**Research Recap**

**Confronting Bias in Publishing on Abortion:**

**Focus on the Turnaway Study**

Poorly designed research has been embraced by professional organizations because the results support a pro-choice socio-political agenda.

The media and abortion providers disseminate the information widely hoping to sell it as factual. Perhaps the most vivid example is the Turnaway Study.

**Turnaway Study Background**

* Warren Buffett provided at least $88,000,000 to the University of California San Francisco’s reproductive health research institute, supporting researchers with outspoken political agendas.
* Martin (2016) explained, *“The research initiative dates back at least to the early 2000s and became more urgent after the high court held in 2007 that in cases of ‘medical and scientific uncertainty’, legislatures could have ‘wide discretion’ to pass laws restricting abortion. Since then, a primary objective of abortion rights supporters has been to establish a high level of medical certainty—both about the safety of the procedure and about what happens when a woman’s reproductive options are drastically curtailed or eliminated.”*

**Turnaway Study Overview**

* Participants with three distinct profiles were recruited:
  + Women whose pregnancies were dated between one day and three weeks after clinic gestational limits and were therefore unable to secure an abortion.
  + Women whose pregnancies were between one day to two weeks shy of the clinic gestational limit and had an abortion.
  + Women who had a first trimester abortion.
* Phone interviews were conducted at 6-month intervals over five years.
* Baseline interviews occurred approximately one week after having or being denied an abortion.
* Topics included aspects of women’s mental and physical health, background characteristics, and questions on the health and development of the participants’ children.

**Turnaway Study Results**

* The Turnaway study results described in over 60 journal articles suggest women who are denied a wanted abortion fare worse on numerous indicators than women who secure abortions.
* The most egregious methodological problems of the Turnaway Study, rendering the results completely unreliable are covered briefly in this recap.

**Turnaway Study Fatal Flaws**

* Sampling data is not provided. The authors do not explain how the sites were actually chosen nor do they explain what type of sampling plan was employed. Further, no information is offered regarding what cities or areas of the country were sampled from.
* The Turnaway Study was comprised of 516 women; however, an exact percentage of the population is not discernable due to missing information. Extrapolating from what is available reveals a likely low of .32% to a maximum of 3.18% of participants sampled from the available pool.
* The researchers attempted to make generalized claims about women seeking abortion when the study itself likely did not even consider over 95% of women receiving abortions at the facilities included in the study. Given the extremely small percentage of women from the population represented in the sample, generalizations are precluded.
* In the Turnaway Study, the group of women who had abortions near state gestational limits included those for whom the legal cut off ranged from 10 to 27 weeks, ignoring the fact that women’s reasons for choosing abortion and their emotional responses to the procedure differ greatly at varying points of pregnancy. Women aborting at such widely disparate gestational ages should therefore not be lumped together.
* All mental health measures are simplistic with 2 variables containing only 6 items. Self-esteem and life-satisfaction were measured with a single item. This is inexcusable given the many psychometrically sound multiple item surveys for these variables available in professional literature. Responsible scientists should not extrapolate from minimalistic assessments to women’s emotional reactions to one of life’s most challenging decisions.

Source:

Coleman P. K. (2022). The Turnaway Study: A Case of Self-Correction in Science Upended by

Political Motivation and Unvetted Findings. Frontiers in psychology, 13, 905221.

https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.905221.