

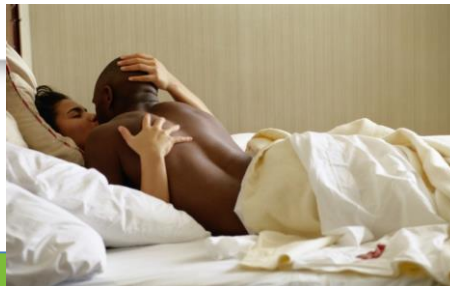


# Does marriage decrease HIV risk? NO

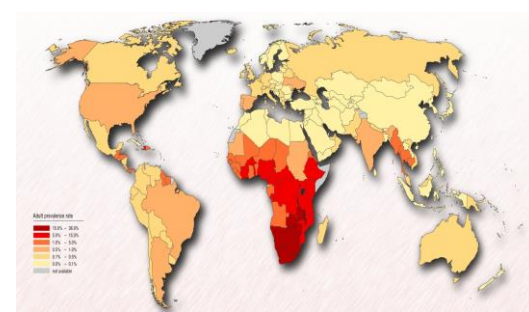
(and even if it did, it is a bad idea to encourage pro-marriage programmes)

Francois Venter

Wits Reproductive Health and HIV Institute (RHI)



# Why are we here?



*Table 3.31: HIV-incidence rates by age and sex, South Africa 2002–2005, 2005–2008 and 2008–2012*

Age groups (years)	2002–2005		2005–2008		2008–2012	
	(%)	95% CI	(%)	95% CI	(%)	95% CI
15–49 years	2.2	0.9–4.0	1.9	0.8–3.3	1.9	0.8–3.1
Males	1.2	0.1–3.0	1.6	0.6–3.0	1.6	0.6–2.7
Females	3.2	1.8–5.0	2.2	1.0–3.6	2.1	1.0–3.4
15–24 years	2.8	1.7–4.2	2.3	1.2–3.5	1.5	0.8–2.3
Males	0.6	0.1–1.6	1.4	0.5–2.3	1.0	0.4–1.6
Females	5.3	3.6–7.1	3.5	2.1–4.9	2.1	1.2–3.1



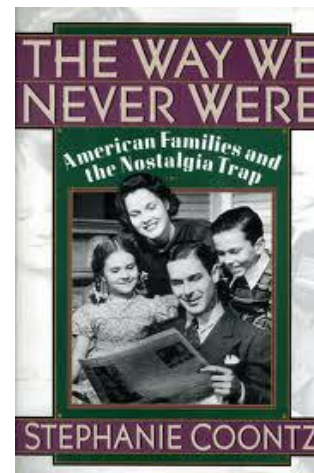
# Plausible...



- ‘Dose’-associated risk of HIV – decrease the dose ie: number of sexual partners → less HIV
- Marriage – a form of socially-enforced **monogamy** (‘faithful’ polygamy; modern relationships notwithstanding – gay, open, etc)
- Other benefits – encourages social cohesion, cheaper together, more ‘moral’
- Marriage unusual and late in South Africa

# Constant appeals to morality, family values and a better time....

- Modern relationships, pornography, concurrency, video games, promiscuity, drug use, degradation of respect, sugar daddies, single people, TV, materialism
- **“Our youth now love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority; they show disrespect for their elders and love chatter in place of exercise; they no longer rise when elders enter the room; they contradict their parents, chatter before company; gobble up their food and tyrannize their teachers.”**
- Socrates ≈ 400 BC



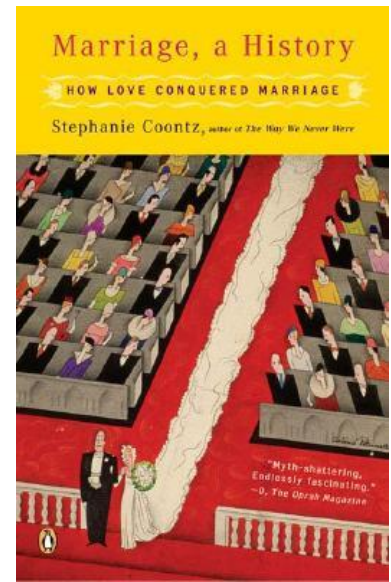
# Marriage protective?

- Its easy to be cynical
- Tiger Woods, Bill Clinton, Angelina Jolie, Jacob Zuma, King Mswati, Elizabeth Taylor...
- PEP experience...



# Marriage history

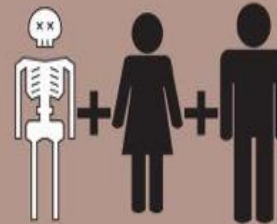
- The notion of routine 'romantic marriage' is a recent one... historically seen as dangerous
- Most marriage was transactional or they cemented family ties
- Many used women as 'objects' – but many exceptions!



# MARRIAGE =

## MAN + WOMAN (NUCLEAR FAMILY) Genesis 2:24

- wives subordinate to their husbands
- interfaith marriages forbidden
- marriages generally arranged, not based on romantic love
- bride who could not prove her virginity was stoned to death

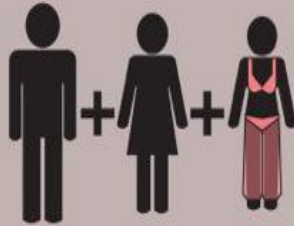


## MAN + BROTHER'S WIDOW (LEVIRATE MARRIAGE) Genesis 38:6-10

- widow who had not borne a son required to marry her brother in law
- must submit sexually to her new husband

## MAN + WIVES + CONCUBINES

Abraham (2 concubines), Gideon (1), Nahor (1), Jacob (1), Eliphaz (1), Gideon (≥ 1), Caleb (2), Manassah (1), Solomon (300), Belshazzar (> 1)



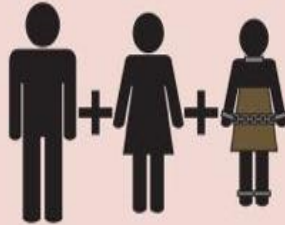
## RAPIST + HIS VICTIM Deuteronomy 22:28-29

- virgin who is raped must marry her rapist
- rapist must pay victim's father 50 shekels of silver for property loss



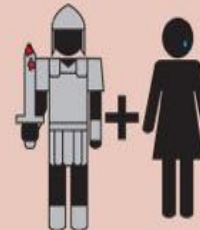
## MAN + WOMAN + WOMAN'S PROPERTY Genesis 16

- man could acquire his wife's property including her slaves



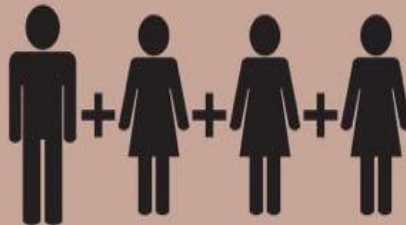
## MALE SOLDIER + PRISONER OF WAR Numbers 31:1-18, Deuteronomy 21:11-14

- under Moses' command, Israelites kill every Midianite man, woman and child; save for the virgin girls who are taken as spoils of war
- wives must submit sexually to their new owners



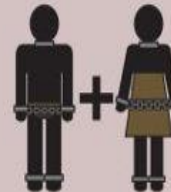
## MAN + WOMAN + WOMAN + WOMAN... (POLYGAMY)

Lamech (2 wives), Esau (3), Jacob (2), Ashur (2), Gideon (many), Elkanah (2), David (many), Solomon (700), Rehoboam (3), Abijah (14), Jehoram, Joash, Ahab, Jeholachin, Belshazzar



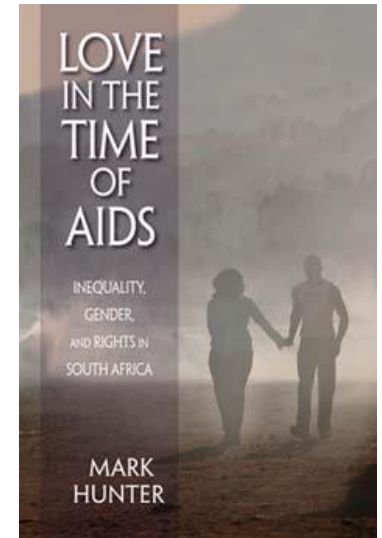
## MALE SLAVE + FEMALE SLAVE Exodus 21:4

- slave owner could assign female slaves to his male slaves
- female slaves must submit sexually to their new husbands



# Complex cultural issues

- Like lobola
- Even the definition of marriage...
- HSRC 2012: Marriage minority (30-40%); similar cohabiting
- Tax breaks, cheaper to live together, socially encouraged... some strong incentives to marry



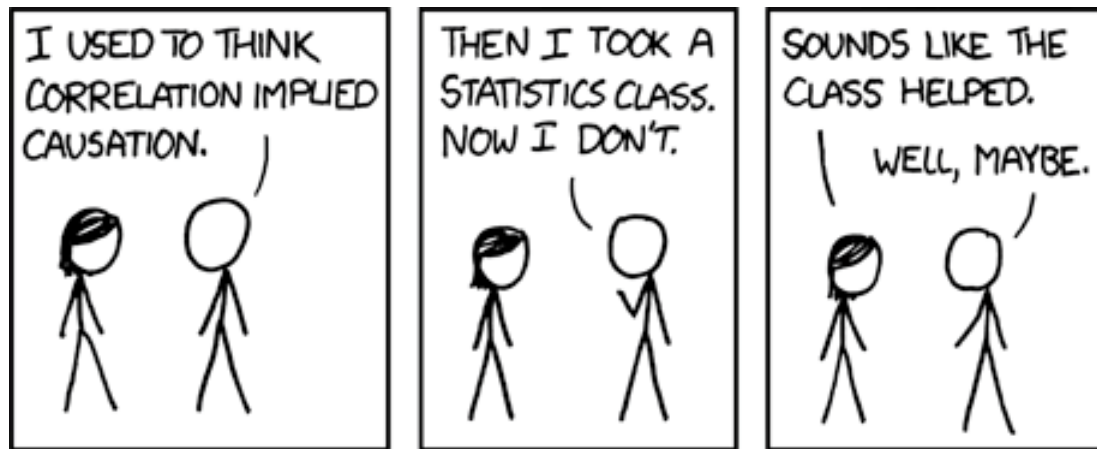


# Reality

- US: Up to 80% of one or both partners cheat in a relationship
- KZN: 1/3 men cheated over 5 years
- Shisana/HSRC: Married women higher risk than married men

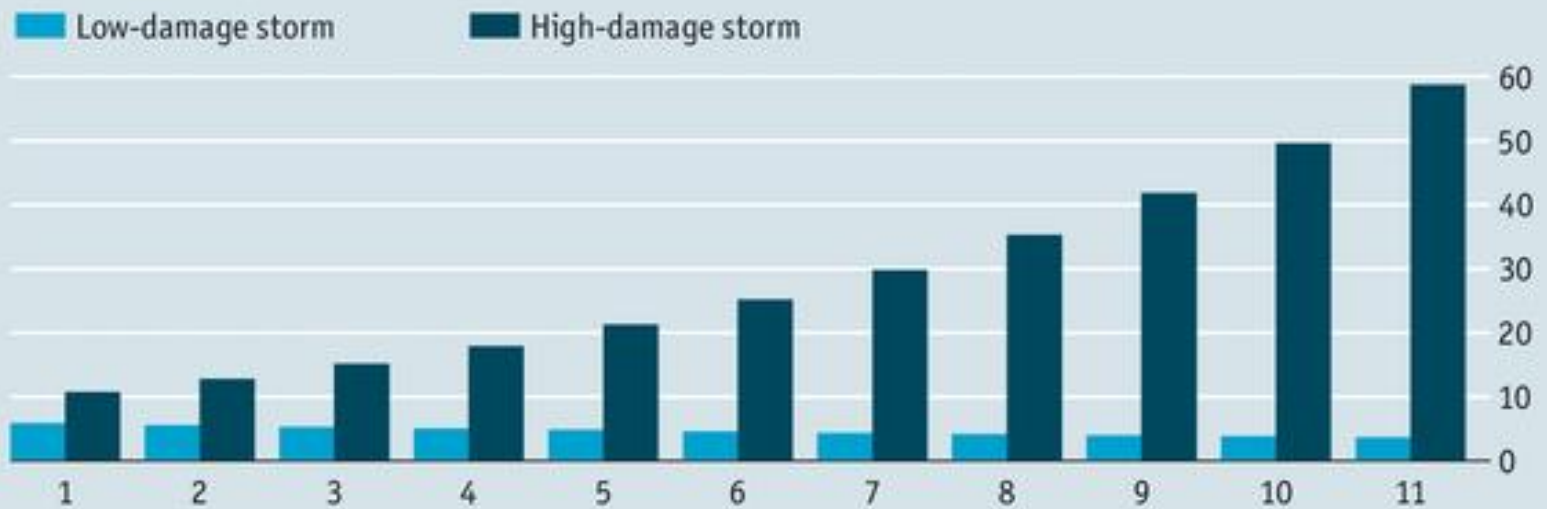


# Mistake – confusing correlation and causation



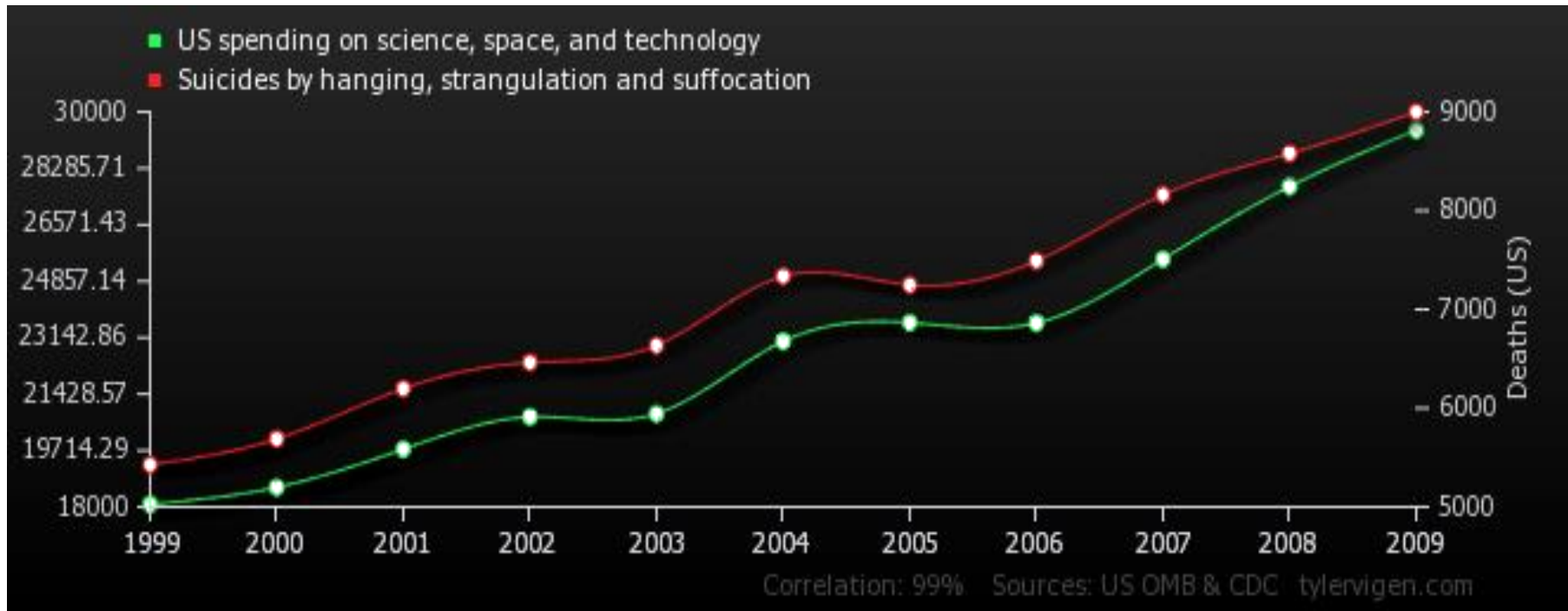
## Sex and death

Number of people killed by a normalised\* hurricane versus perceived masculinity or femininity of its name (1 = most masculine)

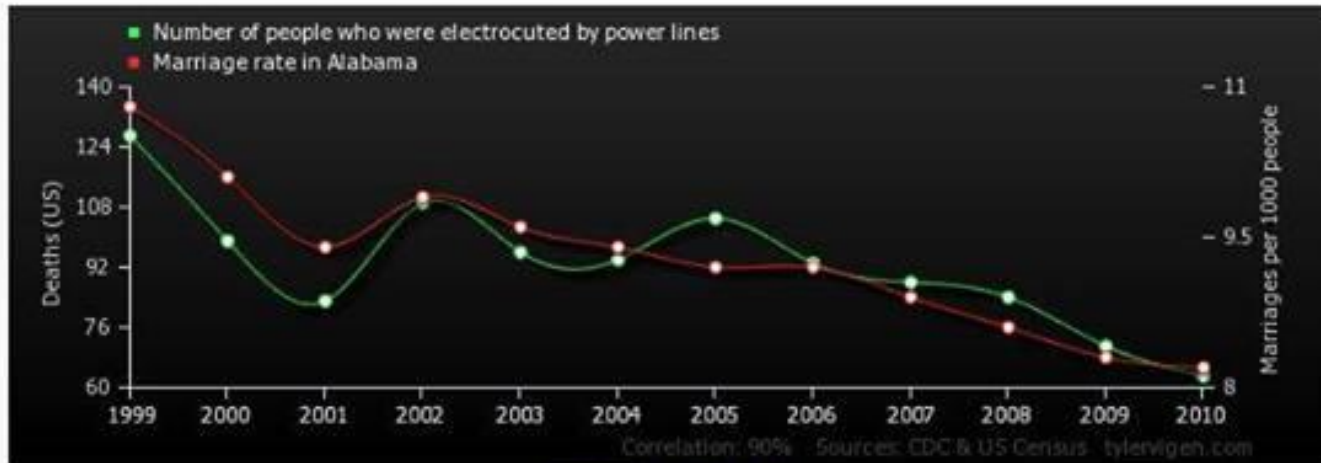


Source: Jung et al, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences

\*Adjusted for wind speed, category and minimum central pressure



# Number of people who were electrocuted by power lines correlates with Marriage rate in Alabama



[Upload this chart to imgur](#)

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<i>Number of people who were electrocuted by power lines Deaths (US) (CDC)</i>	127	99	83	109	96	94	105	93	88	84	71	63
<i>Marriage rate in Alabama Marriages per 1000 people (US Census)</i>	10.8	10.1	9.4	9.9	9.6	9.4	9.2	9.2	8.9	8.6	8.3	8.2
<b>Correlation: 0.903602</b>												

[Permalink](#) - [Mark as interesting](#) - [Not interesting](#)

- But it IS more plausible that marriage is tied up with HIV risk...
- BUT also may be simply the 'coffee' phenomenon – association, not causation

# Mistake

- Believing the data shows this

Table 3.20: HIV prevalence by marital status, household economic situation and sex among respondents aged 15 years and older, South Africa 2012

Variable	Total			Males			Females		
	n	%	95% CI	n	%	95% CI	n	%	95% CI
<b>Marital status</b>									
Married/Civil union	6,741	10.0	8.5–11.8	2,983	9.3	7.4–11.6	3,758	10.8	8.7–13.2
Going steady or Living together (not married)	6,168	24.3	22.3–26.5	2,737	19.2	16.7–21.9	3,431	29.5	26.6–32.6
Single (not in a relationship)	4,987	14.3	12.1–16.8	2,348	9.4	6.3–13.6	2,639	19.9	16.8–23.3
Widowed	1,773	13.8	11.1–17.0	288	15.0	9.6–22.8	1,485	13.5	10.6–17.0
Divorced	693	12.3	8.6–17.3	232	16.1	9.1–27.1	461	10.3	6.9–15.1
<b>Household economic situation</b>									
Not enough money for basic things like food and clothes	11,209	14.7	13.6–15.8	5,088	11.8	10.5–13.1	6,121	17.5	16.0–19.0
Money for food and clothes, but short of many other things	8,825	12.6	11.1–14.3	3,924	10.3	8.3–12.7	4,901	14.6	12.6–16.8
Have most of the important things, but few luxury goods	4,300	5.8	4.3–7.9	1,879	4.8	3.0–7.6	2,421	6.8	5.0–9.2
Money for extra things such as holidays and luxury goods	1,006	2.2	1.3–3.8	470	1.6	0.7–3.4	536	2.8	1.5–5.5



Variables	n	HIV incidence % (95% CI)
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married	3,660	0.55 (0.45–0.65)
Living together	1,499	3.08 (2.48–3.68)
Going steady	4,276	1.99 (1.61–2.37)
Single	4,432	2.28 (1.82–2.74)

# Conflicting data....

- **Adolescents in Uganda more likely to have HIV if married** Review - Protecting young women from HIV/AIDS: the case against child and adolescent marriage, Clark S at al, Int Fam Plan Perspect. 2006
- **Uganda longitudinal study – slightly lower in women who married, not in men** Nalugoda F, Marriage and the risk of incident HIV infection in Rakai, Uganda JAIDS 2014
- **Lesotho and Zim – married women more likely to be infected:** Marriage, widowhood, divorce and HIV risks among women in sub-Saharan Africa. Tenkorang EY Int Health. 2014
- **Unsurprising: marriage may correlate with different cultural (and hence HIV modifying behaviours) by time, geography, religion, finances....**



# HSRC interesting points...

- In poorer married households, both partners great risk for having HIV; but significantly higher for women
- Equivalent risk in richer households

# Mistake

- Unintended consequences of 'encouraged marriage'?

# Parachute

- Do we need evidence when we know its a good idea?



Parachutes reduce the risk of injury after gravitational challenge, but their effectiveness has not been proved with randomised controlled trials

HULTONG/GETTY

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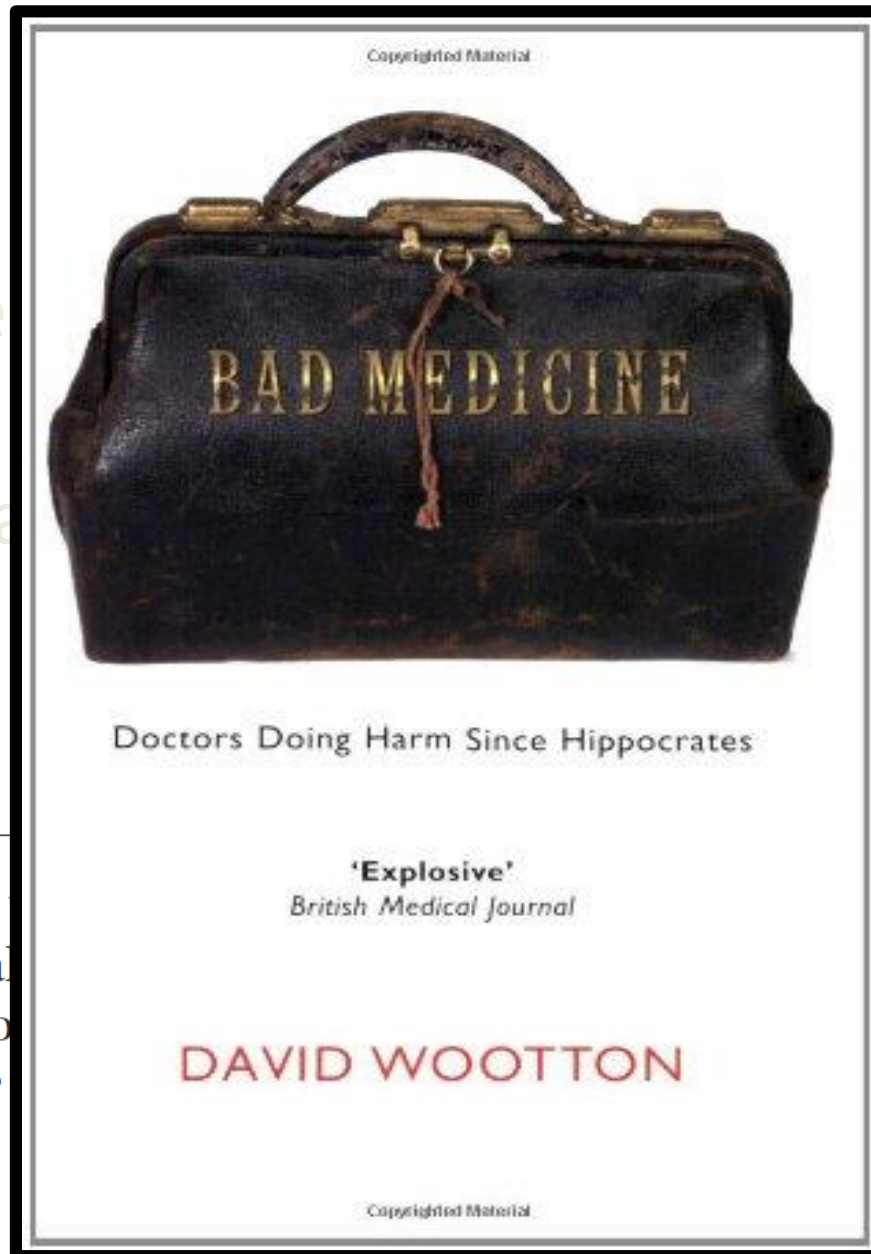
Parachute use to prevent death and major trauma related to gravitational challenge: systematic review of randomised controlled trials

Gordon C S Smith, Jill P Pell

- Do we need more evidence to know its a bad idea?

Parachute use  
to gravitational  
randomised co

Gordon C S Smith, Jill P



HULTONG/GETTY

l challenge, but their effectiveness has

ted

EMBER 2003 bmj.com

# The book of public health harms is yet to be written....

Unfortunately, this is how the brain works:



# Other associations...

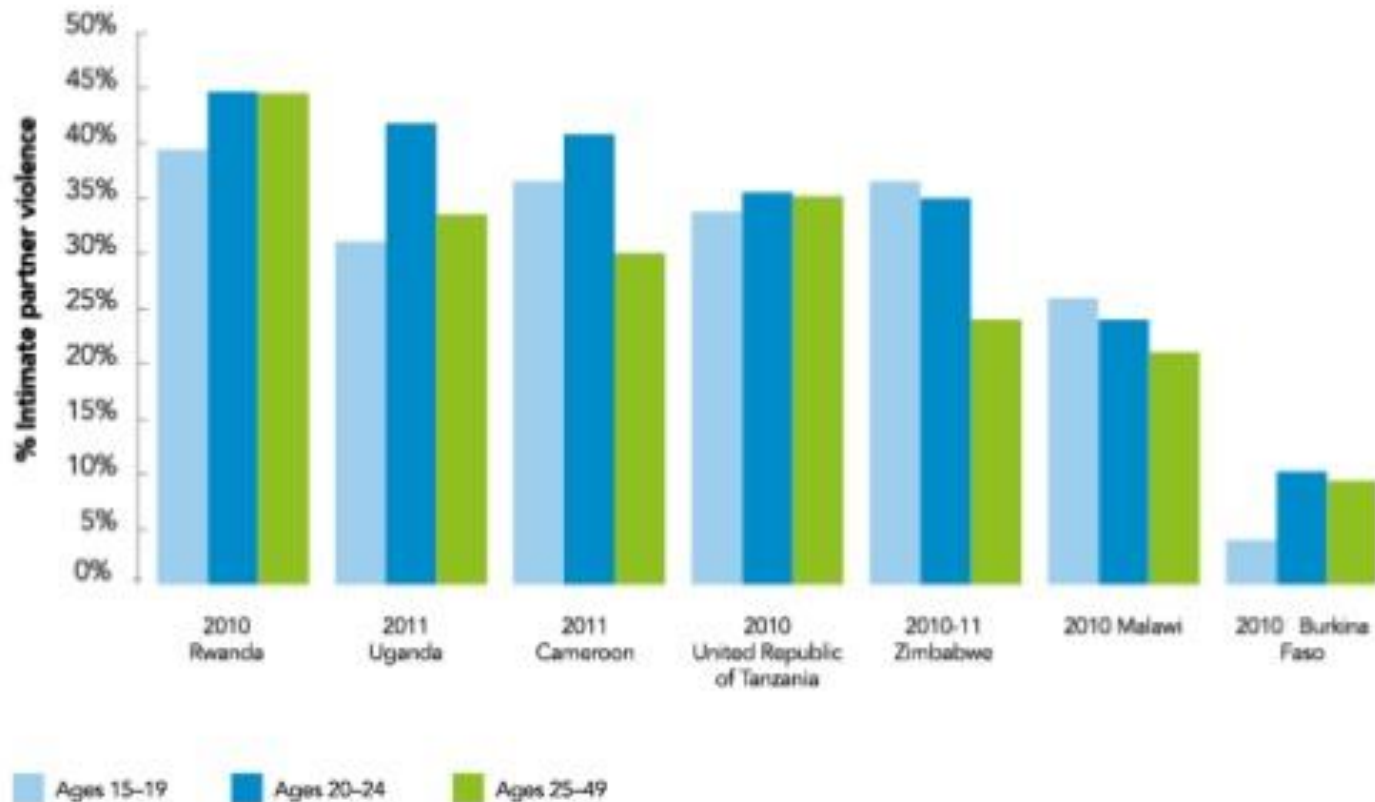
- Gender violence in relationship  $\alpha$  strongly with HIV (and 30-60% are abused, depending on definitions, population surveyed)
- No one in marriage uses condoms
- Staying in school, not falling pregnant associated with lower HIV



# How may a pro-marriage programme promote HIV?

- Encourage (especially young) women to enter relationships before they are independent
- Earlier pregnancy, financial implications (Economist 2012)
- Early exit from school, university
- Earlier economic dependence, less flexibility, trapping people
- Infidelities can be catastrophic – condom use not negotiable, hence no disclosure; acute HIV within a relationship
- Traditional ‘widowhood’ rites may put women at risk

Percentage of ever-married women who have experienced spousal physical or sexual violence by their current or most recent husband or partner in the past 12 months, by age



Source: Demographic and Health Survey

# (a last aside...)

- Cultures with polygamous relationships more protective than monogamous ones Polygyny, partnership concurrency, and HIV transmission in Sub-Saharan Africa, Reniers G, Demography 2012



# What SHOULD we be doing?

- Empowering young people (ESPECIALLY women) to demand better quality relationships
- Not tolerating emotional or physical abuse
- Not adding to social pressure to settle down early
- Making healthy sexual choices (teaching sex for pleasure, not just conception (*but that too!*))
- Mutually agreed child-rearing responsibilities
- Improving economic opportunities to decrease reliance on partners, decrease being trapped in relationships
- Beware of moralising, stigmatising programmes that are coated in HIV prevention conventional wisdom



"I've changed my mind Donald. I don't want to put a little spice back into our marriage anymore."

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