

Boise State University

**ScholarWorks**

---

College of Social Sciences and Public Affairs  
Poster Presentations

2010 Undergraduate Research and Scholarship  
Conference

---

4-12-2010

## **College Students and Sexual Health**

Kelsey Bruch

*Department of Psychology, Boise State University*

—

---

## College Students and Sexual Health

### Abstract

Sexually transmitted disease rates are highest among young adults age 15-25. This age range puts high school and college students at the greatest risk to become infected with a life altering disease. Education is the key to helping prevent the spread of STDs, and there needs to be a strong sexual educational system in our nation's school system to teach students the negative effects of not wearing a condom or practicing safe sex. Psych 101 students from Boise State University as well as community volunteers completed a 7 question survey that contained questions regarding their sexual knowledge and sexual behaviors. The results of this survey showed that although these young adults believe themselves to be knowledgeable about STDs and the importance of condoms they are still not using them all the time. Teens in our society who are choosing to be sexually active need to understand their decisions and the possible consequences; this cannot happen if a school is fixated on trying to teach abstinence as the only method of birth control. New educational practices should be implemented to go beyond what is currently being taught to show students just how badly STDs can affect your body and your life. Current curriculum should also be expanded on to further stress that condoms should be used during all sexual activity. Young adults need to be able to understand the negative effects of not wearing a condom far outweigh the benefits.

# College Students and Sexual Health

Boise State University Undergraduate Research and Scholarship Conference  
April 12, 2010

Kelsey Bruch  
Department of Psychology



Sexually transmitted diseases are a growing problem in our society with young adults age 15-25 being the most widely affected group (Keine, Tennen, & Armeli, 2008). Teaching abstinence does not educate teens that are choosing to engage in sexual activity. The sexually active teens need much more education so they can make informed decisions about having safe sex. Sexual education classes need to teach students that condoms are not only used for pregnancy prevention, but that they are also a key factor in preventing sexually transmitted diseases. A negative connotation associated with condoms usage has led to a decrease in couples practicing safe sex due to claims of decreased sensation and pleasure (Davis, Sloan, MacMaster, & Kilbourne, 2007). Presenting condoms in a positive manner as well as educating students of the negative effects of not practicing safe sex will ultimately lead to a decrease in STD cases and teen pregnancies. This study aims to find a relationship to show that students who are confident in their sexual decisions based on previous sexual education courses about safe sex practices will use a condom more frequently than those who are not confident from previous courses.

## Method

A group of 65 subjects chose to participate in this survey which included seven questions regarding sexual behaviors and knowledge about safe sex practices. The sur-

vey was completed on-line, in-person in a classroom, or outside of a classroom by volunteers. The average age of the subjects was 21.33 years ( $SD = 3.91$ ). Participants were debriefed after finishing the survey and were given the opportunity to ask questions.

## Results

There was not a significant relationship between confidence in sexual decisions based on previous sexual education and frequency of condom use,  $r(52) = 0.02$ , n.s. Interestingly there was a significant difference in condom usage between freshmen ( $M = 1.17$ ,  $SD = 1.20$ ), sophomores ( $M = 2.50$ ,  $SD = 0.65$ ), juniors ( $M = 1.36$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ) and seniors ( $M = 1.86$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ ). Also, a  $t$ -test between sexually active participants and participants that are not sexually active showed that those who are not sexually active consider condoms to be more important ( $M = 4.37$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ) than those who currently sexually active ( $M = 4.04$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ), but the results were not significant.

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to see how well our education system is preparing students for making good, healthy sexual decisions. The study did not contain any information that was statistically significant regarding the frequency of condom use based on former education. This was unexpected after reading previous studies about con-

## Abstract

Sexually transmitted disease rates are highest among young adults age 15-25. To help prevent the spread of STDs, there needs to be a good educational system to teach students the negative effects of not wearing a condom. Psychology 101 students from Boise State University completed a survey that contained questions regarding their sexual knowledge and sexual behaviors. The results showed that although these young adults believe themselves to be knowledgeable about STDs and the importance of condoms they are still not using them all the time. New educational practices should be added to the current curriculum to further stress that condoms should be used during all sexual activity because the negative effects of not wearing one far outweigh the benefits.

dom use frequency and sexual education. Previous studies surrounding STDs state that young adults ages 15-25 have the highest number of reported infections. These facts should lead to more couples using protection, but unfortunately, they do not. The threat of getting an STD or giving one to a partner is greatly increased if a condom is not getting used. In this day and age abstinence programs should be abolished because it is evident from my data that teens are not choosing abstinence as the number one method of birth control. Sexual education courses need to be giving students hard facts and providing valid information to show that the benefits of wearing a condom far outweigh any negative connotations that go along with wearing one. Whether someone is in a sexual relationship or someone plans on having children, they can be affected by sexually transmitted diseases. With the increasing amount of medical information and disease prevention techniques, young adults should be taught to utilize all the resources they have to keep their bodies healthy.