Spring 2012

Assumptions and "Facts" About College Self-Reported Sexual Behavior

Emily M. Pariseau
Trinity College, emily.pariseau@trincoll.edu

Assumptions and "Facts" About College Self-Reported Sexual Behavior

Emily Pariseau

Trinity College

Hartford, Connecticut

Spring 2012

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Randy Lee for his continuous support and encouragement throughout this entire process. I appreciate so much the time he generously dedicated to help me formulate my ideas and make this study a reality. I could not have done it without him.

I would like to thank Professor Chapman for helping me with the analysis component of this project; her enthusiasm made the process enjoyable.

Finally, I would like to thank all the Trinity College students who participated in my study. They bravely decided to share with me personal information about their sexual lives and assumptions. None of this could have been possible without them.

Table of Contents

Abstract

Many young people of today view sexual intercourse with a very casual attitude. The terms "hooking up" and "friends-with-benefits" have been introduced to our vocabularies. While young people are, on average, losing their virginity at the age of 17, they are holding off on marriage until their mid-to-late 20's (Bogle, 2008; Bianchi & Casper, 2000), and that combination leaves many years for sexual experimentation. The present study was conducted to investigate some of the factors that may influence the decisions that young people are making when it comes to their sexual lives. An online survey developed for this study was administered by email to a random sample of 800 Trinity College undergraduate students and 288 responded. Some Ss were asked to report their own behavior, some were asked to give their assessment of the norm at the College, and others were asked to do both. It was hypothesized that factors, such as gender, religion, alcohol/drug use, and parents' marital status would impact how students were behaving sexually. It was also predicted that students would perceive the sexual norm to be more promiscuous than it actually was. Results indicate that alcohol/drug use have an impact on more aspects of students' sexual lives than gender, religion, or parents' marital status. Students who frequently drank alcohol or used recreational drugs were more likely than expected to partake in various promiscuous sexual behaviors. Results also indicate that students perceive that their peers are more sexually promiscuous than they actually are. When this finding is thought of in the context of social norms (and that individuals often feel the desire/need to conform to the norm), it is suggested that college students feel pressure to conform to a false idea of normality.

Introduction

Attitudes about Sex Throughout History

Attitudes towards sex and sexuality are constantly changing and evolving. While having sex is as natural a human practice as eating or sleeping, it wasn't until the late 19th and early 20th century that sexuality entered the popular realm of conversation (Robinson, 1976). In comparison to the 19th century sexual ideas, which are often referred to as "sexual orthodoxy" (Robinson, 1976, p. 5), with the 20th century came the introduction of revolutionaries such as Sigmund Freud and Havelock Ellis, marking the start of the still-continuing conversation about sex.

Starting in the 1890's and continuing into the 20th century, the world was shocked by the radical ideas of Sigmund Freud. To look at one of Freud's many contributions to the world of psychology, he introduced the idea that despite the lack of previous attention paid to sex, sex played a large role in many human thought processes and motivations (Brenner, 1974).

Freud theorized that the instinctual aspects of a person's mental life are governed by two drives, the sexual and the aggressive. According to him, the sexual drive accounts for the erotic component of those mental activities, while the aggressive drive accounts for the destructive component. However, Freud argued, these two drives do not function separately. Instead, in each instinct, both the sexual and aggressive drives participate to varying degrees (Brenner, 1974).

Freud argued that these drives are not only present in adults, but that children's mental processes are similarly influenced by the same drives. Freud suggested that from infancy a child grew into their sexual drive through four stages (the oral stage, the anal

stage, the phallic stage, a latency period and then the genital phase). According to Freud, the oral stage occurs during the first year and half of life, when the infant's sexual organs of focus are the mouth, lips and tongue. During this phase the infant's sexual desires, as well as gratifications, are primarily oral ones. In the next year and half of life, the child transitions to the anal phase, and their sexual organ of focus becomes their anus. Then towards the end of the child's third year of life, the focus is directed towards their genitals during the phallic stage, a stage that continues until around age six. From age six to puberty a latency period then occurs before the genital stage occurs during puberty (Brenner, 1974).

Freud also introduced the theory of the Oedipus complex. He proposed that a young male child is jealous of their father and wants to eliminate them in order to be in a sensual relationship with their mother. Similarly, the young female child is jealous of their mother and wants to eliminate them in order to be in a sensual relationship with their father. However, when the child realizes that this cannot happen, Freud proposed that feelings associated with the complex are in part abandoned and in part repressed (Brenner, 1974).

Diverging drastically from popular opinion at the time, it can be seen through Freud's theories that not only did he feel that sex was a necessary topic of discussion, but that he felt that understanding the drive associated with it (along with the aggressive drive) was integral in understanding how mental processes function.

Following Freud, Americans were introduced to the revolutionary ideas of Havelock Ellis (Robinson, 1976). Ellis suggested that men needed to learn how to respect

rather than despise their bodies, and that this was the principal task of "social hygiene" which could be achieved through sexual education. He argued that in order for men to be sexually healthy, which would ensure psychological and social stability, they needed to engage in honest conversations about any longings that they were experiencing. Through these conversations, Ellis proposed, men could steady themselves and learn to better respect their bodies. Ellis had the revolutionary opinion that rather than censorship and secrecy, sex should be out in the open (Ellis, 1912).

Ellis worked to legitimize "taboo" sexual behavior. He strayed from the idea of sexual normality and instead insisted that there was a continuum of sexual behavior. He felt that what others had classified as perversions, such as homosexuality and bisexuality, could be seen simply as extremes on this continuum (Robinson, 1976). In *Sexual Inversion,* Ellis discussed homosexuality in a way that had never been done before. He argued that homosexuality was "invariably congenital" (Robinson, 1976), which went against previous arguments that saw it as a vice, or something that was developed as a result of sexual excess (usually masturbation).

Ellis was a sexual enthusiast and felt that the world needed less restraint and more passion. He spoke often about the naturalness and beauty of sex, a belief that differed greatly from those of Freud, or in an even bigger regard from the ideas of "sexual orthodoxy" of past generations. However, Ellis did not argue that the beautiful practice of sex did not require restraint. Sex was complicated, Ellis noted, because sexual relationships induced emotions and thus transformed into personal relationships (Robinson, 1976). Generally, Ellis believed that sex should be engaged in by two people of the opposite sex who were in love, and that these two individuals should be bound to

each other in a monogamous relationship. However, despite this belief, Ellis spoke openly about his disagreement with the traditional Western concept of marriage. He found it ridiculous that two individuals should be bound to each other by contract, because in his eyes when the physical and psychological attachments that held two individuals together no longer existed, that the marriage no longer existed (Robinson, 1976).

Another way that Ellis pushed the boundaries was with his actual definition of monogamy. Ellis suggested that humans have a desire for sexual variety that can often not be fulfilled through having sexual relations with only one person. He hoped that in the future the bonds of monogamy would be relaxed so that married individuals could also have sexual relationships outside of their marriage. He stressed that married couples should be true to each other psychologically rather than physically, and should be open with each other about their sexual practices (Robinson, 1976). He argued that this practice would be better than the psychological infidelity that was occurring during the time, through people appeasing their desire for variety through prostitution and secret affairs.

Despite the monumental work of Havelock Ellis and Freud, by the 1940's there had still been little attempt to actually examine how Americans were behaving sexually. Alfred Kinsey, a college biology professor of the time, found that students would often come to him with questions about sex, hoping that as a scientist he may be able to provide them with some factual information (Kinsey, 1953). However, he did not always have all the answers. Similarly, when Kinsey was given the task of teaching a newly introduced sexual education class in 1938, politely called a marriage course, he again

found that many of the students' questions he was unable to answer because of lack of knowledge (Alfred Kinsey, 2012). Kinsey arrived at the conclusion that science didn't know what people did in their private lives, a realization that would lead to him launching his own research on the subject.

Kinsey's fundamental ideology when it came to sex was tolerance. Over and over again he stressed the need for "sympathetic acceptance of people as they are" (Kinsey, 1953, p. 10). It may have been this exact ideology that allowed so many Americans to speak candidly with Kinsey about their sexual practices. Through extensive personal interviews, Kinsey asked Americans to tell all when it came to their sexual histories. He asked them about marital experiences, solitary experiences, heterosexual and homosexual experiences, experiences with animals as well as with children. Kinsey asked Americans about things that at the time they never would have spoken about, and his results were startling.

One aspect that Kinsey asked his participants about was petting, which he defined as an activity performed to produce erotic arousal, but that did not include vaginal or anal intercourse. Despite many petting techniques (such as deep kissing, mouth to breast contact, and mouth to genital contact) being taboo at the time, Kinsey found that many people were in fact engaging in these behaviors. Kinsey reported that 88 percent of single or unmarried females between the ages of 16 and 25 had engaged in petting, and 32 percent had done so and achieved an orgasm. When looking at women who had not engaged in premarital intercourse, Kinsey found that 70 percent had engaged in deep kissing, 30 percent had engaged in mouth to breast contact, 36 percent had had their genitals manually stimulated by a male, 24 percent had manually stimulated a male's

genitals, 2 percent had orally stimulated a male's genitals, and 3 percent had had their genitals orally stimulated by a male. When looking at women who had engaged in premarital sex, he found that between 80 and 93 percent had engaged in deep kissing, between 68 and 87 percent had engaged in mouth to breast contact, between 87 and 95 percent had had their genitals manually stimulated by a male, between 72 and 86 percent had manually stimulated a male's genitals, between 20 and 46 percent had had their genitals orally stimulated by a male, and between 16 and 43 percent had orally stimulated a male's genitals (Kinsey, 1953).

Another aspect that Kinsey focused on during his interviews was homosexuality. He shocked the American public with the statistic that 37 percent of males had had at least one homosexual experience to orgasm sometime between adolescence and old age and that around 50 percent had at some point responded to homosexual stimuli (Kinsey, Pomeroy & Martin, 1948). Similarly shocking to many, Kinsey reported that through his many thousands of interviews he had observed no correlation between masturbation and physical or mental damage, and that in fact there was no such thing as "excessive masturbation" (Kinsey, 1953). Another one of his startling statistics reported that about 50 percent of married men were having extramarital intercourse (Kinsey et al., 1948).

Kinsey's results caused a media frenzy, and both books topped the bestseller lists. Despite Kinsey claiming that he was not in the business of morality and was simply collecting data, his work caused a conservative backlash. Many argued that his results undermined the sanctity of the family. Others were simply not ready for what Kinsey reported. In particular, many were horrified by *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, because at the time women were expected to adhere to a different set of values. Certainly,

he was challenging the conservative climate of the country, and was referred to as the "Columbus of Sex" by *Time* magazine. With his starling statistics revolutionary openness, Kinsey had opened the door to a new way of considering sexuality.

Many have argued that the Kinsey reports are not truly representative of the groups that they claim to be, the human male and the human female (Robinson, 1976). To start, people have pointed out that his studies were limited to people in the United States and Canada. Additionally, the researchers decided to exclude black people from the sample (Robinson, 1976). Kinsey argued that his sample was representative because it included people of both sexes, all ages, and from all different religious, socio-economic, and educational backgrounds. However, many have argued that other factors are also relevant when studying sexual behavior, such as intelligence, race, and family experiences (Robinson, 1976). Many other individuals were appalled that his sample included inmates and sex offenders, such as pedophiles (Alfred Kinsey, 2012).

While Kinsey has been attacked by critics for sampling errors, his first book on sexuality, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, looked at data from twelve thousand people and his second book on sexuality, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, looked at data from eight thousand women, numbers that clearly cannot just be ignored.

While Kinsey revolutionized the American concept of sex by examining reported sexual behaviors, by the 1960's still no research had been done that studied the anatomy and physiology of the human sexual response. This changed, however, with the work of William Masters and Virginia Johnson. Through direct observation, Masters and Johnson attempted to answer two questions: "What happens to the human male and female as they

respond to effective sexual stimulation? Why do men and women behave as they do when responding to effective sexual stimulation" (Masters & Johnson, 1966, p. 10).

Masters and Johnson observed that the human physiological reaction to sexual stimuli could be looked at in four separate stages: the excitement stage, the plateau stage, the orgasmic stage, and the resolution stage. Generally, they emphasized the similarity of the male and female sexual responses. However, Masters and Johnson noted that generally males displayed only one response pattern, while females displayed multiple response patterns. Their data showed that the male resolution stage included a refractory period, which needed to terminate before they could again be stimulated and achieve sexual tension. On the other hand, women were capable of experiencing multiple simultaneous orgasms (Masters & Johnson, 1966).

They used a variety of mechanical devices to make observations as accurate as possible. Through these methods they were able to provide some basic, long-overdue physiological facts when it came to the human sexual response. For example, they were able to report that vaginal orgasmic contractions occur at approximately 0.8-second intervals (Masters & Johnson, 1966).

The researchers then took all that they had learned about the human sexual response and applied it to dealing with issues of sexual inadequacy. In books such as *Human Sexual Inadequacy* (1970), and *Human Sexuality* (1982), Masters and Johnson discussed the sexual dysfunctions that occur when the ordinary physiological sexual responses are impaired, what causes these impairments, and how they can be treated through sexual therapy.

Moving away from Victorianism and sexual orthodoxy, Freud, Ellis, Kinsey, and Masters and Johnson introduced the world to new ideas about sexuality. Their theories and research disproved assumptions of Victorian thought and achieved major breakthroughs when it came to human sexuality. Behaviors that were once generally viewed as dirty and perverted were brought into the public realm as behaviors that average people were engaging in. They set the stage for more honest and accepting communication about sexual practices and encouraged the scientific world to no longer ignore the study of sex.

Contemporary Attitudes

Is it possible, however, that, sparked by the work of theorists such as Kinsey, Masters, and Johnson, our present day American culture has become *too* comfortable with the topic of sex? Much has changed since the time when sex was a topic that researchers veered away from and people never spoke of. One need only turn on their television or open a magazine to see how present sex is in our current culture. Advertisements show scantily clad, voluptuous women and muscular, bare-chested men with products ranging anywhere from cigarettes to juice drinks. A recent study (Reichert & Carpenter, 2004) found that there was a general increase in sexual dress and intimate contact from 1983 to 2003. They found that female models were more provocatively dressed than in the past, and that in 2003, 78% of women featured in advertisements in men's magazines were "sexually attired" (Reichert & Carpenter, 2004).

America's hypersexualized culture in part comes from the abundance of "sexual material, erotica, and pornography" (Kammeyer, 2008). However, the intense opposition

that many Americans have towards sex's role in our society also contributes to our culture's hypersexualized manner. While artists, authors, publishers, entertainers, therapists and many others push the limits of sexual openness, there are also members of our community, such as antipornography crusaders and religious individuals who are constantly trying to repress sexual content (Kammeyer, 2008). These two opposing forces create an ever-present tension, which results in a culture that in many ways revolves around sexuality.

However, this does not mean that in our present day society we have reached a point where there is open and honest communication about sexual practices. While sex is ever present in the media and talked about often, the way that sex is represented is often not true to how people are actually behaving. What does the presence of sex in our media and culture actually say about how individuals are behaving sexually? Is there any truth in the "reality" series that stream through our televisions, depicting young people who have extremely active and promiscuous sexual lives? While one cannot escape sexual content in our culture, there seems to be a disconnect between this representation of sexuality and what is actually happening.

One of the most important missions of the social sciences is to attempt to present as accurate a picture of societies as possible (Harpignies, 2009). One may think that, since Kinsey's groundbreaking work over 60 years ago, now all types of information about sexuality and sexual behavior would be available. However, in actuality, there are still many topics related to sex that are not fully understood and that have not been fully studied. While extensive research has been done on subjects such as condom use, reproduction, and erectile dysfunction, there are still many areas where we are in the dark.

The main cause of this lies in funding. Funding for large-scale, well-designed surveys, which would provide more realistic portraits of how Americans are behaving sexually, simply is not available (Harpignies, 2009). Many conservatives, remembering the power that Kinsey's statistics held, oppose large-scale surveys, seeing them only as a way to legitimize sexual behaviors that they don't agree with (Harpignies, 2009). Focus on the Family and the Family Research Council, two of the leading socially conservative organizations, actively monitor professors and research. They have been known to campaign to discredit teachers and studies that they object to, for example, studies about sexual behavior (Harpignies, 2009). Along the same lines, the Traditional Values Coalition (an organization representing over 40,000 churches) created a list in 2003 of 150 researchers doing work that they disagreed with, a lot of which was related to sexuality, and presented it to conservative politicians. In response to this, Congress threatened to terminate several sex studies that were being conducted by respected researchers, and government health officials refused to finance a proposal made by several major universities to train students in studying sex (Harpignies, 2009). Clearly, sex is still a highly charged subject in our present day culture. Our nation's attitudes towards sexuality are extremely paradoxical. On one hand, we allow far more sexual content into the public realm through media and entertainment than we once did. On the other hand, however, we are still very squeamish and uncomfortable at our core about sex and as a result discourage the serious study of many areas of the field, which still contain unknowns.

With a lack of concrete research on sexual behaviors, people rely on those around them for their information about sex. During childhood, the main source of information

for children is their parents or guardians. However, during adolescence and emerging adulthood, relationships with close friends become particularly important and influential. When young adults transition from high school to college they begin spending much more time with friends than with family, and studies have shown that college students report that their friends are their most useful sources of information regarding sex (Kallen, Stephenson, & Doughty, 1983). Individuals report that they feel more comfortable talking with peers about sex, and that the information that they get about sex through their peers is more useful than the information they get from their parents (DiLorio, Dudley, & Soet, 1998; Kallen et al., 1983).

When talking to their peers about sex, young people have coined a new word of choice to describe sexual interactions: "hooking up." Researchers have defined "hooking up" as a sexual encounter between two people for which there is no further commitment (Lambert, Kahn & Apple, 2003). This definition does not specifically mean sexual intercourse but could refer to any physical and sexually charged interaction. However, young people are not so concrete in their definition of the term. Even individuals partaking in the activity have difficulty defining it, with definitions varying from "just kissing" to "fooling around" to "having sex" (Bogle, 2008, p. 25). Despite the ambiguity of the term, it is clear that "hooking up" has replaced dating on college campuses (Bogle, 2008). Young people of today are on average first having intercourse at the age of 17, but holding off on marriage until their mid-to-late 20's (Bogle, 2008; Bianchi & Casper, 2000). These statistics, coupled with the fact that more and more young people are spending the first years of their adults lives on reasonably unsupervised college campuses, creates the perfect storm for sexual experimentation, and somewhere along the line this

experimentation took the form of "hooking up". Researchers have found that many young people view sex as "no big deal" (Gavey, 2005, p. 107), and it is this same casual attitude that is reflected in the relaxed term "hook up".

However, young people's nonchalant attitudes about their sexual interactions do not come without consequences. Some researchers have found that penetrative hook up sex was predictive of emotional distress in women (Fielder & Carey, 2010). Similarly, studies have found that female students find hook ups less enjoyable than their male counterparts (Owen, Rhoades, Stanley, & Fincham, 2010) and are more likely to regret them afterwards (Paul & Hayes, 2002). These negative emotions that female college students feel after hook ups may be a result of the double standard that exists when it comes to men and women's sexual experiences. This double standard is that men are always eager for sex and looking for an urgent means for sexual release, while women have sex with men, but only for the satisfaction of the male and only when in a committed relationship (Holloway, 1984). Despite the younger generation's resistance to this idea, it still very much affects present ideas and conceptions of people who partake in various sexual acts. For example, "sluts," a term used to describe women who are perceived as too loose in their sexual encounters, are not considered date-worthy (Bogle, 2008), while the same standard is not held for men. This double standard may impact the reputations of females who take part in casual hook ups, and thus be the cause of the reported dissatisfaction and regret.

However, this is not to say that males *never* regret their sexual experiences. One study found that 23 percent of college females and 7 percent of college males have had one or more experience of unwanted vaginal, anal, or oral sex since starting college

(Flack, Daubman, Caron, Asadorian, D'Aureli, & Gigliotti, 2007). Another study suggested that between 44 percent and 47 percent of all sexually active American undergraduate students have consented to unwanted vaginal intercourse (O'Sullivan & Allgier, 1998; Sprecher, Hatfield, Cortese, Potapova, & Levitskaya, 1994). This startling statistic not only suggests that undergraduate students are having unwanted sex, but that they are *consenting* to unwanted sex. This point leads us to the question: why would students consent to unwanted sexual intercourse?

The answer to this question may lie in descriptive norms. A "descriptive norm" refers to the perception of how common a behavior is in one's peer group (Carey, Borsari, Carey, Maisto, 2006). When applying descriptive norms to sexual behavior on college campuses, it would be the perception of one's peers' sex lives. However, *perception* is the key word in this definition, because often how students perceive their classmates to be conducting themselves is not how they actually are. The term "pluralistic ignorance" is used in situations like these, when beliefs held by a group of individuals are erroneous (Chia & Lee, 2006). One study found that students generally over-estimate how many other college students are engaging in casual hook ups (Lambert, Kahn & Apple, 2003). Another study suggested that college students overestimate their peers' sexual activity, and numbers of partners (Scholly et al., 2005). Many theorize that these misconceptions may encourage individuals to partake in promiscuous behavior in a misguided attempt to conform to the perceived norm (e.g. Scholly et al.).

The Present Study

The present study investigated how college students are behaving sexually at a small liberal arts college in Connecticut. Trinity College students were surveyed regarding how they were personally behaving sexually as well as how they believed other Trinity College students were behaving. Four separate surveys were administered. One survey asked participants only about their personal sexual behavior, another survey asked participants only about how they believed their peers were behaving sexually, and the last two surveys asked participants about both topics, in opposite orders.

All participants were asked to answer multiple questions regarding their personal identity and experiences. They were asked about their class year, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, relationship status, and religion. They were also asked if they drank alcohol, if they used recreational drugs, and if their parents had ever been divorced or separated. In addition they were asked to briefly describe their values/beliefs when it comes to sexual behavior. Further analysis of these variables along with reported behavior was used to determine if any of these elements had an impact on sexual practices.

Past research has been done to look at the impact of some of these factors on sexual behavior. Research has shown that there is a negative relationship between religion and risky sexual behavior in adolescents (Landor, Simons, Simons, Brody, & Gibbons, 2011). Some research suggests that people whose parents are divorced or separated generally behave differently sexually than people whose parents stay married. Individuals with divorced or separated parents have been seen to have a greater number

of sexual partners and lose their virginity at a younger age (Jónsson, Njarðvik, Ólafsdóttir, Grétarsson, 2000). This difference in sexual behavior may be a result of the effect of parental separation on child attachment style (Schachner & Shaver, 2004). Greater alcohol and drug use have been seen to be predictive of sexual risk taking in college students (Turchik, Garske, Probst, & Irvin, 2010). Past research done with Trinity College students suggests that males have more sexual partners than females (Mohr, 2007). One of the present study's goals was to determine if these past findings would hold true for its participants.

After answering questions regarding their personal identity and experiences, participants were asked to answer questions about their personal sexual behavior, perceived sexual behavior of others, or both. The data collected when participants were asked about their sexual behavior was used to represent how students are actually behaving, while the data collected when participants were asked how they thought their peers were behaving was used to represent the perceived norm. These data sets were then compared to draw conclusions regarding the relationship between perceived normal sexual behavior and actual sexual behavior.

Hypotheses

Based on past research, the following hypotheses have been developed for the present study:

Sexual Behavior of Trinity Students

Gender Differences

-Males will be less likely to be virgins than females

-Males will report having sex more frequently than females

-Males will report a greater number of sexual partners than females.

-Females will report lower satisfaction with their sexual lives

Religion Differences

Participants who report being strongly religious:

-Will be more likely to be virgins

-Will report having sex less frequently

-Will report fewer sexual partners

-Will be less likely to report having had sex with someone they were not in a monogamous relationship with

-Will be less likely to report having engaged in sexual activity with more than one person during a given period of time

-Will be more likely to report developing close relationships with their sexual partners before having sex with them

-Will report using condoms more

Alcohol/Drug Use Differences

Participants who report drinking alcohol/ using recreational drugs often:

-Will report having sex more frequently

-Will report a greater number of sexual partners

-Will be more likely to report having had sex with someone they were not in a monogamous relationship with

-Will be more likely to report having engaged in sexual activity with more than one person during a given period of time

-Will be less likely to report developing close relationships with their sexual partners before having sex with them

-Will be more likely to report being unfaithful if they have ever been in a monogamous relationship

-Will report using condoms less frequently

-Will report being less satisfied with their sex life

Parents' Marital Status Differences

Participants who report that their parents have been divorced/ separated:

-Will be more likely to be sexually active

-Will report having sex more frequently

-Will report a greater number of sexual partners

-Will be more likely to report having had sex with someone they were not in a monogamous relationship with

-Will be more likely to report having engaged in sexual activity with more than one person during a given period of time

-Will be less likely to report developing close relationships with their sexual partners before having sex with them

-Will be more likely to report being unfaithful if they have ever been in a monogamous relationship.

Students Perceptions of How Their Peers Are Behaving Sexually

Correct Assumptions

-Their predictions regarding the percentage of sexually active students who are engaging in anal and group sex will not be significantly different than how students are actually behaving

Incorrect Assumptions

-They will think, in general, students have sex more frequently and with more partners than they actually do

-They will think that higher percentages of students are engaging in vaginal and oral sex than actually are

-They will think that, generally students do not only have sex when in monogamous relationships

-They will think that, generally, students do not only have sex with one person during a given period of time

-They will think that, generally, students do not form close relationships with their partners before having sex

-They will think that, generally, students who are in monogamous relationships are not faithful

Method

Participants

An online survey was sent to 800 randomly selected students and 288 students responded. Of those that responded, 22.9 percent were freshman, 22.9 percent were sophomores, 20.1 percent were juniors, and 34.0 percent were seniors. 41.3 percent of the respondents were male, and 58.7 percent were female; no respondents reported being intersex. 39.6 percent of those who responded reported that their gender identity was masculine, 58.3 percent reported that their gender identity was feminine, 1.0 percent reported that they were transgendered, and 1.0 percent reported that their gender identity fell into the category "other". Of those that responded, 59.4 percent were "single", 6.3 percent were in open relationships, 34.0 percent were in monogamous relationships, and 0.3 percent categorized their current relationship status as "other".

Instruments

The four surveys were made up of three parts: questions about their personal identity and experiences, questions about their own sexual behaviors, and questions about how they believed their peers were behaving sexually (See Appendix A). All participants were asked about their personal identity and experiences. In the first survey, participants were then asked about how they believed other students were behaving. In the second

survey, participants were asked about how they personally were behaving. In the third survey, participants were first asked how they thought other students were behaving, and then were asked how they personally were behaving. In the fourth survey, participants were first asked about how they were behaving and then were asked how they thought others were behaving. Each survey was sent to 200 randomly selected participants.

The section of the survey where participants were asked about their identity and experiences consisted of ten questions. Participants were asked to identify their class year (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior), sex (male, female, intersex), gender identity (masculine, feminine, transgendered, other), sexual orientation (only to males, mostly to males, equally to males and females, mostly to females, only to females), and current relationship status (single, open relationship, monogamous relationship, other). Participants were also asked if they were strongly religious (yes or no), if they drank alcohol (often, sometimes, rarely, never), if they used recreational drugs (often, sometimes, rarely, never), and if their parents were currently, or ever had been, divorced or separated (yes or no). Lastly, participants were asked to briefly describe their values/beliefs when it came to sexual behavior.

The section of the survey where students were asked about their own sexual behavior consisted of thirteen questions. In order to avoid any confusion, before answering the questions, students were provided with the definition of sex that the survey would be using. They were told that the term sex would only apply to penetration (vaginal or anal sex) and not to oral sex. They were informed that for the purposes of the study, a person was sexually active if they had engaged in vaginal or anal sex, and a person was a virgin if they had not. The decision to define sex in this way was based on

research that suggests that college students do not see oral sex as sex (Cook, 1999). After defining sex, students were then asked if they were virgins or sexually active, how often they were having sex (every few years, every few months, every few weeks, once a week, more than once a week, not sexually active), and on average, how many sexual partners a year they had had during their time at Trinity (0-1, 2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8+). They were then asked, when they have sex, how often they were having vaginal, anal, and group sex (often, sometimes, rarely, never, not sexually active). Additionally, they were asked how often they were engaging in oral sex (which for the purposes of this study was not defined as sex). Students were asked if they had ever had sex with someone they were not in a monogamous relationship with. They were also asked if they had ever had sex with more than one person during a given period of time (for example, had sex with two people in one weekend). Students were also questioned about whether they generally formed close relationships with their partners before having sex with them, whether they were faithful when in monogamous relationships, and how often they used condoms when they had sex (always, often, sometimes, rarely, never). Lastly, they were asked how satisfied they were with their sex lives (very satisfied, moderately satisfied, neutral, moderately dissatisfied, very dissatisfied).

The section where participants were asked about how they believed their peers were behaving sexually consisted of thirteen questions. These questions were on the same topics as the questions about personal sexual behavior. For example, in the section about personal sexual behavior, students were asked, "How satisfied are you with your sex life?" and in the section about perceived peers' sexual behavior, students were asked, "How satisfied do you think that Trinity Students are with their sex lives?"

Procedure

The methodology and instruments used were approved by the Trinity College Institutional Review Board. The four surveys were created and then converted into online formats on Survey Monkey, an online survey software and questionnaire tool (www.surveymonkey.com). The link to each survey was then sent by email to a random sample of 200 Trinity College students. Students were sent two reminder emails, in an attempt to maximize participation. These emails contained a brief message and a link to the survey. The message informed students that the survey would only take approximately 20 minutes, ensured confidentiality and anonymity, and encouraged participation in the pursuit of finding out the "truth" about sexual behavior (See Appendix B). Once on the survey's webpage, a message was displayed regarding informed consent (See Appendix C). By clicking "next" at the bottom of this page, participants gave their informed consent, and were allowed to take the survey. After completing the survey, participants were presented with a message thanking them for participating and encouraging them to contact the counseling center if as a result of the study they felt any anxiety or discomfort. Additionally, they were urged to contact the researchers if they had any questions or if they wanted to see the results once the study was completed (Appendix D).

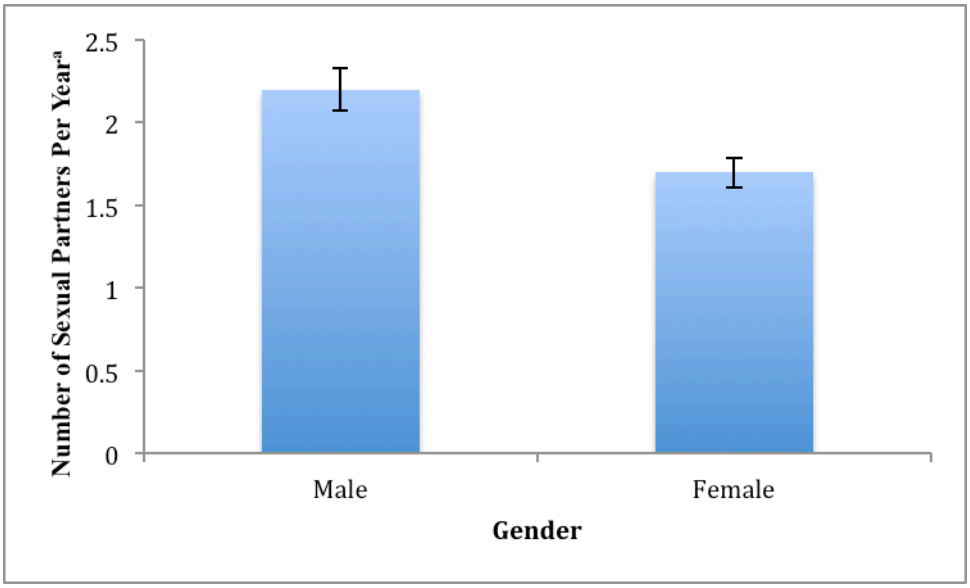
Results

Sexual Behavior of Trinity Students

Gender Differences

Gender was not related to frequency of sex, t (161) = 0.80, *ns*. There was also no significant relationship between gender and whether Ss were sexually active, X^2 (n = 205, 1) = 2.40, *ns*. Additionally, there was no significant difference between how satisfied males and females reported that they were with their sexual lives, t (203) = 0.42, *ns*. However, there was a gender difference in number of sexual partners per year, t (161) = 3.21, $p < .05$. Males had more sexual partners (M = 2.2, SD = 1.18) than females did (M = 1.7, SD = 0.99).

Graph 1. Number of sexual partners per year reported by males and females



[a]Values on the scale: 1(0-1), 2 (2-3), 3 (4-5), 4 (6-7), 5 (8+)

Religion Differences

Ss were asked if they would say that they were "strongly religious". In response to this question, 17.4 percent reported that they were strongly religious, while 82.6 percent reported that they were not strongly religious. Religion was not related to frequency of sex, t (161) = 0.07, *ns*. Neither was religion related to number of sexual partners per year, t (203) = 1.00, *ns*.

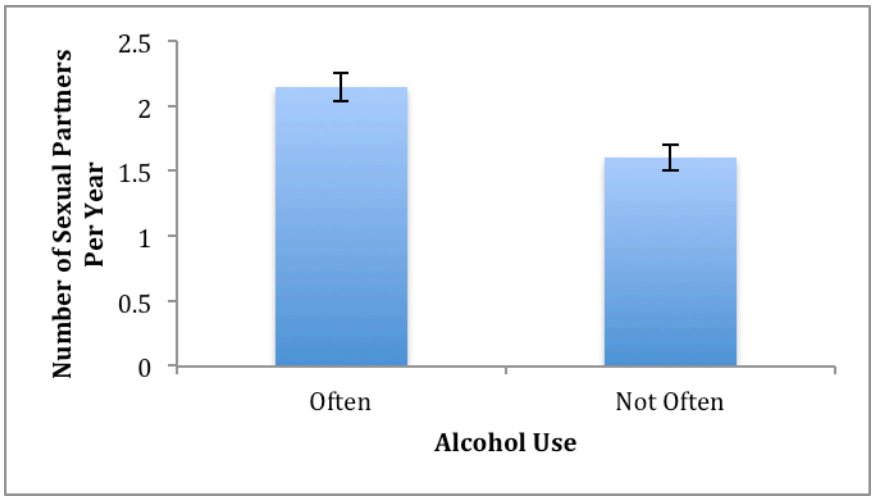
A chi-square test of association showed no significant relationship between whether or not participants were religious and whether or not they were sexually active, X^2 (n = 205, 1) = 1.64, *ns*. For both the strongly religious and less religious groups, there were fewer virgins than sexually active individuals. There was also no significant relationship between whether or not participants were religious and whether they reported having had sex with someone they were not in a monogamous relationship with, X^2 (n = 205, 1) = 0.40, *ns*. For both the strongly religious and the less religious groups, more individuals reported that they had had sex with someone they were not in a monogamous relationship with. Additionally, there was no significant relationship between whether or not participants were religious and whether they reported having engaged in sexual activity with more than one person during a given period of time, X^2 (n = 205, 1) = 0.07, *ns*. For both the strongly religious and the less religious groups, more individuals reported that they had never engaged in sexual activity with more than one period during a given period of time. Lastly, there was no significant relationship between whether or not participants were religious and whether or not they developed close relationship with their partners before having sex with them, X^2 (n = 205, 1) = 0.02, *ns*. For both the

strongly religious and the less religious groups, more individuals said that they generally developed close relationships with their partners before deciding to have sex with them.

Alcohol Use Differences

When asked how often they drank alcohol, 51.4 percent of Ss reported that they drank alcohol often, 36.8 percent reported that they drank alcohol sometimes, 6.9 percent reported that they drank alcohol rarely, and 4.9 percent reported that they never drank alcohol. There was a not a significant relationship between alcohol use and how often Ss had sex, t (161) = 0.56, *ns.* However, there was a significant relationship between alcohol use and number of partners per year, t (203) = 3.74, $p < .001$. Ss who drank alcohol often, had more sexual partners per year (M = 2.15, SD = 1.12) than Ss who did not drink alcohol often (M = 1.60, SD = 1.00). Alcohol use was not related to condom use, t (203) = 0.92, *ns*, or satisfaction with sex life, t (203) = 1.42, *ns*.

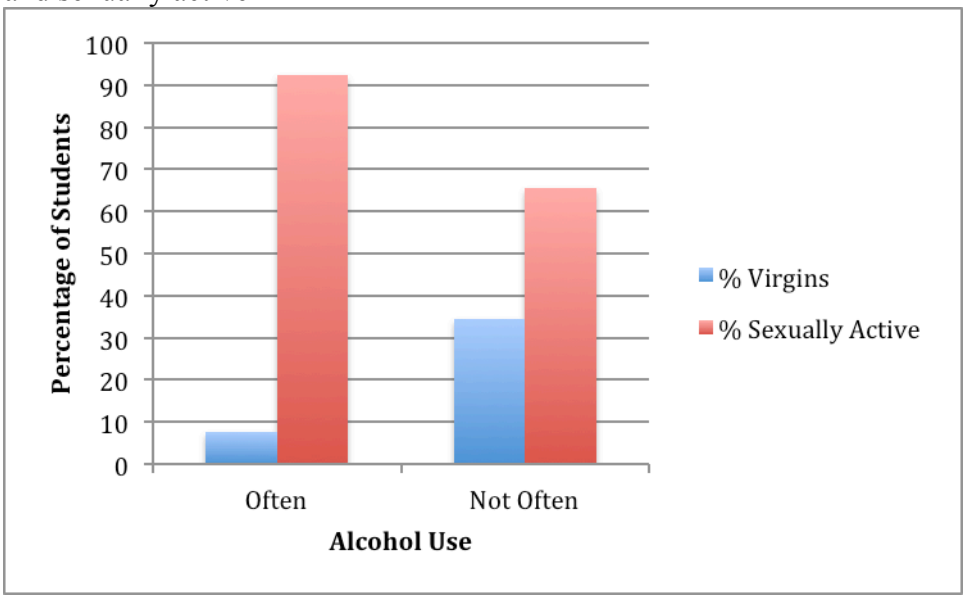
Graph 2. Sexual partners per year reported by Ss who drank alcohol often and Ss who did not drink alcohol often



[a]Values on the scale: 1(0-1), 2 (2-3), 3 (4-5), 4 (6-7), 5 (8+)

Chi-square tests of association were conducted to look at the relationship between alcohol use and various other aspects of Ss' sexual lives. First, there was a significant relationship between alcohol use and whether Ss were sexually active, X^2 (n = 205, 1) = 22.56, p < .001. More of the Ss who drank frequently were sexually active than expected, and less of them were virgins than expected. Additionally, more of Ss who did not drink often were virgins than expected, and less of them were sexually active than expected.

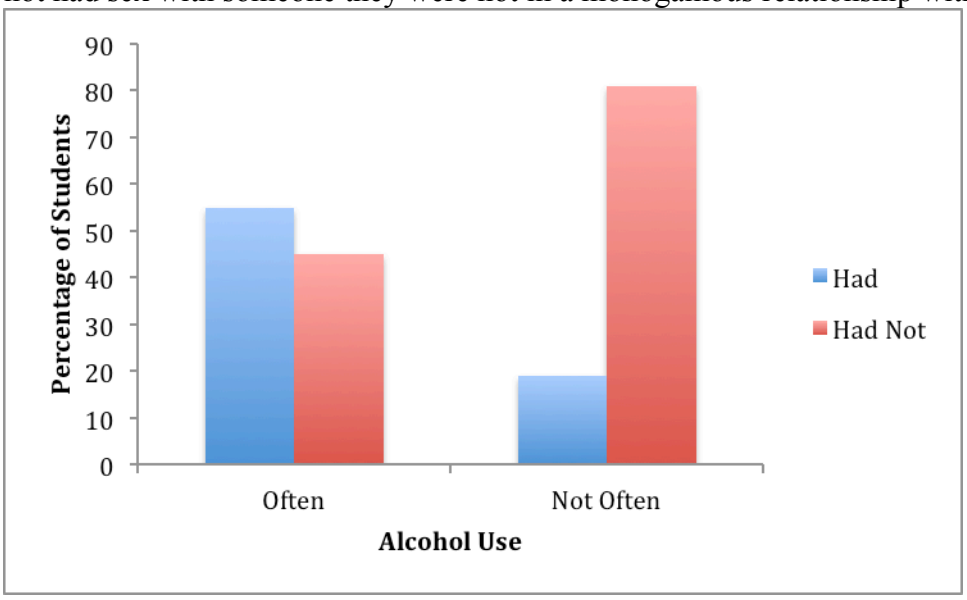
Graph 3. Percentage of Ss who drank alcohol often and Ss who did not, who were virgins and sexually active



There was also a significant relationship between alcohol use and whether Ss reported having had sex with someone they were not in a monogamous relationship with, X^2 (n = 205, 1) = 19.15, p < .001. More of the Ss who drank alcohol often reported that they had had sex with someone they were not in a monogamous relationship with than expected, and less of them reported that they had never had sex with someone they were not in a monogamous relationship with than expected. Also, more of the Ss who did not drink

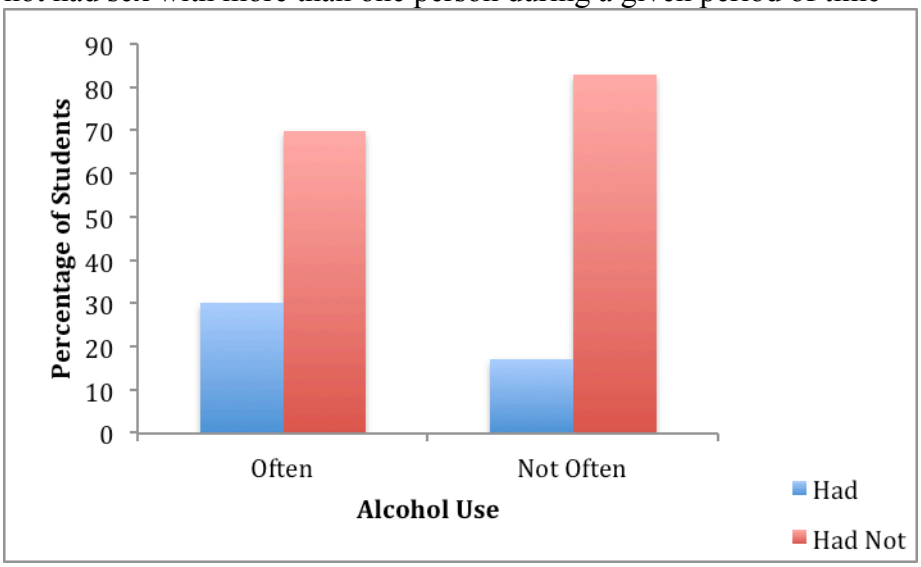
alcohol often reported never having had sex with someone they were not in a monogamous relationship with than expected, and less of them reported having had sex with someone they were not in a monogamous relationship with than expected.

Graph 4. Percentage of Ss who drank alcohol often and Ss who did not, who had and had not had sex with someone they were not in a monogamous relationship with



There was also a significant relationship between alcohol use and whether Ss had engaged in sexual activity with more than one person during a given period of time, X^2 (n = 205, 1) = 4.77, $p < .05$. Slightly more of the Ss who drank alcohol often had engaged in sexual activity with more than one person during a given period of time than expected. Slightly less of the Ss who did not drink alcohol often had engaged in sexual activity with more than one person during a given period of time.

Graph 5. Percentage of Ss who drank alcohol often and Ss who did not, who had and had not had sex with more than one person during a given period of time



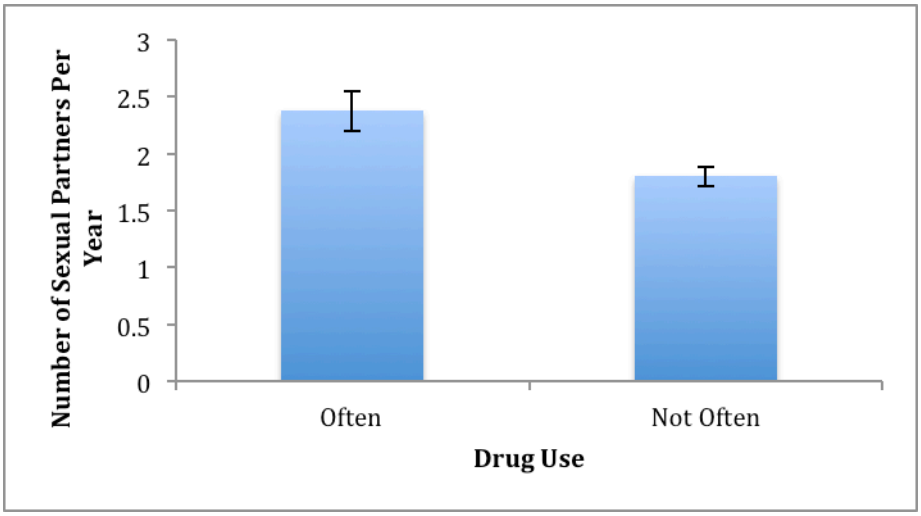
However, there was no significant relationship between alcohol use and whether Ss formed close relationships with their partners before having sex with them, X^2 (n = 205, 1) = 1.46, *ns*. In both the group that drank alcohol often and in the group that did not, more Ss reported that they developed close relationships before having sex. There was also no significant relationship between alcohol use and whether Ss were faithful when in monogamous relationships, X^2 (n = 205, 1) = 0.97, *ns*. In both groups, more Ss reported that when they were in monogamous relationships they were faithful.

Drug Use Differences

When Ss were asked how often they used recreational drugs, 13.2 percent reported they used drugs often, 21.2 percent reported they used drugs sometimes, 21.9 percent reported they used drugs rarely, and 43.8 percent reported they used never used recreational drugs. Drug use was not related to frequency of sex t (161) = 1.71, *ns*.

However, there was a significant relationship between drug use and number of sexual partners per year, t (203) = 2.67, $p < .05$. Ss who used drugs often had more sexual partners per year (M = 2.38, SD = 0.94) than Ss who did not (M = 1.80, SD = 1.10).

Graph 6. Number of sexual partners per year reported by Ss who used drugs often and Ss who did not

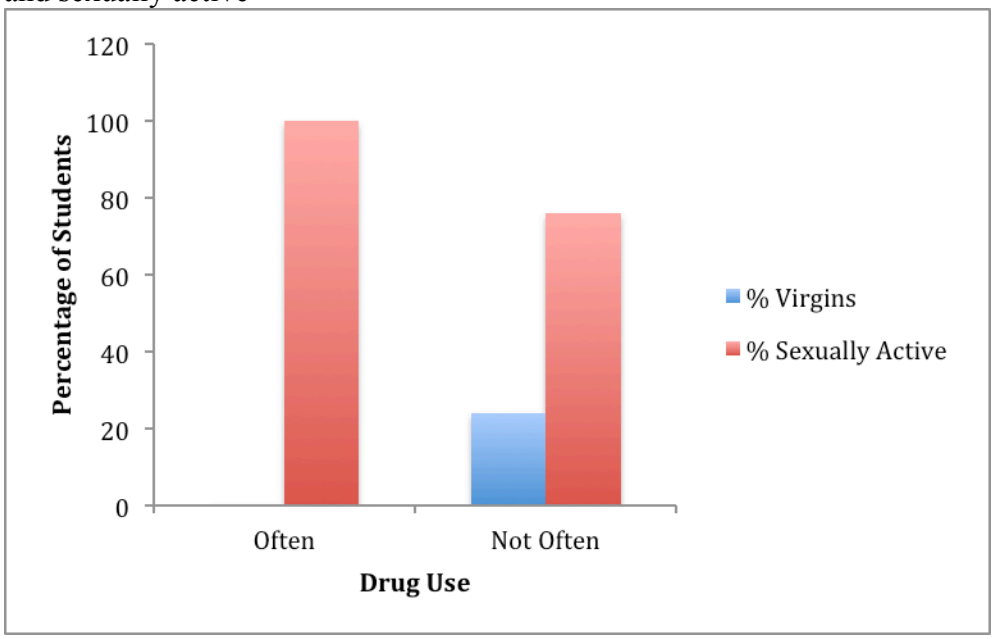


[a]Values on the scale: 1(0-1), 2 (2-3), 3 (4-5), 4 (6-7), 5 (8+)

Drug use was also related to condom use, t (44) = 2.03, p = .049, although this relationship was barely significant. Ss who used drugs often, reported using condoms less frequently during sex (M = 3.00, SD = 1.25) than Ss who did not use drugs often (M = 2.47, SD = 1.56). There was no relationship between drug use and satisfaction with sex life, t (203) = 0.57, *ns*.

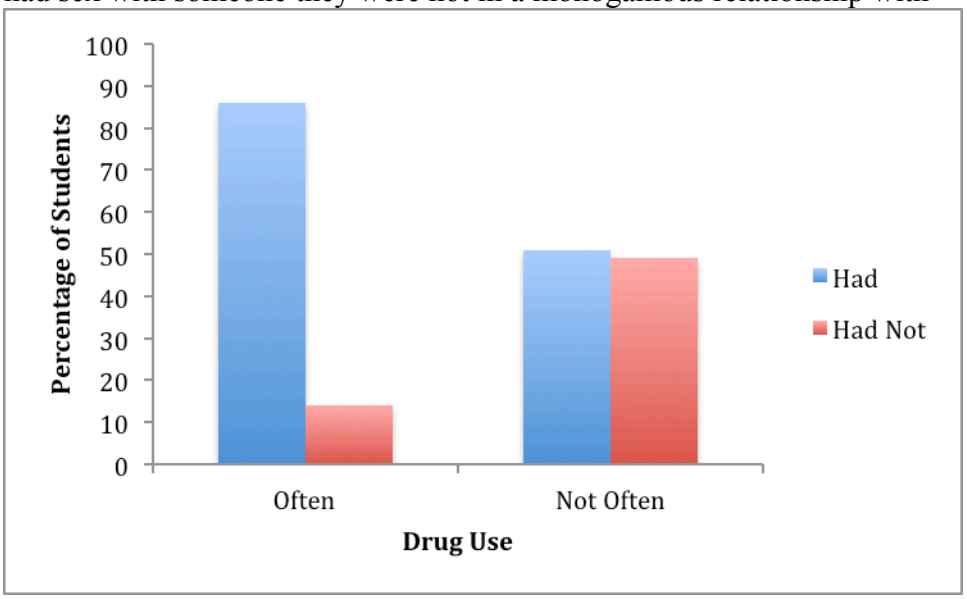
Chi-square tests of association were used to look at the relationship between drug use and various other aspects of Ss' sexual lives. One of the findings of these tests was that there was a significant relationship between drug use and whether Ss were sexually active, X^2 (n = 205, 1) = 8.70 $p < .05$. Less of the frequent drugs users were virgins than expected.

Graph 7. Percentage of Ss who used drugs often and Ss who did not, who were virgins and sexually active



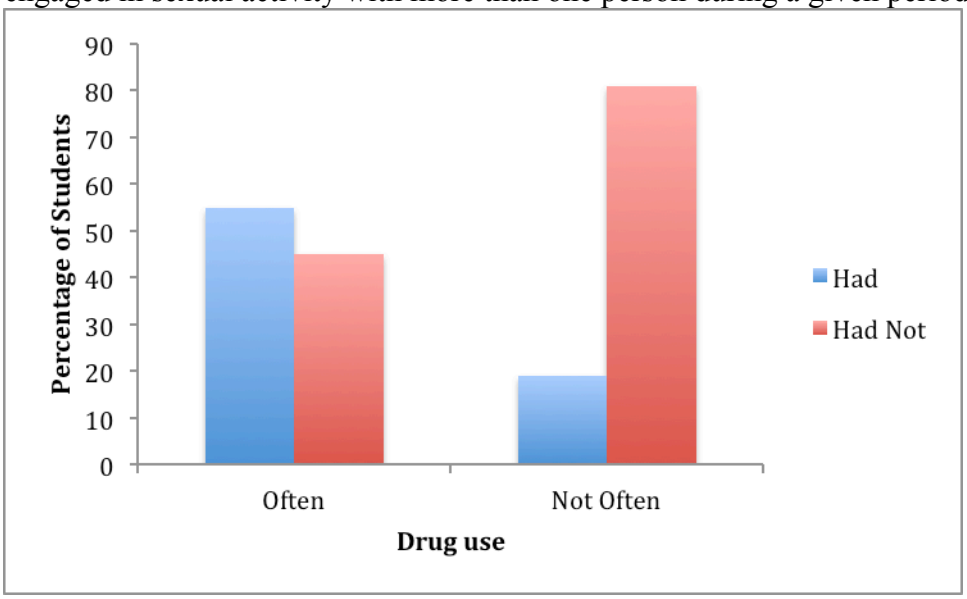
There was also a significant relationship between drug use and whether Ss reported having had sex with someone they were not in a monogamous relationship with, X^2 (n = 205, 1) = 12.43, $p < .001$. More of the Ss who used drugs often, reported that they had had sex with someone they were not in a monogamous relationship with than expected, and less of them than expected reported that they had never had sex with someone they were not in a monogamous relationship with.

Graph 8. Percentage of Ss who used drugs often and Ss who did not, who had and had not had sex with someone they were not in a monogamous relationship with



In addition, there was a significant relationship between drug use and whether Ss had engaged in sexual activity with one more than one person during a given period of time, X^2 (n = 205, 1) = 18.16, p < .001.

Graph 9. Percentage Ss who used drugs often and Ss who did not, who had and had not engaged in sexual activity with more than one person during a given period of time



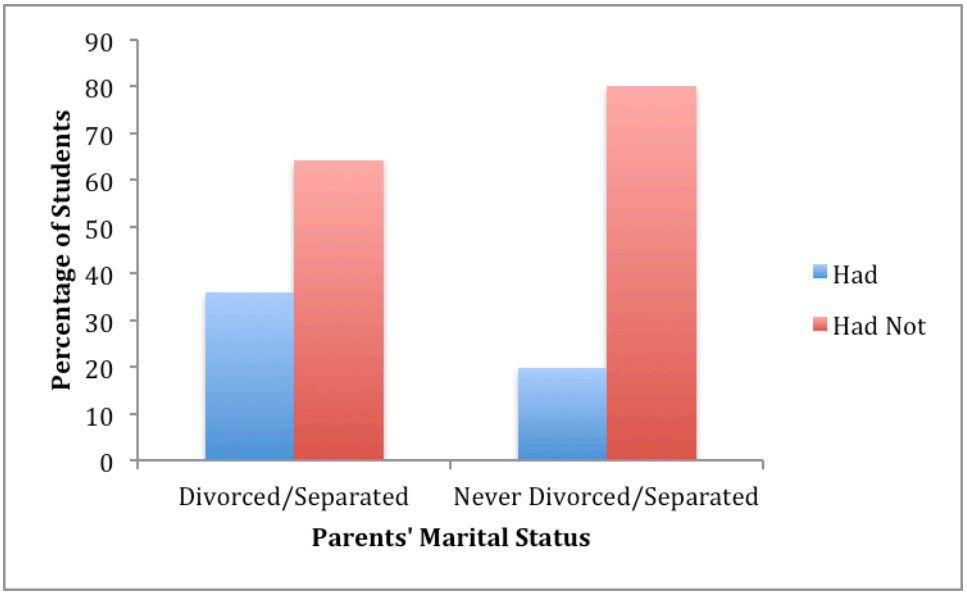
There was no significant relationship, however, between drug use and whether Ss formed close relationships with their partners before sex, X^2 (n = 205, 1) = 1.65, *ns*, or drug use and whether Ss had cheated when in monogamous relationships, X^2 (n = 205, 1) = 2.03, *ns.* In both the group that used drugs often and the group that did not, more Ss reported developing close relationships with their partners before having sex with them. Also, in both groups, more Ss who had been in monogamous relationships reported that they were faithful.

Parents' Marital Status Differences

When asked about their parents' marital status, 24.3 percent reported that their parents were divorced or separated or had been divorced or separated, and 75.7 percent reported that their parents had never been divorced or separated. Parents' marital status was not related to whether or not students were sexually active, X^2 (n = 205, 1) = 0.12, *ns.* For both groups, there were fewer virgins than sexually active individuals. Similarly, there was no relationship found between parents' marital status and how frequently Ss had sex, t (161) = 1.20, *ns*, or how many sexual partners they had per year, t (203) = 0.12, *ns*. There was also no significant relationship between parents' marital status and whether Ss were faithful when in monogamous relationships, X^2 (n = 122, 1) = 1.70, *ns.* For both groups, there were more individuals who were faithful than were unfaithful. In addition, tests found no significant relationship between parents' marital status and whether Ss had had sex with someone they were not in a monogamous relationship with, X^2 (n = 205, 1) = 0.10, *ns.* In both groups, more students reported that they had had sex with someone they were not in a monogamous relationship with. There was also no significant

relationship between parents' marital status and whether Ss developed close relationships with their partners before having sex with them, X^2 (n = 205, 1) = 0.40, *ns*. In both groups, more Ss reported developing close relationships before sex. However, tests did find that one relationship was significant. There was a significant relationship found between parents' marital status and whether Ss had engaged in sexual activity with more than one person during a given period of time, X^2 (n = 205, 1) = 5.61, $p < .05$. More Ss whose parents were divorced or separated or had been divorced or separated than expected had engaged in sexual activity with more than one person during a given period of time.

Graph 10. Percentage of Ss with parents who had been divorced/separated and Ss with parents who had never been divorced/separated, who reported engaging in sexual activity with more than one person during a given period of time



Students Perceptions of How Their Peers Were Behaving Sexually

Correct Assumptions

There was no significant difference between how often participants believed their peers were having sex and how often Ss reported they were actually having sex, t (201) = 0.60, *ns*. There was also no significant difference between the percentage of their peers that Ss thought were having oral sex, and the actual percentage of Ss having oral sex (often or sometimes), t (201) = 1.82, p = .070 (although, as can be seen from the p value, this relationship was almost significant; Ss thought their peers were engaging in oral sex slightly more frequently than they actually were).

Incorrect Assumptions

There was a significant difference between how many sexual partners per year Ss thought their peers were having, and how many sexual partners per year Ss actually had, t (201) = 15.47, $p < .001$. Ss thought that their peers had significantly more sexual partners per year (M = 2.91, SD = 0.95) than they actually did (M = 1.88, SD = 1.10), on a scale ranging from 1 (0-1 partners) to 5 (8+ partners). There was a significant difference between the percentage of their sexually active peers that Ss thought were having anal sex, and the actual percentage of sexually active Ss having anal sex (often or sometimes), t (197) = 10.35, $p < .001$. Ss thought that a greater percentage of their sexually active peers were engaging in anal sex than actually were. Ss also significantly overestimated the percentage of their sexually active peers that were having group sex, t (197) = 4.44, $p < .001$. These were the findings even after outliers were removed from the sample. A significant difference was also found between the percentage of their sexually active

peers that Ss thought were having vaginal sex, and the actual percentage of sexually active Ss having vaginal sex (often or sometimes), t (201) = 9.16, $p < .001$. Ss thought that a smaller percentage of their sexually active peers were engaging in vaginal sex than actually were.

Chi-square goodness of fit tests was done to look at the relationship between Ss self-reported sexual behavior and how Ss perceived their peers to be behaving sexually. Ss' idea of whether or not other Ss were virgins or sexually active did not fit with what people reported about themselves. Overall, Ss thought that more of their peers were sexually active than actually were (96.5 % vs. 79.5%), $p < .05$. Ss were also off base when it came to their peers having sex when not in monogamous relationships. Ss' idea of whether or not other Ss were only having sex when in monogamous relationships did not fit with what people reported about themselves. Overall, Ss believed that their peers were having sex when not in monogamous relationships more than they actually were (94.1% vs. 56.1 %), $p < .05$. Again, Ss were incorrect in their assumptions about whether or not their peers were engaging in sexual activity with more than one person during a given period of time. Ss thought that, in general, other students were engaging in sexual activity with more than one person during a given period of time more than they actually were (58.4% vs. 23.9%), $p < .05$. Additionally, Ss' idea of whether or not other Ss developed close relationships with their partners before having sex with them did not fit with what people self-reported. Overall, participants thought that other Ss were developing close relationships with their sexual partners less than they actually were (5.4 % vs. 62.4%), $p < .001$. Lastly, Ss' perceptions of whether their peers were being faithful when in monogamous relationships did not fit with what other Ss reported about

themselves. Ss believed that their peers were unfaithful when in monogamous relationships more than they actually were (33.7% vs. 13.9%, $p < .001$.

Table 1. Ss assumptions about how their peers were behaving sexually

Measure	**Whether Measure Was Underestimated, Correctly Predicted, or Overestimated**
Percentage that were sexually active	Overestimated
Frequency of sex	Correctly Predicted
Number of sexual partners per year	Overestimated
Percentage having sex when not in monogamous relationships	Highly Overestimated
Percentage having sex with more than one person during a given period of time	Overestimated
Percentage not developing close relationships with their partners before having sex	Highly Overestimated
Percentage being unfaithful when in monogamous relationships	Overestimated

Discussion

Sexual Behavior of Trinity Students

Gender Differences

As had been predicted, male students had more sexual partners per year than female students. This finding may reflect the double standard that exists when it comes to men and women's sexual experiences (Holloway, 1984). In this double standard, it is more socially acceptable for males to take part in promiscuous sexual behaviors than it is for females to do so. Past research has shown that the more sexual partners a female has, the more likely she is to receive a bad reputation and to be labeled as a "slut." On the

other hand, research suggests that when males accumulate multiple sexual partners, they do not receive the same social labeling, and are often even rewarded (Crawford & Popp, 2003). With this past research in mind, the findings may suggest that female Trinity students are having sex with fewer people per year because they are aware of what sleeping with "too many" people could do to their social reputations, while male Trinity students do not need to worry about the same implications.

However, despite male and female students differing on their number of sexual partners per year, there were no significant differences found in whether they were sexually active, how frequently they were having sex, or how satisfied they were with their sexual lives. First, to look at sexual activity, this finding would suggest that gender is less predictive of whether students decide to have sex or not than other factors. Past research has suggested that female college students receive more social pressure than male college students to remain virgins (Sprecher & Regan, 1996). In keeping with the double standard discussed earlier, females who are virgins are seen as more pure and desirable, while males who are virgins are seen as inexperienced. However, the findings of the present study would suggest that these social pressures are not playing a large role in whether students decide to be sexually active. Since equivalent percentages of males and females were sexually active, one could argue that (at least at Trinity) female students may be experiencing less pressure to remain virgins. This could either indicate that females feel more comfortable in expressing their sexual desire and attaining fulfillment, or it could be an indication that females are now experiencing the same pressure that males do to become sexually active.

Female students were also having sex as frequently as male students. While the initial hypothesis had assumed that frequency of sex would also be impacted by the double standard, upon second thought, it actually makes sense that it was not. Keeping in mind that female students had fewer sexual partners per year, this finding only truly suggests that females are having sex more times with the same person. While the frequency of sex reported by males and females were the same, because males reported having more sexual partners, it can be assumed that males are having sex with more people fewer times, while females were having sex with fewer people more times. This is not surprising, as having sex with the same person multiple times would not be expected to negatively impact a female student's reputation.

Lastly, it was found that males and females were equally satisfied with their sexual lives. Males reported an average satisfaction rating of 2.29 (SD = 1.26) and females reported an average satisfaction rating of 2.23 (SD = 1.11) on a scale from 1 (very satisfied) to 5 (very dissatisfied), demonstrating that, on average, both males and females were a little less than moderately satisfied with their sexual lives. Past research has suggested that females are less satisfied with their sexual lives than males and often experience emotional distress and regret following hook ups (Fielder & Carey 2010, Owen et al. 2010, Paul & Hayes 2002). However, this does not seem to be at the case with Trinity students. The finding that female and males students are equally satisfied with their sexual lives suggests female students are not experiencing the regret and distress following hook ups that past research has documented. This may either be a reflection of females becoming more comfortable with their sexuality and less regretful,

or a reflection of the growing social acceptability of sexual behaviors (to be discussed more later on).

In conclusion, the sexual double standard had a less prominent impact on sexual behavior than was hypothesized. While males did have more sexual partners than females, males and females were equivalent when it came to whether they were sexually active, how often they were having sex, and how satisfied they were with their sexual lives. While the double standard may still have an impact (seen in number of sexual partners), the present study's findings suggest that when it comes to sexuality, the younger generation is moving towards gender equality. What remains unclear, however, is whether this gender equality is a positive reflection of females becoming more comfortable with their sexuality, or if the increasing social acceptability of sexual behaviors is now applying the same social pressures on females as males have experienced for some time.

Religion Differences

In the present study, religion did not have an impact on sexual behavior. Strongly religious and less religious students did not differ when it came to how often they used condoms when they had sex. They also were not significantly different in whether they were sexually active, how many partners they had per year, or how frequently they had sex. The was also no difference between strongly religious and less religious individuals when it came to whether or not they had had sex with someone they were not in a monogamous relationship with, whether they had engaged in sexual activity with more than one person during a given period of time, or whether they developed close

relationships with their partners before having sex with them. The findings that strongly religious and less religious students did not differ in frequency of condom use goes against past research, which suggests that religion and risky sexual behavior are inversely related (Landor et al., 2011). Strongly religious students rated their use of condoms during sex as a 2.43 (SD = 0.74) and less religious students rated their use of condoms as a 2.46 (SD = 0.71), on a scale from 1 (always) to 5 (never). These findings suggest that, on average, strongly religious and less religious individuals both use condoms during sex somewhere between often and sometimes. In general, the lack of impact of religion on sexual behavior suggests that religion is not a large factor for students when they are deciding how to act sexually. However, the results may also be an indication of the vague nature of the question about religion, a topic that will be touched upon later on.

Alcohol Use Differences

Alcohol use impacted multiple aspects of students' sex lives. There was a relationship between alcohol use and whether students were sexually active, as well as, how many sexual partners they had per year. Alcohol use also impacted whether students had had sex with someone they were not in a monogamous relationship with and whether they had engaged in sexual activity with more than one person during a given period of time (for example, during a weekend). Students who drank alcohol often, were more likely to be sexually active and had more sexual partners. Also, more of the frequent alcohol drinkers than expected had had sex with someone they were not in a monogamous relationship with, and more than expected had engaged in sexual activity with more than one person during a given period of time. Past research suggests that greater alcohol and drug use is predictive of sexual risk taking in college students

(Turchik et al., 2010). These findings were supported by the results of the present study, though not on all measures of sexual behavior. There was no relationship found between alcohol use and how often students had sex. There was also no noticeable impact of alcohol use on condom use or satisfaction with sex life. In addition, alcohol use was not predictive of whether students formed close relationships with their partners before sex, or if students in monogamous relationships were faithful. Although alcohol use did not impact all measures of sexual behavior, it impacted enough of them to demand attention. The results suggest, that students who drink alcohol often are more likely to engage in at least some promiscuous sexual behaviors. Students who drink alcohol often end up having impaired judgment (as a result of being intoxicated) more often than students who do not drink alcohol often. Generally, impaired judgment comes coupled with more lax moral standards as well as reduced inhibition, which could result in students engaging in sexual behaviors when they are drunk that they otherwise would not engage in. Also, students who are frequent alcohol drinkers are probably more often in environments with other intoxicated individuals, thus creating an environment where initiating a sexual interaction becomes less difficult. However, another alternative is that students are not demonstrating different sexual behaviors *because* they drink more, but that students with certain personality traits are more likely to drink as well as more likely to behave in certain ways sexually.

Drug Use Differences

Drug use also impacted students' sexual behaviors. There was a relationship between drug use and how many sexual partners per year students had; Students who frequently used drugs had more sexual partners (M = 2.38, SD = 0.94) than students who

did not frequently use drugs (M = 1.80, SD = 1.10), on a scale from 1 (0-1 partners) to 5 (8+ partners). These results indicate that frequent drug users, on average, were having sex with between three and four people per year, while students who did not frequently use drugs were, on average, having sex with between one and two people per year. Students who frequently used drugs were also more likely to be sexually active. Of the frequent drug users, 100 percent of them were sexually active, in comparison to 76 percent of students who did not use drugs frequently. Students who used drugs often were also more likely to have sex with someone they were not in a monogamous relationship with, or to engage in sexual activity with multiple people during a given period of time. Additionally, frequent drug users reported using condoms less than other students. Like students who frequently drink alcohol, students who frequently do drugs may be behaving the way they are sexually because of intoxication and reduced inhibition. It also may be that individuals with certain personality traits are more likely to use drugs as well as more likely to engage in certain sexual behaviors.

However, there were aspects of students' sexual lives that were not impacted by drug use. Drug use had no impact on frequency of sex or satisfaction with sex life. Drug use also had no relationship with whether students developed close relationships with their partners before having sex with them or whether students who were in monogamous relationships were faithful. Interestingly enough, the factors not related to drug use are the same factors that were not related with alcohol use (with the exclusion of condom use). This finding leads to the question: why were these factors resilient to alcohol and drug use while others were not? First, when looking at frequency of sex, the true meaning of this rating can only truly be looked at in conjunction with number of sexual partners.

Although there was no relationship between alcohol/drug use and frequency of sex, both frequent alcohol drinkers and frequent drug users had significantly more sexual partners. These findings may suggest that alcohol/drug use is related to number of one-night stands (which would increase number of sexual partners, but not frequency of sex). Alcohol/drug use also did not have a significant relationship with whether students formed close relationships with their partners before having sex with them, however, higher percentages of the frequent alcohol drinkers and frequent drug users did report not developing close relationships with their partners before having sex with them. One factor that may be affecting the results of this question is the ambiguity of the word "close" (see Limitations and Future Research). The vague nature of the question regarding satisfaction with one's sex life may have similarly influenced the results. Lastly, there was no relationship between alcohol/drug use and whether students were faithful when in monogamous relationships. This finding either indicates that even students who frequently use drugs or drink alcohol are generally faithful when in relationships, or that students are more hesitant to report cheating than other aspects of their sexual lives.

Parents' Marital Status Differences

Students whose parents had been divorced or separated and students whose parents had never been divorced or separated were similar in most measures of sexual behavior. Parents' marital status was not related to whether students were virgins or sexually active, how many sexual partners they had, or how frequently they were having sex. There was also no significant relationship between parents' marital status and whether students had had sex with someone they were not in a monogamous relationship with, whether they developed close relationships with their partners before sex, or

whether they were faithful when in monogamous relationships. These findings do not support past research, which suggests that individuals with divorced or separated parents have a greater number of sexual partners and lose their virginity at a younger age (Jónsson et al., 2000). Researchers have suggested that findings such as these may be a result of the effect of parental separation on child attachment style (Schachner & Shaver, 2004). One possible explanation for why the present study's findings do not match up with past findings is the small amount of information that this study gathered about the student's parents or their family's situation (See Limitations and Future Research).

The only significant relationship related to parents' marital status was between parents' marital status and whether students had engaged in sexual activity with more than one person during a given period of time. More students whose parents had been divorced or separated, than expected, had engaged in sexual activity with more than one person during a given period of time. This may be a reflection of students' ideas about commitment and settling down with one person, although more research would be necessary in order to establish this connection.

Students Perceptions of How Their Peers are Behaving Sexually

Correct Assumptions

Students were correct in their assumptions of how their peers were behaving on only two measures. Students' estimate of how often their peers were having sex was not significantly different than how often students reported they were having sex. Additionally, students' estimate of the percentage of students engaging in oral sex was not significantly different than the actual percentage of students engaging in oral sex.

Incorrect Assumptions

Students' perceptions of how their peers were behaving were incorrect, however, on all other measures. In general, students believed that their peers were behaving more promiscuously than they actually were. Students overestimated how many sexual partners per year their fellow students were having. They also thought that more of their sexually active peers were engaging in anal and group sex than actually were. Additionally, students' idea of whether or not other students were virgins or sexually active did not fit with what people actually reported; Students thought that more of their peers were sexually active, than actually were. Students were also incorrect in their idea of whether their peers were having sex when not in monogamous relationships; Students thought that more of their peers were having sex when not in monogamous relationships, than actually were. Also, students believed that other students were engaging in sexual activity with more than one person during a given period of time, more than they actually were. Additionally, students' perceptions of whether or not their peers were developing close relationships with their sexual partners before having sex with them, was also not in line with self-reports. Students thought that other students were developing close relationships with their sexual partners far less than they actually were. Lastly, students believed that their peers were being unfaithful when in monogamous relationships, more than they actually were.

These findings, that students perceived their peers to be behaving more promiscuously than they actually were, support past research. Studies have suggested that college students generally over-estimate how many of their peers are engaging in casual

hook ups (Lambert, Kahn & Apple, 2003), as well as how many of their peers are sexually active and how many sexual partners their peers are having (Scholly et al., 2005).

However, let's pause for a moment to look solely at the relationship between the percentage of their sexually active peers that students thought were engaging in oral, vaginal, anal, and group sex, and the actually percentage of their peers engaging in these types of interactions. Originally, it was predicted that the percentage of students engaging in oral and vaginal sex would be overestimated, while the percentage of students engaging in anal and group sex would not be overestimated. This predication was based on past research that students generally overestimate when it comes to their peers' sexual behavior (Lambert, Kahn & Apple 2003, Scholly et al. 2005) as well the idea that anal and group sex are viewed as less socially acceptable. However, the results showed quite the opposite. The percentage of students engaging in anal and group sex were overestimated, the percentage of students engaged in oral sex fit with the actual percentage, and the percentage of students engaging in vaginal sex was underestimated. However, these results do not seem to reflect the actual views of the population. What may be impacting these results is confusion over the phrasing of the question. The question regarding vaginal sex read as, "Out of the Trinity students who are having sex, what percentage would you estimate are having vaginal sex?" Keeping in mind that the study defined sex as vaginal or anal penetration, one would assume that if participants understood that the question was only asking about sexually active students, they would have predicted that between 81 and 100 percent were having vaginal sex, because this range leaves plenty of room for the presumably small percentage of students who are having anal sex but not vaginal sex. If this had been the case, then the rating would have

been a 5, but in actuality it was a 4.47. This suggests that participants may have misunderstood the question and thought that the survey was asking about all students, as opposed to just sexually active students. In this case, comparing these results to the percentage of sexually active peers who are actually taking part in vaginal sex is not comparable.

However, this still does not explain why anal sex and group sex were overestimated. The initial hypothesis had been that anal and group sex would not be overestimated in the same way the other sexual behaviors were because they are less socially acceptable. Upon second thought, however, many of the sexual behaviors that the present study looked at are not necessarily socially acceptable (i.e. being unfaithful, not developing close relationships with sexual partners etc.). The results suggest that anal and group sex may be overestimated for the same reasons that the other sexual behaviors were, because of a lack of knowledge about how others are actually behaving.

Implications

The present study suggests that college students who drink alcohol and use drugs on a regular basis are more sexually promiscuous than students who do not. Alcohol and drug use seemed to have a larger impact on students' sexual behaviors than gender, religiousness, or parents' marital status. With college drug use as well as binge drinking on the rise (Leinwand, 2007), more and more college students find themselves falling into the category of frequent alcohol drinkers, or frequent drug users. While one can only speculate, the increase in alcohol/ drug use on college campuses and the new relaxed attitudes surrounding the college "hook up" may actually go hand in hand. Students who

frequently drink alcohol and use drugs are impairing their judgment and reducing their inhibition on a regular basis, effects that may leave them more apt to engage in sexual activity. Students may then have adapted a casual and relaxed attitude about sex and hook ups in order to match how they were behaving.

Additionally, the results suggest that college students perceive their peers to be more sexually promiscuous than they actually are. These findings are an example of pluralistic ignorance, and become dangerous when thought of in the context of social norms. It is a well-known phenomenon that individuals often conform to the norm, seeking acceptance and a sense of belonging. However, what this phenomenon means in the context of the current findings is that students may be conforming to a false idea of normality. If students perceive their peers to be more sexually promiscuous than they actually are, then they may be behaving sexually in a way that they wouldn't otherwise, in order to conform to the norm.

Limitations

Sample Population

The results of the present study are not generalizable to the general population. Findings reflect the behaviors and perceptions of students at a small, co-educational, liberal arts school in the northeast. While participants were not asked to share their ethnicity or family's income, based on the general population at Trinity and that the participants were selected randomly, it can be assumed that many of the participants were white and upper-to-middle class.

Methodology

Data was collected from students using online surveys. While this was the obvious choice, over options such as observation or personal interviews (because of anonymity), using an online survey comes with inherent limitations. First, reporting errors may occur on the part of the participants. Past research has shown that males have a tendency to play up their sexual experiences while females have a tendency to play down their sexual experiences (Alexander & Fisher, 2003), so it is possible that these tendencies affected some of the data collected. Also reporting errors could have occurred because of individuals trying to make their answers similar to what they perceived the norm to be (in a sense, fitting in by responding that way). It does not appear that this happened, however, because the results of surveys three and four were not significantly different. In survey three, participants were first asked about how they believed others were behaving and then asked about their own sexual behavior. In survey four, participants were first asked about how they were behaving and then asked how they believed others were behaving. If reporting errors were occurring because participants felt inclined to make their answers more similar to the norm, one would expect that self ratings in survey three would have been more promiscuous, however they were not.

Survey Design

The largest problem with the survey's design lay in the depth of some of the questions. For example, the question regarding religion, simply asked students to specify if they were "strongly religious", but did not asked them what religion they identified with, if they were practicing, or if they felt the need to base their actions around their

religious beliefs. Because of the ambiguity of the question, students who reported they were strongly religious may have done so because their family was religious but may have not actually shared many of their religion's beliefs. Similarly, students were simply asked if their parents had ever been divorced or separated, they were not asked what type of relationship they had with their parents, at what age their parents became divorced/separated, or if their parents ever got back together. Researchers suggest that people whose parents have been divorced or separated would behave different sexually because of their attachment style (Schachner & Shaver, 2004), however, simply asking participants about their parents' marital status was not enough to determine anything about the students attachment style. Additionally, participants who were asked about how often they drank alcohol or used drugs, were not asked about the amount of alcohol or drugs they usually consumed, or how intoxicated they usually became. The question regarding whether students formed close relationships with their sexual partners was also quite vague. Students may have had different definitions of what constitutes a "close relationship", which may have impacted the results.

Future Research

Since the present study suggests that there may be a connection between alcohol/drug use and sexual behavior, it would be interesting to look at this topic in more depth. Of the students who drink alcohol often, they are obviously not all drinking the same amount of alcohol and reaching the same levels of intoxication. Future research could investigate whether it is just how often students drink that may be implicated in sexual behavior, or if how much students drink and how intoxicated they get also are related. Looking specifically at intoxication levels, it would be interesting to look at

"black out" hook ups (hook ups that occur when someone is intoxicated to the point of blacking out). Although a frightening phenomenon to think about, it is not totally uncommon for students to need to be informed the next day by their friends that they hooked up with someone the night before, and thus this topic deserves attention. Although satisfaction with sex life remained relatively consistent throughout all of the groups in the present study, it would be interesting to see if number of "black out hook-ups" had an effect on satisfaction ratings. Similarly, future research could be done with regard to drug use, looking at the impact of how intoxicated or high an individual usually got on their sexual behaviors.

Future research should use more detailed questions regarding religion and parents' marital status. As mentioned before, these questions being relatively vague may have accounted for the lack of results. Questions regarding religion should not simply ask if participants are "strongly religious" but should ask what their religion is, if they are practicing, and how much they identify with their religion's ideas. Questions about parents' marital status should ask about the relationship that the participant has with their parents and when the separation of divorce occurred.

Future research could also look into what a college student views as a "close relationship". For the most part, students reported that they develop close relationships with their partners before having sex with them. This finding was not affected by gender, religion, alcohol/drug use, or parents' marital status. However, when others were asked if their peers generally develop close relationships with their partners almost all of them answered no. This measure was the most overestimated when it came to assumptions about their peers. For this reason, future research may want to look at how students

define a "close relationship" and if this definition differs when they are thinking about themselves as opposed to others.

Additionally, it would be interesting to see if only young people misperceive the sexual norm or if older generations are equally incorrect when it comes to their perceptions of others sexual behaviors. Future research could look at Trinity College faculty members, and conduct a similar study to look at how their perceptions of the norm differ from how their fellow faculty members are actually behaving.

Lastly, future research could investigate males and females perceptions of the norm for their gender. While the present findings suggest that in general students overestimate when it comes to the sexual norm, it would be interesting to look at males and females separately, and if one gender overestimates more than the other.

Conclusions

In general, the difference between how college students are actually behaving and what the norm is perceived to be seems to reflect a general lack of honest communication. As a culture, we have come a long way since the days when Americans hardly ever spoke about sex. Pushed along by Freud, Ellis, Kinsey, and Masters and Johnson, Americans have become more comfortable talking about sex, but only when it comes to some topics. A recent study looked at communication between same-sex best friends about sex. The study found that although overall participants rated the quality of communication with their best friends about sex to be relatively high, they still reported that they only talked to their best friend about topics once or a few times. In addition, some topics were talked about more (such as sexual intercourse, their physical appearance, the physical

appearance of their partner, making out, and dating) than others (such as abortion, masturbation, sexual desire, dangers, STDs, date or acquaintance rape, and abstinence) (Lefkowitz, Boone & Shearer, 2003). The results of this study demonstrate that in many ways we are still very squeamish, or perhaps secretive, when it comes to sex.

Since many people still feel uncomfortable talking about sex, it may be that we only hear the new and loud opinions, or at least that these newer beliefs are receiving more attention. Included in the surveys of the present study was a free response question that asked students to briefly describe their values and beliefs about sexual behavior. Some students reported beliefs similar to those that researchers suggest college students have (Bogle, 2008), such as, "Sex is not that big of a deal" or that "Sex can be casual." Another student responded, "As long as you're safe. It's college, do whatever you want," suggesting that there are different standards for college students than other individuals. In keeping with this casual mindset, yet another student replied, "I am a big fan of the one night stand in college, for me there is no need to have a relationship as they often take up too much time." None of these responses mentions romantic feelings or love, demonstrating the way that some young people have separated the act of sex from feelings of intimacy, which at one point were always expected to come hand-in-hand.

However, holders of these nonchalant and nonromantic attitudes only account for some of the students. On the other hand, many students stressed the need for consent as well as respect, and argued that it was necessary to be in an intimate and meaningful relationship, or at least to have some strong feelings for the other person before having sex with them. As one participant advised, "Only have sex with someone you care for and are willing to be vulnerable in front of." Another student answered, "If you love

someone and you feel comfortable with them, feel free to express your love and sexuality!" One participant even stated, "I do not believe in 'hook-ups' or casual sex… Any sexual behavior I engage in is within a romantic relationship with my partner, NOT a one night stand." Similarly, another student stated, "I take sex very seriously, from both an emotional as well as a health standpoint…I respect myself too much to be casual about a romantic relationship."

While students held both of these sets of beliefs (and everything in between), it is interesting that students believed that in general their peers held casual and nonromantic beliefs about sex. They believed that many of their peers had sex with more than one person during a given period of time, didn't develop close relationships with their partners, had sex out of monogamous relationships, and were unfaithful. These findings suggest that more attention is being paid to the newer more casual attitudes that some college students have than to the more traditional attitudes that have been around for much longer.

Another concept mentioned in many of the responses was judgment. Despite their personal beliefs, many students stressed that they were nonjudgmental of students who decided to behave differently. For example, one student responded, "I think sex is something intimate to share with someone you love. But those are my personal feelings and I don't judge my friends for engaging in casual sex." This common element in many of the responses suggests that of the students who do not personally decide to take part in casual sex, lots of them do not view such behaviors as morally wrong. While casual and promiscuous sexual behavior may not actually have become the norm, it has at least (in the eyes of many of the participants) become socially acceptable. This new social

acceptability may be accountable for the apparent movement away from the gender double standard. One female participant confidently shared, "I don't feel like sleeping with people when not in a relationship makes me slutty and I feel perfectly fine with it." Individuals may feel more comfortable to express themselves sexually, knowing that they will not be judged in the way they would have in past generations.

However, at what point does the transition occur from people feeling free to express themselves to people feeling pressured to act a certain way? This answer may lie in the perceived norm. While it is clearly positive for individuals to feel comfortable behaving sexually how they would like to, it is dangerous when individuals feel the need to behave a certain way sexually in order to remain "normal." If students perceive the norm to be casual and promiscuous then they may feel the need to conform to that false sense of normality in order to fit in. Since the media shows no signs of reducing its sexual content, it seems as though the only way to reshape the perceived norm would be through more open and honest communication about sex.

In the future, it will be interesting to see if as a culture we move towards more open communication about sex, or if conversely we speak about it even less. One could argue that with the increasing social acceptability of sexual behaviors, will come more social acceptability of talking about sex. One could also speculate about the impact that the new technological changes will have on our communication about sex, with people spending more time communicating through text and Facebook messages, and less time speaking face to face. It is possible that people will feel more comfortable talking about sex because of the physical distance between them and the other person. However, on the

reverse, these impersonal, or at least less personal, forms of interaction may limit the depth of conversation. Only time will tell.

The present study suggests that both the misperceived sexual norm and the increase in binge drinking and drug use on college campuses may be contributing to more casual and promiscuous sexual behavior of college students. It is evident that today's college students have different ideas about sex than past generations, both in what they see as socially acceptable and how they perceive the norm. While Kinsey's generation was shocked to learn that large numbers of individuals were engaging in promiscuous sexual behaviors, today's generation thinks that promiscuous sexual behaviors are the *norm*. Our societal attitudes towards sex have clearly changed drastically since the days of Kinsey, yet an element that has remained the same is our trouble with communicating openly. As we come to recognize with more research evidence, the strong interaction and indeed, blurring of the meaning of mind and body, we can hope that our understanding about sexuality in all its aspects can become more clear and more openly discussed. Indeed, no human activity more closely integrates mind and body than sexuality. Greater understanding and especially greater communication about sex may have far-reaching effects in many aspects of human interpersonal relationships.

References

Alexander, M. G. & Fisher, T. D. (2003). Truth and consequences: Using the bogus pipeline to examine sex differences in self-reported sexual behavior. *The Journal of Sex Research, 40* (1), 27-35.

Alfred Kinsey. (2012). *Biography.com*. Retrieved 10:03, March 09, 2012 from http://www.biography.com/people/alfred-kinsey-9365493.

Bianchi, S. M. & Casper, L. M. (2000, December). American Families. *Population Bulletin, 55(*4), 3-9.

Bogle, K. A. (2008). *Hooking up: Sex, dating, and relationships on campus*. New York: New York University Press.

Brenner, C. (1973). *An elementary textbook of psychoanalysis* (Rev. ed.). New York: International Universities Press.

Carey, K. B., Borsari, B., Carey, M. P., & Maisto, S.A. (2006). Patterns and importance of self-other differences in college drinking norms. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors, 20,* 385-393

Chia, S.C., & Lee, W. (2006). Pluralistic ignorance about the direct and the indirect effects of media consumption on college students' misperceptions of sex-related peer norms. *International Journal of Public Opinion, 20* (1), 52-73.

Cook, S. (1999). Study indicates that college students, Clinton define sex similarly. *The Daily Iowan.*

Crawford, M., & Popp, D. (2003) Sexual double standard: A review and methodological critique of two decades of research. *The Journal of Sex Research, 40*, 13-26.

DiIorio, C., Dudley, W. N. and Soet, J. (1998). Predictors of HIV risk among college students. A CHAID analysis. *J. Appl. Biobehav. Res, 3*, 119-189.

Ellis, H. (1912). *The task of social hygiene.* Boston: New York.

Fielder, R. L., & Carey, M. P. (2010). Predictors and consequences of sexual "hookups" among college students: A short-term prospective study. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 39*, 1105-1119.

Flack, W. F., Jr., Daubman, K. A., Caron, M. L., Asadorian, J. A., D'Aureli, N. R., Gigliotti, S. N., et al. (2007). Risk factors and consequences of unwanted sex among university students: Hooking up, alcohol, and stress response. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 22*, 139-157.

Gavey, N. (2005). *Just sex? The cultural scaffolding of rape.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Harpignies, J. P. (2009). *Delusions of normality: sanity, drugs, sex, money and beliefs in America*. Brooklyn, NY: Ruthless Reality Institute with Coolgrovepress.

Holloway, W. (1984). Women's power in heterosexual sex. *Women's Studies International Forum, 7,* 63-68.

Jónsson, F. H., Njarðvik, U., Ólafsdóttir, G., & Grétarsson, S. J. (2000). Parental divorce: Long-term effects on mental health, family relations and adult sexual behavior. *Scandinavian Journal Of Psychology, 41*(2), 101-105.

Kallen, D. J., Stephenson, J. J., and Doughty, A. (1983). The need to know: Recalled adolescent sources of sexual and contraceptive information and sexual behavior. *J. Sex Res*. *19*, 137-159.

Kammeyer, K. C. (2008). *A hypersexual society: sexual discourse, erotica, and pornography in America today*. New York, NY: Plagrave Macmillan.

Kinsey, A. C. (1953). *Sexual behavior in the human female,*. Philadelphia: Saunders.

Kinsey, A. C., Pomeroy, W. B., & Martin, C. E. (1948). *Sexual behavior in the human male*. Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Co..

Lambert, T. A., Kahn, A. S., & Apple, K. J. (2003). Pluralistic ignorance and hooking up. *The Journal of Sex Research, 40,* 129-133.

Landor, A., Simons, L. G., Simons, R. L., Brody, G. H., & Gibbons, F. X. (2011). The Role of Religiosity in the Relationship Between Parents, Peers, and Adolescent Risky Sexual Behavior. *Journal of Youth Adolescence, 40*, 296-309.

Lefkowitz, E. S., Boone, T. L., & Shearer, C. L. (2004). Communication with best friends about sex-related topics during emerging adulthood. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 33*(4), 339-351.

Leinwand, D. (2007, March 15). College drug use, binge drinking rise. USA Today. Retrieved from http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2007-03-15-college-drug-use_N.htm.

Masters, W. H., & Johnson, V. E. (1966). *Human sexual response* ([1st ed.). Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

Masters, W. H., Johnson, V. E., & Kolodny, R. C. (1982). *Human sexuality.* Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

O'Sullivan, L. F. & Allgeier, E. R. (1998). Feigning sexual desire: Consenting to unwanted sexual activity in heterosexual dating relationships. *Journal of Sex Research, 35*, 234-243.

Owen, J. J., Rhoades, G. K., Stanley, S. M., & Fincham, F. D. (2010). "Hooking up" among college students: Demographic and psychosocial correlates. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 39*, 653-663.

Paul, E. L., & Hayes, K. A. (2002). The casualties of casual sex: A qualitative exploration of the phenomenology of college students' hook ups. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 19*, 639-661.

Reichert, T. & Carpenter, C. (2004). An Update on Sex in Magazine Advertising: 1983 to 2003. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly,* 823-837.

Robinson, P. A. (1976). *The modernization of sex: Havelock Ellis, Alfred Kinsey, William Masters, and Virginia Johnson*. New York: Harper & Row.

Scholly, K., Katz, A.R., Gascoigne, J., & Holck, P.S. (2005). Using social norms theory to explain perceptions and sexual health behaviors of undergraduate college students: An exploratory study. *Journal of American College Health, 53*(4), 159-166.

Schachner, D.A., Shaver, P.R. (2004). Attachment Dimensions and Sexual Motives. *Personal Relationships*, 11(2), 179-195.

Sprecher, S., Hatfield, E., Cortese, A., Potapova, E., & Levitskaya, A. (1994). Token

resistance to sexual intercourse and consent to unwanted sexual intercourse: College students' dating experiences in three countries. *Journal of Sex Research, 31*, 125-132

Sprecher, S., & Regan, P. C. (1996). College virgins: how men and women perceive their sexual status. *Journal of Sex Research, 33*, 3-16.

Turchik, J. A., Garske, J. P., Probst, D. R., & Irvin, C. R. (2010). Personality, sexuality, and substance use as predictors of sexual risk taking in college students. *Journal Of Sex Research, 47*(5), 411-419

Appendix A

Background Information

1. Class year:

☐ Freshman

☐ Sophomore

☐ Junior

☐ Senior

2. Sex:

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Intersex

3. Gender identity:

☐ masculine

☐ feminine

☐ transgendered

☐ other: _____

4. Sexual Orientation:

☐ only to males

☐ mostly to males

☐ equally to males and females

☐ mostly to females

☐ only to females

5. Current relationship status

☐ single

☐ open relationship

☐ monogamous relationship

☐ other:_____

6. Would you say that you are strongly religious?

☐ yes

☐ no

7. Do you drink alcohol?

☐ often

☐ sometimes

☐ rarely

☐ never

8. Do you use recreational drugs?

☐ often

☐ sometimes

☐ rarely

☐ never

9. Are your parents currently divorced or separated or have they ever been divorced or separated?

☐ yes

☐ no

10. Briefly describe your values/beliefs when it comes to sexual behavior:

_____

_____

Questions Regarding Assumptions about Sexual Behavior

In the following questions the term sex applies only to penetration (vaginal or anal sex) and not to oral sex. For the purposes of this study, a person is sexually active if

they have had vaginal or anal sex; a person is a virgin if they have not had vaginal or anal sex.

1. Do you think that more students are Trinity are virgins or sexually active?

☐ virgins

☐ sexually active

2. Out of the Trinity students who are having sex, how often do you think that they are generally having sex?

☐ every few years

☐ every few months

☐ every few weeks

☐ once a week

☐ more than once a week

3. Out of the Trinity students who are having sex, what percentage would you estimate are having vaginal sex?

☐ 0% - 20%

☐ 21% - 40%

☐ 41% - 60%

☐ 61% - 80%

☐ 81% - 100%

4. Out of the Trinity students who are having sex, what percentage would you estimate are having anal sex?

☐ 0% - 20%

☐ 21% - 40%

☐ 41% - 60%

☐ 61% - 80%

☐ 81% - 100%

5. Out of the Trinity students who are having sex, what percentage would you estimate are having group sex (sex involving three or more people)?

☐ 0% - 20%

☐ 21% - 40%

☐ 41% - 60%

☐ 61% - 80%

☐ 81% - 100%

6. What percentage of Trinity students would you estimate are having oral sex (which for the purposes of this study we are not defining as sex)?

☐ 0% - 20%

☐ 21% - 40%

☐ 41% - 60%

☐ 61% - 80%

☐ 81% - 100%

7. Do you think that generally at Trinity students only have sex when they are in monogamous relationships?

☐ yes

☐ no

8. Do you think that generally at Trinity students only have sex with one person during a given period of time? For example: they would not have sex with two different people during one weekend.

☐ yes

☐ no

9. Do you think that generally at Trinity students develop close relationships with their partners before they have sex with them?

☐ yes

☐ no

10. On average, how many sexual partners a year do you think Trinity College students have?

☐ 0-1

☐ 2-3

☐ 4-5

☐ 6-7

☐ 7+

11. Generally, do you think that Trinity College students who are in monogamous relationships are faithful to their partners?

☐ yes

☐ no

12. Generally, do you think that Trinity College students who are sexually active use condoms?

☐ always

☐ often

☐ sometimes

☐ rarely

☐ never

13. How satisfied do you think that Trinity students are with their sex lives?

☐ very satisfied

☐ moderately satisfied

☐ neutral

☐ moderately dissatisfied

☐ very dissatisfied

Questions Regarding Personal Sexual Behavior

In the following questions the term sex applies only to penetration (vaginal or anal sex) and not to oral sex. For the purposes of this study, a person is sexually active if they have had vaginal or anal sex; a person is a virgin if they have not had vaginal or anal sex.

1. Are you a virgin or sexually active?

☐ virgin

☐ sexually active

Please answer the following questions as honestly as you can with regards to your sexual activity *during your time at Trinity College*

2. How often are you having sex?

☐ every few years

☐ every few months

☐ every few weeks

☐ once a week

☐ more than once a week

☐ not sexually active

3. When you have sex, do you engage in vaginal sex?

☐ often

☐ sometimes

☐ rarely

☐ never

☐ not sexually active

4. When you have sex, do you engage in anal sex?

☐ often

☐ sometimes

☐ rarely

☐ never

☐ not sexually active

5. When you have sex, do you engage in group sex (sex involving three or more people)?

☐ often

☐ sometimes

☐ rarely

☐ never

☐ not sexually active

6. Do you engage in oral sex (which for the purposes of this study we are not defining as sex)?

☐ often

☐ sometimes

☐ rarely

☐ never

7. During your time at Trinity College have you had sex with someone you were not in a monogamous relationship with?

☐ yes

☐ no

8. During your time at Trinity College have you ever been engaging in sexual activity with more than one person during a given time period? For example: Had sex with two different people during one weekend.

☐ yes

☐ no

9. Would you say that you generally develop close relationships with your partners before you have sex with them?

☐ yes

☐ no

10. On average, how many sexual partners a year have you had during your time at Trinity College?

☐ 0-1

☐ 2-3

☐ 4-5

☐ 6-7

☐ 7+

11. If you have ever been in a monogamous relationship at Trinity, were you faithful?

☐ yes

☐ no

☐ never been in a monogamous relationship

12. Do you use a condom when you have sex?

☐ always

☐ often

☐ sometimes

☐ rarely

☐ never

13. How satisfied are you with your sex life?

☐ very satisfied

☐ moderately satisfied

☐ neutral

☐ moderately dissatisfied

☐ very dissatisfied

Appendix B

Letter of request to complete survey:

Hi,

My name is Emily Pariseau and I am writing my senior thesis on sexual behavior of Trinity College students. As a member of the student body I would greatly appreciated if you would take a few minutes to help me gather representative data. The survey will only take about 20 minutes. While I recognize that the subject matter is extremely personal, each of your responses is necessary in order to truly find out how students are behaving sexually. All responses will be completely confidential and anonymous. Even as the researcher I will have no way of identifying participants. With all of the lies and half-truths that circulate regarding sexual behavior, wouldn't it be interesting to *actually* find out how our community is behaving? Students who participate will have the opportunity to receive the results.

Please copy and paste the following link into your browser to complete survey:

Thank you for your time!

Emily Pariseau

Appendix C

Letter of Informed Consent:

INFORMED CONSENT

By clicking "Next" at the bottom of the page, I am attesting that I freely give my consent to participate in this study.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how college students are behaving sexually. My responses to this study will help researchers to understand what constitutes typical sexual behavior in college. It will take approximately 20 minutes to complete the survey.

I understand that if I participate I will be asked about my sexual behavior and history as well as sexual behavior in general. I also understand that all of my responses will be completely confidential and will be used only for research purposes. I am aware that my participation in this project is completely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time during the project.

There are no potential risks associated with this study, however some discomfort may arise for students who do not generally speak about their sexuality.

If I have any questions regarding this project I am free to contact Randy Lee in the Psychology department at 860-297-2413 or Emily Pariseau, the student researcher, at 401-864-1568.

Appendix D

Letter of Debriefing:

Hi,

Thank you so much for participating in my study on sexual behavior at Trinity College. I understand that we all have busy schedules, so I appreciate you taking some time out of your day to help me with my research. Your responses will be helpful in leading to an understanding regarding sexual behavior in college. During my time at Trinity I have found that there is not a lot of honest conversation regarding sexual practices. Over-exaggerated stories, rumors, and secret hook-ups all lead to lots of misconceptions regarding how students are behaving sexually. I would argue that these misconceptions not only provide an altered view of how our peers are behaving but also may impact the way that we decide to behave sexually. I think that it is important for students to know the "truth" about how our community is really behaving, and your participation in this study is one step in that direction.

Sex is an extremely personal and sensitive topic. If as a result of this study you feel any anxiety or discomfort, please do not hesitate to schedule an appointment to see one of the counselors at the Trinity College counseling center, located at 135 Allen Place (860-297-2415).

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study, feel free to contact me at Emily.Pariseau@trincoll.edu or by phone at 401-864-1568. Also, please let me know by email if you would like to receive the results of my research and I will send them to you once the project is complete.

Thank you again for your participation!

Emily Pariseau