

Alabama Ghana Virtual Symposium 2020 – Abstracts

Wednesday, September 23, 2020

“Race, Gender, and Memory of the Slave Trade”

Prof. Akosua Ampofo

Professor of African and Gender Studies
University of Ghana

Young African Men Living and Performing Blackness in the Diaspora

The work presented in this paper forms part of an on-going collaborative project between initially two, and subsequently three African women who are passionate about understanding masculinities. In this paper I explore the intersections of race, gender (and to a lesser extent class and geo-political location) in the ways in which young black men read, experience, navigate, (de)construct, and perform their lives as black men in spaces that are only sometimes considered to be home in the African diaspora. I discuss the racialization of black bodies, the performance of black African masculinities in white spaces, as well as strategies of survival and resistance. The work’s uniqueness is found in conversations carried out among men spanning three continents and nine cities. For this paper I will rely on conversations among young men in Accra, Philadelphia, and London.

Dr. Emmanuel Saboro, Senior Lecturer

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Sexual Violence, Mothering and Maternal Grieve in Ghanaian Oral Narratives

Oral narratives in northern Ghana promise window into the nature of sexual violence mothering and maternal grieve in Ghana. Drawing on extensive field work through recording of songs and collecting oral accounts from two decentralized societies, the Balsa and Kasena of Ghana, I argue that the insights from these cultures make for an illuminating case study and can find relevance in a wide range of contexts, particularly where oral traditions are concerned. While a great deal of scholarship has focused on the experiences of women within trans-Atlantic slave experience more generally little attempts have been to understand the complexities and experience of women captives within the hinterland of Africa. Yet recent scholarship has shown that the history of enslavement and captivity in Africa cannot be fully understood without taking into account the vital contributions and experiences of a variety of actors particularly women and how their experiences can shape the historical narrative.

Prof. Jenny Shaw

The University of Alabama

Mothering in Diaspora: Birth and Initiation in Early Modern West Africa and Barbados

Scholars have long debated the extent to which Africans who experienced the trauma and dislocation of the Middle Passage continued their cultural practices in the Americas. The Transatlantic Slave Trade

Database shows West African ports as the most common departure points for the enslaved men, women, and children who were forcibly transported to Barbados in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. As one way of investigating the cultural resonances between the two regions, this paper explores what it meant to mother children in West Africa and Barbados. Specifically, I focus on ceremonies surrounding birth and initiation in the lower Guinea region to explain how these practices shaped West African society before Europeans became deeply involved in the slave trade. Paying careful attention to the myriad emotions raised by parenting while enslaved I then examine how some of these same rituals may have been part of a set of tools employed by enslaved West African women when they became mothers in Barbados.

Ms. Brie Smiley, MA Student

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Conversations with My Grandmother: A Portrait of the Black South

My current research project, “Conversations with My Grandmother: A Portrait of the Black South,” revolves around familial stories, commentary, and events primarily concerning my (paternal) grandmother, my mother, and my father. These stories are meant to act as a mosaic that depicts an example of a Black family in the rural South. I use prose, song lyrics, quotes, conversations, and family photo albums to assemble an account of what it means to live in the Black South through several generations (from Jim Crow to the Civil Rights era and now the Post Racial/New South era). This project flirts with musings of Black ontology, Black feminist epistemology, Black oral traditions, and Saidiya Hartman’s “critical fabulation” to argue for the importance of a Black Southern narrative, a Black Southern memory that can better understand the intricacies of the geopolitical features of the South, particularly Alabama, and the status of an often forgotten demographic—Black Southerners.

Wednesday, September 23, 2020

“Social Determinants of Health”

Prof. Pamela Payne Foster

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Tale of Two Pandemics in the Rural Deep South: COVID and HIV

This presentation will cover ongoing issues of two current pandemics in rural Alabama: COVID-19 and HIV/AIDS. Both pandemics have been shown to be disproportionate in African American communities throughout the United States, including Alabama. An overview of the disproportionate cases and death rates will be reviewed for both pandemics as well as potential reasons for disparities in African Americans. Additionally, the speaker will cover two projects:

- A novel early COVID-19 testing project of six testing events in five Alabama “Black Belt” counties from April-July 2020

- Early preliminary results of a HIV Deep South Hotspot project with 70 African American Pastors in three Deep South States via virtual focus groups.

Comparisons will be made between the two pandemics, lessons learned for both and well as long term prevention and treatment implications for the community.

Thursday, September 24, 2020

“Social Determinants of Health”

Shameka L. Cody, PhD, AGNP-C | Assistant Professor, Capstone College of Nursing, The University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL

The speaker will discuss a recently funded diversity supplement sponsored by The National Institute of Health – National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (Parent grant – Goodin, PI). The purpose of the project is to examine the influence of insomnia on inflammation and pain-related processes in the presence of substance use in people with and without HIV. The presentation will briefly cover the following:

1. Methodology and study hypotheses
2. Clinical challenges related to management of insomnia, chronic pain, and substance use in people living with HIV

Prof. George Akanlig-Pare, Ph.D., Senior Lecturer in Linguistics
University of Ghana

Prof. Marcia Hay-McCutcheon, Department of Communicative Disorders
University of Alabama

Addressing Hearing Health Healthcare Disparities in Rural Communities of Ghana and the United States

Mounting evidence suggests that hearing loss is associated with social isolation, depression and cognitive decline. Loss of hearing has become a growing public health concern. For those with no available or affordable hearing healthcare resources, the negative effects of hearing loss are most likely worse when compared to those with access to hearing healthcare. The goal of this long-term project is to mitigate the negative effects of hearing loss by exploring means to improve access and affordability of hearing healthcare in Ghana and the US, particularly West Central and South Alabama. During the past five years, the Hear Here Alabama mobile audiology clinic has travelled to underserved regions of the Alabama and provided hearing evaluations to adults with and without hearing loss. To continue to improve access to care for underserved regions, it will be necessary to reach out to adults living in these communities and understand their needs. The purpose of this long-term project is to conduct individual and group discussions with community members to get their input on how to best improve access to care. Preliminary evidence from the Hear Here Alabama project has suggested that adults with hearing loss often withdraw from social interactions, feel left out of conversations which leads to feelings of social isolation, and many reported that they could not afford hearing healthcare. In addition, community members and community workers overwhelming state that there is a need for increased

awareness of hearing loss in their communities, particularly among healthcare professionals, business owners and other community employees. For this collaborative project, we will continue to conduct individual and group discussions with adults who have hearing loss and live in rural areas of Ghana and Alabama. By more fully understanding the needs of rural communities, we can begin to address disparities and inequalities associated with accessing hearing healthcare.

Prof. Ivy Adwowa Efiefi Ekem, Former Dean of School of Medical Sciences and Associate Professor of Haematology.
University of Cape Coast

Anaemia and the Society

Anaemia is a reduction in the haemoglobin level of an individual below the normal range for the individual's age and sex. The main function of haemoglobin is gaseous exchange. Anaemia thus affects the availability of oxygen (carried from the lungs by haemoglobin) to all the tissues of the body as well as the transport of carbon dioxide from the tissues to the lungs to be exhaled. Anaemia therefore affects the function of all tissues and thus organs including the brain. The extent of anaemia in any country varies. It is very common in Ghana and other countries with low socio economic development. The development of a nation depends on the health and thus potential of its people. From my practice of 23 years as a haematologist, I have come to appreciate that anaemia is often ignored and yet it is the single most important health monitor affecting the health and development of any society. Using literature sources and my own experience this presentation seeks to make clear why society must pay attention to anaemia to make progress. Recommendations are made.

Dr. Dorcas Obiri-Yeboah

Deputy Director, Directorate of Research Innovation and Consultancy (DRIC), UCC

Department:

Microbiology and Immunology
School of Medical Sciences, UCC

Clinical Role:

Lead HIV/STIs Clinician
Cape Coast Teaching Hospital

Differentiated service delivery: a qualitative study of people living with HIV and accessing care in tertiary facility in Ghana

Background: In 2014, the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) set out a treatment target with the objective to help end the AIDS epidemic by 2030. This was supported by the UNAIDS '90-90-90' target that by 2020, 90% of all people living with HIV (PLHIV) will know their HIV status; 90% of all those diagnosed with HIV will be on sustained antiretroviral therapy; and 90% of all people receiving antiretroviral therapy will have viral suppression. The concept of offering differentiated care services using community-based models is evidence-based and is suggested as a means to bring this target into reality. This study sought to explore the possible predictors and acceptability of Community-based health service provision among PLHIV accessing ART services at the Cape Coast Teaching Hospital (CCTH) in Ghana.

Methods: A qualitative study, using 5 focus group discussions (FGD) of 8 participants per group, was conducted at the HIV Clinic in CCTH, in the Central Region of Ghana. Facilitators administered open-ended topic-guided questions. Answers were audio recorded, later transcribed and combined with notes taken during the discussions. Themes around Facility-based and Community-based service delivery and sub-themes developed from the codes, were verified and analyzed by the authors, with the group as the unit for analysis.

Results: Participants expressed preference for facility-based service provision with the construct that, it ensures comprehensive health checks before provision of necessary medications. PLHIV in this study wished that the facility-based visits be more streamlined so “stable clients” could visit twice in a year to reduce the associated time and financial cost. The main barrier to community-based service delivery was concerns about stigmatization and abandonment in the community upon inadvertent disclosure of status.

Conclusions: Although existing evidence suggests that facility-based care was relatively more expensive and time consuming, PLHIV preferred facility-based individualized differentiated model to a community-based model. The fear of stigma and discrimination was very strong and is the main barrier to community-based model among PLHIV in this study and this needs to be explored further and managed

Dr. Nikita Harris

College of Communication and Information Sciences, University of Alabama

Ms. Chasisty G. Cooper

University of Texas Health Science Center of Houston

The Role of New Media in Telemedicine Education and Training

COVID-19 was the driving force that pushed many educational institutions to rely on new age media to transform and deliver professional training programs in alternative virtual forms to replace human communication. Research has shown that no form of communication is as rich as face-to-face interaction. Healthcare providers are expected to facilitate complex human interactions as a part of providing quality healthcare in acute scenarios. A vital part of medical school training programs is to train and evaluate students in how to effectively manage manifold human communication scenarios on entering specialty training. Medical schools were forced to re-examine and modify modes for delivering face-to-face, real-time human communication training in a virtual learning environment. This case study examines how one medical school (USA) used new age media to virtually replicate various forms of verbal and nonverbal communication through simulation based training and Standardized Patients (SPs) online. The study critically analyzes how the adaptations of new media impacted verbal and nonverbal human communication through the training process and evaluation of mastery and proficiency in clinical skills for medical school students. Interview-style encounters, role playing and focused history using new media are explored in this study. Several challenges and opportunities are discussed for how medical schools can better deliver telemedicine and education training programs in a virtual environment.

