

## SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

### DUAL IDENTITY

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Dual identity is a concept that describes the “twoness” of identity and how that twoness influences black gay men. Dual identity means being a black man and a gay man and having to manage both identities; that is, fit into the black community and fit into the gay community. The need for a dual identity often results from the lack of a visible black gay community with which one can identify.

Dual identity results in black gay men having to manage two separate identities—being a black man and being a gay man. In the black community, black men are supposed to be strong, masculine, and heterosexual. They are fathers and providers; black men marry black women and take care of black families. The image of black maleness is devoid of romantic and sexual contact with other men. Black men also have to deal with the pressure, stress, and bias that result because of their race. In the black community, many black gay men encounter homophobia and disapproval from their churches, family, and friends, which may be internalized and result in negative feelings about oneself (internalized homophobia).

In the gay community, there is a contrasted image. The image of gayness is white and feminine, the exact opposite of the image of black maleness. Black gay men may encounter racial discrimination and disapproval in the gay community because of their race, which may be internalized and result in negative feelings about oneself (internalized racism).

Many black gay men have to manage this dual identity and at the same time, try to create an identity that supports their blackness, maleness, and gayness. Many black gay men find it challenging to find and assert their place in the larger black community and in the gay community. Many black gay men find it more fulfilling to create safe spaces where they can relax and be themselves with other black gay men. In this environment, a single identity of being a black gay man can be experienced and other black gay men provide social acceptance and support for this identity. The safe space is sacred because it can affirm the individual; in that space, it is okay and desirable to be a black gay man.

In *Many Men, Many Voices (3MV)*, dual identity is discussed in Session 1. Participants discuss how the struggle of trying to maintain a dual identity can result in internalized racism and homophobia and lead to risky behaviors such as engaging in unprotected sex or using substances to deal with the pressure and stress. The 3MV sessions model a safe space for black gay men in which they can feel free to experience their own identity.

#### Sources:

Peterson, J. L., & Jones, K. T. (2009). HIV prevention for black men who have sex with men in the United States. *American Journal of Public Health, 99*(6), 976–980.

Hart, T., Peterson, J. L., & the Community Intervention Trial for Youth Study Team. (2004). Predictors of risky sexual behavior among young African American men who have sex with men. *American Journal of Public Health, 94*(7), 1122–1124.