Exploration of Research Community Relationships with Marginalized Youth at Risk for HIV in the United States: Promoting Openness Through Safer Sex Education Project

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Working with youth who are marginalized on multiple levels provides unique challenges due to adolescent developmental and social influences, including stigma surrounding access and receipt of medical services, particularly among those with highly stigmatized conditions such as HIV. Utilizing a community-based participatory process, a community-level HIV intervention, Promoting Openness through Safer Sex Education (POSSE), was developed to access the House Ball community in Chicago. The House Ball community is comprised of primarily African-American youth of diverse sexual and gender identities, who compete in underground events involving artistic dance and gender expression. While there is limited research from within such communities, it has demonstrated HIV is a concern. The POSSE study utilized a 3-stage community-based participatory research approach (CBPR) with a community advisory board (CAB) comprised of House leaders and members from Chicago houses. In Stage 1, semi-structured qualitative interviews, using a HIV-related risk and protective factors framework, were conducted with House leaders and members (N = 39). In Stage 2, qualitative data was then evaluated with input from the community advisory board. Summaries were shared with the CAB for theme validation and expansion of definitions. Three main themes were identified informing intervention development. In Stage 3, a pilot intervention of the POSSE project was conducted (N = 60 Opinion Leaders), after the adaptation process of d-up! Defend Yourself intervention for the House Ball community. This study highlighted how this 3-stage CBPR approach can be used to work with marginalized groups to promote innovative HIV-prevention interventions.

Conflict of Interest
None of the authors report a conflict of interest.

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