The Black Infant Health Program provides services to Black women for the purpose of eliminating the disproportionate rates of Black infant mortality. Black women experience 2.5 times the rate of infant deaths compared to other racial groups. The BIH program aims to reduce these health inequities through community engagement of positive psychology and overall stress management. As part of our community experience, we were tasked with developing a curriculum that incorporated an afro-centric positive psychology paradigm.

OBJECTIVES

To document the link between black infant mortality, preterm birth, and stress and understand how Black Infant Health tackles black infant mortality through positive psychology.

HPA AXIS

FIGURE 2: A study was conducted to describe the experiences and responses of Black women towards racism and to examine socioeconomic status (SES) in relation to experiences of racism. Women with higher education reported higher experiences of racism. Racism precedes SES and therefore affects Black women no matter their SES. Further research is needed to examine how the allostatic load of racism influences health outcomes of Blacks.

CHRONIC STRESS OF RACISM

FIGURE 3: Black women have the highest rate of black infant mortality compared to both Hispanic and white women between 2000-2015.

FIGURE 4: US born Black women have the earliest preterm birth across Canada Black women, US white women, and Canada white women. Further, Canada Black women still have an earlier preterm birth when compared to Canada white women. Preterm birth is a strong indicator for overall poor health outcomes, developmental delays, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), and low birth weight and is important to consider when discussing black infant mortality.

FIGURE 5: Fetal activation of the Hypothalamic Pituitary Adrenal Axis results in the production of cortisol which can then stimulate placenta activity to reverse the estrogen-progesterone-ratio. The reversal of estrogen-progesterone ratio then stimulates prostaglandins which initiates labor.

FIGURE 6: There are Black Infant Health programs in 15 counties/cities in California: Alameda, Contra Costa, Fresno, Kern, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Pasadena, Riverside, Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Francisco, San Joaquin, Santa Clara, and Solano. The eligibility requirements of the program are that the women self-identify as African-American, are no more than thirty weeks pregnant upon enrollment, and are at least eighteen years old. The program consists of twenty weekly sessions.

FIGURE 7: “Positive individual traits include compassion, resilience, creativity, curiosity, integrity, self-knowledge, moderation, self-control, and wisdom. Understanding positive institutions entails the study of the strengths that foster better communities, such as justice, responsibility, civility, parenting, nurture, work ethic, leadership, teamwork, and purpose.” Positive psychology can be used to manage stress and as a medium to weaponize strengths against adversity.

REFERENCES