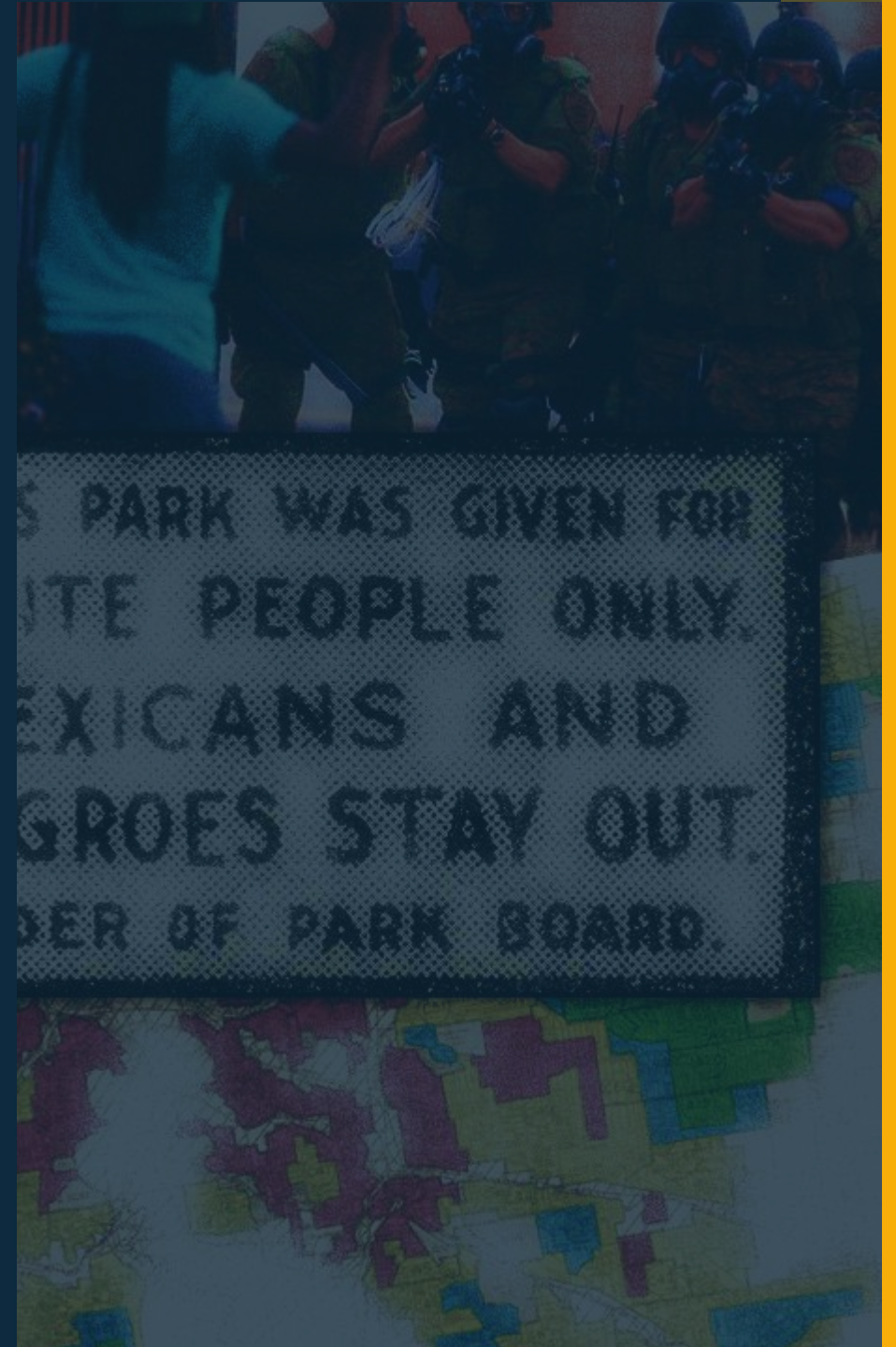


Measuring Structural Racism for Health Equity Research

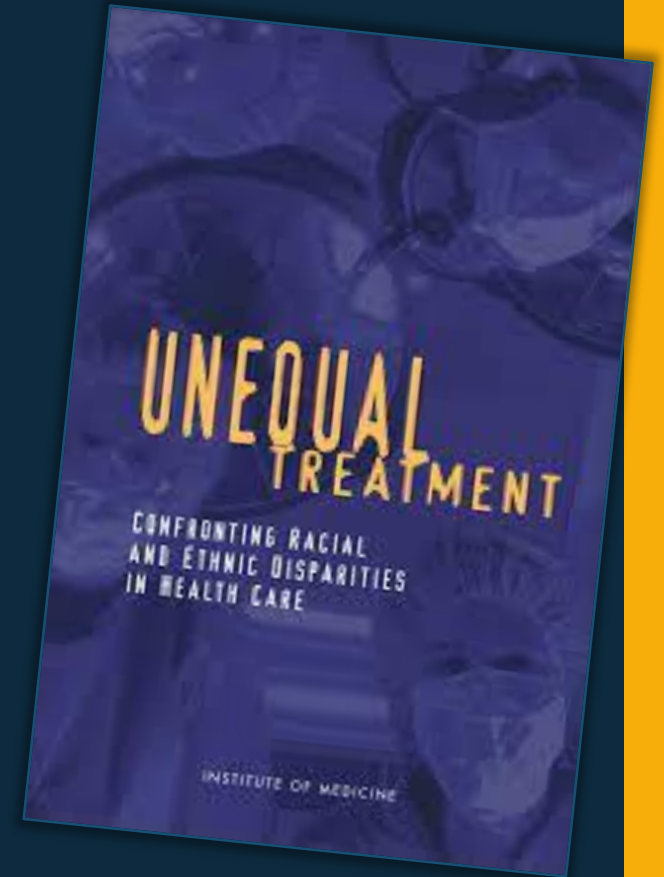
Unequal Treatment Revisited: A Workshop
Series: Part 2

Brigette A. Davis, PhD, MPH
Research Scientist @ UMN Center for
Antiracism Research for Health Equity (CARHE)
Thursday August 17, 2023



Health Disparities Research 20 years in the future...

- Race vs. Racism
 - Race is a social construct, racism is the cause of health inequity
- Manifestations of Racism
 - Interpersonal vs. structural
- Theory → Analyses



Challenges and Opportunities in Measuring Structural Racism in Health Research

- Defining structural racism for health research
- Effects & Outcomes vs. Actors & Actions
- Place, Space, and Meaning

A Shared Definition of structural racism

"...the macrolevel systems, social forces, institutions, ideologies, and processes that interact with one another to generate and reinforce inequities among racial and ethnic groups....emphasizes the most influential socioecologic levels...Even if interpersonal discrimination were completely eliminated, racial inequities would likely remain unchanged due to the persistence of structural racism."

Gee GC, Ford CL. (2011) Structural racism and health inequities: old issues, new directions Du Bois review: social science research on race.

"...involves interconnected institutions, whose linkages are historically rooted and culturally reinforced...totality of ways in which societies foster racial discrimination, through mutually reinforcing inequitable systems (in housing, education, employment, earnings, benefits, credit, media, health care, criminal justice...) that in turn reinforce discriminatory beliefs, values, and distribution of resources, which together affect the risk of adverse health outcomes."

Bailey ZD et al (2017). Structural racism and health inequities in the USA: evidence and interventions. The Lancet

"...refers to the compounding impacts of the cultural norms, policies, laws, and practices that produce racial inequity whereas individualized racism refers to the individual and interpersonal manifestations of racial discrimination."

Lett E, Asabor E, Beltrán S, Cannon AM, Arah OA. Conceptualizing, contextualizing, and operationalizing race in quantitative health sciences research. The Annals of Family Medicine. 2022 Mar 1;20(2):157-63.

Effects & Outcomes vs. Actions & Actors

- Racial residential segregation has been the earliest and most commonly used metrics for structural racism research.
- Is our exposure an outcome of structural racism?
 - Compositional vs. contextual, where are the actors? (Sewell, 2016; Riley 2018; Davis, 2021)
- Singular vs. multiple domains (i.e. housing, education, labor)
 - Composite measures, statistical interaction, latent class analyses (Hardeman, 2022)

Space, Place, and Meaning

- All operationalizations of structural racism have been place-based, focusing on geography rather than individual experiences.
- Place makes meaning of space often through boundaries
- Not all geographic units align perfectly with their meaning
 - Census tract vs. neighborhood
 - PUMA vs. Commuting areas or MSAs

Conclusion

- Still in earliest stages of measuring structural racism in health research.
- Thing to consider:
 - Does my measure align with the definition?
 - What am I measuring to capture the conceptualization?
 - How well does the measure and the unit of analysis align with the meaning and experiences we hope to capture?

References

1. Bailey ZD, Krieger N, Agénor M, Graves J, Linos N, Bassett MT. Structural racism and health inequities in the USA: evidence and interventions. *The Lancet*. 2017 Apr 8;389(10077):1453-63.
2. Davis BA. Racism Lives Here: Leveraging Context and Place in the Conceptualization and Operationalization of Structural Racism in Health Research (Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University). 2021.
3. Dean LT, Thorpe Jr RJ. What structural racism is (or is not) and how to measure it: clarity for public health and medical researchers. *American journal of epidemiology*. 2022 Sep;191(9):1521-6.
4. Gee GC, Ford CL. Structural racism and health inequities: Old issues, New Directions1. Du Bois review: social science research on race. 2011;8(1):115-32. Hardeman RR, Homan PA, Chantarat T, Davis BA, Brown TH. Improving the measurement of structural racism to achieve antiracist health policy: Study examines measurement of structural racism to achieve antiracist health policy. *Health Affairs*. 2022 Feb 1;41(2):179-86.
5. Krieger N. Measures of racism, sexism, heterosexism, and gender binarism for health equity research: from structural injustice to embodied harm—an ecosocial analysis. *Annual review of public health*. 2019 Nov 25;41:37-62.
6. Lett E, Asabor E, Beltrán S, Cannon AM, Arah OA. Conceptualizing, contextualizing, and operationalizing race in quantitative health sciences research. *The Annals of Family Medicine*. 2022 Mar 1;20(2):157-63.
7. Riley AR. Neighborhood disadvantage, residential segregation, and beyond—lessons for studying structural racism and health. *Journal of racial and ethnic health disparities*. 2018 Apr;5:357-65.
8. Sewell AA. *The racism-race reification process: A mesolevel political economic framework for understanding racial health disparities. Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*. 2016 Oct;2(4):402-32.

Brigette A. Davis, PhD, MPH
davi4262@umn.edu

CREDITS: This presentation template was created by [Slidesgo](#), and includes icons by [Flaticon](#), and infographics & images by [Freepik](#)