THE INTERSECTION OF POVERTY, HOMELESSNESS, ECONOMIC DEPENDENCE, AND HIV

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Prepared by
Lynn C. Todman, PhD
Director, Institute on Social Exclusion
Adler School of Professional Psychology
The Intersection of Poverty, Homelessness, Economic Dependence, and HIV
KEY POINT: 1

CONTEXT MATTERS!

The incidence of HIV is not simply a function of sexual behavior.

The social, political, economic, and cultural contexts play a central role in the incidence of the HIV epidemic.
The multi-facetedness and complexity of the social context requires that HIV prevention and intervention efforts employ the skills and knowledge of people and professions that are not on the frontlines of fighting the epidemic.
The Facts: HIV and African-American Women

**United States:**
2006: Black Women = 61% new HIV cases among women

**Illinois:**
2006: African-American Women = 66% HIV diagnoses

**Chicago:**
2006: 316 Women = HIV-positive
(80% African-American)

Sources: Center for Disease Control; AIDS Foundation of Chicago
The Social Determinants of Health

“...the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age...” (WHO, 2007)

Premise: Health is determined not just by personal behavioral factors, but by a host of political, economic, cultural, and social contextual factors which are outside of the purview of the health care sector.
A Social Determinants Perspective on the incidence of HIV

- Social constructions of race and sexuality – notably the promiscuity or hyper-sexuality of African Americans. (Adapted from Stillwaggon 2008, 2009)
- Reflected in public policy, programming (e.g., HIV/AIDS prevention and intervention, ABCs)
- But, HIV among Black women is not simply about individual behavior, but complex and interacting social, cultural, economic, geographic, religious, and political contextual factors.
- The HIV epidemic among African American women cannot be effectively addressed without addressing these contextual variables, including the highly sexualized conceptualizations about the behaviors of black women.
Social Determinants Perspective: Policy and Programmatic Implications

A social determinants-inspired policy and programmatic response to HIV would...

- help dispel popular attitudes and beliefs about the hyper-sexualized African American; and
- challenge the near exclusive use of the personal responsibility doctrine as the basis of HIV policy and programming.
The risk of becoming HIV infected or of infecting someone else, per sex act... is higher in poor populations (Stillwaggon 2009).

Poverty has a direct biological effect that increases the risk of HIV/AIDS
- Malnutrition
- Untreated illness
- Stress (Weathering)

Compromised immune system – predisposes poor people to infections of all types including HIV/AIDS.
A social determinants-inspired policy and programmatic response to HIV would integrate current research and understanding of the impact of poverty on human biology and disease transmission.
Racism-Induced Stress: The *Weathering* Framework

Why are some ethnic groups, such as Blacks, less healthy than others?

- The “*Weathering Framework*” – Racism and racism-induced stressors “weather” the systems of the human body and fuel the progression of disease. (Geronimus)
- Stressors accumulate and feed on each other.
- Minorities suffer from weathering more often than whites because they're more likely to experience stress due to racism induced social, economic, political, and other forms of exclusion.
The Mechanisms By Which Weathering Occurs:
The role of racism-induced stress on the incidence and progression of disease

- Racism
- Stress-induced hormones production
- Wear and tear on the body
- Increased and Accelerated Disease & Aging
Social Determinants and HIV Vulnerability

Who’s Poor in the U.S?
Percentage of people below the poverty line in 2007
National Average – 12.5%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Whites 10.5%</th>
<th>Blacks 24.6%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Source: U.S. Census Bureau
Social Determinants and HIV Vulnerability

Who’s Poor in Chicago?
Percentage of people below the poverty line in 2007
National Average – 12.5%

- Whites 10.9%
- Blacks 32%
- Men 18.9
- Women 22.9
Social Determinants and HIV Vulnerability

Median earnings per week for full time work in 2009

- **Whites** $758
  - **Men** $855
  - **Women** $666

- **Blacks** $577
  - **Men** $595
  - **Women** $559

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics
Social Determinants and HIV Vulnerability: Who is Homeless?

Whites
- US 47%
- Chicago 16%

Blacks
- US 47%
- Chicago 75%

Sources: City of Chicago, 2007 Point In Time Count; US Conference of Mayors, Hunger and Homelessness Survey, 2007
Social Determinants and HIV Vulnerability: Uninsured Women in Illinois

Whites: 11%
- Employer provided: 81%
- Public provided: 8%

Blacks: 24.7%
- Employer provided: 54%
- Public provided: 22%

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation
Social Determinants and HIV Vulnerability
Food Insecure Households in 2007

- 11% of U.S.
- 7.9% of whites
- **22.2%** of blacks
- **37.7%** of poor families
- **30.2%** of single women with children

Source: United States Department of Agriculture
Chicago’s Top Ten Neighborhoods with highest prevalence AIDS rates

- Uptown
- Edgewater
- East Garfield Park
- Washington Park
- Lake View
- Rogers Park
- Near South Side
- Woodlawn
- West Garfield Park
- Near West Side

Source: AIDS Foundation of Chicago
SUMMARY:
Social context plays an important role in the high growth rate of HIV infections among African American women.

Poverty – A social-contextual risk factor that heightens biological vulnerability to HIV

- Poor nutrition
- Untreated illnesses
- Stress (weathering)
Conclusions: Policy and Programmatic Implications

A social determinants-inspired policy and programmatic response to HIV would...

- focus on the role that social, political, economic, and cultural contexts play in predisposing African American women to the disease;
- address the contextual determinants (e.g., poverty, economic dependence, homelessness) with at least the same vigor it addresses the sexual behaviors of black women; and
- build cross-professional alliances to foster social, economic, political, and cultural structural change needed to stem the epidemic.
Thank You!

For more information, contact me at the Adler Institute on Social Exclusion:

ltodman@adler.edu
312-201-5900
References