

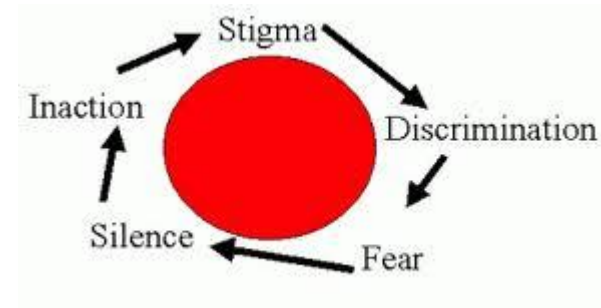
AIDS CRISIS, POVERTY & HAITI

ANTH 306/Medical Anthropology

Understanding & Addressing AIDS-Related Stigma

Arachu Castro and Paul Farmer

- Stigma and discrimination are part of belief systems about illness & disease.
- Often grounded in social inequalities.
- “Stigma” can easily become a convenient excuse for those who do not wish to put in the effort to fight the pandemic.



Understanding & Addressing AIDS-Related Stigma

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- Sociologist Erving Goffman was one of the first to analyze social stigma in terms of relationships rather than individual attributes.
- Castro and Farmer assert that the concept of ***structural violence*** provides a sound conceptual framework for understanding AIDS related stigma.
- Racism, sexism, classism (prejudice/discrimination based upon socioeconomic class), and poverty exacerbate one another, especially when there is political violence and social inequalities.

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- Structural violence creates conditions which predispose certain people to risk of infection and also determines those who have access to counseling, diagnostics, and therapy.
- Experience in Haiti shows that proper HIV care can transform a disfiguring and consumptive disease into a manageable condition that is invisible to consociates.
- National Public Radio segment from July 2012.

[Treating HIV: From Impossible To Halfway There](#)



Francois St. Ker, 55, was on the brink of dying from AIDS in the spring of 2001. Today, he's a successful farmer and is in good health, thanks to treatment for his HIV.

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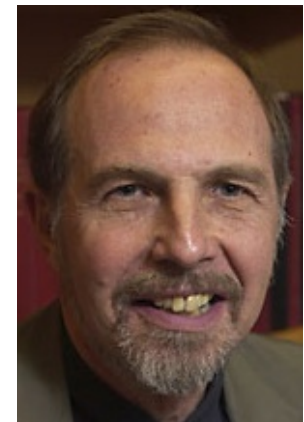
- The social experience of AIDS is affected profoundly by advent of effective therapy.
- Introduction of antiretrovirals has positively impacted demand for counseling & testing.
- Haiti experience shows that improving clinical services can raise quality of prevention efforts, boost staff morale, & reduce AIDS-related stigma.
- Transformation of AIDS from an invariably fatal disease to a chronic and manageable one has decreased stigma dramatically in Haiti.

Paul Farmer and Arthur Kleinman

- Farmer has Ph.D. & M.D. from Harvard University.
 - Professor of Medical Anthropology at Harvard
 - Attending Physician at Brigham & Women's Hospital in Boston, MA.
- Kleinman has M.D. & A.B. from Stanford University; M.A. from Harvard University.
 - Professor & Chair of the Department of Anthropology at Harvard University
 - Professor of Medical Anthropology in Social Medicine and Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School.



Dr. Paul Farmer



Dr. Arthur Kleinman

Paul Farmer and Arthur Kleinman

AIDS as Human Suffering

- We know that AIDS is caused by a retrovirus.
- But we need not look to Haiti to see inequalities that have sculpted AIDS epidemic.
- Disease moves along fault lines of our society.
- Of all infants born with AIDS in U.S. approximately 80% are black or Hispanic.
- Most of these are the children of IV drug users.
- Efforts to control AIDS must be aimed in part at *eradicating conditions that give rise to drug addiction.*

Paul Farmer and Arthur Kleinman: *AIDS as Human Suffering*

- Affliction and death of persons with AIDS create master ***symbols of suffering***
- Ethical and emotional responses to AIDS are collective representations of how societies deal with suffering.
- ***Suffering*** extends from those afflicted with AIDS to their families & intimates, to practitioners & institutions who care for them, & to their neighborhoods & ultimately the rest of society.

Paul Farmer and Arthur Kleinman:

AIDS as Human Suffering

- Ways in which a person, a family, or a community responds to AIDS can reveal a great deal about core cultural values.
- Concept of ***autonomous individuals*** who are solely responsible for their fate, including their illness, is a ***powerful cultural premise in North American society***.
- Conflation (combination) of ***correlation and responsibility*** has the effect of making sufferers feel guilt and shame.

Paul Farmer and Arthur Kleinman: *AIDS as Human Suffering*

- In contrast, in Haiti, many African & Asian societies, individual rights are often underemphasized.
- There the *idea of personal accountability is less powerful than is the idea of the primacy of social relationships*, blaming the victim is also a less frequent response to AIDS.



I took this photo in Cape Town, South Africa in 2001.

Paul Farmer and Arthur Kleinman: *AIDS as Human Suffering*

- Differences in responses of caregivers also reflect differences of cultural orientation.
- A core clinical task would seem to be helping patients to die a decent death.
- Anita's grandmother said that "for some people a decent death is as important as a decent life... It's important that she be washed of bitterness and regret before she dies."



Paul Farmer and Arthur Kleinman: *AIDS as Human Suffering*

- Burgeoning biomedical literature on AIDS has largely ignored issue of AIDS as suffering.
- It is unethical... for international health experts to turn their backs on the suffering of people with AIDS in the Third World and to concentrate solely on the prevention of new cases.

Touch of Hope Foundation, Zero HIV Stigma Facebook page

