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**G=**ENDER  
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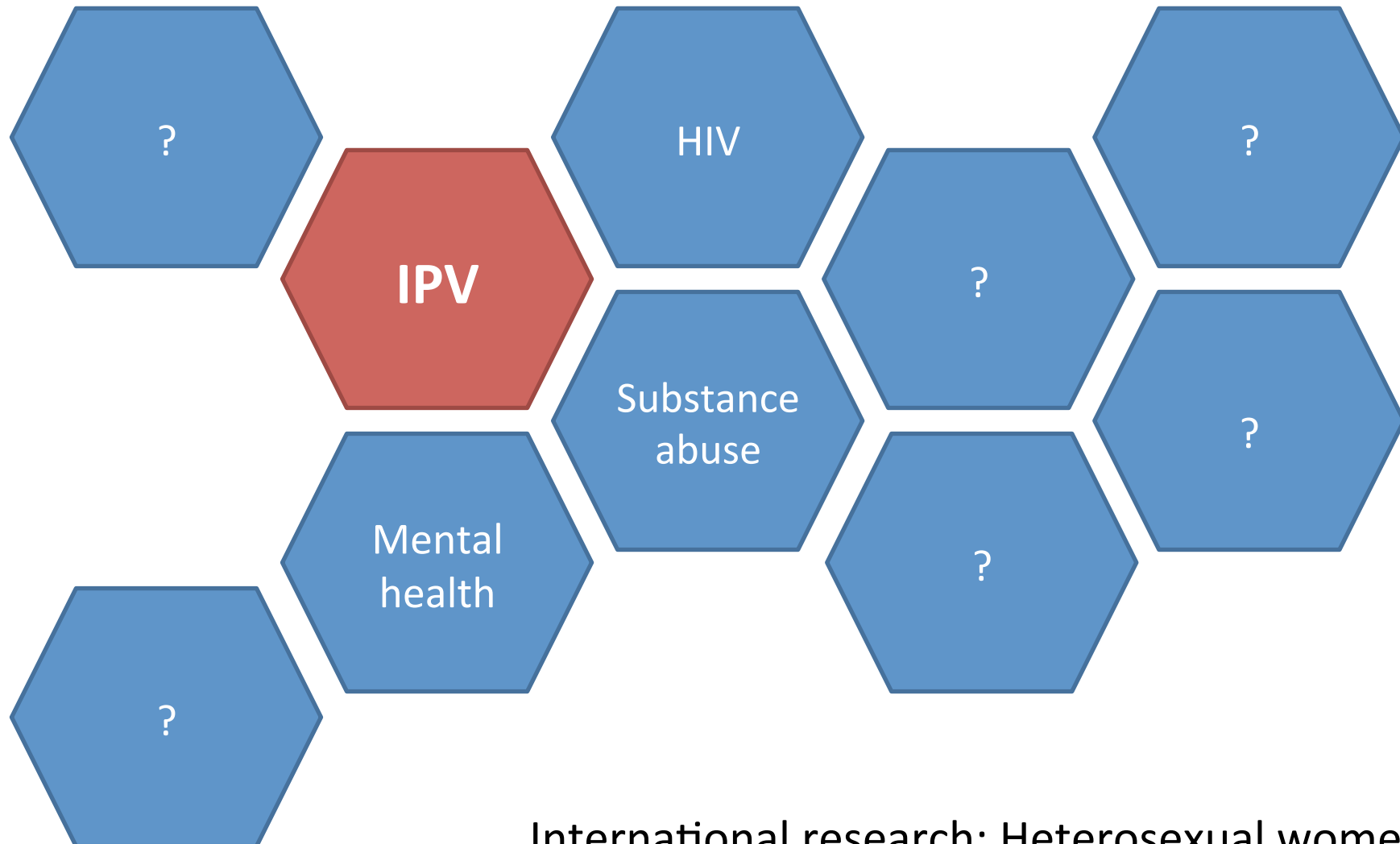
EVIDENCE to IMPACT

08-09 October 2018  
Johannesburg, South Africa

**(Dis)connections between intimate partner violence in women's heterosexual and same-sex relationships**

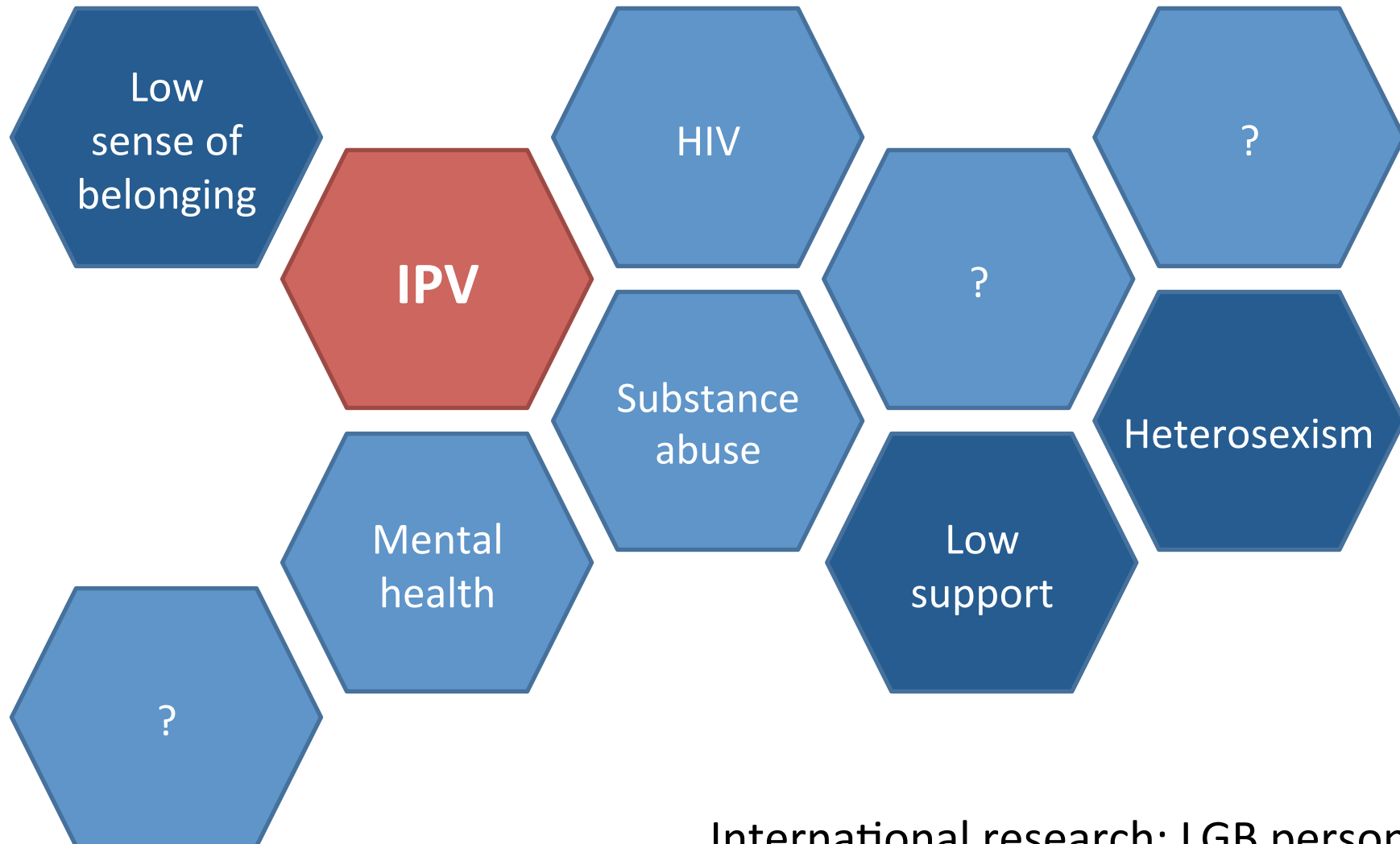
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# Associations with intimate partner violence



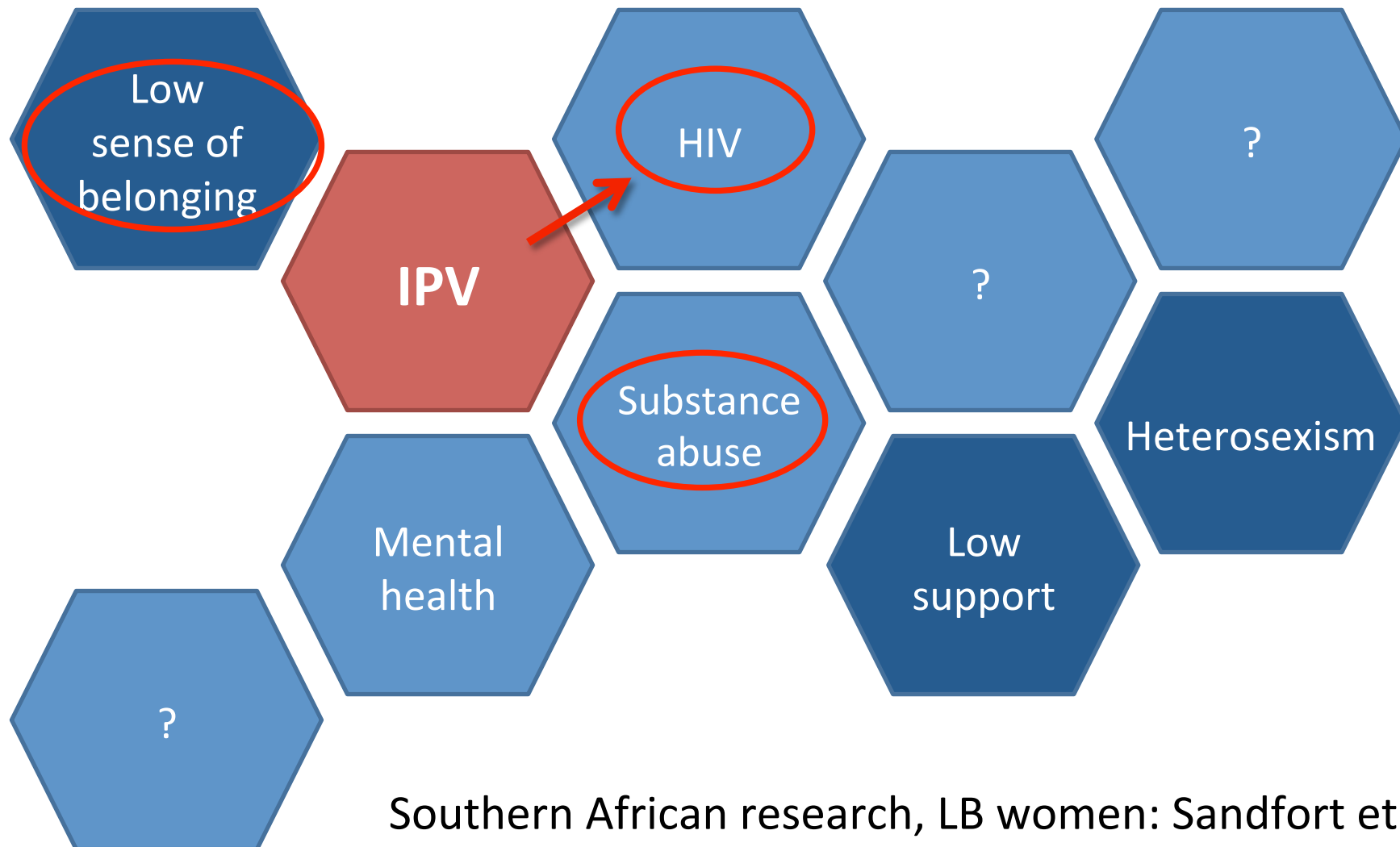
International research: Heterosexual women

# Associations with intimate partner violence



International research: LGB persons

# Associations with intimate partner violence



Southern African research, LB women: Sandfort et al. (2013; 2015)

# The study



- IPV, power and control in women's same-sex relationships
- Qualitative, feminist,
- Five focus group discussions with 42 participants
  - Lesbian, bisexual, queer, 'WSW'
  - 18-35, 'coloured', 'black'
  - Two rural sites, one urban site in Western Cape
  - High levels of unemployment, insecure employment
- Narrative-discursive analysis

## Masculine dominance



Toshi: Even though we are both women, there must be one who can **stand up for both of you.**

Nandipha: Yes .... Should you [and your girlfriend] be walking down the street and a man wants to mess with her, then you must stand up for her. I am not going to leave it like that. [All the participants nod their heads in agreement]. **I am going to stand up for her, I won't just stand back.** (Rural township, Vredendal)

## Masculine dominance



Thembeke: You have to **be strict** about your girlfriend because, you know, our society is like that.

Dudu: The reason why you **keep her next to you**, is because this one [pointing to another group member] is gonna take my girlfriend.

Linda: [Interjects] They're gonna do it [have sex] behind my back.

Thembeke: They've got bad habits [referring to other lesbians] ... (Urban township, Cape Metro)

## Masculine dominance



Pumla: My partner was femme but she was **acting butch** .... She would call me and ask where I am, for instance. I would be with my friend and she would want to see me then and there. I would have to immediately go because if I don't rush back I know she will throw a brick at me. (Rural township, Mbekweni)



## Feminine subservience



Wendy: I would say that if a girl is playing the softer role, then **she can't be demanding**, she shouldn't really be demanding [laughing].  
(Rural township, Vredendal)

## Feminine subservience



Facilitator: When people fight back [in a relationship], what is that seen as?

Patricia: Defiance.

Nomsa: **Woman, you are defying me!** Woman, who do you think you are? I'll beat the hell out of you!

Thembi: If your dad and your mom are fighting and then your mom tries to slap the dad back – it's defiance, it's disrespectful. So why should I as a butch lesbian be disrespected by you as a feminine lesbian? **Then I'm weaker than my father.** (Urban township, Cape Metro)

## Feminine subservience



Vuyo: They are so used to the norm of being beaten up all the time that they cannot take not being beaten up. So, they expect that, from the previous relationships, when they come to me. But I'm very soft so I'm not gonna beat you, why should I do that? And then **they expect me to [be violent] and if I'm not, then they say I'm soft.** (Urban township, Cape Metro)

## Discussion



- Heterogendered masculinities and femininities
  - Make violence and control possible
  - Normalises violence through linking with familiar norms
- Heterosexism, impoverishment, race/class nexus: heteronormative genders become enviable
- Reclaiming respectable personhood

## Implications for policy and practice



- Dedicated safe spaces for queer women
  - Interrogate norms
  - Script egalitarian relationship norms
  
- Solidarity work between queer- and heterosexual-focused IPV organisations
  - Preparedness, training needs?
  - Coordinated community-based perspective
  
- Macro-interventions addressing structural constraints on queer women's agency

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