

SEXUAL PRACTICES OF YOUNG GAY MEN

FROM RESEARCH TO INTERVENTION BACKGROUND

Little data exists in South Africa concerning HIV and the sexual practices of young gay men.

In 2002, OUT held a series of focus groups to determine what sexual health and safe sex issues were faced by resourced gay men.

Between December 2004 and January 2005, an online questionnaire survey was conducted in collaboration with the Centre for the Study of Aids (CSA) to test whether the issues identified in the focus groups applied to a larger, more representative sample.

This was the first study of its kind in South Africa to assess the sexual practices of young gay men. The information provided by the survey is being used to facilitate a fun online intervention for young gay men via a website that will offer information and assistance regarding safer sexual practices.

RESEARCH

Some of the key findings were as follows

- People do not use condoms correctly or consistently.
 - 19 percent of the target group almost never use condoms when using alcohol or drugs.
 - Roughly 20 percent of the sample find it difficult to insist on condoms when engaging in casual sex, or when in a relationship.
 - Half the sample had problems with condoms, saying they come off, break or are uncomfortable.
 - 24 percent of the sample don't use condoms for anal sex.
- People don't know their own or their partner's HIV status
 - 22 percent of the sample don't know their HIV status, and 42 percent don't know partner's status.

- Perceptions about relationships

- Unrealistic expectations about the likely length of relationships.
- Relationships are defined as monogamous, while in fact partners have sex outside of the relationships.
- 52 percent of respondents said they would like more information online about gay sexuality
- Coming out when very young increases sexual risk, as does not being out at all.

Based on these findings, OUT, in collaboration with the CSA and consultants from the Schorer Stichting, is developing an online intervention targeting resourced young gay men.

The key outcomes of the intervention are that young gay men reduce their exposure to risk during both casual sexual encounters and relationships. In both cases, knowledge of their own HIV status and that of their partner's is a key issue.

The intervention

The intervention will take the form of a gay "Sex in the City" type of website. (The popular heterosexual TV series deals with the sexual and relationship adventures of a group of liberated twenty-something women in New York).

The gay "Sex in the City"-type site will have a main character called Gay Steve. Other regular characters will be HIV positive, or in serial monogamous relationships.

The site will update every two weeks to report on the adventures of Gay Steve and his friends in the dating/sex game. These instalments will target identified issues relating to sexual risk and relationships.

The site will provide a framework for the actual intervention components.

The first of these will be an information section, providing short, punchy paragraphs on a variety of sexual and mental health issues.

Two other sections dealing with relationships and casual sex respectively will offer visitors to the site the opportunity to assess their own risks via tailored questionnaires.

Lastly, an interactive sex game will be designed giving people the opportunity to practice skills and make choices to influence the outcome of a given scenario.

The intervention will be formally evaluated for impact.

THE PINK RAND

Just in time for Summer, there is now a way to wisely spend all of those Pink Rands.

OUT has launched a programme whereby supporters of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender communities can now support these communities. LGBT community work is generously supported by the South African Government and international funders, but sadly there is very little income from individual supporters. In places like the USA there is a long tradition of richer people supporting much needed community work with individuals donating buildings to house offices, bursaries for promising LBGT individuals and so on.

If you are still one of those people who think that all these activists must get off your case, think again.

We have all faced discrimination, a lot of people in South Africa still think that gays and lesbians "should be shot like dogs" [participant observation OUT- Planned Parenthood Association training, June 2005], you can still not marry, the magazines you read cater mainly for heterosexual people and so on and so on. We are not activists, we are people like you whom have faced what you did and want to make that better.

The OUT campaign request those who can afford it to donate R100.00 per month, or a R1000.00 once off donation. In return, you will be invited to monthly socials, plus other events, and be acknowledged for your contribution. You will receive quarterly progress reports and financial statements. The money will specifically be used to pay off the OUT offices quicker. The monthly bond payment is R10.000.00 which we will cover from our main budget. We aim to raise an additional R5.000.00 per month for bond repayments. You can also contribute specifically towards the costs for a series of planned lesbian postcards that will provide information on lesbian women and social power and how it influences our lives. We need to raise R55.000.00 for this programme. The third option is to contribute towards the costs of two learnerships. OUT has identified two of our volunteers from Mamelodi and Atteridgeville for mentorship in the organisation. The aim is to develop them so that they can be permanently employed in the organisation. They are busy with a year long course in business administration and have a two day a week placement at OUT. In these two days, they are responsible for the management of volunteers, facilitation work as well as general administration. They also receive mentoring in aspects such as computer skills, meeting protocol etc. The cost of this programme amounts to R29.000.00.

OUT would greatly appreciate your kind consideration to support our communities. If you are interested in donating, please contact the OUT Administrator.



745 Park Street
Arcadia



New offices of
OUT



new reception area

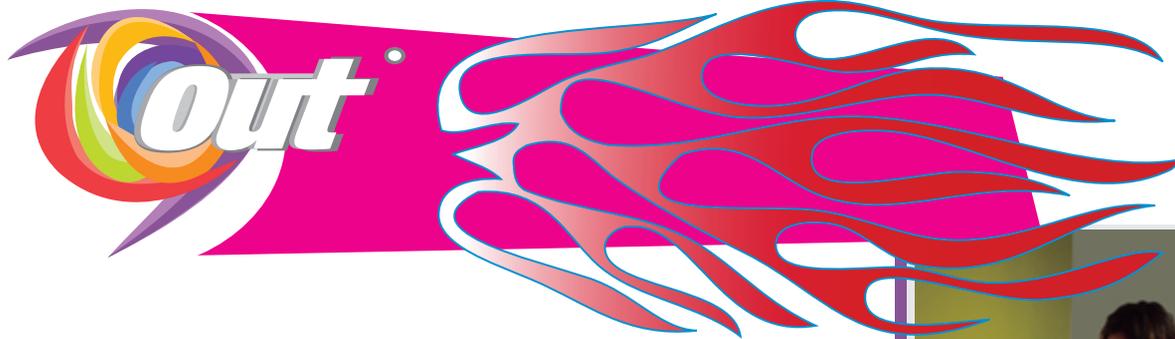
YOUR SPACE IN THE CITY

OUT has bought property. Yes, we now own our own offices! Knowing that a city makes provision for you, that there are places where you can be openly whom you are, makes you feel welcome. OUT has now added to this as lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender people now own part of Tshwane.

The new OUT offices are at 745 Park Street, Arcadia. It is a lovely old house and all staff members have inviting and roomy offices. There is a common room, a volunteer room, and a big meeting room. In the front there is a huge pool which is ideal for parties, socials and for meeting people.

The good news is that all OUT's contact details remain the same. The general telephone number is 012-3445108, the telephonic counselling and information line number is 012-3446500 and the fax number is 012-3446501.

The OUT website is currently under construction but the address is www.out.org.za.



PPASA Sensitisation Training Report

OUT has begun developing mainstream programmes to teach service providers how to make their services gay and lesbian friendly.

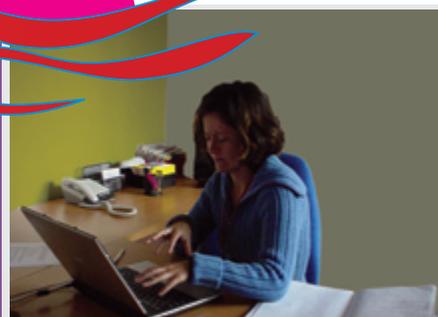
In partnership with Triangle Project, OUT designed and developed a two-day sensitisation workshop to help PPASA/LoveLife staff be their most effective when dealing with gay and lesbian clients. The workshops were held in Gauteng, Limpopo and the Western Cape in April this year.

The workshops were experiential and knowledge-based in design, allowing participants to explore their own feelings as well as developing skills to work with gay and lesbian clients in an appropriate and comfortable way. The training covered the following areas:

- Understanding stereotyping;
- Providing information on lgbt issues and experiences;
- Exploring sexual orientation and gender identity;
- Providing social support and services;
- Role-playing: practicing appropriate responses to lesbian and gay issues in real life.

Coinciding with these workshops was the distribution of HIV safer-sex booklets, targeted at the lesbian and gay youth. OUT believes it is essential that members of PPASA/ LoveLife go through a form of sensitization training before distributing these booklets.

The workshops will serve as a pilot programme that can be adapted for use by other mainstream agents, such as government departments and other non-governmental organisations.



Melanie Judge-Programme Manager

Hi, I'm new on the OUT block!

I have a Masters in development studies, and qualifications in psychology and business management. As Programme Manager at OUT, my work will focus on the integration of lesbian and gay issues within mainstream sectors, and on the expansion of OUT's services to lesbian women.

I believe that after 10 years of democracy, despite the enormous gains achieved for LGBT rights, there is much work to be done to ensure that all lesbian and gay people can enjoy social and economic justice. As a human rights activist I am committed to building on the great work of OUT, so that these goals can be achieved.

REACHING OUT TO LESBIAN WOMEN

At OUT, we are putting added energy and resources into ensuring that lesbian women can better access our services. We are also expanding our programmes to meet the specific needs of our lesbian constituency.

On the 25th June, a social event for lesbian women was held at OUT's offices. Fifty women danced away the winter chills. Some even demonstrated how to use a dental dam. And, people shared with us the kinds of issues they want to talk about at future events.

In the next quarter OUT will be bringing out a range of information for lesbian women. We will also hold discussion groups and regular social events. Together with our volunteers we will expand our reach to more and more women in the months ahead. If you want updated information about OUT's activities for lesbian women, please join our mailing list. Contact Melanie Judge

Lessons Learned

- **Changing attitudes takes time**
- **Having a safe space to share ideas and opinions is key**
- **Active participation makes for better learning**
- **No one is an expert. We all have our own personal experiences of diversity**
- **Getting accurate information breaks down prejudice**
- **Experiential workshops can open hearts and minds**



FRONT FRONT FRONT
FRONT FRONT FRONT
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From the Director

We have had a very successful start to our new financial year.

Melanie Judge joined the OUT team and she has already had a significant and positive impact on our work. Welcome Melanie!

Our new lesbian programme kicked off with a social on June 25. The new programme makes provision for socials, publications, discussions and many other concepts. We are very excited about doing more for the needs of lesbian women.

One of the most exciting developments has been taking up residence in our new offices. We are already comfortably settled and loving the difference that pleasant surroundings can make. Of course, this has been made possible with the help of people like yourselves, who care about the dignity of LGBT people. We are especially grateful to the National Lottery Board who funded our work for the first time. Thank you all.

An important partner organisation of OUT, the Equality Project, recently experienced some significant difficulties. This unfortunate event resulted in the gay and lesbian sector learning some hard, but important lessons. OUT salutes the work done by the Equality Project and we will play our part in ensuring that it continues.

I hope you can join us in officially launching our new offices on August 19. Please also consider helping to fund our projects and joining our new monthly socials.

Dawie Nel



Counseling



Info 012-3446500

Community contacts

The Psychotherapeutic support group for gay men meets every second Wednesday and offers group therapy.

OUT Mamelodi Office

Open on Wednesdays between 9:00-16:30. Programmes in Atteridgeville every Tuesday between 09:00 - 16:30. Programmes include skills development, HIV prevention work and social spaces

Caritas Care

An organisation which supports people living with HIV/AIDS and their loved ones. Call Ockert on [012] 322 7880 for further information.

Glorious Light MCC - PTA

Gay and Lesbian Church. Call Janine on 082 8891 493

Reforming Church

Gay and Lesbian Church. Call Andre [012] 3489024 Budding Roses Support group for transgender people. Contact Helen [012] 34451008

YOU ARE INVITED

The opening of the new OUT offices. It takes place on 19 August 2005 at Ikhaya Lothingo, 745 Park Street, Arcadia, 0007. Snacks will be offered.

Please RSVP to the OUT Administrator on administrator@out.org.za or 012-3445108 before 12 August 2005.

The OUT monthly social. Join us for a drink and friendly chat (and maybe more.....).

Tuesday 6 September 2005, Lounge Maximus, Hazelwood, Tshwane.

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