Pregnancy Behind Bars: Exploring the Impact of Incarceration on Prenatal and Postnatal Care for Female Inmates

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Incarcerated women have a constitutionally protected right to obtain appropriate medical care. Past research has found that "38 states had inadequate or no prenatal care in their prisons" (NWsLC, 2010). A report from The US Department of Justice states that "46% of pregnant imprisoned women reported they received no pregnancy care" (Maruschak, 2008). There is a gap in the literature of analyzing primary accounts of pregnant inmates. The current study is investigating the interaction of incarceration and the available care and quality of care given to female inmates in American correctional institutions. This study is comprised of a qualitative video analysis using a convenience sample. We selected 10 videos of incarcerated women and 10 of non incarcerated women speaking about their pregnancy experience in America. Inclusion criteria includes the videos being made within the past five years, being at least ten minutes long, and showing their face. The software system "ATLAS.ti" will be used to analyze the transcripts and visual notes of the video testimonies. The analysis will focus on the spoken experiences and the visual social cues that are present. Considering these variables, we will be able to account for the similarity and differences of provided care to inmates. The visual cues will provide information about how the subject feels recounting their experience, which can give another element to the analysis as some mental health conditions, such as PTSD, has visual cues. As a control, video testimonies from non-incarcerated women sharing their pregnancy experience will also be analyzed. We hypothesize that prenatal and postnatal care being given to inmates will vary greatly since there is very little legislation protecting pregnant inmates' access to honorable prenatal and postnatal care. We also hypothesize that women that were incarcerated while pregnant will show more visual signals of mental distress.