



Shades of Racism in Human Services

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Research topic

- An examination of the “race / culture divide” in human services
- Critical race theory & critical research methods
 - extended case method (Burawoy)
 - critical discourse analysis (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, Foucault)

A little-studied vantage point

- In-between - the *Middle Woman*
- Outside main stream or resettlement organizations
- Grassroots, community-based, not professionals
- Addresses inequitable barriers to health & well-being of minoritized (im)migrants

Participants

- 24 women (1 man)
 - 27 to 64 years in age
 - 14 different countries of birth
 - 5 to 36 years in Canada (3 born in Canada)
- 31 in-depth interviews
- 24 (of 85) observation opportunities

The race / culture divide

- Focus on culture & cultural differences obscures race and racism
 - racism operates through racialized relations
 - cultural competency cannot address racialized inequities

Cumulative Inequities

- Pre- and post-migration conditions & circumstances work together to exacerbate inequities of minoritized (im)migrants in Canada

- Pre-migration realities
 - inequitable pre-migration conditions
 - compromised physical & mental health
 - lack of formal education & literacy for life in Canada

- gendered inequities

- Post-migration realities
 - profound dislocation & extreme isolation
 - financial struggles & extreme poverty
 - intra-family tensions & family violence
 - gendered inequities

Barriers

- Gaps in knowledge & know-how
- (Cultural) differences in conceptualization
- Inability to use available services
- Fear, distrust, & lack of confidence - reluctance to access
- Negative experiences - refusal to access

No (wo)man's land

- Non-existent supports & services depending on ascribed (im)migration category, length of time since arrival, etc.

External forces

- Government policies & practices
- Institutional thinking
 - one-size-fits-all
 - white, English-speaking, born in Canada

Assumption: Assimilation

- Assumes rapid absorption / integration with little support
 - short-term support, narrow parameters
 - keeps (im)migrants isolated & poor
 - implications for life course

Assumption: Equality

- Universal access
- One-size-fits-all
- Narrow parameters, mandate-driven
- Exceptions only to get their own jobs done
- Resistance to co-creating innovative solutions

Carving out a *niche*

- Discursively produced in *cultural* terms
 - difficult to shift the definition of the problem
 - characteristics of the people (language / cultural differences) are defined as the problem
 - supports individual-focused solutions
 - funding is for *linguistic & cultural solutions*
 - supports cultural competency rather than system change

Revisiting the 3 Ds

- Dress: Stranger appearances
- Diet: Ethnic smells
- Dialect: English sounds

Another 4 Ds

- Disrespect**
- Domination
- Disinterest
- Deficits**

Finding other words

We know, whatever you do, in this country, the race is an issue. It is a given. (Lisa1)

To me that was racism, because I was different, and because the language barriers that faced. (Sary)

Discerning racism

- An absence of privilege – constant vigilance

I refused to believe that was racism ... I refused to believe that this was because I practice my religion visibly. (Natalie)

Sitting in different corners

- Not paradise, but heaven
 - gave meaning to “in Canada” experiences of racism through particular pre-migration realities in a constant comparison between “back home” & “in Canada”
- Calculated kindness

Navigating the divide

- (Not) saying it as it is
 - keeping the door open
 - holding you accountable, clearing the path
 - working around you

A persistent challenge

- Disrupting the gaze?
 - only a buffer
- Paying the toll
 - embodying the sensed
 - draining the spirit