Responsive Parenting Support During the Prison Nursery and Reentry Years

Highlights from a study in progress:
“Maternal and Child Outcomes of a Prison Nursery Program”
(RO1NR00782-04)

Mary W. Byrne, PhD, FAAN
Professor of Clinical Nursing
Columbia University
Research Team

- **Keosha Bond, MPH**  
  Intervention/ Health Ed
- **Carolynn Bitzer, RN, DNSc**  
  GRA Nursing (ASUM)
- **Juliette Clark, BS, BA**  
  Research Associate
- **David Crandall, PhD**  
  Biostatistician
- **Joann Galley, PsyD, JD**  
  Neurodev. Psychologist
- **Lorie Smith Goshin, RN, MSN**  
  Community Coord. / Nursing
- **Sarah Joestl, MPH**  
  Project Director / Public Health
Acknowledgments: Funders and Supporters

- **Cross-sectional studies:**
  - NYS Department of Health, Commissioner’s Priority Award
  - Columbia University Institute for Family and Child Research

- **Current study:**
  - NIH / National Institute for Nursing Research
  - “Maternal and Child Outcomes of a Prison Nursery Program”
    - RO1 NR00782, 2003-7 and RO1 NR00782S1, 2005-7

- **NYS DOCS administrators and personnel and Children’s Center civilian and inmate staff**
Setting: Prison Nursery

“Prison Nursery”
- Infants / children reside with incarcerated mother
- Term describes various arrangements in prison-based and community settings

Exist globally
- Dearth of accurate and complete information

Bedford Hills Correctional Facility (BHCF)
- 100+ years in existence
- Infant stays inside prison with mother for 12-18 months of her sentence
- For 30+ years, associated with a Children’s Center that supports distance parenting through many programs

Taconic Correctional Facility (TCF) nursery: 1990
Research Questions and Approaches

- What is the culture of a prison nursery from mother, staff and provider perspectives?
  - Ethnographic study

- What parenting qualities are exhibited by the nursery mothers, and what is the developmental status of their infants?
  - Cross-sectional study of nursery inmates’ parenting qualities and infants’ development

- Can parenting, child development, and attachment be enhanced by nurse visits during and following the prison nursery experience?
  - Longitudinal study of attachment, parenting competency, and child development during prison nursery co-detention and first re-entry year
# Multiple Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ethnographic</th>
<th>Cross-Sectional</th>
<th>Longitudinal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant Observation</strong></td>
<td>Broad Selected Focused (Spradley, 1979)</td>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interview</strong></td>
<td>Open ended Conversational Semi-structured (Spradley, 1980)</td>
<td>Semi-structured</td>
<td>Adult Attachment Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Developmental Assessments</strong></td>
<td>Denver II Early Language Milestone Cat/Clams</td>
<td>Bayley Scales</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Questionnaires</strong></td>
<td>SF36, CES-D, SES, SSQ, EWB, abuse, PSI, PSOC, CAPI</td>
<td>CES-D SSQ PSOC WGK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>Videotaping, Prison records Medical records</td>
<td>NP / HE visits Video review / coding SSP: Lab attachment measure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Getting the research team inside and staying there

- IRB approved protocol
- Research agreement with NYS DOCS / Working relationships with prison administrators in Albany
- Agreements / Working relationships with local prison administrators and staff
- Establishment of trust with inmates
- Funding
Retaining long-term participants and following them on the outside

- Building on trust
  - Informed consent from alternate caregiver
- Maintaining contact:
  Creative and vigorous attention to address and phone changes
  - Frequent phone contact
  - Birthday and holiday mailings
  - Timely requests for change of address, name, phone
Longitudinal Sample to Date

- N=100 dyads (100% of target)
- Maternal age
  - 18 to 45 years; mean 28 (+/- 6.5)
- Maternal race/ethnicity
  - Varies by source of data
  - 39% Black, 34% White,
    21% Hispanic, 6% biracial
- Infant age now
  - 3 months to 47 months
Data Collection Settings

- **PRISON**
  - Recreation room
  - Inmate cell
  - Child Care Center

- **COMMUNITY**
  - One or more private homes following reentry
  - Transitional housing
  - Office of Family and Child Research
NIDA meeting aim #1: “Provide a picture…”

What do prison nursery studies add to emerging knowledge of children with incarcerated parents?

- Mother-child pairs who are not separated by mother’s imprisonment
  - Nursery inmate mothers and their babies are a small but unique subset of incarcerated women who are not separated from at least one infant whom they raise during their sentence from birth through up to one year, and sometimes longer.
What do prison nursery studies add…cont’d

- Broader, richer, scientifically **accurate** descriptions
  - even demographic reports are sparse
  - past nursery studies: short-term, small convenience samples, little contextual data

- **Models of relationships to do research of significance to inmates**


- **Trials** for interventions
NIDA meeting aim #2: “Examine trajectories to target interventions”

What have we learned about family and child functioning of prison nursery participants that is amenable to intervention?

- Parenting values and cognitions are embedded in history and culture and are not inherently different for incarcerated women
  - Build on strengths
  - Observe, inform, model, reflect, repeat, and allow time for changes

- Crisis of imprisonment can heighten reception to and support behavioral change
  - Reconcile dependence of prisoner status with empowerment of helping relationships

- Resources crucial in prison and during reentry
  - Transition to reentry is critical
NIDA meeting aim #3: “Review theory-based prevention interventions”

What theoretical lenses have been useful to our programs?

- Choosing the Parenting Self
  - Identification
  - Integration
  - Nourishment

- Attachment Theory
  - Interrupting cross-generational insecure cycle