Different amounts of protest in 4-month-old infants of depressed vs. non-depressed mothers
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Different amounts of protest in 4-month-old infants of depressed vs. non-depressed mothers

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Abstract

Amount of vocal protest was measured in 4-month-old infants of depressed vs. non-depressed mothers during 10 minute face-to-face interaction. The sample consisted of a two groups of mothers with their infants: depressed (n=17) and non-depressed (n=49), in total N=66. Vocal protest was measured using PISAAT psychoacoustic software and manual coding. Results showed that infants of depressed mothers expressed a lower amount of vocal protest compared to infants of non-depressed mothers as measured in mean percentage of time (p < .001).

Background

A significantly heightened amount of protest has previously been reported for infants of depressed mothers during face-to-face interaction (Field, Healy, Goldstein, & Guthertz, 1990). The other studies have also reported a heightened amount of protest in infants of depressed mothers on a tendency level (Murray, Fut-Crowley, Hopfer, & Cooper, 1996; Friedman, Beebe, Jaffe, Ross, & Trigges, 1999). Previous studies have predominantly used composite multimodal measures, which measure several modalities together (Field et al., 1990; Murray et al., 1996). However, multimodal measures may cover up so-called discordant affects (the infant is expressing converging affects through different modalities), which have been detected in infants of depressed mother (Beebe et al., 2008).

Aim

The aim of the present study was to measure amount of Infant protest in infants of depressed vs. non-depressed mothers. In addition to the measure through a single modality, the vocal modality, which has been found to be the most salient system through which both mother and infant communicate with each other at 4 months (Van Egeren, Barnett, & Risso, 2001).

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of n=66 primiparous mothers and their infants from the urban Copenhagen area with PPD group (n=17) and non-depressed group (n=49). Inclusion criteria were: Primiparous mother, healthy infant, mother at least 18 of age, living in the Copenhagen area, normal hearing and vision abilities. Exclusion criteria were: Psychosis and presence of co-morbid bipolar disorder and abuse of any substances.

Procedures

The interaction took place according to a standardized design of the interaction took place according to a standardized design of the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Status (EPDS) and Depression status was measured Psychosis and/or presence of co-depressed infant, mother at least 18 of age, living in the Copenhagen area with PPD group (n=17) and a non-depressed group (n=49). Sample consisted of N=66, in total mean age of infants was 4 , in total N=66, of which 60% of the infants in the present sample are 16 weeks, while in the infants in the other studies are younger (8–11 weeks, 13.6 weeks, and 14.8 weeks). The differences in age are relatively small, however an infant might experience many interactions on a daily basis, making the experience on which they base their behavior accumulate quickly.

The sample of depressed mothers might as a group show both a heightened and a lowered amount of protest. Adopting Beebe’s mid-range model for interpretation would indicate that the different depressed samples are facing different types of regulatory disturbances. A heightened amount of protest would indicate that the infant is preoccupied with the interactive regulation while a lowered amount would indicate that the infant has turned to self-regulation (Beebe, Ruster, Sotter, & Knibbaush 2005).

Conclusions

Results show a lowered amount of protest in infants of depressed mothers, while previous studies have detected higher amounts. The relatively small sample size of the depressed group should be taken into account. However, findings of both a higher and a lower amount of protest in infants of depressed mothers might be explained by a model where a mid-range amount is seen as optimal. Operating outside the “mid-range” could be understood as attempts to cope with interactional disturbances by heightening or lowering the response.

References


