

# BEYOND BEHAVIOR: THE ROLE OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER IDENTITY AND ATTRACTION IN HIV INTERVENTIONS FOR YOUNG BLACK MSM AND TRANSGENDER WOMEN

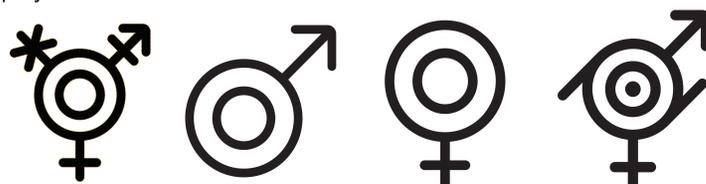
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**Background:** HIV prevention efforts have traditionally focused on individual behaviors that place young black men who have sex with men and transgender women (YBMSM/TW) at risk for HIV, without sufficient attention to the role of sexual orientation and gender identity.

**Results:** The mean age was 24.3 years, 39.5% were HIV-positive, 57.0% reported unprotected anal or vaginal intercourse in the prior three months. Most identified as gay 312 (65.8%), 87 (18.4%) as bisexual, 8 (1.7%) as straight and 67 (14.1%) as other. For many participants, there was lack of congruence between chosen identity, attraction and sexual behaviors in the past three months. Of those who identify as bisexual – only 18.4% reported moderate to high attraction to both males and females and engaged in anal or vaginal sex with both genders in the past 3 months. While most of the sample identified as male (95.6%), 7 (1.5%) participants identified as female, 10 (2.1%) as transitioning and 4 (0.8%) as undecided. One-tenth (n=48) reported being mis-gendered some, most or all of the time; 62.5% reported associated stigmatization. While 66.9% were open with others about their chosen sexual orientation, 21.5% wished they were not that orientation and 7.2% reported wanting professional help to change sexual orientation.

**Methods:** healthMpowerment.org (HMP) is a mobile-phone-optimized, Internet-based intervention for YBMSM/TW that provides information, resources, tailored feedback, and social networking platforms to offer and receive social support from peers. Baseline data from 474 YBMSM/TW enrolled in randomized controlled trial of HMP was analyzed to explore identity, attraction and behaviors.

**Discussion:** A high proportion of participants reported incongruous sexual orientation, attraction and behavior. More nuanced understanding of the complexities of sexual orientation, gender identity and behavior among at-risk and HIV-positive YBMSM/TW is needed if HIV interventions are to provide appropriate tailoring and content to address the roles gender and sexuality may play in risk behaviors for HIV transmission.



## SEXUAL IDENTITY

[sek-shoo-uh | ahy-den-ti-tee]  
noun

1. the label that people adopt to signify to themselves and others who they are as a sexual or romantic being. Sexual identity is based on feelings, attractions, and desires. (e.g. gay, straight, queer, bisexual, same-gender loving)

## ATTRACTION

[uh-trak-shuh n]  
noun

1. Who you find sexually, romantically, physically attractive. (e.g men, women, both, none)

## BEHAVIOR

[bih-heyv-yer]  
noun

1. Who you have sex with. (e.g. men, women, transwomen, transmen, no one)

## GENDER IDENTITY

[jen-der ahy-den-ti-tee]  
noun

1. One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.

## QUOTES

"I knew I was gay since before I knew what the word gay meant I just always felt a strange feeling about another male around me and one I got older to know what the word gay ment I felt happy and relief BC that word describes who I was as a person. Now that I'm out and comfortable who I am I just love my self even more each and every day."

"From the views of the straight world, if a man has sex with another men, same as women, most people consider them to be gay automatically, eliminating the idea of bisexual or anything else. In the gay world, we recognize bisexuality because we understand that someone can like both."

"I think I knew I was gay in middle school although I dated females I knew something was off because it felt forced or something I thought I had to do. From the age of 18 on up I have been happy with myself and messing with only dudes."

"Because every person wants to feel loved, and one cannot feel love until they love themselves. If a person hates who they are every day because they don't like the body they are in, they should be able to change it and not feel hatred from others about it."



	Gay N = 313, 67.3%				Bisexual N=87, 18.7%				Queer/questioning/other N = 57, 12.3%				Straight N = 8, 1.7%			
	Sex w/ men only	Sex w/ men & women	Sex w/ women only	No Sex	Sex w/ men only	Sex w/ men & women	Sex w/ women only	No Sex	Sex w/ men only	Sex w/ men & women	Sex w/ women only	No Sex	Sex w/ men only	Sex w/ men & women	Sex w/ women only	No Sex
Attracted to men only n=341 73.3%	242 52.0%	8 1.7%		24 5.2%	20 4.3%	3 0.6%		2 0.4%	24 5.2%	2 0.4%		5 1.1%	1 0.2%			1 0.2%
Attracted to men & women n=104, 22.4%	22 4.7%	2 0.4%		5 1.1%	36 7.7%	16 3.4%	1 0.2%	4 0.9%	17 3.7%	1 0.2%						
Attracted to women only n=13 2.8%						3 0.6%			2 0.4%	1 0.2%		1 0.2%		3 0.6%	1 0.2%	1 0.2%

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