

LIBERAL ARTS

Presentation of Racial Disparities in Health Care: Portrayals, Perceptions, and Health Attitudes in the Media

Student researcher: Rachel Greene, Sophomore

In the United States, consistent and increasing patterns of health care disparities and inequities mark the contrasting experiences, access to treatments and services, and health outcomes that are reported by different racial groups. The role of the news media shapes public opinion, therefore framing public policies and programs. This research questions the ways in which health disparities are framed in public conversations. It explores the various factors represented in media portrayals of health and the extent to which individual lifestyles and genetic causes are highlighted within the media's portrayal of poor health. These discussions and intersections with policies/programs are pronounced, as shown in health equity documentation. Data was collected concerning state-

level news stories covering major health issues where racial health disparities are most likely to be pronounced (e.g., heart disease, obesity, and cancer). An analysis of the key themes and frames that emerge in these stories will be conducted. These stories disclose the various determinants of health, specifically in the context of individual versus socioeconomic class, to focus on ways the stories frame factors of health. The data gathered from the media analysis will contribute to an ongoing project on health disparities and public opinion at the Center on Poverty and Health Inequities.

Research advisor Mohan J. Dutta writes, "This work holds vital policy implications as it relates to understanding the role of race in shaping disparities within the context of media portrayal, public opinion, and support for specific policies that relate to mitigating race-based health disparities."