

**Stony Brook University
The Graduate School**

Doctoral Defense Announcement

Abstract

Associations Between Parental Psychopathology and Personality and Offspring
Temperament: Implications for the Conceptualization of Temperament

By

Thomas M. Olin

The present study examined the associations between parental psychopathology, personality, and contextual factors and offspring temperament in a large ($n = 375$) community based sample. Three-year old children participated in a series of laboratory activities that were designed to elicit emotional displays and other behavioral tendencies. Maternal and paternal history of depressive and anxiety disorders was assessed via diagnostic interviews and each parent also completed self-report measures of personality and demographic/contextual factors.

No significant main effects of depressive or anxiety disorders on offspring temperament were found. Interactions between maternal depressive disorders and maternal employment and maternal depressive disorders and maternal age was predictive of offspring PA and interest, such that offspring of chronically depressed, non-working mothers had lower levels of PA and interest compared to offspring of non-working mothers with no history of depression. This is consistent with these offspring being at risk for later depressive disorders. For offspring of older working mothers, chronic depression was associated with higher levels of offspring PA and impulsivity, suggesting that these children may be at risk for externalizing behavior problems.

The results suggest that the influence of maternal depressive disorders on offspring temperament varies as a function of demographic/contextual factors. The results highlight the need to investigate the processes through which maternal employment and age influence the relationship between maternal depressive disorder and offspring risk.

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