

# BEYOND

# BEHAVIOURS:

Uncovering the social production of HIV epidemics among gay men

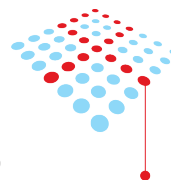
April 15th 2013

Harbour Centre, Simon Fraser University (Room 1400)

515 West Hastings Street

Vancouver, British Columbia

Universities  
Without Walls



**cbrc**   
Community-Based Research Centre  
for Gay Men's Health

8:30 – 9:00 am

**Registration & Coffee**

9:00 – 9:15 am

**Welcome and Introduction***Olivier Ferlatte, Community-Based Research Centre*

9:15 – 10:15 am

**Keeping Gay & Bisexual Men Safe: HIV Prevention as Politics & Praxis***Presenter: Dr. Adam Isaiah Green, Department of Sociology, University of Toronto**Moderator: Olivier Ferlatte, Community Based-Research Centre*

HIV prevention is as much a science as an art and a field of politics. Looking back over three decades of the HIV epidemic we find, roughly, a prevention circle that begins with a biomedical technical fix in the 1980s (the condom), moves toward behavioral psychology, skills building and risk-factorology in the 1990s and early 2000s, then an incorporation of the structural antecedents of health in the first decade of 2000, and more recently a growing shift toward pre- and post-exposure

prophylaxis and “treatment as prevention”—i.e., a return to the biomedical paradigm. In practical terms, all of these approaches have value in promoting the health of gay and bisexual men, but their promise is perhaps best realized in concert, not the least because so called “risky” sexual desires and practices are probably overdetermined and may never be fully amenable to social engineering.

**BREAK 10:15 – 10:45 am**

10:45 – 12:15 am

**Beyond Behaviours: Rethinking Risk and Resilience***Moderator: Travis Salway Hottes, British Columbia Centre for Disease Control***What new sero-converters in Toronto are saying about the contexts of acquiring HIV***Dr. Barry Adam, Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminology, University of Windsor, and Ontario HIV Treatment Network*

Interviews with 43 newly HIV+ gay and bisexual men in Toronto concerning the experiences and life circumstances related to their seroconversion lay the foundation for: (1) a sketch of emergent fields of predisposing circumstances, one of which confirms the conditions pointed to by syndemic indicators, (2) the preliminary identification of additional, non-syndemic fields that may interact with the syndemic field to create

multiple sites of vulnerability, and (3) the social contexts of these fields as they are cross-cut by migration experiences, neoliberal presumptions about responsibility, and the increasingly app-based organization of gay sexual connection. Their narratives raise questions of how to move past pathologizing discourses to affirm the pleasures, health, and well-being of men at edge of sero-conversion.

**The Resilience of Indigenous Men with a Same Sex Attraction***Dr. Clive Aspin, Senior Indigenous Research Fellow, Poche Centre for Indigenous Health, School of Public Health, University of Sydney*

Historically, men with a same sex attraction held positions of esteem within pre-colonial indigenous communities. Many indigenous languages had specific words to describe these men and in many communities, they held important roles such as those of leader, warrior and healer.

The imposition of colonial paradigms has led to the suppression of knowledge about same sex attraction within indigenous communities. More recently, however, there has been an increased understanding of the diversity of indigenous sexuality and the role that it plays in our lives today. As a result, many indigenous men with a same sex attraction prefer to draw on their historical past to describe their sexuality

rather than be confined by labels such as ‘gay’. Indeed, access to culturally relevant terms and knowledge provides protection against negative impacts associated with HIV and other diseases.

In this talk, I will discuss some of the issues that need to be addressed in order to ensure that indigenous men have access to ancestral knowledge and how this can help to shore up the resilience of men with a same sex attraction.

**Diagnostic Technologies-in-Practice: Gay Men’s Narratives of their Acute or Recent HIV Infection Diagnosis Experiences***Dr. Daniel Grace, Faculty of Medicine, University of British Columbia*

In the context of a sustained HIV epidemic among gay men, public health continues to promote testing as a dominant component of sexual health. Enhanced HIV testing technologies (e.g., nucleic acid amplification tests (NAATs)) now allow for the detection of presumptive acute HIV infection (AHI), or recent HIV infection, and may provide opportunities for individual and population health benefit. Our mixed methods study with gay men in Vancouver who recently received an acute (n=13) or recent (n=12) HIV diagnosis revealed data relevant to men’s technologically-mediated processes of coming to know themselves to be HIV-positive. We examine new HIV technologies-in-practice

and consider how an evolving landscape of technologies in and beyond HIV tests themselves have created new diagnostic categories and shifted experiences of learning of one’s HIV-positive serostatus. These advances require additional explanation and education for practitioners and patients in order to be rendered meaningful, alleviate uncertainty and maximize potential health benefits. We reflect on the ways in which existing institutional processes and protocols shape experiences of HIV diagnosis and discuss possibilities to further support men’s overall health and wellbeing.

## LUNCH 12:15 – 1:15 pm

### 1:15 – 2:30 pm

#### **Beyond Behaviours: Uncovering the Social Production of Epidemics**

*Moderator: Nathan Lachowsky, Department of Population Medicine, University of Guelph*

##### **Syndemics Do Not Come Out of a Vacuum**

*Dr. Trevor Hart, Department of Psychology, Ryerson University*

Syndemic models have allowed for an understanding of how gay and bisexual men are at risk for a multitude of health problems. The Minority Stress Model and the related Psychological Mediation Framework add depth to the syndemic model by explaining why and how gay and bisexual men experience these multiple health problems. Dr. Hart will

review the available literature and will add his own recent findings explaining how health behaviours occur in the context of a discriminatory environment. Dr. Hart will also discuss the strengths and limitations of these models, especially regarding the resilience of gay and bisexual men.

##### **Hidden Social Structure in Health Survey Data**

*Dr. Terry Trussler, Community-Based Research Centre*

Eco social theories of health—Social Determinants, Minority Stress, Syndemic Production, Intersectionality—all try to explain health outcomes as effects of social inequality. To investigate the role of inequity in gay men's health and HIV, CBRC conducted two national surveys—each sampling more than 8,000 Canadian men—asking questions beyond behaviours to explore experience with prejudice, discrimination and social participation. The results revealed that critical social and health dispari-

ties exist between gay, bisexual and other MSM married to women. A consistent gradient appears across key measures of HIV epidemiology. Gay men commonly fared worst, female-partnered MSM best and bisexual men somewhere between. We will review the gradient as evidence for the health effects of social inequality and implications for the future of gay men's health promotion.

## BREAK 2:30 – 3:00 pm

### 3:00 – 4:00 pm

#### **Beyond Behaviours: Perspectives from Practice**

*Moderator: Sarah Chown, CIHR Team in the Study of Acute HIV Infection in Gay Men & Gay Poz Sex Project, Positive Living BC*

*Discussants: Dr. Francisco- Ibanez-Carrasco, Universities Without Walls*

*Scott Harrison, Providence Health Care*

*Daniel Pugh, Gay Men's Sexual Health Alliance*

This panel will spark a conversation with conference participants to identify ways current work with gay men goes beyond behaviours and further opportunities for creativity and growth in extending this work.

This panel will also consider the connections between social theory and research in their every day work with gay men.

### 4: 00 – 5:00 pm

#### **Rethinking HIV in the Future of Gay Men**

*Dr. Gary Dowsett, Australian Research Centre in Sex, health and Society at La Trobe University, Melbourne*

*Moderator: Dr. Rick Marchand, Community-Based Research Centre*

In coining the term 'post-AIDS' 18 years ago, I was noting then the dissolution of a singular and unified experience of HIV and AIDS for gay communities. Not only were HIV+ and HIV- gay men having increasingly different experiences, but divergent trajectories were opening before us. Since then, many other factors have been coming into play, e.g. age and generation, migration and internationalisation, the ascendancy of the biomedical and the technosexual, and the supremacy of neoliberal politics (including sexual politics). Now, if gay men are to survive as such — and there is a question about this too — are there larger issues than

HIV and AIDS that ought to command our attention? Or do we need to rethink how we situate HIV and AIDS within the larger framework of gay men's health; maybe, even within men's health as non-gay men look more like us and we look more like them? Is 'health' even the right frame? This might be just a question of politics, or it could be a question of theory. Are we finally returning to the original gay liberation agenda of the eradication of difference, or simply being traduced (seduced?) by our success at intimate citizenship? Some of these questions might be answered.

### 5:00 – 5:15 pm

#### **Concluding Remarks**

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Beyond Behaviours is hosted by the Community-Based Research Centre, in collaboration with Universities Without Walls.  
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