

Public Health Management Corporation

Annual Progress Report: 2009 Formula Grant

Reporting Period

January 1, 2010 – June 30, 2010

Formula Grant Overview

The Public Health Management Corporation received \$21,969 in formula funds for the grant award period January 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011. Accomplishments for the reporting period are described below.

Research Project 1: Project Title and Purpose

The Impact of Masculinity Ideals on HIV Risk among Black and White Bisexually-Active Men -
The overall purpose of this project is to increase the current understanding of how contextual factors such as ideals of masculinity may contribute to HIV risk among Black and White men who have sex with men and women (MSMW). This project will utilize existing data gathered from 346 Black and White MSMW in Philadelphia to examine the relationship between masculinity ideals and sexual behaviors that may increase risk for HIV infection or transmission among MSMW and their partners. This project will examine the differential impact of masculinity ideals for Black and White men and examine how other factors such as internalized homophobia and history of marriage may moderate the impact of masculinity ideals on HIV risk. These findings will help guide HIV prevention messages for these populations.

Anticipated Duration of Project

1/1/2010 – 6/30/2011

Project Overview

While the HIV epidemic in the United States has severely impacted all men who have sex with men (MSM), the highest HIV rates are among Black MSM. Black MSM are more likely than other MSM to identify as bisexual and report sex with women and are less likely to disclose their same-sex behavior. Social norms around gender roles and masculinity, particularly in Black communities, may preclude some men from disclosing same-sex behaviors. It is important to understand how contextual factors such as masculinity ideals may influence HIV risk among MSMW. The overall objective of this project is to further our understanding of the impact of masculinity ideals on sexual behaviors known to increase risk for HIV infection and transmission. Examining data collected from Black and White MSMW will help to identify racial differences in the association between masculinity ideals and HIV risk. The findings from this project will promote the development of more effective, culturally tailored HIV interventions and prevention messages for MSMW.

The specific aims of this project are to:

1. Examine levels of masculinity ideals and patterns of sexual risk among Black and White MSMW.
2. Examine potential correlates of masculinity ideals, including internalized homophobia and history of marriage among Black and White MSMW.
3. Compare Black and White MSMW regarding levels of masculinity ideals, sexual risk, internalized homophobia and history of marriage.
4. Assess the differential impact of masculinity ideals on sexual risk behaviors for Black and White MSMW, accounting for factors such as socio-demographic variables (i.e. age, SES), internalized homophobia, and history of marriage.

The methods for achieving these aims will involve the secondary analysis of existing data collected by PHMC from December 2007 through June 2008 from a sample of 346 Black and White MSMW who participated in a study funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention entitled Using Respondent-Driven Sampling to Reach Black and White Bisexually-Active Men. This cross-sectional study collected comprehensive information from men on a number of important dimensions, including socio-demographic characteristics, physical and psychosocial health, HIV status, sexual practices, substance use, and disclosure of sexual behavior.

Principal Investigator

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Other Participating Researchers

None

Expected Research Outcomes and Benefits

Studies suggest that nearly 1 in 2 Black MSM may become infected with HIV in their lifetime. In addition, with the exception of Black men, the HIV prevalence rate for Black women is greater than the rate for all other subgroups. Considering that the primary mode of HIV infection among Black women is sex with a man, and that Black MSM are more likely than MSM of other racial or ethnic groups to report sex with women and less likely to disclose their same-sex behavior, there is an urgent need to understand the factors that increase Black MSMW's risk for HIV infection and transmission. Few studies have focused specifically on this population. The proposed project will produce new findings on the link between contextual factors such as

masculinity ideals and sexual behaviors that increase men's HIV risk. The inclusion of White MSMW provides an opportunity to examine racial differences in masculinity ideals and sexual risk for HIV, and the findings from this project will help to tailor future interventions and messages to reduce the HIV risk of MSMW and their sexual partners. The key product that will result from this project will be a manuscript published in a peer-reviewed journal that will facilitate the sharing of important information about ideals of masculinity and HIV risk behavior among Black and White MSMW.

Summary of Research Completed

The activity conducted during this reporting period entailed initiation of a literature review of recently published studies. This ongoing literature review is important for at least two reasons. First, since the application for funding for this project was completed, it is possible that new research has been published that may relate to the specific aims of this project. For example, we want to determine if new research has been published related to the effects of contextual factors such as masculinity and internalized homophobia on risk for HIV. The second reason the literature review is important is in the identification of key variables that will be important to consider during analysis of the data. A student from Drexel University School of Public Health, who was completing a short-term internship at PHMC, was able to assist with the initiation of this literature review.

As a first step in conducting the literature review, key words and phrases were identified that would be used as search terms. These included combinations of the following search terms:

- masculinity
- hypermasculinity
- masculine ideals
- ideals of masculinity
- internalized homophobia
- homonegativity
- family
- marriage
- religion
- spirituality
- church
- African American
- Black
- White
- Caucasian
- HIV risk
- HIV/AIDS
- HIV
- men
- men who have sex with men
- men who have sex with men and women
- MSM
- MSMW

- bisexually-active
- bisexual

The ongoing literature review initiated during the reporting period is being conducted using online databases such as PubMed, googlescholar.com, and PsycINFO. Some of the relevant findings in the literature suggest that:

- Messages regarding masculinity are intertwined with issues of race and ethnicity and class.
- Questions about one's masculinity may be associated with attempts to prove one's masculinity through sexual conquests, such as having sex with multiple partners and avoiding emotional attachments in sexual relationships.
- Traditional masculinity ideology messages come from family, peers, school, and the media during adolescence.
- Internalized homonegativity (homophobia) is related to higher age, lower education, African American ethnicity, poverty and homelessness, recent use of cocaine, incarceration, being behaviorally bisexual, and being HIV negative.
- The sociocultural environment of most Black men may prohibit non-heterosexual behaviors and identities.
- Among MSMW with no prior history of HIV testing, internalized homophobia may serve as a barrier to HIV testing.
- Internalized homonegativity was not independently predictive of HIV-related sexual risk behaviors (when controlling for race/ethnicity and sexual identity).
- Bisexually identified MSM may have higher levels of internalized homophobia compared with gay-identified MSM.