

The Cultural and Relationship Context of HIV among Bisexually Active Black Men and their Female Partners

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In The MASAI Project, a qualitative study with 60 HIV+ and HIV bisexually active Black men in the San Francisco Bay Area from 2009 - 2011, men reported having unprotected sex with their female partners more frequently than they did with male partners, with high concurrency of sexual partnerships with male and female partners. Men disclosed that they were bisexually active less frequently to female than to male partners, and described a range of disclosure to female partners. Ideologies of masculinity – or what it means to be a man - were described in the specific contexts of racism and poverty, and influenced men’s sexual risk practices, sexual identities and levels of disclosure to women of their sex with male partners.

This five-year research study seeks to examine the cultural and relationship contexts of HIV among bisexually active black men and their female partners to generate knowledge for the development of HIV prevention interventions. The objectives of the five-year research study are: 1) describe the influence of cultural and relationship factors on HIV risk behaviors through qualitative interviews with women partnered with Black bisexually active men (N=15); 2) develop culturally-relevant quantitative measures of disclosure among men and levels of knowledge of partner’s sexual risk with men among women; 3) assess the effects of disclosure, levels of knowledge of bisexual activity, and gender ideologies on sexual risk behaviors among bisexually active Black men (N=120) and female partners of bisexually active Black men (N=120); and 4) conduct an exploratory mixed methods study of partnerships of bisexually active Black men and their female partners (N=120), to explore how partners influence each other’s sexual risk behaviors.