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The apprehension of newborns at birth: Maternal experiences of grief

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The apprehension of a newborn at birth is a marginalized birth experience. Through the perspective of birthmothers, a plethora of long-term adverse outcomes are associated when separation occurs between mother and newborn; with an exceptional concern being acquiring a problematic grief response. As this population of birthmothers is over-represented within the literature as racialized, living in a low socio-economic status' and constrained into positions of vulnerability, they experience being cut off from sources of power in society and face significant social judgments. Ultimately, due to the lack of understanding and awareness of the phenomenon by the privileged within greater society has led to a lack of available supports offered to these women, resulting in affecting their long-term physical and mental well-being. Through a review of the literature, there is an absence of direct maternal voices regarding the experiences and outcomes associated with the phenomenon, indicating a need for further research in exploring the maternal perspectives. Using Doka's (2002) theoretical framework on disenfranchised grief as a lens for inquiry, attention will be given to how the social context significantly influences a birthmothers' grief experience. Ultimately, the findings of the proposed study aim to inform practice and policy within perinatal nursing, by developing effective nursing interventions that can better support birthmothers facing newborn apprehension.

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