



Vines Victorian Network Study

In collaboration with VAC
Funded by Department Human
Services, Victoria

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Vines

- Formal sociometric analysis of social and sexual networks
- Structured face-to-face interviews
- Individual-based (egocentric) and network-based (sociometric) analyses
- Recruitment through key informants, generative network sampling and advertising

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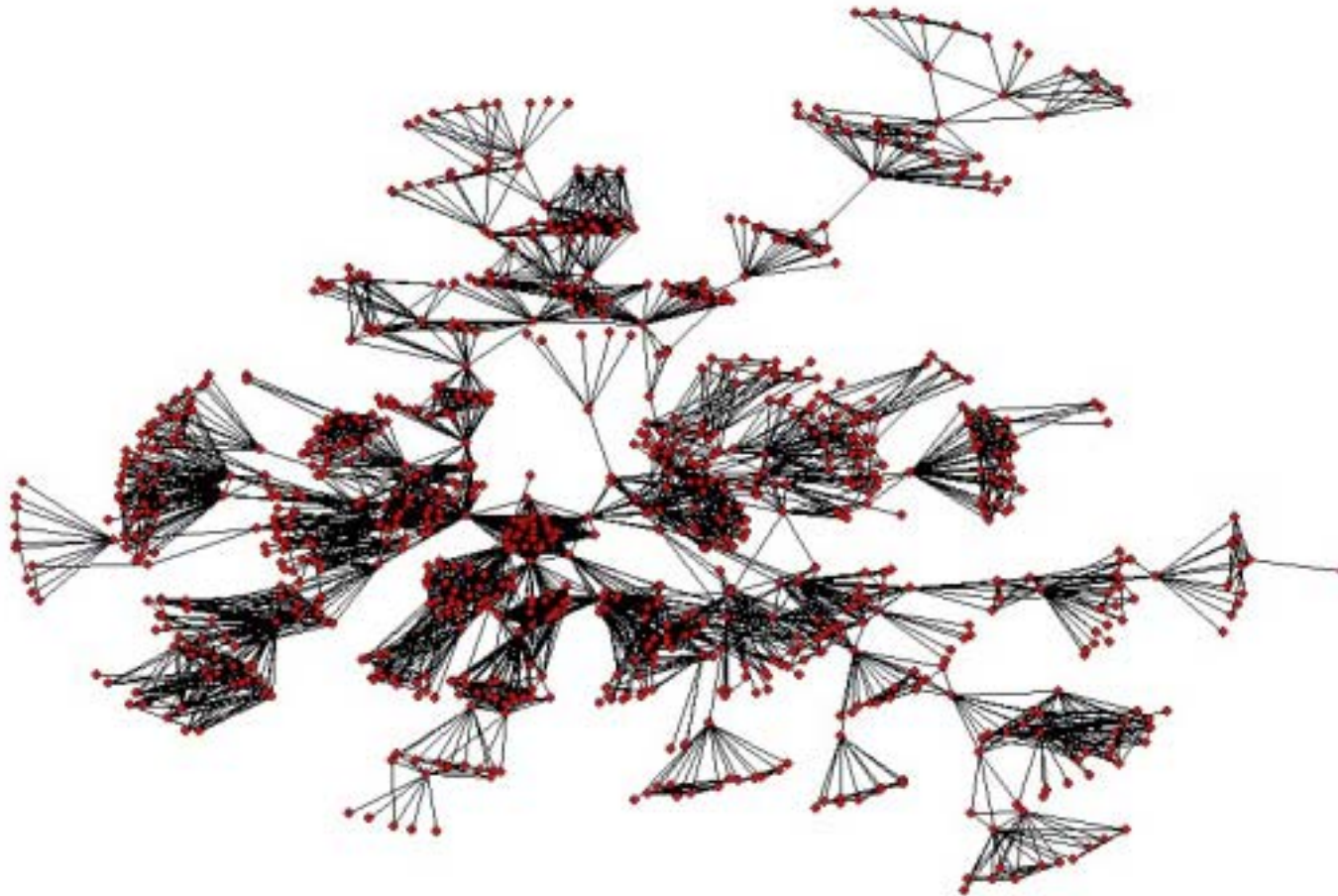
Vines

- 213 interviews
- 3,972 names of both social and sexual contacts
- Some degree of overlap between social and sexual networks (multiplexity)

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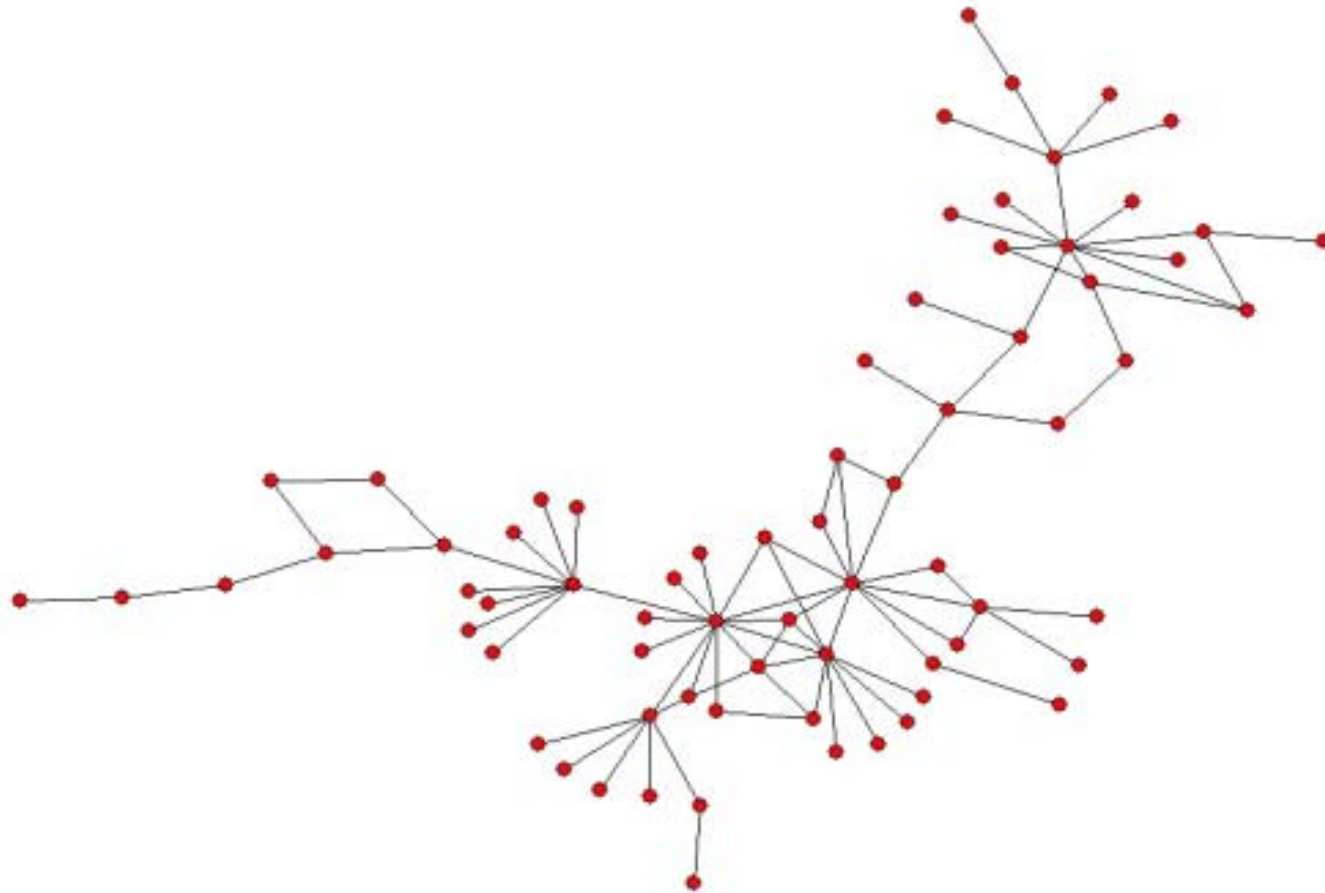
Largest social network



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Largest sexual network



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Sexual acts

735 same sex events, each consisting of one or more sexual acts:

- 44% involved anal sex –
- 32% involving protected anal sex
- 8.5% involving unprotected anal sex with partner known to be of same serostatus
- 3.5% involving unprotected anal sex with partner of different or unknown serostatus

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The sex in more detail

Data can be looked at from a number of different angles, each of which overlap:

- HIV status (both of participant & partner)
- Size and density of social networks
- Location where sexual partner was met
- Location where sex took place
- Ongoing relationship vs. one off
- Relationship of partner to social network

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Assessment of partner's HIV status

An assessment was made in 40.7% of sexual events

- Of the positive men, 57.1% made an assessment
- Of negative men, 38.9% made an assessment
- And 30.7% of men of unknown status made an assessment of their partner's HIV status

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Assessment of partner's HIV status

- An assessment was made in 53.2% of sexual events involving any anal sex
- An assessment was made in 30.7% of sexual events not involving any anal sex

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Assessment of partner's HIV status

The partners were assessed as:

- positive 15.0% (pos 48.3%; neg 9.3%)
- negative 82.8% (pos 45.0%; neg 87.9%)
- unsure 2.2% (pos 6.6%; neg 2.8%)
- Of the 49 partners assessed as positive, 59.2% were having sex with positive respondents

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How the assessment was made

Assessed negative: Assessed positive:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He told you 36.8% • You asked him 27.1% • Just assumed 10.7% | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He told you 64.8% • Tested together 11.4% • His physical appearance 5.6% • His attitude to condoms 5.6% |
|--|--|

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About the social networks

- Size of networks not associated with age
- Size of networks positively correlated with education and income
- Smaller networks may be associated with higher rates of reported injecting drug use

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About the social networks

- Being a member of particularly small or large networks was associated with going out for sexual purposes more often
- Network density was negatively correlated with number of sexual partners

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About the networks

- Network density was negatively correlated with the practice of anal intercourse
- Network density was negatively correlated with likelihood of discussing sexual activity
- Network density was negatively correlated with likelihood of discussing an episode of unprotected sex

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Location, location

- Analysis of spaces and places related to social and sexual encounters
- Involves an analysis both of where partners met and
- where the sexual encounters took place
- Sometimes, but not always these are different spaces

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Sex at Beats

- 13% of total sexual encounters reported in the study took place in beats
- Only 9% of all sexual encounters at beats involved anal sex
- Positive people less likely at beats (11%)

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Sex at Saunas/SOPVs

- 21% of total sexual encounters in the study took place in a sauna or SOPV
- 55% of all sexual encounters at a SOPV involved anal sex
- Positive people were most likely to be partners at SOPVs (22%)

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Sex at home

- 58% of total sexual encounters took place either in the participant's home or the home of their sexual partner
- 50% of these encounters involved anal sex
- This location for sex covers sexual encounters with partners met at a number of different locations.

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Sex somewhere else

- 8% of all recorded sexual encounters in the study took place in other locations
- the number of these other locations is too small to indicate any definite trends

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Known partner for >12 months

- 10% of all sexual encounters
- more likely to be HIV positive
- just under half had anal sex
- group most likely to have UAI with a sero-concordant partner
- group most likely to have UAI with a partner of unknown or different sero-status

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> 12 mths. - my friend's friend...

- Although this appears to be negotiated, there is nothing to indicate the quality and reliability of this negotiation process
- there is a sense that partners have been 'vetted' by friends or networks, and this may lead to some inaccurate assumptions being made.

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Where met sexual partner ?

- Analysis now of where most recent sexual partner(s) were met
- Allows for influence of more than a single set of social/sexual relations

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Pubs/clubs

- 18% of all sexual encounters in the study
- just under half had anal sex
- average amounts of UAI, both sero-concordant and sero-discordant

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Beats

- 17% of all sexual encounters in the study
- a quarter had anal sex, this is the group least likely to have anal sex
- out the anal sex that did take place, there was a fairly average rate of UAI, both sero-concordant and sero-discordant

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Saunas/SOPVs

- 23% of all sexual encounters in the study
- most likely to have HIV positive partner
- the group most likely to have had anal sex (nearly two thirds)
- also the group most likely to have had protected sex

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Internet

- 12% of all sexual encounters in the study
- least likely to be HIV positive
- the group least likely to have UAI with partner of different or unknown sero-status
- less likely to have anal sex in general

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Social event/friends

- 14% of all sexual encounters
- more likely to be HIV positive
- about half had anal sex
- more likely to have UAI with sero-concordant partner than most groups, but still considerably less likely than people in relationships
- sense that meeting people through friends increases trust when negotiating UAI

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Other (through work, brothel, newspaper/chatline)

- 5% of all sexual encounters in the study
- numbers too small to make meaningful distinctions
- nothing to indicate these encounters differ notably from the average

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In summary

- Sexual behaviours tend to be associated with particular places
- Most notable – lack of anal sex at beats
- Preponderance of anal sex at SOPVs
- Longer relationship associated with unprotected sex with partner of same status

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n.b.

- No cause and effect relationships is asserted here
- Rather there are cultures of practice associated with locations
- None are particularly troubling with an exception
- Those who met sexual partner through friends or social event are particularly likely to have UAI with partners believed to be of same status

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Implications

- Location adds another part of the picture
- Locational dynamics are fluid, and include both where partners are met and where sexual acts take place
- Social dynamics of encounters include geography of sexual encounters

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Implications (cont.)

- Social influence that affects protected and unprotected sex is not simply the consequence of dyadic engagements
- Wider social influences, including social networks and social spaces affect sexual safety
- Brokerage may act as a proxy for safety

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