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Heavy Sexual Content Versus Safer Sex Content: A Content Analysis of the Entertainment Education Drama *Shuga*

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ABSTRACT

Extremely popular with Kenyan youth, the entertainment-education drama *Shuga* was designed with specific goals of promoting condom use, single versus multiple sexual partners, and destigmatization of HIV. Almost as soon as it aired, however, it generated controversy due to its extensive sexual themes and relatively explicit portrayal of sexual issues. To determine how safer sex, antistigma messages, and overall sexual content were integrated into *Shuga*, we conducted a content analysis. Results indicated that condom use and HIV destigmatization messages were frequently and clearly communicated. Negative consequences for risky sexual behavior were communicated over the course of the entire series. Messages about multiple concurrent partnerships were not evident. In addition, in terms of scenes per hour of programming, *Shuga* had 10.3 times the amount of sexual content overall, 8.2 times the amount of sexual talk, 17.8 times the amount of sexual behavior, and 9.4 times the amount of sexual intercourse as found in previous analysis of U.S. entertainment programming. Research is needed to determine how these factors may interact to influence adolescent viewers of entertainment education dramas.

One-third of new HIV infections in Kenya occur among young people below the age of 24 years, and youth remain one of the most at-risk groups for sexually transmitted infections (Kenya AIDS Indicator Survey [KAIS], 2013; UNAIDS, 2013). In response, the Kenyan government has recommended consistent safer-sex behavior, single sexual partnerships, and delayed sexual debut as messages to be promoted among young people. *Shuga*, an entertainment education intervention cosponsored by the MTV Staying Alive Foundation, the President's Plan for AIDS Relief, Partnership for an HIV-Free Generation, and the government of Kenya, was designed to address some of these issues via a television drama about the loves, lives, and sexual behavior of a group of college-aged young people. The first two seasons of the drama were filmed on location in Kenya with Kenyan actors. Although it was extremely popular with Kenyan youth, the program almost immediately generated controversy due to its extensive sexual themes and relatively explicit portrayal of sexual issues. Writers in the popular press wondered whether salacious content would overpower safer sex messages.

The polarized reception of *Shuga* raises questions about exactly how safer sex and other sexual messages were conveyed in the series, questions that have implications not only for *Shuga* itself (for which a fourth season will soon begin airing) but also for similar entertainment education programming. To determine how messages about safer sex, single sexual partnerships, HIV stigma, and overall sexual content were integrated into the program, we conducted a content-analytic audit of the *Shuga* season two.

Literature review

Youth and HIV/AIDS in Kenya

In Kenya, the HIV/AIDS epidemic continues to exert a disproportionate effect on young people (KAIS, 2013). Adolescents and young adults between the ages of 15 and 35 years represent about 38% of the national population but make up more than 60% of new infections each year (National AIDS Control Council, 2009). The odds of being infected also increase from adolescence to young adulthood, with more than one in every 25 (4.2%) of those 20 to 24 years old infected (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2010). University campuses have been identified as environments especially conducive to HIV transmission, because they bring young adults in their peak years of sexual activity into close physical proximity without any systematic supervision (Mulwo, Tomaselli, & Dalrymple, 2009).

Shuga, an entertainment education intervention

As in much of Sub-Saharan Africa, HIV-prevention efforts targeting Kenyan youth and young adults have frequently made use of mass media, including entertainment education programming (Govender, 2013). Entertainment education (EE) involves “pro-social messages that are embedded into popular entertainment content” (Moyer-Guse, 2008, p. 408). Unlike pure entertainment programming that may valorize sexual irresponsibility, lewdness, and other antisocial

messages (Singhal & Rogers, 2002), EE uses familiar and entertaining forms to convey prosocial messages to target audiences (Durden, 2013). EE has been shown to be effective (Scheepers, Christofides & Goldstein et al., 2004), with impacts approximately equivalent to those of other health communication campaigns (Shen & Han, 2014).

The most common forms of EE across the continent have been television and radio dramas (e.g., South African, 2006), a number of which have been leveraged toward HIV prevention (e.g., Brown, Kiruswa, & Fraser, 2003). Among these efforts is *Shuga*, a television series designed to spread the message of responsible sexual behavior and tolerance of people living with HIV among adolescents and young adults. Described in its promotional material as “a hard-hitting three part drama series” (*Shuga*, n.d.), *Shuga* won a Gold award in May 2010 at the World Media Festival in the Public Relations Health category. The first season of the program, aired in late 2009, was seen by 60% of Kenyan youth, who rated it as appealing and realistic. Ninety percent also indicated they thought the program had changed their attitudes about HIV stigma and multiple concurrent partnerships. No comparison was reported between attitudes of youths who did and did not watch *Shuga*, and no measures of behavior were taken in the evaluation (Borzekowski, 2010).

Season two, the subject of this study, was aired beginning in February 2012. Objectives were to promote (1) single as opposed to multiple sex partners; (2) safer sex behaviors, especially condom use; and (3) nonstigmatization of people living with HIV. The second season also featured a predominantly Kenyan cast, including local celebrities. Much of it was shot at a local private university, with other scenes filmed in the streets, slums, and nightclubs of Nairobi. In each of three interrelated two-episode storylines, characters are depicted wrestling with HIV stigma, poverty, multiple sexual partnerships, sugar daddies, and sexual abuse by relatives as they attend college or live in the fast-paced capital city.

Among the group of Kenyan young adults whose complicated relationships are the subject of the storyline, six are main characters. Leo is the good-looking host of a popular campus radio program at a local private university. At the beginning of the series Leo speaks negatively on air about his experience with casual sex. He is in a committed relationship with one of his cohosts, Dala. However, in the course of his duties as program host he interviews local musician Mis B’have and sparks fly. Dala’s relationship with Leo is also exclusive. Eventually when she finds Leo has started a relationship with Mis B’have, she has acquaintance sex with Leo’s close friend, Femi. Femi is a player who, in the words of Leo, “has more girls than girls have shoes.” He is not interested in a committed relationship at the time of the program, and talks about how you have to “chopchop around so you can appreciate home cooking.” However, he eventually reveals he has been developing feelings for Dala. Violet is revealed as HIV-positive from the beginning of the series. She goes public with her status during the program and explains that she is trying to change her lifestyle by giving up alcohol and committing not to have sex with men until after the 10th date. During the series she regresses, getting drunk and having acquaintance sex with minor character Winston. After this she is torn about

whether to tell him she is HIV-positive, because she cannot remember whether they used a condom. Kipepeo is a naive country girl who comes to the capital city to enter a singing contest. She passes out on stage from nervousness. With no money to return back home, she looks up Angelo, whom she had met back in the countryside at a wedding. Angelo has recently left a life of petty crime after being shot in a police chase. He is trying to make an honest living as a cleaner at the university. Leo, Femi, and Dala attend, while developing a singing career on the side. He tells Kipepeo that when he gave her his number at the wedding he was a different man, and that he is no longer relates to women as he used to. He feels sorry for her, though, and offers to let her sleep on his couch. When Angelo loses his job because he is wrongly accused of car theft, Kipepeo begins to supplement their income, first by obtaining a sugar daddy, and then by having acquaintance sex with Femi, who has some influence over Angelo’s employment situation.

Creators have stated that in *Shuga* they aimed to present health information in an entertaining manner, so that youth would learn from the program even as they followed the lives of their favorite characters (Arnold, 2012). As far as the authors could determine, although season two aired in early 2012, no evaluation of it had been published at the time of this writing. Consultation with a member of the creative team on the project confirmed this observation. However, MTV Staying Alive Foundation has indicated that the *Shuga* website had more than 400,000 page views over the 6-week broadcast of season two, and #thatshugamoment trended repeatedly on Twitter in Kenya, South Africa, and London (Arnold, 2012).

Despite its health-related goals, critics have charged that sexual behavior in *Shuga* is too much and too explicit, particularly for a predominantly conservative populace (Lindijer, 2012). Perhaps the most telling criticism is the concern that with the high level of sexual activity portrayed, the program runs the danger of promoting the same risky behavior it is trying to discourage (Gathigi & Mariki, 2012). “It is a brilliant production, the acting is superb, brilliant props, amazingly good locations,” wrote a reviewer for Kenya’s *The Standard* newspaper, “... but when I watch the show, all I remember is the naughtiness ... I totally forget about the message it’s meant to pass” (Brilliant production but ..., 2012, p. 7).

The influence of sexual media content

Shuga critics may be overreacting to a drama that pushes the envelope on sexual content, or they may have a legitimate concern. Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2002), the most commonly used theoretical base for structuring and evaluating EE interventions (Singhal & Rogers, 2002), posits that the consequences media characters received for their behaviors determine how likely viewers are to emulate those behaviors. Behaviors modeled by attractive characters are especially likely to be imitated. Although only a small proportion of sexual content in American TV entertainment programming portrays negative consequences of sexual intercourse or sexual risk and responsibility messages (Eyal, Kunkel, Biely, & Finnerty, 2007), evidence suggests that when such messages are conveyed, observers are less likely to enact those

behavioral scripts themselves. Entertainment education dramas typically portray consequences of targeted behaviors by incorporating positive, negative, and transitional role models into story lines (Singhal, Cody, Rogers, & Sabido, 2003). Positive role models perform the desired behaviors and obtain good consequences; negative role models do not perform the behaviors and experience bad consequences; and transitional role models shift from not performing to performing the promoted behaviors, and their lived consequences shift in parallel.

Nabi and Clark (2008) have asserted, however, that this tenet of social cognitive theory may have limitations. They have shown that in certain circumstances even if behaviors are portrayed as having negative consequences, viewers may still develop more positive attitudes toward the behavior. They conclude that viewers of TV series know genre conventions and recognize from past viewing experience that no matter how dire the circumstance the main character will always pull through, making depictions of immediate consequences unimportant. In the same vein, research on the teen pregnancy show *Teen Mom* found that frequent adolescent viewers were more inclined to believe pregnant teens have an enviable quality of life (Martins & Jensen, 2014) than those who did not view the show frequently. Frequent viewing of *16 and Pregnant* and *Teen Mom* has also been associated with an increased probability of having engaged in recent intercourse behavior among females whose fathers did not talk with them about sex when they were growing up (Wright, Randall, & Arroyo, 2013). Findings in these studies suggest that sexual behaviors frequently modeled by attractive characters may normalize and encourage sexual actions even if negative consequences are depicted.

Beyond the issue of influence on social norms, Wright's (2011) 3AM model posits that characteristics of sexual media content make it more likely to be acquired, accessed, and applied to adolescents' behavioral repertoire than many other types of behavior. Most sexual media content is high in functional value, arousal value, salience, plausibility, and simplicity. Functional value is the ability of a behavior to convey rewards and punishments, and is thus related to the depiction of consequences. Even when consequences are not specifically depicted, the social and physical rewards of sexual behavior may appear self-evident to adolescent viewers. Portrayals of behaviors with high arousal value are more likely to draw attention to and be encoded by audiences than depictions or behaviors that are not arousing (Wright, 2011). In recent years evidence has begun to surface that arousing vivid visuals can actually influence audiences more strongly than and even in opposite directions to textual elements (e.g., Kang, Cappella, Strasser, & Lerman, 2009; Muraya, Miller, & Mjomba, 2011). Behaviors that are salient to audience members are more likely to be acquired from media than those that are not, and receivers may be influenced by such messages for longer periods of time (Petty & Cacioppo, 1979). Furthermore, sexual media content may seem realistic to youth as compared to violence or other antisocial behavior they watch on TV, and therefore be more likely to be retained (Andsager, Austin, & Pinkleton, 2001). Also, most sexual behaviors depicted in mass media are not difficult to understand (Ward, 2003), and simple behavioral scripts are also more likely to be acquired and accessed

than complicated ones. Finally, the sheer prevalence of sexual behavior scripts in media makes them likely to be acted upon. The amount of sexual media content that adolescents take in has been found to predict sexual outcomes, including early sexual initiation and teenage pregnancy (Chandra et al., 2008; Collins et al., 2004).

To initiate investigation of this issue, we conducted a content analysis of *Shuga* season two, in line with the Kunkel and colleagues (2005) assertion that content analysis aids in drawing implications for audience effects and should, when possible, be done before attempting to establish audience response to media messages. We posed the following research questions:

RQ1: How prevalent and explicit is the sexual content in *Shuga* season two?

RQ2: How prevalent are messages about program objectives, that is, (a) practicing safer sex, (b) having single versus multiple sexual partners, and (c) destigmatization of HIV in *Shuga* season two?

RQ3: What consequences are portrayed in regard to (a) sexual intercourse, (b) practicing safer sex, (c) having single versus multiple sexual partners, and (d) being HIV-positive in *Shuga* season two?

We also compared findings about *Shuga*'s content to other entertainment programming. Thus, our final research question was:

RQ4: How does sexual content in *Shuga* season two compare to that of TV entertainment programming in general?

Method

This report is part of a two-part study investigating *Shuga* as an entertainment education intervention. This article reports results of the first step, a content analysis of season two. Findings of the content analysis were then used to inform the development of a focus-group discussion interview guide. This guide was used in the second step of the study, which elicited target audience members' response to the series. The two-part nature of the larger study thus dictated our choice of content to analyze. Although three seasons of *Shuga* had aired by the time of this data collection, only seasons one and two were set in Kenya, aimed at Kenyan audiences, and therefore appropriate for examining Kenyan audience members' response to the series. Season one, however, had aired more than 5 years prior to data collection, which posed problems for audience recollection. Therefore, we analyzed the content of the six episodes of season two, totaling 138 minutes of content.

Coders

Three coders were used; all were of similar characteristics as the target audience and had previously viewed the show, as

recommended by Mangnello and colleagues (2010). They were trained for 36 hours, following the guidelines by Kunkel et al. (2003). An initial meeting was held in which the coders and the researcher viewed one episode of *Shuga* season three together and discussed the adequacy of Kunkel and colleagues' (2005) tool to the Kenyan context. Once formal training started, coders were introduced to all coding categories and shown prototypical examples from season three. After initial instruction, coders practiced coding individually before coming back together to compare their coding decisions and discuss disagreements. Practice coding was conducted twice for each variable in the coding scheme.

Coders then watched all the six episodes of season two together with the researcher to agree on scene divisions. As per Kunkel et al. (2005), scenes that did not contribute to the progression of the plot, such as establishment shots and transition shots, were not analyzed. In total, 209 scenes were identified for analysis. The coders and the researcher then independently coded all six episodes of season two.

Interrater reliability

Interrater reliability was computed using percent agreement. Reliabilities were as follows: sexual talk prevalence, 93.8%; sexual talk focus, 99.6%; sexual behavior, 99%; type of intimate relationship, 100%; degree of explicitness 98.5%; consequences of sexual intercourse, 91.1%; sexual risks and responsibilities, 95.1%; response to risk and responsibility messages, 95%; and stigma message prevalence, 98.9%. Disagreements in final coding were resolved by discussion, and final decisions made by the chief coder.

Coding scheme

Coding was done using an adaptation of the scheme developed by Kunkel et al. (2003, 2007) for studying sex on television. This coding scheme has been used extensively in analyzing sex on television and has demonstrated good reliability (Brown et al., 2012; Jensen & Jensen, 2007).

Unit of analysis

Presence of sexual content, prevalence of sexual talk, sexual talk focus, sexual behavior, degree of explicitness, type of intimate relationship, sexual risk and responsibility messages, arousal value, consequences of sexual intercourse, consequences of risk and responsibility messages, and presence of HIV destigmatization messages were coded at the scene level. Kunkel et al. (2007) define a scene as "a sequence in which the place and time generally hold constant" (p.7). A scene ends when the primary setting shifts in time, place or characters in a way that extensively interrupts the flow of related action (Brown et al., 2012) although this may not change the main premise of an episode. We also added the scene-level variable of presence and consequence of HIV-positive status in line with series objectives.

Presence of multiple concurrent partnerships was added to the Kunkel et al. (2007) scheme and coded over the entire series with character as the unit of analysis.

Presence of sexual content

Scenes were coded as having sexual content if sexual talk, sexual behavior, or both were present.

Sexual talk

All statements made by characters about the topic of sex were coded, including topics that were related to sex such as HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Examples of sexual talk included comments about characters' own/others sexual actions and interests, talk about intercourse that had occurred, talk toward sex that is intended to promote sexual activity that is conveyed directly to the desired partner, talk about sexually related crimes, and expert advice on sexual matters.

Sexual talk focus

Sexual talk focus was also coded to establish whether the kind of sexual talk in *Shuga* was inconsequential, minor, substantial, or was the primary emphasis of the scene.

Sexual behavior

Sexual behaviors were coded if they formed an essential part of a scene. For example, if two people were kissing in the background to what was happening in a scene, that did not qualify as sexual behavior. Following Kunkel et al. (2005), types of sexual behavior were analyzed by coding the highest level of sexual behavior depicted in a scene. From lowest to highest, sexual behaviors were physical flirting (meant to arouse or promote sexual interest), passionate kissing (conveying sexual intimacy), intimate touching (touching someone's body so as to sexually arouse them), sexual intercourse strongly implied, sexual intercourse depicted, and any other behavior that was sexual in nature but did not fit one of these six categories.

Type of intimate relationship

Implied or portrayed acts of sexual intercourse were coded according to the type of relationship between the characters: committed relationship (characters were in a committed intimate relationship with one partner and were either dating or engaged), acquaintance sex (main characters were engaged in sexual intercourse with someone known to them but they were not in a relationship with before having sex), casual sex (characters did not know one another before having sex), and rape (forced sexual relations).

Arousal value

Arousal value of sexual behavior was assessed by coding explicitness of the characters' dress or actions in scenes with sexual behavior. Categories were provocative/suggestive dress or appearance, characters disrobing/undressing, discreet nudity, and nudity. Kunkel et al. (2005) defined discreet nudity as exposure of normally covered body parts like buttocks or women's breasts. The research team amended the definition to include exposure of women's thighs and men's chests, due to conservative Kenyan cultural norms that make such exposure extremely rare and tantamount to half nakedness. Following Kunkel et al., explicitness was transformed to a 4-point scale as follows: 1 = *provocative/suggestive dress or*

appearance, 2 = disrobing/undressing, 3 = discreet nudity, 4 = nudity. Scenes in which no explicitness was noted would therefore have an explicitness value of 0.

Consequences of sexual intercourse

Consequences of implied or depicted sexual intercourse were coded to determine whether the consequences encouraged sexual intercourse, discouraged sexual intercourse, sent mixed messages, or were unclear. Consequences could include social, relational, and health-related outcomes.

Sexual risk and responsibility messages

All scenes with sexual content were coded for the presence of discussion/depiction of sexual risks and/or responsibilities. These included mention and/or presence of a condom, the mention and/or presence of contraceptives, mention of safe sex terminology, and mention of concern about HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Once a risk or responsibility message had been identified it was coded as precautionary (urging safer sex actions prior to sexual behavior), consequences (portrayal of either positive or negative consequences of sexual behavior), and sexual patience (encouraging waiting for sex).

Response to risk and responsibility messages

Reponses by other characters to sexual risk and responsibility messages were coded as positive, negative, or mixed. Responses could be verbal or nonverbal.

Presence and consequences of HIV-positive Status

In line with series objectives, presence or absence of messages about HIV in a scene was recorded. Valence of HIV stigma-related messages was coded by categorizing the responses of other characters to HIV-positive individuals as primarily positive (encouraging embracing those with HIV), primarily negative (discouraging embracing those with HIV), neutral, or mixed/not clear.

Single versus multiple sex partners

In addition to the Kunkel et al. (2005) coding categories, messages about single sexual partnerships were coded by examining whether each of the main characters was portrayed as engaging in more than one sexual partnership concurrently over the course of the series.

Comparison to other TV programming

No information is available about the content of locally produced Kenyan programming. However, more than half of Kenyan TV programming is imported, much of it from the United States. Therefore, we compared results from content analysis of *Shuga* to the most frequently cited findings about entertainment programming in the United States, the seminal multiyear Kaiser Family Foundation *Sex on TV 4* figures (Kunkel et al., 2005). The Kunkel et al. data refer to the 2004–2005 season, but their longitudinal study also provides information about the percent change of some types of content between 1998 and 2005. Therefore, we also compared the present study's findings to updated estimates, assuming that

the same rate of change for each variable for the 7-year span between 1998 and 2005 continued for the 7-year interval until 2012, when *Shuga* season two was aired.

Results

Results regarding *Shuga* should be understood to refer to *Shuga* season two unless otherwise noted.

Prevalence and explicitness of sexual content

Research question one asked how prevalent and explicit sexual content was in *Shuga*.

Overall prevalence of sexual content

Out of 209 scenes analyzed for the study, 119 (57%) had sexual content. The 138 minutes of total programming analyzed equals 2.3 hours of programming. Dividing 119 by 2.3 reveals that *Shuga* had approximately 51.7 scenes with sexual content per hour. All estimates of scenes per hour for variables in the remainder of the article are calculated in the same way.

Sexual talk prevalence and type

Forty percent ($n = 85$) of scenes had some form of sexual talk. That is, sexual talk featured in 37 scenes per hour. Out of those scenes, 58.8% ($n = 50$) had sexual innuendo, 17.6% ($n = 15$) involved comments about sexual experiences that had already occurred, 12.9% ($n = 11$) featured talk toward sex, 5.9% ($n = 5$) included comments about sexual intentions, and 4.7% ($n = 4$) contained expert advice/information. The following excerpt from episode three is an example of talk about sex that has already occurred:

Leo, his girlfriend Dala, and Winston are on air doing the breakfast show on their campus radio station. The discussion this morning is on sexual experiences and listeners are being urged to call in and share their stories. Leo starts off by talking about his friend (Femi) who “loves women more than women love shoes” and who has a different woman he sleeps with for every occasion. Leo also talks about his past sexual experiences saying “as for me, I have only *chips fungad* two mamas my entire life [had casual sex with two women] and both experiences were really bad.” (Episode 3, February 2012)

Sexual talk focus

Of the scenes with sexual talk, in 41.2% ($n = 35$), the talk itself was the primary emphasis of the scene. In 30.6% ($n = 26$) of these scenes the sexual talk focus was substantial, meaning that it bore considerable significance to how the plot of *Shuga* progressed and the actions of the characters thereafter. The remainder of the talk was either minor, 9.4% ($n = 8$), or inconsequential, 18.8% ($n = 16$). Following Kunkel et al. (2005) we also transformed these numbers to a scale of one to four, with 1 = inconsequential, 2 = minor, 3 = major, 4 = primary. Mean sexual talk focus on a scale of 1 to 4 was 2.94.

Sexual behavior prevalence

Sexual behavior was present in 39.2% ($n = 82$) of scenes, or in 35.7 scenes per hour of programming. Of the scenes in which sexual behavior was present, 64% ($n = 52$) were suggestive/flirtatious behavior, 9.8% ($n = 8$) were passionate kissing, 4.9%

($n = 4$) were intimate touching, 19.5% ($n = 14$) were sexual intercourse strongly implied, and 2.4% ($n = 2$) were sexual intercourse portrayed. Sexual intercourse was depicted or strongly implied in five of the six episodes. Episodes containing sexual intercourse contained 115 minutes, or 1.92 hours of programming. That is, in episodes that included sexual intercourse depicted or implied, there were 9.38 scenes of sexual intercourse per hour. An example of implied sexual intercourse is described here:

Dala and Leo are in bed together and Dala pulls out a condom. Before ripping it open, she reminds Leo that they have been sleeping together for the last 5 months and 28 days. They had promised each other that after 6 months and after testing for HIV, they would have sex “with nothing in between them.” Leo is excited that he only has two more days to wait for this experience. Dala then asks Leo, “What if I told you this was it?” Leo, surprised, responds, “Then I would be very pleased.” Dala then drops the unopened condom package, Leo gets on top of her, and they start to kiss then the screen fades to black. (Episode 3, February 2012)

Sexual behavior arousal value

In scenes with precursory behaviors (flirting, passionate kissing, intimate touching), explicitness was 1.47 on a 0 to 4 scale. In scenes with intercourse, explicitness was 2.27.

Type of intimate relationship

Fourteen acts of sexual intercourse were depicted or strongly implied in the series (although the actions were portrayed in a total of 22 scenes). Among these, seven (50%) were in committed relationships; four (28.6%) were acquaintance sex; two (14.3%) were casual sex; and one (7.1%) was rape.

Sexual risk and responsibility messages

Research question two asked how prevalent messages about practicing safer sex, having single versus multiple sexual partners, and destigmatization were in *Shuga*.

Out of 119 scenes in which there was sexual content, 26.9% ($n = 32$) had sexual risk and responsibility messages. Out of these scenes, 59% ($n = 19$) contained messages about negative consequences of sexual behavior, 47% ($n = 15$) contained messages about precautionary behavior, and 3% included mentions of sexual patience ($n = 1$). Scenes could include more than one risk and responsibility message, so percentages do not add to 100%. Forty-seven percent ($n = 15$) of risk and responsibility messages mentioned or showed a condom in relation to sexual intercourse. Examples of talk about condoms include scenes such as the one in which Femi’s mother advises her son about his sex life.

Femi walks into the kitchen for breakfast with his mother. His mum has been listening to *Swag FM*, the student run radio station where his friends Leo, Dala and Winston were earlier on air having a discussion about previous sexual experiences. She asks Femi how many women he has in his life and he says he has many but they are all just his friends. “Do you use condoms?” she asks. Uncomfortable, Femi hesitates before he says, “Yes mum I do.” She doubts his response. “Well it depends,” he admits. “If we have known each other for more than 3 months, then we come into an agreement.” “There is nothing like an agreement,” she remonstrates “... you must be safe, always.” (Episode 3, February 2012)

Forty-one percent ($n = 13$) of risk and responsibility scenes mentioned concern about HIV/AIDS, and 13% ($n = 4$) included other safer sex terminology. Just over 3% ($n = 2$) mentioned sticking to a single sexual partner. No mentions were made about abstinence, delay of sexual debut, or concerns regarding sexually transmitted infections other than HIV.

Single versus multiple sex partners

Messages about single sex partnerships were also assessed by examining the type of relationship the main characters were in over the duration of the season. Of the six main characters, four engage in multiple concurrent partnerships. Only Violet, who is known to be HIV-positive from the beginning of season two, and Angelo, who has a platonic relationship with Kipepeo, are not shown being involved with multiple partners. However, both talk about pasts in which they had many sexual relationships. Violet writes in her magazine column about her sexual involvement with “random men, identified only by the different things they gave me.” Two characters, Leo and Dala, are portrayed having sex within a committed relationship to each other at the beginning of the series. Five of six main characters are shown having acquaintance sex with at least one person. Two characters, Femi and Kipepeo, have casual sex. Kipepeo’s casual sex partner becomes her sugar daddy.

Prevalence of HIV stigma messages

Messages about stigmatization of HIV were present in 10% ($n = 21$) of all scenes.

Consequences of sexual behavior and HIV-positive sStatus

Research question three asked what consequences were portrayed in regard to (a) sexual intercourse, (b) practicing safer sex, (c) having single versus multiple sexual partners, and (d) being HIV-positive.

Consequences of sexual intercourse

Fifty-nine scenes included consequences of sexual intercourse depicted or mentioned; 57.6% ($n = 34$) of these showed primarily positive outcomes, that is, outcomes that are likely to encourage sexual intercourse among the viewers (Kunkel et al., 2005). Most commonly, these consequences were positive emotions and furtherance of romantic relationships. One character, Kipepeo, gains financially from a sexual relationship.

New to the big city without resources, Kipepeo is being housed by Angelo who is struggling to make ends meet. In an attempt to eke out a living, Angelo begins a hawking business. Kipepeo, meanwhile, meets a man in a bar who gives her a phone. Eventually she understands he requires “a two-way street” for his gifts and she is portrayed kissing him in a car and handing him a condom. The next time she appears on the screen, she is shopping for fashionable clothes and getting her nails done in a salon as he looks on. She buys food to share with Angelo when she returns back home. She is now financially independent, thanks to the man she met at the club. (Episode 6, February 2012)

Thirty-two percent ($n = 19$) of the scenes that included sexual intercourse showed primarily negative outcomes meant

to discourage sexual intercourse among the viewers, and 10.2% ($n = 6$) of these scenes featured mixed messages. For example, Violet, who is HIV-positive, displays remorse when she is uncertain whether she used a condom when she had sex with Winston the previous night. At the episode level, half of the episodes depicted negative consequences to sexual behavior. These were the second in each of three, two-episode plot lines in the series. For example, Femi picks up a girl at a nightclub and has sex with her in a car. She later informs him that she has learned she is pregnant and HIV-positive.

Consequences of safer sex behavior

Out of the 32 scenes in which sexual risks and responsibility messages featured, 54% ($n = 17$) portrayed negative responses to these messages. For example, Femi and others are portrayed refusing to use condoms when urged to do so by sexual partners. Positive responses were portrayed in 32% ($n = 10$) of scenes, as when Leo agrees to go for HIV testing with Mis B'have before they begin a committed relationship. In 14% ($n = 5$) of scenes, responses to safer sex messages were mixed.

Consequences of HIV-positive status

In the 21 scenes that included HIV stigma messages, messages encouraging other to embrace those with HIV/AIDS comprised 61.9% ($n = 13$) of the scenes. In total, 28.5% ($n = 6$) of scenes with HIV stigma messages were judged by coders to present mixed or ambiguous messages. Primarily negative messages and messages that were neutral each constituted 9.5% ($n = 2$) of stigma-related messages.

Long-term outcomes of characters' sexual behavior at the end of the series

At the end of season two, Leo has been left by his girlfriend, Dala because he had been seeing another women. He goes to get tested for HIV. Dala has broken up with Leo and learned that Femi, with whom she had a one-night stand, has found out that a former casual sex partner is HIV-positive. Her friends support her as she goes for HIV testing. Femi is last seen sitting with his mother in a voluntary counseling and testing center awaiting his HIV test results. Violet is HIV-positive but in good health and is not stigmatized by those around her. Kipepeo has given up her sugar daddy and returned to her friend Angelo. He is aware that she has made some bad sexual choices, but accepts her back. Angelo himself begins to reap some of the rewards of his determination to reform his life, as he and Kipepeo's first joint singing gig comes together. Sexual relationships of major characters in *Shuga* season 2 are summarized in Table 1.

Comparison of content of *shuga* with other entertainment programming

Research question four asked how levels and explicitness of sexual content in *Shuga* compared with that of other entertainment programming. Results are presented in Table 2. All comparisons in graphics are with *Sex on TV 4* figures (Kunkel et al., 2005). Estimates for 2012 are made by assuming the same rate of increase between 2005 and 2012 as Kunkel et al. reported between 1998 and 2005, for those variables about

Table 1. Summary of intimate relationships of main characters in *Shuga* season two.

Character	Type of sexual relationships character is involved in over entire season			Multiple concurrent partnerships
	Committed	Acquaintance	Casual	
Dala	1	1	0	Yes
Leo	2	1	0	Yes
Femi	0	1	1	Yes
Violet	0	1	0	No
Kipepeo	0	1	1	Yes
Angelo	0	0	0	No

Note. Fourteen acts of intercourse are portrayed in the series, four of which are between Leo and Dala and four are between Leo and Mis B'have. One minor character is portrayed being raped. In addition, most acts of intercourse take place over more than one scene. Thus, number of scenes with sexual intercourse (22), number of individual acts of intercourse (14), and number of relationships (10) differ.

Table 2. Comparison of sexual content in *Shuga*, with Kunkel et al. (2005), and estimates of U.S. programming content in 2012.

	<i>Shuga</i>	Kunkel et al. (2005)	Percent increase from 1998 to 2005	Estimated U.S. 2012
Scenes per hour overall sexual content	51.7	5.0	50	7.5
Scenes per hour sexual talk	37.0	4.5	50	6.75
Sexual talk focus (scale: 1 to 4)	2.9	2.7	N/A	N/A
Scenes per hour sexual behavior	35.7	2.0	50	3.0
Scenes per hour sexual intercourse, among episodes containing intercourse	9.4	1.0	50*	1.5
<i>Explicitness of sexual behavior (scale: 0 to 4)</i>				
Precursory behavior	1.5	.3	N/A	N/A
Sexual intercourse	2.3	2.2	N/A	N/A
<i>Types of intimate relationships as percent of sexual intercourse</i>				
Committed	50	50	N/A	N/A
Acquaintance	29	28	N/A	N/A
Casual	14	9	N/A	N/A
Rape	7	0	N/A	N/A
Relationship unclear	0	15	N/A	N/A
Sexual risks and responsibilities message, percent of sexual scenes	26.9	4.0	0	4.0
<i>Types of r/r messages</i>				
Consequences	53.0	55.6	0	55.6
Precaution	47	45	0	45
Sexual patience	3	16.5	0	16.5
Negative consequences at episode level	50	27	N/A	N/A

*Sexual intercourse in U.S. programming rose between 1998 and 2002, but dropped again in 2005. Therefore, it is arguable whether it was trending upward. The estimate of 50% increase between 2005 and 2012 is, therefore, liberal.

which Kunkel et al. reported changes over time. When units of analysis are comparable, findings from other studies are also mentioned in the text.

Prevalence of all types of sexual behavior was higher in *Shuga* than in Kunkel et al. (2005), as well as estimates for 2012. *Shuga* contained 10.3 times as many scenes per hour with sexual content as the Kunkel et al. figures and 6.9 times as much content per hour as estimates for 2012. It also contained 8.2 times the Kunkel et al. figures for sexual talk,

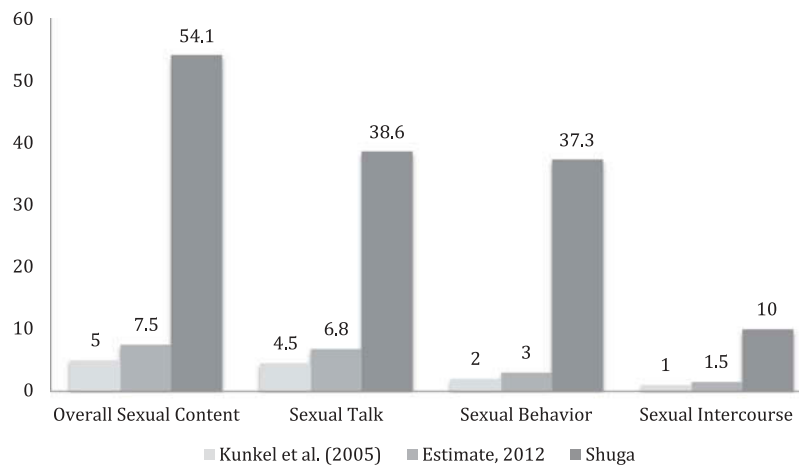


Figure 1. Comparison of scenes per hour with sexual content.

and 5.5 times as many sexual talk scenes as 2012 estimates. Sexual behavior was 17.8 times more common in *Shuga* than in Kunkel et al. and 11.9 times as common as 2012 estimates. In episodes with sexual intercourse, scenes with intercourse were 9.4 times as common in *Shuga* as in Kunkel et al. and 6.3 times as common as 2012 estimates. Explicitness of sexual behavior for scenes with sexual intercourse was about the same in *Shuga* as in Kunkel et al., but more explicit in scenes of precursory behavior like flirting, passionate kissing, and intimate touching. As in Kunkel et al., about half of portrayals of sexual intercourse in *Shuga* were in committed relationships. Comparison of content of *Shuga*, Kunkel et al. (2005), and estimates for 2012 are graphically displayed in Figure 1.

It should be borne in mind that the Kunkel et al. (2007) analysis of programming popular among adolescents in the 2001/2002 television season found a higher mean level of sexual content—6.7 scenes per hour—than was present in entertainment programming in general (i.e., one-seventh as much sexual content as *Shuga*). This type of programming may have a comparable appeal to that of *Shuga*; however, these figures are 3 years older than the final wave of the *Sex on TV* project, and the three waves of the latter make estimating figures for 2012 more appropriate.

Safer sex messages are rare in entertainment programming. An analysis of programming popular with adolescents in the 2001/2002 season revealed that only 1 in every 17 scenes with sexual content included any mention of sexual risk (Kunkel et al., 2007). *Sex on TV 4* figures (Kunkel et al., 2005) were even lower, at 4% of scenes with sexual content. Scenes with sexual content in *Shuga* thus contained nearly seven times more messages about sexual risks and responsibilities in proportion to total sexual content than the Kunkel et al. results. Types of risk and responsibility messages were similar except that few messages in *Shuga* dealt with sexual patience. *Shuga* was nearly twice as likely to portray negative consequences of sexual intercourse as programming assessed in *Sex on TV 4*. The Kunkel et al. analysis examined sexual content regardless of the age of the characters, but Aubrey's (2004) investigated prime-time drama shows with characters aged between 12 and 22 years. She established that about one-third of scenes with sexual content depicted consequences, though only a small

percentage included physical outcomes such as unwanted pregnancies, or contracting of sexually transmitted infections. Most consequences were, instead, social in nature. Because characters in *Shuga* are depicted as being college-aged, or between 20 and 24 years old, a comparison to Aubrey et al. could be more appropriate. *Shuga* characters experienced slightly fewer consequences proportionately as characters in programming examined in Aubrey's study.

Discussion

Despite its popularity, critics charge that the envelope-pushing levels of sexual content and explicitness in *Shuga* are likely to obscure safer sex messages (Brilliant production but ..., 2012; Lindijer, 2012). The purposes of this research were to investigate how objectives of promoting safer sex, single versus multiple sexual partnerships, and destigmatization of HIV, as well as overall sexual content, were integrated into the program, and to assess how *Shuga* compared in this regard to entertainment programming in general.

Analysis revealed that the objective regarding destigmatization of HIV was clearly communicated, particularly in the story line involving Violet, the one HIV-positive character. Response to Violet from friends and family are primarily supportive, and the character herself has good outcomes by the end of the series. Although Violet is portrayed neglecting to disclose her status to a sexual contact, overall she acts as a positive role model. The objective regarding safer sex is also communicated frequently, mostly through talk about and display of condoms, actions that result in mostly positive consequences. This finding is consistent with that of *Soul City* (2007), that condom use is often the predominant safe sex message in EE interventions.

The objective regarding single versus multiple sexual partners was not consistently communicated. Only two statements were made in the series about negative consequences of having multiple sexual partners. Four of the six main characters in the series are depicted as having multiple concurrent partnerships, and no role model is provided of a couple who successfully opts for exclusive sexual partnership. Angelo and Violet, the only characters who have just one sexual

partner during season two, both confess to pasts in which they had many partners. Violet hints that she still has not managed to change her habits entirely. Although three of the main characters who have multiple partnerships are shown getting HIV testing, audiences could just as reasonably conclude that the mistake that led them to this juncture was their failure to use condoms with at least one of their sexual partners, an oversight that was clearly portrayed in all cases. The overarching message in the program would appear to be that multiple concurrent partnerships are acceptable as long as condoms are consistently used.

Comparisons to previous findings on sexual content in entertainment programming (Kunkel et al., 2005) raise two additional points about the content of *Shuga* season two. First, *Shuga* has much more content devoted to sexual risks and responsibilities than is typical of entertainment programming. Only a tiny portion (one scene) of that content is related to themes of sexual patience, which would arguably seem like the most important message to promote in a series aimed at an adolescent audience. Nevertheless, that was not one of the program objectives, so lack of such messages is not inconsistent with program goals.

Just as striking is that *Shuga* season two contained much more sexual content, and especially more sexual behavior, than other programming popular among adolescents, even when figures are liberally adjusted for the passage of time since the comprehensive *Sex on TV* project (Kunkel et al., 2005). This raises an important and, as far as we can determine, hitherto unexamined question regarding entertainment education dramas. Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2002) suggests that the consequences a TV character experiences with respect to behavior comprise an important determinant of how likely audiences are to emulate that character's behavior. However, *Shuga* contains not only many precautionary messages and depicted consequences of risky sexual behavior, but also large amounts of sexual content that is likely to be salient, arousing, and plausible to viewers and therefore liable to be acquired and later accessed and applied (Huesmann, 1986; Wright, 2011). Such content may also raise in students the perception that sexual behavior is normative. What is not clear, and cannot be determined by content analysis, is how these factors interact to influence adolescent viewers. Evidence already exists that certain types of arousing content, such as visuals of lit cigarettes, can work more strongly than, and in opposition to, positive health messages like as anti-smoking appeals (Kang et al. 2009). Sexual behavior in the series is enacted by highly attractive college-aged actors, some of whom already had celebrity status at the time of their casting, and who may well serve as aspirational model for adolescent viewers. Plots are set within the genre of television drama, in which previous research has indicated portrayal of risky behaviors may promote attitude change in an unhealthy direction among viewers no matter whether negative consequences are depicted (Nabi & Clark, 2008). The results of this content analysis make it evident that research needs to be undertaken to investigate the impact of these potentially contradictory factors on viewers' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. The questions raised by *Shuga* are important not only for the series itself, which is ongoing, but for similar entertainment education efforts.

As Nabi and Clark (2008) urged:

If it is the case that the positive value ascribed to risky behaviors as a result of liked celebrities performing them outweighs the negative outcomes displayed for those behaviors or that the negative outcomes are ultimately minimized in the minds of audiences, then the oft-proffered suggestion of showing the negative consequences of risky behaviors is not sufficient to minimize their negative impact on susceptible viewers. (p. 425)

It is critical to investigate these issues so that creative TV dramas and other EE vehicles both provide high entertainment value and promote healthy sexual behaviors that minimize risk of HIV infection in Sub-Saharan Africa.

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