



SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY
DOCTORATE IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY
MAJOR RESEARCH PROJECT

**Maternal Postnatal Depression, Expressed Emotion and Associated Child Internalising
and Externalising Problems Aged 2-Years**

Author name and affiliation: Amy Bryant

College of Life and Environmental Sciences

Washington Singer Laboratories

Perry Road

Exeter

EX4 4QG

Supervisors: Dr Lamprini Psychogiou & Dr Heather O'Mahen

Target journal: The Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry

Word count for manuscript: 8000

Word count for appendices: 3259

Submission date: 1st August 2012

Statement of academic probity and professional practice:

“I certify that all material in this assignment which is not my own work has been identified and properly attributed. I have conducted the work in line with the BPS DCP Professional Practice Guidelines.”

**Submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements for the Doctorate Degree in Clinical
Psychology, University of Exeter**

Contents

Manuscript

Title page	Page 1
Abstract	Page 4
Introduction	Page 6
Method	Page 13
Results	Page 18
Discussion	Page 36
Conclusion	Page 44
Key points	Page 45
Acknowledgements	Page 45
Correspondence	Page 45
References	Page 46

Extended Appendices

Appendix A: Extended Method	Page 57
A1. Rationale for using the EPDS to measure maternal depression	Page 59
A2. Further information on learning to code the PFMSS	Page 60
A3. Inter-rater and code-recode reliability for all elements of Expressed Emotion	Page 61
A4. Instructions for participants for the PFMSS	Page 62
A5. Detailed notes on how critical and positive comments were coded from the PFMSS coding manual.	Page 63
A6. Description of how missing data was handled for the CBCL	Page 66

A7. Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (Cox, Holden, & Sagovsky, 1987)	Page 70
Appendix B: Extended Results	Page 72
Appendix C: Extended Discussion	Page 75
Appendix D: Ethical Documentation	Page 76
D1. Oxford Father's Project Ethical Approval Letter	Page 77
D2. Exeter University School of Psychology Ethics Application	Page 79
D3. Exeter University Psychology Research Ethics Committee Approval Letter	Page 82
Appendix E: Dissemination Strategy	Page 83
Appendix F: Instructions to Authors	Page 84

Abstract

Background: Maternal postnatal depression (MPND) has been associated with child emotional, behavioural and cognitive problems, placing them at greater risk for later psychopathology. Therefore research into mechanisms of risk transmission is important. This longitudinal study considers the emotional quality of the mother-child relationship, using a measure of Expressed Emotion (EE), as a potential mechanism explaining the link between MPND and child emotional and behavioural problems in the postnatal period. It was predicted mothers with higher depressive symptoms at 3-months would show more negative EE and their child would have more internalising and externalising problems at 2-years, with maternal EE acting as a mediator. **Methods:** Data from the longitudinal Oxford Father's Project for 130 (of 192 originally recruited) mother-child dyads was used. Mother's depressive symptoms were measured using the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale at 3-months. Maternal EE, specifically critical and positive comments, was coded from the Preschool Five Minute Speech Sample measured at 2-years. Maternal, paternal and independently rated child outcomes were measured at 2-years using the Child Behaviour Checklist for ages 1.5-5. **Results:** Mothers, fathers and "others" rated child problems similarly. EE-positive comments showed stability from 1-2 years. Mothers with more depressive symptoms at 3-months showed more EE-criticism at 2-years especially towards boys and rated their children higher in internalising and externalising problems. Maternal EE-criticism predicted child internalising and externalising problems at 2-years. EE was not a significant mediator between maternal depressive symptoms and child problems. **Conclusions:** Children of mothers with more depressive symptoms 3-months post-birth experience more maternal EE-criticism and show more internalising and externalising problems aged 2-years. Given the long-term consequences of early childhood problems, postnatal depression should be screened and treated early to reduce EE-criticism and negative

child outcomes. Research should consider why mothers experiencing postnatal depression may be more critical of male children and how this may impact on development.

Keywords: Maternal, Postnatal Depression, Expressed Emotion, Child

Abbreviations:

Maternal Postnatal Depression (MPND)

Expressed Emotion (EE)