



Babies Behind Bars

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PICOT Question

- In incarcerated women, how does having a prison nursery program compared to not having a prison nursery program affect the development of the inmate's child?



<https://www.chicagotribune.com/nation-world/ct-illinois-prison-babies-behind-bars-20180511-story.html>

Background

- A prison nursery program allows for incarcerated mothers and infants to stay connected and live together while still in the prison setting.
- There are currently only nine prison nursery programs in eight states. The largest of these nine programs only accept 27 mother-infant couplets.
- 5% of imprisoned women are pregnant and give birth while serving their sentence.
- Most prison programs limit contact between mothers and their newborns, resulting in missed opportunities for bonding, attachment and breastfeeding.
- For 50% of all cases, the mother-child separation after giving birth in prison becomes a permanent separation and the two are never reunited.
- Prison nurseries have contributed to a lower rate of maternal recidivism.
 - (Chambers, 2009)

Article	Description	Results
Integrational Transmission of Attachment for Infants Raised in a Prison Nursery - Byrne et al., 2010.	Level IV, case control and cohort study comparing attachment outcomes in infants born to incarcerated women during their prison sentence. The manipulated variable being the amount of time each of the 30 couplets were kept together in a prison nursery. Integrational data was used from a five-year intervention study of couplet outcomes for female inmates co-residing with their infants in a prison nursery.	60% of infants in the study were secure. 75% of infants who were able to stay in the prison nursery with their mother for a year or more were found to be secure. 43% of infants who experienced briefer co-residence in the prison nursery were secure. These results suggest that the length of time in the prison nursery program could have an impact on the infant's attachment to their mother. The longer the couplet is together, the more likely the infant might be to have a secure attachment.
Preschool Outcomes of Children Who Lived as Infants in a Prison Nursery - Goshin et al., 2014.	Level IV, case control and cohort study studying the long-term outcomes of children who spent the first 12-18 months of life in a prison nursery, comparing the behavioral development of those children as preschoolers. Of the participants, 47 preschoolers co-resided in a prison nursery with their mother, compared to 64 children from a large national dataset. The dataset was used to locate cases of children who were separated from their mothers due to her incarceration at some point during their infancy or toddlerhood.	Compared to children separated from their mother during early childhood, children who stayed with their mothers in a prison nursery had lower incidence of behaviors related to anxiety and depression as well as withdrawn behaviors. There were no significant differences recognized in aggressive, attention deficit or hyperactivity behaviors. This suggests that children who are able to co-reside with their mothers in a prison nursery have more positive behavioral development outcomes than children who get separated from their mothers early on.
An Alternative to Mothers and Infants Behind Bars - Kwarteng-Amaning et al., 2019.	Level VI, descriptive and qualitative study that examined the effects of an out-of-prison nursery program on mother-infant attachment and aims to determine predictors of insecure attachments. The study used a sample size of 41 graduates from the Baby and Mother Bonding Initiative (BAMBI) program. Participants answered an Attachment Q-Sort Questionnaire (AQSQ) which helped determine attachment styles for infants after their in-prison stay.	The results of this study showed that 46.3% of children demonstrated a secure attachment and 53.7% of children demonstrated an insecure attachment. The results also showed that there is a 77.5% increase in risk for insecure attachment with each additional child born to the family. The results suggest potential insecure attachments related to the BAMBI program but could be due to 21 of the 41 participants having 3 or more children.
Impact of Forced Separation Policy on Incarcerated Postpartum Mothers - Chambers, 2009.	Level VI, descriptive and qualitative study that examines the nature and meaning of the mother-infant bonding experience when incarcerated mothers know separation is coming. Mothers received no opportunities to hold, bond with, or breastfeed their child. Researches conducted 30 to 40 minute interviews, using open ended questions after birth and separation from their newborn.	The results showed four common themes amongst the interviews: "a love connection," "everything was great until I birthed," "feeling empty and missing a part of me," and "I don't try to think too far in advance." The results suggest that women experience a period of immense joy and a period of extreme sadness within a 24-hour period which can alter both attachment for the mother and child.

Conclusion

- Overall, there is some evidence to show that prison nurseries positively impact childhood development.
- While a majority of the articles supported the PICOT question, there were some articles that showed insecure attachments for children after being raised in a prison setting.
- Research is difficult to conduct on a limited and vulnerable population, but should it be conducted ethically, would create a better understanding of childhood development related to the use of prison nursery programs.



<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/babies-should-stay-with-their-moms-in-prisons-1.3230863>

Nursing Application

- Advocate for the vulnerable populations of pregnant incarcerated women and their newborns.
- Advocate for gender sensitive programs which allow for mother-infant bonding.
- Address policy changes on national, state, and local levels.
- Provide further evidence-based research that demonstrates positive outcomes for both incarcerated women and childhood development.