Women Who Lose Children: Consideration of Health Consequences and Potential Solutions

Rosi Andrade, Ph.D. & Corrie Brinley, MSW with Sally Stevens, Ph.D. & Josephine Korchmaros Ph.D.

Southwest Institute for Research on Women at The University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona

The Southwest Institute for Research on Women

Our Mission

• Improve the lives of women and girls – particularly those living in the Southwest – through interdisciplinary and inter-institutional research and action projects

• Challenge the status quo

• Facilitate the voices of those who experience disparity

• Work with diverse groups of women, men and transgendered individuals

• Seek innovative methods to improve conditions and contexts

• Enact positive change at an individual, social and structural level

Projects

• Include a broad spectrum of themes and issues from health and wellness to education, employment, women’s history and the arts

HerStory to Health

A community-based center for active drug using women (18 years of age and older) in substance abuse treatment, and for homeless, near homeless women

• Provides sexual health/PTSD prevention intervention

• 3-month intervention

• Two 2-hour groups (sexuality and intersection of sexuality & substance use)

• Trauma intervention component

• HIV/STD health screening, treatment and referrals

Provides additional supports – Computer Kiosk and flash drive to develop resume and online job searches

• Examinations baseline and follow-up data (3 and 6 months)

Total 302 women; 293 at least one pregnancy; average number of pregnancies = 3.7

Demographic Information (N=302)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Age</th>
<th>34.16 (range = 18-64)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- White</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Caucasian</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Hispanic/Latina</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- American Indian</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- African American</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Multiracial</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Asian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Less than</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Other</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Past 90-Day Drug Use Reported (N=302)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Drug (%)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>162 54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>230 76</td>
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<td>68 23</td>
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<td>Methamphetamine</td>
<td>80 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amiodarone</td>
<td>32 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heroin</td>
<td>23 8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pregnancy and Childbirth: (N=302)

Percent of Participants Who Reported Each Number of Children Under Age 18 Under Their Care (Including Non-Biological Children)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean number of pregnancies = 3.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 5% of women reported being pregnant at the time of the interview
- These data are missing for 6% of participants

Children Under Mothers Care (N=302)

49% of participants reported that between 1 and 6 of the children in their care were investigated by Child Protective Services (N=117 children)

40% of participants reported that between 1 and 6 of the children in their care were removed by CPS (N=93 children)

81% of children investigated were removed by CPS

Sibling cohorts of 2 to 5 children were removed at higher rates (75-86%) than single children (70%)

Participants Involvement with Child Protective Services (N=302)

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40% of participants reported that between 1 and 6 of the children in their care were removed by CPS (N=93 children)

81% of children investigated were removed by CPS

SIROW’s Response

Working Poor Mothers of Minors (MOMs)

A comprehensive, gender specific, and culturally competent residential substance abuse treatment, prevention, and recovery support service project for pregnant and postpartum women (18 years of age and older) and their minor children, and inclusive of their non-residential family members

- 2-months trauma informed residential substance abuse treatment program for women & their children with child care services

- Trauma education & group/individual trauma counseling for the women & their children

- Parenting education & play groups for the women & her supports

- Housing support services

- Sexual health education

- 6-months case management & support for the women, their children, & supports

- Examines baseline and follow-up data (3 and 6 months)

Recovery Oriented System of Care Consortium (ROSCC)

- Engage and meet quarterly to examine, advise on, and implement an efficient and effective, trauma-informed System of Care

- Incorporate a multi-disciplinary perspective (e.g., treatment, psychiatric, medical, spiritual, family, consumer, commerce, policy, prevention)

Contact Information

Rosi Andrade, Ph.D.
rrosa@email.arizona.edu

Corrie Brinley, MSWcbrinley@email.arizona.edu

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Mujer Sana – Healthy Woman

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Poster Presentations

When you are ready to have your poster printed go online to PosterPresentations.com and click on the “Order Your Poster” button. Go to PosterPresentations.com and click on Help Desk. You had a child who was removed from your care and/or went away from you. Your partner or family took your children away from you. Your children were adopted. No parent/parent rights were severed. You had a child who died. Consideration of Health Consequences and Potential Solutions

Trama: Loss of Children & Related Level of Upset (N=302)

<table>
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<th>Type of Child Loss</th>
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<tr>
<td>Remained by your own children</td>
<td>120 40</td>
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<td>Your partner or family took your children away from you</td>
<td>67 22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Your children were adopted</td>
<td>53 18</td>
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<td>No parent/parent rights were severed</td>
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<td>You had a child who died</td>
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Intergenerational Involvement with Child Protection Services

- Of the 293 women who gave birth to one child (missing data on 18) 52 (22%) were involved with CPS as a child

- Of these 52 women, 38 (73%) have had at least one child investigated by CPS

Mothering (Not) and Related Health Consequences

- Difficult for the participants in HerStory to keep their children

- When children are removed from their mothers:
  - Mother and child do not bond
  - Mother and child experience trauma and related health problems (depression, anxiety, physical ailments, somatic symptoms)
  - Trauma in mothers contributes to substance abuse
  - Serial birthing, women grieving, hoping to “keep” new baby
  - Children more likely to be CPS involved
  - Children age out of the system and often pursue mother
  - Neither mother nor child gain relationship skills to reunite in healthy ways or to decrease cyclical interruption of motherhood to loss of child(ren), and childhood to loss of mother

Potential Solutions

Feminist informed programs for women and their children:

- Secure safe long-term affordable housing
- Promote the mother-child relationship (life/work balance)
- Combat stigma associated with drug using mothers
- Include trauma-informed interventions
- Facilitate intergenerational healing activities
- Facilitate innovative humanities-based healing interventions (reading groups, journaling)
- Teach parenting skills with pedagogically appropriate approaches (cognitive/emotional/reflective/experiential)
- Initiate ways for women to be activists in causes larger than themselves

Q U I C K  S T A R T (c o n t . )

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