Developing Experimental Vignettes to Identify Gender Norms Associated with Transactional Sex in Central Uganda

Presented by Kirsten Stoebenau to LINEA, October, 2020
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- Josephine Mulindwa, independent consultant, Kampala, Uganda
Gender Inequality and Transactional Sex

- We know TS → increased HIV risk for women
- Mechanisms remain unclear
  - VAW/IPV (Cluver, 2013), age-disparate partnerships (Ranganathan, 2020); frequent exchanges (Kilburn, 2018); agency (Fielding-Miller)
- Limited understanding of gendered social dimensions
  - Existing evidence at relationship level (Dunkle, 2004; Jewkes, 2012; Fielding-Miller, 2017)
  - Gender Norms and Individual beliefs less understood

Transactional sex refers to noncommercial, nonmarital sexual relationships motivated by the implicit assumption that sex will be exchanged for material support or other benefits. (Stoebenau et al, 2016)
Pilot Study Objectives

- We set out to develop measures to assess the gendered social dimensions of women’s HIV risk.
- Measures explore whether and how fundamental gendered expectations of men’s roles as providers are manifested in:
  - Gender Norms
  - Internalized gender beliefs
Research Methods

- Small Pilot Study with Adolescent Girls and Young women in Kampala and Masaka districts, Central Uganda
  - Study population: Young women ages 15-24
    - Sampled by: school status, community vs. “high-risk” venue
    - Stratified by district, age
  - Data collected in 2017-2018 over four phases with small research team
    - Secondary data analysis, 10 focus-group discussions, 32 cognitive interviews, pilot survey (n=108)
Develop and test experimental vignettes to measure gender social norms* concerning male provision in relationships

- What do we mean by “experimental vignette”?

  **John and Sarah have been in a relationship for some time. He has been providing Sarah with:**
  
  1. a little money for her to buy clothes, and airtime.
  2. things important to her; he has given her a smart phone and gives her any money she says she needs.

  **Last week, he asked her to have sex for the first time. She said she was not ready. John becomes angry with her.**

- Randomly stratify respondents to receive one of two manipulations of the vignette.
  
  - Assess approval/disapproval of behavior across different groups for each manipulation of the vignette
    
    “On this scale of 1-4, how much do you (think John’s friends/ community members would) approve of John’s behavior?”

*Dodoo, F., Demographic Research, 2014*
Vignette Development Process across Phases of Data Collection

Phase 1
- Literature Review
- Secondary qualitative data analysis
- Informed initial vignettes

Phase 2
- 10 Focus Group Discussions
  - Built vignettes
  - Developed appropriate vignette manipulations
  - Identified relevant reference groups

Phase 3
- 32 Cognitive Interviews
  - Further refined vignettes
  - Assessed realism and relatability

Phase 4
- 108 Surveys
  - Conducted Vignette experiment
Phases 1 and 2: Identifying Dimensions attached to expectations of Male Provision

What male provision expectations “buy men”:

1. **Male authority** in relationships (Dunkle, 2007)
   - Legitimizes masculine identity (Morrell, 2012; Dunkle, 2007)

2. Male **control of sexual decision-making** (Jewkes, 2012; Zembe; 2015)

How women respond to male provision expectations:

3. **Women’s economic dependence** on men (Stoebenau, 2011)

4. Women use “erotic power” to access support from men (Groes-Green, 2012; Wamoyi, 2010; Leclerc-Madlala, 2003)

5. Evidence of **Commitment/Intimacy**: provision=love=sex (Poulin, 2007; Mojola, 2014; Swidler and Watkins, 2007)
Three “successful” vignettes:
1. Male provision and authority
2. Male provision and sexual decision-making control
3. Male provision and women having multiple partners

Two “unsuccessful” vignettes:
1. Male provision and women’s economic position
2. Male provision and parent’s role in TS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Experimental vignettes used to examine social norms associated with male provision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male provision and authority in relationships (Vignette A)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipulation 1:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipulation 2:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last week, Cate went out to have fun with a group of her friends without Paul. Paul learned about it, and then told Cate she should never go out with her friends without his permission.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Male provision and sexual decision-making power (Vignette B)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manipulation 1:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipulation 2:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last week, he asked to have sex with her for the first time, but she said no. John becomes angry with her.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Women’s engagement with multiple partners for male provision (Vignette C)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manipulation 1:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipulation 2:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yet, Stella needs (more) money in order to be able to buy trendy clothes so she can fit in with her friends, so she found a second boyfriend to support her.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results

- **Attitude** – How much do you approve?

- **Descriptive Norm** – On a scale of 0-10, how many (men/women) would behave like ___ if zero is none, five is half, and 10 is every (woman/man)?

- **Injunctive Norm** – How much do you think ___'s friends/community would approve of ___?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men's Authority</th>
<th>Sexual decision-making</th>
<th>Women's multiple partners</th>
<th>Women's wealth</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>2.76 (1.09)**</td>
<td>2.13 (1.03)**</td>
<td>2.36 (1.09)</td>
<td>2.60 (0.98)</td>
<td>1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Norm</td>
<td>7.56 (2.31)</td>
<td>7.99 (2.41)</td>
<td>7.63 (2.06)</td>
<td>6.71 (2.58)</td>
<td>1-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.Norm - friend</td>
<td>3.42 (0.83)</td>
<td>3.49 (0.75)</td>
<td>3.32 (0.77)**</td>
<td>3.33 (0.81)</td>
<td>1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.Norm - community</td>
<td>2.57 (1.08)</td>
<td>2.32 (0.91)**</td>
<td>2.14 (0.87)</td>
<td>2.35 (0.98)</td>
<td>1-4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Test of Difference Across Manipulation (no/low provision to high provision)

*p<.05  **p<.01  ***p<.001
Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes/No</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does male provision influence normative expectations about male authority in relationships?</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>But it does influence respondent’s own attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>provision = individual approval of male authority in relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does male provision influence normative expectations about men’s sexual decision-making power in relationships?</td>
<td>YES – at the perceived community level</td>
<td>Greater provision, greater approval of his power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Respondent’s own attitudes were influenced by provision as well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does male provision influence normative expectations about women having a second partner?</td>
<td>YES – at the perceived interactional level (friends/peers)</td>
<td>Less provision, more approval of having a second partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Attitudes and perceived community approval were low</td>
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</table>

In every vignette we are examining whether the level (or presence) of men’s provision of material support to women changes the social expectation for men's or women's behavior including: respondent’s attitude, descriptive norms, and injunctive norms.
Discussion and Next Steps

- Intervention Implications
  - Male authority expectations important but not explanatory for TS risk
  - Male sexual decision-making power and women taking multiple partners do seem contingent on normative male provision expectations
    - Gender norm change interventions to disentangle male provision from male sexual control
    - Increased social acceptance of multiple partners for women adds urgency to above

- Vignette experiments offer potential alternative measurement approach to detecting the presence and strength of social norms
  - Particularly valuable when addressing topics with high social desirability bias (e.g., justifications of GBV)
  - Not perfect – issues of balancing realism, relatability, and measurable manipulation

- Missing: MEN! And large enough sample to allow further manipulations
Thank You!

- Questions?: kstoeben@umd.edu