

# ETIOLOGY

Health disparities are caused by a complex set of individual, environmental, social, and health system factors that converge through central pathways. Central pathways to investigate include how racism influences health, how biological mechanisms and physiological systems respond to social and environmental exposures, how varying life experiences lead to divergent health trajectories, and how health systems can either perpetuate or reduce health disparities. A better understanding of these pathways will make it possible to design effective interventions and policy approaches.

This group of strategies is one of three pillars in NIMHD's plan to advance health disparities science and improve minority health. These three pillars are methods and measurement, etiology, and interventions.



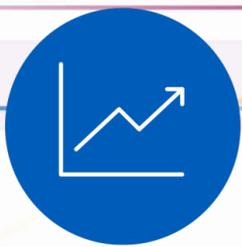
## Social Determinants

- ▶ Advance identification and understanding of how protective factors and resilience promote health at the individual, community, and population levels.
- ▶ Strengthen the understanding of how racism and discrimination are conceptualized and measured and contribute to health disparities, with emphasis on internalized and structural racism.
- ▶ Elucidate mechanisms for how social determinants influence health behaviors that lead to health disparities.



## Environmental Exposures, Biological Pathways and Mechanisms

- ▶ Assess how place and neighborhoods structure health disparities geographically.
- ▶ Determine the pathways and mechanisms through which environmental, economic, sociocultural, and behavioral factors influence biological systems and pathogenesis that leads to health disparities.



## Life Course Approaches

- ▶ Integrate life course into health disparities research, including research on biological pathways and mechanisms.
- ▶ Identify mechanisms of intergenerational transmission of disease leading to health disparities, which take into account biological, behavioral, social, cultural, and life course perspectives.



## Health Services

- ▶ Examine the impact of delivery models on population health.
- ▶ Identify the mechanisms by which patient-clinician communication and biases affect disparities in health outcomes.
- ▶ Determine how to improve diagnostic and medical guidelines, screening criteria, and standards of care through incorporating considerations of patient characteristics.