**How drinking while pregnant is portrayed on television:**

**Implications for FASD prevention**

**Alexandre M. Dionne, Kelly D. Harding, Ph.D., & Shelley L. Watson, Ph.D.**

**Laurentian University**

**Abstract**

**Objectives:** Previousresearch on women’s attitudes towards drinking alcohol while pregnant reveals that only 30% of women report complete abstinence from alcohol during pregnancy (Raymond, Beer, Glazebrook, & Sayal, 2009). Furthermore, the media can have a strong influence on women’s attitudes and feelings (Stice & Shaw, 1994), which may in turn have important implications for women’s health. The current research study addresses the following research question: How is drinking or substance use during pregnancy portrayed in drama television shows and what influence may these portrayals have on the attitudes of pregnant women?

**Method:** Using an ethnographic content analysis approach (Altheide & Schneider, 2013), drama television shows (*n* = 3) will be analyzed for their portrayals of alcohol consumption during pregnancy. This poster presents data from part of a larger study, focusing on the “drama” category shows, Breaking Bad, Mad Men, and Law and Order. Using criteria identified by Altheide and Schneider (2013) and employing a thematic analysis approach, the content and constructed narratives of television media narratives regarding the safety of prenatal alcohol exposure will be explored. Key topics and issues that will be identified in the show include portrayals of abstinence, alcohol use, alcohol use during pregnancy, social drinking, and binge drinking.

**Results:** Data collection is ongoing, but preliminary results will be available at the time of this presentation. Based on previous literature, it is anticipated that alcohol consumption or substance use while pregnant will be addressed within these television shows, that messages of abstinence during alcohol will be addressed peripherally, and that portrayals of women who consume alcohol while pregnant will be depicted negatively. Additionally, it is expected that any related portrayals of individuals with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) will be negative and deficit-oriented. Based on previous research, it is likely that these portrayals may influence women while they are pregnant and provide inaccurate information about the safety of alcohol use during pregnancy.

**Discussion/Conclusions:** This study will help inform mothers and fathers, men and women who are considering having children. Furthermore, it will help inform future media and raise awareness of media influences. Additionally, the findings will help inform future research in the area of media influences, pregnancy, and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). Finally, because media has a strong influence on women’s health, this study will help inform media outlets about these implications.

**Correspondence:**

Alexandre Dionne, Laurentian University, adionne2@laurentian.ca

Kelly Harding, Laurentian University, kharding@laurentian.ca

Shelley Watson, Laurentian University, swatson@laurentian.ca