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Communication and Connectedness in Mother- and Father-Adolescent Relationships

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In Study 1, 605 adolescents estimated how well their parents knew them and said how much they cared what their parents thought about them. Sons and daughters judged that mothers knew them fairly well, but daughters judged that fathers did not know them so well. At the same time, statements of caring indicated high concern by sons and daughters for both parents. A supplemental result was that sons from white-collar families gave relatively low estimates of how much their mothers knew them and daughters from blue-collar families gave very low estimates of how much their fathers knew them. In Study 2, 52 adolescents from single-parent families and living with their mothers but not with their fathers also gave estimates for knowing and caring. Knowing followed the above pattern, with an expected lowering of estimates for fathers by sons and daughters. Further, estimates of caring declined especially for fathers by daughters. These results add to the growing literature that shows mother-adolescent and father-adolescent relationships contribute differentially to psychological development. The results seem especially relevant for adolescents' sex role development and constructed individuality as mediated through relationships with both parents.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is a part of a series of studies in which we have explored structural properties of parent-offspring relationships, their development,

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and the development of the individuals in these relationships (cf. Hunter and Youniss, 1982; Youniss, 1975, 1980, 1983; Youniss and Smollar, 1985). The aim of the present study is to validate and expand on an important finding regarding adolescents' relationships with their parents. In our previous work, when describing interactions with parents, adolescents made sharp distinctions between their mothers and fathers in terms of what they talked about, how they spent free time, and how they settled disputes. As a generalization, mothers were described as more open to listen to problems and to help clarify feelings than fathers were. This was especially true of daughters but applied to sons also. Fathers appeared to take a limited view of their sons and daughters insofar as they chose to emphasize some aspects of their lives, such as future schooling, as important while they seemed to minimize other aspects, such as getting along with peer groups (cf. Hunter, 1985; Youniss and Smollar, 1985).

These data fit within a broad literature in which adolescents have consistently differentiated mothers from fathers along several psychological dimensions. Two in particular seem important. One pertains to communication and includes the range of topics that are brought up as well as the forms of discussion that usually prevail (e.g., Cooper *et al.*, 1983; Hunter, 1985; Jourard and Richman, 1963; Noller and Bagi, 1985). The other deals with seeking aid, in particular, advice (e.g., Burke and Weir, 1979; Wright and Keple, 1981). The overall picture is that of separate spheres, each with limits on the sorts of interactions that would ordinarily occur with one but not the other parent. Looking at either parent, one would see selective aspects of an adolescent being expressed through recreation, simple conversation, or a dispute. The generic term *adolescent–parent relationship* is almost too abstract in the literature. For adolescents themselves, the term is differentiated according to daughter or son in maternal or paternal relationships.

The theoretical implications of parental differences seem fairly clear either from the perspective of sex role development or adolescents' constructions of their own individuality (e.g., Grotevant and Cooper, 1986; Smollar and Youniss, 1982; Youniss and Smollar, 1985). As to the former, the division between maternal and paternal spheres in communication could easily be grounds for the well-established sex differences in intimacy and self-disclosure. Since adolescence is a time when considerable socialization is occurring, differential experience with mothers and fathers could be an important basis for directing sons and daughters into different interpersonal orientations. With respect to individuality, differential experiences in the separate relationships with parents could readily account for differing self-appraisals and defensiveness that appear vis-à-vis mothers and fathers (Volpe, 1981; Youniss and Smollar, 1985).

The present study was constructed from a larger project that had dealt with self-esteem through the high school years (McCarthy and Hoge, 1982). The basic questionnaire included items that were germane to our interests.

In one case, adolescents were asked to estimate how well their mothers and how well their fathers knew them. In another case, the same subjects were asked to say how much they cared what their mothers, and then, what their fathers thought about them. Since the sample was large, included daughters and sons, and offered separate judgments for mothers and fathers within the same subjects, we thought the issue worth exploring in light of our past work and the growing interest in parent-adolescent relationships.

We reasoned that the question about how well parents knew adolescents might offer an interesting measure of communication patterns. The assumption is that knowledge of persons is constructed through communicative interactions (Youniss, 1980). According to findings currently in the literature, communications between daughters and fathers are quite restrictive relative to those between daughters and mothers. Further, daughters' communications with mothers are distinctly more open than their communications with fathers. Sons' communications with both parents seem to fall between these extremes. Thus, we expected that sons would judge both parents to know them equally well, but less well than mothers know daughters and better than fathers know daughters.

The question regarding caring about parents' opinion of adolescents was potentially equally significant. In Grotevant and Cooper's (1986), and Youniss and Smollar's (1985), interpretation of the concept of *individuation,* adolescents are viewed as transforming rather than abandoning their relationships with parents. One side of adolescent development consists in moving away from the definition of self that was valid during childhood and going on to construct a self that fits with one's own experiences rather than parental desires. The other and complementary side involves remaining connected to parents so that one can solicit and receive their validation for the individual that one has constructed. According to this two-sided concept, adolescents seek their parents' approval while they also strive to be seen as new selves rather than as children. We propose that responses to the question about caring express the connection component of individuation insofar as adolescents rely on parents' validation and, thus, care how their parents perceive them. The issues of interest here are whether caring differs across age, according to parent, and according to the sex of the adolescent.

STUDY 1

Method

Sample

The sample in this study was chosen from the first-year respondents who completed the Youth Attitude Survey (YAS) in the 1976–1977 school

year (McCarthy and Hoge, 1982). The YAS questionnaire was administered to 1,970 junior and senior high school students in 13 public (N = 1,131) and parochial (N = 839) schools in Baltimore, Maryland, and Washington, D.C. The subjects were in the 7th, 9th, and 11th grades, and were 55% male, 49% white, and 51% black (or "other"). The SES of the subjects varied from upper middle-class to working class. The 1,970 subjects represent approximately 30% of all students who were in the three grades of participating schools and whose parents signed consent forms. Parents in parochial schools consented more often (55%) than did parents in public schools (23%).

Subjects

A total of 605 adolescents comprised the pool of subjects who provided the data in this study. Seventh graders were not included because they all were from public schools, whereas 9th and 11th graders were from both public and Catholic schools.

There were 352 9th graders, 237 of whom were males and 115 females. Eighty-three percent were enrolled in Catholic schools and 17% were enrolled in public schools. Eleventh graders (N = 253) included 178 males and 75 females, with 74% enrolled in Catholic schools and 26% enrolled in public schools. Of those adolescents who knew the details of their parents' employment (N = 604 for fathers, N = 598 for mothers), 95% (N = 574) reported that their fathers were employed full time; about half reported that their mothers were employed at all. Of those fathers who did work at all, 61% were employed in white-collar, technical, managerial, or professional positions, and the other 39% were blue-collar or service employees. The corresponding figures for employed mothers were 42 and 58%, respectively.

It is noted here that in a supplemental study reported later in this paper, another sample of 52 adolescents living only with their mothers but separated from their fathers was drawn from the original group.

Measures and Procedure

Four items, two pertaining to mothers and two regarding fathers, were chosen for the reasons stated in the introduction. The question about parents' knowledge of the adolescent was, "How well does your (mother/father) know you?" The response categories for this question were (4) *Better than I know myself,* (3) *Quite well,* (2) *Not very well,* and (1) *Doesn't know me at all.* The question about caring was, "How much do you care about what your (mother/father) thinks of you?" The response categories for this question were (5) *I care very much,* (4) *I care pretty much,* (3) *I care somewhat,* (2) *I don't*

care very much, and (1) *I don't care at all.* For both types of questions, then, high scores reflect high caring and high knowing, and low scores reflect low caring and low knowing.

To make the caring and knowing response category ranges conceptually and numerically comparable, and because of very small *N*s for response category (1), that category was collapsed with category (2; now coded number 1) for the caring question pertaining to both mothers and fathers. Thus, both questions had 4 levels of responses.

A listwise deletion procedure was used to handle nonresponses for all statistical analyses in this study.

Results and Discussion

Initially, 2 (sex of adolescent) × 2 (grade) × 2 (parent) repeated measure multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA; SPSSX, 1986) were performed to compare judgments of mothers and fathers on caring and on knowing, with parent as the within-subject factor. All significant interactions were followed-up with tests of simple effects and pairwise comparisons of means (Scheffé method). The significance level for both follow-up tests was set at $p < .05$, and all mean differences reported below passed this criterion unless otherwise noted. Appropriate means are reported in Fig. 1. Because no interpretable statistically significant grade effects were found in the analyses reported below, grade was collapsed in the figure.

The analysis for caring yielded only one statistically significant effect, the three-way interaction, which was not interpretable because the means were closely aligned near the maximum possible score of 4.00 (see Fig. 1).

The analysis for knowing yielded a main effect for parent, which was obviated by a significant interaction between parent and sex of adolescent [$F(1,599) = 30.60, p < .001$]. This interaction revealed that, while daughters and sons judged that their mothers knew them about equally, daughters said that their fathers knew them significantly less well than sons said that their fathers knew them.

We thought that comparing the adolescents' scores on caring relative to their scores on knowing might be of interest in further exploration of parent–adolescent relationships. In going back to Fig. 1 one can see that sons and daughters alike care a lot about what their parents think of them as persons, more so than the extent to which they judge that their parents know them as persons. Other data, not shown here, also revealed that, while the means on caring were very similar at both grade levels when both mother and father were the referent parent, as were the means on mothers' knowing, the overall mean score on fathers' knowing was considerably lower at

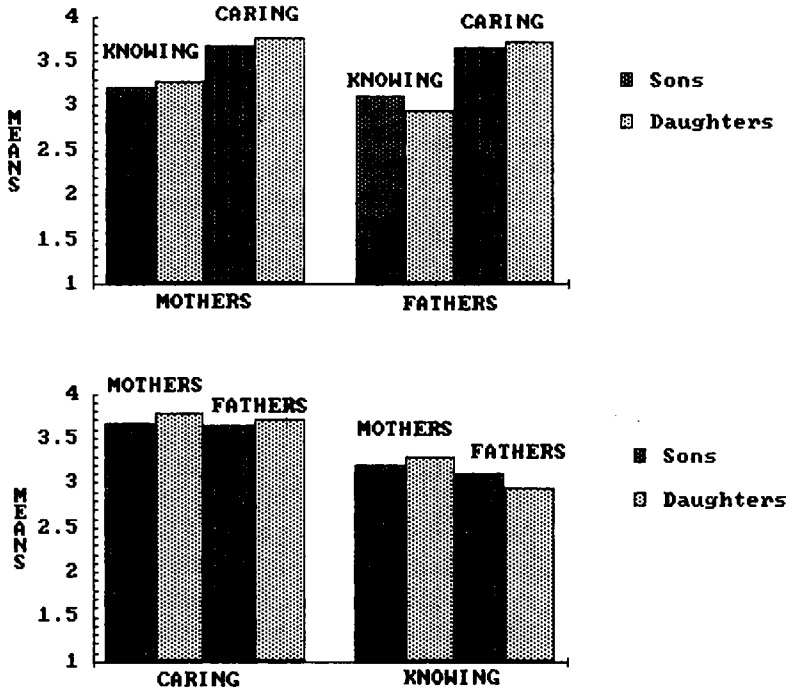

Fig. 1. Comparison of means between caring and knowing for mother and for father in intact families.

the 11th-grade level than at the 9th-grade level (means = 3.14 and 2.91, respectively).

These results concur with previous findings in the literature. First, daughters judged that their mothers knew them better than their fathers knew them. This result would follow from reports that adolescent daughters talk more and talk more openly with their mothers than with their fathers. Daughters presume that their fathers might either be disinterested or judgmental should they reveal what they are really thinking or feeling (Youniss and Smollar, 1985). Further, insofar as disclosing problems permits a person to be known, it is clear that daughters expose themselves to mothers while they remain hidden from their fathers (Burke and Weir, 1979; Wright and Keple, 1981). In short, the adolescent daughters in the present sample provided differential estimates of how well mothers and fathers knew them, as would be expected from reports on daughter–parent communication.

Second, the findings for daughters should be seen in conjunction with estimates given by sons who did not effectively differentiate parents. At the

same time, it was seen that sons said that they were known more by their fathers than daughters said that their fathers knew them. Again, this pattern would follow from previous reports on communication, forms of communication, and advice seeking for problems (e.g., Hunter, 1985). Youniss and Smollar (1985) found that these aspects of communication may be intertwined in a dynamic manner. For example, many sons withhold personal doubts from parents because either they do not want to be told what to think or they believe they will be embarrassed. Hence they are selective in choice of topics, degree of honest expression, and even physical availability. However one views communication, the results would follow that sons are moderately open to both parents and would therefore perceive that they were known fairly well by each.

Third, the results that 9th graders judged that they were known to parents better than 11th graders were known could mean that 11th graders have moved further into what Grotevant and Cooper (1986) call *separation*. They have proposed that adolescents are focused on constructing their own individuality and that this entails departure from the preconceived images that parents hold for them. This process was denoted in adolescents' discursive exchanges with parents insofar as adolescents were able to make and substantiate assertions that differed from the views of their parents. More broadly, separation was found by Youniss and Smollar (1985) in adolescents' statements that they no longer naively accepted their parents' views but thought for themselves. If there is generality to the difference between 9th and 11th graders found here, it might be that older adolescents sense they are known less well by their parents because they are farther along in the separation process, while the younger adolescents are more likely to define themselves through terms set by parents.

Fourth, the rather uniform and near-to-ceiling scores for caring what parents thought about them gives emphasis to the connection side of individuation. For some time sociological and psychological researchers have viewed adolescence as the period in which adolescents leave childish dependence by severing relations with parents (e.g., Coleman, 1961; Freud, 1968), or seen from the upper end of adolescence, severing the relationship has been made the precondition for autonomy. Grotevant and Cooper (1986) have proposed that this relationship is not severed but remains the vehicle for getting acceptance and validation (see Bell and Bell, 1983). Adolescents care what their parents think about them to a high degree because they want parents to acknowledge that they are no longer children and they want parents to approve of the individuals they have become (Youniss and Smollar, 1985).

As Waterman (1981) has pointed out, the maintenance of the parental relationship through the adolescent period may seem to conflict with autonomy, but it need not do so. The key concept here is that the parental

relationship is not static but develops. Were the relationship to remain as it was during childhood, autonomy would not be possible. However, when the relationship is transformed, both offspring and parents can begin to accept one another as the persons they are rather than as the figures that result from unconscious or unreflected expectations. While, then, the 9th and 11th graders may be within different moments of the developing relationship, both would rank caring with high intensity since they derive validation for self through the relationship.

We turn next to a new result that was possible because the sample contained data for SES levels that were based on fathers' employment. It should be of interest to explore whether SES was correlated with degree of knowing since daughters rated fathers' knowing less than sons rated fathers' knowing. In the sample of 574 adolescents whose fathers were working full time, 513 reported their fathers' type of work. Of these 513, 67% specified white-collar or professional employment for their fathers and 33% said their fathers were in blue-collar or service positions. Type of work (white vs blue collar) was entered into analyses with the variables of sex of adolescent and parent, the latter being the within-subject factor. The appropriate means are reported in Table I. When scores for knowing were analyzed, a significant three-way interaction resulted—$F(1,496) = 4.24$, $p < .04$. Scheffé tests were run to assess specific differences. Blue-collar sons said that their mothers knew them better than white-collar sons said that their mothers knew them. At the same time, blue- and white-collar sons did not differ in estimates of how well their fathers knew them.

The results for daughters followed a different pattern. Blue- and white-collar daughters judged that their mothers knew them quite well. On the other hand, white-collar daughters judged that their fathers knew them better than blue-collar daughters judged that their fathers knew them. The interaction is fairly clear. In the main, sons and daughters said that their mothers knew them very well, with one exception: white-collar sons yielded a relatively low score (mean = 3.13 vs means of 3.26 or greater). As before, fathers were

Table I. Comparison of Means Between Mother and Father for Caring and for Knowing in Blue- and White-Collar Intact Families

	Caring		Knowing	
	Blue collar	White collar	Blue collar	White collar
Sons	(N = 114)	(N = 223)	(N = 117)	(N = 228)
Mothers	3.72	3.62	3.26	3.13
Fathers	3.65	3.65	3.15	3.07
Daughters	(N = 42)	(N = 107)	(N = 43)	(N = 112)
Mothers	3.74	3.80	3.38	3.30
Fathers	3.56	3.85	2.79	3.40

said to know these adolescents less well than mothers knew them and sons said that fathers knew them better than daughters said that fathers knew them. The exception here was with blue-collar daughters, who said that their fathers knew them the least well than any other group.

The next analysis on SES for caring yielded a significant finding that indicated an interaction between SES and parent: $F(1,482) = 11.00$, $p < .001$. White-collar adolescents cared as much about their mothers' as their fathers' opinions of them; respective means were 3.72 and 3.75. Blue-collar adolescents, however, cared more about their mothers' opinions than their fathers' opinions of them; respective means were 3.73 and 3.59.

This study was not undertaken to seek SES effects and, to our awareness, there are no theories of adolescence that address these aspects of parental relationships in an integral way. We offer these results, therefore, in a heuristic vein. The groups of special interest seem to be white-collar sons with respect to their mothers and blue-collar daughters with regard to their fathers.

STUDY 2: SINGLE-PARENT (MOTHER) FAMILIES

Differences between relationships with mothers and fathers on the dimensions of caring and knowing were explored a second way. In the first year of the larger study, there were 52 adolescents in grades 9 and 11 who were white, largely low to middle SES, and from the same schools as subjects in Study 1. The parents of these adolescents were, however, separated or divorced; both parents were alive, but the adolescents were living with their mothers only. According to previous findings on teenage daughters (Smollar and Youniss, 1985), we could expect exaggerated differences between parents, with adolescents being likely to feel quite close to their mothers and distant from fathers. It seemed useful, therefore, to ask how caring and knowing would be judged in this new sample, and whether there would be differences between daughters and sons in these judgments.

Method

Subjects

A total of 52 adolescents comprised the pool of subjects for this study. The 9th graders ($N = 40$) were 28 males and 12 females, with 35% enrolled in Catholic schools and the rest enrolled in public schools. The 11th graders ($N = 12$) were 7 males and 5 females, with three-quarters enrolled in Catholic

schools. For those adolescents who knew the details of their parents' employment (N = 40 for fathers, N = 52 for mothers), 92% reported that their fathers were employed full time and 77% said that their mothers were employed; 62% of these mothers were employed full time. Of those fathers who did work, about half were employed in white-collar, technical, managerial, or professional positions, and half were employed as blue-collar or service workers; the corresponding figures for employed mothers were 34% and 65%, respectively.

Measures and Procedures

The same questions and procedures were used as in Study 1. However, grade was not included as a factor in the analyses in order to enhance Ns in the statistical comparisons.

Results and Discussion

Mean ratings comparing mothers and fathers in terms of caring and knowing appear in Table II. The analysis for caring yielded a main effect for parent but that factor interacted with sex of the adolescent: $F(1,47) = 7.43, p < .009$. Sons cared slightly less what their fathers than their mothers thought about them ($p < .028$). But for daughters, caring what fathers thought about them was sharply less than caring what mothers thought about them ($p < .001$).

The analysis for knowing yielded a comparable interaction between parent and sex of adolescent: $F(1,49) = 5.78, p < .020$. Sons judged that their mothers knew them better than their fathers knew them. For daughters the parental discrepancy was in the same direction but was exaggerated in that, as compared to the sons' scores, the daughters thought that their mothers knew them even better while their fathers knew them much less.

Next we compared the means for intact vs mother-only groups on caring and knowing. Because the N for the intact families far exceeds the N for the mother-only families, we randomly selected 52 adolescents from the Study 1 pool of intact respondents. These 52 were used in the following analyses. Both groups have the same number of sons and daughters. The appropriate means are reported in Table II, with scores for caring on the left and scores for knowing on the right.

A Sex of Adolescent × Type of Family × Parent repeated measure MANOVA was computed first for caring. Several effects were significant, but they devolved logically into a significant three-way interaction: $F(1,97) = 8.67, p < .004$. The result was evaluated via Scheffé tests, which yielded the

Table II. Mean Estimates of Caring and Knowing Between Mothers and Fathers by Adolescents in Intact and Mother-Only Families[a]

	Caring		Knowing	
	Intact	Mother only	Intact	Mother only
Sons	(N = 36)	(N = 33)	(N = 37)	(N = 34)
Mothers	3.50	3.55	3.19	3.18
Fathers	3.36	3.06	3.03	2.56
Daughters	(N = 16)	(N = 16)	(N = 15)	(N = 17)
Mothers	3.88	3.88	3.33	3.47
Fathers	3.88	2.37	3.13	2.12

[a]Intact group randomly sampled from Study 1 intact group.

following interpretation: While caring about mother and caring about father did not differ for sons and daughters living with both parents, there were substantial differences for both sons and daughters in the mother-only families.

Sons in mother-only families cared more about their mothers' opinions than about their fathers' opinions. For daughters in mother-only families, this difference was even greater: relative to sons, daughters had inflated means on mothers' caring (although statistically this difference was not significant), and significantly deflated means on fathers' caring. Further, of all the groups, daughters in mother-only families cared least about their fathers' opinions. They also cared significantly more about their mothers' opinions than did sons in both groups.

The analysis on knowing yielded results almost identical to those just reported. An $F(1,99) = 42.63$, $p < .001$, for the three-way interaction indicated a pattern similar to that above. As can be seen in Table II, three of the means for sons are alike but differed from the mean for fathers in the mother-only group. Scheffé tests revealed that sons in mother-only families said that the absent father knew them least as compared to how much sons from intact families judged that their fathers knew them, and as compared to how much they and sons from intact families judged that their mothers knew them. For daughters this same pattern was obtained, with significantly deflated means on fathers' knowing and significantly inflated means on mothers' knowing, as contrasted with comparable groups of sons. Daughters from mother-only families judged that their fathers knew them least as compared to daughters' from intact families judgments of fathers' knowing, and as compared to judgments of mothers' knowing made by sons from both types of families.

These comparisons highlight and support findings that are in the literature. For sons and daughters, the absent fathers' opinions were cared about the least and these fathers were said to know the adolescents the least.

For daughters, the judgments of the fathers are coupled with a high degree of caring about mothers' opinions and mothers' exceptional knowledge of them. These results virtually replicate a pattern reported by Smollar and Youniss (1985). Some daughters who live with their mothers but not with their fathers tend to feel unusually attached to their mothers and especially distant from fathers. While another father difference of this sort is already evident in adolescents from intact families, divorce and father absence seem to lead to increasing psychological distance from fathers. The point is made in terms of caring as well as knowing.

For sons from divorce situations, psychological distancing from fathers was manifest although not so markedly as it had been for daughters. Moreover, there were no signs that sons had become especially close to their mothers. Indeed, sons' scores for the mother—either in caring or knowing—were almost identical in the two types of families.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings for the question about knowing fit quite well with the growing literature on adolescent-parent communication. The assumption is that adolescents have a clear sense of how much they are changing in ideas and feelings from what they were as children. They also have a sense of how much of the change they are hiding or disclosing to their parents (Youniss and Smollar, 1985). Their estimates of how well they are known would then follow these two grounds that we have labeled generally as *communication.* By most accounts in the literature, adolescent daughters discuss themselves more often and openly with mothers than with fathers. Sons, in contrast, discuss themselves less openly than daughters but what they disclose they share equally with both parents.

We maintain that communication is a rather complex issue for adolescent-parent relationships. Our interpretation is that the starting point is seen in children's acceptance of parents' unilateral authority and right to approve or judge what children do when children perceive parents as benevolent caretakers (Youniss, 1980). This basis and subsequent change emanates from both sides of the parent-adolescent relationship, and are concretely evident in interpersonal interactions. Already in late childhood, however, children withhold private thoughts and feelings from their parents because they do not want to risk nonacceptance. To move beyond this point, adolescents have to gain confidence that they will be taken seriously and understood as they are rather than as their mothers or fathers want them to be. Apparently, for most adolescents, this occurs more readily with mothers than with fathers (Youniss and Smollar, 1985). Thus one finds that adolescents more often

choose mothers over fathers when they seek advice on how to solve problems, expertise aside (e.g., Burke and Weir, 1979; Wright and Keple, 1981).

The special case of daughters and fathers can also be viewed within this communication perspective. From daughters' verbal accounts, one sees that some daughters believe their fathers are disinterested in expressions of emotions—either from daughters or from themselves. Other daughters believe their fathers are too judgmental in that they treat daughters from an image that was engendered in childhood but never fully revised to keep up with their daughters' subsequent development (Youniss and Smollar, 1985). The former coincides with the well-known phenomenon of male *inexpressiveness* (see Dosser *et al.*, 1986, for a critical review) while the latter could logically agree with a psychodynamic view (see Douvan and Adelson, 1966). In either case, the point is that communication entails more than talking and probably involves a dynamic that is part of relationships that have been developing since infancy.

The several variations found in knowing are of interest. One set of variations occurred with SES. Recall that the usual daughter–son and mother–father pattern was found, with two exceptions. They were that white-collar sons estimated relatively low knowing by their mothers and that blue-collar daughters estimated low knowing by their fathers. To the best of our awareness, there is no coherent theory that handles these results easily. Rather, one can see the importance of Fasick's (1984) recent analysis that seeks to explain why white- and blue-collar parents might approach their adolescent offspring with different aims and outlooks for the future. In Fasick's view, the dimensions involved include the degree of shared experience that might be projected to the future and the belief that adolescents ought to be pushed out on their own because dependence on parents will be nonadaptive.

The variation found for adolescents from situations of divorce was more understandable. Daughters gave very high estimates of how well their mothers, with whom they were living, knew them. Daughters and sons gave very low estimates of how well their fathers, who lived apart from their families, knew them. Furtstenberg and Nord (1985) have documented that adolescents from divorced families, who live with their mothers, tend to have limited contact with physically separated fathers. Further, the contact that does occur tends to be ritualized and focused on instrumental duties. These facts alone work against fathers getting to know their developing adolescent offspring. Wallenstein and Kelly (1980) report that adolescents tend to align with one parent. These facts only enhance the parental discrepancy evident in intact families. Father absence seems to exacerbate the differential closeness and distance to mothers and fathers.

At least three studies suggest that adolescent daughters may become their divorced mothers' confidantes (cf. Fine *et al.*, 1983; Smollar and

Youniss, 1985; Weiss, 1979). This would mean that these mothers express themselves more often and intimately to daughters than mothers from two-parent homes. If this is the case, then high estimates of knowing should follow because mothers' expression should encourage reciprocation, which would ultimately lead to the breaking down of stereotyped perception and letting both parties get to know one another as the persons they are (Youniss and Smollar, 1985).

At the outset we suggested that the question of how much adolescents cared about parents' opinions of them should reflect the connectedness dimension of individuation (Grotevant and Cooper, 1986). This concept is important because of past emphases by theorists on the need to break the bond with parents. The concept serves as a corrective in asserting that one state of relationship is given up but taken over by another. The latter state is an adaptation to the adolescents' newly constructed greater individuality. Thus, while teenagers change in self-perception throughout the adolescent period, adolescents seek validation for who they are from their parents. In the present study, the high degree of caring represents this function.

There were, however, variations in caring that were interesting. An SES effect was found such that blue-collar fathers' opinions were the least valued in the 2(parent) $\times$ 2(SES level) matrix. The simplest account might be that such fathers actually offer the least validation to their offspring, especially daughters. This would fit Fasick's (1984) analysis in which blue-collar adolescents would be granted freedom to explore values outside those held by parents. Another perspective would follow from Rubins' (1976) depictions of blue-collar husbands who are less than forthcoming in intimate matters with their wives. Perhaps this inexpressiveness or avoidance of sharing feelings is extended to their adolescent daughters.

Another variation occurred with adolescents who were living with their mothers only. They said that they cared for their fathers' opinion of them least of any group of subjects in this study. Again, the most straightforward interpretation is that these fathers offer the least validation and, therefore, are cared about the least. This would follow from the review just given on communication where it was shown that some adolescents have little contact with physically absent fathers. Clearly, these fathers are not the typical sources adolescents seek for validating themselves. More specifically, Smollar and Youniss (1985) found that daughters were quite guarded toward their divorced fathers and, in turn, found them to be defensive in their communication of feelings. Further, within this context, daughters said that they had cut way back on communicating about their lives. A key general finding, then, is that physically absent divorced fathers become figures whose communication with adolescent offspring is sharply curtailed and whose role as validator for the searching adolescent is severely reduced.

Our general findings suggest that, in the process of constructing their own individuality, adolescents differentiate themselves relative to their mothers and fathers in terms of both caring and knowing. It is pointed out, however, that parents are not the sole mediators of this process. Much recent work has emphasized the parallel importance of the role of peers and friends as mediators in adolescents' constructions of their new sense of self (e.g., Berndt, 1979; Youniss and Smollar, 1985). A more complete picture of adolescent development would include friendship as well as parental relationships.

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