

When Should we Intervene? PCIT for Foster Children in Reunification

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OBJECTIVES

Expand knowledge of:

1. Risk factors for children in foster care
2. Placement disruption and attachment
 - Attachment and developmental psychopathology
3. Reunification for children in foster care
4. PCIT with foster caregivers and biological caregivers
5. Current study and hypotheses
6. Results and implications
 - Benefits of providing PCIT to foster caregivers and biological caregivers in reunification!



Ponder this...

4 yr. old Clark and his foster parents, Martha and Jon.





What if...

... there was some magical treatment?



It's... **PCIT** to the rescue!

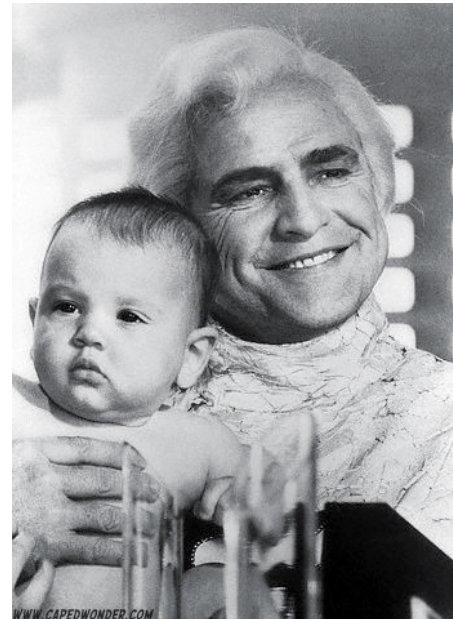
Some people would say:



1. Cruel and unusual
2. Harms attachment with biological caregivers

Say yes to PCIT!

- Clark can benefit from receiving PCIT with his foster caregivers, and then with his biological parents too!
 - Decreases likelihood of another foster placement
 - Makes child's behavior more manageable, decreasing likelihood of reentry into foster system
 - Gives biological parents time to create healthy home environment

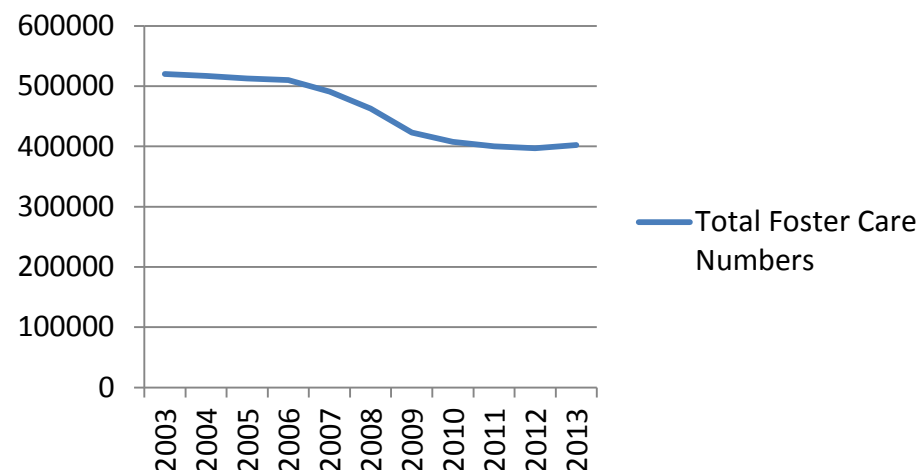


Here's the problem:

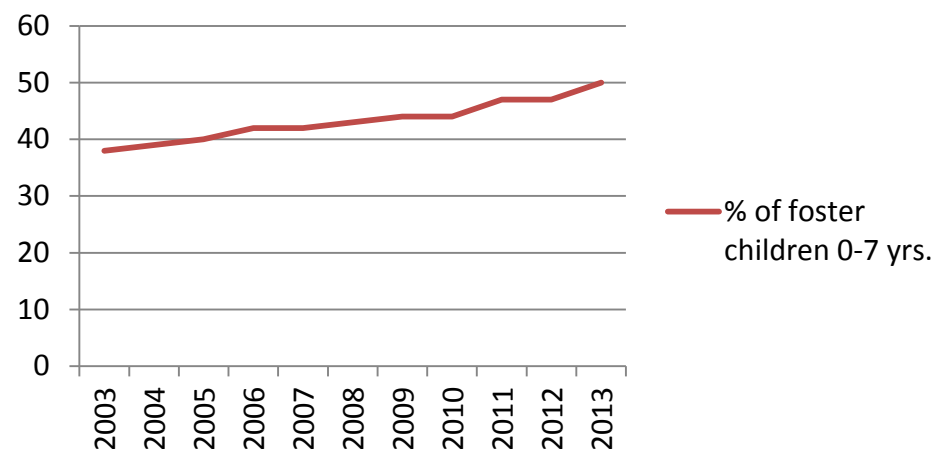
Children in Foster Care

- Exposure to domestic violence
- History of abuse and neglect
- Multiple foster placements
- Emotional and behavior problems
- Attachment disorders
- Prenatal drug exposure
- Other risk factors!

Total Foster Care Numbers



% of foster children 0-7 yrs.





Foster Care Treatment Goals

Legal System/Child Welfare System

- A safe and **speedy** reunification
 - Less time in foster care
 - Reunification is the goal of 50% of foster placements

Children's Mental Health Perspective

- A safe and stable relationship (biological or not)
 - Less foster placements
 - Healthy & supportive relationships

Research shows:

1. Mo' placements = Mo' problems!
2. PCIT with foster caregivers: it's a good thing





Interesting Tidbit:

Legal System/Child Welfare System

- A safe and speedy reunification
 - Less time in foster care
 - Reunification is the goal of 50% of foster placements

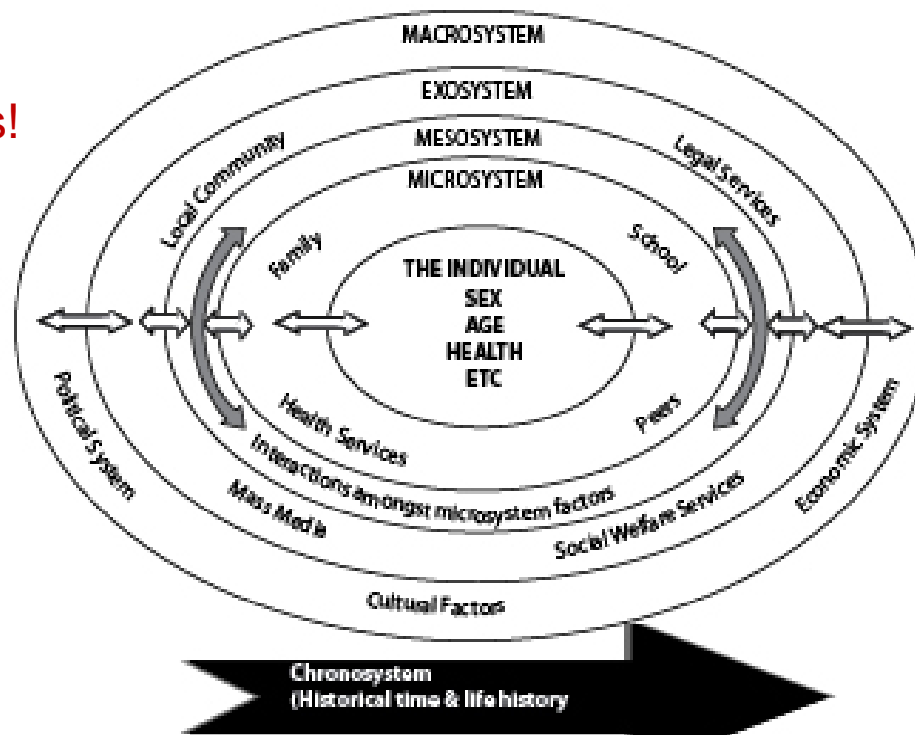
Research ALSO shows:

- Failed reunification (reentry into the foster system):
 1. More foster placements
 2. History of neglect
 3. Spent LESS time in foster care

The Theory Part

- Ecological Transactional Theory:

- Child \leftrightarrow Environment
- Potentiating factors:
 - Multiple foster placements!
 - Risk histories of abuse!
 - Behavior problems!
- Compensatory factors
 - Long term/stable placements!
 - Positive caregiver relationships!
 - Protective (long term)
 - Buffer (short term)
 - E.g., healthy foster caregiver relationship!





The Theory Part Continued

- Attachment Theory:
 - Caregiver \leftrightarrow Child \leftrightarrow Other Caregiver
 - Internal working model:
 - How a child views themselves in other relationships based on relationship patterns with a specific caregiver
 - Internal working model \rightarrow influence expectations of other caregiver



The Study

We looked at 36 children referred to PCIT at the UC Davis CAARE Center with both their foster mother, and their biological caregiver (35 moms, 1 dad)

Hypotheses

- No** 1. Does foster mother participation predict bio parents' use of PRIDE skills?
- Trend...** 2. Does foster mother participation predict bio parents' perceptions of children's behavior problems?
- No** 3. Does foster mother participation predict bio parents' participation in PCIT?
- Yes!** 4. Does foster mother participation predict bio parents' sensitivity to child?
- Yes!** 5. Does foster mother participation predict bio parents' reunification status?

Predictor Variables

Foster Mother participation = # of coaching sessions and use of encouraged verbalizations (unlabeled praises, labeled praises, behavioral descriptions, reflections)

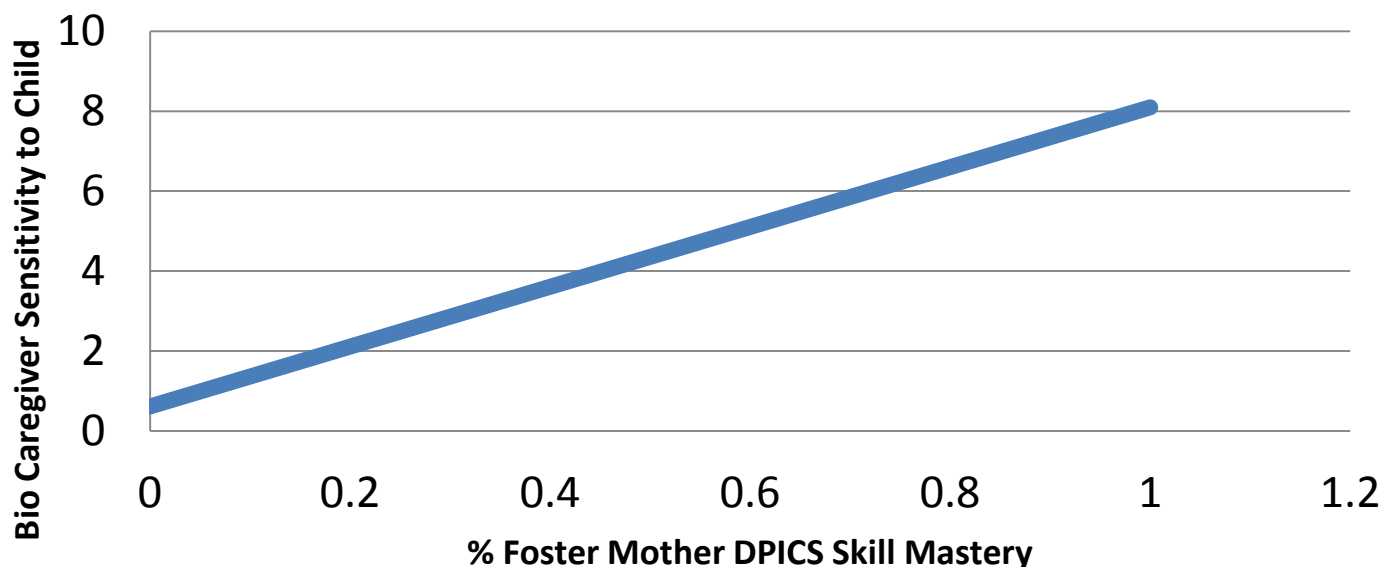
Outcome Variables

Biological Mother:

- Use of encouraged verbalizations (unlabeled praises, labeled praises, behavioral descriptions, reflections)
- Perceptions of child behavior (on the ECBI)
- Participation in PCIT (# of coaching sessions attended)
- Mother sensitivity to child (from Biringen's Emotional Availability Scales)
- Reunification with child by the end of treatment

Results

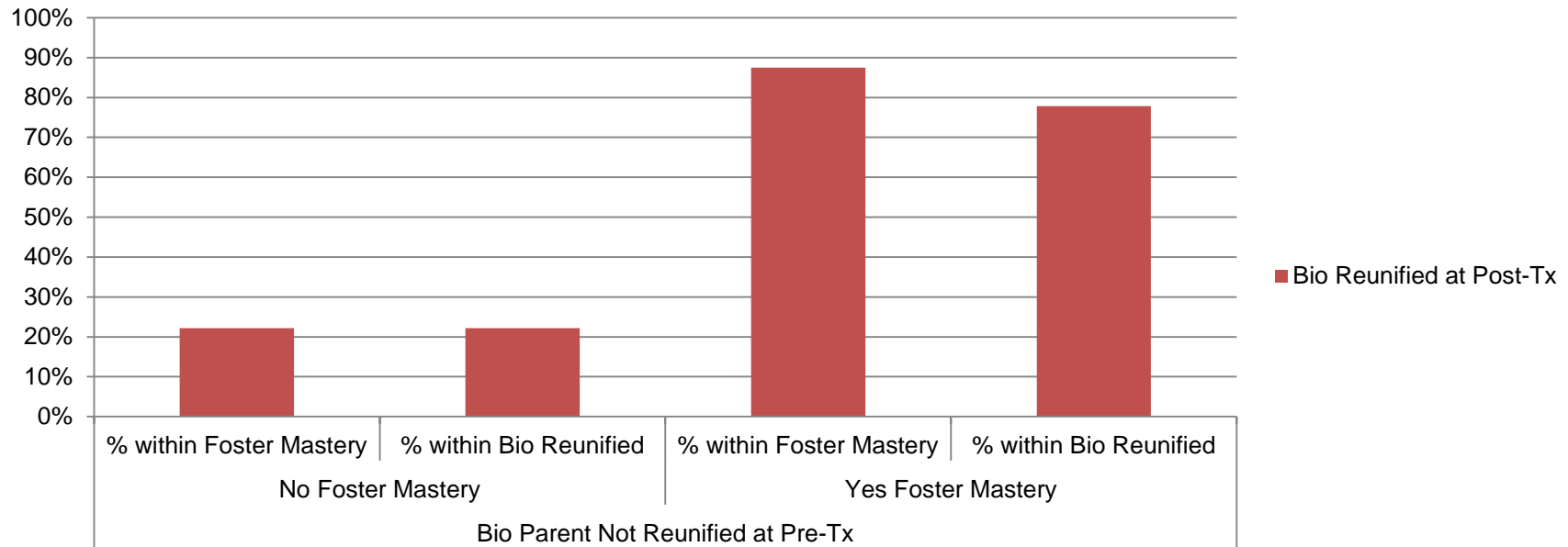
H4: Significant Results



- The better the foster mother was at skill acquisition, the more sensitive bio parents were at pre-treatment
- **Implications:** spillover from foster mother relationship to bio parent relationship
 - Improved child behaviors?
 - Fits with non-significant trend of H2 (Perceptions)

Results continued

H5 Significant Interaction



- The better the foster caregiver was at skill acquisition, the more likely bio caregivers were to reunify by the end of treatment (if they were still in reunification at Pre-Tx)

- Overlapping treatment as a model?

- Implications:** Benefits of a foster system where both caregivers can be included in treatment and encouraged to work towards a positive placement for the child!

Discussion

Myth: Enhancing a relationship between a young child and foster caregiver will harm reunification and relationship quality with a biological parent.



Truth: What's good for the foster parent-child relationship is good for the biological parent-child relationship. The **CHILD** is the common factor!



• Remember “attachment?”: the child's internal working model of a foster caregiver allows the child to build a schema that **caregivers can, in fact, be caring and nurturing!**

THANK YOU!

