

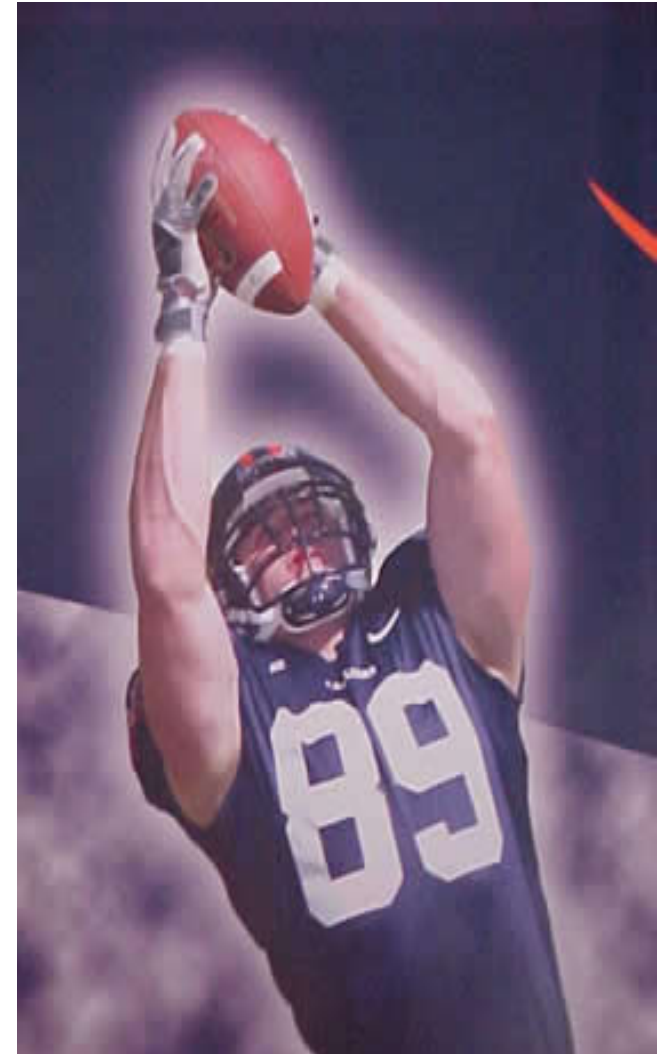
Knowledge Assessment toward STD/HIV Transmission and Condom Use among Male, College Football Athletes

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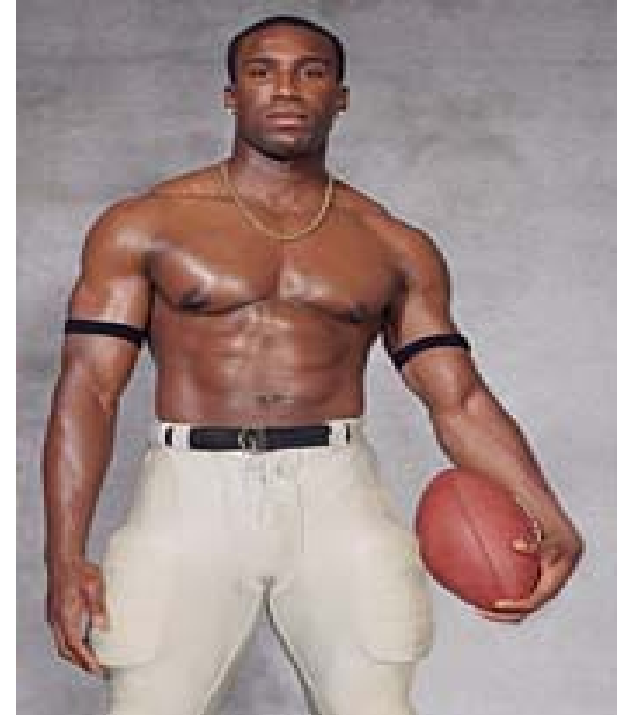
Background

- Sports are viewed as a cultural site for the construction of traditional or hegemonic “masculinity” (*Messner and Sabo 1990*).
- In the U.S. in particular, college football is widely viewed as an institutional training ground for “manhood.”
- In fact, building on the work of *Caron (1985)* and *Houseworth (1989)* on male college students, *Andre and Holland (1995)* found that male athletes:
 - scored higher on self-reported “masculine” traits (BEM Sex Role Inventory) than do their non-athletic counterparts, and
 - displayed more traditional attitudes toward women.



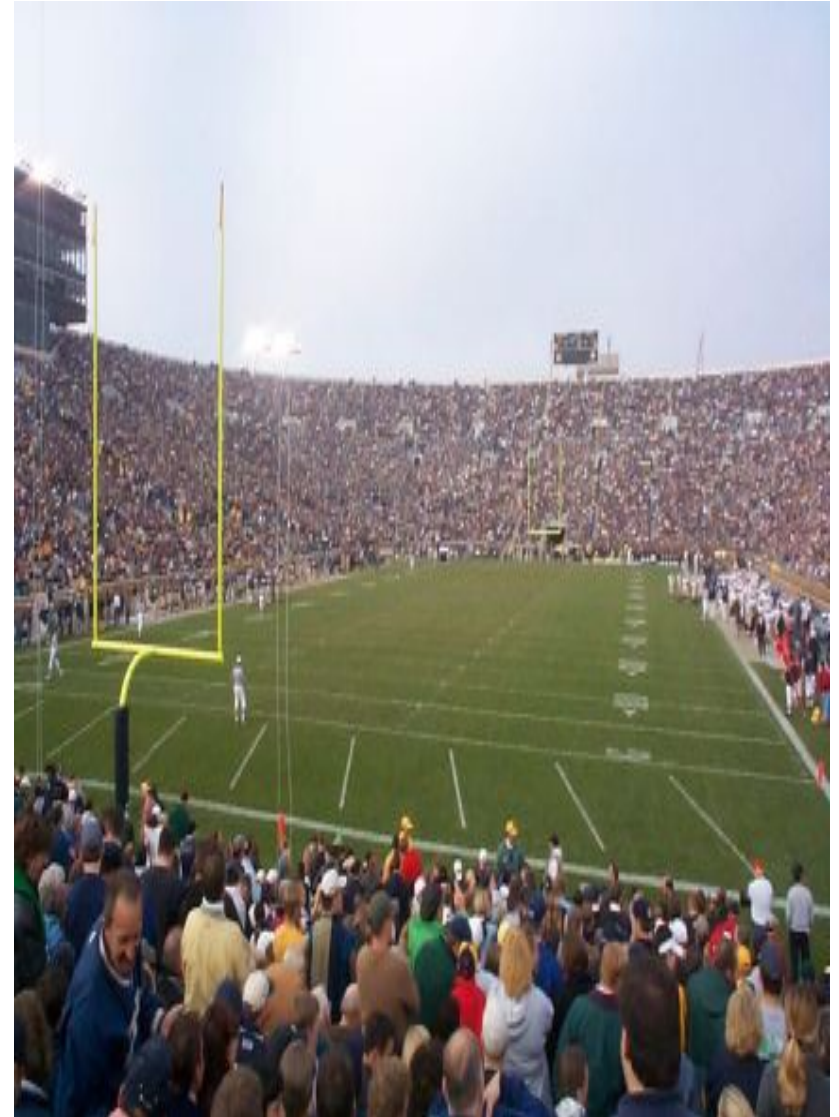
Background

- As adolescence progresses, sexual identity emerges as an extension of an already formed gender identity.
- Thus, sexual behavior becomes scripted in accordance with the wider cultural norms that pattern gender relations (*Sabo and Messner 1993*).
- Cultural expectations attached to "masculinity" may encourage male football players to engage in
 - **unsafe sexual practices** (increased number of sexual partners, lack of condom utilization),
 - to be **sexually aggressive with women**, and
 - to **regard sexual conquest** as a **validation** for **male adequacy** and **superiority**.



Background

- Three general themes emerged in the process of conducting this investigative effort.
- First, research efforts exploring the sexual knowledge, behaviors, and practices of male college football players are still relatively **nascent** and **scarce**.
- Second, there is simply **not** a large enough sample of **thorough** and **systematic data** on this research topic.
 - Data are typically gathered and analyzed from the perspective of participants at a level too cursory to allow an accurate portrayal and in-depth assessment of their sexual practices.
- Third, **social norms** related to **gender roles** heavily influence the male college football players sexual behaviors, knowledge, and condom use.



Background

- Shaping these three themes and guiding much of what the male football players do in their everyday lives are **social norms**, and central among these are **gender norms**.
- **Gender norms** are some of the strongest social influences shaping the collegiate male football players lives.
- They provide the values that justify in their minds **expectations** and ready **acceptance** of **different** and often “preferential” treatment.



Background

- **Norms** favoring
 - the **sexual prowess** and
 - **entitlement** of male football playerswhile promoting women's perceived **sexual attraction** to them through the adoption of a
 - **passive**,
 - **subservient** and
 - **provocative role**,are readily accepted and widely depicted in popular culture.
- More importantly female intimate partners of football players are expected to be
 - **emotionally dependent** and
 - in need to **secure their approval** in order to establish **self-worth**.
- These social factors may contribute to the **high risk sexual behaviors** and **unsafe sex practices** by this group of athletes.



Background

- Athletic culture spans a spectrum of areas, some of which (alcohol use, for example) have become fairly well understood over the years, while others (physical violence, weapons use) need the further exploration and better understanding.
- One of the areas warranting further investigation is the examination of the sexual practices and knowledge of STD/HIV among male, college football athletes.
- With limited amount of data, few studies suggest that many male athletes have misconceptions about the risk of contracting STD/HIV.



Purpose

- Therefore, the sexual behaviors of the male college football athletes are a cause for concern.
- Thus, the present study was conducted in an effort to gain a better understanding of the world of the male college football athlete as it pertained to his knowledge toward STD/HIV transmission and condom use in correlation to the athletes
 - **Age,**
 - **Sociodemographic characteristics,**
 - **Sexual relationship history,**
 - **Sexual knowledge, and**
 - **Sexual practices.**

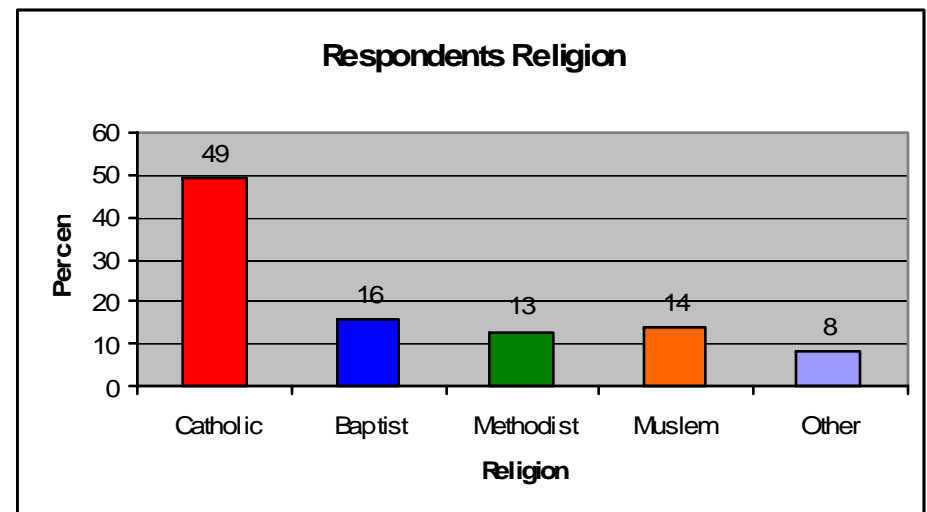
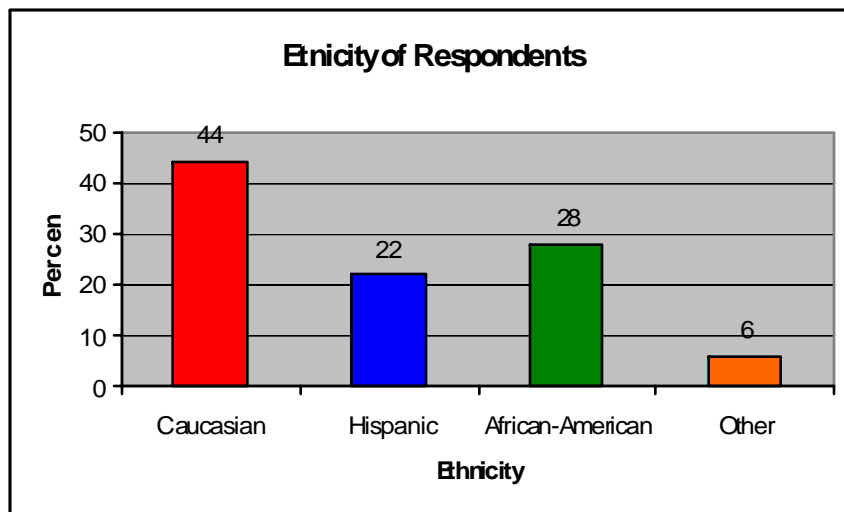
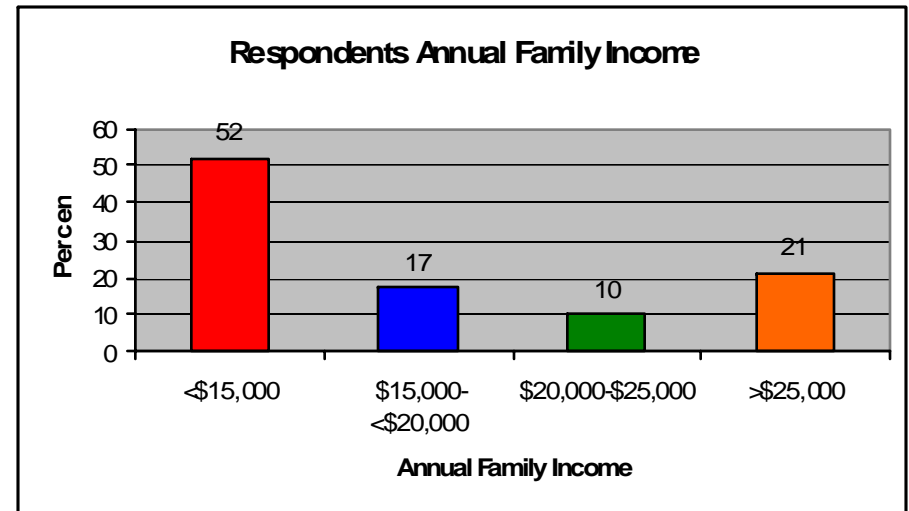
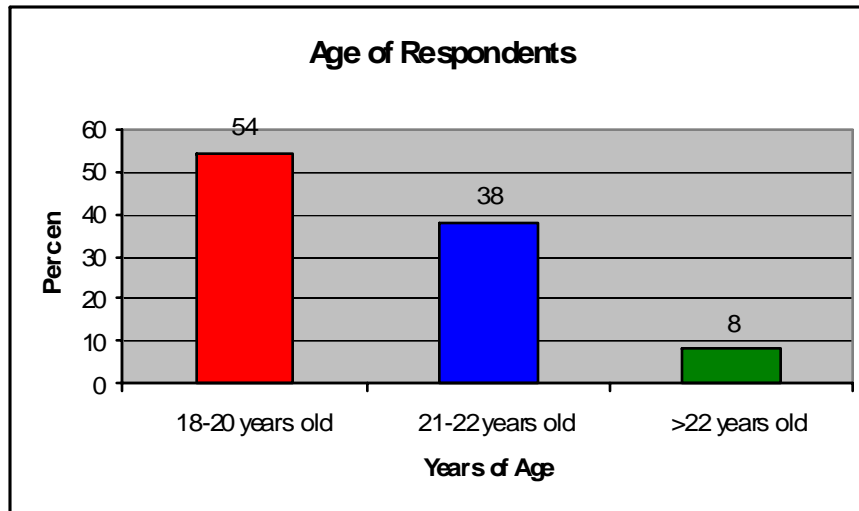


Methods

- The present study surveyed 50 male, college football athletes.
- All data collection was done by one investigator to ensure continuity.
- The questionnaires were anonymous and confidential, and examined four categories of interest:
 - **(1) Sociodemographic characteristics**
 - **(2) Sexual history and beliefs,**
 - **(3) Condom beliefs and utilization, &**
 - **(4) Knowledge regarding condom use and STD/HIV transmission.**

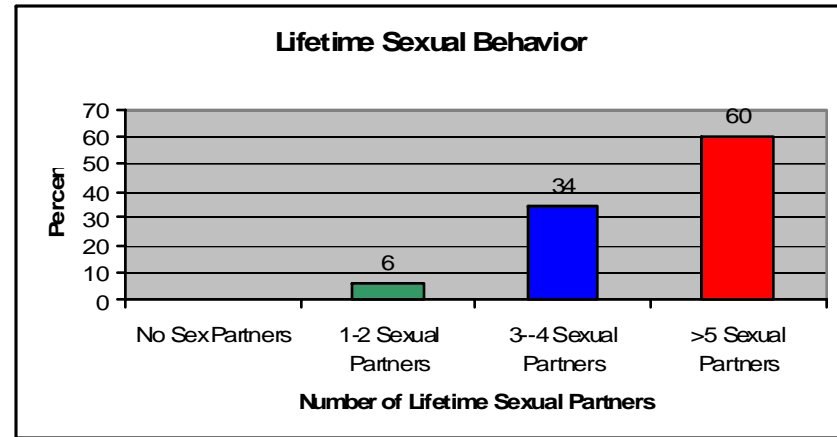
Findings

Sociodemographic Characteristics

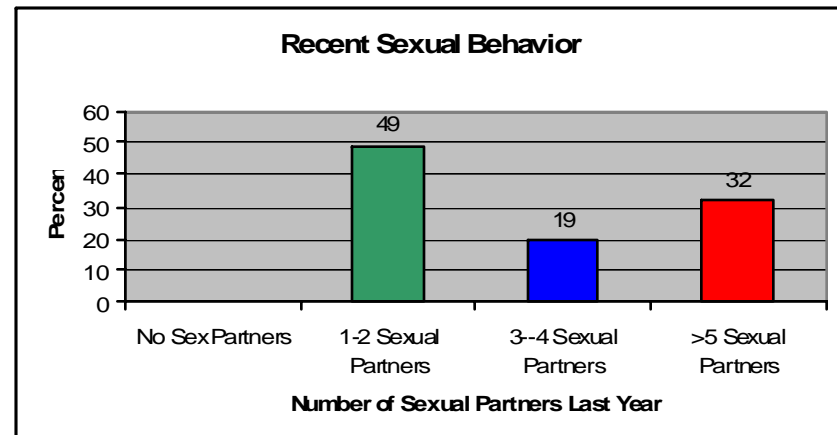


Findings

- Lifetime Sexual Behavior
 - **No** male, college football athletes surveyed reported **not** having at least one or more lifetime sexual partners.
 - While more than half (**60%**) of male, college football athletes surveyed reported having **more than five lifetime sexual partners**.

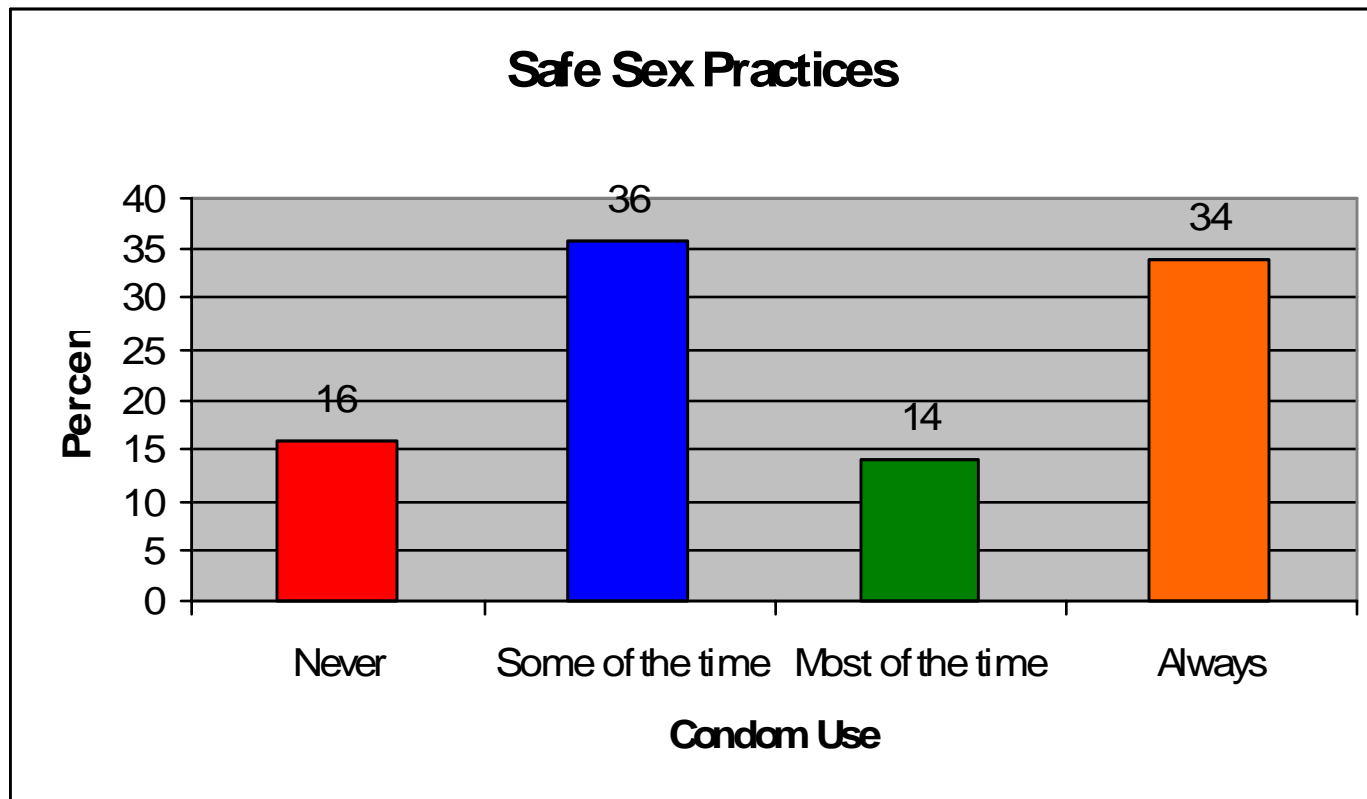


- Recent Sexual Behavior
 - **No** male, college football athletes surveyed reported **not** having at least one or more recent sexual partners.
 - The majority (**49%**) reported having between **1-2 sexual partners within the last year**.



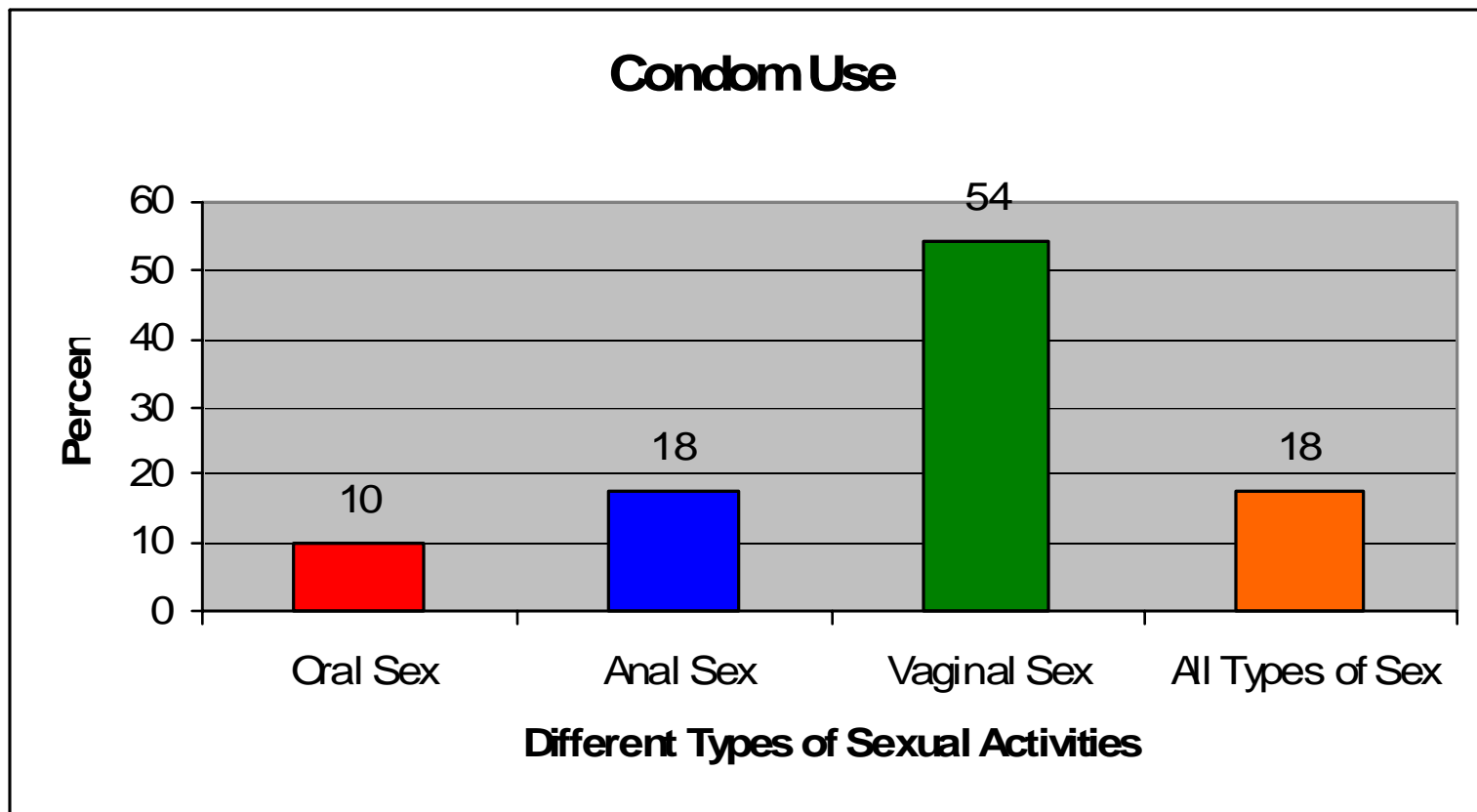
Findings

- Only **34%** reported **always** practicing safe sex.
- While **16%** reported to have **never** practiced safe sex.



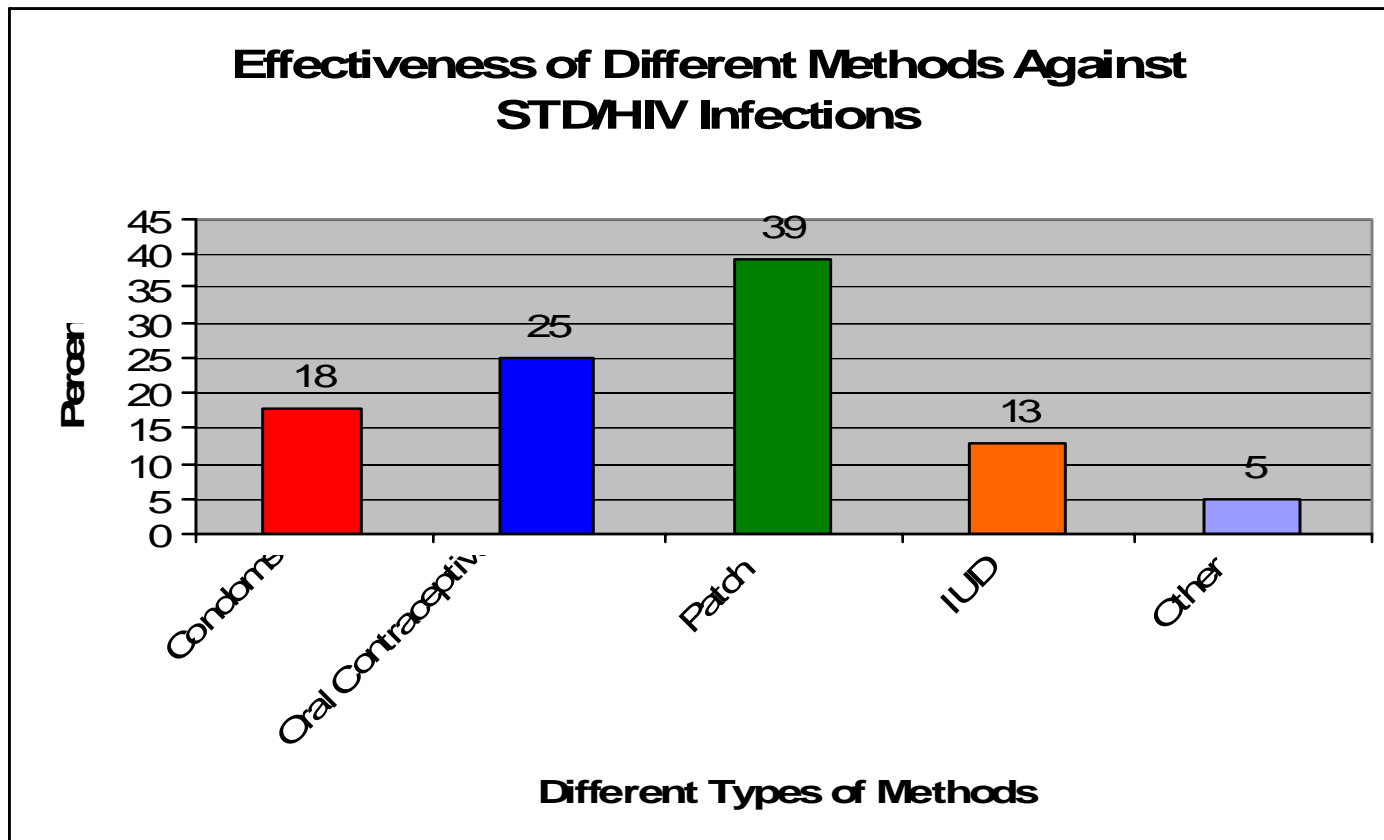
Findings

- Approximately **54%** believed condom use is important during **vaginal sex**,
- While only **18%** believed condom use is important during **vaginal, oral, and anal sex.**



Findings

- Only **18%** believed that **condom use** is effective against STD/HIV,
- While **22%** believed that STD/HIV can be contracted from **toilet seats.**



Discussion

- There are several possible explanations that may account for the findings that college football athletes are at higher risk for several unhealthy lifestyle behavior patterns compared with their nonathlete counterparts.
 - Sports psychologists have described athletes who participate in high-risk sports as possibly having a **predisposing type of personality** (Roberts et al., 1999).
 - Farley and colleagues (1991) has postulated a **“type T” personality** by which high-risk athletes (eg, skydivers, mountain climbers, football players, etc) may be categorized.
 - Type T individuals, according to Farley, thrive
 - on **thrill-seeking behavior**,
 - **excitement**, and
 - **stimulation through physical activity**.
- It is conceivable that the high risk-taking behavior demonstrated by our male, college football player group may have been attributable to such a personality type.



Discussion

- **Personal beliefs** about the extent to which a person feels in control of his own health (**internal** vs **external** locus of control) has also been examined as a possible predictor for certain health behaviors.
- For example, Desmond et al (1995) hypothesized that
 - seatbelt use would be associated with a more internal locus of control in high school students, and
 - non-seatbelt use would be associated with a more external orientation.
- It may follow that athletes, who tend to have more of an **external locus of control**, such as the **football players** participating in the present study may be expected to have **behavioral outcomes placing them at higher risk.**



Limitations

- The **generalizability** of the findings in the present study are **quite limited** because they are partially dependent on the representativeness of the sample.
 - On college campuses across the U.S. male athletes participate in a variety of sports.
 - In this study, not all sports were sampled.
 - Therefore, this selection bias needs to be taken into account and **severely limits generalizing the results to all college athletes.**
- While a **random sampling of the athlete pool** would have **eliminated the biases** introduced with the **convenience sampling method** used in the present study, this approach was **not feasible** given the relatively **small number of football players on campus.**
- Whether **non-collegiate male football players** of **younger** or **older age groups** have **similar high-risk lifestyle behavior patterns** has yet to be determined and cannot be extrapolated from the present study since **these populations were not examined.**
- Lastly, the results from the study are based on the participants **self-reports of their behaviors.**
 - Although the validity of this method of data collection has been well documented, it is possible that estimation of certain behaviors was **over- or underreported.**



Conclusions

- Despite the major public health efforts put into sexual health education of college students, it appears that **many male, college football athletes** do **not** engage in **safe sex practices** and **lack proper knowledge** regarding **STD/HIV transmission** and **effectiveness of condom use**.
- Consequently, health education and prevention strategies in college need to **concentrate** on this **small** and yet **prominent population** on campus, if they are to successfully continue to **decrease** their **STD/HIV incidence rates**.



Questions???

- *It has been said that man is a rational animal.*

All my life I have been searching for evidence which could support this.

- **--Bertrand Russell**