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## Assessing the Differences Between Same-Gender and Cross-Gender Friendships in Sexual Health Communication

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# Assessing the Differences Between Same-Gender and Cross-Gender Friendships in Sexual Health Communication

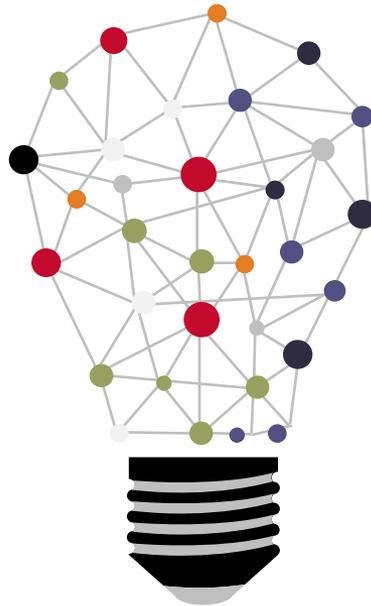
Felicity Doddato

Mentors: Katherine Bonafide, Ph.D.  
Kaitlin Flannery, Ph.D.

# STI Rates & Communication

Increase in prevalence of sexually transmitted infections

Ages 15-24 the most at risk and vulnerable



Connection may exist between sexual health practices and communication

Important to study how these at-risk groups are communicating



# Cross-Gender Friendships

Cross-gender friendships increase in prevalence and importance in emerging adulthood

Friendships often form the basis for romantic relationships

Individuals who desire to transition their relationship from platonic to romantic show an increase in using maintenance behaviors

Cross-gender friendships that are more developed may lead to romantic relationships in the future

# Present Study

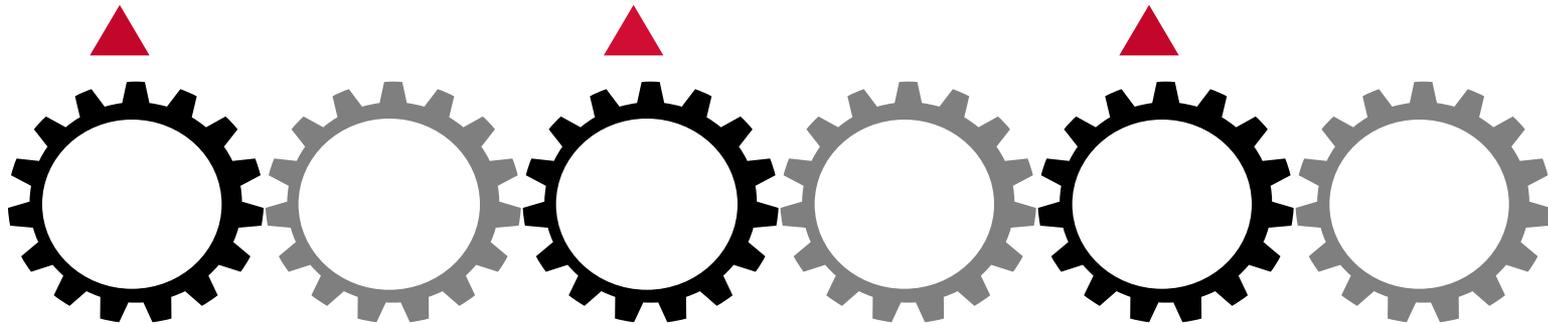
Assess whether differences exist between:

- Same-gender and cross-gender friends
  - Frequency of communication about sex-related issues
  - Comfort discussing sexual health
- Males and females within cross-gender friends
  - Frequency of communication about sex-related issues
  - Comfort discussing sexual health



# Method

- 187 college-aged participants
- $M_{age} = 20.10$  years
- $SD = 1.34$
- Qualtrics Survey
- Self-report experiences
- Recruited participants using posters, mass emails, and announcements throughout campus



- 49.2% Female
- 50.8% Male
- 75% White

- Administered electronically on an iPad

- Participants received a \$10 cash incentive

# Measures

## 1. Close Friend Communication About Sex

The questions below are designed to measure how much you have talked to [friend name] about certain topics IN THE LAST 3 MONTHS. Please answer the questions thinking about [friend name]. Answer each item by selecting the appropriate number.

How much have you talked to your friend about...	Never	Once	A Few Times	Often
1. Homework	0	1	2	3
2. Classes	0	1	2	3
3. Your family	0	1	2	3
4. Entertainment (e.g., movies, TV shows)	0	1	2	3
5. Dating/romantic relationships	0	1	2	3
6. Pregnancy	0	1	2	3
7. Menstruation (e.g., periods)	0	1	2	3
8. Contraception (what's available, how to	0	1	2	3

- Frequency of communication about sex and non-sex related topics
- Within the last three months
- 0 (Never) – 3 (Often)

# Measures

## 2. Comfort Discussing Sex and Sex-related Issues

*Instructions:* Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements

1. In general, talking about sex and sex-related issues, I feel *comfortable*:

123456

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

2. In general, talking about sex and sex-related issues, I feel *open*:

123456

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

3. In general, talking about sex and sex-related issues, I feel *unashamed*:

123456

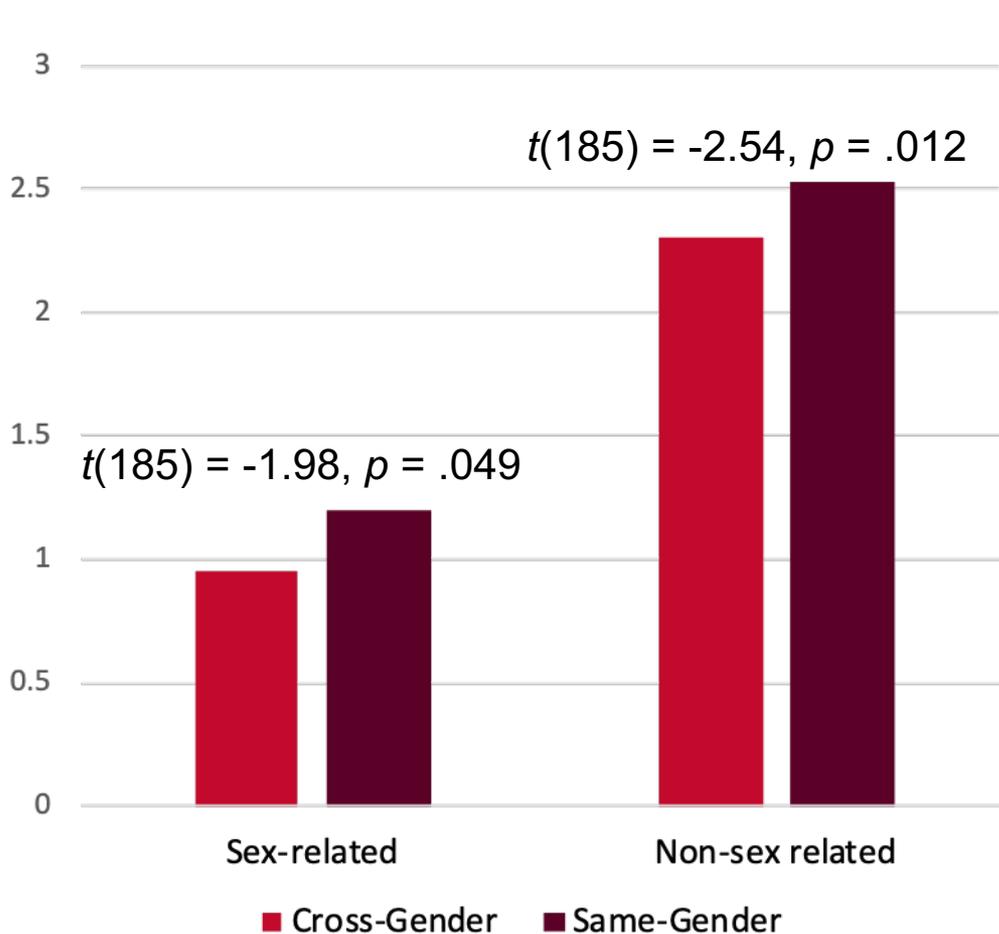
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

4. In general, talking about sex and sex-related issues, I feel *knowledgeable*:

123456

- Comfort talking about sex and sex-related issues
- 1 (Strongly disagree)
- 6 (Strongly agree)

# Results: Frequency

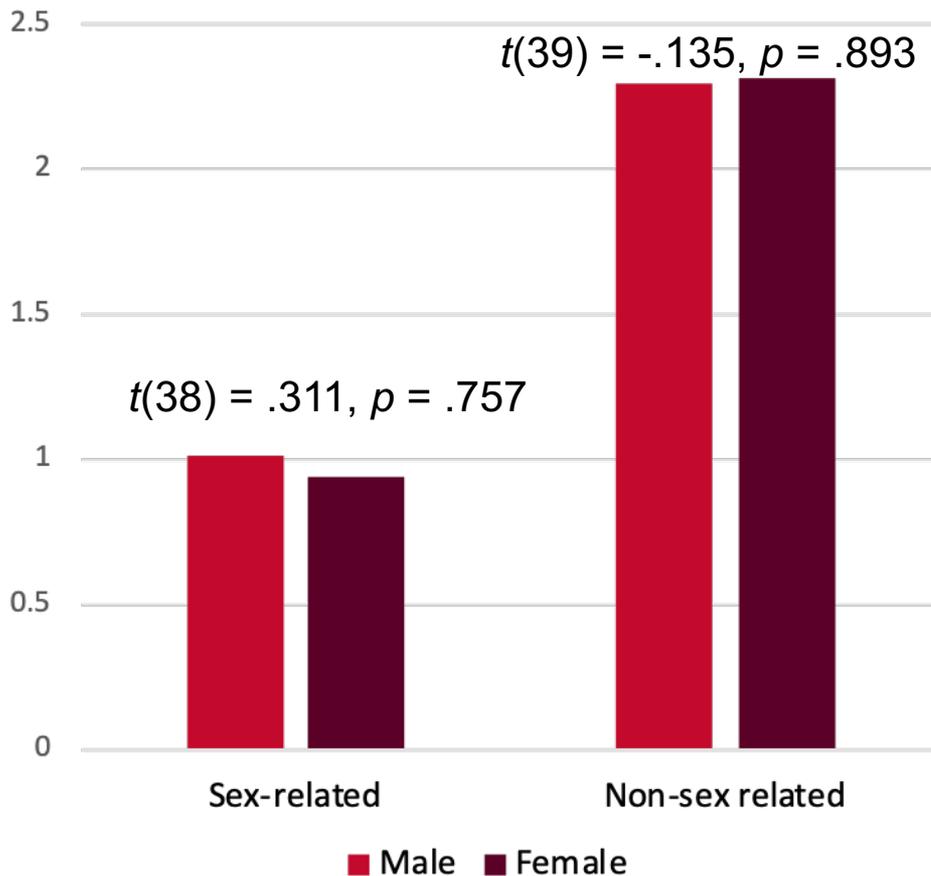


	Cross-Gender M (SD)	Same-Gender M (SD)	t
Sex-related	0.95 (.70)	1.20 (.72)	-1.98*
Non-sex related	2.30 (.50)	2.53 (.51)	-2.54*

\* =  $p < .05$

Significant differences between cross-gender and same-gender friends in their frequency of conversation involving sex and non-sex related issues

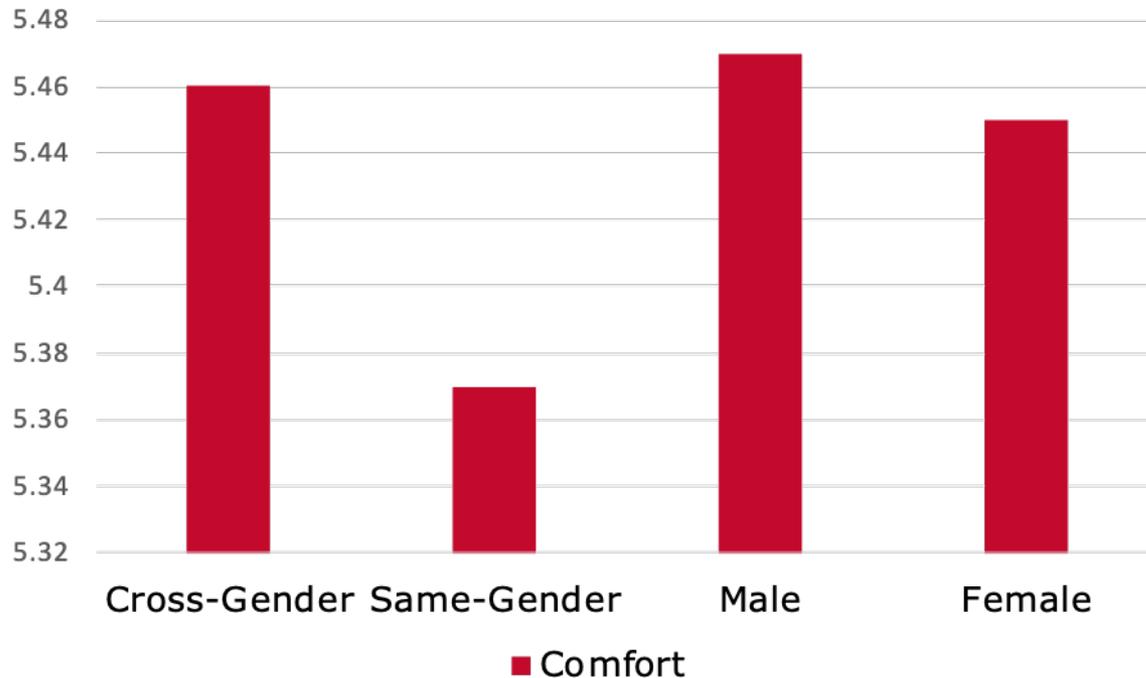
# Results: Frequency



	Males <i>M (SD)</i>	Females <i>M (SD)</i>	<i>t</i>
Sex-related	1.01 (.75)	.94 (.67)	.311
Non-sex related	2.29 (.55)	2.31 (.50)	-.135

No significant differences between males and females within cross-gender friends in their frequency of conversation involving sex and non-sex related issues

# Results: Comfort



- No significant differences between comfort levels of cross-gender friends and same-gender friends  
 $t(178) = .871, p = .385$
- No significant differences between comfort levels of males and females within cross-gender friends  
 $t(178) = .871, p = .385$

	<b>Cross-gender <i>M (SD)</i></b>	<b>Same-gender <i>M (SD)</i></b>	<b>Male <i>M (SD)</i></b>	<b>Female <i>M (SD)</i></b>
Comfort level	5.46 (.54)	5.37 (.62)	5.47 (.56)	5.45 (.55)

# Discussion

Present findings indicate:

- Same-gender friends are more likely to talk about sex-related issues than cross-gender friends.
- However, no gender differences exist in their frequency of communication

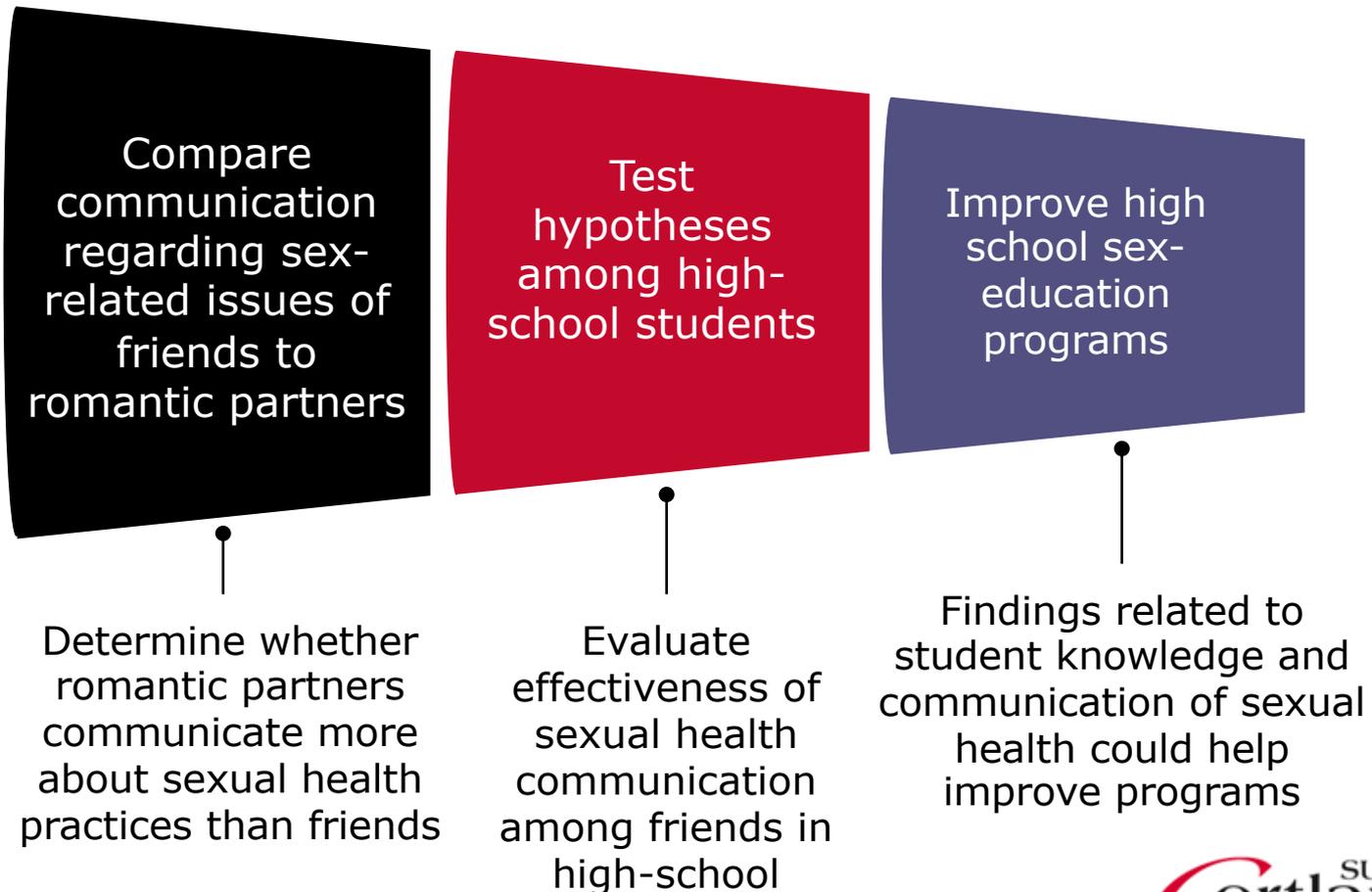
- No differences in level of comfort talking about sex-related issues

- Sexual health behaviors may be best communicated among same-gender friends

- Utilize research to effectively promote sexual health behaviors among college populations

# Discussion

## Future Research:



# References

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