

ABSTRACT

Relationship between Mothers' Affection and Young Adults' Well-Being

by

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The importance of a mother's affectionate communication with her child is significant; thus, the mother/child dyad is central to many studies that place value on the significance of a confident, self-assured mother with the ability to express affection to her children in a loving and beneficial way. This research focuses on the mother and the young adult child relationship, collecting data to determine if there is an association between a mother's affectionate communication and her young adult's self-esteem and life satisfaction.

Keywords: mother, affection, self-esteem, life satisfaction

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And to my twin sister, who was with me for every class, every exam and with life in general. She has made me a better, smarter and kinder person.

DEDICATION

To my children, Violet, Ace, Anabeth and Harrison --
-- in hopes that my communication of affection was effective
and to my Mother who gave me my own sense of well-being

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The importance of a mother's affectionate communication with her child is significant; thus, the mother/child dyad is central to many studies that place value on the significance of a confident, self-assured mother with the ability to express affection to her children in a loving and beneficial way. This communication provides a positive outcome for the child's self-esteem and life satisfaction via mental and physical benefits (Floyd, 2002; Hayden, & Chrisler, 2006; Horan & Booth-Butterfield, 2011). Positive affectionate communication from a mother is related to well-being and confidence in a child. A confident child has many psychological, mental, emotional and social advantages compared to a child receiving little or no affectionate communication from the mother (Floyd, 2002).

Extant literature contains research citing family unit behavior as a key determinant of a child's expression of well-being. Family Systems Theory states what affects one member of the family also affects the family unit; thus, the child can be expected to reflect the family unit's satisfaction with life (Bavelas & Segal, 1982; Rothbaum, Rosen, Ujiie & Uchida, 2002). Previous studies offer mothers as the more likely parent to express affection and warmth to her children (Rothbaum, Rosen, Ujiie, & Uchida, 2002; Armentrout & Burger, 1972), therefore the current study will consider the mother/child dyad of the family system in determining the relationships of a mother's affectionate communication on the child's well-being and life satisfaction.

To determine the affect of a mother's affectionate communication on a child's well-being two areas will be explored. First, self-esteem is central to the child's mental and physical development. The child takes cues from the verbal and nonverbal messages that the mother conveys and the child interprets these messages as acceptance or rejection. The influence of the family unit is noted, however, the mother-child influence is more important to the child's mental development and general well-being than other family dyads (Schrodt, Ledbetter & Ohrt, 2007). Second, the effect of a mother's affectionate communication on a child's well-being can be related to the child's life satisfaction. Previous research reports the importance of the quality of the parent-child relationship as the strongest predictor of life satisfaction in adolescent offspring. Affectionate communication can influence a close interpersonal relationship with the mother and can relate to the child's overall life satisfaction (Huebner, 1991).

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

Much of the current literature researching a mother's affection is limited to infant, child, and adolescent. This study will extend the research to young adults (18-22 years of age), marking this research as different and warranted. The research gathered from this portion of the population will be used to support two things: Hypothesis 1- Young adult self-esteem is positively related to a mother's communication of affection and Hypothesis 2 –Young adult life satisfaction is positively related to a mother's communication of affection.

Importance of the Mother

The importance of the mother in her children's lives is evidenced in the natural selection process. Evolutionary psychologists have studied the heritability of mental, emotional, and psychological characteristics as they affected the behaviors that may be beneficial to our ancestors for survival or procreation. Affectionate communication is a characteristic that may have evolved as a result of preferred behaviors of humans when passing along their genetic material (Floyd & Haynes, 2005). Mothers and fathers invested differently in their children, in part because of the division of labor of the culture (hunters vs. gatherers), time spent, and proximity to the child. For example, men were relied on to bring back food to feed the family placing them physically away from the children while hunting, whereas, women stayed with the children providing comfort, affection, and security (Sear & Mace, 2008).

While fathers experienced paternal uncertainty (Bressan, 2002), mothers were certain of maternity and invested resources in order to ensure the viability of her children for the future. Historically, fathers served as protectors and providers for the family when females were responsible for the care and development of children. While the female role has always been significant beyond the continuation of the family line itself, in many cultures, females were responsible for the physical survival of her babies and provided innovations in gathering of foods to nourish her children. Because mothers were responsible for providing food source for her children, the development of better techniques in procuring sustenance was required. The challenge of developing innovative tools, more productive foraging, and protection from predators often fell to the mother. Conversely, fathers had very little effect on child survival, with only one-third of research showing any favorable effects of the father's involvement in childhood survival (Sear & Mace, 2008). The mother is the focus of social learning, teaching her offspring knowledge and skills for survival. Additionally, women are primary socializers for her children, responsible for sibling connection, encouraging the well-being and care of each other, and sharing their mother's early social and emotional support as they grow up. (Floyd & Haynes, 2005; Tanner & Zihlman, 1976).

Traditionally, a mother is viewed as the most important human contact that a child has available. Men stay connected to children and grandchildren through their ties to women and gradually become more disconnected as the child ages. Thus, value of the mother to her child is increasingly more significant while the father has a greater risk of being excluded from much family interaction or engagement with children (Bianchi, 2006).

Despite the fact that data shows both husbands and wives acknowledge that both parents should conduct child-care tasks, reality shows that soothing the child, showing affection, or basic child interaction fell to the mother the majority of the time (Vangelisti, 2003). Traditionally fathers provide much of the playful connections with their children and are inclined to be more involved with playful activities as the child ages. Fathers tend to participate in activities that relate to development of motor skills, learning new abilities and interests, and in the field of recreation, risk-taking, and amusement (Tasch, 1952). Regarding the division of labor, many parents feel naturally drawn to traditional norms and must guard against the traditional roles of mother and father when attempting to share parenting responsibilities.

The quality of the mother/child relationship can predict later emotional and physical developments for the child. For example, this relationship can influence the son's level of aggression, empathetic concern, and can be an early predictor of depression and substance abuse. A mother's closeness to her son can influence his views on gender roles, mate selection, and his choice of occupations (Diamond, 2004). Furthermore, the mother/daughter relationship has higher expectations of a long-term emotional connection over a lifetime and a closer bond. Daughters show stronger levels of emotion, affection, disclosure, closeness, and empathy within their relationship with their mother (Suitor & Pillemer, 2006). For each sex, a mother influences her child's decisions on education, methods of conflict resolution, and mate selection. A child's development is profoundly affected by the quality of the mother/child relationship and is fundamental in developing the child's self-esteem, social interactions, sense of masculinity or femininity, and overall security.

Finally, in the first year of life, maternal affection is considered a crucial dimension of a child's development, mentally and physically. Mothers have the distinct advantage of supplying the womb for the growing fetus to sustain life even before birth. Physical connection is made between the child and mother and a lifelong link is created through mother-child bonding in utero. Through breastfeeding, mothers are again physically connected to the child and continue to psychologically affect the child for future development. Given the above arguments the mother/child bond is given a greater opportunity to be strengthened through the mother's affectionate communication with the child (Zachariah, 1994).

The next section will address this important human resource within the mother/child relationship.

Affection

An engaged mother has the ability to influence the mother-child relationship through affectionate communication resulting in a multitude of important outcomes for the child (Mendes & Pessoa, 2013). The affectionate communication received can be related to navigating new environments as the child encounters them. The way in which a mother relates to her child is influential when developing skills for use in later life, such as self-care, friend selection, and expressing affection to others. The manner in which a child relates to the outside world is influenced by these skills (Ainsworth, 1979).

Several factors in a mother's life may contribute to the quantity or quality of affection provided to the child. Culture, race, and economic status can play a part in the level of affectionate communication provided. For example, when studying mothers from various economic backgrounds, Tulkin & Kagan (1972) found that lower-income

mothers had less time to communicate to their infant; thus, raising children who were less confident in their mother's affection and approval, and not provided with the development of life-coping skills necessary for their economically challenged lives. Conversely, middle-class mothers had more time to invest in their children and their future development. All mothers communicate a value system throughout the child's life, which allows the child positive (e.g., developing healthy relationships) or negative (e.g., destructive/addictive behavior) life-coping skills for use in future growth. The influence of a mother is the most influential, important, and beneficial contact a child can receive throughout the child's life (Ainsworth, 1964; Bianchi, 2006; Floyd, 2007). Affectionate communication that a mother invests in her child will be reflected in that child's behaviors and interactions (Tulkin & Kagan, 1972). Highly affectionate people have the benefit of positive psychological, mental, emotional, social, and relational characteristics available due to expressing and receiving affectionate communication. When compared to those who communicate little affection to others, those with higher affectionate communication skills are more self-assured and are able to relate positively to those around them. A mother who is highly affectionate is better prepared to communicate her acceptance and approval to the child enabling the child to benefit from the maternal interaction. Conversely, a disengaged mother is ill equipped to provide affectionate communication to the child often resulting in anxious and dismissive attachment to the child and the child deprived of the bonding experience with the mother (Floyd, 2002).

Both verbal and non-verbal affection are essential to a human's development in physical and psychological progress (Floyd, 2002). A mother's conduct when interacting

with her child physically and psychologically provides a bonding to the child that implies that affection is a two-way interactive process between two people. The mother's behavior requires a response from the child, which becomes a chain of interaction and solidly grounds the affectionate relationship. As a child learns to associate certain interactions with a mother's affection, well-being is established and further interactions are prompted (Ainsworth, 1964).

Affection has been shown to positively affect a baby's brain. Babies are much more than the physical body and can be seen as the raw material for a self and an interactive project, not one that continues on its own power (Gerhardt, 2006). Research on the effect of maternal prenatal affectionate communication reveals that this early association translates into a mother's higher interaction with her newborn baby. The Prenatal Attachment Inventory (PAI) measures prenatal attachment to her unborn baby by the pregnant mother. The PAI is a reliable predictor of a 12-week postpartum baby's attentive behavior towards the mother. Mary Müller, whose 21-item survey describes the mother's thoughts, feelings and relationship to the fetus, developed this measure with sample questions like: "I feel love for the baby," "I dream about the baby," "I can tell when the baby is asleep," and "I tell others what the baby is doing inside me." Mothers who were high on the PAI-factor were generally more affectionately involved with the interaction of the child post partum (Muller, 1993). Maternal behaviors towards their infants, such as sensitivity, acceptance, and affection have been associated with a positive relationship with the infant child. Learned behaviors are implicated since research indicates mothers who have experienced warmth and sensitivity from their own mothers are able to show sensitive feelings in their own maternal role. Conversely, a mother

having never experienced security or communication of affection from their mother will have difficulty communicating with her child in a warm and loving manner (Siddiqui & Hägglöf, 2000). Affectionate touch can accelerate a baby's weight gain and general physical and psychological development. The skin-to-skin touch encouraged in a delivery room is the beginning of this tactile show of positive affection, while lack of affectionate touch can lead to body image issues, and other social, psychological, and emotional problems (Gonzalez, Barrull & Marteles, 1998). Affectionate communication is significant for development as a child continues to grow. Mental and physical health is associated with the quality of the mother's interaction with a child in the form of resiliency and coping with the negative effects of health-related stress in adulthood (Maselko, Kubzansky, Lipsitt & Buka, 2011). Physical touch in the form of hugs and physical caress are often able to convey acceptance and affection by the parent to the child (Barber & Thomas, 1986; Floyd & Morman, 1998). The frequency of affectionate touch, through skin-to-skin contact, aids both in maternal bonding and a child's self-regulatory capacities. These regulatory capacities are predictive of mental and physical well-being for the child (Feldman, Weller, Sirota & Eidelman, 2003). Highly affectionate people are associated with greater happiness, higher self esteem, less depression, less stress, and greater overall mental health, producing happier and healthier individuals. Through his Affectionate Exchange Theory, Floyd (2002) posits affectionate communication as a resource that produces benefits when received as well as when given. Affection then becomes a type of relational currency valuable to the sender and receiver by potentially presenting children as suitable mates, growing up to produce another generation, and passing on the family genes.

Because affection is considered to be a fundamental need for humans (Floyd & Morman, 1997) it is widely studied and essential for human development. The benefits of positive affection are noted in extant literature as affecting a child's well-being, overall life satisfaction, and an indicator of positive future relationships (Floyd, Hess, Miczo, Halone, Mikkelsen & Tusing, 2005; Floyd & Morman, 1997, 1998, 2000; Gerhardt, 2004; Horan & Booth-Butterfield, 2010). From the earliest age a child interprets positive affection as security and the absence of positive affection as potentially the beginning of a process leading to significantly different outcomes (Gerhardt, 2006). Inadequate affectionate communication tends to be a factor in the formation of aggressive personalities, to resentment of authority in general, and to social isolation in children, which can be related to delinquent behavioral outcomes (Riege, 1972). For example, in one study, measures of mother-child interaction lacking positive affection collected prior to kindergarten were predictive of initial levels of aggression-disruption in kindergarten-aged children (McFadyen-Ketchum, Bates, Dodge & Pettit, 1996). Absence of affectionate communication is detrimental to a child's well-being and can cause long-lasting psychological problems; thus, the mental and physical health of a delinquent child is often associated with the lack of communication of affection and can be an indicator of aggression-disruption behavior in adulthood (McFayden-Ketchum, Bates, Dodge & Pettit, 1996). Lower levels of affection can predict distress in adulthood and quality of adult functioning (Maselko, Kubzansky, Lipsitt & Buka, 2010). Mental deficiencies resulting from the lack of psychological support and affection can present in depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and personality disorders (Gerhardt, 2006). Affection deprivation is associated with declines in general health, more stress, less happiness, less

social support, less relationship satisfaction, and higher attachment insecurity (Floyd, 2014). In contrast, stress can be positively affected by expressions of affectionate communication, which combats the stress hormone cortisol in the body that is elevated during times of stress. Received affectionate communication can give the child confidence and skills to cope with stress causing situations (Floyd & Riforgiate, 2008). With the advantage of positive affectionate communication a child will feel protected and nurtured, displaying a stronger self-esteem and life satisfaction. Positive affection is correlated with multiple physical health benefits (Floyd, 2014), and relational benefits such as increased happiness, self-esteem, and higher relationship satisfaction (Floyd, Jess, Miczo, Halone, Mikkelsen & Tusing, 2005).

Maternal affectionate communication is a significant issue and can aid or hinder development of the child, adolescent, and young adult. The mother models romantic and non-romantic relationships as she shows positive affection, benefiting the child in positive friend and mate selection. (Floyd, Hess, Miczo, Halone, Mikkelsen & Tusing, 2005). Young adult children have generally been exposed to a maternal communicator for a longer period of time and may have developed positive or negative relational romantic and non-romantic qualities, which can be attributed to a mother's communication of affection from infancy to adulthood (Floyd & Morman, 1997). A self-assured individual will be able to enter into a relationship with greater confidence of appropriate interpersonal behavior that can be gained from affirmative human interaction with the mother. Great significance is placed on the behavioral exchange between the mother and the child. This exchange can originate in the behavior of the mother to which the child responds. The product of this exchange can result in a positive or negative self-

esteem in the child. A child's self-esteem, therefore, can be related to positive affectionate communication provided by the mother (Ainsworth, 1964). The following sections further develop this key point.

Self-Esteem

A mother's affectionate communication is connected to a child's self-esteem through interactive patterns between mother and child throughout life (Grotevant & Cooper, 1985). Coopersmith's (1959) definition of self-esteem refers to the evaluation made by a person with regard to himself/herself. This can express an attitude of approval or disapproval determining if the individual is considered capable, successful, significant, and worthy. From childhood to adulthood a child is continually assessing his/her worth within the family unit, the outside world, and internally as a person.

The ACI (Floyd & Morman, 1998), measures verbal and nonverbal expressions of affection for romantic and non-romantic relationships, which is often used when studying communication of affection as it is associated with self-esteem (Floyd & Mikkelsen, 2005; Floyd & Riforgiate, 2008). Words of comfort, affirmation, and love are as important as nonverbal actions such as skin-to-skin contact, physical protection, and commitment to the relationship (Horan & Booth-Butterfield, 2010). These verbal and non-verbal actions are received by the child and interpreted as love, caring, and a sense of belonging, all associated with positive self-esteem (Felson & Zielinski, 1989).

Multiple studies have been conducted linking the association of self-esteem in childhood with family communication and parental behavior. Children and adolescents have better psychological health if they were emotionally close with their parents during childhood years. In the child-parent relationship parental confirmation is related to positive

psychosocial development for the child (McFadyen-Ketchum, Bates, Dodge, & Pettit, 1996; Schrod, Ledbetter & Ohrt, 2007). Long after the child is no longer living in the same home as the parents, the child's self-esteem remains consistent as a result of the affectionate communication received as a child (Roberts & Bengston, 1996). Parental confirmation (Ellis, 2002) and affectionate behaviors (Floyd, Hess, Miczo, Halone, Mikkelsen, & Tusing, 2005) are key factors in healthy childhood social development resulting in self-acceptance, better behavior, and friend choices. Mothers hold personal ideas, values, and morals, which can be communicated to their children via affectionate communication and can have a greater influence than outside communication; thus, self-esteem is conveyed by the communication of the value of self-esteem by the mother. Family communication is used as a model to influence a child's well-being, mental health, and self-esteem. Positive maternal communication patterns are related to the parents' nonverbal, verbal, and supportive affection (Schrod, Ledbetter, & Ohrt, 2007). Positive self-esteem is one of the psychological outcomes in children directly associated with parental confirmation and affection (Ellis, 2002). Therefore, based on the argument that a link exists between a mother's affectionate communication and her child's self-esteem, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Young adult self-esteem is positively related to a mother's communication of affection.

Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction refers to a cognitive, judgmental process and is defined as assessment of a person's quality of life accordingly to his/her chosen criteria (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985). Bowlby (1977) posits mothers' attachment as an

adaptive behavior and significant involving a process of natural selection that produces survival advantages. Early experiences with the mother allow infants to adapt to the mother's behavioral patterns and develop an internal representation of themselves. Interaction with the mother creates security in the child resulting in greater life satisfaction. An adolescent's perception of certain parenting behaviors (e.g., stress resolution, flexibility, communication of affection) is a type of adolescent life adaptation. Mother-child subsystems within the family are resources to aid in this adaptation.

Extant literature supports the relationship between parental behavior and a child's life satisfaction (Henry, 1994; Young, Miller, Norton & Hill, 1995). Young, et al (1995) supported mothers' supportive behavior (e.g., affection, acceptance) as having a strong impact on child behavioral outcomes. Parental support behaviors (e.g., warmth, concern, encouragement, physical affection) and parental control behaviors (e.g., punitiveness, induction, love withdrawal) are related to a child's life satisfaction contributing to overall well-being. Greater happiness, life satisfaction, and emotional closeness can be associated with maternal affection and support. Conversely, depression, lower quality of life, and maladaptive behavior can be linked to lack of affection and support from the mother (Henry, 1994). Henry's study indicated perceptions of parental support (e.g., intrinsic support, closeness) to be positively correlated to life satisfaction with the strongest correlations between maternal support and adolescents' life satisfaction. Stronger maternal relationships and maternal support are related to greater adolescent's life satisfaction and suggest that mothers are the more supportive parent.

The Satisfaction With Life Survey (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) is shown to be a valid and reliable measure of life satisfaction used with a wide range of age

groups. Utilizing the SWLS, our study of young adults should provide consistent results supporting the relationship between a mother's affection and a young adult's life satisfaction.

Adolescents' perceptions of the affectionate communication of maternal support (e.g., affection, acceptance, confirmation, etc.) are positively correlated to their life satisfaction (Young, Miller, Norton & Hill, 1995). Therefore, the affectionate communication given by the mother can also be associated with the child's life satisfaction, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Young adult life satisfaction is positively related to a mother's communication of affection.

CHAPTER THREE

Methods

Participants

The participants of this study were a convenience sample of 288 undergraduate college students recruited from undergraduate communication classes at a private university in south-central United States. To participate in the study respondents were required to be undergraduate-level college students and at least 18 years old. The student sample as a whole was relatively young ($M = 19.17$, $SD = 1.18$). Male participation was 158 (54.9%) subjects and female participation was 130 (45.1%) subjects. Eighty percent of this sample report to having one or more college credits with no degree and 20% of this sample report an education level of high school or equivalent level. The participants were predominantly White/Caucasian making up 72.2% of the sample, 9.4% Hispanic, 4.9% Black/African American, 11.8% Asian and 1.7% other. A majority (98%) of the students' mothers were living and 93% were between the ages of 40-60, with 5.2% being 30-40, 1.4% were 60-70 and .3% were between the ages of 70-80 years old. Participants varied in the frequency of contact they had with their mothers, ranging from 19.8% multiple times daily to 52.4% multiple times a week, 19.4% weekly, 5.9% multiple times a month, 1.7% once a month and .7% less than once a month.

Procedures

Participants reported to a classroom in an academic building of the selected campus. The introduction delivered by the researcher explained that the participants were taking

part in a study on affectionate communication. An announcement about the study was made before the class began and information packets describing the process and requirements of the study were handed out to all members present. Participants were given the opportunity to ask questions before taking part in the study. To ensure that the well-being of the students was protected, the information about the study and the procedures of the investigation was formally submitted to the university's institutional review board for approval. Student participants were offered extra course credit for participation. Because of the personal nature of the individuals' response, the participants of the survey were informed that their answers were anonymous. The objective of informing the participants of the confidentiality of the study was to promote truthfulness. The respondents were also informed that the information they provided would be destroyed within one month following the completion of the research project and that participants could choose to withdraw their information from the study at any time without penalty.

Measure

Affection

Affectionate communication was measured using the Affectionate Communication Index (ACI), a self-reporting measure of affectionate communication (Floyd & Morman 1998). The ACI was utilized to determine to what extent the participant would use certain affectionate behaviors as a way to express affection to others. A seven-point Likert scale with 18 questions measuring from "Never Do This" to "Always Do This" was utilized. Scale items included behaviors like "hug," "kiss," or "give him or her

compliments.” The results of this scale produced reliability statistics with a Cronbach alpha = .783.

Self-Esteem

The Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1995) measured the self-esteem of the participants. The RSE consists of a 7-point Likert scale with 10 questions (strongly agree to strongly disagree), measuring perceptions of respondent’s self-esteem. For example: “My life is going well,” and “I have what I want in life.” Data analysis from this scale presented a Cronbach alpha = .803.

Life Satisfaction

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) assessed the participant’s overall life satisfaction. The SWLS consists of 7 items and uses a 7-point Likert scale measuring from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree” with statements about satisfaction with life. The SWLS allowed for self-reported responses to items like “I have what I want in life,” and “I wish I had a different kind of life.” The life satisfaction variable returned with a Cronbach alpha = .717 .

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

The current study proposed two hypotheses predicting the relationship between a mother's communication of affection and a child's positive well-being. Results indicated support for a significant relationship between a mother's affectionate communication and her child's life satisfaction, but not child's self-esteem.

Hypothesis 1 predicted young adult self-esteem is positively related to a mother's communication of affection. However, a mother's affectionate communication was not significantly associated with a young adult's self-esteem, $r(285) = .078, p > .05$.

Hypothesis one was not supported. Hypothesis 2 predicted young adult life satisfaction is positively related to a mother's communication of affection. Results found a mother's communication of affection was positively related to a young adult's life satisfaction, $r(287) = .171, p < .05$. Hypothesis two was supported.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

A child's future development is dependent in part on the affection received from a mother. The affection obtained in infancy and adolescence with respect to protection, comfort, and love are also essential to development into young adulthood.

The current study was designed to assess the association between a mother's affection and her young adult child's well-being to determine if the relationship a young adult has with a mother is essential to the self-esteem and life satisfaction of the young adult. The finding that there was an association of a mother's affectionate communication to a young adult's life satisfaction concurred with extant literature and was supported. This study, however, did not support the positive relationship between a mother's affectionate communication to a young adult's self-esteem.

The relationship a mother has with her child is basic and evolutionary. Because the mother invested in her children to secure their viability, survival is improved and genetic material is passed on to future generations through reproduction (Floyd & Haynes, 2005). Floyd's Affection Exchange Theory (2001) posits affectionate communication as an adaptive behavior that can be a factor in humans' long-term viability and procreative success. The pairing of two humans as a result of affectionate exchange allows for shared resources benefiting each of them and could indicate that he or she was a good prospect for parenthood. This theory also indicates that parents show affection to their children in hopes of successful reproducing so that the parents' genes will be passed down to further generations of the family (Floyd, 2001). Furthermore, a mother is a child's early social

and emotional support and is the most important human contact that the child has available. Women are primary socializers for their children, responsible for sibling connection, fostering the care of each other, and sharing this social and emotional support (Ainsworth, 1964; Bianchi, 2006; Floyd & Haynes, 2005; Floyd, 2007; Tanner & Zihlman, 1976). Because affection is considered to be a fundamental need for humans the quality of the mother/child relationship can predict later emotional and physical development for the child (Floyd & Morman, 1997; Gonzalez, Barrull, & Marteles, 1998). The frequency of affectionate touch promotes a child's self-regulatory capacities. Additionally, affectionate communication from the mother to the child results in several important outcomes for the child. Self-care, friend selection, and the ability to express affection to others are skills gained from a positively engaged mother. Conversely, a disengaged mother may not be able to provide affectionate communication resulting in anxious and dismissive attachment because the child is deprived of the bonding experience with the mother. Inadequate affectionate communication can cause long-lasting psychological costs often associated with less happiness, social support, and relationship satisfaction (Floyd, 2002).

Multiple studies have been conducted linking the association of parental communication and behavior to a child's or adolescent's self-esteem. The current study attempted to determine the relationship between the mother's affectionate communication and the young adult's well-being. The communication of affection a mother is able to provide throughout her child's lifetime was measured to determine the influence she had on her young adult child. Data from the current study supports young adults' life satisfaction as positively associated with a mother's affectionate communication. Early

involvements with the mother allow infants to adapt to the mother's behavioral patterns and develop an internal representation of themselves (Bowlby, 1977). Maternal support in the form of acceptance, affirmation, and affection can be positively associated with a child's life satisfaction (Young, Miller, Norton, & Hill, 1995). However, the association of a mother's affection to her young adult's self-esteem was not supported. The evaluation made by a young adult with regard to himself/herself can express an attitude of approval or disapproval determining if the individual is considered capable, successful, significant, and worthy. A child is continually assessing his/her worth (Coopersmith, 1959), thus a young adult with great change in life and further proximity away from a mother may assess self-esteem in different ways. Newly independent young adults may evaluate self-worth with more influence given to the opinion of the outside social world. A mother's influence may be disregarded as new relationships are established (e.g., romantic relationships) resulting in self-esteem fluctuating temporarily, if not permanently.

The current study had a few limitations worth noting. First, due to the convenience sample of college students, the age range of participants was limited. Expanding the age range to include young adults outside of the typical college student age range may have resulted in an openness of participants to relay the influence a mother had on their well-being after the college years spent striving for independence. The race of the participants was primarily white. The surveys selected may not have allowed for the influence of other ethnicities' cultures. The ways in which a mother demonstrates affection to her child can vary in non-white mother/child relationships resulting in differences in survey results. The sex of the participant presented different results in the data collected and

analyzed. For example, a mother's affectionate communication was positively associated with a young adult female's self-esteem possibly due to a closer same sex relationship. Young adult men did not report a mother's affection to be associated with their self-esteem. The age of the male could be a factor in this outcome as young adult men may pull away from their families' influence sooner.

Further research in the area of a mother's affectionate communication could be explored through the mother's attachment style. Surveying mothers with attachment style measures may determine in what ways the attachment style is associated with affectionate communication. By surveying mothers and young adults, the mother's attachment style may be associated with a mother's communication of affection in influencing her young adult's attachment style. There is abundant research on mothers and infants and/or adolescents; more studies are needed on the mother's relationship to her young adult children.

Affectionate communication is an important human resource a mother invests in her child that later is reflected in that child's overall well-being. These interactions can be the result of a bonding from in utero through the college years. The importance of a mother's affection is significant and deserving of future research.

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