

THE CONSTRUCTION OF CLEANLINESS

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FIRST THINGS:

**THE MULTIPLICITY OF
CLEANLINESS**

I work on...

THE MULTIPLICITY OF CLEANLINESS

- ▶ Conceptions
- ▶ Standards
- ▶ Methods
- ▶ Aims

If we study the history of cleanliness practices across culture we see variance across all of its features. This is true not only across cleanliness cultures but within them too.

WHAT DO THESE HAVE IN COMMON?

- ▶ Vacuuming
- ▶ Dusting
- ▶ Cleaning Surgical Utensils
- ▶ Washing Secondhand Clothing
- ▶ Cleaning Paint Brushes
- ▶ Washing a Car
- ▶ Removing Stains
- ▶ Skimming a Swimming Pool
- ▶ Cleaning a Computer Screen
- ▶ Cleaning a Crime Scene
- ▶ Establishing Microprocessor Factory Clean Room

This multiplicity holds for our own cleanliness practices as well. To illustrate this point...

MULTIPLICITY OF AIMS

▶ **Multiple Aims:**

- ▶ meeting aesthetic standards
- ▶ avoiding unpleasant textures, smells, etc.
- ▶ avoiding/counteracting contamination
- ▶ establishing of ownership
- ▶ creating sense of newness
- ▶ erasing the past

For the sake of time I want to highlight just one aspect of cleanliness: the divergent aims we have in our cleanliness practices.

MULTIPLICITY OF AIMS

- ▶ **Multiple Aims:**

- ▶ meeting aesthetic standards

- ▶ avoiding unpleasant textures, smells, etc.

- ▶ **avoiding/counteracting contamination**

- ▶ establishing of ownership

- ▶ creating sense of newness

- ▶ erasing the past

Of the many aims, this bias I'm zoning in on focuses more or less exclusively on avoiding contamination.

MULTIPLICITY OF AIMS

- ▶ **Multiple Aims:**

- ▶ meeting aesthetic standards
- ▶ avoiding unpleasant textures, smells, etc.
- ▶ **avoiding/counteracting contamination (biological)**
- ▶ establishing of ownership
- ▶ creating sense of newness
- ▶ erasing the past

Contamination is understood in the biological sense — as exposure to pathogens.

BIAS:

**THE GERM-AVOIDANCE CONCEPTION
OF CLEANLINESS (GACC)**

I call this bias...

THREE ASPECTS OF THE GACC

- ▶ **Conceptual:** Germs (*in general*)-as-disease-causers
- ▶ **Epistemological:** Pseudo/Scientific (& therefore skeptical)
- ▶ **Practical:** *Hygienic* – disease avoidance through germ-avoidance

It has three important features...

**CLEANLINESS IS ABOUT AVOIDING
OR KILLING GERMS, AND WE CAN
ONLY KNOW SOMETHING IS CLEAN
IF WE USE SCIENCE-Y METHODS.**

GACC

If we were to phrase the bias plainly...

Let's look at the way the bias is inscribed in the world.

INSCRIBING THE BIAS: **ADVERTISING AND ENGINEERING**

I'll point out just two ways this bias makes its way into the world.



I'm thinking of advertisements that purport to inform us about the dangers of germs.

- *Science epistemology
- *All germs are bad
- *Cleaning = germ killing

100X

Dettol

Compared to leading dish wash liquid, based on lab test.
(at 1:10 dilution)

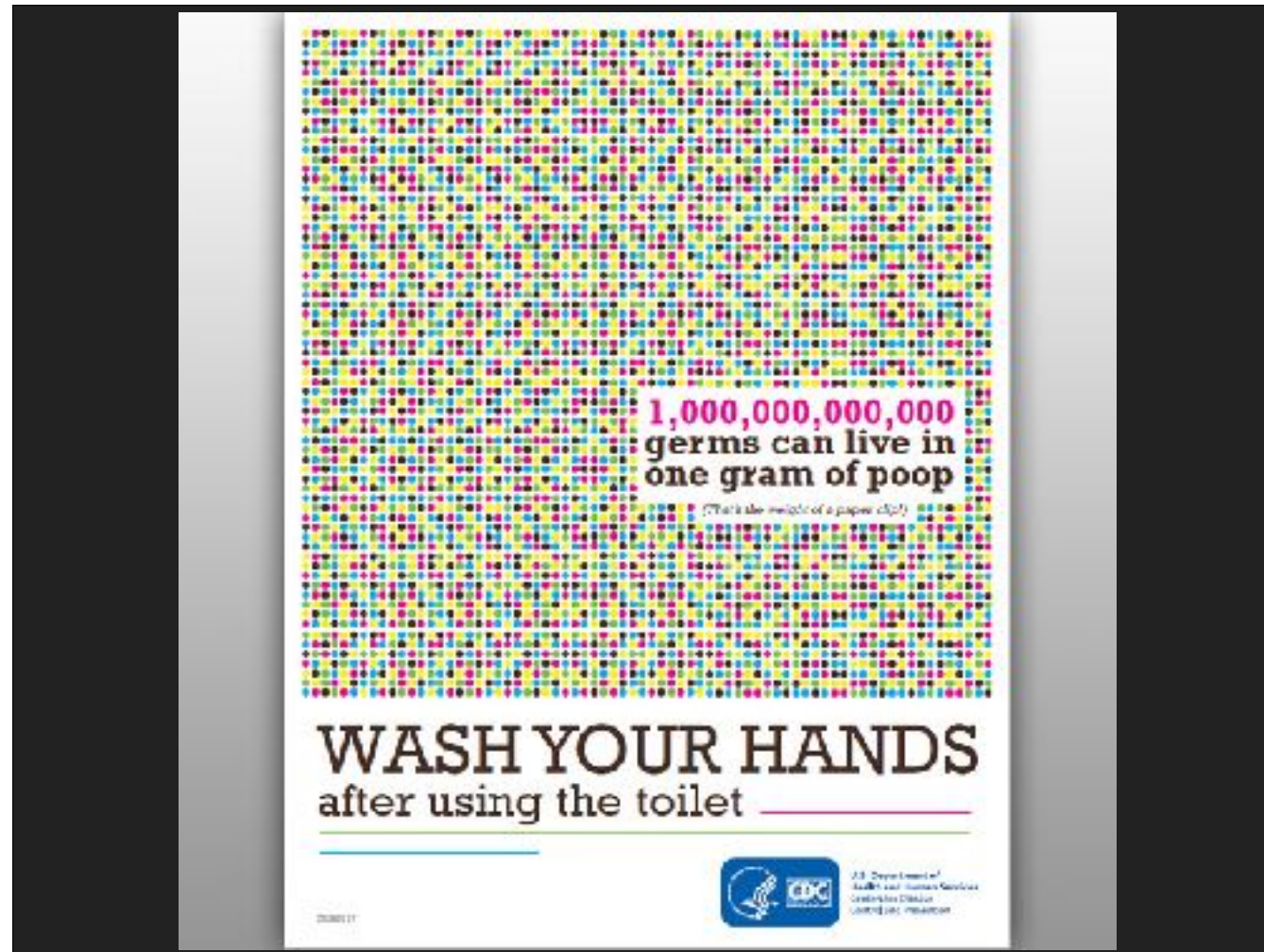
FILTHIEST PUBLIC SURFACES

Percentage of these surfaces that are dirty enough to transmit illness



Men'sHealth

PSA... no distinction bt germs



This CDC poster is no more informative...



What you really touch?





They all

make cleanliness about germs

treat germs as uniformly bad

propose a chemical or lab-derived method



See how public mind

Let's look at...engineered into physical world

CLEANLINESS & DESIGN CONSTRAINTS

- ▶ **Surfaces:** dust, smudges, fingerprints, stains
- ▶ **Building materials:** mold, stains
- ▶ **Engines:** buildup, filters
- ▶ **Metals:** corrosion
- ▶ **Use-objects:** accessible for cleaning

This bias' foot in the door....

How to solve: germs, clean, science?

DESIGNING-IN THE GACC: ANTIMICROBIALS EVERYWHERE

▶ **Construction Materials**

- ▶ Concrete
- ▶ Sheetrock
- ▶ Caulk
- ▶ Mortar
- ▶ Paint
- ▶ Grout

▶ **Fixtures**

- ▶ Handrails
- ▶ Wallpaper

▶ **Everyday Objects**

- ▶ Wood pencils
- ▶ Calculators
- ▶ Baby Carriers
- ▶ Yoga Mats
- ▶ Clothing
- ▶ Scissors
- ▶ Cooking Utensils
- ▶ Pillowcases
- ▶ Cutting Boards
- ▶ Vacuum Cleaners

Here's a partial list of some unexpected places...

**PUBLIC HEALTH
CONSEQUENCES
(VIA ENGINEERING & DESIGN):
BREEDING RESISTANCE**

CONCLUSION:

COSTS OF BIAS TOWARD THE GACC

- ▶ **Short Term:** Decreased exposure rate

- ▶ **Long Term:** Increase resistance rate

THANK YOU

COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS?
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