

“It's not what you do, It's who
you do it with: understanding
how sexual networks can
affect HIV risk”

Jen Hecht, STOP AIDS Project

Dan Wohlfeiler, CA DHS STD Control Branch

Diversity: Some wins, yet more challenges

- We've made progress in developing interventions addressing diversity in terms of ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, HIV status...
- We have not yet addressed diversity of risk.

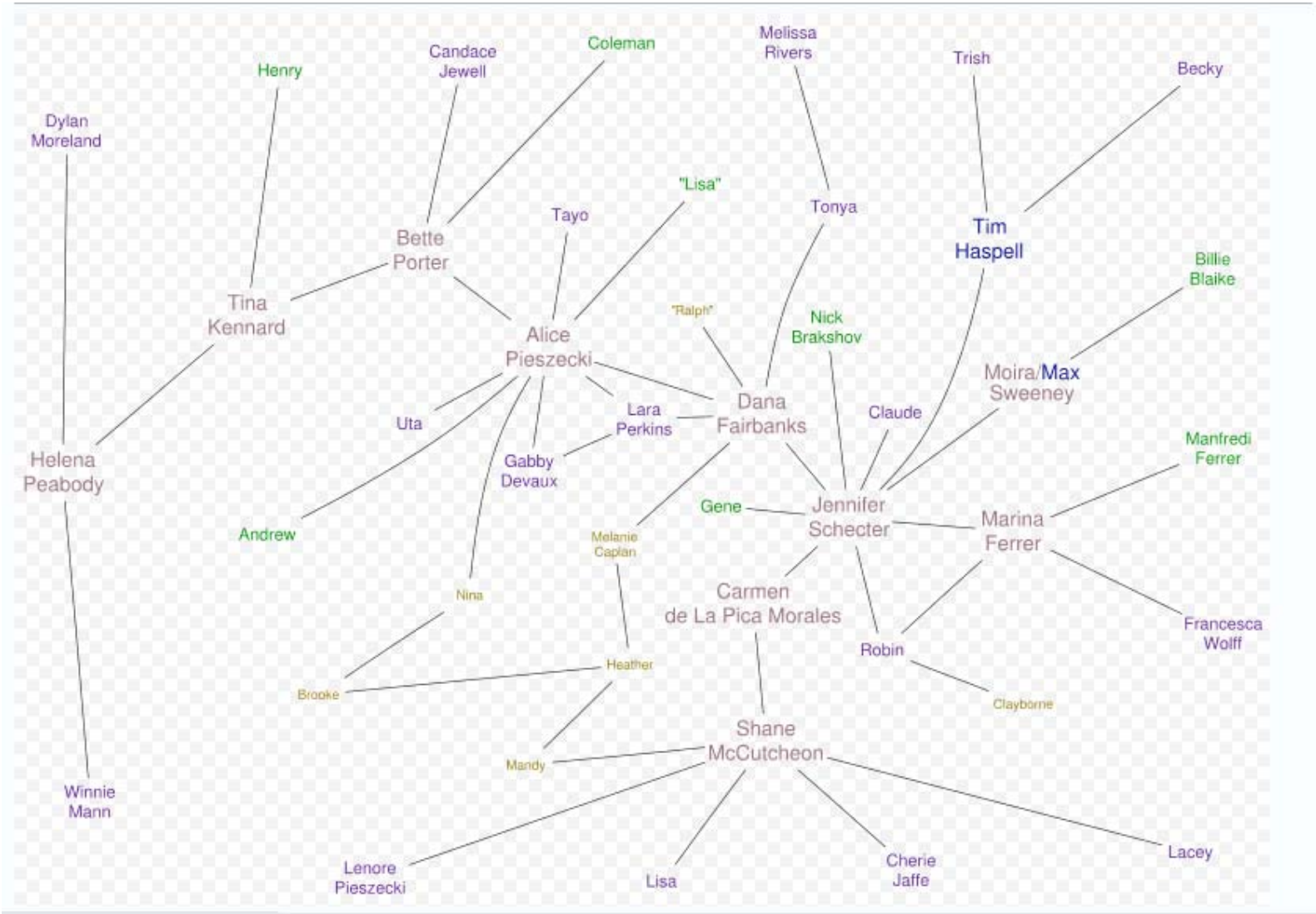
A new way of looking at risk

- The sexual networks approach adds a new layer to existing HIV prevention
- It is a bird's eye view of the way HIV/STDs flow through a community

Six Degrees of Separation

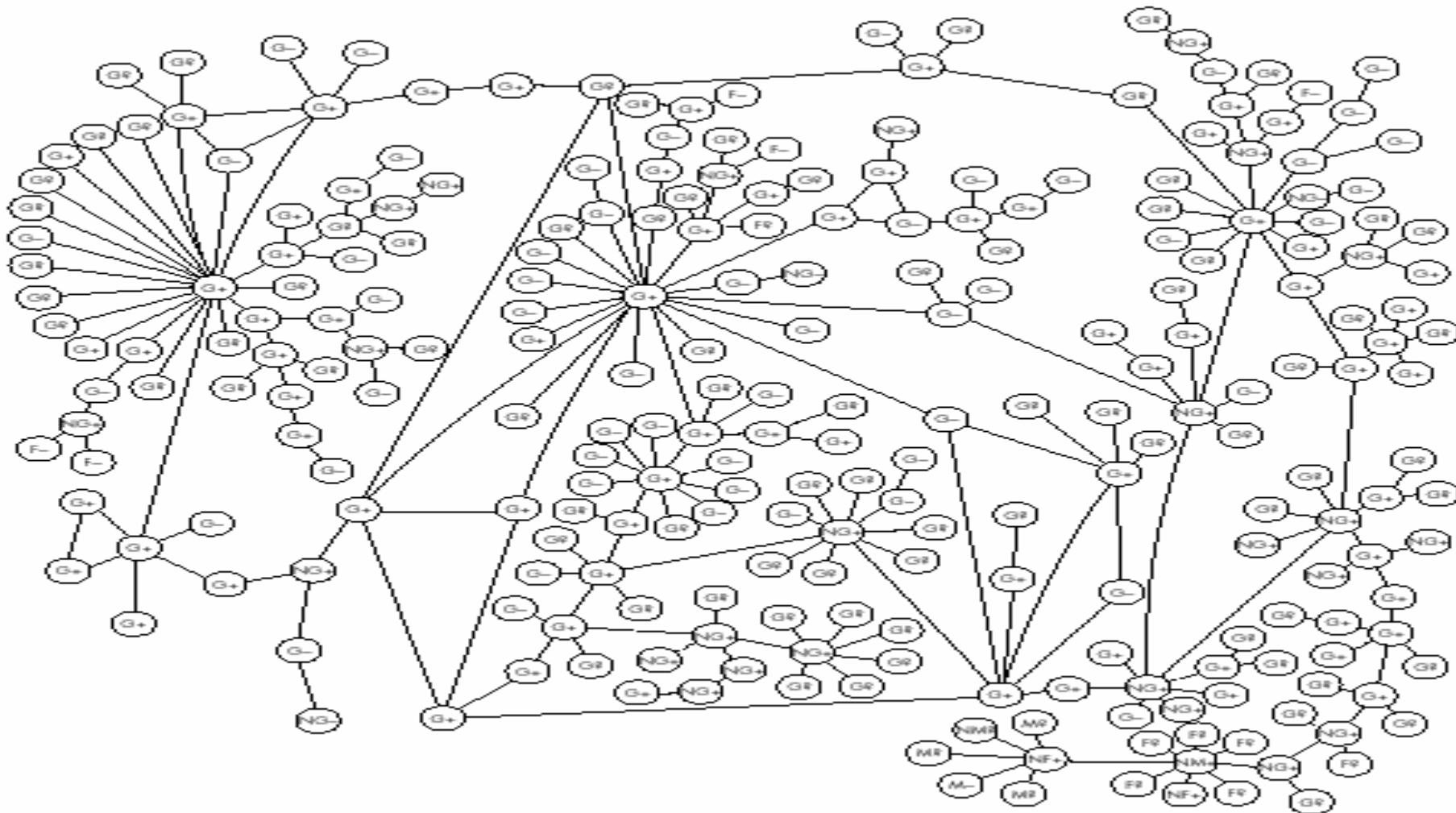
- Sexual networks describe people who are linked through sexual contact
- In some cases, sexual networks overlap with social networks
- Classic examples of sexual networks are:
 - L-word's "The Chart"
 - Colorado Springs Gonorrhea outbreak

L-word's "The Chart"



Risk network structure in Colorado Springs in 1980s

Potterat, Phillips-Plummer, et al, 2002



Celebrity Sexual Networks Game

Instructions:

- Fill in the rest of the missing pieces of the sexual network
- Test your knowledge of pop culture
- Try to remember who's dated, been married, or been seen in the tabloids together -- for the sake of this game, we'll assume they are linked through sex

Characteristics of Sexual Networks

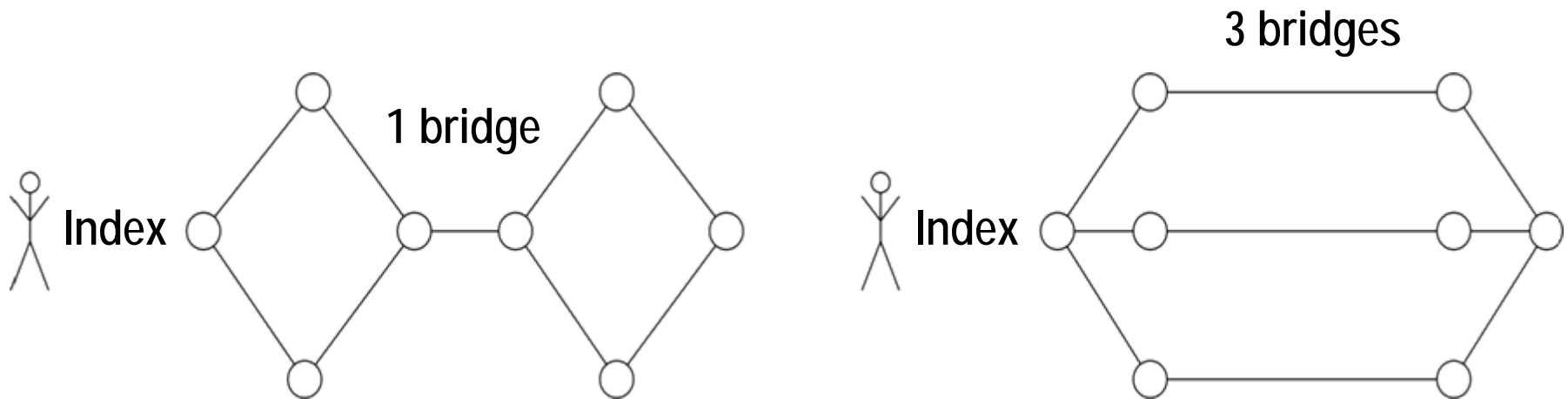
- Bridges
- Relationship time gap
- Core Groups
- Mixing
- Sexual network structure
 - Dyads (monogamous couples) are not connected to the larger sexual network
 - Ex. Lance Bass and Reichen Lehmkuhl

Bridges

- Connect one sexual network to another
- Can be people or places
 - Ex. Penelope Cruz
 - Bars/Places where Penelope Cruz hangs out

Even though individual risk level may look the same, network architecture dramatically alters risk.

For outreach to succeed in reducing transmission, you need to reach the most important people and cut the most important links.



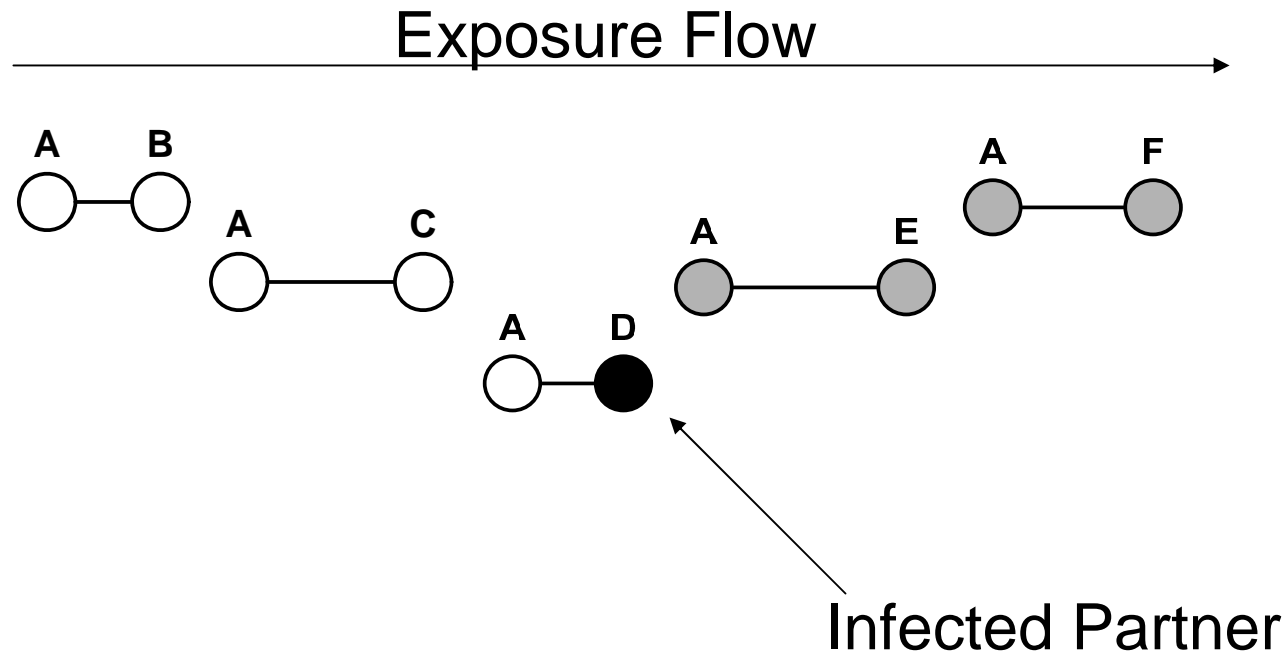
Klovdahl AS, Potterat J, Woodhouse D, et al. HIV infection in a social network: a progress report. *Bulletin de Methodologie Sociologique*. 1992;36:24-33

Relationship time gap

This is called concurrency or “partnership overlap”

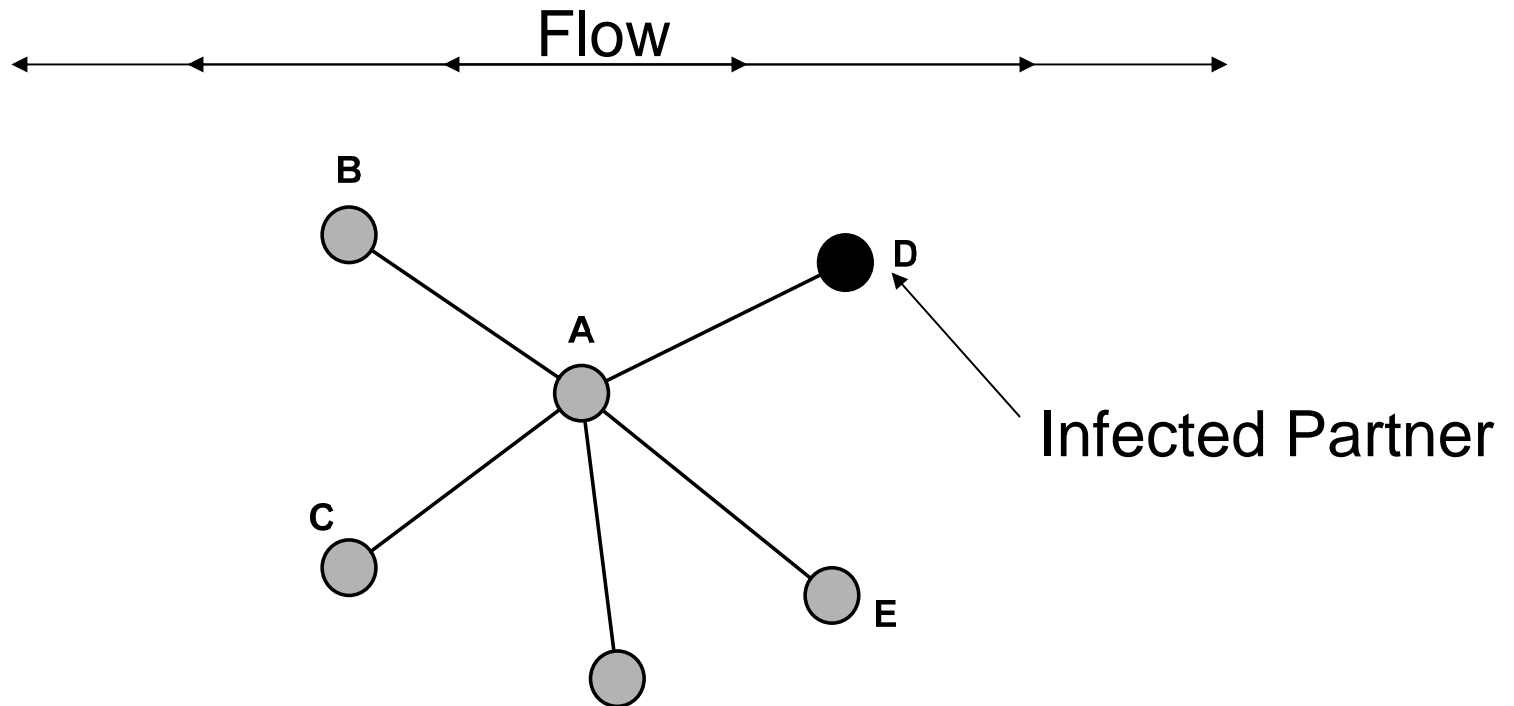
- Partnering with one person then a second then back to the first
 - Open relationships
 - Fuck buddies
 - Ex. Pamela Anderson, Kid Rock, and Tommy Lee

Serial Monogamy



After A is exposed to infected partner D,
three are potentially infected.

Concurrency



Given the same time period: After A is exposed to infected partner D, five are potentially infected. Concurrency **facilitates more transmission than serial monogamy.**

Core Groups

- People who have multiple unprotected partnerships
- People who are located centrally within a sexual network and have the potential to fuel an epidemic
 - Ex. Penelope Cruz, Johnny Depp, Jared Leto
 - Ex. STOP AIDS data

Of those men with whom STOP AIDS contacts had anal sex ...
 how many did they have serodiscordant unprotected anal sex
 with in the past 6 months?

First-time HIV-negative respondents

January 1999 – December 2002 (N=2,047)

Number anal sex partners	Number serodiscordant unprotected anal sex partners			
	0	1	2	≥ 3
1 (n=977)	894	83		
2 (n=278)	216	44	18	
3 (n=197)	156	28	10	3
4-5 (n=204)	132	31	20	21
6-10 (n=201)	114	29	24	34
11-20 (n=112)	57	10	4	41
>20 (n=78)	36	4	4	34

Of those men with whom STOP AIDS contacts had anal sex ...
 how many did they have serodiscordant unprotected anal sex
 with in the past 6 months?

First-time HIV-positive respondents
 January 1999 – December 2002 (N=383)

Number anal sex partners	Number serodiscordant unprotected anal sex partners			
	0	1	2	≥ 3
1 (n=111)	94	17		
2 (n=53)	44	6	3	
3 (n=33)	27	6	0	0
4-5 (n=53)	37	4	7	5
6-10 (n=46)	28	7	1	10
11-20 (n=46)	26	3	1	16
>20 (n=41)	22	1	1	17

Mixing

- Assortative vs. Disassortative mixing
 - Sexual partnerships with people that are alike (assortative) or not alike (disassortative)
 - Examples are by age, race, HIV status, HIV risk level, STD diagnosis
 - Age: Young men's greatest risk of infection is having sex with older men, who are more likely to be HIV positive
 - Katie Holmes & Tom Cruise; Angelina Jolie & Billy Bob Thornton

Individual Prevention Strategy vs. Community Strategy

- A sexual network approach is focused on a community level, not an individual level
 - Sexual network interventions aim to reduce HIV/STD risk at a community level
- Individual level of risk is determined by individual behavior & location within a sexual network

Guiding Principles for Network Level Interventions

- Don't accept network structure as a given.
- Focus on institutions which
 - Facilitate partner mixing
 - Disrupt ecologies or communities
- Pull high and low-risk individuals apart
- Help individuals make more informed choices
- Maintain freedom of choice and human rights

1. Don't accept network structure as a given.

We've used networks to:

- Diffuse messages and change norms
- To find infected individuals

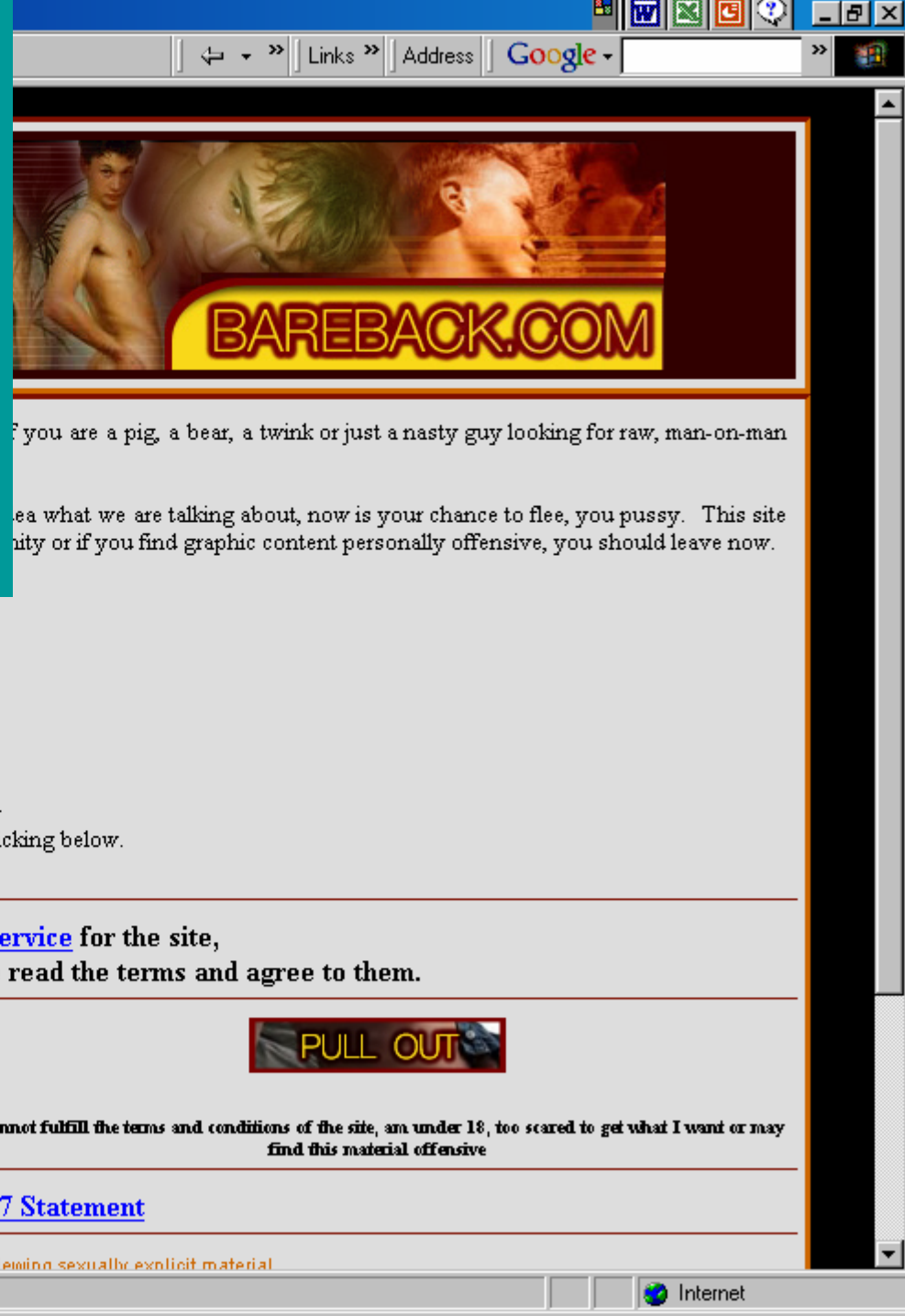
We can do more.

2. Focus on institutions which facilitate partner mixing, or disrupt ecologies or communities (and, in particular, network structure)

- Facilitate Partner mixing
 - Gay men: Baths, internet, circuit parties
- Disrupt ecologies or communities
 - Criminal justice system
 - Upstream: Abolish?
 - Downstream: Transition programs?
 - Migration
 - Upstream: Rural economic development
 - Mid-stream: Housing for migrants (Gebrekristos, 2005)

3. Pull high and low risk individuals apart.

The internet is pulling high-risk men in one direction....



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- You want hard, man-to-man action.
- You are over 18 years of age.
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And low-risk men in another.

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slip it on

FREE



Photo by Kent Taylor Raging Stallion Studios

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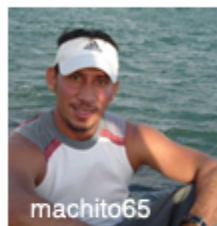
SafeSexCity.com

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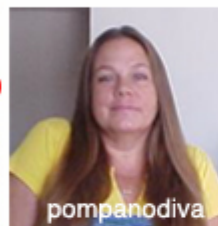


POZ personals

make a positive connection



dating



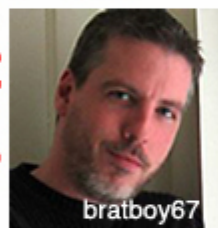
sex



love



friends



New profiles to search every day



What's that twinkle in your eye?

Hi, thanks for all the help. The ad worked!!
- Kristian

Thank you for letting me find my love on your site. - Sandra

Thank you very much, Poz.com. I have met someone through your site! - Maria

Thank you at Poz.com. Your site has been a great help, and now I am no longer in need of your dating services! - Josh

Not a member yet? [Sign up here.](#)

MEMBER LOGIN

Username:

Password:

log in

[did you forget?](#)

CATCH OF THE DAY



djrottenrobbie

Napa
California

PERSONALS POLL

What's your dating style?

Only HIVers need apply!

27%

I'm an equal-opportunity lover.

42%

I like 'em negative and naughty!

3%

Dating!?! What dating?

26%

Vote

4. Help individuals make more informed choices

www.manhunt.net

↓ The Flavor: what I'm into

- | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> JO | <input type="checkbox"/> Sucking | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fucking | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 on 1 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Group Sex | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Voyeurism |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exhibition | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Leather | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Toys | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Role Playing | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> B&D | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> S&M |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pig Play | <input type="checkbox"/> WS | <input type="checkbox"/> FF | <input type="checkbox"/> Nipple Play | <input type="checkbox"/> Rimming | <input type="checkbox"/> Fuck Buddy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LTR | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Friends | <input type="checkbox"/> Dating | <input type="checkbox"/> Kissing | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Safe Only | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no PNP |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feet/Socks | | | | | |

↓ The Time: when I want it

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Ask Me | <input type="radio"/> Right Now! | <input type="radio"/> Later Today | <input type="radio"/> Lunch Time | <input type="radio"/> After Work |
| <input type="radio"/> Weekends | <input type="radio"/> Weekdays | <input type="radio"/> Group | <input type="radio"/> Away | <input type="radio"/> Not Looking |

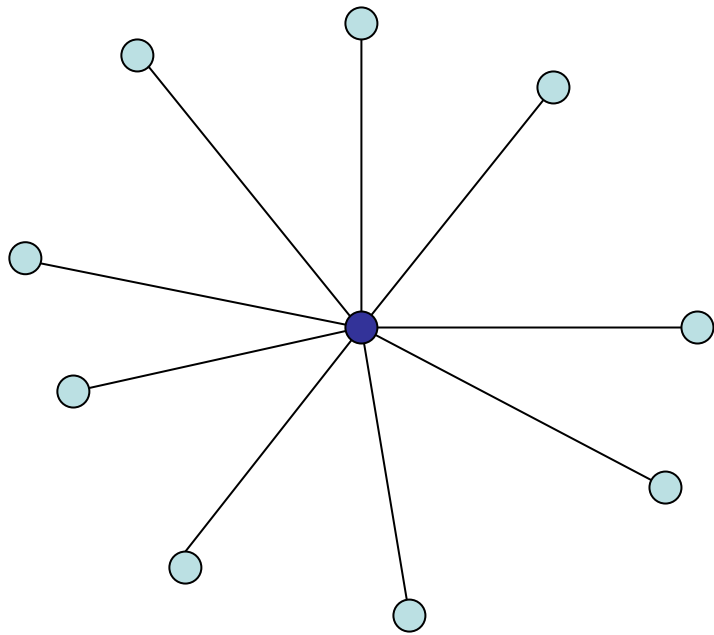
↓ The Position: how I like it

- | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Ask Me | <input type="radio"/> Top | <input type="radio"/> Bottom | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Versatile | <input type="radio"/> Into Oral Only |
| <input type="radio"/> Into JO Only | <input type="radio"/> Top/Vers. | <input type="radio"/> Bottom/Vers. | | |

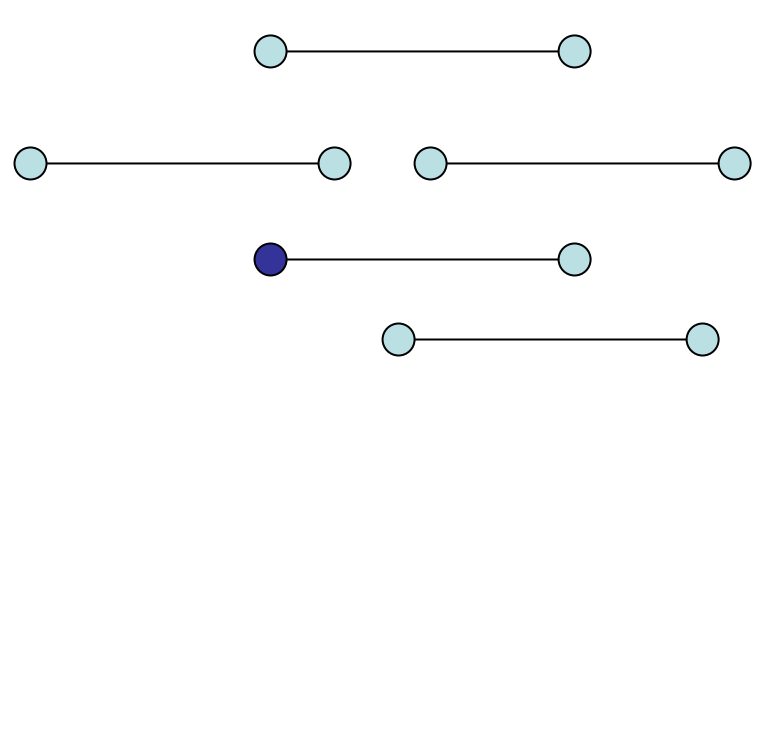
5. Maintain basic respect for human rights.

- People will have the kind of sex they want.
- We need to make our peace with the fact that we can't change them enough.
- If they're going to have unprotected sex, we can help it happen in a network which will facilitate less transmission.

In many venues, we don't know who is having sex with whom



10% high risk



10% high risk

Recommended Standards for the Safe Operation of Sex Clubs in San Francisco

- Owners and AIDS educators
- “Clean, well-lighted place for sex”
- Rules made explicit at door
- No private spaces
- Condoms, educational materials, etc.
- Political protection encourages investment
- Legislation: too complicated, no real gains

Group Rates Clubs For Safe Gay Sex

Some in S.F. didn't meet the guidelines

By David Tuller
Chronicle Staff Writer

Seeking to put a positive spin on an enduring phenomenon of gay life, a group of AIDS educators yesterday cited several San Francisco sex clubs as boosting efforts to promote safe sexual practices while criticizing others as unhygienic.

The Coalition for Healthy Sex — which includes some club owners as well as AIDS educators — announced the results of its surveillance of 14 sex clubs that cater primarily to gay men. The inspectors rated each establishment on such factors as the availability of condoms, lubricant, and safe sex information; adequate lighting, fire exits and clean-up facilities; and whether customers engaged in unprotected anal sex, which is by far the riskiest sexual behavior.

"It may be difficult for people to understand the social dimension of sex in our community," said Chuck Frutchey, director of education at the San Francisco AIDS Foundation. "But the sex clubs are a fact of life for gay and bisexual men, and we need to use them more effectively (for safe sex education)."

Clubs that met the Coalition's guidelines include Eros, Blow Buddies, 1808, San Francisco Jacks, Handball Express, Ecstasy and Mother Goose. Those that did not meet the guidelines are the Church, Night Gallery, Macks, 15, Bearhug, Uncut Club, and Leathernecks, although members of the coalition declined to elaborate on why these clubs failed to pass muster.

Although unprotected oral sex occurs regularly in some of the clubs, members of the coalition yesterday acknowledged that in their survey they did not focus on such behavior. The reason, they said, is because the AIDS risk is minimal in comparison to the risk associated with unprotected anal sex.

The coalition's surveillance effort is the latest in a struggle to regulate gay bathhouses and sex clubs. In the mid-1980s, the decision to close the bathhouses outraged many in the gay community but was applauded by some gays as a life-saving strategy.

Since that time, gays have consistently sought to reinforce the safe-sex message and to find new strategies for disseminating it. Sex clubs have made a resurgence in

the past couple of years, and AIDS educators say such sites can provide a valuable forum for educating individuals who might not otherwise come in contact with safe-sex messages.

Some gays — and some conservative critics — dismiss efforts to defend venues for sex as misguided, or worse. In a column this spring, George Will decried "the political impediments to rational AIDS policies" that has led to "resistance to targeting the risky behavior of particular groups."

Yet AIDS educators say that closing all sex clubs because some people may engage in unsafe sex would be comparable to closing all bars because some people ruin their health by drinking to excess.

Dr. Mitchell Katz, director of the city health department's AIDS Office, endorsed the coalition's approach yesterday. "It's an effort that we believe in," he said. "It's not the site that causes the infection, it's the behavior."

According to a recent study of the practices of young gay men, only 4 percent of the reported incidents of unprotected anal sex took place in sex clubs. Although members of the coalition acknowledge that it is impossible to eliminate such behavior in clubs altogether, they maintain that many of those at the clubs would be more likely to have unsafe sex if they were having sex at home.

Bathroom policies' impact

A policy which mandated a “no barebacking” policy and removed private rooms was correlated with less unprotected sex among sex club/bathroom attendees in clubs in San Francisco than in Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York.

Woods WJ, Binson D, Pollack LM, Wohlfeiler D, Stall RD and Catania JA. Public policy regulating private and public space in gay bathrooms. J Acquir Immune Defic Syndr 2003;32:417-23

How to put the sexual network approach into practice

Step 1: Collect the right information

- Where are men meeting their partners?
 - Venues can serve as proxies for understanding mixing by HIV status as well as where core group members overlap with lower-risk individuals
- Concurrency question:
 - “Have you had anal sex with the same person more than once in the last six months?”
 - If yes, “Have you had anal sex with anyone else between those two fucks (for example, did you have sex with ‘Joe’ and then ‘Sam’ and then ‘Joe’ again?)”

How to put the sexual network approach into practice

- We are not mapping sexual networks of men in San Francisco
- We are using “proxy networks” based on places where men meet their sex partners
 - Ex. Bars/Clubs, Gyms, Internet sites, Sex clubs

How to put the sexual network approach into practice

Step 2: Your ideas?

Think of innovative ideas for structural interventions that would affect the flow of HIV or STDs through sexual networks or that would modify sexual network structures

Thank you!

for more information, questions,
challenges, debates, ideas...

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