# Jack'd dating application motivation, experiences, and sexual risk behaviors: a qualitative study

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2019 HIV NEXT GENERATION CONFERENCE

# Disclosures

# Introduction



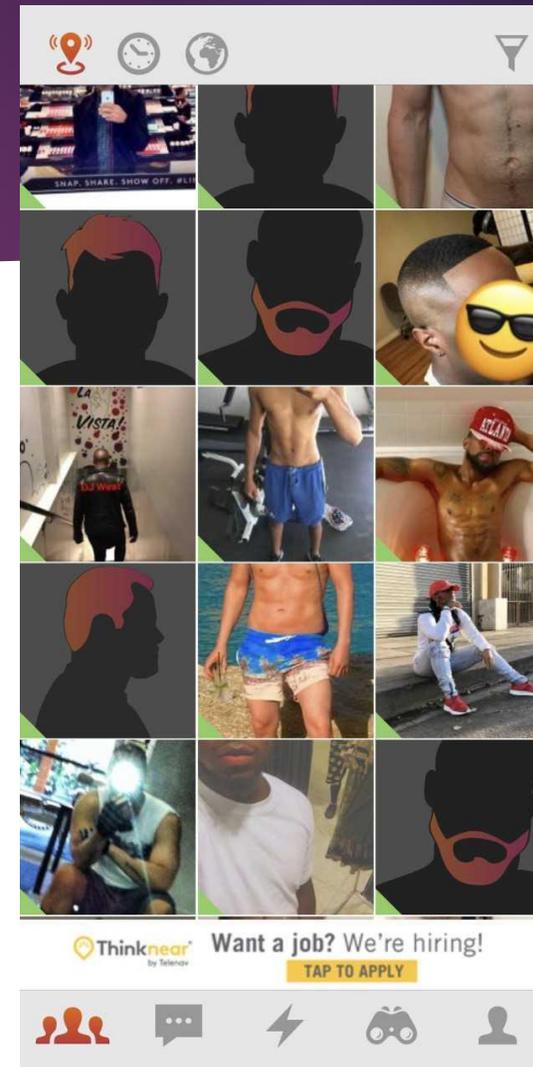- In 2016, Black gay and bisexual men in the U.S. accounted for 25% (10,226) of the 40,324 new HIV diagnoses
  - 3 out of 4 Black gay and bisexual men who received a new HIV diagnoses were aged 13-34
- In Washington, D.C., the highest proportion of new HIV diagnoses occurred in young Black gay and bisexual men
  - Of all 368 HIV diagnoses in 2017, 41% were aged 13-24, 8 out of 10 were Black, and 2 out of 3 were gay and bisexual men
- Explore personal and sociocultural factors that may explain HIV disparities

- Initial release 2010

- Location-based dating app

- "Fastest-growing gay app in the world among young adult gay men, with more than 5 million users, 80% of whom are between 18 and 30 years old" (https://online-buddies.com/products/jackd)

- Referred to as "the "hookup app for gay black men to get laid" (Arceneaux, 2015)

# Research questions

▶ **RQ1:** How do YBGBM describe motivations to use Jack'd?

▶ **RQ2:** How do YBGBM describe and experience meeting sexual partners on Jack'd, including partner preferences (i.e., age, physique) and offline sexual encounters based on Jack'd use?

▶ **RQ3:** How do these descriptions and experiences reflect HIV risk behaviors?

# Methods

▶ Recruitment was conducted via community-based sampling methods at a partnering HIV/AIDS-service organization in Washington, DC.

▶ A young adult Black gay man led recruitment and screened participants by phone to determine whether they met the study's eligibility criteria

▶ Chesapeake Institutional Review Board (Pro00012060)

▶ A Certificate of Confidentiality was obtained from the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

▶ Face-to-face individual interviews (*n=23)*, each lasting between 30 and 45 minutes

▶ $25 Visa gift card incentive



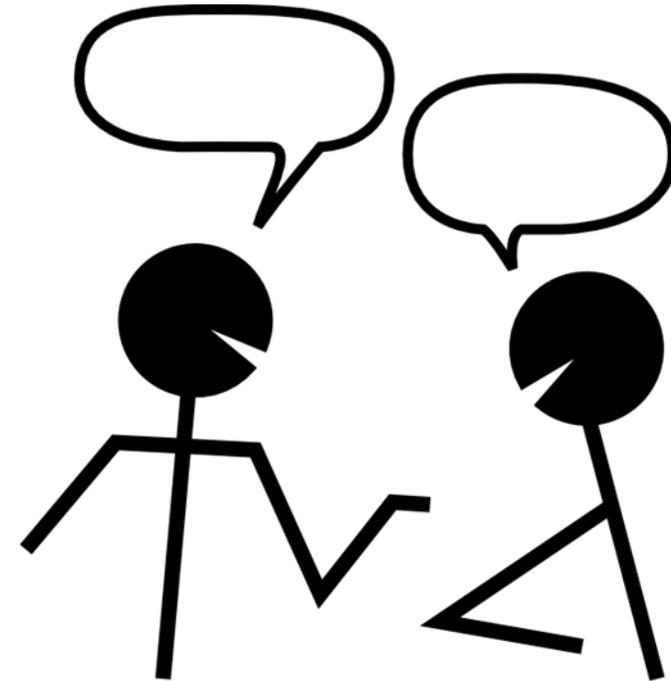**US** **HELPING US** **PEOPLE INTO LIVING**

# Semistructured interview guide

- Why do you use Jack'd?
- Tell me about your experience using Jack'd.
- What do you like most about Jack'd?
- What do you like least?
- What type of man on Jack'd are you attracted to?
- How do you decide to have in-person meetings with a man met using Jack'd, including sexual outcomes from these meetings?
- What role does condom use play when you have sex with partners met using Jack'd?"

# Data analysis

- Interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed, and edited to remove identifiers

- After multiple readings, the transcripts were imported into NVivo 10.0 for coding

- Data were analyzed via two strategies derived from grounded theory: coding and analytical memos

NVIVO

# Participant characteristics

| | N |
|---|---|
| Sample demographic characteristics, *N* = 23 | |
| Age, Mean (SD) | 23.48 (1.51) |
| Some college education | 14 |
| Full or part-time employment | 19 |
| Annual income below $35,000 | 14 |
| Self-identify as gay | 15 |
| Self-identify as bisexual | 8 |
| Use Jack'd multiple times per day or daily in past 30 days | 11 |
| Anal sex in past 30 days | 16 |
| No condom use last time anal sex | 7 |
| Feeling down, depressed or hopeless in past 14 days | 13 |

# Motivations for Jack'd use

**Ease and convenience**

"The ease of it. The simpleness of it."

"You can see who's in the area, a picture of the person, talk to the person. Just easy."

"It's the convenience, like how close they are to me. If they're really close to me, I'll hit them up."

**Safe and non-hostile environment**

"I'm not going to go up to you in a bar."

"I don't like to be approached in public…it gives me the heebie jeebies."

"I might get punched in the face because I don't know if they're straight or gay."

# Partner preferences

**Masculine**

"I do cling to more masculine guys who don't really come off looking gay"

"I don't like heavyweight men"

**Older, educated, and employed**

"I like older men because these people my age are looking for the wrong things."

"He needs to be able to keep and hold a job."

"He should have an education."

**Emotional maturity**

"I don't like to be hit up with an "Oh let's fuck""

"We didn't talk about sex at all. It was just regular stuff"

# HIV risk behaviors

- **Forgotten epidemic:**
  - *"People my age don't see HIV as an epidemic to be honest, because you don't see people in their 20s dying from HIV. I'm sorry, you just don't."(23, self-identified gay man)*
  - *"A lot of them just don't care about HIV anymore. It's kind of crazy but HIV is one of those things people don't want to deal with it. It's sad, but it's true." (25, self-identified bisexual man)*

- **Sense of distrust with regard to HIV status disclosure:**
  - *"I use the app Jack'd a lot and the people who are on there are just like they're "safe" and they use condoms. I've known people who lie about that, so it's just like that's to be overlooked. How well do you know that that's the truth?" (22, self-identified bisexual man)*

# HIV risk behaviors

- **Inconsistent condom use**

  - *"I've had guys I met on Jack'd and had sex with who didn't initiate condoms, but if I say something they'll put it on."* (22-year-old self-identified gay man)

  - *"Condoms come in during sex but not as frequently as they maybe should. If I'm topping then I most likely not wear one, but if I'm bottoming then I'll wear one. I know that I take care of myself. I know that your life is in my hands, and I know I'm protecting you. But then when it's reversed, I don't really trust what you're telling me 100 percent about you. So, when I'm receiving, I'm using a condom."* (21-year-old self-identified gay man)

# Discussion

▶ Jack'd app provides unique opportunities for YBGBM to meet and may mitigate social anxiety or potential violence against them.

▶ Factors such as traditional masculine role norms, older partner preferences, limited conversations around HIV status, and inconsistent condom use associated with anal sex role have implications for HIV risk.

▶ HIV prevention strategies (directed towards YBGBM should consider the role that dating applications may play in either exacerbating or attenuating risk.

# Future directions

- Linkages to test/treat
- Role of PrEP on Jack'd (disclosure, stigma)
- Psychological effects of Jack'd and associations with HIV risk

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# Acknowledgments

- Sherry C. Wang, PhD
- Elexis C. Kierstead, BS
- Alisa Smiley-Dower, EdD
- Alison B. Hamilton, PhD, MPH
- Norweeta G. Milburn, PhD
- Travis Wise
- William Henry

# Thank You