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# The Intergenerational Transmission of Marriage Relationship Satisfaction: Findings from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent and Adult Health 1994-2008

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## Study Purpose

- To explore the intergenerational transmission of relationship satisfaction using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health; 1994-2008).
- Hypothesis: Intimate partner relationship quality of the parent in Wave 1 is significantly related to the intimate partner relationship quality of the adult student in Wave 4 13 years later.

## Method

### Study Sample

- Add Health is a longitudinal study with a stratified, nationally representative sample of students from high schools and feeder schools across the US who were in 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade in 1994.
- The analytic sample consisted of 6,504 in Wave 1 and 5,114 in Wave 4 of the 15,243 original adolescents whose responses were included in the public use Add Health longitudinal dataset used for this study.

## Measures

- Outcome variable: Relationship satisfaction scale of students in Wave 1 who are adults in Wave 4
- Predictor variables: Parental relationship satisfaction in Wave 1
- Covariates: Gender, race, parental marriage status, adult student marriage status, parenting acceptance, parenting control, number of children

## Sample Descriptives

- Age (Wave 4): M = 29, SD = 1.78
- Gender: 48% male
- Race: 58% White, 23% Black, 11% Hispanic
- Married parent (Wave 1): 70%
- Married once (Wave 4): 46%
- Number of children (Wave 4) M = 1.58, SD = 1.13

## Descriptive Statistics

### Predictor Variable

- Parental intimate relationship satisfaction (PRS) on a single-item, ten-point scale: M = 8.41, SD 1.66
- Covariates and controls:
  - All sample descriptive variables except age
  - Parental acceptance ( $\alpha = .78$ ) on a four-item, five-point scale (Wave 1): M = 4.02, SD = .70
  - Parental control ( $\alpha = .62$ ) on a seven-item scale of zero to one (Wave 1): M = .26, SD = .22
- Interaction terms: PRS with all covariates

### Outcome Variable

- Relationship satisfaction of participants ( $\alpha = .89$ ) at Wave 4 reported in a seven-item scale: M = 4.07, SD = .82

## Analytic Approach

- Hierarchical regression analysis using demographic variables, main effects, and interaction terms

## Findings

- No significant interaction or moderation terms.
- Parental relationship is a significant predictor ( $p < .05$ ).
- Race, parental acceptance, and being married only once are significant covariates.

## Standardized Regression Coefficients for Predictors on Wave 4 Relationship Satisfaction

	Bivariate	Single covariates <sup>a</sup>	Full Multivariate <sup>c</sup>
PRS	.05**	.05** <sup>b</sup>	.03
Gender		-.004	-.03
Race		.08***	.05*
Parental marital status		.01	.004
Parental control		-.02	-.03
Parental acceptance		.16***	.14***
Married once		.15***	.14***
Number of children		-.03	-.04

<sup>a</sup> Each covariate was calculated individually with PRS.

<sup>b</sup> PRS at .05\*\* for all individual covariates except parental acceptance (PRS  $\beta = .03$ ) and number of children (PRS  $\beta = .06$ \*\*).

<sup>c</sup> PRS calculated while controlling for all covariates.

\*  $p \leq .05$ . \*\*  $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ .

## Conclusions and Implications

- Parental partner relationship satisfaction does significantly predict a child's later adult relationship satisfaction, although significance fades when parental acceptance is included as a covariate.
- The data suggest that interventions and further research to improve parental relationship quality and parental acceptance are warranted.

