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Differences in the Development of Internalizing and Externalizing Behaviors in Offspring of Depressed Mothers

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INTRODUCTION
- Maternal depression has adverse effects on child development
- Research suggests that maternal depression affects offspring outcomes by affecting parenting practices, family instability, and mother-offspring relationship quality
- Gaps in the literature when it comes to explaining why some children develop externalizing problems and why some develop internalizing problems when exposed to maternal depression

OBJECTIVES
- To examine the development of internalizing and externalizing behaviors in offspring with depressed mothers
- To explore mediating variables that explain this differential association
  - Family Instability
  - Learning Stimulation
  - Emotional Support
  - Spanking/Restricting

METHODS AND MATERIALS
- United States Department of Labor National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979
  - Range of sample sizes for the variables of interest: 1,299 - 2,044
- Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression (CES-D) Scale (Radloff, 1977)
- Home Observation Measurement of the Environment – Short Form (HOME-SF, modified from HOME by Caldwell & Bradley, 1984)
- Young Adult Self Report

RESULTS
- Preliminary Bivariate Correlations
  - Maternal depression and offspring delinquency ($r = .08; p < 0.01$)
  - Maternal depression and offspring depression ($r = .04; n.s.$)
- Mediation Analyses
  - Family instability mediated b/t maternal depression and offspring delinquency ($b = .0048, 95\% \text{ CI} [.0030, .0071]$)
  - Maternal depression and offspring delinquency ($b = .0058, 95\% \text{ CI} [.0016, .0107]$)

DISCUSSION
- Family instability can explain why there is a relationship b/t maternal depression and adolescent internalizing behaviors
- Family instability and learning stimulation can explain why there is a relationship b/t maternal depression and adolescent externalizing behaviors
- Understanding these effects will allow for psychologists, families, schools, and communities to gain the understanding needed to support mothers and children
- Limitations:
  - HOME-Short form is a brief assessment
  - Assured direction of effects but cannot infer causality

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