

2 Cognitive and Contextual Variables in Sexual Partner 3 and Relationship Perception

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7 **Abstract** This study examined the effects of contextual and
8 cognitive variables for sexual protection on perceived social
9 relationship factors. University students (108 women and 108
10 men) read script-based narratives on sexual encounters in
11 which six variables were manipulated in two independent anal-
12 yses. In the first analysis, four variables were evaluated: relational
13 context (stable, casual), condom use (yes, no), script terminus
14 (beginning, middle or end), and the rater's sex. The dependent
15 variables were interpersonal perception of one of the charac-
16 ters of the narrative, and expectations regarding characteristics
17 and future of the relationship. In the second analysis, two other
18 factors were manipulated only in the "yes" condom conditions:
19 communication strategy (verbal, non-verbal) and condom
20 proponent gender. Our findings corroborated other studies
21 where condom use was viewed as unromantic with less posi-
22 tive characteristics for relationships. Condom proponents,
23 especially male, were perceived as less romantic, particularly
24 when proposing a condom non-verbally at the beginning of the
25 encounter. However, the controlled variables enabled us to
26 propose ways of associating condom use with positive expect-
27 ations towards the proponent and the relationship itself. Roman-
28 ticism, expectation of sexual intercourse, emotional proximity,
29 and expectations of condom use in encounters where a condom
30 was proposed increased when suggested by a woman, postponed
31 to the end of the encounter, and verbally mentioned. We encour-
32 age women to take the lead in suggesting condom use, thus
33 empowering them since they do not have to wait for the male to
34 make the first move.
35

Keywords Condom use · Interpersonal perception · 36
HIV/AIDS prevention · Gender · Relationship expectations 37
38

Introduction 39

New interpersonal and situational variables (e.g., Bryan, 40
Aiken, & West, 1999; Flowers, Smith, Sheeran, & Beail, 1997) 41
and less deliberate and more automatic processes (e.g., Miller, 42
Bettencourt, DeBro, & Hoffman, 1993; Williams et al., 1992) 43
have recently been explored with a view to understanding sex- 44
ual protection behavior. By means of underlying knowledge 45
structures, the role of interpersonal perception may be identi- 46
fied among the variables involved in these processes and 47
capable of influencing and predicting individual behavior 48
(Galambos, Abelson, & Black, 1986). 49

The representation of types of people with whom we can 50
interact is an important social structure. In other words, we 51
organize information regarding individual personality through a 52
trait network associated with specific behavior or personality 53
content, enabling us to predict and understand their reactions. 54
There seem to be naïve or implicit personality theories at the 55
root of impression formation on how these characteristics are 56
organized (Bruner & Tagiuri, 1954; Schneider, 1973). Social 57
judgment and personality trait inference are also triggered by 58
contraceptive-related behavior, particularly condom use (Bryan 59
et al., 1999; McKinney, Sprecher, & Orbuch, 1987). 60

Interpersonal perception phenomena involved in condom 61
use may be distinguished by two main processes: one related to 62
inferences on the probability of partner infection and respective 63
evaluation of the need for condom use (Civic, 1999; Misovich, 64
Fisher, & Fisher, 1996, 1997; Williams et al., 1992); the other is 65
related to the image projected of oneself or of the partner, as well 66
as expectations for the future of the relationship when such 67
sexual protection is used (Bryan et al., 1999; Hammer, Fisher, 68

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69 Fitzgerald, & Fisher, 1996; Hynie & Lydon, 1995). In this
70 dynamic, protection is also affected by one partner's ability to
71 involve the other in condom use (e.g., Cline, Johnson, & Freeman,
72 1992) as well as the perception of how suitable the proposal
73 is to the proponent's gender (Hynie & Lydon, 1995; Sacco,
74 Rickman, Thompson, Levine, & Reed, 1993).

75 People believe themselves to be capable of recognizing a
76 partner who is not infected with HIV/AIDS on the basis of non-
77 diagnostic characteristics, ranging from physical appearance to
78 personality traits and relationship status. They stereotype the
79 HIV carrier and believe that the person can be distinguished quite
80 easily (e.g., Maticka-Tyndale, 1991; Williams et al., 1992). It is
81 equally frequent for partners who know each other, bearing
82 specific personality characteristics such as amiability and cour-
83 teousness, to be considered safer, hence arousing less preoc-
84 cupation with sexual contact (e.g., Maticka-Tyndale, 1991).
85 Indeed, relational influences may be displayed before any type
86 of relationship has been established through the use of implicit
87 personality theories which stereotype the prototype of the
88 HIV/AIDS carrier and replace consistent condom use (Williams
89 et al., 1992).

90 The positive feelings developed by the partner and the
91 duration of the relationship also influence the perceived need for
92 safe sexual practices. Thus, partners in a stable relationship—
93 even when there is limited commitment—are perceived as pre-
94 senting less of a risk of infection than those in a casual rela-
95 tionship (Misovich et al., 1996, 1997). Since affection seems to
96 represent a barrier against infection, the perception of danger
97 and disease is mainly associated with casual relationships. Con-
98 sequently, people tend to interpret unprotected sexual inter-
99 course as being more special and romantic (e.g., Conley &
100 Rabinowitz, 2004; Flowers et al., 1997; Galligan & Terry, 1993)
101 whereas condom use may even be viewed as a risk to the
102 potential development of a more stable romantic relationship
103 (e.g., Rosenthal, Gifford, & Moore, 1998).

104 Indeed, condoms are rarely regarded as being attractive or
105 conducive to intimacy and sexual pleasure or as transmitters of
106 trust or spontaneity between partners (Hammer et al., 1996; Sacco
107 et al., 1993). Although the overall impression formed by con-
108 traceptive users following protective behavior is favorable, and
109 they are seen to be more intelligent and mature (McKinney et al.,
110 1987), a more ambiguous stance is adopted towards condom pro-
111 ponents who are also considered less romantic and exciting than
112 non-proponents (Bryan et al., 1999). Women regard female
113 condom proposal as having low social acceptability and being
114 conducive to the development of a negative image from the
115 partner's perspective (Hynie & Lydon, 1995). Men believe that
116 condom use reduces the probability of sexual intercourse (Bryan
117 et al., 1999). Thus, there are also beliefs associated with condom
118 use grounded in fear of its negative implications.

119 Condom use in an encounter where protection is perceived as
120 important will depend on the communication skills between
121 partners. Such negotiation often proves to be difficult. Non-verbal

122 condom introduction may act as a strategy to facilitate sexual
123 communication since it is seen to be more suitable to the type of
124 interaction developed during sexual exchange (Miller et al.,
125 1993) and keeps unsafe sex at bay. Nevertheless, female per-
126 ception of male condom proponent is seen to be more positive
127 when the proposal is verbal (Bryan et al., 1999). In addition to the
128 employed strategy, the point at which the condom is introduced or
129 referred to also seems to contribute to the use of protection. The
130 condom is usually discussed between heterosexuals when sexual
131 intercourse is imminent (e.g., Cline et al., 1992; Edgar & Fitz-
132 patrick, 1993).

Aims of the Present Study 133

134 This study set out to ascertain whether condom use provides
135 information on the personality of the proponent and on the
136 characteristics and future of the relationship. Condom use was
137 analyzed by considering the extent to which the relational
138 context, the script terminus, the communication strategy used
139 for condom proposal, and proponent gender provide infor-
140 mation on the personality of the proponent and relationship
141 expectations through a vignette-analogue study. The presen-
142 tation of information to participants (perceivers) about an
143 individual (a target) in the form of written vignettes as stimulus
144 material is a traditional method in the study of person percep-
145 tion (Hamilton, 1986). We extended its use to perception of
146 the characteristics and future development of the relationship.
147 The use of vignettes to study the effect of sexual protection on
148 the perception of its proponent and the outcomes of sexual
149 encounters have enabled the collection of consistent infor-
150 mation and contributed to the prediction of protective behavior
151 in individuals (e.g., Bryan et al., 1999; Hynie & Lydon, 1995;
152 McKinney et al., 1987). We tried to broaden the aims of other
153 studies by assessing the effect of condom introduction in dif-
154 ferent settings (stable and casual relationship encounters),
155 instead of restricting our analysis to the first sexual encounter,
156 as is usually the case. Finally, instead of solely evaluating dif-
157 ferences in men and women towards male proponents, con-
158 dom proponents from both sexes were used.

159 **Hypothesis 1** It was predicted that partners would be expected
160 to be more positively evaluated, i.e., as more romantic and
161 responsible, in a more serious relationship context than in a
162 casual relationship, given the feelings of affection between part-
163 ners and the trust and confidence developed in longer relation-
164 ships (Misovich et al., 1996, 1997).

165 **Hypothesis 2** It was predicted that condom proponents
166 would be perceived as being more responsible and mature and
167 less romantic and exciting in comparison with non-users,
168 since, in the perception of the partner, condom use is associated
169 with greater maturity and responsibility and less romanticism
170 and excitement (Bryan et al., 1999; McKinney et al., 1987).

Hypothesis 3 It was predicted that the woman condom proponent would also be perceived as being less romantic and responsible in comparison with the man proponent. Such anticipation is the result of social expectations as to the purchase, possession, and use of the condom, particularly on the part of women (Hynie & Lydon, 1995; Sacco et al., 1993).

Hypothesis 4 It was predicted that a less intrusive script terminus for condom introduction would coincide with the imminence of sexual intercourse. This expectation results from the fear, mainly on the part of men, that reference to condom use may render sexual intercourse unfeasible (Bryan et al., 1999) and from the practice of including the condom very close to the point of sexual intercourse between heterosexual individuals (e.g., Edgar & Fitzpatrick, 1993).

Hypothesis 5 It was predicted that more positive expectations regarding the characteristics and future of the relationship would be revealed in encounters where the condom is not used. This expectation stems from the inference of greater romanticism and affection between partners in relationships where the condom is not used (Galligan & Terry, 1993; Rosenthal et al., 1998) and from the belief, on the part of men, that condom use reduces the probability of sexual intercourse (Bryan et al., 1999).

Hypothesis 6 Finally, it was expected that the condom would be used less in a stable relationship than in a casual one, given the importance of the relational context in the partner's perception of safety and the respective need for protection (Misovich et al., 1996, 1997).

As for the strategy of communication used in condom use proposal, the rather disparate conclusions of prior studies did not provide sufficient information to determine whether there is preference for one type of communication over another.

203 Method

204 Participants

205 A total of 216 Portuguese university students (108 men, 108
206 women) with a mean age of 21.19 years ($SD = 1.96$) were
207 recruited between March and May 2000, from ten different
208 courses, with faculty authorization.¹ Participants were request-
209 ed to participate in a psychology research study and those
210 willing to participate provided voluntary, informed consent and

were informed that they could discontinue their participation at
any time. The refusal rate was very low (.9%).

The Portuguese university student population is characterized by approximately half of the women and 80% of the men having already had sexual intercourse. More than half are in a relationship and have sexual intercourse, on average, six times per month. Around 25% of men and 5% of women refer to having more than one simultaneous partner. Sexual practice with individuals of the same sex is mentioned by approximately 2% of women and 5% of men. Condom use is rarely mentioned by more than 40% of individuals and its use is not systematic (Alferes, 1997; Alvarez, 2005).

Measures

Independent Variables: Sexual Encounters

The study used descriptions of sexual interactions considered typical by university students for stable and casual encounters (Alvarez & Garcia-Marques, 2008). In the first analysis, three conditions—relational context (stable vs. casual), condom use (yes vs. no) and script terminus (beginning, middle, or end), plus sex of the rater—were manipulated in a $2 \times 2 \times 3 \times 2$ between-subjects design. In the second analysis, for participants in the condom “yes” condition, we manipulated two additional variables: communication strategy in condom use introduction (verbal vs. non-verbal) and condom proponent's gender (man vs. woman), in a 2 (relational context) $\times 3$ (script terminus) $\times 2$ (communication strategy) $\times 2$ (proponent) $\times 2$ (sex rater) design.

In the vignette description of the stable relationship encounter, both characters had been in the relationship for a short period of time and had never had sexual intercourse. Therefore, condom reference could not be interpreted as the result of a routine. It had to be taken in the context of an initial negotiation between partners, an essential condition for comparing both types of encounter.

An example of the experimental condition of a stable relationship, where condoms are used with a verbal communication strategy up to the end of the script, with a man proponent is as follows: Carlos and Ana, who have been in a stable relationship around a month and have never had sexual intercourse with each other, decide to meet up on this particular day. They talk about various subjects, trivial things, during a walk. At a certain moment, they look into each other's eyes. They smile and move closer to each other. Inside the car, he takes her hand, strokes her hair, and they caress each other/. They kiss each other. They look at each other and kiss again. Once at home, they lie down and fondle each other. They remove the upper part of each other's clothing. Their hearts start to beat faster. They continue to kiss and caress each other. They remove some more articles of clothing. They get completely

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260 undressed as they continue to exchange caresses. He says he
261 prefers using a condom.²

262 In the non-verbal communication strategy, “she takes a
263 condom out of her handbag and passes it to him” (in the case of
264 a woman proponent) and “he takes a condom out of his pocket
265 and passes it to her” (for a man proponent). When the condom
266 is not mentioned, the encounter ends with an ellipsis (...).
267 Slashes are introduced in the script examples to pinpoint the
268 beginning and middle conditions where the narrative was
269 discontinued due to manipulation of the script terminus.

270 *Dependent Variables*

271 Two dependent variables were analyzed, one related to the
272 interpersonal perception of one of the characters of the vignette
273 and the other related to expectations regarding characteristics
274 and future of the relationship.

275 Interpersonal perception was evaluated by a set of 13 adjectives:
276 romantic, affectionate (which define the romantic factor),
277 mature, responsible (mature factor), sincere, respectful (nice
278 factor), spontaneous, adventurous (exciting factor), promiscuous
279 (promiscuous factor), kind, amiable, attractive, and trustworthy.
280 The first nine adjectives, which defined the five factors
281 (in brackets), stemmed from a research study in which suitable
282 adjectives for sexual partners were collected (Bryan et al.,
283 1999). Two characteristics (kindness and amiability), habitually
284 present in implicit personality theories (Rosenberg & Sedlak,
285 1972) and pertinent to the evaluation of a potential sexual
286 partner, were also introduced in the study. A further two characteristics
287 taken from the evaluation of a sexual partner, namely
288 attraction and trustworthiness, were also introduced (Hammer
289 et al., 1996). The adjectives were presented randomly and
290 evaluated with a 15-point semantic differential (e.g., mature-
291 immature). This scale was anchored on -7 to $+7$ bounds.

292 Expectations regarding the characteristics and future of the relationship
293 were evaluated through the presence of emotional proximity (“there is
294 emotional proximity between them”), the future of the relationship
295 (“the relationship will continue”), the consummation of sexual
296 intercourse (“they will have sexual intercourse during this
297 encounter”), condom use (“the condom will be used during this
298 encounter”), and the existence of a sexually transmitted infection
299 (STIs), including HIV (“Carlos [Ana] is infected with a sexually
300 transmitted disease (other than HIV)”, “Carlos [Ana] is HIV
301 positive”), by means of a six-point probability scale ranging from
302 highly improbable (1) to highly probable (6).

303 Expectations regarding emotional proximity, continuation
304 of the relationship, and consummation of sexual intercourse
305 were viewed as positive expectations, whereas the existence of
306 STIs, including HIV, was considered negative. No value was
307 attributed to condom use.

Procedure

Data were collected in the classroom with variable sized
groups, but never with less than 20 persons and randomly
distributed by conditions. Our instructions indicated that we
were interested in studying the impressions they had formed of
each other and participants were asked to put themselves in the
position of one of the characters (Carlos or Ana) and to evaluate
the situation as he or she would.

Description of the sexual encounter was presented after the
instructions, followed by the adjectives characterizing the
participant’s perception of what one of the characters (the non-
proponent) had thought in relation to the other partner in the
story. This was followed by questions on the likelihood of
certain expectations of the characteristics and future of the
relationship being accomplished.

Each participant responded to only one of the conditions. Six
participants (three women and three men) responded to each
condition, except in conditions without condom introduction
where the number of participants doubled (six women and six
men). To be more precise, in conditions including the condom,
the (proponent) characters were evaluated by six women and six
men, the proponent man by three women and three men, and the
proponent woman by a further three women and three men; thus,
there were six participants per condition. In conditions excluding
the condom, six women and six men were requested to
participate in each condition in order to have an equal number of
answers for each gender character. Half evaluated the male
character and the other half the female character.

Statistical Analysis

The aforementioned 13 adjectives served as the basis for evaluating
the effect of cognitive and contextual variables on the interpersonal
perception of sexual partners. To ensure clear understanding of
potential relations, these items underwent a factor analysis with
orthogonal rotation. The internal consistency of the factors was
estimated by Cronbach’s alpha. Factor scores were obtained with
the regression method from the factor score coefficients and the
matrix of the standardized data waves.

For interpersonal perception, univariate analysis of variance
(ANOVA) was used in order to explore the variables susceptible
to differentiate experimental groups.

For expectations regarding the characteristics and future of the
relationship, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was
used and the significant results were later interpreted on the basis
of a discriminant analysis and explored through an ANOVA.
Significant univariates F and discriminant analysis standardized
coefficients above .40 (to highlight only the most important
results) and non-significant univariate F s with standardized
coefficients above the considered criteria were interpreted in
accordance with the guidelines laid down by Applebaum and
McCall (1983).

² An example of the same experimental condition for casual relationship is presented in the Appendix.

358 **Results**359 **Interpersonal Perception**

360 Examination of the eigenvalues and scree plot indicated that two
 361 factors could be extracted (Table 1), and a total of 13 adjectives
 362 were retained, 8 for Factor 1 and 7 for Factor 2. Judging from the
 363 items that had factor loadings higher than .45 in each of the two
 364 factors, the first was labeled Romanticism (Cronbach's alpha =
 365 .83, accounting for 30.8% of the total variance) and the second
 366 was labeled Responsibility (Cronbach's alpha = .72, account-
 367 ing for 17.6% of the total variance).

368 *Romanticism*

369 Table 2 shows the mean ratings and SDs of romanticism and
 370 responsibility perceived in a potential sexual partner as a
 371 function of the main effects and significant interactions of
 372 relational context, condom use, script terminus, and rater's sex
 373 (first analysis).

374 In terms of romanticism, the ANOVA of this first analysis
 375 showed a significant interaction between condom and script
 376 terminus, $F(2, 177) = 4.43, p = .013, \eta_p^2 = .05$. When the con-
 377 dom was referred to in the encounters, the partners were per-
 378 ceived as less romantic and the difference in romanticism
 379 between condom use and non-use was greater at the beginning
 380 of the encounter than the same difference halfway through and
 381 at the end of the encounter.

382 Table 3 shows the mean ratings and SDs of romanticism and
 383 responsibility perceived in a potential sexual partner as a func-
 384 tion of the main effects and significant interactions of relational

Table 1 Factor loadings for principal component analysis with varimax rotation of 13 trait adjectives for interpersonal perception of a potential sexual partner

Adjectives	Factor 1 Romanticism	Factor 2 Responsibility
Affectionate	.74	.14
Amiable	.74	.19
Kind	.73	.06
Attractive	.72	-.10
Romantic	.61	.29
Spontaneous	.56	-.27
Responsible	-.16	.75
Unadventurous	-.33	.68
Mature	.20	.59
Sincere	.05	.54
Non-Promiscuous	.23	.46
Respectful	.52	.56
Trustworthy	.52	.53

Note: In boldface are highlighted factor loadings (>.45) that contribute most to the factor

Table 2 Mean scores and SDs for main effects and significant interactions for romanticism and responsibility perceived in a potential sexual partner (first analysis)

Controlled variables	<i>n</i>	Romanticism ^a <i>M</i> ^c (<i>SD</i>)	Responsibility ^b <i>M</i> ^c (<i>SD</i>)
Relational context			
Stable	102	-.10 (.98)	.30 (.87)
Casual	99	.10 (1.01)	-.31 (1.03)
Condom use (C)			
Yes	136	-.28 (1.00)	.15 (1.02)
No	65	.58 (.70)	-.32 (.87)
Script terminus (ST)			
Beginning	68	-.36 (1.19)	-.08 (1.00)
Middle	71	.12 (.82)	.01 (1.09)
End	62	.25 (.85)	.08 (.90)
Sex of rater			
Woman	102	.02 (1.09)	.08 (1.06)
Man	99	-.02 (.91)	-.08 (.94)
C × ST			
Yes beginning	44	-.86 (1.10)	-.10 (1.08)
Yes middle	48	-.09 (.78)	.34 (1.00)
Yes end	44	.10 (.87)	.21 (.97)
No beginning	24	.56 (.71)	-.05 (.85)
No middle	23	.56 (.73)	-.68 (.97)
No end	18	.64 (.68)	-.21 (.61)

^a Absolute range for Romanticism: min. = -3.29, max. = 2.31

^b Absolute range for Responsibility: min. = -2.5, max. = 2.26

^c Values are the means of the factor scores

context, communication strategy, script terminus, proponent 385
 gender, and rater's sex (second analysis). 386

In this second analysis, for romanticism, we found a signif- 387
 icant interaction between the communication strategy, the script 388
 terminus, and the proponent's gender, $F(2, 88) = 5.53, p = .005,$ 389
 $\eta_p^2 = .11$, which enabled us to specify that the less romantic 390
 perception of the man, in comparison with the woman, was 391
 heightened when the condom was used non-verbally at the 392
 beginning of an encounter and was inverted halfway through the 393
 encounter when words were used to introduce the condom 394
 (Fig. 1). 395

A significant interaction found between script terminus and 396
 proponent's gender, $F(2, 88) = 6.82, p = .002, \eta_p^2 = .13$, led to 397
 the finding that the less romantic condom proponent was the 398
 man and the difference in proponent romanticism was higher 399
 when the condom was introduced at the beginning than in the 400
 middle or at the end of the encounter. 401

402 *Responsibility*

In terms of responsibility, the first analysis showed a signifi- 403
 cant main effect of the relational context, $F(1, 177) = 20.84,$ 404

Table 3 Mean scores and *SDs* for main effects and significant interactions for romanticism and responsibility perceived in a potential sexual partner (second analysis)

Controlled variables	<i>n</i>	Romanticism ^a <i>M^c</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Responsibility ^b <i>M^c</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Relational context			
Stable	69	-.36 (1.02)	.44 (.94)
Casual	67	.20 (.99)	-.14 (1.03)
Communication strategy (CS)			
Verbal	67	-.27 (.91)	.30 (1.10)
Non-verbal	69	-.29 (1.09)	.01 (.93)
Script terminus (ST)			
Beginning	44	-.86 (1.10)	-.10 (1.08)
Middle	48	-.09 (.78)	.34 (.99)
End	44	.10 (.87)	.21 (.97)
Proponent (P)			
Woman	69	-.05 (.88)	.14 (1.04)
Man	67	-.52 (1.07)	.17 (1.02)
Sex of rater			
Woman	70	-.28 (1.10)	.26 (1.07)
Man	66	-.28 (.90)	.04 (.97)
CS × P			
Verbal woman	35	-.12 (.91)	.11 (1.15)
Verbal man	32	-.43 (.90)	.51 (1.02)
Non-verbal woman	34	.02 (.87)	.17 (.93)
Non-verbal man	35	-.59 (1.21)	-.15 (.91)
ST × P			
Beginning woman	22	-.20 (.84)	.07 (1.09)
Beginning man	22	-1.53 (.92)	-.27 (1.07)
Middle woman	24	-.15 (.79)	.40 (1.05)
Middle man	24	-.02 (.78)	.28 (.95)
End woman	23	.20 (1.00)	-.07 (.97)
End man	21	-.02 (.70)	.50 (.90)

CS × ST × P is a significant interaction and it is shown in Fig. 1 for better understanding of the interaction

^a Absolute range for Romanticism: min. = -3.29, max. = 2.31

^b Absolute range for Responsibility: min. = -2.5, max. = 2.26

^c Values are the means of the factor scores

405 $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .11$. Partners were perceived as being more
406 responsible in a stable relationship than in a casual one. A
407 significant interaction was also found between condom use
408 and script terminus, $F(2, 177) = 5.31$, $p = .006$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$.
409 When the condom was present, the partners were regarded as
410 more responsible and its introduction at the beginning of the
411 encounter did not alter the perception of responsibility, which
412 was higher when it was introduced in the middle or at the end of
413 the encounter (Table 2).

414 In the second analysis, for responsibility, we found the same
415 significant effect of the relational context, $F(1, 88) = 11.42$,
416 $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .12$, as verified in the first analysis. It revealed a

significant interaction between communication strategy and pro- 417
ponent, $F(1, 88) = 4.59$, $p = .04$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$, and the difference in 418
responsibility between using a verbal and non-verbal strategy 419
for condom use proposal was greater when the proponent was a 420
man than when the proponent was a woman (Table 3). 421

Expectations Regarding the Characteristics and Future of the Relationship

422
423
424 The multivariate analyses revealed a set of variables and some
425 interactions bearing an effect on expectations regarding the
426 characteristics and future of the relationship. In the first analysis,
427 the MANOVA revealed statistically significant effects of the
428 relational context, $\Lambda = .63$, $F(6, 186) = 18.33$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 =$
429 $.37$, condom use, $\Lambda = .89$, $F(6, 186) = 3.70$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .12$,
430 script terminus $\Lambda = .76$, $F(12, 372) = 4.59$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .13$,
431 sex of the rater, $\Lambda = .93$, $F(6, 186) = 2.27$, $p = .039$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$,
432 and an interaction between condom use and script terminus,
433 $\Lambda = .87$, $F(12, 372) = 2.31$, $p = .007$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$, on characteris-
434 tics and future of the relationship.

435 Table 4 shows the mean ratings and *SDs* of the character-
436 istics and future of the relationship as a function of the main
437 effects and significant interactions of relational context, con-
438 dom use, script terminus, and rater's sex (first analysis).

439 Univariate analyses showed a significant main effect of the
440 relational context on emotional proximity, $F(1, 191) = 54.79$,
441 $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .22$, which was higher in stable relationships than
442 in casual ones. Emotional proximity was also affected by a
443 significant interaction between condom use and script terminus,
444 $F(2, 191) = 3.79$, $p = .02$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$, which was greater when the
445 partner did not use a condom, and the difference between con-
446 dom use and non-use was higher at the end of the encounter than
447 the same difference at the beginning and halfway through the
448 encounter. Only the relational context contributed to the expecta-
449 tion that the relationship would continue, $F(1, 191) = 78.27$,
450 $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .29$, which was associated with a stable rela-
451 tionship. The inferred probability of sexual relationships was
452 affected by script terminus, $F(2, 191) = 14.14$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 =$
453 $.13$, as condom introduction in the middle or at the end of a
454 sexual encounter increased the expectation of sexual inter-
455 course. It was also affected by the sex of the rater, $F(1, 191) =$
456 5.44 , $p = .02$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$, as men had higher expectations that the
457 encounter would lead to sexual intercourse than women. The
458 condom affected expectation of its use, whereby condom ref-
459 erence in the encounter increased the perception of it being used,
460 $F(1, 191) = 10.15$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$. Finally, sex of the rater
461 affected STI expectations, and women associated condom pro-
462 posal with the presence of an STI more than men, $F(1, 191) =$
463 6.39 , $p = .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$ (Table 4).

464 In the second analysis, the MANOVA revealed statistically
465 significant effects of the relational context, $\Lambda = .55$, $F(6, 90) =$
466 12.08 , $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .45$, script terminus, $\Lambda = .65$, $F(12, 180) =$
467 3.64 , $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .20$, proponent, $\Lambda = .67$, $F(6, 90) = 7.51$,

Fig. 1 Interaction among communication strategy for condom use, script terminus, and proponent in perceived romanticism

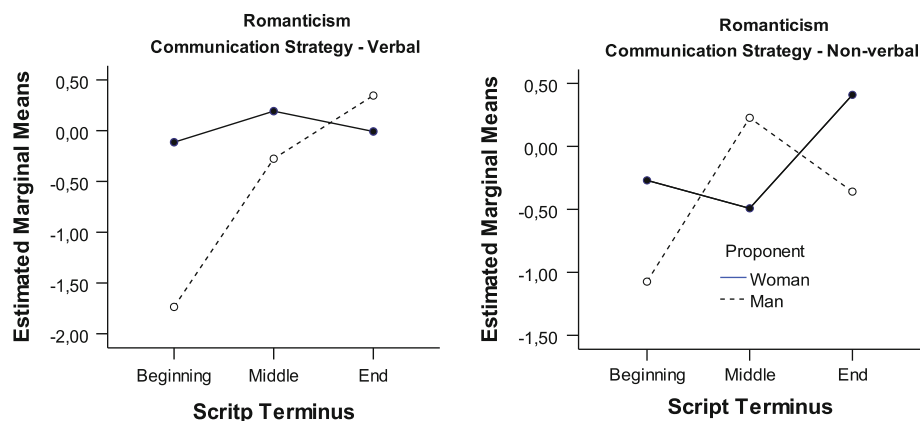


Table 4 Mean scores and SDs for main effects and significant interactions for characteristics and future of the relationship (first analysis)

Controlled variables	<i>n</i>	Emotional proximity ^a <i>M (SD)</i>	Relationship continuation ^a <i>M (SD)</i>	Sexual relations ^a <i>M (SD)</i>	Condom use ^a <i>M (SD)</i>	STI ^a <i>M (SD)</i>	HIV ^a <i>M (SD)</i>
Relational context							
Stable	108	4.80 (.90)	4.41 (.91)	4.62 (1.24)	4.83 (1.25)	2.77 (1.02)	2.64 (1.16)
Casual	108	3.67 (1.27)	3.18 (1.00)	4.65 (1.54)	4.96 (1.25)	2.81 (1.10)	2.72 (1.13)
Condom use (C)							
Yes	144	4.11 (1.27)	3.77 (1.15)	4.63 (1.45)	5.08 (1.26)	2.88 (1.03)	2.77 (1.10)
No	72	4.49 (1.13)	3.83 (1.11)	4.64 (1.28)	4.54 (1.14)	2.60 (1.10)	2.50 (1.21)
Script terminus (ST)							
Beginning	72	4.10 (1.13)	3.74 (1.02)	3.89 (1.52)	4.72 (1.42)	2.85 (1.06)	2.85 (1.15)
Middle	72	4.14 (1.20)	3.88 (1.20)	5.04 (1.05)	5.14 (.92)	2.69 (1.08)	2.44 (1.03)
End	72	4.50 (1.34)	3.76 (1.19)	4.97 (1.27)	4.83 (1.32)	2.82 (1.04)	2.75 (1.22)
Sex rater							
Woman	108	4.22 (1.27)	3.80 (1.07)	4.41 (1.53)	4.81 (1.28)	2.97 (1.07)	2.85 (1.10)
Man	108	4.26 (1.20)	3.79 (1.20)	4.86 (1.20)	5.00 (1.21)	2.60 (1.01)	2.51 (1.16)
C × ST							
Yes begin	48	3.88 (1.18)	3.65 (1.04)	3.83 (1.72)	4.69 (1.57)	2.92 (1.00)	2.90 (1.13)
Yes middle	47	4.21 (1.16)	4.02 (1.10)	5.02 (.96)	5.35 (.85)	2.85 (1.08)	2.69 (.99)
Yes end	48	4.25 (1.45)	3.65 (1.28)	5.04 (1.25)	5.19 (1.18)	2.88 (1.02)	2.73 (1.18)
No begin	24	4.46 (.93)	3.92 (.97)	4.00 (1.06)	4.79 (1.06)	2.71 (1.16)	2.75 (1.19)
No middle	24	4.00 (1.29)	3.58 (1.35)	5.08 (1.25)	4.71 (.91)	2.38 (1.06)	1.96 (.95)
No end	24	5.00 (.93)	4.00 (.98)	4.83 (1.31)	4.13 (1.33)	2.71 (1.08)	2.79 (1.32)

^a Absolute range, 1–6

468 $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .33$, sex of the rater, $\Lambda = .85$, $F(6, 90) = 2.66$,
469 $p = .02$, $\eta_p^2 = .15$, and an interaction between script terminus and
470 proponent, $\Lambda = .74$, $F(12, 180) = 2.41$, $p = .006$, $\eta_p^2 = .14$, and,
471 among relational context, proponent and sex of the rater,
472 $\Lambda = .83$, $F(6, 90) = 3.10$, $p = .008$, $\eta_p^2 = .17$, on characteristics
473 and future of the relationship.

474 Table 5 shows the mean ratings and SDs of the characteristics
475 and future of the relationship as a function of the main effects
476 and significant interactions of relational context, communica-
477 tion strategy, script terminus, proponent gender, and rater's sex
478 (second analysis).

479 Univariate analyses showed that relational context contrib-
480 uted to the expectation that the relationship would continue, $F(1,$
481 $95) = 68.68$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .42$, and, as in the first analysis, it
482 was associated with a stable relationship. The sex of the rater
483 affected the inferred probability of sexual intercourse, $F(1,$
484 $95) = 7.18$, $p = .009$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$, as men had higher expectations
485 that the encounter would lead to sexual intercourse than women.
486 A significant interaction between script terminus and proponent
487 also affected this encounter's characteristics, $F(2, 95) = 11.67$,
488 $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .20$, and showed a lower inferred probability of
489 sexual intercourse when the condom was proposed at the

Table 5 Mean scores and *SDs* for main effects and significant interactions for characteristics and future of the relationship (second analysis)

Controlled variables	<i>n</i>	Emotional proximity ^a <i>M (SD)</i>	Relationship continuation ^a <i>M (SD)</i>	Sexual relations ^a <i>M (SD)</i>	Condom use ^a <i>M (SD)</i>	STI ^a <i>M (SD)</i>	HIV ^a <i>M (SD)</i>
Relational context (RC)							
Stable	72	4.67 (.90)	4.43 (.95)	4.60 (1.31)	5.07 (1.29)	2.79 (.99)	2.61 (1.11)
Casual	72	3.55 (1.35)	3.11 (.94)	4.69 (1.59)	5.08 (1.24)	2.97 (1.06)	2.93 (1.08)
Communication strategy							
Verbal	72	4.00 (1.23)	3.72 (1.18)	4.75 (1.38)	5.10 (1.18)	2.89 (.99)	2.75 (1.07)
Non-verbal	72	4.23 (1.31)	3.82 (1.13)	4.51 (1.52)	5.06 (1.35)	2.88 (1.07)	2.79 (1.14)
Script terminus (ST)							
Beginning	48	3.88 (1.18)	3.65 (1.04)	3.83 (1.72)	4.69 (1.57)	2.92 (1.01)	2.90 (1.13)
Middle	48	4.21 (1.16)	4.02 (1.10)	5.02 (.96)	5.35 (.86)	2.85 (1.07)	2.69 (.99)
End	48	4.25 (1.45)	3.65 (1.28)	5.04 (1.25)	5.19 (1.18)	2.88 (1.02)	2.73 (1.18)
Proponent (P)							
Woman (w)	72	4.20 (1.23)	3.81 (1.11)	5.22 (.89)	5.22 (.94)	2.85 (1.00)	2.69 (1.08)
Man (m)	72	4.03 (1.32)	3.74 (1.20)	4.04 (1.66)	4.93 (1.51)	2.92 (1.06)	2.85 (1.12)
Sex rater (S)							
Woman	72	4.07 (1.31)	3.81 (1.11)	4.39 (1.57)	4.88 (1.39)	3.07 (1.07)	2.92 (1.10)
Man	72	4.15 (1.24)	3.74 (1.20)	4.88 (1.29)	5.28 (1.10)	2.69 (.96)	2.63 (1.09)
ST × P							
Begin woman	24	4.13 (1.19)	3.83 (.92)	5.04 (1.04)	5.29 (.91)	2.96 (1.12)	2.75 (1.15)
Begin man	24	3.63 (1.13)	3.46 (1.14)	2.63 (1.38)	4.08 (1.86)	2.88 (.90)	3.04 (1.12)
Middle woman	24	4.17 (1.11)	4.00 (1.15)	5.29 (.75)	5.21 (.78)	2.79 (.88)	2.50 (.88)
Middle man	24	4.25 (1.22)	4.04 (1.08)	4.75 (1.07)	5.50 (.93)	2.92 (1.25)	2.89 (1.08)
End woman	24	4.29 (1.40)	3.58 (1.25)	5.33 (.87)	5.17 (1.13)	2.79 (1.02)	2.83 (1.20)
End man	24	4.21 (1.53)	3.71 (1.33)	4.75 (1.51)	5.21 (1.25)	2.96 (1.04)	2.63 (1.17)

RC × P × S is a significant interaction and it is shown in Fig. 2 for better understanding of the interaction

^a Absolute range, 1–6

490 beginning of the encounter by a man. For condom use expect-
491 tation, there was an interaction and, both in stable and casual
492 relationships, the woman proponent increased the expectations
493 that the condom would be used, although for men this occurred
494 more in stable relationships and for women in casual relation-
495 ships, $F(1, 95) = 10.28, p = .002, \eta_p^2 = .10$ (Fig. 2).

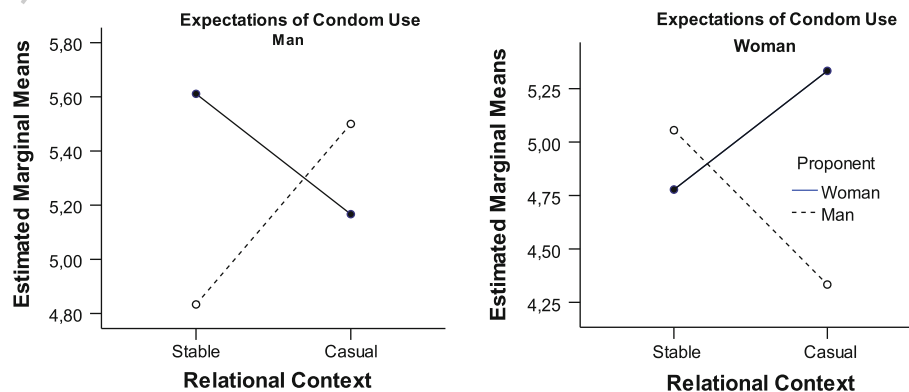
496 Finally, the sex of the rater affected STI expectations, as
497 women associated condom proposal with the presence of an
498 STI more than men, $F(1, 95) = 5.64, p = .02, \eta_p^2 = .06$.

Discussion

499 Findings confirmed the possibility of impression formation on
500 personality traits and the development of expectations towards
501 the characteristics and future of the relationships based on the
502 manipulated variables in the sexual encounter descriptions.
503

504 Particular emphasis has been given to romanticism in this
505 discussion, not because we defend that it should always be
506 present in sexual encounters, but due to the fact that its

Fig. 2 Interaction among relational context, proponent, and sex of the rater in expectations of condom use



507 association with the condom increased the likelihood of its
508 usage (e.g., Galligan & Terry, 1993).

509 The relational context only partially affected partner percep-
510 tion and had a low impact on condom use expectations. Partners
511 in a stable relationship were viewed as being more responsible
512 but not as more romantic as predicted in Hypothesis 1. Thus, it
513 was only partially corroborated. This lack of differentiation in
514 perceived romanticism alerts us to the possibility of it being
515 equally present in casual relationships, thus making the latter
516 more legitimate. Furthermore, contrary to what was expected,
517 condom use was not lower in a stable relationship than in a
518 casual one, and there did not seem to be a connection between
519 sex as an expression of desire and protection or between sex as
520 an expression of love and the absence of protection (Rosenthal
521 et al., 1998). This was not the result of affection also being asso-
522 ciated with protection, but of the desire to not have a connection
523 with condom use, hence not corroborating Hypothesis 6.

524 Another conclusion of this study is that condom use was not
525 viewed as being romantic, which corroborated Hypothesis 2.
526 Indeed, the partners who did not use a condom in a sexual
527 encounter were perceived as being more romantic, even though
528 those who did use it were considered to be more responsible.
529 However, romanticism is believed to be more valued in an
530 encounter than responsibility, since it is an actively sought
531 expectation associated with sexual encounters (Flowers et al.,
532 1997; Galligan & Terry, 1993) and considered more important
533 than other social traits (Bryan et al., 1999). Therefore, it is
534 believed that by not using protection, a message of greater affec-
535 tion, intimacy, and expectations of commitment associated with
536 the encounter may be transmitted. The fact that emotional
537 proximity was coupled with encounters excluding condom use,
538 partially corroborating Hypothesis 5, helps to uphold the sym-
539 bolic barrier between trust and intimacy conveyed by the con-
540 dom (Hammer et al., 1996). Belief in the fear of causing a
541 negative impression by using the condom may be justified in
542 terms of less romanticism being associated with the condom
543 proponent.

544 However, it is possible to increase the perception of roman-
545 ticism and the expectation of sexual intercourse in encounters
546 where the condom is used, when suggested by the woman,
547 introduced later on in the encounter and verbally referred to.
548 When the probability of condom use was analyzed in an encoun-
549 ter, the most effective proponent was, invariably, the woman.
550 This result did not corroborate the fear of women of being
551 socially stigmatized for suggesting and being in possession of a
552 condom, thus not corroborating Hypothesis 3. Whenever a man
553 suggested condom use, it was more effective in accentuating
554 romanticism and responsibility halfway through the encounter,
555 hence corroborating Hypothesis 4, which anticipated the end of
556 the sexual encounter as the less intrusive moment for condom
557 introduction. Perceived romanticism was increased when the
558 condom was verbally referred to. As far as romanticism is
559 concerned, non-verbal condom proposal at the beginning of an

560 encounter by a man should be carefully considered. As for
561 expectations regarding sexual intercourse, condom introduction
562 instigated by a man at the beginning of an encounter should
563 also be equally considered. So, women can be encouraged to
564 suggest condom use, since being regarded as more romantic
565 may increase acceptance and use of protection, contrary to what
566 women habitually fear. These results may reflect the determi-
567 nant role of the woman in sexual encounters, as on showing
568 herself to be responsible in terms of protection she is also giving
569 information as to her availability to have sex, thus increasing the
570 positive expectations of a set of characteristics regarding the
571 relationship and the proponent's personality traits. However,
572 men should also be encouraged, and try to avoid premature
573 condom proposal in sexual relationships, since it may lead to the
574 understanding that sexual intercourse has been taken for granted
575 from an early stage, thus altering the expectations of the deter-
576 minant female role in such situations, which is not well accepted
577 by either gender.

578 Therefore, in order to increase the probability of condom
579 acceptance and to have protected sexual intercourse, the con-
580 dom should be introduced later on in the sexual encounter. This
581 recommendation differs from most, although it has been iden-
582 tified in other studies (e.g., Edgar & Fitzpatrick, 1993), sug-
583 gesting that additional research is necessary to test its benefits.

584 Condom reference (verbal and non-verbal) during the encoun-
585 ter increased expectations that it would be used. This may indicate
586 that once protection has been addressed or brought to the aware-
587 ness of the partners during an encounter, it will be more difficult to
588 forget its importance and get around using it. An educational
589 approach to promoting the development of competencies for
590 negotiating the condom may be a way of heightening its use
591 (Visser & Smith, 2001) and condom reference during the sexual
592 encounter draws on the most effective strategies for doing so.

593 Verbal reference to the condom deserves mention, especially
594 when instigated by the man, since it triggered a positive impres-
595 sion of the partner and, consequently, tends to bring about a
596 more positive reaction in the receiver (Snyder, Tanke, &
597 Berscheid, 1977). In fact, women associated more empathy
598 towards their thoughts and feelings to verbal proposals (Bryan
599 et al., 1999), and this communication strategy may contribute to
600 the transmission of greater proximity and increase the use of a
601 type of protection that is often considered the antagonist of inti-
602 macy. Nevertheless, the communication strategy does not seem
603 to contain information on expectations regarding the charac-
604 teristics and future of the relationship and thus both the verbal
605 and non-verbal form can indistinctly affect condom introduc-
606 tion in a sexual encounter.

607 A more preoccupying conclusion is that condom use indi-
608 cates STIs. It is not the first time that condom use has been
609 associated with promiscuity on the part of university students
610 (Williams et al., 1992). The condom does not seem to be asso-
611 ciated with an act of protection, but rather with an act of
612 remediation, particularly for the women in the sample. This

613 belief may be taken as an indication that condom use is limited to
614 a sporadic and transitory situation, such as the case of a STI.
615 However, a more positive interpretation of the data may show
616 that protection is frequent in the case of a STI. Nevertheless,
617 there seems to be a relationship between condom use and dis-
618 ease, instead of the condom being associated with a healthy
619 status.

620 There are a number of limitations in this study which need
621 to be addressed. First of all, as a convenience sample, the find-
622 ings cannot be generalized to cover other age groups from dif-
623 ferent geographical regions or with different sociocultural
624 backgrounds. Secondly, artificially created situations do not
625 guarantee similarity to the actual experience itself. In spite of the
626 fact that these situations were constructed to be as close as
627 possible to the sequence of expected events in the sexual experi-
628 ences, we are aware of how difficult it is to create a realistic
629 environment. The use of filmed sequences would have helped
630 render the encounters more real. Thirdly, due to the study
631 design, the lack of significance of some outcomes may be due to
632 the small power associated with the reduced sample size in some
633 experimental conditions. However, the significant relations
634 encountered among many of the manipulated variables encour-
635 aged us to present this study, although additional participants
636 would be necessary to fully evaluate its outcomes and help to
637 clarify some of the current results.

638 The most important implication of this study is the need to
639 make condom use and its proponent more romantic. The con-
640 dom should convey a sense of concern and affability towards
641 one's partner, and protection should be connected to affection
642 and not disease, contrary to what seems to be the association
643 shared by the sample, particularly the women.

644 We may also highlight the importance of women being
645 encouraged to take the lead in suggesting condom use, owing to
646 the higher level of romanticism and positive characteristics
647 associated with this situation. We realize that women, in gen-
648 eral, are already disproportionately overburdened with having
649 to accommodate so many sides to heterosexual relations, such as
650 avoiding unwanted pregnancies, greater physical vulnerability,
651 STIs, and sexual violence that to ask them to take on the extra
652 responsibility of condom use may not be the fairest and most
653 acceptable strategy.³ However, it is possible to regard our sug-
654 gession from a more positive perspective, whereby women do
655 not have to wait for a man to make the first move and, indeed,
656 feel perfectly at ease to take the lead themselves, whenever so
657 desired. Hence, this approach may be viewed as a way of
658 empowering women rather than burdening them. Even so, in the
659 case of men, a number of alternatives for increasing romanti-
660 cism and thus the likelihood of condom use have emerged. We
661 encourage the suggestion of condom use halfway through the

sexual encounter, at which point stronger physical intimacy will
not yet have occurred. Another important implication is the
verbal introduction of the condom as a strategy for making its
use known and creating more positive impressions of the pro-
ponent. Finally, as mentioning the condom during the sexual
encounter increases expectations of its use, it is thought that
reference to the condom may heighten the probability that it will
be used during sexual intercourse.

Future research may include interventions planned in accord-
ance with the results obtained, so as to enable testing of the
relevance of the findings in this study, particularly the reference
to condom use halfway through the sexual encounter, which
clearly calls for further research.

Appendix

Example of one experimental condition for casual relationships
(condom use, verbal communication strategy, by a man pro-
ponent, up to the end of the script):

Carlos and Ana do not know each other and, on this
particular day, they meet in a disco. They notice each
other and look each other in the eye. He starts to chat to
her and they talk for a while about trivial things and pay
each other compliments before approaching more per-
sonal subjects. In the disco, they have a few drinks, they
chat and try to get to know each other better, and they are
physically attracted. They dance and/ start to touch each
other/. They kiss and continue to kiss and then they both
decide to leave. Their caresses become more intimate
and they decide to go to one of their homes. They listen to
music, dim the lights, and begin to kiss and exchange
caresses again. They get completely undressed. He says
he prefers using a condom.

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3FL01
3FL02

³ We would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for drawing attention to this fact.

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