


Transactional sex in sub-Saharan Africa: Meaning, Measurement and Implications for HIV Prevention

STRIVE Working Group on Transactional Sex and HIV:

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Main Objectives of the STRIVE Working Group on Transactional Sex and HIV



1. Improve evidence on role of risky TS in HIV for young women

2. Improve definition and measurement of TS as a distinct sexual practice

3. Improve understanding of the motivations for TS



**Inform
Structural
Interventions
with AGYW
to address
the complex
nature and
motivations
for TS**

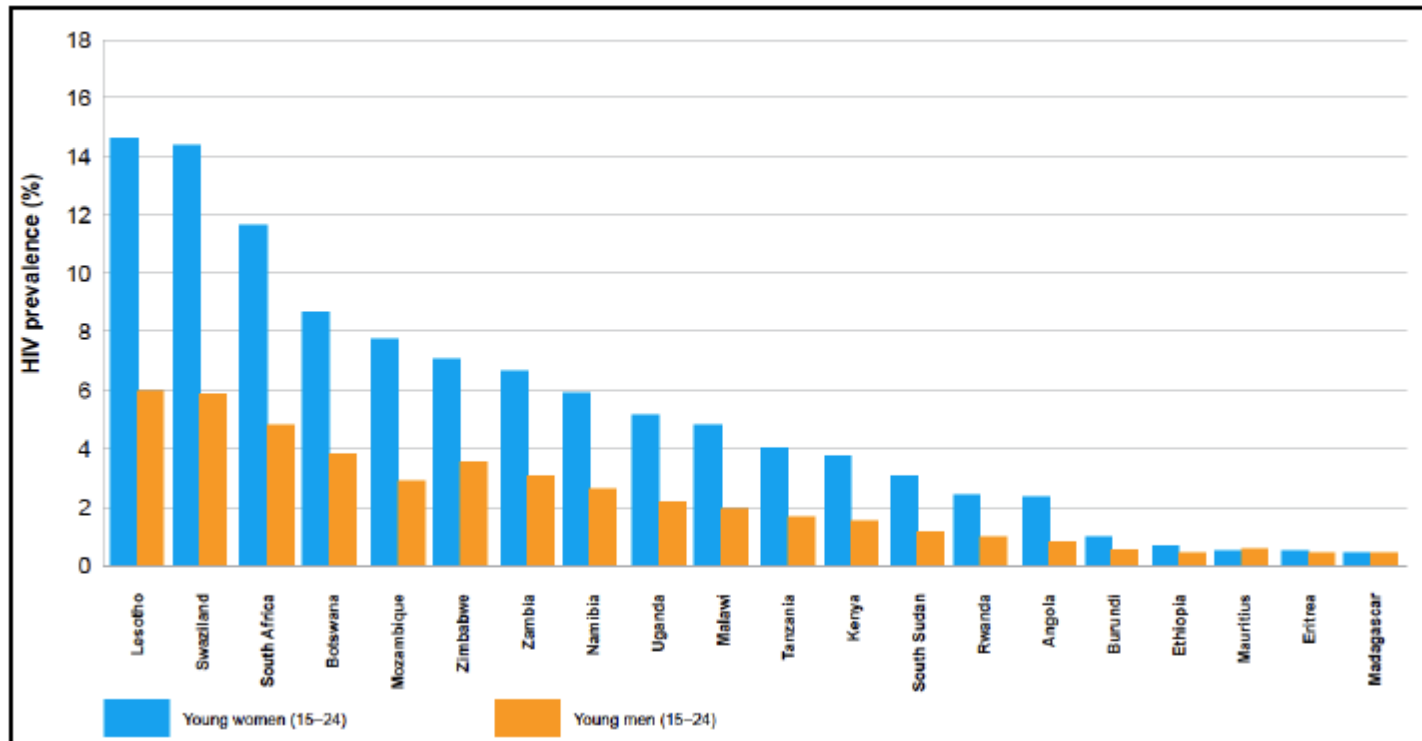
What do we mean by “transactional sex”?

Transactional sex refers to noncommercial, nonmarital sexual relationships motivated by the implicit assumption that sex will be exchanged for material benefit or status

- TS relationships often include emotionality
- Not all TS relationships are age-disparate relationship

- Globally, over **1/3** of new HIV infections occur in young women **ages 15-24** ¹
- Of women living with HIV worldwide, 15% are aged 15–24. Of these, **80%** live in sub-Saharan Africa.²

Figure 2: Estimated HIV prevalence among females and males, ages 15-24, UNAIDS





1. WHY IS TRANSACTIONAL SEX IMPORTANT FOR YOUNG WOMEN'S HIV RISK?

Association between TS and other HIV Risk Behaviors

- Epidemiological studies find TS is associated with other HIV risk behaviours
 - Violence (child abuse, sexual coercion, IPV)
 - Multiple partners
 - Alcohol use
 - Condom use (less clear association)
- The pathways through which TS increases HIV risk remain less clear

Studies from systematic review

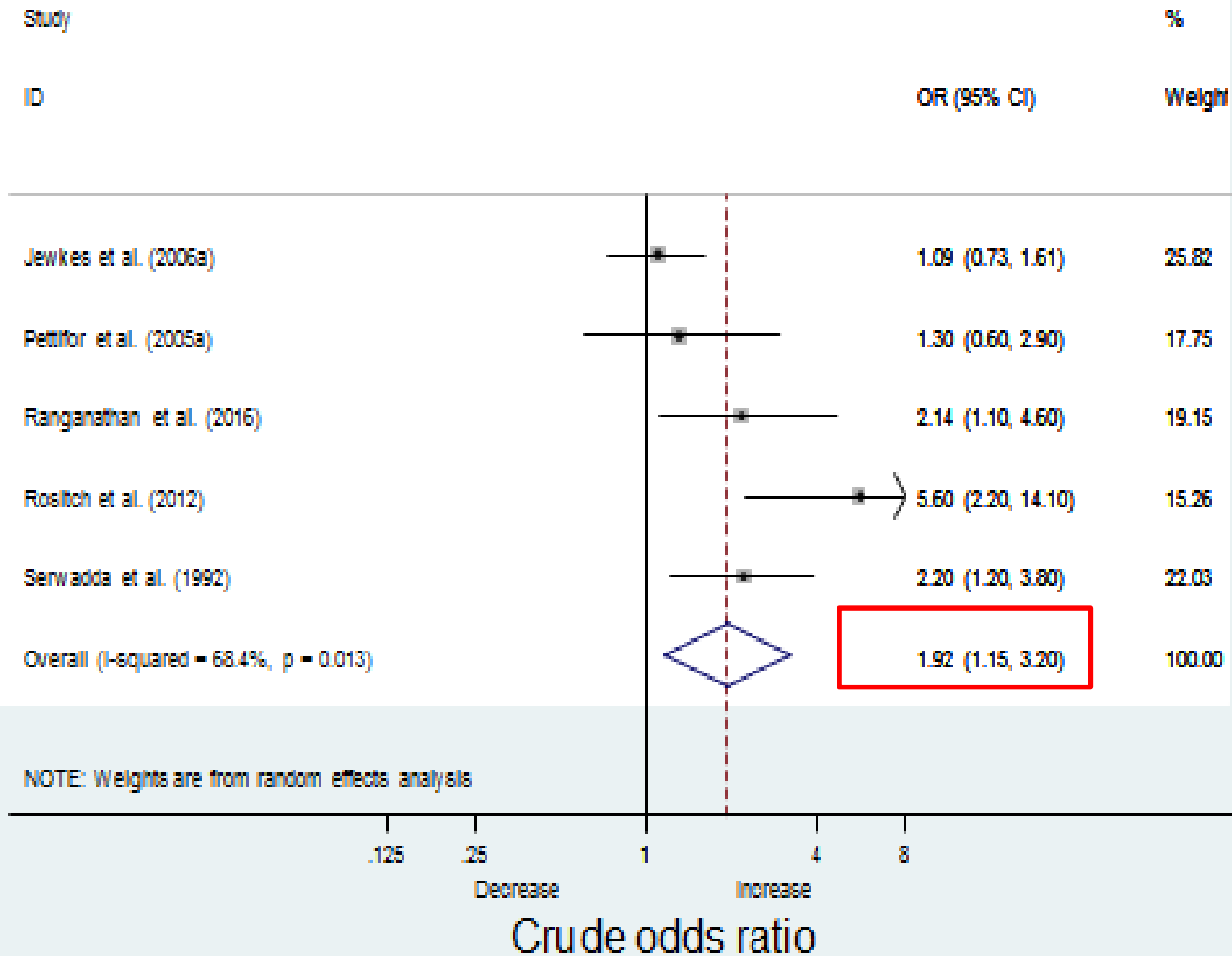
- 14 studies provide data on women (7 on young women aged 13-26 years)
- 10 studies provide data on men (4 exclusively on young men)
- 3 studies provide measures of association that are not sex disaggregated
- 14 studies were cross-sectional or repeated cross-sectional
- Majority of studies from South Africa (8/16)
- 9 studies draw from general population groups, 7 studies draw from specific populations
- 9 studies met the inclusion criteria for the meta-analysis
 - 5 among women, 4 among men

Association between TS and HIV for Women in Systematic Review

TS is Associated with HIV for Women in SSA

- Systematic Review of the relationship between TS and HIV
- Findings are significant for women, but not for men
 - 1 longitudinal study of women finds association between TS and HIV incidence
 - 4 out of 6 studies among young women show significant association)
 - 8 out of 12 studies among all women show significant relationship

Association between Transactional Sex and HIV in Women





2. HOW CAN WE IMPROVE THE MEASUREMENT OF TRANSACTIONAL SEX?

Rationale for Improved Measure of TS

- Current Measures are problematic
 - Measures conflate TS and sex work
 - Measures are varied across studies, rendering comparison difficult
- So What?
 - Different social practice → different contribution to HIV
 - Different risks → Different interventions

Have you ever exchanged sex for gifts or money?

Has someone ever given you money, drugs, or a place to stay in exchange for sex?

Have you ever paid for sex?

Have you ever accepted money, a gift or some other form of compensation as payment for sexual relations?

Did you receive money or goods in exchange for sex with your last sexual partner?

Have you ever become involved with a (roll-on, once-off, main partner) because he provided you with or you expected that he would provide you with any of the following: food; cosmetics; clothes; transportation, school fees; somewhere to sleep, or cash?

Building Better Measurement of TS: Evidence from cognitive interviews

- Measurement aims
 - Develop a measure that differentiates TS from SW
 - Develop a question that will facilitate truthful answers
- Description of cognitive interviews in Uganda and Tanzania
 - Study population (AGYW aged 14-24 years, adult men aged 20-35+)
 - Interviews were conducted in two iterations with 80 women, 80 men in Tanzania and Uganda.
 - Participants were sampled by characteristics such as: Residence (rural-urban); Schooling status (in- and out of school); and age
 - Tested 6 question variations for women and 4 for men

Draft measurement questions

To women: In the past 12 months have you entered into a sexual relationship with anyone in order to receive money, help to pay your expenses or to receive things that are important to you? **(Uganda)**

In the last 12 months, have you started a sexual relationship with a man in order get things that you needed, money or gifts? **(Tanzania)**

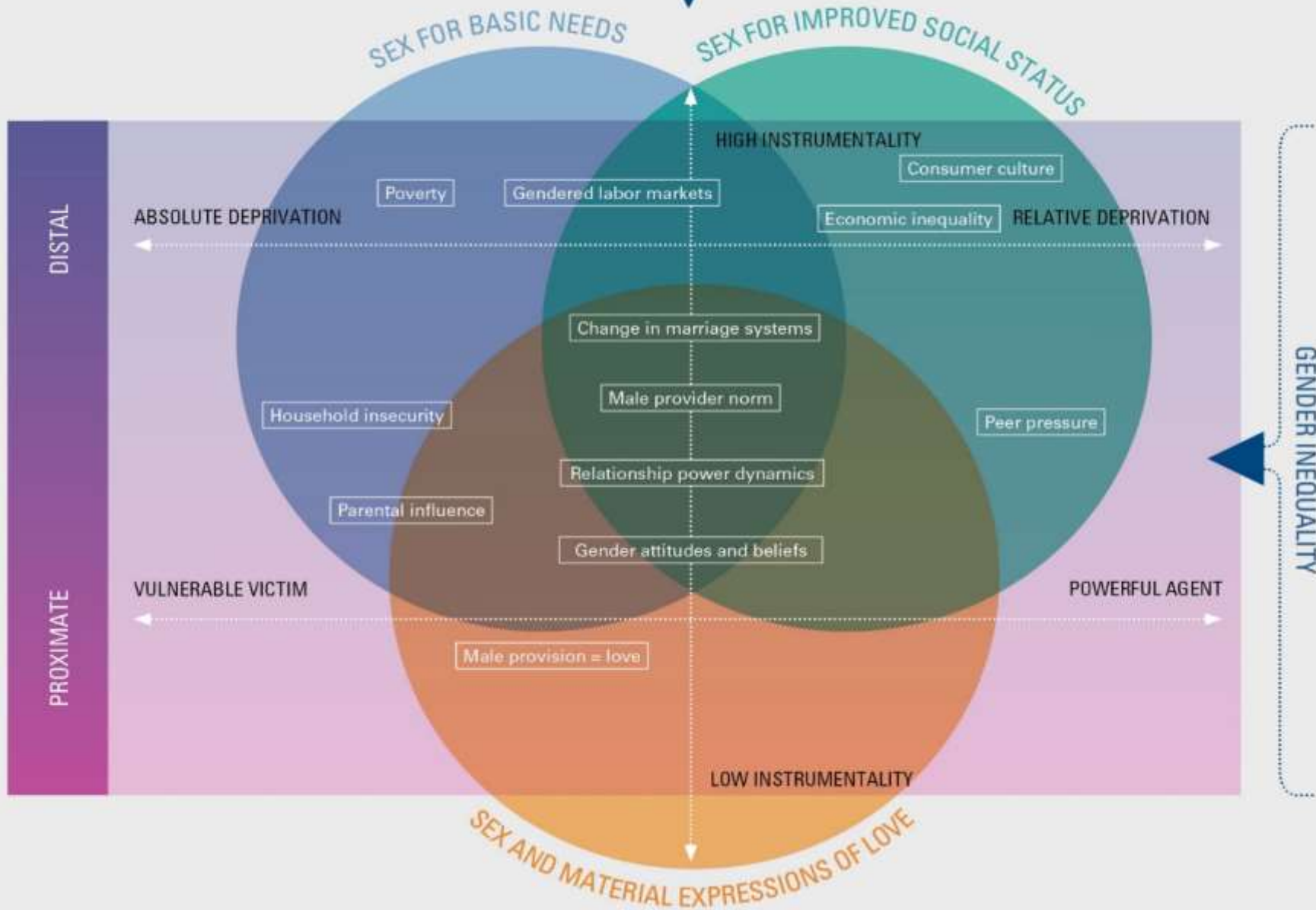
To Men: In the past 12 months have you provided someone who is not a sex worker with money or help to pay for her expenses mainly to become sexually involved with her or to be able to keep having sex with her? **(Uganda)**

In the last 12 months, have you given a woman, who is not a sex worker, any money, a gift or helped her to pay for things in order to start or have a sexual relationship with her? **(Tanzania)**



3. WHAT ARE THE MOTIVATIONS FOR PRACTICING TRANSACTIONAL SEX?

ECONOMIC AND SOCIO-CULTURAL PROCESSES OF GLOBALIZATION

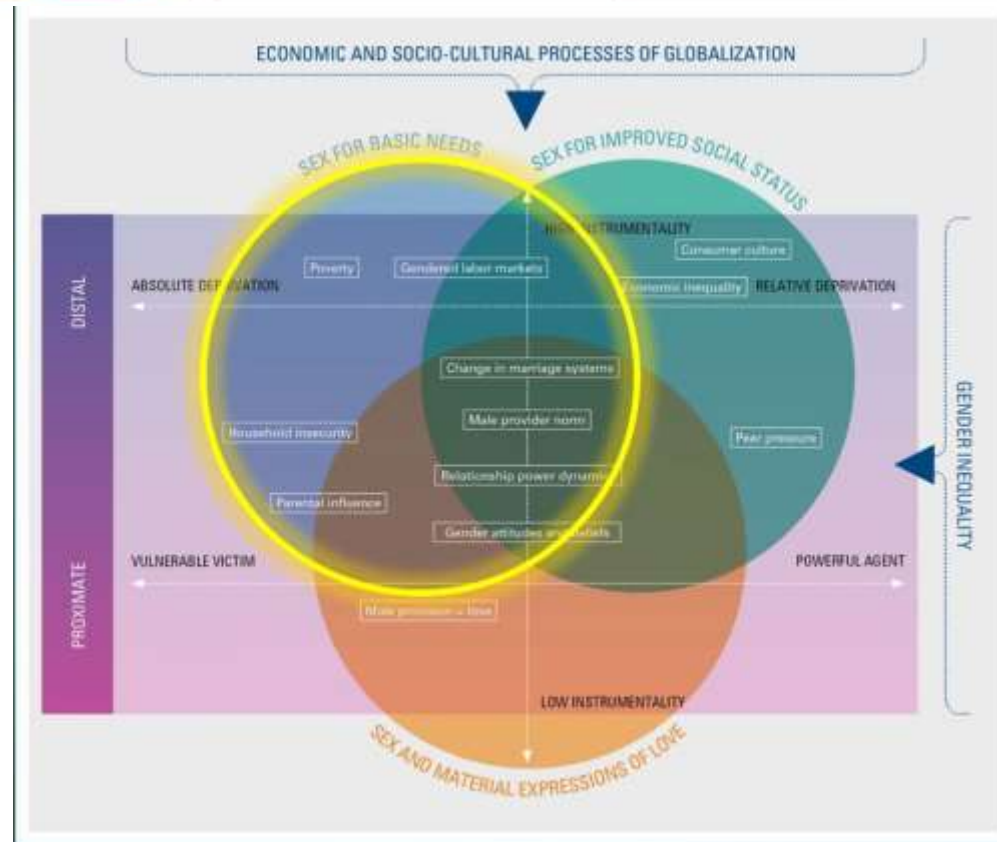


Sex for Basic Needs

Emphasizes gendered poverty, women's economic dependence on men, women's vulnerability/powerlessness in relationships

Shift from Academia → Practitioner perspective

Over time, increasing recognition of women's limited agency

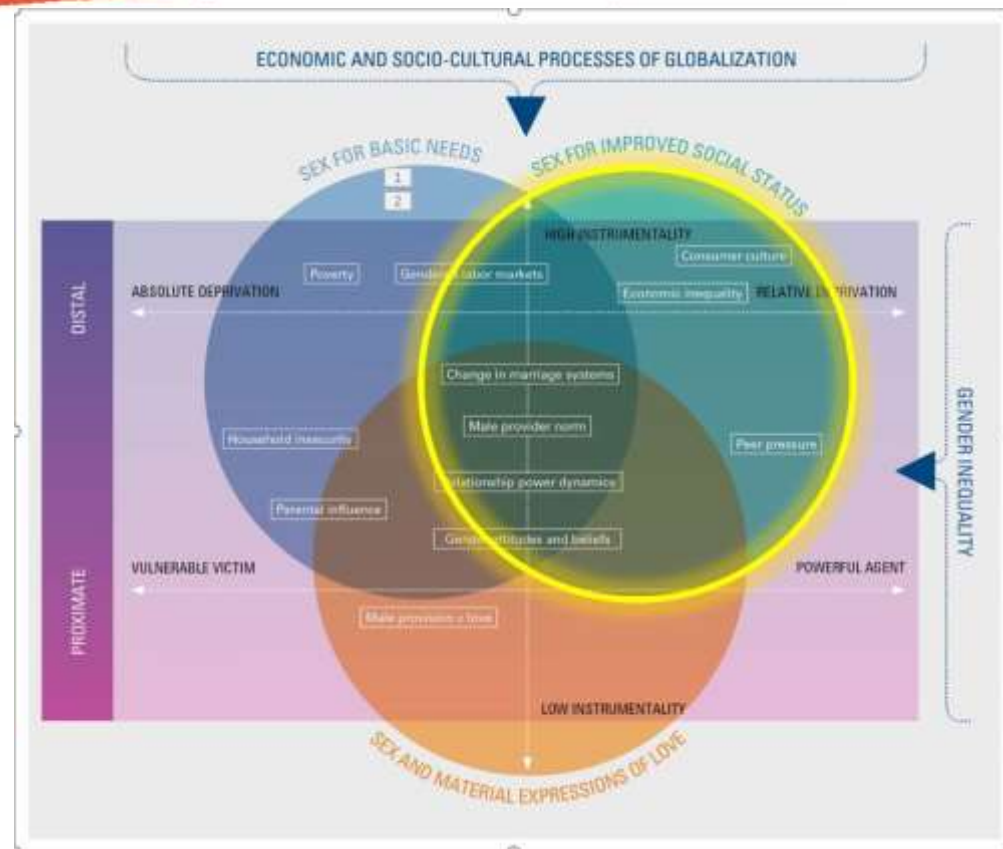


A rural, out-of-school 17-year-old female related how the financial dependency that she had on her partner, who was 15 years older than she, trapped her in a physically dangerous and emotionally damaging relationship.

- Neema et al, Guttmacher 2007

Sex for Improved Social Status

- Emphasizes economic inequality, women's agency, and social importance of modern goods
- Challenges Sex for Basic Needs
- More common in recent studies
- Paradigm can be shaming, cast in moral terms

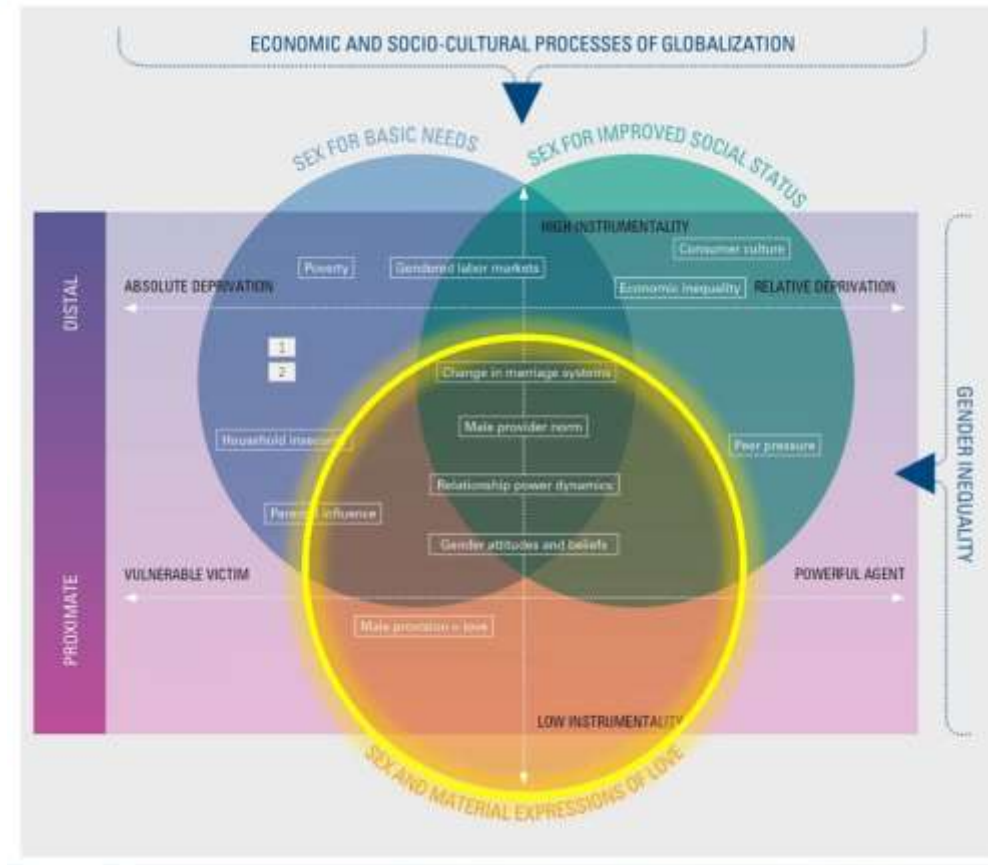


Using their sexuality to access goods and services is construed as a pragmatic adaptation to modern and costly urban life.

- Leclerc-Madlala, 2002
(urban, South Africa)

Sex and Material Expressions of Love

- Men's provision of financial support is a symbol of commitment/love
- Patriarchy and Provision
 - Masculinity = Provision
 - Provision = Love

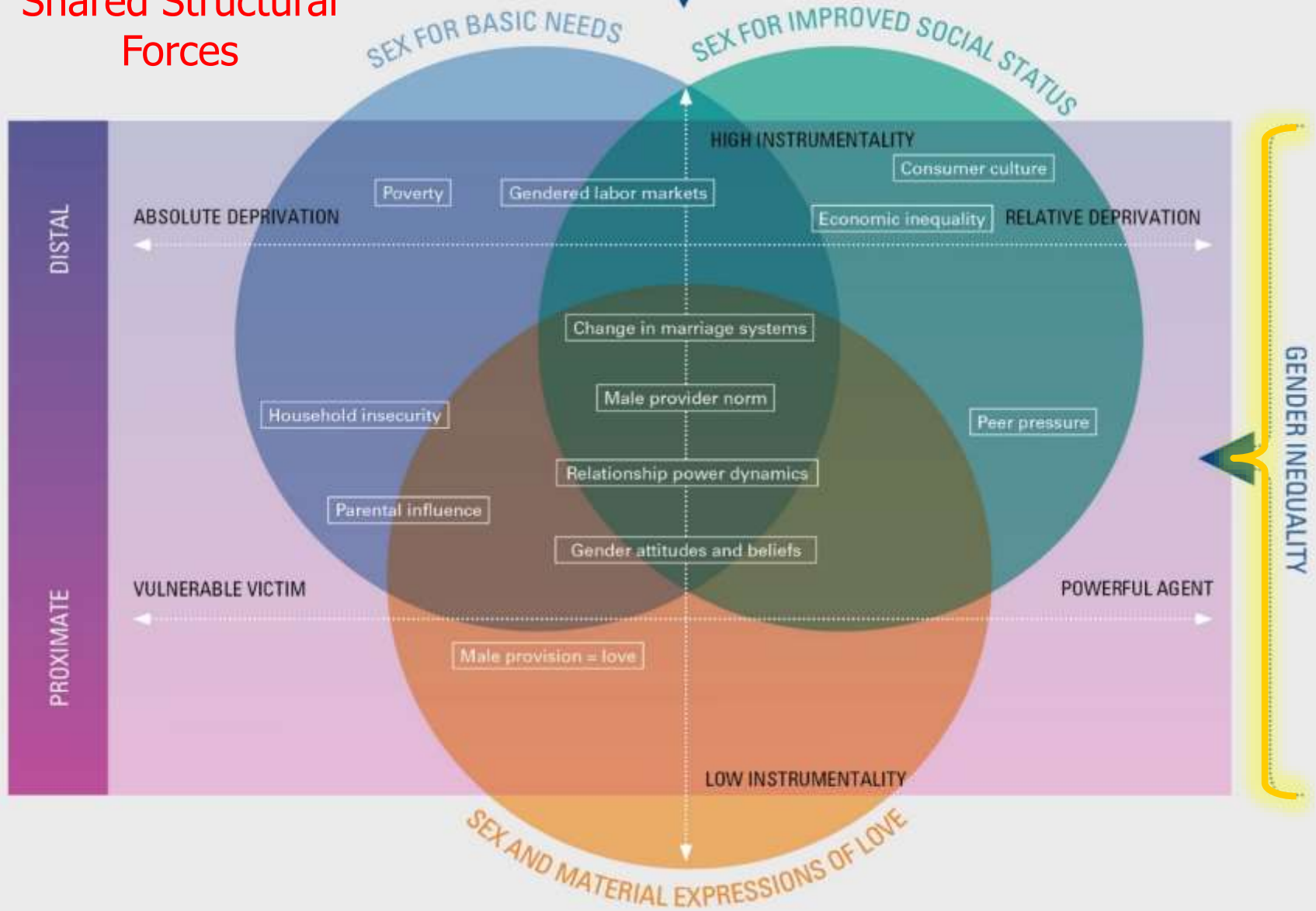


Girls' ideals of love are tied to their aspirations towards middle-class consumerism. Upholding provider masculinity is a strategic means to claim money, fashionable clothes and prestige. ...Love is produced by particular sets of economic and social circumstances through which gender inequalities are reproduced.

(Bhana, urban SA, 2011)

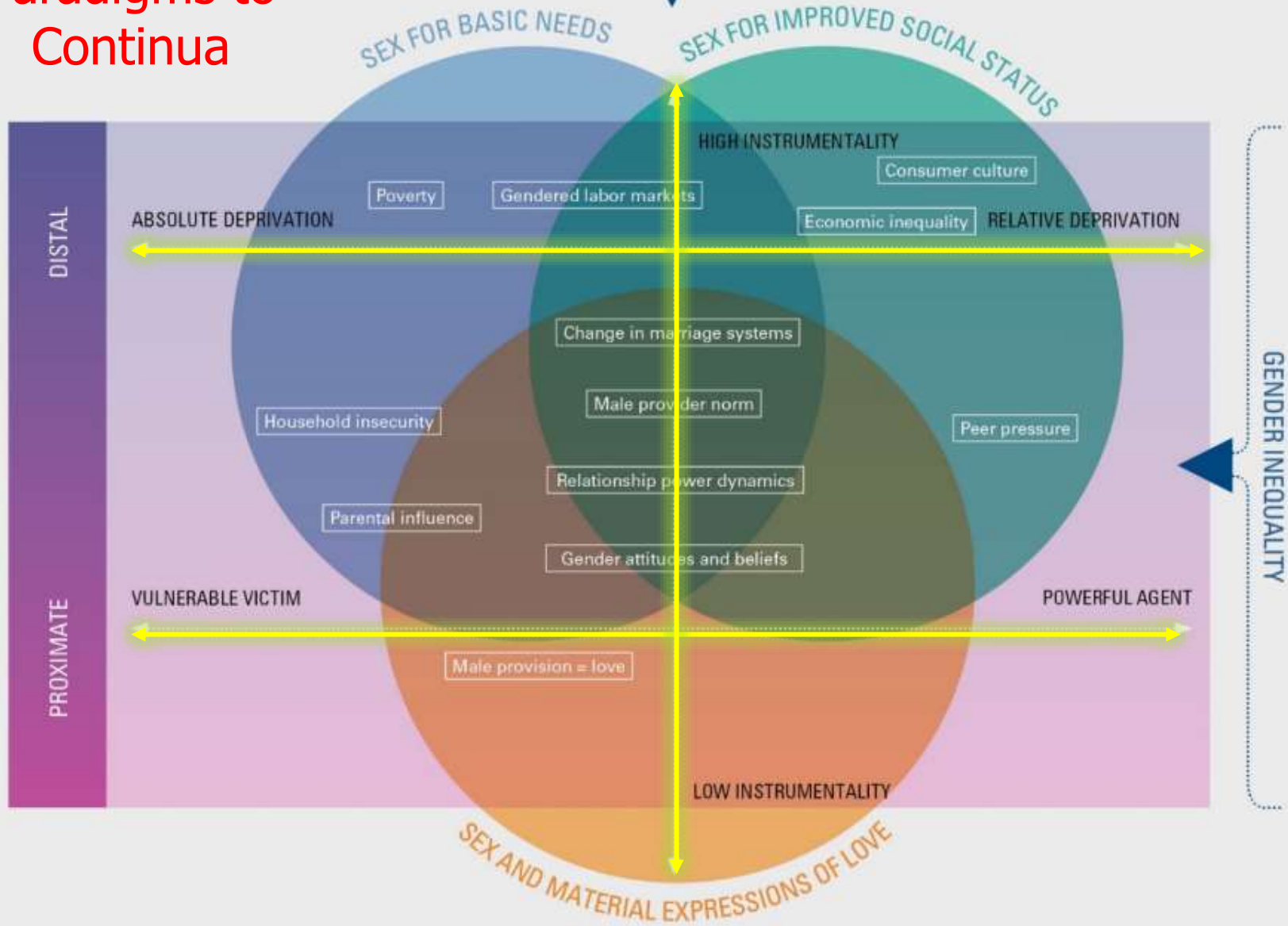
ECONOMIC AND SOCIO-CULTURAL PROCESSES OF GLOBALIZATION

Shared Structural Forces



Paradigms to Continua

ECONOMIC AND SOCIO-CULTURAL PROCESSES OF GLOBALIZATION



Implications for Intervention

Relationships involving exchange are not in themselves ‘risk behaviours’

- Should not seek to eliminate all exchange in relationships
 - Reduce reliance on relationships solely *motivated* by exchange
 - Intervene on mechanisms that increase HIV risk

Current interventions are not adequately capturing multiple drivers of TS and HIV risk

- Most interventions target age-disparate TS with “sugar-daddies”
 - Efforts blame/shame men; protect women and girls
 - Not all women see themselves as “vulnerable victims”
- Not all TS relationships are driven by poverty

Recommendations for Interventions

Multi-component interventions addressing social and structural drivers of HIV risk in AGYW should include TS

- Rapid assessment of the nature/motivation of TS should inform any interventions addressing TS
- Economic interventions should be combined with gender transformation efforts
 - Critically address agency and power, norms around men as providers, benefits/drawbacks of older partners

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