Variations in sexual behavior over time among Black men who have sex with men (MSM) and men who have sex with men and women (MSMW) in 6 US Cities

Background:
There is evidence to suggest that MSMW exhibit higher levels of risk-taking than MSMO because they might be psychologically vulnerable as a result of stigma and discrimination and because they traverse two worlds that often do not converge – one of homosexual or bisexual behavior and one of heterosexual identity (Allen Jr, Myers, & Williams, 2012; Brooks, Rotheram-Borus, Bing, Ayala, & Henry, 2003; Saleh, Operario, Smith, Arnold, & Kegeles, 2011). Conversely, other studies have documented higher levels of illicit drug use at last sex, more psychological distress and less support among MSMW compared with MSMO (Gorbach et al., 2009, Penniman Dyer, forthcoming). Psychological distress and vulnerability may ultimately increase the chances of MSMW engaging in sexual risks that place both their male and female partners at greater risk for HIV.

Though emerging evidence suggests MSMW exhibit elevated levels of HIV risk behaviors, research on sexual behavior patterns in MSMW remains limited.

Current State and Gaps:
Current studies that examine risk among MSM characterize this group as homogeneous, while they may represent a heterogeneous group of men. Some may have current male partners only, others may have current female partners only, and some have both male and female partners, concurrently or serially. Specifically, there is very little research among men who currently have female partners yet have a history of sex with men (MSMW) or men who currently have male partners but have previously had sex with women (MSMW) despite their elevated risk of HIV given prior or current history of sex with a man, and high bridging potential given their prior or current partnership patterns with women. Moreover, there is a dearth of research on substance use, psychosocial and sexual risk comparing MSMO, MSMW and men who may have differential patterns of sexual behaviors with men and/or women.

Rationale:
To best understand how to reduce disproportionate infection among all groups of MSM and to prevent transmission from these men to their male and female partners, research is needed to compare MSMO, and the heterogeneity of groups within MSMW on HIV risk outcomes and vulnerability factors that drive HIV risk.

This paper will use baseline and follow-up (6 month and 12 month) ACASI data for all MSM (N=1553) in the study. The objective being to characterize differences in substance use, psychosocial factors (IHP, perceived homophobia, stigma, disclosure of same sex behavior and HIV status), sexual risk behaviors comparing 3 behaviorally different groups of men. Implications of findings are a) Developing an understanding of the bridging from higher risk populations (MSM) to seemingly lower risk (women) among
MSMW, 2) Assist researchers and interventionists interested in developing interventions for MSMW and their partners to begin to focus on interventions that reduce harm versus reduce behavioral risk.

**Hypotheses:**

MSM (stable) will report less IHP compared to MSMW (stable) and men who changed their sexual behaviors over the course of the study period.

MSM (stable) will report more social support compared to MSMW (stable) and men who changed their sexual behaviors over the course of the study.

MSMW (stable) and men who changed their sexual behaviors will be comparably similar in terms of substance use, including crack cocaine, methamphetamine, marijuana and alcohol use compared to MSM (stable).

Men who changed their sexual behavior over the course of the study will be an intermediate risk group in terms of sexual risk taking (UIAI, URAI, UP sex while under the influence of drugs, UP sex while under the influence of alcohol, sex trade) compared to both MSM (stable) and MSMW (stable).

This project is expected to culminate in a publication in a peer-reviewed journal with a focus on sexual behavior and/or sexuality (e.g. Archives of Sexual Behavior (IF: 3.525) or Journal of Sex Research (IF: 2.532)).

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