

Intergenerational Transmission of Relational Models and Conflict Resolution Tactics

Simone Dill Azeredo Bolze¹ , Beatriz Schmidt² , Lauren Beltrão Gomes³ ,
Carina Nunes Bossardi⁴ , Elisangela Böing¹ , & Maria Aparecida Crepaldi¹ 

¹Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, SC, Brasil

²Universidade Federal do Rio Grande, Rio Grande, RS, Brasil

³Universidade Regional de Blumenau, Blumenau, SC, Brasil

⁴Universidade do Vale do Itajaí, Itajaí, SC, Brasil

ABSTRACT – This study aimed to characterize concepts of continuities and discontinuities in the intergenerational transmission of relational models, as well as marital and parental conflict resolution tactics. This was a qualitative study, in which 12 couples attended a semi-structured interview. Through thematic content analysis, the data was divided into two main themes: Intergenerational Continuities and Intergenerational Discontinuities. The continuities indicated both the repetition of positive and constructive aspects of family models, as well as the prevalence of destructive tactics, such as avoidance between spouses and the use of corporal punishment with the child. The discontinuities revealed a break from negative or destructive patterns and the adoption of positive parenting, in contrast to that of the family of origin.

KEYWORDS: intergenerational patterns, marital relations, parent-child relations, family of origin, marital conflict

Transmissão Intergeracional de Modelos Relacionais e Táticas de Resolução de Conflitos

RESUMO – A pesquisa objetivou caracterizar as concepções sobre continuidades e descontinuidades na transmissão intergeracional de modelos relacionais e de táticas de resolução de conflitos conjugais e parentais. Trata-se de um estudo qualitativo do qual participaram 12 casais, que responderam a uma entrevista semiestruturada. Por meio de análise de conteúdo categorial temática, os dados foram divididos nos eixos temáticos Continuidades Intergeracionais e Descontinuidades Intergeracionais. As continuidades indicaram tanto a repetição de aspectos positivos e construtivos dos modelos familiares quanto o predomínio de táticas destrutivas, tais como a evitação entre os cônjuges e o uso de punição corporal com a criança. As descontinuidades evidenciaram a ruptura com padrões negativos ou destrutivos e a incorporação de uma parentalidade positiva e diferenciada da família de origem.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: transmissão intergeracional, relações conjugais, relações pais-criança, família de origem, conflito conjugal

Intergenerational transmission posits that the nature and quality of parenting are passed down from one generation to the next, with parents similarly raising their children to how they were raised (Serbin & Karp, 2003). The term intergenerational is linked to the notion of reciprocity, the

passing of processes from one generation to another, but not necessarily their permanence (Falcke & Wagner, 2014).

Distinct psychological theories provide explanations for the processes through which this transmission occurs, including attachment theory (Bowlby, 1990), social learning

theory (Bandura, 1978), and family systems theory (Bowen, 1978). Despite the specifics of these theories, they all argue that children are likely to repeat relational, behavioral, and social patterns learned within the family when they become adults and have their children.

The concept of the spillover effect, which emphasizes the association between marital quality and the quality of the parent-child relationship (Erel & Burman, 1995; Hameister et al., 2015; Vian et al., 2019), is also used to support intergenerational transmission. Similarly, the concept is used to explain the transmission of marital conflict across generations, whether through emotional dysregulation of the marital dyad passed from parents to children (Kim et al., 2009; Li et al., 2019), or through experiencing aggressive interactions in the family of origin that shape the children's behavior, leading them to act similarly with their romantic partners as adults (Cui et al., 2010).

This tendency to maintain stability in family behavioral and relational models across generations has been studied under the concept of *continuity* (Patterson, 1998). Prospective and longitudinal research has shown that parenting in one generation predicts the continuity of parenting practices in the next generation to a modest to moderate degree (Kerr et al., 2009; Neppel et al., 2009). This degree of correlation appears to occur across different populations, geographical locations, lengths of time, and types of measurement instruments used (Conger et al., 2009; Li et al., 2018). These results suggest that over time, children come to believe that relational qualities and specific parenting practices used with them are appropriate and effective, leading them to adopt them with their children when they become parents (Conger et al., 2009; Savelieva et al., 2017).

Despite evidence of continuity in intergenerational transmission, it is noted that parenting experienced in one generation is not necessarily repeated in the next. This phenomenon is referred to as *discontinuity* and relates to changes in behavioral patterns and generational legacies. Continuities are explained by concepts called *mediating mechanisms*, whereas discontinuities are related to *moderating mechanisms* (Belsky et al., 2009; Conger et al., 2009).

Mediating mechanisms pertain to childhood experiences. Therefore, individuals who had an upbringing involving harsh discipline (psychological aggression and corporal punishment) are likely to exhibit similar behaviors with their children (Niu et al., 2018). Likewise, individuals who experienced positive relationships within their family as children are more likely to engage in similar attitudes when they become parents (Belsky et al., 2009). Moderating mechanisms are associated with the context and relationships individuals establish throughout their lives and encompass

all conditions that either facilitate or hinder the transmission. Experiencing close supportive relationships with others, such as a spouse or therapist, can “break the cycle”, causing a rupture with behavioral and relational patterns learned in childhood (Belsky et al., 2009). Furthermore, there are several sociodemographic variables and personality traits that can function as moderating factors (Conger et al., 2009).

In addition to the parenting practices, there is also a tendency for an association between the marital relationship of parents and the couple's relationship with their children (Dennison et al., 2014). The parental model of marital harmony is relevant to the choice of a spouse, either as a role model to be followed or avoided (Silva et al., 2010). Studies support the notion that marital satisfaction and quality are transmitted intergenerationally (Dennison et al., 2014; Falcke et al., 2008). Conversely, witnessing and experiencing marital aggression between parents during childhood predicts aggressive behaviors with intimate partners (Cui et al., 2010), reinforcing the idea that marital hostility in the family of origin is an important predictor of negative interactions with a marriage partner (Whitton et al., 2008).

Among the behaviors learned in the family of origin that a child tends to replicate are conflict resolution tactics, which can be constructive or destructive (Hare et al., 2009). Constructive tactics involve successful conflict resolution characterized by calm discussions, explanations, compromise, affection, humor, apologies, agreements, and positive perceptions of unresolved conflicts. Destructive tactics encompass aggression or violence, verbal and non-verbal hostility, abrupt conflict interruption, threats to the family's integrity, and conflicts related to the child (Cummings & Davies, 2010). Destructive tactics can compromise a child's emotional security. There is evidence that a low capacity for emotional regulation is transmitted across generations and is associated with inappropriate interaction strategies with romantic partners (Kim et al., 2009).

It is understood that the relationship between parents is often the first and most frequent model of interpersonal exchange that a child witnesses, which is linked to how they will navigate intimate relationships later (Hare et al., 2009). The marital relationship of parents plays an important role in the social development of children, helping shape their behavior in peer interactions. Similarly, parenting practices and the ways the family of origin deals with conflicts, whether constructively or destructively, can impact the behavior of children. Considering the ripple effect of the marital relationship on the parent-child relationship, the present study aimed to characterize the concepts of continuity and discontinuity in the intergenerational transmission of relational models and conflict resolution tactics in both marital and parental contexts.

METHOD

Research data is available upon request to the authors.

Procedures

Data collection was pre-scheduled and conducted at the participants' homes. The couple responded to the semi-structured interview together, administered by a pair of psychologists. The duration of data collection ranged from 60 to 90 minutes. At the end of the visit, there was a debriefing to address the couple's feelings and perceptions regarding the interview experience, followed by expressions of gratitude and farewells.

Data Analysis

The interviews were recorded, transcribed, organized, and analyzed using the thematic categorical content analysis method (Bardin, 2011). The data were grouped into categories using the Atlas.ti 5.0 software, which is an appropriate tool for categorization in a data-driven process (analogous and progressive classification of elements, in which each category is defined only at the end of each operation). After multiple readings of the *corpus* (12 interviews), elements of analysis were defined. Their classification allowed for the construction of subcategories and their respective categories, which underpin the central phenomenon studied. The use of this software provided resources for data organization and category formation. This categorization underwent evaluation by two expert judges in the field and was approved for use with minor adjustments.

Ethical Considerations

The broader research project of which the present study is a part was approved by the Ethics Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects of the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, under Certificate 520/2009. To protect the confidentiality of the participants, the couples were identified by the letter C, followed by the number indicating the order in which the interviews took place (C1, C2, C3, and so on, up to C12).

RESULTS

Intergenerational Continuities

The "Intergenerational Continuities" thematic axis refers to the relational models and conflict resolution tactics in marital and parental contexts that the couples identified as

Participants

Twelve heterosexual Brazilian couples (12 women and 12 men), each with at least one child, participated in the study. The mean duration of their marital union was 13 years ($SD = 5.34$), with a minimum of six years and a maximum of 24 years. The ages of the women ranged from 23 to 46 years old, while the men's ages ranged from 26 to 48 years old. There were five female children and seven male children, with ages ranging from 5 to 7 years old. The women's education levels varied from 11 to 18 years, and the men's education levels ranged from 8 to 18 years. Monthly family income ranged from R\$700.00 to R\$4,000.00, with a mean of R\$2,456.67 ($SD = 1,003.36$). Both women and men worked between 20 and 44 hours per week. All participants were part of a larger research project conducted through a partnership between a Brazilian university and two Canadian universities. For the present study, couples who had attended the first phase of the project, completing quantitative instruments, were selected.

Instruments

Sociodemographic Questionnaire. Developed for the broader research project of which the current study is a part. It investigates family composition, ages and the number of people living in the household, education, occupation, income, and working hours.

Semi-structured Interview. Developed for the broader research project of which the current study is a part. It investigates marital, parental, and intergenerational relationships, as well as conflicts and resolution tactics, using nine guiding questions (e.g., How do you remember your parents' relationship when you were a child? Are there things in your parents' marital relationship that you consider as a model for your relationship with your spouse? Are there things your parents did in terms of parenting when you were a child that you find yourself doing with your child?).

Next, the results of the thematic categorical content analysis process are presented. The categories and subcategories have been organized into two thematic axes, namely: "Intergenerational Continuities" and "Intergenerational Discontinuities".

repeating from their families of origin, as mentioned by all 12 participating couples. This axis encompasses four categories of continuities, namely: “Harmonious marital model from the family of origin”; “Conflictual marital model from the family of origin”; “Positive parental model from the family of origin”; and “Negative parental model from the family of origin”.

Harmonious Marital Model from the Family of Origin.

This category encompasses positive aspects of the marital relationships in the participants’ families of origin that the couples reported as role models and that they replicated in their current marital relationships. It includes two subcategories: “Continuity of commitment to the spouse”; and “Continuity of constructive conflict resolution tactics”.

The continuity of commitment to the spouse was described by 10 couples who mentioned that, like their parents, they sought to maintain a reciprocal partnership characterized by unity, companionship, respect, and dedication to the relationship. They also mentioned being inspired by their parents’ marital relationship to honor their marriage, work together, and share tasks, and responsibilities. For example, one participant said: “What I bring as a model, well, I remember my mother always hardworking, along with my father, both working together” (C11; 7 years of marriage).

Regarding the continuity of constructive conflict resolution tactics, four couples mentioned resolving marital problems and disagreements in a respectful manner, with open communication and without physical aggression. One participant explained: “One healthy thing that I always remember from the [parents’] relationship is respect. We do argue, of course, but no one has ever gone to the point of physical violence, hitting, or getting too heated” (C3; 7 years of marriage). Similarly, the participants identified as continuity the couple’s behavior of avoiding conflictual interactions in front of their children to protect them, just as their parents did in their childhood. This was illustrated through the following statement: “These things [arguments/fights] happened more inside the bedroom, behind closed doors... We didn’t see it, I don’t remember. Even we [the couple], when we argue, (...), try not to show him [the child] what happened... It was the same way” (C7; 9 years of marriage).

Conflictual Marital Model from the Family of Origin.

This category encompasses destructive conflict resolution tactics and negative aspects of the marital relationship in the participants’ families of origin that the couples mentioned replicating in their current relationships. It is presented in three subcategories: “Continuity of avoidance as a marital conflict resolution tactic”; “Continuity of hostility as a marital conflict resolution tactic”; and “Continuity of addiction as a source of marital conflict”.

The continuity of avoidance as a marital conflict resolution tactic, mentioned by four couples, is characterized by temporary withdrawal from the spouse and silence instead

of conversation. This can be exemplified by a participant’s story about his parents, who, when they argued, would go without speaking to each other for up to two months. When asked about aspects he noticed repeating in his current marital relationship, he mentioned that when he argues with his wife, he also stops talking to her, however, for a shorter period than his parents: “Two days without talking” (C11; 7 years of marriage).

The continuity of hostility as a marital conflict resolution tactic was mentioned by a single couple, who had a significant history of marital violence in their families of origin. This includes arguments with verbal and physical aggression. One participant explained: “We have even physically attacked each other, separated [breaking up the marriage], and then come back together... Nowadays, we’ve reached a point in which we, I believe, are mature enough to discuss. Of course, we still get upset, get heated, and argue” (C11; 7 years of marriage).

The continuity of addiction as a source of marital conflict, described by two couples, is characterized by one member of the couple using a substance, such as alcohol, which leads to conflicts with their spouse. Participants who had one alcoholic parent indicated that they repeated addictive behaviors. One participant stated: “I went through a bit of that process of alcoholism... Not that I was an alcoholic. Let’s say, my father, he drinks regularly. Every day. Two or three beers... Not me, but like... On a weekend, at a barbecue... Boom! I’d get drunk! A party... Boom! I’d get drunk!” (C1; 6 years of marriage). This continuity resulted in marital conflict in their families of origin and served as a trigger for marital conflicts in their current relationships: “We [the couple] have had several discussions, fights about this [addiction]. It’s something that repeats, right? From our parents, like that” (C1; 6 years of marriage).

Positive Parental Model from the Family of Origin.

This category refers to reports of positive examples of parental relationships that the couples experienced in their families of origin and sought to perpetuate in their relationships with their children. It includes four subcategories: “Continuity of parental involvement”; “Continuity of educational encouragement”; “Continuity of values transmission”; and “Continuity of discipline practices”.

Six couples, inspired by the parenting model provided by their parents, mentioned the continuity of parental involvement, which is expressed through direct or indirect interaction activities with the child, as exemplified by one participant: “Affection and attention, singing little songs. My mother is very affectionate, even a bit crazy because she sings, dances, tells stories. So, I bring a lot of that to him [my son]” (C10; 20 years of marriage). More specifically, according to the participants’ statements, the continuity of parental involvement includes showing affection, paying attention, taking care of the child, talking to them, and spending time with them.

The continuity of educational encouragement was also highlighted by five couples who understood that formal education is important and should be encouraged and supported for their child, just as their parents did in their childhood. This educational encouragement involves motivating the child to study, the couple's efforts to provide a good education, and assistance with school tasks: "They [parents] always encouraged us to study. That's what I want to pass on to my children" (C6; 10 years of marriage).

Six couples also expressed the continuity of values transmission, which they experienced as important in their families of origin and aimed to continue by teaching these values to their children. The values that emerged from the spouses' statements included family meals together, religiosity, faith and family prayer, honesty, charity, solidarity, and politeness when dealing with people: "Faith, prayer in the family... It's something I try to carry on and pass on to the children as well. (...) Being honest, that's something I'm very proud of, both from my father and my mother" (C9; 24 years of marriage).

The continuity of discipline practices was also mentioned by six couples as a parenting model they inherited from their parents. The parenting practices that the couples identified as repeating mainly involved disciplining the child when they did something wrong, sitting down, talking, asking and giving explanations to the child about a problem or behavior, and trusting and giving autonomy to the child: "In the conversation, in the dialogue, my parents talked a lot with us, about what's right and wrong, so I do that with [my child]" (C10; 20 years of marriage). However, inspired by their childhood experiences, the parents also reported putting the child on time-outs and depriving them of privileges: "He was grounded for a week. Everything he [the child] wanted, I asked him whether he deserved it or not" (C7; 9 years of marriage).

Negative Parental Model from the Family of Origin.

This category refers to negative or destructive aspects of parenting experienced in the family of origin that the couple perceived using with the child in a similar manner or to a lesser extent. It includes two subcategories: "Continuity of psychological aggression as a conflict resolution tactic with the child"; and "Continuity of corporal punishment as a conflict resolution tactic with the child".

The continuity of psychological aggression as a conflict resolution tactic with the child, mentioned by one couple, involves parental behaviors that include threats or incitement of fear in the child: "I grab a slipper in my hand and say: 'Look [child]! Five minutes for you to go to the bathroom and take a shower!' When he gets glued to the computer, he forgets about everything, then, I have to... But it's just threats, really" (C3; 7 years of marriage).

The continuity of corporal punishment as a conflict resolution tactic with the child, described by two couples, involves the use of physical force by parents (with or without

objects) to make the child perform certain activities or for disciplinary purposes. Pulling the ears, spanking, and hitting with slippers were practices that the couples mentioned using on their children, just as they received from their parents. However, some participants differentiated the intensity of corporal punishment they experienced in childhood from what they currently did with their children, as noted in the following examples: "Nowadays, getting spanked means a slap on the butt, right? My mother used to beat me with those tailor's rulers, for measuring things. I remember growing up being beaten with a ruler, I was terrified. It would leave welts on my legs. We [the couple] have never, we've never left a mark on our daughters. Even though we say we spank, our spanking is a little slap on the butt" (C11; 7 years of marriage). Supported by her partner: "So, I see that the relationship has changed, like, in our time, if there was anything in front of us, we'd hit it, and nowadays, if you give them a little slap, a little squeeze on the arm, they [the daughters] make a big fuss". (C11; 7 years of marriage).

Intergenerational Discontinuities

The thematic axis of intergenerational discontinuities refers to relational models and tactics for resolving marital and parental conflicts in the families of origin that the couples stated they did not want to perpetuate in their current marital and parental relationships. Nine couples mentioned this. This axis encompasses two categories of discontinuities, namely: "Conflictual marital model from the family of origin" and "Negative parental model from the family of origin".

Conflictual Marital Model from the Family of Origin.

This refers to the effort to break away from destructive conflict resolution tactics used in the family of origin and attempts to incorporate constructive tactics into the current marital relationship. It includes two subcategories: "Discontinuities in the use of destructive conflict resolution tactics"; and "Decision to resolve marital conflicts differently from their parents".

Discontinuities in the use of destructive marital conflict resolution tactics were described by two couples. One participant mentioned discontinuing avoidance with their spouse, meaning they stopped the habit of using silence as a conflict resolution tactic with their husband: "A wrong example from them [parents]... if my husband and I have a problem... I say what needs to be said, and that's it. I don't sulk because I know how much that harms the family" (C9; 24 years of marriage). Similarly, another participant mentioned discontinuing hostility as a tactic for resolving marital conflicts. Members of the marital dyad identified breaking away from models of conflict resolution tactics involving physical and/or psychological aggression, that their parents used in their childhood, including to protect their children: "Well, at the beginning of our relationship, there were [hostile fights]. Today, we're more mature about it, also

because of the girls [daughters]. Because we realized that if he [husband] has been through it in his life, and I've been through it in my life [with our families of origin], there's no reason for us to repeat the same actions that we didn't like witnessing... To make our daughters witness that" (C11; 7 years of marriage).

Four dyads also mentioned the decision to resolve marital conflicts differently from their parents, which occurred through a conscious process by the pair, considering the negative model offered by their parents regarding marital relationships and conflict resolution tactics: "As husband and wife, there's nothing like it. I took everything bad that I saw [in my family of origin], I turned it into something good" (C2; 15 years of marriage); "It's completely different, including the way we resolve conflicts between me and [my wife] is also different from my parents. So, the things that went wrong with my parents, I try to correct them so that it doesn't happen with us. I take that as an example—both the right and the wrong things. Then, I draw my conclusion and try to build on that. That helps a lot" (C8; 14 years of marriage).

Negative Parental Model from the Family of Origin.

This category encompasses aspects of the negative parenting model experienced in the family of origin that the members of the couple mentioned they did not want to repeat with their children. It includes four subcategories: "Discontinuity of addiction"; "Discontinuity of corporal punishment as a conflict resolution tactic with the child"; "Incorporation of positive and differentiated parenting from the family of origin"; and "Moderating mechanisms driving the discontinuities".

One participant reported discontinuity of addiction as a conscious decision not to develop addictions, based on the negative experience with her parents during childhood. This subcategory is illustrated by the following statement: "To this day, I don't drink, I don't smoke, I don't like it, I don't do any of that, because of everything I went through when I was a child, a teenager... because of them [parents]" (C6, 10 years of marriage).

Another aspect that emerged in the verbalizations of three couples was the discontinuity of corporal punishment as a conflict resolution tactic with the child, which refers

to the pair breaking away from the parental model of using physical violence as a tactic to resolve disagreements with their children: "But, my mother used to spank us a lot. Wow! It's something that I avoid. I think hitting is violence. Look, [our child] has practically never received a single spank" (C9; 24 years of marriage).

Eight couples also identified the incorporation of positive and differentiated parenting from the family of origin as a discontinuity aspect. In this sense, spouses mentioned introducing new parenting behaviors and more positive ways of dealing with the child, which they highlighted as a practice different from what they experienced with their parents during childhood. Among the behaviors that couples said they engage in with their children were: promoting a parental relationship that was the opposite or different from what they experienced in childhood; giving objects or toys; explaining the importance of studying; talking, helping, and playing; and being present and involved in their lives. This discontinuity can be expressed through the following statements: "What I didn't have, I try to give to [the child] ... This issue of affection, of conversation, of things... I try to give it to him" (C3; 7 years of marriage); "'Daughter, it's important to study for this, for this, and for this', and I think he [the father] lacked this guidance" (C8; 14 years of marriage); "I try to be as involved as possible. So, I'm always there, I accompany them, I go to daycare, I know the teachers, I pick them up, I drop them off... I think I must be for my daughters everything that my father wasn't for me" (C11; 7 years of marriage).

The spouses also identified moderating mechanisms driving the discontinuities, which were factors that propelled the change and contributed to not repeating behaviors learned from their families of origin, mentioned by the three couples. Adherence to a life philosophy, the example of the relationship of their aunts and uncles as a different model to follow, and the relationship with their spouse, which served as a reference, teaching another way of interacting, were factors that facilitated discontinuity, as seen in the following statement: "I think we [the couple] are learning, and we're improving each other. Instead of getting worse, I think it's getting better. That's good" (C3; 7 years of marriage).

DISCUSSION

The present study revealed continuities and discontinuities in the intergenerational transmission of relational models and constructive and destructive conflict resolution tactics in marital and parental relationships. However, continuities were identified by a larger number of couples and in a more diversified manner, with positive aspects of the family of origin models standing out compared to the negative ones. In contrast, intergenerational discontinuities deserve special attention as they indicate a break from dysfunctional or destructive marital and parental patterns and the incorporation of new, more constructive conflict resolution behaviors and

tactics in couples' and parent-child relationships. This result supports findings from other studies involving Brazilian couples, which indicated the relevance of the parents' marital model for their children's marital experiences. These children tended to replicate patterns from their family of origin, especially positive aspects and sought to avoid reproducing what they considered to be negative examples (Bueno et al., 2013; Silva et al., 2010).

The continuities in the harmonious marital model, characterized by commitment to the spouse and the use of constructive conflict resolution tactics, are in line with other

studies indicating that individuals who had better experiences with their family of origin and viewed their parents' marital relationship more positively tended to replicate these patterns and have a better-quality relationship in their marriage (Dennison et al., 2014; Falcke et al., 2008). Additionally, according to Dennison et al. (2014), the conflict resolution style of each spouse's family of origin is associated with the style used by each spouse in their marriage.

The results also revealed continuities in the conflicted marital model, which included reports of repeating destructive conflict resolution tactics between couples characterized by hostility and avoidance. The perpetuation of a marital relationship is marked by hostility and violence, expressed in various ways, as indicated by other studies (Cui et al., 2010; Haack & Falcke, 2020; Kim et al., 2009; Whitton et al., 2008). One possible explanation for this continuity is low emotional regulation, which passes from parents to children and includes aggressive, angry, and hostile behaviors. This has been associated with the maintenance of conflicted marital interactions across generations (Kim et al., 2009; Marasca et al., 2017).

According to Kim et al. (2009), this intergenerational transmission of poor emotional regulation skills may be linked to the spillover effect (Erel & Burman, 1995), which suggests that parental emotions overflow and affect their children, providing a mechanism for the perpetuation of marital conflict. Similarly, other authors have used the spillover effect to explain the association between aggressive behavior with intimate partners in adulthood and witnessing or experiencing aggression between parents in the family of origin (Cui et al., 2010). Thus, this overflow of tension caused by conflicts, sustained by the spillover effect, seems to occur both in the immediate context of relationships between marital and parental subsystems and in the long term due to its repercussions that affect the intimate relationships of children across generations.

It should be noted that the complementarity of violent marital patterns can be linked to the Bowen theory (1978), which suggests that people choose their partners based on their level of differentiation from their family of origin. Therefore, the pattern of hostile communication experienced in the family of origin may contribute to the selection of a romantic partner (Whitton et al., 2008). The lower the degree of differentiation from their family of origin, the greater the difficulty for spouses to establish their own family, agree on values, negotiate rules, and establish a mature relationship with a balance between intimacy and individuality (Bowen, 1978).

The avoidance tactic, identified in this study as a generational pattern of conflict resolution between couples, is widely discussed in research on marital conflicts (Bolze et al., 2013; Hameister et al., 2015). It is important to note, however, that the use of avoidance is not necessarily a destructive tactic (Costa & Mosmann, 2015). Temporarily distancing oneself from the partner to think and discuss the

issue calmly later can be understood as a constructive strategy, as well as protective of the children. What distinguishes a destructive tactic is when the avoidance leads to unresolved conflict for one of the spouses, while the other is left with the need to bring up the issue again, potentially leading to resentment over time.

In contrast, regarding marital conflict resolution tactics, the results also showed discontinuity in the use of destructive tactics (avoidance and hostility), as reported by participants who decided to resolve conflicts differently from their parents. This result reinforces the idea that one cannot assume that everyone who experiences unpleasant experiences in their family of origin will perpetuate such behavior (Razera et al., 2016).

Alcohol abuse as a trigger for marital conflicts was also found to be a behavior repeated from the family of origin. The intergenerational transmission of alcoholism is considered complex and multidetermined, involving genetic factors and family context factors that complement each other for the expression of the phenomenon (Coteti et al., 2014). Alcohol abuse by one of the members of the couple is related to conflictual interactions (Colossi & Falcke, 2013). On the other hand, the effort to discontinue alcoholism, also evidenced in this study, is supported by other research indicating that adults may avoid alcohol consumption due to perceiving their parents as alcoholics and their potential risk of developing the same behavior (Haller & Chassin, 2010).

The continuities in the positive parental model from the family of origin highlighted the repetition of aspects related to parental involvement with the child, encouragement of education, the transmission of values, and disciplinary practices. Parenting research indicates that some patterns of parenting practices tend to be reproduced by subsequent generations (Madden et al., 2015; Marin et al., 2013; Raby et al., 2015), especially those related to positive parenting, support, and emotional connection (Savelieva et al., 2017), involvement, and investment (Raby et al., 2015; Schofield et al., 2014).

The encouragement of formal education was shown to be both a continuity, as couples reported that they sought to maintain a focus on education as their parents did during their childhood, and as a new practice incorporated by those who did not receive this guidance in their families of origin. In this sense, findings on intergenerational educational mobility suggest that it varies depending on sociodemographic characteristics (socioeconomic status, ethnicity, geographic region of residence, and parent's education levels; Ferreira & Veloso, 2003). It is therefore hypothesized that the participants in this study, who had eight to 18 years of education at the time of data collection and income compatible with the Brazilian B2 socioeconomic stratum (Associação Brasileira de Pesquisa e Mercado, 2011), contributed to the emphasis on access to education as a transmitted aspect. Additionally, another study with

Brazilian middle-class families indicated the promotion of their children's education and profession as the main goal of the family (Cervený & Berthoud, 2010).

Regarding the continuity of values, similar to the findings of this study, a national study identified the transmission of love, charity, moral conduct, and honesty as positive aspects that guide child-rearing (Weber et al., 2006). Religious beliefs are also identified as phenomena that are more stable across generations (Min et al., 2012), as indicated by this study. Values transmitted from one generation to another are generally associated with topics that are historically relevant to the family, culture, and what parents consider important (Falcke & Wagner, 2014; Tam, 2015).

Regarding parenting practices, these appeared as both continuity and discontinuity phenomena. Reprimanding a child when they do something wrong, asking for and providing explanations, promoting autonomy, and applying punishments that involve the deprivation of privileges were identified as transmission phenomena. These results are in line with other studies that identified an increase in communication with children and the demonstration of emotional involvement (Weber et al., 2006), the continuity of positive parenting behaviors (affection, demands for autonomy, acceptance, monitoring, involvement, and rule establishment), and the discontinuity of parental control behaviors (harsh discipline and material gratification; Roskam, 2013).

On the other hand, as showed by this study, Madden et al. (2015) highlighted evidence of intergenerational transmission of both positive and negative parenting behaviors. Coercive parenting practices, mainly characterized by corporal punishment as a conflict resolution tactic with the child, appeared as both continuities and discontinuities in the negative parental model from the family of origin, as found in other studies (Marin et al., 2013; Niu et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2014). For example, Friedson's study (2016) showed that approval of spanking is common across the socioeconomic spectrum and may take several generations for people to deviate from this pattern. Discontinuities, on the other hand, are associated with the marital relationship, in the sense that there is a reciprocal influence between spouses that affects their behavior and their relationship with the child (Rothenberg et al., 2016).

The main discontinuity aspect was the incorporation of positive parenting unlike that of the family of origin. This result is in line with another Brazilian study that indicated improvements in parenting practices performed by two generations, showing a goal not to repeat undesirable educational strategies experienced by parents with their parents during childhood (Wagner, 2005). A less strict and more friendly relationship, characterized by dialogue and greater freedom, as well as the desire of men to be more present and involved as fathers, are also aspects of differentiation

(Jablonski, 2010), along with greater involvement, affection, and communication (Weber et al., 2006).

The moderating mechanisms that drove discontinuities provided insight into how relational and contextual factors can promote personal, relational, and behavioral changes. As mentioned by the participants, adopting a life philosophy, seeing other people's relationships as a different model to follow, and the relationship with the spouse seems to be important sources of resources that drive transformations. Schofield et al. (2009) emphasized that spouses tend to change each other's parenting over time. Therefore, if a spouse who was raised in a hostile environment has a partner who provides a different parenting model, they are less likely to use parenting practices from their family of origin (Schofield et al., 2009).

These results indicate that one cannot adopt a linear and deterministic stance on transmission phenomena, assuming that people are "prisoners" of their past (Falcke et al., 2008). This opens the possibility of an understanding that considers both the repetition of models and couples' refusal to follow their parents' patterns (Scorsolini-Comin et al., 2016). Falcke et al. (2008) discussed that each person's life history and experiences with their family of origin seem to have the power to cause continuities only in what is justified as necessary. Over time, through contact with different people, experiences, and relational models, which can function as moderating mechanisms, individuals can acquire resources to deal differently with their family relationships, promoting discontinuities.

Considering the complexity of parental relationships, several studies have sought to explain the occurrence of intergenerational discontinuities. Among the possible explanations, social scientists emphasize the role of social norms in regulating disciplinary practices (Bicchieri & Muldoon, 2014). Although not explicitly expressed by the participants, likely, discontinuities and the incorporation of new parenting practices are also related to policies (debates, campaigns, laws) that have been established in various countries in recent decades to protect and promote the full development of children and adolescents (Roskam, 2013). In Brazil, the enactment of the Child and Adolescent Statute (*Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente* – ECA) in 1988 and the creation of guardianship councils may have acted as moderating mechanisms for the incorporation of new ways of interacting with children.

It is considered that this study presented a wide range of phenomena that participants identified as continuing or discontinuing from their families of origin. The non-linearity and heterogeneity of patterns of repetition and disruption are evident, demonstrating the coexistence of traditional and contemporary models, as indicated by other studies (Marin et al., 2013; Weber et al., 2006).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The current study presented intergenerational continuities and discontinuities regarding relational models and marital and parental conflict resolution tactics. The mediating mechanisms that contributed to continuities appear to be more related to the preservation of values and principles from the families of origin. The moderating factors related to discontinuities, on the other hand, seem to be linked to relational and contextual social factors, in other words, different ways of behaving and relating that couples have encountered throughout their lives, with people, and in the various interactional environments they have been part of.

Understanding concepts about continuities and discontinuities in marital and parental relationship models, constructive and destructive conflict resolution tactics, and, especially, identifying significant mediating and moderating mechanisms, provides insights for preventive interventions and the promotion of individual and family development

in various contexts. In healthcare, social welfare, or school services, for example, opportunities for conversations with parents can be provided. By identifying intergenerational continuities and discontinuities, parents can make choices and implement changes.

Regarding the limitations of the study, the retrospective nature of the information is emphasized. It is recognized that childhood memories can be distorted and are not always reliable. However, memories tend to be recounted according to how experiences were internalized. Therefore, it is understood that what matters for the continuity or discontinuity of an intergenerational phenomenon is how it was experienced and processed by the individual. Accordingly, retrospective interviews are considered a valid methodological resource for conducting studies on transmission between generations. However, under favorable conditions, future research on the topic with a longitudinal design is recommended.

REFERENCES

- Associação Brasileira de Pesquisa e Mercado. (2011). *Crítério de Classificação Econômica Brasil* [Economic Classification Criteria Brazil]. ABEP. <http://www.abep.org/criterio-brasil>
- Bandura, A. (1978). *Aprendizaje social y desarrollo de la personalidad* [Social learning and personality development]. Alianza.
- Bardin, L. (2011). *Análise de conteúdo* [Content analysis]. Edições 70.
- Belsky, J., Conger, R. D., & Capaldi, D. M. (2009). The intergenerational transmission of parenting: Introduction to the special section. *Developmental Psychology*, 45(5), 1201-1204. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/a0016245>
- Bicchieri, C., & Muldoon, R. (2014). Social norms. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2014 Ed.). Spring. <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/social-norms/>
- Bolze, S. D. A., Schmidt, B., Crepaldi, M. A., & Vieira, M. L. (2013). Marital relationship and tactics of conflict resolution between couples. *Atualidades em Psicologia*, 27(114), 71-85. <http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=133232388006>
- Bowen, M. (1978). *Family therapy and clinical practice*. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.
- Bowlby, J. (1990). *Apego* [Attachment]. Martins Fontes.
- Bueno, R. K., Souza, S. A., Monteiro, M. A., & Teixeira, R. H. M. (2013). Process of differentiation of couples from their families of origin. *Psico*, 44(1), 16-25. <https://revistaseletronicas.pucrs.br/ojs/index.php/revistapsico/article/view/9420>
- Cerveny, M. C. O., & Berthoud, C. M. E. (2010). *Família e ciclo vital: Nossa realidade em pesquisa* [Family and life cycle: Our reality in research] (2ª ed.). Casa do Psicólogo.
- Colossi, P. M., & Falcke, D. (2013). Screams of silence: Psychological violence in the couple. *Psico*, 44(3), 310-318. <https://revistaseletronicas.pucrs.br/ojs/index.php/revistapsico/article/view/11032>
- Conger, R. D., Belsky, J., & Capaldi, D. M. (2009). The intergenerational transmission of parenting: Closing comments for the special section. *Developmental Psychology*, 45(5), 1276-1283. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0016911>
- Costa, C. B., & Mosmann, C. P. (2015). Marital conflict resolution strategies: Perceptions of a focus group. *Psico*, 46(4), 472-482. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15448/1980-8623.2015.4.20606>
- Coteti, A.-G., Andreea-Irina, I., Damian, S.-I., Neagu, M., & Beatrice-Gabriela, I. (2014). Like parent, like child? Considerations on intergenerational transmission of alcoholism. *Revista Romaneasca Pentru Educatie Multidimensional: Journal for Multidimensional Education*, 6(2), 39-53. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18662/rrem/2014.0602.04>
- Cui, M., Durtschi, J. A., Donnellan, M. B., Lorenz, F. O., & Conger, R. D. (2010). Intergenerational transmission of relationship aggression: A prospective longitudinal study. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 24(6), 688-697. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021675>
- Cummings, E. M., & Davies, P. T. (2010). *Marital conflict and children: An emotional security perspective*. Guilford Press.
- Dennison, R. P., Koerner, S. S., & Segrin, C. (2014). A dyadic examination of family-of-origin influence on newlyweds' marital satisfaction. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 28(3), 429-435. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0036807>
- Erel, O., & Burman, B. (1995). Interrelatedness of marital relations and parent-child relations: A meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 118(1), 108-132. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.118.1.108>
- Falcke, D., & Wagner, A. (2014). A dinâmica familiar e o fenômeno da transgeracionalidade: Definição de conceitos [Family dynamics and the phenomenon of transgenerationality: Definition of concepts]. In A. Wagner (Ed.), *Como se perpetua a família? A transmissão de modelos familiares* [How is the family perpetuated? The transmission of family models]. EDIPUCRS.
- Falcke, D., Wagner, A., & Mosmann, C. P. (2008). The relationship between family-of-origin and marital adjustment for couples in Brazil. *Journal of Family Psychotherapy*, 19(2), 170-186. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08975350801905020>
- Ferreira, S. G., & Veloso, F. A. (2003). Mobilidade intergeracional de educação no Brasil [Intergenerational mobility of education in Brazil]. *Pesquisa e Planejamento Econômico*, 33(3), 487-513. http://repositorio.ipea.gov.br/bitstream/11058/5022/1/PPE_v33_n03_Mobilidade.pdf

- Friedson, M. (2016). Authoritarian parenting attitudes and social origin: The multigenerational relationship of socioeconomic position to childrearing values. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 51*, 263-275. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2015.10.001>
- Haack, K. R., & Falcke, D. (2020). Is jealousy a mediator between experiences in the family of origin and physical violence in conjugality? *Psico-USF, 25*(3), 425-437. <http://doi.org/10.1590/1413-82712020250303>
- Haller, M. M., & Chassin, L. (2010). The reciprocal influences of perceived risk for alcoholism and alcohol use over time: Evidence for aversive transmission of parental alcoholism. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs, 71*(4), 588-596. <https://doi.org/10.15288%2Fjsad.2010.71.588>
- Hameister, B. R., Barbosa, P. V., & Wagner, A. (2015). Marital conflict and parenting: Systematic review of the spillover. *Arquivos Brasileiros de Psicologia, 67*, 140-155. <https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/2290/229042579011.pdf>
- Hare, A. L., Miga, E. M., & Allen, J. P. (2009). Intergenerational transmission of aggression in romantic relationships: The moderating role of attachment security. *Journal of Family Psychology, 23*(6), 808-818. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0016740>
- Jablonski, B. (2010). The division of household labor between men and women in everyday marriage life. *Psicologia: Ciência e Profissão, 30*(2), 262-275. <http://www.scielo.br/pdf/pcp/v30n2/v30n2a04>
- Kerr, D. C. R., Capaldi, D. M., Pears, K. C., & Owen, L. D. (2009). A prospective three generational study of fathers' constructive parenting: Influences from family of origin, adolescent adjustment, and offspring temperament. *Developmental Psychology, 45*(5), 1257-1275. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015863>
- Kim, H. K., Pears, K. C., Capaldi, D. M., & Owen, L. D. (2009). Emotion dysregulation in the intergenerational transmission of romantic relationship conflict. *Journal of Family Psychology, 23*(4), 585-595. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015935>
- Li, X., Cao, H., Zhou, N., Ju, X., Lan, J., Zhu, Q., & Fang, X. (2018). Daily communication, conflict resolution, and marital quality in Chinese marriage: A three-wave, cross-lagged analysis. *Journal of Family Psychology, 32*(6), 733-742. <https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000430>
- Li, D., Li, D., Wu, N., & Wang, Z. (2019). Intergenerational transmission of emotion regulation through parents' reactions to children's negative emotions: Tests of unique, actor, partner, and mediating effects. *Children and Youth Services Review, 101*, 113-122. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-013-9768-4>
- Madden, V., Domoney, J., Aumayer, K., Sethna, V., Iles, J., Hubbard, I., ... Ramchandani, P. (2015). Intergenerational transmission of parenting: Findings from a UK longitudinal study. *The European Journal of Public Health, 25*(6), 1030-1035. <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckv093>
- Marasca, A. R., Razera, J., Pereira, H. J. R., & Falcke, D. (2017). Marital physical violence suffered and committed by men: Repeating family patterns? *Psico-USF, 22*, 99-108. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0273-2297\(92\)90004-L](https://doi.org/10.1016/0273-2297(92)90004-L)
- Marin, A. H., Martins, G. D. F., Freitas, A. P. C. d. O., Silva, I. M., Lopes, R. d. C. S., & Piccinini, C. A. (2013). Transmissão intergeracional de práticas educativas parentais: Evidências empíricas. *Psicologia: Teoria e Pesquisa, 29*(2), 123-132. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0102-37722013000200001>
- Min, J., Silverstein, M., & Lendon, J. P. (2012). Intergenerational transmission of values over the family life course. *Advances in Life Course Research, 17*(3), 112-120. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.alcr.2012.05.001>
- Neppl, T. K., Conger, R. D., Scaramella, L. V., & Ontai, L. L. (2009). Intergenerational continuity in parenting behavior: Mediating pathways and child effects. *Developmental Psychology, 45*(5), 1241-1256. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014850>
- Niu, H., Liu, L., & Wang, M. (2018). Intergenerational transmission of harsh discipline: The moderating role of parenting stress and parent gender. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 79*, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2018.01.017>
- Patterson, G. R. (1998). Continuities – A search for causal mechanisms: Comment on the special section. *Developmental Psychology, 34*(6), 1263-1268. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.34.6.1263>
- Raby, K. L., Lawler, J. M., Shlafer, R. J., Hesemeyer, P. S., Collins, W. A., & Sroufe, L. A. (2015). The interpersonal antecedents of supportive parenting: A prospective, longitudinal study from infancy to adulthood. *Developmental Psychology, 51*(1), 115-123. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038336>
- Razera, J., Mosmann, C. P., & Falcke, D. (2016). The interface between quality and violence in marital relationships. *Paidéia (Ribeirão Preto), 26*, 71-79. <http://doi:10.1590/1982-43272663201609>
- Roskam, I. (2013). The transmission of parenting behaviour within the family: An empirical study across three generations. *Psychologica Belgica, 53*(3), 49-64. <https://doi.org/10.5334/pb-53-3-49>
- Rothenberg, W. A., Hussong, A. M., & Chassin, L. (2016). Intergenerational continuity in high-conflict family environments. *Development and Psychopathology, 28*(01), 293-308. <https://doi.org/10.1017%2F0954579415000450>
- Savelieva, K., Keltikangas-Järvinen, L., Pulkki-Råback, L., Jokela, M., Lipsanen, J., Merjonen, P., ... & Hintsanen, M. (2017). Intergenerational transmission of qualities of the parent-child relationship in the population-based Young Finns Study. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology, 14*(4), 416-435. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405629.2016.1230057>
- Schofield, T. J., Conger, R. D., Martin, M. J., Stockdale, G. D., Conger, K. J., & Widaman, K. F. (2009). Reciprocity in parenting of adolescents within the context of marital negativity. *Developmental Psychology, 45*(6), 1708-1722. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0016353>
- Schofield, T. J., Conger, R. D., & Neppl, T. K. (2014). Positive parenting, beliefs about parental efficacy, and active coping: Three sources of intergenerational resilience. *Journal of Family Psychology, 28*(6), 973-978. <https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000024>
- Scorsolini-Comin, F., Fontaine, A. M. G. V., & Santos, M. A. dos. (2016). Dating satisfaction and subjective well-being: Associations with parental marital relationship. *Psicologia: Teoria e Pesquisa, 32*(3), 1-8. <http://doi.org/10.1590/0102-3772e32325>
- Serbin, L., & Karp, J. (2003). Intergenerational studies of parenting and the transfer of risk from parent to child. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 12*(4), 138-142. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8721.0>
- Silva, I. M., Menezes, C. C., & Lopes, R. C. S. (2010). Looking for "the better half": Motivations for marital choice. *Estudos de Psicologia, 27*(3), 383-391. <http://www.scielo.br/pdf/estpsi/v27n3/10.pdf>
- Tam, K.-P. (2015). Understanding intergenerational cultural transmission through the role of perceived norms. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 46*(10), 1260-1266. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022115600074>
- Vian, M., Mosmann, C. P., & Falcke, D. (2018). Repercussions of conjugality in internalizing and externalizing symptoms of adolescent children. *Psicologia: Teoria e Pesquisa, 34*, e34431. <http://doi.org/10.1590/0102.3772e34431>
- Wagner, A. (2005). Família e educação: Aspectos relativos a diferentes gerações [Family and education: Aspects relating to different generations]. In T. Féres-Carneiro (Ed.), *Família e Casal: Efeitos da Contemporaneidade* [Family and Couple: Effects of Contemporaneity] (pp. 33-49). PUC-Rio.

- Wang, M., Xing, X., & Zhao, J. (2014). Intergenerational transmission of corporal punishment in China: The moderating role of marital satisfaction and gender. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 42(8), 1263-1274. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10802-014-9890-9>
- Weber, L. N. D., Selig, G. A., Bernardi, M. G., & Salvador, A. P. V. (2006). Continuity of the parental styles through the generations. *Paidéia (Ribeirão Preto)*, 16, 407-414. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0103-863X2006000300011>
- Whitton, S. W., Waldinger, R. J., Schulz, M. S., Allen, J. P., Crowell, J. A., & Hauser, S. T. (2008). Prospective associations from family-of-origin interactions to adult marital interactions and relationship adjustment. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 22(2), 274-286. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.22.2.274>

Data availability statement

Research data is available upon request to the corresponding author.

Responsible editor

Janari Pedroso

Corresponding author

Simone Dill Azeredo Bolze
Email: simoneazeredo@yahoo.com.br

Submitted on

09/05/2023

Accepted on

14/07/2023