

# Assessing Risk and Resiliency: Exploring Social and Environmental Influences Upon Young Gay Male Sexual Behavior



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## BACKGROUND

Recent work has indicated that traditional HIV prevention interventions (individual, small group and community level) may not adequately address risk factors present in the lives of young men who have sex with men (MSM). To more effectively address the evolving prevention needs of this group, social and environmental factors affecting their risk taking behaviors need to be considered when establishing and implementing behavioral interventions.

## OBJECTIVES

Utilizing qualitative research methodologies:

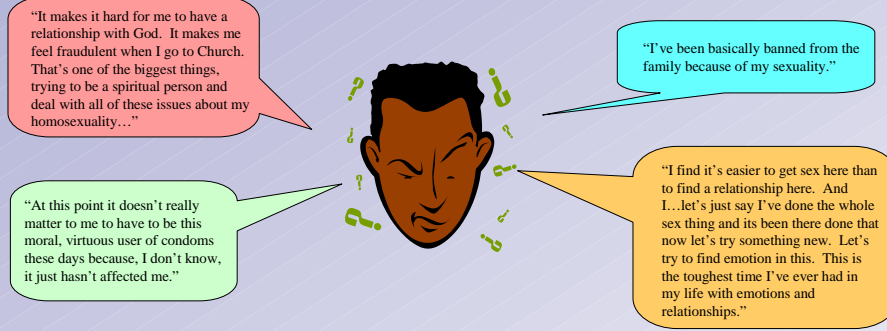
- Identify social and environmental risk factors for HIV
- Validate influence of these factors
- Develop interventions to address these factors

## RESEARCH METHODS

- Conduct focus groups to identify factors influencing sexual behaviors
- Conduct key informant interviews to explore how specific factors influence
- Transcribe audio recording of focus groups and key informant interviews
- Analyze transcriptions utilizing qualitative data analysis software (NUD\*IST) to identify domains of influence
- Summarize influences amenable to social- or environmental-level interventions

## DOMAINS OF INFLUENCE

- Family
- Religion & Spirituality
- Abuse
- Sexuality & Health Education
- General Community
- Peers
- Gay Social Identity
- Gay Environment
- Gay Mentors & Role Models
- Self Efficacy & Self Perception
- Media
- Workplace
- School



**RISK : possibility of loss or injury : PERIL**

**RESILIENCY: an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change**

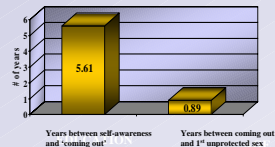
## STEPS TOWARDS RESILIENCY

- Develop a comprehensive and holistically based sexual education curriculum addressing specific issues of concern to young gay men
- Develop parent-oriented sexuality education training or support programs that foster understanding between gay youth and parents
- Conduct educational & prevention outreach in non-traditional venues
- Develop age-appropriate social and recreational alternatives within the community for gay youth
- Gay bars must be visible and vocal partners in HIV prevention campaigns that include general distribution of condoms and other bar-oriented prevention activities
- Develop forums which foster linkages/alliances between the church and the gay community.
- Create “Safe places” in which young gay men and young lesbians may socialize and provide support for one another
- Develop peer based groups to coordinate and implement prevention messages incorporating all forms of media-- print, radio, TV, film, and the Internet
- Develop mentoring programs within the gay community which link various generations and provide support for young gay men
- Develop programs and services specific to the needs of young gay men encompassing issues such as sexual orientation, emotional health and well being, and spirituality

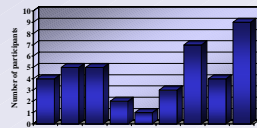
## CONCLUSIONS

- White, Hispanic and African American young gay men purposefully sampled readily identified social and environmental factors which attributed to their safe / non-safe sexual behaviors.
- Suggested interventions tended to be proximal in nature and were highly personal or relationship based.
- Participants appear to be greatly motivated by behavioral interventions which employ multiple facets of the community and social milieu.

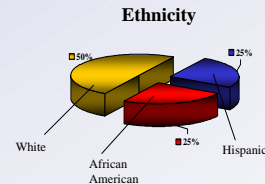
### Windows of Opportunity for Prevention



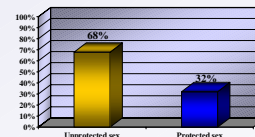
### Ages of Key Participants



### Sample Demographics



### Prevalence of Unprotected Sex in the Past Year



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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