

What is the role of sub-cultural identification in the sexual lives of gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men?

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Background

- Gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (gbMSM) may identify with distinct socio-sexual sub-cultural groups.¹
- Research has shown that sub-cultural identifications are associated with the social lives, interactions, and behaviours of gbMSM that influence their sexual health.²
- We compared sexual encounters and recent behaviour reported by men who affiliated with five sub-cultures: [1] Geek/Nerd/Gaymer; [2] Bear/Cub/Otter; [3] Daddy/Son; [4] Leather; and [5] Twink.

Methods

- Sexually-active gbMSM who were sixteen years or older were recruited through respondent-driven sampling from February 2012 until February 2015 and were interviewed every six months until August 2019.
- Participants reported sexual and substance use behaviours for their most recent sexual events with up to five most recent sexual partners.
- Independent factors associated with each sub-culture identification were identified using backward-selected/AIC-optimized multivariable generalized linear mixed effect models to account for multiple event-level, repeated visit, and RDS-recruitment clustering effects.
- The sub-group categories are not mutually exclusive and are collapsed as “ever having identified” with any of the sub-groups, as participants can identify with more than one sub-group at any time over the course of the study.

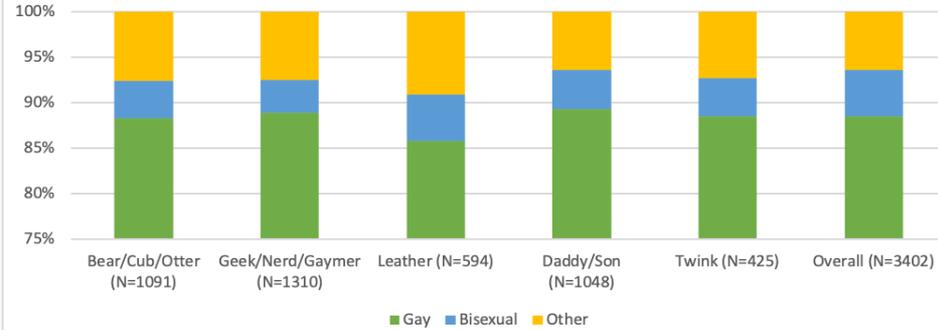




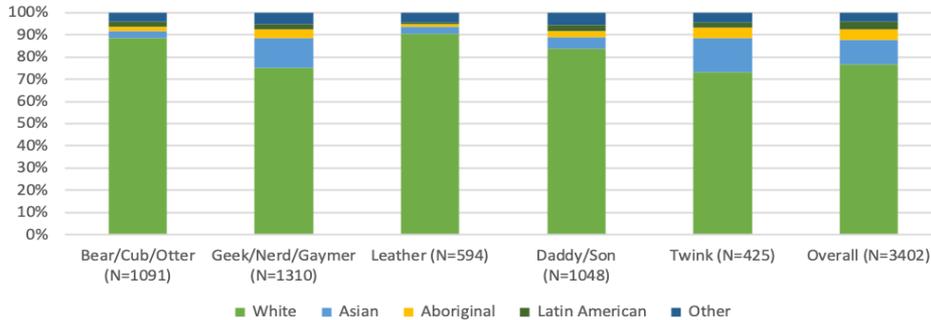
Results

- Collapsing responses from all visits, 526 gbMSM reported sub-group affiliations: 36.5% as “geek/nerd/gaymer”; 30.2% as “bear/cub/otter”; 28.7% as “daddy/son”; 16.0% as “leather”; and 12.5% as “twink”.

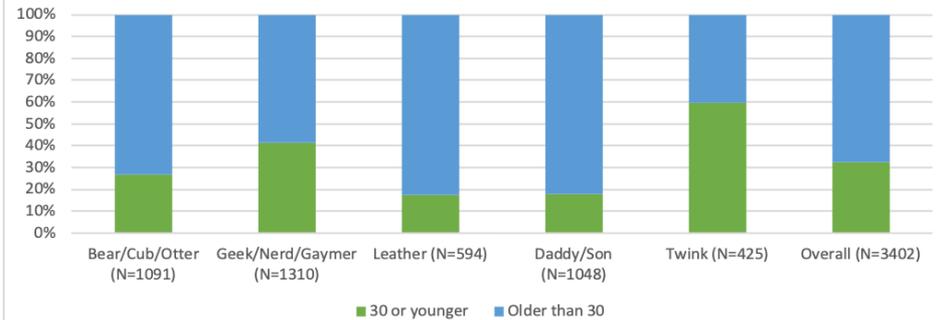
Sexual Orientation



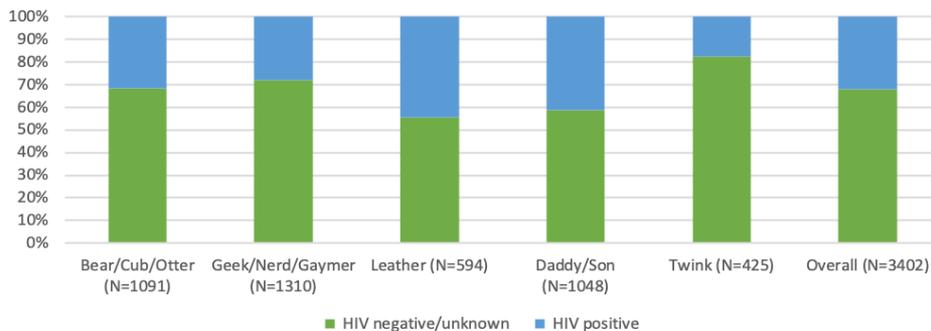
Ethnicity



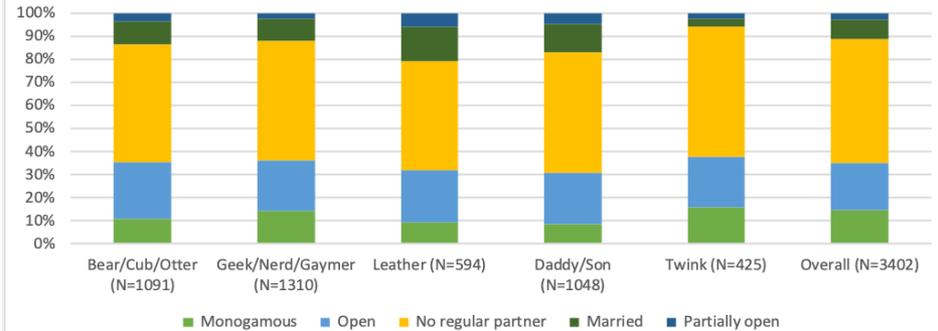
Age



Self-Reported HIV Status at Baseline



Current Relationship Status



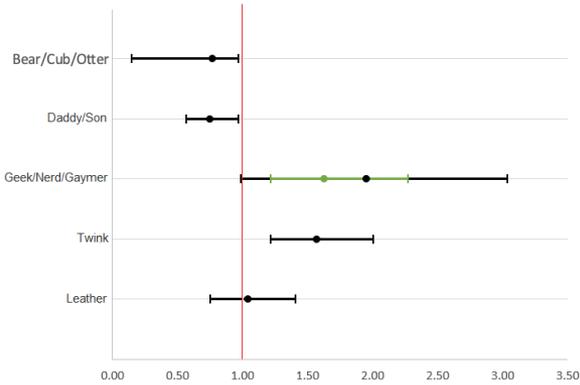
Note: these sub-groups are not mutually exclusive and are collapsed into an “ever having identified” with any of the sub-groups, as participants can identify with more than one sub-group at any time over the course of the study.

Univariable and multivariable generalized linear mixed effect models (GLIMMIX) (n=3402)

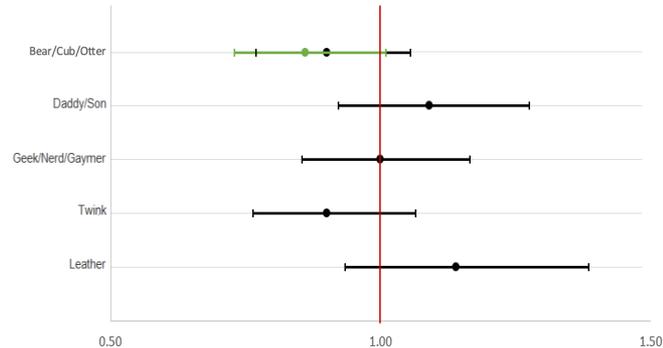
Results Cont'

- Across 3402 visits, 10653 sexual events were reported.
- After adjustments, the “leather” and “daddy/son” sub-cultures were associated with different sexual behaviours when compared to other sub-cultures.
- Only the variables in the multivariable model most relevant to the hypothesis were included in this write up.

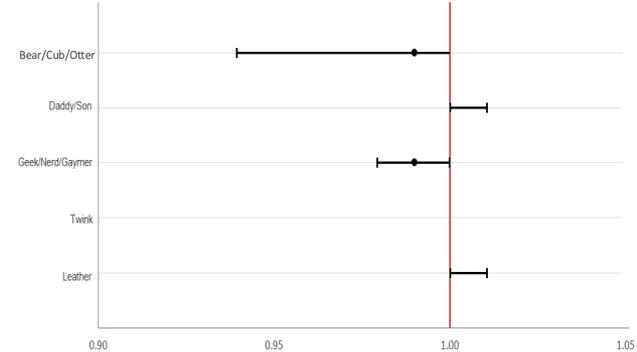
Association Between Reported Having Attended Sex Parties and Sub-culture Identification



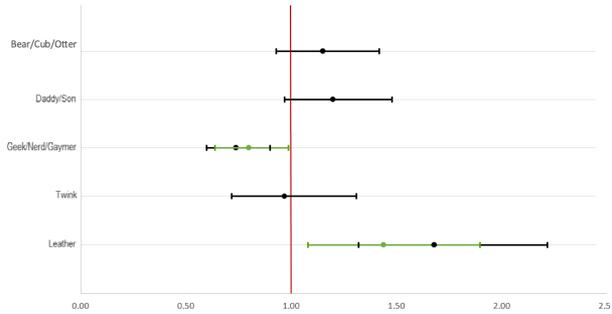
Association Between Reported Receptive Condomless Anal Sex Event and Sub-culture Identification



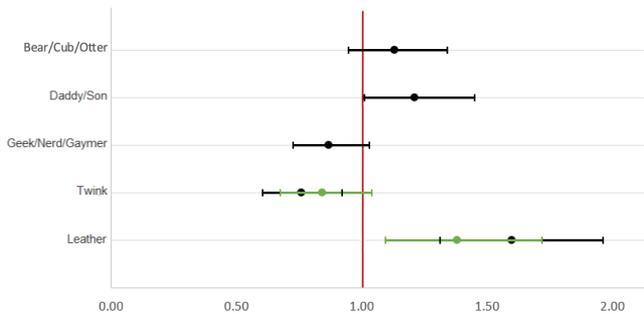
Association Between Reported Number of Recent Sexual Partners and Sub-culture Identification



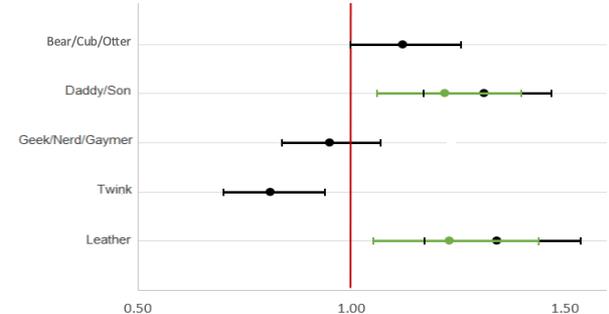
Association Between Reported Meeting Partner at Community Venue (vs Online) and Sub-culture Identification



Association Between Reported Having Used Drugs During Sexual Event and Sub-culture Identification



Association Between Reported Desire to Have Sex with Partner Again and Sub-culture Identification





Discussion

- Sexual encounters, communal norms, and sexual fulfillment differ across the various sub-groups identified in this analysis.
- The “leather” and “daddy/son” sub-cultural affiliations are associated with behaviours that require different HIV prevention supports, but also correlate with characteristics that make networks amenable to socially-driven interventions, such as ongoing sexual encounters.
- Tailored and targeted interventions that embrace the diverse sub-cultural identities and communities should be leveraged.

Acknowledgements

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<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0057740>.
2. Prestage, Garrett, Graham Brown, John De Wit, Benjamin Bavinton, Christopher Fairley, Bruce Maycock, Colin Batrouney, et al. “Understanding Gay Community Subcultures: Implications for HIV Prevention.” AIDS and Behavior 19, no. 12 (December 2015): 2224–33. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10461-015-1027-9>.