

Primary Prevention

A Community Level HIV Prevention Intervention for Young Black MSM

Project Staff: Susan Kegeles (PI); John Peterson (Georgia State University, Co-PI); Greg Rebchook (Co-PI); David Huebner (University of Maryland, Baltimore County, Co-investigator); Starley Shade (Statistician, Co-investigator); Emily Arnold (Anthropologist); Michael Foster (Post-doctoral fellow).

Project Description: This project will test the efficacy of a community-level intervention (an adaptation of the Mpowerment Project) in reducing sexual risk behavior and increasing testing among young Black men who have sex with men (YBMSM). We will implement the Black Mpowerment Project for two years in Dallas, TX. Houston, TX will be the comparison community. We will conduct cross-sectional surveys of samples of YBMSM before and after the intervention in both communities to determine the efficacy of the intervention in: (a) reducing the proportion and frequency of sexual behaviors that are likely to transmit HIV, including reducing the number of sex partners; (b) increasing the proportion of men who know their HIV serostatus; (c) modifying psychosocial mediating variables that may be causally related to HIV risk reduction; and (d) changing psychosocial factors that are indicators of positive mental health and well-being. Additionally, we will conduct process evaluations of the intervention to assess how the Black Mpowerment Project is implemented and to assess the perceptions of the project at both the individual- and community-level. We will also look for changes in sexually transmitted infection rates in both communities.

Interesting Findings: The developers of the Mpowerment Project have spent five years tailoring the intervention to the socioeconomic, cultural, and social context of YBMSM's lives through formative, qualitative research with HIV+ and HIV- YBMSM and through collaborative research with three Black CBOs and two Boards of Cultural Experts, comprised of Black gay/same gender-loving men. The guiding principles, structure and intervention components of Mpowerment continue to be relevant for YBMSM. However, many issues arose regarding the need for substantial adaptation of the intervention. Following are selected themes: 1) Internalized Oppression: Many YBMSM internalize homophobic messages from the Black community and internalize racist messages from the larger society; 2) Emphasize Whole-man: YBMSM do not want to be reduced to their sexual activities, sexual desires. Recognize that their identity includes family, spirituality, community, history, etc. 3) Diverse Sexual Identities: YBMSM have a variety of sexual identities & many are reluctant to join a "gay" project. However, many Black MSM *do* have a strong gay identity and are at risk for HIV. 4) Lack of Adult Male Role Models: Many YBMSM have not had adult men in their lives and have no vision about what an older BMSM's life is like. 5) Church/Religiosity/Spirituality: *Frequently* mentioned by those who feel alienated from the church and those who still participate in it. A need exists for YBMSM to discuss how religion affects them.

Project Recruitment Dates: Participant recruitment will begin in Spring 2007

Project End Date: August 31, 2010