



# Demographic and Psychiatric Correlates of Maternal Attitudes in Postpartum Women

Ellen F. Finch<sup>1, 2</sup> & Laura E. Sockol<sup>1, 3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Williams College <sup>2</sup> McLean Hospital/Harvard Medical School <sup>3</sup> Davidson College



## BACKGROUND

- Maladaptive beliefs about motherhood are associated with increased depression and anxiety during the perinatal period.
- Demographic characteristics, some of which are also associated with differential risk for depression and anxiety, may be related to differences in maternal attitudes.
- The goal of this study was to investigate the associations between maternal characteristics and maternal attitudes in a community sample of postpartum women.

## METHOD

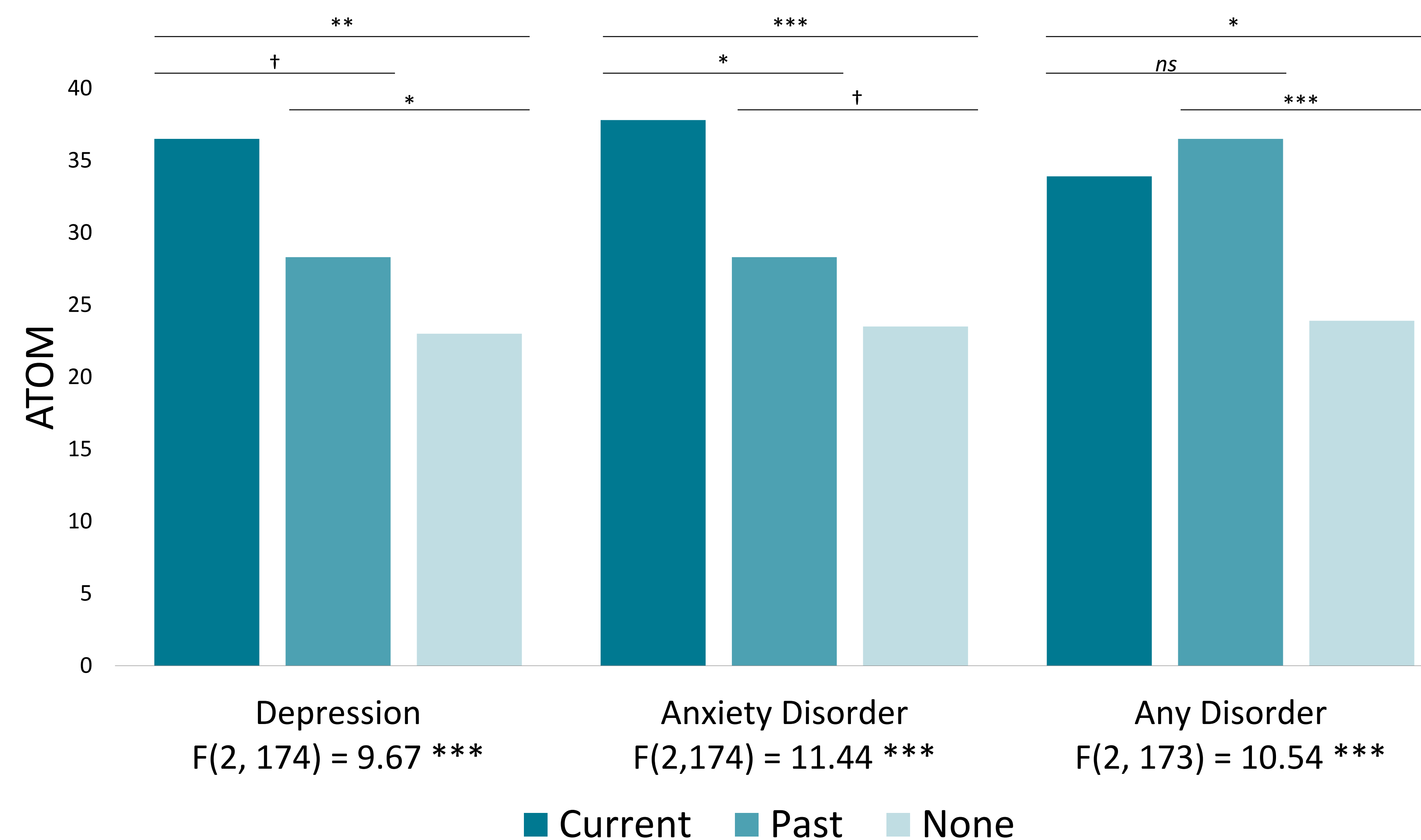
- Participants were recruited online through social media and online forums for new parents. Eligibility criteria included:
  - Age 18-45
  - Mother of child age 6 months or younger
  - United States resident
- 230 eligible women initiated participation in the study; 191 (83%) completed all measures.
- Participants completed the following measures through an online interface:
  - Maternal Attitudes: Attitudes Toward Motherhood Scale (ATOM)
  - Depression: Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS)
  - Anxiety: State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI)
  - Demographic Characteristics: Race, ethnicity, marital status, annual household income, level of education, employment status, age/sex of youngest child, parity, & number of children.
  - Psychiatric History: Current and past history of depression, anxiety and any psychiatric diagnosis.
- Associations between maternal characteristics and maternal attitudes were assessed using *t*-tests for categorical variables and correlations for ordinal (Spearman's rho) and continuous (Pearson's *r*) variables.

## RESULTS

**Table 1** Sample Demographic Characteristics

Race	% (n)	Annual Income	% (n)	Child Age (Weeks)	M(SD)
Caucasian	93% (164)	< \$25K	8% (14)		13.4(7.5)
African-American	1% (1)	\$25-50K	15% (26)	<b>Child Sex</b>	<b>% (n)</b>
East/South Asian	5% (8)	\$50-75K	24% (42)	Female	
Native American	1% (1)	\$75-100K	18% (31)	Male	
Pacific Islander	1% (1)	> \$100K	36% (63)	<b>Parity</b>	<b>% (n)</b>
Other	1% (2)			Primiparous	61% (142)
		<b>Education</b>	<b>% (n)</b>	Multiparous	39% (91)
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>% (n)</b>	< High School	1% (1)	<b>Number of Children</b>	<b>M(SD)</b>
Hispanic/Latina	5% (9)	High School Diploma	5% (9)		
Non-Hispanic/Latina	95% (167)	Some College	24% (42)		1.6(1.1)
		Bachelor's Degree	25% (44)		
<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>% (n)</b>	Graduate Degree	46% (81)		
Married	88% (155)	<b>Employment Status</b>	<b>% (n)</b>		
Cohabiting	10% (17)	Full Time	60% (101)		
In a relationship	1% (2)	Part Time	12% (20)		
Not in a relationship	2% (3)	Not Employed	28% (47)		

**Figure 1** Differences in Maternal Attitudes (ATOM) Associated with Current and Past Diagnosis of Psychiatric Disorders



## RESULTS Continued

**Table 2** Differences in Maternal Attitudes (ATOM) Associated with Maternal Characteristics

	M(SD)	t(df)
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		0.65(175)
White Non-Hispanic/Latina	25.37(11.47)	
Other	23.67(9.32)	
<b>Marital Status</b>		-2.59(24.28)*
Married	24.15(10.40)	
Other	32.32(14.23)	
<b>Employment Status</b>		-1.25(67.02)
Employed	24.39(10.07)	
Not Employed	27.09(13.44)	
<b>Parity</b>		3.16(205)**
Primiparous	27.55(10.97)	
Multiparous	22.61(10.87)	
<b>Child Sex</b>		-1.14(171)
Female	26.38(11.53)	
Male	24.45(10.83)	
	<b>r</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>Annual Income</b>		-0.27**
<b>Education</b>		-0.23***
<b>Child Age</b>	0.12	
<b>Number of Children</b>	-0.14 <sup>†</sup>	
<b>Depression</b>	0.44***	
<b>Anxiety</b>	0.48***	

## DISCUSSION

- Several maternal demographic characteristics are associated with maternal attitudes, including marital status, parity, income and education.
- Clinicians should be aware that asymptomatic women with a positive psychiatric history may have maladaptive beliefs that place them at-risk for recurrence in the context of the transition to parenthood.