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Summary

Literature Review: This article focuses on how family communication patterns influence the use of specific behaviors for maintaining a committed romantic relationship. The interpersonal phenomenon under question in this research study is the relationship between family communication patterns, rituals, and relational maintenance in adult children's romantic relationships. This relationship is important because since family relationships are some of the most long-lasting relationships individuals will have, they can shape how family members understand their social environments. In this way, the family context can act as a primary socialization agent for the development of communication behaviors. As a result, it is important to understand how family patterns and everyday interactions within the household environment establish a foundation for children's perspectives on relationships, which they will carry with them into their future relationships.

The theory of Family Communication Patterns states that how individuals interact with special others is influenced largely by how they have learned to communicate within their own family. Family communication patterns are, therefore, measured by conversation orientation and conformity orientation, which constitute the framework for this study. Conversation orientation is the degree to which families implement discussion and talk, whereas conformity orientation is concerned with the emphasis families place on allegiance to family norms. Bruess and Pearson (1997) discovered seven ritual types among married couples that encompass both meaning and routine, and this theory on rituals, as well as the seven relational maintenance behaviors found in Stafford and Canary's studies are also used to frame this study. This study specifically focuses on the three relational types found to predict relational quality which include couple-time rituals, daily rituals, and intimacy expression rituals. Couple-time rituals provide the couple with privacy or alone time. Daily routines and tasks consist of shared responsibilities and the mundane activities that make up a couples' day. Intimacy expressions involve physical, symbolic, and verbal expressions of love, affection, or sexual attraction, and these rituals are usually acted out in the form of physicality and nonverbal behaviors.

Rituals and relational maintenance behaviors are the concepts under investigation in this study, as the study examined how communication with one's own family is related to the use of these behaviors and rituals in the context of romantic relationships. Ritualized communication refers to routine behaviors or mannerisms that individuals engage in, which hold symbolic meaning to members of the relationship. Relational maintenance is defined as behaviors that are performed to maintain the quality of a relationship, and the seven relational behaviors examined were advice, assurances, conflict management, openness, positivity, shared tasks, and social networks. *Advice* is an individual's expression of opinions to the partner. *Assurances* refer to affirmations about the importance of the relationship as well as the participation of partners in said relationship, which stress the level of commitment between individuals. *Conflict management* is defined as the use of strategies during disagreements such as cooperation and apologizing. *Openness* is expressed as engaging in self-disclosures and discussions about feelings concerning the relationship. *Positivity* is an effort to keep interactions light-hearted and enjoyable for the partners. *Sharing tasks* involves the participation of partners in important activities together as well as addressing tasks that affect the couple. Lastly, *social networks* refer to using mutual acquaintances for the purpose of relationship maintenance.

The research study focused on the following two research questions: "What is the relationship of family communication patterns and adult children's perception of rituals within a committed romantic relationship?" and "What is the relationship of family communication patterns and adult children's perceptions of relational maintenance strategies within a committed romantic relationship?" The authors justified asking these research questions because previous research has shown family communication patterns to be related to a variety of outcomes including relational satisfaction. There is also some evidence that suggests family communication patterns are related to family ritualizing.

Method: The method that was used to collect data was a snowballing sampling technique, so participants as well as faculty/staff were recruited at the university level via email. Individuals needed to meet requirements of being over the age of 18 and currently involved in a committed relationship (either dating for more than 3 months, engaged, or married). Participants forwarded the online survey to other individuals who met criteria. The study included a total of five hundred and twelve total participants, who were mostly female (396 participants), but it also included some males (116 participants). The majority of participants were between the ages of 18-25 years old, and information was collected via online surveys with the implementation of statistical analyses. This population helps us further understand the relational or communication phenomenon under study because the sample is at an age in which many are seeking romantic relationships, if not already in them, but they are also young enough to remember the family communication patterns that they grew up with. This study is an example of quantitative research because it employs research questions, uses surveys, has an overall larger sample size, and implements statistical analyses.

Discussion: The first research question explored how family communication patterns affect rituals within adult children's romantic relationships. This question was addressed as conversation orientation and couple-time rituals were found to be related in a small relationship. The second research question explored whether family communication patterns are related to relational maintenance behaviors within adult children's romantic relationships. The findings addressed this research question as the results showed a relationship between conversation orientation and all seven of the maintenance behaviors (which included assurances, openness, conflict management, shared tasks, positivity, advice, and social networks). All of these relational behaviors had a relationship with conversation orientation, but the only one that had a negative relationship with it was conflict management. Conformity orientation also had a negative relationship with conflict management. As a result of this study, there are many practical implications of these findings which we can apply to our own relationships. One implication being that, in terms of examining the influences on romantic relationships, typically we attribute the couple's own past experiences with relationships to be a significant predictor of how individuals enact their relationships; however, the consideration that the family component is key in developing these attitudes toward couple-time rituals later in life might lead families to instill values of communicative rituals and behaviors of relational maintenance throughout their family interactions. Further, the notion that your romantic relationships may not be shaped exclusively by your own personal experiences, but, rather, be influenced by the communication environment of your family members, could lead families to place an increased importance on these communication patterns going forward.

Evaluation

The reason that I chose this article is because I recognize how much of an influence my family has had on the development of my values. My mother and grandmother have especially influenced how I interact in romantic relationships and what I perceive to be acceptable within this context. This article's consideration of family influence is intriguing in the sense that we may not be consciously aware of all the ways in which our families have impacted our beliefs. I think it's really interesting to examine how the family interactions you participated in, as well as the communicative patterns that you may have observed your family members using with other individuals, lays a foundation for how you view your intimate relationships. Collectively, the authors did contribute new findings to the conversation, however they built upon many concepts already established as means for examining communication and relationships, such as rituals and relational maintenance. Readers can still appreciate the perspective that the authors took in this article, though, because they used these means to specifically looked at the unique dynamic between family communication patterns and their children's subsequent romantic perceptions, which was a novel investigation. Overall, I believe the article's conclusions could extend to other relationships as well, such as friendships. Many of the relational maintenance behaviors that were examined are not only unique to a romantic context, but individuals also value many of the same behaviors in friendships as well. This article allows for the conversation surrounding the intimate role that families play in the development of their children's perceptions, even well into adulthood, to be discussed, and I think it acknowledges important and relevant implications that could come as a result of familial dialogue patterns, especially in terms of adult children's interpersonal skills.