

CLASS

Emerging Voices

A Report on Education in South African Rural Communities

2011/12

in South Africa

Gender Role Attitudes and Sexual Risk

HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL

1990



HSRC
Human Sciences
Research Council

International Conference on

Biopsychosocial

Aspects

of HIV Infection

Abstracts

Volume 11

Form 1-11

July 2007

**Gender Role Attitudes and Sexual
Risk Among Adolescents in South
Africa**

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Youth and Risky Sexual Behavior

- Young people have the fastest-growing infection rates.
- 50% of youth in South Africa are sexually active by age 16, close to 80% by age 20 (Eaton, Flisher & Aarø, 2003)
- Boys have earlier sexual debut
- Majority of adolescents at risk for HIV infection through unprotected sex.

Traditional Gender Roles

- Perceptions of how men and women are supposed to think and behave within the context of heterosexual relationships
- Considerable evidence showing men with more traditional gender role ideologies are more likely to report sexual coercion and relationship violence (Santana, et al., 2006)

Male Gender Roles and Sexual Risk Behaviors

- Need better understanding of transmission dynamics or to understand why youth fail to better protect themselves as HIV rates not declining
- Growing literature that connects gender-related socialization to risky sexual behaviour

Masculinity and Sexual Risk

- Men who believe that risk-taking is an expression of masculinity may be more likely to engage in high-risk sexual and drug-using behaviors (Pleck, et al., 1993; Kowalski, 1993)
- Males (including adolescents) with traditional ideologies more likely to report sexual infidelity, more casual sex partners, unprotected sex, negative attitudes toward condoms (Santana, et al., 2006)

Masculinity and Sexual Risk

- Women are especially vulnerable
- Traditional gender roles also create vulnerability in men
- Gender Role Strain Theory: an individuals beliefs about the importance of men adhering to culturally defined norms for male behavior (Pleck, 1981; Pleck, Sonenstein & Ku, 1992; Pleck et al., 1994)

Objective

- **The objective of this presentation is to examine the relationship between traditional gender roles and adolescent sexual risk**

HIV and Alcohol Prevention in Schools (HAPS)

- HAPS is a school-based intervention research project targeted to Grade 9 school-going youth in a township in South Africa
- The intervention program focuses on delaying early sexual debut and reducing the onset and use of alcohol.
- South African curriculum is an integration and adaptation from Project Northland 'Amazing Alternatives' curriculum (Perry) and Reducing the Risk (RTR) effective in reducing HIV-related risk behavior (CDC)

Programme

- Delivered by learner identified peers
- Key material is the creation of four characters who represent negative, positive or transitional characters who are confronted with choices around risky behavior
- 15 session curriculum includes facts about alcohol and risky sexual behavior, consequences of actions, resisting (peer) pressure, decision-making, etc.

Design

- Eight high schools located in Pietermaritzburg (90km outside of Durban) randomly assigned to either an intervention or comparison condition (4 each)
- Assessments: Baseline (T1), 3-4 months (T2), 1 year (T3). Two independent cohorts sampled

Sample Characteristics

Variable	N	%
Age		
13 or younger	77	4
14	471	22
15	646	30
16	508	23
17	312	14
18 or older	169	8

Gender Characteristics

Variable	N	%
Gender		
Male	1121	51
Female	1074	49
Ever had Sex		
Yes	738	34
No	1437	66
By Gender	Males (n=1099)	Females (n=1059)
Yes	486 (67%)	244 (33%)

Wanted to Have Sex (1st time)

	Yes		Ambivalent		No	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Male	331	65	119	24	57	11
Female	63	28	50	22	117	50

$X^2(2, 740)=144.05, p <.001$

Selected Scale Reliabilities

Scale	T1	T2	T3
Masculinity Scale 1	.72	.76	.79
Masculinity Scale 2	.70	.72	.69
Condom Attitudes	.56	.62	.66
Peer Norms (sex, have sex, pressure to have sex)	.62	.65	.61

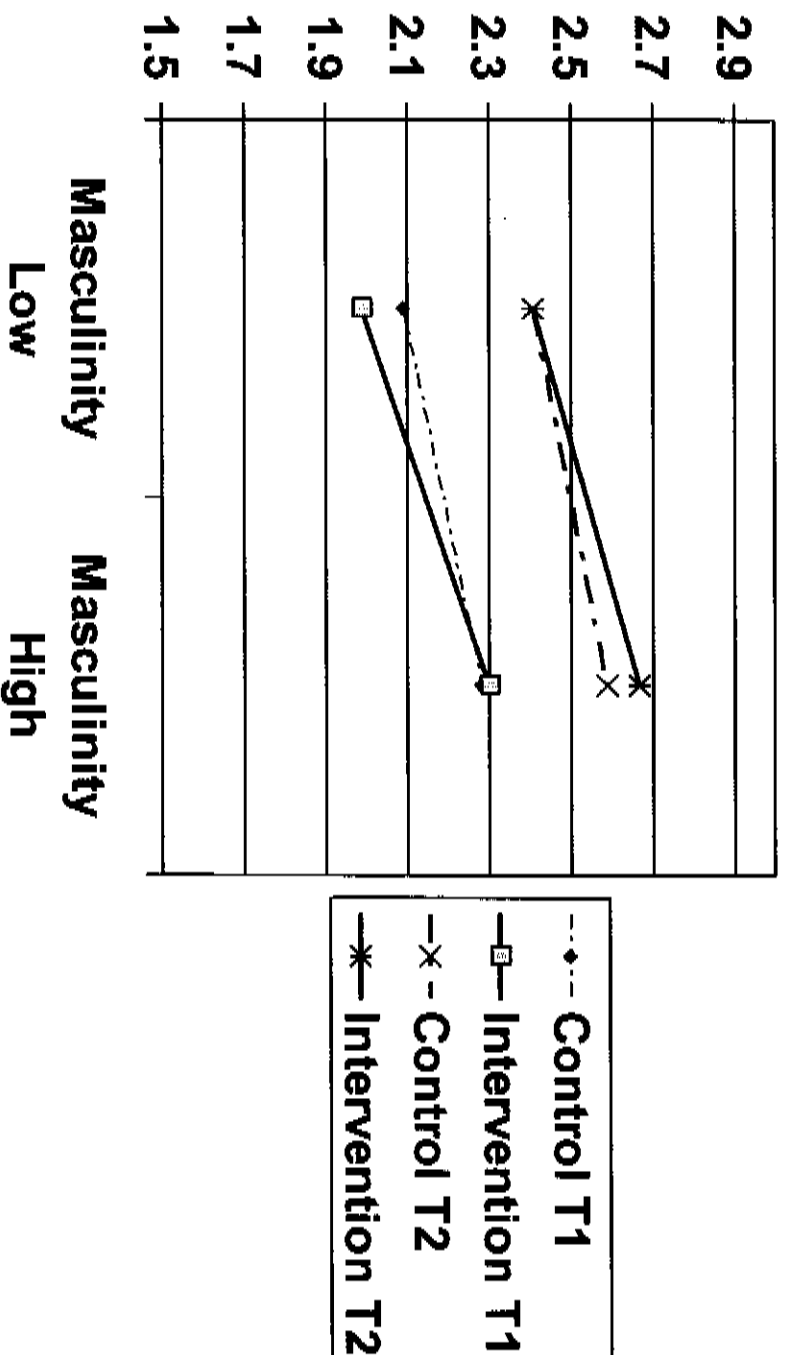
Masculinity Scores

BOYS				GIRLS			
Scale	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	
Masculinity Traditional	T1 1114	3.42	.87	1043	3.61	.88	
Masculinity Traditional	T2 934	3.66	.89	866	3.89	.84	
Masculinity Egalitarian	T1 1118	4.21	.86	1064	4.40	.80	
Masculinity Egalitarian	T2 931	4.21	.90	866	4.45	.77	

Partial Correlations on Masculinity Scales (Sexually Active)

Variable (Bonferroni correction)	<i>MS1</i>	<i>MS2</i>
Condom Attitudes	.246	.133
Peer Norms about Alcohol Use	.078	.048
Peer Pressure: Sex without Condoms	.145	.094
Sexual Refusal Self Efficacy	.170	.159
Situational Self Efficacy (say no)	.116	.258
Alcohol Refusal Self Efficacy	.124	.073
HIV Knowledge	.104	.081
Intention to use Condoms	.161	.229
$p < .002$		

Masculinity as a moderator of Knowledge



Conclusion

- Traditional male gender roles moderate sexual risks among adolescents
- Need to examine “Positive deviance”, i.e., what are the characteristics of youth with positive male gender roles who minimize sexual risk – single partners, delay sexual debut, demand condom use