

BROTHERS Project
HPTN 061

Qualitative Research Manual

I. Overview HPTN 061 Qualitative Sub-study

The primary objective of HPTN 061 is to obtain information needed to design a full community-randomized trial of an intervention designed to reduce HIV incidence among Black MSM. Toward this objective, HPTN 061 will use qualitative methodologies to examine individual, interpersonal, cultural, institutional, and geographic (by site location) processes that influence study participation and up-take of the study intervention components by Black MSM.

Specifically, each site participating in HPTN 061 will conduct 3-5 focus groups among approximately 24 participants total (targeting 8 participants per group), followed by between 10 and 30 in-depth individual interviews to explore the following topics: the conditions that contribute to HIV-testing, access and utilization of health care services, intervention up-take, and emergent themes related to the study goals.

Participation in the qualitative components will be optional, and recruitment for qualitative components will cease when adequate enrollment has been obtained. Both focus groups and individual interviews will be conducted by trained staff. Focus groups will be led by a trained facilitator, and are expected to take about 1.5 to 2 hours of participants' time. Individual interviews will be semi-structured, one-on-one interviews that will last about 1 to 1.5 hours. Focus groups and qualitative interviews will be recorded, transcribed, coded, and analyzed as described below. Coding and analysis will be performed at both the local and study-wide level for qualitative interviews, but only at the study-wide level for focus groups.

II. Study Timeline:

		Month (Beginning with month of first enrollment)																								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
Qualitative Activity	Focus Groups	■	■	■	■																					
	Transcription		■	■	■	■																				
	Focus Group Data Analysis			■	■	■																				
	Interview Instrument Development				■	■	■																			
	In-depth Interviews							■	■	■	■	■														
	Transcription									■	■	■	■													
	Interview Data Analysis												■	■	■											

III. Objectives

The objectives of the qualitative research in HPTN 061 are to:

- Examine individual, interpersonal, cultural, institutional, and geographic-specific processes that influence study participation and uptake of intervention components.
- Understand how and to what extent stigma and discrimination (and other emergent themes) influence HIV testing and access to care by geographic region.

FOCUS GROUPS

IV. Focus Group Domains

The domains upon which the focus groups in HPTN 061 will be focused are:

- 1) The lived experiences of Black MSM in their local communities
- 2) The factors (e.g., protective and risk factors) that influence HIV/STI testing patterns and health care utilization of Black MSM
- 3) The way(s), that stigma and social norms (e.g., based on race, gender, social class, sexuality) affect Black MSM communities

V. Focus Group Recruitment and Sampling

Focus Groups

Each of the six sites for HPTN 061 will conduct approximately 3-5 focus groups. The goal is to conduct three focus groups of eight members for a total of 24 participants. Staff will attempt to schedule 12 focus group participants for each focus group to ensure that eight participants will actually be available. It may be necessary to conduct multiple, smaller focus groups depending on the rate of enrollment, though the goal remains to obtain up to 24 participants and the minimum number of participants for a focus group will be five.

Suggested Sampling Method and Focus Group Scheduling:

In an effort to reduce selection bias (e.g., so that several participants from identical networks will not be overrepresented in the focus groups) a rolling sampling method will be used to populate the focus groups at each site. Every third participant enrolled in the main study will be asked to participate in the focus group after being provided a brief description of what the focus group is and what participation would entail. Focus group dates will be pre-set at each site. For example a site may select five possible dates for conducting focus groups in advance. As participants agree to participate in the focus group, they will be offered a choice of participating on any of the pre-selected dates available within approximately 4 weeks of their enrollment date in the main study. As noted above, 12 participants will be scheduled for each date, if possible, and sites may keep a list of “back-up” participants for a given date.

Enrollment will continue and focus groups will be conducted until the site has achieved 24 focus group participants or until the four month focus group period has ended. Sampling may be paused if the dates for focus groups available in the next 4 weeks are all full. Recruitment may then recommence when an open date enters the 4 week window. Because HIV positive men have typically been overrepresented in study

samples of BMSM, enrollment of positive men will be capped at a maximum of 50%, or 12 participants.

Focus Group Procedures:

Enrollment:

Participants will be consented for the focus group immediately prior to the conduct of the focus group. Participants arriving on time for the focus group will be consented individually or as a group depending on the sites IRB. A staff member will review the consent, or read it aloud with the entire group and then will answer any questions. Those arriving late to the focus group will be consented separately, if it is not too late for them to still participate. During the consent procedure, staff will go over pertinent aspects of the focus group activity with participants, including ground rules, the structure of group discussion, potential risks, benefits, and compensation.

Retention:

Participants who agree to focus group participation at their main study enrollment visit will be provided appointment reminder cards for their focus group appointment and will be asked the best way to provide reminders to them prior to the focus group (phone call, email, text message, etc.) Staff will remind the participant of his upcoming focus group at least twice, one week before the focus group and again approximately 24-48 hours before the focus group using the method(s) chosen by the participant.

Focus Group Timelines:

All focus groups must be completed within a four month period after site activation in order to have sufficient time for qualitative data coding and analyses, as well as the incorporation of key focus group domains into the refinement of the individual qualitative interview protocol. The established time schedule for the focus group procedures has been developed to provide consistency across all sites and to adhere to the timetable of the HPTN 061 project. However, the expected time period for the focus group procedures can be flexible depending upon the specific needs of each site. Sites may need to intensify the sampling frequency by offering focus group participation to every other participant or even every participant enrolled if they have difficulty meeting the four month timeline for completion of the focus groups. This should only be done, however, if the site experience shows that it will not result in a homogeneous focus group.

VI. Focus Group Leader Qualifications, Selection and Training

Focus Group Leader

Focus group leaders/facilitators perform a special role in fostering a safe, open and semi-structured environment for group members to discuss and explore the key issues being presented. The facilitator must be sufficiently familiar with the subject pool and the topic to move from the predetermined questions and probes into "open" or spontaneous exploration of new, emergent and relevant content areas. The facilitators for these focus groups will also need to demonstrate a comfort in addressing the issues

of relevance and interest (i.e., economics, racism, stigma, discrimination and local idiosyncratic agenda, etc.) to the group participants.

The focus group leader should have a basic understanding of group processes and use his/her facilitative role to encourage all participants to engage in topical discussion to their own comfort. It is critical that the facilitator be able to model appropriate group engagement and mutual respect for diverse views. Toward this end the facilitators must be able to move the group through the focus group discussion in the time allotted but must equally assure a safe environment for open discussion and exploration of the key content.

Focus group leaders must have prior experience in conducting focus groups, ideally with Black MSM. Training of focus group leaders for this study will include:

- 1) Overview of overall study and qualitative sub-study objectives
- 2) Review of qualitative research methods
- 3) Practice conducting mock focus group(s) using the focus group guide
- 4) Review and critical feedback of practice focus group with non-participant volunteers at local site
- 5) Ongoing review and feedback of performance from other study team members and or Qualitative Working Group (QWG) members

VII. Focus Groups Conduct

Focus Group Guidelines

When participants arrive for the focus group, they will be greeted by staff and asked to provide written consent. Staff will review the focus group ground rules (Appendix I), emphasizing the importance and limits of confidentiality, explain the potential risks and benefits of participating in the focus group and remind the participants that the focus group will be recorded and that they may choose to discontinue participation in the study at any time.

The facilitator will give participants a site-determined stipend at the beginning of the focus group in order to diminish any sense of obligation or pressure to complete the focus group or answer questions he would prefer not to answer. Once participants have been seated, they will be provided with numbered table tents, on which they may also choose to write their first name, pseudonym or nickname. Participants will be informed that during the focus group, the focus group assistant will not record names, and will instead use the number on the cards to indicate which person is speaking.

Once informed consent has been obtained, the focus group assistant will turn on the recorder. The facilitator will begin the discussion using the script and questions provided in the Focus Group Guide included in Appendix I.

The focus group will consist of 3 sections:

- 1) Framing the discussion
- 2) Asking open-ended questions, and probes as needed, for each domain
- 3) Closing

During the focus group, focus group facilitators will allow themes to emerge naturally within the context of each domain. Facilitators will probe for clarification of key points from participants where appropriate, while simultaneously respecting participants' boundaries. For example, after asking the initial domain questions listed in the focus group guide, the facilitator will listen for responses that address the broader domain. Then, as needed, the facilitator may use probe questions to deepen the participants' responses. The facilitator may stop the focus group at anytime, or request that certain participants leave if he/she feels that the participant is being disruptive or if safety is being compromised.

After the focus has been completed, study staff will thank the participants for their time and answer any questions as needed. At the conclusion of the focus group, the focus group assistant should turn off the recorder and complete their notes on the session to prepare for transcript review.

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

IV. Individual Interview Domains

Each of the six sites participating in HPTN 061 will conduct between 10 and 30 semi-structured individual interviews with participants who enroll in HPTN 061, and consent to be interviewed. The interviews will focus on the following major domains:

- 1) Overall Impressions about HPTN 061
- 2) Health care utilization
- 3) HIV/STI testing and counseling
- 4) 061 and service up-take
- 5) Stigma and discrimination related to HIV, sexuality and race, and
- 6) Additional themes that emerge from the focus groups.

For each domain, interviewers will probe for deeper understanding and indicators of these major themes as well as for themes that arise spontaneously during the interviews. (See Interview Guide, Appendix II)

V. Individual interviews- Recruitment and Sampling

Sampling:

Each site will recruit between 10 and 30 men who have newly enrolled in HPTN 061 to participate in the individual interviews. Each site is expected to interview at least ten participants, to allow for cross-study analysis. Sites that plan to perform site-specific analyses on interview data are expected to interview a total of 30 participants, however this number may be reduced on a site-by-site basis if data show that no new trends are emerging, if costs or site capacity do not allow for conduct of all the interviews, or for other reasons.. All participants enrolling in the main study once qualitative interviews have begun at the site (six months into main study recruitment) will be eligible to be participants in individual interviews. To the extent possible, participants will be purposely selected from the main study such that up to half the participants identify as "other than gay", and approximately half identify as "gay" in order to explore whether our

findings vary by sexual identity. To the extent possible, sites should also purposely sample for diversity by age (half <35 and half >34), and Socio-economic status (SES) (half high school or less and half more than high school) within each of the gay and not-gay identifying groups. Demographic data on age and SES will be gleaned from the demographic data form collected during the enrollment into the main study. These purposive sampling guidelines are not meant as quotas, but rather as preferences to which sites will strive when the opportunity exists.

Interview Scheduling:

Interviews will be scheduled with individual participants according to the availability of participants and interview staff and within one month of the participant's initial visit.

Recruitment:

At the main study enrollment visit, staff will briefly describe the qualitative interview process to eligible participants and invite them to participate in an interview if they are an appropriate candidate per the sampling goals described above. Staff will determine a mutually agreeable interview time within a month of the participant's initial visit for those who agree to participation. And will provide participants with reminder cards for their interview appointment. Participants will be asked the best way to provide reminders to them prior to the interview (phone call, email, text message, etc.) Staff will remind the participant of his upcoming interview twice, one week before the interview and again approximately 24-48 hours before the interview using the method chosen by the participant.

Enrollment:

Participants arriving for their scheduled interview will be consented for the qualitative interview and will have all questions about the interview answered before initiating the interview.

Timelines:

Qualitative interviews will begin six months after initiation of the study and will continue until between 10 and 30 interviews have been conducted or until 30 days after the end of recruitment in the main study, whichever comes first.

VI. Qualitative Interviewer Qualifications, Selection and Training

Qualitative interviews represent a special type of conversation where, ideally, the participant does the vast majority of talking in a relaxed, candid fashion. The interviewers encourage participants to provide as detailed and rich accounts of their experiences as they feel comfortable providing (not yes/no answers). Most probes fall into the category of wanting to know how and why they think, feel or have experienced what they do. The interviewing style should help the participant to feel that they are helping the interviewer understand something important about his life.

In hiring or choosing staff to be qualitative interviewers, sites should strive to pick staff who have prior successful experiences conducting qualitative interviews. Staff training, especially for those who do not have prior qualitative interview experience, will include

role-plays, supervised practice interviews, and practice conducting semi-structured interviews with other staff or friends. Additional qualifications/attributes that should be considered for interview staff include:

- 1) Non-judgmental perspective
- 2) Ability to follow the participant's lead while keeping the discussion close the research question
- 3) Prior experience conducting qualitative interviews

Training for qualitative interviewers at the site level will include:

- 1) Overview of overall study and qualitative sub-study objectives
- 2) Qualitative research methods overview
- 3) Practice conducting qualitative interviews using the qualitative interview guide
- 4) Review and critical feedback of practice interviews with non-participant volunteers at local sites
- 5) Continued review and feedback of study interviews on weekly basis

VII. Conduct of Individual Interviews

Qualitative Interview Guidelines

When participants arrive for their scheduled appointments, the interview-trained staff will greet and escort the participant to a room with a closing door that will allow for privacy. The interview-trained staff will review the purpose of the study with the participant. Staff will obtain written consent from the participant and let the participant know that he may choose to discontinue participation in the study at any time.

The interviewer will give participants a site-determined stipend at the beginning of the interview in order to diminish any sense of obligation or pressure to complete the interview or answer questions he would prefer not to answer. Once informed consent has been obtained, the interviewer will turn on the recorder and begin the qualitative interview using the script and questions provided in the Interview Guide included in Appendix II.

The qualitative interview will consist of 3 sections:

- 1) Framing the interview
- 2) Asking open ended questions and probes as needed, for each domain
- 3) Closing

Interviewers will allow themes to emerge naturally within the context of each domain. Interviewers will probe for clarification of key points from participants where appropriate, while simultaneously respecting participants' boundaries. For example, after asking the initial domain questions listed in the interview guide, the interviewer will listen for responses that address the broader domain. Then, as needed, the interviewer may use probe questions to deepen the participants' responses. The interviewer may end of the interview at any time due to safety concerns for staff or the participant themselves (for example, the participant is drunk/high or emotionally unstable).

Once the interview has been completed, the interviewer will thank participant for their time, answer any questions as needed and turn off the recorder and complete their notes on the session to prepare for transcript review.

VIII. Data Collection Methods

All focus groups and interviews will be audio-recorded using digital recorders for transcription and analysis—providing very detailed, high fidelity reproduction of the interview. Study staff are encouraged to always have extra batteries, and when possible, an extra digital recorder on hand. Staff should test the recorder prior to the beginning of each focus group or interview. In addition, staff are encouraged to record the date, PTID (for interviews) or code (focus groups) at the beginning of the digital file.

For interviews, the digital recordings will be transferred to a computer and labeled using the participant's ID number but no other identifying information the same day as the interview. For focus groups, the digital recordings will be transferred to a computer and labeled using a focus group number and date on the same day as the interview. Once the computer-stored copy of the focus group/interview is verified as audible and uncorrupted, the digital recorder will be erased. The audio files will be saved on a password-protected, access-limited computer and any physical copies of the file (e.g. burned onto compact disc for transcription) will be kept in a locked, limited-access storage location like a file cabinet when not in use. Specifically, the PI, Co-PI, study coordinator, and qualitative personnel will be the only persons who will have access to the computer and storage files. Any potentially identifying information (signed consent forms, staff lists of focus group participants, etc.) will be kept in a separate locked, limited-access storage location from the audio files.

Digital files of focus groups/interviews will be uploaded to the secure website of a commercial transcription service and transcribed within three working days of the completion of the initial focus group or interview. Transcripts will be retrieved by the site where the focus group/interview was performed and local site staff will review and correct the transcript by comparing to the source recording with in 10 working days of retrieval. Any identifying information will be removed from the transcripts at this time.

IX. Data Management and Analysis

Focus Group Analysis:

The Qualitative Working Group Team Leader (Leo Wilton) will develop several teams for analyzing focus group transcripts. Each team will be comprised of approximately three to four members, drawn from different sites. The qualitative focus group leader will assign each focus group transcript to a team for analysis, ensuring that one of the members of the team is from the site where the focus group was conducted. Analyzed transcripts will be forwarded to the QWG Team Leader.. Once one focus group transcript from each site has been analyzed, a codebook and coding lexicon will be generated by the QWG based on a Grounded Theory approach. The focus group leader will assign subsequent transcripts to the teams for analysis using the codebook and coding lexicon.

The focus group leader will be responsible for assuring the timelines below are followed. Centralized training for focus group and individual interviews is described in Section XII.

Quality assurance measures are described in more detail further below.

Timelines:

- Site forwards verified transcript to QWG focus group leader within three working days of verification.
- QWG focus group leader assigns review of transcript to analysis team within ten working days of receipt of transcript.
- The analysis team reviews assigned transcript within ten working days of receipt of assignment
- The codebook and coding lexicon will be updated at least every two weeks, based on recent transcripts

Interview Analysis:

Sites Completing Within-Site Analysis

Local site qualitative teams will use an appropriate qualitative software program to code their site's interviews on two levels: by latent constructs, (the characteristics that are determined to be significant organizing principles), and by indicators of the constructs in the model.³ These constructs and the demographic characteristics will be used to create a "face sheet" for each study participant. These face sheets will provide a useful qualitative summary or "snapshot" of the participant and can be used in searches, along with codes, in the software program.

Once face sheets have been created, the local site teams will begin coding the transcripts by construct. The data in each construct will be read and discussed, and a data coding system (coding lexicon) will be developed using an iterative process of applying linguistic markers³ (words that capture the construct or theme of a phrase or idea stated by the interviewee).

All Sites

Once local site teams have coded local interviews (if performing within-site analysis), the qualitative working group, including one or two representatives from each site, will come together to code and analyze a 10 interviews from each site using a cross-site coding lexicon that will be developed to capture the constructs common to all six sites. This team will be responsible for coding the transcripts using this lexicon.

Timelines

- Site staff will review local interviews and generate face sheets within five business days of verification of the transcript.
- Site staff completing within-site analysis will begin developing site-specific coding lexicon once five transcripts have been reviewed, and will complete the site-specific coding lexicon within one month of last transcript review.
- Site staff will code transcripts using the local coding lexicon constructs within 2 months of completion of the coding lexicon.

- The QWG will coordinate cross-site development of cross-site coding lexicon-ongoing from the time the first site completes a local coding lexicon (sites completing within-site analysis) or receipt of the first site's ten transcripts (sites not performing within-site analysis), and will complete the cross-site coding lexicon within one month of receipt of the last local coding lexicon or set of 10 site transcripts.
- Cross-site coding of transcripts by cross-site coding lexicon will begin after all site analysis of transcripts is completed.

X. Quality Assurance Measures

For quality assurance, 20% of transcripts will be double coded to ensure 90% code-recode and inter-coder reliability⁴. This double coding procedure will be performed by local site teams for individual interviews, and also by the cross-site Qualitative Working Group for the focus group transcripts and the subset of individual interviews selected for cross-site analysis.¹ Data will then be organized for directed content analysis⁴. Once all of the data have been coded in the software program, printouts of codes will be analyzed⁵ Finally, summary reports will be completed for each of the pre-identified constructs and any emergent constructs. The findings from the analyses will be used to identify similar and different trends among sites and to develop a preliminary report of the findings.

XII. Qualitative Study Coordination and Leadership

Qualitative study components of this protocol will be directed by a QWG consisting of selected HPTN 061 investigators, consultants, and local site representatives. Based on their level of qualitative experience, selected qualitative leaders will be responsible for coordinating various aspects of the qualitative study,:

- An administrative leader responsible for convening the QWG, setting meeting agendas, keeping minutes that reflect key decisions and action items (with responsible parties and target dates).
- A training leader responsible for coordinating cross site training and analyses.
- A focus-group leader and an individual-interviews leader responsible for maintaining the respective coding matrices developed by the QWG, documenting the code domains and construct core ideas, creating domain-based reports, documenting code lexicons and ensuring cross-site comparability in both data collection and analysis.
- A quality control leader who will oversee the analysis process including development of transcription protocols and coding protocols, review of face sheet content, establishment of inter-coder agreement procedures and checks against subjective bias/over-interpretation, and all aspects of training.
- A reports leader responsible for producing reports with clearly substantiated recommendations for the intervention trial.

QWG Tasks:

- 1) Meet before enrollment begins to:

- a. Elect the leaders of the different aspects of the group responsibilities and develop a schedule for calls, trainings, and follow-up meetings.
 - b. Develop components for training of site staff working on the qualitative components to include:
 - i. Overall study aims and specific qualitative aims
 - ii. Focus group and qualitative interviews techniques
 - iii. Qualitative methods and analyses
 - iv. Use of qualitative software for analyses
 - v. Cross -site harmonization and oversight
 - vi. Practice focus groups and individual interviews and feedback
 - vii. Practice coding and analysis of mock transcript
- 2) Hold regular calls/meetings to review process and respond to emerging issues or concerns from the sites
 - 3) Generate study-wide code matrices and analyze transcripts from sites

The QWG will use the Handbook for Team-based Qualitative Research as a guide for conducting the study and analyses.²

APPENDIX I - Focus Group Guide

[The focus group guide will provide a basis for discussion and does not have to be used verbatim]

Introductory Presentation

“Thank you for deciding to participate in this focus group. The purpose of this focus group is to better understand your thoughts and experiences as Black men who are emotionally and/or sexually attracted to other men. The information gathered from this focus group will be used to develop programs and improve health services for Black men.”

“You will notice that I [NAME] will be taking a few notes and that there are other non-group members in the room. Let me introduce you to the other team members here and let you know what they are doing and why [introduce by first name and state role (e.g., note taker, forms collector, handling payments)].”

“For this focus group, we are interested in your thoughts, opinions, and experiences in your own words.”

“As a reminder, the information that you share in this focus group will be kept confidential. This means that we will make sure that all information you provide is not used in a way that identifies you. This is important because we want you to feel comfortable sharing ideas, thoughts, information, and your feelings about this project. You have already completed a Consent Form, but we would like to bring up a few points. This focus group will be digital audio recorded. The digital audio recording will be used to make a written transcript of the interview. The digital audio recording and transcripts will be labeled with a Focus Group ID number only. Your name or any of the identifying information about yourself will not be associated with your responses.”

“Before we begin this group, let’s talk about the ways in which we will work together. In order to do this, let’s agree upon some ground rules so that everyone knows how we will relate to each other in this group.”

[The group leader will use a large piece of paper, flip chart, or white board to write out the contributions of group members. The group leader will work with the focus group to elicit group expectations on the following topics. The group leader will shape the discussion so that the topics and expectations agreed upon approximate those below].

“For example, we should all agree upon confidentiality.”

“Confidentiality: Confidentiality means that that the information that we share about each other in this group remains in this group. For example, if a person decides to share their HIV status or talk about their experiences related to HIV then this information should not be talked about outside of this group. What other information would you not want shared?”

“Before we begin the focus group, do you have any questions or concerns?” [Facilitator waits and assesses readiness then instructs to start the recorder and begins by stating for the tape the date and topic of the focus group]

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Let's begin with some general introductions. Let's go around the room and just say the name that you would like to use (just a first name) and what interested you in wanting to participate in this focus group?

- ◆ How would you describe yourself?

Probes:

- ◆ *How would you describe your racial, ethnic, or cultural group background?*
- ◆ *How long have you lived in your community?*

As we discussed earlier, we would like to better understand the experiences of Black men who are emotionally and/or sexually attracted to other men. What word or phrase can we come up with as a group that describes Black men like this? (e.g., gay, bisexual, same gender loving, etc.). What do you think about these words? How have they had meaning in your life? [The Focus Group Leader will need to be mindful about structuring an appropriate length of time for this discussion (e.g., 15 minutes)]

II. COMMUNITY NORMS AND STIGMA:

One of the first things that we would like to discuss relates to your thoughts about the community or communities in which you live.

- ◆ How would you describe your community?

Probes:

- ◆ *What have been some of the best things about living in your community?*
- ◆ *What have been some of the challenges that you've experienced living in your community? (e.g., Have you ever experienced situations where you were treated differently from others because someone thought you were gay? Participants also may talk about experiences of racism, harassment by the police, etc.)*

III. HIV AND AIDS:

We will now focus our discussion on your thoughts and opinions about HIV and AIDS.

- ◆ What things do you know about HIV and AIDS in your community?

- ◆ In what way(s), has HIV and AIDS had an impact on Black men who are emotionally and/or sexually attracted to other men in your community?

Now, I would like to share some recent information with you about HIV and Black men who are sexually active with other men. And, after sharing this information, I would like to see what you think and how you feel about it.

This is what's happening right now. Did you know that?

[This information will also be presented in a visual format for group members]

A recent study showed that 46% of Black men recruited in 5 cities in the US and who were sexually active with other men tested positive for HIV and most of the men were not aware of being HIV positive.

Black men who are sexually active with other men are more likely to not have a regular HIV test at least once a year.

Black men who are sexually active with other men are more likely to have AIDS when first testing for HIV.

- ◆ What do you think about the men who were HIV negative in the study? (e.g., the majority of Black men in the study did not test HIV positive)

Probes:

- ◆ *What do you think helped them stay negative?*

Now, we will talk about your thoughts about services that may be needed in your community.

- ◆ What kind of services do you think Black men who are emotionally and/or sexually attracted to other men need in your community?

Probes:

- *Social services (e.g., housing, employment, substance use, etc.)*
- *Mental health services (e.g., counseling, etc.)*
- *Health services (e.g., healthcare, etc.)*
- ◆ What do you think are the HIV prevention needs of Black men who are emotionally and/or sexually attracted to other men in your community?
- ◆ What do you think would improve the lives of Black men who are emotionally and/or sexually attracted to other men in your community?
- ◆ What do you think are the things that may get in the way of making these changes?

IV. CLOSURE:

In a few minutes, we will be closing our focus group. But, I would like to ask you a few more questions.

- ◆ What was it like talking about some of your thoughts, opinions, and experiences during this focus group?
- ◆ Is there anything else that you would like to say that we haven't talked about?

I would like to thank you for sharing some of your experiences during this focus group.

Appendix II- Qualitative Interview Guide

Introduction

“Thank you for deciding to participate in this study. The purpose of this interview is to better understand your thoughts and experiences related to health care and testing for HIV/sexually transmitted infections (STI) (e.g., gonorrhea, syphilis, Chlamydia), particularly as related to your experiences as a Black man who has sex with other men. We will also talk about your cultural beliefs about health and some experiences that you’ve had related to sex. So, there are no right or wrong answers. In fact, we are only interested in your thoughts, opinions, and experiences in your own words.”

“As a reminder, the information that you share during this interview will be treated confidentially. There is only one exception to confidentiality: If we learn of harm to a child or the elderly, we are required by law to report it [INSERT ANY LOCAL EXCEPTIONS TO CONFIDENTIALITY]. This interview will be digitally audio recorded. The digital audio recording will be used to make a written transcript of the interview. The digital audio recording, transcripts, and information sheet will be labeled with a participant ID number only. Your name or any of the identifying information about yourself or anyone that you mention during the interview will not be associated with your responses.”

“Please let me know if there any questions you would rather not answer or if you need a break.”

“Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions or concerns?”

Questions and Probes

Questions must be asked of all participants (except when it has spontaneously been answered in a previous section)

Probes are follow up questions to be used as needed if the participant has not already discussed it in response to the broader question. Probes marked with an asterisk (*) are particularly important to address if not addressed in the discussion that evolves from the initial question.

Global Probes can be used at the interviewer's discretion to facilitate discussion at any time

- Please tell me more.
- Please give me an example.
- And then what happened?
- What are some reasons for that?

Overall Study Impressions

1) It would be very helpful to us to learn from you about your thoughts about the study we are conducting. We are interested in improving our work and would benefit from your feedback.

Please tell me about your experience with the study so far?

PROBES:

- a. What motivated you to join the study?*
- b. What do you **like** about the your experiences with the study?
What are some of the reasons?
- c. What do you **dislike** about the your experiences with the study?
What are some of the reasons?
- d. Please tell me about your interactions with the staff so far.

Health-care Utilization

2) I would like to ask you about your experiences with health care.

How do you take care of your health?

PROBES:

- a. What do you do when you feel sick?
- b. What to you do when you feel sad, depressed?
- c. What to you do when you feel, stressed out, angry or overwhelmed?
- d. What do you do to stay healthy?
- e. Whom do you rely on for health?
- f. Where do you go for health care?
- g. What are your health care needs?*

HIV/STI Testing and Counseling

3) Please tell me what comes to mind when you think about getting tested for a Sexually Transmitted Infection (such as gonorrhea, syphilis, chlamydia).

PROBES:

- a. What experiences have you had with STI-testing before joining the study?
- b. (If ever tested or experienced an STI) What would you call that infection?*
- c. Please tell me the reasons you (did or did not) get tested before?
- d. (If tested before), Did you get your results?
- e. Please tell me the reasons you did (or did not) get your results before?

4) Please tell me what comes to mind when you think about getting tested for HIV.

PROBES:

- a. What experiences have you had with HIV testing before joining the study?
- b. (How many times have you been tested?)
- c. (How many times have you gotten your results?)
- d. Please tell me the reasons you (did or did not) get tested before?
- e. (If tested before), Did you get your results?
- f. Please tell me the reasons you (did or did not) get your results before?

Stigma and Discrimination

The terms Black or African American will have been determined in enrollment—use whichever the participant used to identify himself.

5) Now I would like to talk with you about possible experiences of stigma or discrimination you may have had as a (Black or African American) man, or as a man who has had sex with other men.

What does Stigma mean to you?

PROBES:

- a. How have you experienced stigma as a Black man?
- b. How have you experienced stigma as a Black man who has had sex with other men?
- c. How have any of these experiences affected your willingness to get health care?"

What does Discrimination mean to you?

Follow pts' lead. If he has already been talking about discrimination, follow up but do not ask discrimination question.

PROBES:

- a. How have you experienced discrimination as a Black man?
- b. How have you experienced discrimination as a Black man who has had sex with other men?
- c. How have any of these experiences affected your willingness to get health care?"

Study/Service Uptake

6) I would like to focus again on the study you have joined.

What do you think about the services that the study offers?

(If not sure about the services) for example HIV and STI testing, talking with a counselor, working with a peer health navigator, getting referrals for medical needs?

PROBES:

- a. Which services are you most satisfied with or think will be the most helpful to you?
- b. Which services are you least satisfied with
- c. Which services do you think will be the least helpful to you?
- d. The goal of the study is to learn about what services are will be useful to Black men and will help stop the spread of HIV among Black men. If we had all the options in the world, what services would you have wanted as part of the study, that would help stop HIV among Black men?

Social/Sexual Networks

7) I would like to learn more about your social network.

Please tell me about the social groups with whom you are involved.

i.e., sports league, team or club, game-focused group, arts/literature organization, dinner/cooking/eating club, service/charitable organization, religious group, political/activism group, on-line community, neighborhood group, house ball, fraternity, gang, etc

PROBES:

- a. Please give me some examples of social groups with whom you are involved.
- b. Please give me some examples of individuals with whom you interact.

Please tell me on whom you rely for support.

Thinking back on your last several sexual partners, please tell me where you first met them.

Collect detailed information about location (i.e.cross streets, neighborhood, hotel name, internet address, bar name) and type of setting (i.e., private party, sex party, blind date...) No names of people. How they found out about it

PROBES:

- a. Please describe where you met.
- b. How did you learn about X?
- c. What are your favorite places to meet other men?

Emergent Themes

This section will be developed based on the focus group findings.

8) I would like to ask some questions about X.

What do you think about X...

PROBES

Etc.