The Academics of Marriage:
Parents’ Marital Status Effects on Academic Performance Amongst High Schoolers
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Introduction

How do parents’ marital status affect high school students’ academic achievements? We aimed to see if the family dynamics at home affected a student’s performance in school. Our group came to a preconceived notion that students within divorced homes are more expected to step in and help around the house considering they are down one family member. Therefore, they would end up performing less efficiently in terms of academics. There are many key factors to a student performing well in high school, but a strong factor is having the support of two parents; our research aimed to figure out this system.

Methods

To obtain a clear understanding, we viewed and analyzed research papers with a similar research question to ours. We interviewed around 20 high school students through Facebook and asked them questions in regards to their academics and the marital status of their parents.

Questions included:
- What was your GPA?
- Are your parents married or divorced?
- On a scale of 1-10, how much do you think the marriage of your parents affects your grades?

Some of our responses included:
- GPA 60.0 and my parents are divorced, “8 out of 10”
- GPA 95.4 and my parents are married, “9 out of 10”
- GPA 96.65 and my parents are divorced, “4 out of 10”
- GPA 78.27 and my parents are married, “6 out of 10”
- GPA 91.00 and my parents are married, “8 out of 10”

Based on a research paper done by B.D. Ham, high school seniors with married parents have significantly higher GPAs than those with divorced parents. Based on Ham’s research, students from intact families outperformed students from divorced families with nearly 11% higher GPAs. This research supports our hypothesis. However, the results are inconsistent because in many instances amongst groups of high schoolers, students with divorced parents end up outperforming students that live in married households.

Mean GPAs of Current Family Structures for All Students from Intact, Single-Mother, Single-Father, and Remarried Families for Males and Females, Separately. Number of Students in Parentheses (N=189)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>GPA-All</th>
<th>GPA-Males</th>
<th>GPA-Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intact</td>
<td>3.4088</td>
<td>3.2254</td>
<td>3.5444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-Mother</td>
<td>2.9056</td>
<td>2.8780</td>
<td>3.2159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-Father</td>
<td>2.8856</td>
<td>2.8688</td>
<td>3.4567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remarried</td>
<td>2.8594</td>
<td>2.9577</td>
<td>2.6040</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion

Based on our research and findings, although there are more factors to be considered such as gender, social status, and extra-curricular interests, it is evident that those who live in single-parent homes tend to perform at a lower standard in comparison to students who live in married households.

In terms of a sociological perspective, our research question ties strongly with an interactionist perspective. An interactionist such as Max Weber [4] would say that to make a statement of students’ academic achievement in relationship to parents’ marital status, we would have to factor in other aspects that each individual endures in life.

Family weighs heavily on academics, and the focus and concentration one has in school can alternate depending on the status of his or her family. Children of divorced families are less likely to enroll in college compared to intact families (Ham, 2004, p. 181). Therefore, parents should now be aware that divorce not only interrupts family structure but also academic abilities.

References/Acknowledgements


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