Conflicting Influences: A study of emerging adults and their mothers’ marriage attitudes.

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Conflicting Influences: A study of emerging adults and their mothers’ marriage attitudes.

Justin J. Hendricks, Adam A. Rogers, Larry J. Nelson*

The School of Family Life

Table 1. Pearson's Correlation Coefficients: Mothers' education-before-marriage attitude and child outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marriage Attitudes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of Marriage</td>
<td>-.30*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to be Married now</td>
<td>-.24*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marry and Continue Education</td>
<td>-.26*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance of Cohabitation</td>
<td>-.25*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief in a final state</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religiosity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of Faith</td>
<td>-.24*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent Personal Practices</td>
<td>-.26*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Personal Practices</td>
<td>-.33*</td>
<td>-.37*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Family Practices</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.31*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ego Identity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Identity</td>
<td>-.23*</td>
<td>-.16*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values Identity</td>
<td>-.25*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Identity</td>
<td>-.25*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating Identity</td>
<td>-.34*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .01; *p < .05; **p < .001

Table 2. Correlation between mothers’ and children’s education-before-marriage attitude

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>r</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .01; *p < .05; **p < .001

**References**


**RESULTS**

Mother’s attitudes about education over marriage were correlated with the following scales. The more mothers felt that their child’s education should come before marriage the following child outcomes occurred:

**Marriage Attitudes**

- Females were:
  - less likely to see marriage as an important life goal
  - less likely to desire marriage now
  - more likely to hold accepting attitudes toward cohabitation

- Males were:
  - less likely to report having engaged in personal religious practices growing up
  - less likely to report engaging in personal religious practices currently

**Religiosity**

- Females were:
  - lower in their strength of faith
  - less likely to report having engaged in personal religious practices growing up

- Males were:
  - less likely to report having engaged in personal religious practices growing up
  - less likely to report having engaged in family religious practices growing up

**Ego Identity**

- Females were:
  - more settled in their religious identity
  - less settled in their values identity
  - less settled in their family identity
  - less settled in their dating identity

- Males were:
  - less settled in their religious identity

**DISCUSSION**

The first hypothesis was confirmed. The stronger mothers endorsed education-before-marriage, the less likely their emerging adult children were to have strongly held convictions about their identity in areas of dating, family and values.

The second hypothesis was also confirmed. The education-before-marriage attitude was linked with lower levels of religiosity. It was also linked with attitudes which are less consistent with LDS teachings. For example, females were less likely to view marriage as important and more likely to be accepting of cohabitation.

Another noteworthy finding of this study was the strong relationship between the mothers’ and the daughters’ education-before-marriage attitude. However, there was no relationship between the mothers’ and the sons’ education-before-marriage attitude.

Implications of these important findings include:

1. When separate influences on identity conflict, emerging adults may have more unstable identities.

2. When parental and religious influences conflict, it seems that emerging adult children are strongly influenced by paternal attitudes.

3. Attitudes about central tenets of a religion may be important predictors for its members’ personal religiosity.

4. Mothers may carry a unique influence on their daughters’ attitudes toward marriage.

While the statistical analyses employed preclude making any further assumptions about the causal nature of these relations, the findings do underscore the link between parent attitudes and children’s attitudes, beliefs, and identity, and therefore emphasizes the need for attention and investigation in future research.

**METHODS**

Procedure

Participants completed the Project READY (Researching Emerging Adults’ Developmental Years) questionnaire via the Internet. Participants were recruited through faculty’s announcement of the study in undergraduate courses for emerging young adults. A total of 99 emerging adult participants were recruited. The majority of participants were Caucasian.

Variables

- **Attitudes of Education Over Marriage**
  - A single item was used to assess whether or not education was a priority before marriage during their emerging adult years.
  - To mothers it was posed as "My child's educational pursuits or career development should come before marriage at this time in my life". Participants indicated their level of agreement on a 6-point Likert scale (very strongly disagree to very strongly agree).

- **Marriage Attitudes**
  - Participants assessed their marriage attitudes on five different items with scales ranging from "very strongly disagree" to "very strongly agree".

- **Religiosity**
  - Participants were asked their religiosity including their beliefs and the extent to which they engaged in religious practices in various settings (i.e., personal and family) at various times in their lives (past and present). Participants also indicated their level of agreement on a 6-point Likert scale (very strongly disagree to very strongly agree).

- **Ego Identity**
  - Participants rated themselves on a 6-point scale ranging from "never" to "daily." These variables included:
    - **Strength of Faith**
    - **Recent Personal Practices**
    - **Past Personal Practices**
    - **Past Family Practices**

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