

Social Capital, Collective Morality and HIV/AIDS in Rural South Africa

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ABSTRACT This study recognises the importance of social capital in community health interventions. It presents the results of a qualitative study exploring the role of community-level social capital in creating and facilitating pathways through which HIV/AIDS infection can be prevented and mitigated. Drawing on ethnographic narratives of the participants captured mainly through semi-structured interviews, the study reveals social capital as playing a significant role in addressing a host of social determinants of HIV/AIDS such as poverty, social marginalisation and inequality. Study participants were drawn from three (3) villages of the Umkhanyakhude District of KwaZulu-Natal Province. The importance of social capital can be seen in its ability to promote the development of a common morality and the horizontal exchange of resources. The study has established that at the community level, social capital is believed to promote health by fighting social stigma and the provision of social support. This study also emphasised the relevance of localised participation in HIV/AIDS initiatives and its ability to create social capital for HIV/AIDS prevention.