Social Constructions & Health Implications of Race/Ethnicity in the United States

Proposed by:
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Population health is effected by a wide range of interconnected factors acting on societal, community, and interpersonal levels. For example, public policies both shape and reflect local built environments, which in turn may either encourage or deter physical activity and social interactions among residents, both of which have health implications. Historical and contemporary constructions of race and ethnicity in the United States are frequently embedded throughout these cross-level interactions, creating a complex web of social, economic, and political disadvantage for many members of minority racial/ethnic groups. Minority disadvantage is also clearly seen in onset and outcomes of many health problems, including heart disease, breast and prostate cancer, and diabetes. During the past 20 years, there has been a more concerted national effort to reduce racial/ethnic health disparities. However, little progress has been made, due at least in part to the complex, far-reaching nature of racial/ethnic inequalities in the United States and the relatively narrow focus of existing health disparities research and interventions.

Given the events of the past 6 months, the social constructions and health implications of race/ethnicity are of particular importance in the St. Louis region. Faculty here at Washington University are already making contributions to the health disparities literature via the recent "For the Sake of All" project, and to the examination of urban segregation via The Divided City initiative. However, there are currently few structured opportunities for faculty members from multiple schools to come together on a recurring basis and share their disciplinary perspectives with one another. With outstanding faculty who are already engaged in complementary scholarship in the George W. Brown School of Social Work, the Sam Fox School of Design and Visual Arts, the College of Arts & Sciences, and the School of Medicine, this is a missed opportunity. Bringing this group of scholars together could lead to the development of new interdisciplinary research projects, community-based interventions, or academic courses worthy of additional investment from the university or outside funding agencies. A short-term product from this group could be a working interdisciplinary bibliography or resource list for studying these disparities. In order to best fit participants' teaching schedules, we would prefer an initial early evening cocktail hour to become acquainted, followed by lunch meetings for the remainder of the term.

Potential participants	School (Division or Department)
Shanti Parikh	Arts & Sciences (Anthropology)
Clarissa Rile Hayward	Arts & Sciences (Political Science)
Ryan Bogdan	Arts & Sciences (Psychology)
Rebecca Wanzo	Arts & Sciences (Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies)
Patty Heyda	Design & Visual Arts (Urban Design)

Don Koster	Design & Visual Arts (Architecture)
Bettina Drake	Medicine (Public Health Sciences)
Melody Goodman	Medicine (Public Health Sciences)
Molly W. Metzger	Social Work
Vetta L. Sanders Thompson	Social Work