

The Intersection of Sociocultural Factors and Health-Related Behavior in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth

Experiences Among Young Black Gay Males as an Example

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KEYWORDS

- LGBT • Youth • Gay • Young black gay and bisexual men • YBGBM
- Health-related behavior • Intersectionality • Black/African American

KEY POINTS

- Young black gay and bisexual men (YBGBM) experience multiple inequities compared with their majority peers by virtue of their membership in multiple oppressed and marginalized groups.
- Intersectionality suggests that multiple social identities intersect at the individual or micro level of experience and reflects larger social–structural inequities experienced on the macro level.
- Intersecting identities predispose YBGBM to adverse health outcomes and health inequality, which are further modified by promoting and protective factors.

R.A. Sanders disclosed that she was funded by NICHD K23 HD074470 award.

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Pediatr Clin N Am 63 (2016) 1091–1106
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pcl.2016.07.009>

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BACKGROUND

Intersectionality is a theoretic framework that suggests that multiple social identities—for example, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation—intersect at the individual or micro level of experience and reflects larger social–structural inequities experienced on the macro level.^{1,2} This article uses an intersectionality framework to describe how multiple stigmatized social identities can create unique challenges for young black gay and bisexual men (YBGBM) as an example.

Adolescence is an important time of physical, social, emotional, and cognitive growth and development in the life course.³ The majority of sexual minority (eg, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender [LGBT]) youth of color emerge from this period as healthy adults, having successfully achieved these developmental tasks.³ However, relative to their majority peers, these youth face greater, formidable risks to their health and development.^{4,5} YBGBM and other young black men who have sex with men (YBMSM), in particular, carry one of the greatest public health burdens in the United States, disproportionately accounting for more than one-half (55%) of all new HIV infections in young men who have sex with men.⁶ YBGBM experience multiple inequities compared with their majority peers by virtue of their membership in multiple oppressed and marginalized groups.

There is limited health-focused research on the intersecting identities of young black gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men^{1,7} but using the lens of intersectionality to understand the threats to health and well-being these young men face may provide key opportunities for prevention and intervention. In this article, we examine the key intersecting identities such as race, sexual identity, and cultural expectations (eg, masculinity, and religious morality; Fig. 1) that exist for YBGBM and how such factors may predispose young men to adverse health outcomes and health inequality. We also describe sociocontextual promoting and protective factors that may further

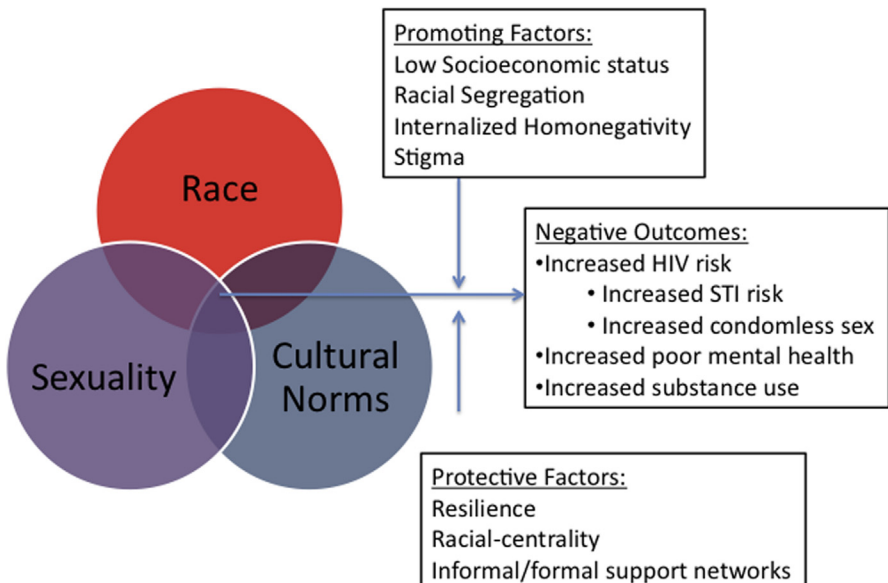


Fig. 1. Key intersecting identities of young black gay and bisexual men. HIV, human immunodeficiency virus; STI, sexually transmitted infection.

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