Adolescent Relationship Quality: Is There an Intergenerational Link?

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ABSTRACT

A growing body of evidence links teen relationship quality with adolescent health and development and with adult union quality. We use longitudinal data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, linking information collected from mothers at the time of their children’s birth and ages 3, 5, and 9 with responses from their children at age 15, to examine whether and how the quality of mothers’ intimate relationships is associated with the partnerships their offspring form in adolescence. Specifically, we consider which aspects of relationship quality endure between generations, whether intensity of exposure to low quality partnerships during childhood influences adolescent relationship quality, and whether associations vary by gender. Preliminary descriptive evidence links 1) exposure to low quality partnerships during childhood with later relationship formation and lower adolescent relationship quality, and 2) exposure to maternal intimate partner violence with early coupling, age asymmetrical relationships, and violence perpetration in adolescent partnerships.