

**Explaining the Rise in HIV/AIDS among Black Women:
The Effects of Sex Ratios on Concurrency,
Condom Use and Age of Sexual Debut**

Christopher M. Cornwell
Department of Economics
Terry College of Business
University of Georgia
Athens, GA 30602
(706) 542-1943
cornwl@terry.uga.edu

Scott Cunningham*
Department of Economics
Terry College of Business
University of Georgia
Athens, GA 30602
(706) 542-1943
scunning@uga.edu

(I1) Health, Education and Welfare: Health

ABSTRACT

HIV/AIDS prevalence has dramatically increased among Blacks over the last decade. It was listed as the 7th leading cause of death for Blacks in 2004, but ranked only 22nd for whites. Blacks accounted for 54% of all new HIV infections in 2004; whites only 26%. In 2003, 22% of all infected Black men contracted HIV/AIDS from heterosexual contact; only 5% of white males did. More than four times as many Black females suffer from HIV/AIDS than white females, and three-quarters of black women received it from heterosexual contact compared with 64% of white women.

Epidemiologists are at a loss as to why the epidemic might differ so much for Blacks than other minority groups with similar socio-economic backgrounds. Adimora and Schoenbach (2003; 2004; 2005) hypothesize that low sex ratios in the Black community have caused an increase in concurrent sexual partnerships by inducing females to match with men who are already matched and/or men to pursue numerous partners over short periods of time. We argue low sex ratios may also influence condom use and the age of sexual debut, two other behavioral choices that affect the spread of HIV/AIDS. Our study is the first to test these propositions.

Using the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 and the 2000 Census IPUMS, we estimate the effect of sex ratios have on the number of recent partners, condom use, and age of first sex. We show that a 10% increase in the sex ratio causes Black males to reduce the number of partners they had in the previous twelve months by about 13%. We also find higher sex ratios associated with higher propensities of condom use.