



“Is Your Man Stepping Out?” An Online Pilot Study to Evaluate Acceptability of a Guide-Enhanced HIV Prevention Soap Opera Video Series and Feasibility of Recruitment by Facebook Advertising

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Love, Sex, and Choices (LSC) is a 12-episode soap opera video series developed to reduce HIV risk among at-risk Black urban women. We added a video guide commentator to offer insights at critical dramatic moments. An online pilot study evaluated acceptability of the Guide-Enhanced LSC (GELSC) and feasibility of Facebook advertising, streaming to smartphones, and retention. Facebook ads targeted high-HIV-prevalence areas. In 30 days, Facebook ads generated 230 screening interviews: 84 were high risk, 40 watched GELSC, and 39 followed up at 30 days. Recruitment of high-risk participants was 10 per week, compared to seven per week in previous field recruitment. Half the sample was Black; 12% were Latina. Findings suggest GELSC influenced sex scripts and behaviors. It was feasible to recruit young urban women from a large geographic area via Facebook and to retain the sample. We extended the reach to at-risk women by streaming to mobile devices.

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There is a compelling need to expand the reach of effective health promotion interventions (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2014b). Computer-based interventions have compared favorably to human-facilitated interventions in HIV prevention (Noar, Black, & Pierce, 2009), substance use (Carroll et al., 2008), and general health promotion (Portnoy, Scott-Sheldon, Johnson, & Carey, 2008). Interventions delivered on Internet-based platforms increase usability and scale-up (Noar, 2011), increasingly important where the costs of facilitator-led groups challenge implementation, and when stigma challenges in-person attendance.

Love, Sex, and Choices (LSC) is an engaging 12-episode soap opera video series developed to reduce

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HIV risk in young, adult Black women (Jones, Hoover, & Lacroix, 2013). LSC narratives portray four women facing archetypical relationship dilemmas involving high-risk situations. Based on formative research (Jones, 2006, 2008), sexual health promotion messages of relationship communication, HIV testing, and consistent condom use skills are woven into familiar high-risk sex scripts to model new behaviors in situational and emotional contexts. The LSC heroines transform self-behavior through awareness of their values, choices, and potentials (Jones et al., 2013).

Further evaluation of LSC through focus groups indicated that an additional mechanism was needed to reinforce health promotion messages and to offer insights at key moments in the story. Viewers experience heightened emotion during the story and identify with LSC characters. However, for meaningful behavior change, critical reflection and new understanding are needed (Gesser-Edelsburg & Singhal, 2013). Contemporary urban women's sex scripts promote unprotected sex to fulfill relationship needs (Emmers-Sommer & Allen, 2005; Jones, 2006; Jones & Oliver, 2007) and to hold onto the relationship, and show trust and intimacy (Bell, Atkinson, Mosier, Riley, & Brown, 2007; Jones & Gulick, 2009). The Guide-Enhanced LSC (GELSC) was, therefore, produced by adding a peer video guide to the end of LSC episodes to provoke viewers to question their own sex scripts and consider their own need for change. An epilogue, such as that conveyed by the video guide, is an important technique in entertainment education to help interpret and emphasize key messages (Kawamura & Kohler, 2013; Sabido, 2004).

Streaming the GELSC video series to reduce HIV risk takes advantage of pervasive smartphone use (Pew Research Internet Project, 2014a), high interest in multimedia video entertainment (Purcell, 2013), and video streaming capabilities. Recruitment and retention of Black women in online HIV prevention research remain understudied, although Internet access on mobile devices is highest among African Americans, particularly among young adult Black women (Smith, 2014). The original LSC had been evaluated in a randomized controlled trial (RCT; Jones et al., 2013; Jones & Lacroix, 2012) in an urban sample of young, predominately Black women who had been screened and identified as high risk. While the videos

in that RCT were streamed to smartphones, the phones had been provided to the participants and recruitment and data collection were conducted at the sites. In contrast, for the pilot study reported here, the new GELSC episodes were streamed to women's own smartphones or computers and recruitment and data collection were conducted online. Ninety-eight percent of African Americans ages 18 to 29 years access the Internet (Smith, 2014); 75% of African American adults and 74% of all adults with Internet access have annual incomes of less than \$30,000 USD (Smith, 2014), and nearly all adults ages 18 to 29 years (89%) with Internet access use a social networking site (Pew Research Internet Project, 2014b). Due to the popularity and reach of Facebook among young adult Black women (Duggan & Smith, 2013), advertisements for our study were placed on Facebook.

The purposes of our pilot study were to ascertain the feasibility of Facebook advertising on smartphones and computers and online procedures consisting of obtaining consent, eligibility screening on smartphones by audio computer-assisted self-interview (ACASI), verification procedures, streaming and tracking GELSC viewing, and retention at 1 month when preliminary outcome data on risk and HIV testing were obtained. The pilot study assessed acceptability of the GELSC using evaluation criteria.

Background

Importance of HIV Prevention Among Black Women

Black women with heterosexual HIV transmission comprise the fourth largest category of all new HIV infections in the United States (CDC, 2014b). The HIV incidence for Black women is 20 times that of White women, and nearly five times that of Latinas (CDC, 2014a). Black women are no more likely to have unprotected sex or multiple partners than White women (Tillerson, 2008), but are more likely to have male sex partners at higher HIV risk (CDC, 2014a; Friedman et al., 2014). Higher HIV prevalence in Black communities is attributed to stigma, and structural and racial disparities (CDC, 2014a). These data point to the importance of prevention, early identification, and access to treatment.

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