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Babies Behind Bars: the influence of the prison environment on infants' occupational participation

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POINTS THAT WILL BE DISCUSSED

- Background and rationale of study
- Research question and objectives
- Methodology
- Findings and discussion
- Implications and recommendations
- Conclusion



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BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE



- Healthcare
- Nutrition
- Security
- Responsive caregiving
- Early learning ^{1,2,3}

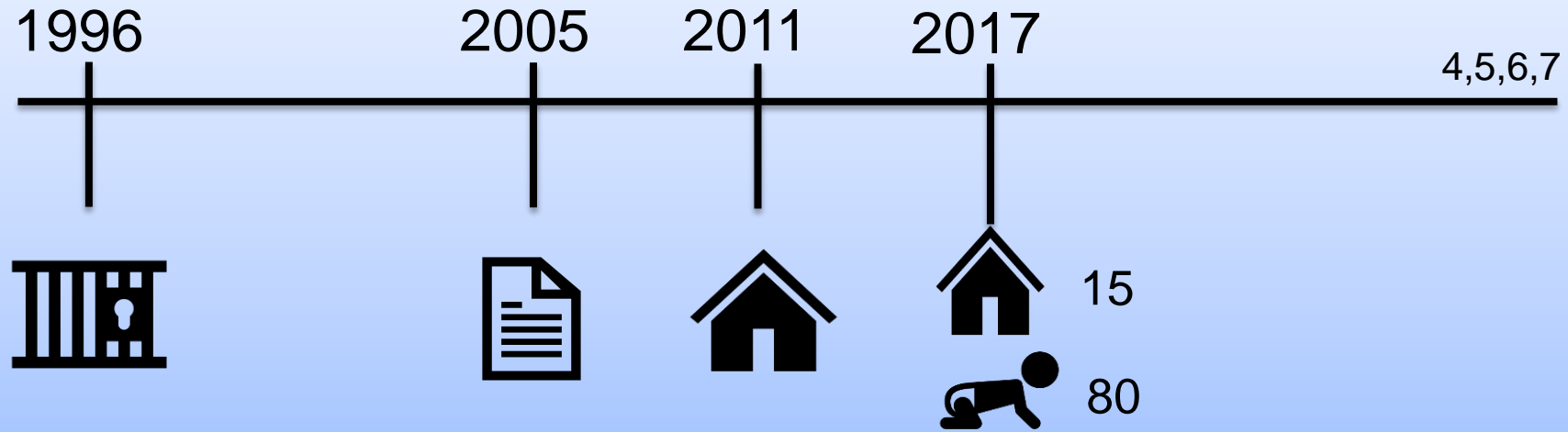
1990's

2005



*“Mother and baby units within the correctional centre with **separate sleeping accommodation** for mothers and their children, as well as a **crèche facility**. The focus should be on the **normalisation** of the environment in order to promote the child’s physical and emotional development and care.”*

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE



Previous S.A. studies: 2003-2010 ^{8,9,10}



Occupational perspective

Our study: how do these environments influence participation?

QUESTION AND OBJECTIVES

Question:

What is the influence of the prison environment on the occupational participation of infants residing in South African correctional facilities with their incarcerated mothers?

Objectives:

1. Describe the prison environment as context for occupational participation
2. Describe the mothers' perceptions of the effect of the prison environment
3. Descriptively compare occupational experiences

METHODOLOGY

Study design:

Descriptive qualitative enquiry ¹¹

Sampling:

Stratified purposive sampling ¹²

13 Mothers

Data gathering:

Semi-structured interviews: 13 participants

Observational checklist ^{13,14,15,16}

3 Units: Gauteng, North-West, Free State

Data analysis:

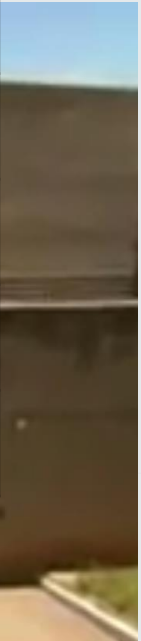
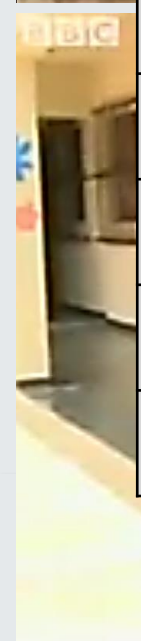
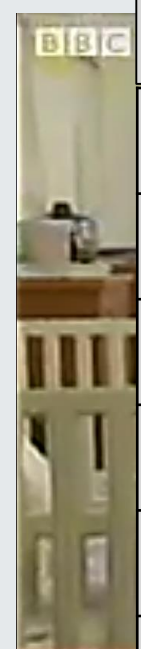
Summaries of environments

Transcriptions

Double blind content analysis ¹⁷

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Description of the environments	
✓	✗
Cots next to mother's bed	No privacy- all spaces shared
Warm clothes and blankets	Limited space (inside and outside)
Sufficient nutrition	Toys locked away
Breastfeeding possible	Toys: not age appropriate/ limited
Outside: 1 unit has grass outside	Not exposed to different settings
Bright colors: 1 unit	No diaper changing area / bottle sanitation
Adequate time: mother and infant	Floors: mostly Novilon, no mats
1 Unit: Creche with teachers	No variety of sensory experiences
	Loud noises, bright lights until late



FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

THEME 1: Living like a prisoner



*“ They are just living in prison like we are, like a prisoner. They are living hard.”
– Thandi* (Gauteng)*

**Pseudonyms*

- Low temperatures and loud noises
- Minimal sunlight
- Limited space
- Limited resources for play



“There are no books to read for the babies, there are no toys ... this place is not like outside. Cause outside, the baby can just play whenever he wants.” – Mamello (Free State)*

- In cells from 3 o'clock until next morning
- Lock-up procedure is traumatic for infants

“So when it's closing time, it's closing time. Mostly they close around 15h00. So when they close early the kids cry. Even in the morning before they open they'll be standing... there by the steel gate, calling they want to come out.” – Rachel (Gauteng)*



- Educational facilities differ between units

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

THEME 2: An opportunity to bond

- Secure mother-infant attachment promotes development and participation ²
- Infants are with their mothers: breastfeeding is possible
- In the units = mothers and infants spend a lot of time together
- Mothers report a strong bond



“First steps, first words... and the bond you get to form is really ... very strong.” – Grace (Gauteng)*



FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

THEME 3: “Dankie hek”/ Thank you gate

- Infants: separated from outside world
- What they experience inside is the only reality they know
- They imitate the language of the other offenders
- Mothers are concerned about their infants’ exposure to such an environment

“When you want the officials to open the gate for you, you have to say 'thank you gate, dankie hek'. Imagine when you are at home and then she wants someone to open the door for her, then she going to say "dankie hek" – Anathi (North West)*



- Not allowed to leave the facility
- Limited interaction with family
- Deprived from normal, everyday experiences
- Limited opportunities to play and learn



“They think these [pictures on the walls], it’s animals. It’s real to them. If they can see a man..., they will scream, they will cry like they see a ghost... [and] They don’t even know trees.” – Thandi (Gauteng)*

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

THEME 4: Thriving or surviving?

Mothers are concerned:

- Infants' basic needs are being met
- BUT they're missing out on normal childhood experiences



“He needs to go to the park. You know like other children do. He needs dirt. He needs to play with the sand. There’s not even soil here to play with. There’s nothing.” – Thandi (Gauteng)*

We think about their occupational participation

We ask: are they thriving or merely surviving?

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



- Deprived of normal experiences
- Influences their learning, playing and interacting.

Policies:

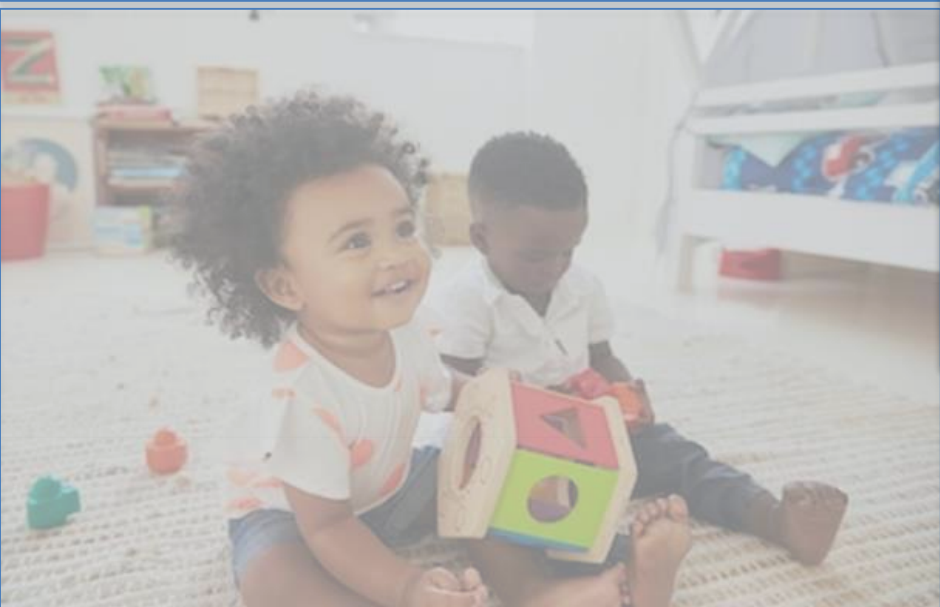


- Effectively implemented
- More specific
- As researchers: make recommendations



Occupational therapy?

CONCLUSION





Thank You

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