

Sexual Behaviors & Practices of African American College Students

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Introduction

- There is limited epidemiological data on the sexual behaviors and practices of African American college students and their reported alcohol and marijuana use.
- Empirical studies have linked illicit drug use and binge drinking to sexual risk-taking behaviors.¹⁻⁴
- While drunk or high, college students are more likely to be sexually active and to have sex with someone they just met.⁵ More than three-fourths (78 percent) of college students who used illicit drugs have had sexual intercourse compared to 44 percent of those who never used drugs.⁵
- Both females (14%) and males (17%) reported having unprotected sex within the last 12 months because of their drinking.⁶
- White students are more likely to use and abuse all forms of drugs than minority students.⁷
- Although the relationship between substance use and higher risk sexual behaviors may be inconsistent among college students⁸, the increasing consumption of alcohol and illicit drugs among adolescents and college youth (Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Study, Monitoring the Future Study and the National College Health Assessment) supports the need for more empirical studies to determine the link between substance use and the gradient of sexual risk behaviors.⁹

Purpose

To examine the associations between alcohol and marijuana use and the sexual behaviors and practices of African American college students attending a mid-Atlantic Historically Black College & University (HBCU).

Methods

- Data was collected using a self-administered survey to intact classrooms of students taking health and physical education courses and to psychology students adhering to protocols established by that department.
- African American College Students between 18-24 years of age, single, and matriculating at a mid-Atlantic HBCU were asked to complete the paper and pencil questionnaire that examined factors influencing sexual behaviors.
- 681 college students completed the Factors Influencing Sexual Behaviors Questionnaire.
- Selected Demographic & Background Characteristics of participants are highlighted in Table 1.

Survey Measures

- Factors Influencing Sexual Behaviors survey developed by the investigator consisted of 7 sections and 51 items using previously validated instruments.
- For the purpose of this poster presentation the items assessing sexual behaviors, alcohol and marijuana use are presented.
- Five items from the National College Health Assessment survey were used to measure student's sexual behaviors.
 - Two items were used to classify students as abstinent, practicing safer sex or engaging in higher risk sexual behaviors.
 - Three additional items developed by the investigator were used to measure students' sexual activity.
- Three items from the National College Risk Behavior Study (NCHRBS) measured students' binge drinking and marijuana use.
- The instrument was reviewed by an expert review panel (n=3) for content analysis, clarity, and formatting of the instrument.
- A pilot test (n=30) was conducted with African American college students not participating in the main study for understandability and acceptability of items.
- The investigator made revisions to the instrument based on expert review panel comments, student feedback and internal consistency reliability analysis before study implementation.

Discussion

- Of the 681 college students sampled, 86% (n=590) reported being sexually active and 13% (n=91) reported abstinence.
- Overall, African American students in this sample reported low rates of marijuana use and binge drinking. This finding is consistent with the literature that reports lower overall substance use for students attending HBCUs.⁷
- Students who reported binge drinking or marijuana use were more likely to report being sexually active than students not engaging in these behaviors.
- A small percentage of students that reported being sexually active (15%) reported binge drinking and smoking marijuana four or more times in the past month.
- Twenty-four percent of sexually active youth reported drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana before the last time they had sexual intercourse.

Results

Table 1: Selected Demographic & Background Characteristics of Students

Variable	n	Percent
Gender		
Female	494	72
Male	187	27.3
Age		
18	69	10.1
19	175	25.5
20	189	27.6
21	153	22.3
22	64	9.3
23	22	3.2
24	9	1.7
Rank		
Freshman	36	5.3
Sophomore	185	27
Junior	201	29.3
Senior	251	36.6
Missing	8	1.8
Residence		
On campus	293	42.8
Off campus housing	89	13
Off campus non-campus housing	239	34.9
At home with family	52	7.6
Other	3	0.4
Missing	7	1.3
Sexual Behaviors		
Abstinent	9	13
Sexually Active	590	86

Total N= 681

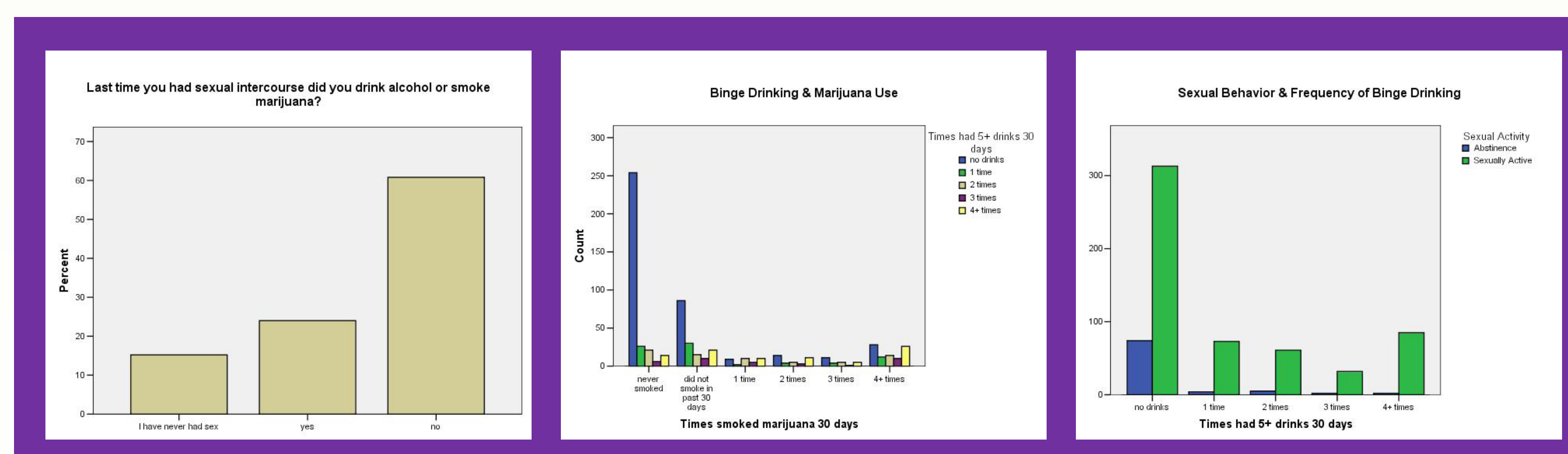
Table 2: Students' Sexual Behaviors

Variable	Yes		No	
	n	%	n	%
Have you ever engaged in:				
Vaginal Sex	550	(80.3)	135	(19.7)
Oral Sex	531	(77.5)	154	(22.5)
Anal Sex	125	(18.2)	560	(81.8)
*Do you or your partner always use a condom when you engage in:				
Vaginal Sex	295	(43.1)	229	(33.4)
Anal Sex	47	(6.9)	57	(8.3)
Not Applicable	63	(9.2)	26	(3.8)
Within the last 30 days, did you do any of the following with more than one person?				
Vaginal Sex	109	(15.9)	427	(62.3)
Gave Oral Sex	54	(7.9)	462	(67.4)
Received Oral Sex	107	(15.6)	427	(62.3)
Anal Sex	8	(1.2)	373	(54.5)

*Condom use reported for vaginal and anal sex only

Table 3: Number of Sexual Partners within the Past Year

Number of Partners	Vaginal Sex		Oral Sex		Anal Sex	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
0	72	(10.5)	93	(13.6)	456	(66.6)
1	206	(30.1)	238	(34.7)	67	(9.8)
2	130	(19.0)	114	(16.6)	9	(1.3)
3	80	(11.7)	66	(9.6)	3	(.4)
4	97	(14.2)	66	(9.6)	7	(1.0)
Not Sexually Active	84	(12.3)	87	(12.7)	87	(12.7)
Missing	12	(2.3)	17	(3.1)	52	(8.2)



Conclusion

- This research provides confirmatory data that alcohol and marijuana use contributes to student's decisions to be abstinent or sexually active.
- College sexual health awareness campaigns should highlight the inextricable link of illicit drug use and sexual risk-taking behaviors and the adverse consequences that may result from having sex while intoxicated or high.

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