



BACKGROUND

- While most research on the transition to parenthood has focused on women's experiences, research suggests that 10% of men experience clinically significant psychological symptoms during the perinatal period.
- Among women, negative attitudes about motherhood are associated with depression and anxiety during pregnancy and the early postpartum period.
- The goal of this study was to develop a measure of men's attitudes about fatherhood and to assess whether these attitudes are associated with psychological symptoms among new and expectant first-time fathers.

METHOD

- Participants were recruited online from social media sites and forums for expectant/new parents. Eligibility criteria included:
 - Age 18-45
 - Partner currently pregnant with first child OR first child born in the previous 6 months
 - United States resident.
- Of the 286 eligible individuals who initiated participation, 258 (90%) completed at least 1 measure and 221 (77%) completed all measures.
- Participants completed the following measures through an online interface:
 - **Paternal Attitudes:** Attitudes Toward Fatherhood Scale (AToF)
 - **General Cognitive Biases:** Dysfunctional Attitudes Scale (DAS)
 - **Social Support:** Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MDPSS)
 - **Marital Satisfaction:** Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DYAD)
 - **Depression:** Beck Depression Inventory (BDI)
 - **Anxiety:** Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI)

RESULTS

Table 1. Intercorrelations among risk factors and psychological symptoms.

	AToF	DAS	MDPSS	DYAD	BDI	BAI
AToF	(0.83)					
DAS	0.50***	(0.91)				
MDPSS	0.24***	0.30***	(0.90)			
DYAD	0.23**	0.21**	0.50***	(0.94)		
BDI	0.28***	0.50***	0.31***	0.43***	(0.86)	
BAI	0.22**	0.43***	0.19**	0.31***	0.60***	(0.91)

Table 2. Hierarchical multiple regressions predicting symptoms of depression.

Outcome: Depression Symptoms (BDI)							
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		
	β	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	
Step 1		0.04	Step 1	0.04	Step 1	0.04	
Step 2		0.14***	Step 2	0.27***	Step 2	0.18***	
AToF	0.32***		DAS	0.52***	MDPSS	0.08	
			Step 3	0.01	DYAD	0.39***	
			AToF	0.10	Step 3	0.18***	
					DAS	0.45***	
					Step 4	0.00	
					AToF	0.04	

Table 3. Hierarchical multiple regressions predicting symptoms of anxiety.

Outcome: Anxiety Symptoms (BAI)							
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		
	β	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	
Step 1		0.01	Step 1	0.01	Step 1	0.01	
Step 2		0.07***	Step 2	0.18***	Step 2	0.09***	
AToF	0.24***		DAS	0.43***	MDPSS	0.02	
			Step 3	0.00	DYAD	0.29***	
			AToF	0.04	Step 3	0.12***	
					DAS	0.37***	
					Step 4	0.00	
					AToF	-0.03	

METHOD Continued

- Sample demographic characteristics:
 - Age $M = 31$ years, range 20-44
 - 51% expectant fathers, average gestational age 25 weeks
 - 49% new fathers, average child age 13 weeks
 - Infant sex: 50% boys, 50% girls
 - Race: 92% Caucasian, 7% Latino, 4% Asian, 4% Other, 0.5% African-American
 - Relationship Status: 89% married, 10% cohabitating, 1% not in a relationship
- The AToF had good reliability among both expectant ($\alpha = 0.81$) and new ($\alpha = 0.84$) fathers.
- A series of hierarchical multiple regressions was conducted to assess the incremental predictive validity of paternal attitudes after controlling for other risk factors. All analyses controlled for demographic characteristics (pregnant vs. postpartum, age, race, relationship status).

DISCUSSION

- General cognitive biases are strongly associated with symptoms of depression and anxiety, even after controlling for demographic and interpersonal risk factors.
- Unlike among first-time mothers, parental attitudes to not have incremental predictive validity beyond general cognitive biases or interpersonal risk factors.
- These findings suggest that attitudes towards fatherhood are associated with symptoms of depression and anxiety, but may simply reflect more general cognitive biases.
- These findings suggest that targeting general cognitive risk factors for depression and anxiety among new and expectant fathers during the transition to parenthood may be effective for treating and preventing paternal depression.