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Background

- When objective ratings of criticism are controlled, individuals differ in the degree to which they perceive criticism from their significant others
- Attributions may play an important role in explaining these individual differences.
- No studies to date have explored the ways in which attributions of criticism predict perceived destructive and constructive criticism, and these two types of criticism may differ in their predictors.

Research Questions

- What is the factor structure of the Attributions of Criticism Scale, a new measure of attributions?
- Do different kinds of attributions differentially predict the amount of destructive and constructive criticism that individuals perceive from their loved ones?
- Are there racial/cultural differences in the relationship between attributions and perceived destructive and constructive criticism?

Method

Participants and Procedure

- 119 undergraduates (36% Asian, 46% White, 18% other) nominated the most important/influential person in their lives who was restricted to be a romantic partner or a parental figure.
- Participants then completed questionnaire measures about this influential individual.

Measures

- Attributions of Criticism Scale (ACS):** 20-item scale developed to assess attributions participants make regarding the intentions underlying their romantic partners/parents' criticism

Perceived Criticism Measure – Type (PCM-T): 2-item scale that assesses the amount of destructive and constructive criticism participants perceive from their romantic partners/parents

Results

Factor Analysis of the Attributions of Criticism Scale (ACS)

- An exploratory factor analysis of the ACS yielded a three-factor solution with factors corresponding to intentions of harm, care, and growth promotion (see Table 1).

Table 1

Factor Loadings and Communalities for Exploratory Factor Analysis with Promax Rotation of Attributions of Criticism Scale (ACS) Items in Undergraduate Sample

ACS Item	Harm	Care	Growth	Communalities
When your significant other/relative criticizes you, to what extent do you believe he/she...				
Intends to control you?	.60			.38
Intends to make you feel incapable, ineffective, or incompetent?	.74			.61
Intends to blame you for something?	.75			.58
Intends to put you down?	.86			.78
Intends to hurt or have a negative impact on you?	.74			.54
Intends prevent you from doing your best?	.30			.12
Intends to attack you?	.85			.77
Intends to humiliate you?	.78			.61
Intends to show that he/she cares?		.70		.52
Intends to show concern for you?		.55		.31
Intends to prevent you from making a mistake?		.71		.52
Intends to protect you?		.79		.64
Has your best interests at heart?		.74		.54
Intends to prevent you from hurting yourself or someone else?		.66		.46
Intends to motivate you or get you to take action?			.77	.60
Intends to get you to do better, learn, or grow?			.74	.57
Intends to be honest and open with you?			.60	.44
Intends to get you to consider a new point of view or perspective?			.49	.33

Note. N = 119. Factor loadings for items included in each factor score are in boldface. Correlations between Harm and Care factors = -.47, Care and Growth factors = .50, Harm and Care factors = -.38.

Regression Analyses

- In multiple regression equations with perceived criticism in one's relationship as the outcome variable, both harm ($\beta = .32, p = .001$) and care attributions ($\beta = -.23, p = .03$) predicted perceived destructive criticism.
- Similarly, harm ($\beta = -.24, p = .01$) and care attributions ($\beta = .31, p = .002$) predicted constructive criticism
- A significant interaction of race and growth attributions ($\beta = .45, sr = .21, p = .02$) predicting destructive criticism emerged such that Asians who made more growth attributions perceived more destructive criticism, $\beta = .33, p = .04$. This was not the case for whites, $\beta = -.26, p = .18$.
- There was also a significant interaction of race and harm attributions ($\beta = .28, p = .03$) in predicting constructive criticism: Whites who made more harm attributions perceived less constructive criticism, $\beta = -.40, p = .001$. This effect was not found for Asians, $\beta = .14, p = .51$.

Discussion

- Individuals who made more harm attributions perceived more destructive criticism and less constructive criticism from the most influential person in their lives.
- Those who made more care attributions perceived more constructive criticism and less destructive criticism from this person.
- The differences in the attributions that predict perceived destructive and constructive criticism underscore the importance of treating these types of criticism as separate outcomes.
- Our findings suggest that there may be racial or cultural differences in the relationship of attributions to the perception of criticism.