



SOCIAL NORMS AND GENDER IDENTITIES SHAPING WOMEN'S AND COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AMONG WOMEN IN THE RURAL EASTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA

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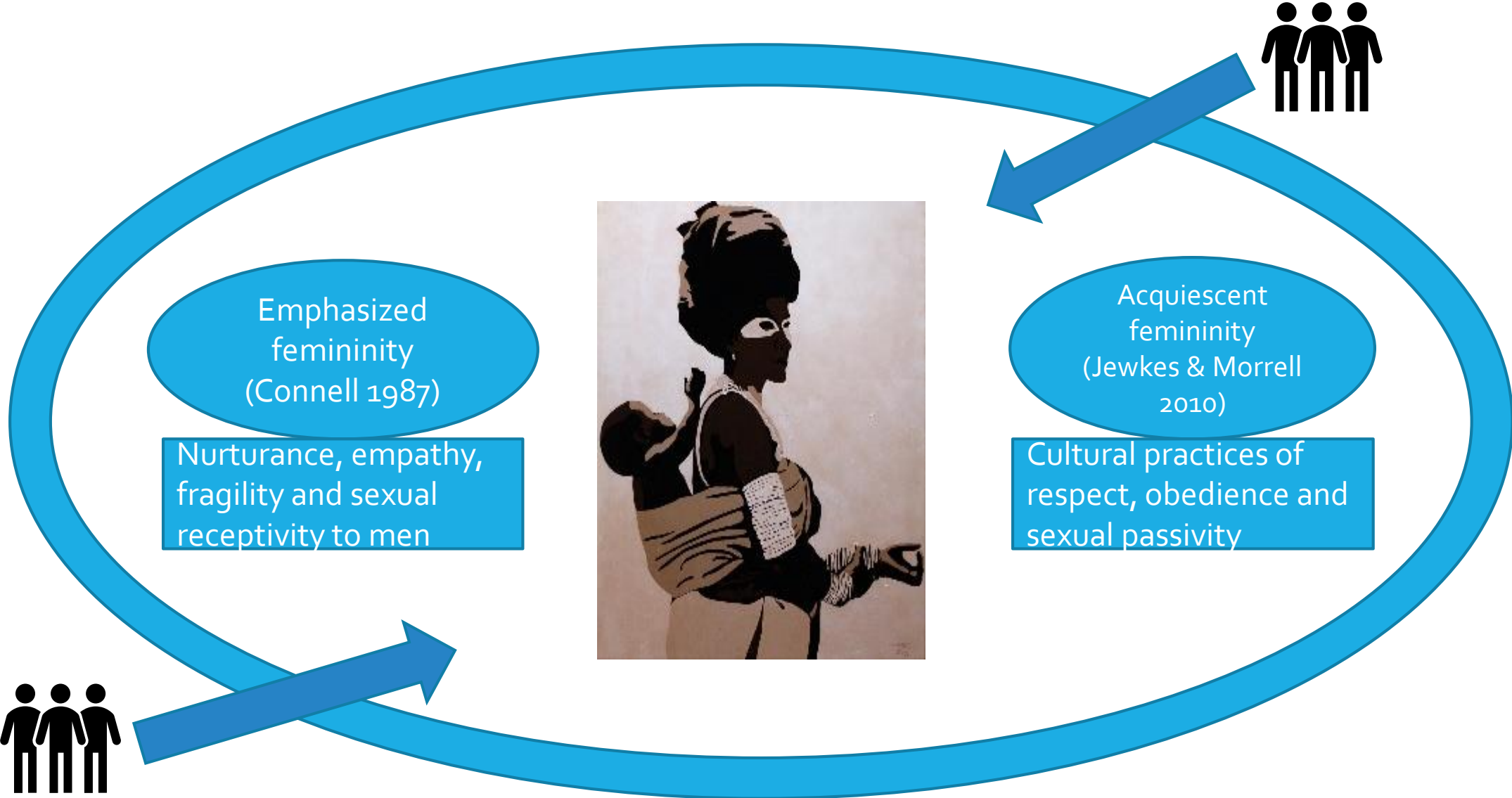
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Background

- South Africa has a high prevalence of SGBV
- Harmful notions of masculinity are one of the social factors that contribute to perpetration (Jewkes & Morrell 2010)
- Women with low relationship power are significantly more likely to have experienced IPV (Jewkes et al 2010)
- Violence is used to fulfil the socially expected roles of a man and to monitor women's adherence to the roles of a woman (Boonzaier 2008)



Theoretical framework



Aim of the presentation

- To explore how underlying social norms and notions of femininity influence women's and community responses to IPV in the rural Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

Methods

- Part of a larger PhD project
- Small town in rural Eastern Cape province, South Africa (Pondoland)
- Qualitative study using ethnographic methods
 - Participant observation (60 days, 4m)
 - 26 women participated in IDIs = 40 IDIs
 - 40 women participated in FGDs = 4 FGDs
- Key informant and community access
- Ethics: SAMRC & Wits Ethics Committees



Social background of informants



- 27-53 years
- Of 26 in IDIs, 19 were aged 40 years or younger
- Livelihoods
- Many high school incomplete
- The majority had children
- Half were ever-married: 6 currently married, 4 widowed, 3 divorced, and the rest (13) had never married

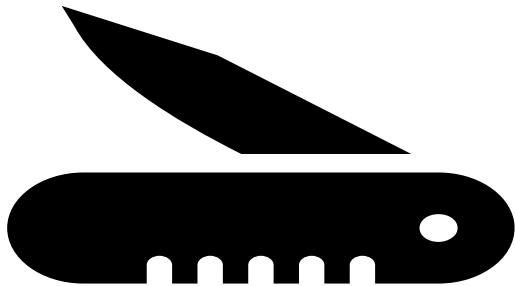
Ideal femininity



- Notions of dignity, respectfulness, obedience, perseverance and sexual passivity

"A woman's destiny is in marriage"

- Half of ever-married women had been forced into marriage through *"ukuthwala"*
- Being unmarried did not free single women from the good woman ideals



"A woman holds a knife by the blade – it's about perseverance. It says that she knows how to persevere even when it's painful"

Ways in which women were mistreated by partners

- A range of abuse by partners, ex-partners or suitors
- Severe forms of physical abuse, one woman was left scared
- Abandonment by husbands for many years
- Lack of financial support by husbands or child maintenance
- **Male multiple partnering:** *"I would say he abuses me by what he's doing because he would just go to that (woman)... You see when we fight here it's about her"*



Factors associated with being mistreated

- Male multiple partnering
- Male control and jealousy
- Alcohol drinking
- Having been married by ukuthwala



Community responses to sexual violence

- Sexual violence by main or ex-partner was confused by notions that agreeing to date is consent to sex

“He carried me over to his home and did as he pleased with me”
(Faniswa, 45 and married)

- Connections between rape and *ukuthwala*
 - Faniswa was forced to marry her rapist
 - A common response purported to punish a rapist or make him take responsibility because she was ***“damaged”***
 - Stigmatising community response to rape that deny the raped women’s voice or choice

Family and community responses to IPV

- In-laws were first port of call to resolve conflict, but barely effective
- Married women who left abusive husbands were recompensed with resistance from partner (or his family)
- Women were blamed for the abuse, notably by other women



Women's responses to IPV

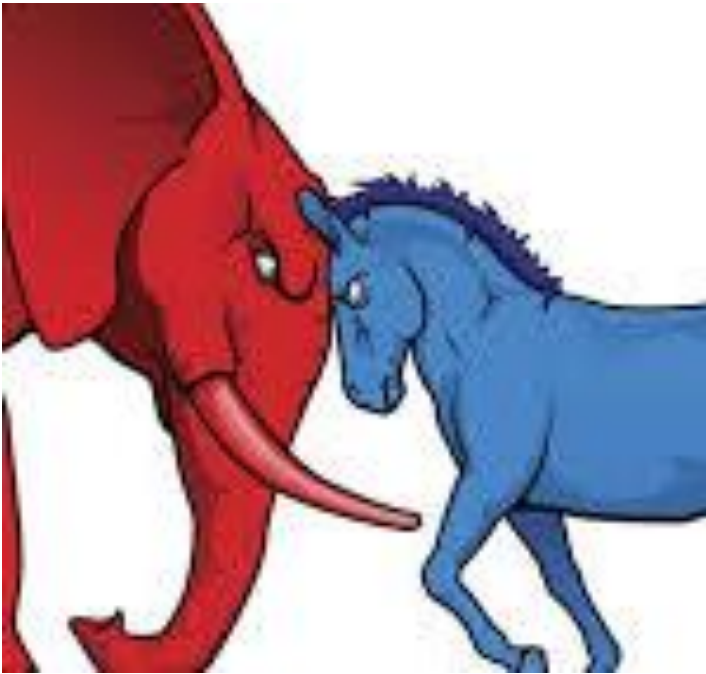
"I am staying here just for the sake of perseverance"
(Lizeka, 48 and married)

- A few women reported to the police, some had reached reporting fatigue, others used Protection Orders to scare men and generally IPV continued with relative impunity

"I didn't go with the hope that one day this thing would come right - just to give him a long rope"



Women fighting



- Some women fought back during beatings, others hit first in anticipation of a beating
 - *“He intentionally orchestrated incidents to make me jealous”*
(Welekazi, unmarried 30 year old)
- Perceptions claimed fighting back was merely “inviting” a severe beating
- Stigmatisation of these women as *“women who beat men”*
- Married women limited to challenge husbands with multiple partners so they picked on GFs and some beating GFs

Mom stabs daughter's three alleged rapists

By Tembile Sgqolana | Sep 06, 2017

An Eastern Cape woman has stabbed a man to death and wounded two others allegedly when she found them gang-raping her 27-year-old daughter.

Community raises bail for mother who killed alleged rapist

SOUTH AFRICA Monday 11 September 2017 - 6:00am



Police fail to make 223 000 arrests for domestic abuse in 2 years
6 September 2017

In the last two years, the police failed to make a startling 223 306 arrests for domestic abuse in terms of the Domestic Violence Act (DVA). This is according to a reply to a DA Parliamentary Question. The police therefore arrested less than 1% of people that committed any form of domestic abuse.

Summary of key findings

- Notions of ideal femininity conspired to undermine women's responses SGBV
- The role of marriage and notions of perseverance hindered constructive responses to SGBV
- Complicity with male dominance and excusing men's bad behaviour
- BUT, some resistance of the ideal by married and unmarried women as they challenged abusive partners
- Fighting back indicated some women's attempts at agency or assertiveness but signalled their disempowerment to stop IPV, or other negative male behaviour

Implications for prevention & practice

Change norms

Critically change social constructions of femininity and marriage and the pretext of culture

Address complicity

Need to go back to the basics to address women's complicity and excusing violent men while women blame one another

Strengthen services

Need for concerted efforts to strengthen GBV response services – criminal justice system to really act and not discourage women from reporting

Scale up programmes

Need for scaling up evidence based programmes such as Stepping Stones to build gender equitable and harmonious relationships among couples

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