Making relationships work:
How much is age a factor?

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Background

- Over half of gay men have a regular partner
  - About half are monogamous
  - Over half have an agreement about sex with each other & with other men
- Negotiated safety was recognised as a risk-reduction strategy in the early 1990s.
- Has been an explicit aspect of HIV prevention in Australia since the mid 1990s.
- Recently seen decline in explicit agreements between regular partners.
- Young gay men tend to have ‘regular’ partners – But tend to be short-term
  - And tend to be assumed monogamous
  - And less likely to have an explicit agreement

About the Monopoly study

- Gay men’s relationships study
  - Study of understandings of monogamy and its place in HIV-prevention
- Collaboration between Australian Research Centre in Sex Health and Society, & Kirby Institute.
- Initiated by Professor Anthony Smith.

- Online national survey conducted late 2013
  - Mainly recruited through Manhunt and Facebook
  - 4215 usable records.
    - 65% identified a ‘primary’ regular partner
    - 2212 men described their relationship agreements.

Sample

Not unlike other samples of gay & bisexual men:

- Mean age 38.6 years
- 52% had university education
- 87% gay & 11% identified as bisexual
- 85% tested for HIV
  - 6.4% were HIV-positive

Relationship agreements

- 19% had been with their regular partner <6 months
- 61% said they were ‘in a relationship’
  - 36% had multiple regular partners
- 35% described their partnership as monogamous
  - 45% had not explicitly discussed outside sex with their partner
  - 19% regularly discussed their agreement

Monogamous & open relationships

![Graph showing differences between monogamous and non-monogamous partnerships]
Agreements and risk reduction

- HIV was not always an issue in negotiating agreements:
  - 15% made agreements in order to stop using condoms
  - 55% discussed HIV prevention when negotiating agreements
  - 30% agreed to use condoms with other men

- 52% reported condomless sex with their PRP
  - 33% of those reporting condomless sex had no explicit agreements with their PRP

Age & relationship agreements

- 52% reported condomless sex with their PRP
  - 33% of those reporting condomless sex had no explicit agreements with their PRP

Age & risk reduction in relationships

- Majority of men with regular partner have negotiated agreements about sex and risk reduction
- Younger men are less likely to have explicit agreements
  - And less likely to discuss risk reduction
- Younger men have shorter relationships
  - And more likely to assume monogamy
- Age made little difference to likelihood to engage in condomless sex

Conclusions & discussion

- Majority of men with regular partner have negotiated agreements about sex and risk reduction
- Younger men are less likely to have explicit agreements
  - And less likely to discuss risk reduction
- Younger men have shorter relationships
  - And more likely to assume monogamy
- Age made little difference to likelihood to engage in condomless sex

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