

Adventist College Student Perceptions of Health Risk Behaviors

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Background

- Andrews University Health Risk Survey
- Qualitative design – Grounded Theory
- Luquis, R. R., Garcia, E., & Ashford, D. (2003). A qualitative assessment of college students' perceptions of health behaviors. *American Journal of Health Studies*, 18(2/3), 156-164.
- Instrument had open ended questions about:
 - Perceptions of college life
 - Perceptions of substance use
 - Perceptions of sexual behaviors
 - The role that family and faith play in these behaviors

Procedure/Methods

- 6 Focus groups
- Met on Monday evenings for about an hour
- January - February, 2013
- Recruitment - Behavioral Sciences Research Pool
- Students given pizza and \$20
- Interviewer and note taker roles
- Coding process
- Coding – 75% agreement

Demographics

- 53 participants aged 18-25, unmarried
- Averaged 9 participants per group (varied 6-15 persons)
- Gender
 - 30 females
 - 23 males
- Ethnicity
 - 23 Caucasian
 - 13 Caribbean/African American
 - 8 Latino/a
 - 6 Asian
 - 3 Asian/Caucasian

Results

Perceptions of College Life

- Decision Making Regarding Choosing Adventist College
 - Adventist lifestyle
 - Wanted a spiritual and safer environment
 - Program
- Perception of College Life
 - Diversity
 - Rules
 - Partying/Fun
- Influence on College Life
 - Family
 - Friends
 - Teachers/high school experience

Perceptions of Substance Use

- Perception of Drug and Alcohol Use
 - Done at parties/social occasions
 - Considered a normal part of the college experience
 - Use varies
 - It is wrong
- Influence on Substance Use
 - Coping – stress, sleep, escape
 - Peers/social
 - Experimentation/recreation
- Binge Drinking
 - Accidental – lowered inhibition
 - Addiction
 - Escape



Narrative Samples on Substance Use

It relieves stress.

I think because around here, it's taboo.

So, like, you know, you just – you're tired of being calm or whatever and doing things people tell you, and you want to be a bit different and do something bad.

Parental and Religious Influence on Substance Use

- Religious Influence
 - Moral standards
 - Body is God's temple
 - Influence varies
- Parental Influence
 - Modeling use/no use
 - Parenting style – not too strict or lenient
 - Relationship with parent

Narrative Samples on Religious and Parental Influence on Substance Use

That saying about your body is a temple of God.

I think it comes down to, when parents give good reasons why they shouldn't be doing it, not just enforcing a bunch of rules that don't have any substance or background to them, so, actually having a rationale rules, or the things that parents try to implement to their kids.

I think religion does play a role in that it tempers most religious people from going into drinking or binge drinking.

Perception of Sexual Behaviors

- Perception of Sexual Behaviors
 - Great variation
 - Lack of information regarding foreplay standards
 - Sex taboo
 - Double standard
 - Pressure to have sex to keep boyfriend
 - Sex is for marriage
 - Difficulties dealing with sexual urges



Sexual Influence

- Sexuality issues
 - Homosexuality acceptance
 - Sex can hurt the relationship/mental health
 - Masturbation/pornography
- Influence on perception of sex
 - Peers
 - Media/music
 - State of the relationship

Narrative Samples on Sexual Behaviors

That you wait until marriage.

Even though they know that's not right, maybe, they've convinced themselves differently."

I mean, you listen to your peers right? And if they have something to say about it, you'll listen to it.

Just the fact that, I mean, some people think that engaging in homosexual acts is wrong, and some say it's doesn't equal as wrong.

Parental and Religious Influence of Sexual Behaviors

- Religious Influence
 - Sex is for marriage
 - Faith
 - Bible unclear
- Parental Influence
 - Relationship with parent – want to please/attachment
 - Clear messages
 - Modeling



Narrative Samples of Religious and Parental Influence on Sexual Behaviors

Cause since I'm a religious person, I understand why God wants you to wait until to married,

If your parents don't talk to you about it at all, and just kinda get educated by your peers, almost guarantee that's gonna be worse indication than if your parents discussed it with you.

There's obviously relational correlations between the relationship with your parents, and actually with waiting.

Discussion

- Macro Influence
 - Society/media
 - Church doctrine
 - School policy
- Mezzo Influence
 - Moral standards and Bible teachings
 - Relationships with peers, parents, and God
 - Parent's interaction with their child, messages given, and the example they set
- Micro Influence
 - Coping
 - Recreation
- Implications for nurture and retention
 - Clear ideals and high standards for behavior
 - Love and acceptance when they fall short

Recommendations

- SDA Church
 - Maintain clear standards while recognizing that youth make mistakes
 - Reinforce health principles
 - Encourage relationship with Christ
 - Focus on prevention and minimizing impact
 - Practice love and acceptance
 - Addicted individuals – importance of treatment
 - LGBTs

Recommendations

- Educational Institutions
 - Education about managing pre-marital relationships, sexual behaviors, and avoiding substances
 - Maintain campus rules, but individualize response, including access to counseling when needed
 - Have programs to help with coping
 - Andrews University's Extended Support Network
 - Develop a variety of on-campus activities

Recommendations

- Parenting
 - Nurture close relationships
 - Family dinners, special outings, etc.
 - Clear, early and repeated communication regarding health risk behaviors
 - Democratic/Authoritative parenting
 - Model the behavior you want in your children
 - Monitor media and peer relationships

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