

**Social & Ecological: Determinants of Health**

C&E SOC. 140: Introduction to Community & Environmental Sociology

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18 June 2021

A supportive response to national and international disasters is critical to the health and safety of both children and those from marginalized communities. Women and minorities are impacted the most by changes in policy; but are the least respected by policy positions or responses to specific events. Some examples of these responses that disproportionately affected minorities include the response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, or the disaster recovery with respect to Hurricane Katrina. While each one of these specific events may have impinged on the general community at large, it is children, women, and minorities who are often more negatively impacted by the less than supportive recovery responses.

“Thinking about racism as a lived, embodied experience also opens connections with the environmental justice movement, which has challenged racialized exposures to industrial pollution and consequent health inequalities,” (Dillon, 2016, pp. 15)

Consider the health implications for children, women, and minority groups after changes in policy. More accountabilities should be attached to policy adjustments. Some examples of the negative health implications for minority groups due to unnatural events is as much an environmental justice debate as it is a civil rights debate, as poor and Black people have disproportionately more cases of asthma worldwide. This problem is especially true in the United States, a country with a history of decisionmakers who provide comfort to corporate entities that in turn manufacture with impunity. Municipal, county, and statewide efforts fail to allocate resources or policy that protects communities of color in urban areas. The cases of asthma are on the rise globally due to increases of poor air quality in urban areas because of air pollution from

carbon emissions, and there are some in power who plainly do not do enough to provide support to the folks in those communities (Brown et. al., 2003, pp. 455).

The Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) is measured by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC defines SDOH as “conditions in the places where people live, learn, work, and play that affect a wide range of health and quality-of life-risks and outcomes,” suggesting that individual health is as much of a physical manifestation as it is a series of abstract occurrences (CDC, 2001). In the PBS documentary “Unnatural Causes,” Neuroscientist, Bruce McEwen, describes how stressors can trigger production of cortisol within the body. These findings support the claim that racism, sexism, and patriarchy have real health implications to the victims of such attacks.

Playwright and activist who created the *Vagina Monologues*, commonly called V, (formerly known as Eve Ensler), delivered an in-depth comprehensive report for *The Guardian* online news source regarding “Disaster patriarchy,” with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic. In this exposé, V describes the patriarchal policy making when it comes to disaster recovery, and the many unconsidered effects of policy to a large population of women victimized by domestic violence, abuse, sexual assault, and other serious health risks. Many women are often the front lines in health care for example, in the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic they were mandated to work long hours without proper protective gear. For many women around the world, following quarantine guidelines might also mean increased victimization from abusers. It is blatantly evident: health is impacted by every event one experiences, detrimentally so for racist, patriarchal, or sexist attacks.

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