Attunement and attention directing strategies

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The Baby Care Questionnaire (BCQ) is a new measure of parenting principles and practices in three specific contexts – sleeping, feeding and soothing. The BCQ measures the parenting principles structure and attunement.

Hypothesis
Attunement influences maternal encouragement of attention, allowing mothers to sense and respond to infants’ cues.

Measures
Parent-Infant Interactions: 10 minute free play session with mothers and their babies in a lab setting with a standardised set of toys.
Baby Care Questionnaire: completed BCQ online after interactions.
Cardiff Antenatal Inventory: completed to provide demographic information.

Main variables
Attunement: trust and use of infant’s cues and support of close physical contact.

Type of attention directing (Bornstein et al., 1990)
Social: caregiver encourages attention to self.
Didactic: caregiver encourages attention to an aspect of an object, environment or event.

Timing of attention directing (Landry et al., 2000)
Maintaining: caregiver encourages attention to an object or person that the infant is already attending.
Introducing: caregiver is encouraging attention to a new object or person.
Redirecting: caregiver is encouraging attention to a different object or person than the infant is attending.

Results

Attunement and maintaining attention

- Maintaining attention: \( r = .33, p = .064 \)
- Maintaining social attention: \( r = .21, p = .280 \)
- Maintaining didactic attention: \( r = .38, p = .031 \)

Attunement was related to maintaining didactic but not social attention.

Attunement and introducing attention

- Introducing attention: \( r = -.29, p = .108 \)
- Introducing social attention: \( r = -.06, p = .749 \)
- Introducing didactic attention: \( r = -.37, p = .036 \)

Attunement was related to introducing didactic but not social attention.

Conclusions

Attunement

- Positively related to maintaining infant’s attention to objects.
- Negatively related to introducing infant’s attention to objects.

Implications

- Maintaining attention related to positive child outcomes.
  - For example, infant’s exploration of objects.
- Early caregiving principles related to caregiving play behaviours.

Future work

- Longitudinal study to examine causal direction of relations between attunement and maintaining and introducing attention to objects.
- Importance of parenting practices in mother’s attention directing.