

“Maternal and Child Outcomes of a Prison Nursery Program”

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Key Findings: If quoted cite “Byrne, M. http://www.nursing.columbia.edu/byrne/prison_nursery.html “

Funders:

Columbia University Institute for Family and Child Policy; NYS Department of Health Commissioner’s Priority Award; National Institutes of Health/NINR RO1 NR 007782

Setting: Bedford Hills Correctional Facility and Taconic Correctional Facility, NYS DOCS

Samples: Cross-sectional study: N=58 mothers / 60 mother-infant dyads
Longitudinal study N= 97 mothers / 100 mother-infant dyads

Main findings:

- Ethnographic theory : “Choosing the Parenting Self”
 - Explains the parenting experience in the prison nursery setting
 - Participants construct parenting self in 3 phases: identification; nourishment; integration
 - Phases overlap, involve process of change over time, or can be abandoned when resources change
 - Attachment goals and separation anxieties are key issues from maternal perspective
- Cross-sectional study : Descriptive (2000-2002)
 - Depressive symptomatology: at clinically worrisome levels on average
 - Social support: Extremely low in availability and range but mothers express high satisfaction with even limited support
 - Parenting:
 - Highly valued as a role
 - Knowledge gaps, which are infant age related and increase in later infancy and toddlerhood
 - Maternal health: Generally good across all functional domains with exception of self-reported mental health concerns
 - Infant development: Screens within normal limits for age on gross and fine motor and social domains
- Longitudinal study: Descriptive and interventional/experimental (2003-2008)
 - Numerous barriers to conduct long-term study in prison, yet protocol fully implemented
 - Retention in study: 95% prison phase; ~80% community follow-up reentry phase
 - Intervention by Nurse Practitioners:
 - on site visit to prison weekly and phone/mail follow-up throughout first year of reentry;
 - 2 groups compared: traditional health versus synchrony emphases

Findings by main aims of longitudinal study:

Aim #1: Attachment and related development

- Mothers are at high risk to transmit secure infant attachment (34% autonomous: Adult Attachment Interview)
- Nevertheless, 74% of infants who stayed 12 months were securely attached (Strange Situation Procedure)
- More mothers in synchrony than in health emphasis group overcame their own insecure attachment representation to raise secure infants
- Infant development was threatened by infant insecure behaviors if transition to alternate caregiver in community
 - then, with intervention support, reorganization began in ~3 weeks if one consistent alternate caregiver
- DOCS initiated separations from mother produced setbacks to infant self-regulatory behaviors
- At all infant ages, infants met developmental mental and motor milestones within prison
- Behavioral lags during reentry for small number of toddlers in health group only
- Social/emotional screening in toddlerhood showed high scores for problems but also high for competencies

Aim #2: Impact of Nurse Practitioner intervention

- Both health & synchrony groups increased maternal sensitivity, responsiveness, contingency
- Both groups increased child care knowledge and sense of parent competency
- Early toddlerhood: social/emotional dysregulation for a subset of health group but not synchrony; Screening showed pattern of high problem scores along with high competence in toddler period
- Where AAI/SSP comparisons possible, secure mothers and also one-third of non-autonomous mothers raised secure infants

Aim #3: Criminal recidivism (short-term)

- For first reentry year: 0% new court convictions; 10% return for parole violations

To request data based and other publications or discuss findings, contact:

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