Segregation, preterm birth linked

New Bowé researcher studies disparities for millions of babies

New research suggests that one reason behind racial disparities in preterm birth may have a lot to do with where the mother lives.

Written by Theresa Osypuk, assistant professor of health science, the study found that regional hypersegregation (residential racial segregation across four or more dimensions) may contribute to the higher rates of preterm births among black women compared to white women.

Prior research has shown that infants born to black women in the United States are 50 percent more likely to be preterm than infants born to white women, although the causes remain poorly understood.

The paper, “Are Racial Disparities in Preterm Birth Larger in Hypersegregated Areas?”, also found that older black women living in areas of the country with very high levels of neighborhood segregation experience even higher risk of preterm birth than black mothers in less segregated areas.

The study appeared in the latest issue of the American Journal of Epidemiology. The abstract is available at http://aje.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/167/11/1295.

Osypuk analyzed data related to births in 237 metropolitan areas, including Boston — almost 2 million infants -- to estimate the odds of preterm birth by hypersegregation, race and age.

“The complexity of residential segregation and its impact on preterm births and related health outcomes has been overlooked by health literature,” said Osypuk.

“We believe that the association between residential segregation and higher risk of preterm birth is related to the neighborhood environments in which black women live, including neighborhood characteristics by high levels of poverty, violent crime, and worse housing stock.”

The authors found that the association between higher rates of preterm births and hypersegregated areas was more pronounced at higher maternal ages. The racial disparity was also larger at higher ages.

“For example, an infant born to a black woman over 40 had a two-times higher risk of preterm birth than a white infant of the same age in non-segregated regions, but this disparity in risk was times higher in hypersegregated areas.”

This finding suggests that age-related preterm birth patterns may be related to stresses associated with residential segregation and neighborhood inequalities facing black women, which accumulate with age. And these stresses that white women just may not experience,” said Osypuk.

“Because of high levels of racial segregation, most black and white women in the U.S. live in entirely separate neighborhoods, and these neighborhoods differ markedly in their quality.”

“In fact, some of our prior work finds that the racial disparity in neighborhood quality is largest in highly segregated areas,” she added.

New hires bring talent, diversity

Faculty, Continued from Page 1

ence of slaves.”

Her focus is on the different rhetorical information stemming from slaves. Surprisingly, she said, Caribbean and African slaves did not narrate their own stories; to do so was thought to be less believable. “Slaves who told their own stories were thought to offer less credible accounts of the facts,” she said, noting that narratives offered by religious leaders and imperial historians were deemed more reliable.

Aljoe loves studying in Boston. From it’s rich “treasure trove” of historic records, which stem from close ties with Caribbean slave ships, to a strong intellectual base of researchers and faculty, the city has a lot to offer.

“I did my graduate work at Tufts, and I’m thrilled to be returning to the area,” she said. “I think the English department, with the hiring of Carla Kaplan, seems poised to do great things, especially with interdisciplinary studies.”

• Baskerville is completing her doctorate in organizational behavior at the A.B. Freeman School of Business at Tulane University. Her research focuses on the experiences of women and racial minorities in the workplace, and includes issues related to sexuality, minority re-

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EMPLOYEES ARE STARS BY COLLEAGUES’ ACCLAIM

Four employees were presented with Star Certificates through Human Resources Management in May, after nomination by their colleagues. The recipients were Glenn Pike of Marketing and Communications, Brian Mitchell of Public Safety, Sean Sullivan of Animal Care and Shaiwee Yang of the Finance Group in the College of Business Administration. Winners receive a $50 American Express Gift Card. Nomination forms are available from HRM.

HOLLYWOOD FILM CREW INTERVIEWS LEVIN

Matthews Arena was unusually quiet Wednesday afternoon as a film crew from E True Hollywood Story videotaped famous criminologist Jack Levin in an hour-long interview. The Bruckdorff distinguished professor of sociology and anthropology, was queried about his expertise, serial killers, for an upcoming documen-

tary. A room in Matthews was transformed into a set, so that Levin could discuss, in detail, the makeup of a serial killer. He discussed the public fascination with these people, the types of person who is likely to become a killer, and how incidents of serial killings have increased throughout the decades following the 1950s.

Nu briefs

PHOTOGRAPHER

Another perspective on the East Village.

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