The Birds and The Bees: A Pilot Study Exploring Sexual Health At The University of Minnesota Rochester

Faduma Ali, Cortney Kokkeler, Abdalla Modawi, Hannah Rydel, Dr. Jessie Barnett & Dr. Kristin Osiecki

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Introduction

Out of 52 institutions surveyed in Minnesota it was found that 50% have full health services, 10% have health services through a partnership, and 40% do not have formal health services for students (1). According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Sexuallly Transmited Illnesses (STIs) such as Gonorrhea, Chlamydia and Syphilis rates have increased by 62% (2). This means the need for sexual health is more prevalent now than ever before. It has been reported that over half of all sexually active college students have never been tested for an STI and in addition to this, over 20% do not know what is involved in an STI test (3). This is because students are not getting adequate resources to information pertaining to sexual health.

Figure 3: An inclusive photo of Condoms

References

1. Eisenberg, M.E., Lechner, K.E., Frerich, E.A. et al. J Community Health (2012) 37: 940. https://doi-org.ezp3.lib.umn.edu/10.1007/s10900-011-9536-6
2. STDs Continue to Rise in the U.S. Press Release. (2019, October 8). Retrieved November 25, 2019, from https://www.cdc.gov/nchhstp/newsroom/2019/2018-STD-surveillance-report-press-release.html.
3. Tolani, A., & Yen, S. (2009). College students' sexual health: behaviors, STD testing and prevention, and Pap smear knowledge. Contraception, 80(2), 226.
4. 2019, July. Condoms. New York City, New York.

Methods

- **Preliminary Work**
  - Consent Form
  - Students, Staff, Faculty and Alumnae
- **Interviews**
  - 8 Interviews
  - 20-40 Minute Interviews
- **Qualitative Review**
  - Transcribed & Coded or Live Coded
  - Notable Codes: Education, Culture, Location & Access

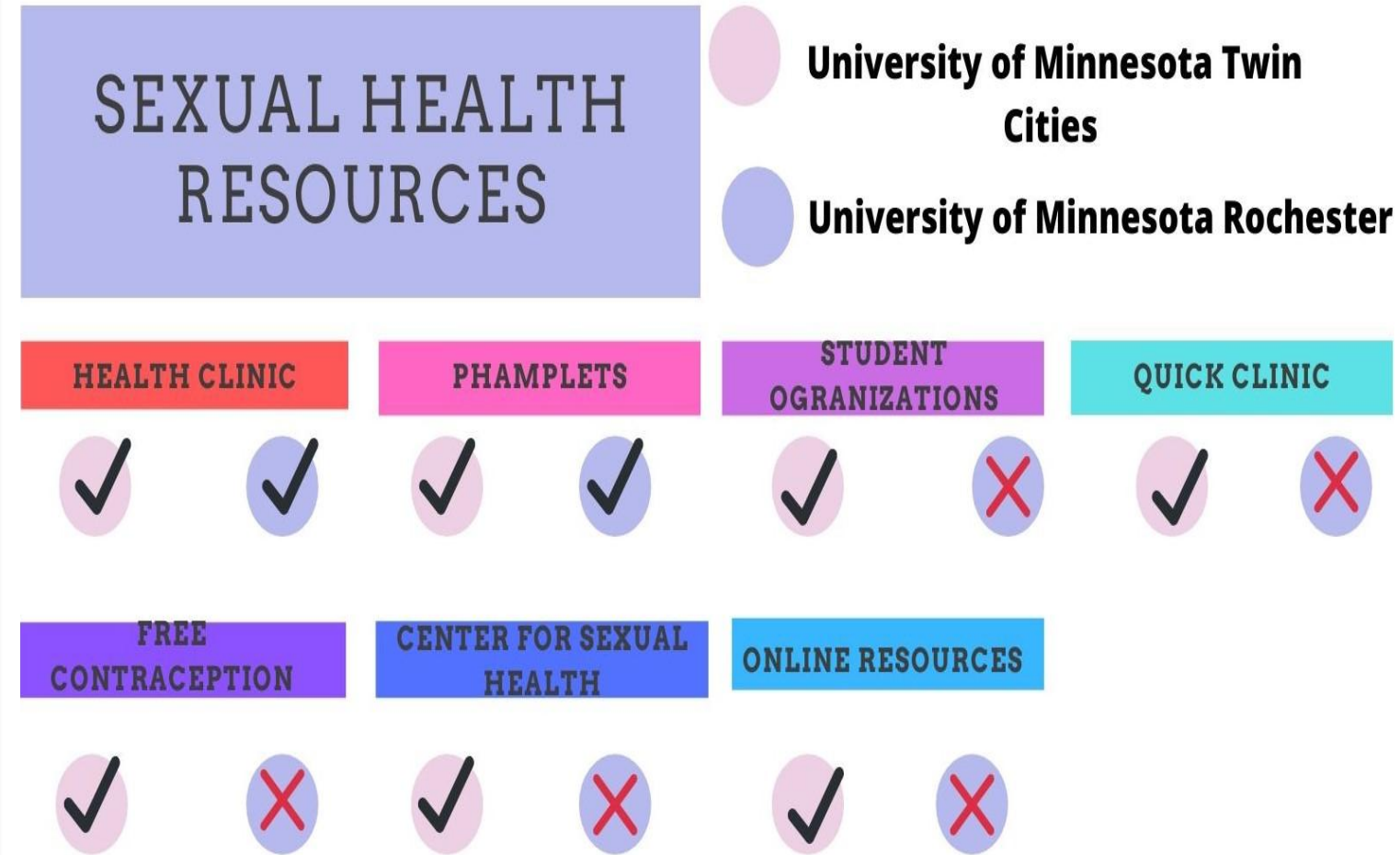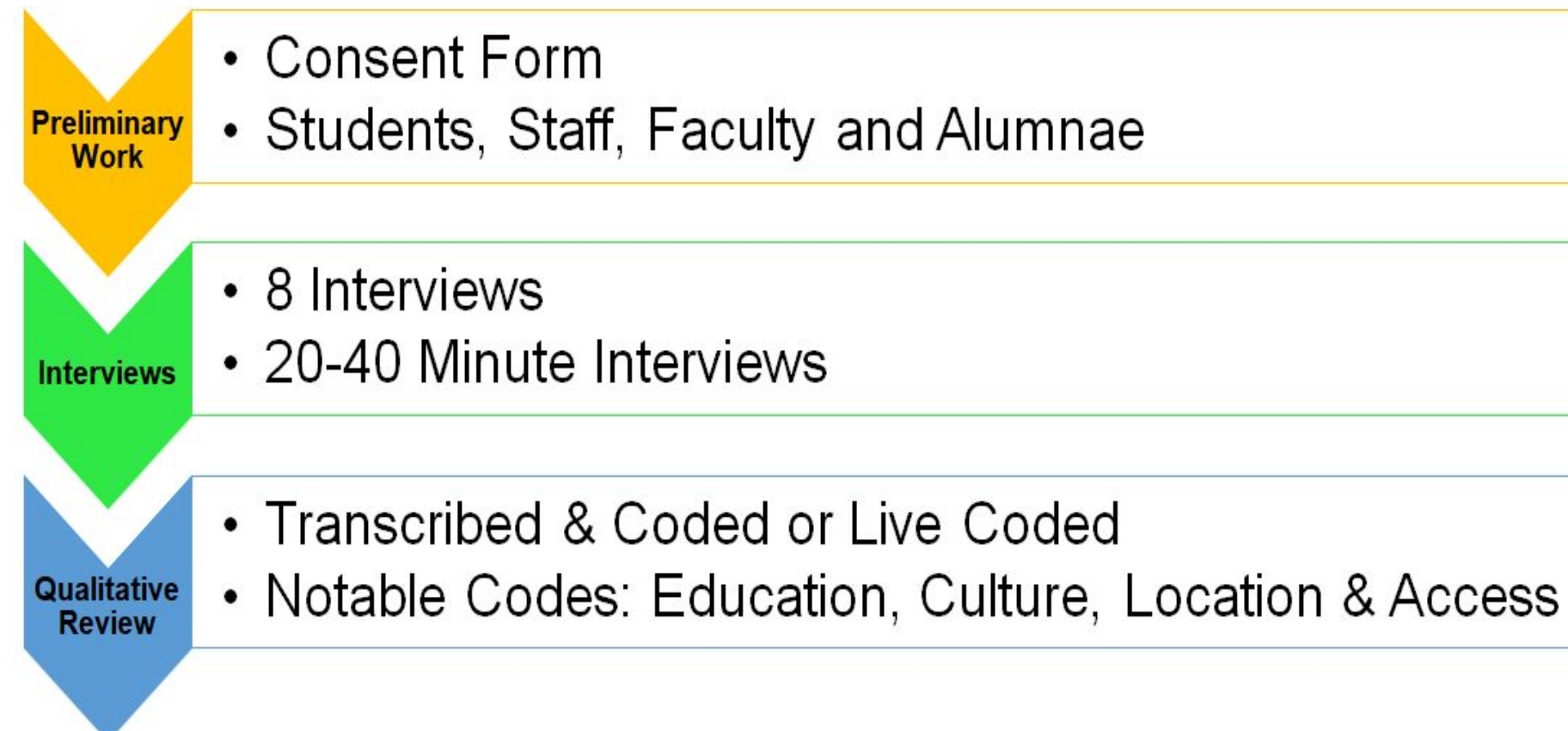
Figure 2: A infographic of sexual health resources found between the University of Minnesota Twin Cities and the University of Minnesota Rochester

Research Objective: To explore sexual health resources available to UMR students regarding sexual health

Wellbeing
"Women face a lot shame & backlash if society believes them to have loose morals. That shame can really damage the way women see themselves"- Karen S.

Self-Awareness
"It's a part of being a responsible adult: knowing what you're working with. How things can go wrong and how they can go right even though that may be considered wrong for most students"- Marco P.

Barriers
"We have to leverage the resources that we do have, taking advantage of Planned Parenthood and also what we have on campus, making sure students are aware is possibly one of the best things that we can actually have"- Marco P.

Need
"Students can't fight or protect themselves from STIs & STDs if they don't know what signs to look for"- Karen S.

Diversity
"Sexual education for heterosexual individuals is different from sex ed for LGBQ individuals which is different from sex ed for transgendered and non-binary individuals"- Terry W.
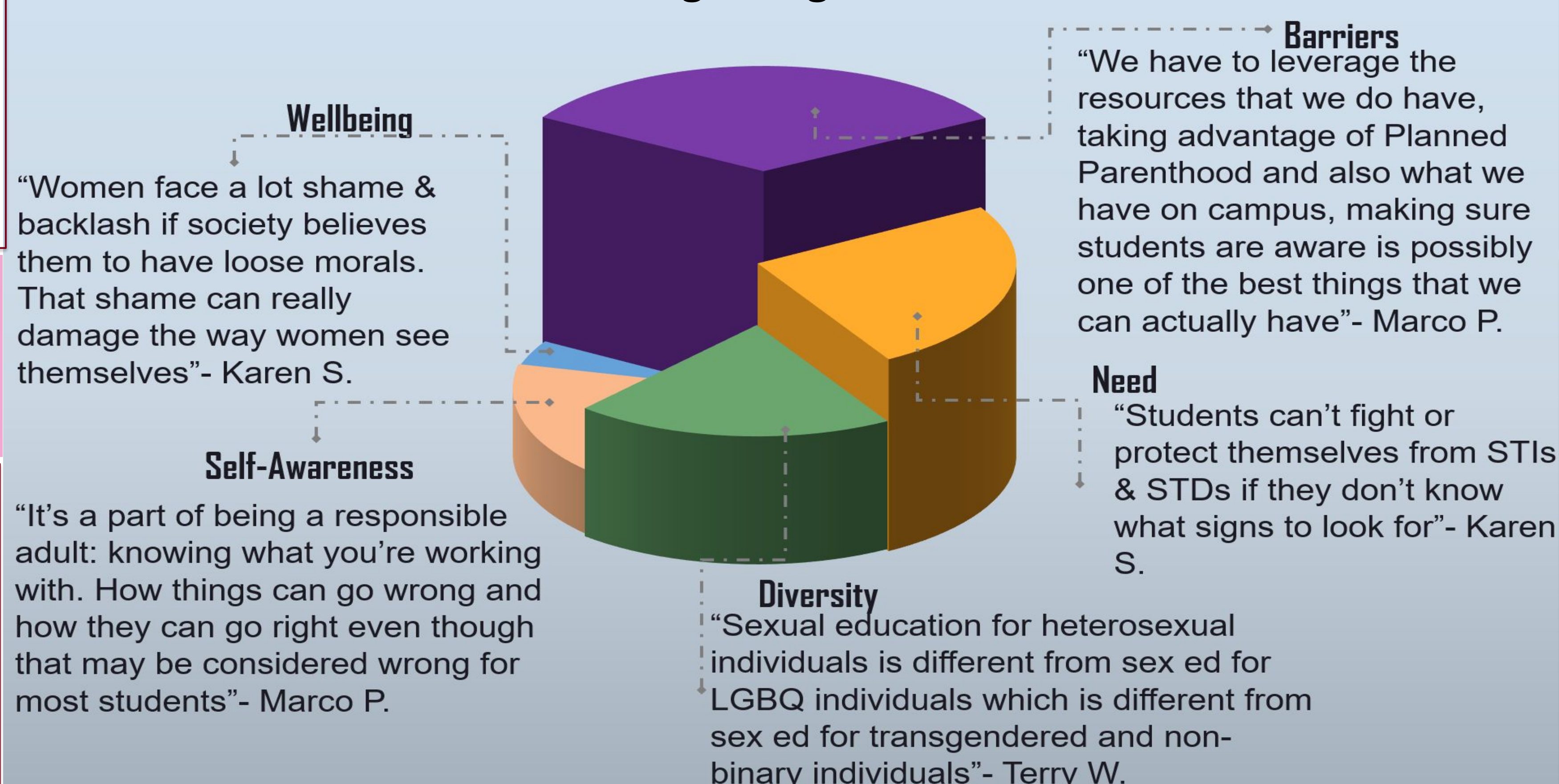
Figure 1: Diagram representing the 5 emerging themes. The size of each section represents how we perceive the needs of the UMR student community.

Discussion

➢ Narrowed down research to 5 major themes demonstrated in findings
➢ The data suggests a desire for a large conversation about sexual health at University of Minnesota Rochester (UMR)
  ○ An environment of shame around sexual health is being fostered
  ○ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered,+ (LGBT+) community feels unwelcome
➢ Our research suggests there isn't enough being done to promote and educate the UMR student population
  ○ Off-campus sexual health resources were explored more
  ○ Alumnae participants noted a backward movement in providing students with resources

Conclusion

Our findings conclude that there is a need for health policy implementation of safe sexual resources and counseling at UMR. UMR as a campus receives less student support than the University of Minnesota Twin Cities because of our small size and relatively new infrastructure as a University. Ultimately, it is important to take the next steps in creating a viable sexual health student support system. Unfortunately our research was limited by our small sample size which cannot compare to greater perspectives from a larger sample size. In the future we would like to address this limitation as well as reevaluate our themes to further define UMR.