Interparental Relationship Adjustment and Positive Parenting: Maternal Use of Suppression as Protective Factor

Emily A. Beshansky, Caroline R. Bourke, Kaitlyn Fritz, Elizabeth Stevens, Faik Ishaque, Meghan Kenya, & David J. Bridgett, Ph.D.
Northern Illinois University

Introduction

- Few studies have examined potential factors that attenuate effects of poor Interparental Relationship Adjustment (IRA) on parenting
- Maternal emotion regulation strategies (i.e. reappraisal and suppression) play key roles in parenting behavior
- Parent emotion regulation in context of IRA has not been examined
- Mothers who flexibly use emotion regulation may engage in positive parenting
- Current study investigates moderating effects of maternal suppression and reappraisal on the relationship between maternal IRA and positive parenting

Hypotheses

- After controlling for variables that are also linked to parenting (i.e. infant gender, cumulative risk, and infant negative affect) it was hypothesized that:
  - High IRA would lead to lower levels of positive parenting
  - Higher use of suppression would lead to lower levels of positive parenting
  - Mothers who experience increased marital conflict will exhibit more positive parenting behaviors in the presence of increased levels of suppression
  - Mothers who experience increased marital conflict will exhibit more positive parenting behaviors in the presence of increased levels of suppression

Method

- Participants consisted of 120 mother-infant dyads that participated in a larger longitudinal study (53.4% female infants)
- Mothers primarily identified themselves as Caucasian (86.8%), followed by African American (12.7%), and Hispanic/Latino (11.9%)
- Mothers had an average age of 28.5 with 8.7% of births occurring between ages 17 and 19

Measures & Procedures

- At 4 months postpartum, mothers completed: Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ)2, Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (R-DAS)3, Parenting Stress Index (PSI)4, A structured clinical interview (SCID-IV)5, Demographics questionnaire
- At 6 and 8 months postpartum, mothers completed: Infant Behavior Questionnaire-Revised (IBQ-R)6
- At 10 and 12 months, infants and their mothers participated in an unstructured free play task

Results

- After controlling for infant gender, infant negative affect, and family cumulative risk:
  - No significant main effect of IRA, suppression or reappraisal on positive parenting
  - Significant interaction between maternal IRA and positive parenting, such that the lowest positive parenting behaviors increases as IRA improves (p < .05)
  - Simple slopes indicated:
    - When maternal suppression was low, there was a positive relationship between IRA and positive parenting, such that the lowest positive parenting occurred at low IRA (p < .05)
    - When maternal suppression was high, there was an inverse relationship, such that mothers were able to persist in using more positive parenting, even when IRA was low

References


Contact:

- Corresponding authors: Emily A. Beshansky (emilybeshansky@gmail.com) and David J. Bridgett (dbridgett@niu.edu)
- Poster presented at the 2015 Society for Research in Child Development Biennial Meeting, Philadelphia
- To download a copy of this poster, please visit the Emotion Regulation & Temperament Lab website at www.niu.edu/emotionreg