

Abstract

The Transmission of Mentalization- How Parental Reflective Function on the Parent Development Interview Relates to Child Mentalization on the Thematic Apperception Test

Mentalization is defined as the metacognitive ability to think about one's own and other's thoughts and feelings, with the goal of comprehending behavior (Benbassat and Priel, 2012). Mentalization is associated with secure attachment, and is both directly and indirectly linked to multiple social and emotional outcomes. This study looked at the correlation between parent and child mentalization as a means of exploring the impact of parent reflectiveness on children's mentalization capacities.

Methods

This study utilized archival data collected at The Psychological Center, a community mental health clinic at the City College of New York that serves the Harlem community. The sample consisted of 15 parent-child dyads. Data was collected as part of the intake process for children beginning treatment at The Psychological Center. The children in this clinical population ranged in age from 4.5 to 15.

Parent reflective function (RF) was measured using Fonagy's RF scale (Fonagy et al., 1998) as applied to the Parent Development Interview (Aber et al., 1985). Child mentalization was measured in an original way, using a composite measure of seven scales of the Social Cognition and Object Relations Scale (SCORS; Westen, 2002) as applied to the Thematic Apperception Test (Morgan & Murray, 1935).

Results

This study did not yield any statistically significant results. However, the effect sizes of the correlations indicated a trend by which parent and child mentalization capacities did appear to be positively associated with one another, with parent reflective function also appearing to be related to various aspects of child object relations.

Discussion

Methodological limitations are discussed so as to shed light on directions for future research on this important topic.