

**THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PRISON NURSERY PROGRAMS IN REDUCING  
RECIDIVISM: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW**

by

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The Effectiveness of Prison Nursery Programs in Reducing Recidivism: A Systematic Review

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**ABSTRACT**

There has been steady increase of females entering prison over the last few decades, with this increase comes the increase of mothers who are entering prison and being forced to give up their children to either other family members, adoption agencies or the foster care system. Prison nursery programs were designed to keep the mother and her baby together and bonding during the duration of the mother's prison sentence. These nursery programs have been found to increase beneficial attachments between the mothers and the children. They also have been promoted as a source of reducing recidivism rates. Recidivism is a critical component when describing the successfulness of a prison program. This systematic review identifies studies conducted on prison nursery programs within the United States and how their results exemplify their successfulness when it comes to recidivism. All of the studies included within this one showed a reduction in recidivism rates for mothers who participated in nursery programs, however, limitations within conducting this research were experienced. Implications for the limitations and recommendations for future research are included in the discussion.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to my loving parents, Amanda and Robbie, for always encouraging me and pushing me to be the best version of myself. I thank you for all of your support throughout my many years of college. I also dedicate this thesis to my two brothers, Carter and Daniel, as a reminder to never give up on your dreams and to always look towards the future.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Over the last three decades, women imprisonment has increased six-fold (Foster & Hagan, 2012). Although, women currently only make up less than 10% of the prison population, between 1980 and 2014 the number of incarcerated women increased by more than 400% (The Sentencing Project, 2015). In 2016, females made up 7% of the total national prison population (Carson, 2018). The imprisonment rate for African American females was almost twice that of Caucasian females, and African American females ages 18 and 19 were 3.1 times more likely than Caucasian females and 2.2 times more likely than Hispanic females to be imprisoned in 2016 (Carson, 2018). Caucasian and African American females comprised of 8% of the female prison population aged 55 or older, compared to 5% of Hispanic prisoners. Although, various factors may have contributed to this enormous growth in female incarceration over the past few decades, Kruttschnitt (2010), notes two primary reasons for the increase. First is the shift from indeterminate to determinate sentencing. Indeterminate sentencing was an “offender-based” system, as opposed to an “offense-based” system (Kruttschnitt, 2010). With indeterminate sentencing, judges could consider a woman's role in the offense and the extent and severity of her prior record when determining her sentence, if the woman played a minor role in the offense, the judge could take that into consideration when they determine the sentence (Kruttschnitt, 2010). They could also consider external factors, such as her family responsibilities, when determining the costs and benefits of a noncustodial or custodial sanction. In other words, judges could take into consideration the severity of the crime and if the severity is low and the woman is a mother or has other

family responsibilities the judge could impose a sentence accordingly and try to ensure that a relationship is maintained between the mother and her child/children (Kruttschnitt, 2010). However, with determinate sentencing, judicial discretion was severely reduced, and persistent offending rather than the severity or dangerousness of offending emerged as the most important criterion for imprisonment (Kruttschnitt, 2010).

Second, is mandatory prison sentences for certain drug offenses which was compounded by the “War on Drugs” and the change of sentencing in the 1980’s. There are several reasons that why women are incarcerated, however, women who are incarcerated in state prisons are more often convicted of drug offenses, property offenses, and public-order offenses (Kruttschnitt, 2010). According to Kubiak et al., (2012), “violent crimes and other assaults account for 12.9% of arrests for women and that women comprise 5% of all state prisoners having committed a violent offense” (p.197). Many women convicted of violent offenses tend not to be mothers, as in many cases, their children are often their motivating factor to desist from criminal activity (Cobbina, 2009). Although mothers do not tend to be incarcerated for violent crimes, mothers do, however, make up much of the female prison population.

Most imprisoned women are mothers and more specifically, at the end of the last decade, 65 percent of the women in state prisons had children under the age of eighteen. Two-thirds of these women lived with their children prior to their arrest (Foster & Hagan 2012; Kruttschnitt, 2010; Glaze & Maruschak 2008). Also, 4% of state and 3% of federal inmates stated that they were pregnant at the time they began their incarceration (Maruschak, 2006), and it is estimated that 9% of female inmates will give birth during the time of their incarceration (Chambers, 2009). Considering the lack of resources in

prisons, only 54% of pregnant inmates stated that they received any kind of pregnancy care (Maruschak, 2006).

The purpose of this study is to exemplify the positive outcomes of prison nursery programs when it comes to recidivism rates. Articles and studies that were included in this systematic review all included comparisons of recidivism rates of mothers who participated in prison nursery programs versus mothers who did not as well as compared to the general female prison population. By showing the positive outcomes of these nursery programs and the lower recidivism rates of their participants, this study can be used to show the lack of research regarding this topic and illustrate the need for more research and ultimately the need for more prison nursery programs in other states across the United States.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Research has shown that incarceration can have adverse effects on women, especially mothers who are forced to be separated from their children (Kennon et al., 2009; Loper & Tuerk, 2006). For most inmate mothers, concerns about their children's wellbeing and separation can be some of the most difficult stressors while being incarcerated (Loper & Tuerk, 2006). According to Kennon et al. (2009), "many incarcerated mothers have a number of mistaken beliefs about being a parent in prison" (p.11). They may believe that their children are unaffected by their incarceration. Some mothers are so filled with guilt at the harm they have caused that they are unsure of how to proceed with their children and their new caregivers. They feel there is nothing they can do for their children or families while so far away (Kennon et al, 2009). Many incarcerated mothers experience high levels of stress and guilt about leaving their children and the harm that they have caused (Kennon et al., 2009). They are unsure of their parenting abilities while being incarcerated and how this will affect their parenting abilities once released (Loper & Tuerk, 2006). Research indicates, mothers tend to experience more depressive symptoms when they have little to no contact with their children during their incarceration (Foster & Hagan, 2012; Twerk & Loper, 2006). This can negatively impact the mother's mental health while incarcerated as well as her ability to effectively parent upon release. Foster and Hagan (2012) found that mothers who had less contact with their children during their incarceration, are at a higher risk of mental and physical health problems. Tuerk and Loper (2006) conducted a study on 357 incarcerated mothers by using the Parenting Stress Index for Incarcerated Women (PSI-

IW) scale, they assessed the stresses that mothers face while being incarcerated and separated from their children. They found that mothers who maintained contact with their children during their incarceration, mainly through letter writing, show significantly less stress than mothers who experienced little to no contact with their children during their incarceration (Turek & Loper, 2006). Poehlmann et al. (2010), also found similar results and noted that women who experienced more child contact were less likely to report symptoms of depression and anxiety during imprisonment. Schubert et al., (2016), also noted similar effects of mothers contact with children and stated that mothers in prison who had frequent contact with their children were less likely to report low self-esteem compared with mothers with no contact. These studies indicate that it is important to ensure that mothers and children maintain a relationship throughout the mother's incarceration.

To help improve and maintain relationships between incarcerated mothers and their children, many prisons nationwide have implemented educational programs designed to teach inmates how to promote healthy interactions with their children (Loper & Tuerk, 2006). These programs include, but are not limited to; parenting classes, programs that allow parents and children to live together in prison, relationship-building visitation activities, parent counseling and post release assistance (Loper & Tuerk, 2006). Children with incarcerated mothers may be at a higher risk for future incarceration, especially if they have little to no contact with their incarcerated mother (Dallaire, 2007). Therefore, these prison programs are designed to help incarcerated parents maintain a healthy relationship with their children, while in prison and when released from prison. With hopes of keeping them and their children out of prison in the future. Although

maternal incarceration has shown to have numerous effects on the mother, it has also been shown to have adverse effects on the children.



When a parent is incarcerated, especially a primary caregiver, the relationship between the parent and child can be strained. Children are often put into foster homes or left with other relatives while the parent serves out their sentence (Kruttschnitt, 2010). There are several reasons why maternal imprisonment is particularly difficult for children (Kruttschnitt, 2010). First, because mothers are often the primary caregivers and the main source of parental attachment, especially for young children, it can cause a strain in the developmental process of positive attachment relationships when it comes to the children (Kruttschnitt, 2010). Second, it may be harder to maintain close ties with an incarcerated mother because there are fewer state prisons for women and they are primarily located in more remote regions, it can be difficult for the new primary caregiver to travel to these prisons (Kruttschnitt, 2010). Although most incarcerated mothers have reported having some contact with their children via phone calls, or by mail, half or more of the children of incarcerated mothers do not see their mothers during their entire incarceration (Foster & Hagan, 2012). Third, children of incarcerated mothers are exposed to more risks in the home environment which can lead to more childhood disadvantages (Foster & Hagan, 2012). Lastly, children with incarcerated mothers have a greater chance of experiencing multiple incarceration-related events such as; being present at the time of arrest and/or sentencing (Foster & Hagan, 2012). Maternal incarceration can also have more adverse effects on children including; cognitive and attachment relationship effects as well as, adverse effects on the children's education. While these effects happen when the mother has already had children before her

incarceration, studies have also been done on mothers who have their children while being incarcerated. In some instances, the mother can keep her baby within a nursery program designed by the prison. Although there are only a few states that currently have implemented these nursery programs, studies have shown that by keeping the mother and baby together, it can have a positive impact on the mother and child as well as reduce recidivism rates.

### **Nursery Programs Background**

Due to the punitive nature of prison, mothers who give birth while incarcerated have little time to bond and build a relationship with their child. In most cases, mothers are immediately transported from the delivery areas and returned to their prison units (Chambers, 2009). These mothers and babies are being forcibly separated directly after birth and the babies are being sent to other caregivers or placed into the foster system or adoption agencies. Unfortunately, for 50% of incarcerated mothers, this separation becomes a permanent, life-long one (Chambers, 2009). Very few prisons in the United States allow mothers and their babies to spend time together following the delivery and thereafter. This results in the loss of crucial bonding and attachment time between mother and baby and can cause a “disruption in the maternal role attainment process” (Chambers, 2009, p. 204). However, because of the rising rate of women entering prisons, a select few states have implemented prison nurseries within their female facilities. Currently the United States has eight states that have running prison nurseries within one or more of their female prison facilities; New York, Nebraska, Washington, Ohio, Indiana, South Dakota, Illinois and West Virginia (DeBoer, 2012). These programs allow mothers to keep their new-born children with them for a specified amount of time, within a special



housing facility that is usually isolated from the general population. These programs operate for women who are pregnant at the time of incarceration and allow the mother to form a bond with the child during infancy (DeBoer, 2012). Nursery programs provide a unique, bi-generational, intervention opportunity for correctional departments (Goshin and Byrne, 2009). Mothers who participate in these programs must be evaluated as mentally and physically capable of caring for their child and have no history of violence or child abuse (DeBoer, 2012). In numerous studies done on nursery programs (Goshin, Byrne and Henninger, 2013; Carlson, 2001; Whiteacre et al., 2013), found that most mothers who participate in these nursery programs are serving sentences for drug offenses, in some programs these women comprised of nearly 79% of participants (Goshin, Byrne and Henninger, 2013). These numbers are consistent with the national rates of female prisoners with over half of the female prison population serving sentences for drug offenses (Carlson, 2018). Mothers who have a history of substance abuse, are allowed to participate in these nursery programs however, they must all complete any and all substance abuse classes required with their sentence (Goshin, Byrne and Henninger, 2013). The lengths of stay can vary from 1-36 months; however, most programs allow 12-18 months. Current US programs are staffed by correctional officers, civilian professionals, including nurses (Goshin, Byrne and Henninger, 2013). Most facilities require prenatal and parenting classes, these can be facilitated by professional staffs, fellow incarcerated mothers (peers) or other community-based organizations (Goshin, Byrne and Henninger, 2013). Other resources can include; lactation support, civilian experts in child-development as well as day care centers that help allow the mother to attend counseling, drug treatment or educational and vocational programs. Each program

runs a little bit differently, can require different prerequisites, and can vary on the capacities, however, all the programs share common goals. First, for mother and child to leave together at the end of the mother's sentence. Second, to promote bonding between mothers and children while also giving the mothers the tools they need to become better parents. Lastly, these programs are designed to reduce recidivism among incarcerated mothers by encouraging them to make changes in their lifestyle following their release (DeBoer, 2012). The state of New York was the first to open a prison nursery in one of its female facilities in 1901, the state opened a second nursery program in another female facility in 1990. The last state so far to open a prison nursery was West Virginia in 2009. The following section briefly describes a few of the nursery programs within the United States. It describes a few of the differences and similarities between some of these programs and how they have been successful.

### **Bedford Hills Correctional Facility, New York**

Between 1901 and 1933, women's reformatories were established across the United States, with the first one being established in New York (Craig, 2009). The program at the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility for Women a maximum facility in New York and has been the model for other nursery programs across the United States. The nursery program at Bedford Hills which opened in 1901, is also the largest program in the United States with the capacity to hold 29 mother/child pairs. In addition to the nursery, Bedford Hills offers a parenting center, prenatal center, infant day care center and a child advocacy office. Bedford Hills does not only support mother in the nursery program, but also supports mothers who do not or cannot participate in the nursery programs. The visiting room at Bedford Hills has a special area for mothers to be able to

read to their children as well as play games together. During the summertime, there is a camp that is held where children of incarcerated mothers can stay with host families at night and spend the day at the prison with their mothers, participating in various family-oriented activities (WPA, 2009). At Bedford Hills, the child can stay for up to eighteen months if the mother will be paroled by that time. Otherwise, the child must leave the facility at the age of twelve months (DeBoer, 2012). For a mother to be able to participate in the nursery program, the mother must be physically fit to care for the child and pass an evaluation based on parental abilities and criminal record (DeBoer, 2012). Other factors are examined before a mother can participate in the nursery programs such as; who will have custody of the child, previous incarcerations and length of current sentence, involvement in the welfare system, and the nature of her crime (WPA, 2009).

### **Taconic Correctional Facility, New York**

Taconic Correctional Facility is also located in New York and is a medium confinement center and just a short distance from Bedford Hills Correctional Facility (Carlson, 1998). The nursery program at Taconic Correctional Facility was started in 1990 and can hold fifteen mother/child pairs at a time. The length for participation follows that of the Bedford Hills nursery program (WPA, 2009). Taconic's program was designed to address the needs of those incarcerated mothers who struggle with substance abuse histories and are due to give birth while incarcerated (Carlson, 1998). The main objectives of this program included; providing drug counseling services, evaluating, monitoring and treating babies born to mothers with histories of substance abuse, to teach parenting skills and improve family relationships for the participants and to increase the

likelihood that the participant will live a drug free life post release, which should help with reducing recidivism (Carlson, 1998).

### **Washington Corrections Center, Washington**

In 1999, the Washington Corrections Center for Women created a nursery program that combined the residential parenting program with Early HeadStart, thus making the unique program known as the Residential Parenting Program (RPP) This program allows pregnant, minimum security, incarcerated women with sentences of less than thirty months the opportunity to keep their babies with them after birth (WPA, 2009). This programs capacity is at 20 mother/baby pairs. RPP participants live in the “J Unit” which is segregated from the general population of the rest of the prison. Each mother has her own room with an adult bed and an infant/toddler bed. The mother-child wing has a playroom, bathing and diaper changing room, a kitchen area, as well as, a large outdoor play area for the participants in the Residential Parenting Program (WPA, 2009). There is a pediatrician that visits the facility once a month to monitor the children’s growth and to administer vaccines and checkups (WPA, 2009).

Due to the extended period of up to three years that a child can stay with their incarcerated mother, the Washington Correctional Center for Women, offers the program; Early HeadStart for all those children (Diamond, 2012). In an attempt to meet the developmental and educational needs of the children who are a part of the RPP, the Washington Correctional Center for Women has implemented an Early HeadStart program. This program is located on the Correctional Center’s grounds and is staffed by HeadStart professionals as well as on position that has been specifically designated for an incarcerated woman (WPA, 2009). Through this Early HeadStart program, incarcerated

mothers and their children receive developmental screenings and assessments, they receive infant/toddler care and activities, nutritious meals and family support (WPA, 2009). Those pregnant women as well as the mothers with infants/toddlers living in the “J Unit” are provided with services such as; prenatal education, information about infant health and development, and screening for maternal depression (WPA, 2009). Finally, the Washington Correctional Center for Women is known for its use of doula services. These doulas help by providing assistance during labor, holding parenting classes within the facility and helping pregnant women with developing individualized birth plans (WPA, 2009).

### **Lakin Correctional Center, West Virginia**

Thus far, West Virginia has been the last state to open a prison nursery program within one of its female facilities. The program known as *Keeping Infant Development Successful (KIDS)*, was opened in 2009 inside Lakin Correctional Center (LCC) in West Virginia. This nursery program is also in partnership with the Early Head Start Program. Through Early Head Start, inmate mothers receive education about their pregnancy and their baby’s development (Nohe, 2014). This education comes both prenatally and as the baby grows. The mother is also educated about child nurturing, good parenting skills, health and safety, nutrition as well as family counseling (Nohe, 2014). The infant also receives appropriate education as it develops as well as needed stimulation, the infant is also assessed for developmental progress while in the program (Nohe, 2014). This program can hold up to five mother/child pairs at one-time, pregnant inmates who are eligible for this program must be within 18 months of release or parole. These women must also not have been convicted of any crimes against children and must be cleared by

the KIDS Review Committee. While residing at LCC and participating in this nursery program, mothers care for their infants 24 hours a day, seven days a week, except for when the mother is unavailable due to parenting and educational classes. During this time, an inmate caregiver is responsible for caring for the infants. The inmate caregiver is required to meet the same criteria as the mothers who enter the program (Nohe, 2014). This program was designed with the hope of establishing a positive and loving and nurturing bond between the infant and mother during the first 18 months of their lives (Nohe, 2014). This bond is proven to be effective in reducing recidivism rates for the mothers as well as providing the necessary needs for attachment for the infant (Nohe, 2014). This program has also been shown to be beneficial to the foster care program in West Virginia. The KIDS program alleviates the need to place these infants within the foster care system and thus is saving the state roughly \$1000 per month, per child (Nohe, 2014).

### **Cost and Funding of Prison Nursery Programs**

Although there is limited financial information on the cost of prison nursery programs, Carlson (2001), estimated that the average annual cost is \$24,000 to house an infant in a nursery program. Carlson (2001) found that in 2005 the average cost per day, per infant, was \$12.66. In West Virginia, the average cost was \$19.17 per infant, per day (Nohe, 2014). The state of West Virginia passed legislation forbidding the use of state funds for the Nursery Program, therefore, the KIDS program is funded through Early Head Start grants and receives funds through fundraising efforts (Marshall, 2011). The Superintendent of the Bedford Hills nursery program in New York estimates the cost of the nursery program to be \$95,000 per year for approximately 20 children (Idaho State

Legislature, 2003). The state of New York passed a law “Article 22 - § 611 Births to Inmates of Correctional Institutions and Care of Children of Inmates of Correctional Institutions, which mandates that pregnant prisoners be able to keep their child in with them in prison for a maximum of 18-months” (Onecle, 2011). Crimes of arson and crimes against children are the only crimes excluded from this law. New York’s Nursery Programs are funded through a contract with Catholic Charities, infant medical care is covered through Medicare and the infants are also eligible for WIC, state funding covers any shortfalls in funding to cover all nursery costs (Marshall, 2011). The reported annual cost for the Nebraska nursery program is \$107,014 per year, and includes the cost of having a program coordinator, security personnel, and a caseworker (Idaho State Legislature, 2003). Nebraska also receives funding through local non-profits which pays for nursery equipment and teachers who work with the mothers and their children, they also receive periodic donations from local churches (Marshall, 2011). Some states such as Washington, receive all their funds through the government and other community agencies. This program is entirely funded through Federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families grants, through the Puget Sound Education Services District Early Head Start and Social Workers are provided through collaboration with the Washington State, Department of Health and Human Services (Marshall, 2011).

Although these costs seem high at first glance, much research has been done to show that these prison nursery programs have reduced recidivism rates, as well as reduced the need for foster care and adoption agencies, which in turn can be worth the costs associated with these types of programs (Carlson, 2009, 2001; Nohe, 2014; Goshin, Byrne and Henninger, 2013). According to the Idaho State Legislature, The Legislative

Budget Office of Ohio (2003) reports the state's prison nursery program has an annual operating expense totaling \$91,250 per year for 20 children. However, officials with the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction estimate the state's nursery program saves approximately \$35,000 in general fund revenue annually by reducing adoption and foster care expenses, this program is also funded through a Federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and most of the staff that works in the nursery also work with the general population (Idaho State Legislature, 2003; Marshall, 2011). Nebraska Department of Correctional Services officials suggest their program might eliminate foster care costs of \$17,500 per year per child (Idaho State Legislature, 2003). West Virginia suggests that their prison nursery program saves the state an average of \$1000 per month, per child (Nohe, 2014). Carlson (2001), calculated that nursery supplies, staff salaries, and medical expenses would total about 40 percent less each year than foster care for the babies who might have otherwise ended up there. Not only do these programs reduce the need for foster care and adoption agencies, they also reduce the rates of recidivism which can benefit the prison system as a whole. By implementing these nursery programs that reduce recidivism rates, states are eliminating the future costs of re-incarcerating these mothers who may return to prison at a future time, as well as the risk of their children later entering the prison system.

According to Dallaire (2007), it is estimated that children with an incarcerated mother are six times more likely than their peers to go to jail. This is shown that the separation of the mother and child can lead to an intergenerational cycle of criminality and incarceration. Through the use of prison nursery programs, this cycle has the potential to be broken because the mothers can provide for their children while still



incarcerated and they are able to learn and develop proper parenting skills to help them upon release. For most prison nursery programs that are in effect today, public funding provides the bulk of the costs to keep these programs running. For instance, the state of Washington's nursery program is funded through a grant from the Puget Sound Education Service District (Alley, 2017). The state of West Virginia has also received grants through their use of Early Head Start, and through donations from the surrounding community. Indiana also receive funding through private grants from the Department of Health and from The Woman's Fund of Indianapolis (Carlson 2009; Marshall, 2011). In most cases the cells and housing units used for these nursery programs, were already in existence and were converted over to nursery units. Carlson (2001) notes that with the decreases in recidivism rates due to these prison nursery programs, the programs will pay for themselves over time simply by the fact that fewer women are returning to prison and with the reduction for the need of foster care and adoption agencies. Through research, the benefits of prison nurseries have been proven too be astonishing. However, for these programs to be implemented nationwide, widespread education demonstrating these benefits is critically needed.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The intention of this study was to conduct a **meta-analysis on recidivism rates** among incarcerated mothers who had completed prison nursery programs, however, to conduct such analysis, statistics are needed to calculate effect size. None of the studies on recidivism and prison nursery programs provided sufficient data for such analysis. Instead most provided descriptive statistics, even when comparing a control and treatment group. Therefore, this study is a systematic review of the existing research on prison nursery programs and recidivism of mothers in prison. The purpose of a systematic review is to synthesize the results of multiple studies done on the topic discussed. This helps to draw reliable and accurate conclusions in a way that helps to educate researchers, policy makers as well as the general public (Gopalakrishnan and Ganeshkumar, 2013). This study aimed to answer the question; do prison nursery programs within the United States help to reduce recidivism rates? Additionally, emphasis was placed on identifying differences between the prison nursery programs and costs of existing programs. Many academic criminal justice databases were used to conduct a thorough search of articles that fit into the specified parameters of this systematic review. The process for inclusion criteria and data collection are outlined below.

#### **Inclusion Criteria**

Articles were eligible for inclusion if they included the specified parameters created for this systematic-review (see Figure 3.1). These parameters included; only peer reviewed and scholarly articles and/or published government reports, articles or government reports published between the year range of 1998 to 2017, articles or

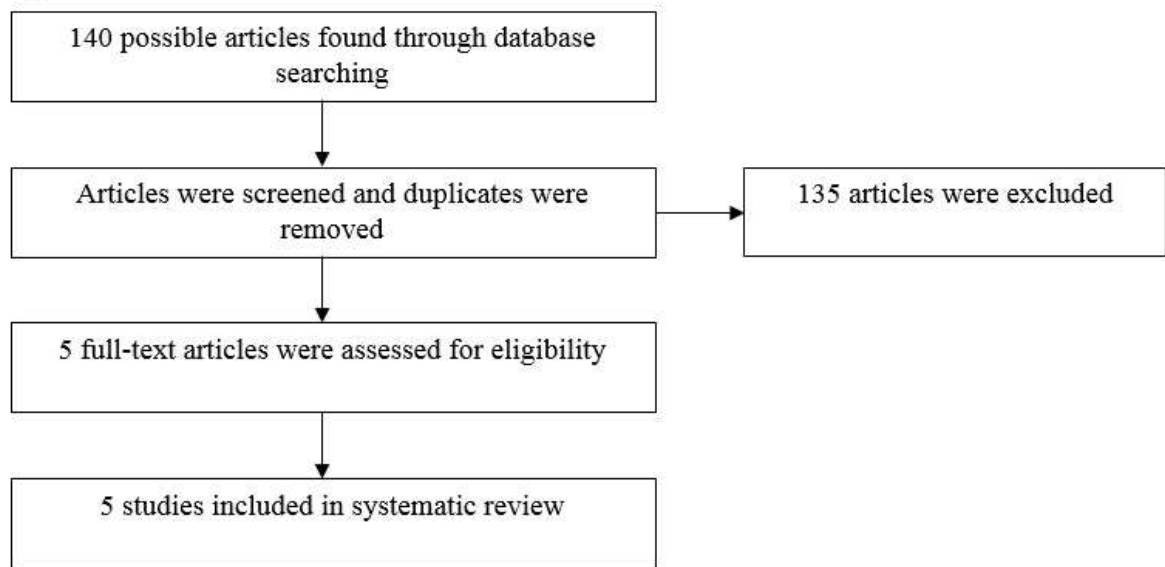
government reports published in English within the United States and finally, articles or government reports that specifically included quantitative studies done on mothers who participated in prison nursery programs who's results produced recidivism rates.

### **Literature Search**

A databases search was conducted including *Sociological Abstracts*, the *ProQuest Criminal Justice Database*, the *NCJRS Abstracts Database*, and the *Social Sciences Citation Index*. Specific criminological keywords such as *prison nursery*, *prison nurseries* and *recidivism* were used when searching these databases, these search results produced 140 possible articles. Many of these articles were flagged because of the term *recidivism*, though they were not specific to prison nurseries or parenting programs. After the specific inclusion parameters were applied to the search results from the criminal justice databases, the sample narrowed down to five quantitative studies.

Although the initial collection process searched for articles between the years of 1998 to 2017, the final study selection year range narrowed from 2000 to 2013. All the articles chosen for this systematic-review, conducted quantitative studies on the recidivism rates of women who participated in prison nursery programs as compared to women prisoners that did not. The states that these studies were conducted, all defined recidivism as the return to custody at the state's Department of Corrections within three years upon their release. Although most of the studies measured recidivism at the three-year mark, some started collecting data one or two years upon release.

**Figure 3.1: Selection Process**



The articles selected for the systematic-review sample, included research from 8 prison nursery programs in the United States. These included: Illinois, Indiana, Nebraska, New York, Ohio, South Dakota, Washington, and West Virginia. The next chapter will outline the findings from the sample regarding nursery program eligibility and overview, costs, and recidivism.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### Study Characteristics

All but two of the five articles used an experimental design with a control group and a treatment groups. A descriptive approach was utilized in two of the studies. Within these three articles that used an experimental design, the treatment groups ranged from 30 mothers to 90 mothers with a total of 164 mothers. This produced an average number of 55 mothers. The control groups ranged from 30 mothers to 98 mothers, with a total of 152 mothers. This produced an average of 51. The final two articles used a descriptive approach and compared recidivism rates of mothers who participated in the nursery programs versus the recidivism rates of the general female population released during the same time. One article used a sample size of 139 women who participated in a nursery program and compared their rates of recidivism using only percentages, to that of the general population released at the same time. Of those 139 women, 32 women returned to prison within three years of their release. The second article used a sample size of 384 mothers who participated within a nursery program in one of two facilities in the state of New York. They compared these mother's recidivism rates to that of the 7,452 female prisoners who were released within in the same three-year time span as the mothers who participated in the nursery program. All but one of the studies used found that over 50% of the mothers who participated in the nursery programs were Caucasian as opposed to African American or Hispanic. African American women made up 10-30% of the population. Hispanic women made up about 2% of the population. The final study found

that 69% of the participants were women of color (African American, Hispanic and Non-Hispanic) as opposed to Caucasian.

### **Prison Nursery Eligibility**

Currently, eight states within the United States have implemented and maintained Nursery programs within one or more of their female prison facilities. These eight nursery programs are captured in the articles for this study (see Table 4.1). The first program was implemented in 1901 in New York, while the most current program was implemented in 2009 in West Virginia. The smallest program will hold up to 5 mother/infant pairs while the largest will hold up to 29 mother/infant pairs. Most programs allow the infants to stay for around 18 months however, South Dakota only allows the infants to stay for 30 days in contrast Washington and Ohio allow the infants to stay for up to 36 months, the average stay for infants is 9 months. For most programs, the eligibility requirements are similar; mothers cannot have been convicted of a violent crime or a crime committed against children, most programs require that mothers complete parenting classes to participate, as well as, the mothers must be physically and mentally capable to care for a child. Other programs require that the mothers be classified as minimum custody and cannot be in segregated status.

**Table 4.1 : Prison Nursery Programs Overview**

State	Facility	Program Name	Year Program Was Started	Capacity	Maximum Length of Infant/Childs Stay	Eligibility Criteria
New York	Bedford Hills Correctional Facility	Nursery Program	1901	29 mother/infant pairs	12 months unless the mother is to be paroled or released within 18 months	No prior convictions of child abuse or arson. Determined on a case by case basis.
New York	Taconic Correctional Facility	Nursery Program	1990	15 mother/infant pairs		
Nebraska	Nebraska Correctional Facility for Women	Nursery Program	1994	15 mother/infant pairs	18 months	Mother cannot be in segregated status. Mothers sentence must be completed by the time the infant is 18 months old. Mother cannot have an extensive history of violence or prior convictions of child abuse. Mother must sign an agreement stating that she will be the primary caregiver of the child upon release.
South Dakota	South Dakota Women's Prison	Mother Infant Program	1998	No Limit	30 days	Inmates must have completed a parenting class to participate. Crimes must have been non-violent in nature. Mothers must pay to keep their infant for the 30 days.
Washington	Washington Correctional Center for Women	Residential Parenting Program (RPP)	1999	20 mother/infant pairs	36 months	The mother must be classified as minimum custody and be convicted of a non-violent crime. Mothers' sentence must be completed by the time the child reaches the age of 36 months. Mothers must receive clearance from the Washington State Division of Child and Family Services. Mothers must also participate in prenatal and parenting classes.

**Table 4.1 : Prison Nursery Programs Overview continued**

State	Facility	Program Name	Year Program Was Started	Capacity	Maximum Length of Infant/Childs Stay	Eligibility Criteria
Ohio	Ohio Reformatory for Women	Achieving Baby Care Success (ABCS)	2001	20 mothers and up to 21 infants	36 months	The mother must be serving a felony conviction for a fourth- or fifth-degree felony and have a release date within 36 months. The mother cannot have convictions for any crimes against children. The mother must have minimum- or medium-security custody status. The Department of Jobs and Family Services from the inmate's county of residence must be willing to approve the placement. Both the mother and infant must be medically cleared to participate. The mother must maintain an appropriate conduct record and adhere to all program rules, which include positive participation in individual and family treatment planning.
Illinois	Decatur Correctional Facility	Moms and Babies Program	2007	5 mother/infant pairs	24 months	Mother must be within two years of release when the baby is born. Mother must not be convicted of a violent crime.
Indiana	Indiana Women's Prison	Wee Ones Nursery	2008	10 mother/infant pairs 4 nannies	18 months	Mother and Nanny must not have been convicted of a violent crime. Mothers must be released within 18 months after the baby is born. Mother and child must meet the medical and mental health criteria established by the pediatrician.
West Virginia	Lakin Correctional Center	Keeping Infant Development Successful (KIDS)	2009	5 mother/infant pairs	18 months	Mother must have been convicted of a non-violent crime. Mother must be physically and mentally capable to care for a child. Mother must participate in all parenting training and be assessed by CPS and cleared of any history of neglect/abuse.



## **Recidivism Outcomes**

The articles included in this systematic review, found that recidivism rates are lower for prisoners that participated in prison nursery programs than compared to the general population or those who did not participate. Carlson (2001) conducted two studies on mothers who participated in a nursery program inside Nebraska's Correctional Facility for Women and compared their recidivism rates to mothers who did not participate in the programs. In one study that measured recidivism upon one year of release, a 5% recidivism rate for mothers who participated in nursery programs was found compared to a 17% recidivism rate for mothers who did not complete the Nursery program. This resulted in a percent change of 70.59%. In Carlson's (2001) second study, he found a 9% recidivism rate for mothers who participated in the nursery program and a 33.33% recidivism rate for mothers who did not participate, this resulted in a percent change of 73%.

Staley (2002) produced recidivism rates at three different time periods; one, two or three years upon release for mothers who participated in prison nursery programs within either one of two facilities (Bedford& Taconic) within the state of New York. These recidivism rates were compared to the rates of female prisoners who were released during the same time periods. Staley (2002) found a recidivism rate of 5.3% for nursery program participants compared to 8.3% of the general female population upon one year of release for a percent change of 36.14%. Recidivism rates for two years upon release were 7.3% for nursery program participants compared to 19.2% for the general female population for a percent change of 61.98%. At the three-year period upon release, a recidivism rate of 13.4% was for participants in the nursery program compared to the

general female population recidivism rate of 25.9%, this resulted in a percent change of 48.26%.

Whiteacre et al. (2013), conducted a study to compare the recidivism rates of mothers who participated in a nursery program within Indiana Women's Prison versus mothers who did not participate in the nursery program. They measured recidivism in two ways; new arrest within one year of release and new admission to DOC within one year of release. For new arrests within one year of release, their results yielded a 26% recidivism rate for mothers who participated versus 31% for mothers who did not, this resulted in a percent change of 16.3%. For those who had a new admission to the Department of Corrections within one year of release, their results showed a 10% recidivism rate for mothers who participated versus 18% for mothers who did not participate, this yielded a percent change of 44.44%.

The final study included within this systematic review, was a study conducted by Goshin et al. (2013), this study examined the recidivism rates of mothers who participated in a nursery program within New York's nursery programs and compared those rates to that of the general population released during the same period. They measured recidivism within three years upon release and broke their results into two categories; return for new offense and return for parole violation. Their results for mothers who participated in nursery programs showed a 4.3% recidivism rate for return for a new violation and a 9.4% recidivism rate for return for a parole violation. This was compared to that of the general population that yielded an 8.9% recidivism rate (51.69% change) for return for a new offense and a 20.4% (53.92% change) recidivism rate for return for a parole violation.

**Table 4.2 : Recidivism Outcomes for Nursery Programs**

Authors	Facility	Measure of Recidivism	Recidivism Rates for Mothers in Nursery Program	Recidivism Rates for Female Prisoners who did not participate in Nursery Program	Percent Change
Carlson (1998)	Nebraska Correctional Facility for Women	Convicted of another crime within three years of release	5%	17%	70.59%
Carlson (2001)	Nebraska Correctional Facility for Women	Convicted of another crime within three years of release	9%	33.33%	73%
Staley (2002)	Bedford Hills and Tacomac Correctional Facility	Return to prison within one year of release	5.3%	8.3%	36.14%
		Return to prison within two years of release	7.3%	19.2%	61.98%
		Return to prison within three years of release	13.4%	25.9%	48.26%
Whiteacre et al. (2013)	Indiana Women's Prison	New arrest within one year of release	26%	31%	16.13%
		New admission to DOC within one year of release	10%	18%	44.44%
Goshin et al. (2013)	New York State Prison	Return to prison within three years of release	4.3% return for new offense	8.9%	51.69%
			9.4% return for parole violation	20.4%	53.92%

The decrease in recidivism rates show a promising future for these nursery programs. However, to keep these nursery programs running, they require extra funds, many of these funds come from outside sources or state mandated funds.

### **Prison Nursery Program Funding**

Many of the nursery programs within the United States, rely on funding from the state or outside sources in order to keep their programs running (see Table 4.3).

Washington receives funding from the Federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families grants and from Early Head Start to help fund their nursery program. Ohio also uses funding from grants through the Federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. West Virginia does not receive any state funding for their program, therefore, they receive their funding from Early Head Start. The state of Indiana receives state funding as well as additional funding from the Department of Health and The Woman's Fund of Indianapolis. Nebraska receives funds from the state as well as from local non-profits and churches. The State of New York's nursery programs receive the majority of their funding from the state, as required by statute, however, they also receive funding from catholic charities. Nebraska, New York, and West Virginia all allow Medicare. West Virginia, New York and Washington all allow funds through WIC. South Dakota is the only state that requires the mother to pay all expenses for the 30 days that her child is allowed to stay within the nursery program. This can be challenging for mothers who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, as they may not be able to pay these expenses and instead are required to give up their child directly after birth.

**Table 4.3 : Funding for Prison Nursery Programs**

State	Facility	Nursery Program Capacity	Yearly Nursery Program Budget	State Funds	Grant Funds	Donations	Extra Funding
Indiana	Indiana Women's Prison	10 mother/infant pairs 4 nannies	\$91,000.00	\$66,000.00	\$25,000.00	Yes	Department of Health The Woman's Fund of Indianapolis
Ohio	Ohio Reformatory for Women	20 mothers and up to 21 infants	\$69,370.00	\$0.00	Federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families block grant	Yes	N/A
Nebraska	Nebraska Correctional Facility for Women	15 mother/infant pairs	\$10,250.00	\$25,000.00	\$0.00	Yes	Medicare Local non-profits and churches
New York	Bedford Hills Correctional Facility and Taconic Correctional Facility	15 mother/infant pairs	Not Recorded	DOC by State Statute	Not Recorded	Yes	WIC and Medicare Catholic Charities
Washington	Washington Correctional Center for Women	20 mother/infant pairs	Not Recorded	Department of Health and Human Services	Federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families block grant Puget Sound Education Services District Early Head Start	Yes	WIC
West Virginia	Lakin Correctional Center	5 mother/infant pairs	Not Recorded	\$0.00 as required by statute	Early Head Start	Yes	WIC and Medicare
South Dakota	South Dakota Women's Prison	No Limit	N/A	\$0.00 Mothers are required to pay all expenses to keep their babies with them	N/A	N/A	N/A

The results of the studies included in this systematic review showcase the need for prison nursery programs and how they are beneficial in reducing the rates of recidivism. Although the research shows that these nursery programs have been proven to be beneficial for the mothers and babies, as well as for the prison system as a whole, some limitations were encountered when conducting research for this systematic review. The subsequent section highlights these limitations and provides recommendations for future research in a hope to alleviate these limitations.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

#### **Discussion**

It is evident from the current review that prison nursery programs are essential and beneficial to not only the mother and child but also to the prison system. Although at first glance, it may seem that prison nursery programs are entirely too expensive, however, when the numbers are broken down the results show that most nursery programs are primarily funded through grants, state mandated funds, and other outside contributors. This study along with other studies demonstrated that when costs are compared to the alternative for these children such as; adoption or foster care, these nursery programs are actually saving states money (Carlson, 2009, 2001; Nohe, 2014; Goshin, Byrne and Henninger, 2013). Funding aside, these nursery programs have also been proven to be beneficial to the mothers and children who participate. Previous research illustrates that mothers who able to keep their children with them in prisons, are more likely to have positive outcomes than mothers who are forced to give their children up while they are incarcerated (DeBoer, 2012; Goshin and Byrne, 2009).

While in prison, mothers in nursery programs are being taught parenting skills. They also can apply what they learn in the program to children who are there with them under supervision of the nursery program staff. These nursery programs are helping to maintain healthy relationships between the mothers and their children and the added benefit reducing recidivism rates for female prisoners with minor children. The research included within this systematic review show that these prison nursery programs and the mothers who participate in them recidivate at lower rates than the general population.

Nursery participants also had lower recidivism rates than mothers who were forced to give up their children while they were incarcerated. Many of the studies included in this systematic review showed differences in recidivism rates of at or around 50% when comparing mothers who participated in nursery programs compared to mothers in the general prison population.

This study shows and exemplifies how nursery programs can be successful in other prisons as well. By using the New York prison nursery program as a model, other states can implement their own nursery programs. They can reduce costs by utilizing existing space. They can fund these programs through state funds, grants and community donations. This would help to allow mothers of any and all socioeconomic backgrounds the ability to participate if they pass all of the other requirements. By implementing nursery programs that allow mothers and babies to co-reside for an average of 36 months, it will help with building successful and strong bonds between mothers and their children during the imperative developmental stages of these children. Most nursery programs require the mother to be released within 18-36 months following the birth of their baby, if programs allowed all babies to co-reside with the mother for up to 36 months, this would ensure that the mother and baby are released together upon the completion of the mother's sentence.

The current research shows that prison nursery programs are beneficial in many ways, however, the lack of knowledge and research as well as misconceptions of these programs can be explained as a few reasons why these programs are not more common across the United States. For instance, in a study done by Campbell and Carlson in 2012, correctional administrators in prisons with and without nursery programs were



interviewed on their perceptions of such nursery programs. They found that 50% of the correctional administrators in states that do not have nursery programs stated that they were unfamiliar with the concept entirely (Campbell and Carlson, 2012). This exemplifies the need for more research regarding these nursery programs to familiarize people with what prison nursery programs are and how they have been proven to be successful.

### **Limitations**

Although the research is astounding and the difference in recidivism rates is found to be promising, limitations were encountered throughout this study. An exhaustive study collection process was used when researching for this systematic review, however, some limitations within already published research on the topic were encountered. Such limitations included; an almost uniform definition of recidivism, the lack of multiple methodologies used, and finally, the lack of a potential larger sample size to be used within this study. The following sections will discuss each limitation.

#### *Definition of Recidivism*

All but two of the articles used in this systematic review used one uniform definition of recidivism. These articles all measured recidivism as the return to prison within a set period after their release. Recidivism can be measured in many ways including but not limited to re-arrest due to a new conviction or violation of community supervision or reconviction, re-incarceration, imprisonment, and re-arraignment. While it makes sense that a program in prison would use returning to prison as a measure of recidivism. However, looking only at returning to prison as a measure of recidivism may miss other contact with the criminal justice system.

### *Methodologies Utilized*

One of the best way to measure recidivism rates is to use longitudinal studies. In many of the studies used within this review, the researchers used a period of three years upon release to measure recidivism rates however, one study used a period of one year to measure recidivism rates. Three years is generally the most ideal follow-up period for a recidivism study, as offenders who recidivate generally do so within three years upon their release (Whiteacre, 2013). A major limitation of this study and the existing research was the data available. The studies used within this systematic review presented their results as only percentages instead of using statistics such as means & coefficients that include or could generate a calculated effect size. Such data would allow a meta-analysis to be conducted and a stronger assessment of the programs to be completed.

### *Small Sample Size*

After extensive research and the use of many databases, five final articles were found to be eligible for this systematic review based on the parameters discussed previously. These five articles were all studies done on recidivism rates for female offenders who participated in prison nursery programs. Although these five studies found astonishingly lower recidivism rates for mothers who participated in these nursery programs, more research needs to be done to showcase the significant differences in rates between mothers who participate in these nursery programs versus those in a control group or within the general population. With an increased sample size, more significant relationships between the different populations may be discovered.

## **Future Research**

Regarding future research, a few recommendations are made to generate more conclusive findings when observing prison nursery programs. First, the use of different definitions of recidivism as measures can help to broaden and add to the research available on recidivism rates and prison nursery programs. With the use of multiple definitions of recidivism, researchers can compare multiple rates and find significant differences between those rates.

Second, more research should be done on the cost-benefit analysis of prison nursery programs. This can help to educate on nursery programs and how they are beneficial to mothers, children, and the general population and how they can help reduce overcrowding and high costs of running and maintaining of state prisons. With more research, it can be shown that these programs can be run through state mandated funds just like foster care, and these programs can even lower the cost of foster care down the road. Third, larger sample sizes would also help to show the significant differences in recidivism rates when discussing prison nursery programs. These nursery programs vary in capacity from 5 mother/infant pairs to 29 mother/infant pairs, programs with more participants helps to show more significant recidivism differences when comparing participants to non-participants. Current research shows the significance of prison nursery programs in relationship to recidivism rates as well as positive attachments between mothers and babies who participate.

Lastly, more future research should be conducted on other forms of success of these nursery programs. Although there are few studies done on the children who were born in these nursery programs, more research must be done to add to the value and

successfulness of these programs. Research such as comparing conviction rates of children born and raised in nursery programs compared to children not born in prison nurseries but who had mothers in prison while they were infants or toddlers. Research has shown that children who have parents, especially mothers who are in prison when they are at a young age, are at a higher risk of being incarcerated in the future (Dallaire, 2007). Goshin, Byrne and Blanchard-Lewis (2014), found that children who were born and spent time with their mothers in these nursery programs had lower anxious, depressed and withdrawn behavior than children who were separated from their mothers due to incarceration. These nursery programs have shown that they help to promote positive strong bonds between the mothers and children. Therefore, more residential programs should be implemented to accommodate young children born before their mothers were incarcerated, this could help to maintain the bonds and ensure positive attachments between the mothers and their children which can also help to reduce recidivism rates and the risk of these children being incarcerated at a future time.

## **Conclusion**

Recidivism is a critical component when assessing the successfulness of a prison program. This systematic review sought to answer the research question; do prison nursery programs within the United States help to reduce recidivism rates? The results of this study exemplified that for the nursery programs that are currently in operation, they have been successful in reducing recidivism rates when comparing mothers who participated in prison nursery programs versus mothers who did not, as well as compared to the general female prisoner population. With the results demonstrated in this systematic review, more research is needed to help educate and showcase these positive

outcomes of participants in prison nursery programs and ultimately demonstrate the need for more states to implement similar programs.

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