Background: HIV transmission in relationships

- HIV transmissions in regular relationships:
  - Australia (from PHAEDRA and Seroconversion Study):
    - 2003: 42%
    - 2006: 29%
    - 2014: 34%
  - Peru, 2013: 32-39% (from modelling)
  - United States:
    - 2009: 68% (“main partnerships”)
    - 2013: 33-66%

What do we know about ‘regular partners’?

- How do behavioural surveys typically ask about partner types?
- What do gay men actually mean by “regular” and “casual” when they complete these surveys?

Two categories: ‘Regular’ versus ‘Casual’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Regular partner type</th>
<th>Casual partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GCPS</td>
<td>Regular (boyfriend/lover)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAXI-KAB, 2009</td>
<td>Regular male partner (boyfriend)</td>
<td>Casual male partner(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREPARE, 2013</td>
<td>Regular male partner e.g. boyfriend, fuckbuddy, partner, husband</td>
<td>Casual partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seroconversion Study</td>
<td>Regular can mean a fuckbuddy/boyfriend/lover/husband</td>
<td>Casual means any other sexual partners, BESIDES your regular partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV Futures 7</td>
<td>Regular relationship / regular partner</td>
<td>Casual partners</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Typical breakdown of partner types in Australia

- Approximately 60% of gay men have a regular partner, and of these, half are monogamous.
The Monopoly Study

- Cross-sectional, online survey on gay men’s relationships.
- Conducted in December 2013 to January 2014.
- Part of a larger, NHMRC-funded study on monogamy and gay men’s relationships.
- Over 4,215 useable responses.

Sample characteristics

- Broadly similar to other samples of Australian gay and bisexual men:
  - Mean age was 36 years
  - 81% identified as gay and 16% as bisexual
  - About half were university educated
  - Just over half were of Anglo-Celtic ethnic background
  - 78% had ever been tested for HIV
    - 5.5% were HIV-positive
    - 71% were negative
    - 24% were either untested or did not know their test results

Reported sexual relationships in Monopoly

- Broadly similar proportions to other surveys.
  - Higher proportion of men reported having regular partners; to be expected in a survey about relationships.

The wording of the question is important

- 70% reported having at least one “regular partner”.
- But only 43.1% said they were “in a relationship” with at least one man.

Agreements and practice

- 37.6% reported having a monogamous agreement with this partner.
  - Of these, 71.7% were actually monogamous.
- When they reported “open” relationship agreements, practice was more likely to match the agreement.

Were they “in a relationship” with the partner?

- 56.6% considered themselves to be “in a relationship” with this regular partner.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boyfriend</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lover</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuckbuddy</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend or “friend with benefits”</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Romantic”: 60%

“Non-Romantic”: 40%
Multivariate logistic regression analysis

- **Outcome variable:**
  Respondent considers himself “in a relationship” with this partner
  *versus*
  Respondent does not consider himself “in a relationship” with this partner

**Agreements and practice**

- Predictors of “being in a relationship” with this partner:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>“In a relationship”</th>
<th>Not in relationship</th>
<th>AOR</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monogamous agreement</td>
<td>54.9%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>1.44-5.38</td>
<td>&lt;0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having casual partners</td>
<td>50.8%</td>
<td>86.2%</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.52-1.70</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having more than 1 regular partner</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.35-1.03</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Condoms, HIV status, risk discussion**

- Predictors of “being in a relationship” with this partner:

<table>
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<th>95% CI</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always uses condoms with partner</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>54.7%</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.30-0.80</td>
<td>0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knows partner’s HIV status</td>
<td>79.6%</td>
<td>55.7%</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>0.67-1.92</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has discussed HIV risk with partner</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
<td>61.3%</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>0.67-2.04</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Commitment, romance and trust**

- Predictors of “being in a relationship” with this partner:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Not in relationship</th>
<th>AOR</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Considers partnership “committed”</td>
<td>Mean = 2.51</td>
<td>Mean = 0.48</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>2.79-5.13</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considers partnership “romantic”</td>
<td>Mean = 2.30</td>
<td>Mean = 0.80</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>1.03-1.86</td>
<td>0.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of trust in this partner</td>
<td>Mean = 3.32</td>
<td>Mean = 2.27</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>0.87-1.46</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sex frequency and satisfaction**

- Predictors of “being in a relationship” with this partner:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>“In a relationship”</th>
<th>Not in relationship</th>
<th>AOR</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex with partner more than once a week</td>
<td>44.3%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>1.25-3.57</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied with partner sexually</td>
<td>74.9%</td>
<td>80.9%</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.24-0.75</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied with partner generally</td>
<td>87.0%</td>
<td>75.6%</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>0.66-2.23</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Partnership characteristics**

- Predictors of “being in a relationship” with this partner:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>“In a relationship”</th>
<th>Not in relationship</th>
<th>AOR</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Living together</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>7.70-40.9</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No one knows about this partner</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.19-0.86</td>
<td>0.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of relationship</td>
<td>Mean = 7 years</td>
<td>Mean = 3 years</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.95-1.05</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met partner online</td>
<td>48.7%</td>
<td>70.6%</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.55-1.53</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of predictors of being “in a relationship”

- "In a relationship":
  - More condomless sex with this partner
  - Monogamous agreement
  - More frequent sex
  - Considers the partnership “committed”
  - Considers the partnership “romantic”
  - Feels more satisfied with the partnership sexually
  - Living full-time with each other
  - More people know about this partner

- No statistical difference:
  - Length of partnership
  - Knowing partner’s HIV status
  - Having casual partners
  - Having more than one regular partner
  - Meeting this partner online
  - Discussing HIV risk with this partner
  - Level of trust in this partner
  - General satisfaction with the partnership

Implications

- Gay men’s relationships are diverse and complex.
- Many of the relationships reported in research are often assumed to be “boyfriend” type relationships, when in fact many of them are “fuckbuddy” relationships.
- HIV prevention should acknowledge “fuckbuddy” arrangements more explicitly.
  - Multiple, simultaneous “fuckbuddies”
  - Boyfriend plus one or more “fuckbuddies”

Recent data from the Seroconversion Study

![Graph showing percentages of people in different relationship types](image)

Implications

- Commonalities between “fuckbuddies” and “boyfriend”-type partners:
  - Greater familiarity and trust
  - Frank discussions about HIV risk and HIV status

- Commonalities between “fuckbuddies” and casual partners:
  - Less emotional commitment and romance
  - Greater focus on sexual pleasure and satisfaction

- HIV prevention/reduction strategies appropriate for “boyfriends” and casual partners may not be seen as appropriate or suitable for “fuckbuddies”.

Acknowledgements

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