


Experiences of racism and breastfeeding initiation and duration among first-time mothers of the Black Women's Health Study

MICHELE K. GRISWOLD, PH.D., MPH, RN, IBCLC
 UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS GRADUATE SCHOOL OF NURSING, WORCESTER
 BREASTFEEDING AND FEMINISM INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
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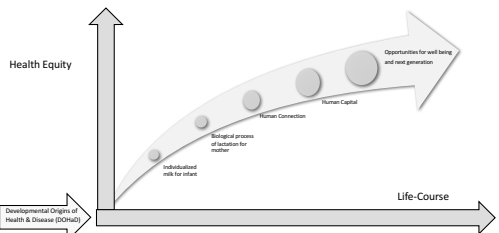


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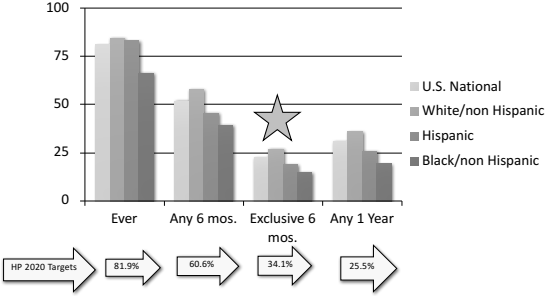
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Background and Significance



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Selected U.S. rates of any and exclusive breastfeeding by socio demographic factors 2013



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Background and Significance

Race, racism and health:
Racism: "phenomena that results in avoidable and unfair inequalities in power, resources and opportunities across racial or ethnic groups..."¹ (p. 2)

- Asthma
- Obesity
- Breast cancer
- Poor birth outcomes

Phitz, N., Paradiak, Y., Tenney, B., Truong, M., Karlson, S., & Kelly, Y. (2013). A systematic review of studies examining the relationship between reported racism and health and wellbeing for children and young people. *Social Science and Medicine*, 95, 115-127.

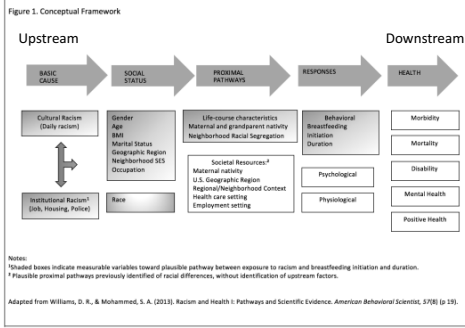
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Specific Aims

1. To investigate the association between experiences of racism and breastfeeding **initiation** among the participants of the Black Women's Health Study. (BWHS)
2. To investigate the association between experiences of racism and breastfeeding **duration** among participants of the BWHS.
3. To investigate the relationship between selected life-course factors and breastfeeding **initiation** and **duration** among participants of the BWHS.

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Conceptual Framework



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Methods

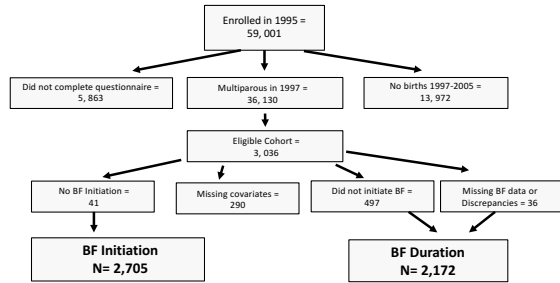
- **Methodology:** Prospective secondary analysis of the BWHS
- **Human Subjects:** Approved Boston University IRB; Exempt from review UMass Med IRB
- **Setting:** Longitudinal cohort (N=59,001) enrolled in 1995; 2 Year Follow Up; 80% Follow Up Rate
- Analytic Cohort:**
 - **Sample included**
 - All participants who enrolled in 1995
 - Responded to the racism assessment in 1997
 - Reported birth of 1st child following the racism assessment

Rosenberg, L., Adams-Campbell, L., & Palmer, J. R. (1995). The Black Women's Health Study: a follow-up study for causes and preventions of illness. *Journal of the American Women's Medical Association*, 50(2), 56-58.

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Sample



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Measurement

Racism

- **Daily exposure:** "in your day to day life, how often have you experienced the following?" (1-5 scale)
 - People act as if:
 - You are not intelligent
 - They are afraid of you
 - You are dishonest
 - They are better than you
 - You receive poorer service
- **Institutional exposure:** "have you ever been treated unfairly in following circumstances?" (Yes/No)
 - Job
 - Housing
 - Police

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Measurement

- **Breastfeeding Initiation**
 - Refers to whether or not a woman initiates breastfeeding upon the birth of her child.
 - "Did you breastfeed?" (Yes or No)
- **Breastfeeding Duration**
 - Refers to how long after birth, the child received breast milk or how old child was when stopped receiving breast milk.
 - 1999 and 2001 (< 3 months, 3-5 months and 6 months or more)
 - 2003 and 2005 (open ended question)
 - 2011 data used to fill in for breastfeeding initiation and duration

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Measurement

Aim 3: Life-Course Characteristics

- **Nativity or Country of birth (U.S./other)**
 - Participant
 - Her mother
 - Her father
- **Neighborhood Segregation**
 - 1997 ("Up to age 18, what kind of neighborhood did you live in?")
 - 1999 ("What kind of neighborhood do you live in?")
 - Responses Predominately Black, White, mixed or other

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Results

➤ Full Sample

- Age = Mean 31.6 (range 22-48)
- BMI = 26.8 (Range 15-65)
- Years of Education = 67% had college or some college
- Marital Status = 47.3% married; 41.6% single, never married
- Geographic Region = 37.7 % South
- Occupation = 59.2% Professional/managerial

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Results

AIM 1

Experiences of **racism** and breastfeeding **initiation** (job, housing, police)

- Experiences of racism in job setting associated with lower odds of breastfeeding initiation ($p > .05$)
- Experiences of racism with the police associated with significantly higher odds of breastfeeding initiation. ($p < .05$)

*adjusted for age, BMI, years of education, marital status, geographic region, occupation and SES index

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Results

AIM 2:

Experiences of **racism** and breastfeeding **duration** (job, housing, police)

- The odds of breastfeeding at 3-5 mos. vs. 3 months were significantly lower for women reporting racism in the job setting. ($p < .05$)
- Experiences of racism with police was associated with significantly higher odds of breastfeeding at 3-5 months and 6 months. ($p < .05$)

*adjusted for age, BMI, years of education, marital status, geographic region, occupation and SES index

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Results

AIM 3:

Life-course characteristics and breastfeeding **initiation**

- Women whose mothers and fathers were born in the U.S. (vs. other) had significantly lower odds of initiating breastfeeding. ($p < .05$)
- Living in a Black neighborhood up to age 18, compared with a White neighborhood, was associated with lower odds of initiating breastfeeding. (Similar for 1999)

*adjusted for age, BMI, years of education, marital status, geographic region, occupation and SES index

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Results

AIM 3

Life-course characteristics and breastfeeding **duration**

- Participants and their mothers born in the U.S. (vs. other) had significantly lower odds of breastfeeding at 3-5 mos. ($p < .05$)
- Living in a predominately Black neighborhood up to age 18 (vs. White) was associated with lower odds of breastfeeding at 6 months. (nearing significance)

*adjusted for age, BMI, years of education, marital status, geographic region, occupation and SES index

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Discussion

- First time mothers in this sample experienced institutional racism.
- Experiences of racism in workplace predicted lower odds of breastfeeding at 3-5 months.
 - Social institutions produce political resources through policies.
 - Cultural racism- negative stereotypes and micro-aggressions in the workplace.

Hilder, A., et al. (2015). "Racial microaggression experiences and coping strategies of Black women in corporate leadership." *Qualitative Psychology* 2(2): 164.
Smith-Gagen, L., et al. (2014). "Breastfeeding rates and breastfeeding practices by race and ethnicity." *Women's Health Issues* 24(1): e11-19.

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Discussion

- Women who reported experiences of racism with the police had significantly higher odds of breastfeeding initiation and duration.
 - Strength, resilience, resistance hypotheses
 - Fear of police encounters

Abrams, J. A., et al. (2014). "Carrying the world with the grace of a lady and the grit of a warrior deepening our understanding of the "strong black women" schema." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 38(4): 503-518.

Jackson, F. M., et al. (2017). "Anticipated Negative Police-Youth Encounters and Depressive Symptoms among Pregnant African American Women: A Brief Report." *Urban Health* 94(2): 219-235.

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Discussion

- Overall, being born in the US was associated with lower odds of initiation and duration compared with being born outside of the US.
 - Significance of early life impressions
- Racial Segregation
 - Limited availability of Baby-Friendly Hospitals
 - Limited availability of culturally congruent skilled lactation support

Fabiy, C., et al. (2016). "A Qualitative Study to Understand Nativity Differences in Breastfeeding Behaviors Among Middle-Class African American and African-Born Women." *Maternal Child Health* 22(12): 2100-2111.

Smith, A. M., et al. (2015). "Enhancing Breastfeeding Through Healthcare Support: Results from a Focus Group Study of African American Mothers." *Maternal Child Health* 20(Suppl 1): 92-100.

Smith, A. M., et al. (2015). "Mind-Body Interventions to Reduce Risk for Health Disparities Related to Stress and Strength Among African American Women." *Woodruff-Gibson, C. L. and A. B. Black (2015). "Mind-Body Interventions to Reduce Risk for Health Disparities Related to Stress and Strength Among African American Women. The Potential of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, Loving-Kindness, and the NTO Therapeutic Framework." *Complement Health Pract Rev* 15(3): 125-131.*

Payne, S. L. (2014). "A call to action: lactation equity through professional diversification." *J Hum Lact* 30(4): 396-397.

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Implications for Policy and Practice

Job Setting:

- Workplace lactation programs- beneficial to focus on the 3-5 month window by providing culturally congruent care and support for Black women in the workplace.
- Individual care is critical but equally critical to dismantle systems of oppression the workplace through policies.

Jahoon, A. M., et al. (2015). "Overcoming Workplace Barriers: A Focus Group Study Exploring African American Mothers' Needs for Workplace Breastfeeding Support." *J Hum Lact* 31(3): 425-433.

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Implications for Policy and Practice

- **Individual-level interventions:**
 - Culturally-congruent lactation care
 - Targeting stress for women
 - Targeting health care professional biases
- **Structural-level interventions:**
 - Health policy
 - Advocate for policies and funding at local, regional, state and national levels
 - To support neighborhood differences in breastfeeding outcomes and
 - Grassroots coalitions

Bagg, K. and G. Bagg, Jr. (2013). "Reaching Our Sisters Everywhere." *Breastfeed Med* 8(5): 453.

Jahoon, A. M., et al. (2015). "Overcoming Workplace Barriers: A Focus Group Study Exploring African American Mothers' Needs for Workplace Breastfeeding Support." *J Hum Lact* 31(3): 425-433.

Woodruff-Gibson, C. L. and A. B. Black (2015). "Mind-Body Interventions to Reduce Risk for Health Disparities Related to Stress and Strength Among African American Women. The Potential of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, Loving-Kindness, and the NTO Therapeutic Framework." *Complement Health Pract Rev* 15(3): 125-131.

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Conclusion

- Investigated the association between experiences of racism and breastfeeding initiation and duration.
- Experiences of racism in the employment setting was inversely associated with breastfeeding duration.
- Breastfeeding initiation and duration varied by life-course characteristics.
- Innovative interventions that address individual level factors related to experiences of racism as well as interventions that address structural factors are warranted.

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Thank you

Email: michelegriswold@me.com
Twitter: @mikgriswold



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Strengths

- National sampling procedure
- Sample size
- Prospective design
- First-time mothers
- Recall bias reduced
- Life-course factors
- Racism related to health promotion vs. morbidity and mortality

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Limitations

- Racism measured at baseline.
- Women in this sample, not nationally representative.
- 1999 racial segregation measure not prospective.
- Exposure to racism does not assess the harmful effects of racism

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