

EVERYTHING BUT: EXPLORING DEFINITIONS OF SEXUAL OUTERCOURSE
AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

A Thesis

by

MINDY ALISON MENN

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE

December 2009

Major Subject: Health Education

EVERYTHING BUT: EXPLORING DEFINITIONS OF SEXUAL OUTERCOURSE
AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

A Thesis

by

MINDY ALISON MENN

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Approved by:

Chair of Committee,	Buster Pruitt
Committee Members,	Patricia Goodson
	Kelli Peck-Parrott
Head of Department,	Richard Kreider

December 2009

Major Subject: Health Education

ABSTRACT

Everything But: Exploring Definitions of Sexual Outercourse Among Undergraduate Students. (December 2009)

Mindy Alison Menn, B.A., Texas A&M University

Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Buster Pruitt

This thesis analyzed if undergraduate students at a Southern university use the term outercourse to describe sexual behaviors that exclude penile-vaginal intercourse. A literature review revealed that no universal definition of outercourse exists and no forward progression toward a more cohesive definition was observed. Furthermore, 22 various sexual behaviors were recognized as possible outercourse behaviors. Following the literature review, a quantitative study with a minor qualitative component was conducted at a large Southern university. For this phase, 426 students responded to a 34-item online survey. After providing basic demographic information, students were asked to select the single term to describe sexual behaviors that do not include penile-vaginal intercourse. Furthermore, students were asked to determine whether or not they would classify 28 various sexual behaviors as outercourse. The respondents were provided space after each behavior to qualify or elaborate upon any uncertainty they had about the classification of a behavior. Frequencies were tabulated for the qualitative responses to each behavior. The number of comments ranged from 2 to 85 and sadomasochistic activity garnered the most comments (85). Frequency statistics were computed for all

quantitative variables. Crosstabs were calculated to determine the demographic characteristics of respondents and non-respondents for each behavior.

The results revealed that a majority of the respondents were female (67.4%) and heterosexual (95.5%). Respondents preferred the term 'fooling around' (63.4%) instead of outercourse (3.4%) to refer to sexual behaviors that exclude penile-vaginal intercourse. The respondents determined ten behaviors to be outercourse, five behaviors to not be outercourse, and 13 behaviors could not be classified due to the lack of a majority response. For each of the sexual behaviors, approximately 25% of the sample did not provide a response. Crosstabs revealed that freshmen students were more likely than their upperclassman counterparts to omit a response to a behavior. In contrast, juniors were most likely to respond to the sexual behavior questions.

The findings from this thesis have provided a catalyst for future interdisciplinary research endeavors and practical implications for health educators and medical professionals who work with undergraduate students.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mom. Without her constant patience, encouragement, and support this work would not have been possible.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Pruitt, and my committee members, Dr. Goodson and Dr. Peck-Parrott, for their guidance and support throughout the course of this research.

Thanks also go to my friends and colleagues, as well as the Health and Kinesiology faculty and staff, for making my time at Texas A&M University a great experience. I also want to extend my deepest gratitude to McKenzie Henry and family members for their immeasurable support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	iii
DEDICATION	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	ix
CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION.....	1
II A LITERATURE REVIEW OF OUTERCOURSE DEFINITIONS...	4
Overview	4
Method	5
Findings	8
Discussion	15
III AN ANALYSIS OF THE TERM OUTERCOURSE AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS.....	19
Purpose	19
Relevant Literature	19
Methods	20
Findings	25
IV DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY	33

	Page
REFERENCES	38
VITA	42

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1 Matrix of Outercourse Definitions	10
Table 2 Outercourse Behaviors Observed in the Literature	17
Table 3 Frequency of Outercourse Behaviors in Sources	18
Table 4 Terms Used to Denote Sexual Acts that Exclude Penile-Vaginal Intercourse	26
Table 5 Behaviors Considered Outercourse, Not Considered Outercourse, and Sometimes Considered Outercourse	29

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Confusion exists when attempting to define the term *sex*. Sex researchers have recently tried to succinctly define sex among undergraduate students but have been met with the lack of a precise definition. Goodson, Suther, Pruitt, and Wilson noted that this is not an isolated phenomenon as the current landscape of “sexuality education...is plagued with problems related to terminology, definitions, and shared meaning” (2003, p.91). The dissimilar definitions are partially based in the sociological fact that “different individuals and social groups attach diverse meanings to sexual activity, variously understanding sex as an expression of intimacy, a route to physical pleasure, or a sacred part of marriage” (Carpenter, 2001, p.127).

Several empirical studies have been conducted in an effort to determine if a consensus exists among American university students about their perceptions of various sexual behaviors. In 1999, Sanders and Reinisch noted that nearly all (99.5%) college students indicated engaging in penile-vaginal intercourse was considered sex. Authors of this study also reported that over two-thirds responded anal intercourse was considered sex, and less than half considered oral sex to be sex (Sanders & Reinisch, 1999, p.276). Peterson and Muehlenhard’s 2007 study continued the mission to define sex by analyzing reasons why individuals include certain acts in their definition of sex while excluding others.

This thesis follows the style of the *Journal of Sex Research*.

They observed that differing definitions of sex occur between as well as within individuals. The authors also noted “decisions about labeling an experience as ‘sex’ often seemed influenced by the consequences of applying this label” (p.256).

Almost ten years after Sanders and Reinisch’s study, Gute, Eshbaugh, and Wiersma (2008) published their attempt to understand how undergraduate students define sex. It is clear that a uniform definition of *sex* among individuals and across various scenarios does not exist.

Despite the current literature outlining the difficulty of defining sex among university students, a literature search conducted in October 2009 revealed no peer-reviewed journal articles that empirically determined how college students define or perceive outercourse. In contrast, the search revealed sources which addressed the concept of outercourse. This literature revealed an assortment of terminology employed to denote a group of sexual behaviors that do not include penile-vaginal intercourse. In 1951, Albert Ellis utilized the term *non-coital sex relations* (p.223). Through a seminal contraceptive work in the 1980’s, Hatcher et al. enhanced the prominence of the term *outercourse* (1982, p.87). Genuis and Genuis contributed the terms *non-coital sex*, *alternate sexual gratification*, and *non-penetrative sex* to indicate sexual behaviors that exclude vaginal intercourse (Genuis & Genuis, 1996, p.11-12). Three years after Genuis and Genuis’ publication, Bolin and Whelehan (1999) included the terms *interfemoral intercourse*, *dry-docking*, and *dry humping* in their text (p.354). In 2000, Weaver and Herold employed the term *fooling around* for their survey. The authors selected this term for their study “because it is commonly used by students at the university to refer to non-

coital sexual behaviors" (p.28). In September 2008, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists released a committee opinion paper that utilized the terms *non-coital sexual behaviors* and *non-coital sexual activities* instead of outercourse. During the same year, the University of California-Santa Barbara instructed readers on the benefits of dry sex, which is "a common form of outercourse" (2008). Given this array of terms to denote a single concept, it is reasonable to expect confusion in the popular and scientific literature regarding the concept of outercourse.

This study begins to fill the gap in the current literature by addressing how students at a Southern university refer to sexual behaviors that do not include penile-vaginal intercourse and whether they utilize the term outercourse to designate such behaviors. This goal was accomplished by initially reviewing the definitions of outercourse that are present in the literature to identify the prominent concepts related to outercourse. Afterward, a quantitative study with a qualitative component was conducted among undergraduate students at a large Southern university.

CHAPTER II

A LITERATURE REVIEW OF OUTERCOURSE DEFINITIONS

Overview

Though outercourse is a relatively new term in the sexuality literature, the notion of selecting a word or phrase to encompass a set of non-coital sexual behaviors is not. This concept can be traced to Albert Ellis' 1951 book *The Folklore of Sex* which employed the phrase *non-coital sex relations* to encompass kissing, masturbation, and petting (p.223). During the time Ellis' work was published, these activities permitted heterosexual couples to engage in intimate behaviors without damaging a woman's social reputation by allowing her to remain a virgin. Following the advent of the birth control pill, the promotion of non-coital sex behaviors was largely ignored in the scientific community during the more sexually and socially liberal times of the 1960s and 1970s. As Cobb noted, his 1972 presidential address to the American Association of Planned Parenthood Physicians promoted "outercourse as a healthier, simpler, safer, and more natural method [of birth control], but it fell on deaf ears of that group of physicians whose chief interest was developing newer and better contraceptives" (1997, p.1380). The promotion of non-penetrative sexual behaviors resurfaced in the early 1980s as the term outercourse was included as a possible contraceptive method for heterosexual couples (Hatcher, Josephs, Stewart, Guest, Stewart, & Kowal, 1982, p.87) prior to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

The battle over the promotion of outercourse behaviors and inclusion of this concept in educational programs and interventions is raging. Proponents of outercourse

advocate it as a “natural and effective way for teenage and adult couples to prevent unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease while making love” (Cobb, 1997, p.1380). In contrast, opponents of outercourse promotion warn that “noncoital sexual activity is not necessarily ‘safe sex’” (ACOG, 2008, p.736) as “these behaviors can result in transmission of disease” (Woody, Russell, D’Souza, & Woody, 2000, p.262).

Purpose

The current landscape of sexuality literature includes academic and popular sources which provide information on the concept of outercourse. While no located source has attempted to determine how undergraduate students define outercourse, several authors of peer reviewed empirical literature, popular literature, and web pages have proposed various definitions of outercourse. The purpose of this literature review was to identify and analyze the recent and relevant published definitions of outercourse from peer-reviewed empirical literature, popular literature, and web pages available through the Internet. The popular sources, including books available through a large university’s library and web pages, were included in this review as they are easily accessible to college students searching for information about sex.

Method

Peer-Reviewed Literature

A library database search was performed in October 2009 to identify the current and relevant peer-reviewed literature which included definitions of outercourse. The search included 10 EBSCO Host Databases (Academic Search Complete, Alt HealthWatch, CINAHL Plus with Full Text, ERIC, Gender Studies Database, Health

Source- Consumer Edition, Health Source: Nursing/Academic Edition, MEDLINE, MEDLINE with Full Text, and Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection) and two Cambridge Scientific Abstracts (CSA) Databases (PsycInfo and Sociological Abstracts). The central keywords utilized for the searches were *outercourse*, *non-coital sexual behaviors*, and *non-coital sex*. These terms were selected due to their prominence in the historical literature regarding outercourse.

Inclusion criteria included English-language empirical research reports, committee papers, professional commentaries, and letters to the editor published in peer-reviewed journals between 1980 and 2009. This time frame includes items that were published during and after the initial onset of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. During this period, sexual behaviors of multiple demographic groups were under immense scrutiny in the medical and academic communities and outercourse was reintroduced as a safer alternative to sexual intercourse.

Exclusion criteria incorporated empirical sources with any variation of the words *rape*, *assault*, or *violence* as the investigator intended to review the literature that specifically addressed consensual sexual activities. Furthermore, book reviews, articles that did not focus on the concept of sexual outercourse, sources that did not include a clearly delineated definition of outercourse, or did not focus on an adolescent or college-aged population in the United States or Canada were excluded.

Library Sources

In order to expand the scope of the literature search the author conducted a search of a large Southern public university's library catalog. The search terms

outercourse, *non-coital sexual behaviors*, and *non-coital sex* were utilized and inclusion criteria included non-fiction books which contained a clear discussion of the concept of sexual outercourse as well as a definition of outercourse proposed by the author(s). Textbooks, academic theses and dissertations, works of fiction, romance novels, and texts printed in any language other than English published before 1980 were excluded.

Internet Search

The author utilized Google to conduct the Internet search and employed *outercourse* as the primary search term. Initially, approximately 51,000 web pages were identified. Google displayed the most relevant 770 pages and omitted the results which were similar to the retrieved pages. The author chose to focus on the 770 retrieved pages and did not expand the search to analyze each identified page.

The inclusion criteria incorporated web pages that included a proposed definition of sexual outercourse on web pages produced by a government, education, or national not-for-profit agency in the United States. Exclusion criteria included: pages which did not focus on sexual outercourse, pornographic web pages, blogs, web pages owned by a for-profit company or corporation, personal web pages, online newsletters, news sites, university course web pages, web pages of religious organizations, advice web pages, social networking pages (i.e. Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter), question-and-answer pages, web pages in any language other than English, web pages published outside the United States, web pages which included definitions retrieved verbatim from another web page, Wiki pages, and web pages with information copyrighted prior to 1980. In order to determine eligibility, the author of this study initially read each web page

summary provided by Google and analyzed if the page met the inclusion or exclusion criteria.

Review Method

The final sample consisting of academic articles, books, and web pages was reviewed using the Matrix Method, an extensive strategy for conducting a literature review outlined by Garrard (2007). The Method provided a framework for this researcher to systematically abstract the literature according to five categories rooted in the literature. For each definition located in a research report, book, or web page, the author examined if multiple potential outercourse behaviors were included. Furthermore, the author determined if the definition acknowledged oral sex as an outercourse behavior, and if anal sex was considered an outercourse behavior. Additionally, the author examined if protection against disease and protection against pregnancy were addressed in the definitions and considered a positive or negative aspect of engaging in outercourse. The matrix can be found in Table 1.

Findings

Sample Characteristics

The final sample included peer-reviewed articles, books, and web pages. Initially, 18 articles were retrieved through a search of the EBSCO databases. Ten articles were located applying the term outercourse, four by using the term non-coital sex, and four through the utilization of non-coital sexual behaviors. The search of the two CSA databases yielded no additional relevant articles. After applying the previously prescribed inclusion and exclusion criteria, the number of qualifying academic articles

was reduced to two. Seven additional articles or books which met the criteria were identified from the reference lists of the peer-reviewed sources and were included in the review. Following the database search, the researcher expanded the search to the library catalog which yielded two sources, but only one source met the inclusion and exclusion criteria. A subsequent Internet search returned approximately 770 web pages and seven web pages adhered to the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Six of the seven web pages were published in the last six years. Three of the web pages were products of university health centers, 2 were produced by non-profit organizations, one was the product of a professional organization, and one was a reference web page. The final sample consisted of 17 sources including four academic articles, six books, and seven web pages.

Outercourse Behaviors

It is clear from the analysis that there is an absence of a universally accepted and applied definition of outercourse. Among the sources in the literature review, 12 sources provided a definition and a list of behaviors that could be considered outercourse (Hatcher, Josephs, et al., 1982; Hatcher, Breedlove, et al., 1988; Genuis & Genuis, 1996; Weaver & Herold, 2000; Basso, 2003; Emory University, 2005; Planned Parenthood, 2008; ACOG, 2008; University of California-Santa Barbara, 2008; Rutgers University, 2009; Advocates For Youth, n.d.) while other sources simply defined outercourse (Cobb, 1997; Bolin & Whelehan, 1999; Merriam-Webster, 2009; Association of Reproductive Health Professionals, n.d.). One source did not directly define the term but rather

Table 1. Matrix of Outercourse Definitions

ID#	Authors	Year	Definition	Is oral sex an outercourse behavior?	Is anal sex an outercourse behavior?	Are there multiple behaviors included in the definition?	Is protection against disease addressed?	Is protection against pregnancy addressed?
1	Ellis	1951	“non-coital sex relations” included kissing, masturbation and petting (p.223).	No	No	Yes	No	No
2	Hatcher, Josephs, Stewart, Guest, Stewart, & Kowal	1982	“holding hands, kissing, petting, dancing, mutual masturbation, oral-genital sex, and the use of stimulating devices such as vibrators” (p.87).	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes. “Sex without intercourse allow you physical closeness and sexual pleasure without the worry of an unwanted pregnancy” (p.87).
3	Hatcher, Breedlove, Martin, & Judy	1988	“...holding hands, kissing, kissing, massage, mutual masturbation, dancing, oral-genital sex, fantasy, anal-genital sex, and racy VCR movies” (p.372) are included as non-coital forms of sexual expression.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes. Sexual expression without intercourse may offer protection from HIV and other sexually transmitted infections” (p.372).	Yes. “...sexual expression without intercourse is superb contraception” (p.372).
4	Genuis&Genuis	1996	“...activities excluding sexual intercourse that are felt to be sexually gratifying to an individual, couple or group.” “Non-coital sexual expression might include mutual masturbation, voyeurism, unshared sex toys, erotic bathing, external urination and defecation, sadomasochistic activity where bleeding does not occur and body to body rubbing (frottage)” (pp.11-12)	No	No	Yes	Yes. “A primary proposed benefit of...noncoital sex is the avoidance of sexually transmitted infections.” “Although the completely consistent practice of nonpenetrative sex without any exchange of body fluids will decrease the risk of discharge-related STDs, it is extremely important to recognize that noncoital sex does not necessarily provide protection from the spectrum of STDs” (p.13).	Yes. “A primary proposed benefit of ...noncoital sex is the avoidance of unintended pregnancy” (p.13).

Table 1 Continued.

ID#	Authors	Year	Definition	Is oral sex an outercourse behavior?	Is anal sex an outercourse behavior?	Are there multiple behaviors included in the definition?	Is protection against disease addressed?	Is protection against pregnancy addressed?
5	Cobb	1997	"...heavy petting with mutual masturbation to orgasm of both partners without penile penetration of the vagina and avoiding getting any semen into the vulva or vagina...anal and oral intercourse is to be avoided" (p.1380).	No	No	No	Yes. "...effective way to prevent...sexually transmitted disease while making love" (p.1380).	Yes. "...effective way for teenage and adult couples to prevent pregnancy" (p.1380).
6	Bolin&Whelehan	1999	"Interfemoral intercourse... known as "dry docking" or "dry humping", is a relatively safer sensuous-sexual alternative to P-V or P-A intercourse. The penis of one partner is rubbed between the thighs of the other partner" (p.354).	No	No	No	Yes. This behavior is a "safer alternative" to intercourse but that "if either partner has sores or lesions on the upper inner thigh" Herpes simplex 2 could be transmitted" (p.354).	No
7	Weaver & Herold	2000	"fooling around referred to as non-coital sex, i.e. hand-genital stimulation or oral sex. The term "fooling around" was chosen because it is commonly used by students at the university to refer to non-coital sexual behaviors (p.28).	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
8	Hutcherson	2002	During outercourse a man's lubricated penis should be slid between a woman's thighs and up against her lubricated vulva and clitoris. As the couple is in this position, the male is to thrust his penis toward but not into his partner and she in return should press her clitoris against his penis and contract her pelvic muscles to create gentle pressure around his penis as he thrusts. A variation consists of a male sliding his penis between a woman's buttocks (p.109-111).	No	No	Yes	Yes. It is possible to get a sexually transmitted disease without entering your vagina." "...use the proper protection if you're unsure of your partner's health status (p.110).	Yes. Follow the usual safe-sex practices to avoid pregnancy" (p.111).

Table 1 Continued.

ID#	Authors	Year	Definition	Is oral sex an outercourse behavior?	Is anal sex an outercourse behavior?	Are there multiple behaviors included in the definition?	Is protection against disease addressed?	Is protection against pregnancy addressed?
9	Basso	2003	“Outercourse is a term often used to describe when a couple sexually stimulates each other sometimes to the point of orgasm, without actually engaging in vaginal, oral, or anal intercourse” (p.94). “Most people agree that outercourse can include: Touching/caressing/stimulating your partner’s chest, breasts, butt, legs, genitals, or other body part. Rubbing your bodies against one another. Stimulation with all your clothes on, some of your clothes off, or all of your clothes off” (p.94).	No	No	Yes	Yes. There is a very little chance of getting STDs as long as infected blood, semen, prelubricating fluid, or vaginal secretions do not enter any openings in the body” (p.95).	Yes. There is no chance of pregnancy, unless semen or prelubricating fluid comes in contact with the vaginal opening- then there is a very slight chance” (p.94).
10	Emory University	2005	“Outercourse usually refers to types of sexual intimacy which do not involve the penis entering the vagina or anus. Some examples include: holding hands, hugs, kisses, mutual masturbation, oral-genital contact, petting above the waist, petting below the waist, touching.”	Yes	No	Yes	Yes. “.when there is no exchange of fluids, some protection against infection” is present, but “oral sex can spread some infections.”	Yes. “...there is no worry about pregnancy.”
11	Planned Parenthood	2008	“Outercourse means different things to different people. For some people outercourse is any sex play without vaginal intercourse. For others, it is sex play with no penetration at all- oral, anal, or vaginal. Behaviors can include kissing, masturbation, manual stimulation, body-to body rubbing, fantasy, sex toys, oral sex play, and anal sex play.”	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes. “Outercourse also greatly reduces the risk of HIV/AIDS and many other sexually transmitted infections- unless body fluids are exchanged through oral or anal intercourse. But some infections like herpes and HPV can be passed by skin-to-skin contact.”	Yes. “Outercourse is nearly 100 percent effective at preventing pregnancy. But pregnancy is possible if semen or pre-ejaculate is spilled on the vulva and gets into the vagina.”

Table 1 Continued.

ID#	Authors	Year	Definition	Is oral sex an outercourse behavior?	Is anal sex an outercourse behavior?	Are there multiple behaviors included in the definition?	Is protection against disease addressed?	Is protection against pregnancy addressed?
12	American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists	2008	“Mutual masturbation, oral sex, and anal sex are all considered to be ‘noncoital sexual behaviors’” (p.735).	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes. Couples may engage in noncoital sexual activity instead of penile-vaginal intercourse hoping to reduce the risk of sexually transmitted diseases...” “... women engaging in noncoital behaviors may be at risk of acquiring sexually transmitted diseases” (p.735).	Yes. “Couples may engage in noncoital sexual activity instead of penile-vaginal intercourse hoping to reduce the risk of unintended pregnancy...” “These behaviors carry little or no risk of pregnancy” (p.735).
13	University of California, Santa Barbara	2008	“Outercourse refers to sexual activities that do not include penetration.” “Mutual masturbation, deep kissing, passionate massage, role-playing, fantasy communication with a partner and dry sex are forms of outercourse.”	No	No	Yes	Yes. “Dry sex is a perfect way for two people to enjoy an intimate and exciting experience without the worries of sexually transmitted disease.”	Yes. “Dry sex is a perfect way for two people to enjoy an intimate and exciting experience without the worries of... pregnancy.”
14	TeenAdvisor	2008	“Outercourse is where two people place their genitals together, as though they were about to have intercourse, and proceed to rub back and forth in a sort of “simulated” sexual intercourse...There is no actual penetration of the penis into the vagina or anus.”	No	No	No	Yes. “Although there is still the risk of catching a sexually transmitted disease... the overall risk is significantly less than with penetration.”	“Yes. “...a condom still needs to be used because there is an exchange of body fluids during outercourse and because it is possible for a female to get pregnant just from outercourse...”
15	Rutgers University	2009	“Sexual behaviors that do not involve the insertion of fingers, penis, tongue, or sex toys into the mouth, anus, or vagina of another person. Can include kissing and other kinds of touching.”	No	No	Yes	No	No
16	Merriam-Webster Dictionary	2009	“Sexual activity between individuals that does not involve vaginal or anal intercourse.	No	No	No	No	No
17	Association of Reproductive Health Professionals	n.d.	“Outercourse is any kind of sexual activity in which the penis does not enter the vagina, mouth, or anus.”	No	No	No	Yes. Engaging in outercourse can “help prevent a person from getting or passing on sexually transmitted infections.”	Yes. “Outercourse is nearly 100% effective at preventing pregnancy.

depicted how to engage in an act of outercourse (Hutcherson, 2002). It should be acknowledged that 100% of the literature did not include penile-vaginal intercourse as a possible outercourse behavior.

Of the retrieved definitions, seven (Genuis & Genuis, 1996; Bolin & Whelehan, 1999; Hutcherson, 2002; Emory University, 2005; Planned Parenthood, 2008; ACOG, 2008; TeenAdvisor, 2008) stated that outercourse behaviors are possible means of disease transmission. In contrast, five sources (Ellis, 1951; Hatcher, Josephs et al., 1982; Weaver & Herold, 2000; Rutgers University, 2009; & Merriam-Webster, 2009) did not cite the risk of contracting a sexually transmitted infection through outercourse behaviors. Furthermore, three sources portrayed outercourse to be a risk-free method of sexual expression (Cobb, 1997; UNSB, 2008; ARHP, n.d.). Cobb addressed outercourse as a “largely unadvertised, cost-free, natural and effective way for teenage and adult couples to prevent...sexually transmitted disease while making love. It requires no equipment or medication and is evidently harmless” (Cobb, 1997, p.1380). And two sources (Hatcher, Breedlove, et al, 1988; Basso, 2003) addressed and minimized the possibility of contracting or spreading a sexually transmitted disease through engaging in outercourse behaviors.

In reference to pregnancy prevention, eight of the definitions instructed readers that outcourse behaviors provide a “perfect way for two people to enjoy an intimate and exciting experience without the worries of pregnancy” (UCSB, 2008).

In contrast, five of the definitions did not address protection against unwanted pregnancy and four revealed that by engaging in outcourse behaviors “there is little or no chance of pregnancy, unless semen or prelubricating fluid comes in contact with the vaginal opening” (Basso, 2003, p.94). In this review, 22 different sexual behaviors were recognized as possible outcourse behaviors in at least one source. The activities are ranked by frequency of citation in parenthesis next to the term. The behaviors were: mutual masturbation or hand-genital stimulation (8), kissing (6), oral sex (6), body to body rubbing or ‘dry sex’ (5), anal sex (3), fantasy (3), holding hands (3), using sex toys (3), dancing (2), hugging (2), massage (2), petting above the waist (2), petting below the waist (2), direct penis contact with a partner’s thighs or buttocks (1), erotic bathing (1), external urination/defecation (1), role playing (1), sadomasochistic activity (1), stimulating or caressing any part of the body (1), voyeurism (1), and watching pornographic movies (1). Table 2 delineates the corresponding sources for each behavior.

Discussion

This review accomplished the goal of identifying and assessing the published definitions of outcourse in both scientific and popular sources. Furthermore, the review highlighted the absence of a universal definition of outcourse and clearly demonstrated

that as the years progressed, the only consistency among outercourse definitions is the inconsistency of the definition's components.

From the review, three sources listed anal sex as a potential outercourse behavior. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "it is possible for either partner to become infected with HIV during anal sex" (CDC, 2006). This possibility is not addressed or not fully addressed in the three sources. Instead, one of the sources noted "outercourse also greatly reduces the risk of HIV/AIDS and many other sexually transmitted infections- unless body fluids are exchanged through oral or anal intercourse" (Planned Parenthood, 2008). This statement should be reconfigured with greater emphasis on the risk of contracting HIV through anal sex.

The review of definitions indicates no forward progression toward a more cohesive definition of outercourse. Instead, the contrary was noted: as the years advance the variation among definitions has only intensified. During the 1980's surge of outercourse promotion due to the onset of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, two sources directly defined and addressed outercourse. In the 1990's, only one source included a definition and subsequent discussion about outercourse. A majority of the sources (10 of 17) were published in the last nine years. Furthermore, 8 of the 10 sources published since 2000 were web pages. This percentage of organizations using web pages to disseminate sexual information could be attributed to the fact that "the Internet has provided easy access to a low-cost means of both receiving and providing health information" (Suzuki & Calzo, 2004, p. 686). Table 3 details the disparity in the number of behaviors included in the reviewed definitions.

Table 2. Outercourse Behaviors Observed in the Literature

Behavior	Sources
Mutual masturbation or hand-genital stimulation	Hatcher, Josephs, et al., 1982; Hatcher, Breedlove, et al., 1988; Genuis&Genuis, 1996; Emory University, 2005; ACOG, 2008; University of California-Santa Barbara, 2008; Planned Parenthood, 2008; TeenAdvisor, 2008
Kissing	Hatcher, Josephs, et al.,1982; Hatcher, Breedlove, et al., 1988; Emory University, 2005; University of California-Santa Barbara, 2008; Planned Parenthood, 2008; Rutgers University, 2009
Oral sex	Hatcher, Josephs, et al., 1982; Hatcher, Breedlove, et al., 1988; Weaver &Herold, 2000; Emory University, 2005; Planned Parenthood, 2008; ACOG, 2008
Body to body rubbing or 'dry sex'	Hatcher, Breedlove, et al., 1988; Basso, 2003; University of California-Santa Barbara, 2008; TeenAdvisor, 2008; Planned Parenthood, 2008
Anal sex	Hatcher, Breedlove, et al., 1988; Planned Parenthood, 2008; ACOG, 2008
Fantasy	Hatcher, Breedlove, et al., 1988; University of California-Santa Barbara, 2008; Planned Parenthood, 2008
Holding hands	Hatcher, Josephs, et al., 1982; Hatcher, Breedlove, et al., 1988; Emory University, 2005
Using sex toys	Hatcher, Josephs, et al., 1982; Genuis&Genuis, 1996; Planned Parenthood, 2008
Dancing	Hatcher, Josephs, et al.,1982; Hatcher, Breedlove, et al.,1988
Hugging	Hatcher, Josephs, et al.,1982; Emory, 2005
Massage	Hatcher, Breedlove, et al., 1988; University of California-Santa Barbara, 2008
Petting above the waist	Hatcher, Josephs, et al.,1982; Emory University, 2005
Petting below the waist	Hatcher, Josephs, et al., 1982; Emory University, 2005
Direct penis contact with a partner's thighs or buttocks	Hutcherson, 2002
Erotic bathing	Genuis&Genuis, 1996
External urination/defecation	Genuis&Genuis, 1996
Role playing	University of California-Santa Barbara, 2008
Sadomasochistic activity	Hatcher, Breedlove, et al., 1988
Stimulating or caressing any part of the body	Basso, 2003
Voyeurism	Genuis&Genuis, 1996
Watching pornographic movies	Hatcher, Breedlove, et al., 1988

Table 3. Frequency of Outercourse Behaviors in Sources

Year	Authors	Number of Behaviors Included	Behaviors
1951	Ellis	3	kissing, masturbation, and petting
1982	Hatcher, Guest, Josephs, Stewart, Stewart, & Kowal	8	holding hands, hugging, kissing, petting, dancing, mutual masturbation, oral-genital sex, the use of stimulating devices such as vibrators
1988	Hatcher, Breedlove, Martin & Judy	9	holding hands, kissing, massage, mutual masturbation, dancing, oral-genital sex, fantasy, anal-genital sex, and racy VCR movies
1996	Genuis & Genuis	7	mutual masturbation, voyeurism, unshared sex toys, erotic bathing, external urination and defecation, sadomasochistic activity where bleeding does not occur, and body-to-body rubbing
1997	Cobb	1	heavy petting with mutual masturbation to orgasm of both partners without penile penetration of the vagina
1999	Bolin & Whelehan	1	the penis of one partner is rubbed between the thighs of the other partner
2000	Weaver & Herold	2	hand-genital stimulation, and oral sex
2002	Hutcherson	2	sliding a lubricated penis between a woman's thighs or buttocks
2003	Basso	3	touching, caressing, or stimulating a partner's chest, breasts, butt, legs, genitals or other body part. Rubbing bodies against one another, or stimulation with all clothes on, some clothes off, or all clothes off
2005	Emory University	8	holding hands, hugging, kissing, mutual masturbation, oral- genital contact, petting above the waist, petting below the waist
2008	ACOG	3	mutual masturbation, oral sex, and anal sex
2008	Planned Parenthood	9	kissing, masturbation, manual stimulation, body-to-body rubbing, fantasy, using sex toys, oral sex play, and anal sex play
2008	University of California-Santa Barbara	6	mutual masturbation, deep kissing, passionate massage, role-playing, fantasy communication with a partner, and dry sex
2008	TeenAdvisor	1	two people place their genitals together and proceed to rub back and forth
2009	Rutgers University	2	kissing and other kinds of touching

CHAPTER III
AN ANALYSIS OF THE TERM OUTERCOURSE AMONG
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

Purpose

Despite numerous attempts to define the term *sex* (as in *having sex*), there have been no empirical studies focusing on the components of outercourse. The primary objective of this thesis was to begin filling a void in the current sexuality education literature by answering two fundamental research questions: Do college students employ the term *outercourse* to describe sexual acts which do not include penile-vaginal intercourse? And what behaviors undergraduate students would classify as an outercourse behavior?

Relevant Literature

In the last decade, four empirical studies focusing on the classification of sex behaviors among undergraduate students in the United States have been published (Sanders & Reinisch, 1999; Bogart et al., 2000; Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2007; Gute, Eshbaugh, Wiersma, 2008). Concepts from this line of research focusing on the classification of sexual behaviors were extrapolated to this study. One of the four articles revealed that “the terms used in sexual behavior surveys are subject to individual interpretation” (Bogart et al., 2000, p.109).

In 2007, Peterson and Muehlenhard identified two implicit and possibly deleterious assumptions associated with the design and execution of sexual behavior research. Initially, it has been assumed by researchers that individuals responding to

sexual behavior surveys have unambiguous definitions of the term *sex* (Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2007, p.257). According to Peterson and Muehlenhard, “Asking respondents whether they, or a hypothetical character, would consider a sexual behavior to be sex seems predicated on the assumption that respondents actually have clear definitions of sex...” (p.257). Furthermore, the authors noted that the closed-ended survey instruments utilized in previous sex research endeavors do not allow participants the opportunity to “qualify their answers” (Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2007, p.257) if they were unclear about the meaning of a term.

The second assumption identified by Peterson and Muehenhard presumes that a person’s decision regarding the classification of sexual behaviors is directly related to his/her definitions of sexual behavior. These authors explained that “individuals sometimes choose a definition or adjust their definition from situation to situation so that their definition will result in positive consequences” (2007, p.257). These positive consequences may include maintaining or shedding the title of sexually active, virgin, whore, adulterer, or sexual assault victim.

Methods

Instrument

This author created a 34-item survey based on concepts of the relevant literature to empirically determine if college-aged young adults employ the term *outercourse* to describe sexual acts that do not include penile-vaginal intercourse. Furthermore, a survey component was devised to determine which behaviors undergraduate students classify as an outercourse behavior. A paper-and-pencil form of the survey was distributed to two

experts in the field of human sexuality, one clinical associate professor in Higher Education Administration, one graduate student, and two undergraduate students. A meeting was held with the experts and the clinical professor to gather feedback regarding components of the survey. Cognitive interviews were conducted with the undergraduate students. The students were asked to describe in lay terms the information the questions were requesting and indicate which terms or concepts warranted further explanation within the body of the survey. After integrating the feedback, the survey was transferred to an online format and was tested again through a cognitive interview format with two undergraduates. A final edition of the survey was produced and prepared for dissemination through the online research suite, Qualtrics after receiving feedback on the online version.

Agreement or disagreement to a statement of informed consent was the only forced-choice question presented to respondents in the survey. Participation in this study was contingent upon agreeing with the statement. Four survey items assessed demographic information including the age, sex, student classification, and sexual orientation of each participant. An additional question asked participants if they had taken a human sexuality course, seminar, or workshop.

The next section of the survey sought to determine the term students most frequently utilize when defining the cluster of sexual behaviors that exclude penile-vaginal intercourse. Participants were instructed to read the statement: "Suppose you and a partner engage in sexual behaviors but do not have penile-vaginal intercourse. Which term would you use to describe these behaviors?" The term outercourse and eight

synonyms for outercourse located in the literature review were provided to respondents in a randomized list. The phrases *I do not know what any of these terms mean, I do not use any of these terms*, or *All sexual behaviors are called sex* were also provided as possible responses. The final list was comprised of 12 terms and phrases and was created in Microsoft Excel and utilized to avoid prominent or preferential answers.

From the list of 12 terms and phrases, respondents were asked to select the single most appropriate word or phrase that he/she would use to describe the sexual behaviors in the scenario. According to Sanders and Reinisch, “hypothetical scenarios may be appropriate for investigating the definitions respondents apply to *other* people but may not reveal the definitions they use when labeling their *own* sexual behavior” (p.267). For this reason, the author intentionally employed a non-hypothetical situation to determine the terminology respondents would use to describe their own sexual behaviors.

The remaining variables measured what sexual behaviors comprise an act of outercourse. In response to the question “Would you consider ___ to be an act of outercourse?” participants were asked to respond Yes, No or Uncertain/Sometimes for 28 possible behaviors and variations of sexual behaviors addressed in the literature review. Participants were allowed a single response for each behavior but were not forced to respond to any of the questions before proceeding to a different behavior or ceasing survey participation. Respondents were provided space to write an explanation for how or why they felt uncertain about the classification of a behavior. The sexual behaviors were sorted alphabetically “to prevent the conveyance of a preconceived hierarchy” (Sanders & Reinisch, p.276). In an attempt to decrease confusion and in

response to comments from the cognitive interviews, definitions for selected sexual behaviors were provided in parentheses.

Data Collection

During Summer 2009, undergraduate health education courses' listserv addresses were obtained from the Division of Health Education at a large Southern university. An email message containing pertinent information about the study and a link to the survey was disseminated to approximately 2,016 undergraduate students enrolled in 15 sections of 14 undergraduate-level health classes. Male and female undergraduates of all ethnicities classified as freshmen, sophomore, junior or senior students aged 18 or over were eligible to participate in the study. The disseminated survey was identical for all participants. Anonymity of participants was assured by not collecting internet protocol (IP) addresses, email addresses, or personal identification information. Participants were allowed approximately two weeks to complete the survey from the email dispersion date.

The investigator did not obtain detailed student rosters. The possibility of concurrent student enrollment in more than one of the undergraduate courses and the reception of more than one email was noted. To decrease confounding for this issue, the online survey collection program only allowed one response per IP address and email address.

Research approval was sought and obtained through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the university where the data were collected. The IRB approved the research procedures, the final version of the administered survey, and the email message

utilized to recruit participants. No incentives, prizes, or extra credit point opportunities were offered to individuals in return for their participation.

Data Set

Of the 2,016 delivered emails, 452 individuals responded to the emailed link for a response rate of 22.4%. Four surveys were initially eliminated from the data set due to withholding informed consent. From those who agreed to the informed consent document, 21 were removed due to a complete lack of responses, and one was dismissed as the participant stated he/she was younger than 18 years of age. The final sample consisted of 426 respondents.

Statistical Analyses

Data were collected through the online survey collection site and downloaded into SPSS® version 15. After removing the unusable cases, frequencies for all variables were calculated and analyzed. Additionally, chi-square tests were conducted to test for relationships between the demographic variables and the response patterns toward the sexual behaviors. For each possible outercourse behavior, respondents were given latitude to detail their uncertainty regarding classification of the behaviors or explain why a behavior would *sometimes* be classified as outercourse. For each behavior, the number of provided comments were calculated and ranked.

Missing Data

For each of the 28 sexual behaviors, between 22.8% and 25.4% (n≈100) of the sample did not provide a response. The investigator calculated crosstabs to determine the demographic characteristics of the responders and non-responders for each behavior.

Respondents and non-respondents were compared on sex, classification, and if the respondent had ever taken a human sexuality course, seminar, or workshop. Chi-square tests revealed that the sex of the respondent and their prior participation in a human sexuality course, workshop, or seminar were not significantly related to the response rates of any sexual behavior. Conversely, a chi-square test determined that freshmen were most likely to omit responses and juniors were most likely to provide responses, indicating that the data are not missing at random. As this is the first study to examine how undergraduate students define outercourse, the author chose to leave the missing data in the data set to depict an accurate representation of the results.

Findings

Sample Characteristics

Participants in this study included 426 undergraduate students at a large Southern university. The majority of the respondents were female (67.4%), had not taken a human sexuality course, seminar, or workshop (83.3%), and were heterosexual (95.5%). In addition to heterosexual students, bisexual (1.9%), asexual (1.2%), individuals unsure of their sexual orientation (.9%) homosexual students (.7%) were included in the sample. Ages of the respondents in the sample ranged from 18 to 43 years with the mean age of 20.48 years ($SD = 2.832$). The vast majority of the sample (94.8%) classified itself as traditional college-aged students between the ages of 18 and 22. Freshmen (11.6%), sophomore (20.6%), junior (35.1%), and senior (32.7%) students were represented in the sample.

Terminology

From the list of 12 terms and phrases, most respondents (63.4%) (n=260) preferred the term *Fooling around* to describe sexual behaviors that do not include penile-vaginal intercourse. The three terms utilized in the literature search (outercourse, non-coital sexual behaviors, and non-coital sex) were selected by 3.4%, 1.5%, and .7% of the respondents, respectively. Table 4 presents the behaviors in the order of their frequency of responses.

Table 4. *Terms Used to Denote Sexual Acts That Exclude Penile-Vaginal Intercourse*

Term or Phrase	Respondents Choosing the Term	n
Fooling around	63.4%	260
I do not use any of these terms	12.2%	50
Dry humping	6.6%	27
All sexual behaviors are called 'sex'	5.6%	23
Alternate sexual gratification	4.6%	19
Outercourse	3.4%	14
Non-coital sexual behaviors	1.5%	6
Non-coital sexual activities	1.0%	4
Non-coital sex	.7%	3
Dry docking	.5%	2
I do not know what any of these terms mean	.2%	1
Interfemoral intercourse	.2%	1

Classification of Sexual Behaviors

A majority of respondents indicated that 10 behaviors or variations of sexual behaviors were considered an act of outercourse. These behaviors included: mutual masturbation without orgasm, body-to-body rubbing (fully clothed), mutual masturbation to orgasm, erotic showering or bathing, petting below the waist, direct penis contact with a partner's thigh, direct contact with a partner's buttocks, petting above the waist, performing oral sex, and receiving oral sex. Five behaviors (penile-vaginal intercourse with female orgasm, penile-vaginal intercourse with both partners experiencing orgasm, penile-vaginal intercourse with male experiencing orgasm, penile-vaginal intercourse with neither partner experiencing orgasm, and anal sex) were determined not to be outercourse behaviors. Additionally, 13 behaviors (dancing, defecating on a partner, fantasy, holding hands, hugging, kissing, massage, role playing, using sex toys with a partner, watching pornographic movies, voyeurism, sadomasochistic activity, urinating on a partner) did not garner a majority of responses to determine whether they would be classified as outercourse. All of the behaviors and their corresponding percentages are outlined in Table 5.

The classification of a student as a freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior and their response rate to several sexual behaviors were related at the $p < .05$ level. These behaviors and their corresponding p values included: voyeurism ($p = .017$), watching pornographic movies ($p = .017$), penile-vaginal intercourse with neither partner experiencing orgasm ($p = .020$), penile-vaginal intercourse with male experiencing orgasm ($p = .024$), penile-vaginal intercourse with both partners experiencing orgasm (p

= .024), petting above the waist (p = .024), role playing (p = .024), holding hands (p = .027), urinating on a partner (p = .027), direct penis contact with a partner's buttocks (p = .029), using sex toys with a partner (p = .033), penile-vaginal intercourse with female experiencing orgasm (p = .036), petting below the waist (p = .036), sadomasochistic activity (p = .039), fantasy (p = .040), body-to-body rubbing (fully clothed) (p = .043), kissing (p = .045), massage (p = .045), mutual masturbation with no orgasm (p = .045), performing oral sex (p = .045), and hugging (p = .047).

For all behaviors, freshmen students were more likely than their upperclassmen counterparts to omit a response to a behavior. For each of the 28 sexual behaviors, over a third of freshmen (between 34.7% and 38.8%) did not provide a response. In contrast, junior students demonstrated the highest response rate of 81.8% - 83.8%. Sophomore and senior students exhibited similar response rates between 70.1% and 75.9%.

Qualitative Component

Respondents were asked to detail their uncertainty about how to classify each sexual behavior or explain why it would only sometimes be classified as outercourse if they wished to write their explanations. The amount of space in the Uncertain/Sometimes response box allowed respondents to explain their viewpoint with a single character, a word or phrase, or a few sentences. Individuals demonstrated their uncertainty about the classification of a behavior by placing a 1 in the space provided, writing a single word or a short phrase resembling "sometimes" or "not at all sexual", or writing a sentence such as, "I would only consider dancing to be outercourse if they were taking part in 'body to body' rubbing." The number of responses for each behavior

Table 5. Behaviors Considered Outercourse, Not Considered Outercourse, and Sometimes Considered Outercourse

Behavior	Considered Outercourse Yes n/(%)	Not Considered Outercourse No n/(%)	Uncertain/Sometimes Considered Outercourse n/(%)
Mutual masturbation without orgasm	261 (61.3)	58(13.6)	5(1.2)
Body to body rubbing (fully clothed)	257 (60.3)	69(16.2)	4(.9)
Mutual masturbation to orgasm	257 (60.3)	60(14.1)	5(1.2)
Erotic bathing or showering	259 (60.8)	60(14.1)	7(1.6)
Petting below the waist	259 (60.8)	57(13.4)	5(1.2)
Direct penis contact with a partner's thigh	255 (59.9)	64(15.0)	5(1.2)
Direct penis contact with a partner's buttocks	240 (56.3)	77(18.1)	7(1.6)
Petting above the waist	225 (52.8)	91(21.4)	6(1.4)
Performing oral sex	221 (51.9)	100(23.5)	3(.7)
Receiving oral sex	218 (51.2)	103(24.2)	2(.5)
Penile-vaginal intercourse with female experiencing orgasm	55(12.9)	263(61.7)	3(.7)
Penile-vaginal intercourse with both partners experiencing orgasm	58(13.6)	262(61.5)	2(.5)
Penile-vaginal intercourse with male experiencing orgasm	57(13.4)	262(61.5)	3(.7)
Penile-vaginal intercourse with neither partner experiencing orgasm	56(13.1)	261(61.3)	3(.7)
Anal sex	68(16.0)	253(59.4)	6(1.4)
Sadomasochistic activity	137(32.2)	96(22.5)	85(20.0)
Defecating on a partner	148(34.7)	124(29.1)	49(11.5)
Urinating on a partner	134(31.5)	144(33.8)	40(9.4)
Role playing	174(40.8)	122(28.6)	26(6.1)
Voyeurism	154(36.2)	143(33.6)	21(4.9)
Fantasy	161(37.8)	142(33.3)	20(4.7)
Dancing	149(35.0)	159(37.3)	18(4.2)

Table 5 Continued.

Behavior	Considered Outercourse Yes n(%)	Not Considered Outercourse No n(%)	Uncertain/Sometimes Considered Outercourse n(%)
Watching pornographic movies	163(38.3)	139(32.6)	16(3.8)
Massage	169(39.7)	143(33.6)	12(2.8)
Using sex toys with a partner	212(49.8)	97(22.8)	11(2.6)
Hugging	148(34.7)	170(39.9)	7(1.6)
Holding hands	145(34.0)	172(40.4)	7(1.6)
Kissing	174(40.8)	144(33.8)	6(1.4)

ranged from 2 to 85 with a majority of the behaviors (18 out of 28) garnering less than 10 comments. The three behaviors that elicited the most comments were sadomasochistic activity (85), defecating on a partner (49), and urinating on a partner (40).

For multiple behaviors, the act of penile penetration emerged as a point of demarcation between classifying a behavior as intercourse or not. Pertaining to erotic bathing or showering one respondent stated “As long as there’s no penile penetration, it’s intercourse.” Referring to role playing, an individual responded, “Does it involve penile penetration? If no, then it’s intercourse.” Another stated that his or her classification of role playing “depends on if there’s penetration or not.” In reference to performing oral sex, one individual reported, “Fellatio involves a type of penetration, so I hesitate to classify it as intercourse.”

The answer choices within this survey only allowed respondents to indicate whether a behavior was considered intercourse and explain their possible uncertainties about a behavior. The survey did not ask if a behavior would be classified as intercourse if it were not intercourse. The tendency for students to classify behaviors as intercourse or refer to intercourse was evident through the qualitative component, however. In reference to direct penis contact with a partner’s buttocks, one respondent revealed he/she was uncertain how to classify the behavior “because that is about as close as it gets to intercourse.” Another participant noted that anal sex is a “form of intercourse.” In reference to sadomasochistic activity, another participant noted that “if insertion of any kind is involved, it is intercourse.”

Respondents also used the opportunity to display their uncertainty about the sheer meaning of a behavior. In reference to sadomasochistic activity, 17 of the 85 responses referenced uncertainty about the definition of the behavior. Respondents stated they had “never heard of the term”, were “not sure of the meaning”, or were “unsure of the definition.” In response to defecating on a partner, one individual noted, “Don’t know what this means.”

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

“Ambiguities and debate surround both the definitions of certain sexuality terms as well as the terminology employed in sexuality education” (Goodson, Suther, Pruitt, Wilson, 2003, p.91). It is apparent from this research that the current dialogue surrounding the term outercourse is rife with ambiguity. The first research question, asking if college students employ the term outercourse to describe sexual acts that do not include penile-vaginal intercourse was answered with a resounding and unmistakable ‘no’. Our data revealed that the three prominent terms used in the current literature to describe sexual behaviors which exclude penile-vaginal intercourse are not used by respondents in our sample. This finding was not consistent with the expectations of the researcher. The proliferation of the word outercourse in published sexuality education literature led the researcher to believe that the term would be recognized and utilized among undergraduate students. Sexuality education resources with information about outercourse accessible to the American college-aged population are employing a term that does not resonate with undergraduate students and is not a recognized word in their sexuality vernacular.

For the second research question this study proposed, it was established that no behaviors were unanimously determined to be outercourse. The lack of agreement about what constitutes an act of outercourse reiterates that “different individuals and social groups attach diverse meanings to sexual activity” (Carpenter, 2001, p.127). This finding

suggests that the published lists of possible outercourse behaviors are not conclusive and should be edited to reflect the uncertainty about the classification of sexual behaviors.

Peterson and Muehlenhard remarked that closed-ended sexual behavior survey instruments did not provide an opportunity for respondents to “qualify their answers” (2007, p.257). In response to this acknowledged dilemma the author intentionally added the open-ended component to the behavior questions. Although the open-ended component was beneficial for satisfying the inquisitiveness of the investigator, it did not contain the methodological requirements to be a valid and independent component of the data. Nevertheless, the open-ended answers that were provided served to accentuate the behaviors that were unclear or unfamiliar to respondents and highlight the need for more detailed explanations of these behaviors in future endeavors.

Limitations

This research was conducted at a large politically conservative university in the Southern United States with an ethnically homogenous population. The results may have been influenced by the school’s culture and hold the potential to be very different if the study were conducted in a dissimilar geographic region or at a school with a more diverse undergraduate population. By non-randomly recruiting participants through the use of a mass email and by collecting data through an online data collection site, the potential for a self-selection bias must be acknowledged. Those who responded might have been more comfortable pondering and providing responses to sexual behaviors. Furthermore, the utilization of the online survey collection site could have positively or

negatively affected individuals by alleviating or enhancing negative emotions associated with providing potentially sensitive information to an unknown recipient.

A central limitation of this study is the large percentage of missing data for each of the 28 sexual behaviors. As approximately one quarter of the sample did not respond to each behavior, it is important to interpret all findings with caution.

Despite the stated limitations, the study proved advantageous in beginning to fill a void in the sexuality literature. This study was the first of its kind to examine the terminology of outercourse and the sexual behaviors that could be considered an act of outercourse, employed by a sample of college-aged young adults. The limitations serve as an impetus for the vast research that is still needed to fully comprehend the manner in which college students construct, define, and label various sexual behaviors that exclude penile-vaginal intercourse.

Implications for Practice

Since the term *outercourse* did not resonate with the traditional-age undergraduate students in this sample, publishers of sexuality information might want to consider creating more relevant materials and web pages by altering their materials to reflect the acceptance of the term *fooling around* among undergraduate students. Healthcare professionals who work in a close capacity with undergraduate students could benefit from understanding the inconsistent and individualized nature in which students classify sexual behaviors. This study revealed that while a majority of individuals classified certain sexual behaviors as outercourse and others as not, no behaviors were unanimously identified as outercourse behaviors. Acknowledging the

spectrum of personal definitions should be an important part of a healthcare worker's assessment of risk for sexually transmitted diseases.

Implications for Future Research

In reference to defining and classifying sexual behaviors, “individuals sometimes choose a definition or adjust their definition from situation to situation so that their definition will result in positive consequences” (Peterson & Muhlenhard, 2007, p.257). This designation refers to the concept of motivated definitions. Researchers examining the definition of sex have noted that motivated definitions (Carpenter, 2001; Peterson & Muhlenhard, 2007) are instrumental in determining how students classify sexual behaviors. It would be beneficial to examine this avenue of research and analyze why students classify some behaviors as outercourse why some did not classify behaviors as outercourse as well as if motivated definitions influence their decisions in this arena of human sexuality.

Analysis of the crosstabs unmistakably demonstrated that freshmen were less likely than their upperclassmen counterparts to provide a response to survey questions. Prominent student development literature notes that a component of a student's “identity hinges on ...coming to terms with one's sexuality” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p.49). Sexuality is commonly defined as “the ways in which we experience and express ourselves as sexual beings” (Rathus, Nevid, Fichner-Rathus, 2005, p.3). If and how respondents classified the sexual behaviors included in this study is a component of their sexuality and developing identities. There is a proposed connection between the classification of a student and their willingness or ability to classify sexual behaviors.

Partnerships between sexuality educators and higher education researchers should examine this link between the development of a college student's identity and the student's classification of various sexual behaviors.

REFERENCES

- American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. (2008). ACOG committee opinion: Addressing the health risks of non-coital sexual activity. *Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 112(3), 735-737.
- Association of Reproductive Health Professionals. (n.d.). Abstinence/outrcourse: Choosing a birth control method. Retrieved October 1, 2009, from <http://www.arhp.org/crc/abstinence.html>
- Basso, M.J. (2003). *The underground guide to teenage sexuality*. Minneapolis, MN: Fairview Press.
- Bogart, L.M., Cecil, H., Wagstaff, D.A., Pinkerton, S.D., & Abramson, P.R. (2000). Is it “sex”? College students’ interpretations of sexual behavior terminology. *Journal of Sex Research*, 37(2), 108-116.
- Bolin, A., & Whelehan, P. (1999). *Perspectives on human sexuality*. New York: SUNY Press.
- Carpenter, L.M. (2001). The ambiguity of “having sex”: The subjective experience of virginity loss in the United States. *Journal of Sex Research*, 38(2), 127-139.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2006). *HIV/AIDS: Questions and answers: Can I get HIV from anal sex?* Retrieved October 2, 2009, from <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/resources/qa/qu22.htm>
- Chickering, A.W., & Reisser, L. (1993). *Education and identity* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Cobb, J.C. (1997). Outercourse as a safe and sensible alternative to contraceptives. *American Journal of Public Health, 87*(8), 1380-1381.
- Ellis, A. (1951). *The folklore of sex*. New York: The Country Life Press.
- Emory University. (2005). Outercourse. Retrieved October 1, 2009, from <http://www.gynob.emory.edu/familyplanning/outercourse.cfm>
- Garrard, J. (2007). *Health sciences literature review made easy: The matrix method*. Boston: Jones and Bartlett Publishers.
- Genuis, S.J., & Genuis, S.K. (1996). Orgasm without organisms: Science or propaganda? *Clinical Pediatrics, 35*(1), 10-17.
- Goodson, P., Suther, S., Pruitt, B.E., & Wilson, K. (2003). Defining abstinence: Views of directors, instructors, and participants in abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Texas. *Journal of School Health, 73*(3), 91-96.
- Gute, G., Eshbaugh, E.M., & Wiersma, J. (2008). Sex for you, but not for me: Discontinuity in undergraduate emerging adults' definitions of "having sex". *Journal of Sex Research, 45*(4), 329-337.
- Hatcher, R.A., Breedlove, B., Martin, N., & Judy, B. (1988). *Contraceptive technology: 1988-1989*. New York: Irvington Publishers.
- Hatcher, R.A., Josephs, N., Stewart, F.H., Guest, F.J., Stewart, G.K., & Kowal, D. (1982). *It's your choice: A personal guide to birth control methods for women...and men too!* New York: Irvington Publishers.
- Hutcherson, H. (2002). *What your mother never told you about s-e-x*. New York: Perigee.

- Outercourse. (2009). In *Merriam-Webster's online dictionary*. Retrieved from <http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/outercourse>
- Peterson, Z.D., & Muehlenhard, C.L. (2007). What is sex and why does it matter? A motivational approach to exploring individuals' definitions of sex. *Journal of Sex Research, 44*(3), 256-268.
- Planned Parenthood. (2008). Outercourse. Retrieved October 1, 2009, from <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/health-topics/birth-control/outercourse-4371.htm>
- Rathus, S.A., Nevid, J.S., & Fichner-Rathus, L. (2005). *Human sexuality in a world of diversity* (6th ed.). Boston: Pearson.
- Rutgers University. (2009). Sex, etc.: Outercourse. Retrieved October 1, 2009, from <http://www.sexetc.org/glossary/1187>
- Sanders, S.A., & Reinisch, J.M. (1999). Would you say you "had sex" if...? *Journal of the American Medical Association, 281*(3), 275-277.
- Suzuki, L.K., & Calzo, J.P. (2004). The search for peer advice in cyberspace: An examination of online teen bulletin boards about health and sexuality. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 25*(6), 685-698.
- TeenAdvisor. (n.d.) Outercourse. Retrieved October 1, 2009, from <http://www.teenadvisor.com/teen-dating/outercourse>
- University of California-Santa Barbara. (2008). Dry sex. Retrieved October 1, 2009, from <http://www.soc.ucsb.edu/sexinfo/?article=EJaW>

- Weaver, S.J., & Herold, E.S. (2000). Casual sex and women: Measurement and motivational issues. *Journal of Psychology & Human Sexuality, 12*(3), 23-41.
- Woody, J.D., Russell, R., D'Souza, H.J., & Woody, J.K. (2000). Adolescent non-coital sexual activity: Comparisons of virgins and non-virgins. *Journal of Sex Education and Therapy, 25*, 261-268.

VITA

Name: Mindy Alison Menn

Address: TAMU 4243
College Station, TX 77843-4243

Email Address: mindymenn@neo.tamu.edu

Education: B.A., Sociology, Texas A&M University, 2007
M.S., Health Education, Texas A&M University, 2009