

Diversity in the USA

(Nakamura, 2003)

Health Concerns of the 21st Century

Diversity, Health & Stress – KIN 169

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Definition:

- ★ Health psychology focuses on health and behavioral issues related to health maintenance, disease prevention and treatment, and psychosocial problems and treatment.

Problem:

- ★ In the past, too many populations have been excluded from research on health and wellness. Therefore, adequate data has not been collected and thus successful interventions have not been explored, let alone implemented.

Problem (cont.)

- ★ In order to incorporate diversity issues along various lines of social identity, health psychology must *focus on*, rather than gloss over, these differences. There is a great potential for ineffective health care provision and intervention if we treat all patients as young, white men.

Why is this an issue in Health Psychology

Research?

- ★ Certain Folks not included in samples
- ★ Attempt to control for variability (as if each of these groups is heterogeneous) What does “White” mean for example (English? Swedish? Sicilian? Bi-Racial/Ethnic?)
- ★ Often, populations are hard to recruit for studies
- ★ Universities tend to recruit from university populations – skewed population

Why are there issues in the research (cont)

- ★ People from lower SEC may not read the recruitment announcements or cannot take time away from work.
- ★ Childcare is often needed to allow people to participate in studies BUT childcare is expensive – who pays?
 - What employee will allow participation?
- ★ Included in samples, but not analyzed separately for each group (outliers)

Beginning to Look at Health Differently: Two Models

- ★ **Biomedical Model:** diseases were traced to immune deficiencies or hereditary causes or outbreaks, and diagnoses were also directly related to physical symptoms.
 - The biomedical model cannot account for numerous aspects of modern illness and general health problems, many of which are now chronic and related to lifestyle.

slow to strike :: slow to treat :: preventable

Two Models (cont)

- ★ **Biosocial Model:** acknowledges disease process on cellular level, but also emphasizes psychosocial factors that determine presence or absence of illness (e.g. support, perception and coping, environmental factors)
 - Goal is wellness: general state of health in all areas of life: psychological, physiological, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, physical.

Wellness defined:

★ **Wellness:**

“The constant and deliberate effort to stay healthy and achieve the highest potential for well-being. It encompasses seven dimensions...and integrates them all into a quality life.” (Hoeger & Hoeger, 2004)

The Wellness Model

For Example (Biosocial Model)

★ Differences in group health

- Not just diversity with respect to a group that is relevant, but individual variability as well. *There are more intragroup differences than intergroup differences.*

For Example (Biosocial Model)

Use of medical system

- ★ Willingness to confront illness, including gender roles.
- ★ Fear and distrust of doctors (gays and lesbians stigmatized, older people babied, language barriers treated as lack of intelligence)
- ★ Insurance (Mexican-Americans and Latinos in general are far less likely to be insured)
- ★ Socioeconomic issues (travel, time off work)
- ★ Racism (built into the system)

For Example (Biosocial Model)

Risk factors associated with lifestyle

- ★ Smoking and cardiovascular disease (gender and culture)
- ★ Alcohol use (men more likely to abuse, but women may be more silent. Also, higher incidence among teens and college students. **STRESS!**)
- ★ Diet is high in fat, cholesterol, and sodium. We have super-sized ourselves into obesity.

For Example (Biosocial Model)

Risk factors associated with lifestyle (cont)

- ★ Class also plays a role, as publicly dispensed food is higher in sodium, etc. Vegetarians?
- ★ Exercise is still largely white, which relates to overall patterns of wealth distribution, leisure time, neighborhoods, etc.
- ★ Promiscuity

Are There Liabilities for studying

group differences?

- ★ Stigmatizing groups: So, if we find that women seek medical treatment more, are they just weak, or do they just listen more to their bodies?
- ★ So, for any group difference, there may be several explanations. A related point involves overlooking differences within groups. Not all gay men contract HIV.
- ★ That said, the benefit is that we can create *targeted interventions*, which are more successful than general, “grab bag” interventions.

Diversity in the USA:

Why this stuff is important

- ★ America is continuing to diversify

Population Statistics (2000 census)

Total Population:	281,421,906
Women:	143,368,343 (50.9%)
Men:	138,053,563 (49.1%)
White:	211,460,626 (75.1%)
Latino:	35,305,818 (12.5%)
Black or African American	34,658,190 (12.3%)
Asian:	10,242,998 (3.6%)
American Indian/Alaska	2,475,956 (0.9%)
Pacific Islander/Hawaiian	398,835 (0.1%)

Is the USA a Melting Pot?

- ★ If it were a melting pot, what is the stuff that we have all melted into?
- ★ Where is the difference and how do we account for it?
- ★ Would we really even want to create a *homogeneous* population?

Is the USA a Melting Pot? (cont)

- ★ What happens to our individual cultural practices, customs and language?
- ★ Do you think it is important to maintain culture, customs, and language?

- ★ Might lose some of these things through the process of acculturation create stress?

Melting Pot v. Salad Bowl!

- ★ While there are many different cultural, racial and ethnic groups in the US, it is not a *melting pot*!
- ★ More like a *salad-bowl* with many different, yet in tact, ingredients.
- ★ Perhaps a *Mosaic*.

Now a Word About Social Construction...

- ★ Concepts and definitions like “Race”, “Ethnicity”, and even “Gender” often have a biological underpinning

However

- ★ While there are certainly some biological implications (male and female for ex.) there are also important social implications that have nothing to do with biology.

Social Construction (cont)

- ★ Race infers a reference to physical or biological traits...
BUT IS ULTIMATLY BASED ON *SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED MEANINGS*, that people have given to particular traits!
- ★ Important because: Attitudes, behaviors, and understandings of groups and/or individuals are greatly affected by these meanings
- ★ These bias can be found woven throughout our institutions as well

Parting Comment...

“It is important to remember that the definition of race focuses on biologically based traits and characteristics, while the definitions of ethnicity focuses on culturally based orientation and behaviors. The definition of minority group focuses on an identifiable collection of people who suffer disadvantages at the hands of others who define them as inferior or unworthy *and have the power to negatively affect their lives*”. (Coakley, 2001)