

Dexter R. Voisin, PhD

Research

Exposure to neighborhood violence, either as victims or witnesses, is a widespread and persistent problem in many of America's urban cities. In the U.S., the number of adolescents murdered each year can fill a high school of almost 6,000 students. As alarming as these figures are, the frequency of non-fatal adolescent injuries is at least 120 times that of youth murders, and it is estimated that more than 1.2 million crimes against adolescents go unreported yearly. Exposure to neighborhood violence has been linked to mental health problems, poor academic performance, involvement with risky peer networks, and more recently, as Professor Voisin's work has documented, engaging in unsafe sex, which increases the chances of contracting HIV. Collectively, these are problems, which disproportionately affect African American and Latino youths. According to research by Voisin, studies on the impact of neighborhood violence have been generally artificially compartmentalized to examine discipline-specific outcomes (e.g., mental health, education performance, delinquency, and more recently risky sex) and have not adequately considered the interrelationships among these various domains, which represent a major focus of Voisin's scholarship. Through engaged research, teaching, service, and training, Voisin is committed to illuminating the broad impact of neighborhood violence on the developmental trajectories of young persons.

For over 20 years, Professor Voisin has been conducting numerous studies, which seek to understand better the various ways in which neighborhood violence exposure impacts the mental health, educational, and sexual trajectories of urban youth, with a significant focus towards HIV prevention and intervention. Competitive awards from the National Institute of Mental Health, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, and the W.T. Grant Foundation, among others, have funded his research. His prior research has informed public policy and provided support for the passage of the [Soto, Delgado Bill approved by Illinois Governor Pat Quinn](#). This bill will provide a state advisory council, which will make recommendations to the Illinois Department of Public Health on effective prevention messages to deter youths from engaging in risky behaviors that lead to HIV/AIDS infections. The Anne E. Casey Foundation has cited Voisin's research, the Centers for Disease Control, the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, the California Department of Education, the Nebraska Department of Education, and the National Institutes of Health, among many others.

Professor Voisin has conducted and corroborated on international studies in the Caribbean and South Africa. Professor Voisin was the Director of the [STI/HIV Intervention Network \(SHINE\)](#) and [Co-Director of the Chicago Center for HIV Elimination \(CCHE\)](#) at the University of Chicago, which were developed to conduct innovative multidisciplinary problem-solving research to reduce the disproportionate impact of STIs and HIV on vulnerable populations.

Biography

Dexter R. Voisin is Dean of the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work and the Sandra Rotman Endowed Chair in Social Work at the University of Toronto. Before this appointment, he was Professor at the School of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago for two decades where he was a Faculty Affiliate at the Center for the Study of Race, Culture, and Politics and the Center for Health and the Social Sciences. His fields of particular interest include neighborhood violence exposure, adolescent sexual risk behaviors, and the role of gender in adapting to risks, international HIV prevention, and social work practice.

A central focus of Voisin's scholarship is examining the impact of neighborhood violence on a wide range of youth problem behaviors and the impact of gender on risk and protective youth trajectories. His research demonstrates that the problems of neighborhood violence exposure are correlated with youth

mental health problems, school failure, negative peer networks, and high rates of HIV-related risk behaviors, which are interconnected outcomes in the lives of adolescents, particularly those who live in urban communities.

Professor Voisin has published more than 130 peer-reviewed studies, with publications in accepted in such journals as *AIDS*, *AIDS Education and Prevention*, the *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, the *American Journal of Public Health*, *Children and Youth Services Review*, the *Journal of Adolescent Health*, and the *Journal of Health Psychology*. His research has generated more than 10 million dollars in extramural funding. Due to his expertise on adolescent sexuality, trauma exposure, and international HIV prevention, he is highly sought after as a peer reviewer and has reviewed articles for various academic journals across many disciplines. His latest project is a book entitled *America the Beautiful and Violent: Black Youth and Neighborhood Trauma in Chicago*, published by Columbia University Press in 2019. In this monograph, he highlights the broad historical, political, economic, and racial factors that shape the construction, concentration, and narratives of violence in black neighborhoods. Voisin explores these forces and the violence they produce; the behavioral health consequences of repeated exposures to neighborhood violence; and the ways youth, families, and communities cope with such traumas.

Voisin was appointed a Visiting Professor (summers 2004, 2005, 2007) at the Center for AIDS Prevention Studies in the Department of Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco. In 2010, he was appointed co-editor of the *Journal of HIV/AIDS and Social Services*. He was also appointed a consulting editor for *Social Work: Journal of the National Association of Social Workers* (2003-2008), the *Journal of HIV/AIDS Education and Prevention* (2004-2007), the *Journal of HIV/AIDS and Social Services* (2003 to 2010). In 2012 he was appointed to the editorial boards of the *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *BMC Public Health*, and in 2013 *Social Work Research*. In 2010, the Office of Governor Pat Quinn appointed him to the Illinois Statewide Committee for Juvenile Justice Programs, Disproportionate Minority Contact Subcommittee and in 2013 to the Illinois African American Family Commission.

His expertise and research findings have been frequently cited by numerous members of the international, national, and local media such as Al Jazeera Television, BBC World News Radio, *India Times*, the *Sunday Business Post* (Irish newspaper) *Svenska Dagbladet* (a leading Swedish national daily), the Associated Press, CNN's Anderson Cooper 360, National Public Radio, The Powers Report, the *Washington Times*, Southern California Public Radio, Chicago Public Radio, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, Chicago Public Television, the *Chicago Tribune*, CBS Chicago, FOX News Chicago, CLTV, and numerous news blogs.

Professor Voisin has more than 28 years post-M.S.W. clinical experience. He has taught advanced courses on effective cross-cultural practice and clinical social work research. He has extensive social work practice expertise in the areas of substance abuse, adult psychopathology, and adolescent and family therapy. Professor Voisin has also delivered many keynote speeches and conducted training for practitioners based on his research findings.

Professor Voisin received his B.A. (psychology, cum laude) from St. Andrews College, M.S.W. (practice) from the University of Michigan, and Ph.D. (advanced practice) from Columbia University School of Social Work.