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IMPACT OF COMMUNICATION PATTERNS ON PERCEIVED DIFFERENCES
IN ATTITUDES OF ADOLESCENTS AND THEIR PARENTS
TOWARD CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Mary Beth R. Howard

August 1988

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Grateful appreciation is due Dr. Priscilla White who, through a class eight years ago, planted the seed and stimulated my interest in undertaking this doctoral program. She has been a constant source of encouragement, humor, and friendship over the years and so graciously agreed to serve as my major professor after Dr. Gary Peterson left UTK for employment elsewhere.

Sincere acknowledgment also is expressed to the remaining members of my committee, Dr. Frances E. Andrews, Dr. Jacquelyn H. McInnis, Dr. Mick Nordquist, and Dr. John R. Ray, for guidance and assistance in completing this program. A word of gratitude is extended to John Cofer who served as my computer consultant and helped me wade through the intricacies of analyzing my data.

A very special word of thanks is due my family who have been very supportive throughout the many years of my educational endeavors and have had a unique opportunity to see the concept of "lifelong learning" in action. My husband deserves a medal of honor for his endurance, patience, and proficiency at ironing his shirts and pants. His reward will be in finally having his wife and children through college and the absence of tuition payments to the University of Tennessee (at least for a while).

ABSTRACT

The quality of relationships between parents and their adolescents has received considerable attention by scholars in the fields of individual and family studies. The focus of this study was to examine the presence or absence of an "actual" or a "perceived" generation/communication gap between parents and their adolescent children. An investigation of parent and adolescent attitudes toward sexual behavior and parental management behavior was also conducted. In addition, the researcher was concerned with the relationship of perceptions of intergenerational communication patterns (openness of exchange, problems in communication, and parental management behavior) with the accuracy with which parents and their adolescents ascribe attitudinal beliefs to each other.

Individual survey data were collected from a sample of 47 high school sophomores and their mothers and fathers. Analyses were conducted on the dimensions of parent/adolescent communication patterns and parent/adolescent attitudes toward contemporary issues. Analyses were also conducted for gender differences in intergenerational dyads. Pearson product-moment correlations were used to analyze the relationship between perceptions of communication and accuracy with which parents and adolescents perceive attitude differences.

A major conclusion of the study was that parents and adolescents do differ as to their self-reported attitudes regarding sexual behavior and parental management behavior, with adolescents tending to be somewhat more liberal in their attitudes. Parents and adolescents also exhibited a high level of accuracy in perceiving what the others' attitudes would be, with adolescents and fathers being somewhat more accurate than mothers.

A further conclusion was that parents perceived more openness and fewer problems in family communication than adolescents, and sons and daughters perceived more openness with their mothers than fathers. Finally, no relationship was found between parents' and adolescents' perceptions of their communication patterns and their perceptions of differences in their attitudes.

These research results seem to have implications for theory and practice in anticipating and explaining the changes in levels of family communication in response to developmental stimuli throughout the life cycle. Further research is warranted in the area of identifying levels of satisfaction expected in family communication.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The quality of relationships among parents and their adolescents perhaps has received more attention in research than any other family developmental stage. An interest in parent-adolescent relationships and the presence or absence of conflict is certainly not unique to this generation. Lambert, Rothschild, Altland and Green (1972) attributed the following statement to Socrates in 500 B.C.:

Our youth now love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority, disrespect for older people. Children nowadays are tyrants. They contradict their parents, chatter before company, gobble their food, and tyrannize their teachers (p. 279).

Parent-adolescent relationships have been portrayed in some research as periods of storm and stress (Erikson, 1968; Freud, 1958; Hall, 1904; Lewin, 1948; Sullivan, 1953) due to such factors as increasing internal conflict, conflicting expectations of new sex roles, rebelliousness versus blind conformity, and the normative crisis of identity resolution. Other researchers (Acock & Bengston, 1980; Bandura, 1964; Benedict, 1938; Conger, 1977; Mead, 1970) have chosen to take an approach which promotes adolescence as a period during which stress or conflict between the adolescent and his or her parents is not necessarily greater than in any other developmental period. Mass media has promoted its view of

parent-adolescent relationships with the knowledge that problematic, deviant, and stressful turbulence sells more copy than the less complicated, transitional conflict which occurs as a necessary part of learning about oneself and the surrounding world (Bengston, 1970).

Much of the work in this area has concentrated on the differences in attitudes and values of parents and their adolescents. The general hypothesis seemed to be that the presence of attitude differences was indicative of conflict in parent-adolescent relationships. However, there are varying reports as to the extent, direction, and content of attitude differences (Acock & Bengston, 1980; Coleman, 1980; Conger, 1977; Lerner, Karson, Meisels, & Knapp, 1975).

Perhaps the most interesting finding in the research in this area was that cross-generational perceptions of attitudes were just as influential on the quality of intergenerational relations as were the actual differences in attitudes between cohorts (Bengston & Kuypers, 1971). This finding raises several questions as to the nature and transmission of attitudes within a family. Adolescents' attitudes may, in actuality, differ from those of their parents. On the other hand, adolescents and parents may be inclined to perceive inaccurately what the other really believes about certain issues. Communication patterns within the family setting could conceivably have an impact on the

accuracy of perceptions in terms of the attitudes of parents and their adolescents.

Communication is generally accepted as one of the most crucial facets of interpersonal relationships. Virginia Satir (1972) stated that "communication is the greatest single factor affecting a person's health and his relationship to others." Barnes and Olson (1985) contended that communication as a major dimension of family life is particularly critical during the adolescent stage of the life cycle. Families found to function best at the adolescent stage had, as a primary resource, good parent-adolescent communication patterns including accurate perceptions of their relationship. In contrast, families with higher discrepancies among family members' perceptions of their relationships experienced higher levels of conflict and stress (Olson & McCubbin, 1983).

Therefore, an examination of the impact of family communication patterns on actual versus perceived attitudes of parents and their adolescents should address a number of issues. In so doing, it may be possible to alleviate some of the confusion regarding the presence or absence of a communication/generation gap.

Statement of the Problem

Given the popular notion of the problems inherent in parent and adolescent relationships, this study was concerned

with the actual versus perceived generation/communication gap and the effect family communication patterns might have on the extent of any gap. As a means of determining the presence or absence of a gap, an investigation of parent and adolescent attitudes toward certain contemporary issues (i.e., sexual behavior and parental control) known to be areas of possible intergenerational conflict was conducted. Of particular interest were the perceived attitudes attributed by parents and adolescents to one another.

This study examined various components present in intergenerational interaction which included the dimensions of communication/problem-solving skills, degree of openness for information exchange between parent and adolescent, techniques used by parents to manage their adolescent, and difficulties or hindrances that might be present in intergenerational communication. Analyses also were conducted for gender differences in intergenerational dyads (i.e., mother/son, mother/daughter, father/son, and father/daughter).

Objectives

The focus of this research was to examine the presence or absence of an "actual" or a "perceived" generation/communication gap between parents and their adolescent children. In addition the researcher was concerned with the degree to which intergenerational communication patterns such

as openness of exchange, problems or hindrances in communication, and parental management or control behavior affect the accuracy with which parents and their adolescents ascribe attitudinal beliefs to each other. For the purposes of this research, the term "actual" is indicative of the individual's self-perception of reality as it relates to his/her attitudes on contemporary issues or his/her perceptions of the communication that is occurring in the family.

More specifically, the primary objectives of this research and the accompanying secondary objectives were as follows:

1. To determine the differences between "actual" (self-reported) attitudes of parents and adolescents toward selected contemporary issues.
2. To determine the differences between "actual" (self-reported) attitudes of parents and adolescents and their perceptions of the attitudes of one another.
 - a. To determine the differences between "actual" (self-reported) attitudes of adolescents and adolescents' perceptions of parents' attitudes regarding contemporary issues.
 - b. To determine the differences between "actual" (self-reported) attitudes of parents and parents' perceptions of adolescents' attitudes regarding contemporary issues.

3. To determine the accuracy of parents' and adolescents' perceptions of differences between attitudes of parents and adolescents.
 - a. To determine the differences between adolescents' perceptions of parents' attitudes and parents' "actual" (self-reported) attitudes regarding contemporary issues.
 - b. To determine the differences between parents' perceptions of adolescents' attitudes and adolescents' "actual" (self-reported) attitudes regarding contemporary issues.
4. To determine if differences between parents' and adolescents' attitudes toward contemporary issues are in the specific areas of sexual behavior or parental management behavior.
5. To determine the differences between the perceptions of parents and adolescents in terms of family communication patterns.
 - a. To determine if differences in perceptions of family communication patterns are related to gender in specific aspects of communication (i.e., openness of communication, problems in communication, parental management behavior).
 - b. To determine if differences in perceptions of family communication patterns are in specific aspects of communication (i.e., openness of

communication, problems in communication, parental management behavior).

6. To determine the relationship between self-reports of aspects of family communication patterns (i.e., openness of communication, problems in communication, parental management behavior) and the gap between "actual" attitudes and perceptions of parent/adolescent attitudes (i.e., sexual behavior, parental management).

Rationale

Communication is one of the most fundamental aspects of all social relationships regardless of whether it is between husband and wife, parent and child, or any other combination of individuals involved in continuing relationships. Family communication is believed to be one of the major elements of family interaction and thus serves as an index of family operations and behavior (Bienvenu, 1969; Rausch, et al, 1979). Although communication between parents and their adolescent children has been a frequent topic of research, it remains a timely subject for investigation when one considers the continuing debate over whether or not there is an intergenerational gap and if that gap is a result of actual attitudinal differences or unclear messages and misperceptions.

According to previous research (Dubbe', 1965), communication is a major dimension of family life and, as

such, has the potential for presenting problems in every parent-child association. Communication problems are seldom simple or single; rather, they represent most frequently a very complex entity. Olson and McCubbin (1983) found the lack of congruence between family members' perceptions of their relationships and interactions and the actual reality that existed in the family to be a factor in increased levels of intrafamily stress. Because of the potential impact of such a widening gap, communication should be studied in the context of its potential for resolving discrepant perspectives and realities of family members. It is particularly critical during the stage of the family life cycle when adolescent children are present. This stage is a period in which parent-adolescent conflicts may arise as teens increasingly assert their independence from their families (Robin, 1981).

To date, investigators have given various explanations as to the perpetuation of the idea of an intergenerational gap. Various theories include: (1) a taken-for-granted belief that there are cohort contrasts between generations in attitudes (Lerner & Knapp, 1975; Bengston, 1971); (2) a deliberate, polarized misattribution on the part of parents who use this as a shielding mechanism (Acock & Bengston, 1980); (3) a normal consequence of ontogenetic development including the issue of generational stake (Adelson, 1970; Bengston & Kuypers, 1971; Grando & Ginsberg, 1976; Jessop,

1981; Lerner & Spanier, 1980; Norrell, 1984); or (4) misattribution due to the lack of communication between generations (Acock & Bengston, 1980; Lerner, et al, 1975). It is the latter two explanations that are the focus of this research. The impetus for the present study is not whether there are actual attitudinal differences between the two generations. Rather the impetus for this study is on the "perceived" differences that appear to be more predictive of behavior between generations and effects of parental influence (Acock & Bengston, 1980; Lerner & Knapp, 1975).

Attempts by social scientists to examine the generation/communication gap have produced several contradictory results. Some research implied considerable attitude differences between parents and adolescents (Acock & Bengston, 1980; Gallagher, 1976; Thompson, Clark & Gunn, 1985). Other findings suggested relatively high levels of intergenerational similarity (Acock & Bengston, 1977; Acock & Bengston, 1978; Kandel & Lesser, 1972; Lerner & Knapp, 1975; Thomas, 1974; Troll & Bengston, 1978; Troll, Neugarten & Kraines, 1969).

These contradictory results could be attributed to methodological differences and limitations in the cited research. Previous investigators have been limited by not having actual and perceived responses available from all persons involved--mother, father, and adolescent. Various studies have measured either the stated opinions of one or

both parents or the child's perception of that opinion, but rarely both.

Biggs (1975), for example, surveyed only the perceptions of parents while Vandenburg and Konrad (1974) surveyed only adolescents' perceptions. In addition, most studies looking at communication between parents and adolescents specifically on matters of sexual behavior have used college students as subjects (Fisher, 1986).

Other studies have investigated whether or not there are substantial differences in patterns of parent/adolescent communication between mothers and fathers and their adolescents. Grotevant & Cooper (1983) and Steinberg (1981) found mother-adolescent communication patterns differed substantially from father-adolescent communication. The largest gap, however, in the research on intergenerational relations remains the unavailability of research that directly relates family communication patterns to the presence or absence of a perceived gap in attitudes of parents and their adolescents (Coopersmith, Regan & Dick, 1975).

Theoretical Framework

Because of the immense complexity of individual and family behavior, this author has chosen to select assumptions and concepts from two of the existing theoretical frameworks for studying parent-adolescent relationships

within the family. The theoretical frameworks chosen were symbolic interaction and systems theory, including the Circumplex Model of Family Systems. A multidisciplinary framework allows for the integration of the dynamic reciprocities of parent-child interactions over the sociohistorical context of an individual's development during the lifespan (Lerner & Spanier, 1978).

The symbolic interaction theoretical framework has several basic assumptions applicable to this research. Those assumptions include: (1) humans are active as well as reactive in the environment and construct their own meaning; (2) man is a valuing and thinking individual and mind, self, and society greatly overlap; (3) one person can assume the role of another; and, (4) humans live in a symbolic environment as well as a physical environment and they acquire complex sets of symbols in their minds (Durr, Leigh, Day & Constantine, 1979).

Symbolic interactionists hold that the perceptual factor accounts for the unique interpretations that individual family members create to explain certain events (Campbell, Adams & Dobson, 1984). If the interpretations are discrepant, then there are likely to be difficulties in family relationships (Olson & McCubbin, 1983). Bengtson (1971) asserted that a basic premise of social science is that one's perceptions of others determine one's behavior toward those persons.

According to Gottman (1982), the symbolic interactionist's conception of the family is that the family is a unity of interacting persons, each occupying a position(s) within the family to which a number of roles are assigned. This network of interrelated roles involves intimate communication (Nye & Berardo, 1966). The individual, parent or child, perceives norms or role expectations, held collectively or individually by other family members, for his attributes or behavior. In a given situation, such as an adolescent's attitude toward parental management, an individual defines these role expectations in view of their source (reference group) and of his own self-conception. This phenomenon illustrates the necessity for studying perceptions and interaction patterns of all family members involved in order to understand the relationship that exists within the family.

This is further reiterated by Schvaneveldt (1966) who stated that "nearly all of the concepts in the symbolic interactionist approach refer to the action and or interaction in relation to the internal processes of the family (p. 109)." The very term "interaction" emphasizes the concept of "process" where family members are viewed as active, rather than passive, in adapting to situations occurring within and outside of the family. During the process of interaction a person anticipates how a certain

behavior will be viewed by the other and alters his/her behavior accordingly.

As previously stated, an individual's feelings and perceptions undoubtedly influence his/her relations with others. Symbolic interactionists argue that when assessing the quality of parent-child relationships, it is the individual's perception of that relationship that is most important. In other words, if individuals define situations as real, they are real in their consequences (Savin-Williams & Small, 1986). Campbell, Adams, & Dobson (1984) included the perceptions of the reality of affection and communication within a parent-child relationship as central to measuring the connectedness and satisfaction of that ongoing relationship.

Communication, according to interactionists, is central to the symbolic presentations that comprise all human interactions. Communication may be viewed as a symbolic transactional process, or as the process of creating and sharing meanings. Parents and their children use symbols to transmit messages and the resulting transactions have a mutual impact (Galvin & Brommel, 1986). Out of the varying patterns of parent-adolescent communication, families may evolve different types of environments and different perceptions of their parent-adolescent relationships. In the present investigation, it was those perceptions of patterns of parent-adolescent communication that were of interest.

The assumptions of systems theory applicable to this study include: (1) all behavior is communication--one cannot not communicate in a system, and (2) the family as a system is relatively closed, boundary-maintaining and equilibrium-seeking, but is, at the same time, morphogenic, purposive, and adaptive (Steinglass, 1978).

Systems theory has been a basic framework used to explain many domains other than the family. The basic concepts of this theory are, however, quite applicable to family systems and this research. Though systems theory includes such concepts as change, stability, purposiveness, cohesion, adaptability, and permeability, it is the concept of communication with which this research is most concerned. Systems theory views all behavior as communication. Family systems, specifically, are information-processing organizations whose members are tied together by information exchange.

Communication patterns within families may be symmetrical, complementary, or parallel depending on the degree to which exchanges represent similar or opposite behavior. As these patterns are repeated, they become redundant and, as such, provide a safeguard against error and misunderstanding in communication. The family then must deal with finding a balance between too little or too much redundancy so as to avoid problems of message, confusion, poorly defined goals and rules, or even stagnation. Those

families with adolescent children who incorrectly perceive feelings, goals, needs and attitudes of each other might be expected, because of these misperceptions, to experience greater levels of stress and intergenerational conflict (Olson & McCubbin, 1983).

Communication occurs whenever an event in one system (individual) affects, influences, or alters an event in another system (individual or individuals). Within a family, each member--whether through words, gestures, silences, actions, or even presence or absence--affects other family members (Leslie, Huston, & Johnson, 1986; Rausch, Greif, & Nugent, 1979).

According to the dynamic-interaction model of Lerner and Spanier (1978), individual development may only be understood in the context of the constant reciprocal interaction between a changing person and his or her changing environment. This environment is of necessity composed of other people, themselves developing within a dynamic environmental setting, thus providing continuous circularity (Bengston & Troll, 1978). Parent-adolescent relationships are affected by community variables, family factors, individual characteristics and ultimately the microsocial patterning of ongoing interactions (Gjerde, 1986). These relationships are nested within larger social entities. It is not necessarily known how much these larger social entities

affect the general quality of parent-adolescent relationships (Grotevant & Cooper, 1985; Montemayor, 1986).

These two frameworks--symbolic interaction and systems theory--address social interactions that may occur within and outside immediate family boundaries. Systems theory can be used to explain why particular forms of parent-adolescent relationships emerge and symbolic interaction answers the meaning assigned within the interaction itself. The feedback mechanism of systems theory can then be used to explain why certain self-correcting adjustments are made such as adapting to a corrected misperception of a parent regarding his or her adolescent child's attitudinal base. This phenomenon is quite compatible with symbolic interaction's information-processing role of individuals in their environment (Stover, 1979).

Finally, the inclusion of the Circumplex Model of Family Systems proposed by Olson, Russell and Sprenkle (1983) provides a framework for looking at how families utilize the mechanism of communication to share changing preferences, needs, attitudes and feelings in order to facilitate movement on a cohesion-adaptability model of balanced families. This model, an extension of systems, family development, and symbolic interaction theories, focuses on three salient dimensions of family dynamics--adaptability, cohesion and communication--and enables one to classify families as to the degree of balance they experience.

Use of the Circumplex Model for assessing marital and family systems has been criticized for the lack of agreement among researchers regarding its validity and for the limited empirical support for this view. However, since the focus of this research is on the dimension of family communication rather than on the dimensions of family cohesion and adaptability, the model still merits inclusion as a means of describing the important communication component in this study.

According to this model, effective communication within the family facilitates movement to, and maintenance of, systems at the desired (balanced) level on the two major dimensions of the model. In addition, ineffective communication minimizes and may even prevent movement toward balanced levels of adaptability and cohesion.

Galvin and Brommel (1986), likewise, viewed the family as a system in which communication regulates cohesion and adaptability by a flow of message patterns or skills through a defined network of evolving interdependent relationships. Positive communication skills (i.e., empathy, reflective listening, supportive comments) enable families to share with each other their changing preferences and needs as they may relate to cohesion and adaptability. On the other hand, negative communication patterns (i.e., double binds, double messages, criticism) minimize the ability of family

members to share their feelings, thus restricting their movement on these dimensions (Olson & McCubbin, 1983).

Olson & McCubbin (1983) found that communication could be linked to balanced family types and change in the dimensions of cohesion and adaptability. Balanced families tended to have more positive communication skills than did extreme families. These skills enabled balanced families to change their levels on these dimensions in response to developmental or ontogenetic stimuli throughout the life cycle, particularly during the adolescent and launching stages.

A final concept of the Circumplex Model relevant to this research is the notion of circular causality adopted from systems theory (Olson & McCubbin, 1983). This notion helps in explaining the relationship between family conflict or stress and discrepant family perceptions (communication/generation gap). The impact of various developmental changes or other stressors produce different effects on the various subsystems in the family and results in differing perceptions among members. This perceptual factor contributes to the unique interpretations that parents and adolescents create and may explain the presence or absence of attitudinal differences within the family and the behavior that may occur as a result of those attitudes.

Nominal Definitions

The primary concerns of this study centered around the actual and perceived attitudes toward certain contemporary issues, communication between and within generations, and the presence or absence of an intergenerational communication gap. Actual attitudes toward contemporary issues were those obtained through self-report and were presumed to represent the realistic views of those respondents toward certain stated issues. Perceived attitudes toward contemporary issues were those attributed to another person and may or may not have represented that person's actual views toward the issue.

For the purpose of this study, contemporary issues were defined as current sociological topics about which there was likely to be disagreement between parent and adolescent generations. The attitude statements chosen represent contemporary topics concerning sexual behavior and parental management behavior.

According to Bienvenu (1969), communication consists of any messages or information (verbal or nonverbal) between the members of a group of two or more persons. As such it is a vehicle for social interaction and the process of transmitting feelings, attitudes, facts, beliefs, and ideas between human beings. More specifically, interpersonal communication includes all the means by which individuals

influence and understand one another--either on conscious, preconscious, or unconscious levels.

Although many definitions of a generation or communication gap exist, the definition used for the present study is that the "gap" denotes significant intergroup discrepancies along attitude or belief continua. The intergroup discrepancies further refer to the alleged differences between today's older and younger generations in attitudes toward various contemporary issues and toward parent/adolescent communication patterns.

Because the study focused on intergenerational relations, it was necessary to delineate the various cohorts involved in the interactions. A cohort refers to persons born within the same generation and is sometimes referred to as a "birth cohort" (Lerner & Spanier, 1980). For the purposes of this research, the two major cohort groups identified were adolescents and their parents.

Intergenerational relationships are those relationships occurring across generations and include the intergenerational cohorts of adolescents (high school sophomores) and the parents of those adolescents.

Open family communication focuses on the freedom of the flow of factual and emotional information in family relationships. More specifically, this dimension measures the more positive aspects of parent-adolescent communication such as congruent messages, empathy, closeness, supportive

statements, reflective listening, affection and warmth.

Problems in family communication focuses on negative aspects of communication, hesitancy to share, negative styles of interaction, and selectivity and caution in what is shared. Specific illustrations of problems include incongruent messages, distance, lack of empathy, and criticism. Parental management techniques refer to those communication behaviors that relate to the way decision-making or problem-solving situations between parents and adolescents are handled. This dimension includes such concepts as induction, negotiation, control, and trust or reliance.

Assumptions

In the development of the research problem with the theoretical framework and methodological approaches used, certain assumptions were made. These assumptions include:

1. One's perception of another person(s) determines behavior toward that person.
2. Cross-generational perceptions are as influential on the quality of intergenerational relations as are the actual differences in philosophy, attitudes, and actions between cohorts.
3. Attitudes toward contemporary sociological issues are formed in part by interactions with significant others and reference groups.

4. Actual and perceived attitudes of parents and adolescents toward contemporary sociological issues can be ascertained from self-report data.

5. Patterns of family communication can be ascertained from data reported by parents and their adolescent children, and at best, represent the individuals' perceptions of those communication patterns.

Limitations of the Study

The major limitations of the study were those common to self-report studies and self-selected samples. The exclusive self-report nature of the questionnaire method and the self-selection due to volunteer participation in the sample must be taken into consideration when drawing conclusions from the study's results. Conclusions must be tempered by questions raised by the unrepresentativeness of the parental sample. It is not known what effects would have been obtained had the responses from those parents not returning questionnaires been available. One may speculate that the parents who did return the questionnaires were a more select group, certainly more cooperative, and perhaps more "child-centered" as well.

Although the sample was fairly heterogenous with regard to educational and income levels, respondents were basically representative of a fairly conservative white population living in a rural, small town setting. Generalizability of the results must be limited to intact, two-parent families

with adolescents living at home. Therefore, the findings from this study may not be applicable to other situations and the results should be generalized with caution.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Of the phenomenon about which social scientists gather, analyze, and report data, there are few of more relevance today than presentations on the "generation/communication gap." This somewhat amorphous term has been used to describe a variety of phenomena ranging from a distinct clash of attitudes and values to a lack of communication between parents and their adolescent children. Literature is replete with various points of view, including impressionistic evidence about the gap, anecdotal evidence, literary essays, as well as traditional empirical and theoretical writings of social-psychological investigators.

The first section of this chapter focuses on research that has attempted to attach a definition to the widely publicized generation/communication gap. In addition studies are reviewed that offer explanations for the existence of such a gap from both sociological and psychosocial perspectives.

The second section of this chapter reviews research which focuses on the extent of a generation/communication gap and the directions such differences may take. This literature includes the concepts of perceived versus actual differences, between or within differences, intensity or

direction of differences, and actual content of the differences.

In the final section of this chapter, studies are reviewed that specifically address the relationship between parent-adolescent styles of communication and the presence or absence of a gap. Although a lesser amount of research attention has been devoted to this particular relationship, there are studies which give credence to the supposition that how parents and adolescents communicate on a daily basis may affect the degree of the gap between the generations.

Definitions of and Explanations for a Generation/Communication Gap

Perhaps one of the most general definitions of the "generation/communication gap" is that of "discontinuity between generations" (Bengston, 1970). Such discontinuity has been documented at least as far back in recorded history as the era of Plato and Aristotle. The term "generation/communication gap" would suggest that persons perceive rather substantial differences in orientations between individuals of different age groups. As a result, these differences have behavioral consequences such as competition, conflict, and coercion between age cohorts (Bengston, 1971). There is still great debate as to whether these differences should be referred to as "great gap" or "gap as an illusion" (Bengston, 1970).

According to Freeman (1972) the term "generation gap" is an amorphous one which has been used to describe phenomena ranging from a clash of values to a lack of communication between adults and youth. Such a description often, rightly or not, connotes the idea of ubiquity--all adolescents and adults are in conflict about everything.

On the other hand, some researchers (Bengston, 1971; Troll, 1970) stated that the term "generation gap" is a misnomer since that to which it refers is neither "generational" nor a "gap." On the one hand, differences within generations may be more pronounced than differences between generations. Another point of view is that it may not be clear to what the term "generation" refers and contrasts observed between age groups may be more related to education than age.

As far as the term "gap" is concerned, it appears that the more important context is that a "gap" is perceived to exist (Adelson, 1970; Bengston & Kuypers, 1971). What does appear to be true is that there is a set of perceived differences between the attitudes and behaviors of one's own cohort and those of other age groups and such differences constitute the "gap." Biggs (1975) viewed the generation/communication gap as a continuous, normative variable used to describe different degrees of parent and adolescent agreement.

According to research, explanations for intergenerational gaps can be attributed to psychological or sociological phenomena. Erikson (1959, 1963) believed that adolescence is a stage in life during which the individual establishes a sense of personal identity or self-definition. During this ontogenetic development, adolescents are involved in expressing their uniqueness and, therefore, may view parents' or other adults' goals or attitudes from a different perspective (Bengston & Troll, 1978; Lerner et al. 1975; Lerner & Knapp, 1975).

Elkind (1967) suggested that as a consequence of adolescent egocentrism, adolescents believe they possess attitudes about their society which are special and unique to them and, therefore, different from their parents. The adolescent's emotional need to establish an identity leads him/her to show fidelity toward a set of attitudes which allows him/her to feel that an identity-giving role has been achieved (Grando & Ginsberg, 1976; Lerner & Knapp, 1975; Norrell, 1984). This set of attitudes may be discrepant from parents which leads to the parents' resistance to perceiving the actual points of attitude divergence between themselves and their adolescent. Some researchers (Armstrong & Scotzin, 1974; Lerner et al. 1975; Lerner & Knapp, 1975) have stated that distortions and discrepancies represent a necessary structural component of the stage/role-specific functioning

of each generational group and are needed for this process of self-differentiation.

From the functionalists perspective, some degree of generational conflict inevitably arises from differences in stages of personality development between age cohorts (Bengston, Furlong, & Laufer, 1974). Likewise, differences may occur due to contrasts in social positions between younger and older members of society. These differences may simply reflect the attempt of adolescents to adapt to and prepare for entrance into adult roles as they follow the parent generation (Zey-Ferrell et al. 1978). According to this perspective, some conflict is unavoidable, arising as a function of developmental contrasts in persons who happen to be born into different historical time periods (Bengston, 1970; Bengston et al. 1974; Bengston & Kuypers, 1971; Bengston & Troll, 1978; Conger & Petersen, 1984; Jacobsen, Berry & Olson, 1975; Troll, Neugarten & Kraines, 1969).

Tied in with the ontogenetic explanation of intergenerational differences is the psychosociological explanation of "generational or developmental stake." In attempting to emphasize one's individuality, the adolescent may perceive differences which are not present. In contrast, the older parental generation, in attending to issues of family continuity and perpetuation, may tend to underemphasize potential differences. According to Bengston

(1971), youth have a "vested interest" in emphasizing differences while their parents have a "stake" in minimizing them. It is almost as if parents feel their lives have come to nothing if their adolescent children reject parental values and attitudes. While the adolescent presses for minimization of external control, the press of the middle generation is in the opposite direction of guaranteeing generational continuity through influence on the adolescent (Bengston & Kuypers, 1971; Bengston & Troll, 1978). This developmental myth can contribute to increasing the gap between what is perceived and what is real in generational differences.

Thompson et al. (1985) used Erikson's stages of identity and intimacy for adolescents and generativity for middle-aged parents as a basis for explaining the "developmental stake" phenomenon. Jessop (1981) viewed generational differences in perception as parents' developmental need for validation in contrast to youth's need for emancipation. Parents who have invested time and energy in maintaining a family would be likely to report a closely integrated family and a relationship in which they still maintain influence over their children. After years of investing in their children, parents appear to have more "at stake" in maintaining a continuing relationship than do their maturing children (Hagestad, 1982). The effort and commitment parents have "invested" in raising their children

and their present diminished influence over them (as well as the parents' perceived shortening of their own lives) are seen as important contributors to the parents' tendency to minimize generational differences.

Adolescents, on the other hand, may be seen as a product of the striving for independence associated with their stage of life and peer orientations. Therefore, they are more likely to believe they are independent of their families and to exaggerate what differences may exist (Jessop, 1981; Newcomer & Udry, 1985). Adolescents are looking forward to an entire life ahead and need to express their uniqueness, at least with respect to their parents. As such they may view their parents' goals from a different perspective (Troll et al. 1969). Thompson et al. (1985) confirmed that adolescents do perceive less intergenerational continuity in attitudes than do their parents.

Parents and adolescents may perceive the distance between them differently because they hold different lineage positions within the family. Biological, social, and psychological concerns naturally change over time and have to be expected to influence one's perceptions of intergenerational differences (Thompson et al. 1985). From both generational and life cycle perspectives, the personalities as well as the values of middle-aged parents are likely to be quite different from those of their adolescent children (Troll et al. 1969).

Grotevant and Cooper (1985) supported the position that adolescence is a period of gradual renegotiation between parent and adolescent. Rather than accepting the asymmetrical authority of early and middle childhood, the adolescent desires to move toward, potentially, a peerlike mutuality with his parents as the adolescent nears adulthood.

Extent and Direction of a
Generation/Communication Gap

The extent of a generation/communication gap appears to be associated with a variety of sociological phenomena. The rapidity with which social changes are occurring, the replacement of intrafamily communication with the one-way communication of television, and the extended period of adolescent economic dependence upon parents have been proposed as possible influences on the extent of a gap (Lambert et al. 1972). The extent of generational differences may be expected to vary from one time period to another, primarily as a result of the speed and pervasiveness of social change (Conger & Petersen, 1984). According to Vandenberg and Konrad (1974), however, the extent of a gap may be no different from those present in the past, but the mass media have served to make these differences more obvious to everyone.

Various researchers have reported on differences in attitude intensity as opposed to attitude direction;

differences between or within age cohorts; gender-related differences; differences related to socioeconomic factors; issue specificity of differences; and, finally, perceived versus actual differences between the generations. It is, perhaps, the latter concept that has received the most attention in research over the past 15-20 years.

In their research on the perceived versus actual intergenerational gap, Vandenberg and Konrad (1974) found a measure of misconception to be associated with the phenomenon of the gap. One-fourth of the adolescents surveyed perceived a gap between themselves and their parents. Regarding other adolescents, however, nearly one-half felt a gap existed for other members of their generation. According to Freeman (1972), a vast majority (three-fourths) of parents do not believe a generation gap exists--at least not in their own family. On the other hand, the majority of students believed that a gap does exist.

It is possible, according to Gallagher (1976) that members of different generations apply inaccurate analyses to each other by miscalculating the extent of attitudinal disparity between them. Perceived generationalism, therefore, may be as important as actual since both can contribute to the "felt" distance between age cohorts. Various researchers have hypothesized that generationalism is partly imaginary as it is expected that adolescents will ascribe attitudinal differences between themselves and their

parents which are overstated (Acock & Bengston, 1980; Gallagher, 1976; Lerner et al. 1975).

Both adolescents and parents misperceive the extensiveness of the division between them with adolescents significantly overestimating major differences and parents significantly underestimating them (Bengston & Kuypers, 1971; Lerner & Knapp, 1975; Meisels & Cantor, 1971; Newcomer & Udry, 1985; Thompson et al. 1985). It is interesting to note, however, that adolescents misperceived fewer attitudes than did parents and by a smaller margin (Lerner et al. 1975).

Regarding specific areas of misperceptions, Newcomer and Udry (1985) found teenagers to substantially underestimate their mother's liberalism and mothers tend to overestimate the degree to which they have served as an influence in the children's sexual education. In the area of ideals and values, parents were less likely to perceive significant differences than were their adolescent children (Conger & Petersen, 1984). Likewise, Davies and Kandel (1981) discovered that perceptual measures inflate estimates of interpersonal influence when it comes to accepting or rejecting parental values and attitudes. These inflated estimates operate in the expected direction with parents overestimating their influence on their adolescent's acquisition of parental values.

Discrepancies exist between the generations in areas other than attitudes and values. Miller et al. (1986) reported that parents' accounts of their behavior are not congruent with their adolescent's perceptions of their parents' behavior. It appears that differing perceptions of family realities and the varied effects of these perceptions are increasingly recognized facts to be considered. In other research (Jessop, 1981) parents had a consistent, but small, tendency to overestimate socially desirable parent or family qualities and behavior. Based on these findings, it was concluded that neither parents nor adolescents can be relied upon for objectively reporting accurate accounts of their family life. This may, however, be a factor of developmental stage.

According to Troll et al. (1969), there appears to be a developmental trend in perceptions of family solidarity. Older groups of young adults were found to perceive greater affectual solidarity than did younger adolescents who were perhaps still attempting to achieve independence, thus minimizing the ties to parents. It may also be that older groups of young adults are influenced to a lesser extent by the propaganda about the generation gap. Meisels and Cantor (1971) found that student judgments may be systematically distorted in one direction or another due to the widely publicized notion that there is "supposed" to be a generation gap.

In summary, Lerner et al. (1975) concluded that the generation gap is more apparent than real. While actual attitudes may not provide a source of serious intergenerational conflict, the maintenance of distorted perceptions regarding the attitudes and behavior of others may, in fact, play such a role. Perhaps it could be said that the perceptual continuity in attitudes between generations is more important than actual continuity (Thompson et al. 1985).

Between cohort and/or within cohort differences are other areas of the generation/communication gap that have been discussed in research literature. Although research findings seem to be somewhat inconsistent, there is evidence to support the hypothesis that differences in attitudes within cohort groups are just as evident as differences between age cohorts. Armstrong and Scotzin (1974) stated that an adolescent's mother and father, or the middlescent generation, have greater differences than those found between the adolescent and either parent. Likewise, Bengston (1971) found that differences within the generations were more pronounced than differences between the groups. In other research, however, homogeneity of attitudes was found to be greater for the parent generation than for their children and resemblances in values were somewhat stronger between parents than between parent and child (Gallagher, 1979; Troll et al. 1969).

Another dimension is added to the between/within phenomenon when peers are included. Students' attitudes appear to be closer to perceived parental attitudes than to perceived peer attitudes, thus allowing adolescents' attitudes to fall somewhere between those of their peers and their parents (Meisels & Kantor, 1971). In a study by Biggs (1975), college students in the same generations reported less similarity to their peers regarding basic values than was reported by the two generations within the family.

It may be that the inconsistencies in research are because of the specific attitudes or values that are reported. When the issues are related to morality, both between and within differences were reported by Sigelman et al. (1984). Students were more lenient in judgment on morality behaviors than were parents; in addition, mothers were even more severe than fathers in judging morality. In a similar study by Kalish and Johnson (1972), older generations were found to be more conservative on social issues than younger, but members within specific families held relatively similar values. Bengston (1971) discussed the fact that a considerable "cohort gap" is perceived between generations in the broader society, but a much smaller "lineage gap" is attributed when respondents are asked about their own family. It would seem then that

individuals from the same family tend to be more like each other than like unrelated people (Troll et al. 1969).

Although not as much attention has been devoted to this topic, there is some indication in research that the generation/communication gap may be gender-related. While Lerner et al. (1971) reported no differences in male and female attitudes, Gallagher (1976) did find some differences when comparing mother/daughter and father/son dyads. Likewise, Zey-Ferrell et al. (1978) discovered the gender gap to be more pervasive than a generation gap. Responses to an inventory of sex-role attitudes revealed a generation gap between females and their mothers but not between males and their fathers. In addition, a combination gender-generation gap was found between females and their fathers.

Grotevant and Cooper (1983) reported on a study that found greater generational conflict between adolescent males and their mothers than with their fathers. The trend for less conflict with the father than with the mother was particularly true for girls. In another study, Hamid and Wylie (1980) found no significant difference between parent and adolescent perceptions of intergenerational conflict levels; however, fathers tended to report more conflict than the adolescent while mothers reported less conflict than the adolescent.

Regardless of the seeming inconsistencies, mothers were still found to be closer to their adolescents than were

fathers (Lesser & Kandel, 1975) and mothers were found to more adequately perceive adolescent attitudes than did fathers (Acock & Bengston, 1978; Smith, 1981). On the other hand, Troll et al. (1969) and Lerner et al. (1971) failed to find a particular parent-adolescent dyad that exhibited any more resemblance in attitudes than any other. There was also no clear trend toward either same-sex or cross-sex parent-adolescent resemblance. It is because of the inconsistencies in results related to gender differences in the generation/communication gap that it was included as a component of this research.

Specifically regarding family communication patterns, Grando and Ginsberg (1976) found that adolescent sons viewed their communication patterns with fathers as being more distant and less understanding than mothers. As a result, the sons were more prone to misperceive their father's attitudes. In a similar study, Norrell (1984) reported that daughters were more accurate than sons in perceptions of parental disclosure or openness of communication. An interesting finding which may be related to the "generational stake" concept is that parents reported more disclosure to adolescents than adolescents perceived. Sons also disclosed less and perceived that they received less disclosure than other family members. As in other studies comparing mothers and fathers, mothers were found to both disclose more and receive more disclosure than did fathers.

Even less attention has been given to the effects of sociodemographic factors on the presence or absence of a generation/communication gap between parents and adolescents. Lerner and Weinstock (1972) reported that the gap appears to be significantly moderated by educational and social class variables. Greater differences were found between high school adolescents and adults from the same college town than were found between high school adolescents and their parents from a non-college, working class community. Because of the direction of the differences, these researchers proposed that there may be as much of a social class gap as a generation gap.

Less significant sociodemographic or social class influences were reported by Gallagher (1976) and Gallagher (1979). Self-reported and ascribed attitudes in the upper class were more similar than in any other social class. One explanation given for this similarity was that there was more parent-child communication in the upper social echelons, thus producing a greater awareness of the other's opinions. Another explanation was that there is less parent-child conflict found in the upper classes so that exaggeration of differences has no driving force (Gallagher, 1976).

Social class variables do not appear to be an important factor in attitudinal differences among adolescents relating to issues of conservatism and liberalism. Gallagher (1979)

found that lower class adolescents displayed an unusual amount of conservatism on parental management issues; but, except for this one area, adolescents of various classes were hardly differentiated attitudinally. Even less of a social class effect was found among parents of these adolescents.

An area of intergenerational gaps with which researchers tend to agree is the issue specificity of differences. Several investigators have pointed out that attitude differences between parents and adolescents tend to emerge as "foci" of disagreement or vary as a function of the particular issue in question (Adelson, 1970; Armstrong & Scotzin, 1974; Jacobsen et al. 1975; Kalish & Johnson, 1972; Larson, 1972a).

A general consensus seems to be, according to Jessop (1981), that dyadic agreement is lower on less objective topics and on threatening topics. It appears that more subjective and threatening topics activate social desirability biases and problems of self-presentation or preservation on the part of both parent and adolescent generations. Frequently cited issues where dyadic discrepancies occur include: following peer wishes in current-oriented situations as opposed to following parental attitudes in future-oriented situations (Larson, 1972b); rules about home life and peers (Jessop, 1981); degree of radicalism in parent-adolescent dyads (Freidman, Gold &

Christie, 1972); communication difficulties, use of leisure time, money, drinking, and dating behavior (Conger & Petersen, 1984); student unrest (Freeman, 1972); drugs (Conger & Petersen, 1984; Freeman, 1972); "trivial" issues such as T.V. viewing and neatness (Hamid & Wylie, 1980); and sexual behavior including attitudes toward premarital coitus (Dubbe', 1965; Fox & Inazu, 1980; Freeman, 1972; Inazu & Fox, 1980; Lerner et al. 1972; Martin & Martin, 1984).

Additional issue specific discrepancies were cited in studies by Bengston and Kuypers (1971), Montemayor (1986), and Thornburg (1971). Parents and adolescents were found to agree on three major areas of basic issues dividing the generations: (1) issues of value and morality; (2) interpersonal interaction (i.e., family rules, choice of friends); and, (3) age-status issues having to do with responsibility, freedom, and parental monitoring.

The intensity and direction of intergenerational differences may be somewhat related to issue specificity as described above. A directional difference (agree or disagree) may occur in those arenas involving conservatism versus liberalism or progressivism (Conger & Petersen, 1984; Gallagher, 1976). In these instances it is still likely that perceptions of parents and adolescents may lead to overconservatizing parents and overliberalizing adolescents (Gallagher, 1976).

The more likely scenario is that there will be few signs of serious differences (Adelson, 1969) and those that do exist may reflect intensity of differences (strongly agree versus agree) rather than direction (Lerner et al. 1971; Lerner et al. 1972; Weinstock & Lerner, 1972). Regardless of the direction or intensity of differences, Conger and Petersen (1984) recently reported that the majority of parents and adolescents feel whatever gap exists has been somewhat exaggerated. The resulting misperceptions concerning intergenerational differences and the fundamental lack of articulation between generations emphasizes the importance of the communication component of this research to be discussed in the following section of this chapter.

Parent/Adolescent Communication Patterns

In an effort to delineate the benefits of effective communication between parent and adolescent, various investigators have identified those process variables that appear to be related to positive interactions and family satisfaction. Montemayor (1986) identified three critical components of intergenerational relationships: communication/problem-solving skills; democratic techniques used by parents for managing the adolescent; and the exchange of positive as opposed to negative behaviors. Higher degrees of family communication in these areas were associated with good listening habits, freedom of expression,

understanding, acceptance, positive ways of handling anger and differences, and even such seemingly small factors as tone of voice and nonverbal communication (Bienvenu, 1969; Bienvenu, 1970; Hepburn, 1983). In contrast, criticism, sarcasm, lack of trust, discourtesies, and lack of acceptance of the adolescent were associated with negative and lower degrees of communication.

Olson and McCubbin (1983) concurred with Barnes and Olson (1985) in stating that good parent/adolescent communication is a family strength characteristic of low-stress families. Rather than passively waiting for problems to improve with time, families with low stress were found to actively, through positive communication skills, reframe their problems and work toward resolving the stress.

Indirect results of positive family communication have been noted in such areas as an adolescent's identity formation and his or her general attitudes toward the basic familial institution (Campbell et al. 1984; Larson, 1972b; Yost & Adamek, 1974). Warm and supportive parent/adolescent relations, democratic parenting, freedom to discuss issues with parents, and a combination of separateness and permeability in parent/adolescent communication behaviors have been shown to be correlated not only with positive attitudes toward the familial institution but also with more advanced identity formation in the adolescent. This correlation underlines the importance of early and frequent

positive interactions between parent and child in order to successfully transmit parental ideas and values to their offspring (Larson, 1972b; Smith, 1984).

As with other areas of intergenerational relationships, investigators have uncovered some misperceptions about parent and adolescent communication which could affect the gap between the two generations. Although global evaluations of the quality of communication and understanding between parents and adolescents may be found as "close or very close," more specific analyses have shown inconsistencies in parent and adolescent evaluations (Bengston & Kuypers, 1971; Bengston & Troll, 1971). Parents consistently tend to overestimate the closeness, understanding, and number of discussions with their adolescents and underestimate the disagreement on topics discussed, while adolescents perceive less intergenerational closeness (Barnes & Olson, 1985; Bengston & Kuypers, 1971; Bengston & Troll, 1971; Lerner & Knapp, 1975; Thompson et al. 1985; Troll et al. 1969).

Fathers again appear to be lacking in effective intergenerational communication. Mothers perceive more satisfying communication with their adolescents than do fathers and adolescents report more openness with mothers than with fathers. Daughters also perceive higher levels of communication with mothers than do sons (Campbell et al. 1984). It appears that females reveal more general and personal information to parents while males reveal more

information regarding their sexuality (Fox, 1986; Fox & Inazu, 1980; Norrell, 1984). Evidence tends to support the idea that adolescents are also selective about the target of certain topics of disclosure.

Although various explanations have been suggested for this gender-related phenomenon, the most frequently cited theory is that sons and daughters are socialized differently with regard to expected levels of openness and interaction. This appears to be particularly true with topics concerning the adolescent's sexuality. Families apparently experience difficulty in communicating about issues of sexuality or other topics because of age differences, signals of discomfort or embarrassment, condemned or guilt feelings, fear, feelings that confidences will be violated, lack of knowledge, or simply because they feel there is no real need (Dubbe', 1965; Fisher, 1986).

In the absence of communication about matters of sexuality, family problem-solving processes, roles or expectations, family members may not always be cognizant of the discrepancies that exist within the family (Larson, 1972b). Better communication within families could, on the one hand, alleviate misperceptions that cause an intergenerational gap. Yet, if the parent, through better communication, finds out that the adolescent's attitudes are quite contrary to those of his or her parents, it may actually exacerbate rather than alleviate generational

conflict (LoPiccolo, 1973). There may be an exaggerated generation gap which could be diminished by better communication, but there may remain a real generational conflict which could be fueled by the improved communication.

Most family practitioners tend to take the position that open communication is still preferable, even though certain risks are inherent. If parents fail to recognize that their children possess opinions that differ from their own, they might be less likely to listen when their children speak. According to Freeman (1972), a generation gap may be somewhat inevitable, but a communication gap need not be.

Summary

Although extensive research has been conducted in the area of parent-adolescent relationships, there still appear to be a number of contradictions and unanswered questions. Inconsistencies reported in the literature may be explained partly by the failure of researchers to collect similar data from each of the mother-father-adolescent triad. In addition, most research has been cross-sectional in nature, consequently not providing answers about ongoing relationships that are possible with longitudinal data.

Based on research findings, it can be concluded, though not definitively, that varying levels of actual or perceived attitude differences do occur between parents and their adolescent children and these differences do cause varying

levels of conflict in intergenerational relations. Further, it has been documented fairly consistently that these differences may be related not only to the particular issue of contention, but also to the patterns of communicating about such issues in the family setting. Less information exists as to the influence of certain sociodemographic variables on intergenerational relations, but it is possible that these variables, either in isolation or in combination, may moderate the extent and direction of attitude differences as well as patterns of communication between parent and child.

From extrapolation of theoretical ideas and research data reported in the literature, it is possible to conclude that some degree of intergenerational differences occur between parent and adolescent but that these differences may be more "perceived or apparent" than "actual or real." Level of intergenerational differences also appears to be a product, at least to a degree, of popularly presented expectations for parent-adolescent behavior. It is possible that learning more about the type of communication that occurs within families may be instrumental in helping to explain the complex relationship between parents and their adolescent children.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This research focused on the impact of family communication patterns on perceived versus actual differences in attitudes of parents and their adolescent children in terms of certain contemporary issues. It was hypothesized that there would be greater differences between the perceived attitudes of parents and their adolescent children toward certain contemporary issues than between the actual attitudes reported. It was further hypothesized that the perceived differences would be less in those families who reported higher levels of positive communication skills and parental management techniques and lower levels of problems in communication.

Sample

Participants comprising the sample for this study were sophomore high school students and the parents of those students. The adolescent subjects were chosen from a county high school located in an East Tennessee town of approximately 2800, representing a mixture of socioeconomic levels. The total enrollment of the high school was 566 with 144 of those being sophomores.

On the two days during which the survey was administered to six sophomore English classes, responses were received from 116 adolescents. From this pool of 116 possible family units, 26 (22%) represented single-parent families, leaving a pool of 90 two-parent families for possible inclusion in this study. Since this research focused on adolescent communication with mother and father, only those adolescents were included whose mothers and fathers both returned surveys. Responses were received from 94 parents (or guardians) giving a total of 47 usable family units of mother, father, and adolescent. This represents a 52% return from those units qualifying for participation in the study.

Sociodemographic data on the parents and adolescents in this study are included on Tables A.1-A.10 in Appendix A. There were 27 boys and 20 girls in the adolescent sample ranging in age from 14 to 17 with a mean age of 15. The mean number of children in the families was 2.6. The mothers and fathers in the sample had an age range of 31 to 58 with a mean age of 40.5 and 42.5, respectively (see Tables A.1-A.2).

The families who participated could generally be described as Caucasian, Protestant families who resided in rural communities (see Tables A.3-A.5). Over 97% of the subjects who participated were Caucasian and 92% of the parents were Protestant. Sixty-five percent of the parents indicated they resided in a rural area while 62% of the adolescents indicated a small town of less than 3000 as their

place of residence. On the average, the adolescents as a group lived with natural mothers and fathers in intact first marriages (see Tables A.6-A.7).

Over one-fourth (26%) of the sample reported a family income \$40,000 to \$49,999, while 4% reported a family income less than \$10,000, 14% reported \$10,000 to \$19,999, 14% reported \$20,000 to \$29,999, 10% reported \$30,000 to \$39,999, and 13% reported a family income of \$50,000 or more (see Table A.8).

Fifty-five percent of mothers and 90% of fathers were employed full time and an additional 17% of mothers were employed part time (see Table A.9). Approximately 42% of the parents had completed high school or the G.E.D. while 36% of mothers and fathers in the sample had completed at least some college work (see Table A.10).

Data Collection

Data from the sample were obtained by acquiring permission from the appropriate school officials to conduct the study. Students at the high school were assessed during English classes. These classes were chosen because this provided access to the entire sophomore population on one particular day. Letters describing the research project were distributed to students and those who participated in the study signed informed consent forms (see Appendices B-C).

Students were first asked to complete a Background Information Questionnaire, after which they completed two additional questionnaires--Parent/Adolescent Communication and Attitudes Toward Contemporary Issues. High school students were asked to take home a packet of survey materials for their parents. The packet contained a cover letter, human subjects forms giving parents' consent for their adolescents' participation and two copies of each questionnaire to be completed separately by the mother and father (see Appendices D-E). Two stamped, self-addressed envelopes were included in the packet for returning the questionnaires.

Follow-up procedures included postcard reminders sent to the parents after two weeks, follow-up telephone calls one week after the postcard reminders, and duplicate questionnaires to parents indicating the need for replacement copies. Students whose parents (or guardian) mailed back the questionnaires were given a high school sun visor.

Instrumentation

A questionnaire method was chosen for the study as the most practical and efficient means of obtaining the desired information from as large a sample as possible. The three instruments used were: Background Information Questionnaire, Parent/Adolescent Communication Questionnaire, and Attitudes Toward Contemporary Issues Questionnaire.

Background Information Questionnaire

A background information form was developed by the researcher to assess sociodemographic variables that could have an effect on the results. The form was used to collect information on sociodemographic data and personal background. This form was subjected to review by independent judges and was pretested with a group of high school students and parents of adolescents to insure the clarity of the questions.

The Background Information Questionnaire included several demographic items including questions about (a) personal data (i.e., age, gender, race, marital status, religious affiliation, and income); (b) educational and occupational status of mothers and fathers; and (c) family composition (i.e., number, age and sex of siblings). A copy of the instrument is appended (see Appendix F). The form was modified for either parent or adolescent respondents.

Parent/Adolescent Communication Questionnaire

The Parent/Adolescent Communication Questionnaire used by this researcher was adapted from an instrument developed by Olson and McCubbin (1982). The instrument was used by Olson and McCubbin in a major research investigation for the purpose of providing a comprehensive picture of normative processes in intact families. Permission was requested and granted from the authors for use of their two-subscale

instrument with certain adaptations made to include a third subscale for this study. Open family communication and problems in family communication were the original subscales assessed by the instrument. The additional third dimension, parental control (or management) techniques, was added to test the supposition that deficient child management skills are highly related to poor parent-adolescent relationships (Montemayor, 1986). The survey instrument was available in two forms: (1) Form P--written from the parental perspective and (2) Form A--written from the adolescent perspective (see Appendix G).

Olson and McCubbin (1982) subjected their 20-item Parent-Adolescent Communication Inventory to extensive pretesting and refinement to determine its reliability and validity. Statistics showed an alpha reliability of .87 for Open Family Communication, .78 for Problems in Family Communication, and .88 for the Total Score.

In order to establish validity, the 8 items added by this author were reviewed by professionals and graduate students in the field of Child and Family Studies. The complete, 28-item questionnaire was then tested with high school and college students for reliability. A test-retest procedure over a 2-week interval yielded a reliability coefficient of .81.

Open Family Communication: Adolescents and their parents marked Likert-type items pertaining to openness of family communication. These items were concerned with the freedom of flow of factual and emotional information in family relationships. An example of an open family communication item was: "When I ask questions, I get honest answers from my mother/father." A score could range from 1 to 7 with the value 1 indicating "never or almost never true" and the score of 7 indicating "always or almost always true."

Open family communication was measured by summing the scores for the responses of parents and adolescents to the Likert-type items. The range for the entire subscale of 12 items was 12-84.

Problems in Family Communication: The items to which parents and adolescents responded in this subscale focused on difficulties or hindrances in the intergenerational exchange of information. An example of a problem in communication item was: "When we are having a problem, I often give my mother/father the silent treatment." A score could range from 1 to 7 with the value 1 indicating "never or almost never true" and the value 7 indicating "always or almost always true."

This subscale was measured by summing the scores for the responses of parents and adolescents to the Likert-type

items representing problems in family communication. The range for the subscale of 10 items was 10-70.

Parental Control Techniques: Parental control techniques referred to those communication behaviors that related to the way decision-making or problem-solving situations between parents and adolescents were handled. Six Likert-type items were included to measure this subscale. An example of a parental control technique item was: "My mother/father asks for my opinion on matters requiring decisions to be made." A score could range from 1 to 7 with the value 1 indicating "never or almost never true" and the value 7 indicating "always or almost always true."

This subscale was measured by summing the scores for the responses of parents and adolescents to the Likert-type items representing parental control techniques. The range of scores on this 6-item subscale was 6-42, with higher scores representing more democratic parenting behavior as opposed to behavior more representative of an authoritarian parenting style.

Items on the three subscales were intermingled as to positive and negative communication behaviors in order to avoid response bias. Therefore, it was necessary to recode 11 items for which keying was indicated and responses were reversed accordingly. Adolescent respondents' scores were

separated as to the mean scores regarding communication with their mother and father.

Parents and adolescents were also asked to respond to four general questions regarding their perception of a family and a society generation/communication gap and the degree of satisfaction with their family communication patterns.

Attitudes Toward Contemporary Issues Questionnaire

Previous researchers (Adelson, 1970; Lerner et al. 1971; Lerner et al. 1972; Lerner et al. 1975; Lerner et al. 1981; Weinstock & Lerner, 1972) had intuitively developed and used a contemporary topics questionnaire to determine the extent of a gap in attitudes between parent and adolescent generations. This researcher chose to narrow the range of contemporary topics and focus on those issues seen by parents and adolescents as the most frequent sources of intergenerational conflict. Students in a college-level human development class and adults in a seminar on family stress were asked to identify issues judged by them to be likely sources of conflict or disagreement between parents and their adolescents. From those submitted, this researcher formulated a list of the 10 most frequently mentioned issues. Those issues were then randomly ordered on a survey instrument and submitted to high school students for ranking by order of most to least critical source of conflict. The two areas chosen for this research were sexual behavior and

parental management or control behavior. Other researchers (Bengston & Troll, 1978; Dubbe', 1965; Jessop, 1981; Kidwell et al. 1983; Lerner et al. 1981; Martin & Martin, 1984; Montemayor, 1986; Thornburg, 1971) have reported these areas to be frequent sources of conflict or disagreement between parents and their adolescents.

Using the input from the two groups of students and the parent group, a list of 20 items was formulated which represented statements of attitudes toward issues regarding sexual behavior and parental management behavior. Colleagues and graduate students in Child and Family Studies were asked to accept, reject or modify the 20-item Attitudes Toward Contemporary Issues Questionnaire (see Appendix H).

Adolescents and their parents marked Likert-type items as to the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with certain attitude statements about contemporary issues. Adolescents were asked to respond to the statements in the following ways: (1) How you feel about each statement; (2) How you think your mother feels about each statement; and (3) How you think your father feels about each statement. Parents were asked to respond to the attitude statements in the following ways: (1) How do you feel about each statement; (2) How do you think your spouse feels about each statement; and, (3) How do you think your son or daughter feels about each statement.

Attitudes Regarding Sexual Behavior: Respondents marked Likert-type items as to the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with certain attitude statements related to contemporary sexual behavior issues. An example of a statement in this subscale was: "Birth control information should be made available to all who desire it." A score on the sexual behavior statements could range from 1 to 5 with the value 1 indicating strongly agree and 5 indicating strongly disagree. Attitudes regarding sexual behavior were measured by summing the scores for the responses of parents and adolescents to the Likert-type items. The range for the subscale of 10 items was 10-50.

Attitudes Regarding Parental Management Behavior: Adolescents and parents marked Likert-type items as to the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with attitude statements related to parental management behavior. An example of a statement in this subscale was: "Parents have the right to determine who will or will not be suitable friends for their teenagers." As in the subscale above, a score on the parental management behavior subscale could range from 1 to 5 with the value 1 indicating strongly agree and 5 indicating strongly disagree. The scores for the responses of parents and adolescents to the Likert-type items were summed giving a subscale range of 10-50. The overall score on the two subscales resulted in a range of 20-100.

Items on the Attitudes Toward Contemporary Issues Questionnaire were intermingled and wording was used to represent a continuum of liberal and conservative attitudes toward sexual behavior and parental management behavior. More specific analyses were conducted on individual attitude statements and are discussed later in this paper.

Data Reduction and Transformation

As completed surveys were received by the researcher, the data were entered into computer data files based upon a previously identified coding system. Verification of all data entry was accomplished through a process of double checking by the researcher and one other person.

Sum scores for each variable in the three survey items were computed, recoding responses on those items for which reverse keying was necessary. Computer printouts of the recoded items and the resultant computed variables were spot-checked manually against raw data to insure the accuracy of the procedures.

Data Analyses

Paired-comparison t-tests were the primary statistical analyses used to determine the differences among mothers', fathers' and adolescents' reported communication patterns and the differences in perceived attitudes of those respondents toward contemporary issues. Several intergenerational

analyses were conducted using the various subscales of each instrument. In addition, to examine possible sex-linkage contrasts, each analyses was replicated for the sub-samples of male and female adolescents and mothers and fathers.

For paired comparisons in each analysis, a new variable was created containing the differences between the paired variables and was subjected to a two-tailed t-test to examine whether the mean difference was significantly different from zero. This gave a t-statistic and a probability value for the null hypothesis that mean differences were equal to zero. An alpha level of .05 was established as the criterion for significance.

Pearson's product-moment correlations were the statistical analyses used to test the final hypothesis in this study. This approach provided an assessment of the degree of relationship between family communication patterns to accuracy with which parents and adolescents perceive each other. The selection of this parametric statistical procedure was based on the use of interval level measurement for the data derived from the two instruments used by the sample.

The SAS for data analysis was used to obtain sums of all the variables, means, standard deviations, minimum and maximum values, standard error of means, t-values, and PRT (probability of a greater absolute value of Student's t).

All computer analyses were done at the University of Tennessee Computing Center.

Operational Definitions

The following operational definitions were used in this study:

Parent-Adolescent Communication Score (PACS) was defined as the respondents' overall score on the 28 items comprising the Parent-Adolescent Communication Questionnaire. The PACS was further divided into the following three subscores:

(1) Open Family Communication (PACS-1): overall score on the 12-item open family communication subscale including items 1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 16, 17, 21, and 22.

(2) Problems in Family Communication (PACS-2): overall score on the 10-item problems in family communication subscale including items 2, 4, 5, 10, 11, 12, 15, 18, 19, and 20.

(3) Parental Control Techniques (PACS-3): overall score on the 6-item parental control subscale including items 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 28.

The overall score on the 3 subscales could range from 28-196 with higher scores indicating higher levels of open communication (PACS-1), more positive parental control techniques (PACS-3), and fewer problems in communication (PACS-2).

Attitudes Toward Contemporary Issues Score (ATCIS) was defined as the respondents' overall mean score on the 20 items comprising the Attitudes Toward Contemporary Issues Questionnaire. The ATCI Score was further divided into the following two subscores:

- (1) Attitudes Regarding Sexual Behavior (ATCIS-1): overall score on the 10 items relating to attitudes toward sexual behavior including items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 10, 13, 16, 18, and 19.
- (2) Attitudes Regarding Parental Management Behavior (ATCIS-2): overall score on the 10 items relating to attitudes toward parental management behavior including items 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17, and 20.

The overall score on the two subscales could range from 20-100 with a higher score indicating somewhat more conservative attitudes toward sexual behavior and parental management behavior.

Hypotheses

The null hypotheses for the study were as follows:

1. There will be no significant difference between the actual, self-reported attitudes of parents and adolescents toward selected contemporary issues.
2. There will be no significant difference between parents' and adolescents' attitudes in the aspects of sexual behavior and parental management behavior.

3. There will be no significant difference between actual, self-reported attitudes of parents and adolescents and their perceptions of the attitudes of one another toward contemporary issues.
4. There will be no significant difference in the accuracy with which parents and adolescents perceive differences in the attitudes of one another toward contemporary issues.
5. There will be no significant difference between the perceptions of parents and adolescents in terms of family communication patterns.
6. There will be no significant relationship between self-reports of family communication patterns and the gap between actual attitudes and perceptions of parent/adolescent attitudes toward contemporary issues.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

The group scores on the Parent/Adolescent Communication Questionnaire used in this study were compared to the extent possible with the normative data cited by the authors of the original instrument. Normative data were available for fathers, mother, and adolescents (combined sons and daughters) on the first 20 items of the questionnaire used in the present study. Mathematical computations were made to adjust for the difference between the 5-point Likert-type scale on the original instrument and the 7-point Likert-type scale used in this study.

A comparison of the combined data from the openness of communication and problems in communication subscales revealed that both the fathers' communication scores ($\bar{X}=75.56$, $SD=12.26$) and the mothers' communication scores ($\bar{X}=79.31$, $SD=9.81$) were somewhat different from the norms ($\bar{X}=72.55$, $SD=10.74$; and, $\bar{X}=75.47$, $SD=11.12$, respectively). However, neither the scores of adolescents' communication with fathers ($\bar{X}=63.24$, $SD=11.66$) nor the scores of adolescents' communication with mothers ($\bar{X}=64.87$, $SD=12.66$) were very different from the norms ($\bar{X}=63.74$, $SD=12.02$; and $\bar{X}=66.56$, $SD=12.10$, respectively).

Table 1 shows the sample means and ranges on the three separate subscales for combined fathers, mothers, and adolescents. Table 2 contains a further breakdown of communication scores by subscale and parent/adolescent dyad. Fathers' perceptions of openness of communication with sons and daughters were somewhat lower on this subscale than mothers' perceptions of communication with sons and daughters. However, both parents' scores on this subscale were higher than scores for sons' perceived communication with their fathers and mothers, as well as daughters' perceived communication with their fathers and mothers.

With respect to the problems in communication subscale, the same trend was found with fathers and mothers perceiving fewer problems in communication than adolescents. The means for fathers' and mothers' perceptions of communication with sons and daughters were all somewhat higher than those of sons with fathers, sons with mothers, daughters with fathers, and daughters with mothers.

The results on the final subscale of communication regarding parental control behavior were not as dramatic. The means of fathers' and mothers' perceptions of communication with sons and daughters were very close to the means of sons' perceptions of communication with fathers and mothers and somewhat higher than the means of daughters' perceptions of communication with fathers and mothers.

Table 1. Sample Means and Ranges on Parent/Adolescent Perceptions of Communication^a

<u>Comparison</u>	<u>Open Communication</u>			<u>Problems in Communication</u>			<u>Parental Control</u>		
	<u>Range</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Range</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Range</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
Fathers' Communication with Adolescents	26-84	62.68	14.17	22-69	52.94	10.34	10-42	28.77	6.56
Mothers' Communication with Adolescents	35-82	68.19	11.44	40-68	54.36	8.18	19-40	30.45	4.83
Adolescents' Communication with Fathers	20-84	50.85	13.99	24-59	45.73	9.32	9-37	26.32	6.31
Adolescents' Communication with Mothers	25-84	56.81	15.28	28-63	43.15	9.23	9-41	26.94	7.58

^aHigher mean scores indicate more positive perceptions of communication.

Table 2. Sample Means and Ranges on Parents', Sons' and Daughters' Perceptions of Communication^a

Comparison	Problems in Communication						Parental Control	
	Open Communication Range	Open Communication Mean	Open Communication SD	Communication Range	Communication Mean	Communication SD	Range	Mean
Fathers' Communication with Sons	32-81	63.74	12.70	37-66	54.56	8.18	16-38	28.56
Fathers' Communication with Daughters	26-84	61.25	16.18	22-69	50.75	12.59	10-42	29.05
Mothers' Communication with Sons	44-82	68.30	10.88	40-68	55.19	8.49	23-39	30.89
Mothers' Communication with Daughters	35-82	68.05	12.45	40-66	53.25	7.81	19-40	29.85
Sons' Communication with Fathers	30-84	54.70	13.99	26-59	47.74	8.33	16-36	27.26
Sons' Communication with Mothers	25-84	56.33	14.85	28-58	43.70	8.65	15-39	27.22
Daughters' Communication with Fathers	20-61	45.65	12.52	24-57	43.00	10.09	9-37	25.05
Daughters' Communication with Mothers	26-84	57.45	16.21	28-63	42.40	10.13	9-41	26.55

^a Higher mean scores indicate more positive perceptions of communication.

The results on the four general questions included on the Parent/Adolescent Communication Questionnaire are summarized in Tables 3-6. In response to the question, "Is there a 'generation gap' (breakdown in communication) between you and your parents (teenager)?" approximately two-thirds of the parents and three-fourths of the adolescents reported either "no gap" or "slight gap" (see Table 3). Both parents and adolescents perceived a greater gap to exist between American families in general than in their own family; more than three-fourths of mothers, fathers, and adolescents indicated a moderate to large gap between the generations (see Table 4).

When comparing the perceived generation gap in relation to previous generations, mothers (72%) and fathers (85%) saw the gap as the same or bigger but only 57% of the adolescents perceived the gap in that manner. Forty-three percent of the adolescents perceived the gap to be smaller or non-existent (see Table 5). Results on the final question showed the vast majority of parents and adolescents to be either fairly satisfied or very satisfied with the way their families communicate (see Table 6). Adolescents are equally divided between very satisfied (43%) and fairly satisfied (43%) while parents were more likely to be fairly satisfied (mothers, 55%; fathers, 62%) than very satisfied (mothers, 38%; fathers, 32%).

Table 3. Perceived Generation Gap as Reported by Parents and Adolescents

Extent of Gap	Mothers		Fathers		Adolescents With			
	<u>Mothers</u>		<u>Fathers</u>		<u>Mothers</u>		<u>Fathers</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Large Gap	5	11	10	21	1	2	3	6
Moderate Gap	12	26	5	11	8	17	9	19
Slight Gap	15	32	20	43	24	51	21	45
No Gap	15	32	12	26	14	30	14	30

Table 4. Perception of Generation Gap Between American Teens and Parents

Extent of Gap	Mothers		Fathers		Adolescents	
	<u>Mothers</u>		<u>Fathers</u>		<u>Adolescents</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Large Gap	16	34	11	23	9	19
Moderate Gap	22	47	25	53	27	57
Slight Gap	7	15	11	23	9	19
No Gap	2	4	0	0	2	4

Note. Totals may not equal 100% because of rounding.

Table 5. Perception of Generation Gap in Relation to Previous Generations

Extent of Gap	Mothers		Fathers		Adolescents	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Bigger Gap	17	36	17	36	9	19
Same Gap	17	36	23	49	18	38
Smaller Gap	10	21	7	15	15	32
No Gap	3	6	0	0	5	11

Table 6. Satisfaction with Family Communication

Degree of Satisfaction	Mothers		Fathers		Adolescents	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Very Satisfied	18	38	15	32	20	43
Fairly Satisfied	26	55	29	62	20	43
Unsatisfied	2	4	2	4	6	13
Very Unsatisfied	1	2	1	2	1	2

Note. Totals may not equal 100% because of rounding.

The group summary scores on the Attitudes Toward Contemporary Issues Questionnaire were separated as to the responding groups and the two subscales--sexual behavior and parental management behavior. With lower mean scores representing a tendency toward more liberal attitudes, adolescent sons' and daughters' self-reported attitude scores on both subscales were consistently lower than the scores for their perceptions of fathers' and mothers' attitudes (see Table 7). The scores for sons' self-reported attitudes on the two subscales were lower than their perceptions of their fathers' and their mothers' scores on the same subscales. Likewise, the scores for daughters' self-reported attitudes on the two subscales were lower than their perceptions of their fathers' and mothers' attitude scores.

The parents also consistently reported lower scores for their adolescents' attitudes than for their own. On the two subscales, the self-reported attitude scores of fathers of sons and fathers of daughters were higher than their perceptions of both sons' attitudes and daughters' attitudes toward contemporary issues. On the same two subscales, the self-reported attitudes of mothers of sons and mothers of daughters were again higher than their perceptions of both sons' attitudes and daughters' attitudes toward the contemporary issues on the questionnaire.

Table 7. Sample Means and Ranges on Attitudes Toward Contemporary Issues^a

Comparison	Sexual Behavior			Parental Management		
	Range	Mean	SD	Range	Mean	SD
^b Fathers' Self-Reported Attitudes	23-40	32.04	4.25	20-43	33.93	5.74
Fathers' Perceptions of Sons' Attitudes	17-37	28.93	4.58	17-37	24.81	5.92
^c Fathers' Self-Reported Attitudes	28-45	34.60	4.67	19-45	33.75	5.20
Fathers' Perceptions of Daughters' Attitudes	22-38	30.65	4.46	15-45	25.25	6.50
^b Mothers' Self-Reported Attitudes	23-39	32.18	4.80	20-48	34.56	6.45
Mothers' Perceptions of Sons' Attitudes	21-37	29.78	3.79	18-43	26.37	5.71
^c Mothers' Self-Reported Attitudes	25-47	33.85	5.45	21-42	33.95	5.29
Mothers' Perceptions of Daughter's Attitudes	23-42	29.45	5.26	19-34	26.55	4.76
Sons' Self-Reported Attitudes	21-42	27.89	4.64	18-38	26.81	4.39
Sons' Perceptions of Fathers' Attitudes	23-42	31.70	4.92	25-40	33.15	4.10
Sons' Perceptions of Mothers' Attitudes	23-42	31.81	5.81	25-40	33.70	4.13
Daughters' Self-Reported Attitudes	16-41	29.50	6.88	16-34	22.30	4.61
Daughters' Perceptions of Fathers' Attitudes	29-42	35.90	3.64	22-43	32.80	5.62
Daughters' Perceptions of Mothers' Attitudes	25-44	35.35	4.85	22-41	31.80	5.28

^aLower mean scores indicate more liberal attitudes toward contemporary issues.^bFathers and Mothers of Sons^cFathers and Mothers of Daughters

Hypothesis 1

The analysis of the self-reported attitudes toward sexual and parental management behavior revealed that there were significant differences between parents' attitudes and those of their adolescent children. Paired-comparison t-tests were used to determine the extent of differences in each of the parent-adolescent dyads represented and the results are shown in Table 8. Significant differences were found on both subscales for each of the following pairs: sons' and fathers' attitudes ($t=-3.63$, $p<.001$; $t=-5.19$, $p<.0001$); sons' and mothers' attitudes ($t=-4.17$, $p<.001$; $t=-4.57$, $p<.0001$); daughters' and fathers' attitudes ($t=-2.98$, $p<.01$; $t=-6.65$, $p<.0001$); and, daughters' and mothers' attitudes ($t=-2.10$, $p<.05$; $t=-7.11$, $p<.0001$).

Thus the hypothesis that there would be no significant differences between the self-reported attitudes of parents and adolescents toward selected contemporary issues was rejected. In addition, the attitude differences appeared to be in the expected direction of parents' attitudes reflecting a somewhat more conservative viewpoint than adolescents' attitudes. This is evidenced by the higher mean scores on parental attitudes ranging from 32.04 to 34.60 in comparison to the adolescents' mean scores of 22.30 to 29.50.

Table 8. Differences Between Adolescents' Self-Reported Attitudes and Parents' Self-Reported Attitudes Toward Contemporary Issues^a

Comparison	Sexual Behavior			Parental Management		
	Range	Group Mean	SD	Range	Group Mean	SD
Sons' Self-Reported Attitudes	21-42	27.89	4.64	18-38	26.81	4.39
Fathers' Self-Reported Attitudes	23-40	32.04	4.25	20-43	33.93	5.74
						-5.19****
Sons' Self-Reported Attitudes	21-42	27.89	4.64	18-38	26.81	4.39
Mothers' Self-Reported Attitudes	23-39	32.18	4.80	20-48	34.56	6.45
						-4.57****
Daughters' Self-Reported Attitudes	16-41	29.50	6.88	16-34	22.30	4.61
Fathers' Self-Reported Attitudes	28-45	34.60	4.67	19-45	33.75	5.20
						-6.65****
Daughters' Self-Reported Attitudes	16-41	29.50	6.88	16-34	22.30	4.61
Mothers' Self-Reported Attitudes	25-47	33.85	5.45	21-42	33.95	5.29
						-7.11****

^aLower mean scores indicate more liberal attitudes toward contemporary issues.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

**** $p < .0001$.

Hypothesis 2

A comparison of the attitudes of parents and adolescents on the separate aspects of sexual behavior and parental management behavior (see Table 8) revealed a significant difference, thus the hypothesis was rejected. The difference, however, was not in the direction anticipated. It was expected that there would be a greater difference between parents' and adolescents' attitudes regarding sexual behavior than in attitudes regarding parental management behavior. In actuality, the reverse appeared to be true. Levels of significance on the parental management subscale for all parent-adolescent pairs exceeded $p < .0001$, while those on the sexual behavior subscale ranged from $p < .001$ to $p < .05$.

The scores for self-reported attitudes on the Contemporary Issues Questionnaire were further analyzed as to individual attitude statements (see Tables 9-10). The analysis of the two parent/adolescent dyads (mother/adolescent and father/adolescent) revealed that items 1, 3, 5, 10, 18, and 19 on the sexual behavior subscale were significantly different at levels ranging from .05 to .0001 for both dyads. Likewise, there were significant differences in attitudes regarding parental management behavior (items 7, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17, and 20) at levels ranging from .05 to .0001).

Table 9. Mothers' and Adolescents' Responses to Contemporary Issues^a

Contemporary Issues	Fathers		Adolescents		t
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
<u>Sexual Behavior Subscale</u>					
1. Premarital sexual intercourse between teenagers should be considered acceptable as long as the couple loves each other.	4.79	0.75	2.87	1.28	-8.07****
2. It is the girl who should set limits as to how far the couple will go in kissing, necking, and petting.	3.00	1.74	3.36	1.44	1.01
3. Sex education is not needed in the public school system.	1.98	1.51	2.64	1.54	2.42*
5. Health authorities should be required to inform the parents of teenagers who receive birth control pills or other birth control devices from a clinic or doctor.	4.15	1.33	2.66	1.52	-4.92****
6. Abortion should be considered as a possible solution if a high school sophomore gets pregnant.	3.96	1.33	3.62	1.44	-1.42
10. Colleges should have housing available for students of the opposite sex who choose to live together.	4.74	0.74	3.15	1.06	-8.13****
13. Birth control information should be made available to all who desire it.	1.64	1.09	1.53	1.04	-0.48
16. Premarital sexual intercourse is considered unacceptable in our present society.	2.96	1.60	2.94	1.28	-0.08
18. Living together intimately (cohabiting) before marriage increases the likelihood of that marriage being successful.	4.59	0.74	3.19	1.04	-7.52****
19. How parents feel about premarital sexual intercourse should be the same for their daughters as for their sons.	1.45	0.97	2.62	1.61	5.13****
<u>Parental Management Subscale</u>					
4. Parents should not allow their teenagers to drink alcoholic beverages.	4.06	1.51	3.49	1.54	-1.76
7. Parents have the right to determine what television programs (MTV, etc.) and movies (PG, R, X) should be watched by teenagers.	3.55	1.33	1.72	1.19	-6.75****
9. Teenagers should use their allowance or money they earn to buy gas when they drive the family car for dating or personal use.	4.28	1.07	3.96	1.27	-1.35
11. Teenagers have the responsibility to let their parents know where they are going and when they will be home.	4.94	0.25	4.32	0.84	-4.83****
12. If a teenager has a paying job, he or she should be able to decide how his or her money will be spent.	2.06	1.05	1.38	0.87	-3.49****
14. A person's appearance is his/her own concern, and others should tolerate whatever that person wears.	3.34	1.45	2.32	1.27	-4.21****
15. A teenager's opinion should be given considerable weight when it comes to making decisions about curfews.	3.04	1.49	1.98	1.15	-3.53***
17. If a high school sophomore wants to go steady, it should be his or her own decision to make.	2.64	1.44	1.47	1.02	-5.37****
20. A teenager has the right to choose his or her own dating partners.	2.15	1.22	1.53	1.12	-2.49*

^aLower mean scores indicate more liberal attitudes toward contemporary issues.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

**** $p < .0001$.

Table 10. Fathers' and Adolescents' Responses to Contemporary Issues^a

Contemporary Issues	Fathers		Adolescents		t
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
<u>Sexual Behavior Subscale</u>					
1. Premarital sexual intercourse between teenagers should be considered acceptable as long as the couple loves each other.	4.81	0.65	2.87	1.28	-10.14*****
2. It is the girl who should set limits as to how far the couple will go in kissing, necking, and petting.	2.83	1.54	3.36	1.44	1.74
3. Sex education is not needed in the public school system.	2.04	1.47	2.64	1.54	2.01*
5. Health authorities should be required to inform the parents of teenagers who receive birth control pills or other birth control devices from a clinic or doctor.	4.28	1.31	2.66	1.52	-5.71*****
6. Abortion should be considered as a possible solution if a high school sophomore gets pregnant.	3.89	1.45	3.62	1.44	-0.91
10. Colleges should have housing available for students of the opposite sex who choose to live together.	4.74	0.79	3.15	1.06	-8.64*****
13. Birth control information should be made available to all who desire it.	1.74	1.37	1.53	1.04	-0.93
16. Premarital sexual intercourse is considered unacceptable in our present society.	2.72	1.58	2.94	1.29	0.77
18. Living together intimately (cohabiting) before marriage increases the likelihood of that marriage being successful.	4.40	1.19	3.19	1.04	-5.19*****
19. How parents feel about premarital sexual intercourse should be the same for their daughters as for their sons.	1.66	1.18	2.62	1.61	3.82***
<u>Parental Management Subscale</u>					
4. Parents should not allow their teenagers to drink alcoholic beverages.	3.87	1.64	3.49	1.54	-1.21
7. Parents have the right to determine what television programs (MTV, etc.) and movies (PG, R, X) should be watched by teenagers.	3.55	1.38	1.72	1.19	-7.56*****
9. Teenagers should use their allowance or money they earn to buy gas when they drive the family car for dating or personal use.	4.02	1.29	3.96	1.27	-0.23
11. Teenagers have the responsibility to let their parents know where they are going and when they will be home.	4.74	0.92	4.32	0.84	-2.25*
12. If a teenager has a paying job, he or she should be able to decide how his or her money will be spent.	2.11	1.11	1.38	0.87	-3.31**
14. A person's appearance is his/her own concern, and others should tolerate whatever that person wears.	3.62	1.51	2.32	1.27	-4.87*****
15. A teenager's opinion should be given considerable weight when it comes to making decisions about curfews.	2.66	1.52	1.98	1.15	-2.24*
17. If a high school sophomore wants to go steady, it should be his or her own decision to make.	2.72	1.44	1.47	1.02	-4.88*****
20. A teenager has the right to choose his or her own dating partners.	2.36	1.36	1.53	1.12	-3.28**

^aLower mean scores indicate more liberal attitudes toward contemporary issues.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

**** $p < .0001$.

The only difference in the mother/adolescent and father/adolescent dyads on the sexual behavior attitudes was a difference in level of significance reported on item 19, with there being a slightly greater magnitude of difference for the mother/adolescent dyad. Analysis of items 11, 12, 15, and 20 on the parental management subscale also produced slightly different levels of significance. The differences in all but item 20 were in the same direction as on item 19 in the sexual behavior subscale--slightly greater magnitudes of difference for the mother/adolescent dyad.

Hypothesis 3

From the analyses of the paired-comparisons between actual, self-reported attitudes of parents and adolescents and their perceptions of the attitudes of one another, evidence indicates that there are, indeed, significant differences between the parent-adolescent dyads. Adolescent sons' and daughters' self-reported attitudes, when compared to their perceptions of their parents' attitudes, are different on both sexual behavior and parental management behavior attitude subscales (see Table 11). The paired analysis of son's self-reported attitudes and sons' perceptions of fathers' attitudes was significant on both subscales ($t=-4.39$, $p<.001$; $t=-6.42$, $p<.0001$), as was the paired analysis of sons' self-reported attitudes and sons' perceptions of mothers' attitudes on the same subscales

Table 11. Differences Between Adolescents' Self-Reported Attitudes and Adolescents' Perceptions of Parents' Attitudes Toward Contemporary Issues^a

Comparison	Sexual Behavior				Parental Management			
	Range	Group Mean	SD	t	Range	Group Mean	SD	t
Sons' Self-Reported Attitudes	21-42	27.89	4.64		18-38	26.81	4.39	
Sons' Perceptions of Fathers' Attitudes	23-42	31.70	4.92	-4.39***	25-40	33.15	4.10	-6.42****
Sons' Self-Reported Attitudes	21-42	27.89	4.64		18-38	26.81	4.39	
Sons' Perceptions of Mothers' Attitudes	23-42	31.81	5.81	-4.05***	25-40	33.70	4.13	-6.87****
Daughters' Self-Reported Attitudes	16-41	29.50	6.88		16-34	22.30	4.61	
Daughters' Perceptions of Fathers' Attitudes	29-41	35.90	3.64	-4.13***	22-43	32.80	5.62	-7.67****
Daughters' Self-Reported Attitudes	16-41	29.50	6.88		16-34	22.30	4.61	
Daughters' Perceptions of Mothers' Attitudes	25-44	35.35	4.85	-4.00***	22-41	31.80	5.28	-6.77****

^aLower mean scores indicate more liberal attitudes toward contemporary issues.

***p<.001.

****p<.0001.

($t=-4.05$, $p<.001$; $t=-6.87$, $p<.0001$). Similar results were found when daughters' self-reported attitudes were compared to daughters' perceptions of fathers' attitudes ($t=-4.13$, $p<.001$; $t=-7.67$, $p<.0001$) and daughters' perceptions of mothers' attitudes ($t=-4.00$, $p<.001$; $t=-6.77$, $p<.0001$).

Fathers' and mothers' self-reported attitudes, when compared to their perceptions of their adolescent sons' and daughters' attitudes, were also found to be significantly different on each subscale (see Table 12). A significant difference was found when fathers' self-reported attitudes were compared to fathers' perceptions of sons' attitudes ($t=3.37$, $p<.01$; $t=8.22$, $p<.0001$) and fathers' perceptions of daughters' attitudes ($t=2.84$, $p<.01$; $t=7.89$, $p<.0001$). Likewise, a significant difference was found when mothers' self-reported attitudes were compared to mothers' perceptions of sons' attitudes ($t=4.40$, $p<.001$; $t=7.77$, $p<.0001$) and mothers' perceptions of daughters' attitudes ($t=3.83$, $p<.001$; $t=5.73$, $p<.0001$). Therefore, the hypothesis that there would be no significant difference between actual, self-reported attitudes of parents and adolescents and their perceptions of one another was rejected.

Hypothesis 4

To test the accuracy with which parents and adolescents perceive differences in the attitudes of one another toward contemporary issues, paired t-tests were again used for each

Table 12. Differences Between Parents' Self-Reported Attitudes and Parents' Perceptions of Adolescents' Attitudes Toward Contemporary Issues^a

Comparison	Sexual Behavior			Parental Management		
	Range	Group Mean	SD	Range	Group Mean	SD
Fathers' Self-Reported Attitudes	23-40	32.04	4.25	20-43	33.93	5.84
Fathers' Perceptions of Sons' Attitudes	17-37	28.93	4.58	17-37	24.81	5.92
Fathers' Self-Reported Attitudes	28-48	34.69	4.67	19-45	33.75	5.20
Fathers' Perceptions of Daughters' Attitudes	22-38	30.65	4.46	15-45	25.25	6.50
Mothers' Self-Reported Attitudes	23-39	32.81	4.80	20-48	34.56	6.45
Mothers' Perceptions of Son's Attitudes	21-37	29.78	3.79	18-43	26.37	5.71
Mothers' Self-Reported Attitudes	25-47	33.85	5.45	21-42	33.95	5.29
Mothers' Perceptions of Daughters' Attitudes	23-42	29.45	5.26	19-34	26.55	4.76

^aLower mean scores indicate more liberal attitudes toward contemporary issues.

**p<.01

***p<.001.

****p<.0001.

8.22****

7.89****

7.77****

5.73****

parent-adolescent dyad. The first set of comparisons between parents' perceptions of adolescents' attitudes and adolescents' self-reported attitudes revealed significant differences on only two of the possible pairs (see Table 13). There was a significant difference between mothers' perceptions of sons' attitudes and sons' self-reported attitudes on the sexual behavior subscale ($t=2.33$, $p<.05$) and between mothers' perceptions of daughters' attitudes and daughters' self-reported attitudes on the parental management subscale ($t=3.03$, $p<.01$). It was expected that parents would tend to underestimate differences in attitudes while adolescents would tend to overestimate differences. This was not found to be true except in the two significant dyads where mothers did underestimate the difference in sons' attitudes toward sexual behavior and daughters' attitudes toward parental management behavior.

The comparisons of scores on both subscales for how fathers thought their adolescents felt and the adolescents' self-reported attitudes did not produce significant results. In addition, there was no significant difference between how mothers' perceptions of sons' attitudes and sons' self-reported attitudes on the parental management subscale or between mothers' perceptions of daughters' attitudes and daughters' self-reported attitudes on the sexual behavior subscale.

Table 13. Differences Between Parents' Perceptions of Adolescents' Attitudes and Adolescents' Self-Reported Attitudes Toward Contemporary Issues^a

Comparison	Sexual Behavior			Parental Management		
	Range	Group Mean	SD	Range	Group Mean	SD
Fathers' Perceptions of Sons' Attitudes	17-37	28.93	4.58	15-37	24.81	5.92
Sons' Self-Reported Attitudes	21-42	27.89	4.64	18-38	26.81	4.39
			0.99			-1.64
Fathers' Perceptions of Daughters' Attitudes	22-38	30.65	4.46	15-45	25.25	6.50
Daughters' Self-Reported Attitudes	16-41	29.50	6.88	16-34	22.30	4.61
			0.83			1.84
Mothers' Perceptions of Sons' Attitudes	21-37	29.78	3.79	18-43	26.37	5.71
Sons' Self-Reported Attitudes	21-42	27.89	4.64	18-38	26.81	4.39
			2.33*			0.30
Mothers' Perceptions of Daughters' Attitudes	23-42	29.45	5.26	19-34	26.55	4.76
Daughters' Self-Reported Attitudes	16-41	29.50	6.88	16-34	22.30	4.61
			-0.03			3.03**

^a Lower mean scores indicate more liberal attitudes toward contemporary issues.

*p<.05.

**p<.01.

The second set of comparisons between how adolescents perceived the attitudes of their parents and their parents' self-reported attitudes revealed no significant differences between any of the parent-adolescent pairs tested on either of the two subscales (see Table 14). With the exception of the two pairs as noted above, the hypothesis that there would be no significant difference in the accuracy with which parents and adolescents perceive differences in the attitudes of one another toward contemporary issues was not rejected.

Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis 5 stated that there would be no significant difference between the perceptions of parents and adolescents in terms of family communication patterns. On the openness of communication subscale, all pairs tested--fathers with sons, fathers with daughters, mothers with sons, and mothers with daughters--showed significant differences in the perceived level of communication between respondents (see Table 15). A comparison of fathers' and sons' perceptions of communication with each other yielded significant differences ($t=2.94$, $p<.01$) as did fathers' perceptions of communication with daughters and daughters' perceptions of communication with fathers ($t=4.02$, $p<.001$). The two remaining paired tests in this subscale--mothers' perceptions of communication with sons and sons' with mothers ($t=4.63$, $p<.0001$) and mothers' perceptions of communication with

Table 14. Differences Between Adolescents' Perceptions of Parents' Attitudes and Parents' Self-Reported Attitudes Toward Contemporary Issues^a

Comparison	Sexual Behavior			Parental Management				
	Range	Group Mean	SD	t	Range	Group Mean	SD	t
Sons' Perceptions of Fathers' Attitudes	23-42	31.70	4.92	-0.29	25-40	33.15	4.10	-0.62
Fathers' Self-Reported Attitudes	23-40	32.04	4.25		20-43	33.93	5.74	
Sons' Perceptions of Mothers' Attitudes	23-42	31.81	5.81	-0.87	25-40	33.70	4.13	-0.51
Mothers' Self-Reported Attitudes	23-39	32.81	4.80		20-48	34.56	6.45	
Daughters' Perceptions of Fathers' Attitudes	29-42	35.90	3.64	1.08	22-43	32.80	5.62	-0.57
Fathers' Self-Reported Attitudes	28-45	34.60	4.67		19-45	33.75	5.20	
Daughters' Perceptions of Mothers' Attitudes	25-44	35.35	4.85	1.13	22-41	31.80	5.28	-1.34
Mothers' Self-Reported Attitudes	25-47	33.85	5.45		21-42	33.95	5.29	

^a Lower mean scores indicate more liberal attitudes toward contemporary issues.

Table 15. Differences Between Parents' Perceptions of Communication with Adolescents and Adolescents' Perceptions of Communication with Parents^a

Comparison	Range	Mean	SD	t
<u>Open Communication Subscale</u>				
Fathers' Perceptions of Communication with Sons	32-81	63.74	12.70	2.94***
Sons' Perceptions of Communication with Fathers	30-84	54.70	13.99	
Fathers' Perceptions of Communication with Daughters	26-84	61.25	16.18	4.02****
Daughters' Perceptions of Communication with Fathers	20-61	45.65	12.52	
Mothers' Perceptions of Communication with Sons	44-82	68.30	10.88	4.63****
Sons' Perceptions of Communication with Mothers	25-84	56.33	14.85	
Mothers' Perceptions of Communication with Daughters	35-82	68.05	12.45	3.08**
Daughters' Perceptions of Communication with Mothers	26-84	57.45	16.21	
<u>Problems in Communication Subscale</u>				
Fathers' Perceptions of Communication with Sons	37-66	54.56	8.18	3.23**
Sons' Perceptions of Communication with Fathers	26-59	47.74	8.33	
Fathers' Perceptions of Communication with Daughters	22-69	50.75	12.59	2.39*
Daughters' Perceptions of Communication with Fathers	24-57	43.00	10.09	
Mothers' Perceptions of Communication with Sons	40-68	55.19	8.49	4.60****
Sons' Perceptions of Communication with Mothers	28-58	43.70	8.65	
Mothers' Perceptions of Communication with Daughters	40-66	53.25	7.81	4.66****
Daughters' Perceptions of Communication with Mothers	28-63	42.40	10.13	
<u>Parental Control Subscale</u>				
Fathers' Perceptions of Communication with Sons	16-38	28.56	5.37	0.98
Sons' Perceptions of Communication with Fathers	16-36	27.26	5.20	
Fathers' Perceptions of Communication with Daughters	10-42	29.05	8.05	3.72****
Daughters' Perceptions of Communication with Fathers	9-37	25.05	7.52	
Mothers' Perceptions of Communication with Sons	23-39	30.89	3.98	3.45**
Sons' Perceptions of Communication with Mothers	15-39	27.22	6.05	
Mothers' Perceptions of Communication with Daughters	19-40	29.85	5.83	1.36
Daughters' Perceptions of Communication with Mothers	9-41	26.55	9.43	

^aHigher mean scores indicate more positive perceptions of communication.

*p<.05.

**p<.01.

***p<.001.

****p<.0001.

daughters and daughters' with mothers ($t=3.08$, $p<.01$)--also produced significant results.

As with the first subscale, all the paired comparisons on the problems in communication subscale were significant. The results were as follows: fathers' perceptions of communication with sons and sons' with fathers ($t=3.23$, $p<.01$); fathers' perceptions of communication with daughters and daughters' with fathers ($t=2.39$, $p<.05$); mothers' perceptions of communication with sons and sons' with mothers $t=4.60$, $p<.0001$); and mothers' perceptions of communication with daughters and daughters' with mothers ($t=4.66$, $p<.001$).

The scores on the parental control techniques subscale produced significant differences on two of the pairs. How fathers and daughters perceived their communication was significantly different ($t=3.72$, $p<.001$) as was how mothers and sons perceived their communication ($t=3.45$, $p<.01$). The same-sex pairs of father-son and mother-daughter were not significantly different.

As a result of these findings and with the exception of the same-sex pairs on the latter subscale, the null hypothesis was rejected. The findings also support the researcher's expectations that parents will perceive family communication patterns to be more positive than will their adolescents. This was especially so with the openness of communication and problems in communication subscales. Mean

differences ranged from 6.81 to 15.60 with parents' mean values being consistently higher than adolescents'. On the third subscale, parental control, the mean differences ranged from 1.30 to 4.00, indicating closer agreement as to items on this area of parent/adolescent communication.

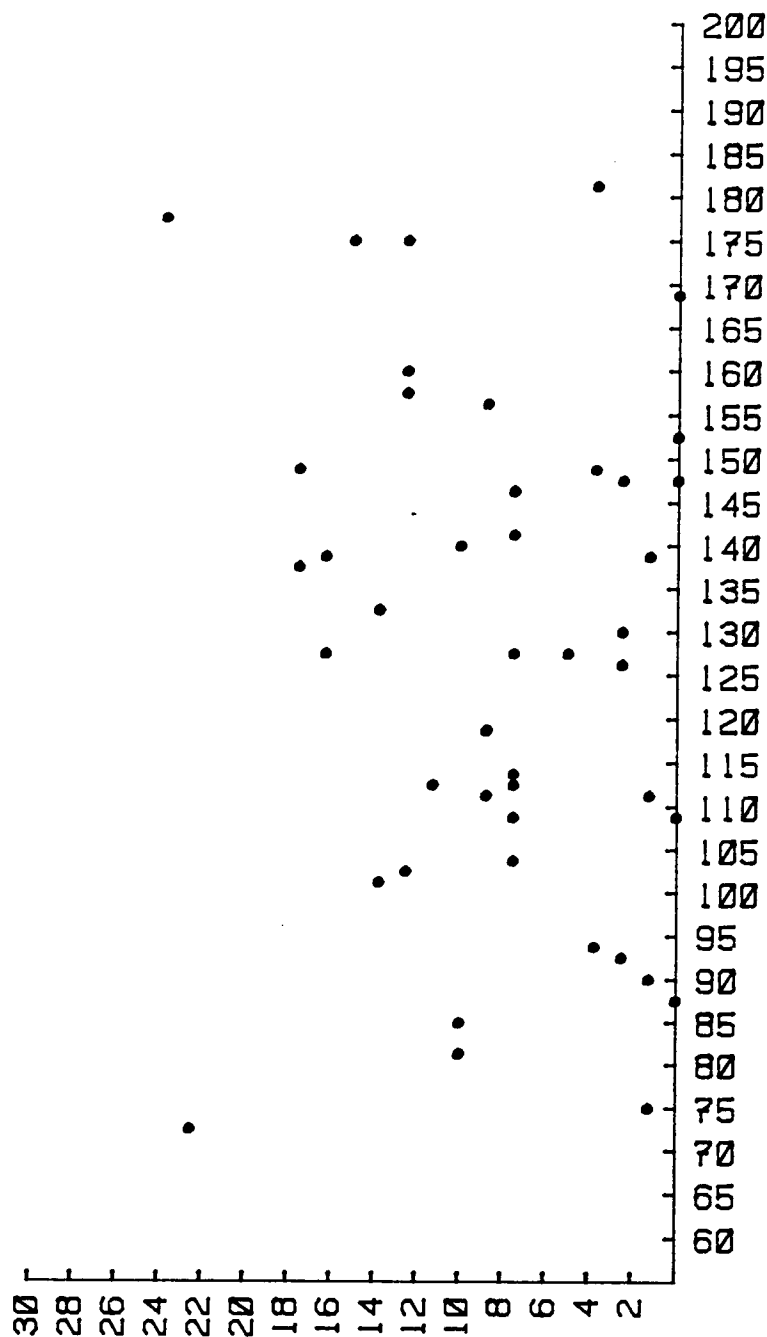
The expectation that family communication would be gender-related was also supported by the findings in certain areas. Both sons and daughters indicated higher communication scores with mothers than with fathers on the openness of communication subscale. This was not necessarily the case with the remaining subscales. With the one exception of the father-daughter pair on the problems in communication subscale, all opposite-sex pairs showed a greater magnitude of difference than did same-sex pairs, thus tending to validate the expectation that family communication is indeed gender-related.

Hypothesis 6

Based on the assumption that these data could be treated as interval data, Pearson product-moment correlations were used to test the hypothesis that there would be no significant relationship between self-reports of family communication patterns and the gap between actual, self-reported attitudes and perceptions of parent/adolescent attitudes toward contemporary issues. In order to provide an examination of the magnitude of parent-adolescent correct and

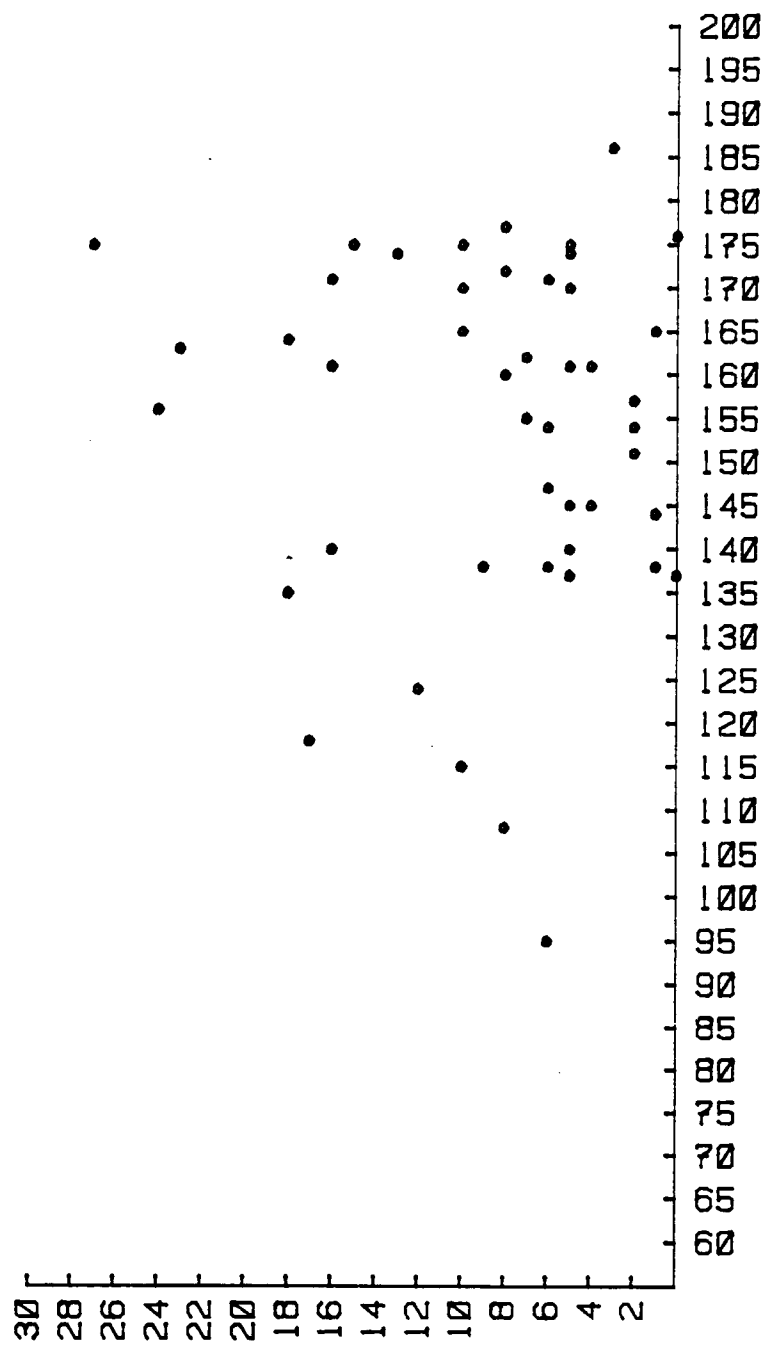
incorrect perceptions as related to communication scores, scatter plots (see Figures 1-4) were printed to illustrate the results of the four comparisons--adolescents with mothers, mothers with adolescents, adolescents with fathers, and fathers with adolescents.

An analysis of the gap between adolescents' perceptions of mothers' attitudes and mothers' self-reported attitudes yielded a correlation coefficient of $r=.16$. As can be seen in Figure 1, there appears to be no substantial relationship between perceived level of communication and a gap between perceived and actual, self-reported attitudes of adolescents and mothers. Similar results were found when analyzing the remaining dyads--mothers with adolescents ($r=.05$), adolescents with fathers ($r=.57$), and fathers with adolescents ($r=.17$). Therefore, the final null hypothesis of this study was not rejected.



Communication Scores of Adolescents with Mothers

Figure 1. Relationship of Communication Scores of Adolescents with Mothers and Gap Between Adolescents' Perceptions of Mothers' Attitudes and Mothers' Self-Reported Attitudes



Communication Scores of Mothers with Adolescents

Figure 2. Relationship of Communication Scores of Mothers with Adolescents and Gap Between Mothers' Perceptions of Adolescents' Attitudes and Adolescents' Self-Reported Attitudes

Gap Between Perceived and Self-Reported Attitudes

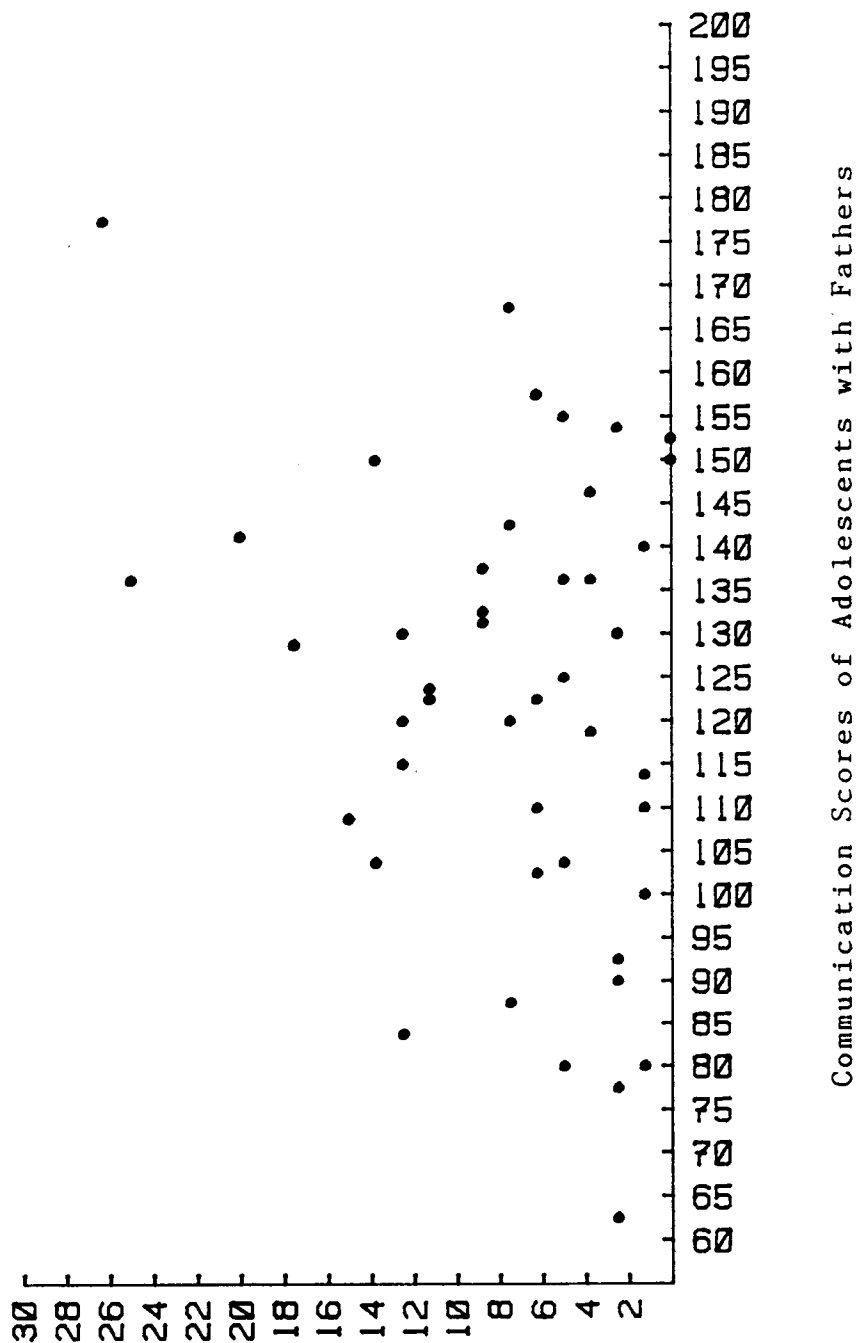


Figure 3. Relationship of Communication Scores of Adolescents with Fathers and Gap Between Adolescents' Perceptions of Fathers' Attitudes and Fathers' Self-Reported Attitudes

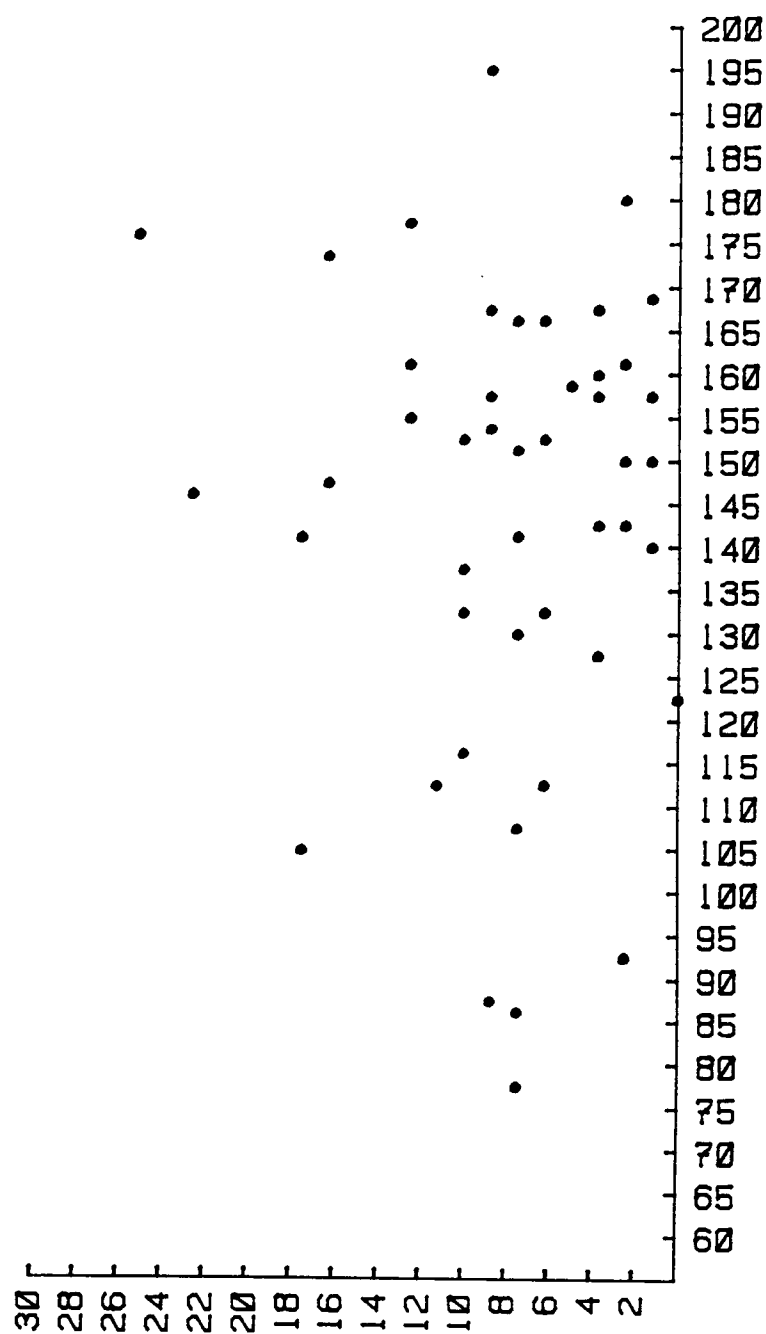


Figure 4. Relationship of Communication Scores of Fathers with Adolescents and Gap Between Fathers' Perceptions of Adolescents' Attitudes and Adolescents' Self-Reported Attitudes

Gap Between Perceived and Self-Reported Attitudes

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The results of the present study supported the following:

1. The first conclusion from the study is that parents and adolescents do differ as to their self-reported attitudes regarding sexual behavior and parental management behavior, with adolescents tending to be somewhat more liberal in their attitudes than parents. However, the differences in attitudes related to parental management behaviors appeared to contribute more to the overall differences in attitudes between parents and adolescents.

2. A second conclusion found in the study is that there was a significant difference in parents' and adolescents' own attitudes and their perceptions of the others' attitudes. Sons and daughters perceived that their attitudes would be different from attitudes of their mothers and fathers. Likewise, mothers and fathers perceived a difference between self-reported attitudes and those of their adolescent children. This finding was true for both subscales--sexual behavior and parental management behavior.

3. It can also be concluded from the data analysis that there was a high level of accuracy with which parents and adolescents perceived differences in the attitudes of one

another toward contemporary issues. Adolescents' perceptions of parents' attitudes were accurate in the areas of sexual behavior and parental management behavior. Likewise, fathers perceived adolescents' attitudes accurately in all areas examined. Mothers perceived adolescents' attitudes accurately with two exceptions: they did not accurately perceive the attitudes of their sons toward issues of sexual behavior; neither did they accurately perceive daughters' attitudes toward parental management behavior. These two exceptions were in the expected direction of parents underestimating the differences between their attitudes and those of their adolescents.

4. Further analysis of the data revealed a significant difference in how parents and adolescents perceived their family communication patterns. In every dyad examined, parents generally perceived more openness and fewer problems in family communication than did their adolescent children. With the exceptions of the same-sex dyads--father/son and mother/daughter--parents also perceived more positive communication patterns in relation to parental management techniques. In addition, both adolescent sons and daughters perceived more openness in communication with their mothers than with their fathers.

5. The final conclusion of the study is that there does not appear to be a relationship between parents' and adolescents' perceptions of their communication patterns and

their perceptions of differences in their attitudes toward issues of sexual behavior and parental management behaviors.

Discussion of the Study's Conclusions

Kalish and Johnson (1972) and Sigelman et al. (1984) found that adolescents were more lenient in judgment on morality and social issues than were parents. The present results tend to concur with these findings in that significant differences were reported between parents and adolescents on 6 of the 10 sexual behavior issues including premarital sexual intercourse, cohabitation, sex education, and birth control.

According to Jessop (1981), dyadic agreement tends to be lower on less objective and threatening topics including those issues that are related to an adolescent's striving for independence. This issue was addressed in the parental management subscale of the Contemporary Issues Questionnaire. Adolescents were found to hold attitudes different from parents on 7 of the 10 issues which could be related to independence-seeking behavior on the part of the adolescent. The general trend was for adolescents to report a more liberal score, perhaps indicating what they believe represents more independence from their parents. This was evident in their responses on such issues as home rules, use of money, dating behavior, and personal appearance.

Zey-Ferrell et al. (1978) found an attitude gap between female adolescents and their mothers but not between males and their fathers. In the present study, both mother/daughter and father/son dyads were found to have significant attitude differences. While the previous research also found a combination gender-generation gap between females and their fathers, this researcher found such a gap between both opposite-sex pairs on sexual and parental management behaviors.

Several researchers (Bengston, 1971; Bengston & Kuypers, 1971; Lerner & Knapp, 1975; Meisels & Cantor, 1971) have postulated that youth have a "vested interest" in emphasizing differences between themselves and their parents, while their parents have a "stake" in minimizing those differences. Although it was expected that there would be a tendency among the adolescents to overestimate the number of major divisions that existed between themselves and their mothers and fathers, the results of the present study do not appear to substantiate this hypothesis. The suggestion that arises from the analysis of the present sample is that adolescents, as a group, demonstrate considerable accuracy in assessing the attitudes of their parents, and parents, as a group, are about equally as accurate in assessing the attitudes of their adolescent children.

The exceptions found may be related to current socialization behaviors present in families. The finding

that there was a significant difference in mothers' perceptions of sons', but not daughters', attitudes in the area of sexual behavior may be a reflection of the double standard. Daughters have a tendency to talk about sexual matters more with mothers than do sons; therefore, mothers have a greater opportunity to correctly perceive their daughters' attitudes.

Likewise, the results indicating mothers incorrectly perceive daughters', but not sons', attitudes toward parental management behavior may be related to male socialization that encourages more outspokenness in expressing disagreement. This, in turn, provides mothers with more opportunity for correctly "reading" their sons as opposed to daughters, who may be socialized to refrain from outward disagreement for the sake of maintaining a harmonious atmosphere.

The finding that adolescents were somewhat more accurate than parents in perceiving the attitudes of the other may also be a result of adolescents' striving for a separate identity from their parents and thus, they may not be as open with parents about what they believe. Parents, on the other hand, with their vested interest in the parental role, may be somewhat more likely to distort perceptions.

While not totally supporting the "developmental stake" issue with respect to perceived attitude differences, there was evidence that this may have been a factor in the reports of communication patterns within the family. Miller et al.

(1986) reported that parents' accounts of their behavior are not congruent with their adolescents' perceptions of their parents' behavior. Jessop (1981) also found parents to overestimate socially desirable parent or family qualities and behavior. At the same time, adolescents, who may be attempting to minimize family ties in their drive for independence, are more likely to distort perceptions of family solidarity (Troll et al. 1969). The results on the Parent/Adolescent Communication Questionnaire tend to support these suppositions.

Mothers and fathers consistently perceived communication with their adolescents as being more positive than did their children. Parents reported higher levels of open communication as well as fewer problems in communication with their adolescent children. These results also concur with those of other researchers (Barner & Olson, 1985; Bengston & Kuypers, 1971; Bengston & Troll, 1971; Thompson et al. 1985) who found parents to overestimate closeness, understanding, number of discussions, and lack of disagreements. These same items were on the present communication instrument and are seen as "positive, socially desirable" behaviors necessary for optimal family functioning.

Inconsistent findings have been reported with respect to whether mothers or fathers are closer to their adolescents and more adequately perceive their attitudes (Acock & Bengston, 1978; Lerner et al. 1971; Lesser & Kandel, 1975;

Smith, 1981; Troll et al. 1969). The results of the present study tend to support the view that mothers report higher levels of communication with adolescents, at least on openness of communication, than do fathers. Norrell (1984) also found that parents (especially mothers) reported more disclosure or openness of communication with adolescents than adolescents perceived. This is consistent with the present findings that mothers and fathers report higher levels of open communication than their adolescents, with mothers' scores being somewhat higher than fathers' scores.

It is interesting to note that even though mothers report more closeness with adolescents than fathers, it was fathers who perceived more accurately the attitudes of their adolescents. Perhaps this is related to the salience of the mother-parental role in the present culture. It could be that mothers have more of a vested interest in believing they have been able to transmit their values to their children.

The differences found in the communication of cross-sex dyads on the parental management technique subscale may again be reflective of the double standard in socialization. Sons may be somewhat more resistant to attempts at management from mothers because of the carryover in today's society of socializing males toward a father-dominant authority relationship. Then, too, perhaps this is related to the way parents "manage" adolescent behavior--whether management

of that behavior is supervised by same-sex as opposed to opposite-sex parent.

Conger & Petersen (1984) have said that the extent of generational differences may be expected to vary from one time period to another, primarily as a result of the speed and pervasiveness of social change. Both viewpoints seem to be evident in the present research. For whatever reason, over one-third of the parent sample in this study thought the gap to be bigger than in previous generations. On the other hand, one-third of the adolescent sample thought the gap was smaller than in previous generations. According to Vandenberg and Konrad (1974), however, the extent of a generation/communication gap may be no different from those present in the past, but mass media have served to make these differences more obvious to everyone.

The results reported on the degree of perceived generation/communication gap coincided to some extent with Freeman's (1972) findings that three-fourths of parents do not believe a gap exists in their own families; two-thirds of parents in the present study supported that view. However, though the majority of adolescents in his study believed a gap existed, over three-fourths of the present adolescent sample believed the gap to be either non-existent or only slight. These results appear to be consistent with the degree of satisfaction reported by the families in this

study who tend to perceive their situations as being more positive than those of other families in general.

Mothers, fathers, and adolescents all tend to be in agreement that their individual family situation is quite different from that of other American families. It would be interesting to determine the basis of this perception of American families and whether it has been negatively affected by media, peers, or other influencing phenomena.

Perhaps both parents and adolescents have a "stake" in presenting their family situation in the most positive way possible. Parents and adolescents may temper negative evaluations which might be interpreted as resulting from some failure on the part of either generation in making the family a harmonious unit. This could also be related to what Bengston (1971) and Troll et al. (1969) referred to as a tendency for families to report smaller "lineage gaps" when asked about their own family and greater "cohort gaps" when asked about the broader society.

Implications for Research

Further research is warranted in the area of determining what is meant by satisfactory communication and the degree of satisfaction expected in family communication. Although both parents and adolescents generally perceived their communication as satisfactory, parents tended to see the level of communication as more positive than did adolescents.

Researchers need to address the issue of whether adolescents expect communication to be less positive than parents and, therefore, are just as satisfied as parents, even at lower levels of communication. Additionally, more specific analyses need to be made of individual statements on the Parent/Adolescent Communication Questionnaire. In so doing, it may be possible to determine if there are behaviors that contribute more or less to the difference in perception of closeness, openness, or problems between parents and their adolescents.

The greater magnitude of difference on the attitudes toward parental management behaviors may be an indication of the relative importance of these issues to family relationships. It could be that day-to-day exchanges in this arena may contribute more to the level of satisfaction than the seemingly larger issues of morality and sexual behavior. Further research is needed to test this supposition.

Though beyond the scope of this research, it may be important to look at differences within the generations--mother/father and son/daughter--to see what impact, if any, such differences may have on the parent/adolescent relationship. This should include a more complete study of cross-sex and same-sex dyads with respect to sex-role attitudes and accompanying behavior.

A thorough examination of diverse populations, more representative of the overall population, is also warranted.

In addition, it would be beneficial to have longitudinal data to help support the proposition that differences are developmentally related.

Implications for Theory

The results of this research seem to have implications for the use of family development theory in anticipating and explaining the changes in levels of family communication in response to developmental or ontogenetic stimuli throughout the life cycle. This is especially true during the adolescent and launching stages of the family life cycle. Many theorists recognize the family life cycle stage which includes adolescents and middle-aged parents as being particularly challenging in successfully negotiating transitions from one stage to the next. Nichols (1984) reports that "optimal resolution of the transition from adolescence to adulthood entails separating from the family, achieving emotional maturity, and developing an independent self-identity" (p. 150). Likewise, middle-aged parents must deal with the decreased influence on and attachment to their adolescents as well as the acceptance that only by rejection of customary family patterns does their adolescent become a separate adult person.

Theorists need to continue to look at the issue of generational separateness and polarization (generation/communication gap), though somewhat problematic, as a part of

the normative development of the adolescent phase of the family life cycle. Without this generational conflict, including differences in attitudes and communication patterns, no adolescent psychological differentiation and restructuring would occur.

Perhaps, within the constructs of family development theory, more attention needs to be given to the implications for sex-role socialization as found in this research. There is evidence that parents and society in general are continuing to socialize adolescents as to sex roles that are seen as appropriate for males and females. Parents seem to be perceiving differences in expectations for sons and daughters and are interacting with them accordingly. Such an emphasis would add to the important knowledge already gained about intergenerational influences on parent and adolescent relationships.

Implications for Practice

In programming for or intervention with families, communication is generally included as a skill deemed essential for optimal family functioning. Families found to function best during the adolescent stage had as a primary resource good parent/adolescent communication patterns including accurate perceptions of the relationship (Olson & McCubbin, 1983). Knowledge of how parents and adolescents perceive these communication patterns within individual

family units is critical. Practitioners also need to be aware of the fact that just because parents and adolescents differ on certain issues, it does not necessarily mean they perceive their communication to be any less effective because of these differences.

Practitioners should be highly cognizant of the stages of the life cycle of the families with whom they work. It is essential that programs be developed for parents and adolescents that include information concerning normative differences experienced during teen/middle age years. Programming should include recognition of certain core conflicts between parents and their adolescent children: control versus freedom; parental responsibility versus shared responsibility; and, open communication, including outspoken criticism, versus respect with peace and quiet (Nichols, 1984).

From the standpoint of adolescents, practitioners need to be alert to the need for facilitating individual independence-seeking behavior within an acceptable level of parental supervision. From the parental perspective, knowledge concerning the complementarity of generativity needs of adults and individuation needs of adolescents must be adequately conveyed.

Rather than viewing the post-child rearing stage from an "empty nest" perspective, practitioners should promote this as a positive and liberating experience during which

parents can gradually relinquish the primary role of parent. This type of approach could facilitate providing a service that promotes positive parent/adolescent interaction as well as strengthens relationships between parents and adolescents.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Table A. Parent and Adolescent Sociodemographic Data

Table A.1. Age of Participants

<u>Participant</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Range</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Adolescent males	27	14-17	15.2
Adolescent females	20	14-16	15.3
Fathers	47	31-58	42.5
Mothers	47	32-55	40.5

Table A.2. Family Composition

<u>Number of Children</u>	<u>No. of Families</u>	<u>% of Families</u>
1 Child	1	2.1
2 Children	26	55.3
3 Children	10	21.3
4 Children	7	14.9
5 Children	3	6.4

Table A.3. Race

<u>Category</u>	<u>Adolescents</u>		<u>Fathers</u>		<u>Mothers</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Black American	1	2	1	2	1	2
Hispanic surnamed American	0	0	0	0	0	0
Native American, American Indian	0	0	0	0	1	2
Oriental American, Asian	0	0	0	0	0	0
White American, Caucasian	46	98	46	98	45	96
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table A.4. Religion

<u>Category</u>	<u>Adolescents</u>		<u>Fathers</u>		<u>Mothers</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Protestant	41	87	42	89	44	94
Catholic	0	0	0	0	0	0
Jewish	0	0	0	0	0	0
None	3	6	2	4	1	2
Other	2	4	3	6	2	4
No response	1	2	0	0	0	0

Table A.5. Community Size

<u>Category</u>	<u>Adolescents</u>		<u>Fathers</u>		<u>Mothers</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Rural area	18	38	32	68	29	62
Small town, less than 3000	29	62	15	32	17	36
No Response	0	0	0	0	1	2

Table A.6. Parental Relationship to Adolescent

<u>Category</u>	<u>Fathers</u>		<u>Mothers</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Natural father/mother	38	81	44	94
Stepfather/stepmother	5	11	0	0
Adoptive father/mother	2	4	1	2
Other	2	4	2	4

Table A.7. Marital Status of Parents

<u>Category</u>	<u>Fathers</u>		<u>Mothers</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Never married	0	0	0	0
Intact first marriage	37	79	35	75
Separated	0	0	0	0
Divorced	1	2	1	2
Remarried	9	19	11	23
Widowed	0	0	0	0
Not married, living with significant other	0	0	0	0

Table A.8. Family Income

<u>Category</u>	<u>Adolescents</u>		<u>Fathers</u>		<u>Mothers</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Under \$10,000	1	2	2	4	2	4
\$10,000 to \$19,999	9	19	6	13	7	15
\$20,000 to \$29,999	11	23	6	13	7	15
\$30,000 to \$39,999	6	13	8	17	10	21
\$40,000 to \$49,999	11	23	13	28	11	23
\$50,000 or more	3	6	6	13	6	13
No response	6	13	6	13	4	9

Note. Totals may not equal 100% because of rounding.

Table A.9. Employment Status of Parents

<u>Category</u>	<u>Fathers</u>		<u>Mothers</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Not employed	2	4	11	23
Employed part time, less than 30 hours weekly	1	2	8	17
Employed full time, more than 30 hours weekly	42	89	26	55
Other	1	2	1	2
No response	1	2	1	2

Note. Totals may not equal 100% because of rounding.

Table A.10. Educational Level of Parents

<u>Category</u>	<u>Fathers</u>		<u>Mothers</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Grade school	4	9	5	11
High school or G.E.D.	19	40	20	43
Vocational, technical or certificate	4	9	4	9
Some college but no degree	10	21	9	19
Two-year college degree	3	6	1	2
Bachelor's degree or equivalent	0	0	4	9
Some graduate or professional school	0	0	3	6
Master's degree or equivalent	3	6	0	0
Ph.D., Ed.D., M.D., J.D.	1	2	0	0
Other	2	4	0	0
No Response	1	2	1	2

Note. Totals may not equal 100% because of rounding.

APPENDIX B

Dear Student:

We are conducting a study in order to learn more about patterns of family communication occurring between teenagers and their parents. In addition, we will be looking at differences in attitudes of parents and their teenagers in terms of certain contemporary issues. The importance of positive parent/adolescent communication in family relationships makes this a very important matter of concern for each of us.

We have chosen to include teenagers in the age range of sophomores in high school and their parents. More specifically, Madisonville High School has been chosen as the population for this research. If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to complete an Informed Consent Form, a copy of which will be given to you. Then you will be asked to complete three brief questionnaires--Background Information, Parent/Adolescent Communication, and Attitudes Toward Contemporary Issues--which should take approximately 30-45 minutes of your time. In addition you will be asked to take home a packet of similar questionnaires for your parents to fill out and return. You will be given a high school supervisor upon the return of your parents' questionnaires.

We have obtained the approval of the Monroe County School Board, the high school principal, and your English teacher. We can assure you that there are no anticipated risks associated with participation in this study. We can also assure you that any information you give will remain strictly confidential. A summary of the group results will be sent to you if you wish.

We recognize that you may be very busy; however, your participation is extremely important as we seek to learn more about the relationship between teenagers and their parents. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and we hope you will agree to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

Beth R. Howard, C.H.E.
Doctoral Student
The University of Tennessee
Knoxville

Dr. Priscilla White, Professor
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APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

We are conducting a study in order to learn more about patterns of family communication occurring between teenagers and their parents. In addition, we will be looking at differences in attitudes of parents and their teenagers in terms of certain contemporary issues. The importance of positive parent/adolescent communication in family relationships makes this a very important matter of concern for each of us.

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to complete 3 brief questionnaires--Background Information, Parent/Adolescent Communication, and Attitudes Toward Contemporary Issues. In addition you will be asked to take home a packet of similar questionnaires for your parents to fill out and return.

We would like for you to understand our commitment to the following safeguards in your interest:

1. Your confidentiality as a participant will be maintained by the use of code numbers instead of names on all materials. The data gathered will be reported in summary form with no reference to you personally. Individual data and participant identities will not be shared with anyone and will be secured in the office of the Project Director.
2. There is no penalty associated with refusing to participate in the study or withdrawing at any time.
3. There are no anticipated risks or benefits to you associated with your participation in the study, but the group results may be of interest to you.
4. It should take approximately 30-45 minutes of your time to participate in this study.
5. Answers to any questions you may have about the procedures of this study are available at any time. Contact Beth R. Howard either at the Department of Home Economics, Hiwassee College, Box 655, Madisonville, TN 37354 (Phone: 442-2520, Ex. 277) or at home (Phone: 442-2163)

I have read this form and on the basis of informed consent agree to participate in this study.

Date: _____

Signature: _____

APPENDIX D

Dear Parent:

We are conducting a study in order to learn more about patterns of family communication occurring between teenagers and their parents. In addition, we will be looking at differences in attitudes of parents and their teenagers in terms of certain contemporary issues. The importance of positive parent/adolescent communication in family relationships makes this a very important matter of concern for each of us.

We have chosen to include teenagers in the age range of sophomores in high school and their parents. More specifically, Madisonville High School has been chosen as the population for this research. If you agree to participate in the study, you and your spouse will be asked to complete, without consulting each other, three brief questionnaires--Background Information, Parent/Adolescent Communication, and Attitudes Toward Contemporary Issues. Completing and returning the questionnaires will be taken as an indication of your consent to participate in this research project.

Your teenager has been asked to complete similar questionnaires during a regularly scheduled English class session. In order for us to use the information collected from your teenager, we would like for you to complete the attached Informed Consent Form and return it with your completed questionnaires in one of the return envelopes. Any teenager may choose not to participate even though we have the consent of the parents. We have obtained the approval of the Monroe County School Board, the high school principal, and the high school English teachers and we can assure you that there are no anticipated risks associated with participation in this study. We can also assure you that any information you or your teenager give will remain strictly confidential. Your teenager will be given a high school sun visor upon the return of his or her parents' questionnaires (or parent in the case of a single parent family).

We recognize that you may be very busy; however, your participation is extremely important as we seek to learn more about the relationship between teenagers and their parents. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and we hope you will agree to participate in this study. Simply complete and return the three questionnaires for each parent in the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelopes within the next

two weeks. The Informed Consent Form for your teenager may be returned in either of the envelopes. A summary of the group results will be sent to you if you wish. With your help we expect to identify some strategies for improving relationships between parents and their teenagers.

Answers to any questions you may have about the procedures of this study are available at any time. Contact Beth R. Howard either at the Department of Home Economics, Hiwassee College, Box 655, Madisonville, TN 37354 (Phone: 442-2520, Ex. 277) or at home (Phone: 442-2163).

Sincerely,

Beth R. Howard, C.H.E.
Doctoral Student
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Dr. Priscilla White
Professor, Child & Family Studies
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

APPENDIX E

PARENTAL CONSENT FORM FOR TEENAGER'S PARTICIPATION

We are conducting a study in order to learn more about patterns of family communication occurring between teenagers and their parents. In addition, we will be looking at differences in attitudes of parents and their teenagers in terms of certain contemporary issues. The importance of positive parent/adolescent communication in family relationships makes this a very important matter of concern for each of us.

Your teenager will be asked to complete three brief questionnaires--Background Information, Parent/Adolescent Communication, and Attitudes Toward Contemporary Issues. In order for us to use the information collected from your teenager, we would like for you to complete and return this Informed Consent Form.

We would like for you to understand our commitment to the following safeguards in your teenager's interest:

1. Your teenager's confidentiality as a participant will be maintained by the use of code numbers instead of names on all materials. The data gathered will be reported in summary form with no reference to you personally. Individual data and participant identities will not be shared with anyone and will be secured in the office of the Project Director.
2. There is no penalty associated with refusing to participate in the study or withdrawing at any time.
3. There are no anticipated risks or benefits to your teenager associated with his/her participation in the study.
4. It should take approximately 30-45 minutes of your teenager's time to participate in this study.
5. Answers to any questions you or your teenager may have about the procedures of this study are available at any time. Contact Beth R. Howard either at the Department of Home Economics, Hiwassee College, Box 655, Madisonville, TN 37354 (Phone: 442-2520, Ex. 277) or at home (Phone: 442-2163)

.....
I have read this form and on the basis of informed consent agree for my teenager to participate in this study.

Teenager's Name: _____

Parent's Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX F

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: ADOLESCENT FORM

DIRECTIONS: Please circle the letter beside the most appropriate response or fill in the blank.

1. Age at last birthday: (Fill in years) _____
2. Sex: (Circle one) a. Male b. Female
3. Race: (Circle one)
 - a. Black American
 - b. Hispanic Surnamed American
 - c. Native American, American Indian
 - d. Oriental American, Asian
 - e. White American, Caucasian
 - f. Other (Please specify) _____
4. Marital Status of Parents: (Circle most recent status)
 - a. Never married
 - b. Intact first marriage
 - c. Separated
 - d. Divorced
 - e. Remarried
 - f. Widowed
 - g. Not married, living with significant other
5. What is the status of the parent(s) for whom this survey is completed? (Circle all that apply. All other survey questions relating to parents will refer to the parental status circled here.)
 - a. Natural father
 - b. Natural mother
 - c. Stepfather
 - d. Stepmother
 - e. Adoptive father
 - f. Adoptive mother
 - g. Other (Please specify) _____
6. Please write the age and sex of each of the children in your family, not including you.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
 - e. _____
 - f. _____
7. What is your religious affiliation? (Circle one)
 - a. Protestant
 - b. Catholic
 - c. Jewish
 - d. None
 - e. Other (Please specify) _____
8. What is the size of the community in which your family now live? (Circle one)
 - a. Rural area
 - b. Small town, less than 3000

9. What is your current family income before taxes and other deductions? (Circle one)

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| a. Under \$10,000 | d. Between \$30,000 and \$39,999 |
| b. Between \$10,000 and \$19,999 | e. Between \$40,000 and \$49,999 |
| c. Between \$20,000 and \$29,999 | f. Over \$50,000 |

10. If your parents are employed outside the home, please provide the following information:

- | | <u>Father</u> | <u>Mother</u> |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| a. Current employment position/title: | _____ | _____ |
| b. Briefly describe what he/she does: | _____ | _____ |
| c. For whom does he/she work: | _____ | _____ |

11. What is the highest level of education obtained by your parents? (Please place the appropriate letter in the space beside each parent.)

- | | Father _____ | Mother _____ |
|--|--------------|--------------|
| a. Grade school | | |
| b. High school or G.E.D. | | |
| c. Vocational, technical, or certificate program | | |
| d. Some college work but no degree | | |
| e. Two-year college degree | | |
| f. Bachelor's degree or equivalent | | |
| g. One or two years of graduate or professional school | | |
| h. Master's degree or equivalent | | |
| i. Ph.D. or Ed.D. | | |
| j. Other (Please specify) | _____ | |

12. What is your position in the family birth order?

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| a. Oldest child | e. Fifth child |
| b. Second child | f. Sixth child |
| c. Third child | g. Other (Please specify) _____ |
| d. Fourth child | |

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: PARENT FORM

DIRECTIONS: Please circle the letter beside the most appropriate response or fill in the blank.

1. Age at last birthday: (Fill in years)_____
2. Sex: (Circle one) a. Male b. Female
3. Race: (Circle one)

a. Black American	d. Oriental American, Asian
b. Hispanic Surnamed American	e. White American, Caucasian
c. Native American, American Indian	f. Other (Please specify)_____
4. Marital Status: (Circle most recent status)

a. Never married	e. Remarried
b. Intact first marriage	f. Widowed
c. Separated	g. Not married, living with significant other
d. Divorced	
5. What is your parental relationship to the teenager for whom this survey is completed? (Circle one)

a. Natural father	e. Adoptive father
b. Natural mother	f. Adoptive mother
c. Stepfather	g. Other (Please specify)_____
d. Stepmother	
6. What is the age of the son/daughter for whom this survey was completed? (Please specify)

a. Son_____	b. Daughter_____
-------------	------------------
7. Please write the age and sex of each of the children in your family, not including the teenager for whom the survey was completed.

a. _____	d. _____
b. _____	e. _____
c. _____	f. _____
8. What is your religious affiliation? (Circle one)

a. Protestant	d. None
b. Catholic	e. Other (Please specify)_____
c. Jewish	
9. What is the size of the community in which you now live? (Circle one)

a. Rural area	b. Small town, less than 3000
---------------	-------------------------------

10. What is your current family income before taxes and other deductions? (Circle one)

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| a. Under \$10,000 | d. Between \$30,000 and \$39,999 |
| b. Between \$10,000 and \$19,999 | e. Between \$40,000 and \$49,999 |
| c. Between \$20,000 and \$29,999 | f. Over \$50,000 |

11. What is your current employment status: (Circle one)

- | | |
|--|--|
| a. Not employed | c. Employed full time (more than 30 hours each week) |
| b. Employed part-time (less than 30 hours each week) | d. Other (Please specify) _____ |

12. If you are employed, please provide the following information:

- a. Current employment position/title: _____
- b. Briefly describe what you do: _____
- c. For whom do you work: _____

13. What is the highest level of education you have completed? (Please circle or specify)

- a. Grade school
- b. High school or G.E.D.
- c. Vocational, technical, or certificate program
- d. Some college work but no degree
- e. Two-year college degree
- f. Bachelor's degree or equivalent
- g. One or two years of graduate or professional school
- h. Master's degree or equivalent
- i. Ph.D. or Ed.D.
- j. Other (Please specify) _____

APPENDIX G

PARENT/ADOLESCENT COMMUNICATION QUESTIONNAIRE FORM A - ADOLESCENT

DIRECTIONS: On the following pages, you will find a number of statements which may or may not describe the type of communication you have with your parents. I would like for you to indicate, on a scale from 1 to 7, how true of your communication patterns each of these various statements is. Part I is to be marked for communication with your mother and Part II is to be marked for communication with your father. Please do not leave any statements unmarked.

EXAMPLE:

I talk with my mother about the ideas and interests
we share.

RATING
5

RESPONSES:

- Mark a 1 if it is NEVER OR ALMOST NEVER TRUE.
- Mark a 2 if it is USUALLY NOT TRUE.
- Mark a 3 if it is SOMETIMES BUT INFREQUENTLY TRUE.
- Mark a 4 if it is OCCASIONALLY TRUE.
- Mark a 5 if it is OFTEN TRUE.
- Mark a 6 if it is USUALLY TRUE.
- Mark a 7 if it is ALWAYS OR ALMOST ALWAYS TRUE.

*Responses on the designated items were reversed for scoring purposes.

PART I: ADOLESCENT AND MOTHER FORM

RESPONSE CHOICES

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 - Never or Almost Never True | 5 - Often True |
| 2 - Usually Not True | 6 - Usually True |
| 3 - Sometimes But Infrequently True | 7 - Always or Almost Always True |
| 4 - Occasionally True | |
-

-
- ____ 1. I can discuss my beliefs with my mother without feeling restrained or embarrassed.
- ____ 2.* Sometimes I have trouble believing everything my mother tells me.
- ____ 3. My mother is a good listener.
- ____ 4.* Sometimes I am afraid to ask my mother for what I want.
- ____ 5.* My mother has a tendency to say things to me that would be better left unsaid.
- ____ 6. My mother can tell how I am feeling without asking.
- ____ 7. I am very satisfied with how my mother and I talk together.
- ____ 8. If I was in trouble, I could tell my mother.
- ____ 9. I openly show affection to my mother.
- ____ 10.* When we are having a problem, I often give my mother the silent treatment.
- ____ 11.* I am careful about what I say to my mother.
- ____ 12.* When talking to my mother, I have a tendency to say things that would be better left unsaid.
- ____ 13. When I ask questions, I get honest answers from my mother.
- ____ 14. My mother tries to understand my point of view.
- ____ 15.* There are topics I avoid discussing with my mother.
- ____ 16. I find it easy to discuss problems with my mother.
- ____ 17. It is very easy for me to express all my true feelings to my mother.

RESPONSE CHOICES

- 1 - Never or Almost Never True
2 - Usually Not True
3 - Sometimes But Infrequently True
4 - Occasionally True

- 5 - Often True
6 - Usually True
7 - Always or Almost Always True
-

- ____ 18.* My mother nags/bothers me.
- ____ 19.* My mother insults me when she is angry with me.
- ____ 20. I don't think I can tell my mother how I really feel about some things.
- ____ 21. My mother pays me compliments and says nice things to me.
- ____ 22. I feel free to discuss matters of sex with my mother.
- ____ 23. My mother asks for my opinion on matters requiring decisions to be made.
- ____ 24. My mother has confidence in my ability to make rational decisions.
- ____ 25. My mother explains the reasons for not letting me do something I want to do.
- ____ 26. Conversations with my mother sometime help me solve a problem of my own.
- ____ 27.* My mother wants to control whatever I do.
- ____ 28. I negotiate rules for my conduct (behavior) with my mother.

PART II: ADOLESCENT AND FATHER FORM

RESPONSE CHOICES

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 - Never or Almost Never True | 5 - Often True |
| 2 - Usually Not True | 6 - Usually True |
| 3 - Sometimes But Infrequently True | 7 - Always or Almost Always True |
| 4 - Occasionally True | |
-

- _____ 1. I can discuss my beliefs with my father without feeling restrained or embarrassed.
- _____ 2.* Sometimes I have trouble believing everything my father tells me.
- _____ 3. My father is a good listener.
- _____ 4.* Sometimes I am afraid to ask my father for what I want.
- _____ 5.* My father has a tendency to say things to me that would be better left unsaid.
- _____ 6. My father can tell how I am feeling without asking.
- _____ 7. I am very satisfied with how my father and I talk together.
- _____ 8. If I was in trouble, I could tell my father.
- _____ 9. I openly show affection to my father.
- _____ 10.* When we are having a problem, I often give my father the silent treatment.
- _____ 11.* I am careful about what I say to my father.
- _____ 12.* When talking to my father, I have a tendency to say things that would be better left unsaid.
- _____ 13. When I ask questions, I get honest answers from my father.
- _____ 14. My father tries to understand my point of view.
- _____ 15.* There are topics I avoid discussing with my father.
- _____ 16. I find it easy to discuss problems with my father.

- ____ 17. It is very easy for me to express all my true feelings to my father.
- ____ 18. * My father nags/bothers me.
- ____ 19. * My father insults me when he is angry with me.
- ____ 20. * I don't think I can tell my father how I really feel about some things.
- ____ 21. My father pays me compliments and says nice things to me.
- ____ 22. I feel free to discuss matters of sex with my father.
- ____ 23. My father asks for my opinion on matters requiring decisions to be made.
- ____ 24. My father has confidence in my ability to make rational decisions.
- ____ 25. My father explains the reasons for not letting me do something I want to do.
- ____ 26. Conversations with my father sometime help me solve a problem of my own.
- ____ 27. * My father wants to control whatever I do.
- ____ 28. I negotiate rules for my conduct (behavior) with my father.
-

Please answer the following general questions by **circling** the appropriate answer.

1. Is there a "generation gap" (breakdown in communication) between you and your parents?

Mother: Large Gap	Moderate Gap	Slight Gap	No Gap
Father: Large Gap	Moderate Gap	Slight Gap	No Gap
2. In your opinion, does a "generation gap" exist between American teenagers and their parents (speaking of American families in general, not your family)?

a. Large Gap	b. Moderate Gap	c. Slight Gap	d. No Gap
--------------	-----------------	---------------	-----------
3. In general, how do you perceive the "generation gap" to be in relation to previous generations?

a. Large Gap	b. Moderate Gap	c. Slight Gap	d. No Gap
--------------	-----------------	---------------	-----------
4. How satisfied are you with the way your family communicates with each other?

a. Very Satisfied	c. Unsatisfied
b. Fairly Satisfied	d. Very Unsatisfied

PARENT/ADOLESCENT COMMUNICATION QUESTIONNAIRE
FORM P - PARENT

DIRECTIONS: On the form below, you will find a number of statements which may or may not describe the type of communication you have with your teenager. I would like for you to indicate, on a scale from 1 to 7, how true of your communication patterns each of these various statements is. Please do not leave any statements unmarked.

EXAMPLE:

I talk with my teenager about the ideas and interest we share. Rating
5

- Mark a 1 if it is NEVER OR ALMOST NEVER TRUE.
Mark a 2 if it is USUALLY NOT TRUE.
Mark a 3 if it is SOMETIMES BUT INFREQUENTLY TRUE.
Mark a 4 if it is OCCASIONALLY TRUE.
Mark a 5 if it is OFTEN TRUE.
Mark a 6 if it is USUALLY TRUE.
Mark a 7 if it is ALWAYS OR ALMOST ALWAYS TRUE.

RATING	COMMUNICATION PATTERNS
_____ 1.	I can discuss my beliefs with my teenager without feeling restrained or embarrassed.
_____ 2. *	Sometimes I have trouble believing everything my teenager tells me.
_____ 3.	My teenager is a good listener.
_____ 4. *	Sometimes I am afraid to ask my teenager for what I want.
_____ 5. *	My teenager has a tendency to say things to me which would be better left unsaid.
_____ 6.	My teenager can tell how I am feeling without asking.
_____ 7.	I am very satisfied with how my teenager and I talk together.
_____ 8.	If I was in trouble, I could tell my teenager.
_____ 9.	I openly show affection to my teenager.
_____ 10. *	When we are having a problem, I often give my teenager the silent treatment.
_____ 11. *	I am careful about what I say to my teenager.

- _____12.* When talking with my teenager, I have a tendency to say things that would be better left unsaid.
- _____13. When I ask questions, I get honest answers from my teenager.
- _____14. My teenager tries to understand my point of view.
- _____15.* There are topics I avoid discussing with my teenager.
- _____16. I find it easy to discuss problems with my teenager.
- _____17. It is very easy for me to express all my true feelings to my teenager.
- _____18.* My teenager nags/bothers me.
- _____19.* My teenager insults me when she/he is angry with me.
- _____20.* I don't think I can tell my teenager how I really feel about some things.
- _____21. My teenager pays me compliments and says nice things to me.
- _____22. I feel free to discuss matters of sex with my teenager.
- _____23. I ask for my teenager's opinion on matters requiring decisions to be made.
- _____24. I have confidence in my teenager's ability to make rational decisions.
- _____25. I explain the reasons for not letting my teenager do something he/she wants to do.
- _____26. Conversations with me sometimes help my teenager solve a problem of his/her own.
- _____27.* I want to control whatever my teenager does.
- _____28. I negotiate rules for my teenager's conduct (behavior) with him/her.

*Responses on the designated items were reversed for scoring purposes.

a. Very Satisfied
b. Fairly Satisfied
c. Unsatisfied
d. Very Unsatisfied

APPENDIX H

ATTITUDES TOWARD CONTEMPORARY ISSUES: ADOLESCENT FORM

DIRECTIONS On the attached page you will find a number of statements which represent attitudes toward various contemporary issues. You are asked to respond to each of the statements according to the following ways:

1. **First**, read each statement carefully and mark the appropriate number you believe most accurately represents how you feel about each statement.
2. **Second**, reread each statement marking how you think your **mother** feels about each statement.
3. **Third**, reread each statement a final time marking how you think your **father** feels about each statement.

Select from the following opinion responses and mark the appropriate number for each issue.

- | | | |
|--------|---|--|
| Mark a | 1 | if you Strongly Agree (definitely yes) |
| Mark a | 2 | if you Mildly Agree (I believe so) |
| Mark a | 3 | if you are Undecided (not sure) |
| Mark a | 4 | if you Mildly Disagree (probably not) |
| Mark a | 5 | if you Strongly Disagree (definitely not) |

SELF MOTHER FATHER

EXAMPLE: Marijuana should be legalized under state supervision. 4 2 4

*Responses on the designated statements were reversed for scoring purposes.

ATTITUDES TOWARD CONTEMPORARY ISSUES: ADOLESCENT FORM

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES	SELF	MOTHER	FATHER
1. Premarital sexual intercourse between teenagers should be considered acceptable as long as the couple loves each other.			
*2. It is the girl who should set limits as to how far the couple will go in kissing, necking, and petting.			
*3. Sex education is not needed in the public school system.			
*4. Parents should not allow their teenagers to drink alcoholic beverages.			
*5. Health authorities should be required to inform the parents of teenagers who receive birth control pills or other birth control devices from a clinic or doctor.			
6. Abortion should be considered as a possible solution if a high school sophomore gets pregnant.			
*7. Parents have the right to determine who will or will not be suitable friends for their teenagers.			
8. Parents have the right to determine what television programs (MTV, etc.) and movies (PG, R, X) should be watched by teenagers.			
*9. Teenagers should use their allowance or money they earn to buy gas when they drive the family car for dating or personal use.			
10. Colleges should have housing available for students of the opposite sex who choose to live together.			
*11. Teenagers have the responsibility to let their parents know where they are going and when they will be home.			
12. If a teenager has a paying job, he or she should be able to decide how his or her money will be spent.			
13. Birth control information should be made available to all who desire it.			
14. A person's appearance is his/her own concern, and others should tolerate whatever that person wears.			
15. A teenager's opinion should be given considerable weight when it comes to making decisions about curfews.			
*16. Premarital sexual intercourse is considered unacceptable in our present society.			
17. If a high school sophomore wants to go steady, it should be his or her own decision to make.			
18. Living together intimately (cohabiting) before marriage increases the likelihood of that marriage being successful.			
19. How parents feel about premarital sexual intercourse should be the same for their daughters as for their sons.			
20. A teenager has the right to choose his or her own dating partners.			

ATTITUDES TOWARD CONTEMPORARY ISSUES: PARENT FORM

DIRECTIONS: On the attached page you will find a number of statements which represent attitudes toward various contemporary issues. You are asked to respond to each of the statements according to the following ways:

1. **First**, read each statement carefully and mark the appropriate number you believe most accurately represents how **you** feel about each statement.
2. **Second**, reread each statement marking how you think your **spouse** feels about each statement.
3. **Third**, reread each statement a final time marking how you think your **teenager** feels about each statement.

Select from the following opinion responses and mark the appropriate number for each issue.

- | | | |
|--------|---|--|
| Mark a | 1 | if you Strongly Agree (definitely yes) |
| Mark a | 2 | if you Mildly Agree (I believe so) |
| Mark a | 3 | if you are Undecided (not sure) |
| Mark a | 4 | if you Mildly Disagree (probably not) |
| Mark a | 5 | if you Strongly Disagree (definitely not) |

EXAMPLE: Marijuana should be legalized under state supervision.	<u>SELF</u>	<u>SPOUSE</u>	<u>TEEN</u>
	4	2	4

*Responses on the designated statements were reversed for scoring purposes.

ATTITUDES TOWARD CONTEMPORARY ISSUES: PARENT FORM

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES	SELF	SPOUSE	TEEN
1. Premarital sexual intercourse between teenagers should be considered acceptable as long as the couple loves each other.			
* 2. It is the girl who should set limits as to how far the couple will go in kissing, necking, and petting.			
* 3. Sex education is not needed in the public school system.			
* 4. Parents should not allow their teenagers to drink alcoholic beverages.			
* 5. Health authorities should be required to inform the parents of teenagers who receive birth control pills or other birth control devices from a clinic or doctor.			
6. Abortion should be considered as a possible solution if a high school sophomore gets pregnant.			
* 7. Parents have the right to determine who will or will not be suitable friends for their teenagers.			
8. Parents have the right to determine what television programs (MTV, etc.) and movies (PG, R, X) should be watched by teenagers.			
* 9. Teenagers should use their allowance or money they earn to buy gas when they drive the family car for dating or personal use.			
10. Colleges should have housing available for students of the opposite sex who choose to live together.			
* 11. Teenagers have the responsibility to let their parents know where they are going and when they will be home.			
12. If a teenager has a paying job, he or she should be able to decide how his or her money will be spent.			
13. Birth control information should be made available to all who desire it.			
14. A person's appearance is his/her own concern, and others should tolerate whatever that person wears.			
15. A teenager's opinion should be given considerable weight when it comes to making decisions about curfews.			
* 16. Premarital sexual intercourse is considered unacceptable in our present society.			
17. If a high school sophomore wants to go steady, it should be his or her own decision to make.			
18. Living together intimately (cohabiting) before marriage increases the likelihood of that marriage being successful.			
19. How parents feel about premarital sexual intercourse should be the same for their daughters as for their sons.			
20. A teenager has the right to choose his or her own dating partners.			

VITA

Mary Beth R. Howard was born in Princeton, West Virginia on May 15, 1943. She resided in Madisonville, Tennessee and attended public schools there, graduating from Madisonville High School in 1960.

The following September she entered Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama where she remained for two years. In January of 1963 she transferred to the University of Tennessee in Knoxville and, following an extended hiatus for child-rearing, received the Bachelor of Science degree in Home Economics Education in June, 1973.

In the fall of 1973 she accepted a position as Instructor of Home Economics at Hiwassee College in Madisonville and began part-time work toward a Master's degree in Home Economics Education. She received the Master's Degree from the University of Tennessee in August, 1975. Ms. Howard began part-time work toward the Doctorate degree at the same university in 1980, and in 1988 completed the Ph.D. program in Human Ecology with areas of concentration in Child and Family Studies and Nutrition.

Ms. Howard married James L. Howard in 1960. They have a daughter, Kim, who was born in 1964, and a son, Jeff, who was born in 1966. The author is presently a Professor of

Home Economics at Hiwassee College and serves as Chairperson of the Business and Consumer Economics Division.

Ms. Howard's professional interests include human development through the lifespan, family relations, human sexuality, family resource management, and curriculum development utilizing team teaching methodology. Her community interests include presenting parent education workshops, teaching human sexuality workshops for pre-teens and teens in surrounding churches, and serving as a resource consultant for organizations such as the Monroe Maternity Center and the Young Parent Job Placement Program of the JTPA (Job Training Partnership Act).