

POSTER

HOW DOES POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION AFFECT RESPONSES TO INFANT CUES? (PREREGISTERED PROJECT PROPOSAL)

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ABSTRACT

Infant cues (facial cuteness in particular) are linked to evolutionary adaptations to motivate caretaking and protective behaviors (Kringelbach et al. 2016). Previous neuroimaging work has demonstrated that the infant cuteness activates reward-related regions in the brain (Glocker et al, 2009) and behavioral work suggests that the reward value of cuteness is linked to maternal tendencies (Hahn et al., 2015). It is estimated that 15% of mothers in the U.S. experience postpartum depression (PPD) (Wisner et al., 2013), which impacts the mesolimbic system and is linked to anhedonia (i.e., reduced ability to experience pleasure). Given that infant stimuli are rewarding, it is possible that PPD reduces the reward value of infant stimuli. Previous research has linked anhedonia to reduced reward responses to positive infant emotion expression in mothers with PPD (Morgan et al., 2017). This project aims to determine whether PPD symptomatology negatively impacts the mother-infant bond through blunted reward-related responses to infant facial cuteness.