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Stigma as oppression: Measuring racialized and homophobic stigma and violence in a sample of US black men who have sex with men

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Black men who have sex with men (MSM) investigating and contextualizing multi-faceted social oppression is paramount in addressing inequities in HIV incidence experienced by this group. We conducted a secondary data analysis of the HIV Prevention Trial Network (HPTN) 061 study to test measurement properties of social oppression among 1530 US Black MSM. We used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to explore the psychometric properties and structure of the HPTN 061 stigma items. Three measurement models were examined: (1) a 2-factor CFA (Racial Stigma and Homophobic Stigma); (2) a 4-factor CFA (Racial Stigma, Homophobic Stigma, Racially-motivated Violence and Homophobic-motivated Violence); and (3) a new higher order Stigma latent construct. We chose 14 items a-priori to assess new racial and homophobic stigma variables (7 items assessed racial-based stigma, e.g., "Being ignored, overlooked, or not given a service because of my race"; and 7 items assessed homophobic-based stigma, e.g., "Being ignored, overlooked, or not given a service because of my sexuality"). Additionally, 6 violent items (3 racially-motivated and 3 homophobic-motivated) were assessed (e.g., "Being threatened with a gun, knife, or another weapon because of my race/sexuality"). Participants rated the impact of the event in the preceding week from 0=" has never happened to me" to 5=" bothers me extremely". These severity ratings were used in each CFA. Overall, 77% reported some form of racial stigma with 63% reporting homophobic stigma. In each model, standardized factor loadings exceeded 0.63 for all items. Regarding violent experiences, 45% reported some form of racially-motivated violence with 42% reporting some form of homophobic-motivated violence. For all models, standardized factor loadings were all above 0.62 with most being above 0.75. Higher order standardized factor loadings were all above 0.7. The discussion will focus on naming new latent constructs, analysis strategies and limitations and the utility of higher-order factors.

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