

Association and Outcomes of Positive Emotion Socialization in the Children of Mothers with Unipolar and Bipolar Depression

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Background

Emotion socialization (ES) is the way in which influential individuals in a child or adolescent's life react to, discuss, and express emotions, which in turn influences the child's own emotional responses and expression. Supportive positive ES more specifically has a cumulative effect that beneficially affects multiple levels of not only cognitive functioning and well-being, but also coping with various stressors and adversity. However, parents with depression have a well-established pattern of dysregulated parenting, which is thought to be associated with their children's later maladjustment and increased levels of psychopathology. Based on these patterns of dysfunction, it seems possible that utilizing the opposite strategies, that is being responsive and positive with their children, could act as a protective factor for child of parents with depression. This archival study aims to analyze if children of mothers with unipolar and bipolar depression perceive different levels of positive ES compared to children of control mothers. Additionally, the study will longitudinally assess if children that experience increased perceptions of positive ES will exhibit less psychopathology and increased well-being compared to children with decreased perceptions of positive ES.

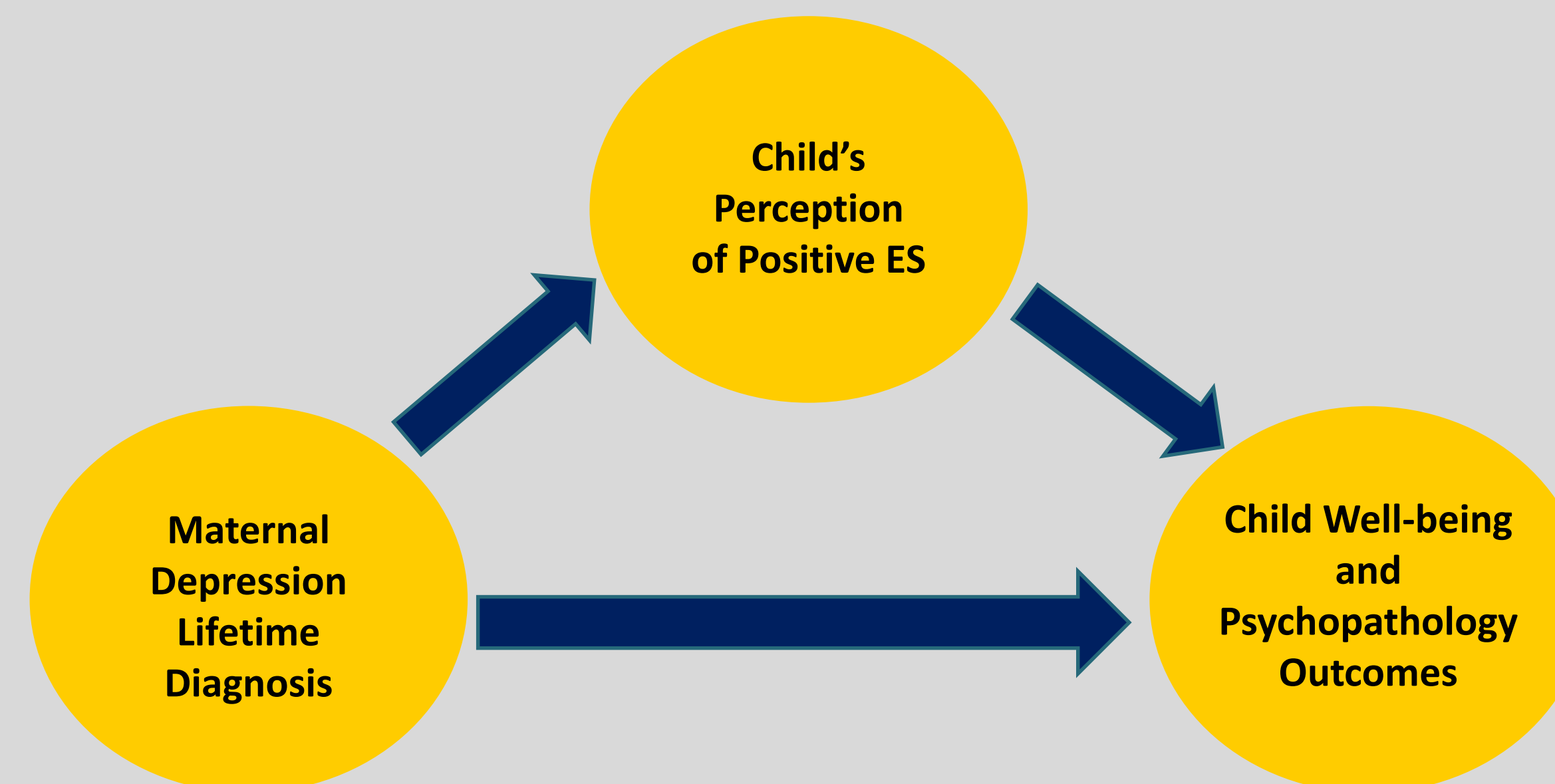
Predictions

1. Children of mothers with unipolar depression will report a decreased perception of positive ES compared to children of mother's with bipolar depression and both groups will report a decreased perception of positive ES compared to the children of control mothers.

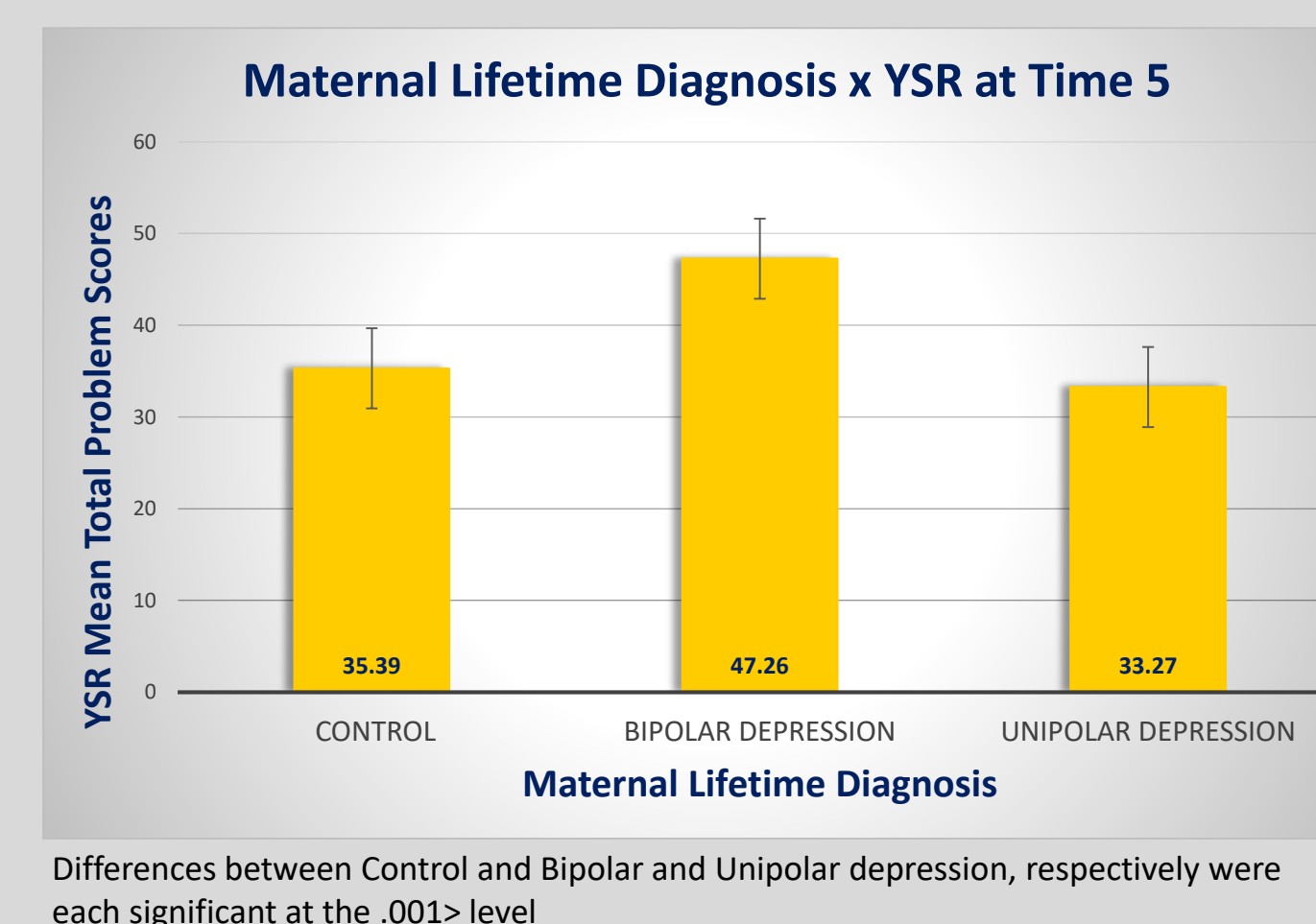
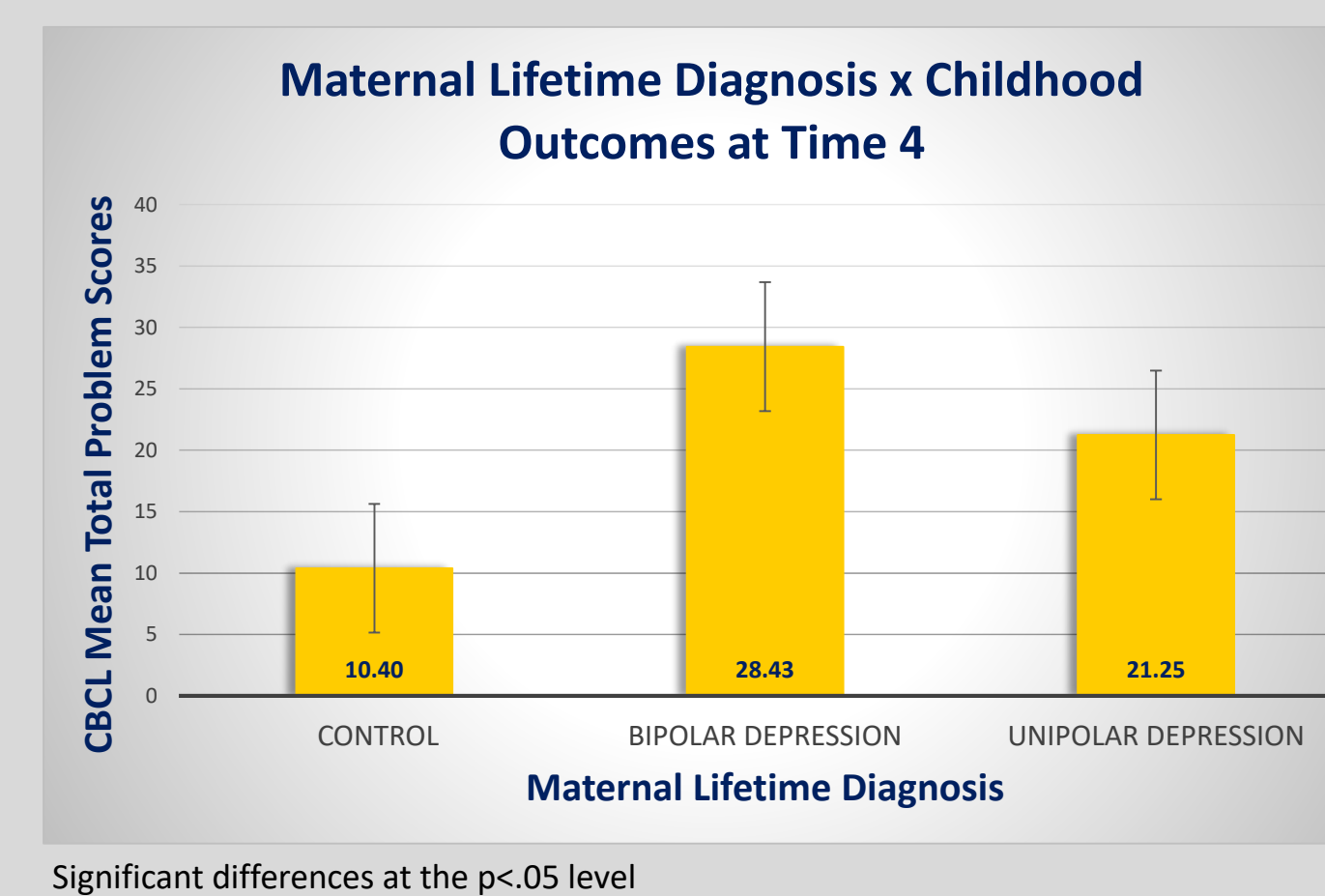
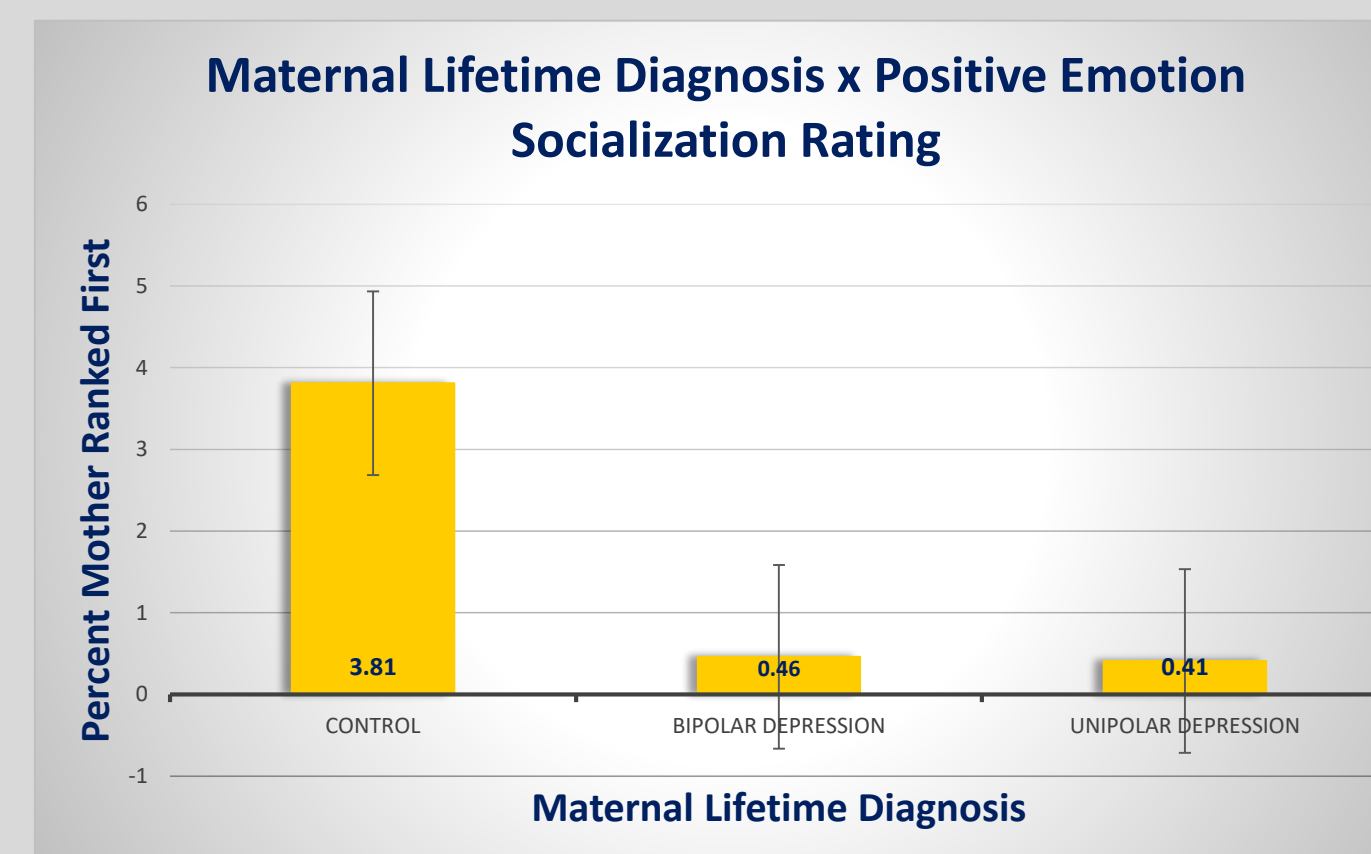
2. Children with increased perceptions of positive ED will exhibit less psychopathology and increased well-being compared to children with decreased perceptions of positive ES.

Method

Mothers were recruited along with their two children and measured at five different time periods after the initial meeting. The mothers' lifetime diagnoses were determined using diagnostic tests at time 1 and time 3. At time 3, when the younger siblings were 7 years 9 months to 11 years 2 months ($M=9.37$, $SD=1.03$), and the older siblings were between 10 years 3 months and 16 years 1 month ($M=13.14$, $SD= 1.48$), the My Family and Friends measure was administered (Reid et al., 1989). The measure assesses the child's response to questions about mother's response to positive emotion and general feelings of positive emotion towards their mothers were recorded. In order to assess the children's outcomes, the child behavioral checklist was utilized at T3 and T4, as well as the youth self-report at T5 (Achenbach, 1991a; Achenbach, 1991b). In order to analyze the data, one-way ANOVAs were conducted between the maternal lifetime diagnoses and childhood outcome measures. Additionally, correlations were conducted between the My Family and Friends scores and the childhood outcome measures. Finally, one-way ANOVAs were used to analyze the relationship between the maternal lifetime diagnoses and positive ES scores.



Results



Conclusions

This study had two initial hypotheses regarding maternal diagnoses and positive ES. Based on the insignificant findings, the researcher's hypotheses were not supported. However, the study did continue to add to the literature by supporting the well-established link between maternal depression and increased likelihood of child psychopathology. Further research needs to be conducted into this topic using multiple different measures that might be more precise and better able to capture ES. This research could lead to intervention strategies for the children of depressed mother, which could decrease the rates at which the children experience later in life depression. Overall, this research could lead to decreased likelihood in heritability of unipolar and bipolar depression by identifying important moderators within the parent child relationship.

Future Research

Examine positive emotion socialization with a more environmentally inclusive lens. In future studies, it would be beneficial to not only examine the mother child relationship, but also other significant people in a child's life. This would include friends, fathers, other caregivers, coaches, teachers, and any other significant members. Having a more broad study would allow for a more broad view that could better encapsulate the intricacies of the ES process.

Record the continuity of positive emotion socialization in children and adolescents. Including information about the continuity of positive ES would better allow researchers to better understand the changing dynamics of ES as a child progresses throughout the lifespan. Additionally, this would give increased insight into the relationship between various factors such as child symptomology and ES as those variables change.

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References available upon request.



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