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Does Attachment to Parents Mediate the Relationship between Marital Conflict and Child Self-Regulation

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Does Attachment to Parents Mediate the Negative Relationship Between Parental Conflict and Children's Self-Regulation?



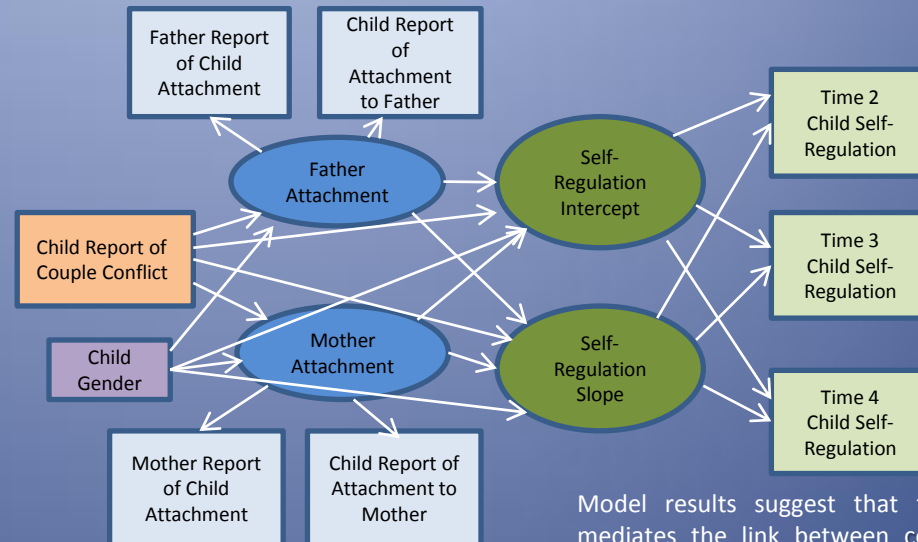
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This longitudinal study considers the effect of parent-child attachment on the self-regulation of children. Four hundred and forty-eight families from the Northwestern U.S. were surveyed as part of Brigham Young University's *Flourishing Families Project*. Each family studied included a child between the ages of 11 and 13. *Couple conflict* and the *child's attachment to parents* were assessed at *time 1* and the *child's self-regulation* was assessed each year thereafter for three years.

RESULTS

Higher couple conflict predicted lower attachment to father and to mother at time 1 with a greater negative effect for fathers

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY



EFFECT OF COUPLE CONFLICT ON CHILD ATTACHMENT (STANDARDIZED)

Table 1

Attachment to	Change Estimate	S. E.	Two-tailed P-value
Father	- 0.351	0.055	< .001
Mother	- 0.256	0.059	< .001

EFFECT OF ATTACHMENT SCORES ON CHILD SELF-REGULATION (STANDARDIZED)

Table 2

Attachment to	Estimate of Change in Self-Regulation	S. E.	Two-tailed P-value
Father	0.542	0.107	< .001
Mother	0.160	0.107	N Sig.

Higher scores on attachment to father predicted greater initial levels of child self-regulation (at time 2) but not slopes of child self-regulation (Table 2).

Attachment to mother did not predict initial levels or slope of self-regulation.

Results appear similar for male and female children as the gender of the child did not predict any of the variables in this study.

Model results suggest that father attachment mediates the link between couple conflict and initial levels of self-regulation. Bootstrapping was used to obtain corrected standard errors, which indicated the significant indirect effect of couple conflict (with father attachment) on self-regulation. Sobel's test confirmed the mediation at $-3.967 p < .001$.

This model accounted for 40% of the variation in child self-regulation measured at one year.

CONCLUSION

Attachment to father may be an important mechanism in the relationship between couple conflict and child self-regulation. Further research should examine whether father attachment also moderates this relationship.