

SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective (SisterSong) and Ibis Reproductive Health (Ibis) proposed a community-based participatory research (CBPR) study to explore Black women’s perspectives on reproductive health relative to their geographic context and the range of factors that influence their reproductive health decision making. Our specific aims were to: 1) Describe the current reproductive health concerns of Black women; 2) Understand the range of factors influencing Black women’s reproductive health decision-making; and 3) Generate strategies for engaging communities of Black women on reproductive health issues.

Over an 18-month period, we implemented a series of activities aligned with a CBPR approach. This began with concentrated efforts to develop principles of engagement for both organizations, creating a research protocol and accompanying data collection instruments, and identifying and inviting Black women to participate in a Research Board. We then worked with two community organizations to conduct six focus group discussions and 25 in-depth interviews.

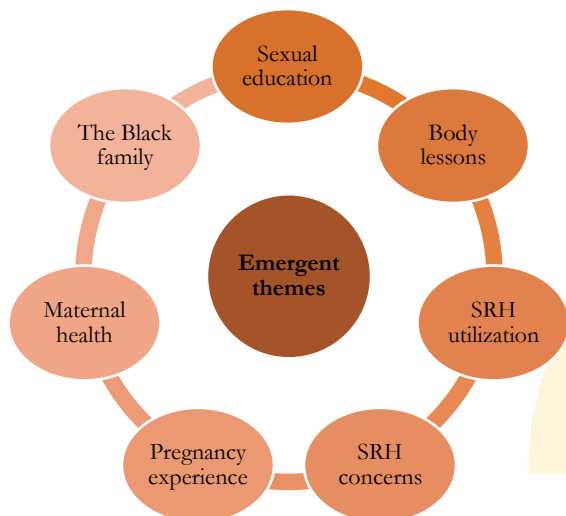
### Context

We focused on geographic settings with a larger concentration of Black women (15% and higher), with different reproductive health policy environments, and where there were existing Trust Black Women (TBW) partners to implement the study.

### Findings

Multiple themes emerged and were grouped under seven broad categories: sexual education; body lessons; sexual and reproductive health utilization; pregnancy experience; maternal health; the Black family; and reproductive health concerns (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Emergent themes from focus group discussions**



Results indicate that Black women in the south are concerned about a wide range of sexual and reproductive health issues. In many cases, these concerns impacted the ways in which they used sexual and reproductive health services. Finally, we observed that context matters; living in the south—where there are restrictions on abortion care, limits on insurance coverage for abortion and maternal health, abstinence only programs, and pro-childbearing views—impacts quality of care, feelings of autonomy, access, and reproductive and sexual health knowledge.

**Table 1. Participant demographics**

	Georgia n=29 n (%)	North Carolina n=20 n (%)
<b>Number of focus groups</b>	4	2
<b>Number of interviews</b>	14	11
<b>Age range</b>	19-47	18-45
<b>Reproductive Health history</b>		
Never pregnant	16 (55%)	14 (70%)
Ever pregnant	13 (45%)	3 (15%)
<b>Insurance type</b>		
Employer/School/Private	16 (55%)	7 (35%)
Public/other	10 (34%)	6 (30%)
No insurance	3 (10%)	4 (20%)
<b>Profession</b>		
Employed full-time	16 (55%)	12 (60%)
Employed part-time	10 (34%)	5 (25%)
Not currently working	3 (10%)	2 (10%)

### Next steps

We hope that findings from this study will benefit Black women in two ways. First, understanding their current reproductive health concerns will help identify gaps in health research, services, and policy efforts aimed at improving reproductive health outcomes. Second, the expanded reproductive health narratives generated from the discussions and interviews will be used to create new social marketing and messaging specially designed for this population, with a focus on shifting harmful narratives that perpetuate stigma within the Black community.

### Dissemination

Conference	Type	Date
Society of Family Planning	Plenary	October 2020
Society of Family Planning	Oral	October 2020
Abortion Care Network	Panel	March 2020
Let’s Talk about Sex	Panel	October 2019