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ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS

Structural Violence in Healthcare:

Ideological considerations, historical reflections and
application to COVID vaccinations

Realities and Limitations

- Our whiteness
 - Not our experience
 - Using privilege
- Language Matters
 - The binary exists
- Necessarily limited scope

Learning Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- Identify philosophical structures of modernity as the breeding ground for structural violence in healthcare
- Reflect on the historical and systemic application of structural violence in healthcare
- Identify the way in which structural violence has manifest during COVID and impacts vaccine creation and distribution
- Participate in guided discussion about how to disrupt these systems of structural violence to create more equity in healthcare

- Does this matter? If it does or does not, why?
- How does structural violence manifest in your work environment?
- How do we decolonize our professions?
- How do we breathe humanity into the healthcare system?
- How is trust built? Or repairs made?





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Ideological Considerations:

How Descartes ruined it for all of us...



Modern Philosophical Paradigm

- René Descartes (1596-1650)
- Methodological Doubt
- Myth of Objectivity
 - Reductionism
 - Breeding ground for structural violence
 - Dehumanization
 - Desocialization

Birth of the Scientific Revolution

- Isaac Newton (1642-1726)
 - Intelligent Design
 - Atomized/Molecularized
 - Privileging Quantitative Research
 - Scientific Foundation for Modern Medicine
 - Scientific/Medical Discovery Divorced from Lived Experience



The image features a light blue background with several thick, expressive black brushstrokes. These strokes are positioned around the central text, with some extending from the left and right edges towards the center, creating a sense of movement and framing. The strokes vary in thickness and direction, adding a dynamic and artistic touch to the slide.

What is the way out...

Postmodern Philosophy


- Feminist Epistemology
 - Standpoint theory
- Dubiosan Social Theory



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Historical Reflections



Exploitation for
the
Advancement of
Medical Care
and Research



Historical Application of Structural Violence

- Human exceptionalism is the belief that all humans are unique, distinctive beings that ought to be assigned fundamental moral value in accordance with that.
 - This belief would make racism and slavery evil
- The views of racists/racism support justify discriminating, denigrating and/or objectifying the targeted victim based on the fallacy that the 'others' life is somehow less important or worth valuing.
 - For people of faith, racism erases the idea that the victim as being equally made in God's image
 - For scientific racists, racism promotes the belief that 'others' are different from whites = inferior. That inferiority of Blacks was documented in medical journals and textbooks.

Black iatrophobia has a very long history originating from the exploitation of Slaves by the medical establishment.

- Early physicians were dependent upon Slave trade for economic security and research subjects
- Early 'scientific' facts/beliefs created by misinformation about Blacks
 - Immune to some disease (malaria)
 - Impervious to pain (physically and emotionally),
 - Inferior intelligence, yet many Slaves held responsible positions.
 - Slaves were used to perfect treatments (genitourinary surgeries) all in the name of medical progress.

Racialized Scientific Beliefs and Experimentation

- 1839: Pro-slavery physician scientist Samuel George Morton demonstrated that cranial skull measurements indicated hierarchy of racial types. Caucasians had the largest skulls therefore the largest brains, and Black people's the smallest.
- 1848: Samuel Cartwright: Louisiana MD was appointed by the Medical Association of Louisiana to investigate Black people's health. Cartwright suggested that Black people's physical and mental deficits made it impossible for them to survive without White supervision....alleging that the craniums of Blacks were 10% smaller than Whites, which prevented full brain development.
 - Cartwright's work (1851) also discovered many imaginary 'Black' diseases. He insisted that White and Black people were so different that the treatment for Whites if given to Blacks would 'injure or kill a Negro'
- James Marion Sims: MD revered as a women's benefactor, conducted painful and degrading genitourinary experiments without anesthesia or consent on enslaved Black women.

Reproductive Control





The Dawn of Eugenics

- Francis Galton is credited for using selective procreation to refine the human race.
 - Eugenicists proposed using medical knowledge about disease to end social ills by encouraging the birth of good, healthy and beautiful traits.
 - By 1915 The first wave of U.S. eugenics began: Dr. Harry J. Haiselden.
- Eugenicists disparaged Black persons
 - Women were seen as sexually indiscriminate, bad mothers and likely to birth defective children.
 - 1922: Margaret Sander popularized eugenics and shaped American reproductive policies. Published books describing the eugenic problems with Black families

Reproductive Control

- African Americans and compulsory surgical sterilization
 - The “Mississippi Appendectomy”
 - 1930’s: Compulsory sterilizations were occurring globally
- By 1983: 43% of women sterilized were Black women, even though they only made up 12% of the population.
- Birth control: Selective marketing: Depro-Provera and Norplant
- By 1967: Black Power Conference: Black people argued that the birth-control movement by targeting Black women was nothing more than genocide.
- 1972: Urelia Brown said, “Negroes don’t want children they can’t take care of, but we are afraid to trust you when your offered help has so often turned out to be exploitation.”

Experimentation Continued

- Radiation exposure
- The use of incarcerated individuals for research
 - 1950s-1960s: Dr. Albert Kligman, dermatologist: Skin patch pharmaceuticals
- Exploitation of Black children that stigmatized Black children. Seeking to investigate a biological basis for behavior such as generational violence runs in families.
 - Fen-Phen





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Anti-Blackness

What does it mean to be white?

Definitions

- Anti-blackness
 - Urban Dictionary: The personal, cultural, social, legal, and structural attacks on people called black
 - Robin DiAngelo: The essential foundation to our identities as white people
- Anti-black
 - Merriam Webster: Opposed to or hostile toward Black people, first used 1836
- Blackness
 - Oxford English: 1) Black in color/absence of white 2) Associated with Black people 3) State or condition of despair/depression 4) State or condition of being evil or wicked
- “Thingification”
 - Aimé Césaire (1950s): Coined this term to capture objectification as part of colonization.

A close-up, high-contrast photograph of a human eye. The eye is looking slightly to the right. The iris is a deep, dark brown, and within it, a city skyline is reflected, set against a vibrant sunset sky with orange and red hues. The eyelashes are dark and prominent, framing the eye. The skin around the eye is a warm, golden-brown color.

“In this country, American means white. Everybody else has to hyphenate.”

—Toni Morrison





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COVID-19 Vaccinations



Moving forward

- Largest impact is on Black communities
- Mistrust and misinformation
- Skepticism about the vaccine

Guided Discussion

Where do we go from here?

- Does this matter? If it does or does not, why?
- How does structural violence manifest in your work environment?
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Thanks for Participating!

Emily Gamm, LCSW, CACII, ACS
Senior Instructor of Clinical Practice
Family Health Clinic—Sheridan Campus
University of Colorado, College of Nursing
emily.gamm@cuanschutz.edu

Susan Bonini, EdD, MSN, RN
Assistant Professor
Program Coordinator of the Integrated Nursing Pathway
University of Colorado, College of Nursing
susan.bonini@cuanschutz.edu

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