



Intersections of HIV and gender power, identities and violence: Directions for HIV prevention

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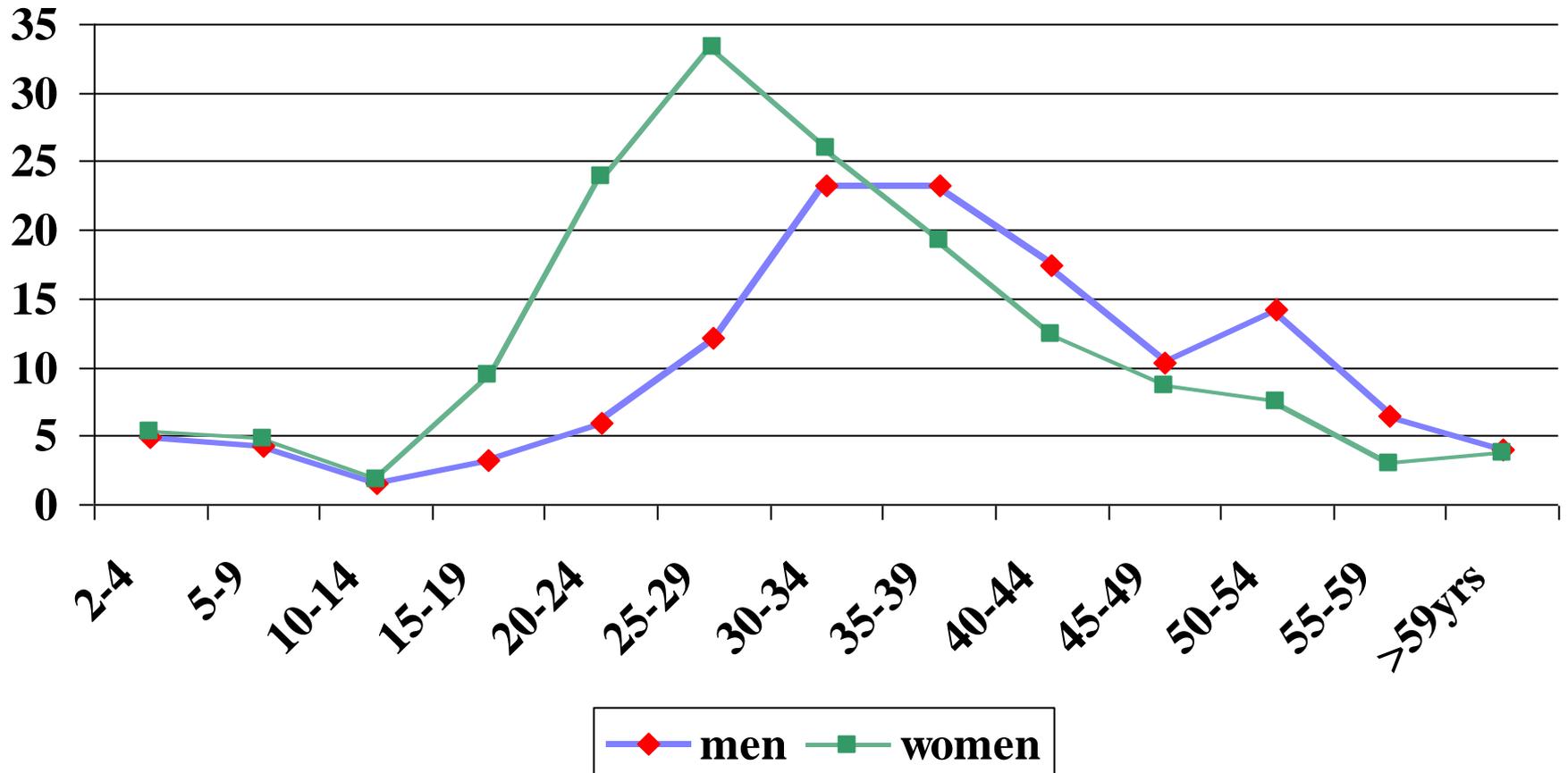
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Links between GBV & HIV: what is the evidence?

- **Very high levels of GBV**
- Rape
 - 54,926 rapes reported to the police in year 2005-6
 - 28% of adult men in the general population disclose rape perpetration (Jewkes et al 2009)
- Physical intimate partner violence:
 - victimisation disclosed by 25% of women in general population and over 40% in targeted studies
 - perpetration disclosed by over 40% of men in the general population
- **High prevalence of HIV**

HIV prevalence (%) by sex & age group, 2005

Source: HSRC national survey



Gender-based violence and HIV

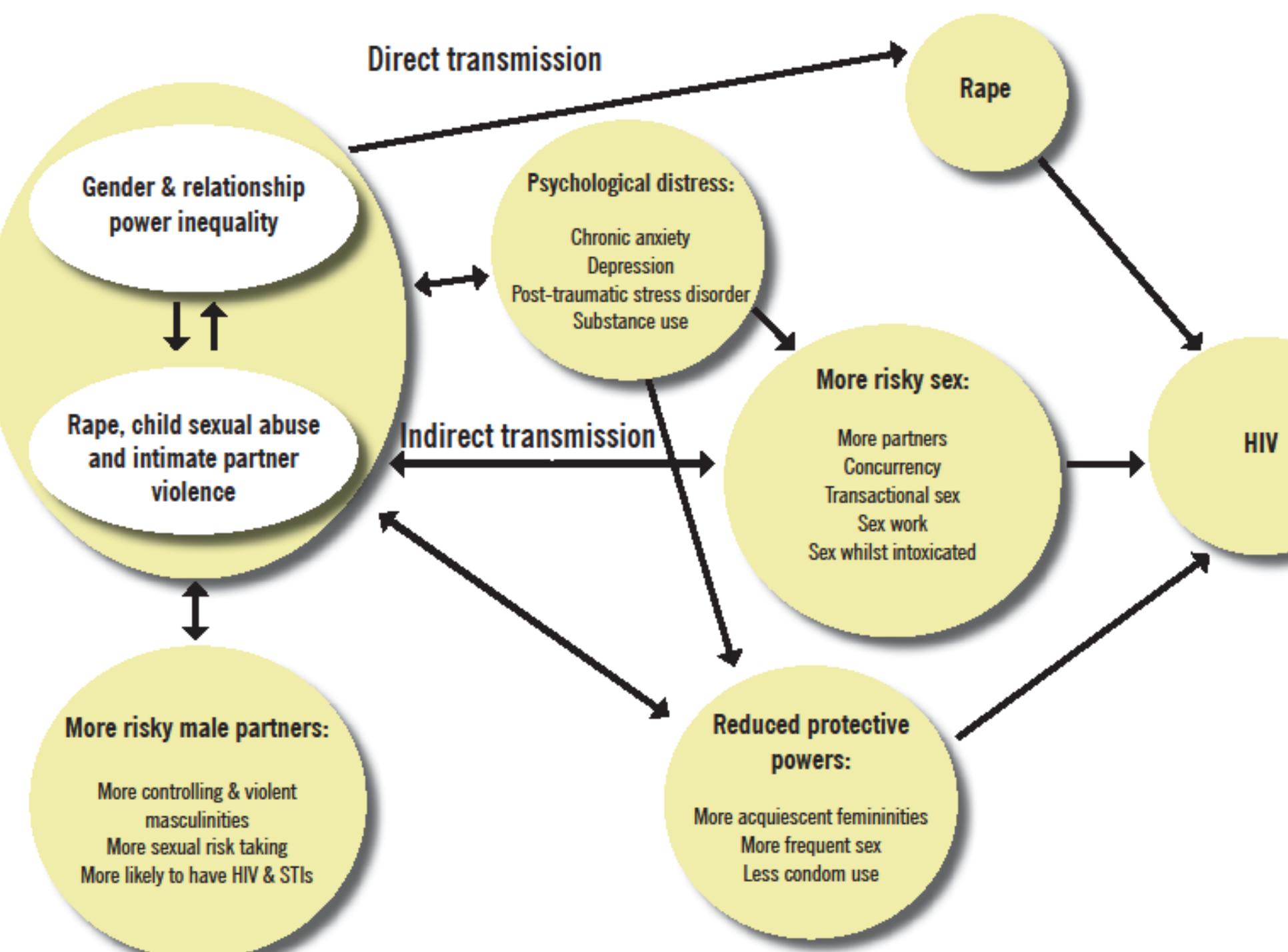
- Compelling evidence from cross-sectional research that abused women and men have used violence are more likely to have HIV
- **Evidence from Soweto:** Women who have experienced physical/sexual intimate partner violence are 54% more likely to have HIV (aOR 1.54 (95%CI 1.19, 1.99))
- Women who have least power in their relationship are more likely to have HIV (aOR 1.56 (95%CI 1.15, 2.11)) (Dunkle et al 2004)
- **Evidence from men in EC/KZN:** Men who have used physical intimate partner violence are more than twice likely to have HIV (aOR 2.23 (95%CI 1.13-4.40)) (Jewkes et al 2009)

New evidence that among young women in the Eastern Cape...

- Women with the low relationship power equity at baseline had a 50% higher HIV incidence than those with greater relationship equity (after adjusting for other risk factors)
- And those who had experienced more than one episode of intimate partner violence also had a 50% higher HIV incidence (after adjusting for other risk factors)

What does this mean in real terms?

- Calculation of the Population Attributable Fractions shows that
- 13.9% of HIV infections in young women could be prevented if no women experienced most severe gender inequity in relationships
- 11.9% of HIV infections in young women could be prevented if no women experienced intimate partner violence



What about women?

- A lot of people assume that because you can get HIV from rape, it must be the main link between gender violence and HIV
- But we have enough knowledge of rape, HIV prevalence, transmission risk etc.. to know that its very unlikely that more than 1 in a 1000 (0.1%) new HIV infections in women are due to rape
- Preventing these is critically important, but it is not rape that is the key nexus of the problems of HIV and gender-based violence

Women who experience partner violence have more risky sex (women 15-26 years, rural Eastern Cape)

	% with IPV exposure reporting the behaviour	% with no IPV reporting behaviour
Had a casual partner	34.6	17.4
Transactional sex with a casual partner	15.7	6.2
Transactional sex with a main partner	28.3	19.9
Partner 3+ years older	53.0	44.6
Sex in the last 3 mths	81.9	70.9
3+ partners in last year	19.2	7.1

Men who are violent towards women partners in the EC/KZN also have more risky sex

	% reporting the behaviour in violent men	% reporting the behaviour in non-violent men	P value
20+ partners ever	51.5%	26.0%	0.0000
Any transactional sex	81.0%	59.7%	0.0000
Sex with a prostitute	31.6%	14.6%	0.0000
High levels of alcohol in past year	39.3%	19.2%	0.0000
Rape of woman	49.6%	18.8%	0.0000
Rape of a man	6.6%	1.1%	0.0000
Consistent condom use in past year	30.7%	41.0%	0.0002

So what is underlying these associations? :

a dip into some gender theory

- RW Connell describes the existence of multiple configurations of masculinity which are hierarchically organised and structured along lines of gendered domination (of men over women, of powerful men over less powerful men etc).
- One masculine position that is dominant ('hegemonic masculinity') and generally associated with the subordination and oppression of women.
- Hegemonic masculinity is a dominant cultural model of idealised manhood, and whilst this encompasses elements of fantasy, it is important as a frame used by individual men against which to judge their 'success' as men.
- Thus it is generally viewed as a cultural norm of how to 'be a man', even if it encompasses a set of practices and expression of power which in reality in totality few men may do and have.

What does Connell say about femininity?

- More diversity in feminine ideals, but a dominant one is “emphasised femininity”, characterised by compliance with women’s subordination and an orientation towards accommodating the interests and desires of men.
- In other words, women ‘agree’ with the unequal structuring of relations, do not challenge these relations.
- Other forms of femininity are shaped around strategies of resistance, and some combine compliance, resistance and co-operation
- Forms of femininity which (either in whole or in part) emphasise compliance with hegemonic masculinity are expressed as cultural ideals of femininity, and usually in some way socially rewarded.
- Women who adopt femininities based on resistance, or indeed engage in acts of resistance, are often marginalised and stigmatised.

Dominant ideas of hegemonic masculinity in South Africa

- We are still a society that has a very prominent ideal of male success proven through sexual success with women, as epitomised by President Zuma and his multiple concurrent partners.
- Research from Mthatha shows sexual competition to be a key element in successful (young) African manhood – i.e. being able to win desired women, keep them (prevent them from being seduced by others), and show evidence of being a man in control (of others).
- Whilst the power of men is not established solely through the use of force (the cultural foundations of patriarchy are far too deep for that) the use of violence, within limits, is viewed as legitimate (understandable) for men

What of women?

- Dominant ideas of successful young womanhood where success is proven through affirmation by men, in a way that is largely complicit with hegemonic masculinity
- Encompasses very conservative femininities, where there is very substantial compliance to the will of men and considerable lengths to excuse male hurtful, controlling, violent and risky behaviour
- Notable tendency to frame the prevailing gender order as a product of 'nature' and unchangeable culture

'Modern girl' femininity

- Much more prevalent in urban areas and among the relatively more advantaged classes
- Framed in a way that resists conservatism and incorporates elements of empowerment to varying degrees
- Still an emphasis on success viewed in terms of desirability to men, often framed in terms of sexual agency and acknowledgement of women's sexual desire and power.
- Womanhood is tested through flirtation and picking up desired men, and through exercise of sexual power over them, as in elements of transactional sex
- Performance of womanhood requires being partnered, often having more than one boyfriend ("walking on two legs")
- Keeping these men for 'modern girls' also requires tolerance of their misdemeanours

Putting it together

- Compliance with forms of acquiescent femininity is rewarded, not just by men, but by other women.
- Women with desirable (usually employed or otherwise with money and handsome) partners are admired by their peers, and married women are respected in families and communities.
- Women often make trade offs between tolerance of their men and social or material rewards.
- Hegemonic masculinity is sexually rewarded, women often want their heg. masc. man
- It is important to see hegemonic masculinity, as well as acquiescent femininities, having deep cultural roots and thus models of behaviour that may be hard for individuals to critique and exercise real choices around.

What are the implications for prevention?

- If we view sexual practices as rooted in and *flowing from* gender identities, we then need to address our attention to changing these, rather than the individual behaviours.
- In real terms this means focusing attention on building more gender equitable and caring masculinities, and less acquiescent femininities.
- Indications of the value of this are seen in the results of the Stepping Stones RCT evaluation

Stepping Stones evaluation

- A gender transformative programme for HIV prevention that aims to improve sexual health through building stronger, more gender-equitable relationships
- Comprehensive approach to SRH & HIV prevention that uses participatory learning approaches, including critical reflection and drama, and communication skills building, to empower participants to develop new understandings of themselves and their relations to others
- Has been used in the E Cape from 1998
- Evaluation was conducted in 70 villages around Mthatha from 2002 - 2006
- With 2800 young men and women

Main findings

- Stepping Stones led to a 33% reduction in new genital herpes infections in young men and women over 2 years
- Stepping Stones is the only purely behavioural intervention in Africa to have shown an impact on a biological indicator of sexual risk (i.e one that isn't vulnerable to reporting bias)

In men

- Men in Stepping Stones reduced significantly reported perpetration of intimate partner violence across two years of follow-up
- They also demonstrated significant reductions in male participation in transactional sex and problem drinking at 12 months
- Qualitative research shows men were empowered and it made them more socially responsible in general, as well as more considerate and better able to communicate with their partners. It changed the way they saw themselves and behaved ***as men***

Stepping Stones in women

- Its not very clear how the reduction in herpes in women was achieved. Qualitative research suggests it probably was through women having less sex because they split up with cheating boyfriends or simply felt they had more culturally accepted space in relationships for declining or delaying sex than for condom use
- It was clear that interventions with women need to very tangibly empower women and enable them to challenge and transform how they see themselves as women if they are to be successful

Conclusions

- There is strong evidence linking violence and gender inequity in relationships to HIV risk
- Sexual practices need to be seen as flowing from gender identities, and this provides a frame for understanding **why** men and women behave in the way that they do.
- It enables reflection on the emotional and material context within which sexual behaviours are enacted, in particular the broader struggles, aspirations, desires and needs that motivate men and women's behaviour.
- It follows that only when we understand this, will we be able to change sexual behaviours and thereby reduce the risk of HIV infection.