



PERSPECTIVES

The Perceived Risk Hierarchy Theory (PRHT):™ A New Framework for Understanding Health Risk and Reality among African American Emerging Adults

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ABSTRACT

The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) has had a significant impact on minority emerging adults, who have faced pronounced health disparities compared to their non-minority peers. Emerging adults ages 13 - 24 accounted for more than one in five new HIV diagnosis in 2015. Emerging adults today have limited knowledge of the earlier toll of HIV when it was identified as a death sentence. The Get SMART Project/Intervention aimed to prevent/reduce alcohol, substance use and acquisition of HIV/AIDS among at-risk African American emerging adults. To meet the unique needs of this population, the goals included: establishing partnerships with community-based organizations to provide integrated substance use, Hepatitis-C, and HIV screening and services and provide re-purposed prevention education to the target population. Of concern, it was recognized that prevention screenings that have been made significantly more convenient and accessible compared to traditional testing and screening modalities were not being utilized in light of incentivizing participation. HIV testing rates were low as emerging adults believed that they were unlikely to have been exposed to the virus, even when engaging in high-risk behaviors.

The Perceived Risk Hierarchy Theory (PRHT) is a new framework for understanding health risk, trauma and survival expectations among African American emerging adults. The PRHT was developed by public health scholars to explain the lack of concern for preventive health screenings for early detection of communicable/infectious diseases. Recognizing and making the collective experiences of urban young must become a priority. Robust restorative practices are important steps that will aid in building trust, healthy-relationships, resolve conflicts, and minimize the barriers to learning, remembering, and applying re-purposed preventive education. Bearing in mind the political landscape, return on investment (ROI) is no longer an option. The PRHT, allows one to recognize the competing factors associated with improved outcomes and implement the appropriate strategies.

Keywords: Risk profiles; Emerging Adults; Health Behaviors; HBCUs

Suggested Citation:

Edwards, L.V., Lindong, I., Brown, L., Dennis, S. Moody, A., Pullen, E. & Henry, M. "The Perceived Risk Hierarchy Theory (PRHT):™ A New Framework for Understanding Health Risk and Reality among African American Emerging Adults", *International Journal of Ethnic College Health*, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 28-32.