



# Links between Maternal Depression and Infant Frustration: Home Chaos and Inter-Parental Adjustment

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## Introduction & Hypotheses

- Infant frustration has been implicated in the subsequent development of childhood externalizing problems<sup>1</sup>, making it important to understand factors that may contribute to early frustration.
- Three aspects of the home environment which may contribute to infant frustration are:
  - Maternal depression, as links between higher levels of maternal depression and increased infant negative affect, broadly, have been identified<sup>2</sup>
  - Maternal dyadic (relationship) adjustment (DA) with her partner, as associations between low relationship adjustment and increased frustration in older children<sup>3</sup>, as well as higher levels of negative affect in infancy, have been identified<sup>4</sup>
  - Home chaos, as prior studies have found associations between increased home chaos and subsequent childhood anger and impulsivity<sup>5</sup>
- It is also possible that maternal depression may be related to increased infant frustration, indirectly, through DA and home chaos
  - However, no studies have considered this possibility despite work noting the influence of maternal depression on DA<sup>6</sup> and home chaos<sup>7</sup>

- The current study aims to examine the relationship between maternal depression at 4 months postpartum and infant frustration 2 months later, examining both direct and mediated/indirect effects through DA and home chaos.

- It was anticipated that:
  - Maternal depression would be positively associated with infant frustration, related to poorer DA, and to increased home chaos
  - After controlling for infant gender and family income-to-needs, maternal depression would be related to higher infant frustration, indirectly, through maternal DA and home chaos

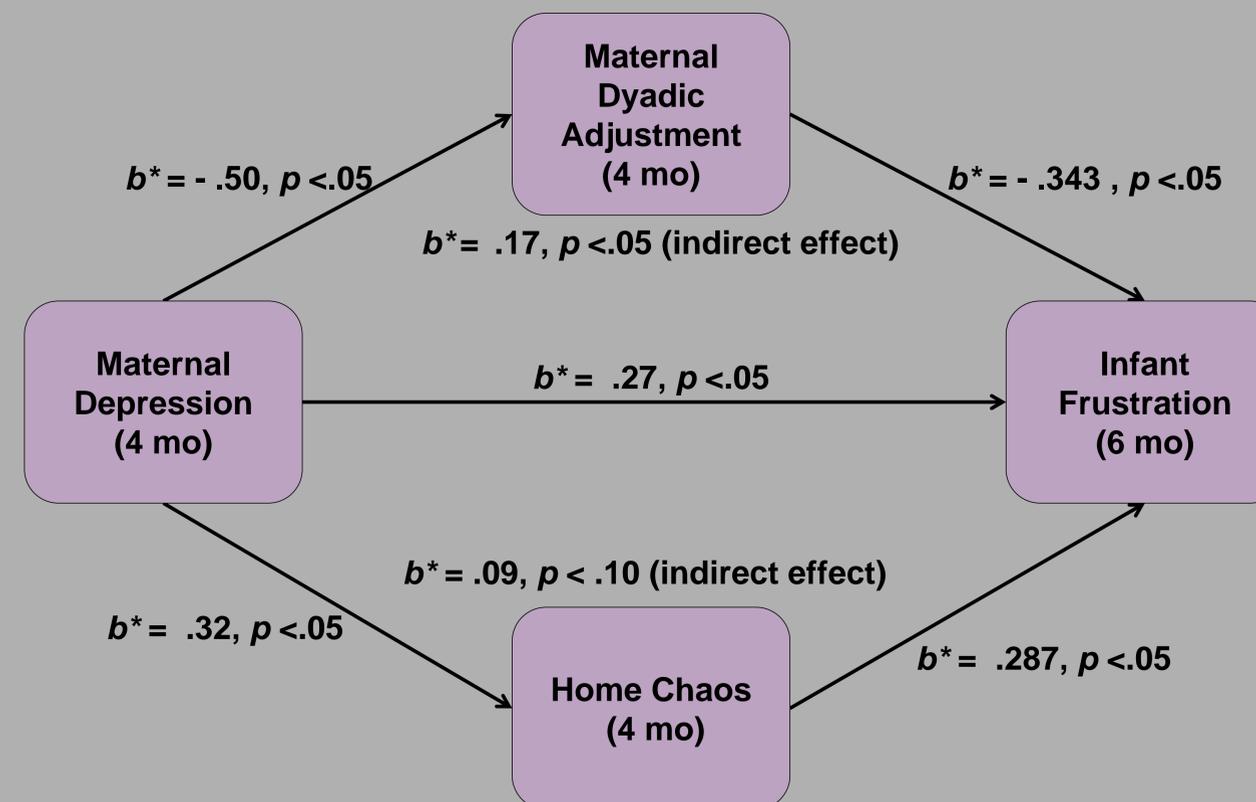
## Method

- 85 mothers (mean age = 27.67, 30% self-identified as a racial minority, 21% were classified as falling below the poverty level based on family income to needs) and their infants took part in the present study
- 57.6% of the infants were female

## Method Continued

- Four months postpartum, mothers completed:
  - The Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-II<sup>8</sup>), the Parental Stress Index Depression subscale (PSI<sup>9</sup>), and the clinical interview (Affective disorders module of the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV SCID<sup>10</sup>) from which a symptom count for major depression was derived
  - Depression scores from each measure were standardized and averaged to create a global depression score
  - The Confusion, Hubbub, and Order Scale (CHAOS<sup>11</sup>) was used to measure home chaos
  - The Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS<sup>12</sup>) was used to measure maternal DA
- At 6 months postpartum, mothers completed:
  - The Infant Behavior Questionnaire – Revised (IBQ-R<sup>13</sup>) to assess infant frustration

## Results



## Discussion

- Findings provide support for one, and perhaps two (DA and home chaos), pathways through which maternal depression may be related to infant frustration.
  - Consistent with previous research<sup>6,7</sup>, maternal depression was linked to poor DA and home chaos.
  - Also consistent with previous research, maternal depression was linked to infant frustration<sup>14</sup>, indirectly, through maternal DA.
- The findings of this study suggest that interventions for depressed mothers that target marital relationships and home management, in addition to the depression itself, may be of benefit in preventing increased infant frustration and later childhood behavior problems.
- One limitation of the current study is the reliance on maternal report for maternal DA, home chaos, and infant frustration.
  - Future investigations could consider measuring infant frustration using laboratory based methods of assessment
- Future research should also potentially consider the direction of effects between maternal depression, DA, and home chaos as these contextual variables may also influence maternal depression.
- Potential child effects (e.g., infant frustration influencing maternal depression) also warrant consideration in future work.

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