

How Does Social Desirability Affect Sexual Preferences

STUDENT: NICOLE HAFNER
FACULTY: DR. JOSHUA DUNTLEY

Previous Study

- ◉ We replicated a study done by Alexander and Fisher (2003).
 - They questioned sex differences in preferences for partner variety.



Alexander & Fisher (2003)

- Argued that social pressures lead men to exaggerate their sexual conquests and women to be ashamed of their sexual behavior, leading both to lie about their true desires.

Alexander & Fisher's Research

- Participants completed a survey of desire for partner variety in a bogus pipeline condition.
 - while being observed by a female professor and
 - while connected to a polygraph machine by a female professor

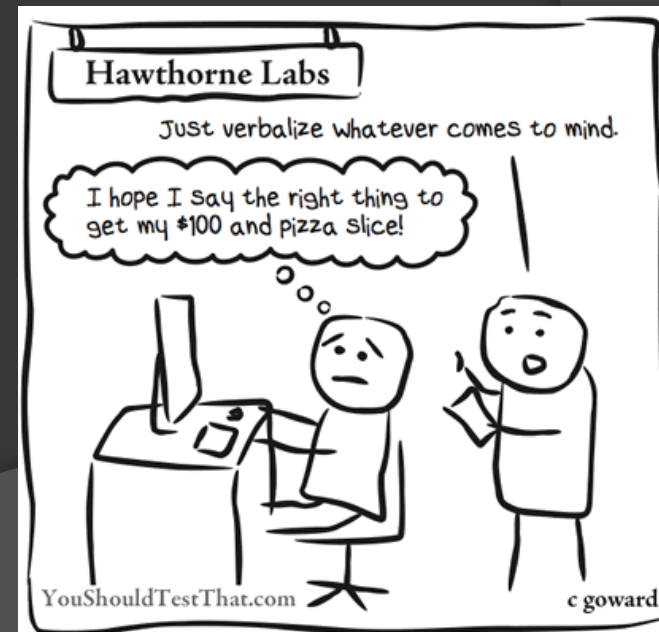


Alexander & Fisher's Findings & Conclusions

- The researchers found a smaller sex difference in preferred number of sex partners in these conditions than was obtained in previous anonymous surveys.
- They concluded that participants in previous research lied and that their participants were telling the truth.

Other Explanations

- Were the answers that the participants gave in the polygraph/observation conditions really more truthful?
- Or were participants providing more socially desirable responses because they knew they were being observed?



Other Explanations

- Perceived social desirability can have a large impact on sexuality research involving self-reports (Crutzen & Goritz, 2010; Meston, Heiman, Trapnell, & Paulhus, 1998).



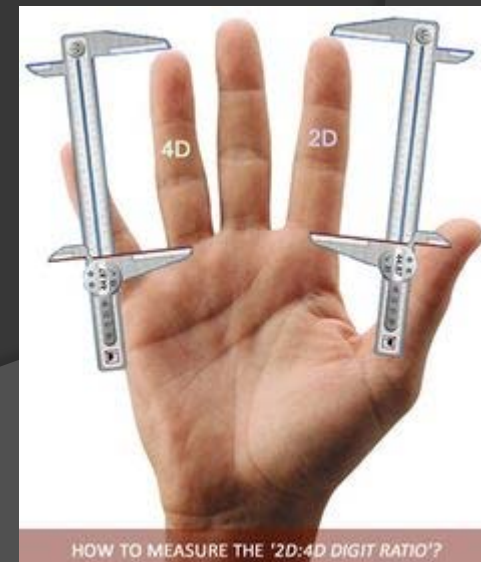
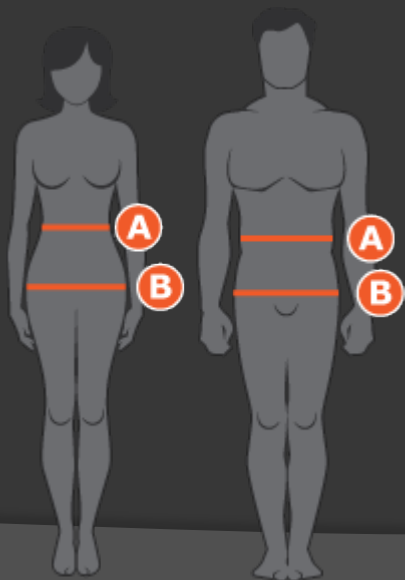
Current research - Hypotheses

- Participants desire for partner variety will vary depending on whether they are being observed.



Current research - Hypotheses

- ◉ Individual difference factors could contribute participant's desire for partner variety.
 - For example, women with low WHR, and High T men have greater desire for partner variety (Gomula, Nowak-Szczepanska, & Danel, 2014; Varella, Valentova, Pereira, & Bussab, 2014)



The Lab



Research Methods

- Control group: completed the survey while connected to a polygraph with an observer monitoring from the other side of the room.
- Participants were told that the honesty of their responses was not monitored individually; experimenter not notified of dishonest responses.



Research Methods: Experimental Group

- Experimental Group:
Completed the survey while connected to a polygraph with an observer monitoring the polygraph result.
- Participants were told that experimenter is alerted of any dishonest answers.



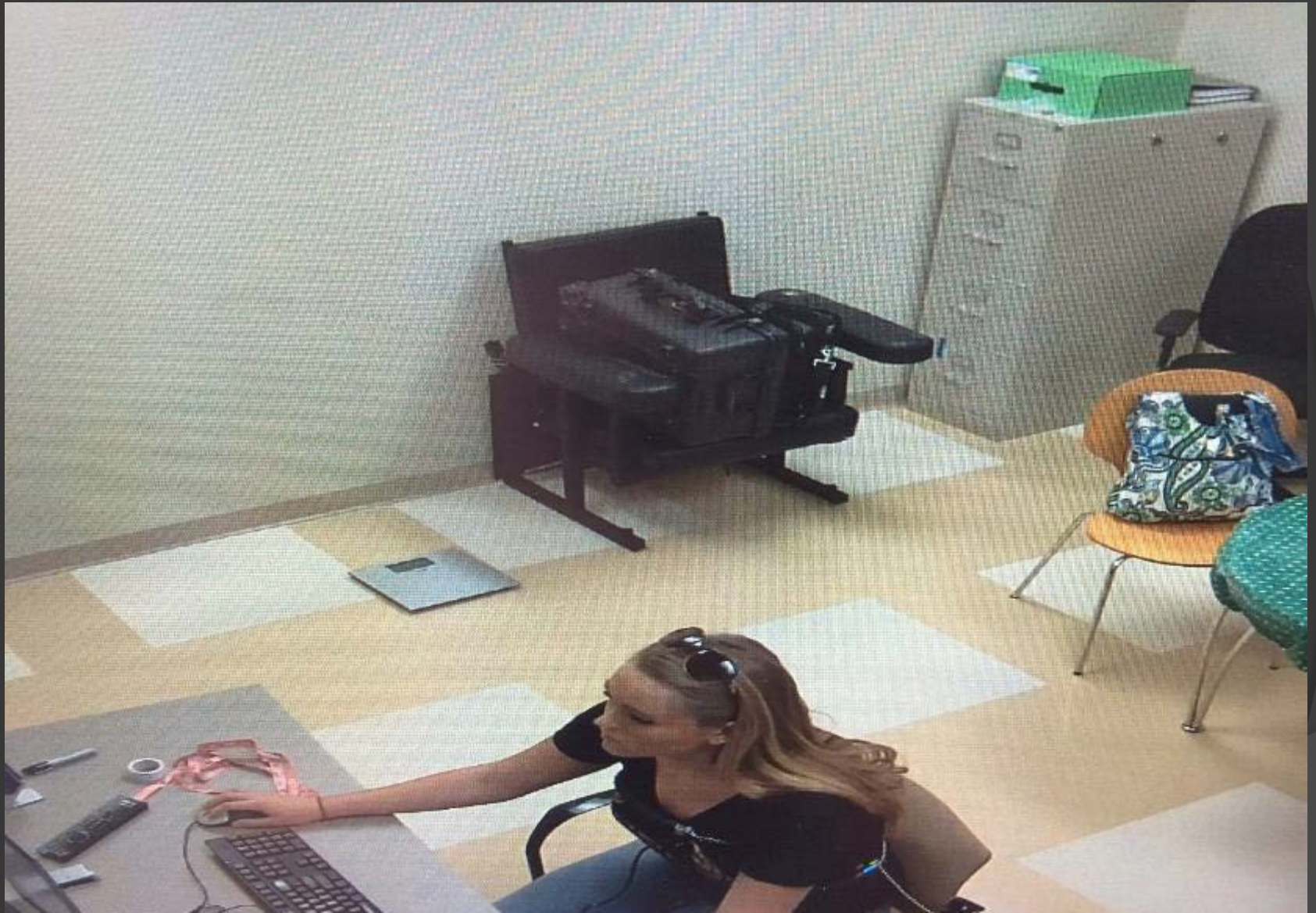
Research Methods

- ⦿ Participants were randomly assigned to an observation or non observation condition for the completion of the survey by flipping a coin.









Research Methods

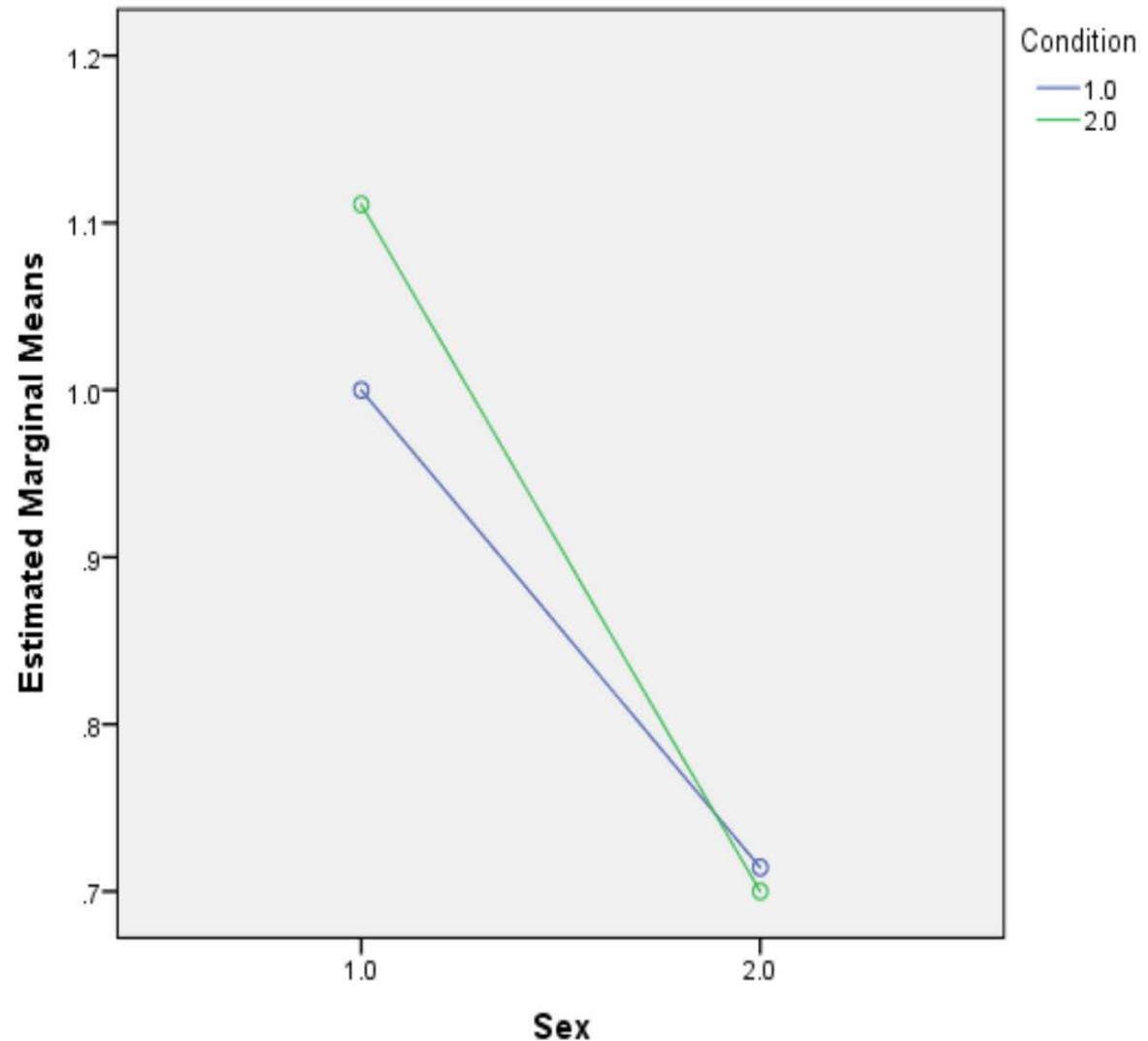
- After completing the survey, all participants were measured for height, weight, WHR, and 2D:4D.
- Participants were debriefed.

Results

- ① We found significant sex differences in desire for partner variety (# of sex partners).
- ① Ideally, how many different people would you like to have sex with in the next...

Results : 24 Hours

Estimated Marginal Means of Ideally, how many different sex partners would you like to have in the next 24 hours?



SEX

1= Male

2= Female

CONDITION

1=Observed

2=Not Observed

Interaction: N.S.

Sex Difference

$p=.027$

Condition Difference

-N.S., $p=.752$

Results: One week

SEX
1= Male
2= Female

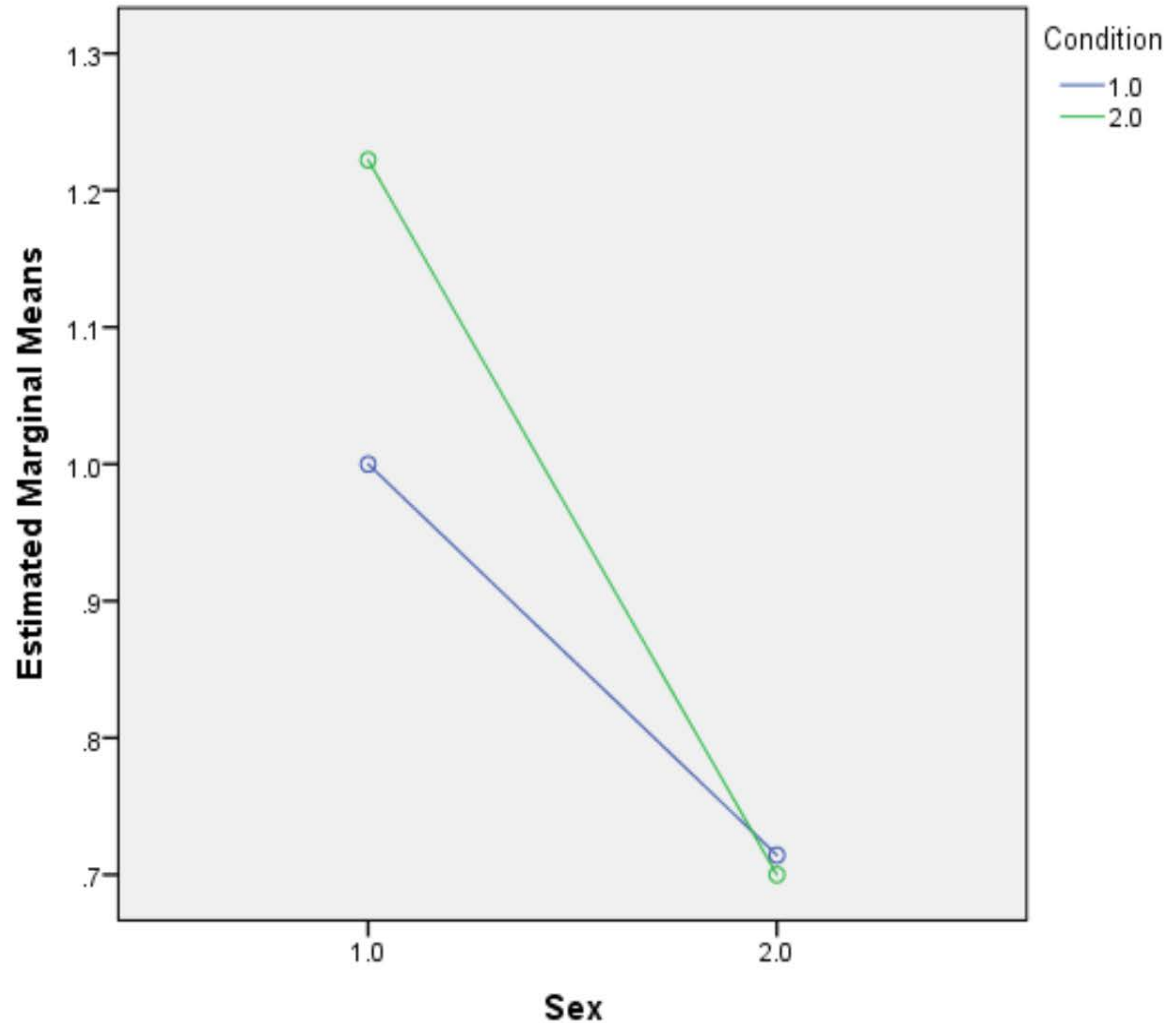
1 CONDITION
1= Observed
2= Not Observed

Interaction= N.S.

Sex Difference
 $p=.029$

Condition Difference
N.S., $p=.562$

Estimated Marginal Means of Ideally, how many different sex partners would you like to have in the next week?



Results: One Month

SEX

1= Male

2= Female

CONDITION

1=Observed

2= Not Observed

Interaction= N.S.

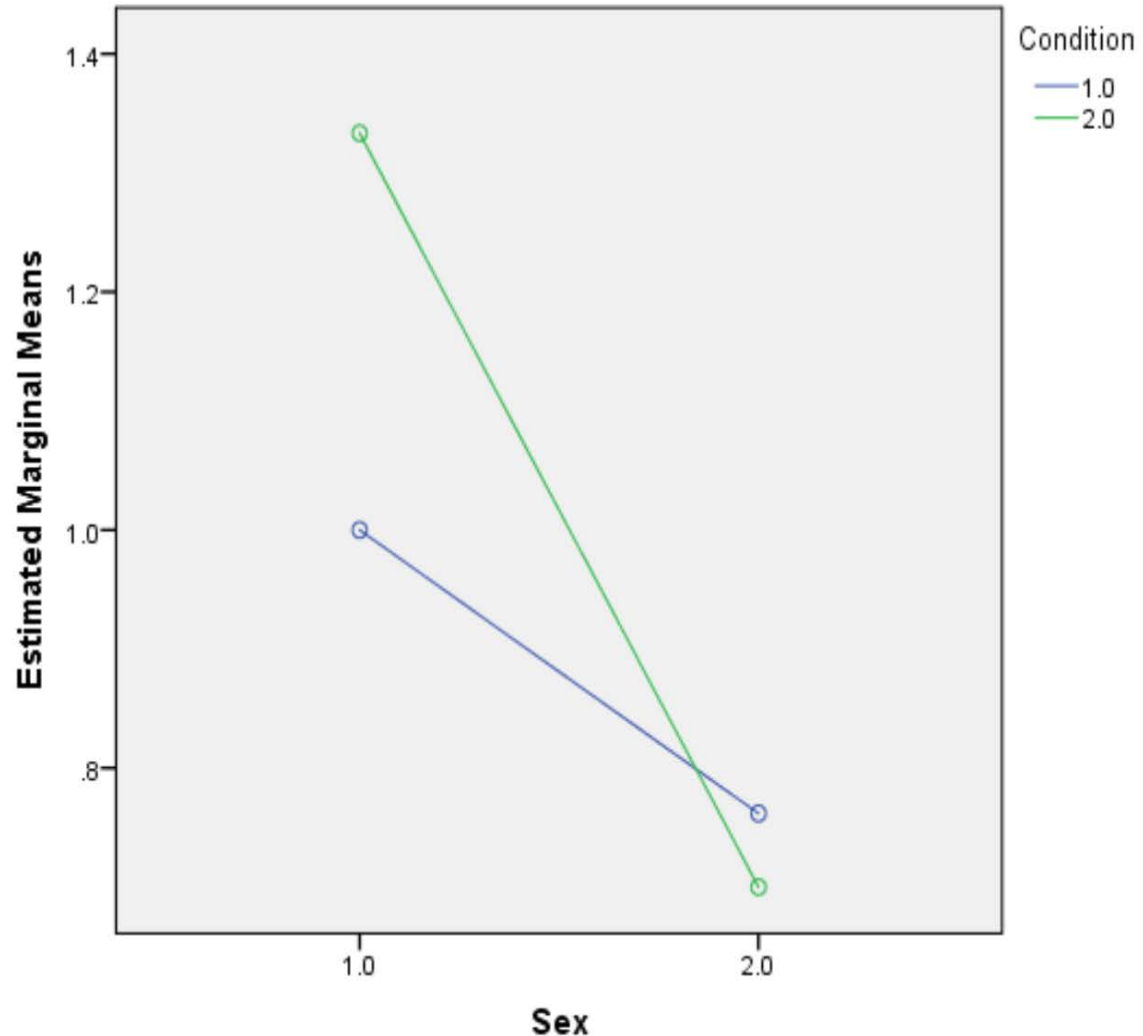
Sex Difference

$p=.045$

Condition Difference

-N.S., $p= .522$

Estimated Marginal Means of Ideally, how many different sex partners would you like to have in the next month?



Results: 6 Months

SEX

1= Male

2= Female

CONDITION

1=Observed

2= Not Observed

Interaction= N.S.

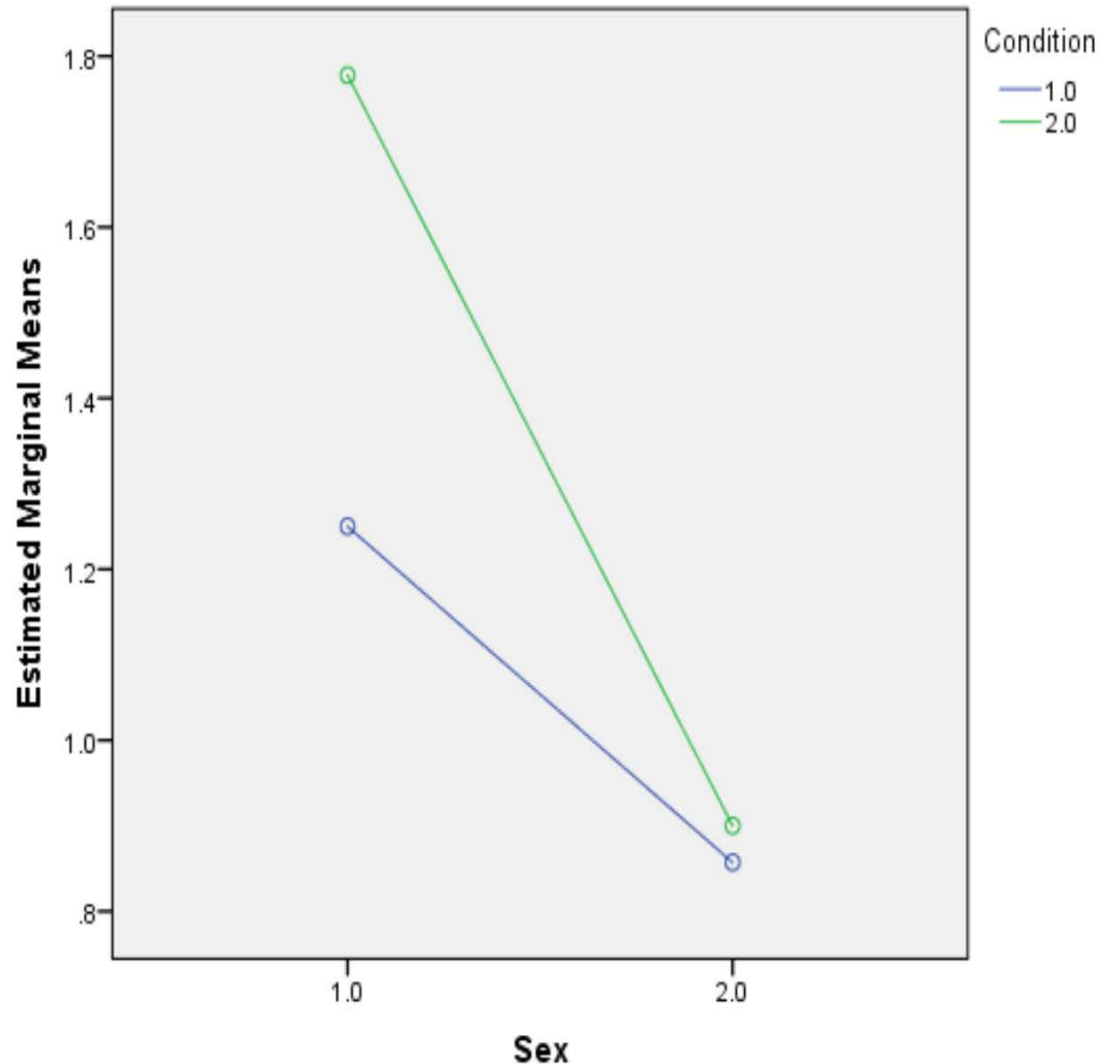
Sex Difference

$p=.039$

Condition Difference

-N.S., $p=.343$

Estimated Marginal Means of Ideally, how many different sex partners would you like to have in the next 6 months?



Results: One Year

SEX

1= Male

2= Female

CONDITION

1=Observed

2= Not Observed

Interaction= N.S.

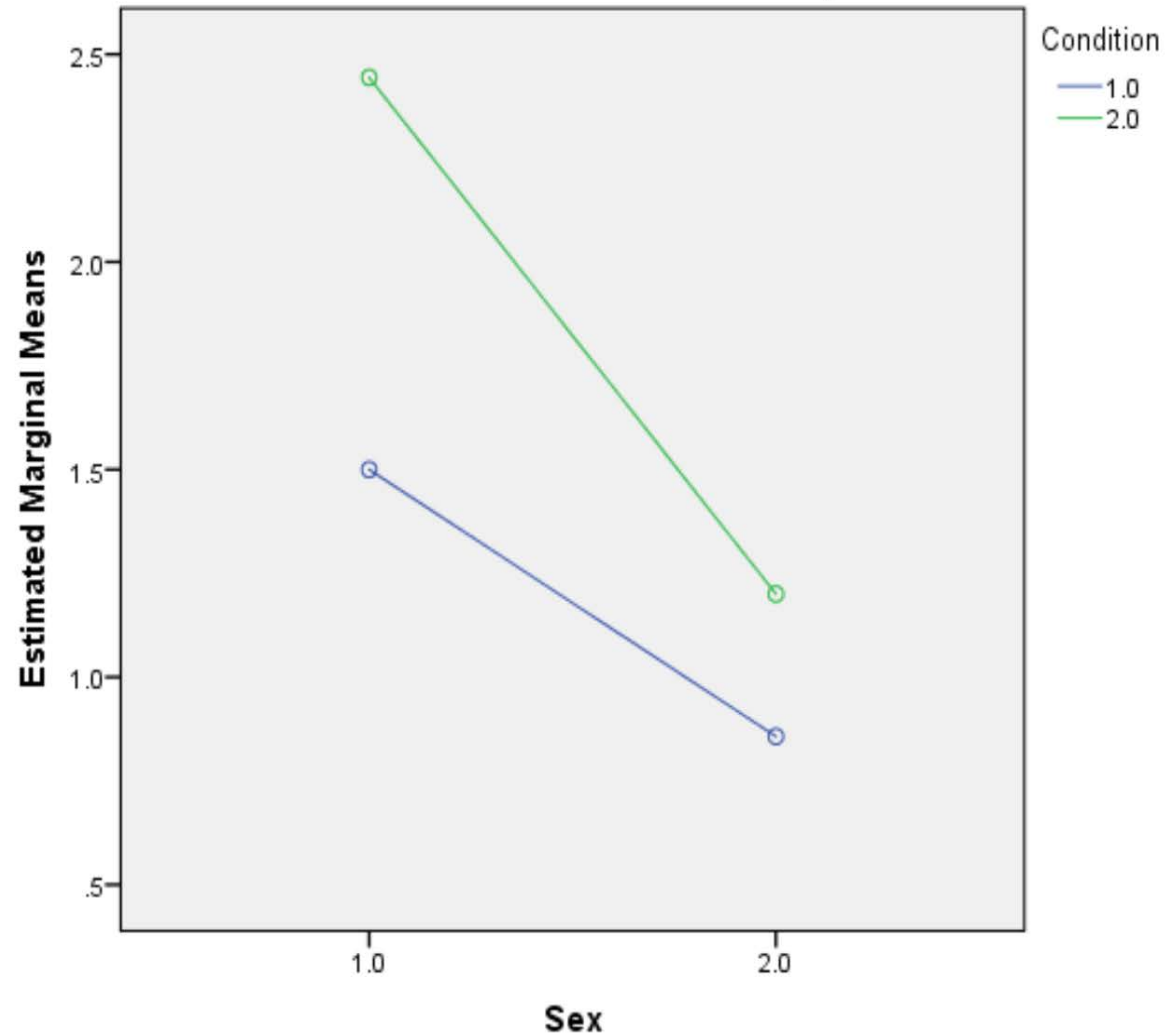
Sex Difference

-N.S. $p=.124$

Condition Difference

-N.S., $p=.290$

Estimated Marginal Means of Ideally, how many different sex partners would you like to have in the next year?



Results: 5 Years

SEX

1= Male

2= Female

CONDITION

1= Observed

2= Not Observed

Interaction= N.S.

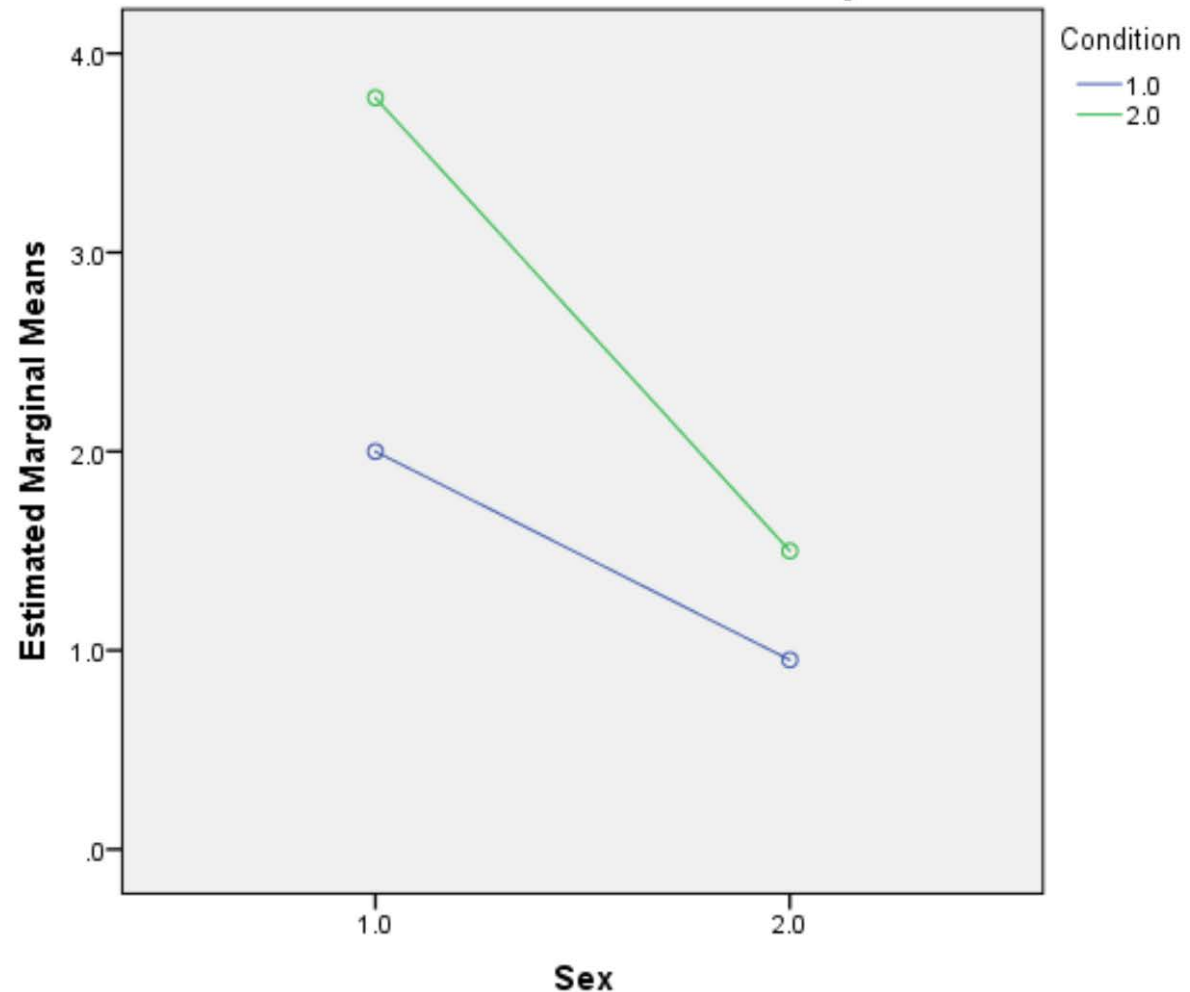
Sex Difference

$p=.031$

Condition Difference

-N.S., $p=.125$

Estimated Marginal Means of Ideally, how many different sex partners would you like to have in the next 5 years?



Results: 10 Years

SEX

1= Male

2= Female

CONDITION

1= Observed

2= Not Observed

Interaction= N.S.

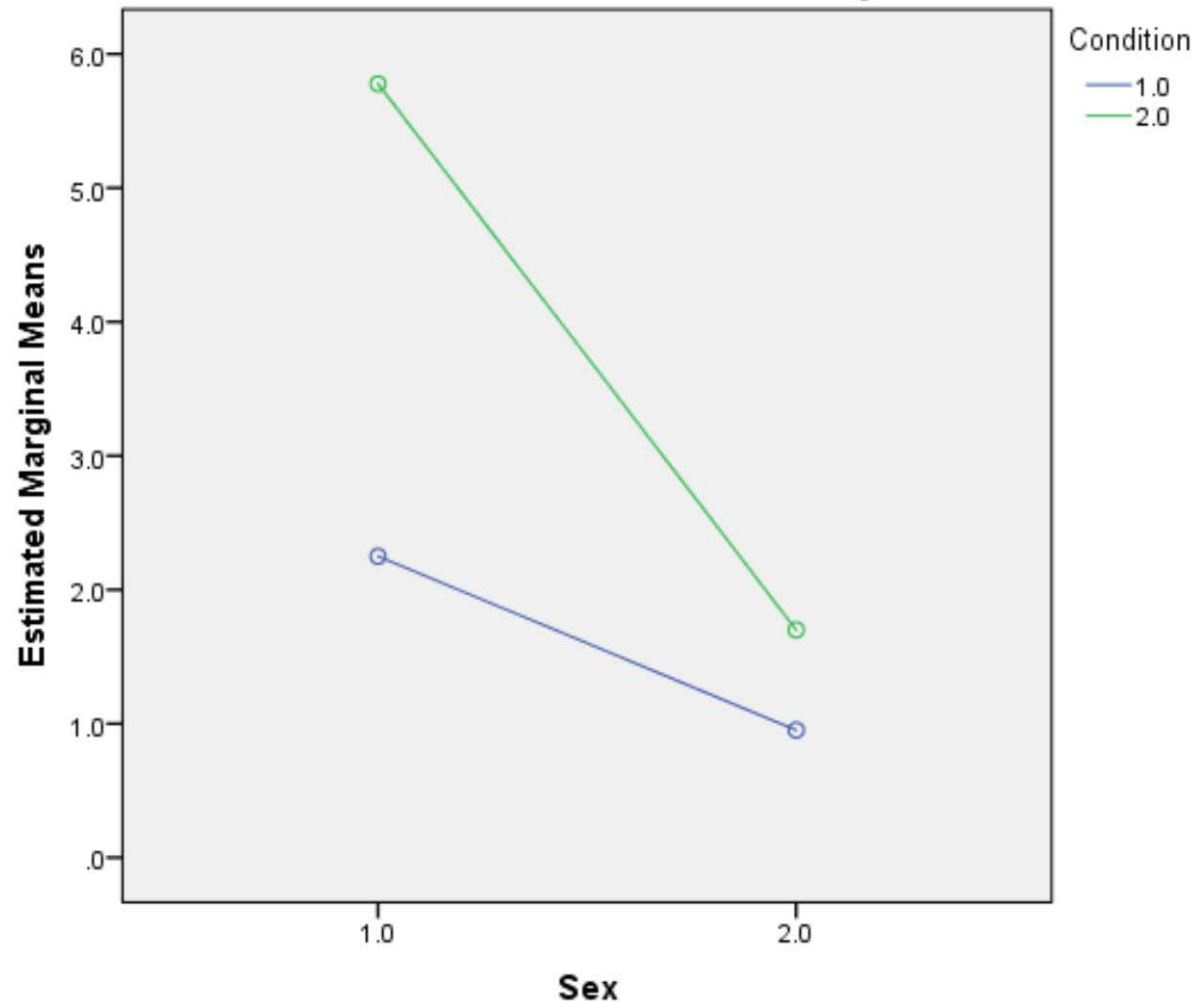
Sex Difference

$p=.024$

Condition Difference

-N.S., $p=.069$

Estimated Marginal Means of Ideally, how many different sex partners would you like to have in the next 10 years?



Results: 20 Years

SEX

1= Male

2= Female

CONDITION

1= Observed

2= Not Observed

Interaction= N.S.

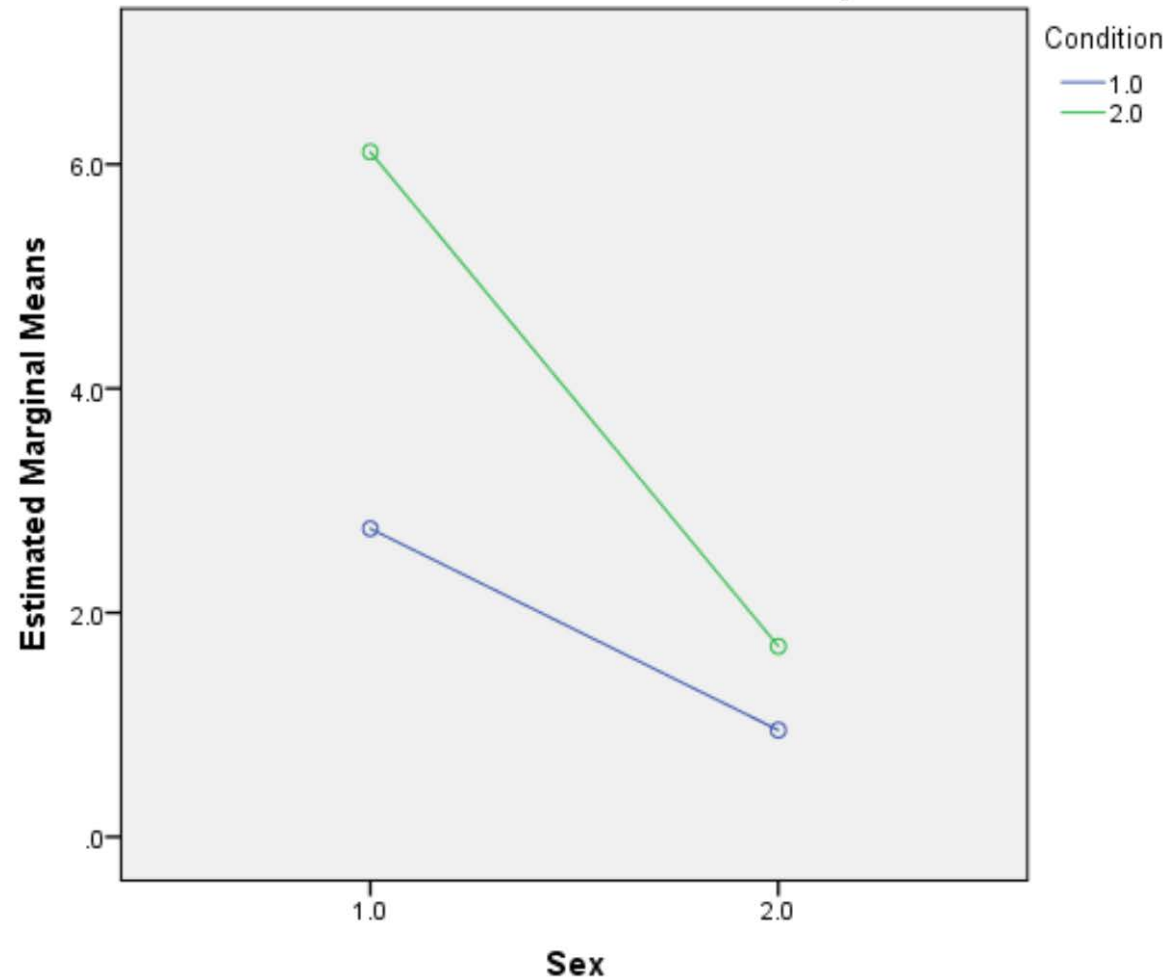
Sex Difference

$p=.009$

Condition Difference

-N.S., $p=.077$

Estimated Marginal Means of Ideally, how many different sex partners would you like to have in the next 20 years?



Results: Rest of your Life

SEX

1= Male

2= Female

CONDITION

1= Observed

2= Not Observed

Interaction= N.S.

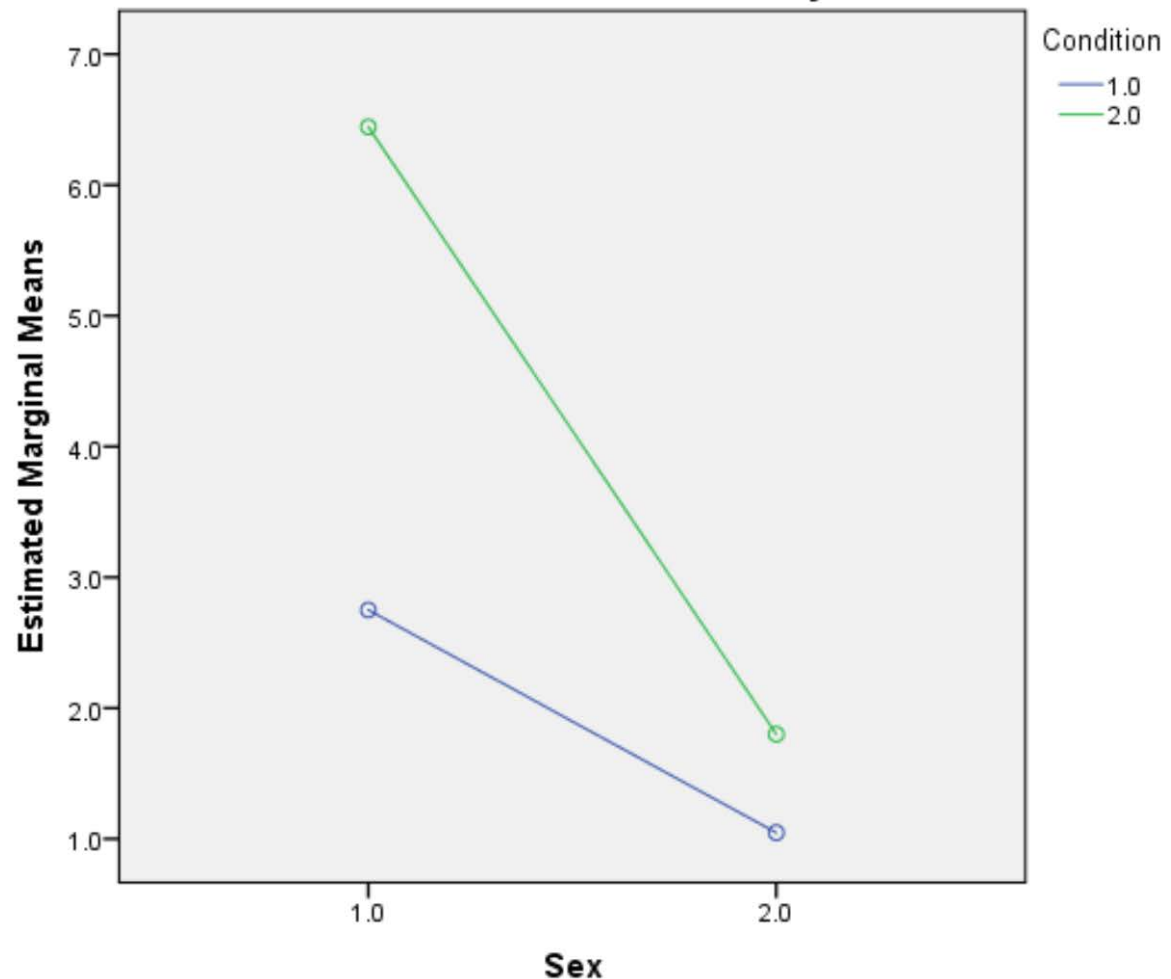
Sex Difference

$p=.016$

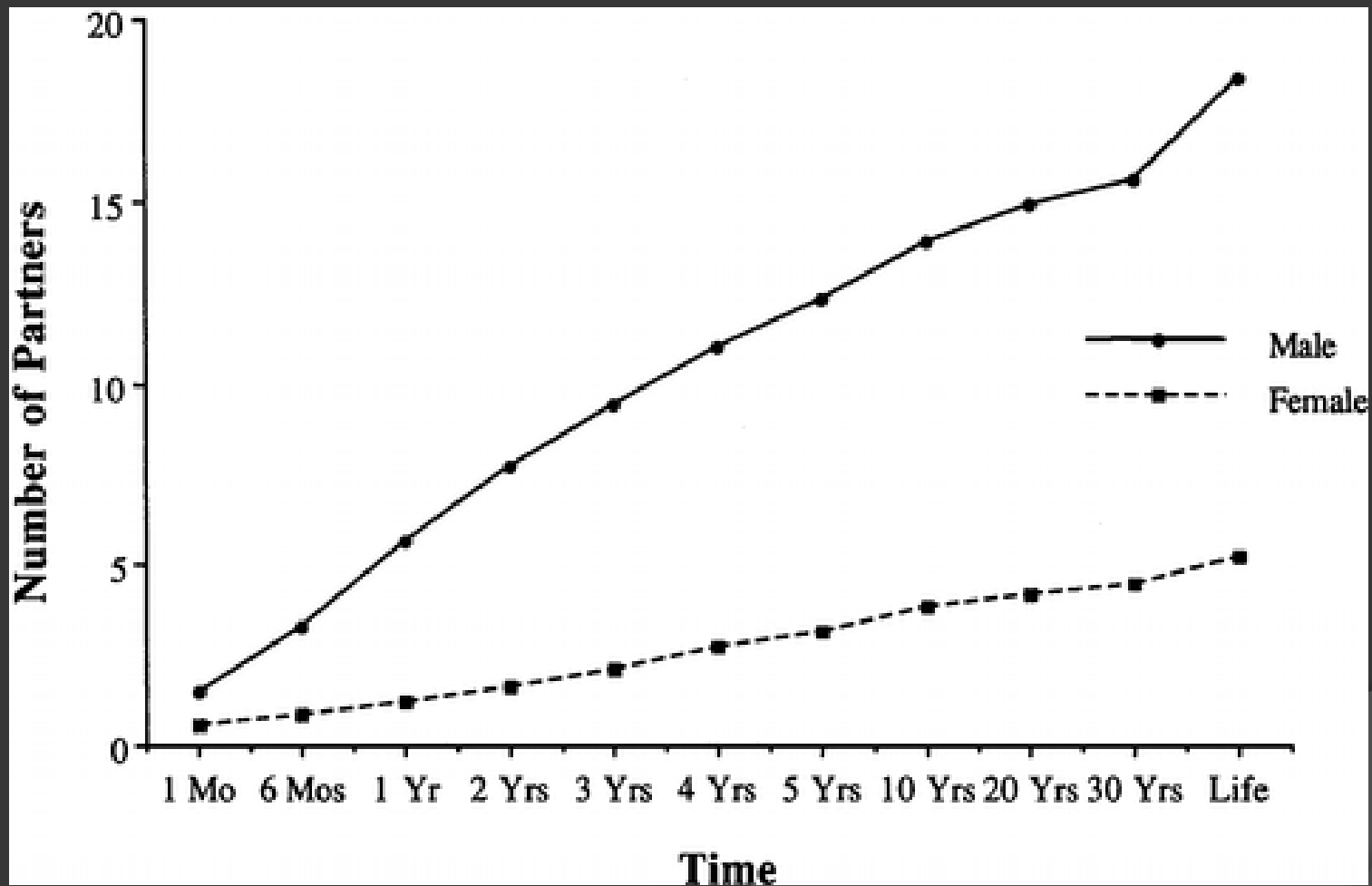
Condition Difference

-N.S., $p= .085$

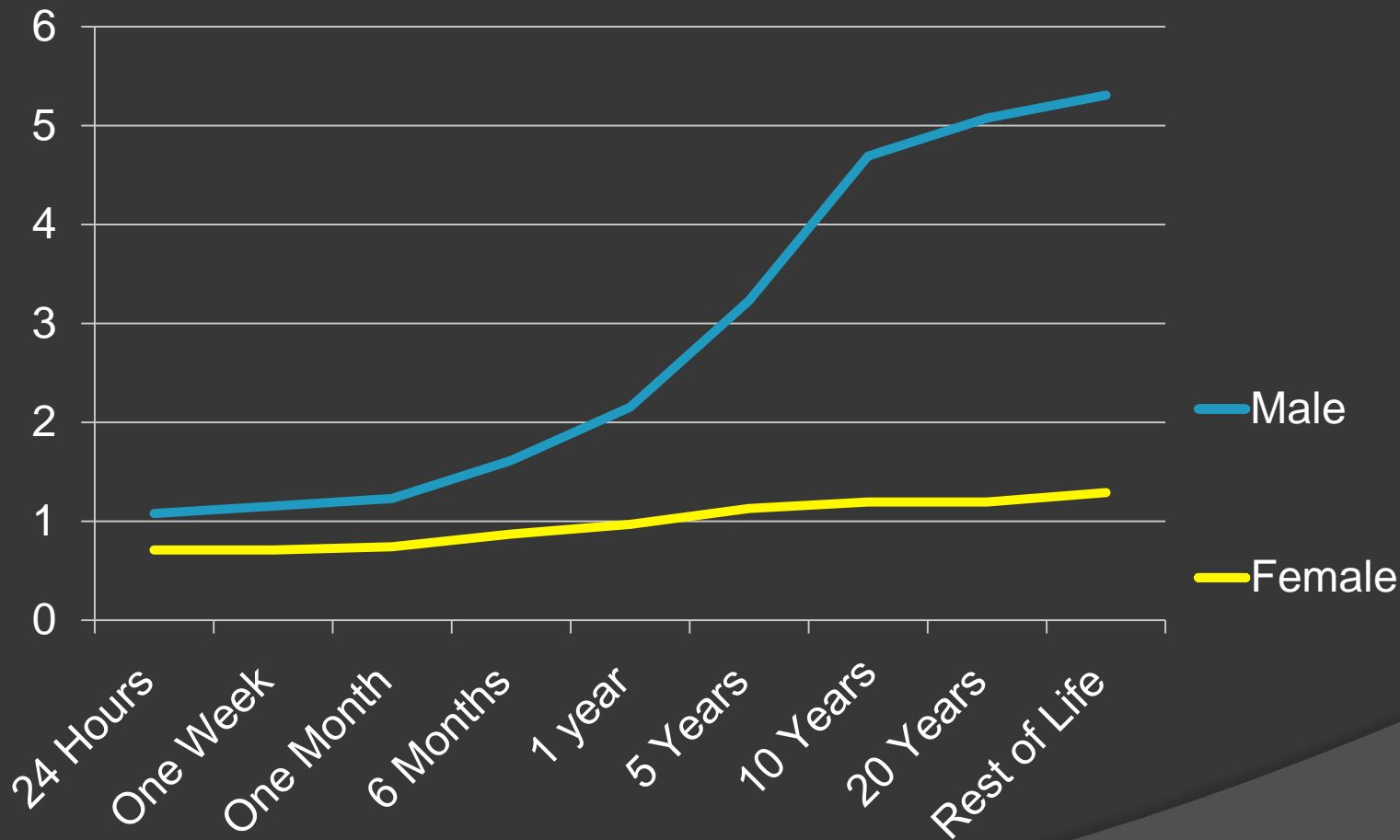
Estimated Marginal Means of Ideally, how many different sex partners would you like to have in the rest of your life?



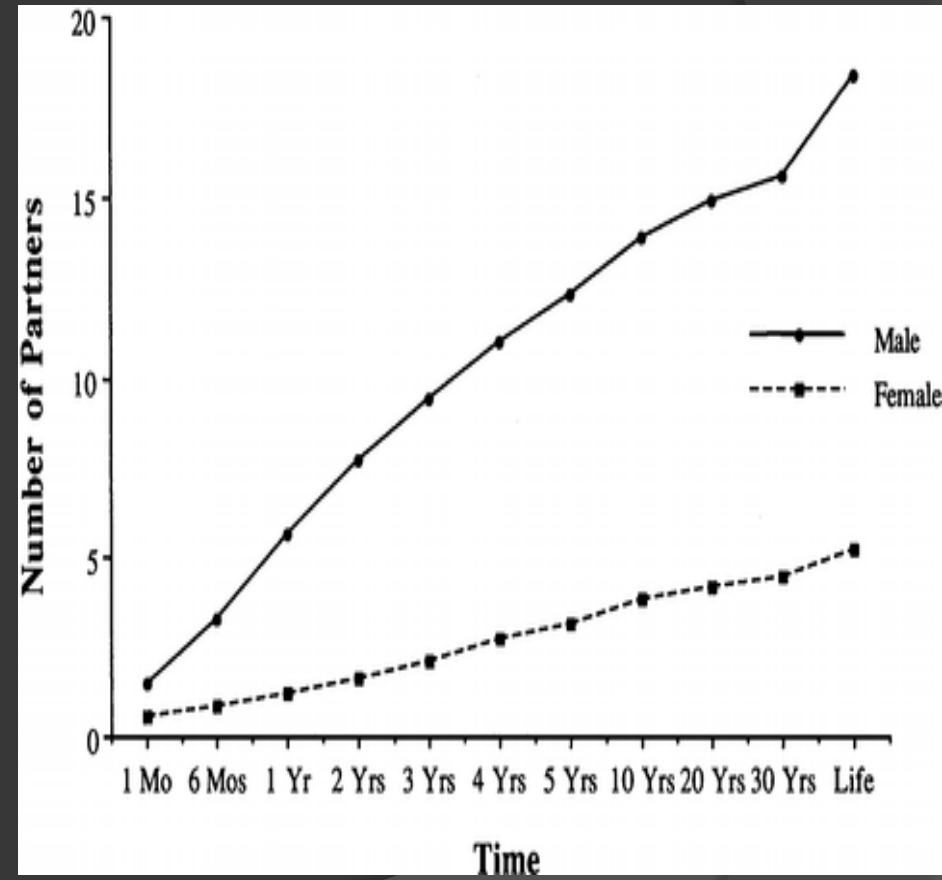
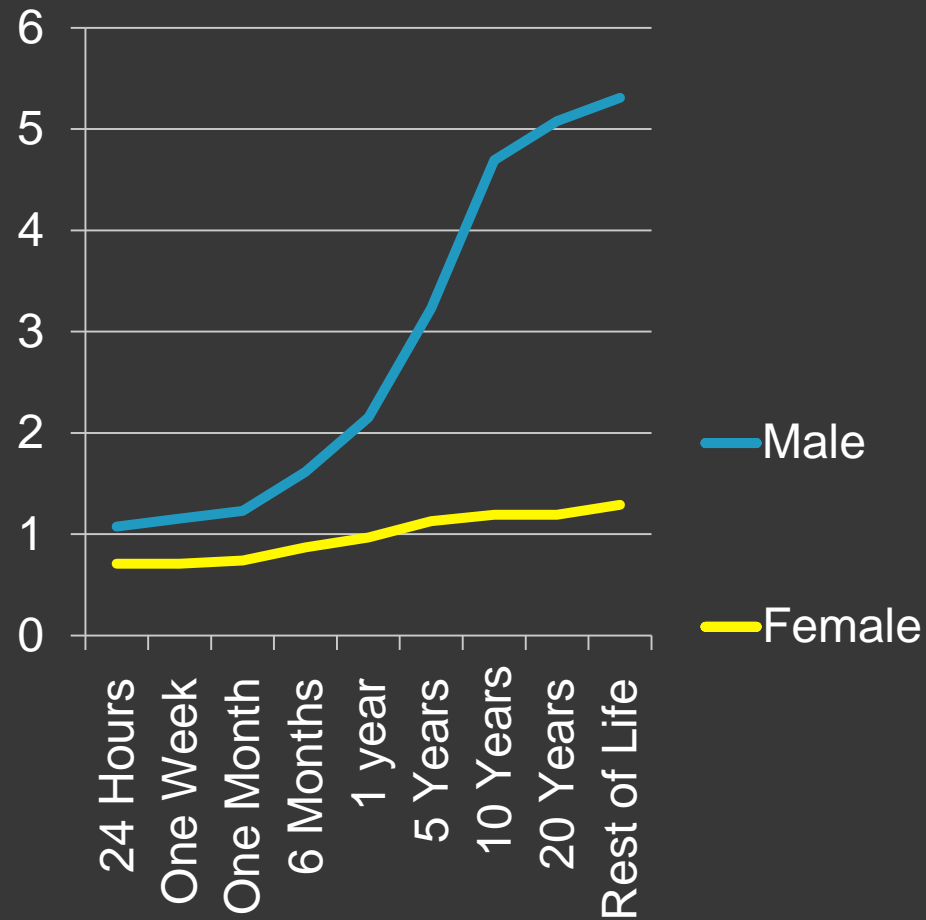
Supporting Data of Hypotheses



My Research Results in Congruence to my hypotheses



Comparison of Results



The Significance

Length of Time	24 Hours	One Week	One Month	6 Months	One Year	5 Years	10 Years	20 Years	Rest of Life
Average 2D:4D	.167 p=.280	.274 p=.071	.323 p=.032	.525 p<.001	.517 p<.001	.520 p<.001	.474 p=.001	.455 p=.002	.478 p=.001

Discussion

- ⦿ There are significant sex differences in desire for partner variety.
 - But not as large as those seen in previous research, supporting Alexander & Fisher (2003)
- ⦿ There was no main effect for condition
 - Suggests manipulation was inadequate, but may overcome once data from full sample is obtained.

Discussion

- 2D:4D (proxy for testosterone) was a significant predictor of desire for partner variety.

Limitations of the Research

- Results are preliminary. Data collection is still in progress.
- Experimental manipulation may not be adequate to make participants feel free enough from social desirability influences associated with being monitored.

What's Next?

- I plan on having a male researcher join me to test if the sex of the observer will have an affect on the participant in relation to their sex.
- I also plan on implementing a condition where the participant is not observed or hooked up to the polygraph and may fill out the survey anonymously.