

Influence of Age and Parental Marital Status on Parent-Child Relationships: College Students Perspective

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence age and parental marital status on parent-child relationships form college students perspective. Data was collected among 150 adult students, representing 109 (73%) female and 41 (27%) male participants. The participants completed Adult Attachment (AA) Scale with 18 items and The Parent-Child Relationship Scale (PCRS) with 48 items. One-Way ANOVA showed that there was a significant difference in age and parental marital status on Parent-child relationships on college students' perspective. The study also revealed there is a significance difference on parental marital status for both father-child and mother-child relationships on the scale of positive effect, communication, resentment/role confusion and involvement.

Keyword: close, depend, anxiety, positive effect, involvement, resentment, communication.

1. Introduction

The relationship between parent and child is among the most important of the many different relationships people form over the course of their life. As infants, we arrive in the world unable to care for ourselves. We depend on our parents for food, protection, and both physical and emotional warmth. Frank (2007) examined the relationships of parents and their adult children and found that parent-child relationships are one of the longest lasting social ties human beings establish. The tie is often highly positive and supportive but it also includes feelings of irritation, tension, and ambivalence. The research examined a variety of topics including personality differences, past relationship problems, children's' finances, housekeeping habits, lifestyles, and how often they contacted each other (Linwood, 2004).

There are many different types of relationships a child can have with their parent. There are secure relationships, avoidant relationships, ambivalent relationships, and disorganized relationships. With each of these different types of relationships there are many different factors that can attribute to the type of relationship a person will have with their parents. Studies on parent-child relationships have mainly focused on the early years while investigations of family relations in early adulthood have been somewhat neglected (Gitelson & McDermott, 2006). It is important to study all stages of life when dealing with relationships between parents and children because that relationship evolves from birth to elder years.

2. Literature Review

The first family relationship individuals have is with their parents. Parenting is crucial to the lives of children, adolescents, and young adults (Frank, 2007). Attachments to, and involvement from both mothers and fathers are essential for healthy development throughout the lifespan (Finley & Schwartz, 2009). Children who receive “good enough” parenting are more likely to feel successful and competent, as compared to those who did not and who are more likely to suffer from low self-worth, depression, and other psychological problems (Laible & Carlo, 2004).

Lehmkuhl, Lugo, Schencki, & Titze (2013) found that through ongoing parental interaction, a child builds an increasingly complex internal representation of his or her experiences with each parent that becomes relatively stable over time. A functional parental representation is crucial for developing appropriate internal regulation of emotions and satisfactory social interactions (Lehmkuhl, Lugo, & Titze, 2013). The family is the primary agent of socialization, the setting in which children begin to acquire the beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors considered appropriate in the society, preparing the child for economic self-sufficiency and encouraging the child to maximize other cultural values such as morality, religion and achievement (Ogwo, 2013). Ogwo (2013) found that the age of adolescents has a significant effect on how they perceive their relationships with their parents, as younger adolescents tended to perceive their relationships with their parents in more positive terms than older adolescents.

Adolescence is known as a period in human development characterized by profound psychological changes (Smetana, Yau & Hanson, 1991). Bancroft and Reinish (1990) defined adolescence as a period of transition between childhood and adulthood, a time when individuals learn to be socially responsible for themselves and for their actions. Smetana, Yau and Hanson (1991) observed that as youths develop, they are less likely to concede an argument to parents, and as a result, conflicts may be left unresolved. During early and middle adolescent years, there is usually more frequent conflict between teens and their parents (Cogsow, 2013). In general, conflict increases in early adolescence, reaches its height in mid-adolescence (14-16 years), and declines in late adolescence (17-18 years) (Ogwo, 2013).

Early adulthood (18-25 years) is a time of dramatic change. During this period, individuals are facing many transitions such as finishing school, entering long-term relationships, beginning a career, and leaving their parents' home (Crouter & Whiteman, 2010). Research on the transition to adulthood has documented both continuity and change in parent-child relationships (Crouter & Whiteman, 2010). As youth transition out of the home, parents may reduce their levels of control, and offspring may reduce their levels of dependency (Aquilino, 2006). Lefkowitz (2005) found that 78% of youth who transitioned to college reported changes in their parent-child relationship, and more than 80% of those described these changes as positive (e.g., feel closer to parents, communication is more open, argue less). Crouter and Whiteman (2010) also found that offspring leaving home was modestly associated with improvement in mother-offspring intimacy reported by adolescents and maternal acceptance reported by the mothers.

Kloep and Hendry (2010) found that it was particularly difficult for parents to separate from a child of the opposite gender. The study also found that a majority of the parents appeared to have certain difficulties in allowing their adult children to seek and gain mature independence. Some parents tried with reluctance to accept their offspring's striving for autonomy, while others employed various strategies whether consciously or unconsciously to delay 'letting go' (Kloep & Hendry, 2010; Buhl, 2007). In the same study, Kloep and Hendry (2010) found that societal changes have not only affected young people, but also changed family interactions and the role of parents. Twenty years ago the social norm was that young people should leave home in their early twenties and if a young adult continued to live at home, their parents were disappointed and believed that they had failed to adequately socialize their offspring for adulthood, but nowadays more children are living at home longer and parents are okay with it (Whiteman, 2010; Kloep & Hendry, 2010).

Although more children are living at home longer, emerging adults who live independently tend to report better relationships with their parents than those who still live with their parents and are more likely to develop mature adult-to-adult relationships (Buhl, 2007). This isn't always the case with emerging adulthood (18-25 years), a time when young people do not take on full adult responsibilities and shy away from various relational and personal commitments, while exploring possible lifestyles (Kloep & Hendry, 2010).

Kloep and Hendry (2010) reported that during the time of emerging adulthood, it requires the material and emotional support of parents, as to whether or not their near-adult children stay at home or move away to attend college but with today's prolonged education, rising house prices, and youth unemployment, makes it more difficult for young people to move out of their parents' house. Intergenerational bond between parents and their children focused on the gender relationship of the parent and child (Proulx & Helms, 2008). Family members tend to value and expect a level of closeness and connection between daughters and mothers more so than between fathers and sons (Proulx & Helms, 2008). Relationship satisfaction in parent-child relationships has been found to vary according to the gender of the child and parent. Starrels (1994) reported that fathers are much more involved with their sons and tend to concentrate more on active aspects of support (e.g., coaching, homework), whereas mothers tend to be more supportive for both their sons and daughters in the traditional affective sense.

Phares, Renk, Duhig, Field and Sly (2009) found that both boys and girls reported significantly higher levels of positive affect and lower levels of negative affect towards their mother than their father. Gender differences in parent-child relationships during childhood and adolescence; reveal that fathers differentiate between sons and daughters to a greater extent than mothers (Russell & Saebel, 1997). According to Dalton 111, Frick-Horbury and Kitzmann (2006) reports of father's parenting, but not mothers, were related to the quality of relationships with a romantic partner. Also, father's parenting was related to the view of the self as being able to form close and secure relationships (Dalton et al, 2006). Fingerman (2001) proposes that the mother-daughter relationship may be the most enduring relationship throughout life due to gender-specific similarities mothers and daughters share. Pillemar (2006) found that mothers prefer to rely on their adult daughters for emotional and instrumental support due to the belief that their daughters would share gender-specific values. Yet, there are instances where mothers prefer the support of their sons.

Duhig and Phares (2009) found that regarding age-related patterns, the behavioral observation data revealed that mothers and fathers showed a decline in negative affect toward their older daughters and sons, respectively. Duhig and Phares (2009) also found that as children aged, parents demonstrated significantly less negative affect with their same sex child (i.e. mothers with daughters and fathers with sons) but not their opposite sex child, boys were observed to show more positive behavior and less negative behavior toward their mothers and fathers than were girls, and observations of positive behavior as well as negative behavior were correlated for mothers and sons, fathers and sons and fathers and daughters (Duhig & Phares, 2009).

For both parents and children, the most difficult and stressful phase of the divorce process is usually the period leading up to and immediately following parental separation and divorce (Johnson, 2008). The uncoupling process takes on several dimensions at this stage, as divorcing parents confront legal challenges and expenses, make their intentions public to family and friends, and redefine their roles as residential and nonresidential parents (Johnson, 2008). Cohen and Finzi-Dottan (2005) found that parent-child relationships after divorce are often problematic. The first year after the divorce may be particularly trying. Parents, occupied by the myriad economic, social, and emotional adjustments required by divorce (Booth, & Amato, 1992; Hazan & Shaver, 1994), may be irritable, impatient, and less available emotionally and physically for their children than they had previously been. Amato and Sobolewski (2007) found that during the past three decades, studies have shown that children with divorced parents have an elevated risk of experiencing a variety of problems in early adulthood, including low socioeconomic attainment, weak ties with parents, symptoms of depression and relationship instability.

Kalmijn (2007) found that divorced parents receive less support from their children than married parents. The main effect of gender is negative which shows that even when married, fathers receive less support from and have less contact with their children than married mothers and the interaction shows that these gender differences are increased when parents are divorced (Kalmijn, 2007). Prior research has found that divorce often leaves young people with feelings of regret and "missed opportunities" about their relationships with their fathers (Fabricius & Hall, 2000).

Finley and Schwartz (2009) found that divorce is often associated with increased desire for father's involvement, but to a much less extent for mother's involvement meaning young adults missed their fathers' involvement more than they missed their mothers' involvement. Amato and Sobolewski (2007) found that 85% of offspring with divorced parents reported living primarily with their mothers following marital dissolution, and levels of father-child contact after divorce are often modest. Moreover, many nonresident fathers act more like "visitors" than parents after divorce (Amato & Sobolewski, (2007).

Cohen and Finzi-Datton (2005) examined the possible contribution of four factors to parental satisfaction with the parent-child relationships one year after divorce. The four factors were attachment style, parenting style, perception of own parents' parenting, and ex-spouses' assessment of the quality of the parents' parenting. Attachment style is defined as the nature of the bonds of affection that persons form close relationships. Attachment theory identifies a "secure" style and two or three variously conceptualized "insecure" styles, the main ones being preoccupied or anxious/ambivalent and avoidant (Shaver & Mikulincer, (2002).

Cohen and Finzi-Datton (2005) found that psycho-educational intervention, during or after divorce, could provide divorced fathers with needed legitimization and practical guidance. The intervention could legitimize the many emotional and instrumental hardships that divorced men encounter as non-custodial fathers and help them to develop ways of spending quality time with their children despite the impediments. Finley and Schwartz (2009) found that for fathers instrumental functions such as discipline, protection, and monitoring schoolwork which cannot feasibly be carried out from outside the home, may be more strongly affected by divorce than expressive domains such as sharing activities, companionship, and facilitating emotional development.

Since many fathers from both intact and divorced families are less involved in expressive domains than in instrumental domains and because divorced fathers tend to be less involved than fathers from intact families, expressive involvement from divorced fathers may be harmfully low (Finley & Schwartz, 2006). When parents get remarried, Kalmijn (2007) found that these parents receive less support from their children than parents who live alone. Parents who remarry after divorce experience a double negative effect (the effect of divorce and the effect of remarriage). Kalmijn (2007) reported that remarriage interacts significantly with gender. In other words, remarriage separates fathers more from their original children than it does mothers. Part of the reason why a marital dissolution hurts fathers more lies in the fact that fathers remarry more often than mothers and separates the fathers more from the children (Kalmijn, 2007).

Brevik, Endresen and Olweus (2009) found that children of divorce residing with a single mother are at increased risk of developing both antisocial behavior and substance use compared with children in non-divorced two-biological parent families. According to Wallerstein and Kelly (1980), children who are 9 -12 years old at the time of their parental divorce may be especially prone to feel anger and direct those feelings toward their parents as a way of deflecting their feelings of sadness and helplessness.

Frank (2007) found that conflict negatively affects relationships with both mothers and father. These results are also highly consistent with previous research (Ahrons & Tanner, 2003; Amato & Sobolewski, 2001; Cooney, 1994) in finding that the father-daughter relationship in particular is negatively affected by divorce. The multiple regressions revealed that while gender was not a significant predictor of the mother-child relationship, it was a highly significant predictor of the father-child relationship with daughters reporting worse relationships with fathers than sons (Ahrons & Tanner, 2003). Frank (2007) found that the impaired father-daughter relationship is largely due to fathers' post-divorce hostility. In the same study, Frank (2007) found that verbal hostility is the aspect of post-divorce conflict which is most deleterious for relationships. One can speculate that fathers' hostility towards former wives may interfere with the father-child relationship in a number of ways. Nonresidential fathers depend on the goodwill of their former wives and in cases in which the fathers are extremely hostile, the mothers will not be disposed to promote the father-child bond (Frank, 2007).

2.1 Theories of Parent-Child Relationships

Several theories have been proposed to explain the psychological significance of parent-child relationships and why they are strongly linked with children's well-being (Sears et al. 1957). Much contemporary research on parent-child relationships can be traced to three dominant perspectives: social learning theory, attachment theory, and parenting styles. Robert Wahler (1965) whose program recognized the particular needs of isolated mothers, was instrumental in showing that "insular" mothers were harsher to their children on days when the few adults with whom they had contact-such as local officials or their own mothers- had been rejected of them. Social learning theory argues that children's real life experiences and exposures directly or indirectly shape behavior (Patterson, 1969). Patterson found that the fundamental tenet is that moment-to-moment exchanges are crucial; if a child receives an immediate reward for his/her behavior, such as getting parental attention or approval, then he/she is likely to do the behavior again, whereas if he/she is ignored (or punished) then he/she is less likely to do it again. Other advocates have expanded this focus to consider the cognitive or "mindful" processes that underlie parent's behavior and its effects on children (Bugenthal et al. 1989, Dix, 1992).

The social learning theory suggests that children learn strategies about managing their emotions, resolving disputes and engaging with others not only from their experiences, but also from the way their own reactions were responded to (Dix, 1992). According to attachment theory, secure attachments facilitate children's formation of coherent and organized mental representations of the relationship that they can use effectively to predict attachment figures' behavior (O'Connor & Scott, 2007). Attachment theory is defined as the nature of the bonds of affection that persons form in close relationships. Attachment theory identifies a "secure" style and two or three variously conceptualized "insecure" styles, the main ones being preoccupied or anxious/ambivalent and avoidant (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002). Main and Solomon, (1990) propose a disorganized style while Bartholomew (1990) divides the avoidant style into fearful avoidant and dismissing avoidant. According to the theory, each attachment style entails deeply rooted views of the self and others and issues in affect and behaviors that reflect these underlying views (Cohen & Finzi-Dottan, 2005). In an empirical study examining the links between attachment style and the mental health of divorcing persons, Birnbaum, Orr, Mikulincer, and Florian (1997) found that attachment style moderated persons' affective reactions to their divorce and was significantly related to their appraisal and coping with the crisis. Studies of parenting suggest that attachment style may be associated with the degree to which parents are able to respond to their children (Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985; Ricks, 1985). Cohn et al. (1992) reported that secure mothers and fathers were warmer, more responsive, and more able to set appropriate limits for their children and that their children were warmer toward them and less angry than children of non-secure mothers.

Baumrind (1991) found the important dimensions of parenting-warmth (as opposed to conflict or neglect) and control strategies. Parenting typologies were, thus, constructed from a cross of warmth, conflict and control: authoritative (high warmth, positive/assertive control and in adolescence high expectations), authoritarian (low warmth, high conflict and coercive, punitive control attempts), permissive (high warmth coupled with low control attempts) and neglectful/disengaged (low warmth and low control). These four typologies have been repeatedly associated with child outcomes. Children and adolescents of authoritative parents are consistently described as most prosocial, academically and socially competent, and least symptomatic. Children whose parents are described as authoritarian, permissive and disengaged show significantly worse outcomes, with children of authoritarian parents showing typically the most disturbed adjustment of the four parenting types (O'Connor & Scott, 2007). Schindler and Coley (2012) focused on the specific effects of family relationships as a predictor of marital separation and divorce. The research targeted the exploration of both the father-child and mother-child relationships and how both may affect spousal relations-serving as a precursor to divorce. Schindler and Coley (2012) hypothesized- like family systems theory and identity role theories- that fathers that have close and positive relationships with their children will be less likely to leave a marriage. Family systems theory suggests that individuals cannot be understood in isolation from one another, but rather as a part of their family, an emotional unit.

Balance theory (Heider, 1958; Newcomb et al. 1965) emphasizes the consistency of interpersonal relationships rather than their additive effect. If offspring maintain close ties to both parents, and if the relationships between the two parents is hostile or strained, then offspring are likely to experience a psychological dilemma- an aversive state of dissonance (Festinger, 1957). Under these circumstances, trying to be loyal to both parents implies being disloyal to each. Buchanan et al. (1996) referred to this situation as being "caught in the middle". According to balance theory, trying to remain close to two feuding parents involves an emotional cost that may outweigh the benefits of having two strong parent-child relationships (Sobolewski & Amato, 2007). Amato (1986) found that daughters who felt close to both married parents had an especially low level of self-esteem when their parents had an antagonistic relationship. Another study found that adolescents from divorced families reported the same level of subjective well-being whether they were close to one or both parents, which suggest that having positive bonds with two parents confers little additional benefit when parents do not have a positive relationship (Buchanan et al. 1996).

3. Method

3.1 Participants and Design

Data in this study was collected from 150 college students from different majors of study with a mean age of 23. There were 101(67%) female participants and 49 (33%) male participants. Convenient stratified sample was used in this study as participants were individuals selected from college classrooms with the permission of the instructors during instructional time.

Both quantitative and survey designs were used in this study. The participants completed two scales: Adult Attachment (AA) scale with 18 items and Parent-Child Relationship Scale (PCRS) with 48 items. Quantitative design was used in this study and SPSS was used for data analysis.

3.2 Research Questions

RQ1- Does the college student's age influence adult attachment style?

RQ2- Does parental marital status influence child-father relationships?

RQ3- Does parental marital status influence child-mother relationships?

3.3 Materials

The Parent-Child Relationship Survey (PCRS) written by (Fine & Schwebel, 1983) which consists of a 48-item instrument (24 items for relationships with mothers and 24 items for relationships with fathers) designed to measure adult children's perception of the parent-child relationship. The PCRS has been standardized in a university population, has excellent consistency and good predictive validity. The Adult Attachment Scale written by (Collins & Read, 1990) consists of an 18-item instrument designed to measure adult attachment style dimensions including comfort with closeness and intimacy, comfort with depending on others, and worry about being rejected or unloved.

3.4 Procedure

The collection of the data for this study was a convenient and stratified sample. The participants were requested to respond during usual classroom instructional time and the investigator identified various classes in the colleges to participate in the study. The investigator contacted the professors by e-mail, asking for permission to pass out surveys during their class time. The surveys were then taken to the instructor's classrooms who agreed for data collection. Once in the classrooms, the consent letters and the surveys were passed out to the class and they were given 10-15 minutes to complete the survey and give it to the investigator. The surveys were then entered individually into SPSS after every class collection.

4. Results

Table 1: RQ1- Does the college student's age influence adult-attachment style?

		N	Mean	Std. Deviat	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
AACLOSE	Young	69	3.3502	.74489	1	1.116	2.105	.149
	Older	74	3.5270	.71195	141	.530		
	Total	143	3.4417	.73085	142			
AADEPEND	Young	70	2.7738	.73504	1	2.474	4.396	.038
	Older	74	3.0360	.76415	142	.563		
	Total	144	2.9086	.75900	143			
AAANXIETY	Young	71	2.9648	1.04840	1	8.845	9.019	.003
	Older	74	2.4707	.93118	143	.981		
	Total	145	2.7126	1.01749	144			

One-way ANOVA comparing Young and Older students was carried out on three scales, Close, Depend and Anxiety. A significant difference was found on Depend ($F(1, 142) = 4.396, P < .05$) and on Anxiety ($F(1, 143) = 9.019, P < .05$). Tukey's *HSD* was used to determine the nature of the differences between the young and older participants. This analysis revealed that on Depend Young student scored lower ($M = 2.774, sd = .735$) than Older students ($M = 3.036, sd = .7642$). On Anxiety Older student scored lower ($M = 2.471, sd = .9312$) than Young students ($M = 2.965, sd = .1.048$). No significant difference was found on the scale close.

Table 2: RQ2- Does parental marital status influence child-father relationships?

		N	Mean	Std. Devia	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
FaPOSITIVEAFFECT	Married	87	5.6935	1.22081	2	29.634	12.040	.000
	Divorced	35	4.4254	1.92799	140	2.461		
	Other	21	4.2963	2.12171	142			
	Total	143	5.1779	1.68643	2	33.514		
FaINVOLVEMENT	Married	87	5.3793	1.36675	138	2.451	13.672	.000
	Divorced	35	4.0571	1.70013	140			
	Other	19	3.8070	2.09958	2	59.457		
	Total	141	4.8392	1.70147	147	3.310		
FaCOMMUNICATION	Married	88	5.0591	1.49855	149			
	Divorced	37	3.5514	2.08135				
	Other	25	2.9200	2.37346				
	Total	150	4.3307	2.01577				

One-way ANOVA comparing Parental marital status was carried out on three scales of Father Child relationship, Positive Affect, Involvement and Communication. A significant difference was found on Positive Affect ($F(2, 140) = 12.04, P < .05$), Involvement ($F(2, 138) = 13.672, P < .05$) and Communication ($F(2, 147) = 17.964, P < .05$). Tukey's *HSD* was used to determine the nature of the differences between of parental marital status, Married, Divorced and Others. This analysis revealed that on Positive Affects student from Divorced parents scored lower ($M = 4.425, sd = 1.928$) than student from married parents ($M = 5.694, sd = 1.221$). On Involvement student from Divorced parents scored lower ($M = 4.057, sd = 1.1.700$) than student from married parents ($M = 5.379, sd = 1.367$). On Communication student from Divorced parents scored lower ($M = 3.551, sd = 2.081$) than student from married parents ($M = 5.059, sd = 1.4986$).

Table 3: Q3-Does parental marital status influence child-mother relationships?

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
MoPOSITIVEAFFECT	Married	87	5.8424	.99858	2		4.471	.013
	Divorced	37	5.3687	1.53608				
	Other	24	4.9494	2.16638				
	Total	148	5.5792	1.41860				
MoRESENTMENTroleCONFUSSION	Married	87	6.0632	1.38892	147	8.592	3.740	.026
	Divorced	37	5.2027	2.00506	2	1.922		
	Other	23	5.7174	1.68433	144	9.688		
	Total	147	5.7925	1.63946	146	2.591		
MoIDENTIFICATION	Married	88	4.6856	1.64107	2	2.569	.865	.423
	Divorced	36	4.5278	1.62788	145	2.968		
	Other	24	4.1667	2.11961	147	10.472		
	Total	148	4.5631	1.72126	2	2.083		
MoCOMMUNICATION	Married	88	5.8841	1.04550	147		5.028	.008
	Divorced	37	5.2432	1.74472	149			
	Other	25	4.9943	2.05638				
	Total	150	5.5781	1.48169				

One-way ANOVA comparing Parental marital status was carried out on four scales of Positive Affect, Resentment Role Confusion, Identification and Communication. A significant difference was found on Positive Affect ($F(2, 145) = 4.471, P < .05$), Resentment Role Confusion ($F(2, 144) = 3.740, P < .05$) and Communication ($F(2, 147) = 5.028, P < .05$). Tukey's *HSD* was used to determine the nature of the differences between of parental marital status, Married, Divorced and Others.

This analysis revealed that on Positive Affects student from Divorced parents scored lower ($M = 5.3687$, $sd = 1.5361$) than student from married parents ($M = 5.8424$, $sd = .9986$). On Resent Role Confusion student from Divorced parents scored lower ($M = 5.2027$, $sd = 2.0051$) than student from married parents ($M = 6.0632$, $sd = 1.3889$). On Communication student from Divorced parents scored lower ($M = 5.2432$, $sd = 1.7447$) than student from married parents ($M = 5.8841$, $sd = 1.0455$).

5. Discussion

The major finding of this study is that different factors influenced parent-child relationships. The study found there is a significant difference in the influence of college student's age on adult attachment style when it comes to depend and anxiety. As youth transition out of the home, parents may reduce their levels of control, and offspring may reduce their levels of dependency (Aquilino, 2006). Lefkowitz (2005) found that 78% of youth who transitioned to college reported changes in their parent-child relationship, and more than 80% of those described these changes as positive (e.g., feel closer to parents, communication is more open, argue less).

The study showed that there is a relationship between the participant's parental marital status and the influence on the parent-child relationship when it comes to mother and father positive affect, father involvement, mother resentment/role confusion and mother and father communication but no significant difference when it comes to mother identification. Kalmijn (2007) found that divorced parents receive less support from their children than married parents.

Finely and Schwartz (2009) found that divorce is often associated with increased desire for father's involvement, but to a much less extent for mother's involvement meaning young adults missed their father's involvement more than they missed their mother's involvement. Married fathers receive less support from and have less contact with their children than married mothers and the interaction shows that these gender differences are increased when parents are divorced (Kalmijn, 2007).

5.1 Conclusion

The study showed that child age and child parental marital status has an influence on parent-child relationships. As the relationship between parent and child is among the most important, it is imperative to realize that many factors influence the strength and importance of the relationship. Parent-child relationships are one of the longest lasting social ties human beings establish and it is interesting to see how certain factors can affect these relationships, both positively and negatively. The society and family unit should be deliberate in promotion of those factors that will make such relationship more positively for both the parents and the children.

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