to have a medium level of social interaction (78% vs. 70%), and male students were more likely than females to have a high level (19% vs. 8%).

Roughly three-quarters of young men reported a medium or high level of erotic exposure, compared with about two-fifths of young women.

### Bivariate Findings

Overall, 47% of male participants and 13% of females had had any sexual experience; 26% and 3%, respectively, had had intercourse. In the following analyses, young women’s experience of sexual intercourse has been excluded, because the number reporting this behavior was very small.

Individual-level factors exerted a greater influence on males’ sexual behavior than on females’ (Table 1). The proportion of young men who had had any sexual experience increased steadily from 21% among those aged 15 or younger to 68% among those older than 21; similarly, those in the final year of college were significantly more likely than those in the 11th standard to be sexually experienced. Young men in the arts program were more likely to have engaged in sexual activity (53%) than those studying science or commerce (39–48%). Those who were employed had a higher level of sexual experience (67%) than those who did not work (43%), and the level of sexual experience increased as young men’s income rose. Generally similar patterns were seen with regard to young men’s level of intercourse. Among female students, however, only age, year in school and academic program significantly influenced the likelihood of having had sexual experience.

In general, the socioeconomic variables at the household level did not show any significant relationship with students’ sexual behavior (Table 2). The exception was that male students’ level of any sexual experience rose from 42% of those with the lowest family income to 55% of those in the highest income category. Of the remaining familial variables, increasing religiosity raised the likelihood of sexual activity among female students, and an uncomfortable family environment was associated with elevated levels of any sexual activity and of sexual intercourse among male participants.

All of the intermediate variables except attitude toward sex in general were significantly associated with young men’s sexual behavior (Table 3). Those with liberal attitudes toward premarital sex and high levels of social interaction and erotic exposure were significantly more likely than their peers with lower scores on these indices to have had any sexual experience and to have had sexual intercourse. Notably, young men with a high level of knowledge about sexuality-related issues were the most likely to be sexually experienced (62%), and the proportion who had had a sexual encounter declined as the level of knowledge dropped; in contrast, those with a moderate level of knowledge were more likely to have had intercourse (31%) than were those with either a high or a low level of knowledge (24% and 15%, respectively).* Findings were similar for female students, except that a liberal attitude toward sex in general was associated with the greatest likelihood of having had any sexual experience (32% vs. 9–17%), and attitude toward premarital sex had no significant effect.

The importance of knowledge about issues related to sex extends beyond its importance in terms of influencing sexual experience. In particular, one might expect that knowledge would lead to the practice of safer sex; results of an examination of this behavior, however (not shown), did not support this hypothesis. Among the

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*The inconsistent relationship between knowledge and the level of sexual intercourse among young men invites an examination of the construction of the knowledge index. We cross-tabulated the individual items that constituted the index with sexual experience and found that the exclusion of one or more of them did not considerably affect the results presented in Table 3. Furthermore, any other logical classification of the knowledge index also does not significantly alter the pattern. Since the effect of knowledge on sexual experience is modified by other factors, the multivariate analysis will clarify the independent effect of level of knowledge.