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Why Did Mothers with Unresolved Trauma Fail to Benefit from an Attachment Based Intervention? Correlates of Unresolved Status in a High Risk Sample

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**WHY DID MOTHERS WITH UNRESOLVED TRAUMA
FAIL TO BENEFIT FROM AN ATTACHMENT BASED INTERVENTION?
CORRELATES OF UNRESOLVED STATUS IN A HIGH RISK SAMPLE**

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With more than a little assistance from...

- Sandi Bento, Research Coordinator
- Carey Anne DeOliveira (CPRI, London)
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- Anneli Sepa
- Deanne Pederson
- and others, including *countless London area mothers and their babies*

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The Western Adolescent Parenting Study Determinants of Intervention Outcome

- The Risks of Adolescent Parenthood
 - Jaffe (2001) New Zealand study on developmental outcome for children of adolescent mothers
- Study Objectives
 - Identify factors related to intervention success and failure

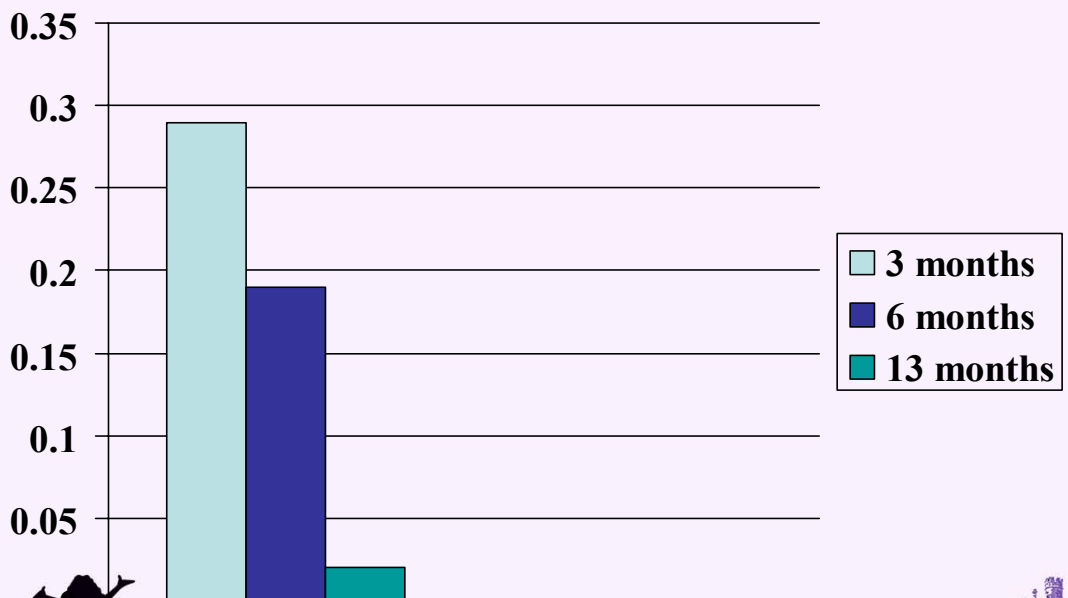


The Intervention Study - Goals

- Improve the security of the attachment relationship by supporting the mother's sensitivity
 - Build rapport with mother
 - Affirm parenting strengths while viewing a 5-minute videotape of the mother and infant at play
 - Augment mother's awareness of infant signals



Maternal Sensitivity Over the First Year (MBQS scores)

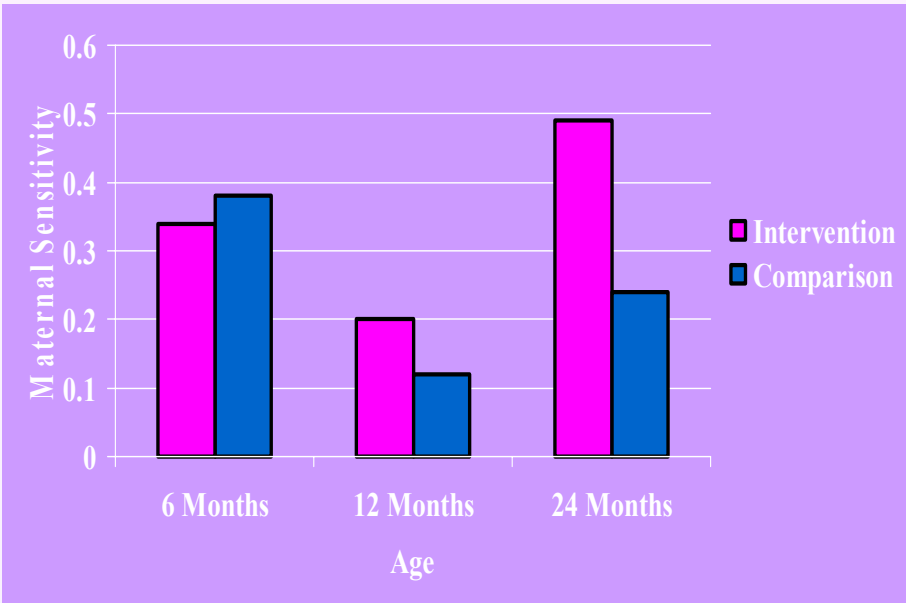


Study Design

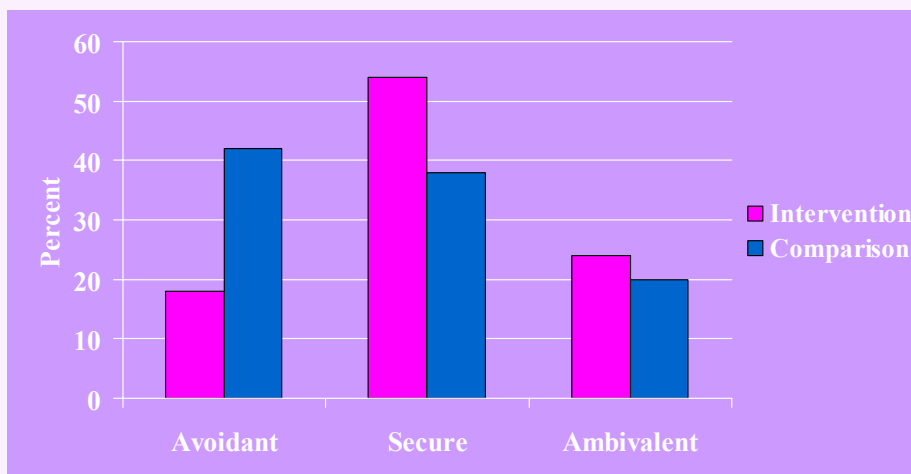
- Adult Attachment Interview at 6-months
- Maternal sensitivity assessed in home visits at:
 - 6-months - baseline,
 - 12-months - post-intervention
 - 24-months - follow-up
- Strange Situation at 12-months
- Comparison and Intervention Groups
 - 8 home visits between 7 & 12 mos



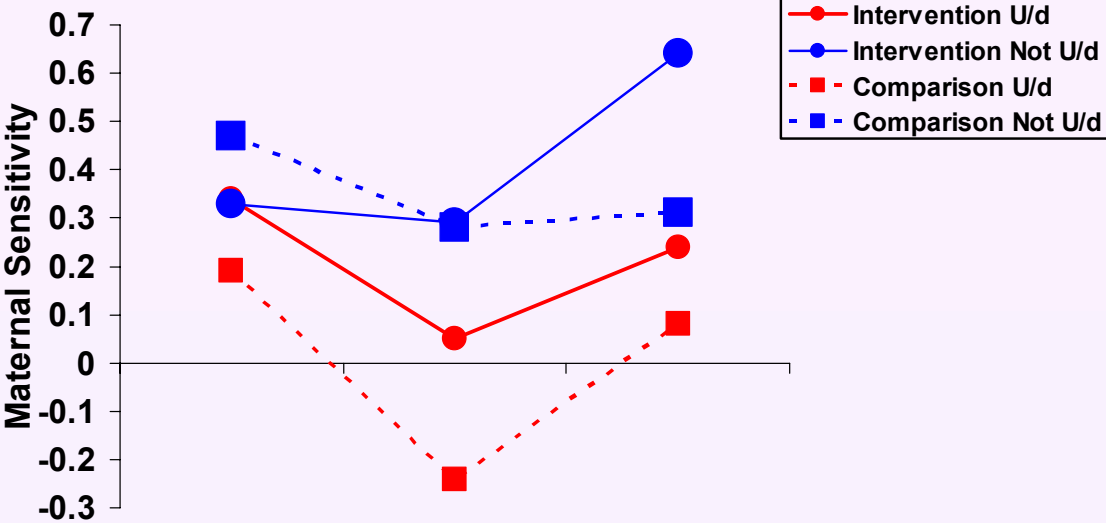
Maternal Sensitivity by Intervention and Age



Attachment Classifications Intervention and Contrast Groups



Maternal Sensitivity Related to Intervention and Unresolved Adult Attachment Interview Classification



6-months 12-months 24-months



With Success, a New Challenge

- A developmentally based home visiting program that encourages young mothers' skills supports sensitivity and security
- This interaction-focused intervention appears to be most effective with mothers who are not Unresolved
- A distinct approach seems necessary with mothers with Unresolved states of mind and a history of trauma - but what sort of approach???

Where Next!?

- Pursue a better understanding of the psychological consequences of physical and sexual abuse



Unresolved Attachment and Trauma Symptoms

- Questionnaires:
 - Trauma Symptom Inventory (TSI)
 - Borderline scale of Personality Assessment Inventory (PAI)

Unresolved Mothers
reported **MORE:**

Dissociative Symptoms
Identity Confusion
Relationship Problems*



Unresolved Attachment and Trauma Symptoms

The Problem:

- Self-report measures are limited by people's limited awareness.
- Unresolved mothers: limited awareness.
- -> Assessment validity?



Assessing Relational Processes: Projective Techniques

Transference Themes

Perception of Infant Emotions



Assessing Transference

Karin Gleason, Ph.D., C.Psych.



Assessing Transference

Previous experience
with relationships



Cognitive representations
of relationships



Expectations for a
new relationship



Behaviour in
relationship



Core Conflictual Relationship Themes

(Luborsky et al., 1986)

- Within each narrative:
 - wishes, needs or intentions
 - response of the other
 - response of the self
- Overall scores:
 - identify repeated themes,
 - their congruence,
 - their inflexibility



- Do you see [your parents] very much?
- I see my dad more than I see my mom. And I didn't get to see them till B was 3 months old. (wish to be close)
- What happened when you told them about the pregnancy?
- They told me not to call them back. (other rejecting)
-
- And how was that for you?
- I don't know, I have (partner's) family so it wasn't that bad. (self response: comfortable)

Recurring CCRT Themes: Rejection from Other Adults

Unresolved: others were Rejecting: **94%**

Not Unresolved: others were Rejecting: **58%**



Autonomous: others as understanding, helpful



Relationship Themes with Infants: Response of Self

Unresolved: self as Disappointed and Depressed (28%)

Not Unresolved: self as Respected and Helpful (39%)



Congruence: Wishes & Others' Response

Unresolved: 42% congruence

Not Unresolved: 51% congruence

Inflexibility: Response of Others

Unresolved: 71% inflexibility

Not Unresolved: 56% inflexibility

Overall, wishes of adolescent mothers
were rigid and inflexible



Transference: Implications for Intervention

- **Unresolved mothers:**
 - themes of rejection, disappointment
 - lack of flexibility
- **How will this affect:**
 - Expectations for mother-infant relationship?
 - Interpretation of infant's behaviour?
 - Ability to benefit from intervention?



Assessing Mothers' Perceptions of Infant Emotions

Carey Anne DeOliveira, Ph.D., C.Psych



Mothers' Perception of Infant Emotions

Experience of emotions
in early relationships



Perception of own and
others' emotions



Perception of their
infant's emotions



Response to their infant

Lack of
understanding of
emotions

Expectations of
others' responses

Projection of own
feelings



IFEEL Pictures

(Emde, Osofsky, & Butterfield, 1993)



Perceived Emotions

Unresolved Mothers perceived LESS: Content

**Unresolved Mothers perceived MORE: Surprise
Shame/Guilt
Passivity**

Perceived Emotions: Atypical Responses

- Used by <5% of the reference sample
(Emde et al., 1993)

Unresolved Mothers reported MORE: Atypical Responses

Perception of Emotions: Implications for Intervention

- **Unresolved mothers:**
 - perceive different emotions (more passive, shame, surprise)
 - have atypical perceptions of infant emotions
- **How will this affect:**
 - behaviour toward infant?
 - awareness of distortions?



Summary:

Implications for Intervention

- **Assess relational processes using:**
 - self-report and projective techniques
 - behavioural observations
- **Interventions to address:**
 - attributions and expectancies within mothers' awareness, and
 - automatic/implicit responses within interactions and to emotion cues

