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Using online focus groups to tailor a text-message based HIV-prevention project to meet the needs of adolescent MSM.

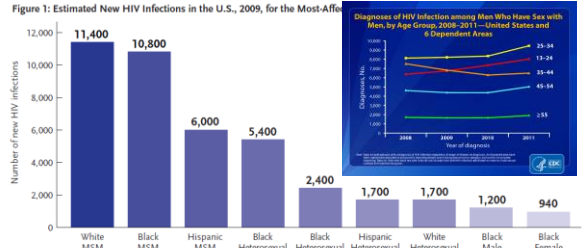
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HIV/AIDS Epidemiology



*The term men who have sex with men is used in CDC surveillance systems because it indicates the behaviors that transmit HIV infection, rather than how individuals self-identify in terms of their sexuality.

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Guy2Guy (G2G): Text-messaging HIV-prevention program:

Aims: To deliver healthy sexuality and HIV prevention information specifically *relevant to young men (14-18) who identify as gay, bisexual, queer (GBQ)*.

- 6 healthy sexuality modules focused on supporting HIV preventive behavior:
 - Condom use
 - Abstinence
 - Healthy sexual decision-making
- A "text-buddy" program
 - Guys connect via text with other guys
- Other Resources
 - Website for parents and teachers
 - G2Genie



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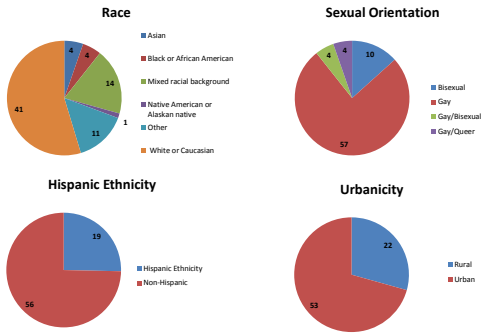
Tailoring a text-based HIV prevention program:

Developmental phase

- Online focus groups
 - To develop program content and logistics
 - To tailor program for GBQ men ages 14-18
- Youth Advisory Council
 - To test content
- Pilot randomized controlled trial (RCT) across the U.S.
 - Test acceptability and feasibility (recruitment/retention)
 - Test efficacy (3 mos post-intervention)

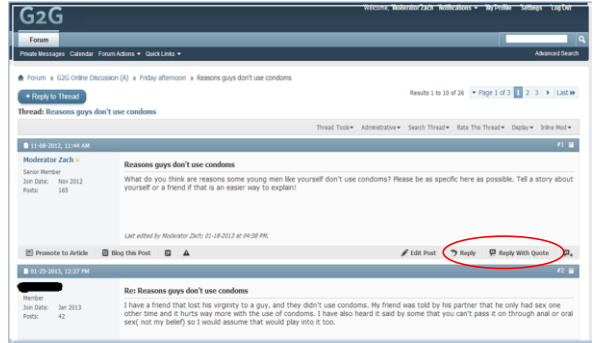
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Participant Characteristics (N=75)



Using Online Focus Groups

- ❖ Asynchronous, bulletin-board style format
- ❖ Questions posted 2x daily for 3 days



Topics covered in focus groups:

- **Text-messaging practices and habits**
 - Logistical and programmatic development
- **Privacy and programmatic concerns**
 - Logistical and programmatic development
 - Creation of "Safety check list" for enrollment
- **Sexual and relationship experience**
- **Condom use**
 - Content of text messages
- **Experiences with sex education**
 - Tailoring to GBQ adolescent's and sexual experience
- **Access to resources and LGBTQ youth**
 - Necessity of program
 - Content of text messages

Need for tailoring based on sexual experience

Sexually Inexperienced/Abstinent

- Emphasis on wanting to wait (particularly *until married*) as a positive *decision*
- Desire for messages that support that decision

Sexually Experienced

Unique Themes:

- Issues of ability to access and effectively use condoms
- Embarrassment about buying condoms

Shared Themes

- Benefits of text messaging
- Concerns about privacy and how to avoid being "outed" as GBQ
- Need for healthy sexuality info tailored for GBQ youth

Benefits of text-messaging format

- **QUESTION:** Can you tell me what you *like* about the idea of getting text messages that talk about healthy sexuality and that share ways to help to prevent HIV transmission?

"Texting is so easy and **convenient** that getting a text about healthy sexuality would be simple and **private**."

"Email, FB, and any other form of social communication is not always **reliable** and texting seems like the best way to go! ...people I know **always check their text messages** and it's a little more private!"

"...it would make me stop and think twice about say having sex without a condom when I am getting a text telling me what the consequences could be."

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Both Groups: Concerns about privacy and "outing"

QUESTIONS: What kinds of worries do you have about texts/info on your phone "outing" you?

"I think that the **only danger would be getting outed**. But, a guy who signs up for this should likely know that as a repercussion for getting such **messages...you guys should make sure that these repercussions are known...**"

I think the combination of **using a lock** and keeping the phone on our person is the easiest way to prevent "outing."

My parent's are extremely protective...they read my texts on a regular basis. It makes me feel violated and ashamed, because I have a lot of inner turmoil about my sexuality.

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Sexually Inexperienced Groups: Wanting to "wait" and to receive positive and supportive messages

- **QUESTIONS:** What do you think are some of the good things about not having sex? What are some of the draw backs? What do you think are the main reasons young men like yourself choose not to have sex?

"Well for me I am 16 and there are many guys that have wanted to have sex with me ... I have never even had my first real kiss...sex isn't an option till I find that one guy I know I will want to be with for the rest of my life and even then I'll ask him to **marry me before we have sex...**"

- **QUESTIONS:** What things would be helpful for you to hear that would remind you about why this choice is important to you, when you might feel tempted to do other things?

"As this is what I chose to do...I would definitely not like to hear that it could give me STDs so I shouldn't do it; that might come off as a challenge, sometimes doing risky things is exciting for people, especially teens. Rather, it would be better to show that it's much better to do something sexual while in a committed relationship with a partner you love..."

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Both Groups: Themes: Lack of gay positive/inclusive sex ed

Question: Please share your thoughts about programs (e.g., Sex Ed in school, or a program at a community organization) that you know about that talks about safe sex or abstinence: how do they make you feel? How were they useful (or not)?

"My community doesn't even acknowledge that gays are real. There are no programs that discuss sex between males and females let alone males and males."

"Well sex ed. Was not helpful to me but to my str8 friends yea but for me and my GBT friends it says nothing about gay sex so its nit helpful so u cant wait to see this program come out to try it and see it."

"Health class at my school doesn't discuss gay sex at all, so I didn't have any conception of how it worked ...I don't know everything about how to be as safe as possible."

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