

A FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF SEXUAL SATISFACTION AND SEXUAL PLEASURE ACROSS FIVE RELATIONSHIP TYPES AMONG WOMEN LIVING WITH HIV IN CANADA

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BACKGROUND

Sexuality research for women with HIV is overly medical, reductive, and risk-based. Physical and physiological outcomes have been prioritized (i.e., sexual inactivity, sexual dysfunction), and positive subjective experiences ignored. Further, how such experiences are shaped by relational and socio-political contexts is unknown.

The **objective of this analysis** was to describe experiences of sexual satisfaction and pleasure across five relationship types, taking into account socio-political influences, among 1,335 Canadian women with HIV enrolled in the CHIWOS study.

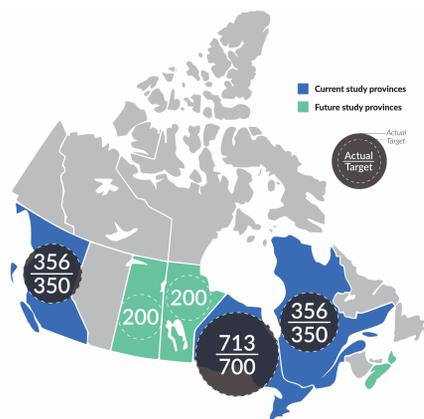
A critical feminist epistemological stance informed our research. Key principles:

- Involving women living with HIV
- Documenting diversity and attending to systems of inequality
- Challenging risk narratives and replacing them with positive, pleasure-focused stories

METHODS

The CHIWOS study:

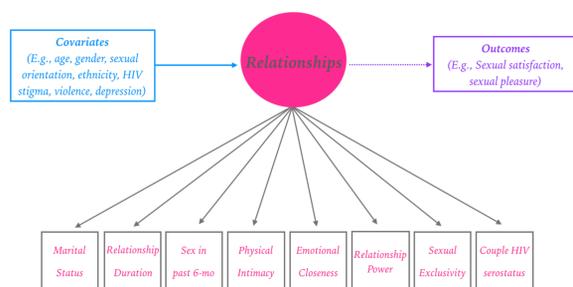
- A longitudinal, community-based research study
- Involves women with HIV as Peer Research Associates (PRAs) and academic researchers, providers, and community agencies as allied partners in all stages
- Uses online questionnaires administered by PRAs (total N enrolled at baseline=1,425; August 27, 2013 to May 1 2015; median time: 120 min., IQR: 90-150 min.)



Statistical analyses:

- Delineated relationship types via latent class analysis
- Measured satisfaction with sex life ("completely" to "not at all") and pleasure during solo/partnered sex last month ("always" to "none")
- Assessed associations through multinomial logistic regression, adjusting for **confounding factors** associated with relationships and predictive of sexual outcomes

Latent class analysis can uncover subgroups of individuals defined by the intersection of multiple observed variables.

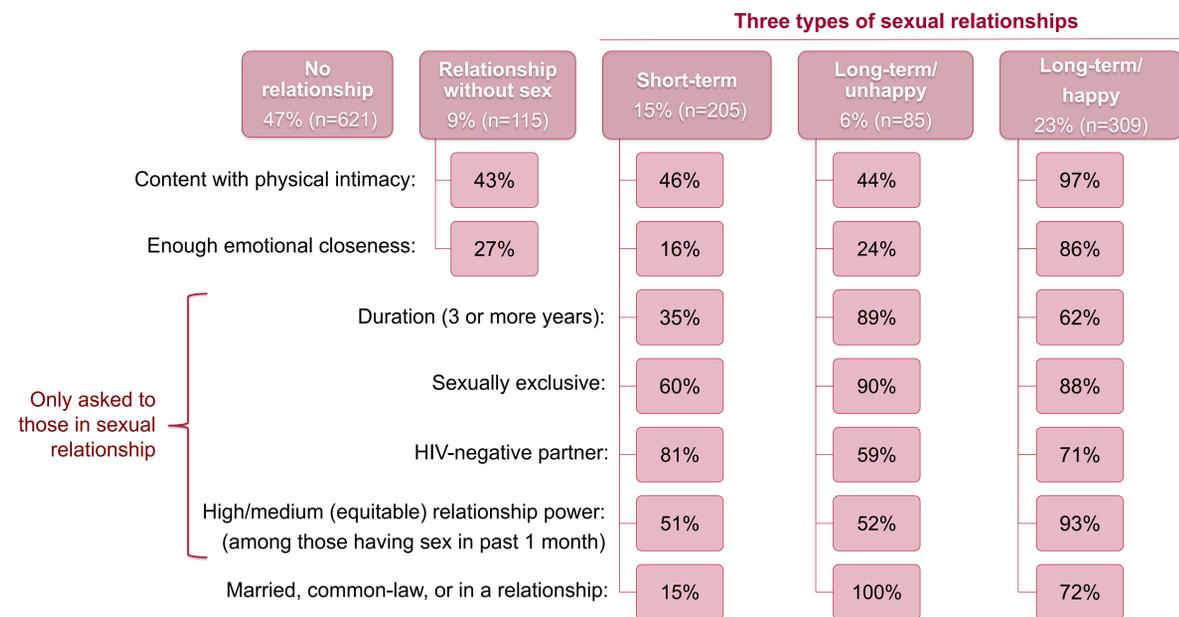


RESULTS

Of 1,335 included in analysis: Women were diverse in **gender** (4.3% trans), **sexual orientation** (12.5% lesbian/queer), **ethnicity** (22.3% Indigenous; 28.9% African/Caribbean/Black), **socio-economic status** (71.4% income <\$20,000 CAD, 18.1% current illicit drug use, 6.2% sex work), **age** (median: 10.8 years; IQR: 5.9, 16.8; range: 16-74), and **time living with HIV** (median: 10.8 years; IQR: 5.9, 16.8; range: 1 month to 33.7 years). 64.9% had **given birth**. Both **depression** (49%) and lifetime experiences of **violence** (80.4%) were common. Median HIV stigma score was 60 (IQR: 50, 72), and **physical & mental health-related quality of life** was 47.9 (IQR: 33.6, 55.5) and 42.2 (IQR: 31.4, 52.5) respectively. Most were taking **cART** (82.7%) and had an **undetectable viral load** (81.5%), and 68.8% had talked to their doctor about its impact on transmission.

RESULTS (CONTINUED)

Five latent classes with different relationship characteristics



Experiences of sexual satisfaction and pleasure by relationship classes

	Sexual satisfaction (N=1,231)				Pleasure (N=676)*			Sex does not equate with satisfaction and pleasure: - Some completely satisfied without sex (i.e., 12.4% of women in no relationship, 20.4% relationships without sex) - Others having sex without pleasure (i.e., 33.8% short-term, 34.1% long-term/unhappy, 2.0% long-term/happy)
	Completely (n=259, 21.0%)	Very (n=211, 17.1%)	Reasonably (n=381, 30.9%)	Not very/not at all (n=380, 30.9%)	Always felt pleasure (n=280, 41.4%)	Usually/Sometimes (n=261, 38.6%)	Seldom/None (n=135, 20.0%)	
No relationship	66 (12.4)	66 (12.4)	165 (30.9)	237 (44.4)	66 (12.4)	165 (30.9)	237 (44.4)	
Relationships without sex	22 (20.4)	9 (8.3)	36 (33.3)	41 (38.0)	9 (8.3)	36 (33.3)	41 (38.0)	
Short-term	15 (7.6)	29 (14.7)	87 (43.9)	67 (33.8)	29 (14.7)	87 (43.9)	67 (33.8)	
Long-term/unhappy	7 (8.2)	9 (10.6)	40 (47.1)	29 (34.1)	9 (10.6)	40 (47.1)	29 (34.1)	
Long-term/happy	149 (48.7)	98 (32.0)	53 (17.3)	6 (2.0)	98 (32.0)	53 (17.3)	6 (2.0)	

*Note: 628 had no solo/partnered sex in past 1-month.

Associated factors, showing AOR (95% CI)¹

	Sexual satisfaction (N=1,143) (ref: not very/not at all)			Pleasure (N=593) (ref: seldom/not at all)	
	Completely	Very	Reasonably	Always	Usually/Sometimes
Relationships without sex	1.93 (1.04, 3.60)	0.71 (0.30, 1.70)	1.36 (0.81, 2.29)	-	-
Short-term	1.04 (0.54, 2.01)	2.02 (1.13, 3.59)	2.10 (1.37, 3.23)	-	-
Long-term/unhappy	1.36 (0.55, 3.39)	1.74 (0.72, 4.20)	2.64 (1.48, 4.72)	0.47 (0.17, 1.31)	1.58 (0.73, 3.41)
Long-term/happy	71.55 (29.65, 172.68)	50.55 (20.65, 123.72)	11.05 (4.57, 26.72)	11.32 (4.47, 28.72)	5.58 (2.25, 13.83)
Age (10-unit inc.)	0.92 (0.76, 1.11)	0.92 (0.76, 1.11)	0.84 (0.72, 0.98)	0.79 (0.59, 1.07)	0.89 (0.67, 1.19)
HIV stigma (10-unit inc.)	0.98 (0.88, 1.08)	1.04 (0.94, 1.16)	1.07 (0.98, 1.16)	0.94 (0.82, 1.09)	0.90 (0.80, 1.02)
Current violence	0.47 (0.25, 0.89)	0.50 (0.25, 0.99)	0.52 (0.31, 0.87)	0.25 (0.08, 0.76)	0.67 (0.23, 1.95)
Depression	0.42 (0.28, 0.63)	0.32 (0.20, 0.49)	0.50 (0.36, 0.70)	0.52 (0.30, 0.93)	0.81 (0.47, 1.38)
Talked to Dr. about risk	-	-	-	2.00 (1.12, 3.58)	1.57 (0.93, 2.63)
Current sex work	-	-	-	0.24 (0.09, 0.69)	0.77 (0.35, 1.71)
Current illicit drug use	-	-	-	1.22 (0.57, 2.60)	1.03 (0.52, 2.06)
Had biological children	-	-	-	0.81 (0.44, 1.50)	0.94 (0.52, 1.68)
Indigenous (vs. White)	2.63 (1.58, 4.39)	2.63 (1.58, 4.39)	2.63 (1.58, 4.39)	-	-
African, Caribbean, Black	0.95 (0.59, 1.54)	0.95 (0.59, 1.54)	0.95 (0.59, 1.54)	-	-
Other ethnicities	1.28 (0.61, 2.69)	1.28 (0.61, 2.69)	1.28 (0.61, 2.69)	-	-

Notes: 1. Confounder model: main explanatory variable: relationship classes. 2. Referent: "No relationship". 3. Referent: "Short-term relationship".

CONCLUSIONS

Findings suggest enormous diversity in sexual satisfaction and pleasure among women with HIV, with relational and social conditions shaping women's access to sexual health and wellbeing. Research and support that affirms the right of women with HIV to have and enjoy to the kind of relationships and sexualities they want is needed.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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