

Changes in Maternal Insight During an Attachment-Based Dyadic Intervention

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ABSTRACT

In this pilot study, the Working Model of the Child Interview (Zeanah, 1994) was administered to three expectant/new mothers to assess their mental representations of their babies before and after participating in an intervention called Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up. Through this intervention, the mothers were taught and encouraged to be sensitive to their child. Nurturing behavior, following the lead, and non-frightening behavior were the main emphases.

INTRODUCTION

Reflective Functioning (RF)

- The ability to understand how emotions and cognitions influence behavior of the self or others (Borelli, et al., 2016)
- There is a connection between mother's prenatal perceptions of her baby and herself as a parent and postnatal psychosocial outcomes (Vreeswijk, Maas, & Van Bakel, 2012)

Attachment

- The quality of the bond between infant and caregiver (Bowlby, 1969)
- Basic patterns: secure, insecure-avoidant, and insecure-ambivalent
- Affects coping, relationships, and Internal Working Model of the self & others (Bowlby, 1982)

HYPOTHESIS

After participating in the intervention, mothers will have more balanced, insightful representations, thus increased WMCI scores.



METHODS

Participants

- 3 expectant mothers, beginning in the 3rd trimester of pregnancy and continuing for approximately 1 year
- 2 mothers are in their early 20's and the other is in her 30's
- 2 of the mothers already have other children
- All mothers are Caucasian
- All mothers were recruited through their nurse midwife
- ABC began when babies were 5-6 months

Pre- and Post-Intervention Assessment

Working Model of the Child Interview - explores the "meaning" a baby has to his or her parent by asking about perceptions of the relationship, the child, and parenting experiences (Benoit et al., 1997). Specific questions were rated on the scale below and averaged.

- 7-point RF scale:
 - 1 = dismissive, negative, defensive
 - 4 = ordinary, some effort, but unsophisticated
 - 7 = complex, accurate, accepting, easy

Intervention

Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up (ABC) - an intervention that encourages and teaches parents to be nurturing and sensitive to their child (Yarger, 2015)

- Core concepts:
 1. Nurturance
 2. Following the lead
 3. Non-frightening behavior
- Sessions (Bernard, 2012):
 - 1-2: Providing nurturance
 - 3-4: Following the lead with delight
 - 5-6: Frightening behavior
 - 7-8: Recognizing voices from the past
 - 9-10: Consolidation of gains
- Providing explicitly positive comments to the parents is critical
- In several randomized controlled trials, ABC has been demonstrated to impact child attachment security and parenting behavior (Bernard et al, 2012).

Dyad #	WMCI Interview Scores	
	Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention
1	3.33	5.43
2	3.06	2.65
3	3.43	3.90

RESULTS

Pre-Intervention Scores

- All mothers scored were rated as "moderately low RF"
- The range of individual answer scores was 2 to 5
- None of the mothers' answers scored as very low RF (1) or highly reflective (7)

Post-Intervention Scores

- Mother 1's score greatly increased and was classified as "somewhat reflective"
- Mother 2's score decreased slightly and was rated as "low RF"
- Mother 3's score slightly increased and was rated as "moderately low RF"

CONCLUSIONS

The WMCI results showed that our participating mothers needed intervention and that the mothers aren't fully insightful about themselves or their babies. It was predicted that, after participating in the ABC intervention, the mothers' insightfulness would improve and the mothers would have higher reflective functioning scores. However, only one of the three mothers had a clinically meaningful increase in score. ABC is thought to change parenting behavior more than thinking, and our results to some degree support this.

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