NSF Award in Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences

Principal investigator: Celeste Watkins-Hayes, African American Studies and sociology
Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences

- Project: CAREER: Resource Attainment and Social Context in Negotiating Illness Among Marginalized Populations
- Start Date: September 1, 2009
- Total Award Amount: $411,473

**How the results of this project will benefit society:**
The research will study the economic experiences and related social processes of people living with HIV/AIDS, how their financial conditions and economic survival strategies evolve over time, and how these processes shape and are shaped by their health and well-being. The study has the potential to inform sociological research on the ways in which health status has an impact on economic status, illuminating the role that institutions play in mitigating, supporting, or challenging the economic standing of women with HIV. The PI has significant plans for community participation in the research, leading to possibilities for innovation in service delivery and the development of policy options.

**The problem the project is trying to solve:**
This theorized relationship between economic survival strategies and health maintenance raises critical policy, programmatic, and societal questions about how researchers, policymakers, and society will address the epidemic’s next frontier: ensuring that the economic and social factors that increase the risk of HIV infection do not further hinder individuals’ abilities to take care of themselves and contribute to their communities after diagnosis. HIV infections have risen particularly alarmingly among African-American women in recent years, creating additional post-diagnosis economic and social challenges because of their social locations.

**How this project will work:**
This multidisciplinary, comparative ethnographic research project and integrated educational initiative will explore how living with HIV shapes the economic realities and related social experiences of infected women while educating students, the HIV services community, and the public about this important but often ignored facet of the fight against AIDS. The study will focus on 105 women living with HIV/AIDS who represent a diverse sample in terms of race, socioeconomic class, age, reported mode of infection, and time since diagnosis. The PI and a graduate student research team will conduct the in-depth interviews in order to build a large qualitative database on the economic survival strategies of women living with HIV, likely the first of its kind. The educational objectives will be accomplished through (1) the creation of a sociological research lab; (2) course offerings that include a service-learning exercise pairing undergraduate students with local AIDS service providers for educational event planning for clients and other stakeholders; and (3) a research dissemination apparatus that utilizes media, Internet technology, and traditional tools such as newsletters, fact sheets, policy briefs, books, and academic papers to inform multiple groups.

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