

“Texting in Bed”: Implications for Sexual Health Promotion with Black and Latino YMSM



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Outline



- Background
- Methods
- Results
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- Texting Behavior
- Advantages and Disadvantages of Texting
- Texting Etiquette
- Preferences in Texting
- Participants' Advice on Sexual Health Messages

Background: YMSM and HIV



- HIV infections have a disproportionate burden on African American and Latino YMSM
- There is a need for culturally appropriate interventions for these groups

Background: Texting



- Use of texting is rapidly increasing, especially among racial minorities
 - 79% African Americans and 83% English-speaking Latinos text
- This is also true among young people
 - 95% young adults aged 18 – 29 text
- It is essential to better understand how 18-24 year-old YMSM use texting

Background: Relevant Research



- Texting has been increasingly utilized in interventions
 - Diabetes management, weight loss, and smoking cessation
- Research has shown the acceptability of texting used in HIV related health interventions
- There was little evidence on the effectiveness of texting for HIV prevention

METHODS



Methods: Data Collection



- 10 semi-structured focus groups
 - 5 Latino groups
 - 4 African American groups
 - 1 mixed group (African American and Latino)
- Brief demographic survey

Methods: Sampling



- Recruited 50 Black and Latino YMSM at gay-identified clubs and bars

Sampling Criteria

- Ages 18 – 25
- Latino/Hispanic or Black/African American
- Gay or bi-sexual
- Use texting

RESULTS



Results



1. Texting Behavior
2. Advantages and Disadvantages of Texting
3. Texting Etiquette
4. Preferences in Texting
5. General Advice on Messages

RESULTS: Texting Behavior



RESULTS: Texting Behavior



- Pervasiveness
- Multi-networking
 - Uses
 - Privacy

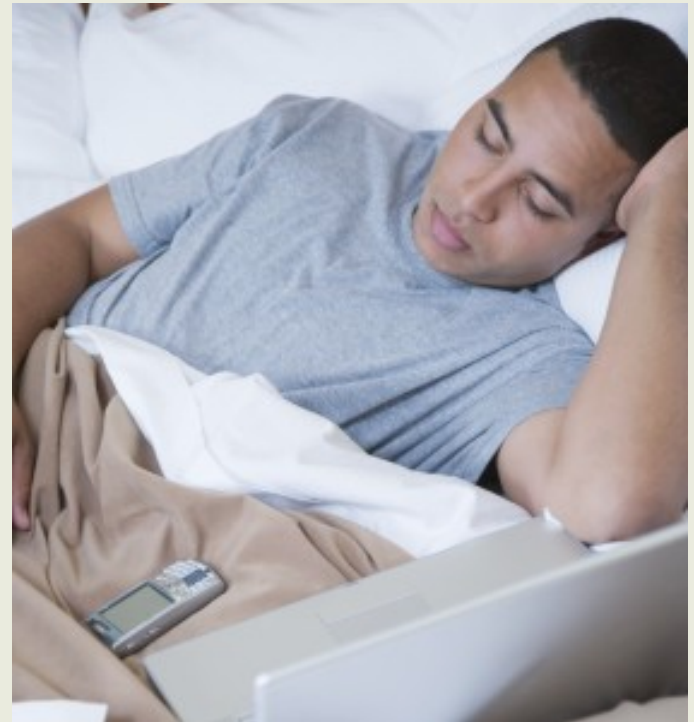
Texting Behavior: Pervasiveness



- Many participants seemed to be texting twenty-four hours a day:

“I’m always doing text messages. When I’m sleeping, I have to wake up and reply to them...five in the morning.” – Ben (African American)

“When I’m in the shower, I even text back sometimes.” – Marco (Latino)



Texting Behavior: Multi-networking



- Participants used multiple modes of communication and social networking simultaneously
- We call this “multi-networking:”

*“Usually, I’m on Facebook... and I’m texting someone else while I’m talking to someone else on the phone.” – Tommy
(African American)*

Texting Behavior: Uses



- Socialize electronically and make plans with friends
- Flirt and facilitate sexual encounters
- Share useful information or humorous comments
- Give or receive social support, such as encouragement and reminders
- Mentor younger gay friends

Texting Behavior: Privacy



- Participants used texting to protect their privacy by preventing others from overhearing conversations:

“We used text messages to keep it more confidential and avoid making somebody feel bad...I figured it would be better [to talk about HIV] through texting, than to be on the phone and be like, ‘Oh my god,’ because people might hear me. ‘Who is he talking to about HIV?’ They might misinterpret it, and then gossip.” – Gerard (Latino)

RESULTS: Advantages and Disadvantages



RESULTS: Advantages



- Increased Privacy
- Control When to Respond
 - Convenience
- Managing Relationships

RESULTS: Managing Relationships



“There’s things I’ll tell my boyfriend on a text that I won’t tell him in person...about the relationship, how you’re feeling...it’s like you know I want to be with you...I want to really tell him to his face, but on the text, I’ll do it.” – Gerard (Latino)

RESULTS: Disadvantages



- Less Intimacy
- Less Depth and Sincerity
- Replaces In-Person Socializing
 - Lack of Clarity
 - Permanence

RESULTS: Lack of Clarity, Permanence



“...If a person asks you in text, ‘How do you use a condom?’ I’m sure you couldn’t explain that in a simple text. There’s no acronym for explaining that, so I’m sure it’ll be a lot easier just to tell them in person.” – Tommy (African American)

“You get some dirty texts, but the person that’s sending the text, they don’t know who is reading it. Anybody can read it because I leave my phone anywhere, and then if I’m working, somebody is going through it.” – Gerard (Latino)

RESULTS: Texting Etiquette



RESULTS: Texting Etiquette



- DO Respond Timely
- DON'T Send Inappropriate Texts
 - Texting Language
 - Importance of Context
 - Sexual Health Messages

Texting Etiquette: Texting Language



- Emoticons could dramatically change the tone of a message:

“Let’s say I’m picking someone up. I can say, ‘Come out now.’ It can sound like ‘Come out now!’ or if I put the smiley face on the end, ‘Come out now 😊’ it’s like ‘Okay, I’m here. So, it’s okay.’” – Alejandro (Latino)

Texting Etiquette: Importance of Context



- Etiquette is contextual, depending on the relationship between the parties:

“A friend texted me saying, ‘Hey what’s up, you bitch? What are you up to?’ That’s okay with me because she’s my best friend.” – Carlo (Latino)

“She was talking to us, and she was like, ‘Oh, get your butts up here.’ We were just like, ‘What?’ Are we talking to a young person, and adult? Age range? Girl, guy? We just didn’t know, so we were just weird.” – Frank (Latino)

Texting Etiquette: Sexual Health Messages



- Many participants liked receiving sexual health messages from friends because it shows that their friends care:

“If I get this [sexual health message] from a close friend...it is a reminder that they still care about you.” – Owen (Latino)

- But some would get offended:

“You’re telling me what to do with my life, and who are you? I know you’re my friend, but I mean, you don’t have that much say in it. That’s how it sounds to me.” – Gerard (Latino)

RESULTS: Preferences in Texting



RESULTS: Preferences In Texting



- Sexually Explicit Texts
 - Caring Messages
- Keep It Short and Simple
 - Personalization

Preferences in Texting: Sexually Explicit Texts



- “Sexting” (sexually explicit texts) and their attached photographs were often, but not always, unwelcome:

“I won’t respond to texts [from] people who want to hook up...sometimes they send pictures of themselves, and I just don’t reply.” – Leo (Latino)

“I don’t mind at all. I get them all the time. I have a whole album.” – Samuel (Latino)

Preferences in Texting: Caring Messages



- Many participants liked messages that are positive and show concern, such as greetings:

“For me, it would make me feel a lot better...I would use [condoms] anyway, but I mean like all right, that person really genuinely cares about me.” – Tommy (African American)

“Yeah, when people don’t check in for a long time...and all of a sudden, they text you...now that I know that you’ve been thinking about me, it makes me feel happy.” – George (African American)

Preferences in Texting: Keep It Short and Simple



- Lengthy, repetitive and meaningless texts annoyed participants:

“Lengthy texts to me, I ignore them, I’m not going to lie. I won’t even read them... I would be like, ‘I don’t have time for this.’ It wouldn’t mean anything to me because I’m so busy texting. I’m trying to move on with my day.” – George (African American)

“...Just get to the point. It doesn’t matter what I’m doing. You’re texting me. Tell me, what’s the purpose?” – Mark (African American)

Preferences in Texting: Personalization



- Participants liked personalized messages, but not “chain texts” and anonymous messages:

“Well, the señoras send you’re my best friend, I couldn’t live without you. Send this to nine other people, and show them you love them, and I put back to the person, ‘Don’t send these texts. I appreciate it and everything, but please don’t send me chain letters.’ ...We hate those things.” – Ricky (Latino)

RESULTS: Advice on Sexual Health Messages



RESULTS: Advice on Sexual Health Messages



- Personalize the Messages
- Use References to Celebrities
 - Be Conversational
 - Humor Helps
 - Timing is Important

Advice on Sexual Health Messages: Personalize the Messages



- Participants liked to be addressed by name in sexual health messages:

“... what if it said, ‘Hello,’ like your name and it was personalized?” – Carl (African American)

*“When you texted me a few days ago, you started out by saying my first name, so that made me feel, ‘All right, she knows who she is speaking to. It’s very direct,’ and I like that.”
– Tommy (African American)*

Advice on Sexual Health Messages: Use References to Celebrities



- References to pop culture make sexual health messages more relevant and likeable:

“RuPaul says, ‘If you don’t love yourself, how are you going to love somebody else?’” – Daniel (from mixed group)



Advice on Sexual Health Messages: Be Conversational



- Messages should have a natural, friendly voice:

“... Something more along the way we speak to each other. This [text] just doesn’t sound like something my friend would say.” – Leo (Latino)

*“You can’t be so serious. Even though it is a very serious matter, like these texts, you’ve got to kind of loosen it up.”
– Mark (African American)*

“... if you put a happy face or cute little heart or little stuff around it, it changes everything.” – Michael (Latino)

Advice on Sexual Health Messages: Humor Helps



- Humor makes sexual health messages interesting:

“Wrap it before you tap it.” – Tim (African American)

“No glove, no love.” – Samuel (Latino)

“Don’t forget Jimmy.” – Andre (African American)

“Strap your tool.” – Owen (Latino)

“Rubber blocks electricity, and it also blocks STDs.” – Ricky (Latino)

Advice on Sexual Health Messages: Timing is Important



- Sending sexual health messages at the right moment is more effective:

“... if someone is going out to the club and they get the message like that, and you meet somebody. It might make them think twice, or it might make them think back to a previous experience and be like, ‘I don’t want that happening again. So, I might live by this.’” – Andre (from mixed group)

Implications and Recommendations



Implications and Recommendations



Texting-based sexual health promotion interventions need to...

- **Identify** new ways to encourage social support and avoidance of risk behavior
- **Ensure confidentiality** and communicate these efforts to their targeted population
- **Personalize** content

Implications and Recommendations – cont.



Texting-based sexual health promotion interventions need to...

- **Engage** social networks (messages are being sent to and from friends)
- **Integrate** texting with other modes of communication
 - Social networking sites
 - Face-to-face interventions
- **Follow** the texting etiquette of target subpopulations

Conclusions



- Many complex factors affect whether YMSM will be receptive to sexual health messages sent through texting
- Understanding cell phone use by Black and Latino YMSM helps us develop targeted interventions
- By following the etiquettes and preferences of texting, we can improve the efficiency of text-based programs in promoting sexual health

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Discussion



ANY QUESTIONS?



Contact



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“Committing to monogamy does not always protect someone against HIV. What if their partner doesn’t know their status or has sex with someone else?”



- Reaction: Likeable but too long
- Advice: Keep it brief

“I’d keep it brief ... keep it handy. ‘Monogamy doesn’t protect against HIV.’”

“Put your safety first no matter how much you love somebody.”



- Reaction: Clear, precise and well-received

“...when you love someone else, sometimes you forget about your friends. Receiving a text like this is a reminder that they still care about you, and maybe I should think things over.”