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Losing My Religion (And It Doesn't Feel So Good) How Alcohol, Drugs, and Religion Affect Hookup Enjoyment Among College Students

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**Losing My Religion (And It Doesn't Feel So Good)
How Alcohol, Drugs, and Religion Affect Hookup Enjoyment Among College Students***

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ABSTRACT

In Western media, drugs, alcohol, and casual sex are widely regarded as essential facets of the college experience. It is not only *accepted* but *expected* that students will experiment with drugs and explore their sexuality throughout their undergraduate careers. Students who come from religious backgrounds that position such behaviors as against their fundamental beliefs are put in a tricky predicament. How do they participate in behaviors that go directly against their religious ideals? In the current study, I explore the questions “do drug and alcohol use affect college students’ enjoyment of a hookup, and how strong of a role does religiosity play in this relationship?” Using the Online College Social Life Survey from the years 2005-2011 (N=24131), the current study examines the effects that drugs, alcohol, Christianity, and religious attendance have on hookup enjoyment while controlling for race, sexual orientation, and gender. The study finds that when alcohol is involved, students who attend religious services frequently report higher levels of hookup enjoyment than those who attend religious services infrequently. Additionally, the findings show that drug use has no significant effect on hookup enjoyment in religious and non-religious college students, and religious attendance-- but not Christianity--has a significant negative affect on hookup enjoyment. The results of the study lead to further inquiries regarding the ways in which particular religions may affect hookup enjoyment and other passages for further research.

Losing My Religion (And It Doesn't Feel So Good) How Alcohol, Drugs, and Religion Affect Hookup Enjoyment Among College Students

Movies like the *American Pie* franchise, *Spring Breakers*, and *Animal House* have established three pillars of the college experience: drugs, alcohol, and casual sex. Although we cannot always believe what we see on screen, drugs, alcohol, and “hookups” are common parts of social life on real college campuses, not just in the movies. Partially due to popular media, provocative behaviors associated with collegiate culture are generally accepted as “normal,” but remain deviant in certain communities (Carpentier and Stevens 2017; Jolien et al. 2016) . Religious groups, for example, have strong opinions on right and wrong in relation to sexual activity. There are strict conditions under which sexual activity may occur, and any deviance from these norms result in shame, ostracization, and additional consequences. Drug and alcohol use, too, is limited in many religions. If not prohibited explicitly, as in Islam, religious groups generally encourage their youth to abstain from alcohol consumption until they reach the legal age and forbid illicit substance use altogether. Essentially, “normal” college behaviors are frowned upon in many religious communities. What, then, are the social ramifications of religious college students following in the steps of their favorite movie characters? How do they cope with the expectations of their religious communities and the combatting social pressures of college? In this study, I examine how drug and alcohol use affect college students’ enjoyment of a hookup, and the role religious practice plays.

In much of religious research, because it is linked to drug use and sexual regret, hookup culture is understood to be a negative product of undergraduate college life (Longest and Uecker 2018; Esbaugh and Gute 2008; Sack et al. 1984; Uecker and Martinez 2017; Grello et al. 2006; Esbaugh and Gute 2008; Burdette et al. 2009; Winter et al. 2014; Poulson et al. 2008).

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Regardless of the possible negative consequences, casual sex remains prevalent on college campuses, enticing students of all backgrounds regardless of belief. Because many religions condemn extramarital sexual activity and drug use, the ways in which religious college students rate the enjoyment of their last sexual experience under the influence of drugs or alcohol is of great interest. How does the compounded shame from breaking two cultural norms manifest itself in their reports?

There is plenty of research regarding religious students and hookup culture (Burdette et al. 2009; Poulson et al. 2008; Zaleski and Schiaffino 2000; Winter et al. 2014; Davidson et al. 2018; Longest and Uecker 2018; Cochran and Beeghley 1991; Ginn et al. 1998; Eshbaugh and Gute 2008; Sack et al. 1984; Farmer et al. 2008) and religious student's attitudes towards illicit substances (Galen and Rodgers 2004; Adamczyk and Palmer 2008; Ginn et al. 1998; Winter et al. 2014; Poulson et al. 2008), but little on how religion, drugs, alcohol, and sexual enjoyment interact with each other. Through investigation of the relationship between these variables, further understandings of the intricacies of religion, drugs, and sex in the lives of college students may be unveiled.

Considering previous research on sex, drugs, and religiosity, three hypotheses emerge. Primarily, prior research suggests that religious students are more likely than secular students to feel sexual regret after engaging in a hookup (Eshbaugh and Gute 2008; Longest and Uecker 2018). It is also widely supported that religious students are less likely to use drugs and alcohol than their secular peers (Poulson et al. 2008; Galen and Rogers 2004; Adamczyk and Palmer 2008), indicating the profound affect religiosity has on the pillars of college social life. Therefore, one can easily assume that religious students are less likely to enjoy a hookup when drugs or alcohol are involved; hooking up under the influence goes against their religious beliefs two-fold,

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providing more reason to feel poorly about it afterwards. This compounded sexual regret has the potential to lead to depressive symptoms and other negative psychological effects among religious students as well (Grello et al. 2006). In consideration of previous research and controlling for other factors, I hypothesize that...

- Respondents who attend church frequently and Christian respondents will report enjoying their last hookup less than their secular peers (H₁).
- Students who use drugs and alcohol will report enjoying their last hookup less than students who do not (H₂).
- The relationship between drugs and alcohol use and hookup enjoyment will be stronger amongst religious students than secular students (H₃).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Approach

Before investigating the complicated relationship between religion, hookup enjoyment, and drug and alcohol use, it is important to establish a definition of a “hookup.” There are various understandings of what “hooking up” is, but the clearest comes from the work of Burdette et al. (2009). In their paper, a hookup is defined as “a physical encounter between two people who are largely unfamiliar with one another or are otherwise briefly acquainted” (Burdette et al. 2009:535). Although not explicitly stated in their definition, hookups are generally seen as purely physical encounters. Some students may classify a hookup as prolonged kissing, while others may limit it to penetrative sex, but emotionless activity is the common denominator for all. Although the data set I use invites participants to use their own definition of “hooking up”, Burdette et al.’s (2009) definition is appropriate for understanding the following theoretical

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approach and literature review. The discrepancies in hookup definition will be further addressed in the limitations section of the current study.

How do drug and alcohol use affect college students' enjoyment of a hookup, and what role does religion play in that relationship? The relationships between drugs and sex, religion and sex, and religion and drugs have been heavily researched, especially within the population of undergraduate college students. Much of the research on religion's impact on drug use and sexual activity is based in Rodney Stark's (1996) Moral Community Thesis. Stark's theory revolves around the idea that those in communities with strong, shared, moral values are less likely to display deviant behaviors than those who are not part of close-knit communities.

Since the publication of Stark's Moral Community Thesis, sociologists and psychologists have put it to the test. Longest and Uecker (2018), for example, drawing on a nationally representative, longitudinal phone survey, find support for the theory in that those with strong personal religious affiliations are less likely to engage in sexual behavior and more likely to experience sexual regret than their secular peers. In their work on religiosity and alcohol behavior, similarly, Galen et al. (2004) find an inverse relationship between religiosity and alcohol consumption in their survey of 265 college students, further supporting Stark's theory. Beyond the support garnered through experimentation, the theory is refuted in several works as well. Burdette et al. (2009), for example, find that young women who attend religious universities are more likely to engage in hookup culture than their peers at secular universities. Additionally, the work of Poulson et al. (2008) finds that a belief in God has little effect on sexual activity and alcohol use, despite having an effect on marijuana use.

The Moral Communities Thesis, then, while widely supported, is faced with conflicting evidence. In the current study, due to prior findings that *religion has an effect on drug and*

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alcohol use, religion has an effect on sexual activity, and religion has a direct effect on sexual regret, I expect to see overall support of the Moral Communities Thesis. That being said, because I am investigating a population of college students who refute Stark's (1996) theory (religious students who are sexually active), I also rely on evidence that debunks the Moral Communities Thesis. To engage in a hookup culture is to go against Stark's (1996) theory, as casual sex does not align with the values of Christian faiths. Therefore, I am looking to see how breaking the moral community thesis not just one (drug use), but twice (casual sex), affects the ways religious students rank their enjoyment of a hookup. The moral community I investigate in the current study is Christian students and those who attend religious services regularly; these students will be compared to their more secular peers. The deviant behaviors I will examine are drug use, alcohol use, and casual sexual activity.

It is important to note that although I lump all denominations of Christianity together in the current study, there are discrepancies within Christian religions that differentiate themselves from one another. Evangelicalism, for example, has an especially strict stance on pre-marital sexuality, while the United Church of Christ takes a more progressive, holistic approach (Burke 2014:4; United Church of Christ). Therefore, as explained in the limitations section of this paper, it is difficult to make conclusions on how drugs, alcohol, and sex affect *all* Christians, and these discrepancies may lead to inconsistent results.

Drug and Alcohol Use

In previous research, it has generally been found that religious young people are more likely to abstain from drug and alcohol use than their less religious peers. In their research, for example, Adamczyk and Palmer (2008) find that religious students are less likely to be initiated into marijuana use than non-religious students (718). In addition to the moral communities

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thesis, the researchers explicitly mention social control theory as a catalyst for abstinence. Social control theory posits that teens who are “tightly bound” to their familial, social, and institutional communities hold a “stake in conformity” that prevents them from participating in typical, antisocial behaviors like marijuana use (Adamczyk and Palmer 2008:718, 719). Poulson et al. (2008) have similar findings. In their study of HBCU students, they found a weak, yet significant, inverse relationship between religiosity and marijuana use, and no relationship between religiosity and alcohol consumption. The “lack of association between belief and behavior,” they theorize, is due to Black churches not placing enough effort in “instructing students about the values of self-restraint (539). It is because of the unique positioning of race in relation to the moral communities thesis that I include race as a control variable in the current study; there may be reason to believe that sexual enjoyment will differ between White and Non-White students.

In addition to looking at drug use behaviors, researchers also investigate the driving forces that discourage (or encourage) drinking behaviors amongst religious youth. In Galen and Rodgers (2004) study, for example, the pair finds that religious respondents tend to hold negative expectations about alcohol consumption and are less likely to drink for “enhancement, sociability, and coping reasons” (474). Therefore, it is understood that religious students don’t necessarily abstain from alcohol use out of fear of breaking social norms, as suggested by social control theory and the Moral Communities Thesis. Instead, religious communities may teach young people about the negative effects of alcohol, encouraging them to make their own decisions about illicit substance use (Galen and Rodgers 2004). Further, Galen and Rodgers’ (2004) study, then, suggests that religious communities may work to instill alternative, healthy coping mechanisms among their youth.

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Sexual Activity

In addition to drug and alcohol use, religious students are also found to have an aversion to premarital sexual activity. As taught in traditionalist readings of the Christian Bible, premarital sex is sinful, inappropriate behavior. Although these beliefs have stood the test of time in some religious communities, movements like the sexual liberation movement of the 1960s, the three waves of feminism, and the Progressive Christian movement have loosened beliefs around sex and sexuality (Cochran and Beeghley 1991:46; Edles 2013). As a result, young religious people may be allowed more flexibility when it comes to breaking sexual religious norms. The newfound lack of parental supervision in dating life that college brings may also lead to participation in hookup culture among religious youth (Burdette et al. 2009:546). Without parental supervision, students can explore the sexual aspects of romantic relationships, which may include the practice of “hooking up” with potential partners (Burdette et al. 2009:546).

Despite the sexual freedoms some religious students experience, plenty of literature suggests the pervasiveness of a strong, negative relationship between religiosity and premarital sexual behavior (Zaleski and Schiaffino 200). Some argue the inverse relationship stems from the sexual education religious students receive and who they receive it from (Davidson et al. 2018). In the work of Davison et al. (2018), for example, religiously affiliated students were likely to believe the sexual education they receive from their church, while non-religious students saw such sources of information as unreliable (50). Religious students’ belief in the reliability of these sources, the researchers posit, could explain their finding that students with religious affiliations have fewer sexual partners (50). Research also supports a connection between religiosity, religious friends, and abstaining from premarital sex. In the research of Sack et al. (1984), religious female participants had fewer sexually active friends and were less likely

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to be sexually active themselves, therefore supporting the moral communities thesis. Because religious students are more likely to have religious friends than secular students, their shared values have an effect on an individual's behavior.

Additionally, studies have historically found a strong positive correlation between alcohol consumption and sexual acts on college campuses (Poulson et al. 530). In their longitudinal study on Finnish twins, for example, Winter et al. (2014), found that abstinence from alcohol had a strong, positive relationship with sexual abstinence among religious young adults (205). Because religious students choose to abstain from alcohol, they then may find it easier to also abstain from sexual activity, too.

Sexual Enjoyment and Regret

Outside of a religious context, sexual regret is most common in women because of the societal norm that men are inherently sexual and women are not, highlighting the important role that social expectations play in self-evaluations of hookups (Esbaugh and Gute 2008:86; Uecker and Martinez 2017:483; Allison 2019:380). Men are allowed to explore their sexuality in popular western culture, while women are stuck in the virgin-whore paradox (Klement and Sagarin 2016:208). If a woman engages in sexual activity she is perceived as promiscuous, but if she does not, she is a prude. Therefore, no matter what decisions a woman makes about her sexuality, she is prone to feelings of regret. The influence of gender norms may also explain why college-aged women are more likely to feel depressive symptoms after hooking up than their male counterparts (Bradshaw et al. 2010:668; Grello et al. 2006:265).

The influence of community norms on sexual regret is present among religious students as well. When compared to their secular peers, for example, religious students feel significantly more sexual regret after a casual sexual encounter (Longest and Uecker 2018; Esbaugh and Gute

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2008). This comes as no surprise, as many religions prohibit pre-marital sexual activity.

Although there is little research about the relationship between sexual regret and enjoyment of sexual activity, one may easily assume that those who regret a sexual encounter are likely to rate their enjoyment of the hookup as low.

Besides sexual regret, there are several other reasons why someone might not enjoy a hookup. According to the work of Grello et al. (2006), for instance, those whose first sexual encounter was a random hookup rate the experience more negatively than those whose first sexual encounter was with a romantic partner (259). Further, one-time hookups leave little room for communication about a partner's (especially a woman's) wants and needs (Armstrong et al. 2012:458; Uecker and Martinez 2017:474). Heterosexual sex generally centers the penis as a vessel of pleasure, and women with vaginas do not receive the same attention (Armstrong et al. 2012:436). Therefore, women do not receive adequate pleasure which may lead to lower hookup enjoyment (Armstrong et al. 2012:436). Religious students in particular are less likely to engage in non-traditional sexual activities such as mutual oral stimulation and vaginal intercourse where women are on top, men are on top, and where the vagina is penetrated from behind (Farmer et al. 2009). In Farmer et al.'s (2009) research, religious students' restricted sexual intercourse stems from an adherence to religious doctrine (863). Because they follow religious norms of what is and is not appropriate, religious students may feel less freedom to explore their fantasies, fetishes, or other aspects of sexuality they might enjoy. Therefore, religious students may report lower sexual enjoyment than their secular peers.

Despite the negative effects of hookup culture, especially in the lives of women, it is important to highlight the benefits as well. For example, the work of Shepardson et al. (2016) find that sexual pleasure and gratification are the most common motives for hooking up (217).

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Additionally, women list happiness and enjoyment, as well as self-confidence, as benefits of hooking up (217). Regardless of these important findings, there is an overwhelming amount of data and research supporting the negative effects of hookup engagement among college women, especially religious ones. It is because of the reported higher levels of sexual regret among religious students that I hypothesize they will enjoy hookups less than their secular peers.

Despite the extent of previous research on religion's effects on sexual regret, sexual activity, and drug and alcohol use, there remains a gap on how drug and alcohol use impact the sexual enjoyment of religious students. Obviously, religious students tend to stay away from drugs, alcohol, and pre-marital sexual activity, but what happens when they engage in all three illicit behaviors? Is sex, as proposed by films such as *American Pie* and *Spring Breakers*, as enjoyable as it is made out to be, and do drugs and alcohol really make it better? If so, is that relationship applicable to those who grew up learning that engaging in those behaviors is not only illicit, but immoral? In studying reports of sexual enjoyment through the lens of religiously deviant behaviors, this study offers further insight into the way straying from religious norms colors a college student's experiences, as well as the possible emotional and psychological consequences.

METHODS

For this study I use the Online College Social Life Survey (OCSLS) developed by Paula England and Jonathan Bearak at New York University (England 2005). Between the years of 2005 and 2011, England and Bearak collected data from 21 four-year degree-granting colleges and universities across the United States. The schools represent various geographic regions of the country and encompass public and private, secular and religious, and big and small institutions. The survey was given to 24,131 respondents using a convenience sample of undergraduate social

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science and humanities students; after listwise deletion of missing data, the sample size is 13,906. The current study's population is students who have participated in at least one hookup throughout their college career. Students who completed the online, anonymous survey received extra credit for their participation, leading to an almost 100 percent response rate (Allison and Ralston 2018:501; Uecker and Martinez 2017:475). The unit of analysis for the dataset is the individual. For further information on how the data were collected, please see <https://pages.nyu.edu/ocsls/2010/>.

In the current study, I investigate variables pertaining to the last hookup the respondent participated in, as asked in section C of the survey. Particularly, I will measure the drugs used before or during the last hookup (drugs.used), the number of drinks consumed before or during the last hookup (num.drinks), how often the student attends religious services (church_attendance), the current religious preference of the student (religion), and how much the respondent enjoyed the hookup (enjoyed.sexual.activity).

The drugs used variable asks, "what illegal drugs did you use before or during the hookup?" coding those who did not use drugs as 0 and those who did as 1. There were 9,374 missing cases for this variable, which I removed using a listwise deletion. The large amount of missing data may be caused by students who have never hooked up as well as social desirability; the respondents may have felt uncomfortable reporting their use of illegal substances. I did not need to adjust the coding of this variable.

In addition to drug use, I also examine responses to the survey question "how much alcohol did you drink before or during the hookup? The number of drinks variable is an interval-ratio measure and ranges from 0 to 360 drinks; there was no missing data for this variable. In recoding the variable, I rounded decimal values up to the next whole number (10.2 to 11, 11.5 to

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12). I also coded any value above 20 drinks as “>20” for two reasons. First of all, 20 drinks, regardless of biological sex, is enough to greatly impair the motor skills, and mental and sexual functioning of anyone under 450 pounds (American Addiction Centers). Secondly, some participants reported consuming up to 360 drinks before or during a hookup, which is highly improbable. Participants may have included too-high values because of question wording confusion or as a joke. After the recoding process, the values are coded as follows: 1:0, 2:1, 3:2, 4:3, 5:4, 6:5, 7:6, 8:7, 9:8, 10:9, 11:10, 12:11, 13:12, 14:13, 15:14, 16:15, 17:16, 18:17, 19:18, 20:19, 21:20, 22: >20.

To measure the independent variables of church attendance and current religious preference, I use the variables church_attendance (How often did you typically attend religious services in the past year?) and religion (what is your current religious preference?). Church attendance is measured using a Likert scale (never, a few times a year, 1-3 times a month, once a week, and more than once a week), while religion is answered through a multiple-choice questionnaire (Catholic, Mormon, Evangelical, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, none, other). Church attendance had 241 cases of missing data and religion had 765, both of which I removed using listwise deletion of missing data. The cause of the missing cases is unclear. Because of automatic recoding of the variables, the codes were presented in a nonsensical order. To adjust church attendance, I recoded "never" as 1, "a few times a year" as 2, "1-3 times a month" as 3, "once a week" as 4, and "more than once a week as" 5. I recoded religion into a dummy variable of Christian and Not Christian, where Christian = 1 and Not Christian =0. The reasoning behind the dummifying of this variable is that Christians made up 37% of the population, a larger percentage than any other religion besides non-religious students

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(37%). Because some religions, like Mormonism (.4%), made up only very small percentages of the sample, measuring the effect of each religion would not reap significant findings.

My dependent variable, enjoyment of sexual activity (how much did you enjoy whatever happened physically (most recent event)?), is answered using a Likert scale: I did not enjoy the sexual activity at all; I enjoyed the sexual activity very little; I enjoyed the sexual activity somewhat, and I enjoyed the sexual activity very much. There were originally 9657 missing cases in this variable, which I removed using listwise deletion. One can assume that the majority of the 9657 cases were students who did not have a recent hookup. In addition to deleting missing data, I had to recode the variable due to the illogical results of automatic recoding. I coded “I did not enjoy the sexual activity at all” as 1, “I enjoyed the sexual activity very little” as 2, “I enjoyed the sexual activity somewhat” as 3, and “I enjoyed the sexual activity very much” as 4. Additionally, I will control for the following variables:

- Race (race): “if you had to pick one racial or ethnic group to describe yourself, which would it be?” is answered using a multiple-choice questionnaire (White, Black, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, Vietnamese, South Asian, Other Asian, Native American, Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Other Hispanic, and Other Race). I removed all 289 cases of missing data using listwise deletion and recoded the variable into the dummy variable “White,” where White =1 and all other races = 0. As proposed in the work of Poulson et al. (2008), race may play a role in the way religious groups view deviant behaviors. Because the researchers found a weak correlation between religious belief and abstinence from drugs and alcohol among HBCU students, they theorized that Black churches do not teach adequate restraint. To investigate the possible relationship between race and deviant behavior, I control for Whiteness.

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- Sexual orientation (sexual.orientation): “what is your sexual orientation?” is answered using a multiple-choice questionnaire (straight, gay, bisexual, and unsure). I removed the 219 missing cases through a listwise deletion and transformed the variable into one dummy variable: “straight,” where straight students are coded as 1 and all other students are coded as 0. Religion, especially Christianity, and homosexuality have a turbulent past. Although some churches have altered their stances on homosexuality to become more inclusive, many have not (Cochran and Beeghley 1991:46). Due to this tense relationship, religious students who identify as homosexual may have deeper feelings of sexual regret because their sexual orientation adds a third layer of deviance from Christian norms. This compounded sexual regret, then, may lead them to reporting lower levels of sexual enjoyment.
- Gender (gender): “what is your gender?” is answered using a multiple-choice questionnaire (male, female, MTF, and FTM). There were 155 cases of missing data which I removed with a listwise deletion. After that, I recoded the variable into a dummy, where women = 1 and men = 0. I created a dummy variable because although the trans experience is different from the experience of cis-gendered people, trans men are still men and trans women are still women. According to prior research, gender has a direct effect on how much students enjoy a hookup. While women tend to report higher levels of regret due to sexual activity, men are more likely to regret sexual inactivity (Eshbaugh and Gute 78). Therefore, one can assume that women will report lower sexual enjoyment after a hookup; as a result, I control for gender.

By controlling for these variables, I will see if any of them have a direct effect on the enjoyment of a hookup.

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FINDINGS

Univariate Analysis

Forty-nine percent of all respondents reported that they enjoyed their last hookup very much, 37 percent enjoyed the hookup somewhat, 9 percent enjoyed it very little, and 4 percent not at all (Figure 5). The dependent variable, enjoyment of sexual hookup, has a mean of 3, a median of 3, and a standard deviation of .80 (Table 1). With “I did not enjoy the sexual activity at all” coded as 1 and “I enjoyed the sexual activity very much” coded as 4, the mean and median indicate that more respondents enjoyed their last hookup than not. The standard deviation of .80 shows that data points are clustered closely around the mean value. The frequencies of sexual enjoyment, as displayed in Figure 5, further support the measures of central tendency shown in Table 1.

{Insert Figure 5 Here}

The independent variable “Christian” has a mean of .37, a median of 0, and a standard deviation of .48. The variable is a dummy, with 0 coded as not Christian and 1 coded as Christian. Therefore, the mean of .37 shows that there are more respondents who do not identify as Christian (63 percent) than respondents who do (37 percent), a claim further supported by the median value (Figure 1). The standard deviation of .48 shows that the data points are clustered closely around the mean.

{Insert Figure 1 Here}

Another independent variable, how often the respondent attends religious services, has a mean of 2, a median of 2, and a standard deviation of 6, as shown in Table 1. The values of the variable are coded where 1= the respondent never attends religious services and 5= the respondent attends religious services more than once a week. Because the mean and median are 2, one can see that the majority of respondents attend church between 0 times a year and “a few

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times a year.” The standard deviation, though, speaks to a wider distribution of data points from the mean value. Figure 2 exhibits the frequencies of the values; 36 percent of respondents never attend religious services, 44 attend a few times a year, 12 percent go 1-3 times a month, 6 percent go once a week, and 1 percent attend religious services more than once a week.

The independent variable “used drugs,” where 0= the respondent did not use drugs before or during the hookup and 1= the respondent did use drugs before or during the hookup, has a mean of .18, a median of 0, and a standard deviation of .39. Both the mean and median values show that the average student did not use drugs before or during their hookup. The standard deviation indicates a clustering of data points around the mean. Figure 3 shows that 81 percent of students do not report using drugs before or during their last hookup while 19 percent do.

{Insert Figure 3 Here}

Number of drinks consumed before or during the hookup, the final independent variable, has a mean and median of 5 and a standard deviation of 4. On average, as exhibited by the mean and median, students consumed approximately 4 drinks before or during the hookup, as each value is coded as one below its value (for example 1=0 drink, 2= 1 drink, and 3= 2 drinks, etc.). The standard deviation indicates a wide distribution of data points around the mean. Figure 4 shows that 34 percent of respondents had 0 drinks before or during their hookup, with the next highest frequency being 5 drinks (9 percent), followed by 6 drinks (8 percent) and 4 drinks (7 percent). Only 0.4 percent of respondents had more than 20 drinks. The finding that the majority of students did not drink before or during their hookup is quite interesting, as drinking and hookup culture are inextricably linked in previous literature (Esbaugh and Gute 2008).

{Insert Figure 4 Here}

{Insert Table 1 Here}

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Bivariate Analysis

The strongest significant relationship ($p < .001$) in my bivariate correlation is the positive, moderate relationship between Christianity and church attendance ($r = .373$), as shown in Table 2. The correlation coefficient of the relationship indicates that Christians attend church at a higher frequency than non-Christians. The relationship between women and the number of drinks consumed is the next strongest statistically significant relationship, although it is considered a weak, negative relationship ($r = -.171$). The correlation coefficient shows that women in my sample are less likely to drink than their male counterparts. Other notable statistically significant relationships include the relationships between church attendance and enjoyment of sexual activity, the number of drinks consumed and enjoyment of sexual activity, and women and enjoyment of sexual activity.

Church attendance and enjoyment of sexual activity have a weak, negative, but statistically significant relationship ($r = -.042$). The value of r indicates that as people attend church more frequently, they tend to enjoy their hookup less. The relationship between the number of drinks consumed before or during a hookup and the enjoyment of sexual activity is a negative, weak, and statistically significant relationship ($r = -.092$); as people drink more, they report lower enjoyment of sexual activity. The correlation coefficient of $r = -.069$ shows that the relationship between women and enjoyment of sexual activity is a statistically significant negative, weak relationship. Therefore, women are less likely to rate a hookup as enjoyable than men.

It is important to note that the relationship between drug use and sexual enjoyment is not statistically significant ($r = .017$); there is no relationship between the two variables. The fact that the relationship between Christianity and enjoyment of sexual activity is not statistically

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significant is also of great importance. Because the correlation coefficient ($r=-.009$) is not statistically significant, there is no relationship between Christian respondents and enjoyment of sexual activity.

Other notable relationships include the relationships between women and drug use, women and the number of drinks consumed, and white respondents and sexual enjoyment. The relationship between women and drug use is a negative, weak, statistically significant relationship ($r=-.115$). This correlation coefficient indicates that women are less likely to use drugs than men in my sample. Women and the number of drinks consumed is also a negative, weak, statistically significant relationship ($r=-.171$), meaning that women are less likely to drink than men. Finally, the relationship between white respondents and enjoyment of sexual activity is a weak statistically significant, positive relationship ($r=.039$). Therefore, white respondents are more likely to enjoy their hookup than respondents of other races.

{Insert Table 2 Here}

Multivariate Analysis

For the multivariate regression, I created one model for students who attended religious services frequently (more than 1-3 times a month) and a model for those who attended religious services infrequently (a few times a year or never). The two-model regression (Table 3) results show that the F-test for students who attend religious services infrequently (40.51) and the F-test for students who attend religious frequently (9.02) are both significant at the $>.001$ level. From further investigation of Table 3, one can see that 2.1 percent of the variance in sexual enjoyment of students with less religious attendance can be attributed to the independent and dependent variables. The standardized coefficients of the variables white (.059), straight (.036), woman (-.085), and number of drinks (-.124) are all statistically significant at the $>.001$ level. The number

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of drinks has the largest effect on hookup enjoyment, followed by woman, white, and straight. Drug use and Christian were not significant at the $>.001$ level.

Two percent of the variance in hookup enjoyment of students who attend religious services more frequently can be attributed to the independent and dependent variables. The standardized coefficients of women (-.1) and the number of drinks (-.119) are statistically significant at the $>.001$ level, with the number of drinks having a larger effect on the dependent variable. In the model of students who attend religious services more frequently, the variables white, straight, Christian, and used drugs are not statistically significant at the $>.001$ level.

In comparison to my bivariate analysis, the only notable difference is the statistical significance of the straight variable in the multivariate regression of students who attend church less frequently; straightness was not significant in the bivariate analysis at all. This finding indicates that heterosexuality only has an effect on hookup enjoyment among students who attend church infrequently.

The findings of the multivariate regression do not support my third hypothesis that the relationship between drugs and alcohol use and hookup enjoyment will be stronger amongst religious students than secular students. If those who do attend religious services frequently indicate more religious students and those who attend religious services less frequently indicate less religious students, the hypothesis is not supported. The effect of the number of drinks on hookup enjoyment is stronger in students who attend church less frequently (-.124) than those who attend church more frequently (-.119), although by a marginal amount. Drug use is not statistically significant in either regression, but its effect on hookup enjoyment is still stronger in students who attend religious services less frequently (.029) than those who attend more frequently (-.009), despite working in opposite directions.

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{Insert Table 3 Here}

DISCUSSION

The bivariate findings of the current study show which variables have a statistically significant effect on the dependent variable, enjoyment of sexual activity. As supported in previous literature, church attendance has a significant, negative relationship with hookup enjoyment. Although other studies use scales of religiosity rather than separating church attendance and religious practice as I do, it is generally found that those who are religious feel more sexual regret than their secular peers (Longest and Uecker 2018; Esbaugh and Gute 2008). In their study, Esbaugh and Gute (2008) also mention the role alcohol plays in sexual regret; women who drink alcohol in anticipation of a hookup are more likely to regret a sexual encounter (86). Although the current study does not measure sexual regret, it can be assumed that those who feel high levels of sexual regret will also report lower levels of hookup enjoyment. Support for this assumption is found in the work of Esbaugh and Gute (2008) who find that women who experience high levels of sexual regret also report feeling disappointed in the hookup experience (78). Because disappointment is intrinsically linked to a lack of enjoyment, one can make the connection between regret, disappointment, and low levels of enjoyment. The finding in the current study that the number of drinks one consumes has a negative effect on enjoyment of sexual activity lines up with previous findings (Esbaugh and Gute 2008). Prior research also finds that women are more likely to experience sexual regret than men (Esbaugh and Gute 2008:86; Uecker and Martinez 2017:483; Allison 2019:380), a result which also appears-- although in terms of sexual enjoyment-- in the current study.

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Findings from the bivariate analysis only partially supports H_1 (respondents who attend church frequently and Christian respondents will report enjoying their last hookup less than their secular peers). Although there is a significant, negative relationship between church attendance and enjoyment of sexual activity, there is no relationship between Christianity and hookup enjoyment. The second hypothesis of the current study (Students who use drugs and alcohol will report enjoying their last hookup less than students who do not) is also only partially supported by the bivariate analysis. Despite the negative affect that drinking has on hookup enjoyment, there is not a significant relationship between the dependent variable and drug use. In fact, although the relationship is not statistically significant, the r value of used drugs and enjoyment of sexual activity is positive, which is quite surprising. H_3 (The relationship between drugs and alcohol use and hookup enjoyment will be stronger amongst religious students than secular students) cannot be supported just through a bivariate analysis, a split multivariate regression is required to denote the differences between those who attend religious services frequently and those who do not.

Controlling for other factors, a larger number of variables have a significant effect on sexual enjoyment among those who attend religious services infrequently than those who attend regularly (as shown in the multivariate analysis). For example, for those who attend religious services infrequently, white, straight, women, and the number of drinks one consumes before or during a hookup all have a statistically significant effect on the sexual enjoyment of a hookup. Whiteness and heterosexuality lead to higher levels of hookup enjoyment while womanhood and the number of drinks one consumes leads to lower hookup enjoyment. Among those who attend religious services *more* frequently, womanhood and the number of drinks one consumes are statistically significant and negatively associated with hookup enjoyment.

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Some of the relationships in the linear regressions are in line with previous theories regarding religion, hookups, drug & alcohol use, and sexual regret. To start, previous literature supports the relationship between women and higher levels of sexual regret as exhibited in both multivariate regressions (Esbaugh and Gute 2008:86; Uecker and Martinez 2017:483; Allison 2019:380). Although the current study examines sexual enjoyment as the dependent variable rather than sexual regret, one can assume that high levels of sexual regret may result in low levels of sexual enjoyment, as explained earlier. Previous literature also supports the relationship between the number of drinks consumed and lower levels of sexual enjoyment, a current finding in both regressions. (Esbaugh and Gute 2008:83). Whiteness and heterosexuality were not explicitly connected to sexual regret or sexual enjoyment in previous literature, despite having a statistically significant effect on hookup enjoyment among students who attend religious services infrequently in the current study.

Surprisingly, when controlling for other factors, Christianity does not have an effect on sexual enjoyment in either regression model, a finding that deviates from previous literature about sexual regret (Longest and Uecker 2018; Esbaugh and Gute 2008). It is also surprising that, controlling for other factors, drug use does not have a statistically significant effect on sexual enjoyment, although there was little prior research on drug's effect on sexual regret.

Overall, the findings of the current study do not support the hypotheses I initially set out to prove or the Moral Communities Thesis. In fact, the exact opposite phenomenon occurs. The first two hypotheses I propose were only partially supported by the bivariate analysis; religious attendance, not Christianity, has an effect on reports of hookup enjoyment, and only drinking has a significant, negative affect on hookup enjoyment. The third hypothesis, that the relationship between drugs and alcohol use and hookup enjoyment will be stronger amongst religious

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students than secular students, is not supported at all. In fact, the negative relationship between alcohol use and sexual enjoyment is stronger in students who attend religious services infrequently (-.124) than those who attend frequently (-.119).

In consideration of previous research, there are some reasons as to why this relationship exists. In the research of Burdette et al. (2009), the researchers find that young women who attend Catholic universities are more likely than women who attend secular universities to participate in hookup culture. The reasoning behind this phenomena, the researchers posit, is the emphasis catholic universities put on marriage and family (Burdette et al. 2009:546). Because Christian religions, and Catholicism in particular, stress marriage as a social norm, students are often encouraged to date and find potential life-long partners. In their search for a mate, Burdette et al. (2009) suggest that students may be inclined to explore physical relationships as well, especially since students are no longer under the watchful eye of their parents (546). Although I am not sure what percentage of the current population is Catholic, some of these themes may remain salient in the current study. If religious college students are no longer under the supervision of their parents and prioritize finding a marriage partner, they may feel free to explore their sexual options, a process which is most often accompanied by drugs and alcohol, without any sexual regret (Esbaugh and Gute 2008).

Limitations

One of the major limitations of the current study is the qualification of religiosity. In the multivariate regression, for example, religiosity is measured by frequency of religious service attendance, a measure that ignores the complexities of religious practice. By combining all religions in the same measure (excluding the independent variable of Christianity), the nuances of different religions' views on pre-marital sexual activity and drug use are erased. Another

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striking limitation of this study is the ambiguity of the term “hookup”. In the OCSLS, Paula England (2005) asks respondents to use their own definition of “hooking up” when answering survey questions. The “up for interpretation” nature of a hookup, then, may lead to some inconsistencies in the data. If someone defines a hookup as a kiss with a stranger while another person defines it as a one-time sexual encounter with a close friend, there is very little reliability to the measure. The final major limitation of the current study is the creation of the gender dummy variable. The original variable for gender had four categories: male, female, male to female transgender, and female to male transgender. Because a very slim portion of the sample identified as transgender (.1 percent), it would be incredibly difficult to draw any major conclusions about their experiences in relation to the current study. Therefore, I created a dummy variable where women equaled one and men equaled zero, removing the specificity of the trans experience.

The findings of the current study lead to many possibilities for future research. Primarily, researchers may learn more about the effect of drugs and alcohol on the sexual enjoyment of religious students by running regressions for specific religious traditions. A separation of religious identities may lead to a greater understanding of which ones affect hookup enjoyment and which do not. Future research may also benefit from separating different sexual behaviors (kissing, mutual masturbation, oral sex, vaginal sex, anal sex) to see the effects drugs and alcohol have on the enjoyment of each. The difference in the “seriousness” of the hookup may lead to interesting results. Finally, research in the years to come should look to incorporate the lived trans experience into their studies. Transgender people may report their hookups differently in terms of sexual enjoyment due to the transphobia-- especially in settings of physical intimacy—

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they face in everyday life, especially some religious sects. Incorporating these factors which were missing from the current study may lead to a plethora of new information down the line.

CONCLUSION

Using data from the Online College Social Life Survey (OCSLS), the current study set out to answer the question “do drugs and alcohol use affect college students’ enjoyment of a hookup, and how strong of a role does religiosity play in this relationship?” The bivariate and multivariate analyses of the dataset showed that alcohol use, not other drug use, has a negative effect on hookup enjoyment, and that the relationship is in fact stronger among students who attend religious services infrequently than students who attend frequently. The results of the analyses partially supported the first two hypotheses of the study, and completely refuted the third. H₁, “respondents who attend church frequently and Christian respondents will report enjoying their last hookup less than their secular peers” was supported in that students who attended church more frequently reported lower hookup enjoyment than their secular peers, but Christian students did not. H₂, “students who use drugs and alcohol will report enjoying their last hookup less than students who do not” was partially supported as well; alcohol had a significant negative affect on hookup enjoyment but drugs did not. Finally, the third hypothesis, “the relationship between drugs and alcohol use and hookup enjoyment will be stronger amongst religious students than secular students” was completely contradicted in the current study. Students who attended church infrequently and used drugs and alcohol before or during their hookup, in fact, reported lower rates of hookup enjoyment than their peers who attended religious services frequently and used substances. Therefore, the current study moves against the Moral Communities Thesis, the theory on which it is based.

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Sociologically, these findings open up avenues for further critical inquiry. For example, the current study shows that religion may not have as much of a negative effect on deviant behaviors as initially believed. Although prior research only points to the emphasis that Catholicism places on marriage and family, there are other possible sociological explanations for the results. For example, the relationship between drug use, alcohol use, sexual enjoyment, and church attendance may be indicative of changes in how Christian religions view sex and sexuality. Since the early 2000s, there has been a rise in “progressive Christianity,” a form of Christianity that champions “religious pluralism, indeterminacy and inclusivity” (Edles 2013:6). In the progressive Christian movement, there is far more dialogue about sexuality, the environment, and other social justice issues than there ever has been previously (Edles 2013:16). The opening up of conversation about topics that were once taboo (such as premarital sexuality) may contribute to the findings of the current study. Perhaps religions are not as strict on the topics of sexuality and illicit substance use as they once were.

If progressive Christianity is the catalyst for these findings, the current study speaks to the importance of dialogue and acceptance as an avenue of diminishing negative feelings like regret and disappointment. If religious communities continue to open up about the intricacies of sexual activities outside of heterosexual, penetrative, and marital norms, students may have better experiences in their inevitable sexual expression, whether through exploration or abstinence. The current study, then, speaks to the need for open, comprehensive, and accepting sexual education in churches, our schools, and other prominent institutions. For young people to have more enjoyable, safe, sexual explorations in young adulthood, more conversation and comprehensive education is required.

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Table 1. Means, Medians, Standard Deviations, Minimums, and Maximums for All Variables (N=13906)

Variable	Mean	Median	S.D.	Minimum	Maximum
Straight	0.91	1.0	0.28	0.0	1.0
Woman	0.67	1.0	0.47	0.0	1.0
White	0.70	1.0	0.46	0.0	1.0
Christian	0.37	0.0	0.48	0.0	1.0
Drugs before or during hookup	0.18	0.0	0.39	0.0	1.0
How often respondent attends church	1.9	2.0	0.91	1.0	5.0
Drinks before or during hookup	6.7	6.0	5.9	0.0	360.0
Enjoyment of hookup	3.3	3.0	0.80	1.0	4.0

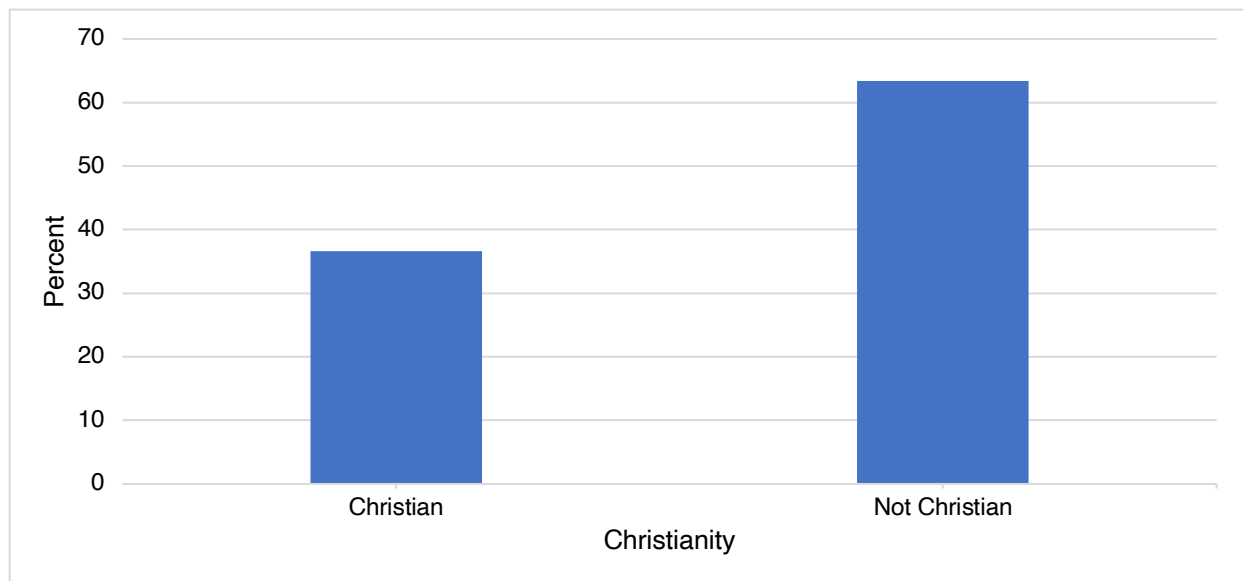


Figure 1. Bar Chart of Current Religious Practices

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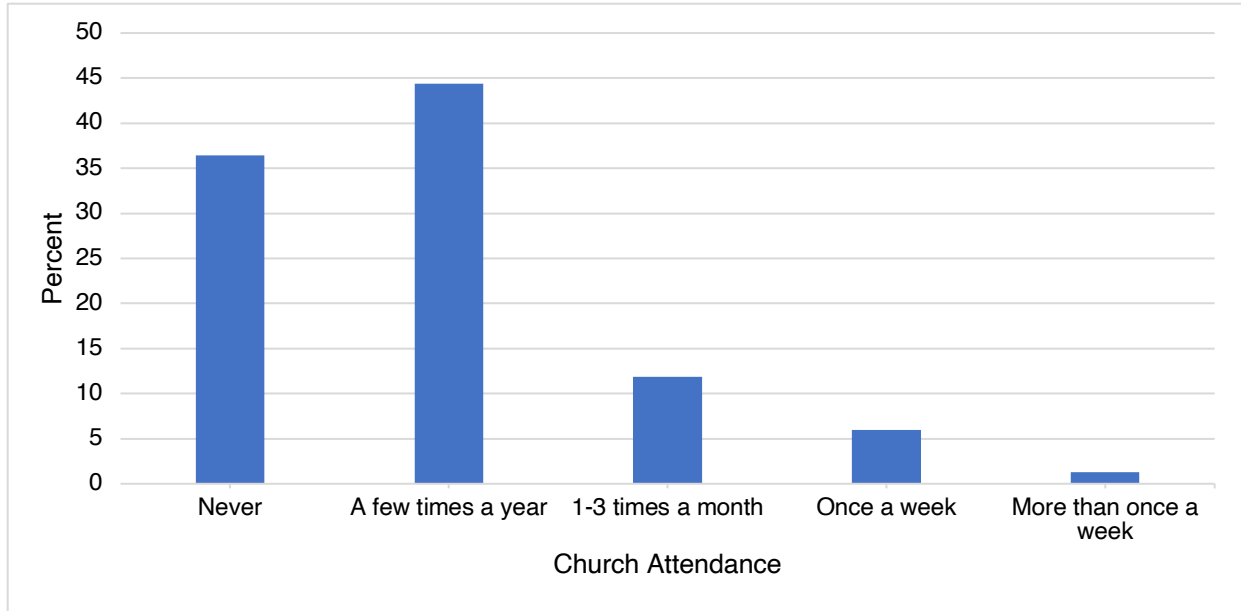


Figure 2. Bar Chart of Church Attendance

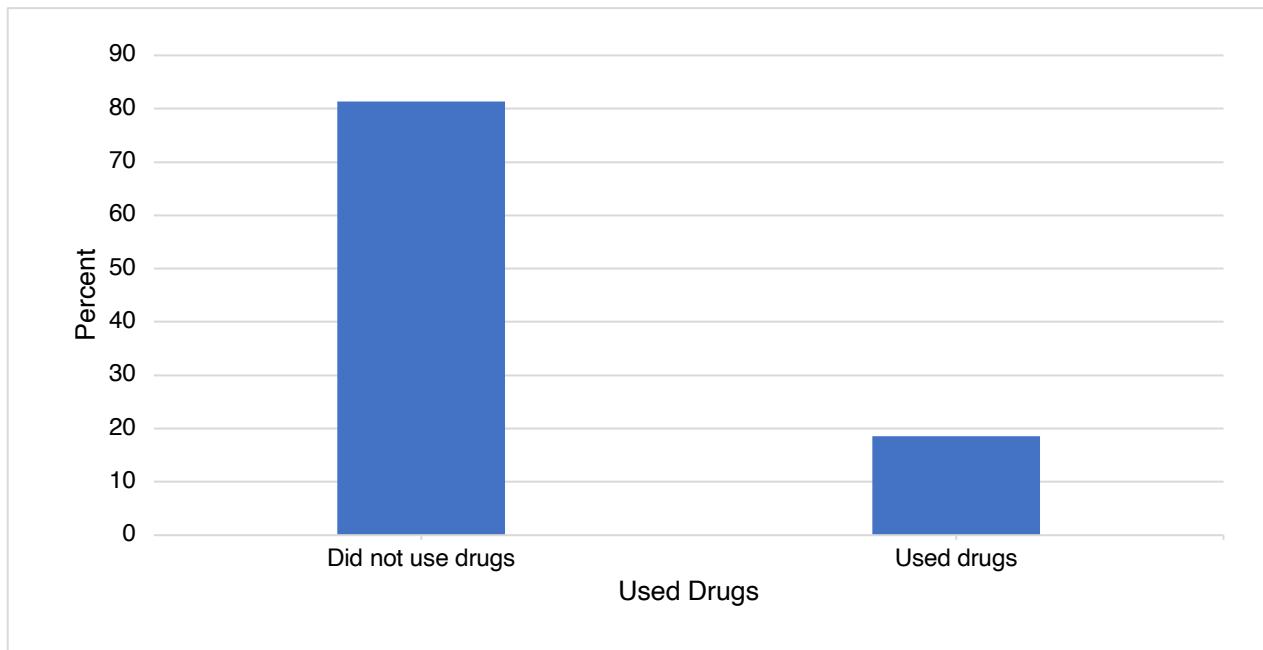


Figure 3. Bar Chart of Drug Use

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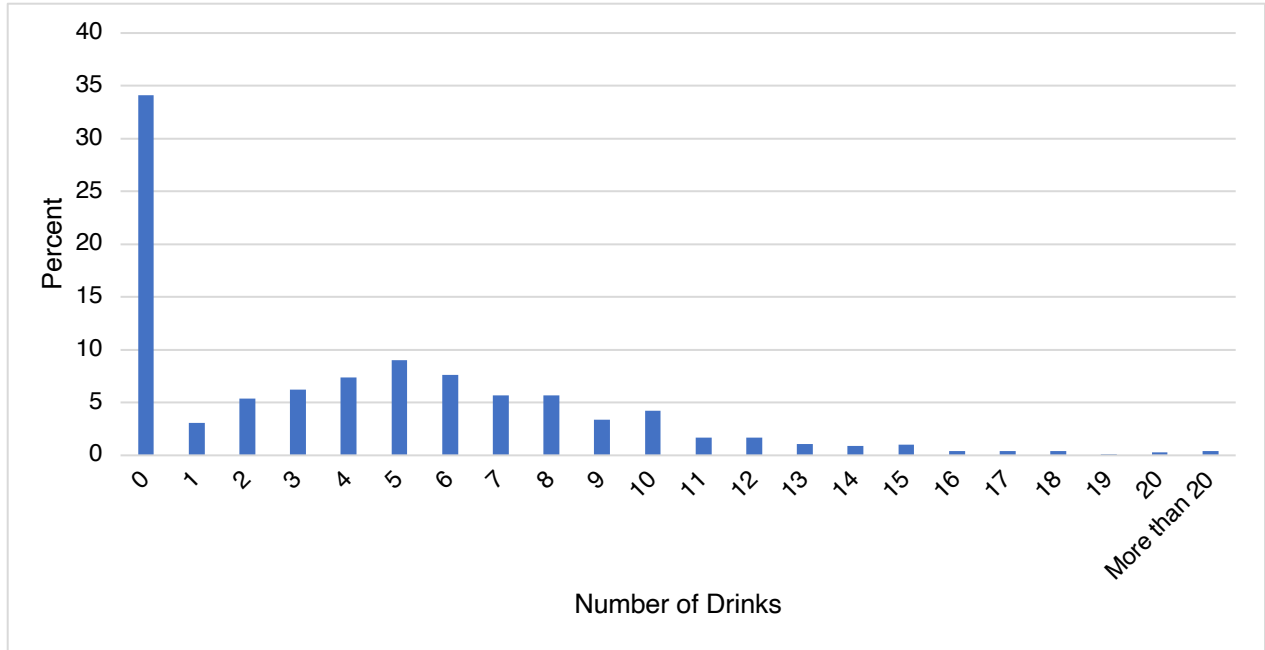


Figure 4. Histogram of Number of Drinks Consumed

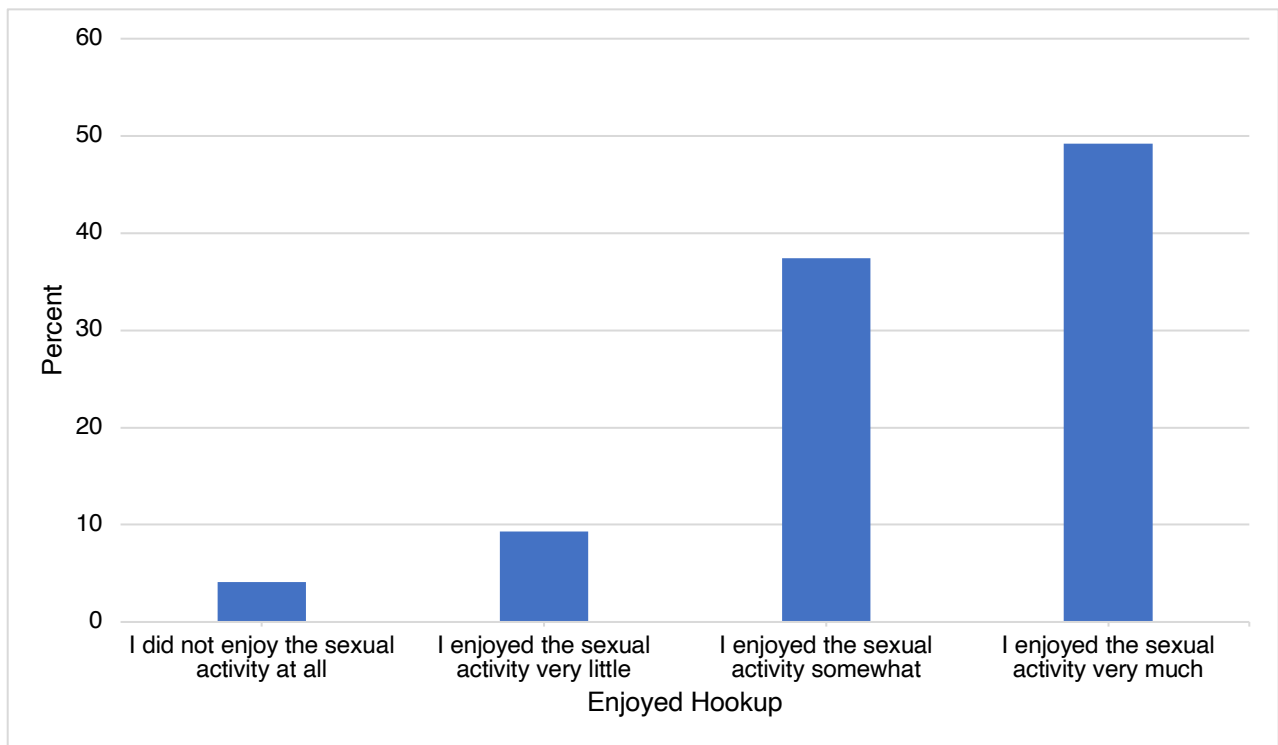


Figure 5. Bar Chart of Hookup Enjoyment

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Table 2. Bivariate Analysis
(N= 13906)

Variables	Enjoyed Sexual Activity	Christian	Church Attendance	Used Drugs	Number of Drinks	Straight	Woman
Christian	-.009						
Church Attendance	-.042*	.373*					
Used Drugs	.017	-.050*	-.064*				
Number of Drinks	-.092*	.060*	-.050*	.139*			
Straight	.020	.103*	.064*	-.053*	.080*		
Woman	-.069*	.005	.026	-.115*	-.171*	.022	
White	.039*	-.036*	-.144*	.036*	.150*	.057*	.010

* $p < .001$

Table 3: Split Multivariate Regression for the Sexual Enjoyment of Respondents Who Attend Religious Services Frequently and Those Who do Not.
(N=13906)

	Less Religious Attendance	More Religious Attendance
	β	β
White	0.053*	0.024
Straight	0.063*	0.06
Woman	-0.085*	-0.097*
Christian	0.005	0.029
Number of Drinks	-0.123*	-0.115*
Used Drugs	0.028	-0.007
Constant	3.367*	3.346*
<i>F</i>	24.847*	6.204*
<i>df</i>	(10, 11229)	-102655
R^2	0.022	0.023
<i>n</i>	11240	2666

* $p < .001$