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## Final Report

### **Introduction**

This social action research project focused on the health and wellness as well as the access to resources for pregnant minority women in the D.C. area. Different challenges face minority women in accessing adequate health services such as location, cost, and social discrimination that decrease a woman's health overtime. This proves to be detrimental to not only women but also families over a period of time. Inadequate health services leads to long term health issues past on through systemic discrimination. This project looked to identify where the shortcomings come from as well as looked to help different organizations throughout the area support women.

### **Research Question**

Do the current institutionalized systems of health care regarding the kind of prenatal care a patient receives produce differences in the quality of care for the black female population in terms of the care given by individual care providers such as nurse practitioners and doctors?

### **Literature Review**

For this research project, my focus is on care for pregnant minority women. Specifically, this paper will investigate the disparities minority women experience in acquiring prenatal care and how these disparities are created within the healthcare system. This is an incredibly important discussion to look into because the health and safety of minority women is a basic

right. Therefore, investigating and understanding the issues in the system is crucial to making improvements and fixing the systemic issues that plague minority women. Based on this, my research centers around the experience of minority women when searching and receiving prenatal care.

The resources found during the research process showed that the discussion around minority women's prenatal care is being considered. There are clear indications of disparities. An element that was important to distinguish, however, when investigating these disparities, was whether the resource was talking about racial minorities or ethnic minorities. This is an important distinction. The two groups do overlap, however, they can produce different results in studies and analysis. Therefore, for this research project, racial minorities will be the center focus of this paper.

Throughout the research, themes became apparent throughout the sources. A prominent theme was patient hesitation for care. This came out as a result from multiple studies. It was noted that even health professionals highlighted that, within the healthcare system, prenatal care for minority women (specifically black women) shows dramatic disparities (Edge 2010). Additionally, it was said that the resources are not being maximized to ensure the best efforts for these women (Edge 2010). This was similarly seen in another source, where it was discovered that minority women were less likely to seek medical care in the early stages of their pregnancy (Gavin 2004). The hesitation can even be seen when racial minority women chose to have children. Amongst minority women, there is a delay in child bearing, which can present negative health outcomes for the child in the future, including the death of the child (Nabukera, Wingate, Owen, Salihu, Swaminathan, Alexander, & Kirby 2009). In all, the sources show that there is a

culture of hesitation and, to an extent, fear in minority women in seeking care when pregnant. As it stands, this is a dramatic disparity stemming from racial inequalities.

Another prominent theme was health consequences due to disparities. Whether this was from the previous theme of patient hesitation or due to the form and quality of care, negative health outcomes were present for both mother and child. Large differences between racial groups showed that the major gap in care contributed to negative outcomes for mothers and children both prenatal and postpartum (Parekh, Jarlenski, Kelley 2017). Another study focusing on how the disparities impact birth weights of children of racial minority women. In this study, findings showed that low birth rates were more consistent for racial minorities (Wartko, Wong, Enquobahrie 2017). Taking a look at the bigger picture, a study found that, for African American women specifically, there were overall higher rate adverse health outcomes compared to white Americans.

All together, these sources have highlighted that issues are present within the healthcare system in respects to caring for pregnant minority women. The research points to the disparities along racial minority lines while also showing the tangible impacts on the mothers and the children. As the research process goes on, there is more to investigate in respect to the patient and carer relationship as well as the systemic portion of this health crisis. From this research, it is evident that the disparities exist and that there are dramatic outcomes. Yet, it is important to comprehensively understand what creates these issues. Therefore, as research continues, these points will be heavily covered.

## **Policy Memo**

### **I. Executive Summary**

Health care is understood as a basic human right, particularly in the western hemisphere. Yet, despite this, the U.S. finds itself falling short in caring for many of its citizens. Specifically, many health care disparities exist for minorities within the United States. For this research project, the disparities and how they impact pregnant minority women is the focus. This is a crucial issue, for these women are experiencing a massive lack of care which not only puts their health and life in jeopardy but also their child's (Parekh, Jarlenski, Kelley 2017). Additionally, this is an issue that impacts families for generations through health complications which are often exacerbated by environmental and socioeconomic factors. For these women, as well, there is little they can do as individuals to mitigate these issues that have the capability to directly impact them and leave a lasting effect on their families for generations. Additionally, there is reportedly very little being done to address this critical issue (Edge 2010). Therefore, this issue is important to address because, the bottom line is, women regardless of their race have the right to be adequately cared for. In all, health should not be a privilege, it should be a basic human right.

### **II. Background**

Research has shown that racial minorities do not trust the healthcare system or providers. Patient hesitation is a common theme when it comes to care, and this has shown to be detrimental to both the health of the mother and the unborn child (Gavin 2004). This was similarly seen in another source, where it was discovered that minority women were less likely to seek medical care in the early stages of their pregnancy (Gavin 2004). The hesitation can even be seen when racial minority women chose to have children. Amongst minority women, there is a

delay in child bearing, which can present negative health outcomes for the child in the future, including the death of the child (Nabukera, Wingate, Owen, Salihu, Swaminathan, Alexander, & Kirby 2009). Some consequences specific for the child are low birth weights and even fetal death (Wartko, Wong, Enquobahrie 2017). Whether this was from the previous theme of patient hesitation or due to the form and quality of care, negative health outcomes were consistently present for both mother and child. Large differences between racial groups showed that the major gap in care contributed to negative outcomes for mothers and children both prenatal and postpartum (Parekh, Jarlenski, Kelley 2017). In all, then, access and quality are crucial aspects that are falling short for racial minorities in the field of prenatal health care.

### **III. Key Stakeholders**

Regarding this critical issue within the healthcare system, the key stakeholders for this issue are minority women, minority communities, city officials, and healthcare providers. Minority women and minority communities are being directly impacted by this issue. With this issue being addressed, not only would minority women's health dramatically improve but the health of the community and future families would also improve.

City officials are also key stakeholders in this issue. The health and safety of minority communities is an important issue, particularly in politics today. In terms of political reputation and even reelection, supporting minority communities and their health is crucial when serving as a public servant.

The final key stakeholder are the healthcare providers. This includes the big corporations and hospitals that provide the care and insurance for these women. It also includes the practitioners in private practices. Additionally, this issue is crucial to the minority population, not just specific to women, but to the entirety of a community. This is due to the fact that the health

of young children dramatically impacts their developments into adulthood and will impact generations' health as well.

#### **IV. Past Solutions**

At this point in time, little legislation has been passed to address this issue. In approaching this issue, there has been a social approach rather than a political one. The closest attempt to supporting women in minority communities comes from Planned Parenthood and local, small resources. A political approach may prove to be more effective in instituting change in the systems.

#### **V. Project Plan**

Through the action project, there will be three main goals. The first will be to establish an organized and coherent website that is accessible for those seeking information. The second goal will be the coordination of both social media and the website in order to increase awareness. The third will be any degree of fundraising achieved throughout the social media campaign. With these three goals, in all, the informative website and social media campaign will have made an impact in increasing awareness of this issue in the D.C. area. These are appropriate goals for this project because they are within the realm of possibility considering the COVID-19 crisis and are also complementary goals to one another.

## **VI. Conclusion**

Healthcare is a critical issue, as health is the foundation of a community and a country. The fact that minority women are suffering by not receiving adequate and appropriate prenatal care is ultimately unacceptable. Not only does it impact the health of the women, but it also impacts the health and wellness of the children and the community at large. More action must be taken to ensure that the patterns that are affecting pregnant women's health is addressed. Specifically, an increase in political approaches to this issue look to be a more effective way forward compared to social movements. In all, there needs to be formal legislation by local officials to help these communities and support minority women.

### **Criteria Alternative Matrix**

My research questions centers around if the current institutionalized systems of prenatal health care for African American women produces disparities in care. This question begs the consideration of various factors that have a considerable impact. Therefore, approaches towards solutions actually spread quite wide in terms of how we can help different aspects of this issue. Based on this, I plan to consider a range of potential solutions to this issue to try and hit some of the key aspects of the issue. These involve obvious issues such as funding, but also include issues heavily associated with the produced disparities such as transportation and awareness. Considered in my criteria alternative matrix is a funding campaign for Planned Parenthood, funding campaign for small, local care giving facilities, social media campaigns for awareness of the issue, and a social campaign to push for increased transportation access.

1: not so good;

5: Good

Alternatives	Criteria 1: Affectability on issue directly	Criteria 2: Amount of resources available in order to complete	Criteria 3: Time Cost	Criteria 4: Total Cost	Criteria 5: Increase Awareness	<b>TOTALS</b>
Funding Campaign for Planned Parenthood	4	3	1	5	2	15
Funding Campaign for local care giving	3	3	1	5	2	14
Social media Campaign	2	5	3	5	2	17
Social Campaign push for Transportation	4	1	1	2	3	9
Website	3	5	3	5	3	19

In evaluating the possible solutions, there were a few key criteria that seemed to be the most important to consider. A key element to this, however, is that these solutions will be both approached and executed differently due to the current state of the country given the COVID-19 Pandemic. Having said that, the criteria for the possible proposed solutions are the effectability of the issue directly, the amount of resources available to complete the solution, the amount of time it would take, the cost, and the degree of awareness for those who are not affected by this issue.

Having conducted the criteria alternative matrix, it is evident that,



based on the given criteria, the website and social media campaign will prove most appropriate for this social action project. The combination of the two approaches are not only complimentary, but will also be manageable and feasible considering the resources available. Within this approach as a proposed solution, the focus will be to support an increased awareness of this issue within the community on social media through information on the website. In the current state, this is how most if not all awareness campaigns are mainly conducting themselves. The biggest downfall of this proposed solution, however, is that the effectiveness on the issue may be difficult to evaluate since it is difficult to do anything hands on at this point in time. The biggest upside to this proposed solution is the accessibility not only for the one running the website and social media campaign but also to the other people who are interested.

The third solution with the highest score came out to be the funding campaign for Planned Parenthood. The solution for a funding campaign for local caregivers and facilities came closely behind. While these solutions are cost effective and reasonably impactful for a community, the time and awareness dramatically fall behind in effectiveness. However, funding ultimately is a massive resource for facilities and would prove to be impactful.

The final solution that was ranked last was the social campaign for increase and improved transportation. While transportation is actually one of the key elements of this issue, it is a big beast to tackle because so many aspects need to be considered. This solution demands attention towards transportation legislation and funding as well as the consideration of the health care legislation. To conduct a movement for increased and better quality transportation would ultimately be an incredibly difficult task, particularly during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

In all, the best option from this criteria alternative matrix came out to be a website complimented by a social media campaign. This option has also been heavily considered based

on the projected status of the COVID-19 Pandemic. However, as more develops, it will be interesting to see if an approach such as a social media campaign could grow to something bigger, especially considering the awareness of public health and social issues in the modern day.

### **Final Project Plan**

Based on my research question, the primary issue at hand is minority access to specific healthcare. The specific healthcare would be prenatal care for African American women. This is an important issue to address because not only does it deal with the health of American citizens but it also deals with the health of the overall community as well as the future health of the community. Additionally, this issue also points to the overall quality of life for minorities in America. Overall, this issue has been mostly overlooked because it is as tangible of a problem for voters or legislatures to engage with. Therefore, African American women seeking prenatal care and help have been falling through the cracks for decades. This means, then, that there is a pattern of inadequate care for a substantial amount of the population starting from birth. Not only is this an oversight of basic human rights and decency, but this also puts substantial strains on many systems throughout the country. Currently, there is little being done to address this issue. The most substantial movements would be the Affordable Care Act passed by the Obama administration. However, to combat this issue, help needs to be narrowed down and focused to really care for these individuals.

Based on the background information while also considering the current state of the U.S. public health crisis, I shall create an informational and awareness focused website which will be complimented by a social media awareness campaign. This has been evaluated through a criteria alternative matrix where resources and effectiveness were considered. The website will include

information including both practical help and scholarly information. Within the social media campaign, the goal is to achieve community awareness and support in the local D.C. area. To execute this project, multiple social media platforms, including fundraising pages, Instagram and Twitter, will be used to reach as many people throughout the community as possible. Within these platforms, information and local resources will be highlighted from the website as well as ways individuals in the community can help with this issue. Again, the key is to increase awareness as there is massive oversight on this issue. Through this, the goal is to alert our community that action must be taken and that it is unacceptable that women and their families across the nation are suffering at mass rates.

Through the action project, there will be three main goals. The first will be to establish an organized and coherent website that is accessible for those seeking information. The second goal will be the coordination of both social media and the website in order to increase awareness. The third will be any degree of fundraising achieved throughout the social media campaign. With these three goals, in all, the informative website and social media campaign will have made an impact in increasing awareness of this issue in the D.C. area. These are appropriate goals for this project because they are within the realm of possibility considering the COVID-19 crisis and are also complementary goals to one another.

For the month of January, the website will have been created and the about page will have been finished. The website will continue on to grow through including articles, statistics, and resources. By early February, at least five helpful articles and five scholarly articles are to have been cited and published on the website. By the middle to late February, the social media platforms will have been established. Throughout March, the social media campaign will highlight and support the website through posting information from the website. This is to ensure

that the information is spreading throughout the community. The final stages of the project, running till the end of the semester, will include a coordinated campaign focusing on awareness and fundraising for organizations that support the cause throughout the D.C. area. This will be solely on the social media platforms.

There are potential challenges that could be presented during the execution of the social action portion of this project. A massive challenge that is foreseen due to the COVID-19 crisis is social media exhaustion. Due to the current pandemic, everything has been moved online. Therefore, people are finding themselves exhausted with online engagement as a whole making social media campaigns not as easy to conduct as they once were. An additional challenge that could occur could be a lack of engagement due to the excitement of the current political climate. At this point, politics takes up a lot of space on majority social media platforms. Therefore, it will be important to be aware of the climate of social media as the campaign goes on.

The issue of prenatal care of African American women is an issue that needs to be addressed by our legislatures now. Creating a social media campaign for awareness and fundraising will support the push for attention on the issue. As efforts continue towards this issue, there is hope for improvements in experience for women across the nation.