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Premarital Sex in College Students: Factors that Influence Their Attitudes and Practices

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**PREMARITAL SEX IN COLLEGE STUDENTS:
FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THEIR ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES**

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INTRODUCTION

- College is a time of sexual exploration for many students
- Students vary in the sexual education (SE) they received as teens
 - Abstinence-only education
 - Comprehensive sex education (abstinence-plus)
 - Safe sex education
- Both teens and professionals see sexual behaviors as a hierarchy
- College students who engage in casual hook-ups have more relaxed attitudes towards sex and are more accepting of genital contact

INTRODUCTION

Sex Education Programs

Abstinence-only (SE)

Ambiguity about the term
“abstinence”

Correlated with an increase in teen
pregnancies

Does not encourage safe sex, so
those who do not follow are left
with no information on protection

Comprehensive (SE)

More effective in preventing
teenage pregnancies

Does not necessarily decrease rates
of sexual activity

Promotes protection when engaging
in intercourse

INTRODUCTION

Parental influence

- Parents advising abstinence tends to increase abstinence in a teenager
- Teenagers from single parent homes are more likely to have had sex
- Abstinence information from parents can often appear to superficial to teenagers
- One study found that mother-daughter conversations about sex is linked with higher sexual behavior in the daughter

THE PRESENT STUDY

Hypotheses

- **H1:** Parents have a greater influence in teaching abstinence than do schools.
- **H2:** Teaching safe sex leads students to practice safe sex rather than unprotected sex and have more sex than those taught abstinence.
- **H3:** Those who practice abstinence view other sexual behaviors as unacceptable.

Variables

- IV: source and type of sex education (H1 & H2); abstinence (H3)
- DV: sexual behaviors and attitudes
- Purpose: Understand the educational and experiential variables behind students' sexual practices and attitudes towards sexual behavior



METHOD

Participants

- 1042 college students
 - 280 from Cedarville University
 - 480 from University of Dayton
 - 92 from Wright State University
 - 97 from Antioch
 - 102 from University of Cincinnati
- Ages 18-35
- Mean age = 20.28

METHOD

Questionnaire

- Type of sex education
- Values of parents and parental encouragement
- Sexual activity and protection
- Level of acceptability for college students
 - Hugging
 - Kissing
 - Touching on top of clothes
 - Touching under clothes
 - Hand jobs
 - Oral sex
 - Vaginal sex
 - Anything
 - None

RESULTS

Table A
Crosstabulation of Students by Sex Education and Sexual Activity

Sex Education	Sexually Active		Abstinent		χ^2
	n	%	n	%	
Safe Sex	214	50.0	214	50.0	6.542**
Abstinence	155	41.0	223	59.0	

** $p < .01$

Those taught abstinence were more likely to be abstinent than those taught safe sex.

Table B
Crosstabulation of Students by Abstinence Taught by Parents or School

Abstinence	Sexually Active		Abstinent		χ^2
	n	%	n	%	
Parents	249	72.0	414	90.0	8.293**
School	97	28.0	46	10.0	

** $p < .01$

Parents had a greater influence over students' abstinence than did schools.

Table C
Crosstabulation of Students by Sex Education and Sex Practice

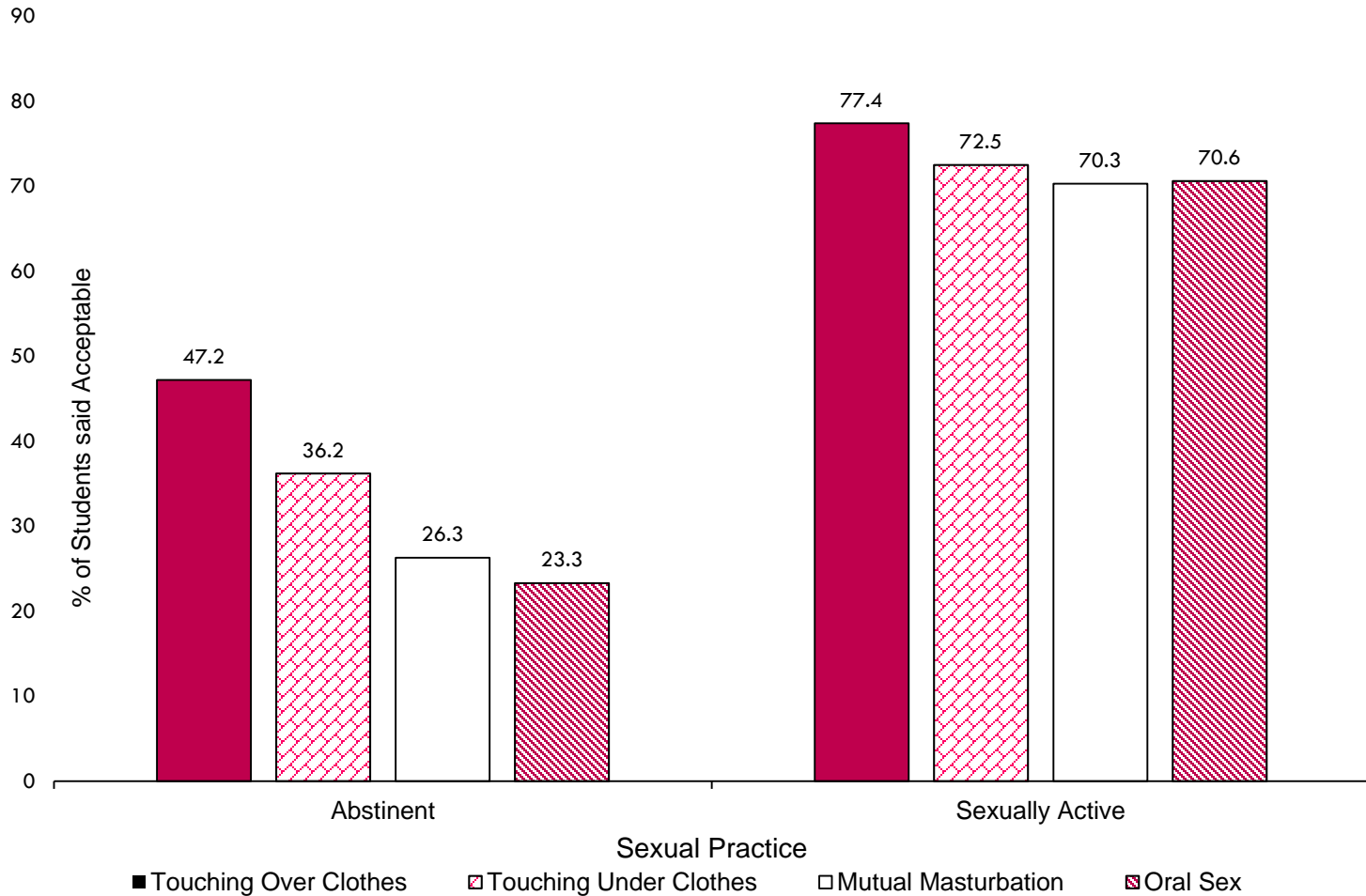
Sex Education	Practicing Safe Sex		Not Practicing Safe Sex		χ^2
	n	%	n	%	
Safe Sex	108	50.5	106	49.5	1.568
Abstinence	68	43.9	87	56.1	

*Note: these statistics only include those who are sexually active

Abstinence programs reduced the number of sexually active youth, but they were not prepared for safe sex.

Safe sex education had no impact on the actual practice of safe sex (condom use).

RESULTS



H3: Those who practice abstinence view other sexual behaviors as unacceptable.



DISCUSSION

Limitations

- Does not account for homeschool education
- Vague questions
 - Contraception v. protection
 - Missing information

Implications and future research

- Implement safe sex behavior/abstinence
- Qualitative research to find out why students behave these ways
- Role of parents
 - Father-to-son, father-to-daughter, mother-to-daughter, etc.
 - Education from non-biological parents

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