



A comparison of adolescent perceptions of parent-child relationships between delinquent and non-delinquent adolescents  
by William Duane Haidle

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF EDUCATION  
Montana State University  
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**Abstract:**

This study dealt with the perceptions of adolescents concerning the parent-child relationship. It was designed to determine differences in these perceptions between non-delinquent and delinquent adolescents. The study was centered around four specific areas, how the adolescent perceived his relationship with his parents, how the adolescent perceived his relationship in the family, how the adolescent perceived his home, and how the adolescent perceived himself.

The review of literature revealed that authorities on adolescent behavior agree that delinquent behavior is learned. Much of this learning of delinquent behavior is a result of failure in the home to provide the necessary normal, growing experiences and support the adolescent needs.

The results of the study indicated that there is a difference in the way non-delinquents and delinquents perceive their parents, family, home, and themselves.

Some of the major conclusions reached are that: (1) parents have a great influence upon the development of their children; (2) parents tend to react to their children rather than listen to the real need the child is trying to express.

Some recommendations offered are: (1) that this study be replicated; (2) differences in male and female responses be investigated; and (3) that a class should be designed for parents of adolescents which would help them understand the needs of the adolescent.

Children now love luxury, they have bad manners, contempt for authority. They show disrespect for elders, and love chatter in place of exercise. Children are now tyrants, not servants of their households.

Above written by Socrates  
approximately 2500 years ago

I see no hope for the future of our people if they are dependent on the frivolous youth of today, for certainly all youth are reckless beyond words . . . . When I was a boy we were taught to be discreet and respectful of elders, but the present youth are exceedingly wise and impatient of restraint.

Hesiod: Eighth Century B.C.

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by

WILLIAM DUANE HAIDLE

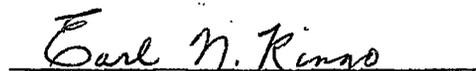
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## ABSTRACT

This study dealt with the perceptions of adolescents concerning the parent-child relationship. It was designed to determine differences in these perceptions between non-delinquent and delinquent adolescents. The study was centered around four specific areas, how the adolescent perceived his relationship with his parents, how the adolescent perceived his relationship in the family, how the adolescent perceived his home, and how the adolescent perceived himself.

The review of literature revealed that authorities on adolescent behavior agree that delinquent behavior is learned. Much of this learning of delinquent behavior is a result of failure in the home to provide the necessary normal, growing experiences and support the adolescent needs.

The results of the study indicated that there is a difference in the way non-delinquents and delinquents perceive their parents, family, home, and themselves.

Some of the major conclusions reached are that: (1) parents have a great influence upon the development of their children; (2) parents tend to react to their children rather than listen to the real need the child is trying to express.

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

Dr. Haim Ginott, in his book "Between Parent and Teenager," had this to say about parent-child relationships:

As adults our responsibility is to set standards and demonstrate values. Our teenagers need to know what we respect and what we expect. Of course, they will oppose our standards, resist our rules, and test our limits. This is as it should be. No one can mature by blindly obeying his parents. Our teenagers' resentment of the rules is anticipated and tolerated. They are not expected to like our prohibitions (1969:150).

The above statement indicates that a conflict between parent and teenager not only exists, but is to be expected. The abundance of literature dealing with the problems of adolescence and the number of books on "how to raise your children" verifies that this problem is widespread and is of major concern to parents, professionals, and teenagers themselves.

Depending upon the viewpoint of the author, the blame for the problem in parent-child relationships is placed upon: parental behavior, community characteristics, interactions with peers, teacher-child interactions, socioeconomic status indices, relations with siblings, and violence on television. While this is not intended to be an exhaustive list, it does indicate that factors from various areas of our life experiences are being postulated as the genesis of behavior in the adolescent which eventuates in a breakdown of the relationship between the parent and the teenager.

It is hard for parents to accept the fact that this "adolescent," who up to this point in time has been so dependent upon them, begins to indicate through words, actions, and deeds that the relationship is too confining, and that he (the adolescent) has some thoughts, feelings, and emotions of his own. Marin and Cohen said that "we as parents do not see our young people very accurately (1971:3)." Instead, we fantasize about our teenagers, projecting onto them our own dreams, phobias, and needs. Commenting about programs we have devised for our young people, Marin and Cohen said:

We watch them at home and in the classroom, they sit still for most of it and go through the appropriate motions, and we are sometimes convinced that we understand them, that we know what they need. But when we put our programs into effect they fail, they alienate the young, and we cannot understand why--for we cannot understand that out of sight and among themselves they become something altogether different from what we see: beautiful strangers, at once far more intelligent and passionate and distressed than we had imagined them to be (1971:3).

It is even more difficult for us as parents to accept the fact that the period of adolescence is a period of searching for a personal identity, and a time of seeking an answer to the question, "Who am I (Ginott, 1969:26)?" While the adolescent may be uncertain of who he is, or what he wishes to be, there is a definite feeling of "what he does not want to be." To the parents, it might seem that they are setting a good example. They have expressed strong feelings about having their child take over the family business, follow in their footsteps, or even be more successful than they have been. Engrossed in their own

dreams and expectations, the parents are unaware that their adolescent may see their lives as pointless, harried, and intolerable. Perceiving his parents in this manner, the adolescent may determine to be as unlike his parents as possible (Ginott, 1969:26; Marin & Cohen, 1971:18).

Concerning the purpose of adolescence, Dr. Ginott said:

The purpose of adolescence is to loosen personality. His personality is undergoing the required changes: From organization (childhood) through disorganization (adolescence) to reorganization (adulthood). Adolescence is a period of curative madness, in which every teenager has to remake his personality. He has to free himself from childhood ties with parents, establish new identification with peers, and find his own identity (1969:25).

Although the preceding statement offers little comfort to the harried parent, it does clarify some of the psychological trauma involved in the adolescent years.

The immediate question that is brought to attention by the previous comments is, "Why do some adolescents become delinquent while others are able to function in a socially acceptable manner?" The obvious reply to such a question is, "There are many factors which influence the adolescent's ability to cope with these problems." While sociological, hereditary, economic, and psychological factors could and do have an influence on the adjustment of the adolescent, it is the purpose of this researcher to investigate the impact of the parent-child relationship upon the ability of the adolescent to cope with this adjustment period.

While being interviewed by the U. S. News and World Report

magazine, Dr. Aaron Beck made the statement that one of the major problems a child has to cope with in early life is "the immediate family group--how to deal with any harmful elements that might be present, such as hostile parents or overly competitive brothers and sisters (Sept. 1973:48)."

To further complicate the adjustment process of the adolescent, our present society requires that a man be able to change jobs in order to take advantage of better opportunities. The result of this mobility is the breakdown of the influence of the extended family (Bricklin & Bricklin, 1970:4). Thus, if the adolescent lives in a family that does not give the necessary psychological support and fails to furnish him with "significant others" to emulate, there is no extended family to which he can turn. He is forced to search for his identify and acceptance among other adolescents.

The importance of having a person or a place through which the adolescent can test or measure himself was expressed by Marin and Cohen when they said:

Much of what the young seek from one another has traditionally been found in large and extended families and tribes: among cousins and generations and crowded households, lodges, and clans. At best the self is shaped and made resonant in childhood, then expanded and expressed among comrades in the community. Real coherence and integration of personality depend upon the quality of the household and familial relations: their warmth, depth, honesty, and liveliness. To make use of the world, one must be resilient and sound, grounded in loving relations. The family's principal gift to the young is neither discipline nor morality, but a sense of self developed through rich connections to whole persons. In that sense the ideal family is a natural mandala,

the wedding of polarities and tendencies, and the young find there--symbolized by parents and relatives--the integration of the disparate elements they feel in themselves: a blending, a correspondence. It is that sense of rich wholeness and one's place in it that turns, in later life, into the way one sees the world (1971:16).

The adolescent responds to himself in the same way he perceives others responding to him. If he sees himself as not being worth much to others, friends and/or family, his self-esteem dissipates and becomes a road block to personal happiness (Briggs, 1970:26). Briggs further suggested that more progress is snagged on interpersonal relationships than we realize.

Supporting the emphasis the authors cited have placed upon the influence of the family on the adolescent, Bricklin and Bricklin said, "The family is the most important social grouping humanity has so far produced (1970:4)."

The ideal home is seen as the proving ground for the adolescent. It is a place where it is safe to test himself and his ideas. A place where he is accepted and loved, and even more important, allowed to change. For the parents to allow this testing and change, and for the adolescent to feel secure enough in the home to attempt this change is an essential element of the family relationship. This type of relationship requires a significant amount of trust between parents and their children. Too often this normal process of testing and change in order to find himself is seen as a form of rebellion on the part of the adolescent, and parents tend to react rather than respond to the

attempts of the adolescent to find himself.

This rebellion, as it is perceived by the parents, is usually part of the searching process through which the adolescent must go. He may in essence be saying, "Can you still love me if I do this?" or the more poignant question, "Do you love me?" This can be the special need of an adolescent raised in a home in which he has felt insecure and uncertain whether his parents loved him. There is a distinct difference between being loved and feeling loved for the adolescent (Briggs, 1970: 61-117).

Another part of the searching process may be the adolescent who is searching for boundaries. He is seeking to know what he can do, and how far he can go. This can be especially important for the adolescent who has become confused by conflicting or non-existent standards or mores in society and the family.

To an increasing number of experts in the field of interpersonal relationships and family relationships, it is becoming more apparent that the child is conditioned by external factors to react in certain ways to certain stimuli. If we can learn how to teach our children to be more human and how to respond to others, rather than reacting to them, we may have taken an important step toward understanding the problem of delinquency.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This dissertation has investigated the perceptions of adolescents concerning their relationship with their parents. A comparison between the perceptions of delinquent and non-delinquent adolescents, and some of the causes of these differences, has been effected. It is hoped that this study clarified some of the problem areas in parent-child relationships and provided insight for dealing with these problems.

## NEED FOR THE STUDY

The problem of the delinquent adolescent is not unique to our twentieth-century society. The ancient Hebrew author of the Mosaic law had this to say about rebellious children in the Holy Bible:

If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; and they shall say unto the elders of his city, this our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die . . . . (Deuteronomy, 21:18-21).

The people of that culture felt so strongly about their children that the writer of Proverbs said, "A foolish son is the calamity of his father . . . . (Proverbs, 19:13)."

The writer of Proverbs perhaps has shown some significant insight into the problem of delinquency when he indicated it was a

calamity of the father. There is abundant evidence from researchers in the field of delinquency which substantiates the Hebrew sage that the fault must be laid, at least in part, at the feet of the parents (Marin and Cohen, 1971:2; Young, 1965:2; Cole and Hall, 1965:430; Nixon, 1962:102; Duvall, 1966:192; Briggs, 1970:259; Hurlock, 1956:655; Bricklin and Bricklin, 1970:5-9).

In spite of the plethora of material available today, the problem of delinquency persists. A member of the Governor's Crime Control Commission in Montana, Mr. Steven Nelson, expressed the Commission's concern by saying, "Our probation officers are crying for material which would help them understand family causes in delinquency." Although we are able safely to land men on the moon today and bring them back, it seems our society has been hesitant to acknowledge the fact that being biologically able to raise children is not synonymous with having the emotional maturity and understanding to be good parents.

This study has attempted to define some of the problem areas that have been found by other researchers in the field.

It should be noted that a thorough search of the Dissertation Abstracts from 1968 through 1972 has revealed studies between mothers and sons, measuring of parental attitudes, and adolescent perceptions of parents, but no studies comparing the perceptions of delinquent and non-delinquent adolescents concerning their relationships with their parents. Investigation also revealed that no studies such as this had

been done in the state of Montana, using adolescents from Montana as subjects.

#### GENERAL QUESTIONS EXAMINED

Some questions considered in the study were:

1. How does the adolescent perceive the quality of his relationship with his parents?
2. Is there a difference in perceived parent-child relationships between delinquents and non-delinquents?
3. What change factors must be recognized as essential to creating a home atmosphere in which the adolescent can grow safely to maturity?
4. Does a poor parent-child relationship create confusion within the adolescent as to self-identity and self-worth?

Some questions considered in the review of literature have been:

1. What is a self-concept? Where does it come from?
2. Does the self-concept an adolescent has determine his choices and influence his decisions?
3. How does pathology in a child-parent relationship affect the adolescents' perception of himself?
4. Is adolescent rebellion against parents just a normal part of the growing-up process? If so, is the emotional degree of the

rebellion a measure of its' normality?

5. How does the absence of a significant other in the family affect the psychological development of the child?

#### GENERAL PROCEDURES

The procedures followed in this study were:

1. A working definition of what is a delinquent adolescent for the purposes of this study was established.

2. The researcher has conducted an extensive and thorough review of literature as it pertains to parent-child relationships, paying particular attention to those sections dealing with causes of delinquency. The author also researched data to determine what factors must be recognized and understood if changes are to be recommended in parent-child relationships.

3. Questionnaires were developed and submitted to both delinquent and non-delinquent adolescents to determine some of the problems often encountered in parent-child relationships.

4. Personal interviews were held with some of the adolescents to gain first-hand knowledge about their perceptions of their parents. To accomplish this, trips were made to:

Study group:

(a) Montana Childrens Center at Twin Bridges, Montana

(b) Mt. View Home at Helena, Montana (State Reform School for

girls)

- (c) Pine Hills School at Miles City, Montana (State Reform School for boys)

Control group:

- (a) Junior and senior high schools at Circle, Montana
- (b) Junior and senior high schools at Terry, Montana
- (c) Junior and senior high schools at Custer, Montana

4. Results of the study have been discussed and recommendations have been made which, it is hoped, will prove helpful to those working with adolescents and their problems.

#### LIMITATIONS

This study is limited in the following ways:

1. Less effort and time have been devoted to historical perspectives and theoretical background in delinquency in this thesis, since these areas are more than adequately discussed in other publications.

2. This is a theoretical study only. The actual implementation of the findings of the study have not been tested at this time.

3. No adolescents have been surveyed beyond the geographical boundaries of Montana. Only those adolescents who are presently attending one of the schools listed in either the control group or the study group were surveyed and interviewed.

4. Only 10 per cent of those surveyed by questionnaire were interviewed.

5. The majority of sources used in the development of this paper were from the Montana State University Library, a personal library that includes over fifty titles dealing with various aspects of psychology and interpersonal relationships, other libraries through inter-library loans, and extensive use of Dissertation Abstracts resources.

#### DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

For the purposes of this dissertation, certain terms have been considered in the following context:

Adolescence. The period of adolescence is defined by Hurlock as, ". . . from the time the child becomes sexually mature--about thirteen for girls and fourteen for boys--to legal maturity . . . . (1956: 28)." In the Dictionary of Psychological and Psychoanalytical Terms, adolescence is defined as ". . . the transitional stage during which the youth is becoming an adult man or woman . . . . (English and English, 1958:14)."

Since adolescence is usually considered that period of time beginning with the onset of puberty up to the reaching of legal age, this researcher will be using the term to mean the years from twelve up to eighteen. This period of time coincides with the time most young

people are in the process of completing their junior and senior high school years, and thus are generally still dependent upon their parents for support and are less able to leave home even if they are dissatisfied.

Delinquent. As defined by the New York Joint Legislative Committee on Court Reorganization, in its draft of a Family Court Act, a delinquent is ". . . a person over seven and less than sixteen years of age who does any act which, if done by an adult would constitute a crime, and requires supervision, treatment or confinement (Wolfgang, Savitz, & Johnston, 1962:26)."

As defined in the Dictionary of Psychological Terms, it is "such behavior by a young person (usually under 16 or 18, depending on the state code) as to bring him to the attention of a court (English and English, 1958:143)."

Since the legal age in the state of Montana is eighteen at the present time, for the purpose of this research the age of eighteen will be considered adulthood.

Family. "The United States Census defines a family as two or more people who live together and who are related by blood, marriage, or adoption (Bricklin and Bricklin, 1970:3)."

Healthy child. The term healthy child is used to refer to the child who exhibits the natural innate characteristics of spontaneity, curiosity, creativity, and a striving for self-realization. The healthy child exhibits ". . . an awareness, a curiosity, a great love of life that thrills and delights him . . . . (Axline, 1947:12)."

#### SUMMARY

The question, "Why does one adolescent become delinquent while another adolescent seems to make the necessary adjustments and moves on into adulthood without getting into serious trouble?" is as pertinent to our society as it was to previous generations. Although there is much material available today on delinquency, it seems that there are many factors which influence the adolescents' adjustment which need more study.

It is the researcher's intent to survey sample populations of non-delinquent and delinquent adolescents to determine if there are differences in their perceptions of parents, family, home, and self-concepts.

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this review of literature was to develop, through awareness of the findings of studies and writings on this subject, a better understanding of the dynamics involved in child-parent relationships and the effects of these dynamics upon the adolescent. In order to facilitate this understanding, the literature has been approached with the following questions in mind.

1. What is a self-concept and from where does it originate?
2. Does the self-concept an adolescent has determine his choices and influence his decisions?
3. How does pathology in a child-parent relationship affect the adolescent's perception of himself?
4. Is adolescent rebellion against parents just a normal part of the growing-up process? If so, is the emotional degree of the rebellion a measure of it's normality?
5. How does the absence of a significant other in the family affect the psychological development of the child?

### THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

#### The Family of the Adolescent

The amount of literature available on adolescence indicates that much attention has been focused upon youth. Richard Poirier emphasized

this when he said, ". . . we are more hung up on youth than any nation on earth . . . (Klein, 1969:172-189)." He went on to say that along with our emphasis upon youth there is a determination among adults that our youth are not to enter adulthood without paying the price adults have placed upon this transition.

In fact, it may be that the adult view of adolescence as a transition period contributes to the problem of adolescence. Anna Freud (1958:255-276) took a negative view of adolescence and suggested that it was a period of stress and should be waited out. However, the time of adolescence is not a period conducive to waiting for either the parent or the adolescent. Changes, both physical and sociological in nature, demand that the adolescent move. This movement can be in either a positive or a negative direction. Duvall described the situation very graphically when she said:

You cannot build a wall around your children. They must forge forth to meet the world on its' own terms. Somehow, someday, they must learn to protect themselves from lifes' hazards without fear. At the same time, you, as a responsible adult, must prepare your child for life with all kinds of people (1966:18).

The immediate question that commands our attention is, "Are all parents responsible adults?" The obvious answer is no. While a person may have the physical maturity to become a parent, this person may not have the emotional maturity to provide a home atmosphere conducive to both physical and mental growth. Outside of a few courses offered in the colleges, there are few programs to help the prospective parent

achieve the level of mental maturity needed to be a responsible parent. Briggs (1970:xiii) called this "an unfortunate oversight in our culture." She pointed out that vast sums are spent to teach academic or vocational skills, but the nurturing care of our greatest resource, children, is left to chance. The investment of time and money in training programs for parents could possibly be one of the greatest deterrents to juvenile delinquency. This is especially true when the cause of delinquency is attributed to a learning process. Wolfgang, Savitz, and Johnston said:

In attempting to uncover the roots of juvenile delinquency, the social scientist has long since ceased to search for devils in the mind or stigma in the body. It is now largely agreed that delinquent behavior, like most social behavior, is learned and that it is learned in the process of social interaction (1970:292).

If behavior is learned, it would seem that a logical solution to the problem would be to train parents to be better parents. This is not to suggest that this researcher is advocating the entire problem of juvenile delinquency can be resolved through this type of action. It is simply saying that if the child-parent relationship can be improved the natural consequence will be a more compatible and understanding relationship in which the adolescent would feel more free to seek advice and help from the parent.

Bandura and Walters (1959:4) emphasized that while sociological factors such as poor housing, inadequate recreational facilities, and low standards of living can contribute to the learning of anti-social

behavior, they only provide conditions under which anti-social behavior can grow. The problem as they saw it stemmed from the parents' inability to establish close personal relations with other people. Another finding reported in this study was that parents of aggressive boys showed less warmth toward and less acceptance of each other than did the parents of the boys in the control group.

In a study of adolescents who had left their homes, conducted by Morse (1965:212), the finding that emerged most often was that there had been a breakdown of family relationships. Happy child-parent relationships were the exception rather than the rule. The breakdown of the family relationship can be the cause of difficulty for the adolescent in establishing a relationship with desirable peer groups. Strang (1957:363) reported findings from her study that indicated a positive relationship between the home atmosphere and the type of peer group or street gang the adolescent joined. Continual arguing and disagreement between the parents and between the parents and their children, along with suspicion and fault-finding, creates a situation in which it is difficult for the adolescent to find himself.

The conflict between parents can be amplified through the presence of an adolescent. The parent who is physically an adult but emotionally a child often sees the adolescent as a source of competition or a threat rather than someone to be loved and nurtured. Theodore Lidz said that in such families a father could be sexually attracted to

his daughter and flee into an extramarital affair. The mother could see her daughter as a competitor and try to demonstrate her greater attractiveness to young men (Caplan and Lebovici, 1969:109). The effect of this immature behavior upon the adolescent is negative (Bricklin and Bricklin, 1970:25). The fact that children are quick to note the faults of adults is noted by Strong (1957:376). Yablonsky said:

Today's violent delinquent is a displaced person--suspicious, fearful, not willing or able to establish a concrete human relationship. The formation of the violent gang, with its impermanence, its' possibilities for hollow glory, its' limited expectations of any responsibility on the part of its' members, is all inviting to youths who have difficulty fitting into a more integrated and clearly defined world (1962:4).

The effects of pathology in the parent-child relationship are noted by Duvall when she said her studies had revealed, "School dropouts often come from unhappy families that give them little support or encouragement (1966:65)." The child needs a place where it is safe to test himself, especially during the time of adolescence when changes both physical and psychological in nature are demanding to be acknowledged and tried. The safety and warmth of the atmosphere of the home is crucial to the emotional growth of the adolescent.

Finch, Pognanski, and Waggoner (1971:22) emphasized the effect of the home atmosphere upon the adolescent suicides. They said, "It is not unusual to find the suicide attempt triggered by a parental remark of 'drop dead,' or 'you're a pain to have around.'" The adolescent's perceptions of not being wanted is confirmed by the parental remark. Other findings of this study indicated that, ". . . suicidal

teenagers came from families characterized by disorganization, parental disharmony, cruelty, abandonment, dependency, and delinquency."

More specific evidence of the effects of poor interfamily relationships is reported by Margolin and Teichner (1968:296-315) in their study of adolescent suicide attempts. The findings of this study indicated that the mothers in the cases investigated were described as, "angry, depressed, and withdrawn." The mothers were preoccupied with their own depression and pushed their sons into the role of the husband. The fathers, in these cases, were found to be " . . . weak, rejecting, or absent." The results of this study are supported by the findings of Bigras, Ganthier, Bouchard, and Tasse (1966:275-282), who found that the mothers of adolescent girls who attempted suicide were described as " . . . cold, rejecting, and rigid." The father was found to be " . . . passive, weak, rejecting, or absent."

When the child perceives either or both of his parents as being cold and rejecting, this creates feelings of alienation and insecurity in the child. Bandura and Walter (1959:85) reported that, "Much of a child's dependency has as its major goal the eliciting of affection from his parents." When this need for affection is spurned by the parents, the child can interpret this as meaning that it is inappropriate to need or expect affection.

The stability of the marital relationship of the parents contributes in either a positive or a negative sense to the adolescent's

perception of his place or role in the home. Blaine (1966:15) said, ". . . the threat of separation or divorce can be the cause of a powerful unconscious fear that he (child) will be deserted or abandoned by one or both parents." The emotional impact resulting from this feeling of uncertainty is an important factor in the conduct of the child. Ginnott emphasized that the ". . . personality of the child is colored by the emotional atmosphere of his home (1965:193)."

In some cases, a marriage is perpetuated on the premise that breaking up the home will be too emotionally traumatic for the children to endure. Evidence presented by Remmers and Radler (1957:98) indicates that such a premise may be false. When incompatible parents stay together "for the sake of the child," the emotional tension in the home is often reflected in the child's behavior. Kaplan and Pokorny (1971: 328-337) reported data indicating that broken homes are not necessarily related to self-derogation. The cause was found to be in the characteristics of the broken home.

Some of the characteristics of the broken home which were seen as contributing to pathology in the broken home were reported by Hetherington (1973:46-52). Her study revealed that in the broken homes included in her survey the mothers were ". . . overprotective and solicitous of their preadolescent daughters." The study also indicated that the absence of the father in the home was a factor in the type of relationship the girl established with males. Girls from broken homes

more often tended toward a flirtatious or seductive type of relationship.

In their study of adolescent aggression, Bandura and Walter (1959:69) found that, "In some instances, the parents of the aggressive boys rejected the boy because he possessed characteristics that they were unable to accept in themselves." In contrast, the control group in the Bandura and Walter (1959:81) study gave very few indications of being rejected. Control fathers in this study were found to have spent more time with their sons and the relationship with their sons was open and friendly. The evidence would seem to support the premise that children have a strong need to be loved and wanted. In spite of the rejection of parents, for whatever cause, adolescents generally do not express feelings of hatred towards their parents. Offer (1969:57) found that teenagers did not feel that their parents' judgment of them was harsh. Even though they are rejected by their parents, or perceive their parents as rejecting them, they are hesitant to pass a harsh judgment upon their parents. This does not mean to imply that the adolescent will not enter into delinquent behavior because he is hesitant to judge his parents. Delinquent behavior, in many cases, is a desperate attempt to draw the parents' attention. Even a negative form of attention is better than being ignored. In such children, attention, even in negative form, becomes a substitute for affection.

Communication within the home between members of the family is

a contributing factor to the feelings of rejection and alienation. Much of the communication comes in a non-verbal form, especially when there is little effective communication between family members. Sabbath (1969:272-289) coined the term the expendable child to describe the situation when parents have non-verbally communicated that the child is a burden and they wish he really had not been born.

The expendable child was referred to in order to better illustrate the desperate feeling that comes to the child who receives this message, whether it comes in a non-verbal manner, by being rejected, ignored, put down, or by parents who do not hear or understand. The loneliness experienced by this adolescent is overwhelming. He has the feeling that no one knows, understands, is interested, or even cares about him. Duetsch said:

Many suffer the worst form of loneliness; these are the ones who are not able to communicate their feelings on that score. This is extremely common among adolescents, who may share their secrets, but not their most painful sensation--that of loneliness (1967:66-67).

In a speech on November 15, 1973 at Montana State University, Paul Harvey said, "Lack of communication is an increasingly detrimental factor in the bringing up of our children." This statement was supported by Blaine (1969:9) who also pointed out that working mothers, and fathers working at two jobs, contribute greatly to this problem. Not only is there less time to practice communicating, there is less physical energy to devote to it. Cervantes (1965:218-223) found that one of the

differences between high school graduates and dropouts was a lack of communication in the home. In her study of adolescent self-esteem, Matteson collected data that indicated that, ". . . dysfunctional communication affects all relationships in the family to some degree (1974:35-47)."

Part of the problem in communication can be found in the practice of locking family members into certain roles. This is not necessarily accomplished by direct verbal assignment; however, it can be and is done this way at times. More often the child is guided into these roles by the parent. Bricklin and Bricklin (1970:5) said they found that a father will unconsciously trap his child into a deficient, rebellious role so the child will express the anger the father feels toward society. This is accomplished by the father without his being consciously aware of what he is doing.

A direct verbal assignment of a role may come from parental comments such as, "I was that way myself," or "He's the dumb one in the family." Bricklin and Bricklin point out that in such a case it is important to understand why the child accepts this role. They said, "A simple explanation is that the scapegoat usually has no conscious awareness of what's really going on, particularly if he's a young child, and thus does not know how to fight against those patterns which have laced him into the scapegoat role (1970:8)." Another reason brought out by the authors for accepting the role is that even a negative role is

better than no role at all, ". . . at least he knows who he is." Other members of the family will help the scapegoat perpetuate his role in order to assert their supposed superiority, flaunting before him and others his oft claimed inferiority.

Other problems in communications may be found in factors, such as inconsistent communication. The parental instructions or standards change from one time to the next. Or the fathers' demands can be inconsistent with the demands the mother has outlined for the adolescent. Another variation of this could be parental demands which are inconsistent with the standards of the society in which they live. A mother may add to the confusion in interfamily communications when she demands her husband assume a role of leadership in the family and then usurps his role of leadership in the decision making process.

Parents communicate their values to their children knowingly or unknowingly. Strang (1957:361) said if parents have high values and live by them, their example will encourage the adolescent to set and maintain a high standard for himself. Especially when the adolescent is confronted with conflicting standards and practices in society. Even the emotional trauma of moving to a new city can be offset by the attitude of the parents about the move. Barrett and Noble (1973:181-188) found their data did not differ significantly between children who had recently moved into a neighborhood and children who had lived there for some period of time if a positive attitude had been demonstrated

by the parents about the move. The results of this study were supported by Strang's comments when she indicated that children are strongly influenced by their parents, ". . . especially during the stages of development in which the child feels dependent upon the parent and identifies closely with him (1957:114)." Even in later adolescence the teenager tends to follow the values of his parents.

The results of a study conducted by Schvaneveldt would seem ironic if the end results were not so often tragic. This study showed that ". . . both parents and adolescents desired more and better communication, understanding, tolerance, and more lenient rules and regulations (1973:171-178)." In spite of the proliferation of knowledge, the scientific discoveries, our knowledge of both physical and emotional needs, and our demonstrated need to communicate better, we have not been able to address ourselves effectively to the problem of communication within the family. This may be, in part, due as Duvall has said, "You do not deal with teenagers in an emotional vacuum. Both of you are in a storm center of shifting emotions. You share an emotional climate that has fast-moving fronts of feelings--theirs and yours (1966:22)." It would not be improper to add that this is true of communication with every member of the family.

Briggs summed it up nicely when she said, "Each child, though thoroughly unique, has the same psychological needs to feel lovable and worthy (1970:4)." She emphasizes an important point when she pointed

out that being loved and feeling loved are not synonymous. The parent can say he loves his child, but the child does not feel loved. The child needs to receive the message that he is loved.

### Adolescent Rebellion

One of the most traumatic experiences for the parents is when their adolescent begins to assert himself, even against their strongest demands and warnings. This rebellion, as it is perceived by the parents, is a frightening experience for the parents because they see themselves as losing control. In some cases, they may not be able to enforce their demands physically; but even if they could at this point in the adolescents' development, it would not change the adolescents' mind or attitude.

What is perceived by the parents as rebellion may not actually be a desire for rebellion on the part of the adolescent. Alissi said that what is termed as rebellion by the adult world may be more accurately described as ". . . a threat to an established order essential to the well-being of adults (1972:491-510)." The rebellion then is more of a reaction on the part of the parents to the acuity of the questions the adolescent is asking about himself, his parents, and about life in general. Alissi went on to say that it is through asserting himself that the adolescent finds his identity and meaning in life.

Further evidence to negate the emphasis placed upon adolescent rebellion was cited by Strachan (1972:67-71) when he reported findings

indicating that adolescents who run away, become truants, or are beyond control ". . . are usually not expressing any psychopathology or even antisocial sentiments. In fact for many youths the act of running away or truancy is psychologically the healthiest thing they could do." It may be the only way these adolescents have of asserting themselves or finding themselves. Parental restrictions at home may prohibit any effort on their part to achieve any measure of independence or identity. An interesting point brought out by Strachan is that these are status crimes among adolescents and are punishable only because they are juveniles.

Salzman pointed out the dilemma of the adolescent when he said:

. . . criticized by the adults for being too dependent, at the same time he is being pressed to remain dependent until he is capable of sustained financial work life. He is pushed toward having a "mind of his own," while denounced for his premature independent viewpoints (1973:249).

Caught in between two worlds, the world of the child and the adult world, it seems that the alternatives left to the adolescent by the adults are few. Too often, instead of offering support, adults are guilty of blocking what few alternatives are open. His only means of fighting back is to rebel, or as Blaine put it, ". . . to be a non-conformist in order to irritate, perplex, and annoy the adult (1966:81)."

The insistent, natural, driving press toward finding himself and his identity is met with unyielding resistance. Marin and Cohen (1971:8) pointed out that many times schools, family, and community

combine to insulate the adolescent from actually experiencing life. Especially the life experiences they need to learn and grow. In fact, there is a great deal of pressure upon the adolescent to postpone the transition into adulthood and independence. Handlin and Handlin (1971: 220) emphasized that in spite of evidence indicating that adolescents arrive at physical maturity earlier than in the past, social and parental pressure is to delay the transition into adulthood.

Silverstein (1973:88-89) saw rapid social change as causing conflict between parent and child. He attributed the reason for the conflict to the parent and child being in different stages of development. He further emphasized the point that ". . . the content which the parent acquired at the stage where the child now is, was a different content from that which the child is now acquiring." The experiences and the knowledge from these experiences may be judged by a different set of values than the adult would judge them by, thereby coming up with a completely different set of responses to the experiences.

Munns found evidence in her study that ". . . children conform more to a system of peer group values than to parental values (1972: 519-524)." This would seem to contradict the findings of Strang (1957: 361), cited earlier in this chapter, which said the parental values are the most important. However, a closer examination of the study conducted by Munns reveals that adolescent males ". . . saw themselves and their friends as holding quite different values from

those of their parents, except for theoretical, social, political, and religious values in which they saw themselves like their fathers." This would seem to invalidate the first statements of Munns about an existing difference. However, a moment of reflection may provide an answer for the seeming contradiction. The contradiction may exist in the definition of these terms and in the means of accomplishing the ends desired.

An example of this is the adolescent who may turn to drugs to achieve the desired results. The discovery, through the use of drugs, of an idyllic world far removed from the harsh reality of the real world can bring a real temptation to use drugs. This is especially true when the influence of the youth culture and the peer group is to be part of the group which often includes the use of drugs. Marin and Cohen said:

In their own world they become increasingly pressured by the invitations and judgments of their friends; lacking a real relation to either themselves or wise adults, they are easily swayed by one another, by fads and propaganda, by unwritten mores and challenges (1971:17).

Added to this pressure upon the adolescent is the changing values within our present society. Themes currently being used for movies and television shows would have been taboo a few years ago. Language that was forbidden except in men's locker rooms is now used unabashedly in the classroom, movies, and on television. Silverstein said, ". . . the sexual revolution, the drug revolution and the revolutionary youth revolution represent the extremes of a fundamental reversal

of values in the middle class (1973:65)." While change is essential to growth, it seems apparent from the authors and studies cited above that change can have a negative as well as a positive effect upon the adolescent. Especially if it comes in such a way that the adolescent loses sight of his values and his identity.

Richer's (1968:462-466) study emphasized the importance of this concept. In summarizing his study, he said:

. . . with the increased availability of resources and alternative sources of rewards accessible to the youth, the less likely parental dictates are to be followed and the more conflict-ridden the relationship with the parents is likely to be."

The present day adolescent can find encouragement and reward from friends and the peer group. This is especially true for the adolescent who does not find them at home. In this type of situation, the influence of the youth culture can have an enormous effect upon the adolescent. He is sorely tempted to find the ideal world through shortcuts (drugs) and live by the values of the peer group. Leslie Fiedler summed up the results of adolescent need to find reward outside the influence of the home.

Not only do they reject the Socratic adage that the unexamined life is not worth living, since for them precisely the unexamined life is the only one worth enduring at all. But they also abjure the Freudian one: "Where id was, ego shall be," since for them the true rallying cry is, "Let id prevail over ego, impulse over order"(Klein, 1969:207).

Without the influence of adults with wider experience and understanding of life, the adolescents' perspective can become distorted, in spite of

the urge to grow. He can do much harm to himself physically and emotionally. Without healthy parental example, the adolescent may confuse freedom with liberty. He may demand immediate gratification of his impulses, without understanding the consequences of such gratification.

Parents wise enough to understand the adolescent need for experience, identity, reward, and acceptance will find a way to provide the guidance and support the adolescent needs, without humiliating the adolescent. At the same time, the parents will allow the adolescent to experiment with the freedom and independence so necessary for the growth that is taking place within him.

While the adolescent may not understand or be conscious of it, he may also be testing for new boundaries. Growth that has occurred and expanded freedom demand a re-definition of boundaries. This can be a frightening and a lonesome experience for the adolescent. In fact, he may desire parental help in redefining the boundaries, yet he would not acknowledge his desire for help. Theodore Lidz explained the dilemma this way:

. . . the youth may also deeply resent the parents' failures to set limits. He fights against delimitation, but at times he also wishes to be relieved of the responsibility of deciding what chances he can take, how far to go along with the gang, how far to venture sexually. The boy or girl can interpret parental compliance and their willingness to accede to his wishes as lack of interest (Caplan and Lebovici, 1969:109).

There is an inherent desire for the security of parental help, but there is also a hesitancy to specifically ask for help. To do so

would be an admission that the hard fought for freedom is too much for him. Such an admission might result in parental withdrawal of the opportunity to experience and grow. Teenagers attempting to cope with this dilemma were described by Remmers and Radler:

Teenage boys and girls, torn between their desire for independence and their craving for security, often make reasonable demands in unreasonable ways and so tend to seem more childish than they really are. In addition, proving that they can be independent is often more important to them than actually being independent (1957: 100).

Parental attitudes toward the adolescent can be of critical importance during this period of time. If they are reassuring and accepting to the adolescent and his efforts to establish himself, his confidence will grow. If they are critical and ridicule the adolescent, his confidence is shaken and he may turn to the peer group for help.

Havighurst, Bowman, Liddle, Matthews, and Pierce reported ". . . this group of boys and girls have failed in their efforts to grow up by playing the game according to the rules of society . . . . As a result of this failure, they seek illegal and socially undesirable substitutes for growth (1962:67)." This person may become a part of a street gang and find his growth in a rebellion against society.

The atmosphere of the home can play an important part in the adjustment made by the adolescent during this time. As was cited earlier in this chapter, the parents presenting inconsistent demands upon the adolescent increase the tendency for rebellion. Bandura and Walter (1959:201) found the most rebellious boys in their study came

from homes where parents were inconsistent in their demands and restrictions. They also found that these parents were not aware of where their sons were, what they were doing, or who they were with. Mothers made fewer demands and expected less compliance to their demands. Data collected in the same study indicated that while sons in the control group resented parental restrictions and demands, they were much more willing to accept them (1959:203). Resentment to parental controls was expressed in milder form than the aggressive boys. This would give credence to Caplan and Lebovici's (1969:109) statement that parental hesitancy to set boundaries or limits is perceived by the adolescent as not caring.

While rebellion can be a frightening experience, especially for the parents, an understanding of the dynamics of the rebellion may alleviate some of the fears. Parental understanding of the growth taking place, the search for an identity, the testing of self, the need for freedom, and the need for adventure can be an important step in this direction. Marin and Cohen said, "What they are after is . . . an acknowledgment of their growth, some sign that parents recognize and accept them as independent and adventurous persons (1971:18)." To this might be added the need to find out if it is alright to be me.

Parental anxiety over the teenagers' ability to take care of himself can be a cause of problems for the adolescent. Caplan and Lebovici described it in this manner:

Parents may not only find it difficult to relinquish authority but also to contain their anxieties over a teenagers' ability to take care of himself. Anxiety leads to anger and may be vented as rage against a child who arouses the anxiety (1969:108).

Thus, the anxious parent is not only unwilling to relax his hold on the adolescent, he compounds the problems of the adolescent by adding his own problems to those of the adolescent. The effect of this is to drive the adolescent away from his most important source of help during this period of time, his parents. Bandura and Walters (1959:32) found that a child unable to receive emotional support and help from his parents also had trouble internalizing the parental standards. They suggested that a failure to internalize these standards often resulted in antisocial behavior and in inadequate ways of handling feelings that led to this behavior.

Strang (1957:81) stated that in their attempt to have parental restraints relaxed the adolescent often finds himself in a no-man's-land. He has lost the privileges of childhood and is not really accepted in the adult world. The parents, while they reluctantly agree to more freedom for the adolescent, are not ready to accept the adolescent as a contributing member of the family. Suggestions and opinions offered by the adolescent are not accepted on an equal basis with adult suggestions and opinions. This can also be a source of discord and problems within the home. A study reported in Caplan and Lebovici's (1969:109) works indicated that denying an adolescent boy the opportunity to practice his adult role within the family can result in an attempt to break

















































































































































































































































































