

# GAY SEX 101... AND OTHER THINGS!

*Darnell Motley*

This lesson is an opportunity for participants to think about the range of ways gay men can have sex and engage in it safely. Through a mix of discussion and self-reflection, participants will be able to consider how to engage in sex that is safe for them physically and emotionally.

## KEYWORDS

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Body Image  
Community  
Effemophobia  
Gender  
Homophobia  
Masculinity  
Race  
Sexual Health

## THEME

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Society &  
Culture

## FORMAT

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Workshop

## TIME

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60 minutes





# PREPARATION

*The facilitator(s) should use this section to prepare for the lesson.*

PREPARATION

## WHY THIS LESSON IS IMPORTANT FOR BLACK MEN

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As opposed to their heterosexual counterparts, research has found that the primary space many gay men learn about sex (even same-sex attraction more broadly) is through pornography (Bond, Hefner, & Drogos, 2008). While pornography can have its place, it does not provide a full picture of how complex sex can be. Pornography can provide a very limited view of what it means to be a sexual gay man. In particular, Black men may be largely absent from porn, or only present stereotypically (e.g., dominant, thuggish, with abnormally large genitals). Accordingly, a bit more thorough of a conversation about sex might be useful.

### GOAL

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Participants will increase their capacity to think critically about the basic physical aspects of sex, including how it intersects with race and cultural experiences.

### OBJECTIVES

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By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to:

- Celebrate at least three life-affirming aspects of sexual behavior between and among Black gay men.
- Describe at least two ways racism can limit sexual pleasure with some partners.
- Apply critical thinking to assess the role and effects of media (esp. sexually explicit media) in/on Black gay male sexual development.

## TIME

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<b>STEPS 1-4</b>	Introductions and Opening Activity	15 min.
<b>STEPS 5-12</b>	Gay Sex Basics	20 min.
<b>STEPS 13-21</b>	Race and Sex	15 min.
<b>STEPS 22-24</b>	Closing Activity	10 min.

## REQUIRED BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE FOR EDUCATORS

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This lesson can be led by any individual with at least a high school education. Definitions of key terms which are not likely to be general knowledge are included, in order to support the educator. Further, potential responses to questions and prompts are provided in-text in order to support the educator.

## SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

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While this lesson can be led by any individual, the ideal facilitator will be someone who is either a gay, queer or same-gender-loving male, and/or has a strong standing rapport with group participants.

## KEY TERMS & DEFINITIONS

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**“Gay sex”:** an arbitrary term used to name or describe, in general, sexual activity between men and/or male-identified people.

**Racialized sexuality:** experiences of sexuality that are informed by one's simultaneous experience of race, racism, and/or anti-Blackness.

**Pornography:** videos, pictures, and other media depicting explicit sexual behavior or images.

## FACILITATION PREP

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The facilitator(s) should complete the following tasks before the lesson starts:

- ❑ If space allows, arrange participant seating in a circle or semi-circle. Avoid having any participant sit with their back to another participant.
- ❑ As participants enter the space, ask them to fill out and put on a name tag. Encourage them to include their pronouns (e.g., she/he/they, etc.) on the name tag as well.
- ❑ If the facilitator is using the alternate activity for Step 17, prepare a slide presentation with 7–10 still images from popular mainstream Black gay porn scenes. Include images that feature both people and promotional materials clearly (e.g., words, character descriptors, etc.) Unless the images are from the same scene, refrain from putting no more than one image on each slide. Keep the slideshow closed and unviewable by participants until the proper time in the session. Be sure to have adequate materials (projector, viewing screen) for all participants to comfortably view the slideshow as well.
- ❑ Adhere any community agreements and/or group norms to a sheet on the wall in a prominent, easy-to-see location of the room.
- ❑ Prepare a list of referral services offered by your agency or locally and have copies ready to distribute to participants at the end of the session.

## MATERIALS

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The facilitator(s) should have the following materials for the lesson:

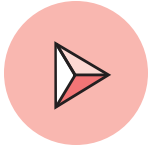
- ❑ Writing utensils (*one for each participant*)
- ❑ Note pads or loose-leaf paper (*one pad or 3–5 sheets for each participant*)
- ❑ Flip chart paper with adhesive or tape

## HANDOUTS

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Each participant should be provided with the following printed materials:

- ❑ End-of-Session Evaluation



# PROCEDURE

The facilitator(s) should follow the steps in this section to facilitate the session, and use the margin for notes and prompts.



## Introductions and Opening Activity

### STEP 1

Welcome participants to your session and conduct brief introductions (name, pronouns) with the group as needed. Review all established group agreements and reaffirm consent from the group. If group agreements have not been completed, please create them at this time (*use the Community Agreements lesson, if necessary*). Emphasize the necessity of respecting diverse viewpoints and the range of experiences in the room, given the potential sensitivity of discussing sexual behavior so directly.

### STEP 2

Ask participants to share the first words that come to mind when they hear the word “sex.” As participants respond, write their responses on flip chart paper. Encourage them to answer as freely as they feel comfortable, and inform them that all responses are acceptable.

#### *Alternate Activity:*

If you find you have a group that does not know each other well, or does not feel comfortable speaking openly with each other, distribute 5–10 Post-it Notes with a writing utensil to each participant, and instruct them to write one thought on each note. Post each note onto a larger sheet of flip chart paper.

### STEP 3

Once all responses have been given, ask participants to review the list, and then proceed through the following Discussion Questions:

1. “Are there any other important terms missing from this list? If so, why do you think that is?”
2. “How do these terms make you feel? Do you find yourself having a different reaction to certain terms versus others?” (*If participants respond yes, solicit 1–2 examples.*) “If so, why do you think that is? If not, why do you think that is?”

**STEP 4**

End the activity by explaining that the session is intended to be a sex-positive conversation, which is to say that it affirms sexual expressions of all kinds that are safe, sane, and consensual. Explain that each person’s vocabulary around sexual behavior may be different, but that as much as possible, everyone should feel encouraged to speak honestly, and to respect each others’ varying comfort levels.

**Gay Sex Basics****STEP 5**

Divide participants into small groups of 2–4 people each, and then instruct them to arrange their chairs so that they are facing their group members.

**STEP 6**

Instruct participants to imagine that they are speaking in front of an adult audience that knows nothing about gay men, and then ask them to discuss and prepare an answer the following question:

- “What kind of sex do gay men have?”  
(*Feel free to adapt question wording in this activity to your own language so that it feels like comfortable and/or more appropriate.*)

Give participants two minutes to discuss.

**STEP 7**

After two minutes, reconvene the larger group and then instruct participants to share their small group’s responses with the entire group. Encourage a response from at least one member per group. Record participant responses on a sheet of flip chart paper.

**STEP 8**

Ask participants if they have any questions or comments about the terms on the sheet, or if they have any additional ideas that have not been included.

**STEP 9**

After about five minutes of discussion, ask 1–2 participants from each group to shift to an alternate group (*If you have a group you are unsure will move quickly, be prepared to reassign people yourself.*) Instruct groups to prepare responses for a second question: “What makes sex fun for gay men?” Allow two minutes for group discussion.

**STEP 10** After two minutes, reconvene the larger group, and solicit responses from each small group. Encourage a response from at least one member from each group. While each small group reports out, encourage others to respond with any non-judgmental questions, comments, or reactions they have to what is being shared.

**STEP 11** After about five minutes of discussion, ask 1–2 participants from each group to shift again to an alternate group (*encourage those who have not yet moved to be willing to switch this time.*) Instruct groups to prepare responses for one final question:

- “How is the sex that gay men have any different from the sex had by other people?”

Allow for two minutes of group discussion.

*For this particular question, you might have participants who choose to focus on the sociological aspects of sexuality in highlighting perceived differences (or lack thereof). Validate any response that you get that is of this nature; however, encourage participants to focus more on the technical differences that may exist between sex experienced by gay men, and that experienced by other groups. As examples, you may choose to offer one or both of the following:*

- *Sometimes there are additional risks when gay men have penetrative sex because of the differences between an anus and a vagina. The anus may be more susceptible to injury.*
- *Gay men may have more flexibility than heterosexual couples, because either partner could be the penetrator and either partner could be the penetrated.*

**STEP 12** Reconvene the larger group, and solicit responses from each small group. Encourage a response from at least one member from each group while encouraging other participants to engage in dialogue similar to that conducted for each previous question. After about five minutes of conversations, instruct participants to return to their original seating and chair arrangement.



## Race and Sex

### STEP 13

Ask participants to get into pairs, and prompt the group with the following question:

- “Does being Black affect the way gay Black men think about or experience sex? If so, how?”

After about 3–5 minutes, ask each pair of participants to share a note or two about what they discussed with the larger group. (*Consider making a verbal note to the group when a response about the way Black gay men think about and engage in sex has more to do with the impact of systemic racism, e.g., stereotypes, discrimination—rather than race—racial/ethnic/cultural identity, skin color perceptions, etc.*)

### STEP 14

Ask each pair to join with another pair to create groups of four. Prompt the group with a second question:

- “How does race impact the portrayal of gay sex in the media?”

To answer this question, encourage participants to consider both mainstream and non-mainstream sources (e.g., pornography). After about 3–5 minutes, instruct each group of four to share what they discussed.

### STEP 15

If pornography has not been mentioned specifically, instruct participants to share how, if at all, they believe race affects the portrayal of Black gay men in pornography. As an additional point of conversation, clarify that for many young gay men, pornography may be one of the few ways they learn about gay sex at all, given its relative lack of coverage in most school sex ed programs and community conversations.

### STEP 16

Instruct each group of four to join with another group (to create two groups of eight), or to join with other members in a way that creates two small groups total. Instruct both groups to now imagine that they are a production team responsible for casting a black gay porn scene that will be used in mainstream pornography.



**Explain** to them that they must create a casting notice for at least two main characters. **Instruct** each group to select one person to serve as a scribe for the group; once that person is selected, **give** them one note pad and a writing utensil.

**STEP 17**

**Explain** to participants that they will have 10 minutes to draft their casting notice. In it, **instruct** participants that they must include the following details for the actors they are looking for: height, age, skin tone, hair texture, build (and/or weight), penis size, etc. **Instruct** groups to think not only of what they personally believe would be sexy, but what they believe would sell in the pornography market.

*Alternate Activity:*

**Distribute** 2–3 sheets of paper and a writing utensil to each participant. **Instruct** participants to view a series of images and write down any reactions or observations they have about what they see. Once all instructions have been given, **reveal** your slide presentation (*see Facilitation Prep*). **Give** participants approximately 30 seconds to review each image before moving on to the next one.

**STEP 18**

After about 10 minutes of brainstorming, **ask** each group to designate a reporter who will “present” their casting call to the whole room. **Instruct** participants not to react to anything they hear until everyone has presented.

**STEP 19**

After both groups have presented, **proceed** through the following Discussion Questions:

1. “What was it like completing that exercise? How did it feel? What is easy or difficult to do? Why or why not?”
2. “What were some things you notice about the casting calls (*alternate: PowerPoint slides*)? Were there any trends or similarities?” (*You may wish to record responses down on a clean sheet of flip chart paper.*)
3. “Based on what you came up with for your casting call (*alternate: saw in the still frames*), what is the overall message that pornography gives us about gay Black men?” (*Encourage participants to consider a broad layer of areas of influence, including pornographic depictions of ideal bodies, aesthetics, gender roles & expressions, sexual positions, etc.*)

*Alternate Activity:*

If you are using the PowerPoint slides and it has not been mentioned, **encourage** participants to consider that Black men are disproportionately portrayed in pornography as dominant, aggressive “tops”, and usually with large penises.

**Note** that they are often described in relation to their genitals, and usually introduced with descriptors like “thug” and “ghetto”, which is usually very different than non-Black male performers.

**STEP 20**

**Explain** to participants that while the next set of Discussion Questions will be discussed as a large group, participants should first consider them silently.

**Read** them out loud one at a time, then **give** participants 30 seconds to think about it before responding:

1. “What do you think it is like (emotionally or psychologically) for a Black male performer to be portrayed in these ways in pornography?”
2. “How might the ways that Black men are represented in porn impact the ways that Black gay men see themselves?” *(If not explicitly mentioned by a participant, discuss how Black men with varying penis sizes and varying degrees of comfort with being a “masculine top” might feel about themselves after watching pornography.)*
3. “How might the ways that Black men are represented in porn impact the ways that Black gay men are treated by their sexual partners?”
4. “How might the ways that Black men are represented in porn impact the way Black gay men see or engage with their partners?”

**STEP 21**

**Conclude** the discussion by asking participants to name any additional messages (stereotypical or otherwise) they’ve heard or have been told about Black gay men. **Write** them down on a new sheet of flip chart paper; **encourage** participants to give both positive and negative responses. **Invite** participants to consider that every statement written represents an idea that may or may not be true for an individual, which is why each Black gay man should be treated uniquely, without using any universal standard or expectation for any of them. **Solicit** any final comments participants have about this discussion before moving on.



## Closing Activity

### STEP 22

Ask participants if they have any outstanding questions about the lesson. Respond to these as necessary.

### STEP 23

Distribute a copy of the End-of-Session Evaluation to each participant. Allow participants 5–7 minutes to complete the evaluation, and collect them as they are completed. After five minutes, invite any participants who have not completed the evaluation to do so after the next activity.

### STEP 24

Close by asking each participant to name one thing that surprised them today and one thing they will continue to think about after they leave. Once everyone has shared, thank all participants for participating, and then adjourn the session.