The experience of pregnancy and early parenting for women who are addicted to heroin

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今天，我们的目标是：
1. 说明社会环境对我们的项目
2. 描述项目设计
3. 从案例研究中发现的份额
4. 为我们的研究结果解释
5. 考虑政策和实践的影响

Today I aim to:
1. explain the social context for the project
2. describe the project design
3. share findings from the case studies
4. offer interpretations of the findings
5. suggest implications for policy & practice
Social Context

- Problematic use of heroin experienced by less than 1% of the population.
- Around 90% of women who use heroin are of childbearing age.
- Individuals enter treatment for problematic heroin use for a number of reasons.
- Treatment is usually as an ‘outpatient’ and methadone is the most common therapy.
- Treatment for pregnant and parenting women varies across the country.
- A ‘team around the family’ may assess the risk of the child remaining with the mother.
A population of women who have traditionally been marginalized, demonized and blamed for harm to both their children and society.

‘Hidden’ and hence under-researched population.

The convergence of two potent stages in a women’s life offers exciting opportunities for an exploration of the psychological processes involved.
20 pregnant women in treatment for heroin addiction were recruited through antenatal clinics and drug centres.

I interviewed the women in pregnancy and once or twice in the postnatal period (after their babies were born).

I asked them about what they were enjoying or finding difficult about their lives, how they were managing their addictions and what they were expecting for theirs and their babies' future.

The interviews were semi-structured: the women were invited to talk about what was important for them.

I analysed the themes that emerged from the interviews.
**Case study findings: Susan**

### Pregnancy:
- High level of addiction to opiates;
- History of prostitution;
- History of addiction to other substances;
- Living in inadequate housing with addicted partner
- Has friends & family who do not use drugs
- Strong resolve to achieve ‘normality’

### 1 year postnatal:
- Not using heroin or methadone;
- Living with son in rented house close to own mother;
- No contact with ex-partner;
- Happy;
- Planning to start college course.
Case study findings

Susan’s story

Facilitators

- Strong personal resolve to achieve goals
- Supportive relationship with mother
- Existing networks outside of drug communities
- Courage to leave violent and addicted partner

Hindrances

- Significantly addicted when pregnancy discovered
- Baby’s father not in treatment for addiction
- Homelessness
- Poverty
The women’s perinatal experience is characterised by powerful aspirations for:

- a ‘normal life’,
- security
- and independence.

These aspirations are catalysed by pregnancy and are furthered strengthened by the arrival of the baby.

Moving towards these goals requires negotiation of a complex process of evolution which is personal and social.
Implications for policy and practice

• There is a uniqueness of the stressors experienced and coping resources utilised by this group of women.

• The transition to motherhood can be a positive, psychologically evolutionary experience which can change these women’s lives for the better.

• A ‘window of opportunity’ exists for positive changes to heroin consumption levels if the women are able to successfully achieve their aspirations.

• The evolutionary process is individual and social: there are specific roles that other people play in assisting or hindering the women in achieving their aspirations.
非常感谢！ Thank you!

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