

HIV Prevention Efforts for Young Gay/Bisexual Men

Susan M. Kegeles, Ph.D., Gregory M. Rebchook, Ph.D., Robert B. Hays, Ph.D., Lance M. Pollack, PhD

Center for AIDS Prevention Studies, University of California, San Francisco, U.S.A.

Background

- Previous research indicated that our multi-component, community-level HIV prevention intervention (the Mpowerment Project) was effective in reducing rates of unprotected anal sex among young gay/bisexual men
- But the research communities were small (less than 120,000), with little ethnic/racial diversity
- Goal of this study: to implement and evaluate it in a larger, more diverse U.S. community

Evaluation of Intervention Efficacy

- Longitudinal cohorts in 3 larger cities (population 1-3 million)
- Participants recruited independently of the intervention in each community
- 1 intervention & 1 comparison community
 - Self-administered
 - Men between ages of 18-27
- Participants recruited from:
 - Gay bars
 - Community/University
 - Friendship networks
- Participants received \$10 per survey

Young Men's Survey

- Wave 1: Pre-HAART (1996)
- Wave 2: Post-HAART (1999)
- 3 large U.S. cities
 - Albuquerque, NM (Intervention community) (N = 90)
 - Austin, TX (N = 213)
 - Phoenix, AZ (N = 329)



Demographics of Young Men's Survey

- Race/ethnicity
 - 59% White
 - 29% Latino
 - 5% African American
 - 4% Native American
 - 3% Asian/Pacific Islander
- Sexual Orientation
 - 83% Gay
 - 16% Bisexual
 - 1% Other



Guiding Principles of the Mpowerment Project

- Community Building: create a healthy community that promotes supportive friendship networks and disseminates a norm of safer sex
- Social Focus: link HIV prevention to the fulfillment of social needs and infuse HIV prevention into all activities
- Peer Based: peer-influence is very powerful, peers are mobilized to act as agents of change within their social networks
- Empowerment: Young gay/bi men are the decision makers of the project; it is their own project
- Diffusion of safer sex message: young gay/bi men talk with and encourage their friends to be safe
- Multi-level: since young gay/bi men engage in risky behavior for multiple reasons that occur at different levels - need to focus on different levels of variables simultaneously
- Gay/Sex positive: enrich and strengthen young gay/bi men's sexual identity and pride in being gay/bi/queer; eroticize safer sex—not just focused on condoms



Outreach Approach

- Formal Outreach
 - Outreach Events provide venues for safer sex promotion and invite YGM to get involved in Project activities
 - Outreach Volunteers promote safer sex through performances at events and in community
- Informal Outreach
 - Taught and encouraged in M-groups
 - 1 to 1 conversations with friends



Small Groups ("M-Groups")

- Peer-led
- 8-10 YGM
- 1 time group
- About 3 hours long
- Promoted as a way of meeting other young gay/bi men, fun, discussion of important issues (NOT a "safer sex workshop")
- Focus on personal risk-taking and on informal outreach, building community



Young Men's Community Center

- Project Headquarters
- Space for most events and activities
- YGM's drop-in center
- Resources and referrals
- Volunteers decorate and maintain space
- Home-like, safe, gay-positive atmosphere

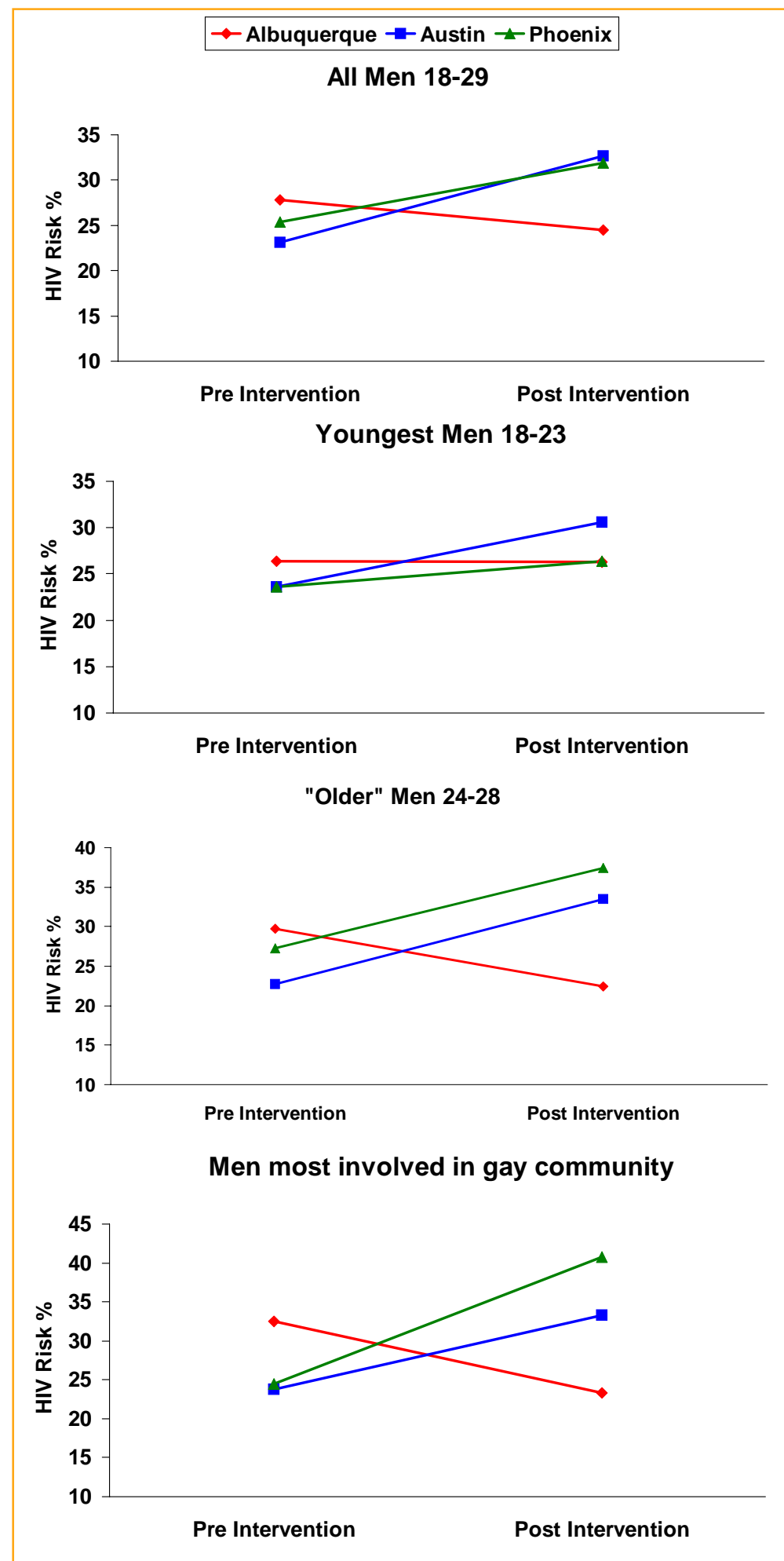


Publicity Campaign

- Articles/ads in gay and alternative press
- Posters, fliers, brochures
- Web-site (with calendar)
- E-mail distribution lists
- Word of mouth
- Generally avoid "mainstream" press



Outcome Evaluation Data



Summary

- In the "HAART era" there were large increases in risk behavior in comparison communities, similar to gay "AIDS epicenters."
- In intervention community, risk behavior decreased in "older" men and those involved in gay community and held steady in younger men.
- Intervention staved off the enormous secular changes occurring in risky behavior with casual partners.

University of California San Francisco



Funded by the U.S. National Institute for Mental Health

AIDS Research Institute
http://ari.ucsf.edu