



‘Mobile men with money’: these are only words so why does it matter?

Professor Peter Aggleton

Never Stand Still

Arts & Social Sciences

Centre for Social Research in Health

See: Aggleton P, Bell SA & Kelly-Hanku A (2014) ‘Mobile men with money’: HIV prevention and the erasure of difference, *Global Public Health*, 9:3,257-270

Resources for action and thought

- Vocabulary/terminology matters
 - Is the glass half empty or is it half full?
 - Is it racism or ‘bigotry’
 - Is it sexism or ‘just a joke’
- Key concepts in HIV-related work
 - Risk
 - Vulnerability
 - Social exclusion
- Theory
 - Aid to careful thinking
 - Guide to action

HIV – an epidemic of acronyms?

- 4 ‘Hs’, SWs, MSM, TGs, IDU, PWID
- Much criticised for
 - Homogenisation and stereotyping
 - Reification
 - Lack of meaning to the individuals concerned
 - Conflation of identities and behaviours
 - Creation of social stigma
- Potential result
 - Solidification and inability to think properly
 - Too narrow a set of policy and program responses

What is in a name?

- HIV has always had its ‘bogey’ figures
- We need to use terminology carefully in HIV policy and programs
- Important to highlight heteronormative and gender assumptions underpinning use of a category such as MMM in relation to HIV
- Important to recognise the erasure of ‘difference’, specificity and locatedness caused by the term

‘MSM’ – a short history of a category

- Early origins (not an inclusive term)
 - MWHSWM, MeSMen
 - c.f. gay and other homosexually active men
- Middle years
 - Taking on a life of its own
 - Increasing recognition of other terminology (e.g. panthi, kothi, do paratha)
- Now (very unhelpful inclusive term, especially in the US literature)

Mobile Men with Money (MMM, 3Ms, triple Ms) – a new category in the making

- Creation and use of the category
 - Different geographical contexts (Asia, the Pacific and Africa)
 - HIV policy literature (e.g. in Lao PDR, PNG, Uganda and Nepal National HIV and AIDS Plans)
- Covers quite different population groups
 - Immigrant groups
 - Internal migrants (temporary workers in agriculture, construction or extractive industries)
 - Mobile groups such as wealthy businessmen and government officials
- Offers a reductionist understanding
 - predatory men, **away** from home, **with** sex workers, and posing a **threat** to ‘innocent’ wives

MMM plays to some unhelpful stereotypes about 'men'

- Until recently men were portrayed as the perpetrators of infection, posing a risk to ('innocent') women's health and well-being
- Growing body of literature critical of the way in which men have been represented globally in relation to HIV

The ‘problem’ of men

“Traditional ideas of masculinity are fuelling the global HIV/AIDS pandemic. Around the world men continue to wield the power in the majority of sexual relationships, an imbalance that often robs women of the ability to make decisions relating to their health or status.” (IRIN, n.d.)

“Men’s support for women’s empowerment is something to be welcomed by everyone in the field. But men are responsible for, and remain the root of many of women’s reproductive health problems.”
(Berer, 1996)

More careful analyses

- Recognise that not all men are the same
- Stress the positive attributes of men, and the damage done by careless stereotyping
 - ‘Men Make a Difference’ World AIDS Campaign, 2000-2002
 - Caring and counter-hegemonic practices among groups of men in diverse contexts such as downtown Chicago, the favelas of Rio and Lagos, Nigeria
 - Men as Partners Project (South Africa); Men, Sex and AIDS Project (Botswana); Mathare Youth Sports Association AIDS Programme (Kenya)
- Groups of men have been central to planning positive responses to HIV in Australia and many other contexts

Men and money

- Problematic notions of men and masculinity present in images of men and money
- Mobility varies, but is typically framed negatively
 - **Local** (e.g. Uganda (*boda boda men*), **national** (government workers, business men and long distance truck drivers), and international (fly-in fly-out workers, Mexican migrants to USA, Australian offshore workers in PNG)
 - Frequent and infrequent travel
 - Short- and long-term time away from home
- Recognition of economic, social and individual benefits of mobility rarely present in HIV literature

Men and mobility

- Problems with existing literature
 - Few if any studies differentiate between different forms of mobility, the specific vulnerabilities associated with each, and the challenges they may pose for men and their sexual partners.
 - Few studies have moved beyond highly opportunistic samples of men accessed in bars, at road-side truck stops, in sex work contexts, to identify the perspectives of men who do **not** frequent such locations
- Very few good quality population-based studies examining HIV-related health-related risks and benefits faced by mobile men.

Some other problematic assumptions

- Mobile men spend the money they earn on smoking, drinking, gambling and risky sex rather than saving it or sending it home through remittances to their families
- Mobile men have money
 - How much money?
 - What about the men who move to find money?
 - What about mobile women in search of, or with, money?
- Is it only men who are involved in sexual networking while they are away?

Recognition of these assumptions enables ...

- Move beyond assumptions positing too direct a set of relationships between men, mobility, money and HIV related risk
- Closer examination of individuals and contexts and a more balanced view of HIV-related risks

Conclusions

- Think carefully about the use of the trope, ‘MMM’ in HIV prevention policy making and program design
 - Motivations for, and experiences of, being a man, being mobile, being in work that offers financial reward and/or being in search of money, are diverse
 - Mobile men may or may not become involved in social and sexual practices that pose a risk of HIV
 - The ‘cultures of sexuality’ men encounter as they move, may or may not place individuals at risk – at home, in host communities and along the way

Conclusions

- Need for deeper understanding of relational factors influencing sexual behaviour among those who move in pursuit of money and greater opportunity
 - Sense of belonging, commitments at home, emotional attachment in relationships, the negotiation of sex and safety, social influence of peers

Action required... before MMM 'solidifies'

Programmatic implications

- Programming should be based in the realities of men's lives
- Move beyond individual awareness and behaviour change
- Recognise structural drivers affecting HIV and sexual health (including poverty and the pursuit of opportunity)
- **Make mobility safer**
 - Ensure families not split up, or are split up for less time
 - Enable workers to send remittances home speedily, safely and securely
 - Provide opportunities for recreation outside of work that do not carry HIV-related or sexual health risks
- **Reduce isolation, loneliness and risk**

Thank you