What Do We Know and What Do We Need To Know About Health and Marriage in the African American Community

A Discussion of the Complex Interactions of Marriage, Health, Race, Gender and Class

AAHMI Connecting Research to Practice Conference
UNC/Chapel Hill, June 19-21, 2007
Marriage Health Race Gender Class

- Wood, Goesling, & Avellar
- Healthy People 2010
- The State of Black America 2007
- Fein, Gubits, Gennetian, and Yumoto (forthcoming)
- TRIM3/March Current Population Survey
Marriage and Health (Wood, Goesling, & Avellar)

- Marriage reduces heavy drinking and total consumption
- Marriage reduces marijuana use
- Marriage does not reduce smoking
- Marriage increases weight but effect on obesity unknown
- Marriage reduces physical activity
- Marriage decreases depressive symptoms
- Divorce and not being married increases depressive symptoms
- Depressive symptoms do not affect likelihood to marry
Marriage and Health (Wood, Goesling, & Avellan)

- Married people live longer
- Married men report being healthier
- Divorced women report being less healthy
- Marriage increases health insurance coverage
- Marriage decreases the risk of losing insurance
- Marriage increases preventive care
- Marriage reduces health care cost possibly by shortening a variety of health care stays
Marriage reduces heavy drinking and total consumption

- Marriage benefit is for both Whites and Blacks, men and women, and for those with lower and higher education.
- Black teenagers drink less than white teenagers.
- In general alcohol consumption is higher for men than women, and about the same for adult Black and White men and lowest for Black women.
- Husbands’ substance abuse (all kinds) associated with wives’ poorer quality marriage and marital instability.
Marriage Health Race Gender Class

Married people live longer

- Likely applies to both Blacks and Whites
- But married Whites still live longer than married Blacks
- Married women live longer than married men
- Once past 75 or so age-based age adjusted death rates for Blacks and Whites converge
- Substantial difference in age adjusted death rates between Blacks and Whites for children, adolescents and adults.
Marriage increases private health insurance coverage

- Finding not differentiated by race.
- Employment ratio slightly higher for whites than blacks. (63.8 versus 58.5)
- Overall percent with private health insurance payments higher for whites than blacks (65.8% versus 51%).
- For married Blacks, 73% of husbands and 58% of wives work full time, for Whites 80% of husbands and 40% of wives were full time.
- 83% married Whites versus 68% of married Blacks have full family private health insurance coverage.
Marriage Matters for African American Health

Marriage Cannot Eliminate Other Underlying Disparities that affect Health and Access to Care
Marriage Health Race Gender Class

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