Among U.S. racial and ethnic minority populations, African American communities are the most disproportionately impacted and affected by HIV/AIDS (CDC, 2009; CDC, 2008). The chapters in this volume seek to explore factors that contribute to this disparity as well as methods for intervening and positively impacting the epidemic in the U.S. The book is divided into two sections. The first section includes chapters that explore specific contextual and structural factors related to HIV/AIDS transmission and prevention in African Americans. The second section is composed of chapters that address the latest in intervention strategies, including best-evidence and promising-evidence based behavioral interventions, program evaluation, cost effectiveness analyses and HIV testing and counseling. As background for the book, the Introduction provides a summary of the context and importance of other infectious disease rates, (i.e., sexually transmitted diseases [STDs] and tuberculosis), to HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment in African Americans and a brief introductory discussion on the major contextual factors related to the acquisition and transmission of STDs/HIV.

Contextual Chapters

Johnson & Dean author the first chapter in this section, which discusses the history and epidemiology of HIV/AIDS among African Americans. Specifically, this chapter provides a definition for and description of the US surveillance systems used to track HIV/AIDS and presents data on HIV or AIDS cases diagnosed between 2002 and 2006 and reported to CDC as of June 30, 2007. The chapter also includes a discussion of the epidemiology of HIV/AIDS and describes how these data reflect different populations. The chapters that follow address HIV/AIDS among African Americans in the context of poverty and racism, organized religion, disparities in incarceration rates, trauma, substance use, mental health issues, violence, and a history of childhood sexual abuse.

Williams and Prather describe how experiences with racism and poverty and the interactions between racism and poverty affect sexual behavior and consequently HIV/AIDS transmission and acquisition among African Americans. They offer
recommendations for measures of racism and poverty and methods for including these constructs in behavioral interventions. Eke, Willis and Gaither follow with a discussion of the “black church” and the influential role that this institution has on African American communities. They provide a summary of the church’s historical activities in health promotion and disease prevention efforts associated with chronic diseases (e.g., diabetes, hypertension), and barriers to a role for the church in HIV/AIDS prevention activities.

Spikes, Willis and Koenig explored the available literature to identify potential links between exposure to traumatic events and HIV risk, mental health disorders and HIV risk, and utilization of mental health services for the general population and African Americans. Their chapter provides a discussion of these links and the implications of this research to HIV/AIDS prevention efforts among African Americans. El-Bassel, Gilbert, Witte, Wu and Vinocur describe the interpersonal contexts that link experiencing intimate partner violence and engaging in HIV/STI transmission risks among African American, drug-involved women and provide evidence supporting the need for strategies preventing HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) for African American women that address individual, interpersonal, community, macro and structural risk factors. Finally, in the concluding chapter for this section, Sumner, Wyatt, Glover, Carmona, Loeb, Henderson, et al., focus on aspects of childhood sexual abuse that influence high-risk behaviors and discuss the importance and challenges of implementing community interventions that integrate HIV-risk reduction and child sexual abuse.

**Intervention Chapters**

The chapters in this section discuss evidence-based interventions developed for subgroups within the African American community. Marshall, O’Leary and Crepaz conducted a systematic review of evidence-based interventions (EBIs) for African American youth at risk for HIV; 11 EBIs were identified. Their chapter describes the process for identifying and evaluating the interventions, and discusses what was addressed in the EBIs, what research gaps exist, and research recommendations derived from the review. Henny, Williams and Patterson follow with a critical review of HIV behavioral prevention interventions for heterosexually active African American men (EBIs and other interventions) and the extent to which these interventions include elements of cultural competency. Further, the chapter includes a discussion of definitions and measures of cultural competency and identifies gaps and future directions regarding the use of cultural competency in HIV behavioral prevention intervention activities with these men. Wingood follows with a discussion of HIV prevention for heterosexually active African American women that describes correlates of HIV risk, how the Theory of Gender and Power may be used to understand women’s HIV risk, and concludes with a critical review of the available literature on prevention interventions for this population. Jones, Wilton, Millett, and Johnson then provide a complimentary chapter on MSM that describes
currently available interventions and describes a model to explain how racial socialization and other culturally appropriate strategies might reduce the HIV risk of black MSM.

The next three chapters examine structural interventions, behavioral interventions for injection drug users (IDU), and interventions in correctional settings. Purcell, Mizuno and Lyles discuss the contribution of injection drug use to the HIV epidemic among African Americans and the interventions designed to reduce HIV transmission among IDUs, and specifically African American IDUs. Sanders and Ellen examine structural factors that may facilitate transmission of HIV and discuss the available literature on structural interventions that have been associated with decreasing HIV transmission risk. Finally, Seal, MacGowan, Eldridge, Charania, and Margolis provide a summary of the available literature on HIV prevention interventions for correctional populations in the United States and discuss gaps in the literature and needs for future intervention in this populations. This volume concludes with a final closing chapter by the co-editors that provides recommendations for future HIV/AIDS prevention strategies among African Americans.

It is our intent that this book contribute to a greater understanding of HIV among African Americans and other emerging risk populations in the US and globally. As such, one goal of African Americans and HIV/AIDS is to provide practitioners, health workers, researchers, academics, students, and activists with an additional prevention tool to combat HIV. As evidenced by the book as a whole and individual chapters, much work has already occurred in halting the devastating spread of HIV in African American communities. However, also demonstrated in these chapters is the work that is yet to be completed. Only through collaborative efforts between community members, families, practitioners, activists, health officials, and researchers will we have a positive impact on the HIV/AIDS epidemic among African Americans.

References


African Americans and HIV/AIDS
Understanding and Addressing the Epidemic
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