

## Abstract

Early experiences increase risk for psychopathology; however, the behavioral mechanisms behind this association are yet to be established. Previous research has shown connections between harsh-intrusive parenting, negative affect, and internalizing symptoms; however no study has looked at these associations specifically with preschool anxiety. The present study tests associations between harsh-intrusive parenting, negative affect, and preschool anxiety in a cohort of mother-child dyads ( $n = 153$ ). Observations for harsh-intrusive parenting and negative affect were taken at 6 months of child's age and compared to parent report of anxiety symptoms at 30 months. Harsh-intrusive parenting was measured using a semi-structured parent child interaction task, negative affect was measured using the Still Face Paradigm, and preschool anxiety was measured using the Preschool Anxiety Scale. Multiple linear regression models show a positive association between harsh-intrusive parenting and obsessive-compulsive symptoms ( $\beta = .304, p < .001$ ). Additionally, infant negative affect during the Still Face and Reunion Episodes were associated with obsessive-compulsive symptoms ( $\beta = .313, p < .001$ ;  $\beta = .186, p = .025$ , respectively). Finally, negative affect during the Still Face Episode was negatively associated with physical injury fears ( $\beta = -.196, p = .016$ ). These findings highlight the importance of infant reactivity and experiences on subsequent mental health outcomes.

Keywords: harsh-intrusive parenting, negative affect, infancy, preschool anxiety