

Sensitivity and Commitment: A View on Parenthood in a Context of Placement Trajectory

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Abstract : Introduction: Placement is, without doubt, a challenging experience for both foster children and biological parents who witness their child being removed from their care. Yet, few studies have examined parenting in such a context through critical parental skills such as parental sensitivity and commitment. Sensitivity is described as the capacity of parents to respond accurately to their child's needs in a warm, predictable and consistent way, whereas commitment is the ability of the parent to get involved physically and emotionally in an enduring relationship with his child. The research confirms the important role of parental sensitivity and parental commitment on child development following placement in foster care. Nevertheless, these studies were mainly conducted with foster parents, and few studies have examined these components of parenthood with biological parents. Method: This study evolves in two times. At first, 17 parents participated throughout a 90-minutes interview. It allowed to collect information regarding the sociodemographic situation, contacts, placement trajectory. Parental sensitivity is observed during a supervised parent-child contact. The second time occurred one to two years later and implied an at-home 90-minutes interview where we updated the information from the first interview and were able to assess the level of parental commitment. In this ongoing part of the study, five parents have already participated in implying the rest of them remain to be interviewed in the coming months - from October through December 2018. Results: Descriptive analysis from the first part of the study suggests the examination of two groups: 11 children have been reunified whereas six are still in foster care. Qualitative analysis allows to compare themes of sensitivity and commitment regarding if the reunification project occurs or not. Preliminary analysis about thematic content shows key components of parental commitment through parent's reveal of the way they nurture a relationship with their child. Furthermore, preliminary analysis suggests that parental sensitivity is not associated with family reunification ($r = 0,11$, $p = 0,74$). Further analysis will be assessed with the date from the second part of the study to examine the potential association between commitment and reunification. Discussion: Parental sensitivity and commitment are fundamental to the well-being of the child in a placement trajectory. They need to be understood better as two different complex concepts and as two parenting skills that might have a way of echoing to one another when engaged in a specific context. Above all, a more accurate comprehension of parenting in a placement trajectory allows to sustain adequate intervention practices for birth parents and could change the way parental adequacy is assessed when reaching for reunification.

Keywords : child welfare, foster care, intervention practices, parenthood

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