SUMMARY


HIV prevention work for men who have sex with men (MSM) represents a front-line institutional response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, but one that has been highly contested in its substance and execution. In fact, since the discovery of the virus that causes AIDS 25 years ago, HIV prevention work has been the site of charged paradigmatic contests over how MSM are imagined as subjects of health directives, how to best manage, inform and govern sexual conduct, the role of sexual pleasure in prevention discourse, the goals of HIV prevention, and the management of evolving scientific knowledge about disease transmission and its relationship to prevention directives. This study will develop a history of MSM HIV prevention work in Toronto—a city with the highest concentration of HIV infected MSM and some of the most extensive outreach and prevention programs in Canada. The history of HIV prevention work can be conceived as a complex prevention field comprised of competing organizations and health specialists vying for limited resources and a voice in the development of prevention discourse and programming. Examining this changing institutional field from the emergence of AIDS in 1981 to the present, the study addresses four central questions:

1) How have MSM HIV prevention programs executed prevention services over time and what has been their relationship to each other and to the state?

2) What expert epidemiological, social scientific and local folk knowledge regarding HIV have emerged over the past 25 years and how have they been translated to prevention work?

3) What impact have external stakeholders, including federal and provincial funders and non-state actors such as the media and ethnic based community leaders, had on the form and substance of prevention work?

4) How has the target MSM subject been constructed in discourse and how has it changed over time? To develop a history of HIV MSM prevention in Toronto, the study will focus on key governmental agencies, AIDS Service Organizations (ASO), ethno cultural community-based organizations, and AIDS activists. Data sources will consist of past and present service providers, organizational leaders and policy makers, along with analysis of archival prevention materials and organizational documents, correspondence and meeting minutes. While the goal of keeping gay and bisexual men safe from disease has been a unifying objective, the complex and changing prevention field in which the history of MSM HIV outreach has materialized is as yet dimly understood. This study promises to put in high relief an historical case of urgent health intervention programming in Toronto but, also, dynamics inherent to disease-prevention movements more broadly as these take form against a backdrop of changing and often competing expert, epidemiological and socio cultural knowledges and practices.