



# Single Sex versus Coeducational Colleges Who wins the self-esteem battle?



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# Research Question



- ❧ How does attending a single sex school affect a female's self-confidence?

# Past Research



- ❧ **Campus Climate: How Males' Presence Makes a Difference**
  - ❧ National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972
    - ❧ “Chilly climate” affected academic experiences and self-esteem
  - ❧ Faculty
    - ❧ “The behaviors of females students and of both male and female professors were strongly related to whether or not male students were present in the classroom” (Canada & Pringle, 1995, p. 179).
  - ❧ Gender Inequality

# Past Research, cont.



## ❧ The Benefits of an all Women's College

- One study drew on data from 3,249 students from coeducational schools and 387 women from single sex schools
  - ❧ More opportunities for leadership and increasing self-esteem
- Who's Who in America
  - ❧ High emphasis on career aspirations and achievement

# Past Research, cont.



- ❧ **Single Sex Schools: Do they really deserve all of the credit?**
- ❧ Single sex schools attract a certain type of female
- ❧ “There is much variation among women as between men and women. Some women are going to speak up, some aren’t. Some are going to be thoughtful, some are going to be thoughtless” (Wilson, 1995, p. 18).

# Hypotheses



- ❧ It was predicted that female students in their senior year at Wellesley College would have higher levels of self-esteem than female students in their senior year at Trinity College.

# Method



❧ Participants: 39 Females from Trinity

40 Females from Wellesley

❧ Materials:

❧ Online survey

❧ Rosenberg Scale for Self-Esteem

❧ Interview with an alumna from Trinity and Wellesley

# Quantitative Results

Rosenberg Scale for Self-Esteem Scores			
	Low Self-Esteem	Normal Self-Esteem	High Self-Esteem
Trinity College	4	23	11
Wellesley College	5	23	14

- ☞ Only significant finding: More Trinity seniors felt positive about the extent to which they felt they had gained or made progress in functioning independently, without supervision, when reflecting over their four years in college,  $F(1,77) = 6.22, p < .05$ .

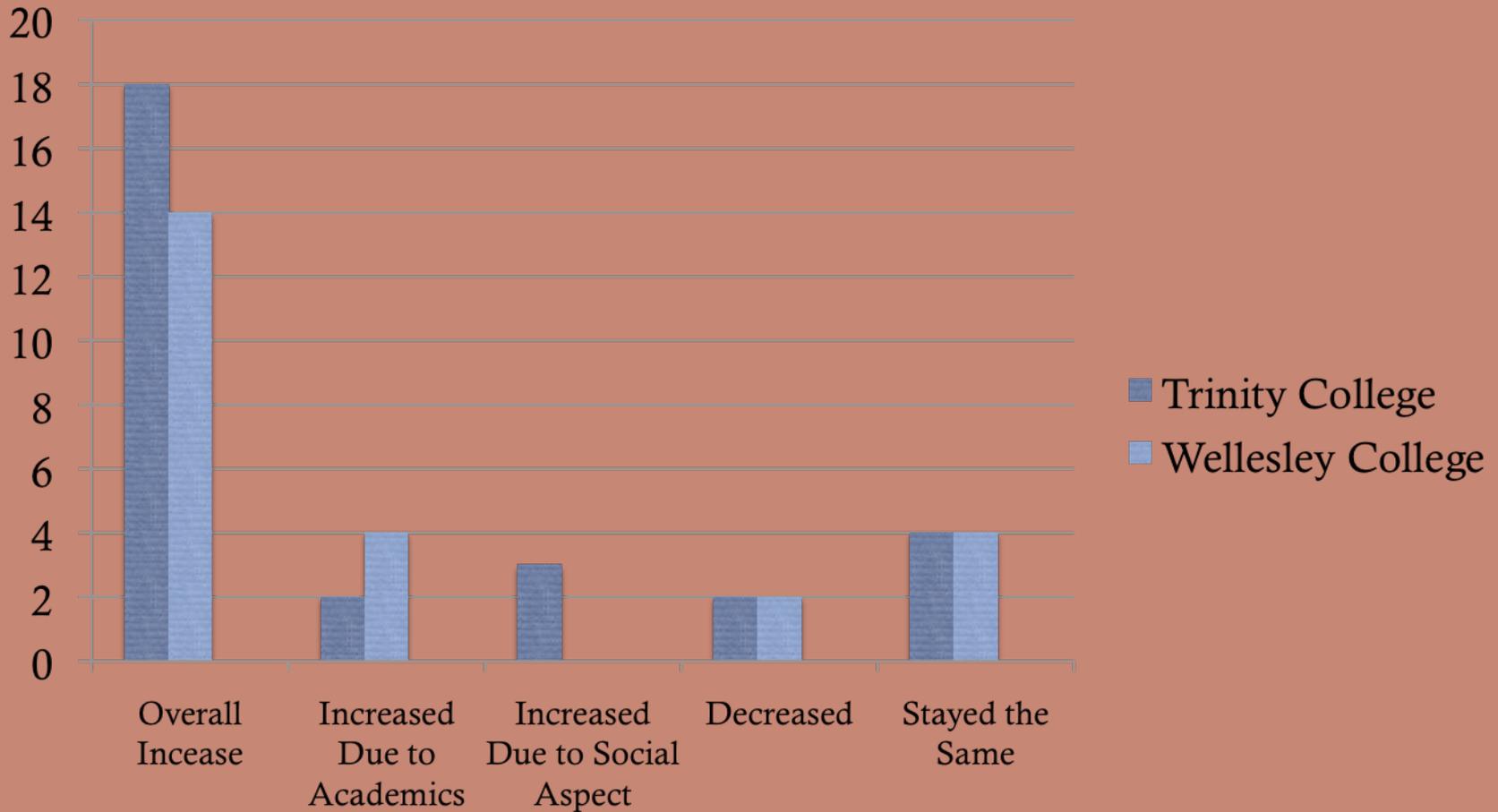
# Interview Results



- ❧ “I felt very good and very confident about how hard I worked, and that was a source of pride for me.” (Trinity Alumna)
- ❧ “I have always had tremendous confidence academically.” (Wellesley Alumna)

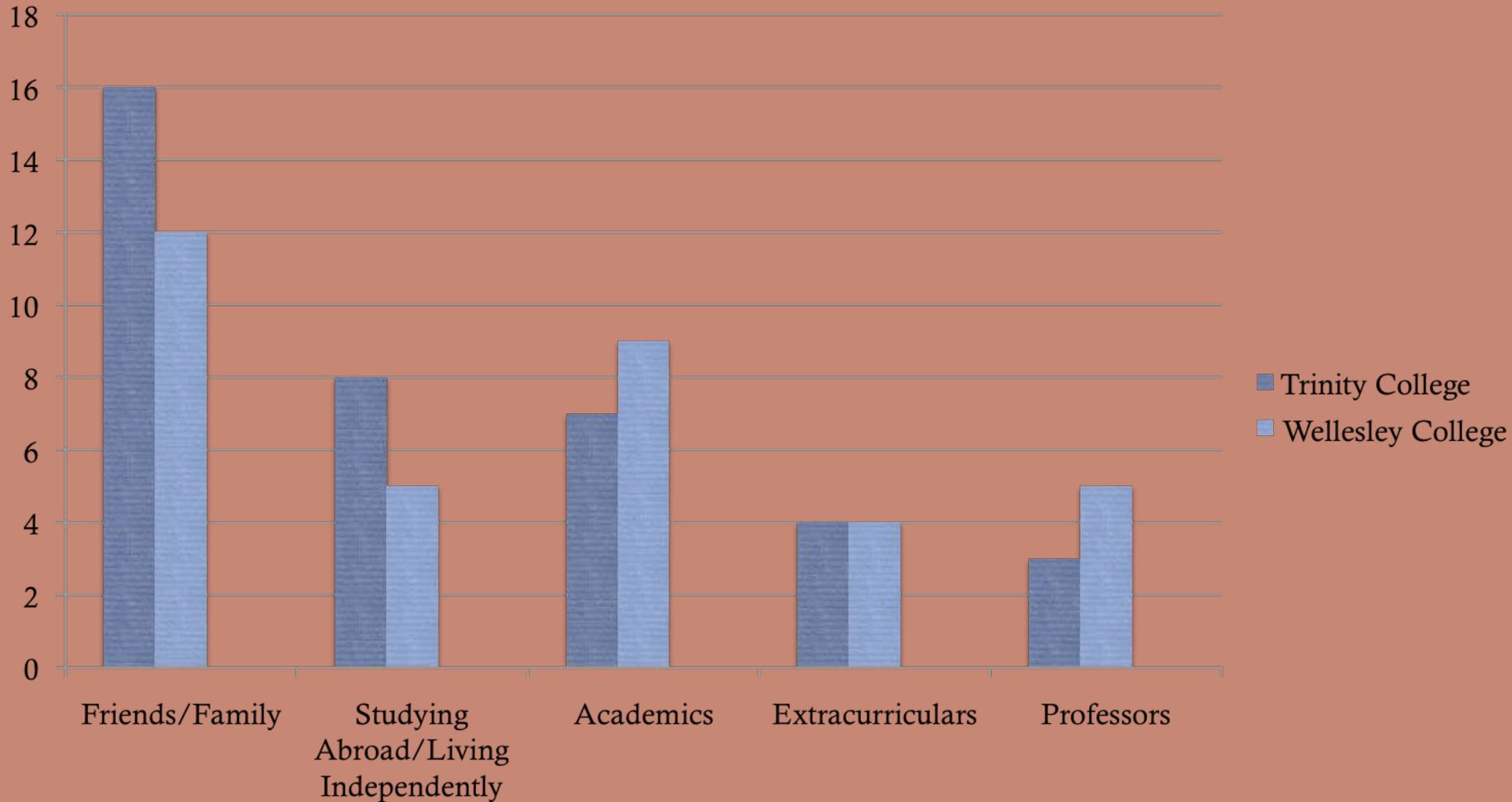
# Qualitative Results

Describe how your self-esteem has changed over the past four years



# Qualitative Results

Describe the two things you think have been most important in shaping how you feel about yourself over the past four years



# School Climate's Influence on Self-Esteem

## ☞ Trinity College → Social Environment

☞ “In certain arenas like social situations, expressing my thoughts and viewpoints and speaking with professionals and professors I feel as though I have come leaps and bounds from my high school self. But, in other arenas like romantic life and physical self esteem I find it hard sometimes at Trinity because there is such an emphasis on physical beauty and material possessions to compete with other girls. Sometimes I feel like the men at Trinity find women appealing only on a physical level which is sometimes hard to cope with.”

## ☞ Wellesley College → Academic Competitiveness

☞ “When I first entered college, my self-esteem dropped for awhile because I was surrounded by so many amazing students. i was no longer the smartest girl in my class.”

# Limitations and Future Studies



- ❧ 80 participants – less generalizable
- ❧ Self Evaluation on self-esteem
  - ❧ Survey females over the four year span of college for more reliable answers
- ❧ Two schools with different acceptance rates, academic programs, and geographic settings
- ❧ Two interviews
  - ❧ Not enough to make claims from data

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