

Ageing, Attitudes and Sexual Concerns.

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My placement was in the Cathy Marsh Institute for Social Research (CMIST), on a project carrying out a dyadic analysis of how sexual behaviour impacts on the health and wellbeing of heterosexual

couples over the age of 50. There is a paucity of research in this area so my work contributed to a larger ongoing project within CMIST.

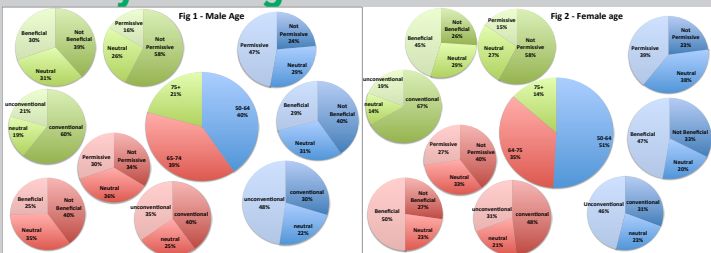
Objectives

- To investigate any gendered difference in the attitudes of couples in the 50+ age group, if attitudes impacted on sexual behaviour, concerns or satisfaction, and if there was any partner influence.
- Attitudes in question here: 'permissiveness' (extra or pre-marital sex, homosexuality etc), 'conventionality' (men have higher sex drive, sex drive decreases with age etc), and 'sex is beneficial'.
- Provide some back ground to the wider project, investigating how sexuality impacts on health outcomes for couples in the 50+ age bracket.

Method

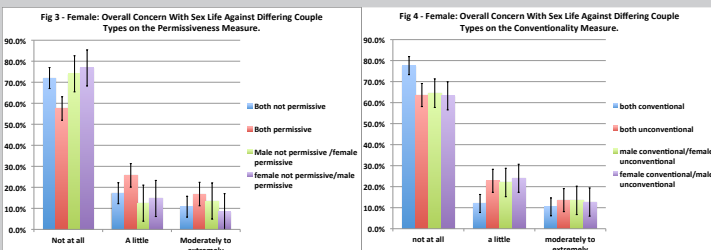
- Data gathered from the Sexual Relationships and Activities questionnaire, inserted into wave 6 of the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing.
- SPSS used to recode the 3 attitude variables into 3 categories, indicating how strongly individuals identify with each attitude.
- Excel used to represent how these attitudes are distributed by gender and age.
- Initial analysis in SPSS to investigate possible associations between the attitudes and behaviours, concerns and satisfaction and if this varies between couples with convergent or divergent attitudes
- Logistic regression in Stata to control for demographics like age, health and class, also partners influence.

Key Findings



Distribution of age by gender, plus attitudes by age.

Women are generally younger, less 'permissive' and more likely to agree 'sex is beneficial' than men. 'Conventionality' increases with age, more so for women.



Comparison of overall concern against permissiveness and conventionality in differing couple types.

Women from 'permissive' couples are significantly less likely to be not concerned, whilst those from 'conventional' couples are significantly more likely to be not concerned.

Conclusion

- This poster has women as its focus as there appears to be few significant partner influences for men. Further the area of 'concerns' had the most associations, but there were other associations for behaviours and satisfactions to be explored else where.
- Women's attitude re 'sex is beneficial', is strongly associated with overall concerns re sex life, even once theirs and their partners

Probability of being overall concerned once attitudes and demographics controlled for.

Women get slightly more concerned the more 'permissive' or 'unconventional' they are, but less concerned the more they agree 'sex is not beneficial'.

Table 1: The Impact of various attitudes on overall concern with sex life, once female age, health and class controlled for.

	Odds ratio once female demographics controlled for.	Probability
permissiveness	1.205	0.019
unconventionality	1.235	0.01
sex is not beneficial	0.822	0.008

Once male demographics and attitudes are controlled for the association of female overall concern with 'permissiveness' and 'conventionality' becomes insignificant, but the association with 'sex is not beneficial' remains significant

demographics and attitudes are taken into account.

- Women's level of 'permissiveness' or 'conventionality' is perhaps better explained by their partners demographics, primarily health and age, than by their overall concern with their sex life.
- As a larger proportion of women have male partners that are older than them, this might explain why partner influence leads to greater proportions of conventionality and less permissiveness for women.