

Creating a Program for Improving Romantic Relationship & Sexual Health Knowledge for Adults with Disabilities in Michigan

Rebecca Kammes, PhD

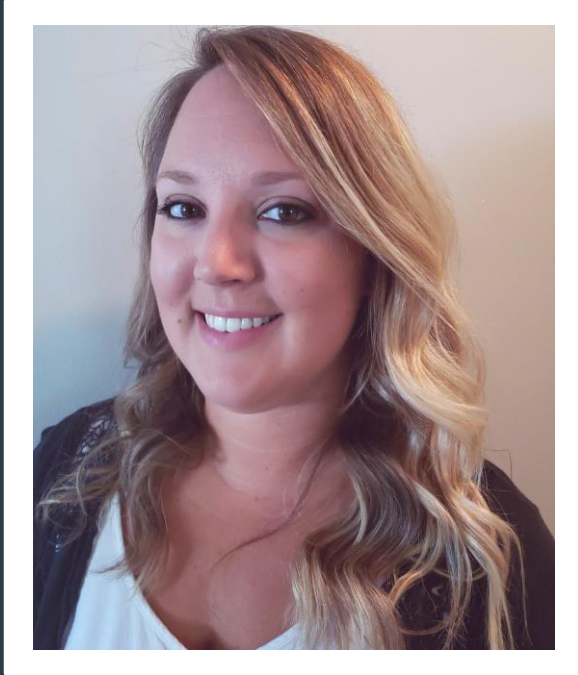
Maria Peak, Director of ASPPIRE of Mid-Michigan

ESC 2019 Conference

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Introductions

Rebecca Kammes



Maria Peak



Why is Sexuality & Romantic Relationship Education Important?

Intimate relationships and
sexuality expression is a healthy
component of adult life (Beckes & Coan,
2011; Moos, 2003; Robles, 2014)

Adults with IDD are often
restricted from having intimate
relationship experiences
(Black & Kammes, 2019; English, Tickle & dasNair, 2018)

Sex education often “skips”
relationships, leaving this issue up
to parents, caregivers, staff, and
siblings to teach (Foley, 2012)

High rates of abuse/exploitation
within the population, and
inappropriate relationships in
adult programs (Hollomotz & The Speakup
Committee, 2008; Stavis, 1991; Ward, Bosek & Trimble, 2010;
Yacoub & Hall, 2008)

Concern that adults with IDD
are being denied the right to
experience romantic
relationships and sexuality
expression (Richards, Miodrag, & Watson, 2006)

So What Did We Do About It?



COMMUNITY-BASED
PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH
PROJECT



CURRICULUM
DEVELOPMENT

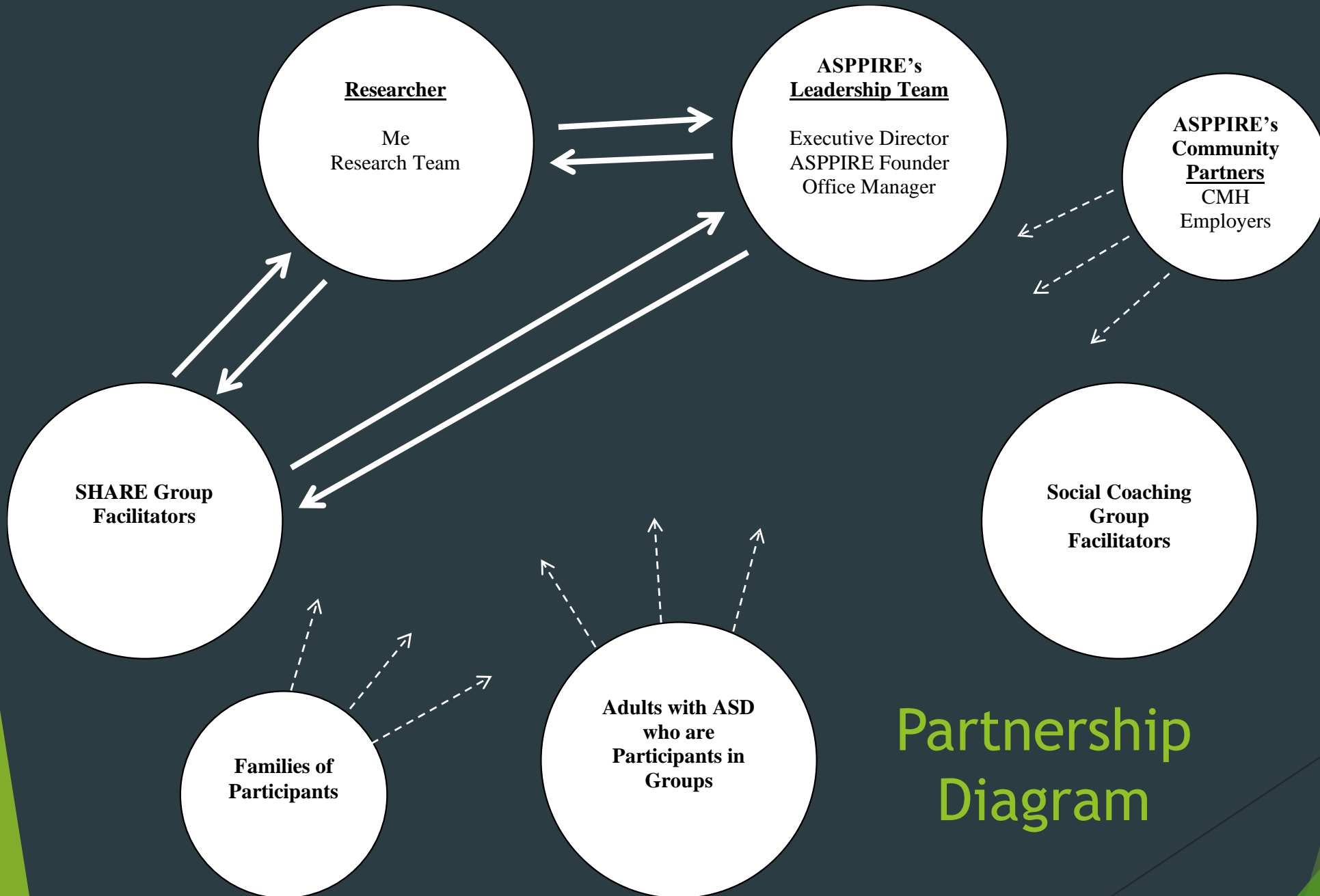


PROGRAM EVALUATION

Overview of the SHARE Program

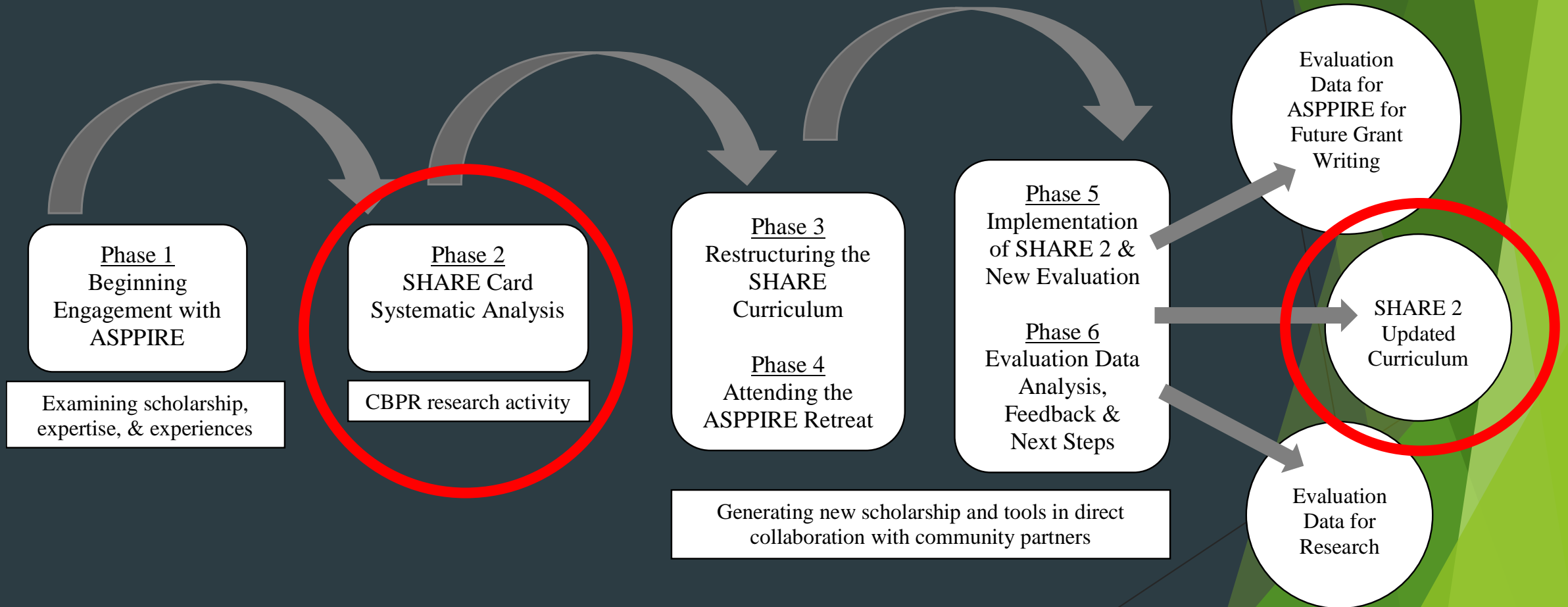
- ▶ ASPPIRE is a program in Mid-Michigan for adults with disabilities aimed at issues related to social coaching (including employment skills and sex ed)
- ▶ All participants are 18 and older and have a mild/moderate ID
- ▶ Majority of participants have ASD
- ▶ Small groups= more individualized
- ▶ Have a more self-determination structure to groups
- ▶ Sexual Health and Relationship Education (SHARE)
- ▶ 12-week program
- ▶ Curriculum & materials developed by ASPPIRE staff based on previous experience teaching sex ed in special education classes



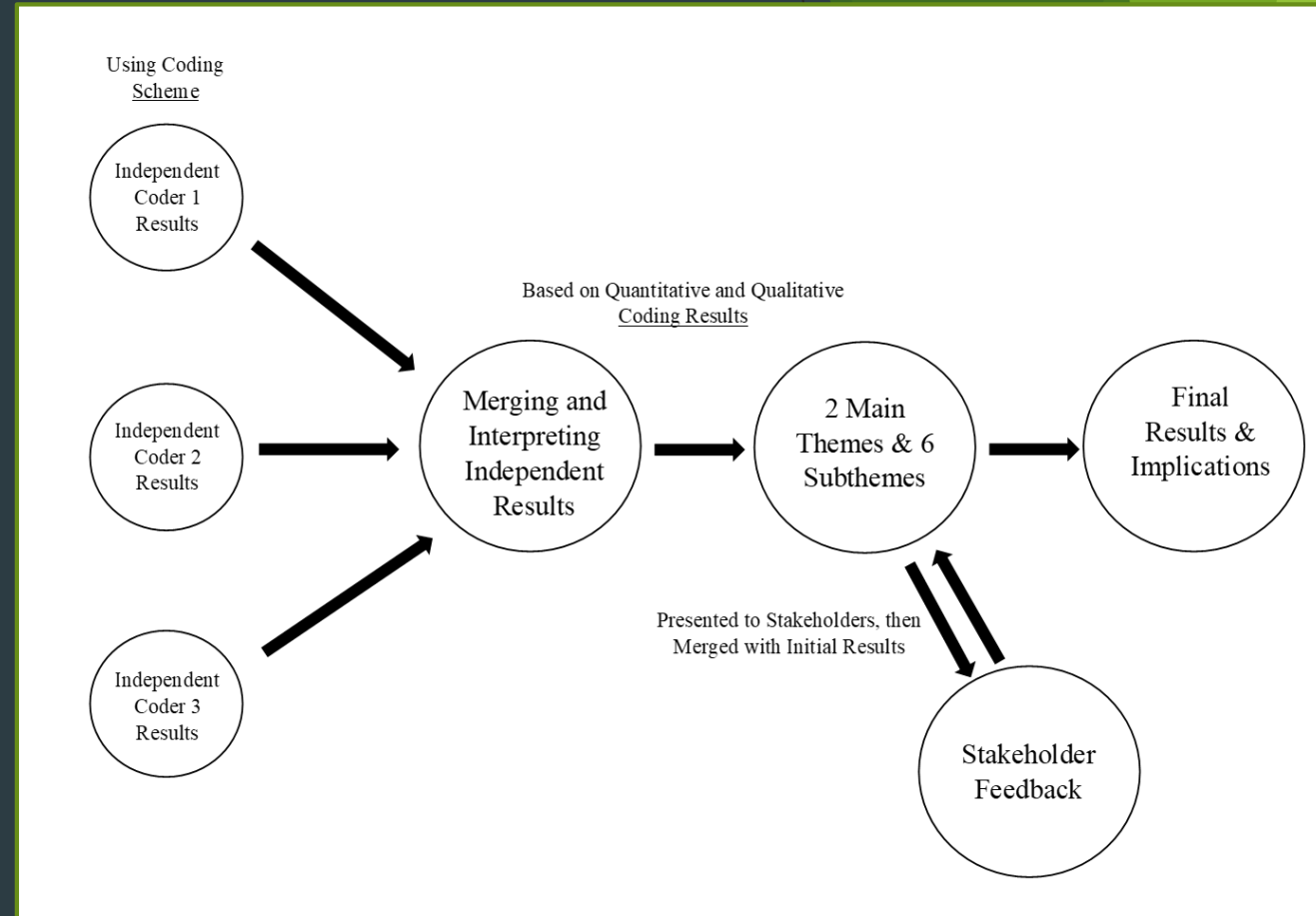
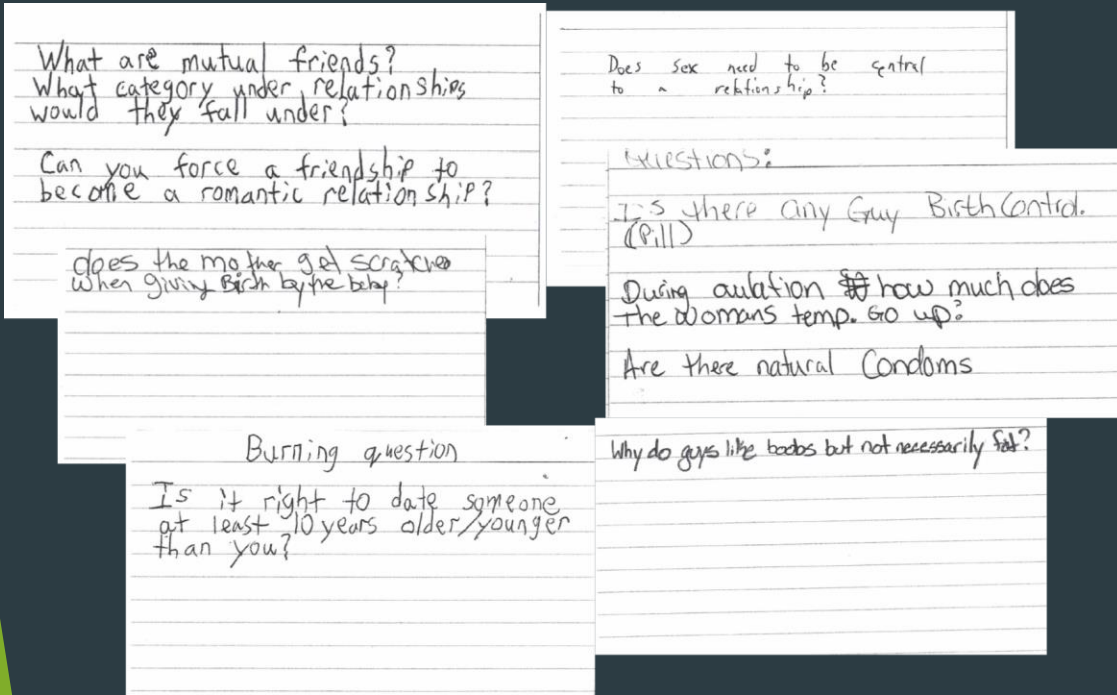


Partnership Diagram

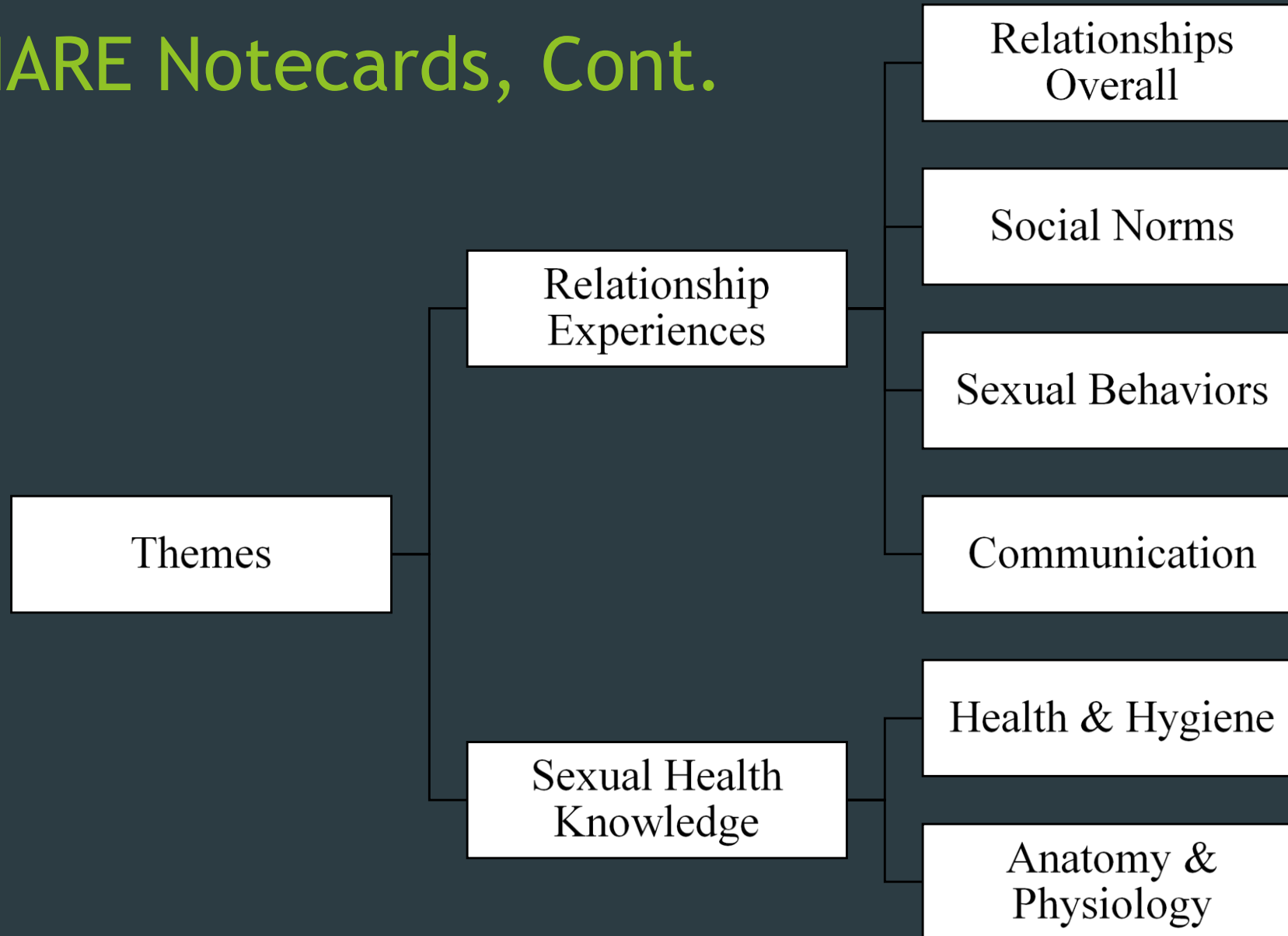
Multi-Phase Project



SHARE Notecards



SHARE Notecards, Cont.



Decision to Split up SHARE

01

Sexual Health Education

- Anatomy & Physiology
- Health & Hygiene
- STI & Other Diseases
- Safe Sexual Practices

02

Intimate Relationships and Sexuality Expression

- Finding Potential Partners
- Long-Term & Short-Term Relationships
- Sexuality Expression
- Safety Within Relationships

03

Dating & Relationships in the Real World

- Online Dating
- Community Outings
- Putting Knowledge into Practice
- Discussions of Practical Knowledge & Experience

SHARE Curricula

SHARE 1

1. Intro to group
2. Anatomy & reproductive systems
3. Sexual life cycle*
4. Sexual feelings
5. Sex
6. Sexual health*
7. Sexual behavior
8. Exploring your sexuality
9. Final wrap-up

*MSU nursing students as potential guest speakers

SHARE 2

1. Types of relationships
2. Starting a relationship
3. Sexual orientation & gender identity
4. Personal values & consent
5. Dating: Part I
6. Dating: Part II
7. Dating: Part III
8. Long-term relationships: Part I
9. Long-term relationships: Part II
10. Relationship problems: Part I
11. Relationships problems: Part II
12. Final wrap-up

SHARE 2 Outcomes: What We Learned

Curriculum Content

- ▶ Need more on starting a relationship
- ▶ Sexual orientation and gender identity as an important topic that needs to be explored further for participants
- ▶ Participants wanting to share more openly about disclosing disability within a relationship
- ▶ Talking about abuse and laws is difficult, need to find a more interactive way

Group Format & Structure

- ▶ Importance of role plays and providing examples
- ▶ Pair & Share vs. Group Discussions
- ▶ Engaging activities
- ▶ Concerns with evaluation tools used

Next Steps



- ❑ Continue to refine the SHARE curriculum
- ❑ Run SHARE 3 pilot
- ❑ SHARE-PC