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Jessie L. Rector 3/30/12

Associations between Maternal Depression and Infant Temperament: Investigations of a Transactional Model

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Abstract

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Maternal depression, both prenatal and postpartum, has been consistently shown to predict infant temperament ([McGrath, Records, & Rice, 2008](#_ENREF_17); [Sugawara, Kitamura, Toda, & Shima, 1999](#_ENREF_26)). Additionally, few studies have examined the contribution of infant temperament to maternal depression. Previous literature has shown longitudinal correlations, but has not controlled for the continuity of depression and temperament over time. We investigated associations between maternal depression and infant temperament over the first year of the infant’s life, while controlling for the stability of these factors. Additionally, we incorporated both prenatal and postpartum depression in order to further address this continuity. Maternal depression was operationalized as a mean of monthly BDI-II scores during the prenatal period, while BDI-II scores were used at three, six, and 12 months. Infant temperament was operationalized as infant negative affectivity, as assessed via the IBQ-R. Prenatal depression was found through regression analysis to be predictive of infant negative affectivity at three months (p<.001) and correlated with infant negative affectivity at six (r=.297) and 12 (r=.263) months. While the postpartum transactional model pathways proposed and tested through hierarchical regression analyses were not supported, there is limited correlational support for the influence of postpartum maternal depression on infant negative affectivity. The continuity of maternal depression and infant negative affectivity over the first year was shown. This study suggests that postpartum maternal depression does not predict infant negative affectivity above and beyond what would be predicted by previous measures of infant negative affectivity. Future directions for longitudinal models examining the relationship between maternal depression and infant temperament should examine further subscales of the IBQ-R measures of infant temperament. Additionally, further research into the role of perceptions versus behavioral constructs on infant temperament should be compared.

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