Author's response to reviews

Title: Pictorial Representation of Attachment: Measuring the parent-fetus relationship in expectant mothers and fathers

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Version: 4 Date: 16 April 2013

Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor and reviewer(s),

We were very pleased to read the comments of the reviewer on the third draft of our paper “Pictorial Representation of Attachment: Measuring the parent-fetus relationship in expectant mothers and fathers” which you invited us to resubmit in your e-mail of April 16th 2013. We thank the reviewer again for the final valuable comments and suggestions, which we closely followed in our third revision of the manuscript. Below, we describe how we addressed the remaining issues raised by the reviewer.

1a. “I am still not sure what the difference is between the PRAA and the PRAM (besides the title).”

Reply: The reviewer is correct that there is no difference between PRAA and PRAM, except for the title. We changed the title in 2010 from PRAA -about which we reported in the 2009 poster presentation- into PRAM –from 2010 onwards. At the start of the study we named the new tool the Pictorial Representation of Antenatal Attachment (PRAA) but later we preferred the PRAM (Pictorial Representation of Attachment Measure), because we intend to also use this tool postnatally. Therefore we changed the PRAA into PRAM.

1b. “I am also not sure why the “pilot” work is not valuable to mention. Were the 80 mothers and 76 fathers mentioned in the earlier study included in the data reported in the present study?”

Reply: We agree that the pilot work may be valuable for the readers. Because the 80 mothers and 76 fathers mentioned in Van Bakel et al., 2009 are also included in the present study, we refrained from focusing on the poster as a ‘pilot’ study. For the sake of clarity we now included this poster/publication in the introduction. (page 5).

2. “While the authors have chosen to not report the larger study, my concern in mentioning the larger study relates to the question of whether any of the measures used prior to those in the present study could have influenced the participants’ responses.”

Reply: We agree with the reviewer that specific measures used prior to those in the present study could have influenced the participants’ responses. At 15 weeks GA the first questionnaires were filled in by parents about background information, anxiety, and depression. The M/PAAS (administered at 26 weeks GA) were the first questionnaires containing questions about feelings and attitudes towards the fetus. These questions could have influenced the participant’s responses. Therefore we now included order effects of the PRAM and MAAS in the method section of the manuscript. See also comment #5.

3. “I would be tempted to include the information given to the participants as mentioned in #4 of their reply to my previous questions.”
Reply: We followed the reviewer’s suggestion and now added the following information in the text on page 8. “Parents were asked to participate in a longitudinal study, in which parents were followed from pregnancy (15 weeks gestational age) until 24 months postpartum. The aim of the larger study was to gain more insight into feelings, emotions, behaviors and expectations about the pregnancy and the fetus, and about experiences with and development of the child after birth. The purpose of the larger prospective study is to investigate the quality of parent-infant relationships from parents’ perspectives, both in the prenatal and postpartum period. This was also communicated to parents (see Maas et al., 2012). For the purpose of the present study we informed parents that we aimed to gain more insight into feelings and emotions with the pregnancy and with the developing fetus.”

4. “I suggest to the authors that they include last two sentences of the reply to question #6, i.e., “In the present study we also asked all parents............”
Reply: We follow the reviewer’s suggestion and include the following sentences in the text on pages 10-11. “We also asked all parents to describe why they put the sticker at a particular distance. All (expectant) parents were able to answer this question, indicating that there were no problems in understanding the instruction”.

5. “I recommend including the information in #7 about the order effects.”
Reply: We agree and added the next paragraph in the text in the method section on page 9. “The M/PAAS and PRAM were administered in the same order. We first send parents the M/PAAS at 24-26 weeks GA (by mail) and during the home-visit at 26 weeks GA parents completed the PRAM. At the home visit we collected all questionnaires that were filled out by the parents before the home-visit and were not send back to us. Our experience is that sending parents questionnaires before a home visit -with the instruction that we will collect the questionnaires at the home visit- improves the response rate. Due to this standard order we are not able to control for a possible effect of the M/PAAS on the PRAM”.

6. “And, only one final question. On page 17, what does “very and moderate preterm” mean? I don’t think these terms are self- explanatory.”
Reply: We now explained the terms very and moderate preterm on page 18. ‘Very preterm’ is before 31 weeks gestational age and ‘moderate preterm’ between 32-37 weeks gestational age.

We wish to thank you and the reviewer again for the time spent on our manuscript and for the final valuable comments and suggestions which again led to an improvement of our paper.

Yours Sincerely,

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