

Article critique #2



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Parenting Styles of Substance-Abusing Mothers Suchman et al.'s article on parenting interventions for mothers in treatment for substance abuse was published by the Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment in January of 2007, and is available in PDF format from the PubMed database. The researchers are affiliated with the Yale University Department of Psychiatry and the Columbia University Teachers College Department of Human Development. The article cites 37 sources; however, from looking at the authors' last names and comparing them to the reference list, it appears as though 8 of these are self-references. Suchman and Luthar have collaborated on several related projects in the past. Self-referencing in this case is acceptable because other sources are credible. This 2007 article is related to prior work done by the authors and the different studies apparently support one another.

The authors assert that parental control results in better behavior outcomes for children, and parental warmth results in better psychological outcomes. Mothers in the study were taken from a population participating in methadone treatments, and randomly assigned to either control-training group therapy or warmth-training group therapy. The group therapy lasted for 24 weeks and the children and mothers completed assessments a total of seven times during the study. A total of 98 mother-child pairs participated all the way through the study.

The authors' hypotheses were that mothers who exhibited greater control over their children's behavior while still allowing them to be autonomous would have children with fewer behavioral issues, and that mothers who exhibited warmth toward their children would have children who were better adjusted. The findings of the study proved that these assumptions were true,

to a degree. Since all the data was self-reported, the mothers and children saw themselves differently. For instance, children who rated their mothers high on the parental control scale were not looked at by their mothers as having fewer problems, but the children's self-report showed they had fewer problems with behavior. And, when both mothers and children rated the mothers high on the warmth scale, those children reported greater problems with internalizing behaviors such as depression. Obviously, children view their mothers differently than they view themselves; one reason for this could be that the mothers were trying to make changes in their parenting styles and the children were not yet responding in line with the parents' changes.

The randomized assignment of the women to either of the two groups was useful for the purposes of study, but the two parenting styles overlap in the real world. In addition, nowhere do the authors mention what went on during the 24 group therapy sessions, nor do they discuss a change between initial behaviors and behaviors after intervention. It would be relevant to know these things so the reader could know how to interpret the findings.

Supporting parents in recovery to better raise their children is important. The two interventions examined in this article are commonly used, and they each have different but overlapping effects on the outcomes for the children. A significant reason women use to get cleaned up is the desire to raise their children, so all support possible must be given to these women so they have a better chance at staying clean.

Reference

Suchman, N., Rounsaville, B., DeCoste, C., and Luthar, S. (2007). Parental control, parental warmth, and psychosocial adjustment in a sample of
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substance-abusing mothers and their school-aged and adolescent children.

Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment, 32(1), 1-10.