

THE IMPACT OF MATERNAL DEPRESSION IN MOTHER'S CHILD DIRECTED SPEECH

Irlanda Gomez, Developmental Psychology Program, Department
of Psychology, University of Manitoba



Introduction

Maternal depression during infancy and early childhood is consistently shown to negatively affect child outcomes like language and emotion problems (Goodman et al., 2011). However, it is still unclear how maternal depression translates to negative child outcomes (Goodman et al., 1999; Lovejoy et al., 2000). This project focuses on the way depressed mothers speak to their preschool-aged children as a potential pathway. Although there is some research on the speech of depressed mothers to their children (commonly referred to as child directed speech, CDS; Rowe, 2012) during infancy, there is little research to date on this process with preschool-aged children, a time when maternal depression might have the largest impact in child outcomes (Letourneau et al., 2013). The available research also focuses on the quality of the speech content, whereas here I focus on affective components of CDS that reflect warmth and sensitivity (NICHD, 1999).

Hypothesis: mothers with more severe depressive symptoms will differ in the affective components of CDS, specifically through reduced turn-taking, flattened intonation and fewer emotion words.

Project 1: Scoping Literature Review

Our research team is currently conducting a scoping literature review following PRISMA guidelines (Moher et al., 2009) and using the framework proposed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) for scoping studies. Our goal is to synthesize the limited knowledge to date on the links between maternal depression and components of CDS from infancy to early childhood years. Specifically, this review investigates the existing quantity and quality of research assessing speech sensitivity variables in depressed mothers, which in turn will inform the conceptualization of speech sensitivity measured in project two.

Project 2: Laboratory assessment of CDS

This component, to be started in the Spring of 2021, will assess the extent to which depression severity is linked to CDS sensitivity in a sample of treatment-seeking mothers of preschool-aged children in the BRIDGE program at the University of Manitoba (N = 60 dyads). 10-minute video recordings of the dyads during free play will occur immediately after the child has finished a challenging, stress-inducing task (Roos et al., 2017). Our team will code maternal speech using the ELAN coding software to assess the following:

- Speech segmentation
- Word onsets
- Pitch qualities
- Word content analysis

My analytic plan will involve conducting an ANOVA to examine the effects of maternal depression severity on speech affective content, while controlling for SES, child age and sex.



Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my advisors, Drs. Roos and Giuliano, as well as the BRIDGE assessment team at the Hearts and Minds lab and Megan Gornik, co-author in our scoping review currently underway