



# An App-Based Approach to Addressing HIV and Associated Stigmas



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## BACKGROUND

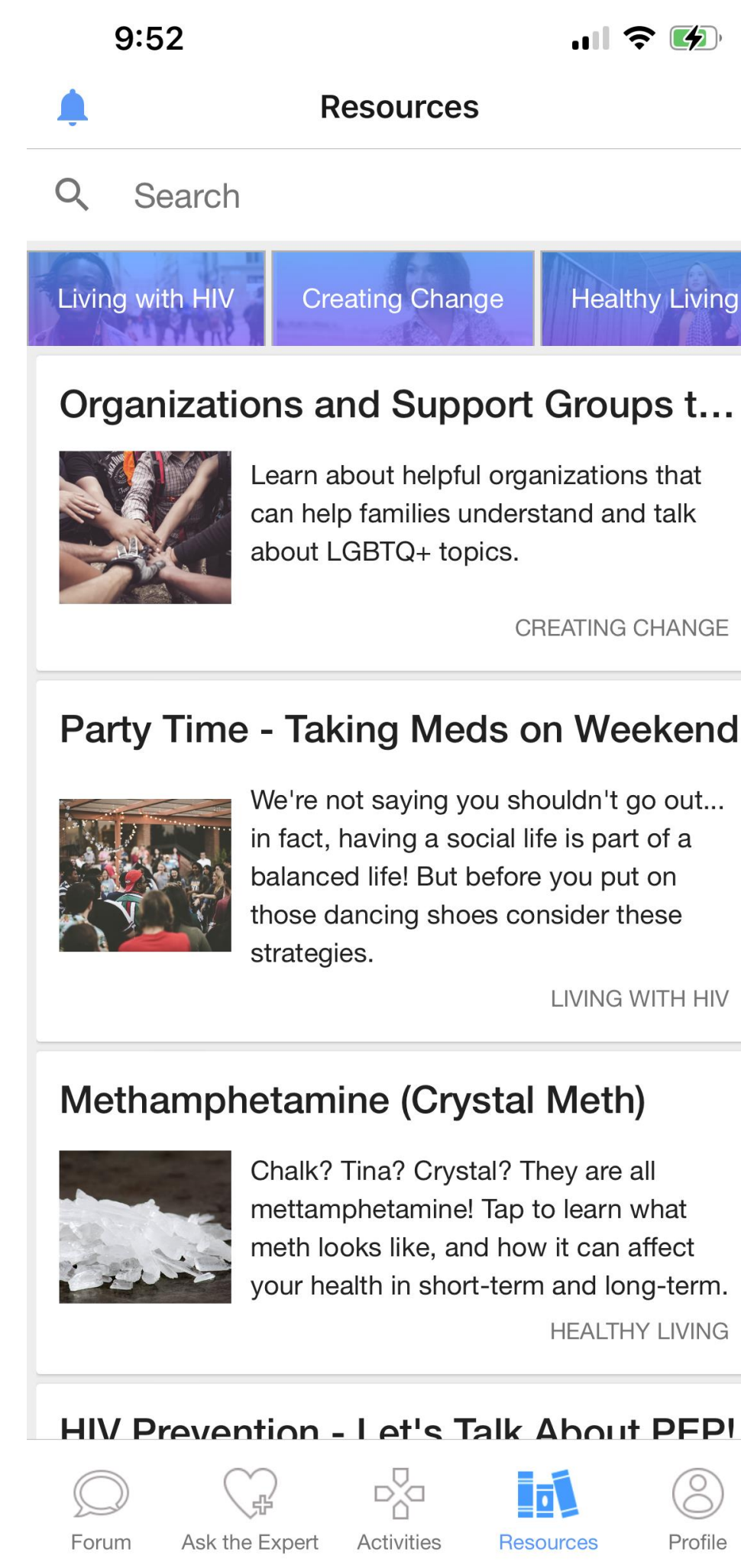
Progress has been made towards ending the HIV epidemic as new resources and educational tools have significantly decreased HIV incidence. However, in the United States young Black and Latinx men who have sex with men and transgender women (YBLMT) continue to be disproportionately affected by HIV (2). According to the CDC more than 40% of all new infections occurred amongst Black people in 2019. Historical and ongoing intertwined stigma and discrimination around race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation all contribute to higher HIV incidence and lower rates of receiving care.

## OBJECTIVE

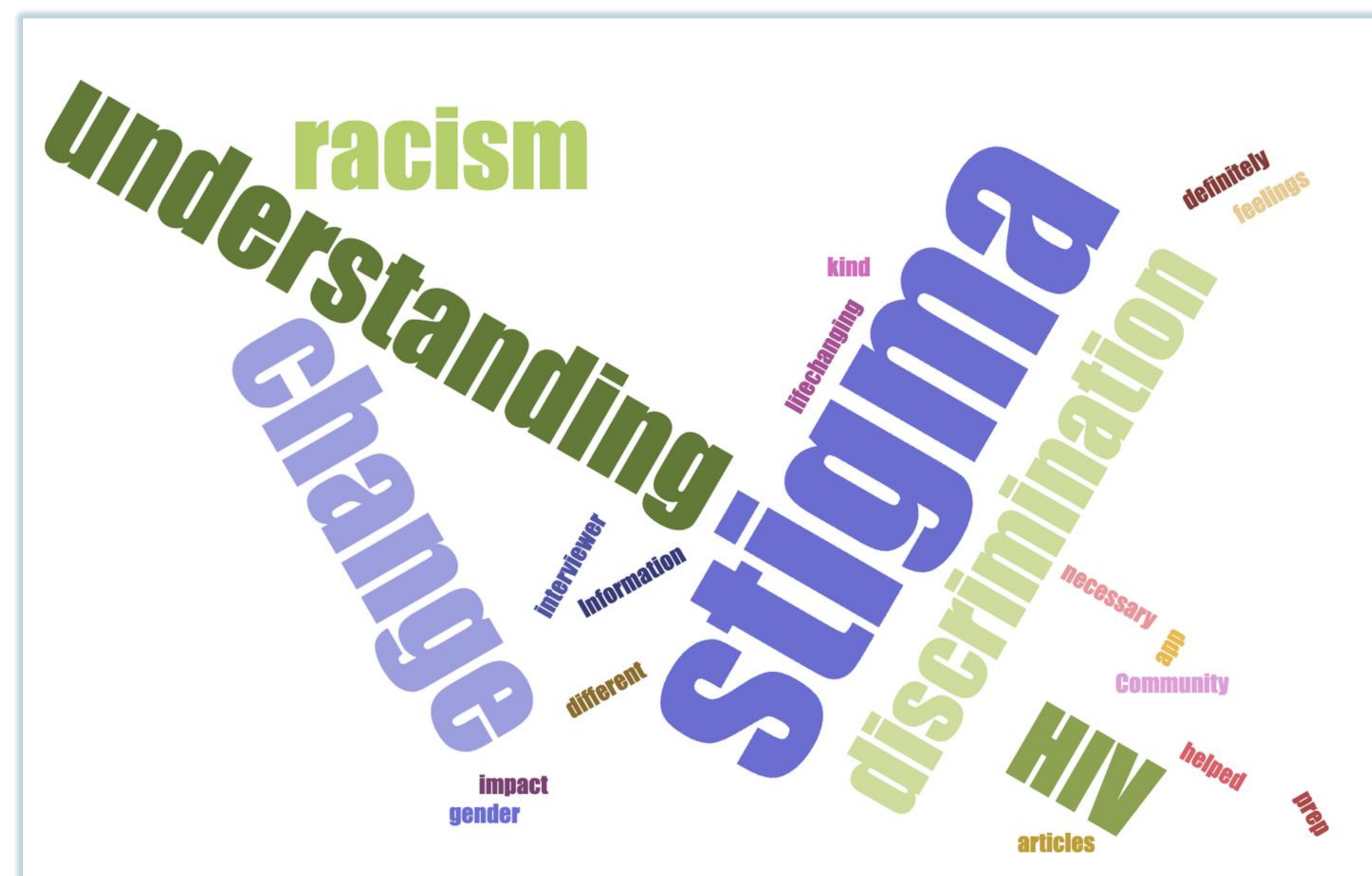
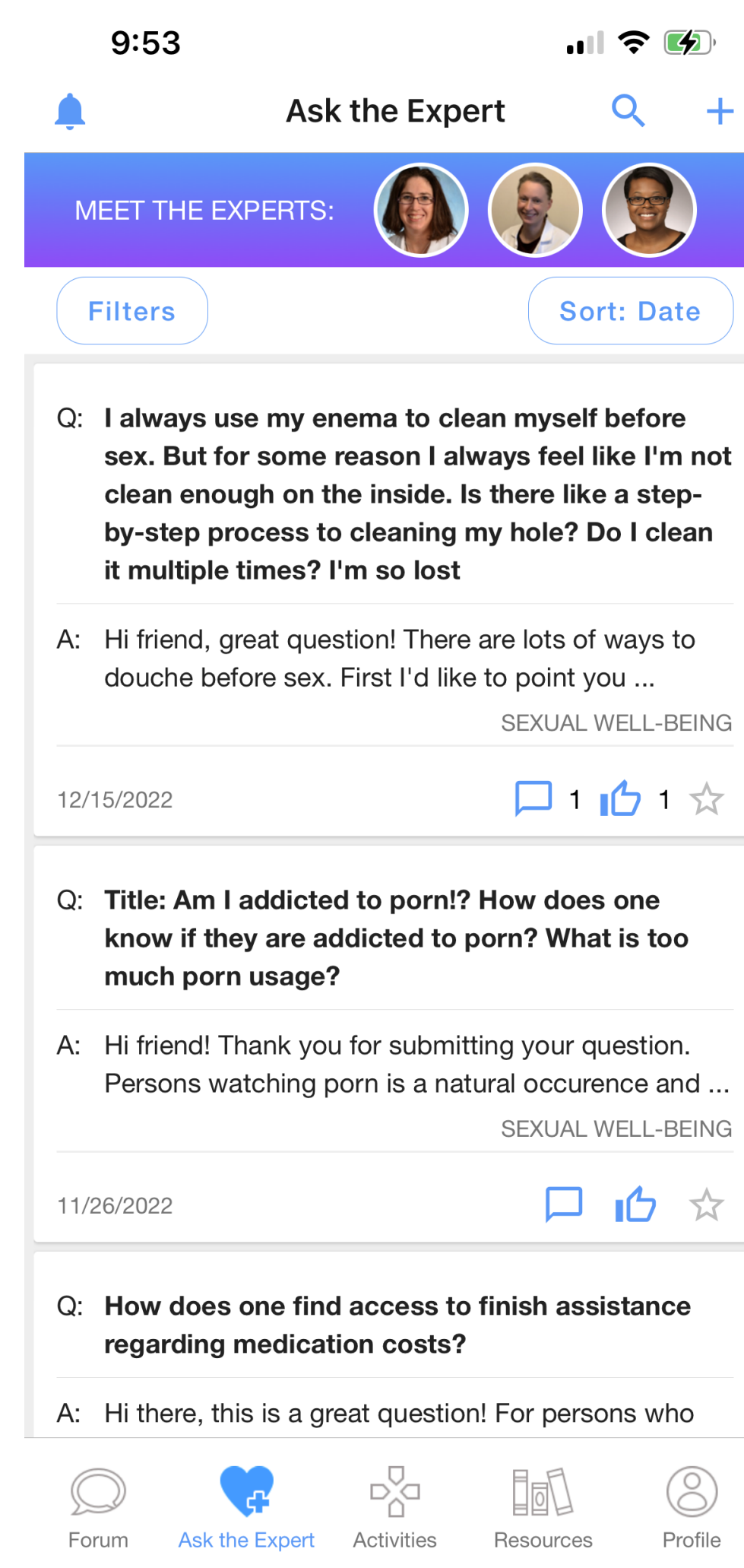
The HealthMpowerment (HMP) study delivered an app-based intervention to address stigma and discrimination and increase engagement with HIV prevention and care. The app provides a platform to build a diverse community and provide resources and educational tools for HIV health and wellness. The study aimed to evaluate the intervention's effectiveness by understanding changes in feelings of stigma and discrimination and changes in engaging in prevention and care behaviors.

“I was in love with it [HMP]... if I had just gotten HIV that would have been a really cool place to be because it's very reliable and resourceful.” (3)

“honestly the most empowering and powerful aspect of the app, ... getting the opportunity to have that accessible without, having to cost you financially is just a game changer.” (3)



“Seeing stuff about PrEP and people living with HIV and like explanations and stuff regarding stigma and all that is nice.” (4)



## REFERENCES

1. Muessig KE, et al. Increasing HIV Testing and Viral Suppression via Stigma Reduction in a Social Networking Mobile Health Intervention Among Black and Latinx Young Men and Transgender Women Who Have Sex With Men (HealthMpowerment): Protocol for a Randomized Controlled Trial. *JMIR Res Protoc*. 2020;9(12):e24043.
2. HIV and Black/African American people in the U.S. HIV and Black/African American People in the U.S. July 6, 2022. Accessed February 26, 2024. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchhstp/newsroom/fact-sheets/hiv/black-african-american-factsheet.html>.
3. Interview 204929 [00:15:28]
4. Interview 204637 [00:07:04]

## METHODS

- 3 arms: the control, research created, and peer referred and a total of 750 participants ages 15-29 over the duration of 12 months (1)
- Each participant was offered at-home HIV self-testing kits and took surveys at baseline 3, 6, 9, and 12 months. (1)
- Around 40 participants were selected at random for a qualitative interview. Participants were asked a series of questions evaluating their use of each part of the app including likes, dislikes, and overall take aways.
- These interviews were transcribed and cleaned through Trint and coded through Dedoose for analysis.

## RESULTS

This project is currently in the analysis phase therefore results are pending; however, trends suggest an app-based intervention is effectively reducing stigma making it a valuable support tool for YBLMT individuals at risk or living with HIV. Participants highly valued having access to educational resources and health care professionals through the app.

## CONCLUSION

Programs and interventions that aim to decrease HIV and related stigma could consider using a mobile platform for education (healthcare provider access and articles) that can counter the spread of misinformation, provided tailored information and desired health resources.

**FUNDING :** This HMP study was funded by a grant from the National Institutes of Health : R01MD013623 (PIs: Bauermeister; Muessig)