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Masculinity, Race/Color and Health

L.E. Batista

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Objectives: Identify the differences in mortality profiles between black and white men in São Paulo, Brazil with respect to three causes of death.

Methodology: Data from the 1999 Mortality Data System data base (SMI) were used in the analysis, and the data were divided into three main causes of death; infectious and parasitic diseases, mental disorders, and external causes (violence, homicide, etc.) Only data on blacks and whites were included in the analysis.

Results: The author reported higher rates of mortality for men than for women. This is attributed to social determinants such as lifestyle, behavior and habits. Black men and women die from (respiratory) tuberculosis at a rate three times as high as whites and 2.3 times higher from HIV-related illness. Mortality from mental disorders in black women was 1.7 times that of white women, while black men died at 3 times the rate of white men from mental disorders related to alcohol and drug use. Mortality from external causes was twice as high among black men as white men, evidence that this group suffers from high exposure to violence.

Conclusions: Given the higher mortality rate among blacks, the author analyzes the relationship between death, the health-illness process, and social conditions. A critical perspective on racial inequality and its impact on health are advanced throughout the article.