Sexual Risk Communication between African American Fathers and Adolescent Sons

Jillian Lucas Baker, DrPH, EdM
Assistant Professor of Public Health
La Salle University
Relationship Symposium
February 12, 2015
In US, 2 young people under the age of 24 become infected with HIV every hour!

Respect Yourself. Protect Yourself.
In 2011, an estimated 3,004 youth in the United States and six dependent areas were diagnosed with AIDS, a number that has increased 29% since 2008.
Diagnoses of HIV Infection and Population among Adolescents Aged 13–19 Years, by Race/Ethnicity 2011—United States

Diagnoses of HIV Infection
N = 2,294

- American Indian/Alaska Native: 13%
- Asian: 17%
- Black/African American: 67%
- Hispanic/Latino\(^a\): 1%
- Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander: 1%
- White: 2%
- Multiple races: <1%

U.S. Population aged 13–19 years
N = 29,895,041

- American Indian/Alaska Native: 15%
- Asian: 21%
- Black/African American: 56%
- Hispanic/Latino\(^a\): 4%
- Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander: 3%
- White: 1%

Note. Data include persons with a diagnosis of HIV infection regardless of stage of disease at diagnosis. All displayed data have been statistically adjusted to account for reporting delays, but not for incomplete reporting.

\(^a\) Hispanics/Latinos can be of any race.
HIV Risk Factors for Adolescents

- Unsafe/unprotected vaginal, anal or oral sex
- Having sex while intoxicated
- Having multiple partners
- Sexual partners who themselves have multiple sexual partners
- Social determinants
  - Poverty
  - Homelessness
  - Education
Young people in the United States are at persistent risk for HIV infection. This risk is especially notable for youth of minority races and ethnicities.

Fathers are influential promoters of sexual health information.

Few HIV/STI risk-reduction intervention trials have focused specifically on fathers and their children.
Study purpose

- To understand sexual risk communication practices among African American fathers and sons
- To assess the feasibility of implementing a father-son HIV risk reduction program.
Procedures

- A convenience sample of African American fathers were recruited from Philly Cuts barbershop in West Philadelphia.

- Sample
  - 30 father/son pairs

- Conducted 6 focus groups
  - 3 groups with fathers/father figures
  - 3 groups with sons (age range 11 to 17; mean age of 14.71 (SD=2.14).
Fathers as role models

- Wanted their sons to make good sexual and life decisions
- Lead by example for their sons
- “I think you should enlighten the actual fathers first so the father can give it to the child.”
- “I would definitely participate because I always want to put that message in their head”
- “I want them to know that I’m not the only father saying this to you”
Sons & messages from fathers

- Receptive to the program
  - Could promote enhanced bonding and communication with their fathers
  - Learn things from their fathers that they would not have learned otherwise

- “Some dudes I know they talk to their father about having sex with girls”

- “My dad just told me- Use protection.”

- “He’ll try to say something; he wants me to talk to him about sex”
Father program Ideas

- Use the barbers and fathers as peer educators
- Use mentors/uncles/other male figure instead of the bio dad
- Fathers need training- enhance knowledge on condom use, HIV/AIDS and other STIs
- Include social media; Facebook, Twitter and Instagram
Father program Ideas

- Confidentially contract
- Have guest speakers to help personalize the importance of sexual health
- Have follow up sessions with the sons
- Intervention should also focus on the emotional health of their sons
Adolescent Program Ideas

- Have fathers or other African American male instructors teach them about HIV & STIs
- Have program provided in the summer
- Using technology and social media- Twitter, Facebook, phone apps, videos
- Themes and messages to include:
  - Abstinence
  - HIV testing
  - Goals/Careers
  - Violence (preventing)
  - “all the ways you can get STDs”