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Exploring health determinants among African American adolescents at increased risk for STIs and HIV: Towards a social network-based intervention

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At present, peer and family-level influences on sexual risk behaviors among African American Adolescents (AAA) in high-risk communities are understudied and extremely complex, and there is a paucity of research on effective, network-focused prevention approaches that are optimized for AAA at increased risk of poor sexual health outcomes, despite emerging evidence that adolescents social networks have immense influence on their risk behaviors. When inadequately addressed, the consequences associated with risk behaviors in this population are burdensome both socially and economically. Thus, there is an urgent need to better understand the relationship between individual-level and network-level dynamics that contribute to AAA sexual risk behaviors. The aim of this project is to examine individual & network level predictors associated with poor sexual health outcomes (i.e. changes in sexual risk behaviors, laboratory confirmed STI status & drug use, and mental health diagnoses) over time in a sample of clinic based AAA. This work is informed by the Network-Individual-Resource Model, which describes the complex, multi-level “exchange of mental & tangible resources” that occurs between AAA and their networks. It is assumed that health risk behaviors and consequent health disparities are sustained by a lack of supportive mental & tangible resources; thus, increased understanding of the aspects of AAA networks that sustain risk behaviors and associated health disparities will provide the foundation for planning targeted, multi-level prevention efforts geared towards addressing specific health determinants that are tailored to their unique networks.

Biography

Jerrold M Jackson completed his PhD in Clinical Research from Mount Sinai School of Medicine in May 2013, and he began his postdoctoral fellowship at the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University in August 2013. He is a member of the Emory Center for AIDS Research.

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