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Sexual Experiences and GPA among First Time College Freshmen

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Introduction



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- New pressures of university freshman.
 - Academic
 - Social
- Sexual activity is common among college students.
- Social activity can influence early sexual initiation that increases risky sexual behaviors which negatively impacts academic performance

Research Question



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- How are sexual activity and number of sexual partners related to the academic performance of college freshmen?

Sexual Activity of College Students



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- Health Association reported that 52% of college students engaged in sex vaginal intercourse with a partner of the opposite sex in the past thirty days
 - Varies by gender, peer pressure, alcohol and drug use
- Ethnic and religious influences on sexual activity

Sexual Activity of College Students



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- Younger generations have more liberal attitudes toward sex outside marriage, but number of sexual partners is decreasing
 - American College Health Association: among sexually active students, men reported 2.53 sexual partners and women reported 1.80 sexual partners in past 12 months
- Limited research on how college students' sexual activity and/or number of sexual partners influences their academic outcomes

Theoretical Approach



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- Structural Functionalism
 - Sex and education both forms of socialization (Eaton et al. 2016)
- Sexual Scripts
 - Simon and Gagnon (1984) theorized that there are scripts to initiating sexual scripts

Hypotheses



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- *Hypothesis 1:* Among first time college freshman, those who have had sex will have a lower GPA than those who have never had sex.
- *Hypothesis 2:* Among first time college freshman, the number of sexual partners will be negatively related to GPA.

Data and Sample



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- Jaguar Freshman Health and Wellness Study
 - Collected by researchers at Texas A&M University – San Antonio in the Fall 2018 semester
 - Study focused on social, behavioral, cognitive, biophysical, and academic characteristic of freshmen
 - Participants were first-time in college freshman who were recruited at freshman orientation events
- N = 111
 - Entire sample's marital status is single, and 98% was 18 or 19 years old
 - A variety of majors are represented in the sample

Measures



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- Sexual measures
 - Ever had sex (yes/no)
 - Number of sexual partners in last 6 months (categorical coding: 0, 1, 2+ partners)
- GPA
 - Four point scale, collected at end of Spring 2019 semester
- Demographic measures: gender (male/female), ethnicity (Hispanic/non-Hispanic), ever skipped a meal due to cost (yes/no)

Analytic Approach



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- Estimate ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions to test both hypotheses
- Analyses conducted using Stata 15

Findings: Descriptive Statistics



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Descriptive Statistics of Participants (N=111)

	%/Mean(SD)		%
Ever had sex		Sex	
No	36.04	Male/other	36.94
Yes	63.96	Female	63.06
Number of sex partners		Race/Ethnicity	
None	43.24	Hispanic	67.57
One	39.64	Non-Hispanic	32.43
Two or more	17.12	Ever skipped campus meal due to budget	
GPA	2.67 (0.89)	No	70.27
		Yes	29.73

Findings: Hypothesis 1



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Table 2. Estimated Regression Coefficients Predicting GPA from Ever Had Sex (N=111)

	Coefficient	SE
Have had sex	-0.40*	0.17
Female	0.17	0.17
Not Hispanic	0.33+	0.18
No skipped meal	-0.02	0.18
Constant	2.42	0.4

Findings: Hypothesis 2



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Table 3. Estimated Regression Coefficients Predicting GPA from Number Sex Partners (N=111)

	Coefficient	SE
Number sex partners (ref=none)		
One	-0.32+	0.18
Two or more	-0.51*	0.24
Female	0.22	0.17
Not Hispanic	0.32+	0.18
No skipped meal	-0.02	0.18
Constant	2.36	0.39

Discussion



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- Sexual behavior and GPA are negatively related
 - Students who have had sex have a lower GPA than students who have not
 - Compared to student who have no sexual partners, those who have had two or more sexual partners in the past 6 months have a lower GPA
- Risky sexual behaviors of college students (i.e. multiple partners) can affect their GPA
 - College socialization
- Students may prioritize sexual relationships over education responsibilities
- Seeking out sex can be a time-consuming process due to sexual scripts college students follow (Eaton et al. 2016; Simon and Gagnon 1984)

Limitations



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- Data is cross-sectional, so cannot determine causality
- Non-representative convenience sample
- Likely underreporting for sexual history
- Due to the low number of LGBTQ+ respondents, we could not add them to the sample or separate this group for statistical tests

Conclusion



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- Study sheds light on how sexual activity is related to GPA among a college sample that is predominantly Hispanic
 - Sample may be reflective of future collegiate student bodies
- Future research on this topic should consider sexual orientation