MSM in South Africa: what do we know?

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Homosexuality and South Africa - 1753

- The first reports of homosexual behaviour in South Africa date back to the days of the Dutch East India Company settlement at the Cape of Good Hope.

- In 1753 there was a trial of a Dutch man and two Indian slaves, who had committed mutual masturbation at the chicken house at Robben Island, off the coast of Cape Town.

- The court records reflect that “not satisfied with their devilish frisky stimulation” they had also sodomized each other.

- The consequence, following their confession, was that the three were bound together with chains and thrown overboard into Table Bay.
Homosexuality and South Africa - 1912

• Homosexuality was variously ascribed as a foreign vice, brought in by white settlers, or by migrant workers.

• Visiting the gold rush town of Johannesburg in 1912, British traveller William Scully noted the occurrence of homosexual behaviour in the predominantly male mining settlement.

• In his view: it was an “undoubted fact that the Natives from some of the East Coast recruiting areas, as well as from parts of the Tropics, are addicted to those unnatural vices which, according to Holy Writ, occasioned the destruction of the Cities of the Plain”

• He also noted that: “The Shangaan Natives are the worst offenders”
Homosexuality and South Africa

- “Sodomy” and “unnatural sexual acts” remained offences in the Roman-Dutch common law of South Africa.

- These offences criminalised acts such as anal sex, oral sex, intercrural sex and mutual masturbation between men, but did not apply to, for example, men merely touching or kissing each other.

- The apartheid era brought new controls and legal restrictions, with the ruling National Party viewing homosexuality as a “threat to white civilization”
In 1969 Clause 20A was added to the Immorality Act was added, known as the “three men at a party clause”.

"Acts committed between men at a party and which are calculated to stimulate sexual passion or to give sexual gratification, prohibited.

20A. (1) A male person who commits with another male person at a party an act which is calculated to stimulate sexual passion or to give sexual gratification, shall be guilty of an offence.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1) 'a party' means any occasion where more than two persons are present.”

In 1987, a conviction under the section was reversed on appeal because the court ruled that "a party" was not created when a police officer entered a room in a gay bathhouse because the two men in the room jumped apart when he switched on the light.
Homosexuality and South Africa - 1994

Section 9 of the Constitution, entitled "Equality", states that:

"(3) The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth."
AIDS in South Africa

First South African publication: 1983

- two cases in homosexual men,
- both died in 1982
AIDS in South Africa

September 1986:

“The present status of AIDS cases in the RSA is:

(i) South African residents – 30 cases comprised of:

- homosexual/bisexual men (26),
- heterosexual (1),
- blood transfusion AIDS (1), and haemophiliacs (2);
  all these are white males;”

R Sher, SAMJ, 1986
Why MSM?

The term “men who have sex with men” or “MSM” refers to behaviour rather than identity or sexual orientation.

MSM may include gay and non-gay identified men, bisexual men, men who engage in “situational” sex with other men (for instance, in prisons, schools, or militaries), and male sex workers, among others.

Around the world, a wide variety of local terms and male identities fall under the MSM umbrella.

MSMGF, 2010
Why MSM?

- Public health importance, even in generalized epidemics
- Marginalized, often invisible but significant grouping of men
- Most MSM in African settings are also MSW
- Prejudice prevents MSM accessing health services and research opportunities
Why MSM?

• MSM are at high risk of HIV transmission and acquisition
  • Gay and bisexual men account for 66% of new infections in the US, and African American men in this group account for more new infections than any other subgroup.

  • Increased HIV risk compared to general population (OR 3.8 in Africa) [Baral et al 2007]

• Soweto Men’s Study MSM HIV prevalence = 20%
  • High rates of unprotected sex
  • High rates of sex with men and with women [Lane et al 2009]

• JEMS study, South Africa:
  • MSM HIV prevalence = 43% [HSRC 2009]
Why MSM?

• MSM are a priority for targeted health interventions & research
  • US National AIDS Prevention Plan
  • PEPFAR Guidance
  • South African National Strategic Plan
Multiple vulnerabilities impact on MSM research and care
MSM in Africa

- The “un-Africanism” of homosexuality
- Ongoing criminalisation of MSM
- Stigma and discrimination

African MSM are facing unprecedented prejudice and discrimination culminating in human rights abuses
The “criminal” connection

• Homosexuality is outlawed in 38 African countries.

• In 4 it carries a death penalty

• In 13 nations homosexuality is either legal or there are no laws pertaining to it.

• Providing MSM focused services, or enrolling MSM into studies in these countries becomes a major challenge

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_Africa
Mombasa, Kenya, 2010

Five men arrested over gay marriage rumors
Police drag gay man from KEMRI building
Mob threatens death by fire
Malawi: 2010

FAST FACTS
1. Homosexuality referred to under "offences against morality" in the Penal Code section 153 and 154 is illegal in Malawi and can result in a maximum sentence of five to 14 years imprisonment, respectively, with or without capital punishment.
2. Principal Secretary for HCD, Aids and Nutrition in the Ministry of Health, Mr. M. Chiwela, said the country had lost a lot of lives to HIV/AIDS. The government, he said, was trying to engage those in the fight against HIV, in the same manner as it engaged those in the fight against other diseases.
3. The first engaged public activity was for homosexuals in the country. The engagement was held at Makumbura Lodge in the city and was attended by hundreds of people.
4. Clad in traditional wedding attire, the couple was seen cheering and dancing to take a glimpse at the couple. During the event, the couple was accompanied by hundreds of people.
5. People also painted the couple in the lodge. The whole place was a scene of activity as people pushed and shoved to take a glimpse at the couple. During the event, the couple was accompanied by hundreds of people.
6. The couple was seen cheering and dancing to take a glimpse at the couple. During the event, the couple was accompanied by hundreds of people.

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Uganda, 2010 & ongoing; Zambia 2013, and ongoing
“Traditional” culture, queer identity, and HIV

‘South Africa remains a homophobic, heterosexist society where, across cultures, homosexuality is pathologised, and where cultural discourses such as the notion that “homosexuality is not African” continue to play themselves out.’

Henderson and Shefer 2008
“Traditional” culture, queer identity, and HIV

“first of all in our culture we not allowed to be gays, that’s absolutely Satanism”

“...some will say it’s because of the culture that is enforced in you as a black person that I’m a Xhosa, you’ve got to have a wife, you’ve got to have children, your sexual status your sexual relationship it’s not counted as the thing, it’s only that you’re a man so you have to behave like a man”

Focus Group Participants, Cape Town
Jobson 2010
Evolving attitudes?

"When I was growing up an unqingili (a gay) would not have stood in front of me. I would knock him out."

"[same-sex marriages are] a disgrace to the nation and to God".

Jacob Zuma, 2006

“Today, we are faced with different challenges. Challenges of reconciliation and of building a nation that does not discriminate against other people because of their colour or sexual orientation.”

Jacob Zuma 2012

“if you do it [engage in same-sex relations], you must know that it is wrong and you are rotten”

King Goodwill Zwelethini, 2013
Religion and homophobia

“I can't be accused of homophobia,” says Wilfrid Napier, “because I don't know any homosexuals.”

Cardinal Wilfrid Napier, Catholic Archbishop of Durban

Mail & Guardian, 11 April 2013

“I cannot worship a homophobic God. I would refuse to go to a homophobic heaven.”

Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu

Daily Maverick, 29 July 2013
Back on track....

“heterosexism and homophobia are often key drivers of many negative things in society ...

I don't believe that anyone is born homophobic in the same sense that no-one is born racist. These are norms we acquire because of our socialisation. And, in turn, other human beings can move us away from these prejudices,......

"all people - regardless of race, culture, gender, HIV status or sexual orientation - have equal rights to the provision of services".

Dr Aaron Motsoaledi,
Minister of Health, South Africa
September 2010
Growing political support

“....gay rights are human rights, and human rights are gay rights....

Being gay is not a Western invention; it is a human reality......

......it should never be a crime to be gay”

Speech by US Secretary of State
Hillary Clinton's Human Rights Day,
Geneva 2011
Challenges in MSM research and health services
Multiple barriers impact on MSM care

Tucker et al, 2012; MSMGF 2012
Why sexual identity matters

HIV risk is impacted by sexual identity and behaviour

HIV Prevalence among MSM in Soweto (n=368)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual Identifier</th>
<th>% of Sample</th>
<th>Female partner</th>
<th>HIV Prevalence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straight</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lane et al, 2008
MSM in Soweto

• High degree of concurrent female sexual partners

• High rates of HIV: estimated at 13%, and 34% among the sub-set of gay-identified men.

• These estimates are higher than men in the general population, and among 20-24 year old MSM HIV prevalence surpasses that of women

• Inconsistent condom use
“They see you as a different thing”

- “People are aware of gay and lesbian people but accepting those people like human beings is another story, because they don’t understand what they are going through inside, so that causes a problem, in terms of when you need help from them, they see you as a different thing.”

Lane et al; Sex Transm Infect 2008;84:430–433
Healthcare, homophobia and HIV

• The experience of discrimination based on sexual orientation at clinics and health facilities acts an important deterrent to seeking medical care and going for HIV tests.

• Health facilities viewed as places where health care workers constantly threatened MSM’s rights to privacy and confidentiality by engaging in gossip and homophobic verbal harassment

(Lane, 2008)
Healthcare, homophobia and HIV

‘They said ‘are you a man, a real man? What you want here?’, they said ‘ooh wait I’m going to help you’, those people they stay there for a long time, they won’t get help they just laugh, laugh…’

Focus Group Participants, Cape Town
Jobson 2010
“They see you as a different thing”

- MSM felt their options for non-stigmatising sexual healthcare services were limited by homophobic verbal harassment by HCW.

- Gay-identified men sought out clinics with reputations for employing HCW who respected their privacy and their sexuality and challenged those HCW who mistreated them.

- Non-gay-identified MSM presented masculine, heterosexual identities when presenting for sexual health problems and avoided discussing their sexuality with HCW.

Lane et al; Sex Transm Infect 2008;84:430–433
“They see you as a different thing”

“I once went to the clinic and there were two gay men at the clinic, apparently one of them had an STD, then a nurse said to them she expected that, she wasn’t expecting them to have flu but an STD, because they sleep around and God is punishing them.”

“Then you go to the clinic, the nurse will ask questions like ‘What was in here?’—she means in the anus. And that makes us afraid of going to the clinic to get treatment on time and that’s why many gay men get sick.”

Lane et al; Sex Transm Infect 2008;84:430–433
Why diversity matters

- MSM are not “one population”
- Different men have different needs, do different things, hear different messages, are engaged in different ways
Diversity of sexual behaviour

- Sex between men occurs in diverse circumstances and among men whose experiences, lifestyles, behaviours and associated risks for HIV vary greatly.

- MSM may also have sex with women, if infected they can transmit the virus to their female partners or wives, or be infected from female partners.

- Men who have sex with men are often married, particularly where discriminatory laws or social stigma of male sexual relations exist.

- Sex between adolescent males can also be a part of sexual experimentation.

- In all-male environments, such as prisons, sex between men can be common regardless of sexual identity and may be coerced.

Adapted from UNAIDS, 2008
Specific programming needs for transgender people

- The few existing epidemiological studies among transgender people have shown disproportionately high HIV prevalence ranging from 8% to 68%, and HIV incidence from 3.4 to 7.8 per 100 person-years.

- Underlying correlates of HIV and STI risk as well as the specific sexual health needs of transgender people may be distinct from those of MSM.

- Although the same basic HIV and STI prevention interventions may be indicated for the two groups, public health professionals should avoid conflating the two groups and work towards a more nuanced understanding of each group’s needs.

WHO, 2011
MSM health services: the intersection between behaviour and medical

- Supplying condoms and water-based lubrication;
- Individual and same-sex couple counselling;
- Support groups
- Prevention with positives
- Needle exchange and IDU interventions
- Education on sexual and psychosocial health;
- Promotion of “responsible sex“

HIV testing services

- Sexual health checkups
- HIV-related counselling
- CD4 and viral load testing;
- HIV care and treatment including access to ARVs;
- Diagnosis and treatment for STIs;
- Vaccinations against viral STIs;
- Sex worker-targeted services

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Challenges in MSM health service research

- Reaching hidden, non-gay identified MSM
- Stigma and discrimination
- Real and perceived barriers to HIV testing and treatment
Challenges in MSM health services & research

• Working with diverse sexual identities according to complex dynamics including cultural, geographical and socio-economic factors – difficult to message (content), to reach (disseminate) and serve.

• Complex taboos around male-to-male sexuality and HIV/AIDS

• Recreational substance abuse

• Mental health issues – guilt/shame, depression, anxiety,

• Complex relationship dynamics
Health4men: A Novel Urban Clinical Service Targeting Men Who Have Sex With Men (MSM)
Providing Accessible MSM Care

- The first (and largest) MSM-targeted service in state clinics in Africa
- Minimise barriers to health care access
- Attracting MSM into care
Developing & Mainstreaming Skills

- Facility-based training
- Peer educator training
- Medical staff training & mentoring
- Master classes and symposia with health providers and planners
With thanks for the generous help from:

Glenn De Swardt  
Tim Lane  
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Riaan Norval

"The Bible contains six admonishments to homosexuals and 362 admonishments to heterosexuals. That doesn't mean that God doesn't love heterosexuals. It's just that they need more supervision."

Lynn Lavner