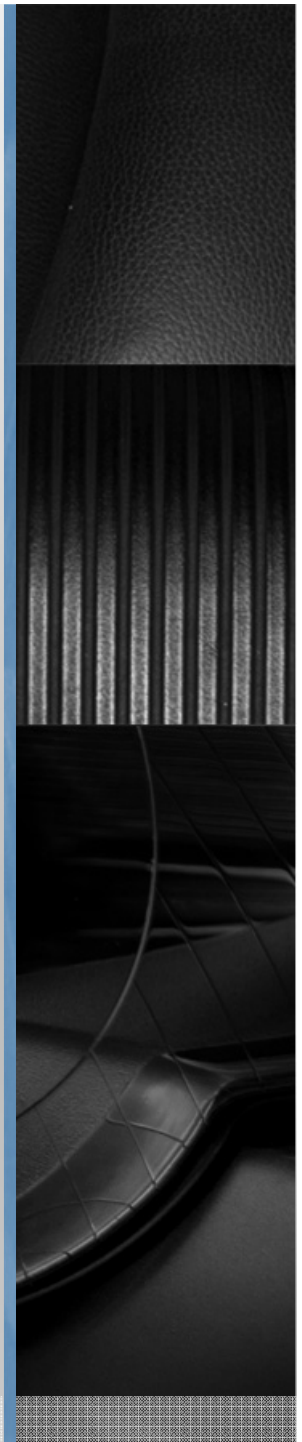



**PLAYING THE GOOD WIFE:
EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN SOCIAL
CONSTRUCTIONS OF
WOMANHOOD AND RISKS FOR
CONTRACTING HIV; A CASE
STUDY OF BOTHAVILLE**

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“The way we understand the world is a product of a historical process of interaction and negotiation between groups of people”

McLeod (1997)



Methodology

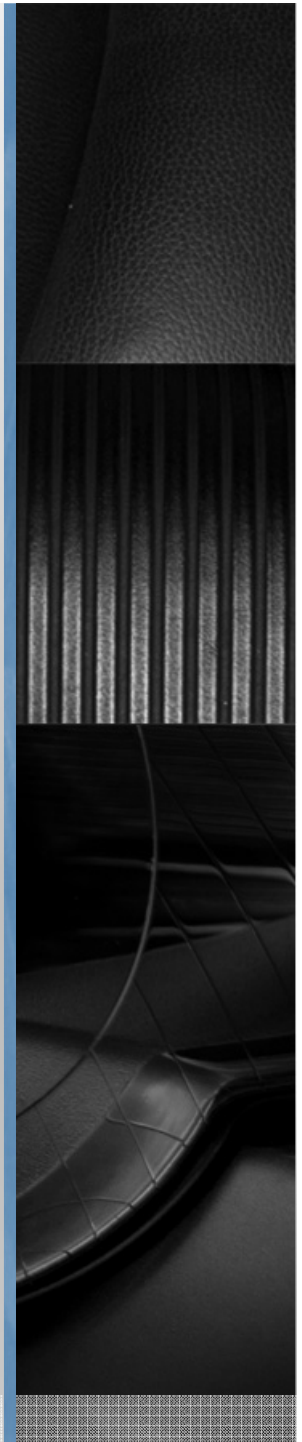
- 2 samples selected
- Relational outcropping and expert sampling (sample 1 and 2)
- 20 women – support groups in Bothaville, Free State
- 8 experts involved in 1 focus group discussion
- Interviews lasted 1-1.5 hours long
- Focus group discussion lasted 2 hours
- Analysis- thematic analysis
- Confidentiality and anonymity
- All names used are pseudonyms



Description of Participants

- Equal number of employed (10) and unemployed (10) participants for sample 1
- The age range of the participants was from 25 to 44 years (mean= 34.05).
- Race group:- all women were African
- Second sample:- magistrate, social worker, CBO employee, prosecutor, councillor, clergyman, police official and criminal court manager

CONSTRUCTIONS OF WOMANHOOD





Connell's concepts of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity

- The conceptualization of the ideal masculinity
- Femininity that is defined around compliance with subordination [by men] and oriented to accommodating the interests and desires of men.

“Just as hegemonic masculinity is given power as a “cultural norm”, forms of femininity that either in whole or in part emphasize compliance with this are expressed as cultural ideals of femininity, and are usually in some way socially rewarded” Jewkes and Morrell (2010)

- The extent to which women are able to risk losing (or not accessing) the rewards of acquiescence varies depending on other aspects of their emotional and/or material well-being.



INDISCRIMINATE IDEALIZATION OF MARRIAGE

Kelebogile: “I am too old to marry again. Where will I find another husband at my age?”

“The dominant idea of successful young womanhood is one where success is proven through being desirable to men.....Women with desirable partners are admired by their peers, and respected in families and communities” Jewkes and Morrell (2010)- Reward

In 2007, more white S. Africans divorced than black S. Africans (9935 versus 9055), despite the fact that the former represent only 9% of the population, compared to the latter group's 80%. Jewkes and Morrell (2010)- Sanction



PASSIVITY

a. Receptivity to sexual advances

- **Modiehi:** “You are married, so sex with your husband is part of marriage. It’s not about you anymore” :- marriage as a proxy for sex??
- Loss of control over the circumstances of sex such as negotiating the use of protection



PASSIVITY cont.....

b. Acceptance of victimization

Maditaba: “You have to be the mother of the household and deal with issues of your own household.....even my family would think I am crazy if I report every time he assaults me” (trivializing abuse; abuse constructed as part of marriage)

- In a Soweto study women who were beaten by their husbands or boyfriends were 48% more likely to become infected by HIV than those who were not (Dunkle et al, quoted in: UNAIDS, UNFPA and UNIFEM, 2004: 46)
- Connell’s concept of hegemonic masculinity explains clustering in SA



DEPENDENCY and SUBORDINATION

a. Financial dependency and emotional subordination

- All (10) of the employed participants earned less than their male partners- this was constructed as the norm

Dieketseng: -"As my man he should provide for me. My earnings do count but he is the man of the house and he should be a provider".

Matshidiso: -"It has always been like that since we were growing up. The duty of the man is to provide for the family".

"At an intimate partnership level, unequal power relations between women and men, make it difficult for women to influence when, where and how sexual relations occur or to negotiate safe sex" (Piot, 2001)- Resource theory



DEPENDENCY and SUBORDINATION cont...

- **Emotional subordination**
- **“Women are expected to avoid behaving in a way that threatens men’s sense of control, failing which they are expected to endure and accept their physical punishment”** Jewkes and Morell (2010)
- In a Soweto study, women who were emotionally or financially dominated by their partners were 52% more likely to be HIV infected than those who were not (Dunkle et al, quoted in: UNAIDS, UNFPA and UNIFEM, 2004: 46)



CONCLUSIONS and DISCUSSION

- There are higher chances of achieving the goals of HIV prevention through changing gender identities rather than focusing on individual sexual behaviours
- Prevalent notions of womanhood limit women's ability to protect themselves from HIV infection and are both a cause and a risk factor for HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS, UNFPA and UNIFEM, 2004)
- Women's vulnerabilities result from contexts in which they have little control over sex, either because of unequal power relations or because of economic choices (Piot; 2001)
- Women need structural support to enable them to forego the benefits of complying with subordination

SILENCE IS

VIOLENCE

THANK YOU

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