



Overview

- My PhD study
- Population-based evidence about midlife sexuality and relationship diversity
- Relate this evidence to the findings from my rural sexuality research from the perspectives of stigma, confidentiality and well-being.

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Doing relationships differently: Rural baby boomers negotiate friends-with-benefits relationships

- Definitions: Rural; Baby boomers; FWBR
- The study



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Diverse sexuality and relationships



Photo credit: Linda Kirkman 2014

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Population-based evidence about midlife sexuality and relationship diversity

- Still sexual
- Increasing divorce; new partners sought
- Get to intimacy quickly
- Skill development missing
- Concern about sexual health

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Expectations and social control

- Social manipulation
- "Like Coronation Street"
- socially gendered, restricted and religious girlhoods in small rural towns


<http://handle.slvic.gov.au/10381/70876>

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Stigma and confidentiality

- Need for secrecy to avoid gossip and judgement
- Stigma; status loss; deviance
- Violation of social norms
- Fear of discrimination from disclosure
- Mainstream representation uses heteronormative paradigm
- Growing social change in relationships


<http://handle.slvic.gov.au/10381/321176>

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Wellbeing

- Identifying with a community
- "Essential" for wellbeing: without "I would be quite miserable".
- "Fun, and pleasure...don't want him as part of my family"
- "I never wanted to live with anyone again, but wanted to be in an intimate relationship with someone."
- "Whatever works for the person"
- "People are more accepting...of a couple"



Photo credit: Linda Kirkman 2014

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Conclusion

The benefits from being in intimate relationships are well established and the growing prevalence of casual sexual relationships is known.

Living in a rural area with limited health service options and concern about confidentiality adds to the physical and psychological health burden of having intimate relationships outside the norm. These relationships exist and are growing.

It is time for preventative health measures, especially awareness of and respect for difference in sexual orientation, gender identity and relationship type, to support good sexual and relationship health for people in midlife, including those in rural areas.

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Articles

Kirkman, L., Fox, C., & Dickson-Swift, V. (2015 in press). Midlife relationship diversity, sexual fluidity, wellbeing and sexual health from a rural perspective. *Rural Society Special Edition on Sex, Sexuality and Place*.

Kirkman, L., Fox, C., & Dickson-Swift, V. (under review) A case for sexual health policy that includes midlife and older adult sexuality and sexual health. *Aging and Society*

