Attachment Orientations as Potential Mediators in the Intergenerational Transmission of Marital Satisfaction

Amber M. Jarnecke & Susan C. South
Purdue University

Introduction

• Individuals who grow up in a home marked by marital conflict or divorce are more likely to have dysfunctional romantic relationships (Amato & Booth, 2001).
• Parent-child attachment orientations and romantic relationship attachment orientations are related to adult romantic relationship quality, including marital satisfaction (Simpson, 1990; Crowell, Treboux, & Brockmeyer, 2009).

Goal of Current Study: Examine if attachment orientations mediate the intergenerational transmission of marriage.

Methods

Participants
• 26 cohabitating couples (N=52), married 12 months or less.

Husbands | Wives
--- | ---
Age, M (S.D.) | 28.23 (6.56) | 28.31 (6.62)
Age at Marriage, M (S.D.) | 27.65 (6.46) | 27.69 (6.68)
Citizenship (White) | 84.6% | 73.1%
Religion (Christian) | 61.5% | 42.3%
Total Individual Salary (per year), M (S.D.) | $27,860.00 (13,608.79) | $25,421.60 (21,108.79)
Earnings Adopted | 0% | 3.8%
Time Dating Before Marriage (in months), M (S.D.) | 35.71 (25.13)
Length of Marriage (in months), M (S.D.) | 6.13 (2.39)
Total Household Income (per year), M (S.D.) | $52,900.00 (30,014.24)

Measures
• Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976)
  Assessed participants' marital adjustment
• Parents' Marital Adjustment Scale (adapted from DAS, Spanier, 1976; CTS2, Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996)
  Measured retrospective recall of participants' parents' marital adjustment
• Experiences in Close Relationships (Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000)
  Assessed participants' attachment to spouse
• Relationship Structures Questionnaire (Roisman et al., 2007)
  Assessed participants' retrospective attachment to mother and father

Procedure
• Couples were brought into lab together, each completed computer-administered measures separately

Statistical Analysis
• Path modeling in AMOS to assess mediation (indirect effects)

Results

Conclusions

• Parents' marital satisfaction predicted participants' parent-child attachment.
• In most cases, parent-child attachment predicted romantic relationship attachment.
• Anxious attachment orientation only mediated the intergenerational transmission of marriage in husbands.