

HIV/AIDS and Indian Hijra's: An Anthropological Analysis

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Introduction

The overarching term “Hijra” is a social category that includes hermaphrodite, Eunuchs and transgender individuals. In pre-colonial India, there were few thoughts on gender and sexuality. In ancient Hindu literature, three main genders are described; *pursasa* (male), *istri* (female), and *napumsaka* (third gender). In colonial times, Victorian laws were introduced to destroy the third gender category because it deviated from British ideal heteronormative concept of sexuality. These laws have contributed to the present day marginalization of this community.

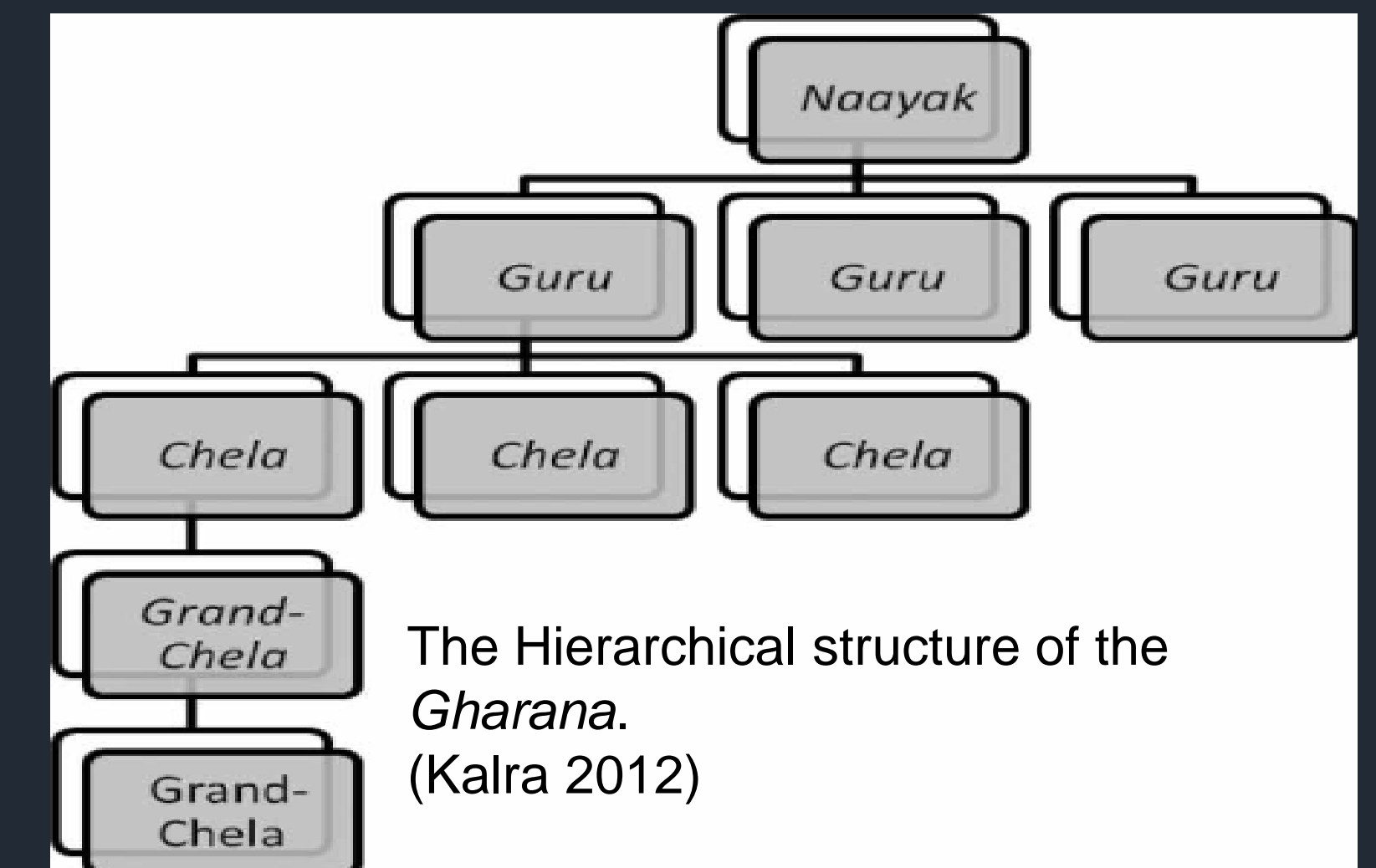
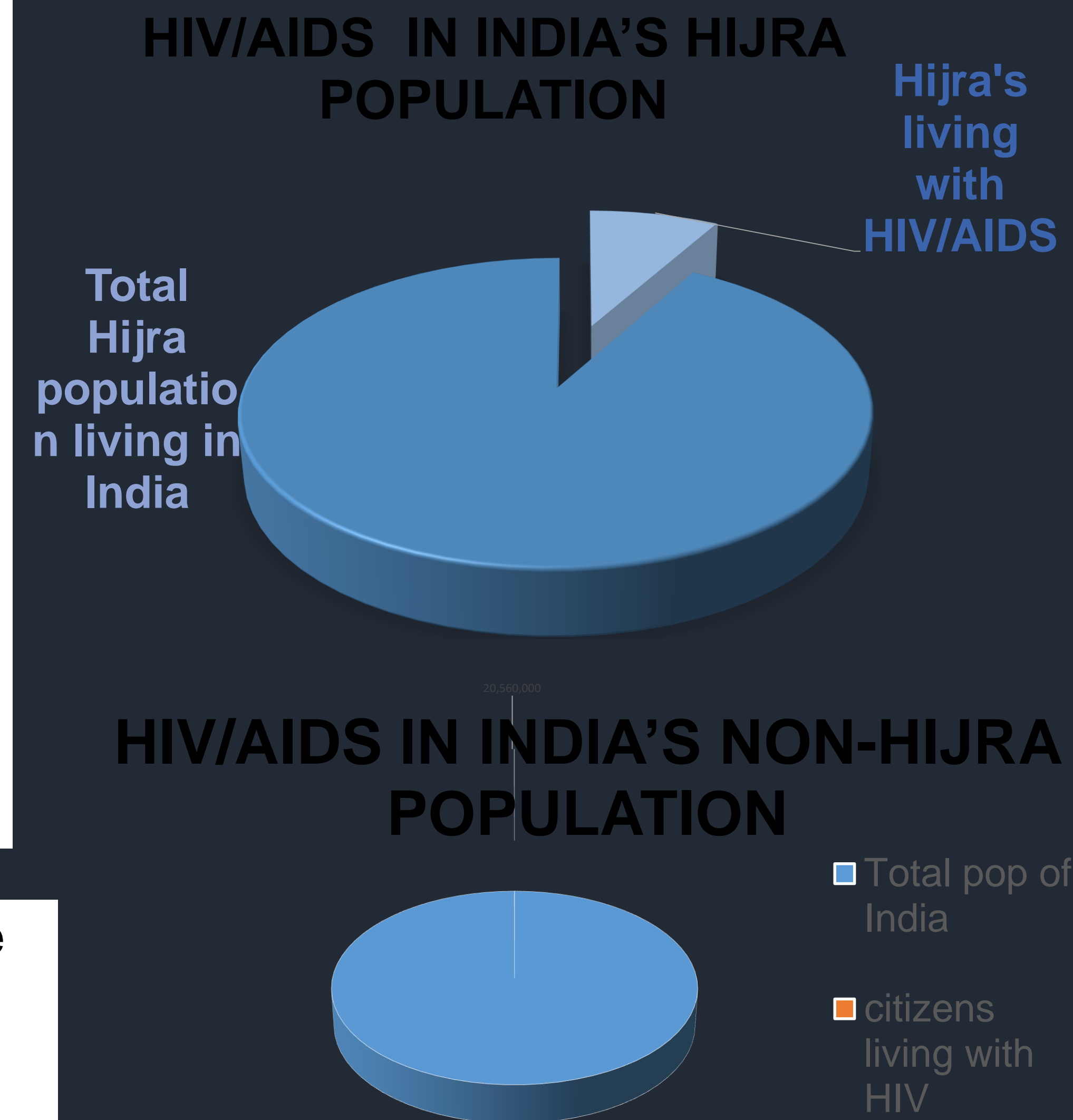
Abstract

This anthropological paper outlines the root institutional, legal and social causes which have lead to the presence and spread of the HIV/AIDS virus amongst the marginalized Hijra population of India.

A graphical comparison of the incidence of HIV/AIDS in the Hijra vs non-Hijra population (Avert.org 2016)

Results

- India's legal structure is semi-colonial in nature which impacts institutional structures, public health policies and shapes the conversation around HIV/AIDS.
- The International medical tourism industry is part of structural adjustment in the healthcare system. This impacts accessibility to resources for the local population.
- A common theme found when interviewing Hijras was the experience of social discrimination and hateful interactions within the healthcare system and in society.
- Hijras experience social estrangement because of the effeminacy that they display.
- Lack of education and accessibility to social programs prevents them from moving up in society and as a result of stresses in all aspects, stagnates their health rapidly.



Methods

Using participant observation and key informants as our primary anthropological methods of data collection, we simulated the fieldwork experience by using first hand narrative accounts and ethnographic studies.