



Maternal and adolescent temperament as predictors of maternal affective behavior during mother–adolescent interactions

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This study examined maternal and early adolescent temperament dimensions as predictors of maternal emotional behavior during mother–adolescent interactions. The sample comprised 151 early adolescents (aged 11–13) and their mothers (aged 29–57). Adolescent- and mother-reports of adolescent temperament and self-reports of maternal temperament were collected. Mother–adolescent dyads participated in event-planning and problem-solving interactions, which were coded for frequency of aggressive, dysphoric, and positive interpersonal maternal behavior. Analyses indicated that adolescents who are higher in temperamental Negative Affectivity and lower in Effortful Control are generally exposed to more frequent aggressive and less frequent positive interpersonal maternal behavior. Furthermore, mothers lower in Effortful Control engaged in more frequent dysphoric behavior toward their adolescent. Given the associations between parental emotional behavior and the development of adolescent emotion regulation, these findings suggest that temperamental dispositions, particularly of early adolescents, may influence their ongoing socialization of emotion regulation skills, and thus their emotional well being.

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Temperament refers to biologically-based differences in emotional, motor, and attentional reactivity and self-regulation (Posner & Rothbart, 2007). Temperament is thought to form the core of personality as it develops (Rothbart, Ahadi, & Evans, 2000), and is thus strongly associated with personality traits (Evans & Rothbart, 2007; McCrae et al., 2000). Mary Rothbart and other leading researchers in this domain argue that one's temperament plays an important role in the development of emotion regulation strategies, emotionally expressive behavior, and psychopathology (Rothbart et al., 2000). These claims are supported by extant evidence (e.g., Barkley, 1997; Yap, Allen, O'Shea, Di Parsia, Simmons, & Sheeber, 2011). Its pervasive nature therefore renders temperament a likely influence on family interaction behavior.

Parental emotional expressions are an important form of emotion socialization. They often serve as a model for adolescents of appropriate interpersonal emotional behavior (Fox & Calkins, 2003; Halberstadt, Cassidy, Stifter, Parke, & Fox, 1995; Siegler, DeLoache, & Eisenberg, 2003), and may demonstrate the consequences of expressing or inhibiting particular emotions (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994). Frequent expression of negative emotions by mothers has been linked to problematic behaviors,

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including greater negative emotional expression in children (Halberstadt et al., 1995), and greater depressive symptoms and maladaptive emotion regulation in early adolescents (Yap, Schwartz, Byrne, Simmons, & Allen, 2010). The latter study examined two particular styles of negative emotional behavior: firstly *aggressive* behavior, referring to belligerence and criticism, and also *dysphoric* behavior, referring to complaining, anxious, and self-derogatory conduct. Both behavioral styles in mothers have been distinctively linked to problematic emotional outcomes in children (Hops & Seeley, 1992; Patterson, DeBaryshe, & Ramsey, 1989). Conversely, frequent expression of positive emotions by mothers, (e.g. cheerfulness, affection, hopefulness, pleasure), has been associated with positive emotional experience, emotional understanding, and self-esteem in children (Brody & Ge, 2001; Halberstadt, Crisp, & Eaton, 1999). Given the important implications of these maternal behaviors (i.e., aggressive, dysphoric and positive) for child adjustment, this paper examines the extent to which are predicted by maternal and adolescent temperament dimensions.

Although less research has been conducted on emotion socialization in adolescence compared with childhood, early adolescence is an important period for the development of emotion regulation (Spear, 2000; Thompson, 1991). In particular, it is a time of increased parent-child conflict (Morris et al., 2002), and increased risk of emotion regulatory disorders such as depression (Kessler, Avenevoli, & Merikangas, 2001). Therefore, it is beneficial to investigate these issues during early adolescence, as this developmental period may shed light on processes that are critical the emergence of mental health problems later in adolescence.

It is believed that both mother and child characteristics contribute to maternal behavioral patterns (Belsky, 1984). However, there is a paucity of research investigating the relative influence of maternal and child characteristics within one study (Denissen, van Aken, & Dubas, 2009). Belsky (1984) and Hoffman (1975) both proposed that a parent's nature (e.g. personality, history of socialization) is the predominant contributor to parental behavior; an assertion that has been supported by evidence that maternal emotional characteristics, such as levels of anxiety and depression strongly influence the quality of mother-child interactions (Cumberland-Li, Eisenberg, Champion, Gershoff, & Fabes, 2003; Kendler, Sham, & McLean, 1997).

Other researchers have proposed that parental behavior is more responsive to child-related factors, such as type of misdemeanor (Grusec & Kuczynski, 1980) and child characteristics (e.g., Bell, 1968; Mangelsdorf et al., 1996; Patterson, 1982; Pettit & Laird, 2002; Pettit & Loulis, 1997; Prinzie et al., 2004; Siegler et al., 2003). Parents' use of a particular control or regulatory strategy may hinge on whether the child is perceived negatively (e.g. as being difficult to manage) or positively (Pettit & Laird, 2002). Studies have found that mothers' anxious and disapproving behavior varies depending on child personality and temperament (Anderson, Lytton, & Romney, 1986; Rubin, Cheah, & Fox, 2001). Nevertheless, recent research indicated that parent and adolescent personalities account for relatively equivalent proportions of variance in parental warmth (Denissen et al., 2009). Responding to this ambiguity in the literature, the present study explores the predictive power of both maternal and adolescent temperaments, independently and interactively, on maternal emotional behavior.

In this study, we will examine three dimensions of adult temperament, based on Evans and Rothbart's (2007) model, and three dimensions of early adolescent temperament, based on Ellis and Rothbart's (2001) model: Negative Affectivity (NA), Effortful Control (EC), and Surgency (SUR). These factors are the temperament dimensions that most consistently replicate across models of temperament (Putnam, Ellis, & Rothbart, 2001), and remain distinct constructs of temperament models across the lifespan; that is, in children's, early adolescents', and adults' temperament systems (Putnam et al., 2001). Unlike other dimensions of these models, such as Affiliativeness, the constructs of NA, EC, and SUR have all been consistently validated and thoroughly studied (Putnam et al., 2001), thus can be measured and conceptualized with assurance.

Although temperament is conceptually distinct from personality, which refers to the manner of interacting with oneself and the environment (Endler, 1989), NA, EC, and SUR strongly correlate with the personality traits of Neuroticism, Conscientiousness, and Extraversion, respectively (Evans & Rothbart, 2007). NA refers to discomfort, fear, anger, frustration, and sadness in adults (Evans & Rothbart, 2007), while in early adolescents, it is comprised solely of frustration (Ellis & Rothbart, 2001). EC refers to attentional, inhibitory, and activation control in both adults and early adolescents (Ellis & Rothbart, 2001; Evans & Rothbart, 2007). SUR comprises positive affect, high intensity pleasure, and sociability in adults (Evans & Rothbart, 2007), and high intensity pleasure, low shyness, and low fear in early adolescents (Ellis & Rothbart, 2001).

Negative emotionality

NA may be associated with conflict and tension within mother-adolescent interactions. NA in adolescents generate interpersonal conflict (Dodge, Coie, & Lynam, 2006; Kawaguchi, Welsh, Powers, & Rostosky, 1998; Miller, Shim, & Holden, 1998) and harsh parental discipline (Patterson, 1982). According to Patterson's (1982) coercive interaction theory, aggressive and non-compliant child behavior serves to provoke habitual patterns of oppression and hostility from parents, which in turn maintains aggressive child behavior (Eisenberg et al., 2008), leading to a perpetuating cycle of conflict. Prinzie et al. (2004) demonstrated that benevolent children aged 5–11, who were defined as warm, agreeable, and cheerful, were less likely than non-benevolent children to be subject to parental irritability, anger, and spitefulness. Mothers with greater negative emotionality tend to show less tolerance and warmth (Zussman, 1980), responsiveness (Woodruff-Borden, Morrow, Bourland, & Cambron, 2002), nurturance (Metsapelto & Pulkkinen, 2003), and empathy (Frodi & Lamb, 1980) towards their children. Accordingly, it is hypothesized that both mother NA and adolescent NA will be associated with more frequent aggressive and dysphoric, and less frequent positive interpersonal maternal behavior.

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