The science of gender equality

or why this isn’t just about working with women

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What are the views of South African men and women on gender equity?

![Bar chart showing the views of South African men and women on gender equity.](chart)
Rate of psychological abuse: 43.7%
Rate of physical violence: 33.1%
Rate of sexual abuse: 25.2%
Rate of economic abuse: 22.3%

Perpetration
Experience
Origins of gender socialisation & roots of GBV

• Gender socialisation of children, i.e. the process of learning social expectations about appropriate goals and practices for men (and boys) and women (and girls), and concomitant expectations and experiences of power, starts from early life.

• Recognizing that social expectations change with age, and that there are multiple ways of ‘being a man/boy’ (or woman/girl), in any given setting, there some dominant cultural models which are esteemed and socially rewarded and others that are not, and are to varying degrees subject to pressure, sanctions or stigma.

• The process of gender socialisation involves learning about power and social value, and messages are conveyed through social institutions, policies and laws as well as socialisation at home and in the community.
Gender socialisation and relationships

• Gender socialisation around relationships starts at home and with the family, but also draws on experiences from multiple areas of social life – including peers, school, media, community etc.

• Whilst globally there are cultural and socio-economic differences in gender socialisation, there are strands of abiding similarity.

• This is most clearly seen in the case of children who are raised in homes with violence, as notably across all cultural settings, such boys are more likely to subsequently abuse their partners, and women who are similarly raised are more likely to become victims.
What is the process through which this occurs?

- Violence between parents is incredibly distressing for children, but at the same time it may normalise controlling and violent behaviours.
- It may encourage boys to equate manhood with having power over women and if necessary using violence to gain this.
- It may also be associated with role modelling other aspects of relationships which enhance the likelihood of cycles of violence, including poor communication, abuse of alcohol, expressions of low self-esteem, and general expectations of women’s subordination.
- Important to recognise that these are also learnt by some boys/men who have not experienced intra-parental violence.
And for women?

- Similar processes occur with normalisation of marked gender hierarchy and acceptance of the use of violence
- But, important to recognise that these ideas are not restricted to women raised in homes where they experience violence
- Femininities that are constructed around acquiescence to male domination and accommodation of the demands and desires of men are common in many settings, and often involve acceptance of (or excuse for) the use of violence
- Women may not see this as a choice, it may be ‘how things are’ or have to be
- They are strongly socially rewarded, not least through rewards given for ‘keeping the family together’
Hegemony: power (of men) exercised not predominantly through the use of force but through the consent of the powerless men and women in Gauteng Province, South Africa agreeing with statements on gender relations.
So

• Picture in South Africa is of a very high level of public expression of support for (something that sounds like) gender equity
• Very high prevalence of violence
• High level of acceptance of women’s subordination by men and women
• We will see that the latter is strongly linked to experience of violence
Women: relationship between views on gender relations and having experienced IPV

Gender statements:
husband has a right to punish wife by beating (p=0.029),
and, beating is a sign of love (p=0.012)
Intersections of gender & economic power: poorer South African women hold more conservative views on gender measured on the GEM scale (p<0.0001)
Relationship between economic power and IPV

prevalence of IPV victimisation/perpetration by women's ability to mobilise resources and men's experience of hunger

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of IPV (victim/perpetrator)</th>
<th>Women: hard or v. hard to find $30 in emergency</th>
<th>easy or v.easy</th>
<th>Men: ever hungry due to lack of money</th>
<th>never hungry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% IPV</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Intersections of gender power & education: less educated South African men hold more conservative views on gender measured on the GEM scale \((p<0.0001)\), relationship persists after adjusting for income.
How do we explain patterns of intersections of socio-economic & gender power?

- Exposure to other ideas of gender relations
- Men’s perceived stress / vulnerability translated into more emphasised exercise of power in domestic arena
- Women’s economic dependence on men, and acceptance of lack of possibility of independence
- Women may perceived costs of risks in gender relations if status quo challenged to be too high
- Poorer women have few alternative life courses (and avenues for entertainment, self-esteem etc), and so engage in relationships which may reward in some ways and cost in others
- Question of the direction of causation: boys and girls abused in childhood and early adult life may be less able to achieve their economic potential and more likely to be violent/re-victimised
Gender inequality can’t just be explained in terms of economic power

• Different SES measures map differently on to violence victimisation / perpetration
• For men:
  • The relationship between income for both violence and rape perpetration is an inverted U, so men with some but not much income have a higher prevalence than those with none or high income
  • Education may mitigate the effects of other measures of poverty, but hunger persists as important
• For women:
  • A strong association between low SES and violence victimisation in women may be substantially explained by childhood trauma exposure
  • The relationship is uneven, yet women need economic power to get respect in a family and control their lives,
  • But its not all they need
• The next challenge is to understand the connections between gender inequality and violence:

• Both need to be addressed
Motivations for rape

- Sexual entitlement
- Anger
- Boredom
- Alcohol
- Fun
- Cleaning

- Girl<15 yrs
- Girlfriend
- Non-partner
- Gang rape
Multivariable model of factors associated with raping (age adjusted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>OR</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Childhood trauma scale</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>0.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raped by a man</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother's education: none</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender equitable attitudes scale</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life circumstances less good than peers</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>0.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-social personality/blame externalisation</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past year drug use</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>0.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever a gang member</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;20 sexual partners</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever had transactional sex</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>0.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical IPV perpetration: never</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>0.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Multivariable poisson models of relative incidence of HIV of exposure to IPV & gender inequity in a relationship

Adjusted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship power scale:</th>
<th>IRR</th>
<th>95%CI</th>
<th>Pvalve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mid/high equity</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>low equity</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Physical or sexual IPV

| none or 1          | 1.00  |       |        |
| >1 episode         | 1.51  | 1.04  | 2.21   | 0.032 |
Implications

• It follows that effective long term violence prevention strategies have to entail working to build gender equity, effectively intervening to change men and boys, as well as women and girls

• Critical challenge is how to do this in way which is appropriately complex
Conclusions:

• Important to develop a multi-level and multi-factorial approach to violence prevention
• Building gender equity needs to be part of the strategy
• Needs to involve working with men and boys as well as with women and girls
• Need to include policy, interventions, structural interventions and support for victims
• Needs to recognise the need to build gender equity broadly but also to reduce the costs to women of working for gender equity, through removing structural barriers
• There is need for far more research on which needs to be done, what is effective in which populations, and to learn more about the circumstances in which what we try doesn’t work!