Predicting Antecedents of Mother-Infant and Father-Infant Attachment: A Comparison between Categorical and Continuous Variables

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Introduction
Examination of the various factors that may influence infant-mother attachment relationships has been a focus of considerable research. Less research has focused on the antecedents of infant-father attachment (see Blesey, 1996; Owen & Cox, 1997; van IJzendoorn & de Wolff, 1997). In addition, different methodologies have been used to examine the antecedents of attachment. For example, infants can be grouped as either secure or insecure and variables can be identified to discriminate between the two groups. In contrast, attachment security can be treated on a continuum using two factors: Proximity-Seeking Vs. Avoidant Strategies and Angry and Resistant Strategies (Fraley & Spieker, 2003). The purpose of this poster is to identify antecedents for mother-infant and father-infant attachment and compare the results of the two methods used to predict mother- and father-infant attachment security.

Method
Participants
70 mothers, 63 fathers, and their infants. Mean age 29.16 (SD = 4.63) for mothers, and 31.72 (SD = 6.80) for fathers before birth of target child. 31\% European-American, predominantly middle-class and well-educated.

Measures
Data collected at three time points:
A) Pre-birth (3rd trimester)
B) 3.5 months post-birth
C) 12 and 13 months post-birth

Infant Attachment Security:
- Strange Situation Procedure (Ainsworth et al., 1978); measured at 12 and 13 months.
- ICQ; Bates et al. (1979); measured at 3.5 months.

Infant Difficult Temperament:
- Perceived by mothers and fathers (ICQ; Bates et al., 1979); measured at 3.5 months.

Negative Marital Quality:
a) Pre-birth negative marital quality
b) 3.5-month post-birth negative marital quality

Beliefs about Paternal Roles:
- Mothers' beliefs about traditional paternal roles, and 2) nontraditional paternal roles
- Fathers' beliefs about 1) traditional parental roles, and 2) nontraditional paternal roles

Demographic Variables:
- Age, education, family income, and work hours; measured pre-birth.

Results

Result 1: Attachment Security as a Categorical Variable

- Father Work Hours (pre-birth) $t(60) = -2.02, p < .01$
- Perceived Infant Difficult Temp. $t(61) = -2.00, p < .05$

- Based on T-Tests

Result 2: Attachment Security as Continuous Variables


Summary
1. Different antecedents are associated with attachment to mother and father.
2. Examining attachment security as a categorical variable vs. continuous variables yields slightly different patterns of results. Moreover, examining attachment security as continuous variables allows us to identify predictors associated with specific aspects of attachment security.

- Mothers' work hours (pre-birth) were related to more Proximity-Seeking Vs. Avoidant and Angry and Resistant Strategies to fathers.
- Fathers' beliefs about nontraditional paternal roles were related to categorical father-infant attachment and infants' Angry and Resistant Strategies to fathers.
- Infants who were securely attached to fathers had fathers who worked more pre-birth. Fathers who worked more pre-Birth had infants who used more Angry and Resistant Strategies to them.
- Infants who were securely attached to fathers were perceived by their parents as having less difficult temperament at 3.5 months.
- Pre- and post-birth negative marital quality were related to categorical mother-infant attachment, but only pre-birth negative marital quality was negatively related to Proximity-Seeking Vs. Avoidant Strategies to fathers.
- Fathers' beliefs about nontraditional paternal roles were negatively related to Angry and Resistant Strategies to both mothers and fathers.
- Mothers' beliefs about nontraditional beliefs about paternal roles.
- Mothers' beliefs about traditional paternal roles were related to categorical mother-infant attachment.

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