

LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX...EDUCATION!

Sexuality and Sex Education for Autistic Individuals

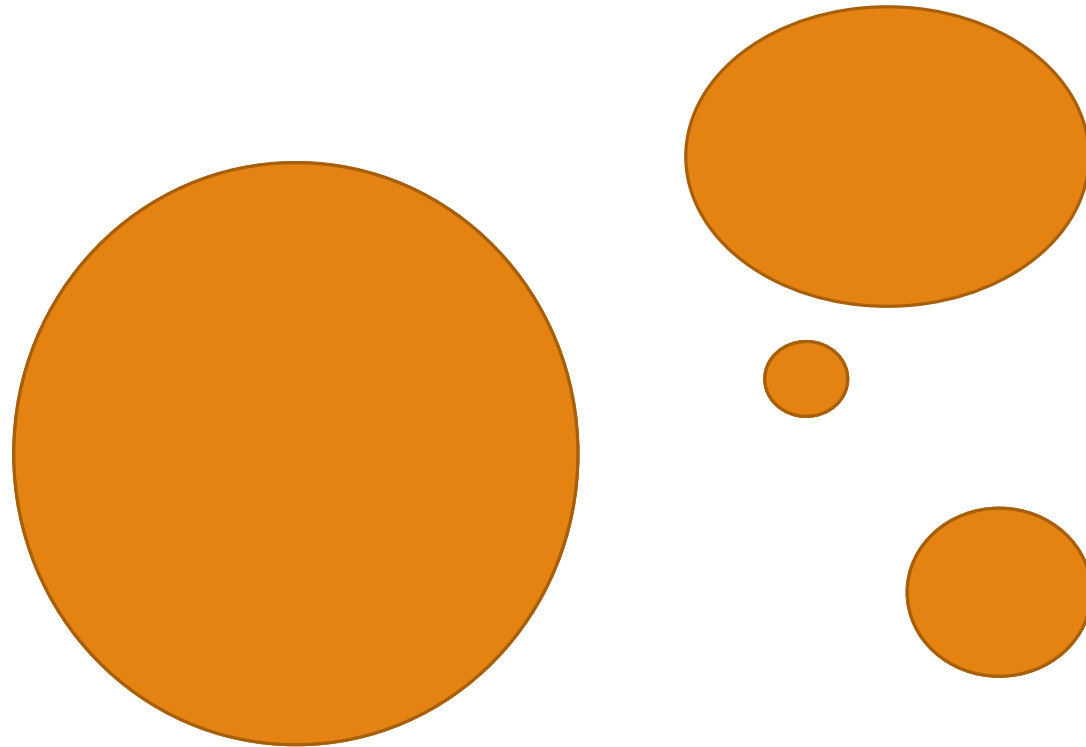


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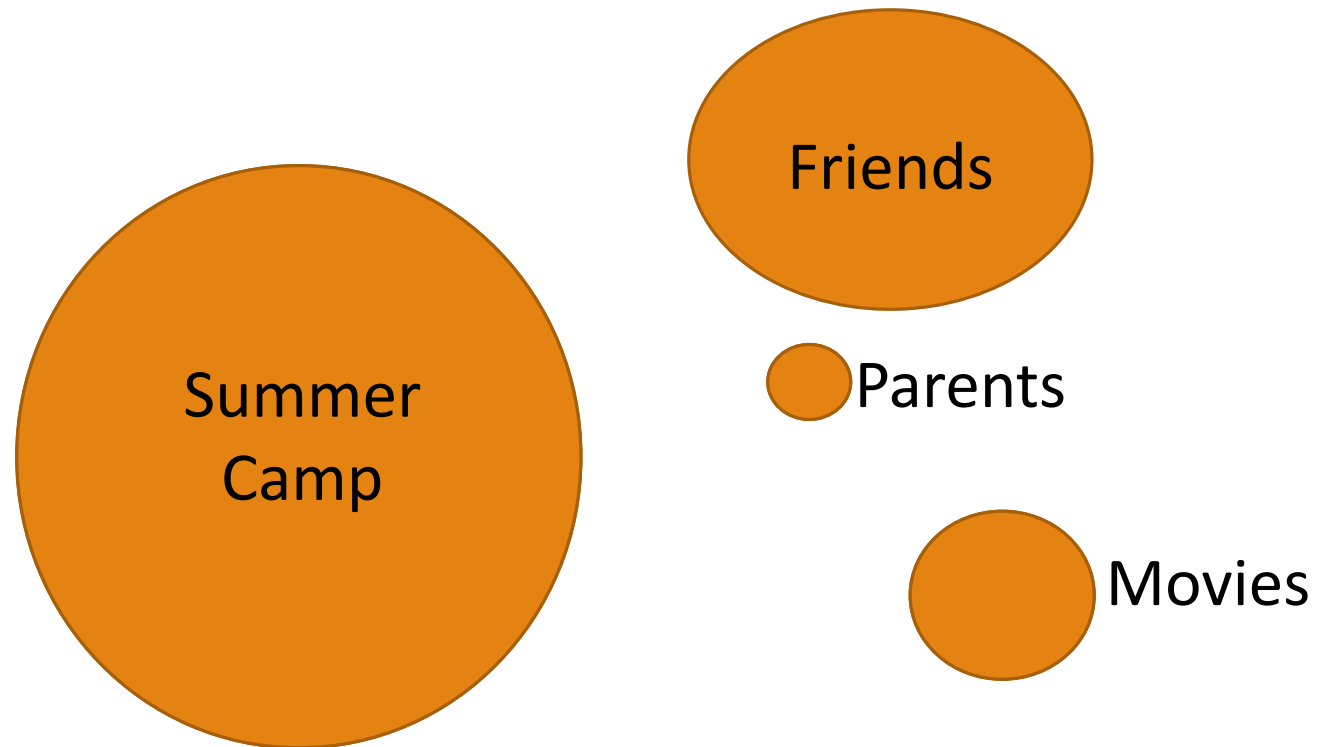
WHY TALK ABOUT SEX?

- Where did you learn about sex?



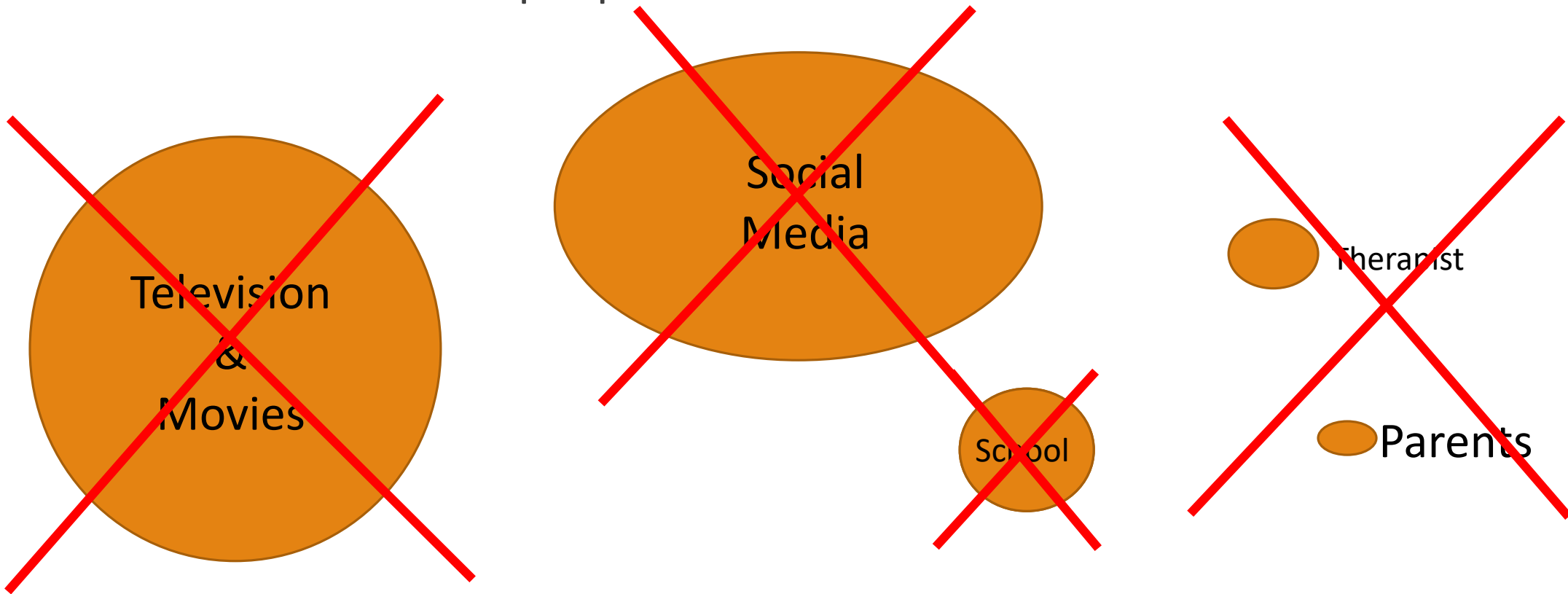
WHY TALK ABOUT SEX?

□ Where did you learn about sex?



WHY TALK ABOUT SEX?

□ Where do autistic people learn about sex?



CORE IMPAIRMENTS OF ASD

Social Communication

- Theory of Mind Deficits
- Challenges in social reasoning
- Literal thinkers
- Miss/misinterpret contextual cues

Restricted/Repetitive Behaviors

- Stereotyped behavior
- Routines, rituals, rigidity
- Highly restricted interests
- Atypical sensory processing

CORE IMPAIRMENTS INFLUENCE SEXUAL BEHAVIORS & RELATIONSHIPS

Core Impairments



Sexual Victimization
Sexual Perpetration



Counterfeit Deviance
(e.g. "naïve curiosity")

Behaviors that occur not because of deviancy, but lack of "knowing better"

IMPLICATIONS

- Autistic individuals are at high risk of sexual abuse, violence, and exploitation
 - 78% of autistic adults reported at one occurrence of victimization
 - As children, higher incidence of sexual assault by peers
 - As adults, higher incidence of unwanted sexual contact
 - Autistic college students are twice as likely to experience unwanted sexual contact

- Are at risk of perpetration/being accused of sexual crimes
 - DD population 7x more likely to have contact with Criminal Justice System
 - Retained for 11 years longer than non-autistic peers in psychiatric settings

IMPLICATIONS

- ❑ Socially odd or awkward behaviors are often misinterpreted as intentionally harmful (stalking, molestation, "obsessed" with someone)
- ❑ Less knowledge of privacy behaviors and display more inappropriate sexual behaviors
- ❑ Desire to have friends/be accepted can lead to placing themselves in risky/dangerous situations



IMPORTANCE OF SEX EDUCATION

- ❑ Most autistic individuals have typical sexual/romantic feelings and desires, but few report intimate and sexual experiences and/or express frustration
- ❑ Autistic individuals have the right to learn sexual education
- ❑ Not as adept at learning from the environment, or they learn from inappropriate sources
- ❑ Without this, may engage in socially inappropriate/dangerous ways to fulfill sexual and intimacy desires
- ❑ ***PREVENTATIVE***

CURRENT CURRICULUM

- ❑ Tacking Teenage Training (TTT; Boudesteijn et al., 2012)
- ❑ Positive psychosexual development in autistic adolescents (ages 12-18)
 - ❑ 18 individual sessions
 - ❑ Intervention *or* preventative
- ❑ **Topics**: puberty, appearances, first impressions, physical and emotional developments in adolescence, friendships, falling in love and dating, sexuality and sex (e.g. sexual orientation, masturbation, and intercourse), pregnancy, setting and respecting boundaries and safe internet use

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

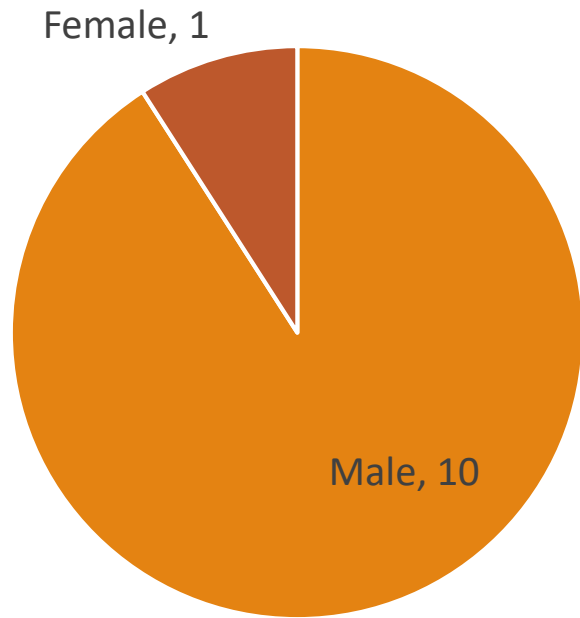
- ❑ Pilot Study (Dekker et al., 2015)
 - ❑ Thirty 11-19 year old autistic adolescents (23 males, 7 female)
 - ❑ Significant increase in psychosexual knowledge pre and post training
- ❑ Randomized Clinical Trial (Visser et al., 2017)
 - ❑ 189 12-18 year old autistic adolescents across treatment group and waitlist control group
 - ❑ Increase in social communication skills (SRS)
 - ❑ Decrease in problematic behaviors
 - ❑ Higher psychosexual knowledge
 - ❑ Most effective for younger adolescents

CURRENT GROUP

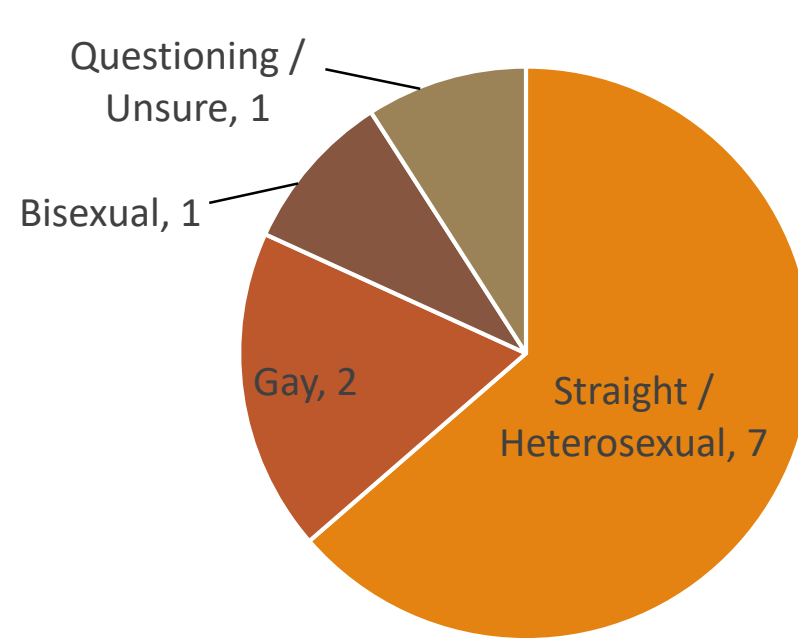
- ❑ In collaboration with Dr. Eileen Crehan, PhD at Tufts University
- ❑ Modifications:
 - ❑ Adaptation to young adult population
 - ❑ Adaptation to group format (online due to COVID-19)
 - ❑ Inclusion of LGBTQIA+ individuals

PARTICIPANTS

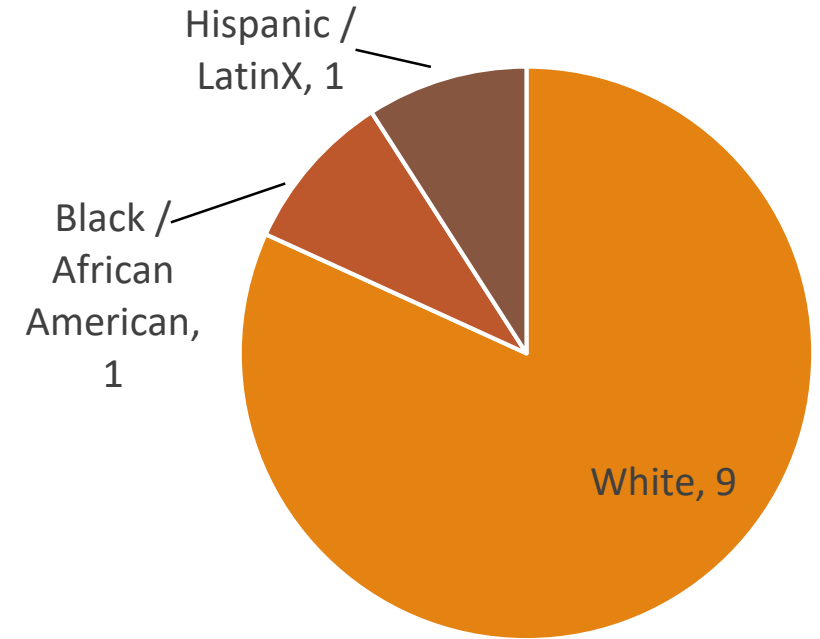
Gender Identity



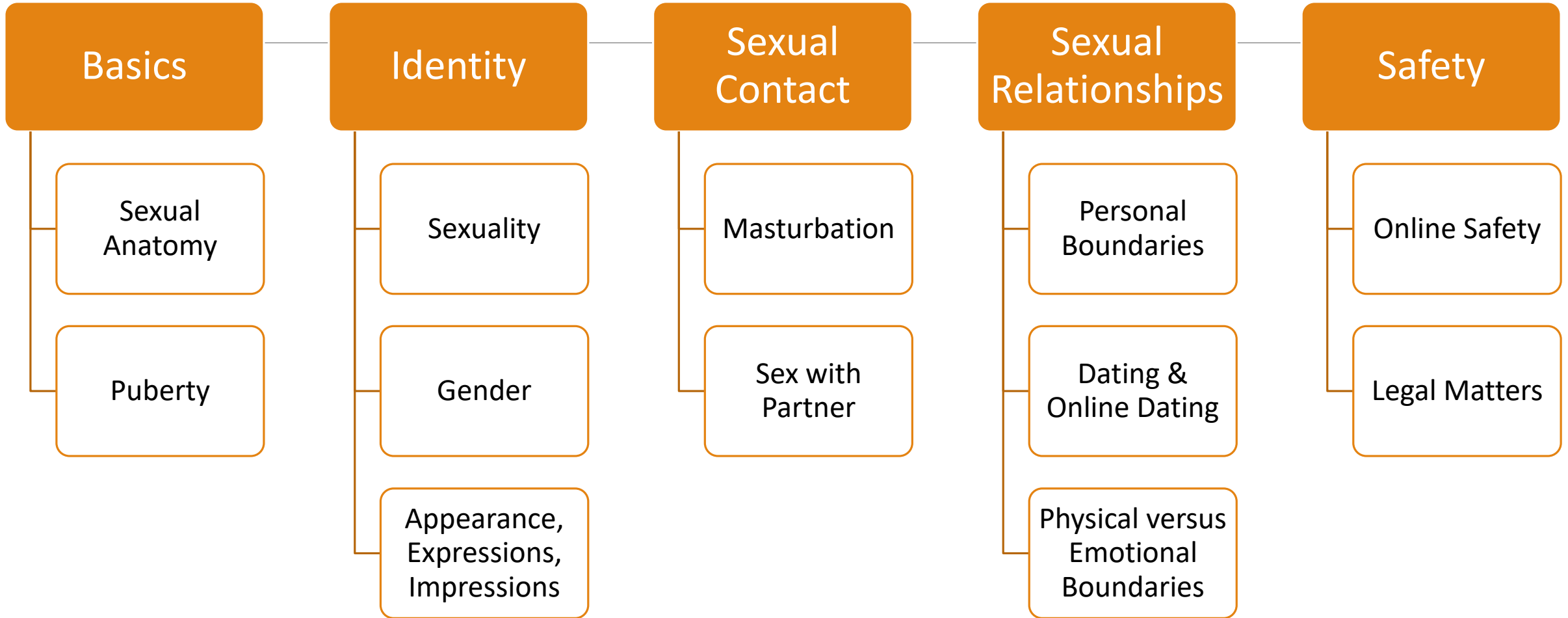
Sexual Orientation



Race/Ethnicity



GROUP CONTENT



SAMPLE SCHEDULE

Topic: Personal Boundaries

1. Review Homework: Quiz on STDs
2. Lesson Activities
3. Peer Consult
4. Homework: Create “Safer Sex” Protocol



Exercise 2:

Your own personal boundaries

Using a red **stop** card and a green **ok** card, show if the following situations overstep your boundaries (**stop**) or if the situation is acceptable (**ok**).

1. A professor gives you a pat on the back because you got a high grade on a test.
2. A therapist gives you a compliment and says “You look attractive today”.
3. While you are taking a test a professor leans over you to be able to read what you are writing.
4. An older man at a bus stop asks for your name.
5. An older man comes up to you at a bus stop and asks where the bus is taking you.
6. When you are in your room someone enters your room without knocking.
7. When you pass a few peers in the hall they make remarks about your appearance.
8. A good friend takes your mobile phone without asking and starts looking at your text messages.
9. In the movie theatre a stranger comes and sits directly next to you with his or her arms and legs touching yours.
10. Someone you have only met online asks for you to send them a picture of yourself.
11. Someone at a coffee shop asks if you would be interested in joining them for coffee.

RESULTS: WEEKLY TOPICS

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Sexual Anatomy & Puberty

Identity, Expression, Sexual & Romantic Attraction

Masturbation

Sex with Partner

Personal Boundaries

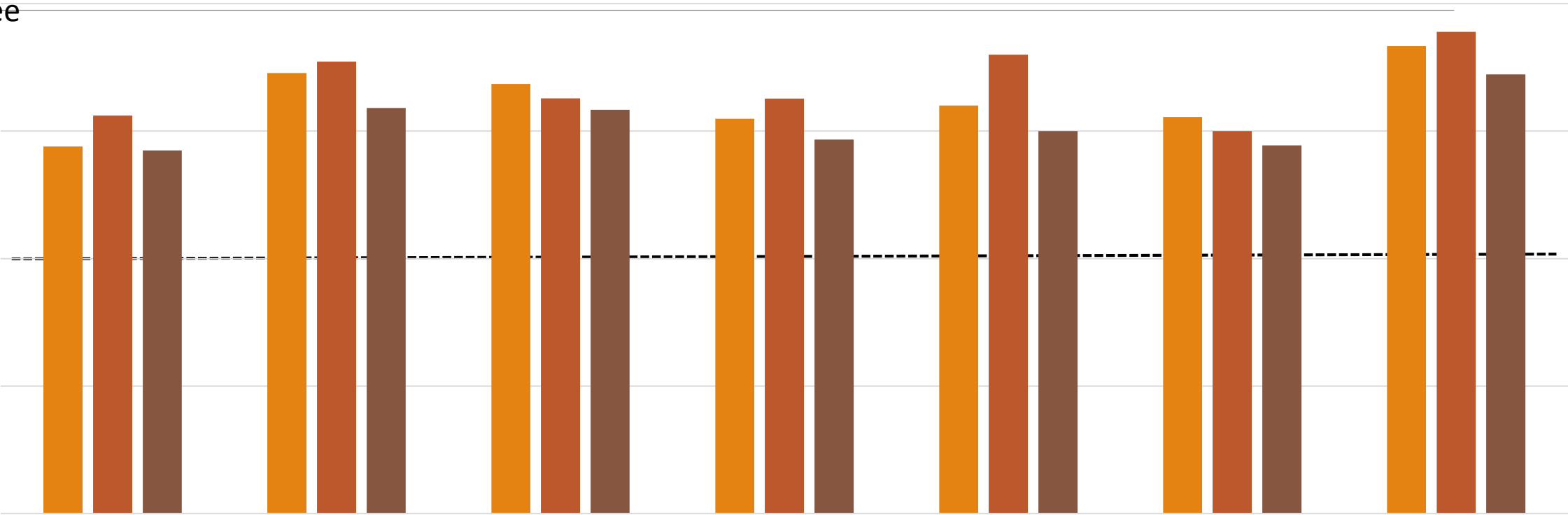
Dating

Online Dating

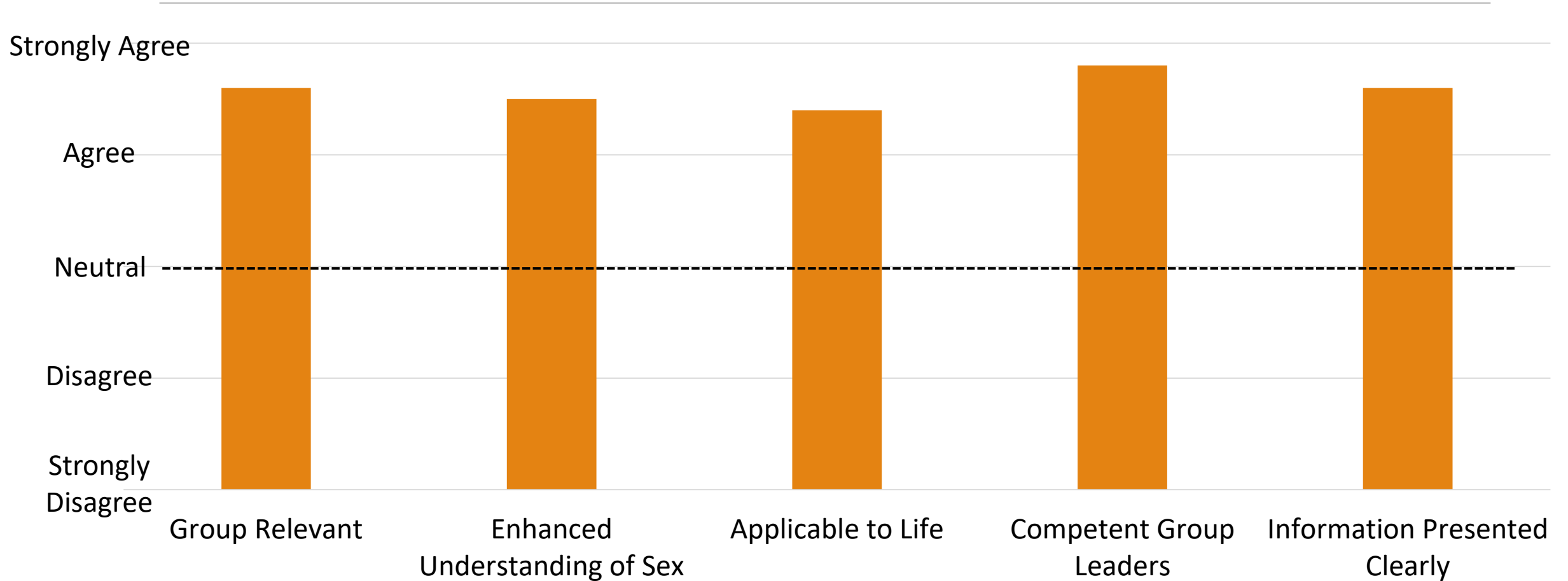
Topic Relevant

Learned Something

Want to Know More



RESULTS: OVERALL SATISFACTION



RESULTS: SUMMARY

☐ Things Learned:

- ☐ “Dangers and risks of online dating”
- ☐ “Don’t be afraid to be honest with your partners”
- ☐ “Gender and sexuality is fluid”
- ☐ “Imperfection in sexual activity”

☐ Most Enjoyed:

- ☐ “Role-Playing”
- ☐ “Hearing different perspectives” “meeting others on the spectrum”
- ☐ “Discussions”
- ☐ “Learning about sexual anatomy”

☐ Wanted More:

- ☐ Discussions of peer pressure
- ☐ Emotions in relationships (and break-ups)
- ☐ Follow-up group to continue peer support

KEY COMPONENTS

- Explicitness
- Use of visuals
- Peer component
- Inclusiveness

NEXT STEPS

- Examine data on changes in sexual knowledge
- Trial with more diverse populations (e.g., females)
- Adapt for IDD population

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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