



Demographic Correlates of Impaired Mother-Infant Bonding in a Community Sample of Mothers of Young Infants

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BACKGROUND

- Mother-infant bonding represents the mother's perspective of her relationship with her baby, and plays an important role in the development of attachment between a mother and her child.
- Previous research on demographic correlates of impaired mother-infant bonding has resulted in mixed findings. These may result from differences in the types of samples assessed or from differences in the ways mother-infant bonding is assessed between studies (Kaufman, 2015).
- In a psychiatric sample, Caucasian women, married women, and women with college degrees were at greater risk for impaired mother-infant bonding (Sockol, Battle, Howard & Davis, 2014).
- The goal of this study was to investigate demographic correlates of maternal-infant bonding in a community sample using two widely-used measures of mother-infant bonding.

METHOD

- Subjects were recruited online through social media and forums for new mothers. Eligibility criteria included:
 - Age 18-45.
 - Mother of a child 6 months old or younger.
 - Resident of the United States.
- Participants completed the study online. Measures of mother-infant bonding included:
 - Mother-Infant Bonding Scale (MIBS; Taylor, Atkins, Kumar, Adams & Glover, 2005; $\alpha = 0.79$): a 7-item scale which measures the emotions a mother experiences in interactions with her infant during the first 2 weeks postpartum. Higher scores indicate worse mother-infant bonding.
 - Postpartum Bonding Questionnaire (PBQ; Brockington et al., 2001; $\alpha = 0.84$): a 25-item scale which measures a mother's perception of her relationship with her infant. Higher scores indicate worse mother-infant bonding.

RESULTS

Differences in Mother-Infant Bonding Between Demographic Categories

	PBQ Total		PBQ Impaired Bonding		PBQ Rejection/Anger		PBQ Maternal Anxiety		PBQ Risk of Abuse		MIBS Total	
	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>t/F(df)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>t/F(df)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>t/F(df)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>t/F(df)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>t/F(df)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>t/F(df)</i>
Education		-3.32(91)***		-3.10(92.4)**		-2.85(82.04)**		-2.58(175)*		0.92(53.12)		-3.58(126.8)***
College Graduate	23.23(8.61)		12.19(4.71)		7.00(2.40)		3.98(2.42)		0.06(0.27)		2.66(3.11)	
Not College Graduate	19.12(6.43)		10.12(3.47)		5.95(1.97)		2.93(1.88)		0.12(0.40)		1.31(1.72)	
Marital Status		-0.43(175)		0.13(175)		-0.63(175)		-1.37(175)		1.14(22.64)		-0.35(175)
Married	22.35(8.44)		11.68(4.60)		6.79(2.36)		3.82(2.39)		0.06(0.26)		2.37(2.95)	
Unmarried	21.55(7.51)		11.82(4.08)		6.45(2.26)		3.09(1.90)		0.18(0.50)		2.14(2.55)	
Race/Ethnicity		0.99(175)		1.27(175)		1.18(12.63)		-0.80(175)		0.04(175)		0.86(175)
White	22.08(8.02)		11.58(4.30)		6.66(2.18)		3.77(2.34)		0.073(0.30)		2.29(2.86)	
Nonwhite	24.46(11.67)		13.23(6.85)		7.92(3.82)		3.23(2.42)		0.077(0.28)		3.00(3.37)	
Employment		0.30(2,165)		0.31(2, 165)		0.04(2, 165)		0.66(2, 165)		0.87(2, 165)		1.03(2, 165)
Full-Time	22.81(8.27)		12.02(4.51)		6.81(2.24)		3.92(2.37)		0.06(0.238)		2.54(2.90)	
Part-Time	21.55(8.80)		11.25(5.13)		6.80(2.61)		3.45(2.01)		0.05(0.22)		2.30(3.07)	
Unemployed	21.94(8.53)		11.60(4.38)		6.70(2.59)		3.51(2.51)		0.13(0.45)		1.81(2.87)	

† $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

RESULTS

- Of the 233 eligible subjects who completed the initial assessment, 217 (93%) completed both measures of mother-infant bonding and 168 (72%) provided full demographic information.
- Maternal income was significantly associated with increased PBQ total scores ($r = 0.15^*$) and rejection/anger ($r = 0.17^*$), and there was a trend for income to be associated with greater impaired bonding on the PBQ ($r = 0.13^\dagger$). Mothers with more children reported significantly lower maternal anxiety on the PBQ ($r = -0.21^{**}$). Child age was not significantly correlated with any measure of mother-infant bonding. No other correlations between maternal demographic characteristics and mother-infant bonding were significant.

DISCUSSION

- Findings regarding demographic correlates of mother-infant bonding were consistent across both measures of mother-infant bonding.
- Mothers with higher levels of education consistently reported more impaired mother-infant bonding across all measures; this is consistent with findings from previous research.
- Income was correlated with impaired mother-infant bonding; this has not been found in previous studies of mother-infant bonding.
- Mothers with more children reported lower levels of maternal anxiety; this is also consistent with findings from previous research.
- These findings suggest that some women may be at greater risk for impaired mother-infant bonding during the early postpartum period.