the negative physical consequence condition ( $M = 2.97, SD = 1.13$ ) were not significant,  $F(1, 200) = .693, p = .406, \eta^2 = .003$ . However, male participants ( $M = 3.56, SD = 1.09$ ) reported significantly greater similarity to Sandy than did female participants ( $M = 2.66, SD = 1.20$ ),  $F(1, 200) = 29.45, p < .001, \eta^2 = .128$ . It is possible that males related more to Sandy because she was portrayed as a sexually experienced, permissive emerging adult. As noted above, male emerging adults have been found to report more liberal sexual attitudes and engagement in more permissive sexual behaviors than female emerging adults. There was no significant interaction between gender and experimental condition,  $F(1, 200) = .036, p = .850, \eta^2 = .000$ .

Next, participants also reported that they were slightly dissimilar to Martin ( $M = 3.81$ ,  $SD = 1.25$ ). There were some differences among the three experimental conditions, however,  $F(2, 297) = 11.26$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .070$ . Tukey pairwise comparisons indicate that participants in the negative physical consequence condition reported being significantly less similar to Martin ( $M = 3.26$ ,  $SD = 1.31$ ), than did participants in the negative emotional/social consequence condition ( $M = 4.07$ ,  $SD = 1.25$ ), and the control condition ( $M = 4.06$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ). Participants in the latter two conditions did not differ significantly from one another.

There was not a main effect for gender,  $F(1, 297) = 1.04$ ,  $p = .309$ ,  $\eta^2 = .003$ . There was, however, a significant interaction between gender and experimental condition,  $F(2, 297) = 4.02$ ,  $p = .019$ ,  $\eta^2 = .026$ . Women reported greater similarity to Martin than the men did in both the control condition (women:  $M = 4.26$ ,  $SD = .91$ ; men:  $M = 3.69$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ) and the negative emotional/social consequence condition (women:  $M = 4.16$ ,  $SD = 1.21$ ; men:  $M = 3.91$ ,  $SD = 1.33$ ), but less similarity to Martin than the men did in the negative physical consequence condition (women:  $M = 3.10$ ,  $SD = 1.32$ ; men:  $M = 3.49$ ,  $SD = 1.28$ ).

### Hypotheses

Three groups of hypotheses, introduced above, were tested in this study. Each group predicted differences between the study's experimental conditions on the five dependent variables: negative outcome expectancies for risky sex, attitudes toward casual sex, attitudes toward condoms, behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex, and behavioral intentions to use condoms. The first group, hypotheses 1a-1e, addressed anticipated

differences between participants in the negative physical consequence condition and the negative emotional/social consequence condition. It was expected that inhibitory effects on participants' sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions (measured through the five dependent variables) in the negative physical consequence condition would be significantly stronger than inhibitory effects experienced by participants in the negative emotional/social consequence condition.

The second group of hypotheses (2a-2e) explicated predicted differences between participants in the negative emotional/social consequence condition and the control condition. It was expected that participants in the negative emotional/social consequence condition would report significantly more conservative/sexually responsible sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions than participants in the control condition.

The third and final group of hypotheses (3a-3e) addressed anticipated differences between participants in the negative physical consequence condition and the control condition. It was expected that participants in the negative physical consequence condition would report significantly more conservative/sexually responsible sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions than participants in the control condition.

To examine these three groups of hypotheses, and all expected differences between the experimental conditions, a single multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted, including experimental condition and all five dependent variables. Significant differences were not found among the conditions on these dependent measures, Wilks'  $\Lambda = .975$ ,  $F(10, 606.00) = .774$ ,  $p = .654$ . Analyses of variances (ANOVA) on each dependent variable were conducted as follow-up tests to the MANOVA. The ANOVAs

showed no significant differences between the three experimental conditions on each of the dependent variables: negative outcome expectancies for risky sexual intercourse,  $F(2, 307) = .455, p = .635$ ; attitudes toward casual sex,  $F(2, 307) = .128, p = .880$ ; attitudes toward condoms,  $F(2, 307) = .172, p = .842$ ; behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex,  $F(2, 307) = .567, p = .568$ ; and behavioral intentions to use condoms,  $F(2, 307) = .427, p = .653$ . None of the hypotheses were supported. See Table 4 for means and standard deviations by experimental condition and dependent variable.

### Moderators

Several potential moderating variables were assessed in this study. In order to see which, if any, of these variables were significant predictors of the dependent variables and should therefore be used as covariates, a series of stepwise, multiple regression analyses were executed.

In the first analysis, participants' *negative outcome expectancies for risky sex* was used as the criterion variable. All of the moderating variables mentioned above, that were found to be significantly correlated with this dependent variable, were entered as potential predictor variables. As none of the variables accounted for more than 3% of the variance in negative outcome expectancies, it was decided that no covariate would be included in additional analyses of this dependent variable.

In the second regression analysis, participants' *attitudes toward casual sex* was used as the criterion variable. Again, all of the potential moderating variables that were significantly correlated with this dependent variable were entered as potential predictors. Only one of these variables explained more than 5% of the variance in participants'

attitudes toward casual sex. Participants' gender contributed significantly to prediction of this outcome. Gender accounted for 17.89% of the variance in attitudes toward casual sex. Thus, gender will be used as a covariate for all additional analyses of this specific outcome variable. The one exception will be in the analysis conducted to test research question 1, where gender will already be implemented as a factor.

Next, participants' *attitudes toward condoms* was used as the criterion variable in the third regression analysis. All potential moderating variables, significantly correlated with attitudes toward condoms, were entered as potential predictors. Only one of the variables accounted for a substantial, significant amount of the variance in this outcome variable: sexually active participants' past condom use frequency. Participants' past condom use accounted for 27.98% of the variance in their attitudes toward condoms, contributing significantly to prediction of this dependent variable. Thus, participants' past condom use will be controlled for in all additional analyses of attitudes toward condoms.

In the fourth regression analysis, participants' *behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex* was used as the criterion variable. Once again, all of the potential moderating variables were entered as potential predictors. One of these variables, participants' attitudes toward casual sex, significantly explained a large portion (29.81%) of the variance in participants' behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex. Participants' attitudes toward casual sex was found to be a strong predictor of their behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex and will therefore be included as a covariate in all additional analyses of this variable.

The fifth, and final, regression analysis looked at participants' *behavioral intentions to use condoms* as the criterion variable. Of all the potential moderating variables included as potential predictors in this regression equation, two were found to contribute significantly to prediction of participants' intentions to use condoms. These were participants' past condom use and participants' attitudes toward condoms. Participants' past condom use accounted for 19.36% and their attitudes toward condoms accounted for 8.8% of the variance in their intentions to use condoms. Thus, these two variables will be entered as covariates in all additional analyses of this dependent variable. The covariates included in all future analyses of the dependent variables are summarized in Table 5.

To re-examine the hypotheses tested above with all of the identified moderating variables controlled, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted for all of the dependent variables except for participants' negative outcome expectancies for risky sex. An ANCOVA was not conducted for negative outcome expectancies, as none of the potential moderating variables were found to account for a substantial amount of the variance in this variable. Again, none of the hypotheses were supported. Even when controlling for moderating variables, the analyses showed no significant differences between the three experimental conditions on each of the dependent variables: attitudes toward casual sex,  $F(2, 306) = .074, p = .929$ ; attitudes toward condoms,  $F(2, 265) = .308, p = .735$ ; behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex,  $F(2, 306) = 2.75, p = .065$ ; and behavioral intentions to use condoms,  $F(2, 264) = .605, p = .547$ . Differences between experimental conditions approached significance ( $p = .065$ ) for only one variable,

participants' behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex. Results of these analyses appear in Table 6.

In sum, significant moderators were identified for four of the dependent variables: attitudes toward casual sex, attitudes toward condoms, behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex, and behavioral intentions to use condoms. Hypotheses were then reanalyzed, statistically controlling for the significant moderators of each of these dependent variables. None of the hypotheses were supported. Only for participants' behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex, did differences between experimental conditions approach significance.

#### Research Question 1 - Gender

Research Question 1 asked, "How does gender influence the effects of exposure to differing types of portrayals of negative consequences of casual sex?" To examine this question each dependent variable was analyzed using experimental condition and gender as factors. Results of these analyses appear in Table 7.

First, an ANOVA was conducted for participants' *negative outcome expectancies for risky sex*. In this analysis, experimental condition and gender were entered as the independent variables, and negative outcome expectancies for risky sex was entered as the dependent variable. Results showed no significant differences by condition, and no gender x condition interaction effect. The analysis identified only a significant main effect for gender,  $F(1, 304) = 39.32, p < .001, \eta^2 = .115$ . Women ( $M = 5.55, SD = 1.23$ ) reported stronger negative outcome expectancies for risky sexual intercourse than males ( $M = 4.61, SD = 1.33$ ).

Next, an ANOVA was conducted for participants' *attitudes toward casual sex* with experimental condition and gender as factors. For this variable, differences by condition and a gender x condition interaction effect also were not significant. However, a main effect for gender was found,  $F(1, 304) = 139.97, p < .001, \eta^2 = .315$ . Women ( $M = 4.00, SD = .80$ ) reported significantly less favorable attitudes toward casual sex than men ( $M = 2.85, SD = .87$ ). That is, women's attitudes were more conservative than men's attitudes.

A third analysis was conducted for participants' *attitudes toward condoms*. In an ANCOVA, experimental condition and gender were entered as factors and participants' past condom use was statistically controlled. Because participants' past condom use was included as a covariate in this analysis, the sample included only sexually active participants. Similar to the latter two analyses, this analysis also found no significant differences by condition. Though the gender x condition interaction effect was not significant, it is interesting to note that it was approaching significance,  $F(2, 262) = 2.71, p = .068, \eta^2 = .020$ . Whereas female participants' attitudes toward condoms became slightly more positive across conditions (i.e., from the control to the negative emotional/social consequence condition to the negative physical consequence condition), male participants' attitudes became slightly more negative across conditions. Additionally, there was also a significant main effect for gender,  $F(1, 262) = 5.13, p = .024, \eta^2 = .019$ . Female attitudes toward condoms ( $M = 3.78, SD = .98$ ) were slightly more positive than were male attitudes ( $M = 3.55, SD = .90$ ).

For participants' *behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex*, an ANCOVA was also conducted. In this analysis, experimental condition and gender were entered as factors,

and participants' attitudes toward casual sex was entered as a covariate. No significant differences by condition and no gender x condition interaction effect were found.

Women ( $M = 4.47$ ,  $SD = 1.25$ ), however, were found to have significantly stronger intentions to avoid casual sex than men ( $M = 2.56$ ,  $SD = 1.44$ ),  $F(1, 303) = 18.37$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .057$ . Furthermore, when examining women only, their behavioral intentions do in fact differ significantly across experimental conditions,  $F(2, 185) = 3.68$ ,  $p = .027$ ,  $\eta^2 = .038$ . Bonferroni post-hoc comparisons show that these differences exist only between the control condition ( $M = 4.23$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ) and the negative emotional/social consequence condition ( $M = 4.67$ ,  $SD = 1.28$ ).

Lastly, a fifth ANCOVA was conducted for participants' *behavioral intentions to use condoms*. The independent variables in this analysis were experimental condition and gender. Participants' past condom use and attitudes toward condoms were statistically controlled. Because participants' past condom use was included as a covariate in this analysis, the sample was limited to sexually active participants. For this variable, differences by condition and a gender x condition interaction effect were also not significant. However, a main effect for gender was found,  $F(1, 261) = 7.98$ ,  $p = .005$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ . Men ( $M = 5.23$ ,  $SD = 1.67$ ) reported stronger intentions to use condoms than women did ( $M = 4.83$ ,  $SD = 2.24$ ). This was the only variable on which men reported stronger outcomes than women. That is, outcomes that indicated greater avoidance of the negative physical consequences of sexual intercourse.

In summary, gender was not found to influence the effects that exposure to stimuli had on participants. Across all dependent variables only one significant difference

between conditions was found. Female participants' in the negative emotional/social consequence condition were found to have significantly stronger behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex than female participants in the control condition. There were, however, main effects for gender in each of the above analyses. Results showed that women were more sexually conservative than men. That is, women reported more negative outcome expectancies for risky sex, less favorable attitudes toward casual sex, more positive attitudes toward condoms, and greater intentions to avoid casual sex than men, regardless of the experimental condition to which they were assigned. Only in behavioral intentions to use condoms did men report stronger intentions than women.

#### Research Question 2 – Sexual Risk Experience

The second research question asked, “How does participants’ sexual risk experience influence the effects of exposure to differing types of portrayals of negative consequences of casual sex?” To answer this question, three different sexual experience variables were analyzed: 1) sexual intercourse experience; 2) casual sex experience; and 3) number of sexual partners. Each of these three variables were analyzed separately.

##### *Sexual Intercourse Experience*

The first group of analyses sought to find out how both virgin and sexually active participants were influenced by the stimuli. To determine this, each dependent variable was analyzed using experimental condition and sexual intercourse experience as factors. Because the majority of participants were sexually active, and few were virgins, participants were not consistently distributed across cells. Thus, it is important to note the number of virgin and sexually active participants’ in each condition, as the unequal

sample size could have affected the analyses (see Table 8). Results of these analyses appear in Table 9.

First, an ANOVA was conducted for participants' *negative outcome expectancies for risky sex*. It should be noted at the outset that the variance across conditions was disparate. Because of this, Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances was applied and found significant ( $p = .001$ ), indicating that homogeneity of variance assumptions were violated in this analysis. Nonetheless, an ANOVA was conducted, although it is important to bear in mind that its results should be viewed with particular caution because of this violation.

A significant main effect for condition was found,  $F(2, 304) = 3.11, p = .046, \eta^2 = .020$ . Tukey pairwise comparisons indicated that significant differences existed only between the control condition and the negative physical consequence condition. Participants in the negative physical consequence condition ( $M = 5.09, SD = 1.44$ ) reported significantly less negative outcome expectancies for risky sex than participants in the control condition ( $M = 5.27, SD = 1.33$ ). These differences should be interpreted with caution, however, as a significant sexual intercourse experience x condition interaction effect was also found,  $F(2, 304) = 3.56, p = .030, \eta^2 = .023$ . Sexually active participants reported roughly equivalent negative outcome expectancies across all of the conditions; the control condition ( $M = 5.16, SD = 1.36$ ), the negative emotional/social consequence condition ( $M = 5.00, SD = 1.27$ ), and the negative physical consequence condition ( $M = 5.13, SD = 1.34$ ). However, virgin participants' negative outcome expectancies were equivalent in the control ( $M = 6.08, SD = .71$ ) and negative

emotional/social consequence conditions ( $M = 5.98$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ), but dropped dramatically in the negative physical consequence condition ( $M = 4.54$ ,  $SD = 2.41$ ). Obviously, this is a counterintuitive finding. Reasons for this finding will be discussed in the following chapter. See Figure 1.

Next, an ANCOVA was conducted for participants' *attitudes toward casual sex*, with experimental condition and sexual intercourse experience as factors, and gender as a covariate. No significant differences were found. That is, there was not a main effect for condition or sexual intercourse experience. Likewise, a sexual intercourse experience x condition interaction effect was not found.

A third ANOVA was conducted for participants' *attitudes toward condoms*. In this analysis, experimental condition and sexual intercourse experience were entered as factors. Please note that though participants' past condom use was identified above as a potential moderator of their attitudes toward condoms, it was not possible to include it as a covariate because this analysis was comparing virgin and sexually active participants. For this variable, there were no differences by condition and no sexual intercourse experience x condition interaction effects. However, a main effect for sexual intercourse experience was found,  $F(1, 304) = 4.31$ ,  $p = .039$ ,  $\eta^2 = .014$ . Virgin participants ( $M = 4.08$ ,  $SD = .84$ ) reported more positive attitudes toward condoms than sexually active participants did ( $M = 3.69$ ,  $SD = .98$ ).

Fourth an ANCOVA was conducted for participants' *behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex*, with experimental condition and sexual intercourse experience as factors. Participants' attitudes toward casual sex was controlled for in this analysis. Like the

latter variable, for this variable there also were no differences by condition and no sexual intercourse experience x condition interaction effects. Only a main effect for sexual intercourse experience was found,  $F(1, 304) = 10.43, p = .001, \eta^2 = .033$ . Virgin participants ( $M = 4.93, SD = 1.47$ ) reported significantly stronger intentions to avoid casual sex than did sexually active participants ( $M = 3.55, SD = 1.57$ ).

A fifth, and final, ANCOVA was conducted for participants' *behavioral intentions to use condoms*. Again, experimental condition and sexual intercourse experience were included as factors. Though both past condom use and attitudes toward condoms were identified as moderators of participants' behavioral intentions to use condoms, only participants' attitudes was held constant in this analysis. It was not possible to include participants' past condom use as a covariate because this analysis was comparing virgin and sexually active participants, and in controlling for past condom use the virgin participants would have been excluded. In this analysis, only a main effect for sexual intercourse experience was found,  $F(1, 303) = 7.83, p = .005, \eta^2 = .025$ . Virgin participants ( $M = 6.21, SD = 1.41$ ) reported greater intentions to use condoms than sexually active participants ( $M = 5.00, SD = 2.03$ ).

Overall, the results of these analyses show that though virgin and sexually active participants differed significantly from each other on the dependent variables (except with regards to their attitudes toward casual sex), neither group was more likely to be influenced by the stimuli. The stimuli were only found to significantly influence participants' negative outcome expectancies. However, this single finding is

counterintuitive to theoretical expectations and appears to be anomalous. Reasons for this finding will be discussed in the subsequent chapter.

### *Casual Sex Experience*

The second group of analyses in this section sought to find out if sexually active participants' casual sex experience influenced the effects that the stimuli had upon them. To determine this, each dependent variable was analyzed using experimental condition and casual sex experience as factors. Casual sex experience had four levels/groups: participants who had never engaged in casual sex, participants who had engaged in casual sex one time, participants who had engaged in casual sex two-three times, and participants who had engaged in casual sex four or more times. It is important to note that there was not an equal amount of participants in each condition across the four different levels of casual sex experience. Therefore, it is possible that the inconsistent distribution of participants across cells could have influenced this group of analyses. For the number of participants' in each condition by their casual sex experience, see Table 10. Results of these analyses appear in Table 11.

The first analysis was conducted for participants' *negative outcome expectancies for risky sex*, with experimental condition and casual sex experience as factors. The only significant effect found in this analysis was a main effect for participants' casual sex experience,  $F(3, 258) = 9.30, p < .001, \eta^2 = .098$ . Negative outcome expectancies for risky sex were found to weaken as participants' casual sex experience increased. Specifically, participants who had never engaged in casual sex had the strongest negative outcome expectancies for risky sex ( $M = 5.52, SD = 1.28$ ); participants who had engaged

in casual sex one time had slightly weaker expectancies ( $M = 5.04, SD = 1.32$ ); followed by participants who had engaged in casual sex two to three times ( $M = 4.93, SD = 1.17$ ); and finally, participants who had engaged in casual sex four or more times had the weakest negative outcome expectancies for risky sex ( $M = 4.24, SD = 1.34$ ).

In the second analysis an ANCOVA was conducted for participants' *attitudes toward casual sex*. Casual sex experience and experimental condition were entered as factors, and gender as a covariate. Though there was not a main effect for condition, there was a significant main effect for casual sex experience,  $F(3, 257) = 24.34, p < .001, \eta^2 = .221$ . The main effect for casual sex experience revealed that the more casual sex experience participants had the more positive their attitudes toward casual sex were. Specifically, participants who had never engaged in casual sex expressed the least positive attitudes toward casual sex ( $M = 4.07, SD = .82$ ); the attitudes of participants who had engaged in casual sex one time were more positive ( $M = 3.45, SD = .81$ ); followed by participants who had engaged in casual sex two to three times ( $M = 3.04, SD = .87$ ); and finally, participants who had engaged in casual sex four or more times had the most positive attitudes toward casual sex ( $M = 2.56, SD = .73$ ).

Next, participants' casual sex experience was also found to influence the effects that the stimuli in the negative consequence conditions had upon their attitudes toward casual sex,  $F(6, 257) = 3.10, p = .006, \eta^2 = .068$ . Participants who had never engaged in casual sex reported roughly equivalent attitudes toward casual sex in all three conditions. Participants who had only engaged in casual sex one time reported less favorable attitudes toward casual sex in the negative emotional/social consequence condition than

they did in the control and negative physical consequence conditions. However, participants who had engaged in casual sex two-three times reported roughly equivalent attitudes toward casual sex across all conditions. Lastly, participants who had engaged in casual sex four or more times reported more favorable attitudes toward casual sex in the negative emotional/social consequence condition than in the control and negative physical consequence conditions. A significant main effect for condition was only found for participants who had engaged in casual sex one time,  $F(2, 56) = 4.69, p = .013, \eta^2 = .143$ , and participants who had engaged in it four or more times,  $F(2, 29) = 4.75, p = .016, \eta^2 = .247$  (see Figure 2). First, for participants who had engaged in casual sex only one time, Bonferroni post-hoc comparisons indicated that their attitudes toward casual sex were more conservative and less favorable in the negative emotional/social consequence condition ( $M = 3.81, SD = .72$ ) than they were in the negative physical consequence condition ( $M = 3.09, SD = .90$ ). Participants in the negative physical consequence condition expressed more positive attitudes toward casual sex. Conversely, for participants who had engaged in casual sex four or more times, post-hoc comparisons showed that participants attitudes toward casual sex were more positive/liberal in the negative emotional social consequence condition ( $M = 1.92, SD = .41$ ) than they were in both the control ( $M = 2.76, SD = .74$ ) and negative physical consequence conditions ( $M = 2.69, SD = .66$ ). It is important to note that there are no obvious interpretations for these findings. These findings were unexpected, and they run contrary to social cognitive tenets. The possible reasons for these findings will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

Next, an ANCOVA was conducted for participants' *attitudes toward condoms*, with condition and casual sex experience as factors and past condom use as a covariate. No significant differences were found. That is, there was not a main effect for condition or casual sex experience. Likewise, a casual sex experience x condition interaction effect was not found.

In the fourth analysis an ANCOVA was conducted for participants' *behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex*. Again, casual sex experience and experimental condition were the independent variables. Participants' attitudes toward casual sex were statistically controlled. In this analysis, only a main effect for casual sex experience was found,  $F(3, 256) = 15.30, p < .001, \eta^2 = .152$ . Participants who had never engaged in casual sex expressed the strongest intentions to avoid casual sex ( $M = 4.66, SD = 1.24$ ), followed by participants who had only engaged in casual sex one time ( $M = 3.58, SD = 1.18$ ), participants who had engaged in casual sex two-three times ( $M = 2.64, SD = 1.22$ ), and participants who had engaged in casual sex four or more times ( $M = 2.00, SD = 1.14$ ).

In the fifth and final analysis, an ANCOVA was conducted for participants' *behavioral intentions to avoid condoms*, with experimental condition and casual sex experience as factors, and past condom use and attitudes toward condoms as covariates. No significant differences were found. That is, there was not a main effect for condition or casual sex experience. Likewise, a casual sex experience x condition interaction effect was not found.

In sum, participants' casual sex experience was found to significantly influence only the effects that the stimuli had upon their attitudes toward casual sex. Participants' with

differing amounts of casual sex experience responded differently to the experimental stimuli. Participants casual sex experience did not influence their responses to the stimuli with regards to their negative outcome expectancies for risky sexual intercourse, their attitudes toward condoms, their behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex, and their behavioral intentions to use condoms.

### *Number of Sexual Partners*

The third and final group of sexual experience analyses looked at how sexually active participants' total number of sexual partners influenced the effects that the stimuli had upon them. In these analyses, each dependent variable was examined using experimental condition and number of sexual partners as factors. Number of sexual partners had four levels/groups: participants who had only one previous partner, participants who had two partners, participants who had three partners, and participants who had four or more partners. It is important to note that there was not an equal amount of participants in each condition across the four different levels of number of sexual partners. Therefore, it is possible that the inconsistent distribution of participants across cells could have influenced this group of analyses. For the number of participants' in each condition by the number of sexual partners they have had, see Table 12. Results of these analyses appear in Table 13.

First, an ANOVA was conducted for participants' *negative outcome expectancies for risky sex*, with experimental condition and participants' number of sexual partners entered as factors. In this analysis, only a significant main effect for number of partners was found,  $F(3, 256) = 2.66, p = .049, \eta^2 = .030$ . Participants who had one ( $M = 5.37$ ,

$SD = 1.22$ ) or two ( $M = 5.54, SD = 1.40$ ) sexual partners expressed greater negative outcome expectancies than participants who had three ( $M = 4.97, SD = 1.37$ ) or four or more partners ( $M = 4.98, SD = 1.32$ ).

In the second analysis an ANCOVA was conducted for participants' *attitudes toward casual sex*, controlling for gender. Like the latter analysis, only a significant main effect for number of partners was found,  $F(3, 255) = 12.21, p < .001, \eta^2 = .126$ . Participants who had one sexual partner reported the least favorable attitudes toward casual sex ( $M = 4.14, SD = .84$ ); attitudes of participants who had two sexual partners were slightly more favorable than those who had only one partner ( $M = 3.91, SD = .98$ ); attitudes of participants who had three sexual partners were slightly more favorable than those who had one or two sexual partners ( $M = 3.61, SD = .91$ ), and participants who had four or more partners expressed the most positive attitudes toward casual sex ( $M = 3.23, SD = .92$ ).

In the third analysis, an ANCOVA was conducted for participants' *attitudes toward condoms*. Experimental condition and number of partners were factors in this analysis, and participants' past condom use was entered as a covariate. Results showed that participants' attitudes toward condoms differ significantly by condition,  $F(2, 254) = 2.99, p = .051, \eta^2 = .023$  (see Figure 3). This finding should be interpreted with caution, however, as additional analyses show that participants who had four or more sexual partners in their lifetimes were not influenced by the stimuli. Their attitudes toward condoms remained stable across conditions. Only participants who had one through three sexual partners were influenced by the stimuli,  $F(2, 86) = 3.21, p = .045, \eta^2 = .070$ . For

participants who had one through three sexual partners, their attitudes were the least positive toward condoms in the control condition ( $M = 3.68, SD = .85$ ), their attitudes became slightly more positive in the negative emotional/social condition ( $M = 3.86, SD = 1.00$ ), and their attitudes were the most positive toward condoms in the negative physical condition ( $M = 4.07, SD = .87$ ). Bonferroni post-hoc comparisons found that significant differences existed only between participants in the control condition and participants in the negative physical consequence condition. Participants in the negative physical consequence condition expressed significantly more positive attitudes toward condoms than participants in the control condition. In both of the above analyses, no main effects for number of partners or interactions between number of partners and experimental conditions were found.

Next, in the fourth analysis, an ANCOVA was conducted with *behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex* as the dependent variable. Experimental condition and number of partners were factors in the analysis, and attitudes toward casual sex were held constant. Results of this analysis found that participants' intentions differed significantly across condition,  $F(2, 255) = 4.33, p = .014, \eta^2 = .033$  (see Figure 4). This finding should be interpreted with caution, however, as additional analyses show that participants who had four or more sexual partners in their lifetimes were not influenced by the stimuli. Their behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex remained stable across conditions. Only participants who had one through three sexual partners were influenced, as a whole, by the stimuli,  $F(2, 87) = 4.71, p = .011, \eta^2 = .098$ . For participants who had one through three sexual partners, their behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex were weakest in the

control condition ( $M = 4.18$ ,  $SD = 1.45$ ) and strongest in the negative emotional/social condition ( $M = 4.76$ ,  $SD = 1.29$ ). In the negative physical condition, participants' mean score on behavioral intentions was 4.40 ( $SD = 1.45$ ). Participants reported greater intentions to avoid casual sex in the negative emotional/social consequence condition than they did in both the control and negative physical consequence conditions. However, Bonferroni post-hoc comparisons indicated that significant differences existed only between participants' behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex in the control and negative emotional/social consequence conditions.

Additionally, a main effect for number of partners was also found,  $F(3, 255) = 10.44$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .109$ . With each additional sexual partner, participants' intentions to avoid casual sex weakened. That is, participants who had only engaged in intercourse with one partner expressed the greatest intentions to avoid casual sex ( $M = 5.00$ ,  $SD = 1.19$ ), followed by participants who had two partners ( $M = 4.48$ ,  $SD = 1.48$ ) and then participants who had three partners ( $M = 3.79$ ,  $SD = 1.32$ ). Participants who had four or more sexual partners expressed the weakest intentions to avoid casual sex ( $M = 3.05$ ,  $SD = 1.42$ ).

Lastly, in the fifth analysis an ANCOVA was conducted for *behavioral intentions to use condoms*, with experimental condition and number of partners as factors, controlling for attitudes toward condoms and past condom use. Though no main effects were found, there was a significant interaction between number of partners and condition,  $F(6, 253) = 2.58$ ,  $p = .019$ ,  $\eta^2 = .058$ , (see Figure 5). Participants who had only had one sexual partner expressed weaker intentions to use condoms in the control and negative

emotional/social consequence conditions than they did in the negative physical consequence condition. Conversely, participants who had a total of two or three sexual partners actually expressed the strongest intentions to use condoms in the control condition and the weakest intentions to use condoms in the negative physical consequence condition. The intentions of participants who had four or more sexual partners remained the same across all three conditions. A significant main effect for condition was found only among participants who had one sexual partner,  $F(2, 31) = 8.17, p = .001, \eta^2 = .345$ . Bonferroni post-hoc comparisons showed that these differences were significant between the negative physical consequence condition ( $M = 5.75, SD = 1.64$ ) and the control condition ( $M = 4.59, SD = 2.48$ ), and the negative physical consequence condition and the negative emotional/social consequence condition ( $M = 4.89, SD = 2.05$ ). The control condition and the negative emotional/social consequence condition did not differ. Participants in the negative physical consequence condition reported significantly stronger intentions to use condoms than participants in both the control and negative emotional/social consequence conditions.

In sum, number of sexual partners emerged as a significant moderator for three of the dependent variables: attitudes toward condoms, behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex, and behavioral intentions to use condoms. Though the scores of participants who had four or more sexual partners remained stable and relatively unchanged across all three conditions, outcomes of participants who had one, two, or three sexual partners differed significantly across conditions.

### *Summary of Results for Research Question 2*

To review, this second research question was concerned with whether or not participants' sexual risk experience would influence the effect that the stimuli had upon them. To answer this question, three different sexual experience variables were entered alongside experimental condition as factors into analyses of the five dependent variables. The sexual experience variables measured included: sexual intercourse experience, casual sex experience, and number of sexual partners. Each of these three variables were analyzed separately. Overall, results of these analyses showed that participants' sexual risk experience did in fact influence the effects that the stimuli had upon them. However, patterns of influence were not necessarily similar or significant across all of the dependent variables. Additionally, the three sexual experience variables analyzed were distinct variables and therefore different patterns emerged for each. For example, though the number of previous sexual partners participants had was found to moderate the relationship between exposure to the stimuli and attitudes toward condoms, participants' casual sex experience was not.

Recapping the analyses, the first group looked at the differences between virgin and sexually active participants. Though interesting patterns emerged across many of the dependent variables, with virgin participants appearing to be influenced more by the stimuli (see Table 9), only one comparison proved significant. Virgin participants' expressed very high negative outcome expectancies for risky sex in both the control and negative emotional/social consequence conditions, and fairly mild expectancies in the negative physical consequence condition. In contrast, sexually active participants' scores

remained stable across conditions. This finding was unexpected and runs contrary to social cognitive predictions.

Next, to gain a better understanding of the potential differences between sexually active participants with different amounts of casual sex experience, the second group of analyses was conducted. These analyses revealed that participants' casual sex experience influenced only the effect that the conditions had on participants' attitudes toward casual sex (see Table 11).

The final group of analyses examined how the number of previous sexual partners can influence how participants are affected by the stimuli. This variable, number of sexual partners, had the greatest influence on participant outcomes. Number of sexual partners was found to significantly influence outcomes on three of the five dependent variables: attitudes toward condoms, behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex, and behavioral intentions to use condoms. Whereas the outcomes of participants who had four or more sexual partners remained stable and unchanged across all three conditions, there was some variation in the scores of the participants who had one to three partners (see Table 13).

#### Overall Summary of Results

This study hypothesized specific differences in participant outcomes across the three experimental conditions. Analyses found, however, that participants did not differ significantly across conditions on any of the five dependent variables. Even when controlling for significant moderating variables, none of the hypotheses were confirmed.

Analyses of Research Question 1, then, explored differences between male and female participants across experimental conditions. Though male and female participants were found to differ significantly on all five dependent variables (i.e., significant main effects for gender were identified for all dependent variables), on the whole, they were not found to differ significantly by experimental condition. Only a single main effect for condition was found among female participants. Female participants' behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex were found to differ significantly between the control and negative emotional/social consequence conditions. That is, female participants reported stronger intentions to avoid casual sex after viewing the negative emotional/social consequence condition, than they did in the control condition. Reasons for these findings will be explored in the following section.

Finally, analyses of Research Question 2 revealed that the effects that exposure to negative consequences of casual sex have on emerging adult participants are at least partially dependent upon their sexual risk experience. However, these effects were complex, and not driven simply by the fact that participants' had, or had not, previously engaged in sexual intercourse. Instead, analyses showed that sexually active participants' sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors were influenced by the amount of sexual risk experience that they had. That is, their responses to the measures of the dependent variables were influenced either by their casual sex experience, or the number of previous sexual partners they had. Participants' casual sex experience influenced their attitudes toward casual sex. Similarly, participants' number of sexual partners influenced their attitudes toward condoms, behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex, and behavioral

intentions to use condoms. Overall, sexually active participants with differing amounts of sexual risk experience were influenced differently by the experimental stimuli. These differences, however, varied by dependent variable and the sexual risk experience variable being examined: if participants had engaged in intercourse before, the amount of casual sex participants had engaged in, and/or the number of sexual partners participants had. Reasons for this set of findings will be explored in the following chapter.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the results from this dissertation are discussed and interpreted. First, an overall summary of results is provided. Next, findings are addressed in detail and interpreted in the order in which they were analyzed in the previous chapter: hypotheses, Research Question 1, and Research Question 2. Following this, the limitations of the current study are discussed and suggestions for future research introduced. The chapter closes with a final summary of the study's findings and conclusions.

##### Overview

This study examined the influence of exposure to television portrayals of differing types of negative consequences of casual sex on emerging adults' sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions. Negative consequences of casual sex were manipulated, such that one viewing condition showed a program with portrayals of negative emotional/social consequences and another, a program with a negative physical consequence. A control group was exposed to a program that did not have any sexual content. Outcome variables included negative outcome expectancies for risky sex, attitudes toward casual sex, attitudes toward condoms, behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex, and behavioral intentions to use condoms.

It was hypothesized that emerging adults' exposure to a negative physical consequence of casual sex would lead to stronger inhibitory effects on their beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions than would exposure to only negative emotional/social consequences of casual sex. It was also expected that significant differences would emerge between the emerging adults exposed to either type of

portrayal of negative consequences and emerging adults exposed to the control condition, which did not contain any sexual content. Analyses of hypotheses found, however, that participants' sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions were not influenced by the type of negative consequence portrayals they watched. No significant differences emerged across conditions, and therefore, not a single hypothesis was supported.

Following analyses of all hypotheses, the study then examined how participants' gender influenced the effects that the negative consequence conditions had upon them. Though gender has been found to moderate the effect of exposure to sexual television content on emerging adult outcomes (Aubrey et al., 2003; Farrar, 2002; Ward, 2002), only in one instance did it influence participants' responses in this study. Female participants' behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex were influenced by the portrayals of negative emotional/social consequences of casual sex. They expressed significantly stronger intentions to avoid casual sex upon viewing the stimulus in the negative emotional/social consequence condition than they did in the control condition. Male participants' outcomes were not influenced by either negative consequence condition.

Lastly, the influence of participants' sexual risk experience on the effects of the negative consequence conditions was also examined. Analyses found that for emerging adult participants, the relationship between exposure to the negative consequence portrayals and subsequent effects was found to be moderated by their sexual risk experience. Specifically, participants' number of sexual partners was found to influence differences across conditions on three of the dependent variables examined: attitudes toward condoms, behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex, and behavioral intentions to

use condoms. Emerging adults with different amounts of sexual risk experience responded differently to the experimental stimuli in these outcome areas. Participants who had extensive sexual risk experience (i.e., four or more previous sexual partners) were not influenced by the stimuli. However, effects of exposure to the negative consequence conditions, relative to the control condition, were identified among participants who had little to moderate amounts of sexual risk experience (i.e., one to three previous sexual partners). Both the negative physical and emotional/social consequence conditions led these participants to report safer sex outcomes. It is important to note, though, that these outcomes varied by negative consequence condition, dependent variable, and participants' sexual risk experience. All of these findings are discussed in detail below, in light of social cognitive theory and previous research.

### Hypotheses

The literature review of this dissertation illustrated the need for research on the differences in the inhibitory effects of television portrayals of negative emotional/social consequences of casual sexual intercourse and negative physical consequences of casual sexual intercourse on emerging adult viewers. In light of this review, three groups of hypotheses were introduced. These hypotheses framed the investigation for this dissertation on the effects of exposure to differing types of television portrayals of negative consequences of casual sex on emerging adults' negative outcome expectancies for risky sex, attitudes toward casual sex, attitudes toward condoms, behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex, and behavioral intentions to use condoms. They served primarily to

test the role that distinct types of negative consequence portrayals played in influencing the sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions of emerging adult viewers.

Analyses of hypotheses revealed no significant differences between experimental conditions. No hypothesis was supported. Even when controlling for moderators that significantly influenced any of the five dependent variables, no significant differences emerged as a function of experimental condition. In sum, the experimental stimuli were not found to influence the outcomes of the group of emerging adult participants. That is, as a whole, participants' sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions were not influenced through exposure to vicarious negative consequences of casual sex, regardless of the consequences' severity. Despite the fact that social cognitive theory conveys that strong, long-lasting, negative consequences of sexual intercourse with broad social impact should yield more potent effects than weaker, temporal consequences (Bandura, 1986), even the negative physical consequence condition had no impact on participants.

Why were emerging adult participants not influenced by the experimental stimuli? There are several possible reasons that could account for the lack of significant differences across conditions. The first three explanations have to do with participants' perceptions of the stimuli, as social cognitive theory and media effects research in the area of sexual television content suggest that viewer perceptions of television programs can influence the effects that they have upon them (Bandura, 1986; Taylor, 2005; Ward & Friedman, 2006). Specifically, the following paragraphs examine the role that participants' perceptions of the programs' realism, their similarity to the main characters,

and the severity of the portrayed consequences, may have played in influencing their responses.

First, on average, participants indicated that they did not find the programs to be highly unrealistic or realistic. They fell at the mid-point of a 5-point scale. It is likely that participants would have been influenced by the negative consequence portrayals if they had perceived the programs to be more realistic, as studies have found that adolescents and emerging adults are more influenced by sexual television content that they perceive to be realistic (Greenberg et al., 1993; Rivadeneyra & Ward, 2005; Taylor, 2005).

Second, participants reported that they were slightly dissimilar to the main characters of the negative consequence conditions, Martin and Sandy. And yet, social cognitive theory and research suggest that people are more influenced by models that are similar to themselves (Bandura, 1986; Ward & Friedman, 2006). Therefore, it is also likely that participants in this study would have been influenced by the negative consequence portrayals if they had been more similar to the characters shown experiencing them.

Third, it is also possible that participants found both the negative emotional/social and negative physical consequences portrayed in the conditions to be mild/tolerable, and equal in severity. This seems improbable, however, for two reasons. First, participants' reported that the expected duration of the experienced consequences differed significantly between conditions. They noted that the consequences experienced in the negative physical consequence condition would last for a significantly longer time than the consequences experienced in the negative emotional/social consequence condition.

Second, participants reported that physical consequences of casual sex were significantly more negative and severe than emotional/social consequences of casual sex. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that the consequence portrayals did not yield inhibitory effects on participants because they were simply too weak, and/or equivalent in perceived strength regardless of their type.

Next, research from a social cognitive perspective has established that portrayals of negative consequences to televised violent/aggressive behavior can inhibit viewers' own aggressive behaviors (Bandura et al., 1963; Lando & Donnerstein, 1978; Wotring & Greenberg, 1973). Therefore, as minimal research has been conducted on the influence of televised negative consequences of sexual behavior on television, it was predicted that the negative consequences to casual sex seen in this study would also lead to viewer effects. This, however, did not occur. It is possible that the hypotheses in this study were not supported because the nature of sexual intercourse may make it much more difficult to inhibit and/or influence vicariously than violent behavior. Comparing violent and sexual media content, Ward (2003) highlighted the fact that although violence is generally avoided, perceived to be negative, and infrequently encountered, sexuality is a natural part of life, healthy, and most often a positive experience for people.

As previously mentioned, social cognitive theory asserts that it is more challenging to vicariously inhibit rather than disinhibit behaviors, particularly when the behaviors are rewarding, personally functional, and generally approved of, like sexual behaviors often are for many people today (Bandura, 1986). Bandura explains that people go to great lengths to gain sexual gratification. He asserts that with the advent of contraception,

societal moral codes on appropriate sexual behavior have become obsolete to many. “With increasing liberalization of sexuality, for many persons, especially the unattached and those preferring informal cohabitation arrangements, sexual activities have become more a matter of convention than of morality,” Bandura states (p. 291). And indeed, research on the sexual attitudes and behaviors of emerging adults confirm his assertions. Once again, in society today many emerging adults approve of (Chara & Keunnen, 1994; Lefkowitz, 2005) and engage in risky sexual behaviors (i.e., casual sex, unprotected sex, sex with multiple partners) (Arnett, 2000; Bishop & Lipzitz, 1991; Hawa et al., 1998; National Center for Health Statistics, 2000; Wiederman, 1997). Thus, it is possible that social cognitive tenets on the influence of differing types of vicarious negative behavioral consequences on viewers were not confirmed in this study because sexual behavior, even risky sexual behaviors, are common and accepted among emerging adults, the target population of this study.

Finally, in addition to participants’ perceptions of the stimuli, differences in their personal characteristics could also help explain the lack of significant findings in analyses of the study’s hypotheses. It is possible that participants of different genders and varying amounts of sexual risk experience were differently influenced by the experimental stimuli. First, the literature on emerging adulthood highlights differences between male and female emerging adults’ sexual attitudes and behaviors (Knox et al., 2001; Maticka-Tyndale et al., 2003; Oliver & Hyde, 1993). Second, social cognitive theory suggests that emerging adults with varying amounts of sexual risk experience may be differently influenced by exposure to negative consequences of casual sex (Bandura, 1986). As

noted previously, the theory asserts that behaviors that are found rewarding and that people already have personal experience with are difficult to influence vicariously. If gender and/or sexual risk experience were significant moderating variables in this study, it is possible that the hypotheses were not supported because these variables were occluding or masking the relationship between exposure to the negative consequence portrayals and participant outcomes. This possibility is explored in research questions 1 and 2. Analyses of these variables are detailed below.

#### Research Question 1 - Gender

To date, no study has examined the influence of emerging adults' gender on the inhibitory effects of differing types of televised portrayals of negative consequences of casual sex. Therefore, it is not known whether male and female emerging adults would be influenced differently by the two types of negative consequences portrayed in the experimental stimuli. This study was designed to contribute to knowledge in this area by examining the impact of different types of negative consequences of casual sex (emotional/social vs. physical) on both male and female emerging adults' sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions. Research Question 1 asked, "How does gender influence the effects of exposure to differing types of portrayals of negative consequences of casual sex?"

Analyses of this question showed that, overall, gender did not influence the effects of exposure to the stimuli. Out of the five dependent variables measured, only one was found to differ significantly by gender between experimental conditions. Exposure to the stimulus in the negative emotional/social consequence condition influenced female

participants' behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex. Female participants' expressed significantly stronger behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex in the negative emotional/social consequence condition than in the control condition. It is important to note, however, that this difference was very small in magnitude (4.23 vs. 4.67 on a 6-point scale).

It is uncertain why the stimulus in the negative emotional/social consequence condition influenced only female's behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex and not their responses on the other outcome variables. It is possible that this finding occurred by chance. However, it is also possible that this difference was only found for females on this specific variable alone because female emerging adults are more likely than males to feel ashamed and regretful after engaging in casual sex (Conner & Flesch, 2001; Herold & Mewhinney, 1993; Paul & Hayes, 2002). Thus, they may have been more motivated to avoid this specific type of sexual behavior.

A study on negative consequences of sex experienced by adolescents has also found that, as compared to males, female adolescents are particularly at risk for experiencing negative emotional/social consequences of sex (Brady & Halpern-Felsher, 2007). Female adolescents were twice as likely to report feeling bad about themselves and/or used because they had engaged in sexual intercourse. Perhaps that is why the female participants in this study were: 1) motivated to report the strongest intentions to avoid casual sex upon exposure to the negative emotional/social consequence condition, and; 2) only influenced by the stimuli on this single dependent variable. It appears that for female participants, it is important to minimize the negative emotional/social

consequences of sexual intercourse. It is likely that male participants' behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex were not similarly influenced by the negative consequence portrayals because they are more inclined to both support and engage in casual sex than females (Herold et al., 1998; Knox et al., 2001; Yost & Zurbriggen, 2006).

Consistent with the research on emerging adults, which has found males to be more accepting of and apt to engage in casual sex than females, this study also found significant gender differences on each of the dependent variables when the data were summed across all conditions. First, males reported significantly less negative outcome expectancies for risky sex than females. Second, males were significantly more accepting of casual sex than were females. Third, females expressed more positive attitudes toward condoms than males. Fourth, females' behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex were much stronger than males' intentions. Fifth, and finally, males reported greater intentions to use condoms the next time they engaged in intercourse, than females. This is the only gender difference that was not expected. It is probable that this finding emerged because the females who consistently used another form of birth control may have felt it unnecessary to also use condoms. Additionally, research has found that emerging adult males report more consistent condom use than do females (Brown, DiClemente, & Park, 1992; Leigh, Morrison, Trocki, & Temple, 1994).

Overall, these gender differences confirm findings of past research on emerging adults' sexual choices. Studies have found that emerging adult males consistently report more positive attitudes toward casual sex (Knox et al., 2001; Oliver & Hyde, 1993; Wilson & Medora, 1990), greater willingness to engage in casual sex (Knox et al., 2001;

Simpson & Gangestad, 1991; Yost & Zurbriggen, 2006), and stronger intentions to engage in casual sex (Conner & Flesch, 2001; Herold et al., 1998; Maticka-Tyndale et al., 2003) than females. And yet, though main effects for gender emerged across all dependent variables, it appears that gender does not moderate the effects of exposure to portrayals of negative consequence of casual sex on emerging adults.

In light of the main effects of gender identified on each of the dependent variables, why did gender not have an influence on the effect that the stimuli had upon participants? It is uncertain why gender did not moderate the relationship between exposure to the negative consequence portrayals and participant outcomes, as many studies on the influence of sexual television messages on emerging adults have identified gender differences in effects (Aubrey et al., 2004; Farrar, 2002; Ward, 2002; Ward & Rivadeneyra, 1999). It is possible that gender differences did not emerge in this study for the same reason that the hypotheses were not confirmed. Perhaps participant perceptions of the stimuli rendered the negative consequence portrayals ineffective. It is also possible, however, that participants' sexual risk experience was moderating the relationship between exposure to the stimuli and their sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions. If participants' sexual risk experience did in fact influence effects, then it is likely that gender differences would not emerge unless this variable was also included as a factor in all analyses. Unfortunately, however, when separated into groups based on the amount of sexual risk experience they had, there were simply too few male and female participants in this study to provide enough statistical power to detect significant differences between conditions. Therefore, the following section explores the

role that participants' sexual risk experience plays, apart from gender, in influencing the effects that the negative consequence portrayals have upon them.

#### Research Question 2 – Sexual Risk Experience

In addition to gender, this study also examined the role that participants' sexual risk experience played in influencing their responses to the negative consequence portrayals. It was not known whether emerging adults with differing amounts of sexual risk experience would be influenced differently by the two types of negative consequences portrayed in the experimental stimuli in this study. To date, no media effects study has carefully examined the moderating role of participants' past sexual risk behavior. Studies on the effects of exposure to sexual media content have either sought to predict sexual behavior (namely the initiation of sexual intercourse and other advanced sexual behaviors among adolescents) (Collins et al., 2004; Martino et al., 2006; Pardun et al., 2005), to examine correlations between exposure and young people's sexual experience (Ward, 2002; Ward & Friedman, 2006; Ward & Rivadeneyra, 1999), and/or to make note of the role that past-experience plays in predicting sexual beliefs, attitudes, and/or behaviors, and then control for it statistically in data analyses (Aubrey et al., 2003; Taylor, 2005, Ward, 2002).

Therefore, this study hoped to contribute to knowledge in this area by examining the impact of different types of negative consequences of casual sex (emotional/social vs. physical) on the sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions of emerging adults of varying amounts of sexual risk experience. Social cognitive theory suggests that emerging adults with different amounts of sexual risk experience may respond differently

to the negative consequence stimuli. In measuring the effects of exposure to a behavior like sexual intercourse, that many young people find rewarding and personally functional, social cognitive theory highlights the importance that their behavioral experience plays in determining the effects that vicarious consequences will have upon them (Bandura, 1986). In light of social cognitive theory and the lack of research on the role of sexual experience in influencing the effects that exposure to sexual television content can have on young people, Research Question 2 was introduced. It asked, “How does participants’ sexual risk experience influence the effects of exposure to differing types of portrayals of negative consequences of casual sex?”

In order to answer this question, three different sexual experience variables were analyzed: 1) presence/absence of any sexual intercourse experience; 2) amount of casual sex experience; and 3) number of sexual partners. The findings from analyses of these three sexual experience variables are discussed separately below.

#### *Sexual Intercourse Experience*

First, differences between virgin and sexually active participant’s outcomes were examined. Overall, analyses showed that neither virgin nor sexually active participants were significantly influenced by the negative consequence stimuli. In these analyses, participants’ sexual intercourse experience was found to influence responses to the stimuli only in the case of their negative outcome expectancies. However, this finding is counterintuitive and appears to be spurious. With regards to negative outcome expectancies, sexually active participants reported roughly equivalent levels in all three conditions, indicating that they believed it likely that they would experience negative

consequences if they engaged in risky sexual intercourse. Similarly, virgin participants in the control and negative emotional/social consequence conditions reported that they believed it very likely that they would experience negative consequences upon engagement in risky sex (they scored 6.08 and 5.98, respectively, on a 7-point scale). However, in the negative physical consequence condition virgins expressed significantly less negative outcome expectancies and reported that it was only slightly likely that they would experience negative consequences after engaging in risky sex (4.54). Virgins' negative outcome expectancies in this condition were even lower than sexually active participants' scores across all three conditions (control 5.16, emotional/social 5.00, and physical 5.13). This finding was unexpected and is uninformative given that the variances were not equal in this analysis. That is, the homogeneity of variance assumption was violated. Social cognitive theory conveys that the more intense negative consequence portrayals should have led to stronger negative outcome expectancies for risky sex, especially among participants with no sexual intercourse experience (Bandura, 1986).

In light of social cognitive predictions, it is possible that significant differences would have emerged for each of the dependent variables after exposure to the negative consequence portrayals if a larger sample of virgins had been obtained. However, because there were so few virgin participants in each condition, the power to detect statistically significant differences between virgin participants across conditions was limited. There were only 39 virgin participants in the study. Thirteen of these participants were in the control condition, 19 were in the negative emotional/social

consequence condition, and only 7 were in the negative physical consequence condition. Additionally, despite the fact that there were a substantial amount of sexually active participants examined in these analyses, as a whole, these participants were also not found to be significantly influenced by exposure to the stimuli in the negative consequence conditions. Therefore, the additional analyses of Research Question 2 examined the role that their amount of sexual risk experience played in influencing reactions to the stimuli. Results of these analyses are discussed below. First, analyses of the role that sexually active participants' casual sex experience played in influencing their responses to the negative consequence portrayals are detailed. Next, analyses on the influence of participants' number of sexual partners are discussed.

#### *Casual Sex Experience*

This next group of analyses sought to find out if participants' casual sex experience influenced the effect that the stimuli had upon them. In the experimental stimuli, the main characters are shown experiencing negative consequences of their single act of casual sexual intercourse. As noted previously, social cognitive theory stipulates that it is difficult to establish and sustain inhibitions through vicarious negative consequences when they require giving up behaviors that are personally useful and enjoyable (Bandura, 1986). Thus, it was important to determine if participants with differing amounts of casual sex experience would be influenced differently by the stimuli. Therefore, in these analyses four groups of sexually active participants were compared across conditions: 1) those who had never engaged in casual sex; 2) those who had engaged in casual sex one

time; 3) those who had engaged in casual sex two to three times; and 4) those who had engaged in casual sex four or more times.

Overall, analyses did not find participants' casual sex experience to influence the effects that the negative consequence portrayals had upon them. Significant differences across the experimental conditions emerged on only one of the dependent variables: attitudes toward casual sex. However, the significant differences identified between conditions for participants' attitudes toward casual sex were counterintuitive and appear to be spurious. The impact of exposure to the negative consequence portrayals on participants' attitudes toward casual sex, at each level of casual sex experience, is summarized below.

First, the attitudes of participants who had never engaged in casual sex were roughly equivalent in all three conditions (control 4.13, emotional/social 4.00, and physical 4.06 on a 5-point scale). These participants were uninfluenced by the stimuli, despite the fact that social cognitive theory suggests people with no experience with a modeled behavior should actually be more influenced by vicarious negative consequences of the behavior than those who have experienced it (Bandura, 1986). Second, the attitudes of participants who had casual sex with only one person were significantly more in favor of casual sex in the negative physical consequence condition (3.09) than they were in the negative emotional/social consequence condition (3.81). And yet, neither group of participants in the negative consequence conditions differed significantly from the control condition (3.48). This finding is contrary to theoretical predictions, and it is uncertain why this pattern emerged for this group of participants. The fact that attitudes toward casual sex in

the negative consequence conditions do not differ from the control condition suggests that the negative consequence conditions did not have an influence on the attitudes of emerging adults who had engaged in casual sex one time.

Third, for participants who had casual sex two to three times, attitudes toward casual sex remained stable across conditions (control 3.02, emotional/social 2.98, physical 3.14). This is the first finding that appears to be consistent with social cognitive tenets. One would not expect participants who have engaged in intercourse two or more times with a person they had just met, to be influenced by the portrayals given that they already had substantial personal experience with the behavior portrayed in the stimuli. Fourth, and finally, participants who had engaged in casual sex four or more times were found to be significantly more accepting of casual sex in the negative emotional/social consequence condition (1.92) than they were in both the control (2.76) and negative physical consequence conditions (2.69). This implies that a disinhibitory rather than an inhibitory effect occurred. It is highly probable that this finding emerged by chance and is spurious. This would seem to be the most likely conclusion, as it is inconsistent with social cognitive tenets and there were only seven subjects in the negative emotional/social consequence condition with this level of sexual experience.

In sum, though the negative consequence portrayals were found to significantly affect participants' attitudes toward casual sex at different levels of casual sex experience, the findings appear to be random or spurious. As noted above, significant differences across conditions on participants' attitudes toward casual sex were found only for participants who had engaged in casual sex one time and for those who had engaged in casual sex

four or more times. However, these findings were counterintuitive and uninformative. Namely, they were unexpected, inconsistent with theoretical predictions, and most likely spurious. Overall, it must be concluded that participants' casual sex experience did not influence the effect that the negative consequence portrayals had upon them.

#### *Number of Sexual Partners*

As noted previously, a young person's lifetime number of sexual partners is commonly used as an index of their sexual risk experience (DiIorio et al., 1998; Hawa et al., 1998; Huebner & Howell, 2003; Kosunen et al., 2003; Spitalnick et al., 2007). Therefore, the final group of sexual risk experience analyses examined how participants' number of sexual partners influenced the effect that the negative consequence portrayals had upon them. The analyses examined differences across conditions, on each dependent variable, between participants who had one partner, two partners, three partners, and four or more partners. The findings from these analyses showed that participants' number of sexual partners influenced their responses by experimental condition, with regards to their attitudes toward condoms, their behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex, and their behavioral intentions to use condoms. It is important to note that participant outcomes within the different experimental conditions varied by negative consequence condition, dependent variable, and number of sexual partners. Treatment effects were noted for participants' attitudes toward condoms and behavioral intentions to use condoms in the negative physical consequence condition, whereas the negative emotional/social consequence condition led to inhibitory effects on participants' behavioral intentions to

avoid casual sex. These findings, however, were not significant for all groups examined. They were dependent upon the number of previous sexual partners participants had.

All findings are discussed in detail in the following paragraphs. First, the effects of exposure to the negative physical consequence portrayals are examined. Second, the effects of exposure to the negative emotional/social consequence portrayals are explored. Third, a summary of all significant findings is provided. Fourth, and finally, reasons for non-significant differences across conditions on participants' negative outcome expectancies of risky sex and attitudes toward casual sex are presented.

#### *Effects of Exposure to Portrayals of Negative Physical Consequences*

Exposure to the portrayals of negative physical consequences of casual sex influenced some of the participants' attitudes toward condoms and behavioral intentions to use condoms. First, effects on participants' attitudes toward condoms were found. However, this finding emerged only for participants who had one through three sexual partners. Upon viewing the television characters experience an unplanned/unwanted pregnancy as a result of their casual sex, participants who had one to three sexual partners expressed significantly more positive attitudes toward condoms than they did in the control condition (4.07 vs. 3.68 on a 5-point scale). Specifically, they endorsed the attitude that condoms were relatively easy and pleasant to use when having sexual intercourse. Consistent with social cognitive stipulations, the attitudes toward condoms of participants who had four or more sexual partners (64% of the sexually active participants in the sample) were not influenced by the experimental stimuli.

There are two reasons why this finding may have occurred. First, as mentioned in chapter one, social cognitive theory explains that it is difficult to influence rewarding behaviors vicariously through negative consequence portrayals (Bandura, 1986). Thus, it should be difficult to influence a person's sexual choices. In order to vicariously influence a rewarding behavior that one has had personal experience with, like sexual risk experience in the case of this study, the theory explains that it needs to be met with a type of negative consequence that is severe and long-lasting, with broad social impact. Thus, it was predicted that the negative physical consequence condition would have the strongest effect on emerging adult participants. This was confirmed in this analysis. Only the negative physical consequence condition significantly influenced participants' (with one to three sexual partners) attitudes toward condoms, such that they became more positive.

It is also possible that the findings were influenced by the dependent variable being measured, attitudes toward condoms. Perhaps only the negative physical consequence condition led to more positive attitudes because use of condoms would not have prevented the negative emotional/social consequences of casual sex that were portrayed in the negative emotional/social consequence condition (i.e., guilt, regret, embarrassment, disapproval of family and friends). Thus, participants' attitudes toward condoms were not influenced by exposure to the stimulus in the negative emotional/social consequence condition. As condom use could have prevented the pregnancy seen in the negative physical consequence condition, it is possible that participants' then expressed significantly more positive attitudes toward condoms in this condition than they did in the

control condition. Social cognitive theory explains that the effectiveness of controlling behavior through vicarious negative consequence not only depends on the benefits gained from the behavior, but also upon the availability of alternative ways to get the most desired outcome (Bandura, 1986). Therefore, in the case of this analysis, participants may have expressed more positive attitudes toward condoms, as condoms would allow for the behavior to still be engaged in and at the same time they prevent the negative physical consequence portrayed, the unplanned/unwanted pregnancy.

The second effect of exposure to negative physical consequences of casual sex was found for the behavioral intentions to use condoms of participants who had one previous sexual partner. Upon watching the negative physical consequence condition, participants who had one previous sexual partner reported significantly stronger intentions to use condoms after exposure to the negative physical consequence portrayals than they did in the negative emotional/social consequence and control conditions. The behavioral intentions to use condoms of participants who had more than one sexual partner were not found to differ significantly across conditions. Participants who had engaged in intercourse with only one partner reported very slight agreement that they would use condoms the next time they engaged in sexual intercourse upon watching the stimuli in the control and negative emotional/social consequence conditions (they scored 4.59 and 4.89, respectively, on a 7-point scale). Participants in the negative physical consequence condition differed significantly from these two conditions; their scores were an entire point higher (5.75). This score indicated that they agreed/strongly agreed that they would use a condom the next time they engaged in sexual intercourse. Participants' intentions

to use condoms were significantly and substantially stronger upon viewing the characters experience a negative physical consequence of casual sex, an unplanned/unwanted pregnancy, than they were in the other two experimental conditions. Though it is uncertain if these participants' behavioral intentions to use condoms led, or will lead, to actual condom use, as the data were collected at a single point in time, it is probable. Research has found that intentions to use condoms are strongly positively correlated with (Sheeran & Orbell, 1998), and significant predictors of, actual condom use (Terry et al., 1993; Thompson, Kyle, Swan, Thomas, & Vrungos, 2002; Visser & Smith, 2004).

The findings from this analysis, however, show that participants' behavioral intentions to use condoms were difficult to enhance. Results showed that participants' intentions to use condoms were more difficult to influence than were their attitudes toward condoms and behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex. Only participants at low risk for negative consequences of intercourse (i.e., those who had one previous sexual partner) were influenced by the portrayal of negative consequences. It is uncertain why the behavioral intentions to avoid condoms of participants who had two or three sexual partners were not similarly influenced by the negative physical consequence condition as were their attitudes toward condoms. Why didn't their behavioral intentions to use condoms also become stronger upon viewing the characters experience an unplanned/unwanted pregnancy? Though one might think that one of the reasons these participants' intentions to use condoms were not influenced by the negative physical consequence condition was because they frequently used another form of contraception, this was not the case. Actually, participants who had the least amount of sexual partners

reported using birth control more frequently. Slightly more than 60% of participants who had one to two sexual partners reported that they had always used birth control when having sexual intercourse, whereas 47% of participants who had three or more sexual partners reported that they had used birth control consistently. And still, participants who had one sexual partner were strongly influenced by exposure to the stimulus in the negative physical consequence condition, even though the other participants appeared to be at greater risk for experiencing a possible unplanned pregnancy.

Additionally, as mentioned above, participants who had two or three sexual partners reported stronger attitudes toward condoms upon viewing the negative physical consequence condition than they did in the control condition. It is curious, then, that they did not consistently report stronger intentions to use condoms upon watching this condition. Again, it appears that it is more difficult to influence participants' intentions to use condoms, than it is to influence their attitudes toward condoms. Research suggests that this may be the case. Studies have shown that participants' sexual risk experience (i.e., number of partners, past condom use, and/or casual sex experience) can negatively influence their behavioral intentions to behave in a sexually responsible manner (Abraham et al., 1992; Conner & Flesch, 2001; Hardeman et al., 1997; Middlestadt & Fishbein, 1990). One study found that sexual attitudes only exerted influence on the intentions to use condoms of female college students who had little sexual experience (Middlestadt & Fishbein, 1990). Another study found that college students who have previously engaged in high-risk sexual behaviors (e.g., casual sex, sex with many partners) were more likely to intend to do so in the future (Conner & Flesch, 2001).

Perhaps this is why only the intentions of participants who had a single sexual partner, and not the intentions of participants who had two to three sexual partners, were significantly influenced by the negative physical consequence condition. It appears that less sexual risk experience leads to more media influence.

*Effects of Exposure to Portrayals of Negative Emotional/Social Consequences*

Exposure to the portrayals of negative emotional/social consequences of casual sex influenced only participants' behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex. Behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex for participants who had one to three partners were inhibited upon viewing the stimulus in this condition. Consistent with theoretical tenets, the behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex of participants who had four or more sexual partners were not influenced by the experimental stimuli. This finding is not surprising given that 81% of participants who had four or more lifetime sexual partners had also engaged in casual sex, the behavior portrayed in the negative consequence conditions, before the study. It is probable that their extensive personal experience with risky sexual intercourse served to insulate them from the effects of the stimuli.

For participants who had a total of one to three sexual partners, however, their behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex became significantly stronger from the control to the negative emotional/social consequence condition (4.18 vs. 4.76 on a 6-point scale). Watching the characters experience negative emotional/social consequences of their act of casual sex appears to have had an inhibitory effect on the participants' behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex. It is uncertain why this finding occurred for this condition but not for the negative physical consequence condition. Social cognitive theory conveys

that types of vicarious consequences that are severe and long-lasting with broad social impact should have the strongest inhibitory effect on observers (Bandura, 1986). In this study, participants indicated that negative emotional/social consequences of casual sex are less severe/negative than negative physical consequences. And yet, participants' behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex were influenced only upon viewing the stimulus in the negative emotional/social consequence condition. Why were participants' behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex influenced by the negative emotional/social consequence condition but not the negative physical consequence condition?

One possibility is that upon watching the negative physical consequence condition, participants may have realized that the pregnancy could have been prevented through the use of condoms and/or birth control. It would make sense, then, that their behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex did not significantly strengthen in that condition. In the negative emotional/social consequence condition, however, the negative emotional/social consequences seen (i.e., guilt, embarrassment, regret, disapproval of family and friends) could only have been prevented if the couple portrayed had never engaged in casual sex with each other. Thus, this may be the reason that upon watching this condition, participants expressed stronger intentions to avoid casual sex with people they had just met, along with stronger intentions to avoid sexual intercourse in casual dating relationships (i.e., relationships that had lasted less than one month). Though this rationale does not follow the original social cognitive predictions presented above, it is not completely unexpected from a social cognitive perspective.

Social cognitive theory stipulates that how vicarious negative consequences influence a person's future behavior, even if they are powerful and sufficiently inhibiting, depends on the availability of alternatives and the rewards associated with them (Bandura, 1986). Upon viewing the negative emotional/social consequence condition, it is likely that participants felt that apart from abstaining from casual sex, there were no alternative ways to prevent the negative consequences that the characters experienced as a result of their casual sex (i.e., guilt, regret, embarrassment and the disapproval of family and friends). That is, use of contraception would not have prevented the characters from experiencing the negative emotional/social consequences of their casual sex. Thus, their intentions to avoid casual sex were significantly stronger after viewing these consequences than they were in the control condition. However, upon watching the characters experience an unwanted/unplanned pregnancy, it is possible that participants' intentions were not inhibited because an alternative way to prevent the consequence existed. That is, contraception/protection could have been used to prevent the pregnancy and the characters could have still engaged in their act of casual sex.

#### *Summary of Findings*

In sum, participants' lifetime number of sexual partners influenced the effects that the stimuli had upon their attitudes toward condoms, their behavioral intentions to use condoms, and their behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex. Only one consistent finding emerged across these dependent variables, however. Participants who reported that they had a total of four or more sexual partners were not influenced by the stimuli. Participants with four or more sexual partners responded similarly in each of the three

experimental conditions. It appears that this particular group of participants simply had too much personal experience with risky sexual intercourse for their attitudes and behavioral intentions to be influenced through watching the different types of negative consequences of casual sex. The large majority of participants (81%) who had four or more sexual partners had also personally experienced the particular risk behavior portrayed in the negative consequence stimuli, casual sex with someone they had just met.

The theory implies that it should be easier to vicariously influence the attitudes and behaviors of those who have not had as much experience with the modeled behavior; which is risky sexual intercourse, in the case of this study. This was confirmed in these analyses. First, exposure to the negative physical consequences of casual sex influenced the attitudes toward condoms of participants who had one to three sexual partners, and the behavioral intentions to use condoms of participants who had a single sexual partner. Second, exposure to the negative emotional/social consequence condition inhibited the behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex of participants who had one to three sexual partners.

The findings from these analyses show that an emerging adult's number of sexual partners, as a measure of their sexual risk experience, is an important moderator of the inhibitory effects that exposure to negative consequence portrayals has upon them. In this study, the findings of the analyses of participants' number of sexual partners appear to confirm past research on emerging adults' risky sexual behaviors. Just as this study found that participants with four or more partners were uninfluenced by the stimuli,

research has confirmed that young people's unsafe sex practices are resistant to change (Abraham et al., 1992; Hardeman et al., 1997, Sutton, 1994). Specifically, studies have found that the more sexual risk experience young people have, the more likely they are to intend to engage in casual sex and avoid use of condoms (Abraham et al., 1992; Hardeman et al., 1997; Sutton, 1994). These findings have led some to assert that past sexual risk behavior should be treated as an independent predictor, or antecedent, of an emerging adult's sexual attitudes and behavioral intentions (Albarracin, Fishbein, & Middlestadt, 1998; Fredricks & Dossett, 1983; Sutton, 1994). And yet, as mentioned previously, this study is the first to examine the influence of past sexual risk behavior on the effects of sexual television content.

Therefore, this study makes a significant contribution to the research on the effects that exposure to sexual television content has on young people. The findings of the analyses of participants' number of sexual partners, noted above, clearly show that sexual risk behavior is an important moderator of the relationship between sexual media exposure and effect outcomes. They imply that the less sexual partners an emerging adult has had, the more likely he/she is to be influenced by television portrayals of negative consequences of casual sex. They also suggest that it may be difficult at best and impossible at worst to inhibit the unsafe sex attitudes and behavioral intentions of emerging adults who have had four or more sexual partners. Implications of these findings will be discussed further below.

### *Non-Significant Differences*

It is uncertain why participants' number of sexual partners did not influence their negative outcome expectancies for risky sex and their attitudes toward casual sex. Both of the measures of these variables were reliable, with strong internal consistency. In addition, findings from past media effects studies on the influence of sexual television content on emerging adults suggest that these variables can be influenced by portrayals of consequences of sex.

First, though no study has examined the influence of televised negative sexual consequences on young viewers negative outcome expectancies of risky intercourse, recent research suggests that positive consequences of sexual intercourse on television can lead young viewers to express less negative outcome expectancies of intercourse (Martino et al., 2005). Therefore, based on social cognitive theory and the modest existing research in the area, this study predicted that the negative consequence portrayals would lead to greater negative outcome expectancies of risky sex among emerging adult participants. In light of the significant findings discussed above, one might expect that the negative outcome expectancies of participants without substantial sexual risk experience would have been influenced by the negative consequence portrayals. And yet, analyses of this dependent variable showed little variation in participants' scores across conditions regardless of the number of sexual partners they had. Though there was a small main effect for number of partners, with negative outcome expectancies weakening as participants' number of partners increased, on average, participants at all partner levels indicated that they believed they would, in fact, experience negative consequences if they

were to engage in risky sexual behaviors (i.e., sex without protection against pregnancy and STIs, sex with multiple partners, and casual sex). Participants' scores ranged from 4.40 to 5.89 on a 7-point scale with endpoints of *not at all likely* and *extremely likely*. It is uncertain why the negative consequence portrayals did not influence the responses of participants with little to moderate amounts of sexual risk experience.

Next, in the case of participants' attitudes toward casual sex, previous research has found that emerging adults' sexual attitudes can be influenced through exposure to sexual television content (Eyal, 2005; Taylor, 2005; Ward, 2002). For example, Taylor found that exposure to permissive sexual television content influenced emerging adults' attitudes toward casual sex, in that they became more permissive and accepting of the behavior upon viewing. Conversely, Eyal found that emerging adults' attitudes toward premarital sex actually became more negative upon exposure to negative emotional/social consequences of intercourse. It is surprising, therefore, that the attitudes toward casual sex of participants with three or less sexual partners were not influenced by the negative consequence portrayals in this study. One would expect that their attitudes toward casual sex would have at least been influenced by the negative emotional/social consequence condition, in light of the fact that their behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex were strengthened upon viewing this condition. It is uncertain why this did not occur. Regardless of the number of partners they had, participants' attitudes toward casual sex remained stable across conditions. Only a significant main effect for number of partners emerged. Participants who had one previous partner reported the most negative attitudes toward casual sex, indicating that they disapproved of it (4.13 on a 5-point scale).

Whereas, participants who had four or more partners reported the most positive attitudes toward casual sex and indicated that they neither approved nor disapproved of the behavior (3.23).

It can be concluded, then, that additional research should be conducted on the influence of emerging adults' number of sexual partners on the effect that exposure to negative consequence portrayals can have upon their negative outcome expectancies of risky sex and attitudes toward casual sex.

#### *Implications & Summary of Findings from Research Question 2*

It was uncertain if participants' sexual risk experience would influence their responses to the negative consequence stimuli, as this variable had never been explicitly examined in studies on the effects of exposure to sexual television content. The findings from Research Question 2 clearly imply that emerging adults' number of sexual partners, as an index of their sexual risk experience, can in fact influence these effects. In this study, number of sexual partners was a significant moderator of the relationship between exposure to television portrayals of negative consequences of sexual intercourse and participant outcomes. Participants who had four or more sexual partners were not influenced by the stimuli. In contrast, some inhibitory effects and differences between conditions were found for those who had one to three partners.

These results appear to be consistent with social cognitive tenets. The theory implies that the effects that vicarious consequences can have on people are dependent upon their personal experience with and knowledge of the portrayed behavior (Bandura, 1986). Specifically, the theory explains that dependent upon the viewer, the information that

vicarious consequences convey may be perceived as novel, contradictory, partially correlated with that of other sources, or redundant. Thus, it is not surprising that participants in this study with four or more sexual partners were not influenced by the negative consequence conditions. It is likely that they viewed the information conveyed by the consequence portrayals as contradictory to their own personal experiences. Therefore, the negative consequence conditions had no effect on over half of the sample in this study; 171 of the 310 participants had a total of four or more sexual partners in their lifetime.

These results give insight into the lack of significant findings in the analyses of the study's hypotheses. They suggest that no hypothesis was supported because sexual risk experience was occluding or masking the relationship between exposure to the negative consequence portrayals and participant outcomes. It would now be beneficial to conduct this study with younger and less sexually experienced individuals. The findings from this research question, along with social cognitive tenets, imply that younger audiences and/or audiences who have had less sexual risk experience should be influenced by negative consequences of sex on television. The fact that over half of the emerging adults in this sample already had intercourse with four or more partners at such a young age (the average age of participants was 20.6 years) highlights the importance of continual research in the area, as they were uninfluenced by the stimuli.

The results of Research Question 2 also revealed that televised portrayals of both negative emotional/social and negative physical consequences of casual sex can influence emerging adults with little to moderate amounts of sexual risk experience (i.e., one to

three sexual partners). This is the first study to uniquely examine the effects of television portrayals of both negative emotional/social and negative physical consequences of sexual intercourse. To date, only one study has examined the impact of exposure to television portrayals of negative consequences of sexual intercourse on emerging adults (Eyal, 2005). Explicitly looking at the effect of negative emotional/social consequences, Eyal found that emerging adults expressed significantly less positive attitudes toward premarital sex after viewing this particular type of consequences of sexual intercourse. The findings from the current study confirm that exposure to negative emotional/social consequences of intercourse can have an inhibitory effect on emerging adult viewers. In addition, they uniquely add to the previous study through illustrating that negative physical consequences of intercourse can influence emerging adult viewers. Once again, this is the first study to examine the influence of exposure to, and confirm effects of, a negative physical consequence of sexual intercourse.

Additionally, the findings of this study show that the different types of negative consequences of casual sex can lead to different effects on emerging adults with little to moderate amounts of sexual risk experience. This is a very important finding of this study. Results show that exposure to portrayals of a negative physical consequence of casual sex influenced these participants' safe sex attitudes and intentions, whereas exposure to portrayals of negative emotional/social consequences influenced their intentions to actually abstain from casual and permissive sexual intercourse. Specifically, exposure to the negative physical consequence condition led participants to express significantly more positive attitudes toward condoms and stronger behavioral intentions

to use condoms than they did in the control condition. Exposure to the negative emotional/social consequence condition led participants to express significantly stronger behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex than their counterparts in the control condition. All findings noted here emerged among participants who had one to three sexual partners, except for the effect on behavioral intentions to use condoms; only the intentions of those who had one previous sexual partner were influenced by the negative physical consequence portrayals.

These findings suggest that television can be used to promote responsible sexual attitudes and behaviors among young people who do not yet have extensive sexual risk experience. Perhaps educators, parents, religious institutions, public health agencies, and other individuals/groups seeking to teach young people to take precautions to protect themselves from the negative physical consequences of sexual intercourse and/or to completely abstain from permissive sexual intercourse, can employ entertainment television programs with portrayals of negative sexual consequences in their curriculum to meet their objectives. With the findings of this study illustrating that negative emotional/social and negative physical consequences have distinct effects on emerging adults (i.e., emerging adults who do not already have extensive sexual risk experience), these different institutions could potentially choose to exclusively show young people the type of portrayals of negative consequences that would bring about their specific sexual education goal (i.e., safe sex or abstinence). As mentioned above, in this study, portrayals of negative physical consequences of casual sex enhanced some participants' attitudes toward and behavioral intentions to use condoms, whereas portrayals of negative

emotional/social consequences inhibited their behavioral intentions to avoid/abstain from casual and permissive sexual intercourse.

These findings also have important implications for entertainment television writers and producers. As previously noted, television infrequently shows negative consequences of sexual intercourse (Eyal & Finnerty, 2006; Kunkel et al., 1999; Will et al., 2005). When present, negative sexual consequences on television are largely emotional/social (e.g., guilt or remorse, rejection, peer/partner relationship problems) and very rarely physical (e.g., unplanned/unwanted pregnancy, STI contraction) (Cope-Farrar & Kunkel, 2002; Eyal & Finnerty, 2006; Gunasekera et al., 2005; Will et al., 2005). The findings of this study (i.e., that both types of negative consequence portrayals led to more responsible sexual outcomes among emerging adult participants with little to moderate amounts of sexual risk experience) suggest that it would be beneficial to young viewers' sexual health if the entertainment television industry integrated similar portrayals into programs that young people watch. As this study shows that many emerging adults already have a lot of sexual risk experience, and are therefore unlikely to be influenced by such portrayals, negative consequence portrayals would probably be most effective if included in programs watched by adolescents and younger emerging adults (i.e., 18 to 19 year-olds).

Next, the fact that participants who have less sexual risk experiences can be positively influenced by the negative consequence portrayals, such that they espouse more positive attitudes toward safer sex and stronger intentions to engage in safer sex/abstain from casual sex, is a very important finding produced by this research. Though many studies

have suggested that adolescents and emerging adults can be influenced by sexual television content, in that exposure leads them to report more sexually permissive outcomes (Aubrey et al., 2003; Bryant & Rockwell, 1994; Taylor, 2005; Ward, 2002; Ward & Rivadeneyra, 1999), research has only begun to indicate that safer sex messages on television can yield safer sex outcomes for adolescents and emerging adults (Collins et al., 2003; Farrar, 2002). To date, only two studies have examined the impact of messages about condoms in entertainment television programming on young people. One found that they can lead emerging adult women to express more positive attitudes toward condoms (Farrar, 2002), and the other found that they can lead adolescents to gain more knowledge about condoms (Collins et al., 2003).

This study complements this research, through uniquely showing that different types of portrayals of negative consequences of casual sex can also lead to safer sex/more sexually responsible outcomes among young people without extensive amounts of sexual risk experience (i.e., those who have had less than four sexual partners). The findings of this study illustrate that emerging adults can also be positively influenced by portrayals of negative consequences of sexual risk behavior on television, apart from television messages about sexual precautions. Though the data from this study do not allow one to determine how long these effects are likely to endure, as the outcomes were measured at a single point in time, it is encouraging to know that emerging adults' attitudes and behavioral intentions regarding safe sex can be bolstered by even a single television viewing of a program containing negative consequences of casual sex.

Finally, this study is the first to find that it is possible to positively influence the behavioral intentions of emerging adults (i.e., their behavioral intentions to use condoms and to avoid casual sex). From a sexual health perspective, this is an extremely important finding. It is possible that these behavioral intentions will translate into more responsible sexual choices and behaviors in emerging adult's lives. As previously mentioned, safe sex intentions have been found to predict safer sexual behaviors (Sheeran & Orbell, 1998; Terry et al., 1993; Thompson et al., 2002; Visser & Smith, 2004). Specifically, research has found that intentions to avoid casual sex predict whether emerging adults actually choose to avoid casual sex (Terry et al., 1993), and intentions to use condoms predict their condom use (Sheeran & Orbell, 1998; Thompson et al., 2002; Visser & Smith, 2004). Therefore, as emerging adults are known to commonly engage sexual behaviors that put them at risk for experiencing negative physical consequences of casual sex (DiIorio et al., 1998, Lambert et al., 2003; Paul & Hayes, 2002; Wiederman, 1997), it is very important to further explore the effect that exposure to negative consequences of risky sex on television can have on their sexual behaviors and intentions.

#### Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Though this study makes several important contributions to knowledge about the effects of portrayals of negative consequences of sex on television, there are some limitations associated with this study that should be noted. These limitations inform suggestions for future research.

First, this study only examined the effect of one type of negative physical consequences of casual sex on emerging adults, an unplanned/unwanted pregnancy.

However, STI contractions also represent another distinct category of negative physical consequences of intercourse. It is uncertain if emerging adults would be similarly influenced by portrayals of STI contractions on television. It is impossible to generalize the findings of this study to all negative physical consequence portrayals, until the influence of STI portrayals is also measured. With almost half of the estimated 19 million annual STI contractions occurring to young people under the age of 24 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2004), it would be very beneficial from a sexual health perspective to determine if consequences of STI portrayals can also lead to safer sex outcomes among emerging adults. Therefore, it is important that future research examines the effect of this particular negative physical consequence on the sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behavior intentions/actual behaviors of emerging adults.

Another important limitation of this research is that actual behavior of the participants was not assessed. This particular study was conducted at a single point in time. Consequently, it was impossible to determine how long the effects of the experiment would last. That is, though the stimuli were found to influence some of the participants' attitudes toward condoms, behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex, and behavioral intentions to use condoms, it is uncertain if these safer-sex outcomes were actually applied to the participants' sexual behavior. To understand the influence that exposure to negative consequence portrayals can have on emerging adults' actual sexual behaviors, future research would need to examine the over time impact that these portrayals have upon them. For example, a study might follow up with participants two to three weeks

after exposure to the negative consequence portrayals and measure the sexual behaviors they had engaged in since participating in the experiment.

A third limitation of the study is that only one type of sexual intercourse was discussed in the negative consequence stimuli. The negative consequence conditions in this study featured a very specific type of sexual intercourse, casual sex. This study chose to feature portrayals of the consequences of this specific type of behavior because it is known to put those involved at risk for negative consequences (Hoff et al., 2003; Paul & Hayes, 2002; SIECUS, 2003). Many emerging adults, the target population of this study, have been found to engage in it often (Lambert et al., 2003; Paul & Hayes, 2002; Paul et al., 2000). However, as noted from the results of this study, casual sex is a behavior that all sexually active young people do not endorse. Thus, it is possible that the findings of this study emerged only because of the nature of this particular type of sexual relationship. The question now is if effects would still have occurred if these consequences were shown occurring to a couple in a committed, premarital sexual relationship? It is doubtful that sexually active participants, who had between one to three sexual partners, would have responded similarly if the portrayals featured couples who had actually known each other prior to engaging in intercourse.

It is likely that it would be much easier to try to motivate young people to abstain from risky sexual intercourse than to motivate them to completely abstain from any premarital sexual relationships, for example. Social cognitive theory suggests this to be true. Once again, the theory explains that it is difficult to vicariously inhibit behaviors that people already have experience with and that they find personally functional and

rewarding (Bandura, 1986). As 87% of the participants in this study's sample were already sexually active, the theory implies that it would be very difficult to inhibit them from engagement in sexual intercourse in general. Thus, it is very important that future research consider the influence that the relationship of couples shown experiencing negative consequences of sex on television exerts on viewer outcomes.

A fourth limitation of the study concerns participants' similarity to the main characters of the negative consequence conditions. Participants reported that they were slightly dissimilar to the main characters, Martin and Sandy. And yet, social cognitive theory and research suggest that people are more influenced by models that are similar to themselves (Bandura, 1986; Ward & Friedman, 2006). Therefore, participants also may have been more affected by the negative consequence portrayals if they had been more similar to the characters shown experiencing them. However, it is likely that participants believed themselves to be dissimilar to Martin and Sandy because the two had engaged in the risky sexual behavior of casual, unprotected sexual intercourse. On average, participants in this study indicated that they slightly to moderately disapproved of casual sex. Thus, dissimilarity to the characters may have had more to do with participants' attitudes toward the behavior portrayed than the characters themselves. It is possible that when negative consequences of casual sex are shown on television, participants may consistently report dissimilarity to any model experiencing them, regardless of who they are. In fact, given the nature of the consequences and the behavior shown, it is actually somewhat surprising that participants only reported being slightly dissimilar to the characters. This may be due to the fact that, apart from their irresponsible behavior, the

main characters in the stimuli were portrayed as physically attractive, generally well-liked emerging adults.

Next, though the manipulation of the type of negative consequences portrayed in the stimuli was considered to be a strength of this study, it is possible that one might argue the artificial creation of the negative consequence stimuli could have limited the findings. To ensure that the in-depth editing of the two negative consequence conditions did not lead participants to perceive them to be radically different from the intact 7<sup>th</sup> *Heaven* episode shown in the control condition, participants were asked to indicate how much they enjoyed the programs, and how realistic they found the programs to be. First, participants were asked to indicate how much they enjoyed watching the program, as it was important to make sure that the editing did not lead them to favor one condition over the other. Results showed that participants' enjoyment of the different stimuli did not differ significantly between the three experimental conditions. On a 7-point scale they scored 3.15 in the control, 3.11 in the negative emotional/social consequence condition, and 3.41 in the negative physical consequence condition. This indicates that participants did not favor one type of program over the other (i.e., the intact episode shown in the control condition vs. the edited programs shown in the negative consequence conditions). Overall participants indicated that they slightly disliked the programs that they watched.

Another measure asked about the perceived realism of the program participants viewed. Though one might argue that participants would have perceived the control condition to be more realistic than the negative consequence conditions, as it was an intact, unedited 7<sup>th</sup> *Heaven* episode, this was not the case. Actually, participants found

the negative physical consequence condition to be the most realistic of the three. They found the negative physical consequence condition to be slightly realistic (3.39 on a 5-point scale), and both the control and negative emotional/social consequence conditions to be neither realistic nor unrealistic (2.99 and 2.96, respectively). This suggests that the editing was successful, and that the programs did in fact resemble a normal 7<sup>th</sup> *Heaven* episode. The results from the latter two measures indicate that the manipulation of the negative consequences between the two experimental treatment conditions did not limit the findings of this study.

Finally, the experiment in this study was conducted in a controlled laboratory setting. In the experiment, participants viewed the television stimulus in groups, while sitting around a large table in silence and in the presence of the researcher. In addition, participants were randomly assigned to conditions, and therefore, they often did not have any acquaintances or friends in their viewing groups. This viewing situation differs from the typical circumstances under which emerging adults are likely to watch television. Studies have found that most young people multi-task and use many different forms of media at one time (Comstock & Sharper, 1999; Roberts, Foehr, & Rideout, 2005). Thus, emerging adult college students are likely to have the television on in the background while they are using the internet, talking to friends, and doing their homework. Because the viewing situation in the lab was very different from their typical television viewing behavior, it is possible that participants' responses could have been influenced. Participants may have responded differently to the programs they watched or the questions asked in the survey because they knew they were involved in an experiment.

To determine if this occurred, future research should look at participant responses to television programs shown in a setting that allows for more natural viewing.

### Final Summary and Conclusions

Many emerging adults engage in sexual behaviors that put them at risk for experiencing negative physical consequences of sexual intercourse, like unplanned/unwanted pregnancy and STI contraction (DiIorio et al., 1998, Lambert et al., 2003; Paul & Hayes, 2002; Wiederman, 1997). From a sexual health perspective, it is important to understand the different factors that influence this behavior, in order to discover ways to promote safer, more responsible sexual choices within this developmental period. Though many factors can contribute to a young person's sexual socialization (e.g., education, family, religion, peers), this study only focused on the influence of television. The role that television can play in leading to safer sex outcomes among emerging adults was explored in this research.

Specifically, this dissertation sought to discover if televised portrayals of negative consequences of casual sex can lead emerging adults to espouse more conservative/sexually responsible beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions with regards to risky sexual intercourse. In light of social cognitive tenets, it examined the influence of exposure to different types of negative consequences of casual sex (i.e., negative emotional/social or physical consequences) on emerging adult's negative outcome expectancies for risky sex, attitudes toward casual sex, attitudes toward condoms, behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex, and behavioral intentions to use condoms.

The results of this study suggest that emerging adults' sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions are not uniformly influenced by television portrayals of negative consequences of casual sex. As a whole, emerging adult participants were not significantly influenced by the stimuli. Rather, the effect that exposure to negative consequence stimuli had upon participants was influenced by their sexual risk experience (i.e., the number of previous sexual partners they had). The findings suggest that the sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions of emerging adults with extensive amounts of sexual risk experience (i.e., four or more sexual partners) are difficult to influence through exposure to televised negative consequences of casual sex. Participants with little to moderate amounts of sexual risk experience (i.e., one to three sexual partners) are more readily influenced by these types of portrayals.

In this study, participants who had a lot of sexual risk experience were not influenced by the experimental stimuli. However, emerging adults with little to moderate amounts of risky sexual intercourse experience were influenced by exposure to portrayals of negative consequences of casual sex. First, the negative physical consequence portrayals were found to enhance these participants' attitudes toward condoms and behavioral intentions to use condoms; only the intentions of those who had very little sexual risk experience were influenced on the latter variable. Second, the negative emotional/social consequence portrayals had an inhibitory effect on their behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex.

These findings are encouraging because they show that sexual content on television can lead some emerging adults to: 1) espouse more positive attitudes toward condom

use/sexually responsible behavior, and 2) express stronger intentions to avoid risky sexual behaviors. More pointedly, they imply that not all sexual television messages lead to more permissive and unsafe sexual choices among emerging adults. Rather, they show that sexual content on television does have the potential to positively influence young people's sexual choices.

This study revealed no effects of negative consequence portrayals on emerging adult participants' negative outcome expectancies for risky sex and attitudes toward casual sex, regardless of their sexual risk experience. It is uncertain why these variables were not affected by the stimuli. More research is needed to understand exactly why these outcome expectancies and attitudes were not susceptible to the influence of the negative consequence portrayals.

The results also suggest that participant outcomes were largely uninfluenced by their gender. Only female participants were influenced on one of the dependent variables. Female participants' behavioral intentions to avoid casual sex were significantly stronger upon viewing the stimulus in the negative emotional/social consequence condition than they were in the control condition. Male participants were not influenced by the stimuli.

In sum, this study has made an important contribution to the growing body of research regarding the effects of sexual television content on emerging adults' sexual attitudes and behavioral intentions. This study shows clearly that the attitudes and behavioral intentions of emerging adults can be positively influenced by exposure to television portrayals of negative consequences of casual sex, albeit if they do not already have an extensive amount of sexual risk experience. This study illustrates that an

emerging adult's sexual risk experience is a key moderator of the effects of negative consequence portrayals. The results suggest that the study's hypotheses were not supported because the participants' sexual risk experience was obscuring the relationship between exposure to the negative consequence portrayals and participant outcomes. These results imply that future research on the inhibitory effects of negative sexual consequences on television should be conducted with younger participants and/or participants with lower levels of sexual risk experience.

Table 1

*Number of Participants in Each Experimental Condition by Gender*

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Gender	Condition			Total
	Control	Em./Soc. Cnsq.	Physical Cnsq.	
Males	41	40	40	121
Females	65	69	55	189
Total	106	109	95	310

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Table 2

*Variables Measured before and after Exposure to the Stimuli*

Before Exposure to the Stimuli	After Exposure to the Stimuli
Gender	Negative Outcome Expectancies of Risky Sex
Age	Attitudes Toward Casual Sex
Ethnicity	Attitudes Toward Condoms
Television Exposure	Behavioral Intentions to Avoid Casual Sex
Sexual Experience	Behavioral Intentions to Use Condoms
- Intercourse Experience	Perceived Realism
- Risk Experience	Similarity to the Main Characters
- Condom Use	Familiarity with the Stimuli
- Contraception Use	Manipulation Check
- Casual Sex Experience	- Severity of Outcomes of Casual Sex
- Number of Sexual Partners	- Consequences of Casual Sex Experienced by the Main Characters*
- Exp. w/Negative Em./Soc. Consequences	- Amount of Sexual Topics/Consequences*
- Exp. w/Negative Phys. Consequences	- Enjoyment of Program
Sexual Risk Comm. with Parents	- Duration of Negative Consequences*
Friends' Sexual Beliefs	
Religiosity	

*Note.* Variables are listed in the order that they appeared in the survey.

\* Manipulation check item measured only in the negative consequence conditions.

Table 3

*All Variables Measured in this Study*

Independent Variable	Dependent Variables	Moderating Variables
<p>Exposure to Televised Negative Consequences of Risky Sexual Intercourse</p> <p><u>Manipulation</u></p> <p>Type of Negative Consequences Portrayed</p> <p><u>Viewing Conditions</u></p> <p>1. Negative Emotional/Social Consequences</p> <p>2. Negative Physical Consequences</p> <p>3. Control</p>	<p>1. Negative Outcome Expectancies of Risky Sex</p> <p>2. Attitudes Toward Casual Sex*</p> <p>3. Attitudes Toward Condoms*</p> <p>4. Behavioral Intentions to Avoid Casual Sex</p> <p>5. Behavioral Intentions to Use Condoms</p>	<p>Gender</p> <p>Age</p> <p>Ethnicity</p> <p>Television Exposure</p> <p>Sexual Experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intercourse Exp.</li> <li>- Risk Experience</li> <li>- Condom Use</li> <li>- Contracept. Use</li> <li>- Casual Sex Exp.</li> <li>- Num. of Partners</li> <li>- Exp. w/Neg. E/S</li> <li>- Exp. w/Neg. Phys.</li> </ul> <p>Sexual Risk Comm. w/Parents</p> <p>Friends' Sexual Beliefs</p> <p>Religiosity</p> <p>Perceived Realism</p> <p>Similarity to Main Characters</p>

*Note:* This list excludes manipulation check items which are explicated in pages 85-94.

\* Also examined as a moderating variable.

Table 4  
*Means and Standard Deviations for Key Dependent Variables by Experimental Condition*

Dependent Variable	Scale Range	Condition			Significance
		Control	Em./Soc. Cnsq.	Physical Cnsq.	
Negative Outcome Expectancies	1-7	5.27 (1.33)	5.17 (1.28)	5.09 (1.44)	$F(2, 307) = .455, p = .635$
Attitudes toward Casual Sex	1-5	3.58 (.97)	3.56 (1.05)	3.51 (.98)	$F(2, 307) = .128, p = .880$
Attitudes toward Condoms	1-5	3.71 (.97)	3.78 (.93)	3.72 (1.02)	$F(2, 307) = .172, p = .842$
Behavioral Intentions to Avoid Casual Sex	1-6	3.59 (1.57)	3.83 (1.73)	3.74 (1.55)	$F(2, 307) = .567, p = .568$
Behavioral Intentions to Use Condoms	1-7	5.02 (2.18)	5.27 (1.90)	5.17 (1.92)	$F(2, 307) = .427, p = .653$

Table 5

*Significant Predictors of Dependent Variables Used as Covariates in Analyses*

Predictors	Criterion Variables			
	Attitudes Toward Casual Sex $\beta$	Attitudes Toward Condoms $\beta$	Behavioral Intentions to Avoid Casual Sex $\beta$	Behavioral Intentions to Use Condoms $\beta$
Gender	.347** (17.89%)			
Past Condom Use		.529** (27.98%)		.449** (19.36%)
Attitudes Toward Casual Sex			.482** (29.81%)	
Attitudes Toward Condoms				.270** (8.8%)

*Note.* \*\*  $p < .01$ . (Variance accounted for by predictor).

Table 6

*Means and Standard Deviations for Experimental Condition with Covariates Included in all Analyses*

Dependent Variable	Scale Range	Covariates	Condition			Significance
			Control	Em./Soc Cnsq	Physical Cnsq.	
Attitudes toward Casual Sex	1-5	Gender	3.58 (.97)	3.56 (1.05)	3.51 (.98)	$F(2, 306) = .074, p = .929$
Attitudes toward Condoms	1-5	Past Condom Use	3.65 (.94)	3.72 (.98)	3.69 (1.04)	$F(2, 265) = .308, p = .735$
Behavioral Intentions to Avoid Casual Sex	1-6	Att. Toward Casual Sex	3.59 (1.57)	3.83 (1.73)	3.74 (1.55)	$F(2, 306) = 2.75, p = .065$
Behavioral Intentions to Use Condoms	1-7	Past Condom Use; Att. toward Condoms	4.93 (2.21)	5.03 (1.86)	5.03 (2.03)	$F(2, 264) = .605, p = .547$

Table 7

*Means and Standard Deviations for Gender by Condition*

Dependent Variable	Scale Range	Gender	Condition			Significance <i>Effect size listed when significant (<math>\eta^2</math>)</i>
			Control	Em./Soc Cnsq	Physical Cnsq.	
Negative Outcome Expect.	1-7	Men	4.71 (1.37)	4.43 (1.20)	4.69 (1.42)	Main effect for condition: $F(2, 304) = .409, p = .664$
	1-7	Women	5.62 (1.19)	5.61 (1.12)	5.38 (1.39)	Main effect for gender: $F(1, 304) = 39.32, p < .001, \eta^2 = .115$
	1-7	Total	5.27 (1.33)	5.17 (1.28)	5.09 (1.44)	Condition/gender interaction: $F(2, 304) = .920, p = .400$
Attitudes toward Casual Sex	1-5	Men	2.92 (.98)	2.75 (.87)	2.86 (.75)	Main effect for condition: $F(2, 304) = .170, p = .843$
	1-5	Women	3.99 (.71)	4.02 (.85)	3.98 (.87)	Main effect for gender: $F(1, 304) = 139.97, p < .001, \eta^2 = .315$
	1-5	Total	3.58 (.97)	3.56 (1.05)	3.51 (.98)	Condition/gender interaction: $F(2, 304) = .492, p = .652$
Attitudes toward Condoms	1-5	Men	3.66 (.83)	3.59 (.78)	3.40 (1.06)	Main effect for condition: $F(2, 262) = .253, p = .777$
	1-5	Women	3.65 (1.01)	3.80 (1.09)	3.90 (.99)	Main effect for gender: $F(1, 262) = 5.13, p = .024, \eta^2 = .019$
	1-5	Total	3.65 (.94)	3.72 (.98)	3.69 (1.04)	Condition/gender interaction: $F(2, 262) = 2.71, p = .068, \eta^2 = .020$
Behavioral Intentions to Avoid Casual Sex	1-6	Men	2.59 (1.60)	2.38 (1.42)	2.71 (1.29)	Main effect for condition: $F(2, 303) = 2.10, p = .124$
	1-6	Women	4.23a (1.18)	4.67b (1.28)	4.49 (1.28)	Main effect for gender: $F(1, 303) = 18.37, p < .001, \eta^2 = .057$
	1-6	Total	3.59 (1.57)	3.83 (1.73)	3.74 (1.55)	Condition/gender interaction: $F(2, 303) = 1.49, p = .226$
Behavioral Intentions to Use Condoms	1-7	Men	5.04 (1.87)	5.50 (2.21)	5.16 (2.19)	Main effect for condition: $F(2, 261) = .461, p = .631$
	1-7	Women	4.85 (2.42)	4.73 (1.44)	4.93 (1.96)	Main effect for gender: $F(1, 261) = 7.98, p = .005, \eta^2 = .030$
	1-7	Total	4.93 (2.21)	5.03 (2.19)	5.03 (1.68)	Condition/gender interaction: $F(2, 261) = .283, p = .754$

Note. Means with different subscripts differ significantly at  $p < .05$ .

Table 8

*Number of Participants in Each Experimental Condition by Sexual Intercourse Experience*

Sexually Active	Condition			Total
	Control	Em./Soc. Cnsq.	Physical Cnsq.	
No	13	19	7	39
Yes	93	90	88	271
Total	106	109	95	310

Table 9

*Means and Standard Deviations for Sexual Intercourse Experience by Condition*

Dependent Variable	Scale Range	Sexually Active	Condition			Significance <i>Effect size listed when significant (<math>\eta^2</math>)</i>
			Control	Em./Soc Cnsq	Physical Cnsq.	
Negative Outcome Expect.	1-7	No	6.08 (.71)	5.98 (1.00)	4.54 (2.41)	Main effect for condition: $F(2, 304) = 3.11, p = .046, \eta^2 = .020$
	1-7	Yes	5.16 (1.36)	5.00 (1.27)	5.13 (1.34)	Main effect for sex experience: $F(1, 304) = 3.19, p = .075$
	1-7	Total	5.27 <sub>a</sub> (1.33)	5.17 (1.28)	5.09 <sub>b</sub> (1.44)	Condition/experience interaction: $F(2, 304) = 3.56, p = .030, \eta^2 = .023$
Attitudes toward Casual Sex	1-5	No	4.11 (1.00)	4.12 (.99)	4.18 (.97)	Main effect for condition: $F(2, 301) = .153, p = .858$
	1-5	Yes	3.50 (.95)	3.43 (1.03)	3.45 (.97)	Main effect for sex experience: $F(1, 301) = 1.20, p = .274$
	1-5	Total	3.57 (.97)	3.56 (1.05)	3.51 (.98)	Condition/experience interaction: $F(2, 301) = .326, p = .722$
Attitudes toward Condoms	1-5	No	4.10 (1.20)	4.09 (.61)	4.00 (.69)	Main effect for condition: $F(2, 304) = .028, p = .972$
	1-5	Yes	3.65 (.93)	3.72 (.97)	3.70 (1.04)	Main effect for sex experience: $F(1, 304) = 4.31, p = .039, \eta^2 = .014$
	1-5	Total	3.71 (.97)	3.78 (.93)	3.72 (1.03)	Condition/experience interaction: $F(2, 304) = .052, p = .949$
Behavioral Intentions to Avoid Casual Sex	1-6	No	4.83 (1.55)	4.91 (1.54)	5.18 (1.27)	Main effect for condition: $F(2, 304) = .841, p = .432$
	1-6	Yes	3.42 (1.50)	3.60 (1.69)	3.63 (1.52)	Main effect for sex experience: $F(1, 304) = 10.43, p = .001, \eta^2 = .033$
	1-6	Total	3.59 (1.57)	3.83 (1.73)	3.74 (1.62)	Condition/experience interaction: $F(2, 304) = .194, p = .824$
Behavioral Intentions to Use Condoms	1-7	No	5.59 (2.02)	6.42 (.96)	6.79 (.47)	Main effect for condition: $F(2, 303) = 1.50, p = .224$
	1-7	Yes	4.94 (2.20)	5.03 (1.95)	5.04 (1.93)	Main effect for sex experience: $F(1, 303) = 7.83, p = .005, \eta^2 = .025$
	1-7	Total	5.02 (2.18)	5.04 (1.89)	5.15 (1.99)	Condition/experience interaction: $F(2, 303) = 1.31, p = .271$

*Note.* Means with different subscripts differ significantly at  $p < .05$ .

Table 10

*Number of Participants in Each Experimental Condition by Casual Sex Experience*

Number of Casual Sex Experiences	Condition			Total
	Control	Em./Soc. Cnsq.	Physical Cnsq.	
0	35	33	37	105
1	22	18	20	60
2-3	20	32	20	72
4 +	16	7	10	33
Total	93	90	87	270

Table 11

*Means and Standard Deviations for Casual Sex Experience by Condition*

Dependent Variable	Scale Range	# of Casual	Condition			Significance <i>Effect size listed when significant (<math>\eta^2</math>)</i>
			Control	Em/Soc Cnsq	Physical Cnsq.	
Negative Outcome Expect.	1-7	0	5.51 (1.42)	5.56 (1.27)	5.48 (1.17)	Main effect for condition: $F(2, 258) = .987, p = .374$
	1-7	1	4.97 (1.18)	5.40 (1.16)	4.79 (1.58)	
	1-7	2-3	5.45 (1.32)	4.52 (.81)	5.05 (1.32)	Main effect for casual experience: $F(3, 258) = 9.30, p < .001, \eta^2 = .098$
	1-7	4+	4.28 (1.17)	3.59 (1.58)	4.66 (1.37)	
	1-7	Total	5.16 (1.36)	5.01 (1.28)	5.13 (1.35)	Condition/casual interaction: $F(6, 258) = 1.87, p = .087, \eta^2 = .042$
Attitudes toward Casual Sex	1-5	0	4.13 (.86)	4.00 (.86)	4.06 (.75)	Main effect for condition: $F(2, 257) = .669, p = .513$
	1-5	1	3.48 (.65)	3.81a (.72)	3.09b (.90)	
	1-5	2-3	3.02 (.82)	2.98 (.90)	3.14 (.92)	Main effect for casual experience: $F(3, 257) = 24.34, p < .001, \eta^2 = .221$
	1-5	4+	2.76a (.74)	1.92b (.41)	2.69a (.66)	
	1-5	Total	3.50 (.95)	3.44 (1.03)	3.47 (.96)	Condition/casual interaction: $F(6, 257) = 3.10, p = .006, \eta^2 = .068$
Attitudes toward Condoms	1-5	0	3.69 (.84)	3.86 (.95)	3.82 (1.03)	Main effect for condition: $F(2, 256) = .014, p = .986$
	1-5	1	3.52 (.83)	3.78 (1.05)	3.87 (1.09)	
	1-5	2-3	3.92 (1.07)	3.58 (.96)	3.45 (1.05)	Main effect for casual experience: $F(3, 256) = 1.44, p = .230$
	1-5	4+	3.44 (1.07)	3.52 (1.10)	3.30 (.94)	
	1-5	Total	3.65 (.94)	3.72 (.98)	3.69 (1.04)	Condition/casual interaction: $F(6, 256) = 1.31, p = .254$
Behavioral Intentions to Avoid Casual Sex	1-6	0	4.53 (1.32)	4.77 (1.32)	4.70 (1.10)	Main effect for condition: $F(2, 256) = 2.33, p = .099$
	1-6	1	3.48 (.84)	4.06 (1.44)	3.28 (1.16)	
	1-6	2-3	2.46 (1.12)	2.61 (1.22)	2.86 (1.34)	Main effect for casual experience: $F(3, 256) = 15.30, p < .001, \eta^2 = .152$
	1-6	4+	2.13 (1.19)	1.46 (.82)	2.18 (1.22)	
	1-6	Total	3.42 (1.50)	3.60 (1.69)	3.66 (1.50)	Condition/casual interaction: $F(6, 256) = .179, p = .982$
Behavioral Intentions to Use Condoms	1-7	0	4.75 (2.38)	4.90 (2.04)	4.82 (2.17)	Main effect for condition: $F(2, 255) = .398, p = .672$
	1-7	1	5.00 (2.10)	5.44 (1.89)	5.55 (1.38)	
	1-7	2-3	5.30 (2.07)	5.08 (1.84)	5.03 (2.05)	Main effect for casual experience: $F(3, 255) = 1.13, p = .338$
	1-7	4+	4.73 (2.27)	4.36 (2.43)	4.78 (1.82)	
	1-7	Total	4.93 (2.21)	5.03 (1.96)	5.03 (1.94)	Condition/casual interaction: $F(6, 255) = .113, p = .995$

Note. Means with different subscripts differ significantly at  $p < .05$ .

Table 12

*Number of Participants in Each Experimental Condition by Number of Sexual Partners*

Number of Partners	Condition			Total
	Control	Em./Soc. Cnsq.	Physical Cnsq.	
1	14	7	15	36
2	8	16	7	31
3	8	11	11	30
4 +	62	55	54	171
Total	92	89	87	268

Table 13

*Means and Standard Deviations for Number of Sexual Partners by Condition*

Dependent Variable	Scale Range	# of Partners	Condition			Significance <i>Effect size listed when significant (<math>\eta^2</math>)</i>
			Control	Em./Soc Cnsq	Physical Cnsq.	
Negative Outcome Expect.	1-7	1	5.39 (1.51)	5.69 (.76)	5.21 (1.13)	Main effect for condition: $F(2, 256) = .315, p = .730$
	1-7	2	5.48 (1.20)	5.43 (1.61)	5.89 (1.18)	
	1-7	3	4.40 (1.40)	5.20 (1.33)	5.15 (1.39)	Main effect for number of partners: $F(3, 256) = 2.66, p = .049, \eta^2 = .030$
	1-7	4 +	5.17 (1.35)	4.74 (1.16)	5.00 (1.42)	
	1-7	Total	5.16 (1.37)	4.99 (1.28)	5.13 (1.35)	Condition/number interaction: $F(6, 256) = .878, p = .512$
Attitudes toward Casual Sex	1-5	1	4.15 (.93)	4.12 (.79)	4.13 (.84)	Main effect for condition: $F(2, 255) = .300, p = .741$
	1-5	2	3.79 (1.13)	3.96 (.93)	3.96 (1.06)	
	1-5	3	3.75 (1.02)	3.88 (.80)	3.25 (.88)	Main effect for number of partners: $F(3, 255) = 12.21, p < .001, \eta^2 = .126$
	1-5	4 +	3.29 (.86)	3.13 (1.01)	3.27 (.92)	
	1-5	Total	3.50 (.95)	3.45 (1.03)	3.47 (.96)	Condition/number interaction: $F(6, 255) = .159, p = .987$
Attitudes toward Condoms	1-5	1	3.91 (.72)	3.90 (1.08)	4.02 (.97)	Main effect for condition: $F(2, 254) = 2.99, p = .051, \eta^2 = .023$
	1-5	2	3.46 (1.14)	4.04 (.85)	4.24 (.71)	
	1-5	3	3.48 (.72)	3.58 (1.17)	4.03 (1.04)	Main effect for number of partners: $F(3, 254) = 1.22, p = .304$
	1-5	4	3.62 (.97)	3.62 (.97)	3.45 (1.07)	
	1-5	Total	3.64a (.93)	3.71 (.98)	3.69b (1.04)	Condition/number interaction: $F(6, 254) = 1.55, p = .163$
Behavioral Intentions to Avoid Casual Sex	1-6	1	4.73 (1.25)	5.29 (1.29)	5.12 (1.11)	Main effect for condition: $F(2, 255) = 4.33, p = .014, \eta^2 = .033$
	1-6	2	3.90 (1.61)	4.81 (1.51)	4.39 (1.22)	
	1-6	3	3.50 (1.43)	4.34 (.85)	3.45 (1.53)	Main effect for number of partners: $F(3, 255) = 10.44, p < .001, \eta^2 = .109$
	1-6	4 +	3.06 (1.41)	2.90 (1.52)	3.20 (1.35)	
	1-6	Total	3.43a (1.51)	3.62b (1.69)	3.66 (1.50)	Condition/number interaction: $F(6, 255) = .961, p = .452$
Behavioral Intentions to Use Condoms	1-7	1	4.59a (2.48)	4.89a (2.05)	5.75b (1.64)	Main effect for condition: $F(2, 253) = .440, p = .644$
	1-7	2	5.65 (1.52)	5.42 (2.15)	4.44 (2.66)	
	1-7	3	5.39 (1.59)	5.14 (1.25)	5.02 (2.15)	Main effect for number of partners: $F(3, 253) = 1.19, p = .313$
	1-7	4 +	4.85 (2.30)	4.90 (2.05)	4.90 (1.87)	
	1-7	Total	4.92 (2.22)	5.02 (1.97)	5.03 (1.94)	Condition/number interaction: $F(6, 253) = 2.58, p = .019, \eta^2 = .058$

Note. Means with different subscripts differ significantly at  $p < .05$ .

Figure 1

*Sexual Intercourse Experience by Condition: Plot of Mean Scores on Negative Outcome Expectancies for Risky Sex*

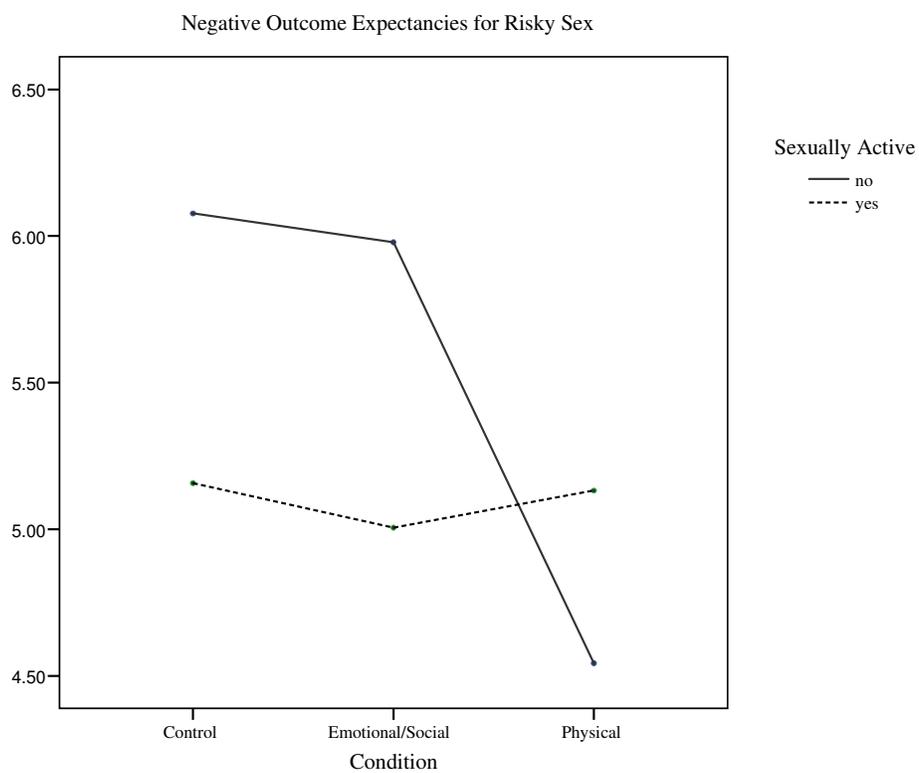


Figure 2

*Casual Sex Experience by Condition: Plot of Mean Scores on Attitudes toward Casual Sex*

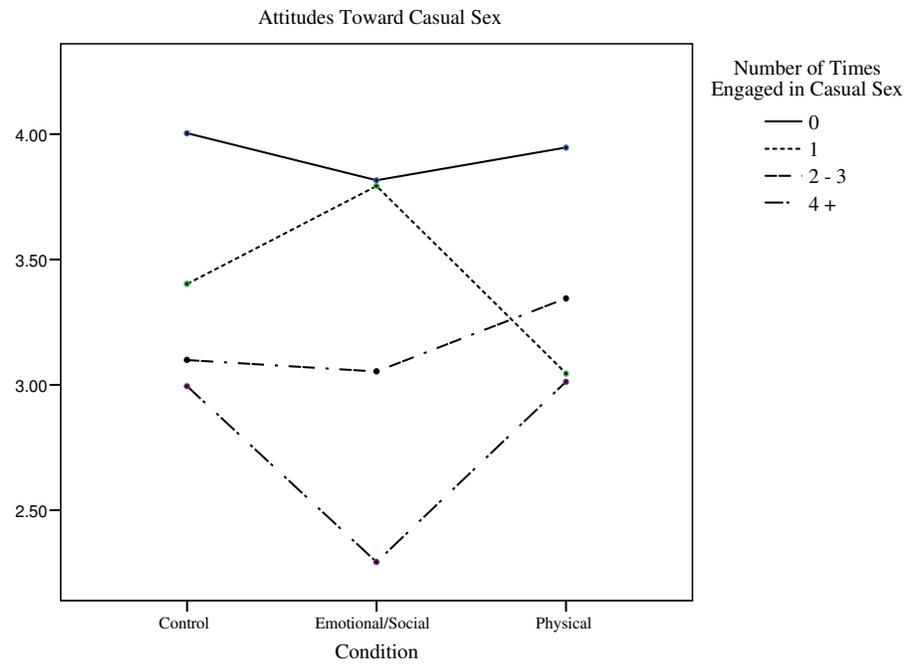


Figure 3

*Number of Sexual Partners by Condition: Plot of Mean Scores on Attitudes toward Condoms*

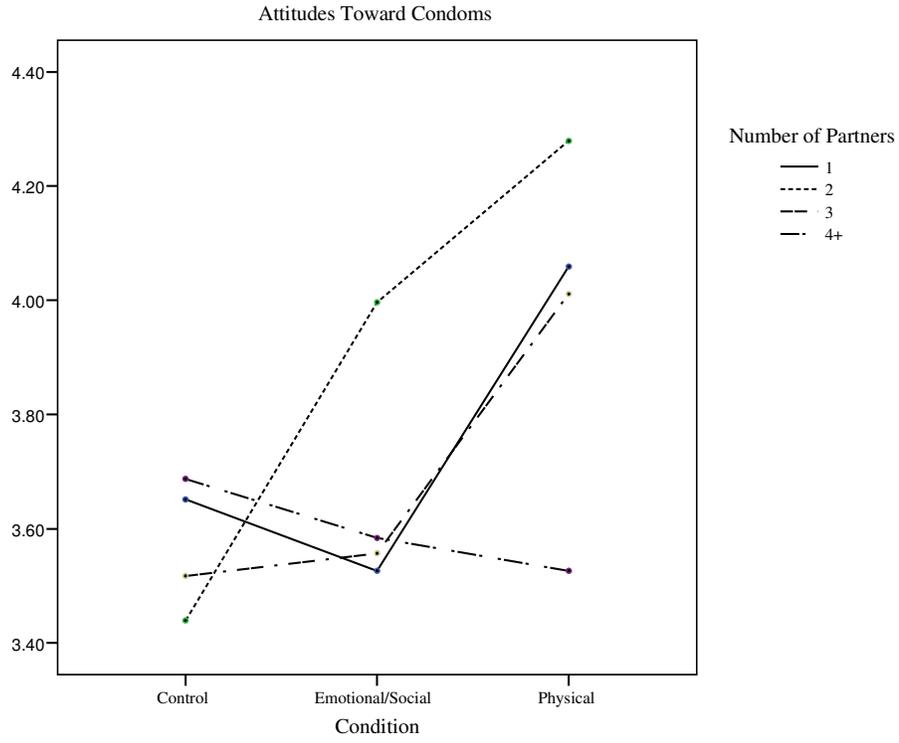


Figure 4

*Number of Sexual Partners by Condition: Plot of Mean Scores on Behavioral Intentions to Avoid Casual Sex*

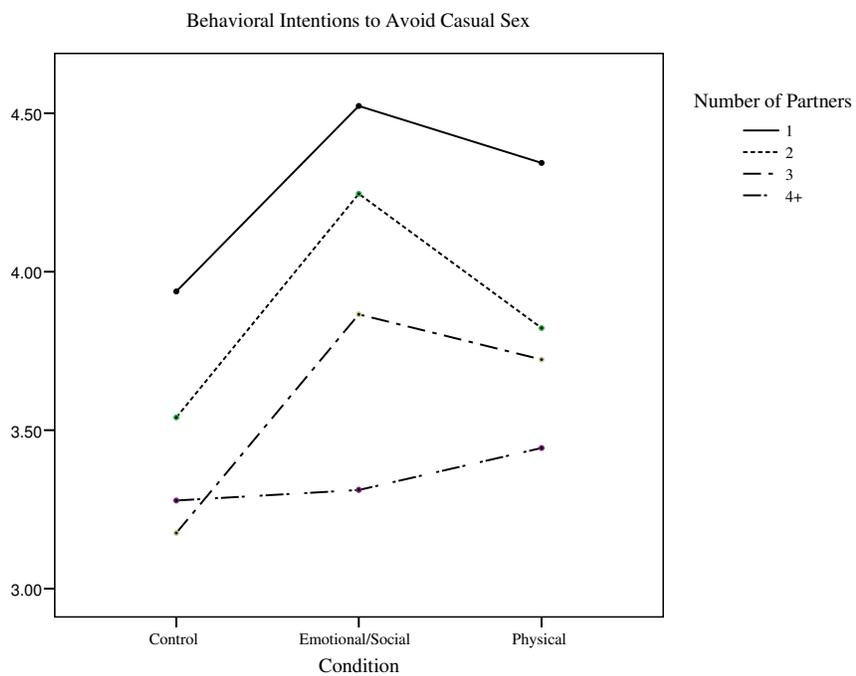
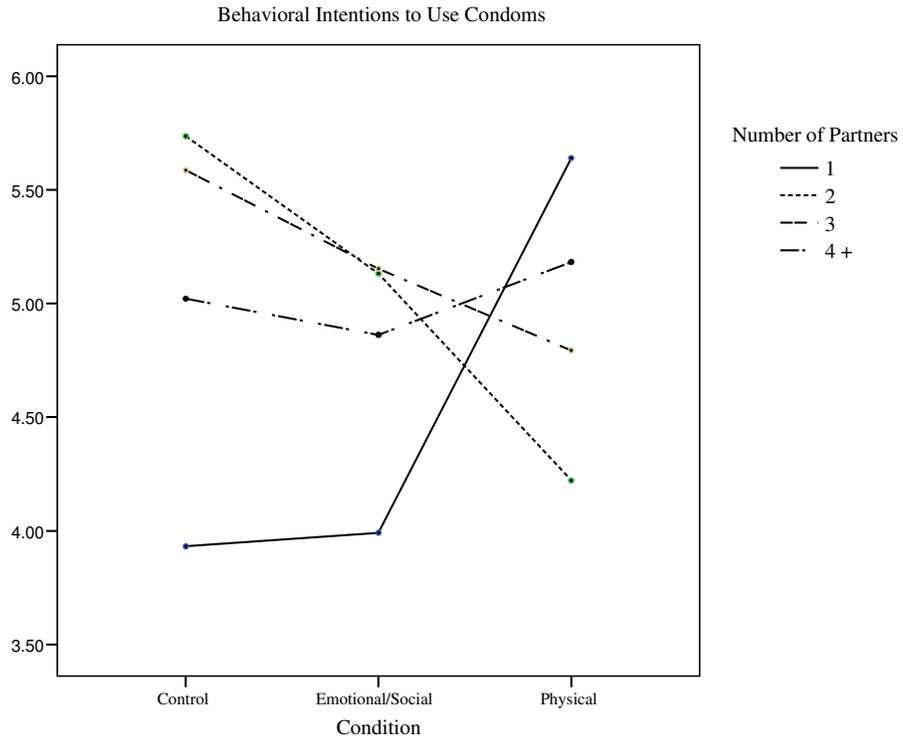


Figure 5

*Number of Sexual Partners by Condition: Plot of Mean Scores on Behavioral Intentions to Use Condoms*



APPENDIX A  
CONSENT FORM

## TELEVISION AND SEXUAL CHOICES

Dear Participant,

The Department of Communication at the University of Arizona supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

This study will ask you a number of questions about your television exposure and also about sexual topics. The survey will contain some questions regarding your sexual activity that may make some people feel uncomfortable. All of your responses to this survey will be completely anonymous. Your survey will only be identified by a code number and it will not be possible for us to trace the responses to you personally. This survey will take you about 10 minutes to complete. Then you will be asked to watch an hour-long television program. After you're finished watching the television program, you will then be asked to complete another survey. This survey should take you approximately 10 minutes to complete. The program you are viewing may include conversations about sexual choices, similar to what you would normally expect to view on entertainment television primetime programming.

Once again, all of your responses to survey questions are completely anonymous and confidential. Unless you are consciously making a decision to not answer a question, please make sure you respond to all questions. This will increase the validity of our research. You can refuse to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable and you will not be penalized for this.

For completing the questionnaire you will receive extra credit in your course. The exact amount of extra credit will be determined by your course instructor. Your participation is solicited, although strictly voluntary. The current study will take no more than an hour and a half of your time.

Participants must be 18 or older.

If you have questions concerning your rights as a research subject, you may call the University of Arizona Human Subjects Protection Program office at (520) 626-6721.

If you would like any additional information concerning this study before or after it is complete, please feel free to contact me by phone, mail, or email.

Please sign your name below if you agree to participate in this study. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Keli Finnerty, Principal Investigator  
 Department of Communication  
 Office #315 Communication Building  
 University of Arizona  
 Tucson, AZ 85721  
 Phone: 520-626-0336  
 Email: kelif@email.arizona.edu

Participant Name (Please print clearly): \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX B  
DEPENDENT VARIABLES

## Dependent Variables

### *Negative Outcome Expectancies*

INSTRUCTIONS. If *you* were to engage in the following sexual behaviors, please rate the likelihood that a negative consequence would occur.

NOTE: Negative consequences can include guilt, regret, embarrassment, sickness/disease, unintended pregnancy, injuries, damage to reputation, strained or hurt relationships with family and/or friends, depression, etc.

1. What is the likelihood that you would experience a negative consequence if you were to engage in sex without protection against pregnancy?

Not at all likely							Extremely likely
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

2. What is the likelihood that you would experience a negative consequence if you were to engage in sex with someone you had just met or didn't know well?

Not at all likely							Extremely likely
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

3. What is the likelihood that you would experience a negative consequence if you were to engage in sex without protection against sexually transmitted diseases?

Not at all likely							Extremely likely
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

4. What is the likelihood that you would experience a negative consequence if you were to engage in sex with multiple partners?

Not at all likely							Extremely likely
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

5. What is the likelihood that you would experience a negative consequence if you were to go home with someone you had just met at a social event?

Not at all likely							Extremely likely
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

*Attitudes toward Casual Sex*

INSTRUCTIONS. Listed below are several statements that reflect different attitudes about sex. For each of the following statements, indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with it. Some of the items refer to a specific sexual relationship, while others refer to general attitudes and beliefs about sex. Whenever possible, answer the questions with your current partner in mind. If you are not currently dating anyone, answer the questions with your most recent partner in mind. If you have never had a sexual relationship, answer in terms of what you think your responses would most likely be.

1. I do not need to be committed to a person to have sex with him/her.

Strongly agree 1	Moderately agree 2	Neutral - neither agree nor disagree 3	Moderately disagree 4	Strongly disagree 5
------------------------	--------------------------	--	-----------------------------	---------------------------

2. Casual sex is acceptable.

Strongly agree 1	Moderately agree 2	Neutral - neither agree nor disagree 3	Moderately disagree 4	Strongly disagree 5
------------------------	--------------------------	--	-----------------------------	---------------------------

3. I would like to have sex with many partners.

Strongly agree 1	Moderately agree 2	Neutral - neither agree nor disagree 3	Moderately disagree 4	Strongly disagree 5
------------------------	--------------------------	--	-----------------------------	---------------------------

4. One-night stands are sometimes very enjoyable.

Strongly agree 1	Moderately agree 2	Neutral - neither agree nor disagree 3	Moderately disagree 4	Strongly disagree 5
------------------------	--------------------------	--	-----------------------------	---------------------------

5. It is okay to have an ongoing sexual relationship with more than one person at a time.

Strongly agree 1	Moderately agree 2	Neutral - neither agree nor disagree 3	Moderately disagree 4	Strongly disagree 5
------------------------	--------------------------	--	-----------------------------	---------------------------

6. The best sex is with no strings attached.

Strongly agree 1	Moderately agree 2	Neutral - neither agree nor disagree 3	Moderately disagree 4	Strongly disagree 5
------------------------	--------------------------	--	-----------------------------	---------------------------

7. It is possible to enjoy sex with a person and not like that person very much.

Strongly agree 1	Moderately agree 2	Neutral - neither agree nor disagree 3	Moderately disagree 4	Strongly disagree 5
------------------------	--------------------------	--	-----------------------------	---------------------------

*Attitudes toward Condoms*

INSTRUCTIONS. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about condoms. If you have never had a sexual relationship, answer in terms of what you think your responses would most likely be.

1. Condoms are too much of a hassle to use.

Strongly agree 1	Moderately agree 2	Neutral - neither agree nor disagree 3	Moderately disagree 4	Strongly disagree 5
------------------------	--------------------------	--	-----------------------------	---------------------------

2. Condoms are very affordable.\*

Strongly agree 1	Moderately agree 2	Neutral - neither agree nor disagree 3	Moderately disagree 4	Strongly disagree 5
------------------------	--------------------------	--	-----------------------------	---------------------------

3. Use of condoms takes too much planning.

Strongly agree 1	Moderately agree 2	Neutral - neither agree nor disagree 3	Moderately disagree 4	Strongly disagree 5
------------------------	--------------------------	--	-----------------------------	---------------------------

4. It is easy to get a sexual partner to use condoms with you.\*

Strongly agree 1	Moderately agree 2	Neutral - neither agree nor disagree 3	Moderately disagree 4	Strongly disagree 5
------------------------	--------------------------	--	-----------------------------	---------------------------

5. Condoms interfere with sexual enjoyment.

Strongly agree 1	Moderately agree 2	Neutral - neither agree nor disagree 3	Moderately disagree 4	Strongly disagree 5
------------------------	--------------------------	--	-----------------------------	---------------------------

6. If you have condoms with you, your friends might think that you are looking for sex.

Strongly agree 1	Moderately agree 2	Neutral - neither agree nor disagree 3	Moderately disagree 4	Strongly disagree 5
------------------------	--------------------------	--	-----------------------------	---------------------------

*Behavioral Intentions to Avoid Casual Sex*

INSTRUCTIONS. For each of the following statements, indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with it. These statements concern what you think is appropriate behavior *for you*.

1. I would have sexual intercourse with a person I had just met.

Strongly agree 1	Moderately agree 2	Slightly agree 3	Slightly disagree 4	Moderately disagree 5	Strongly disagree 6
------------------------	--------------------------	------------------------	---------------------------	-----------------------------	---------------------------

2. I would have sexual intercourse with a person on a first date.

Strongly agree 1	Moderately agree 2	Slightly agree 3	Slightly disagree 4	Moderately disagree 5	Strongly disagree 6
------------------------	--------------------------	------------------------	---------------------------	-----------------------------	---------------------------

3. I would have sexual intercourse with a person I've only dated a few times.

Strongly agree 1	Moderately agree 2	Slightly agree 3	Slightly disagree 4	Moderately disagree 5	Strongly disagree 6
------------------------	--------------------------	------------------------	---------------------------	-----------------------------	---------------------------

4. I would have sexual intercourse with a person I'm casually dating (dating less than one month).

Strongly agree 1	Moderately agree 2	Slightly agree 3	Slightly disagree 4	Moderately disagree 5	Strongly disagree 6
------------------------	--------------------------	------------------------	---------------------------	-----------------------------	---------------------------

*Behavioral Intentions to Use Condoms*

INSTRUCTIONS. For each of the following statements, indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with it. If you have never had a sexual relationship, answer in terms of what you think your responses would most likely be.

1. I will make an effort to use a condom the next time I have sex.

Strongly disagree							Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

2. I do not intend to use a condom the next time I have sex.\*

Strongly disagree							Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

3. I intend to talk to my partner about using a condom the next time I have sex.

Strongly disagree							Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

4. I will try to use a condom the next time I have sex.

Strongly disagree							Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

APPENDIX C  
MODERATING VARIABLES

## Moderating Variables

*Demographic Variables*

Please answer the following questions about yourself.

1. Are you (please circle):                      Male                      Female
  
2. Age? \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Do you consider your ethnicity to be primarily (please circle one):

1. African-American	4. Hispanic
2. Asian-American	5. Native American
3. Caucasian	6. Other

*Television Exposure*

Please answer the following questions ask about your television viewing habits.

3. On the average week day (Monday – Friday), how many hours of TV do you watch?  

Less than 1 hour	1	2	3	4	5	6	More than 6 hours
------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	-------------------
  
4. On the average week-end day (Saturday & Sunday) how many hours of TV do you watch?  

Less than 1 hour	1	2	3	4	5	6	More than 6 hours
------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	-------------------
  
5. How often do you view television dramas? (e.g., Smallville, Desperate Housewives, Grey's Anatomy, etc.)  

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never						Very Often

*Sexual Experience*

INSTRUCTIONS. The following questions ask about your sexual history. Please remember that your answers are completely anonymous, so please answer as honestly as you can.

1. Have you ever had sexual intercourse? For purposes of this survey, sexual intercourse is defined as sex in which the penis penetrates the vagina or anus.

\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_ No

*If you answered "No", indicating that you have never engaged in sexual intercourse, please proceed to page #\_\_, item #\_\_.*

2. Since becoming sexually active how frequently have you, or your partner(s), used condoms when having sexual intercourse?

never	some of the time	most of the time	every time	every time except once
-------	---------------------	---------------------	------------	---------------------------

3. Since becoming sexually active how frequently have you, or your partner(s), used a form of birth control other than condoms when having sexual intercourse? (e.g. the birth control pill, patch, ring, or other pharmaceutical contraception)

never/ don't know	some of the time	most of the time	every time	every time except once
----------------------	---------------------	---------------------	------------	---------------------------

4. How often have you had sexual intercourse with someone you just met?

never	once	twice	three times	four or more times
-------	------	-------	-------------	-----------------------

5. With how many people have you ever had sexual intercourse?

one	two	three	four or more
-----	-----	-------	--------------

*Experience of Emotional/Social Consequences of Sex*

1. Please indicate the extent to which you have ever experienced happiness after having sexual intercourse.\*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never						very often

2. Please indicate the extent to which you have ever experienced regret after having sexual intercourse.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never						very often



*Sexual Risk Communication with Parents*

INSTRUCTIONS. Please answer the following questions about the information your parents shared with you about sexual topics.

How much information did your parents share with you about:

1. Contraception/preventing pregnancy?

None 1	A little 2	Some 3	A lot 4	Extensive 5
-----------	---------------	-----------	------------	----------------

2. Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)?

None 1	A little 2	Some 3	A lot 4	Extensive 5
-----------	---------------	-----------	------------	----------------

3. Ways to protect yourself against STDs and AIDs?

None 1	A little 2	Some 3	A lot 4	Extensive 5
-----------	---------------	-----------	------------	----------------

4. Condoms specifically?

None 1	A little 2	Some 3	A lot 4	Extensive 5
-----------	---------------	-----------	------------	----------------

5. Postponing or not having sex?

None 1	A little 2	Some 3	A lot 4	Extensive 5
-----------	---------------	-----------	------------	----------------

6. Peer pressure and sexual pressure from dating partners?

None 1	A little 2	Some 3	A lot 4	Extensive 5
-----------	---------------	-----------	------------	----------------

*Friends' Sexual Beliefs*

INSTRUCTIONS. Please indicate if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about your friends' sexual beliefs.

1. My friends believe that premarital sexual intercourse for young people is acceptable.\*

Strongly disagree							Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

2. My friends believe that sexual intercourse should occur only between two people who are married to each other.

Strongly disagree							Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

3. My friends believe that petting is immoral behavior unless the couple is married.

Strongly disagree							Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

4. My friends believe that people do not need to be committed to one another to have sex.\*

Strongly disagree							Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

5. My friends believe that casual sex is unacceptable.

Strongly disagree							Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

6. My friends believe that one-night stands are sometimes acceptable.\*

Strongly disagree							Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

7. My friends believe that it is okay to have ongoing sexual relationships with more than one person at a time.\*

Strongly disagree							Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

*Religiosity*

INSTRUCTIONS. Please answer the following questions about your religious beliefs.

1. Personally, how important is religion to you?

Not important at all							Very important
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

2. To what extent are your behavioral decisions based on your religious beliefs?

Not at all based on my religious beliefs						Completely based on my religious beliefs
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3. To what extent do your religious beliefs influence your sexual behavior?

They have no influence at all						They have a lot of influence
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4. How often do you attend religious services?

Never						Very Often
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

*Perceived Realism of Stimulus*

INSTRUCTIONS. For the statements listed below, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each.

1. The program I just watched showed realistic situations that young people have to deal with.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

2. The program I just watched showed me an accurate portrayal of young people's lives.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

3. The program I just watched presented fictional situations that are *not* similar to those experienced in real life.\*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

4. The program I just watched allowed me to see what happened in the character's lives, as if I were really there.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

*Similarity to the Main Characters*

INSTRUCTIONS. Please indicate your thoughts about Sandy on the scale below. Sandy is the female college student who had sex with Martin.

Sandy

- |     |                                 |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |           |  |  |  |  |  |                                   |
|-----|---------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|-----------|--|--|--|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1.  | Doesn't think<br>like me        |   |   |   |   |   |   |  | Undecided |  |  |  |  |  | Thinks<br>like me                 |
|     | 1                               | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |  |           |  |  |  |  |  | 7                                 |
| 2.  | Morals<br>unlike mine           |   |   |   |   |   |   |  | Undecided |  |  |  |  |  | Morals<br>like mine               |
|     | 1                               | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |  |           |  |  |  |  |  | 7                                 |
| 3.* | Behaves<br>like me              |   |   |   |   |   |   |  | Undecided |  |  |  |  |  | Doesn't behave<br>like me         |
|     | 1                               | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |  |           |  |  |  |  |  | 7                                 |
| 4.* | Shares my<br>values             |   |   |   |   |   |   |  | Undecided |  |  |  |  |  | Doesn't share<br>my values        |
|     | 1                               | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |  |           |  |  |  |  |  | 7                                 |
| 5.  | Sexual attitudes<br>unlike mine |   |   |   |   |   |   |  | Undecided |  |  |  |  |  | Sexual attitudes<br>like mine     |
|     | 1                               | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |  |           |  |  |  |  |  | 7                                 |
| 6.* | Similar<br>to me                |   |   |   |   |   |   |  | Undecided |  |  |  |  |  | Different<br>from me              |
|     | 1                               | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |  |           |  |  |  |  |  | 7                                 |
| 7.* | Treats people<br>like I do      |   |   |   |   |   |   |  | Undecided |  |  |  |  |  | Doesn't treat people<br>like I do |
|     | 1                               | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |  |           |  |  |  |  |  | 7                                 |
| 8.  | Unlike me                       |   |   |   |   |   |   |  | Undecided |  |  |  |  |  | Like me                           |
|     | 1                               | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |  |           |  |  |  |  |  | 7                                 |

INSTRUCTIONS. Please indicate your thoughts about Martin on the scale below. Martin is the high school senior who had sex with Sandy.

Martin

1.	Doesn't think like me	1	2	3	Undecided	4	5	6	7	Thinks like me
2.	Morals unlike mine	1	2	3	Undecided	4	5	6	7	Morals like mine
3.*	Behaves like me	1	2	3	Undecided	4	5	6	7	Doesn't behave like me
4.*	Shares my values	1	2	3	Undecided	4	5	6	7	Doesn't share my values
5.	Sexual attitudes unlike mine	1	2	3	Undecided	4	5	6	7	Sexual attitudes like mine
6.*	Similar to me	1	2	3	Undecided	4	5	6	7	Different from me
7.*	Treats people like I do	1	2	3	Undecided	4	5	6	7	Doesn't treat people like I do
8.	Unlike me	1	2	3	Undecided	4	5	6	7	Like me



APPENDIX D  
MANIPULATION CHECK

## Manipulation Check

### *Negativity/Severity of Consequences of Casual Sex*

INSTRUCTIONS. People who engage in casual sex with a partner they've just met can potentially experience a wide range of outcomes, both positive and negative. The following is a list of possible outcomes of casual sex.

Please indicate how positive or negative you think that these outcomes would be for the average person who has engaged in casual sex with a partner they've just met.

1. The person experiences physical satisfaction as an outcome of having casual sex

Extremely Positive							Extremely Negative
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

2. The person experiences regret as an outcome of having casual sex.

Extremely Positive							Extremely Negative
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

3. The person, or their partner, experiences an unintended pregnancy as an outcome of having casual sex

Extremely Positive							Extremely Negative
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

4. The person experiences happiness as an outcome of having casual sex

Extremely Positive							Extremely Negative
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

5. The person experiences embarrassment as an outcome of having casual sex

Extremely Positive							Extremely Negative
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

6. The person contracts a sexually transmitted disease as an outcome of having casual sex

Extremely Positive							Extremely Negative
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

7. The person experiences guilt as an outcome of having casual sex

Extremely Positive							Extremely Negative
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

8. The person experiences disapproval from friends or family as an outcome of having casual sex

Extremely Positive							Extremely Negative
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

*Consequences Experienced by the Main Characters in the Program*

INSTRUCTIONS. Please check all of the consequences to casual sex that you actually watched *Sandy* experience in the program you just viewed.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Regret
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Physical Satisfaction
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Unintended Pregnancy
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Embarrassment
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Sexually Transmitted Disease
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Guilt
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Happiness
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Disapproval from Friends or Family

INSTRUCTIONS. Please check all of the consequences to casual sex that you actually watched *Martin* experience in the program you just viewed.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Regret
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Physical Satisfaction
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Unintended Pregnancy of Partner
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Embarrassment
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Sexually Transmitted Disease
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Guilt
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Happiness
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Disapproval from friends or family

*Amount of Sexual Content in Program*

1. How often did the characters discuss sexual topics, or consequences of sexual behaviors in the episode you just watched?

Not at all							A lot
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

*Enjoyment of Program*

1. Please indicate how much, or how little, you enjoyed watching the program.

Not at all Enjoyable							Very Enjoyable
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

*Duration of Consequences*

1. How long do you think that Martin and Sandy will continue to experience the consequences of their casual sex that were shown in the program?

Extremely Short Amount of Time (for a few days)							Extremely Long Amount of Time (for many years)
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

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