

Social and sexual networks of newly diagnosed people living with HIV

A qualitative social network analysis

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Rationale & objective

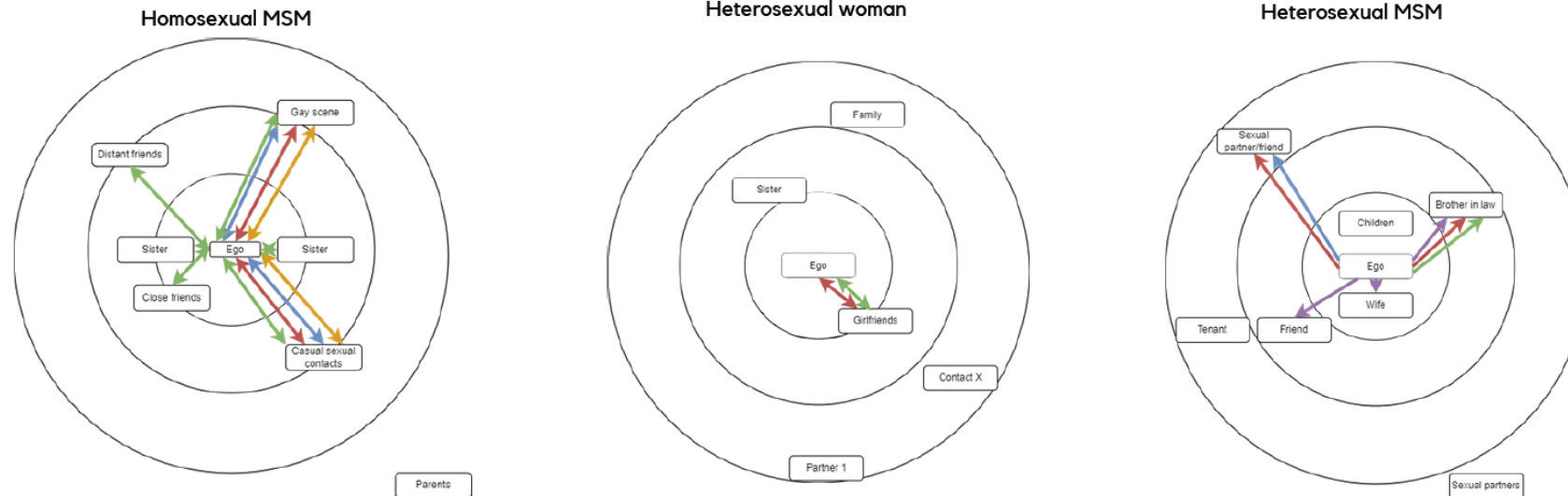
- New HIV acquisition continue to occur
- Need to better understand role and social context
- How do people's social and sexual networks influence HIV acquisition and prevention behavior?
- **Objective:** to understand the influence of social and sexual networks on preventive and risk behavior?

Methodology

- Qualitative sub-study of COLIBRI study (*Vanden Bulcke et al., 2024*)
- Ego-centric social network approach
 - In-depth interviews (n=20)
 - Constructing of sociograms

SOCIOGRAMS

Examples of pseudonimized and digitalized visualisations of sociograms constructed during the in-depth interviews



Legend arrows:

- Talking about sexual life (red)
- Advice on safer sex (blue)
- Help with sexual problems (orange)
- Talking about sexual orientation (green)
- Social support (purple)*

A single arrow indicates the flow of communication/support from one person to the other, while a double arrow indicates that communication/support go both ways.

*only implemented after the first three interviews. Absence of a purple arrow does not necessarily mean absence of (psycho-)social support. When an asterisk is added, it means (psycho-)social support was not added to the topic guide yet at the time of interview.

Results

“There was HIV and ... but not with us [heterosexuals], a distant matter. Kind of nonchalant thinking that it won't happen to me” (bMSM)

Self-identified gay men:

- Main source of sexual health information = casual sex partners, although not emotionally close
- High awareness of PrEP
- High risk perception

Heterosexual and bisexual men and women who have sex with men:

- More diverse networks
- Often did not consider themselves at risk for HIV

HIV status disclosure:

- Prevented by internalized and anticipated HIV stigma and homophobia
- Influenced by perceived social support

Conclusions

- Important **differences** in the networks of gay-identified men who have sex with men, heterosexuals and hetero- and bisexual identified men who have sex with men
 - => influences **sexual risk taking** and prevention behavior
- **HIV stigma**: important factor in acceptance and disclosure
- Future prevention/promotion should be **inclusive** and **mainstreamed**



Thank you!

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