Author's response to reviews

Title: Sex Partnerships, Health, and Social Risks of Young Men Leaving Jail: Analyzing Data from a Randomized Controlled Trial

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear BMC Public Health Editorial Board:

Thank you so much for considering our manuscript (referenced above) for publication in BMC Public Health. We sincerely appreciate the valuable reviewer feedback. Please find enclosed manuscript with the following changes incorporated within:

Feedback from BioMed Central Editorial:
1. Clinical trial registration # required: this particular project does not have a clinical trial number, per the Principal Investigator, Nicholas Freudenberg. Either the registration was not a requirement at the start of this study, or does not apply since this is a behavioral intervention with random assignment of participants. It’s not “clinical” in the sense of a medical intervention.

Feedback from Reviewer 1, Christopher K. Fairley:
2. Paper is too long, and all of the most important information is communicated in the first paragraph of the discussion: the authors substantially cut the paper by about 15 pages (paper reduced by half), eliminating unnecessary parts of the literature review, results, discussion, and tables, in order to focus on the points and major findings in the first paragraph of the discussion.
3. Would be nice to have data/statistics in the abstract: we included key data findings in the revised abstract with odds ratios and p-values.
4. Introduction is way too long as should be cut to one page: our original introduction was 7 pages long, and we have now cut it to 1 page with only a brief summary of the relevant literature to contextualize our project.
5. Results are long and tedious/don’t repeat findings in table and text: we cut 2 tables in order to address comment 2 above and meet the requirements of this particular comment. In addition, we trimmed our results section from 6 pages to 2 pages so that information is not repeated in table and text.
6. Too many tables: as described in comment 2 and 5 above, we have cut 2 tables. In the process of cutting these tables, we decided to reorganize our new Table 1 so that it presents a general overview of the sample on key indicators at the Time 1 and Time 2 interviews. We felt this was a better way to present the data from this study, given the new number of tables in the manuscript.

Feedback from Reviewer 2, Sonali Kulkarni:
7. Include statement of purpose at beginning after abstract and make introduction more cohesive: we added a statement of purpose to the beginning of the introduction, and in response to comments 2 and 4...
above, we have substantially shortened and made the introduction more cohesive.
8. Discussion spends too much time reviewing secondary findings: we shortened the sections covering secondary findings (education and employment) in the discussion section, and shortened the discussion section overall by 3 pages.
9. Tables contain too much information: we deleted 2 tables in response to comment 6 above. As described in response to comment 6 above, we also reorganized Table 1 so that it didn’t contain so much information. Now it reads as much more straightforward.
10. Intervention recommendations are not appropriate for discussion in a research report: we deleted the section on intervention recommendations, as suggested by the reviewer.

In addition to these revisions, and upon further reflection on this manuscript, we also decided to re-run the main multivariate analyses (new Table 2 and 3). None of the results changed substantially. The new results are just a more accurate reflection of what we intended to compare: people who have long-term sex partnerships only vs. people with short-term only, or both simultaneously. The change had to do with recoding the main independent variables so that the categories were more defined. The change has been described clearly in the methods section.

Thank you very much for considering this manuscript for publication in BMC Public Health. And please extend our sincere thanks to the reviewers for their thoughtful comments - they were very helpful. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Best,

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