

The Race of Health Workers As a Determinant of Black Women's Childbearing Experiences

Princess Magor Abozo,¹ Fidelis Y. Sesenu,^{1,2} Jessica R. Thompson, PhD, MEd^{1,3} Corrine Williams, ScM, ScD⁴

¹Center for Health Equity Transformation, ²College of Communication and Information, ³Markey Cancer Center Community Impact Office, ⁴Department of Health, Behavior, and Society
Research Mentor: Dr. Corrine Williams



Introduction

- Maternal mortality rates (1,205 deaths in 2021) have been on the rise in the United States in recent years¹, with four in 5 deaths being preventable²
- Black women have the highest rate and are **3x more likely to die of pregnancy** related issues as compared to white women.³
- Factors that contribute to the poor maternal health of black women include:
 - structural racism**
 - implicit bias**
 - poor quality in healthcare**
 - mistrust of the healthcare industry**^{3,4}
- Black women are also **more likely to suffer from maternal morbidities or pregnancy-related illnesses** as compared to their white counterparts.⁴
- Black women's historical and anecdotal experiences of medical experimentation, coercion, mistreatment continue to shape their engagement and satisfaction with medical care⁵

Aims

Objectives of this study include to:

- Identify/understand themes surrounding the **experiences of Black women during maternity** including prenatal, childbirth, and postpartum periods
- Identify experiences of common **implicit biases by healthcare workers** about Black women during maternity periods
- Understand **methods of care preferred and requested** from Black mothers to better their childbearing experience

Methods

Overview of Recruitment Plans

- We plan to recruit 10 Black women who are 18+ years old and are currently pregnant or have been through pregnancy.
- Community partners around Lexington will be contacted by via email to share a flyer with a QR code for an eligibility survey.
- Participants who are eligible for the study will then be contacted and asked to sign a consent form before the interview.
- Participants will be compensated with \$50 gift cards.

Data Collection Plans

- To ensure participants are in a comfortable space, we will offer interviews online via Zoom or in-person in a conference room at a public library.
- Questions the participants will be asked include the following areas:
 - Overall childbearing experiences
 - Race/ethnicity of your health care worker
 - Anything that could have been done better by your healthcare workers
 - Anything you could have been done to make your experience better
 - Worries, complaints, and/or requests disregarded by your health workers
 - (If ≥1 child) how childbearing experiences between your children differ

Potential Results

- Based on previous literature, we **anticipate** results to show that Black women experience **several racialized pregnancy stigma** and stereotypes requiring several coping strategies.⁵
- Literature related to the maternal health of Black women shows some implicit biases against the women. From this, we anticipate mothers to report some implicit biases they faced including **assumptions of their socioeconomic status, marital status, and their pain tolerance because of their race**.⁶
- Interventions recommended by studies on racialized pregnancy include **training health care providers as well as social service providers on anti-bias and implicit bias**. We foresee the study participants agreeing to this intervention as well as other programs geared to support their childbearing experiences including but not limited to⁵:

1. **Support groups** for Black women who are pregnant, or have given birth

2. **Reproductive health facilities** that are **easily accessible**

3. **Better insurance coverage** for reproductive health services

4. **More Black medical professionals**

5. **Better education** on pregnancy and perinatal care to encourage self-efficacy

- We also **anticipate** Black mothers to also comparatively **report better experiences** including **higher levels of satisfaction, perceived trust and empathy with Black health care providers** because of racial and ethnic commonalities.³

Research Approach:
Qualitative

Method:
In-depth interviews

Study Site:
In-Person / Zoom

Sample:
Black women aged 18-99 & have given birth

Data Analysis:
Thematic analysis

Next Steps

Next steps include:

- Outreach to and collaboration with potential community partners and organizations to aid in the recruitment of Black mothers for the study
- Conducting interviews with participants in their preferred locations
- Analyze collected data using thematic analysis to identify common themes amongst the experiences of participants
- Compile findings to compose an accurate report of the study

This study will contribute:

- Unique insights about the intersections of perceptions of healthcare providers' race/ethnicity with Black women's lived experience of childbearing care
- To public discourse and interventions to address racialized pregnancy stigma in health care to improve maternal and infant outcomes for Black women

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