Nonverbal Behavior & Satisfaction: The Mediating Role of Intimacy

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Background

• Reducing conflict and increasing intimacy lead to couple satisfaction, however, conflict reduction does not necessarily increase intimacy; Are intimacy and satisfaction related? (Vangelisti, 2005).

• One major component of intimacy is through self-disclosure. We focused on nonverbal behavior as a means of self-disclosing. It may be more consistent than verbal behavior, which is filtered through cognitive processes (Weisbuch, 2010).

• Current study: Use a daily diary method to assess each partner’s perception of spouse’s nonverbal behavior, intimacy, and satisfaction.

• Purpose of the current research: Determine how nonverbal and intimacy impact satisfaction controlling for conflict.

Method

Participants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>n=46 (23 couples)</th>
<th>Husbands</th>
<th>Wives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (SD)</td>
<td>28.29 (6.89)</td>
<td>28.48 (6.88)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity (White)</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion (Christian)</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship (U.S.)</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (Bachelors)</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age at Marriage (SD)</td>
<td>27.78 (6.81)</td>
<td>27.87 (6.97)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline Satisfaction (0-151)</td>
<td>124.13</td>
<td>123.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Satisfaction (0-151)</td>
<td>123.43</td>
<td>119.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Dating</td>
<td>37.30 months</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Marriage</td>
<td>6.15 months</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>$49,020</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Materials:

• Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier,1976)
• Daily Diary Questionnaire (DDQ): A questionnaire created specifically for this study which included measures of conflict, intimacy, nonverbal disclosure, and nonverbal supportiveness.

-3 Conflict Items:
  Ex. How serious was the conflict?
  Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Extremely

-8 Intimacy Items:
  Ex. How much did you share with your partner regarding facts and information?
  Very Little 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much

-16 Nonverbal behavior and Nonverbal Supportiveness Items:
  Ex. Rate how much your partner smiled in the last 24 hours.
  Very Little 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Frequent
  Unsupportive 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Supportive

Procedure:

• Participants came into the lab to complete computer-based questionnaires on personality, psychopathology, life events, and family history as part of a larger study, as well as the DAS.
• DDQ: Participants were told to behave normally and answer the DDQ at the end of each day. Couples completed them separately and immediately sealed their responses to ensure confidentiality and encourage honesty.
• Participants came into the lab on the seventh day to complete the DAS for a second time.

Statistical Analysis:

• Hierarchical linear modeling to examine the interaction between intimacy and nonverbal behavior on change in satisfaction over a one week period, controlling for level of conflict during the week.

Results

Conclusions

• The results suggest that increasing intimacy is more important than reducing conflict.
• Marriage counseling should emphasize increasing verbal and nonverbal disclosure rather than reducing conflict.
• Couples should be more aware of their nonverbal communication and whether or not it is supportive, as it can affect their intimacy and in the long run possibly the outcome of their marriage.