Race and Midwifery Care in Atlanta, GA

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Introduction
• I spent 8 weeks this summer performing ethnographic research at two midwiferies in Atlanta, Georgia.
• My goal was to understand how the specific nature of midwifery care impacts its patient population and analyze the potential effects that the midwifery model of care might have on racial disparities in maternal birth outcomes.

Objective of Project
I endeavored to contribute to the body of ethnographic research on African American maternal health outcomes by centering and analyzing the voices and experiences of black mothers in Atlanta across the socioeconomic spectrum. I hope that this research will help to elucidate the socially-driven upstream causes of African American maternal mortality and propose potential solutions.

Research Overview and Reflection
• I spent a month researching and volunteering for Intown Midwifery, a midwife-owned practice in Downtown Atlanta, which has a 75% white population. All mothers here were either self-pay or had private insurance, so the vast majority were of middle to high SES. I shadowed midwives and office staff and interviewed patients.
• I found that the midwifery model of care at Intown was an intentionally feminist model, centering the needs of women, but not necessarily working to include or make space for all women, as it is economically exclusionary and primarily white.

• I spent the following month researching at Midwife Associates on the south side of the city, also midwife owned. This midwifery is 90% African American and the vast majority of its patients are on Medicaid.
• The mission of Midwife Associates is access-driven, as evidenced by the reflections of its patient population as well as the attitudes of its staff and the extensive level of holistic services provided.

Looking Ahead
• The midwifery model focuses on aspects of care, such as continuity of care, a holistic focus, and individualized, low-intervention treatment, that are associated with better birth outcomes and less morbidity and mortality. This was demonstrated clearly at both practices.
• Midwives should become a more utilized source of birth care for American women, especially those from vulnerable populations.
• Midwiferies run by equality and justice-minded midwives can be an important intervention for reducing disparities in birth outcomes for African American women.

Conclusion
• I would like to continue this research in the future, working in rural regions and different parts of the United States.
• I am looking forward to working on the written part of my thesis, combining existing qualitative and quantitative research with my ethnographic work to demonstrate the impact and efficacy of midwifery care that I observed this summer.