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Millennial Sex Habits: The sexual attitudes and behaviors of unmarried undergraduate males at a small, private, Christian institution.

By Travis T. York

Abstract

This study analyzed the sexual attitudes and behaviors of 211 unmarried, traditionally-aged undergraduate males at a small, private, Christian, liberal arts institution in western Pennsylvania. As hypothesized, data were largely consistent with millennial theorists' projections about current students' decline in sexual activity in comparison to data from the past. The results of this project also confirm the relevance of the Social Norms Theory to the study of sexual behavior (Berkowitz, 2003). Descriptive data and definitions of sex, virginity, and abstinence are also discussed. This research suggests that student development professionals should invest in education and programming that provides accurate statistics about sexual behaviors.

Introduction

Millennial theorists, such as Howe and Strauss (2007), indicate that the new generation of students primarily comprising college campuses is perceived to be more "traditional," "conventional," "religious," "driven," and "special," than the students that have passed through higher education over the past couple of decades. To what extent do these characteristics define the actions and beliefs of this generation? In particular, what does this mean for the current college students and their sexuality? Very little conclusive research has been gathered about the sexual attitudes and behaviors of current students; barely any at all have been related to Christian institutions. Thus higher education professionals are faced with two distinct questions: What are the sexual attitudes and behaviors of the students on a Christian college campus? How do these beliefs and behaviors compare to those of the past?

This study used a survey to explore the sexual attitudes and behaviors of male undergraduate students at a private, Christian, liberal arts institution. The survey included several questions that were taken from a similar survey conducted in 2003. This 2003 survey, created by A. Jacob and used by permission, provides some descriptive data for comparison from the same demographic at an earlier date. The present study pays particular attention to the trends that may be present within this sample of millennial students. The goal of this research is to provide accurate data that can be used in assessing and improving programming in this area. The purpose of this project is to give student development professionals insights into the sexual values and practices of male undergraduates, and to confirm or contrast trends suggested by generational theorists regarding the sexual attitudes and behaviors of millennial students.

Definitions

High-risk behaviors are behaviors that can lead to the contraction of serious sexually transmitted diseases, the most common of which is HIV. The following is a list of activities that most commonly fall under this classification:

- Unprotected intercourse without male or female condom use, except in a long-term, single-partner (monogamous) relationship.
- Unprotected mouth-to-genital contact, except in a long-term, monogamous relationship.
- Early sexual activity, especially before age 18.
- Having multiple sex partners.
- Having a high-risk partner (one who has multiple sex partners or other risk factors).
- Having anal sex or a partner who does.
- Having sex with a partner who injects or has ever injected drugs.
- Exchange of sex (sex work) for drugs or money.

Sexual health or prevention programs are commonly oriented around the goal of lowering or stopping high-risk behaviors amongst their participants.

Sexual intercourse, *sexual activity*, and *sexual partners* are all terms that do not have clear definitions. For this project, the term *sexual intercourse* will be defined as any sexual activity that involves penile/vaginal or penile/anal penetration, unless otherwise differentiated. A large number of researchers, such as Randall and Byers (2003), are finding that students themselves have differing opinions on what the definitions of these terms are, which is why this study hopes to gain a clearer understanding of what these terms mean to this group of people. *Sexual activity* includes any activity that a participant(s) engages in where sexual stimulation occurs. Since this is such a broad definition, for this study the term will be used to signify activities that include, but are not limited to: sexual intercourse, oral sex, and masturbation. The term *sexual partner* most commonly describes a partner with whom sexual intercourse has been had (and this will be the primary definition used in this study unless otherwise denoted); however, more recent studies (Randall & Byers, 2003) show that this demographic repeatedly considers *sexual partners* to be anyone with whom a *sexual activity* has occurred, especially where at least one person obtains orgasm. Therefore, it should be noted that while the primary definition does hold true for this term, this term could be more broadly used to define partners with whom *sexual activity* has occurred.

Literature Review

The actual reliability of data collected in sexual attitude and behavior assessments is highly debatable because of recent trends that show a multitude of definitions for the meaning of what “sex” is. While the hope of many remains that exposure to sex education and programs about healthy sexuality will decrease student involvement in high-risk sexual activities, what research is showing this to be the case? Are these hopes held without much understanding or research about what students’ current sexual attitudes and behaviors are? Such questions also involve questions and assumptions about what “healthy” sexuality looks like and what types of sexual activities are

considered “high risk.” What may be more concerning is the lack of research conducted on this topic at smaller private Christian liberal arts institutions at all.

The importance of gathering accurate research about students’ behaviors and sexual history is intensified with the negative effects related to students’ lack of knowledge or inflated statistics. Page, Hammermeister, and Scanlan (2000) indicated that students who were more sexually active also displayed higher estimates about their peers’ sexual activity. Not surprisingly, the researchers also found the inverse to be true: students who estimate less active peers tended to be less active themselves, which the researchers attributed to the Social Norms Theory, which describes a strong correlation between students’ perception of their peers’ behaviors and their own. This information becomes more concerning as this study shows that males on average estimate higher activity for their peers than is actual. The result is that without accurate information about the reality of sexual activity amongst males, they are more likely to participate in sexual activities.

In fact, males who estimated that 75% or more of their male peers were sexually active were 11 times more likely to have had sexual intercourse in the past months than were those estimating this to be true of less than a quarter of males (Page *et al.*, 2000, p. 390).

This overestimation is also supported by the *Journal of American College Health* (2007) who reports that students overestimated both rates of oral sex and number of sexual partners: 45.2% of students reported having had oral sex one or more times, although they estimated that 93.1% had in the past thirty days; and the rates of sexual partners: 75.8% of students had zero or one partner in the past year, although they estimated that only 17.7% had zero to one sexual partner.

Scholly, Katz, Gasciogne, and Holck (2005) provide further explanation to this effect, saying that college populations who are exposed to health education programs that focus on high-risk behaviors and inflated statistics understand their peers’ behaviors as being more involved or more risky than they truly are. As a result, students may begin or increase their participation in high-risk behaviors so that their behaviors are in line with the high-risk perception they hold of their peers. If male students are given more accurate norms regarding the sexual activities and attitudes of their peers, they are less likely to participate in high-risk situations since most males overestimate their peers’ behaviors.

Scholly, *et al.*, (2005) are not alone in their perception that college educators and administrators are limited in their information about students’ sexual attitudes and behaviors. In writing about the importance of programs on sexuality for students and their apparent limited success, Langer, Warheit, & McDonald (2001) note, “...it is clearly evident that an understanding of the risk and protective factors on which many prevention programs are based needs further refinement and elaboration” (p. 134). They go on to cite that age (older), age of first sex (younger), number of sex partners (greater), and gender (male) are the top four correlates for risky behavior; with this in mind, it is not surprising that the “Morbidity and Mortality College Risk Study” done by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in 1997 also shows these protective factors colliding in a negative way amongst college males. The study reported that males were more likely to have had their first intercourse younger than age 13 and more likely to have had six or more partners.

Other studies trying to find the correlates of risky sexual behaviors have made similar connections to the relationship between a person's sexual history and their current and persistent sexual actions. A study conducted at a small Midwestern college surveyed unmarried undergraduates about their sexual behaviors, attitudes, and knowledge. In their results, Ratliff-Crain, Donald, and Dalton (1999) found that, while it had largely been unstudied, sexual history was a stronger predictor of risky behavior than any other factor examined by these researchers. Moreover, age of first intercourse was indicated as the strongest factor in their study. They also noted that this study found that those who engaged in intercourse at a younger age were more likely to persist in risky behavior and perceive peer norms to be more consistent with their behavior (Ratliff-Crain, et al., 1999, p. 639). This study intensifies the need for accurate research assessing perceived norms, sexual history, and their relationship to sexual attitudes especially as males are continually noted as being more involved in high-risk predictors such as younger age of first intercourse and higher numbers of partners.

There is another consideration that must be given to these situations: while males are shown to be more likely to have engaged in sexual activities at younger ages and to have more sexual partners, this data may be skewed due to their definition of these terms. Students' understanding and definitions of "sex," "sexual partner," and even "being unfaithful" have a broad range (Randall & Byers, 2003). In this study, Randall and Byers (2003) concluded that sex researchers could not assume that these terms meant the same thing for their participants and subsequently advised researchers to carefully define the sexual terms they use to question the specific behaviors they were intending to gather data on. These researchers concluded that unclear or general terms could decrease the accuracy of the gathered data due to the test individuals' variations in definition. As these researchers began to study the sexual trends and history of students, they found that definitions of what sex is and is not were not as clear as they originally anticipated. Their 2003 study conducted at the University of New Brunswick reported that "... the current sexual script defines sex narrowly and many behaviors that students might agree are sexual activities are nonetheless not having sex" (Randall, et al., p. 93). The study went on to find that most students reported that only activities that involved the genitals of both partners made the cut of being defined as sex, while activities involving one person's genitals—such as oral sex—was only a sexual activity, not sex. Furthermore, the researchers concluded that students also had varying understandings or definitions of what "having sex," "sexual partners," and even "unfaithful behaviors" meant. As a result of these variants, there were certain activities that many students categorized as unfaithful behavior but that they did not consider to be "having sex."

Research conducted over the span of two decades (1980-2000) indicates a steady increase in sexual activity among college students. (Netting & Burnett, 2004, p. 34) This data is consistent with popular thought about the sexual liberation experienced by many adolescents during the 80s and the early 90s; however, it is most important in contrast to the more recent research. The information that the Center for Disease Control collects annually provides statistics regarding the current trends in youth behavior across America. In 1993 the CDC reported a drop in the percentage of high school students who had experienced sexual intercourse with one or more partners in the past three months. Likewise, this percentage has dropped each year since, and there was an overall reduction of 9.5% between 1991 and 2005 (CDC, 2007). Later this trend showed up

in higher education as well. Amy Holmes reported in her article *Hook-up U: Sexual Practice Amongst College Students* (1999) that the UCLA's survey of college Freshman found approval of promiscuity at its lowest point in 25 years. What is it that caused this change? This question has been the topic of much debate, especially for generational theorists.

Neil Howe and William Strauss have proposed answers to this question with their work on generational trends. In *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* (2000), Howe and Strauss note the falling trends of not only sexual intercourse, but also the number of sexual partners and involvement in high-risk behavior correlatives (p. 197). Their book *Millennials Go to College* (2003) did not just describe this new generation's (largely classified as persons graduating high school in 2001—thus their most popular name: Millennials) actions, but also described the characteristics that dictated such behavior trends. Here Millennials are primarily described as being more religious, more sheltered, and more conventional than their predecessors. George Gallup, Jr., remarks that according to recent Gallup polls:

Teens are decidedly more traditional than their elders were, in both lifestyles and attitudes. Gallup Youth Survey data from the past 25 years reveal that teens today are far less likely than their parents were to use alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana. In addition, they are less likely than their parents even today to approve of sex before marriage and having children out of wedlock... They are searching eagerly for religious and spiritual moorings in their lives. They want abstinence taught in school, and they think divorces should be harder to get (Howe, *et al.*, p. 60).

Data which describes millennials as less sexually active, then, is not surprising when other studies show that religiosity is significantly related to sexual attitudes in that “the more religious a person tends to be, the more likely he or she will also hold conservative attitudes about sex” (Beckwith & Morrow, 2005). But are these attitudes and projections of millennial behavior consistent with their behaviors today?

Are millennials really less sexually active or have their definitions of sex just become more narrow? Is there any difference with this type of data collected at a small, private, Christian liberal arts institution versus the type of data at other institutions? Unfortunately, there is very little data with which to answer these questions. Along with the decrease of sexual intercourse reported by the CDC, a 4.4% increase of high school sexual education was also reported (2007). This statistic could suggest that sexual education has some sort of positive effect upon reducing high risk behaviors, barring any other mediating factors; however, high-risk behavior is still a prominent aspect for many students' lives. Langer, et al. (2001) notes this inconsistency, arguing that such sexual education programs' limited success makes it evident that there is a need for greater understanding of the correlates of risky behavior and the protective factors that can be implemented (p. 134).

In accordance with such a need, this project seeks to provide some amount of additional information to the already expansive field of male students' sexual attitudes and behaviors. With the apparent gap of this data at small, private, Christian liberal arts institutions, I hope to provide accurate descriptive information about the sexual nature of students at such an institution. The discussions and data presented will certainly not answer all of the questions presented, nor will they be able to propose the “best”

programming methods for “good” or “healthy” sexuality; however, the desired outcome is that professionals in higher education will move along that path by describing trends that can be seen in this population and that may be present in others. In so doing, I hope that this information will educate and encourage others to continue to research this important topic.

Method

Five hundred and seventy students met the required demographics of the quantitative study, being non-married, male, undergraduate students. Those students were each invited by email to participate in the study which was being conducted securely online. Of these, 211 students volunteered to take the 42-question, online, multiple choice survey during a one-week period. Invited students were assured of their anonymity, and approval was gained by the Institutional Review Board of the participating institution. Invited students were also given a list of on/off-campus resources, should they have experienced any discomfort due to the survey and wanted to seek counsel.

Delimitations

This survey has been narrowed from the previous survey (2003) given in its scope by concentrating on several specific delimitations: males, undergraduates (18 years and older), unmarried, at a small, private, Christian, liberal arts institution in western Pennsylvania. The previously-conducted survey (2003) was conducted at the same institution, thus to preserve the integrity of some of the data that is being compared, its environment will be kept as constant as possible. The encouragement of such Biblical standards as abstinence prior to marriage, the view of homosexual acts as sinful, or even the enforcement of an alcohol-free campus by this faith-based institution might also delimit the population’s activity and thus should be taken into account.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this project as well. The chosen population is so specific that any trends or suggestions made may not translate to other institutions. The campus’s conservative environment, size, and location may also limit students’ sexual behaviors. While this is not damaging to the research conducted, it is a noteworthy limiting factor in that students may have more conservative behaviors at this institution because of these factors and not because of their generational trends. The size of this institution may also limit a student’s feeling of anonymity, and could thus limit a student’s exploration of some sexual behaviors. Finally, the very nature of the information being asked is somewhat of a limitation, as the subject may be perceived as being highly personal, which may limit honesty in the responses.

Results and Analysis

Population Characteristics

This study consisted of research gathered from 211 completed surveys (570 students were invited to participate voluntarily). These students were 18 years of age or older, unmarried, and attended a small, private, Christian, liberal arts institution located in western Pennsylvania. Race was not questioned due to the ability to link minority answers with their potential demographic data. The mean age was 20.5, and the mode age was 21. Participants were well dispersed amongst class status: 18.4% Freshmen,

24.5% Sophomores, 24% Juniors, and 33.2% Seniors. Participants were primarily traditionally aged, with only 3% (n=6) indicating they were 25 years or older in age. Participants lived on campus for a mean of 3.9 semesters. Students' relational status was described as: 42.3% Single, not dating; 15.3% Single, dating; 6.6% In a relationship, not dating; 26% In a relationship, dating; 8.7% Engaged; and 1% Other. When asked, 95.7% of the students said that their religion/spirituality was important in their life (65.6% very important, 30.1% important), and in an average school week, 22.6% reported attending 1 religious gathering (35.5%-2; 23.1%-3; 6.5%-4; 4.8%-5) or more, and only 7.5% said they "Do not attend." This data was gathered to explore what correlation, if any at all, exists between students' sexual behaviors, their participation in religious activities, and the importance of religion/spirituality in their lives. It is pertinent to note that there were different correlations found between all three of these factors which will be discussed further in greater depth.

Descriptive Data

When describing what "practicing abstinence," "being a virgin," and "having had sex meant," students had varying definitions for these three terms. Figure 1 shows their answers:

Figure 1.

To you, "being a virgin," means...
(Please mark all that apply.)

	Response Percent	Response Total
No kissing	0.5%	1
No light petting (hands above clothing)	8.6%	16
No heavy petting (hands underneath clothing)	15.1%	28
Not having oral sex	62.2%	115
Not having intercourse	96.8%	179
Other (please specify)	4.3%	8
Total Respondents		185

To you, "practicing abstinence," means...
(Please mark all that apply.)

	Response Percent	Response Total
No kissing	3.2%	6
No light petting (hands above clothing)	30.3%	56
No heavy petting (hands underneath clothing)	53%	98
Not having oral sex	80.5%	149
Not having intercourse	94.6%	175
Other (please specify)	7.6%	14
Total Respondents		185

Figure 1. Continued

For which of the following acts would you label that a person “has had sex”?
(Please mark all that apply.)

	Response Percent	Response Total
Kissing	0.6%	1
Light petting (Hands above clothing)	3.1%	5
Heavy petting (Hands underneath clothing)	6.8%	11
Manually stimulating another’s genitalia	31.7%	51
Oral sex	62.7%	101
Intercourse (penile/vaginal)	98.1%	158
Intercourse (Anal)	86.3%	139
Total Respondents		161
(skipped this question)		50

While the majority of students included sexual intercourse in their definitions, the number of students who did not define some acts as sex should be noted. Oral sex is not particular to abstinence by 19.5% (n=36), not a disqualification of virginity by 37.8% (n=70), and not considered sex by 37.3% (n=60). Likewise, anal intercourse is not considered sex by 13.7% (n=22). This data is consistent with other research conducted in general student populations (Randall & Byers, 2003).

As hypothesized, the sexual behavior averages were overall lower than the national averages reported by the National College Healthy Risk Behavior Survey (Page et al., 2000). When asked about their first sexual activity, 75.4% said they had experienced some sexual activity; the average age being 16.1 years old [24.6% (n=41) reported that they had not had any sexual experiences]. Only 29.9% (n=50) reported having ever experienced sexual intercourse. Additionally, 72 (42.2%) respondents reported they had experienced oral sex. Below are more response details:

Figure 2. With which of the following have you had intercourse? (Please mark all that apply.)

	Response Percent	Response Total
A female I’m in a relationship with	26.3%	44
A male I’m in a relationship with	0.6%	1
A female friend	18%	30
A male friend	0.6%	1
A female stranger	7.8%	13
A male stranger	0.6%	1
I have not had intercourse	67.7%	113
Total Respondents		167
(skipped this question)		44

Figure 2. Continued

At what age did you first experience intercourse?		
	Response Percent	Response Total
14 or younger	3.6%	6
15	1.2%	2
16	5.4%	9
17	7.8%	13
18	4.8%	8
19	3.6%	6
20	3.6%	6
21	0.6%	1
22	0%	0
23	0%	0
24 or older	0%	0
Not yet happened	69.5%	116
Total Respondents		167
(skipped this question)		44

With how many partners have you ever had intercourse?		
#	Response Percent	Response Total
0	69.3%	115
1	12.7%	21
2	5.4%	9
3	4.2%	7
4	1.2%	2
5	1.8%	3
6 or more	5.4%	9
Total Respondents		166
(skipped this question)		45

When asked to describe their feelings after viewing erotic material, participants most commonly responded that they felt guilty [73.3% (n=121)] and shameful [62.4% (n=103)]. The most common source of viewing erotic material was through the Internet (67.9%, n=112). When asked to think of the past six months and report how often they viewed pornography in a typical month, students answered with the following answers:

Figure 3.

Think of a typical month during the past 6 months. In total, how often did you view erotic films, videos, magazines, Internet sites, or chat-rooms during this month?

	Response Percent	Response Total
One or two times a month	37.3%	62
Once a week	11.4%	19
A few times a week	14.5%	24
Once a day	3.0%	5
Several times a day	1.8%	3
Never	31.9%	53
Total Respondents		166
(skipped this question)		45

Comparative Data - Millennial Trends

In both studies (2007 & 2003), respondents were overwhelmingly heterosexual; however, this study showed an increased indication of non-heterosexual self-descriptors when asked to describe the respondents’ sexual orientations. The 2003 survey showed 95.5% heterosexual (n=106); this study (2007) shows 95.2% (159) heterosexual. The 2003 study indicated that 5.2% (n=3) of the males had some sexual activity with another male and this study showed a similar 5.6% (n=8). What is interesting is that both studies had showed some percentage of students who classified themselves as heterosexual, but that had also experienced sexual activities with another male. The current study added the option of “heterosexual/curious” to its answer choices and received a 3% (n=5) choice of this descriptor.

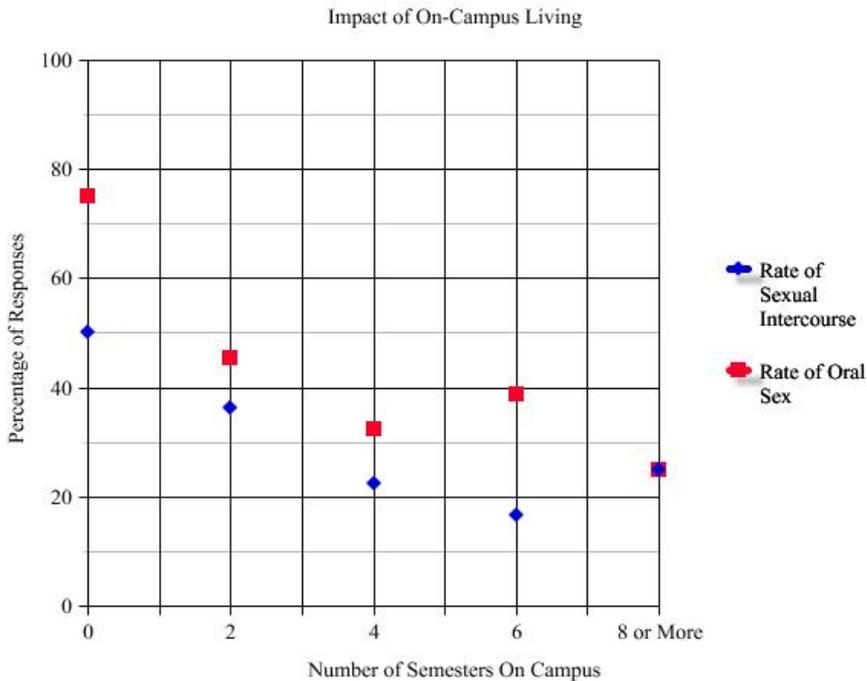
The current study found 50 respondents (29.9%) who reported that they had engaged in sexual intercourse, which shows an unexpected 10.1% increase from the 2003 survey which reported that only 19.8% of the males had engaged in sexual intercourse. This increase is counter to the millennial projections; however, it most likely resulted from the delimited sample group of the 2003 study. For instance, the 2003 study only surveyed students in traditional halls. This difference may be impactful to the study because of the negative correlation found between residents living in traditional halls and their participation in sexual activities found through this study. As Figure 4 shows, traditional hall participants have lower peer estimates of sexual intercourse which will further link to less, and less risky, sexual engagement.

With respect to living arrangements, this study shows a correlation between the amount of time spent living on campus and a student’s sexual behaviors. Figure 4 shows a negative association with rates of sexual intercourse and oral sex as the number of semesters on campus increase. Since this study was conducted in the spring, typical college students are grouped in the even-numbered semesters, whereas the odd-numbered semesters indicate a much smaller group of mid-year transfers or mid-year

new students. It was interesting to note that those who reported an odd number of semesters (likely to be transfers or non-traditional students) had higher rates of sexual intercourse and oral sex.

This relationship deserves further research. Does this living environment have a limiting effect upon these behaviors or do less sexually active students seek out these living conditions? What do these statistics say about younger millennial students coming into higher education?

Figure 4.



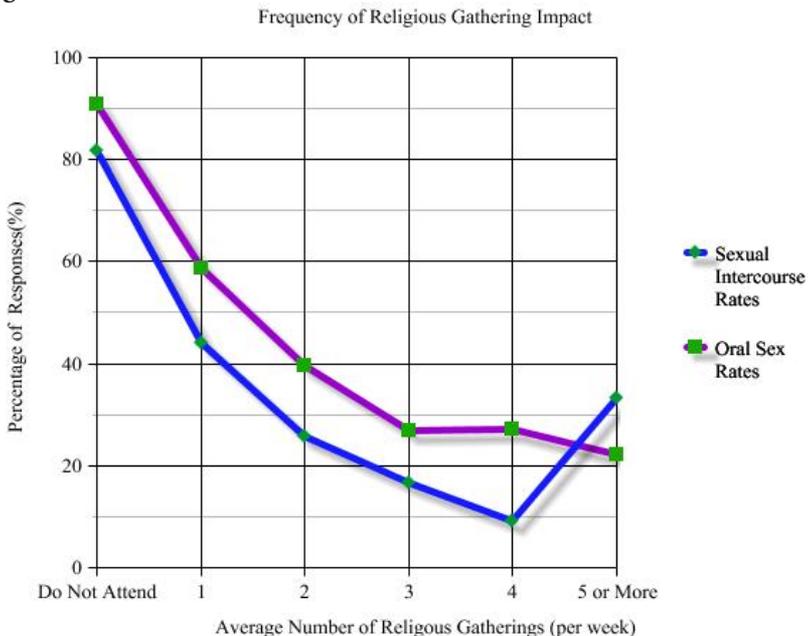
It is important to note that all of these statistics are far below the national average rates of sexual behavior offered by the CDC. In reference to high-risk behaviors, it has already been shown that the sample group which participated in this research study engaged in sexual activity and intercourse at an older age. The research shows this sample group to be a considerably safer (or less involved in high-risk behaviors) population with an extremely large decrease of 45.5% in intercourse where neither partner used a condom. The 2003 study showed that 68.2% (n=15) had experienced sex without a condom, where this study only showed 21.7% (n=34). This statistic is made even more poignant when it is noted that of the 34 respondents that reported engaging in sexual intercourse where neither partner used a condom, 23 lived somewhere (on or off campus) other than traditional dorms. This would indicate that had the 2003 study included participants from these living arrangements, this decrease of engagement in high-risk sexual intercourse would be even greater. Of these respondents, 19 (12.1%)

reported participating in this act with only one partner, six (3.8%) reported doing so with two partners, two (1.3%) reported three partners, one (0.6%) with four partners, and six (3.8%) with five or more partners.

Other comparisons that are affirming with millennial trends are the areas where respondents indicated they received the majority of their information about sex or health-related issues to sex. Both studies [2007—66.5% (n=123) and 2003—66.6% (n=74)] show close friends as the most frequently mentioned source of information. There was a small increase from 51.4% (n=57) to 56.2% (n=104) with the second most indicated choice of “Parents/Legal Guardian”. From this point the past survey showed “general peer group” as next most common choice (36%); however in this study, 77 respondents (41.6%) indicated “TV” as their next most common choice. This data supports the media-driven nature of millennials (Howe et al., 2000). This is further supported by the fourth most indicated choice of the Internet at 75 indications (40.5%), which is a marked increase of 18%.

Data also supported that millennials are more religiously active than their predecessors and there are interesting comparisons between the importance they indicated of their religion/spirituality and the frequency of attendance at religious gatherings. Figure 5 shows the association between attendance at religious gatherings and the rates of sexual intercourse and oral sex. The effect is remarkable. Moreover, it is intriguing to note that the importance of religion/spirituality had little correlation to behaviors in contrast to the clear negative correlation that frequency of gatherings showed. In other words, the importance of religion or spirituality showed little to no effect upon a participant’s engagement in high-risk behaviors whereas their frequency in attending religious gatherings had a strong delimiting effect, as the graph below demonstrates.

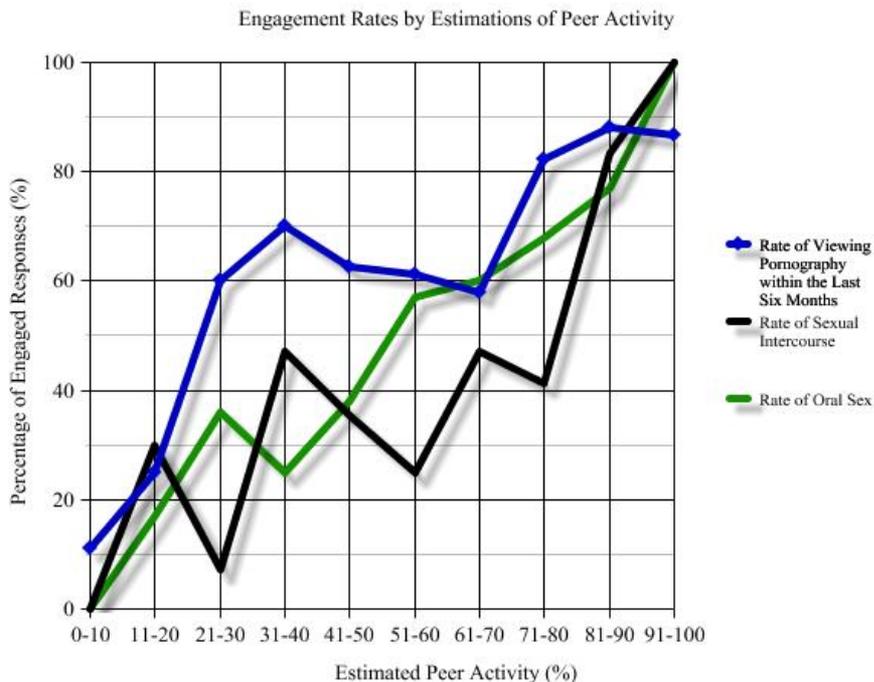
Figure 5.



Social Norms Theory Data

The following data looks specifically at the effects of estimated peer activity upon the actual sexual behaviors of those participants. The results confirm the Social Norms Theory (Berkowitz, 2003), which theorizes that as estimates of peers' sexual activities increase, so will the actual behaviors of that individual. Figure 6 shows the comparative data of estimates of peer sexual activity with that of participants' rate of sexual activities (delineated by specific behaviors). There is a clear overall positive association which is consistent with the Social Norms Theory. Students who estimated that 0-10% of their peers were engaging in sexual intercourse were not engaging in sexual intercourse themselves at all. Moreover, as the research suggests (Scholly et al., 2005) and as hypothesized, it is shown that students who have high estimates about their peers' engagement in sexual intercourse are much more likely to be engaged in sexual intercourse themselves.

Figure 6.



Conclusion and Recommendations

The data collected gives a clearer picture of the types of sexual behaviors this demographic may be engaging in. While the data certainly shows millennial students are safer (meaning less involved with high-risk sexual behaviors than the same demographic in the recent past) in their sexual activities, it also shows that a large number of these students are engaging in risky behaviors. While more students are presently shown to be engaging in more sexual intercourse than the 2003 study, this may actually be attributed to the limiting correlation of the sample's living situation. In this previous study, the entire sample resided in traditional halls, which through this study has a limiting correlation with sexual behaviors. Similarly the statistics discovered about this demographics' sexual behavior, are more meaningful in their scope coupled with the firmer definitions of what "sex," "sexual partners," and "sexual activity." Clearly, students' varied responses to what these terms mean further confirm that researchers must be clear and detailed when they are inquiring about this topic. It is also interesting to note here that the majority of students in this study hold a more narrow description for what a virgin is than for what it means for a person to practice abstinence. In other words, a person can still be a virgin yet not be abstinent because of their sexual activities which may not include sexual intercourse. This difference in definitions further supports the hypothesis made that this generation of students, while safer, are still involved in sexual activities even though the rates of sexual intercourse continue to drop (CDC, 2006).

Because of the overwhelming support that the data lends towards the Social Norms Theory, I would recommend that student development professionals seek opportunities to educate students about correct sexual activity statistics. Furthermore, with the lowered rate of sexual activity engagement on a campus like this one (i.e., small, private, Christian, liberal arts institutions), these departments should seek to research and share lowered statistics. As students start to form more correct and thus lower estimates, they are more likely to be less involved in high-risk sexual activities and less involved in premarital sex, assuming that there aren't any other mediating factors. Programs that focus on high-risk statistics can inflate student perceptions and actually cause increased probability for high-risk behaviors. A note must be made here that while it is my belief that this relationship is causal, the data only suggests a correlation; thus, further research must be done to prove this hypothesis.

The negative correlation between religious/spiritual gatherings (such as times of worship, small groups, accountability groups, etc.) and sexual activity can clearly be seen in this data. Further research should be done to seek out a causal relationship here as well. If such a relationship does exist, student development professionals on non-religiously-affiliated campuses would be wise to make sure students are provided with religious resources. Religiously-affiliated institutions should seek to hold open communication and intentional programming about these topics, especially since "Teacher/Professor" was indicated 37.3% of the time when asked who students received the majority of their information about sex from. Students may face social stigma and/or policy infraction issues as they deal with the nature of their sexuality; however, developing a healthy sexuality that is both expressive and safe is imperative for the long-term success of these people.

Further study about the correlates of high-risk sexual behavior and the protective factors upon students is desperately needed. Additionally, further study at other similar

institutions is necessary. Are protective correlates such as on-campus living or traditional hall settings distinctive to this population, or are they found at other institutions as well? While millennials are predicted to be less sexually involved, the data from the four-year span of respondents at this institution question whether or not millennials are really less sexually active. A note should be made here that the sample was fairly homogeneous in its ethnic makeup, so a recommendation for further research with a diverse sample should be conducted. Furthermore, high-risk behaviors are still taking place despite this generation having had the most sex education in history as well as the most parental involvement (Howe, et al., 2003). How will the attitudes and behaviors shown affect the culture that these students are beginning to inherit or the culture they are creating? Will we adequately prepare them for the work they have, not only vocationally, but also with the ability to live healthy lives, of which sexuality is such an integrated part?

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