

Infant Temperament, Socially Aversive Traits, and Maternal Mindfulness

Mahlon Brady

Child temperament is shaped by several environmental factors, including how caregivers respond to infant needs. Some caregivers respond to their child with care and consideration, and other caregivers are much less sensitive. For example, mothers who display socially aversive traits are less likely to adequately respond to their infant's needs. This inadequacy may negatively impact infant temperament. It is possible, however, that mothers' mindfulness may mitigate any negative impacts. The present study used data from the Brain and Early Experience Study to examine the potential association between maternal socially aversive traits and infant temperament as well as how this association may be moderated by maternal mindfulness. Mothers ($N = 153$) completed self-assessments prenatally to measure socially aversive traits and mindfulness. When infants were 6 months-old, temperament was evaluated through observation and parent-reports. The temperament traits assessed in this study were social approach, affect, attention, negative affect, surgency, and orienting and regulatory control. Results provide some evidence for a negative relationship between socially aversive traits and infant temperament. There were significant negative associations between Machiavellianism and attention as well as psychopathy and orienting and regulatory control. Results also suggest that mindfulness is protective against the effects of maternal narcissistic tendencies on infant social approach. Therefore, the results of this study have implications for the consideration of mindfulness training for caregivers, as it may ameliorate the negative impacts of certain parental characteristics on child development.