



Socio-Contextual Factors of Substance Use During 1st Few Same-Sex Events among Black Gay/Bisexual Adolescent Males

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Substance Use in Sexual Minority Youth



- Studies suggest sexual minority (GLB) adolescents report more frequent and higher initial rates of substance use than heterosexual teens; and this increases over time (*Marshal et al, 2009*).
 - Stress derived from one or multiple minority status' such as race and/or sexual orientation may lead to maladaptive coping strategies like substance (ab)use (*Meyer, 2002*).
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Young Black Gay & Bisexual Men

- Young Black Gay & Bisexual Men and other MSM are less likely to report prevalent use than White peers, but are more likely to experience health disparities as a result of substance use (*Millett et al., 2007*).
 - Syndemic theory suggests that social conditions (*i.e. homonegativity, social isolation*) promote substance use in order to hide sexual behaviors that are socially unacceptable.
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First Sex

- First few sexual experiences in adolescent males can be a time of anxiety, stress, & fears related to sexual performance (*Zilbergeld, 1999*).
- For Black gay and bisexual men, first sex occurs in isolation, without access to information, and emotional support from families (*Arrington-Sanders, In Press*).
- Despite evidence of substance use by gay and bisexual adolescents to cope with stress and anxiety (*Goldbach et al, 2014*), no prior work has examined the role & function of use during first same-sex.

Purpose

- To describe substance use experiences during first same-sex sexual events (FSSSE) in a sample of Black Gay/Bisexual adolescents males living in Baltimore, MD.
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Methods

- Recruitment:
 - Clinics: School-based, STD (2) & Adolescent (2)
 - Outreach at local venues and LGBT events
 - Internet sites (Jack'd, Facebook)
 - Snowball sampling technique (participant referral)
- Baseline visit:
 - 10-minute, Audio Computer Assisted Survey Interview (ACASI)
 - 90-minute, in-person In-depth Interview

Analysis

- Interviews
 - Coded independently by two team members
 - Transcript double coded until coding had high inter-rater reliability (Cohen's Kappa >0.80)
- Thematic Development
 - Inductive open coding to connect emergent concepts across interviews and major themes
- Analysis
 - Grounded by phenomenological approach

Demographics (N=50)

- Mean Age: 17.7 (SD 1.3)
- Race:
 - Black/African American N=48 (96%)
 - Other N=2 (4%)
- Sexual Orientation:
 - Gay N=31 (62%)
 - Bisexual N=17 (34%)
- Transgender Gender Identity N=4 (8%)

ACASI Survey Findings



- Mean age at first sex: 13.9 (SD 2.7)
 - Mean age at first oral sex: 13.6 (3.2)
 - Mean age at first anal sex: 14.7 (1.9)
- Mean number of sexual partners:
 - Lifetime partners: 13 (14.5)
 - Past 6 months: 3.7 (5.1)
- Prior history STD/HIV diagnosis:
 - History of STD diagnosis 9 (18%)
 - History of HIV diagnosis 4 (8%)

Substance Use History



- Participants were asked if they “ever” used:
 - Alcohol N=40 (80%)
 - Marijuana N=29 (58%)
 - Injection drugs N=1 (2%)

Drinking Alcohol (N=40)



- Frequency of alcohol use:
 - Only during special occasion: N=32 (80%)
 - 2-3 times a week: N=2 (5%)
 - Once a week: N=1 (2%)
 - Other: N=5 (12%)

Marijuana Use (N=29)



- Frequency of Marijuana smoking:
 - Used once a week or more: N=13 (45%)
 - Only during special occasion: N=10 (34%)
 - I don't smoke marijuana regularly: N=6 (20%)

Substance Use Before Sex

- About half of the sample (46%) reported smoking marijuana and/or drinking alcohol before sexual events

Use Prior to Sex Event

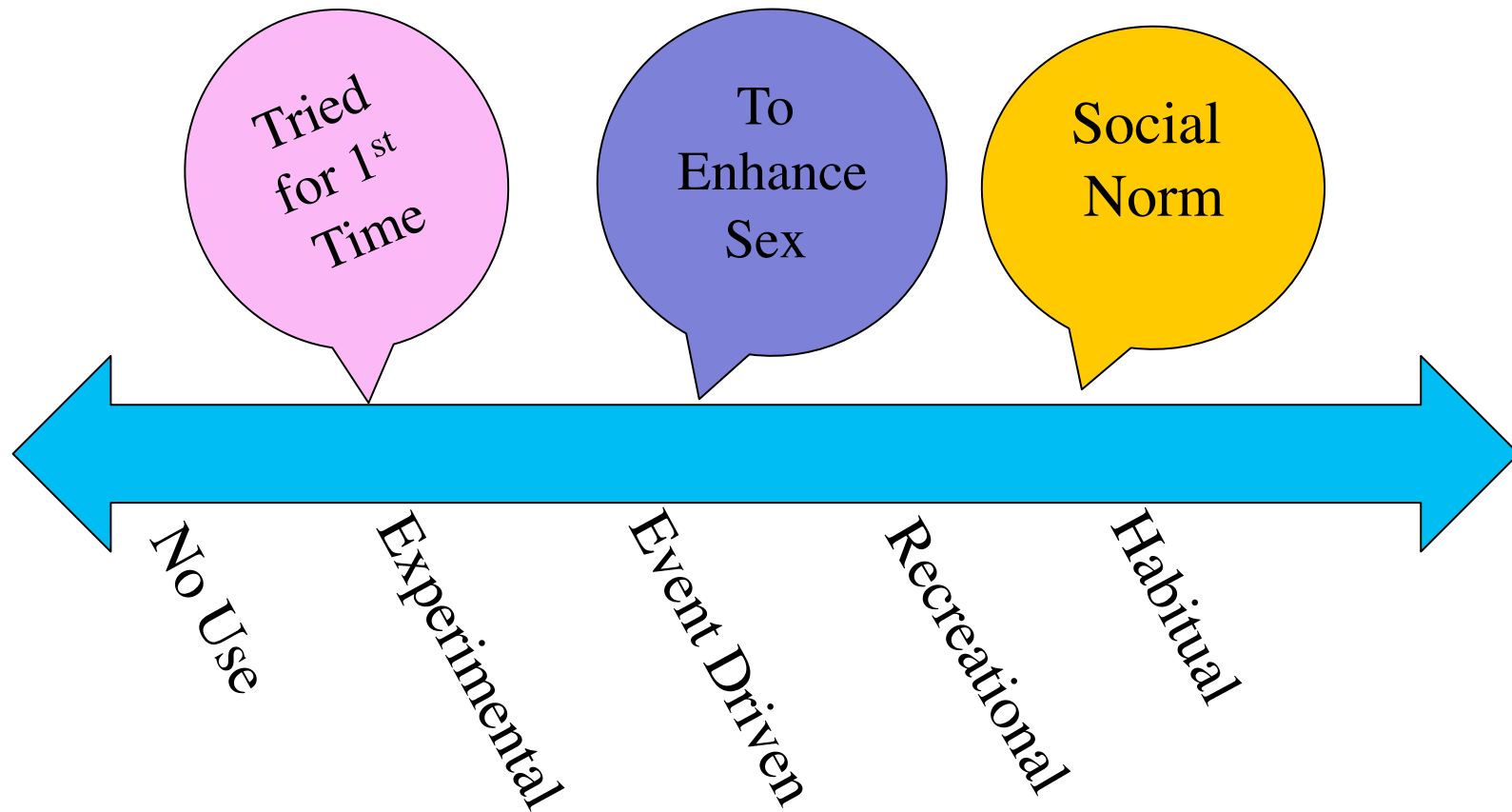


In-Depth Interview Findings

- Participants reported experiences with substance use before/ during first few same-sex sexual events along a spectrum



A Spectrum of Use



Substance Non-Use



- Joe, 19 year old, gay male said:

*"I'm always worried about drugs and alcohol. **My parents are big about that, and I'm scared myself.** I don't want to do drugs or drink anything"*

– Age at first sex 16 y/o

Experimentation



- Alonzo, 19 year old, bisexual male shared:

*“It was a guy in drag. He was getting high [marijuana]. **He told me I think you should try it too. I said okay maybe I should do it for the first time. So we were in his car smoking...**”*

– Age at first sex 13 y/o

Event Driven

Corey, 17 year old, bisexual male shared:

*“Well me personally, if I’m under intoxication or high, **it makes sex better for me, It just gets me more horny, I get hornier when I smoke a blunt**”*

– Age at first sex 14 y/o

Recreational & Habitual Use



- Prentice, 18 year old, bisexual male shared:

*"...every setting that I'm in-- well, not every setting, **but every social setting with friends is always something drinking or smoking involved.**"*

– Age at first sex 15 y/o

Positive Themes About Use



- Most participants described use of substances before/during 1st few same-sex events as positive and could be grouped into four (4) themes:
 - **Relaxation during sex**
 - **Aphrodisiac effects**
 - **Dissociative Effect**
 - **Disinhibition**

Relaxation During Sex

- Milton, 18 year old. gay male shared:

*“I usually smoke before I have sex. It takes the edge off. **It makes everyone relax and it hurts less.** It feels much better. We’re both smoking usually”*

– Age at first sex 14 y/o

Aphrodisiac Effects



- *Robert, 17 year old, bisexual male said:*

*“Well me personally, if I’m under intoxication or high, **it makes sex better for men, It just get me more horny, I get hornier when I smoke a blunt**”*

- Age at first sex 15 y/o

Aphrodisiac Effects



- Phillip, 19 year old, gay male shared:

*“...when I'm sober, I don't really be in the mood to have sex...It just don't feel like how when I'm drunk and high. Like, **when I'm drunk and high, you gettin' all that but if I'm sober, it's gonna be just regular.**”*

– Age at first sex 16 y/o

Dissociative Effect

- Troy, 19 year old, bisexual male said:

“We did it in the back of his car and I felt like everything was slower, everything didn’t hurt. I felt like I was just floating instead of feeling that pain.”

– Age at first sex 13 y/o

Disinhibition

- David, 18 year old, gay male shared:

*“I didn’t care what was going on because I was drunk. So, **I didn’t try to think about okay we should use a condom, I don’t care what’s gonna go on...**”*

– Age at first sex 13 y/o

Negative Themes About Use



- Dis-inhibition was viewed both positively and negatively
- Others described discontinuing use because of negative side effects of substance use including:
 - Poorer sexual performance while intoxicated
 - Lack of control
 - *“Well I was **drinking and smoking** and I **winded up having sex with somebody** and I didn't know if they could've had it [STD] or not....” (15 y/o)*

Unplanned & Risky Sex



- John, 19 year old, gay male reported:

“It was this one time, I was messing with this boy older than me still and he got me high and we had sex.”

-Age at first sex 16 y/o

Conclusion

- This work suggests that substance use may be a key contextual factor for some first same-sex sexual experiences in gay/bisexual youth
- Youth described using substances to:
 - Relax, heighten sexual sensation, and to relieve stress during first sex
- Feelings of disassociation & disinhibition – historically understood as ‘risky’ were viewed very positively by some youth

Harm Reduction Approach



- This work suggests that providers may need to:
 - Focus on how to prepare young Black gay and bisexual men for first sex, including relaxation techniques and knowledge of non-maladaptive coping strategies
 - Acknowledge the potential perceived benefits of substance use during first sex that some gay/ bisexual youth may experience

Next Steps



- Understand whether substance use during first sex predisposes some youth to continue use later in adult life, during sex and/or other periods of stress.
- Broaden the sexual health paradigm provided for sexual minority youth, especially Black gay/bisexual men and other young men who have sex with men who may be particularly isolated and predisposed to use.

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