

Discussing structural interventions -- perspectives from the field

Strategy lab

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Background

- We know that individual risk alone does not fully explain risk levels of all groups
 - High rates of HIV among Black MSM not explained by sexual risk or alcohol and drug use (Millett, 2006)
- These type of data indicate that contextual and societal factors are at play
- We can't hope to reduce HIV disparities or end infections by solely addressing individual factors, we need to use the full spectrum of prevention to succeed

Spectrum of prevention

- individual
- partnership/group
- network
- community
- structural

Definition of structural intervention

- Measures that seek to modify the social, political, economic, and environmental domains in which risk takes place, directly altering the physical environments in which people work, live, play and have sex, in order to reduce risk or increase healthier options (Wolhfeiler, Ellen, Sweat)
 - Examples include: designated drivers (social domain), banked highway (environmental domain)
- A good test: is it sustainable?

Paradigms for discussing structural interventions

- Availability, acceptability, accessibility (Blankenship, 2000)
 - Ex. microfinance programs affect power dynamics so that gender inequity and women's economic dependence on men is reduced
 - Interventions can be targeted to: individual, organization, environment
- Distal v. proximal factors
 - Ex. In addition to addressing proximal factors such as condom use, address factors that can lead to lack of condom use, such as housing (being stably housed reduces one's likelihood of exchanging sex)

Why focus on structural interventions?

- We need a more complete and varied response to HIV
 - We know structural factors influence HIV transmission so we must address them
- Sustainable interventions are efficient:
 - Behavior change efforts are necessary but not sufficient (Wohlfeiler/Ellen, 2007)
 - For every person reached, there is another in need of prevention (not to mention re-enforcement of key messages and on and on...)
 - Environmental change can bolster behavior change
- Reach people who would never seek services



Standing in line for HIV prevention?

Why focus on structural interventions? (cont)

- Address factors of social injustice, such as higher burden of disease in minority populations
 - Structural interventions can help re-adjust an imbalance of power, like legalizing gay marriage. Civil unions have been associated with a decrease in HIV/STD risk (Klausner, 2006)
- Cost effectiveness: structural interventions generally affect a large population (Cohen, 2005)
- Structural interventions can be effective
 - Increasing taxes by 20 cents on a six-pack of beer reduced gonorrhea rates by 8.9% - (Chesson, 2000)



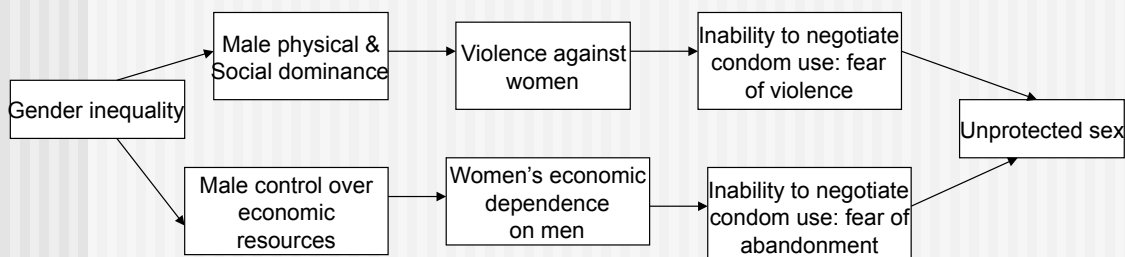
If they pay 20 cents more, their risk for gonorrhea goes down...

What we're doing at STOP AIDS Project

- Groundwork laid by Wohlfeiler in *Buying Upstream: Applying Structural and Environmental Interventions to HIV Prevention*
- Goal of work is to take research, theory, and discussions of national policy and bring it to local level
 - Some interventions can work at a much smaller level (ex. working with a specific venue on their policies)
- Learning how to incorporate structural intervention efforts into community-based organization's work
- Develop criteria for generating and selecting interventions

Overview of steps to developing an intervention

- Review the literature and listen to community (ex. learn that alcohol is a major factor in HIV transmission)
- Brainstorm about the structural factors
- Understanding the causal pathway
 - analyze how the economic, social, political, and environmental factors affect risk (Gupta, 2008)



Overview of steps to developing an intervention (cont.)

- Causal pathway helps us determine how structural factors affect HIV risk
- Use factors from causal pathway to generate intervention ideas (ex. street vendors provide food for patrons to sober up)
- Community conversations happen throughout to generate ideas and get feedback about ideas
- Use criteria to select intervention

Criteria for selecting an intervention

- Feasibility
- Impact
- Acceptability - within affected community
- Sustainability
- Unintended consequences
- Scope of work
- Agency capacity
- Alignment with mission and values
- Research support
- Timing and context (what else is going on in the community?)

Start implementing

- Next steps forthcoming...

This work is formative...

- We're in the process of using this work to implement structural interventions locally
- We welcome any feedback and comments
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Thank you!

References

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