

Perceptions of Neighborhood Factors and Their Influence on Rates of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

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BACKGROUND

- In 2012, the Philadelphia Department of Public Health released a report of the cases of STIs by ZIP code
- Southwest Philadelphia's 19143 ZIP code reported the highest cases of STIs (Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, and Syphilis)
- The neighboring ZIP codes in Southwest Philadelphia (19142 and 19153) reported significantly lower cases
- Studies have reported associations between neighborhood factors and rates of STIs in various urban cities

STUDY PURPOSE

To explore community members' perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge of neighborhood factors and the possible link to rates of STIs

METHODOLOGY

Utilized an exploratory approach with no hypothesis to test through in-depth interviews and qualitative analysis

CONTEXT OF THE INTERVIEW

Neighborhood

- Description, challenges, quality, health challenges

STIs

- Thoughts and reactions on 2012 PDPH STD Data, who is at risk?

Neighborhood Factors:

- Crime:** Breaking the law
- Violence:** Intentional harm doing using physical means
- Neighborhood Satisfaction:** How happy are you with where you live?

- What are the possible links to rates of STIs?

Other

- What are your thoughts on lowering STI rates?

- 12 Participants:** 4 Adolescent Residents (Age 15 –24), 4 Adult Residents (Age 25+), and 4 Community Stakeholders (Working in the 19143 ZIP Code with efforts to improve the quality of live)
- Adolescent and adult residents were recruited through flyers posted at Planned Parenthood Southeastern Pennsylvania's Locust clinic in Center City Philadelphia and The Family Practice and Counseling Network's The Health Annex in Southwest Philadelphia. Community Stakeholders were approached by the researcher
- Interviews transcribed verbatim, major themes within the four categories of the interview established per participant group, and the research team summarized findings on an excel sheet

RESULTS

	Adolescents n=4	Adults n=4	Stakeholders n=4
Gender			
Female	3	4	2
Male	1		2
Age			
15-19	2		
20-30	2	1	1
31-40		2	2
51-60			1
61+		1	
Ethnicity			
Not of Hispanic, Latino/a, or Spanish origin	4	4	4
Race			
Black or African American	4	4	3
White			1
Highest Level of Education Achieved			
Currently in High School	3		
High School Graduate or GED	1	2	
Some College or Associate Degree		2	1
Master Degree			3
Years Lived in or Worked in 19143			
Less than 1 year		1	
1 to 3 years	1		1
4 to 10 years	1	1	2
11 to 20 years	2		
21 to 30 years		1	1
More than 30 years		1	

RESULTS

Interview Topic	Adolescent Residents (Age 15-24)	Adult Residents (Age 25+)	Community Stakeholders
Neighborhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Violent – gun violence, fights Drug activity Filthy, trashy, nasty, polluted, ghetto, wasteland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Violent High drug activity Deterioration, breakdown Poor state of the neighborhood and lack of jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dilapidated – condemned buildings, trash, lack of jobs, underutilized services, poverty Destruction of family Forgotten part of the city
STIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not surprised by data Determined females, SW Philadelphia residents, and those ages 13-25 most at risk Attribute to lack of values and good parenting at the home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People behave in ways that emulate from their parents Attributed to 19143 ZIP code being in bigger area distinguished by USPS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully aware of the issue Emphasis on continuous and sustained funding STIs seen as more manageable and less threatening
Neighborhood Factors - Crime and Violence & STIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hard time separating crime and violence Rape, drugs, prostitution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hard time separating crime and violence Prostitution, popularity, drugs, appeal of 'gangsta lifestyle' Sexual assault, rape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Live in the moment' mentality Social and emotional trauma Feeling of hopelessness
Neighborhood Factors - Neighborhood Satisfaction & STIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nobody is satisfied Decreased neighborhood satisfaction leads to a decreased feeling of self-worth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boredom, lack of jobs Neighborhood environment influences how you act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced vested interest in community which carries over to personal satisfaction
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents need to talk to their kids "Everybody's doing it" mentality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of awareness and education in schools about STIs Nothing for kids to do 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of trust between community members and outside agencies Importance of positive affirmations from family members



Philadelphia City Planning Commission, 2005

"It's **not violent** but it is sometimes throughout the year **because there have been shootings on our block like crossfire stuff**" - Adolescent

"Misery loves company...I think it's like when you get something [STIs] **you hurt, and so you just want to hurt others**" - Adolescent

"Kill each other, shoot each other, and give each other STDs. **They [leaders of Philadelphia] want us to die off slow**" - Adolescent

"**Parents need to talk to they kids a little bit more, communities they need to mentor the youth, we need a lot, and it's going to take time for that, as long as you know somebody actually gets to sit down and be able to talk about it** – not just the block captains, the government, state officials, whoever runs this stuff like **I just hope that they actually understand some people's state of mind**" - Adolescent

"Most of 'em, the women, are looking for a father figure which **you can't open your legs to a father figure, you feel me?**" - Adult

"**Everything's falling apart...**The housing to ... the way kids are raised today" - Adult

"I been in 19143 area for about 26 years of my life and **this is the worst it's ever been**" - Adult

"Yeah **there's a link** – people are just bored, **there's nothing to do but have sex**" - Adult

"**It is about the area you live in.** It is about the influences around you and it is a difference" - Adult

"**Because every girl and boy out there want to be a gangsta or wanna be a thug** wanna be you know, just what they're not. And everybody tryin to get the good lookin clothes, the high price stuff ...It leads to the drugs, **'cause the partying and the drinking and all that and it all leads to layin in the bed**" - Adult

"I think it's economic instability, which has led to destructions of family, which has led to high rates of crime, which **leads people to feel there's a very strong survival mentality**" - Stakeholder

"I think sadly in some ways the description you hear about southwest **almost becomes a self fulfilling prophecy**" - Stakeholder

"I think when you have a section of the city that's so high with crime, it's kinda like the mentality of I **don't know what tomorrow's gonna bring for me – life or death**" - Stakeholder

"...whether that be elected officials, anyone that's an authority they don't trust because they come and they say we want to work with you we want to help you with your community **but what they do is they take from and they don't bring anything back**" - Stakeholder

DISCUSSION

- Participants identified links between neighborhood factors and rates of STIs
 - Crime, violence, and unprotected sex are all high risk behaviors
 - Negative and poor outlook about surroundings fosters high risk behaviors
 - Belief that dissatisfaction of the neighborhood can link to high STI rates
- Common response surrounding family structure & involvement
- Imperative to include a diversity of perspectives that represent the community
- Individuals are not 'Isolated Islands'
- Positive vs negative affirmation for understanding the message "Protect Yourself"

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Focus on Behavioral Changes** (i.e., emphasis of positive family influence, empowering individuals through education and awareness)
- Allocation of Resources** (i.e., cleaning up trash, litter, & recreational centers, fund and sustain health education in schools, renovate defaced and abandoned buildings, bring the resources into the community)

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