

* Thank you for your interest in this presentation. Please note that analyses included herein are preliminary. More recent, finalized analyses may be available by contacting CIPHR for further information.

Using online focus groups to tailor a text-message based HIV-prevention project for adolescent MSM.

L. Zachary DuBois¹, Brian Mustanski¹, Michele L. Ybarra²

¹ IMPACT Program, Northwestern University, Chicago, Illinois
² Center for Innovative Public Health Research, San Clemente, California



April 7, 8 & 9, 2013
 San Francisco, CA 1



Guy2Guy: Collaborative study led by Dr's Mustanski and Ybarra

❖ **Mission:** to conduct translational research that improves the health of the LGBT community. We seek to develop the capacity of the LGBT community to conduct health research and translate research findings into practical interventions.



❖ **Vision:** to promote positive human development through the creation and implementation of innovative, unique, tech-based research and health education programs.

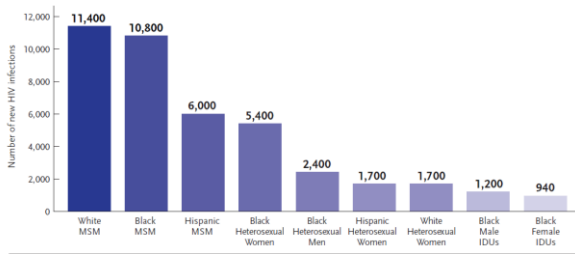


April 7, 8 & 9, 2013
 San Francisco, CA 2

HIV/AIDS



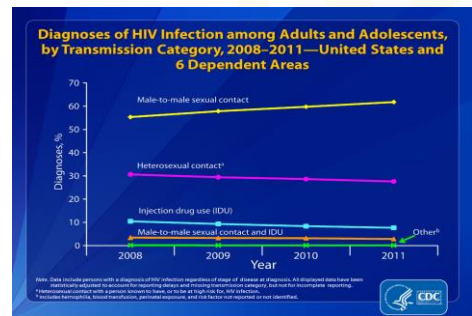
Figure 1: Estimated New HIV Infections in the U.S., 2009, for the Most-Affected Subpopulations



*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. AUGUST 2011



April 7, 8 & 9, 2013
 San Francisco, CA 3



Note: Data include persons with a diagnosis of HIV infection regardless of stage of disease or hepatitis. All diagnosed data have been standardized to represent a person known to have sex to the greatest extent for HIV infection. *Heterosexual contact with a person known to have sex to the greatest extent for HIV infection. †Includes heterosexual, homosexual, parenteral exposure, and other sexual contact not classified.



April 7, 8 & 9, 2013
 San Francisco, CA

Guy2Guy(G2G): Developing a Text-Message Based HIV Prevention Program



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

- MSM – behavioral grouping, not an identity.
- Preliminary analyses from Ybarra's Teen Health and Technology study suggest that of the 6% of men who have recently had sex with men, 71% self-identify as gay, queer, or bisexual; 9% as questioning, and 20% as straight.
- **Thus, being male and having sex with another male is not necessarily equivalent to self-identifying as gay, bisexual, or queer.**
- **Our aim is to tailor a program that meets the needs of men with a gay, bi, or queer identity, not who just have sex with other men.**

Guy2Guy (G2G): Program Components will include:

- 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
- Program website
 - info, resources, and blog



Guy2Guy (G2G) is an exciting new text messaging-based HIV prevention project designed specifically for adolescent men who have sex with men (MSM), ages 14-18. This study is a joint collaboration between the IMPACT Program at Northwestern University and the Center for Innovative Public Health Research, a nonprofit research group in California. G2G is funded by the National Institute of Mental Health.

MSM are facing increasing incidence of HIV/AIDS (accounting for almost 70% of HIV diagnoses among U.S. young people) with most transmission occurring through unprotected sex. Furthermore, the majority of prevention programs focus primarily on adults and heterosexual youth. G2G is working to address this problem through the development of an innovative intervention that uses a modality that more than half of adolescents already use on a daily basis: text-messaging.

The intervention is based on the Information-Motivation-Behavior Skills Model for HIV risk behavior change and will include a 6-module text messaging intervention that will be tested through a pilot randomized controlled trial (RCT) conducted among MSM across the United States. In addition to text-based informational and motivational modules aimed at increasing safe-sex behavior (i.e., condom use, abstinence), the program will include components that increase participant access to real-time peer-based support.

The G2G intervention is in the formative stage of development. In order to develop an intervention that is tailored to reflect the needs of MSM, the G2G project is currently in the process of conducting online focus groups and will convene Youth Advisory Councils where MSM will participate in each stage of program development and evaluation.

Benefits of text messaging include:

- Private, convenient, portable
- Something they already do everyday (54% of adolescents text daily)
- Proven feasible for behavioral interventions (e.g., Smoking cessation)



Tailoring a text-based HIV prevention program: Developmental phase

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

Methods: Using Online Focus Groups for Program Development



April 7, 8 & 9, 2013
San Francisco, CA

Using Online Focus Groups for Program Development:

❖ Online recruitment

- Ads ran on GLSEN, TrevorSpace, Facebook
- → online screener → eligibility, demographics, and phone number
- Purposeful sampling for age, race/ethnicity, region

❖ Eligibility:

- Male birth sex and male gender ID
- 14-18 years old
- Self identified as GB or Q
- Owns cell and has texted > 6 months



April 7, 8 & 9, 2013
San Francisco, CA 10

If u mean talk on the phone it would be good at 5 but if texting than all day

Hello! And I'd be available to communicate via text or email basically any time after 4 pm.

Yea, the number was restricted so I didn't answer :P

Talk on the phone or through text?

❖ If eligible via online screener:

- Texted via SendHub to set up time to talk
- Conveyed preference for texting over talking!
- Confirmed eligibility
- Consent/Assent
- Provided registration and login info

What would we need to do? Like talk on the phone?



April 7, 8 & 9, 2013
San Francisco, CA 11

Recruitment and Enrollment

➤ Sexually Experienced and Abstinent Guys

✓ Matched for:

- Age (14-18)
- Geographic regions
- Urban/rural status

➤ Purposeful sampling

- Racial/ethnic diversity
- Outness



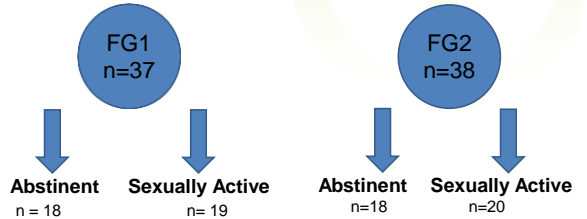
April 7, 8 & 9, 2013
San Francisco, CA 12

Recruitment and Enrollment:

Recruitment		Totals
Screener received	460 total / 193 ineligible**	267 eligible
Contacted via text/phone	152	80 enrolled
Enrolled	80	40 Abstinent 40 Sexually Active
Registered/created username	40 39	Focus group 1 Focus group 2
Withdrew	3	Focus Group 1 n = 37
Did not participate	1	Focus Group 2 n = 38

**52% of ineligible screeners submitted by females or males <14yo or >18yo
**31% did not own a cell phone or have unlimited texting availability

Structure of Online Focus Groups:



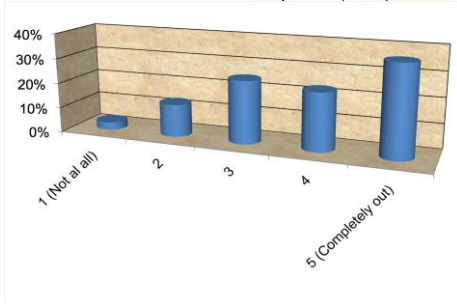
Participant demographic characteristics

Participant characteristics	Group 1 (n=37)	Group 2 (n=38)	P-value
Race			0.55
Asian	5%	5%	
Black or African American	8%	3%	
Mixed racial background	19%	18%	
Native American or Alaskan native	0%	3%	
Other	19%	11%	
White or Caucasian	49%	61%	
Hispanic ethnicity	19%	29%	0.31
Sexual orientation			0.32
Bisexual	11%	11%	
Bisexual/Questioning	5%	0%	
Gay	76%	89%	
Gay/bisexual	3%	0%	
Gay/queer	5%	0%	

Participant demographic characteristics

Participant characteristics	Group 1 (n=37)	Group 2 (n=38)	P-value
Region			0.88
Midwest	27%	24%	
North	22%	21%	
South	22%	32%	
West	30%	24%	
Urbanicity			0.07
Rural	19%	39%	
Urban	81%	61%	

“How ‘out’ are you?” (N=75)



Using Online Focus Groups

❖ Asynchronous, bulletin-board style format: *

- Log-in at their convenience over 3 day period
- Easy moderation of board

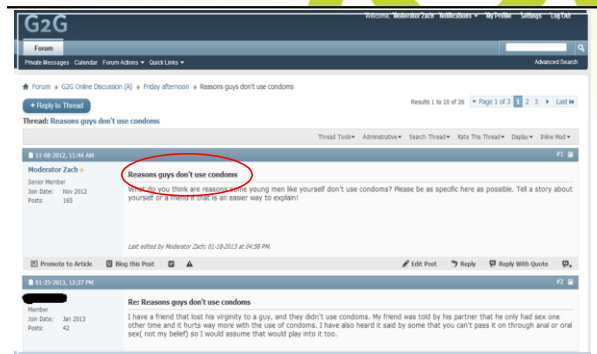
❖ Questions posted 2x daily for 3 days

- Password protected site
- Self-selected anonymous username

* used to understand online experiences of adolescent LGBT youth (Hillier, Mitchell and Ybarra, 2012), to develop an online HIV prevention program (Levine et. al. 2011), to develop a text-message based smoking cessation program (Ybarra, Holtrop and Prescott et al. 2013)

Preparation for online framework for focus groups:

- Encourage interaction between members
- Prevent short, non-descriptive answers
- Importance of moderation to probe for detail and clarity
 - Message function alerts members to follow-up questions



Topics of interest:

- Sexual experience and decision-making
- Condom use
 - Content of text messages
- Text-messaging practices and habits
- Privacy concerns
 - Logistical and programmatic development
 - Creation of "Safety check list" for enrollment
- Experiences with sex education
- Access to resources and LGBTQ youth
 - Necessity of program
 - Content of text messages



April 7, 8 & 9, 2013
San Francisco, CA 21

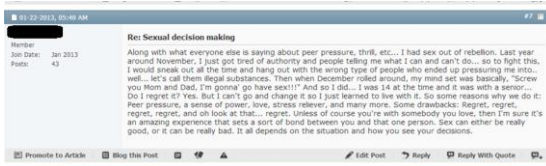
Preliminary Findings



April 7, 8 & 9, 2013
San Francisco, CA

Benefits of format:

- Enabled everyone to say as much as they wanted to – didn't prevent other's from "speaking."



April 7, 8 & 9, 2013
San Francisco, CA 23

Inspired a *breadth* of ideas: emergent themes:



April 7, 8 & 9, 2013
San Francisco, CA 24

Need for tailoring based on sexual experience

Sexually Inexperienced/Abstinent

Unique Themes:

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

Shared themes

- Lack of education about healthy gay sex and sexuality
- Desire for info on how to meet guys, develop and maintain healthy romantic relationships

Sexually Experienced

Unique Themes:

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

Shared themes

- Lack of education about healthy gay sex and sexuality
- Desire for info on how to meet guys, develop and maintain healthy romantic relationships



April 7, 8 & 9, 2013
San Francisco, CA

Abstinent Groups: Themes: *Wanting to wait*

- *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?*

"For me and people like me, sex isn't just a physical pleasure. It is emotionally significant. When I have my first time, I want it to be with a man whom I'm in love with."

"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 ill ask him to marry me before we have sex.."

"one of the goods things is that you cant get any std's. but the draw backs are your kinda of missing out on things, but when its my first time i want it to be with my boyfriend, when were both ready."



April 7, 8 & 9, 2013
San Francisco, CA 26

Abstinent Groups:

Themes: *Interest in receiving positive and supportive messages*

- *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..."

"I would like to be asked why am I going to have sex and do I feel real emotions towards that person."

"...your body is a temple. It is the only thing that keeps you alive. Do not defile your own temple. Do not throw away what should be given only to the worthy person(s). Cheesy? Maybe. Too bad."



April 7, 8 & 9, 2013
San Francisco, CA 27

Sexually Active Groups: Themes: *Barriers to condoms use*

- *QUESTION: What are your thoughts about condoms and using them? What percentage of guys like you would you guess use condoms when they have sex?*

"A very low percentage. Me for example would be extremely embarrassed to ask for them, and wouldn't even know where to get them (I think they sold in vending machines! And pharmacies. Also, some don't know how to use them properly and would feel awkward using them."

"I definitely agree with the low percentage. Most likely with the thought that condoms only prevent pregnancy. They don't think of anything else. Also embarrassment, I'd be too embarrassed to go off and purchase condoms myself if I had money for it."



April 7, 8 & 9, 2013
San Francisco, CA 28

Sexually Active Groups: Themes: Barriers to condom use

Question: What are some of the reasons why young men like yourself don't use condoms?

"Having condoms can be uncomfortable around parents."

"Some guys think that it takes away from the general effect of sex. Like bareback sex. I have had many people tell me "I don't use condoms because it just doesn't feel the same with them on"...and some people may be afraid to go somewhere and buy them! Or they may be afraid that their parents will see them in their room and just flip out."

➤ QUESTION: What do you think could be done to help you use condoms more regularly?

"Show us how they can increase the pleasure of sex. Ribbed? Heated ones?"

"...exactly what I was thinking and also lower prices, and make the idea of buying a condom less taboo."

"Lower prices. I bought condoms for my boyfriend and I and they were about 7 for the 3 pack. Also try to use other kinds. It was my first time buying and it was rather awkward."



April 7, 8 & 9, 2013
San Francisco, CA 29

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 school's health class was pretty terrible...I'm pretty sure the word gay wasn't said throughout the entire class. They're pretty useless. And I don't have any community programs I could to learn about anything."

"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."

"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."

"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."



April 7, 8 & 9, 2013
San Francisco, CA 30

Both Groups: Themes: coming out and meeting guys

Question: How do you usually meet guys?

"I typically will meet other guys online on tumblr facebook or omegle. I met my current boyfriend through a mutual friend. Unfortunately not all guys are easy to spot, as some try to appear straight. had lots of experience with that."

"I am not out so its hard to meet guys kind of. The guy I am currently talking to I met at school."

"What if people can't tell your gay? That's definitely how it is with me. I can sometimes tell when other guys are gay, but I'm always to shy to do anything about it. How do you put yourself out there without totally giving yourself away to everyone?"

"well... im one of the few guys at school that is out."



April 7, 8 & 9, 2013
San Francisco, CA 31

Next Steps

- Conduct mixed-methods analysis of data for program tailoring
 - Compare Abstinent/Sexually Active
 - Compare Urban/rural
 - Examine differences related to being "out" as gay
- Integrate results into content/logistics
- Conduct Youth Advisory Council
 - To test content
- Pilot RCT among AMSM across the U.S.
 - Test feasibility and acceptability (recruitment/retention)
 - Test efficacy (3 mos post-intervention)



April 7, 8 & 9, 2013
San Francisco, CA 32

Annual Conference on Youth + Tech + Health

Acknowledgements

The project described was supported by Award Number R01 MH096660-01A1 from the National Institutes of Mental Health.

The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institutes of Mental Health. We would like to thank the entire G2G Team from IMPACT and CiphR, particularly Ms. Tonya Prescott for her contributions recruiting and managing participants and Mr. Schwab for his leadership on the technology development supporting the Bulletin Boards. We'd also like to acknowledge the contributions of our consultants, Drs. Sheana Bull and Jeffrey Parsons. Finally, we thank the participants for their time and willingness to participate in this study.

For more information, contact:
Zachary DuBois
zach.dubois@northwestern.edu



April 7, 8 & 9, 2013
San Francisco, CA 33