

MEN WHO HAVE COVERT SEX WITH MEN: PERFORMANCE ENHANCING DRUGS?

PROFESSOR SHONA BETTANY (LJMU) & DAVID ROWE (LEEDS UNIVERSITY)



TANGENTIAL TOPIC?

- **ARE DRUGS TAKEN TO : “REDUCE INHIBITIONS/HEIGHTEN SEXUAL RESPONSE/REDUCE ABILITY TO CONSENT/ENABLE SUBSEQUENT FORGETTING” PERFORMANCE ENHANCING DRUGS?**
- **CONTEXT: MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN COVERTLY, WHO ARE NOT OUT AS GAY ACROSS THEIR LIFE WORLDS (MCSM)**
- **HOW DO WE ENGAGE WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE DOING POTENTIALLY HARMFUL ACTIVITIES COVERTLY?**
- **METHODS OF SOCIAL MARKETING/HEALTH PROMOTION - MEN'S SEXUAL HEALTH**
- **FIVE YEAR RESEARCH PROJECT: AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHIC, ETHNOGRAPHIC AND NETNOGRAPHIC (USING SOCIAL MEDIA)**

FINDINGS (IN BRIEF)

- **DIS-IDENTIFICATION WAS A STRONG COMMON THEME ACROSS ALL COHORTS (E.G. I'M NOT GAY, HE ISN'T GAY, YOU CANT GET HIV FROM X, THIS IS NOT A DISEASE CONTEXT ETC.)**
- **MEN PLACED THEMSELVES EITHER INSIDE OR OUTSIDE THE RISK CONTEXT FOR HIV THROUGH VARIOUS DIS IDENTIFICATION STRATEGIES**
- **LEVELS OF DIS IDENTIFICATION ALSO WERE APPARENT (I.E. FROM COMPLETE DENIAL TO PARTIAL ACCEPTANCE)**
- **5 CATEGORIES EMERGED – *ALL SUGGESTED DIFFERENT MODES OF ENGAGEMENT* FOR HEALTH/SAFETY RELATED SOCIAL MARKETING/HEALTH PROMOTION/PUBLIC HEALTH MESSAGES**
- **NEW FINDING AS THIS COHORT HAVE BEEN SEEN FAIRLY HOMOGENEOUSLY PREVIOUSLY IN THE LITERATURE**
- **CATEGORY 1: MEN IN COMPLETE DENIAL SEEMED MORE LIKELY TO ABUSE ILLEGAL/ILLICIT DRUGS**

CATEGORY 1: MEN IN COMPLETE DENIAL SEEMED MORE LIKELY TO ABUSE ILLEGAL/ILLICIT DRUGS (CODED: SUBSTANCE LINKED DIS-IDENTIFICATION)

- **“UNPLANNED”**
- **MAINLY YOUNGER MEN (BUT NOT ALWAYS)**
- **DIS-IDENTIFICATION FROM THE CONSCIOUS SELF “ITS NOT REALLY ME...”**
- *“I still have to be a bit drunk to fall into bad ways...”*
- *“I wouldn’t even think about doing that sober”*
- *“The last time I did that (had unprotected anal sex) I was off my face. It was one of those OMG moments in the morning, what the f*ck have I done? It’s a feeling in the pit of your stomach. I’m not gay, I’m straight, I suppose a bit bi-curious....maybe just horny. I dunno, when I’m like that I can hardly remember what I’ve done” (Joe)*

Field notes: Joe indicated to me that he felt not being able to recall was a good thing, but there was also a sense of excitement, a kind of illicit thrill he seemed to be having from his recollection – like he had got away with something. There certainly didn’t seem to be much genuine sorrow or regret! He seemed to have no problem detaching the self “then” from the self “now”, and drugs seem to be the enabler here (DR)

ANALYSIS

- **INTERNALISED HOMOPHOBIA**
- **LOW SELF ESTEEM (WHAT HAPPENS TO ME “DOESN'T MATTER”)**
- **PRIMARY RISK CONTEXT: RISK TO SELF CONCEPT AS “NORMAL” (I.E. NOT RISK OF HIV OR ILLEGAL DRUG USE OR HEAVY ALCOHOL USE) - ACTUALLY VERY LITTLE DISCUSSION OF RISK AT ALL**

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **GENERAL (NON SEXUALITY RELATED) HEALTH MESSAGES (PERHAPS INCORPORATING ALCOHOL/DRUG MESSAGES)**
- **SAFETY EDUCATION - PERSONAL RISK – SELF ESTEEM**
- **EXPANSION OF FREE CONDOM SERVICES**
- **IMPLICIT MESSAGES**
- **INTERVENTIONS IN NON-TRADITIONAL LOCATION**