

2-1-2013

HIV/AIDS Stigma: Effects of Gender, Level of Responsibility, and Priming

Kendra R. McCarty

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Follow this and additional works at: <http://knowledge.library.iup.edu/etd>

Recommended Citation

McCarty, Kendra R., "HIV/AIDS Stigma: Effects of Gender, Level of Responsibility, and Priming" (2013). *Theses and Dissertations (All)*. 379.

<http://knowledge.library.iup.edu/etd/379>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by Knowledge Repository @ IUP. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations (All) by an authorized administrator of Knowledge Repository @ IUP. For more information, please contact cclouser@iup.edu, sara.parme@iup.edu.

STUDENT HAS RESTRICTED ACCESS TO FULL TEXT OF THE DISSERTATION.

ONLY COVER PAGES AND ABSTRACT ARE AVAILABLE AT THIS TIME

HIV/AIDS STIGMA:
EFFECTS OF GENDER, LEVEL OF RESPONSIBILITY, AND PRIMING

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Psychology

Kendra R. McCarty

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

December 2012

© 2012 by Kendra R. McCarty

All Rights Reserved

Indiana University of Pennsylvania
School of Graduate Studies and Research
Department of Psychology

We hereby approve the dissertation of

Kendra R. McCarty

Candidate for the degree of Doctor of Psychology

Laurie Roehrich, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Psychology, Advisor

Beverly J. Goodwin, Ph.D.
Professor of Psychology

Maureen C. McHugh, Ph.D.
Professor of Psychology

ACCEPTED

Timothy P. Mack, Ph.D.
Dean
School of Graduate Studies and Research

Title: HIV/AIDS Stigma: Effects of Gender, Level of Responsibility, and Priming

Author: Kendra R. McCarty

Dissertation Chair: Laurie Roehrich, Ph.D.

Dissertation Committee Members: Beverly J. Goodwin, Ph.D.
Maureen C. McHugh, Ph.D.

HIV/AIDS stigma has been studied generally, in relation to other medical conditions, and in relation to gay men. Research demonstrates many detrimental effects of HIV/AIDS stigma, including negative health outcomes. Although women are contracting HIV in greater numbers with every passing year, little research focuses on HIV/AIDS stigma as it relates to women. The few available studies indicate HIV+ women may be more stigmatized than HIV+ men, as evidenced by pejorative media portrayals and pervasively more negative attitudes.

The current experimental study sought to identify variables impacting negative attitudes toward women and men with HIV/AIDS, to determine if social priming can mitigate stigma, and to measure potential behavioral effects of social priming in this context. A series of four vignettes were created depicting male and female HIV+ characters. As stereotypes about HIV+ people include demographic variables such as being gay, illegal drug use, racial/ethnic minority status, low education or income, the characters and their behavior were portrayed in ways that minimized these biases.

Based on previous social stigma research, this study hypothesized the following: participants would stigmatize female vignette characters with HIV more than male characters in the same scenarios, the level of responsibility assigned to vignette characters would impact social stigma, social priming cues for “openness/tolerance” would lessen stigmatizing attitudes, and participants in the priming condition would donate significantly more to an AIDS charity than two other health-related charities.

Data were obtained from 168 college undergraduate participants, randomly assigned to the priming or control conditions. Findings confirmed that the more responsible a character was perceived to be for having HIV, the more negatively s/he was rated. Higher levels of perceived responsibility led to significantly higher stigma ratings and social distance scores. Overall, female participants had significantly less stigmatizing attitudes toward HIV+ vignette characters compared to male participants. Priming with cues for openness/tolerance had no significant effects. Behaviorally, when offered a choice of three different charities, subjects were most likely to give one dollar to the American Cancer Society, followed by the American Foundation for AIDS Research. They were least likely to give money to a diabetes organization.