

A pilot assessment of the outcomes of an HIV and substance use prevention program tailored for African-American young adults ages 18 to 24: 'Color it Real'

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BACKGROUND

In the U.S., African-Americans compose one eighth of the population, but comprise nearly half of people living with HIV. Infection among young African-Americans is 11 times that of their White counterparts.

OBJECTIVES

To determine whether a tailored HIV and substance use prevention program for African-American young adults produced short-term changes in participants' knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs.

INTERVENTION

In 2011, the Wholistic Stress Control Institute, Inc. of Atlanta, GA, developed and tested the 'Color it Real' program for African-Americans, which aims to provide HIV education, and address behaviors related to risk awareness, decisional balance, partner negotiation, and attitudes. It originally consisted of 7 2-hour sessions (since revised to 6) that are culturally-tailored and age-specific (18-24 year-olds).

CURRICULUM COMPONENTS

Though ultimately reactive to participant needs, 'Color it Real' has sequential guidelines:

- 1) Pretest survey; use music to explore it's influence on normative behaviors and decision making;

CURRICULUM (Cont'd)

- 2) Use video clips from popular African-American TV shows and movies to display healthy and unhealthy personal relationships;
- 3) Provide contextual framework through the defining of vocabulary words related to HIV/AIDS/STIs and substance abuse;
- 4) Address HIV/AIDS/STI risk knowledge through educationally appropriate, culturally sensitive teaching methods;
- 5) Demonstrate proper male and female condom use;
- 6) Review previous lessons; address problem solving through identifying and discussing coping strategies; stress management exercises; posttest survey.

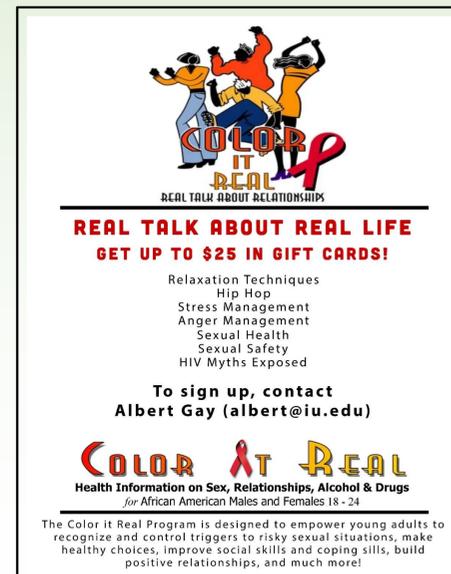


Figure 1: Color it Real Recruitment Poster

METHOD

Study Population: 32 African-American young adults (ages 18 to 24) from communities in northwestern Indiana.

Study Design: Secondary analysis of evaluation data from a prospective cohort (IRB# 1709270934).

Follow-Up: 32 participants attended at least one session of the 'Color it Real' program over 3 weeks. Of those, 14 completed pre- and post-test evaluation surveys, attended at least 5 sessions, and met data validation standards.

Instrument: The survey data were collected using the National Minority Substance Abuse and HIV Prevention Initiative Adult Questionnaire.

Data Analysis: Changes in knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs across the duration of the program were assessed using Wilcoxon Signed Ranks tests or paired Student's t-tests, depending on the data type. Due to limited statistical power, post-hoc significance correction was not applied, and interpretation should be limited accordingly.

RESULTS

Even with limited statistical power in this pilot study, likely areas of participant improvement included:

- 1) perceived risk of smoking marijuana once/twice a week ($z=-2.0$, $p=0.046$)
- 2) disapproval of friends' unprotected sex ($z=-1.88$, $p=0.061$)
- 3) perceived risk of having sex without a condom ($z=-2.27$, $p=0.023$), and
- 4) perceived risk of having sex under the influence of alcohol ($z=-2.07$, $p=0.038$)

Some additional tests also yielded lower z-scores that would be significant if observed in a study with greater power.

One potential iatrogenic effect was observed, a non-significant increased likelihood of asserting that there is a cure for AIDS ($z=-1.34$, $p=0.180$).

CONCLUSIONS

'Color it Real' has not been validated since the original study, but has since been revised. Our preliminary findings generally concur with the original validation study and support continued use of 'Color it Real' in northwestern Indiana, though a larger sample and experimental design are required to more definitively determine the program's benefits for African-American young adults. Anecdotal investigation into the increased perception that there is a cure for AIDS suggests that this may result from participants' pre-test perception that HIV is rapidly lethal and subsequent efforts to correct that notion.

REFERENCES

Akintobi T.H., Trotter J., Zellner T., Lenoir S., Evans D., Rollins L., & Miller A. (2016). Outcomes of a behavioral intervention to increase condom use and reduce HIV risk among urban African-American young adults. *Health Promotion Practice*, 17(5), 751-759.

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FUNDING

Funding for the Knowledge for Life campaign, which supported these sessions of 'Color it Real,' was provided by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) via Award SP021706 to Jon Agley.

