

# **Whitney Robinson, Ph.D.**

**Associate Professor, Epidemiology at UNC-Chapel Hill**

Chapel Hill, NC, US

Areas of expertise: Women's reproductive health and health care; Breast cancer disparities; Health disparities by gender, race & ethnicity.

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Whitney R. Robinson is figuring out why Black women in the U.S. experience worse health and healthcare than other Americans when it comes to gynecological issues, cancer, and obesity. Her research focuses on everyday challenges (such as poverty during childhood, limited health care options, parts of the country where people live, and structural racism) and how they contribute to people's risk of dealing with chronic health care issues. She believes that Black women are like "the canary in the coal mine": the kind of changes that would improve the health of Black women would dramatically improve the health of all Americans. Robinson specializes in epidemiologic methods for health disparities research. She focuses on how and why processes of obesity and cancer development differ by sex, race, and ethnicity. The theoretical underpinning of her work is the lifecourse framework. For example, her Population Health work hypothesizes that nutritional, socioeconomic, and psychosocial exposures during critical periods in utero and during childhood have enduring effects on adult obesity development and partially explain why obesity prevalence is much greater in young U.S. Black women than in young U.S. Black men and other groups. Robinson's newer research program uses the lifecourse framework to investigate questions relevant to demography and reproductive health. This newly funded work investigates how racial/ethnic and socioeconomic inequalities in gynecologic surgery among U.S. women affect disparities in fertility as well as health disparities in several chronic diseases. A Faculty Fellow at the Carolina Population Center, she also currently leads an NIH R01 to use health care data to investigate racial/ethnic differences in hysterectomy rates among young women, and also recently completed an R03 to investigate the obesity paradox among people diagnosed with renal cell carcinoma (a type of kidney cancer).

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Research, Education/Learning

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Cancer Survivorship, Health disparities by gender, Breast cancer disparities, Women's reproductive health and health care, Epidemiologic methods, Health disparities by race and ethnicity

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Delta Omega, The Obesity Society, Society for Epidemiologic Research

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**University of North Carolina**  
Ph.D. Epidemiology

**University of North Carolina**  
MSPH Epidemiology

**Harvard University**  
A.B. Biochemical Sciences

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**Award for Teaching Excellence and Innovation,**  
Epidemiology Department, April 2018

**Fellow**  
The Obesity Society

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