

# Weight Gain in African American Breast Cancer Survivors

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# Breast Cancer Facts and Figures in African Americans

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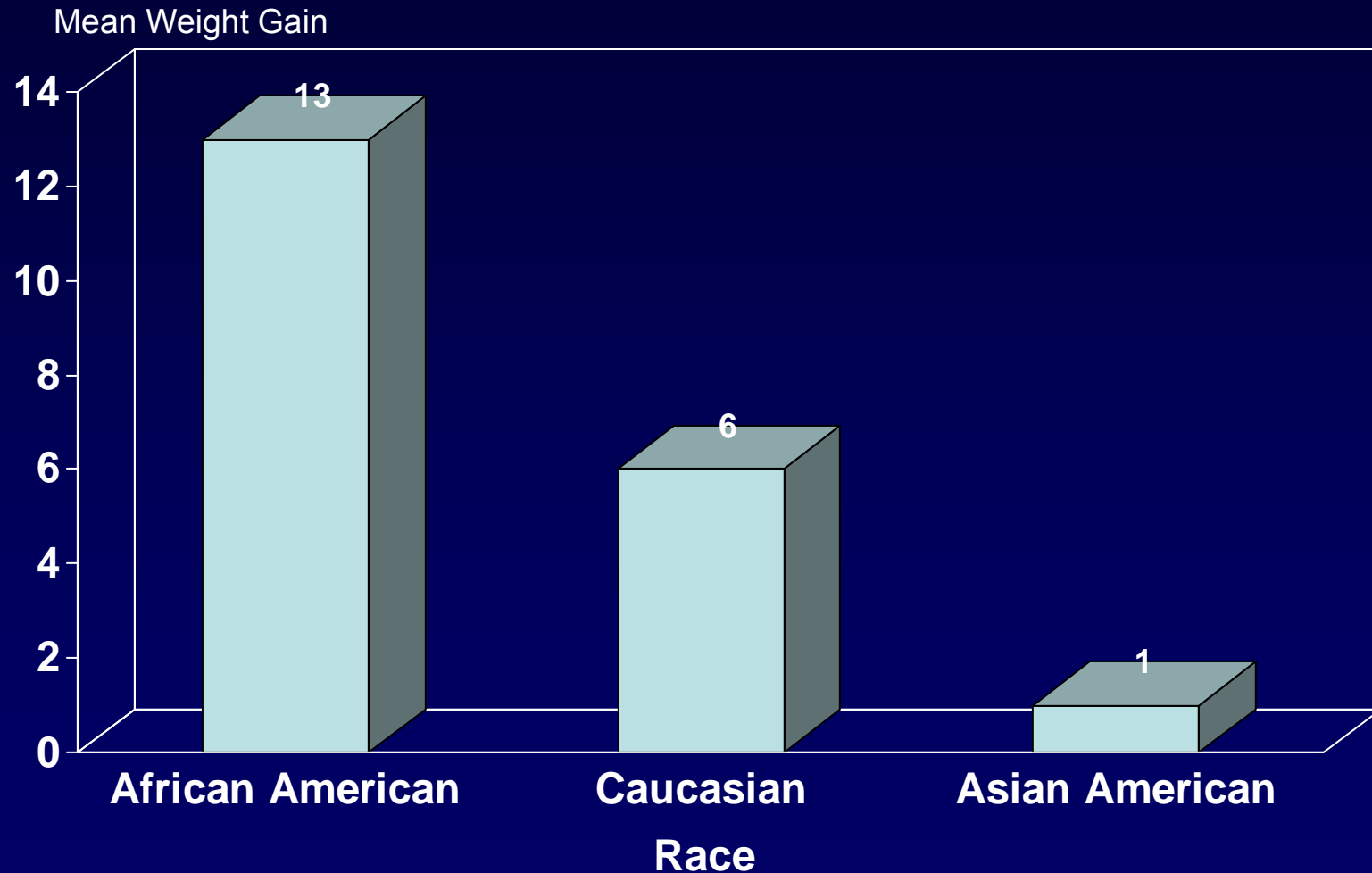
- Breast cancer is the most common form of cancer in African American women
- Despite lower incidence, mortality from breast cancer is substantially higher in African American women compared to Caucasian women
- Limited information is available on survivorship issues among African American breast cancer survivors

# Weight Gain in Breast Cancer Survivors

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- About 56% to 75% of breast cancer survivors gain following diagnosis and treatment
- Weight gain during treatment has been associated with an increased risk for cancer recurrence
- Weight gain may also increase risk for developing other diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease

# Racial Differences in Weight Gain in Breast Cancer Survivors



# Objectives

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- To Evaluate the psychological impact of post-treatment weight change in African American breast cancer survivors
- To evaluate the behavioral impact of post-treatment weight change

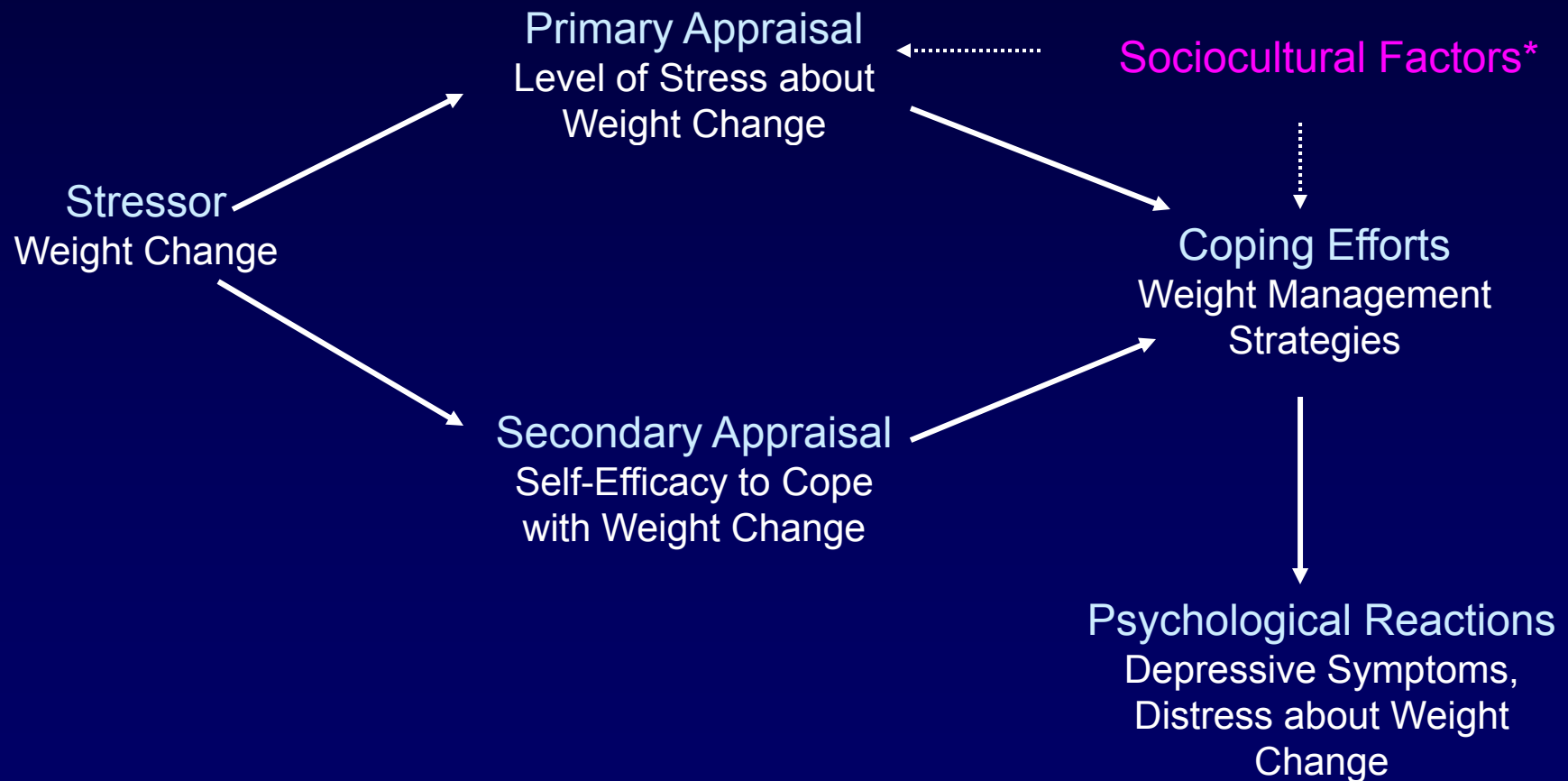
# Study Design and Sample

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- Mixed methods study using qualitative and quantitative methods
  - Phase I: Focus groups
  - Phase II: Cross-sectional survey
- African American breast cancer survivors ages 21 and older
- Diagnosed with stage I, II, III disease
- Completed primary treatment
- Short and long-term survivors

# Conceptual Framework

## Transactional Model of Stress and Coping



\*Religious coping style, temporal orientation, communalism

# Phase I: Focus Groups (n=34)

## Topics about Weight Gain

Pre-Diagnosis	Treatment	Post-Treatment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Weight gain history</li><li>• Body image perceptions</li><li>• Level of concern about weight during adulthood</li><li>• Weight management efforts</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Experiences with weight change during treatment</li><li>• Knowledge about impact of treatment on weight change</li><li>• Concerns about weight changes relative to survival</li><li>• Weight management efforts</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Estimated weight change since treatment completed</li><li>• Concerns about weight gain relative to other side effects</li><li>• Attributions about changes in weight</li><li>• Weight management efforts</li></ul>



# Sample Characteristics (n=34)

Variable	Level	N (%)
Marital status	Not married	22 (65%)
	Married	12 (35%)
Education level	$\leq$ High school	18 (53%)
	$\geq$ Some college	16 (47%)
Employment status	Employed	19 (56%)
	Not employed	15 (44%)
Income level	$\leq$ \$35,000	21 (62%)
	$>$ \$35,000	13 (38%)

# Clinical Characteristics

- Mean (SD) age at diagnosis was 52.5 (8.5)
- 62% of women had a lumpectomy and 44% of women had a mastectomy\*
  - 67% of women received chemotherapy
  - 74% of women received radiation
  - 56% of women received Tamoxifen
- Most (74%) women were short-term survivors

\*Total exceeds 100% because some women had both types of surgery.

# Stressors

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- Experiences with weight change
  - 47% of women gained weight
  - 21% stayed the same weight
  - 32% lost weight
- Among those who gained weight, average amount gained was 16 pounds

# Primary Appraisal

## Level of Stress about Weight Change

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- Many women did not feel the same in their bodies as before being diagnosed
- Women were unhappy with their weight
  - Those who gained weight felt uncomfortable; gaining weight was upsetting. *“I gained 35 pounds in four months”*
  - Those who lost weight said the loss made them feel sick and gaunt, which would lead to death. *“...you always think of cancer as losin’ weight and dying”*
- Fear about the implications of weight change was common

# Attributions about Weight Change

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## Weight Gain

- Treatment
- Eating more food (during and after treatment)
- Eating more food to cope with stress about diagnosis and treatment
- Increased intake of sweets and high fat food
- Being at home more

## Weight Loss

- Lack of appetite
- Nausea
- No taste because of chemotherapy

# Coping Efforts

## Strategies to Cope with Weight Change

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- Exercising more, especially walking
- Changing diet; planning meals each week
- Wearing layers of clothes to accommodate weight loss
- Buying bigger clothes to accommodate weight gain

# Collaborators

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