Gender Analysis of COVID-19 Response

Developed in Women, Gender and Health 207:
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Appropriate Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health Core Courses:
This teaching example is designed to be used in HSPH MPH 100E: Essential Concepts in Infectious Disease or in a similar level introductory public health course that explores communicable disease transmission, health communication, and public health response. Note that this teaching example touches on topics that may be difficult to talk about in the classroom because students or teaching staff may have been personally affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and/or gender based violence.

Brief Background:
During COVID-19 shelter-in-place policies, rates of intimate partner violence rose [1][2]. People were forced into difficult situations — some were forced to stay at home with an abuser and others may have sought temporary shelter elsewhere. As the COVID-19 crisis continues to shed a light on many long-standing inequities, public health leaders must carefully consider how vulnerable and difficult-to-count populations are affected by the pandemic. Multiple intersecting social systems influence how a shelter-in-place policy impacts individuals differently, and these practices have a direct influence on viral transmission. Including gender and gender roles into an analysis of the differential impact of COVID-19, particularly in relation to shelter-in-place orders and intimate partner violence provides a more detailed and accurate understanding of the impacts of the pandemic and its public health response.

This learning activity is intended for use in MPH100E, a required MPH introductory class about public health responses to infectious disease. A core Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) competency that MPH100E targets is communicating audience-appropriate public health content, and learning objectives include describing "how infectious disease impacts the well-being of individuals and communities and how they stem from and exacerbate health inequities" and describing "characteristics of infectious disease as they relate to public health, with a focus on transmission as a defining characteristic" [3]. The goal of this learning activity is to introduce gender analysis into these two learning objectives and to strengthen the above CEPH competency by inviting students to compare two infographics and an article excerpt about COVID-19 and shelter-in-place policies.

Teaching and Learning Objectives for Teaching Team:
In order to facilitate a discussion on gender-based analysis of and responses to infectious disease outbreaks, we aim to achieve the following objectives for the teaching team:

1. Incorporate gender-based analysis and intersectionality into their teaching of this and other course content.
2. Critically evaluate public health messaging about gender, COVID-19, and stay-at-home orders.
3. Effectively and sensitively manage group discussions of difficult and potentially triggering topics and provide space to close discussion safely.
4. Equip students with tools to think about improving public health communication and response to infectious disease by taking into account the myriad of social systems within which public health responses exist.

Learning Objectives for Students:
This lesson intends to equip students with the skills to:
1. Use gender as a lens to investigate the differential impact of infectious disease and public health responses to infectious disease on individuals and communities.
2. Critically evaluate public health messaging about gender, COVID-19, and stay-at-home orders.
3. Reflect on how we can improve public health communication and response to infectious disease by taking into account the myriad of social systems within which public health responses exist.

Teaching Method:
1. Resources will be provided to the teaching team (professor and teaching assistants) about gender-based analysis and intersectionality to assist with grounding their teaching experience within a gender-based analysis lens.
2. Post infographics and Viera & Maciel article with English excerpt to online teaching platform before class.
3. Begin with a trigger warning: "The articles/excerpts we will discuss today touch on topics that may be sensitive for some of us in the room. If for any reason you'd like to take a break or would rather not participate in the discussion portion of today's activity, feel free to assess and address your needs as you see fit." This warning could be followed with links to school mental health resources in case students do not feel comfortable approaching teaching staff about these issues.
4. Hand out infographics and text excerpts to students who did not access it online or did not bring a computer to class.
5. Give 5 minutes to look over the infographics and text.
6. Instruct students to pair up or work in groups of 3 to discuss the following questions. Post discussion questions on the board or projector for students' reference.
7. Questions for small group/partner discussion (**15 minutes**):
   a. How does the incorporation (or lack) of a gender analysis facilitate the reader's understanding of the impact of stay-at-home orders?
   b. How might the incorporation of gender analysis in our public health response / communication improve the overall effectiveness of response to infectious disease?
   c. Why do you think many public health strategies don't account for gendered impacts?
   d. How does the excerpt inform the content in the UN Women Infographic? Would you make any changes to the UN Women infographic?

       e. How could the CDC infographic be improved to account for what you learned from the UN Women infographic? The article excerpt?
       f. What aspects do you think are missing that are useful for understanding stay-at-home orders from either infographic, or the article excerpt?
       g. What assumptions are made about the reader within the CDC infographic?
          - Think about how class, race, gender, and other facets of a person's identity can affect their ability to stay at home

8. Ask students to re-group and volunteer to share with the entire class. They can either share the things they discussed with their partner/group, or choose to address a big-picture question, which can be posted on the board or projected.
9. Questions for large group discussion (**30 minutes**):
       a. How could U.S. stay-at-home orders in response to COVID-19 have attended to the issues raised we discussed today?
       b. How can we as future public health practitioners communicate about gender differences and gendered consequences of infectious disease without reinforcing gendered hierarchies or stereotypes?
       c. How do these issues relate to other infectious disease topics we've covered in class, or that you've had personal experience with?
10. Wrap-up: encourage continued thinking on these topics while learning about other infectious diseases and disease responses. Connect to care resources (for students and community) on a final slide.

Supplementary Materials:
The materials below are intended to familiarize faculty with the concepts of gender analysis, gender equity, and intersectionality.
1. Julia Smith, "Overcoming the Tyranny of the Urgent: integrating gender into disease outbreak preparedness and response" [5]
https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13552074.2019.1615288
2. Kimberle Crenshaw's Instructors' Guide for Intersectionality [6]
https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/Kimberle-Crenshaw-Instructors_-Guide-1.pdf

Teaching Materials:
These materials and discussion questions can be downloaded as a slideshow here.
1. Infographic 1:
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/2019-ncov-factsheet.pdf
2. Infographic 2: https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/issue-brief-covid-19-and-ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-infographic-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5348
3. Excerpt: from: Viera PR & Maciel ELN, "The increase in domestic violence during the social isolation: what does it reveal?" [4] (*text copied below*)

Abstract: The social isolation imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic brings out, in a empowered way, some worrying indicators about domestic violence and family violence against women. Organizations addressing domestic violence have already seen an increase in domestic violence due to forced coexistence, economic stress and fears about the Coronavirus. The article seeks to establish some relations between social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic and the increase in violence against women, taking into account the context of a patriarchal society. Data, still incipient, published by the press of several countries were analyzed, as well as reports from international organizations and organizations focused on combating domestic violence. In parallel, a brief literature review with authors who discuss the social role of women in society.

Excerpt: The unequal division of domestic tasks, which especially burdens married women and children, proves how the home environment is yet another sphere of the exercise of male power. Most of the time, the presence of men at home does not mean cooperation or a more harmonious distribution of tasks among the whole family, but rather an increase in the invisible and unpaid work of women [9] . During social isolation, whether in the *home office* regime, or in the quest to maintain a source of income in informal work, domestic work does not give off. On the contrary, it increases as more people spend more time at home.

The construction of the female gender stereotype associates women with sensitivity, instinctive and intuitive capacities, opposing them to universal, rational, political and cultural issues. In this way, they are destined for devotion to the particular: family love, domestic care, maternity projects [9] . This common sense prevents the fair distribution of domestic responsibilities.

References:

1. "Gender-Based Violence Prevention, Risk Mitigation and Response during COVID-19 - World." ReliefWeb,reliefweb.int/report/world/gender-based-violence-prevention-risk-mitigation-and-response-during-covid-19.
2. Taub, Amanda. "A New Covid-19 Crisis: Domestic Abuse Rises Worldwide." The New York Times, The New York Times, 6 Apr. 2020, www.nytimes.com/2020/04/06/world/coronavirus-domestic-violence.html?auth=login-email&login=emai
3. Eric Rubin. MPH100E -- Essential Concepts in Infectious Disease. Fall 2019. Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Boston, MA.
4. Viera PR & Maciel ELN, The increase in domestic violence during the social isolation: what does it reveal? Rev Bras Epidemiol. 2020 Apr 22;23:e200033. doi: 10.1590/1980-549720200033. eCollection 2020.
5. Smith J, Overcoming the Tyranny of the Urgent: integrating gender into disease outbreak preparedness and response Gender and Dev. 2019 Jun 28; 27:2, 355-369. DOI: 10.1080/13552074.2019.1615288.
6. Crenshaw, K, Instructor's Guide for Intersectionality, n.d. https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/Kimberle-Crenshaw-Instructors_-Guide-1.pdf