Author's response to reviews

Title: Using Relationship Styles Based on Attachment Theory to Improve Understanding of Specialty Choice in Medicine.

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Author's response to reviews:

Thank you for the opportunity to revise this paper. We appreciate the reviewers' thoughtful comments and their guidance with respect to making this a better paper. We believe that we have addressed the reviewers concerns and have "polished up" the paper to make it a much stronger paper.

Our responses are as follows:

1) Reviewer Dr. Roberts

We have rewritten the methods section that pertains to IRB approval, so that it is clear that IRB approval was not "post hoc". We have also clarified what is meant by "permission of the students". Instead, we make clear that we received consent of the students for their involvement in this study and outline the specific areas that we received consent for.

We appreciate the reviewer's comments about the title and introduction, and have modified both to make them clearer. We have not discussed other psychological measures that have been explored in the literature so as to maintain a clear focus in the introduction of this paper. The new title of the paper is: "Using relationship styles based on attachment theory to improve understanding of specialty choice in medicine".

In response to this reviewer's concern about the narrowness of the analyses, we now include a section in which we determined if there were differences between relationship style groups in gender, age, race, marital status and living situation. We found expected differences in marital status and living situation (e.g. proportion of students saying they live alone). We did not include these two variables in subsequent analyses since we did not feel that they contributed conceptually to the mediation models that we used in the rest of the paper.

We clarified our comments in the discussion about the interpretation of data so as to not make too strong a claim and have revised the first paragraph of the discussion.

We have completely changed Figure 1 and added a new legend, in response to the reviewer's comments. We have also taken the opportunity to make Tables 1 and 2 clearer with clearer legends.

2) Reviewer Dr. Dozier

This reviewer's main concern was that the effect of the predictor variable on the outcome is significantly less when the effects of the mediator are covaried. This reviewer, however, also felt that we had probably met those criteria. We would agree that in the methods section, we had carefully outlined the methods and defining what was considered mediation using methods of Baron and Kenny and those of Shrout and Bolger. We also clearly show that the main outcome (choice of a non-primary care specialty) using the main independent variable (self-reliant relationship style) goes from being strongly significant to non-significant after controlling for patient centered specialty choice factor.