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THE IMPACT OF EMPATHY, CONGRUENCE AND REGARD ON SATISFACTION WITH
FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AMONG PARENTS AND THEIR ADOLESCENTS

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	iv
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
The Problem	3
Design of the Study	4
II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	8
III. PROCEDURE AND METHODS	21
The Sample	21
Measures	23
Statistical Analysis	29
IV. RESULTS	30
The Sample	30
Hypothesis: 1	32
Hypothesis: 2	39
Hypothesis: 3	47
Hypothesis: 4	52
V. DISCUSSION	58
Limitations of Study	67
Summary	69
REFERENCES	72
APPENDIXES	77
A. Items from the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory	78
B. Edmonds' Marital Conventionalization Items	79
C. Adolescent Items	80
D. Dependent Variables - The Satisfaction Measures	81
E. Glossary of Abbreviations	82

LIST OF TABLES

1. Sample Characteristics and Response Rates for Urban and Rural Samples	24
2. Alpha Internal Consistency Reliability Estimates for the RI Subscales	27
3. Alpha Internal Consistency Reliability Estimates for the Marital Satisfaction (MS) and Conventionalization (CONV) Scales	27
4. Alpha Internal Consistency Reliability Estimates for the Adolescent Response Scales	28
5. Selected Demographic Characteristics of the Samples Expressed as Percentages of the Total Group	31
6. Zero-order Pearson Correlations among Marital Satisfaction and Spouses Variables. (Parallel Scores for Low Conventionalization Group)	33
7. Partial Correlations between Marital Satisfaction and the Independent Variables for Total Groups and Low Conventionalization Groups, Controlling for the Effects of the Other Independent Variables and Conventionalization	34
8. Regression Analysis of the Interaction Effects (Int) of the Variables, from the Spouses' Perception, in Marital Satisfaction	37
9. Zero-order Pearson Correlation of Congruence and Marital Satisfaction in High Regard and Low Regard Group	40
10. Zero-order Pearson Correlation of Congruence and Regard in High Empathy and Low Empathy Groups	40
11. Zero-order Correlations and Partial Correlations of Adolescents' Satisfaction with their Parents' Relationship and the Independent Variables Controlling for the Effects of the Other Independent Variables	42
12. Zero-order Pearson Correlation Coefficient of Adolescents' Satisfaction with their Parents' Relationship and the Parents' Reported Marital Satisfaction (MS)	43
13. Regression Analysis of the Interaction Effects of the Independent Variables, from the Spouses' Perceptions, on Adolescents' Satisfaction with their Parents' Relationship	45

14.	Zero-order Correlations and Partial Correlations of the Adolescents' Satisfaction with their Relationship with their Parents and the Independent Variables the Adolescents' Perceive the Parents to Exhibit Toward Them, Controlling for the Effects of the Other Independent Variables	48
15.	Regression Analysis of the Interaction Effects of the Empathy, Congruence and Regard the Adolescents Perceive to be Exhibited by their Parents on the Adolescents' Satisfaction with their Relationship with their Parents	51
16.	Zero-order Correlations and Partial Correlations of Mothers' and Fathers' Satisfaction with their Relationship with their Children and the Empathy, Congruence and Regard the Adolescents Perceive they Exhibit Toward their Parents	54
17.	Regression Analysis of the Interaction Effects of the Empathy, Congruence and Regard the Adolescents Perceive they Exhibit Toward their Parents on the Parents' Satisfaction with their Relationship with their Children	56

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A great deal of concern has been expressed over the years about the fate of the American family. Divorce rates have been viewed with alarm as an indication of the sorry state of the family and an omen of its impending demise. Rally calls to save the family frequently focus on the search for ways to strengthen, and support families. President Carter's establishment of a White House Conference on families is one example. It seems such challenges to "save the family" often cite the need to improve marital and family relationships and the often suggested solution is improved communication between family members.

Communication is frequently identified as one of the central contributing factors to marital satisfaction. It's assumed importance to satisfying marital relationships has increased through the years as marriages have become less role bound and the desire for companionship based marriages has increased. Such marriages are sustained and revitalized through periodic renegotiation of the roles and realignment of the relationship priorities. These marriages are dependent upon effective communication to bring these periodic realignments to a satisfactory conclusion. Effective communication skills are also necessary to help families negotiate individual member's relationships to an increasing number of social systems outside the family. As each member experiences increased contact with other systems this impacts upon the family requiring it to respond accordingly. The recent trends toward ever larger numbers of working mothers and dual career families has also been viewed as placing greater demands on the family which might be met through

more effective communication within the family. As evidence of the recognized importance of communication skills, a variety of marriage enrichment or marriage enhancement programs have been developed during the past decade. Many of these programs are totally or partially based on improving communication through communication skill training. The assumption these programs make is that more effective communication will lead to more openness in the relationship and ultimately to greater relationship satisfaction.

A more recent trend in these programs has included additional family members in the skill training. This development appears to be based on the assumption that effective communication skills are significant contributors not only to marital satisfaction but to family relationships in general. These programs include training on parent child communication as well as that occurring between spouses.

Research on interpersonal communication and on the effects of communication skill building programs is being utilized to substantiate what particular aspects of interpersonal communication are most essential to the development and sustenance of satisfaction in interpersonal and intrafamily relationships. Research has also focused on evaluating the effectiveness of several of the different programs that have been devised (Gurman and Kniskern, 1977). The result of this research has been utilized to refine existing programs with an aim to increase their effectiveness as well as to develop new programs.

This study focuses on the initial assumption shared by most all marriage enrichment or family enrichment programs, that communication contributes to satisfaction with family relationships. Three aspects of communication, empathy, congruence, and regard, as exhibited by various family members are examined for their contributing effect to

individual perceptions of satisfaction with family relationships. In a study of similar concerns that was limited to the spousal relationship, Boyd and Roach (1977) found several items that distinguished between the most satisfied and least satisfied couples in their experimental group. These items formed three major clusters or groups closely related to the aspects of empathy, congruence and regard under study here.

The present study moves beyond consideration of satisfaction with the spousal relationship to include parent-child relationships. In each of the families assessed, measures were taken from both wife/mother and husband/father as well as an adolescent/son/daughter. Assessments were made of the spouses' marital satisfaction and their satisfaction with their children. The adolescents were asked to assess their satisfaction with their relationship with their parents and their satisfaction with the relationship between their parents.

The Problem

While many family professionals recognize the need for effective communication skills and have been involved in developing communication skill training experiences, it appears recognition of this need may not be widely shared by the general populace, at least not to a comparable degree. As David Mace (1977) points out, we do not naturally acquire the insights and skills required to establish and maintain companionship marriages. Therefore, we must be trained in the appropriate skills. Yet it appears that such training programs, although gaining in popularity, have not been utilized by the vast majority of people. Why is this? There is a variety of possible answers. Despite the wide publicity in the popular media that supports the importance of good communication, people may not yet be generally aware of the importance

of communication to satisfying family relationships. Perhaps the general population does not believe the experts or perhaps they feel their skill level is already sufficient regardless of what the statistics on family break up indicate. Possibly the distaste or distrust some people experience toward such training programs is so widely held as to exclude proportions of the population from being interested in such programs. Another alternative explanation is the possibility one of the basic assumptions of such programs is erroneous. This issue will be the focus of this study. The assumption is that communication is a major factor in relationship satisfaction. This issue will be examined from the perspectives of three different family members in each of the families in the sample.

Although several different aspects or elements of communication have been identified and studied to varying degrees, this study examines interpersonal interactions through the constructs of empathy, congruence and regard. These three variables have been identified as playing a critical role in interpersonal relationships such as marriages (Rogers, 1957; Barrett-Lennard, 1962; Litwak, Getson, and Saltzman, 1968). Schumm (1979) has demonstrated that these three elements do have an impact on self-reported marital satisfaction. This study builds on this earlier work and attempts to expand the analysis of the effects of empathy, congruence and regard beyond the spousal relationship.

Design of the Study

The data for this study are drawn from a larger study of the quality of life¹ that was investigated in fall 1977 and spring 1978

¹The Research project NC-128, "Quality of Life as Influenced by Area of Residence" sponsored by the Agricultural Experiment Stations of Arizona, California, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, Ohio, and Texas in cooperation with Science and Education Administration, Cooperative Research, the United States Department of Agriculture.

as a cooperative venture between Kansas and several other states. One of the special features of this study is that two distinctly separate samples were drawn. One sample was randomly selected from a metropolitan (250,000+) area. The second sample represents a rural Kansas community. The combined sample includes 542 individuals from 181 families. The urban sample includes 98 intact families consisting of mother, father and at least one adolescent. The rural sample consist of 83 families of similar composition. For these study these samples were analyzed separately.

In addition to a general examination of the quality of life, the Kansas study focused particularly on the quality of family life. This study utilizes that data to analyze the nature of the interpersonal interactions within families in urban and rural areas. Specifically, interpersonal interactions within families as measured by empathy, congruence and regard are examined for their effect on perceived levels of satisfaction with relationships with other family members. The approach used here is unique for several reasons. Several of the studies to date have utilized a clinic or agency population in their study. This presents some biases and makes generalization to the general population difficult if not impossible. The studies of the communication training groups have focused on persons who volunteered for the training. Using volunteers also presents difficulties in terms of the ability to generalize findings to a larger population. This study avoids these difficulties as it utilizes a randomly selected sample from a non-clinic non-volunteer population. This study is also unique in that the sample size is larger than that of most of the studies in this area.

Another unique feature of this study is its extension of analysis beyond the marital dyad that has been the focus of most other studies.

This study used the family as the unit of analysis. Subject families include a husband, wife and adolescent from an intact family. Thus, the study of communication is here extended beyond the marital dyad to also include the parent-child relationship. The sample allows for a tap of the adolescent's view of the spousal relationships which is a unique approach.

Self-report measures were used to obtain the data in this survey. Selected items from the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory (1962) were utilized to measure levels of empathy, congruence and regard each spouse perceived to be exhibited by the other spouse. Similar items were used to measure empathy, congruence and regard the adolescents' perceived to be exhibited by their parents toward them and by themselves toward their parents. Three items were combined into a scale to assess each spouses' marital satisfaction. Measurement of the parents' satisfaction with their relationship with their children, the adolescents' satisfaction with the relationship between their parents and satisfaction with their own relationship with the parents were assessed by single items. In addition to analyzing the separate components of empathy, congruence and regard for their effect on relationship satisfaction, an analysis was completed to determine if these three aspects showed an interaction effect in their impact upon relationship satisfaction.

Regression analysis and partial correlation analysis were used to analyze the data. These computer analyses were based on the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (Nie, Hill, Jenkins, Steinbrenner, and Bent, 1975). Partial correlation analysis was used to determine the impact of each of the components on the relationship satisfaction. The regression analysis was used to determine the extent of additional

variance due to the interaction effects of empathy, congruence and regard on relationship satisfaction.

The specific hypotheses examined in this study are listed below.

H:1 Interaction effects among empathy (E), congruence (C) and regard (R) will impact upon spouses' satisfaction (S) with their marriage in a direction consistent with the contributions of the individual factors.

H:2 The parents' perception of E, C and R exhibited toward each other will directly affect the adolescent's (A) S with the relationship between his/her parents.

H:3 The level of E, C and R the A perceives exhibited by his/her parents toward him/her will directly affect the A's S with his/her relationship with his/her parents.

CHAPTER II

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The study of human interaction often focuses on the communication between people. In the area of family studies, intrafamily communication is frequently a point of major interest. Intrafamily communication is viewed as one of the basic facets of family life from the perspectives of theoreticians, researchers and practitioners. In the family context, the interactions and exchanges that constitute interpersonal communication have attained a place of prominence from several different theoretical perspectives.

Goffman (1959) viewed communication as central to the symbolic presentations we make to others and thus to all human interactions. Nunnally (1971) also noted the centrality of interpersonal communication to the symbolic interaction perspective. He also discussed the role of communication from the viewpoint of family development theory. Miller (1971) and Corrales (1974) also viewed intrafamily communication as a core concept of family development theory. Nunnally, Miller and Corrales agree that the importance of communication is perhaps most fully recognized by systems theory.

Buckley (1967) and Russell (1977) described a system as a complex network of related elements where each element is related to at least some of the other elements in a more or less stable manner within any given time period. Buckley identified three types of systems with the complex adaptive being of the highest order. Such systems are characterized by internal openness between elements or components of the

system as well as openness to the system's external environment. Buckley noted that "the interchanges among their components may result in significant changes in the nature of the components themselves with important consequences for the system as a whole." (1968, p. 490) This interconnectedness defines the notion of wholeness of systems that is central to systems theory. Buckley recognized the importance of information exchange. It is only in these highest order systems that "internal as well as external interchanges are mediated characteristically by information flows." (p. 490) Families as family systems are of this highest order type of system.

The internal "interchanges" of such systems and the "information flows" are presented through and/or mediated by what is referred to here as intrafamily communication. Hence the central importance of communication to this perspective which defines families as rule governed systems and defines a system, in turn, as "two or more communicants in the process of defining the nature of their relationship." (Watzlawick, et al 1967: p. 121)

Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson (1967) in their classic work The Pragmatics of Human Communication, postulated the widely accepted idea that communication is ever present in all human interactions, "one cannot not communicate." (p. 48) Given this omnipresent nature of communication in human interaction, the importance of the role of communication in such interactions becomes clearly apparent. In the discussion of family systems, Watzlawick et al reemphasize their view when they state "All behavior is communication and therefore influences and is influenced by others." (p. 132)

The family systems theory concept of non-summativity points up the necessity of viewing communication not merely as an activity of individuals but also as a behavior or pattern of behaviors of system.

Understanding communication patterns can be the key to appreciating the interaction processes in complex adaptive systems such as families. Communication is often viewed as a major determinant of the ability of a family to continue to operate or exist as a family. The information flow is viewed as crucial to the maintenance and growth of systems. Feedback can function to slow the rate of change to enable a system to maintain its integrity as a system, or to keep the rate of change and/or growth to a manageable level. On the other hand, feedback can help to move a system from a state of inertia or stability that allows for no growth into a more dynamic state that enables changes to be amplified throughout the system to bring about changes necessary to accommodate the needs of the elements, or members of the system. Given the view that all behavior is communication, these feedback processes are also communication. Thus communication plays a crucial role in family life when people interact (define and redefine relationships) over an extended period of time.

Olson (1971) noted the close relationship conceptually between family communication and viewing the family as a system. Communication is the means through which family systems become known. Broderick (in Olson, 1976) cited the important diagnostic function of communication and stressed the need to focus "upon the processes in the interchange between and among members, and particularly on disruptive and inconsistent patterns of verbal communication." (p. XVI) To summarize, communication is viewed as an important concept in the study of families and family interaction from the perspectives of symbolic interaction and family development theory. Communication is particularly central to the systems theory view of families. Communication is recognized as universal to human systems and as an invaluable tool for understanding

and analyzing the processes of these systems.

While it is fairly evident that communication is and has been important to the maintenance of family life for centuries, the magnitude of its role is increasing as we move further away from instrumental marriages and increasingly further into the different demands imposed by the desire for companionship based marriages. Instrumental marriages were often based on roles or role performances that were commonly conceptualized or prescribed throughout an entire society. Thus the role of a spouse in one family was fairly similar to the role of the (same sex) spouse in the next family, assuming similar socio-economic status. As we move away from an era of societally proscribed marital and family roles and into an era of companionship marriages with family roles increasingly negotiated, communication looms even larger as a critical factor in family life. The further we move away from a time of commonly perceived family roles the greater the need for effective communication to negotiate the roles and relationships within the family.

As mentioned above, concerns about communication arise not only at the theoretical level but also in the realms of research and the more practical arena of planned interventions into family interactions. Concerns in these latter two areas were combined in the development of the Hill Interaction Matrix (Hill, 1965) which sought to identify the properties or types of communication most effective in psychotherapeutic situations. Hill distinguished between content and style, delineating four categories of content and five different styles of communication. These might be viewed as similar to Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson's (1967) report and command aspects of human communication.

Building on the work of Hill and others, Miller (1971) and Nunnally (1971) speculated that interactions can be successful at the preventive as well as therapeutic level. They developed a communications training program that has been widely used for both engaged and married couples. This program's emphasis on communication skill building is not unlike a wide variety of marriage enrichment or family enrichment programs that have been developed during the last 20 years. The vast majority of such programs, designed to increase satisfaction with marriage and family life, emphasize the importance of effective communication as the single most crucial variable in building greater relationship satisfaction.

Whether they are aware of it or not, many adherents of such programs imply or directly support the notion of dynamic, ever changing relationships between family members that is a core concept in family systems theory. Thus they recognize the challenge presented to family relationships and the need for ongoing communication and negotiation in families.

Several researchers have examined the relationships of various facets of married and family life to different aspects of communication. Some of these studies have noted a positive correlation between "effective" communication and marital satisfaction. Navran (1967) compared 24 happily married couples with 24 who sought marriage counseling. He found that the former group reported better communication at both the verbal and nonverbal levels than the latter group. Levinger and Senn (1967) also used a group seeking counseling as their experimental group. Using self-report measures, they found this group to have a lower level of disclosure than their control group when examining pleasant interactions. However, the experimental (cline) group did

have a higher level of disclosure of material labeled as unpleasant. It appeared the control group avoided more of the unpleasant, disclosures, especially on important matters, than the counseling group. They concluded, "For the average couple, selective disclosure of feelings seems more beneficial to marital harmony than indiscriminate catharsis" (p. 246).

In both of these studies experimental and control groups could be distinguished by their communication patterns. A general measure of communication was used in the first study cited and specific facets or characteristics of the patterns of interaction were examined in the second study.

The following two studies look at particular aspects of communication. In a study of families that received treatment at a family agency, 25 families that continued in treatment for at least 3 months were assessed as having substantially improved their communication patterns as well as experiencing improvement in the presenting problem that had led them to seek counseling (Schreiber, 1966). Miller (1974) also used a counseling group to compare with a noncounseling group. He anticipated the latter group would exhibit more communication work patterns i.e. more effective communication than the former. Although the results were not significant, the trend was in the predicted direction.

Corrales (1974) found that marital satisfaction was positively influenced by open communication styles to a substantial degree. Eleven of the twelve tests (six for each spouse) that were applied indicated that open styles of communication between the spouses had a significant positive effect on their reported marital satisfaction. The importance of other specific aspects of communication will later

be elaborated. In a finding somewhat similar to that reported by Levinger and Senn, (as presented earlier in this chapter) a study of the adjustment processes of young married couples to a violation of their expectations found they were selective in their disclosures. The subjects were found to be selective in how they responded to such violations and in the nature of the violations to which they responded, (Cutler & Dyer, 1965). These researchers found a considerable tendency for the subjects to adopt a wait and see attitude toward violations rather than attempting to discuss them with their spouse. Such non-action responses were judged by the spouses to be inhibiting to the process of marital adjustment.

This finding is somewhat supportive of David Mace's (1977) contention that effective communication is not something humans come by naturally, ". . . mere effort may not of itself be productive. Growth takes more than determination. It also requires insight and skill. What our culture must begin to accept is that the achievement of a successful 'companionship marriage' is a very complex task, and that we have so far provided no effective training for it." (1977: p. 521) Because of this Mace sees the need for systematic training for effective communication skills. The same theme is echoed by Sherwood and Scherer, (1975), "A marriage is more than ever a consequence of the dynamic interplay of the unique and changing needs, expectations, and skills of the two parties themselves." (p. 12) They developed a conceptual model of the process involved in dynamic marital relationships that focuses attention on the points where renegotiation of the relationship becomes crucial to the maintenance of a satisfying marriage. It is critical to satisfaction with their marital relationship that the couple have sufficient skills to successfully negotiate a

reorganization of the marriage.

As the importance of communication to interpersonal and especially intrafamily relationships becomes increasingly apparent, more people are recognizing the need for more formal training programs to assist in the skill building effort, to provide family members with the skills to face the challenges, to appropriately process the necessary information in accurate and appropriate ways and to successfully negotiate meaningful and satisfying relationship. Marriage enrichment and more recently, family enrichment programs, have been developed to provide such training.

Much of the literature on marriage enrichment is conceptual rather than empirically oriented. However, the assumptions underlying much of this work is at least partially supported by the research that has been done. The theme of much of this literature continues to showcase the role of communication. In a decade review of marriage and family therapy, one of the "promising new directions" that Olson (1971) pointed to was the programs (specifically Miller's and Nunnally's) designed to train couples in communication skills. He noted the need for much more to be done in this area in the future.

In a review of a marriage enrichment program, Travis and Travis (1975) noted the overriding importance of communication. "Communication, verbal and nonverbal, which represents the self in the relationship, is necessary for personal growth in the marriage and for continued development in the marriage (p. 174)." Mace (1977) also shares this view of the basic importance of communication. "After all, individuals can have no human identity except through what they experience by relating one by one to significant others. What they become as persons is almost entirely determined by what

the sum total of those dyadic relationships does to them (p. 520)."

Further evidence of the recognized importance of good communication skills to relationship satisfaction is provided by the large number of programs that incorporate some type of communication skill building into their agendas (Sherwood and Scherer, 1975; Regula, 1975; Miller et al, 1974; Hinkle and Moore, 1971; Schlein, 1971; D'Augelli et al, 1974; Van Zoost, 1973; Campbell, 1974; Carnes and Laube, 1975; and already mentioned Miller, 1971; and Nunnally, 1971).

Although still very much in the beginning stages of inquiry, attempts at empirical analysis and validation of such programs are occurring with increasing frequency. In a comprehensive review of the research on marriage enrichment, Gurman and Kniskern (1977) found 29 different studies that had been reported in the literature. Of these 29 programs, 24 were specifically aimed at communication skill building training or incorporated such training as a part of their program. The above discussion indicates a rather clear consensus in the theoretical, research, and applied literature that communication is one of the most important factors in determining the nature of family relationships and family systems. It plays a crucial role in helping to gain insight into family systems. It has been shown to affect marital satisfaction. It is a key concept from several different theoretical perspectives. Finally, it is widely recognized as a vital component of pre-marital, marital and family enrichment programs.

In addition to the general review of communication and the importance of selective self-disclosure and openness presented above, the impact of empathy or empathic understanding, congruence, and regard on interpersonal interactions will be discussed. Similar in origin to

the Hill (1965) work cited above, the initial conceptualization, operationalization, and testing of these three components grew out of an interest in the dynamics of the client-therapist relationship and an attempt to identify the agents of this relationship responsible for the change or growth of the client during therapy. Carl Rogers (1957) formulated a theory of conditions that facilitate therapeutic change. He identified regard, empathy, and congruence as three of the important variables in the client-therapist communication that facilitate change.

Barrett-Lennard (1962) tested the impact of these variables and devised a scale (Relationship Inventory) to measure them. The definitions of the three variables used in this study are drawn from Barrett-Lennard's formulation. Empathy is defined as "experiential recognition of perceptions or feelings that the other has directly symbolized and communicated"(p. 3). Congruence "is theoretically centered on consistency between total experience and awareness"(p. 4). Thus congruence is the degree of consistency between a person's feelings and experience and what is expressed in the relationship (Walker & Little, 1969). Congruence implies a maximal openness to awareness of the other (Barrett-Lennard, 1962). Regard is the "affective aspect of one person's response to another" (p. 4). This entails degree of affection or liking as well as degree of respect or valuation.

In his initial research Barrett-Lennard found these three qualities or variables to be "significantly associated with alternative criteria of the adequacy of interpersonal relationships and with indices of personality adjustment" (p. 32). This was true not only in therapy but seemed to extend to non-therapy relationships as well. In a later presentation of his revised Relationship Inventory he noted, "This

instrument has demonstrated its usefulness in measuring the defined variables in the context of a significant interpersonal relationship" (Litwack, Getson, and Saltzman, 1968, p. 416). The subsequent reformulations and research indicated that empathy, congruence, and regard are important to other significant interpersonal relationships such as those in family units. As further evidence of this, using a refined version of the Relationship Inventory to measure empathy, congruence and regard, Schumm (1979) demonstrated that these three factors are significantly related to the marital satisfaction of husbands and wives.

Having recognized the importance of these variables, successful attempts have been made to teach them as skills to family members. Epstein and Jackson (1978) found that communication training could be used to increase spouse rated empathy. In the widely used program they developed, Miller (1971) and Nunnally (1971) combined training in the areas of self-disclosure, empathy, and regard (which they labeled "worth of the individual"). Their own research and that of others indicate these skills can be taught.

With increasing frequency, the importance of effective communication to family relationships is being recognized by family professionals. In their review of recent trends in marriage, therapy, and divorce in the U. S., Paolino and McCrady (1978) recommend communication training as the first line of intervention for mild to moderate marital problems.

The above discussion reviews the importance of communication to family life. Whether using global concepts of "effective communication" or more specific variables of openness, self-disclosure, empathy, congruence, or regard, several researchers found that communication

affects relationships, especially the more intimate interpersonal relationships such as that between spouses. In addition to the researchers findings, communication has been shown to be an important consideration to the maintenance of family systems from the theorists point of view. Communication is viewed as both the medium and the process for information flow and exchange. In the view of Watzlawick et al, communication is a universal component in human relationships. Practitioners, both therapists and enrichment trainers, have also identified communication as perhaps the most important variable contributing to more satisfying family relationships.

This study attempts to empirically validate the relationship between communication and satisfaction with family relationships. Communication as measured by empathy, congruence and regard will be examined for its effect on satisfaction with family relationships. The general hypothesis is measures of perceived levels of communication (empathy, congruence, and regard) will fluctuate directly with the level of satisfaction with family relationships. Thus, low levels of perceived empathy, congruence and regard are expected to adversely affect relationship satisfaction while high levels of perceived empathy, congruence and regard are expected to enhance the relationship satisfaction. This general hypothesis will be examined in four components from the perspective of different family members. As a starting point, an attempt is made to build on the above mentioned work of Schumm (1979). Knowing that empathy, congruence and regard do impact upon the marital satisfaction of both spouses, an examination will be made of the potential interaction effects among these variables. It is anticipated that interaction effects between these factors will impact upon

marital satisfaction scores. Following this analysis the scope of the study will be expanded to include the perspectives of adolescents from the same families. The four hypotheses of this study are stated below.

H:1 Interaction effects among empathy (E), congruence (C) and regard (R) will impact upon spouses satisfaction (S) with their marriage in a direction consistent with the contributions of the individual factors.

H:2 The parents' perception, of E, C and R exhibited toward each other will directly affect the adolescents' (A) S with the relationship between their parents.

H:3 The level of E, C and R the A perceives exhibited by his/her parents toward him/her will directly affect the A's S with his/her relationship with his/her parents.

H:4 The level of E, C and R the A perceives s/he exhibits toward the parents will directly influence the parents' reported S with their relationship with their children.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE AND METHODS

The variables measured for this study are only a few of those included in a large national research project on quality of life. This large cooperative venture involved researchers from Agricultural Experiment Stations in 14 states. The data for this study was collected from the Kansas study which focused on the quality of family life.

The Sample

One of the goals of the larger study was to compare perceived quality of life in rural and urban areas. Therefore, the sample was drawn from two distinctly different areas. In Kansas there are only three cities that met the criterion (population 100,000+) for the urban center. The area chosen for sampling was selected by process of elimination rather than randomly chosen. The state capital was not chosen in order to avoid possible unknown effects from it's special circumstances. Kansas City was removed from consideration due to its proximity to Kansas City, Missouri. The remaining qualifying urban center, Wichita, was selected.

The criteria for a rural area was a small town with a population of 2,000 to 5,000 that was located no closer than 50 miles from a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area. Such an area was selected in a random draw of eligible towns.

One of the unique features of this study was the gathering of data from each of three members of every family sampled. To be included in the completed sample responses were gathered from each spouse and from an adolescent (12 - 18 years old) living in the home. Families with a single parent or younger children were eliminated as they did not meet the criteria for eligibility.

Having responses from three members of the same family provides several advantages. Data is available from the husband/father, wife/mother and adolescent/son/daughter perspectives. In addition, these can be combined in any given family to provide a family perspective of the same variable. Thus, family scores may be developed on some measures. Further, on some variables cross checks are available with the perceptions of the other family members.

In the rural area, county records were examined to determine eligible families. These families were then contacted by telephone and a personal interview was requested. One spouse from each participating family was interviewed to complete the information on the primary instrument. This instrument contained items of interest to all states. The remaining information was obtained from self-report questionnaires that were left in the home and later collected by the interviewers.

The sampling method was somewhat different in the urban area, although the eligibility criteria for families was the same. In Wichita a 10 percent sample of precincts was selected using a table of random numbers. Then families were randomly selected from these precincts. The data was collected in the same manner using the same instruments used with the rural sample. In both samples, respondents were asked to avoid collaborating with other family members on their

responses. The response rate appears lower in the urban sample. This is at least partially due to the lack of prior identification of eligible families.

The combined sample includes 542 individuals or 181 families consisting of husband/father, wife/mother and an adolescent/son/daughter. Of these families, 98 represent the urban area and 83 were from the rural area. Table 1 gives additional sampling characteristics as compiled by Schumm (1979).

Measures

The instruments used in the larger study were compiled by 26 professional researchers from 14 universities who were involved in the item selection. The items were pretested on selected populations in four states, Kansas, Indiana, Texas and Missouri. They were pretested for language difficulties and concept ambiguity which proved especially important for the clarity of some of the adolescent items. As a further check, instruments were also post tested in Texas. A pre-post correlation of .75 was used as the cut off point for item selection.

The specific items from the larger study that are utilized in this investigation came from two sources. Some of the items were drawn from instruments already available in the literature. Other items were constructed specifically for the study. Space limitations precluded incorporating entire instruments so specific items were selected. This study uses items that were drawn from the Relationship Inventory (Barrett-Lennard, 1962) and Edmonds' Marital Conventionalization scale (1967) in addition to the items constructed for the larger study by the research team.

Table 1. Sample Characteristics and Response Rates for Urban and Rural Samples.

Category	Urban Sample		Rural Sample	
Total Families Selected	392		189	
Incorrect Address/Telephone Number	29		13	
Ineligible Families	52		25	
Total Eligible Families Contacted	311		151	
<u>Response Rates</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>% of 311</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>% of 151</u>
No answer	73	23.5	24	15.9
Refusals	126	40.5	33	21.8
Incomplete data*	14	4.5	11	7.3
Interviews completed by all family members	98	31.5	83	55.0

*At least one family member did not complete all three sets of questionnaires

For this study, a modified version of the Relationship Inventory (RI) was used to assess the spouse's communication. The wording was modified to apply to one's spouse rather than to a therapist. The factor analysis of Walker and Little (1969) and the further refinements by Schumm (1979) were used as guides in reducing the number of items. In its final form, five items were retained to measure empathy, defined as "experiential recognition of perceptions or feelings that the other has directly symbolized and communicated" (Barrett-Lennard, 1962, p. 3). Five items were retained to measure regard or degree of respect, valuation or affection. Three items were retained to measure the congruence between what is experienced and what is expressed in the relationship. The instrument is presented in Appendix A.

Barrett-Lennard (1962) reported acceptable content validity of the Relationship Inventory as evaluated by a panel of five clinical judges. From the analyses of Walker and Little (1969) and Schumm (1979) the dimensionality of the scales has also been confirmed. Schumm (1979) also reported good construct validity and fair discriminant and convergent validity from his analysis of the RI in its modified form (i.e. as applied to family relationships).

Adequate levels of internal consistency have been reported for the RI. The Barrett-Lennard (1962) data indicates split-half reliability coefficients of empathic understanding (.86), congruence (.89) and regard (.93) which are comparable to those reported in other studies (Litwack, et al, 1968). The reliability analysis for the RI items used in this study are reported in Table 2. Test-retest reliability reports have ranged from .61 to .81 (Litwack, et al, 1968) for a six month interval and between .86 and .92 with two and six week intervals.

Items from the Edmonds' Marital Conventionalization scale (1967) (Appendix B) were used to examine the extent to which the results in the first hypothesis were due to a response bias of conventionalization rather than reflecting the effects of the variables under investigation here. The five item modified scale adapted by Schumm (1979) was utilized here. This scale consists of the five most discriminating items from Edmonds' scale. The validity of this measurement was discussed by Edmonds (1967) but remains an open question. Reliability coefficients are listed in Table 3.

The items used to record adolescent responses can be found in Appendix C. These items were compiled by the research team (Bollman, Jurich, and Schumm, 1976) and, in general, are worded much like the RI items. These items were judged to have face validity by the research team. Alpha levels for the scales are presented in Table 4. The Spearman-Brown prophecy formula (Roscoe, 1975) was used to determine individual item reliabilities. Given the similarity of wording, when single items were used to measure some of the factors, reliability was judged to be similar to the single items from the scales (alpha .45 - .70).

The dependent variable of marital satisfaction was measured by a three item scale. The reliability of this scale is presented in Table 3. The three other dependent variables were measured by single items. Based on the average single item reliability of the marital satisfaction scale these single items were judged to have reliability ranging from .6 to .8. Although some difficulty may be encountered in using single items, this approach also offers some advantage. "Our general conclusion has been that the single-item summary, despite its lesser reliability, is probably of prime value because of its

Table 2. Alpha Internal Consistency Reliability Estimates for the RI Subscales.

Variable	Sample group	N	Alpha	Median	Mean	S.D.
Regard	Rural Husbands	78	.88	20.3	20.6	2.72
Regard	Rural Wives	78	.80	20.7	20.8	2.65
Empathy	Rural Husbands	78	.87	18.6	18.1	3.58
Empathy	Rural Wives	78	.86	18.3	17.7	3.44
Congruence	Rural Husbands	78	.77	11.7	11.3	1.95
Congruence	Rural Wives	78	.72	11.6	11.2	2.00
Regard	Urban Husbands	84	.91	20.1	20.4	2.6
Regard	Urban Wives	84	.92	21.1	20.8	3.9
Empathy	Urban Husbands	84	.91	18.3	17.7	3.8
Empathy	Urban Wives	84	.91	17.3	16.8	4.0
Congruence	Urban Husbands	84	.83	11.6	11.0	2.0
Congruence	Urban Wives	84	.79	11.6	11.2	2.3

Table 3. Alpha Internal Consistency Reliability Estimates for the Marital Satisfaction (MS) and Conventionalization (CONV) Scales.

Variable	Sample group	N	Alpha	Median	Mean	S.D.
MS	Rural Husbands	76	.84	19.2	18.8	2.6
MS	Rural Wives	83	.93	20.0	18.5	3.5
MS	Urban Husbands	76	.84	18.4	18.3	2.4
MS	Urban Wives	97	.91	19.0	18.5	3.2
CONV	Rural Husbands	79	.72	2.35	2.11	1.56
CONV	Rural Wives	79	.59	1.68	1.80	1.34
CONV	Urban Husbands	89	.85	1.35	1.78	1.82
CONV	Urban Wives	89	.70	1.15	1.46	1.41

Table 4. Alpha Internal Consistency Reliability Estimates for the Adolescent Response Scales.

Variable	Sample group	Alpha
Empathy exhibited by parent	Rural	.64
	Urban	.72
Empathy exhibited toward parent	Rural	.64
	Urban	.71
Regard exhibited by parent	Rural	.85
	Urban	.85

(1) simplicity; and (2) its likely 'coverage' of the domain from the point of view of any given individual" (Campbell, Converse, and Rodgers, 1976).

One of the basic considerations in any research is the potential contamination of results due to the effects of interacting variables. Ideally for the purposes of this study, the subjects educational level and socio-economic status would have been controlled. However, the complexity of the current analysis did not make this approach feasible. Controlling for these variables in some cases would have reduced the sample size to such an extent as to make the desired analysis difficult or impossible to complete. Therefore, in evaluating the results, it should be remembered that no controls have been provided for potential interacting variables.

Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis of the data included three main tests. Pearson product moment correlations were computed to determine the extent of relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Partial correlations were used to determine the strength of the relationship between independent and dependent variables after controlling for the potential effects of the other independent measures. Finally, regression analysis was used to determine the extent of additional variance in the dependent variable that might be explained by an interaction effect between the independent variables. These computer analyses were based on the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (Nie, Hull, Jenkins, Steinbrenner, and Bent, 1975).

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section describes sample characteristics, response rates, selected demographic characteristics of the urban and rural samples and some unique features of the sample. The second section consists of presentations of the analysis for each of the four main hypotheses in this study.

The Sample

As reported in Chapter 3, two independent samples were randomly selected for this study. One sample represents an urban center and the other represents a small rural community.

Table 1 presents the sample characteristics and response rates for both samples. The larger number of eligible families in the urban sample is due to the lack of preliminary screening of the urban group that had been done on the rural sample. Thus a larger initial pool of eligibles was deemed necessary.

The description of selected demographic characteristics of both samples is presented in Table 5. The figures represent the percentage of respondents in each category. The figures indicate the samples are fairly comparable on the characteristics presented. As a group, the spouses and adolescents in the urban sample appear to be slightly older. Education and income levels are also slightly higher for the urban group. This might be explained by the larger proportion of professional and technical workers in the urban group.

Table 5. Selected Demographic Characteristics of the Samples Expressed as Percentages of the Total Group.

Ages (years)	Urban		Rural		Professions	Urban		Rural		Annual Family Income	Urban	Rural
	H	W	H	W		H	W	H	W			
12-15	43			60	Not in labor force	5	39	1	23	\$5,000-6,999	2	1
16-19	57			40	Professional and technical workers	27	12	18	6	\$7,000-8,999	3	11
20-29					Managers, officials, and proprietors	8	1	12	10	\$9,000-11,999	11	17
30-39					Self-employed in business	7	0	14	3	\$12,000-14,999	20	8
40-49					Clerical and sales workers	8	22	3	23	\$15,000-19,999	17	27
50-59					Craftsman, foreman, workers	10	1	18	8	\$20,000-29,999	26	19
60 and over					Operative and kindred workers	24	5	23	13	\$30,000-49,999	15	10
Highest school years completed	Urban		Rural		Laborers, service workers, farm laborers	10	13	3	14	\$50,000 or more	5	5
Under 8	9	2	7	5	Farmers and farm managers	0	0	2	0	Information missing	1	2
8-12	36	60	60	66	Information missing	1	7	6	0			
13-16	43	34	31	29								
Over 16	12	4	2	0								
Sex of Adolescents	Urban		Rural									
Male	54			57								
Female	46			43								

Hypothesis: 1

The initial analysis of H:1 clearly shows that empathy (E), congruence (C), and regard (R) exhibited by each spouse are all significantly correlated with the marital satisfaction (MS) of the other spouse. As Table 6 indicates, these results held for both the urban and rural samples. Schumm (1979) has noted such a relationship may be attributable to a response bias reflecting marital conventionalization (CONV). This possibility was tested. The data was reanalyzed using a sample of persons who had scored low (0, 1) on a marital conventionalization scale (0, 5) contained in the original data pool. A low score on the marital conventionalization scale indicated a low level of response bias in this specific area. As Table 6 shows the significant relationships between marital satisfaction and E, C and R held for both groups who indicated low marital conventionalization response bias. From this it can be concluded that marital conventionalization did not significantly alter the relationship of E, C, and R with MS. Further tests for the effects of conventionalization are discussed later .

To determine the extent to which E, C, and R each independently contributed to marital satisfaction an analysis of partial correlations was used. At this point differences were found between the urban and rural groups as well as between husbands and wives.

For rural wives, congruence and regard indicated the strongest relationships with marital satisfaction. Empathy was correlated with WMS when either regard or conventionalization were partialled out. However, when both were partialled this relationship was no longer significant (Table 7). The levels of congruence and regard exhibited by the husband both continued to reflect a significant correlation with WMS when controlling for other variables.

Table 6. Zero-order Pearson Correlations among Marital Satisfaction and Spouses Variables. (Parallel Scores for Low Conventionalization Group)

<u>URBAN</u>					
	MS	Empathy	Congruence	Regard	
MS	----- -----	.61*** (.53***)	.68*** (.69***)	.48*** (.47**)	Husbands, N=64 (N=36)
E	.53*** (.47***)	----- -----	.73*** (.66***)	.55*** (.39**)	
C	.57*** (.54***)	.59*** (.44***)	----- -----	.61*** (.38**)	
R	.70*** (.70***)	.64*** (.60***)	.72*** (.70***)	----- -----	
Wives, N=86, (N=54)					
<u>RURAL</u>					
	MS	Empathy	Congruence	Regard	
MS	----- -----	.44*** (.33*)	.27* (.13)	.42*** (.38**)	Husbands, N=72 (N=36)
E	.48*** (.41**)	----- -----	.60*** (.43**)	.74*** (.68***)	
C	.58*** (.55***)	.48*** (.38*)	----- -----	.62*** (.51***)	
R	.59*** (.56***)	.58*** (.49**)	.57*** (.42**)	----- -----	
Wives, N=76, (N=33)					

***p < .001

**p < .01

*p < .05

Table 7. Partial Correlations between Marital Satisfaction and the Independent Variables for Total Groups and Low Conventionalization Groups, Controlling for the Effects of the Other Independent Variables and Conventionalization.

	E(R)	E(CONV)	E(R, CONV)	C(R)	C(CONV)	C(R, CONV)	
HMS - U	.48***	.45***	.37***	.56***	.56***	.49***	
R	.20*	.28**	.11.	.01	.13	.05.	
WMS - U	.14	.37***	.06	.12	.45***	.06	
R	.21*	.26*	.09	.37***	.40***	.27**	
R(CONV)		R(E)	R(E, CONV)	R(C)	R(C, CONV)	R(E, C)	R(E, C, CONV)
HMS - U	.33**	.21*	.18	.11.	.08	.07	.05
R	.30**	.16 ^t	.16 ^t	.34**	.28**	.17 ^t	.17 ^t
WMS - U	.64***	.56***	.56***	.51***	.51***	.46***	.46***
R	.45***	.44***	.39***	.39***	.34***	.32**	.30**
Low CONV		C(R)	R(E)	R(C)	R(E, C)		
HMS - U	.43**	.63***	.33*	.31*	.29*		
R	.10	.07.	.23 ^t	.37*	.24 ^t		
WMS - U	.09	.11.	.59***	.53***	.46***		
R	.18	.41**	.46**	.44**	.38*		

***p < .001

**p < .01

*p < .05

^tp < .07.

Rural husband's MS was significantly related to empathy and regard but not congruence. However, as with the wives, when both regard and conventionalization were partialled out, empathy no longer correlated with HMS. Regard consistently showed a relationship with HMS when C, CONV or both were partialled. Partialling out empathy, alone or in combination with other variables, reduced the correlation of regard and HMS to non-significance.

To summarize, after partialling out the other factors, congruence and regard continued to correlate significantly with the rural wives' marital satisfaction, empathy did not. Once partialled, although regard showed a trend, none of them significantly correlated with the rural husbands' marital satisfaction.

The urban group showed some unanticipated differences. For the group of wives, (Table 7) regard appears to be the crucial factor. Through all the partials for regard it maintained a significant relationship with WMS. However, whenever regard was partialled out of empathy or congruence, they ceased to be significant. As Table 7 shows the urban husbands were almost the opposite of the wives. HMS remained significantly correlated with empathy and congruence through all the partials, but the relationship with regard did not hold up very well. Regard correlated with HMS only when partialling out either empathy or conventionalization. In all the other partials, it failed to maintain significance.

The above report indicates mixed results on the effects of empathy, congruence and regard on marital satisfaction for the urban and rural husbands and wives. However, some conclusions are possible. The data suggest a general hierarchy among the three variables. In their relationship to marital satisfaction, regard appears to be the most

critical and most consistent factor in importance, followed by congruence and empathy appears least significant. The nature of the specific group must be kept in mind when asserting such a hierarchy.

It is also interesting to note that the urban husbands were the group accountable for most of the instances where no significant relationship was found. The analysis of the urban husbands low on conventionalization does consistently show significant relationships suggesting conventionalization may have been a factor in the responses of the total group of urban husbands.

As mentioned, Schumm (1979) suggested conventionalization may be an alternative explanation for the significant relationships between marital satisfaction and empathy, congruence and regard. This possibility was examined in two ways. The effects of conventionalization were partialled out of each of the other factors in the analysis of partial correlations. Also a special analysis was run comparing groups that scored high on marital conventionalization with a low scoring group (0 or 1 on a 0 to 5 scale). These analyses of conventionalization indicated it was not a significant factor in the results of this study with the above noted exception of the urban husbands. Thus conventionalization was generally ruled out as an explanation for the findings.

Attention is now turned to the most immediate test of H:1. Having determined that empathy, congruence and regard do correlate to varying degrees with the marital satisfaction of the groups under consideration, regression analysis was used to determine the extent to which an interaction of these factors might account for variance in the levels of marital satisfaction. Figures are presented in Table 8. The interaction of empathy and regard did not show an effect on marital

Table 8. Regression Analysis of the Interaction Effects (Int) of the Independent Variables, from the Spouses' Perception, on Marital Satisfaction.

Group	N	^a r	Int 1 (E x C)	Int 2 (E x R)	Int 3 (R x C)	All 3 Two-Way INT
Urban			R ² = .49833	.50052	.53484	.56027
Husbands	68	.49356	F ^b (1, 63) = .60	F(1, 63) = .88	F(1, 63) = 5.59*	T = .00012
						F = .538
Rural			R ² = .21478	.21676	.22433	.23181
Husbands	74	.21435	F(1, 69) = .04	F(1, 69) = .21	F(1, 69) = .89	T = .00021
						F = 3.745
Urban			R ² = .52550	.53240	.63934	.65824
Wives	90	.52472	F(1, 85) = .14	F(1, 85) = 1.40	F(1, 85) = 27.01***	T = .00055
						F = .018
Rural			R ² = .48319	.47678	.49070	.49664
Wives	79	.44935	F(1, 74) = 4.85*	F(1, 74) = 3.88	F(1, 74) = 6.01*	T = .00015
						F = .000

***p < .001

*p < .05

^a Pearson Correlation - MS with E + C + R

^b F scores are for the additional variance explained by the interaction

^c T= tolerance limit of computer reached - prohibits further computation

satisfaction in any group. The interaction effect between empathy and congruence did significantly contribute to the marital satisfaction score of rural wives. Congruence and regard showed a significant interaction effect in three of the four groups, failing to reach significance only with the rural husbands. It might be recalled that it was only among the rural husbands' group that none of the completed partials on empathy, congruence and regard resulted in a significant correlation with HMS. This would seem to make it very unlikely for any of these factors to show interaction effects for this particular group.

As Table 8 indicates, the computer's tolerance would not allow for the computation of the three-way interaction. This suggests they were not significant as far as can be determined in the present analysis.

Scatterplots were developed to ascertain more complete information about the C x R interaction effect. Because regard earlier had demonstrated a more consistent relationship to MS than did congruence, groups were split on this variable. Thus, high regard and low regard groups were formed. The relationship between congruence and marital satisfaction was determined for each group. As Table 9 indicates, the correlation between congruence and MS in the high regard groups was only significant among urban husbands. In the low regard groups, the correlation was highly significant in all but the rural husbands group² and even they did show trends in the predicted direction.

²The initial regression analysis showed no interaction effect for this group so a lack of significant correlation is not surprising here.

This analysis suggests high regard is sufficient for high marital satisfaction. Furthermore, when level of regard is perceived as high, congruence is somewhat irrelevant (except for urban husbands). If regard is low, congruence appears to become a much more important contributor to marital satisfaction. Also, if regard is low and congruence is low they appear to have a multiplier effect on marital satisfaction which will then be very low as a result.

A final analysis was done on the interaction of empathy and congruence on regard to further clarify the relationship between these variables. Groups were split on the basis of their empathy scores to for high empathy and low empathy groups. The relationship between congruence and regard was examined within these groups. As Table 10 indicates congruence and regard are significantly related in all of the groups. For three of the four major groups, urban husbands and rural husbands and wives, the relationship is substantially enhanced in the high empathy groups compared to the low empathy groups. This suggests the interaction between empathy and congruence does contribute to the level of regard.

To summarize, of the twelve expected interaction effects only four were found to be significant. The results show an empathy-congruence interaction effect for the rural wives and regard-congruence interaction effects for all groups except the rural husbands. Thus, hypothesis 1 is partially accepted but most obvious is the need for further research to clarify the situation.

Hypothesis: 2

The second hypothesis is designed to test the extent to which the E, C, and R each spouse perceives exhibited by the other spouse affects

Table 9. Zero-order Pearson Correlation of Congruence and Marital Satisfaction in High Regard and Low Regard Group.

Group	High Regard				Low Regard			
	N	r	B(slope)	Intercept	N	r	B	Intercept
Rural								
Husbands	33	-.01	-.02	19.80	42	.23 ^t	.32	14.90
Wives	42	.55	.48	14.31	38	.55***	1.22	4.46
Urban								
Husbands	22	.59***	.65	11.28	47	.63***	.86	8.94
Wives	50	.01	.00	19.54	42	.66***	1.20	5.30

Table 10. Zero-order Pearson Correlation of Congruence and Regard in High Empathy and Low Empathy Groups.

Group	High Empathy				Low Empathy			
	N	r	B	Intercept	N	r	B	Intercept
Rural								
Husbands	42	.57***	.73	13.23	39	.31*	.42	14.68
Wives	38	.63***	.96	10.63	42	.47***	.52	14.18
Urban								
Husbands	42	.73***	1.09	8.07	47	.42**	.57	13.83
Wives	33	.79***	1.15	8.01	60	.67***	1.22	7.00

***p < .001

**p < .01

*p < .05

^tp < .07

the adolescent's satisfaction with the relationship between his/her parents. Zero order correlations, Table 11, indicate an inconsistent mix of relationships. Initially correlations between the parents' marital satisfaction scores and the adolescents' scores of satisfaction with the relationship between their parents were examined (Table 12). These indicated there was generally a significant relationship between these scores with the exception of urban male adolescents and their fathers. This indicates that generally the adolescents' satisfaction was related to the parents' expressed satisfaction. The next step involved analyzing the separate components of empathy, congruence and regard for their relationship to the adolescents' satisfaction ratings.

Of the six possible correlations with the adolescents' satisfaction with the parents' relationship, for the urban females only the mothers' regard (as perceived by the father) was significant. The urban males' satisfaction is correlated with the fathers' regard and congruence. The empathy of both parents shows a trend in the predicted direction. The satisfaction of rural males is significantly correlated with the empathy exhibited by both parents as well as the regard of fathers and the congruence exhibited by mothers. The data indicate the rural female adolescents' level of satisfaction to be most closely tied to the parental factors. Significant correlations were found with all three of the mothers' factors and two of three for the fathers'. The only factor that failed to achieve significance for this group was the level of congruence the mother perceived to be exhibited by the father. An across groups inspection suggests regard is the most important factor reaching significance in five of eight correlations.

Table 11. Zero-order Correlations and Partial Correlations of Adolescents' Satisfaction with their Parents' Relationship and the Independent Variables Controlling for the Effects of the Other Independent Variables.

Parent Perspective	Adolescent Group	N	(Variable Controlled)							
			Variable E	E(R) ^a	C	C(R) ^a	R	R(E) ^b	R(C) ^c	R(E,C) ^d
Father of	Urban Males	46	.23 ^t	.14	.36**	.27*	.26*	.19	.08	.08
	Females	38	.12	.02	.17	.10	.15	.09	.04	.07
Mother of	Males	46	.21 ^t	.13	.11	-.03	.18	.05	.14	.08
	Females	38	.20	.00	.11	-.14	.30*	.23	.31*	.27 ^t
Father of	Rural Males	43	.30*	.07	.21	.02	.32*	.15	.24 ^t	.15
	Females	33	.39*	.08	.21	-.10	.54***	.42**	.52***	.44**
Mother of	Males	43	.35**	.34*	.28*	.24 ^t	.15	-.09	-.05	-.12
	Females	33	.57***	.38*	.42**	.20	.56***	.36*	.46**	.27 ^t

***p < .001

**p < .01

*p < .05

^tp < .07

a First-order partial controlling for regard.

b First-order partial controlling for empathy.

c First-order partial controlling for congruence.

d Second-order partial controlling for empathy and congruence.

Table 12. Zero-order Pearson Correlation Coefficient of Adolescents' Satisfaction with their Parents' Relationship and the Parents' Reported Marital Satisfaction (MS).

	Adolescent Group			
	Rural Males (N=41)	Rural Females (N=32)	Urban Males (N=39)	Urban Females (N=28)
Fathers' MS	.34088*	.73493***	.04015	.45058**
Mothers' MS	.38917**	.60158***	.39358**	.66960***

***p < .001
 **p < .01
 *p < .05

Empathy is a close second reaching significance in four of eight and showing trends in the predicted direction in two others. Congruence was significant in three of eight correlations.

Partial correlations were used to obtain a more refined measure of the effect of each factor. As would be expected from this more rigorous test, partialling reduced the number of significant relationships between the parents' empathy, congruence, and regard and the adolescents' satisfaction with the parents' relationship. Once again the group showing the strongest relationships is the rural female adolescents. As Table 11 shows, six of the ten partials are significant and a seventh indicated a trend in the predicted direction. Except for the mothers' empathy, it is the regard items to which these females appear to be attuned. Only one relationship was significant in each of the other three groups and these represented a different factor in each group.

The results of this analysis indicate intergroup differences. The rural females appear to be tuned into the dynamics of their parents' relationship to a greater extent than any of the other groups.

For this group H:2 is partly confirmed, particularly with the factor of parental regard exhibited toward each other. The significant results of the other groups are too few and too random to support H:2, especially with the partial correlations. As mentioned, the results do suggest a hierarchy among the factors under consideration. Regard tends to consistently display the strongest relationship followed by empathy and then congruence.

A regression analysis was also run to check for possible interaction effects between the parental variables. There are two distinctly different types of possible interactions. Similar to the examination of H:1, interactions could occur between the factors of a single parent. Interactions might also occur between the two parents on the same factor. An example of the first instance might show an interaction effect between the empathy and the congruence exhibited by the mother toward the father. In the second instance the empathy exhibited by the mother might interact with the empathy exhibited by the father. Separate regressions were completed for each type of interaction.

The first analysis examined the interaction of different factors for each of the parents (see Table 13). The data from the rural sample showed interaction effects in some of the mothers' scores on the satisfaction of both sons and daughters. For the rural sons, interactions between the mothers' empathy and congruence ($E \times C$) and regard and congruence ($R \times C$) contributed significantly to the amount of explained variance in the sons' expressed level of satisfaction with the relationship between the parents.

Table 13. Regression Analysis of the Interaction Effects of the Independent Variables, from the Spouses' Perceptions, on Adolescents' Satisfaction with their Parents' Relationship.

Adolescent Group										
Rural					Urban					
Interaction	Males		Females		Males		Females			
	Fathers' Scores	Mothers' Scores	Fathers' Scores	Mothers' Scores	Father's Scores	Mother's Scores	Fathers' Scores	Mothers' Scores		
$R^2(E+C+R)$	.10980	.14108	.31529	.44124	.14152	.08174	.03881	.11010		
$E \times C$	.11650	.25912	.32861	.57113	.22139	.11484	.05686	.14182		
F^a	.30	6.37*	.60	8.78**	4.31*	1.72	.67	1.26		
$E \times R$	.10980	.19625	.36840	.63150	.17923	.11950	.03908	.11992		
F	.00	2.75	2.52	14.97***	1.93	1.97	.01	.38		
$R \times C$	.11889	.23789	.33515	.49832	.14298	.08182	.04196	.14486		
F	.41	5.08*	.90	3.30	.07	.00	.12	1.38		
$HE \times WE^b$	.16283 ^c	.16651 ^d	.32049/	.37972	.07558/	.14164	.03370/	.03372		
R^2/R^2	.18		2.77		3.16		.00			
F										
$HC \times WC$	.10889/	.10943	.19658/	.22591	.11401/	.11401	.03322/	.03960		
R^2/R^2	.02		1.10		.00		.21			
F										
$HR \times WR$	.14435/	.14450	.42618/	.52937	.06828/	.06829	.08390/	.15521		
R^2/R^2	.01		6.36*		.00		2.70			
F										

***p < .001

**p < .01

*p < .05

a F scores are for the additional variance explained by the interaction

b Husbands' scores multiplied by wives' scores on same variable

c R^2 of HE + WE

d R^2 of the interaction between the variables

Interactions between empathy and congruence ($E \times C$) and empathy and regard ($E \times R$) exhibited by the mother were found to be highly significant to the explained variance in the satisfaction scores of rural female adolescents. No significant interaction effects were found in the fathers' scores for female or male rural adolescents.

The data for the urban sample, Table 13, indicated only one interaction effect. The interaction of empathy and congruence ($E \times C$) exhibited by the fathers contributed to their sons' satisfaction with the parental relationship to a significant degree. The tolerance level of the computer would not allow for the analysis of the three way interactions. Therefore, it can be assumed any interaction effects were sufficiently explained by the two way interactions that were detected.

Considering the rural and urban data of this set together shows the empathy and congruence interaction to occur more frequently (in three of four groups) than any other. In fact, the other two interactions, $E \times C$ and $R \times C$, each only occurred once. This suggests that the adolescents are more attuned to the interaction of the communication variables between parents than to the interaction of communication and regard. The exception is the urban females where no interaction effects were detected.

The regression analysis examining the interaction of both parents' perceptions of each factor on the level of satisfaction expressed by their children only yielded one significant effect. The level of regard exhibited by the parents did show a significant interaction effect on the satisfaction scores of rural female adolescents. Once again the rural females appear to be the group most sensitive to the relationship dynamics between their parents that were measured here. However, even

for this group, only one of three possible interactions contributed significantly to the daughters' expressed satisfaction with the relationship between their parents. The lack of interaction effects suggests the adolescents' satisfaction with their parents' relationship is not affected by the discrepancies in the parents' perceptions of empathy, congruence and regard.

The results of the analysis on H:2 are mixed. Zero order correlations indicate several significant relationships and suggest a hierarchy of regard, empathy and congruence. Some of these relationships failed to maintain significance through partial correlations. With the exception of the rural females, H:2 must generally be rejected. The exception of the rural females suggests the need for further research.

Hypothesis: 3

Hypothesis three examines the relationship between adolescents' satisfaction with their relationship with their parents and the level of empathy, congruence and regard they perceive the parents to exhibit toward them. As Table 14 indicates, results for all four groups of adolescents show the empathy the parents exhibit toward the youth is significantly correlated with the youth's satisfaction with their relationship with their parents. In other words, those adolescents who have a sense of being understood by their parents are more satisfied with the relationship they have with their parents. For both groups of female adolescents, the level of congruence exhibited by their parents directly affected their relationship satisfaction to a significant degree. This did not hold true for the male adolescents. Empathy proved to be the only significant factor affecting their

Table 14. Zero-order Correlations and Partial Correlations of the Adolescents' Satisfaction with their Relationship with their Parents and the Independent Variables the Adolescents' Perceive the Parents to Exhibit Toward them, Controlling for the Effects of the Other Independent Variables.

Variable (Variable Controlled)	Adolescent Group			
	Rural		Urban	
	Males (N=40)	Females (N=32)	Males (N=47)	Females (N=40)
R	.23	.25	.02	.29 *
E	.56 ***	.33 *	.45 ***	.49 ***
C	.19	.36 *	.18	.27 *
R(E) ^a	.14	.10	.00	.10
R(C) ^b	.26 ^t	.14	.02	.28 *
R(E,C) ^c	.13	.05	.00	.11
E(R) ^d	.54 ***	.24	.45 ***	.42 **
C(R) ^d	.22	.30 *	.18	.26 *

*** $p < .001$

** $p < .01$

* $p < .05$

^t $p < .07$

a First-order partial controlling for empathy.

b First-order partial controlling for congruence.

c Second-order partial controlling for empathy and congruence.

d First-order partial controlling for regard.

relationship satisfaction between themselves and their parents. In addition to the relationships noted above, the urban females' satisfaction also showed a significant relationship with the degree of regard they perceived their parents to display toward them. (In analyzing the relationship with regard in this hypothesis and in hypothesis four, the nature of the items should be considered. The regard items measure verbal expressions of regard which is a more specific and more limited measure of regard than if general perceptions of regard had been measured.)

Thus, for the urban females all three factors are significantly related to the level of their satisfaction with the relationship they share with their parents. Empathy and congruence are the crucial factors for the rural females and both groups of males showed a significant relationship only with the factor of empathy. Looking across groups, adolescents are most consistently satisfied with the relationship they have with their parents when they feel they are understood by their parents. This is the only factor important to all four groups and the only factor of significance for the two groups of males. Congruence is also important for the groups of female adolescents. Of the three factors examined, regard ranks third showing significance only for the urban females.

This apparent hierarchy among the variables continued to hold through the more rigorous analysis of partial correlations (Table 14). After partialling out the effects of regard, empathy continued to be significant in three out of four groups of adolescents, dropping in importance for the rural females. The data on female adolescents continued to indicate congruence bears a significant correlation with their satisfaction with the relationship they have with their parents.

This relationship maintained significance even when regard was partialled out.

Generally regard did not appear to be very significant to the adolescents' perceptions of satisfaction. Partialling out each of the communication variables and both together, only one corelation reached significance between regard and relationship satisfaction. In this phase of the analysis, the correlation between these two variables reached significance for the urban females when congruence was partialled out. This particular partial also showed a trend in the group of rural males.

As was the case with the above correlation analysis the partial correlations continued to indicate that relationship satisfaction between the parents and adolescents was most closely tied to empathy, congruence and regard for the urban females. Three of the five partials for this group were significantly related to the degree of satisfaction they expressed. Only one significant relationship was found in each of the other three groups, empathy (partialling out regard) for each of the male groups and congruence with regard partialled out for the rural females.

A regression analysis for interaction effects was computed for each of the four groups. As Table 15 indicates, such effects were demonstrated only among the group of urban female adolescents. For this group empathy and congruence showed an interaction effect that significantly contributes to the explainable variance of their satisfaction level. In addition, a three way interaction effect involving empathy, congruence and regard ($E \times C \times R$) was found to be significant. Consistent with the above analysis on this particular data set, the urban female adolescents appear to be more sensitive to fluctuations

Table 15. Regression Analysis of the Interaction Effects of the Empathy, Congruence and Regard the Adolescents Perceives to be Exhibited by their Parents on the Adolescents' Satisfaction with their Relationship with their Parents.

Group	N	r^a	E x C	E x R	R x C	All 3 Two-Ways	E x C x R
Urban Females	42	.25007	$R^2 = .34105$ $F^b(1, 37) = 5.11^*$	.25259 .12	.29884 2.57	.40964	.47700 14.75***
Urban Males	49	.20460	$R^2 = .20492$ $F(1, 44) = .02$	.23356 1.66	.20891 .24	.26184	.27047 3.70
Rural Females	34	.17524	$R^2 = .18054$ $F(1, 29) = .19$	.20835 1.21	.17918 .14	.23065	$T^c = .00090$ $F = .036$
Rural Males	42	.32545	$R^2 = .33715$ $F(1, 37) = .65$	.32595 .03	.32881 .19	.34198	$T^c = .00063$ $F = .257$

a Pearson Correlation - Adolescent Satisfaction with E + C + R

b F scores are for the additional variance explained by the interaction

c T = tolerance limit of computer reached - prohibits further computation

*** $p < .001$

* $p < .05$

in the empathy, congruence and regard they perceive to be exhibited toward them by their parents. At the very least, it is evident their level of satisfaction with their relationship with their parents has a closer relationship to the parents' empathy, congruence, and regard than is found in any of the other three groups. Additional research will be necessary to shed light on why this is so and why it is only true of the group of urban female adolescents. It is interesting to recall that it was the rural female adolescents that distinguished themselves as a group in the analysis of H:2.

The final analysis of this hypothesis was a test of the relationship between congruence and the dependent variable for curvilinearity to assure the appropriateness of the regression analysis. Although some curvilinearity was detected the relationship did indicate a substantial linear component. Visual inspection of the scatterplots indicated the curvilinearity was not a problem.

To summarize, it appears hypothesis three can be generally accepted for the factor of empathy. The relationship between the parents' congruence and the adolescents' satisfaction is supported for the two groups of females but not for the male adolescents. With the exception of the urban females, the hypothesis must be rejected on the factor of regard.

Hypothesis: 4

Hypothesis four considers the relationship between the empathy, congruence and regard the adolescents report displaying toward their parents and the level of satisfaction the parents derive from their relationship with their children. At the outset, it should be noted that the dependent variable, the parents' satisfaction with their

relationship with their children, is somewhat non-specific. This element of non-specificity is due to the wording of the item. There is no way to determine the extent to which the parents' response refers specifically to the adolescent that was the subject in this study or to what extent it refers to other children in the family. An attempt was made to overcome this problem by examining families where the adolescent was the only child. This so severely reduced the sample size that it made further analysis impractical. Therefore, the entire sample was analyzed with this caution about the possible limitation imposed by the wording of the dependent variable.

As the presentation in Table 16 indicates, the correlations in this analysis generally did not reach significance, with the exception of regard. The regard exhibited by the adolescents was significantly related to the mothers' satisfaction in three of four groups and to the father's satisfaction in one group. Examination of the separate groups shows the males' data to contain most of the significant correlations. For the urban males, the regard and congruence they report is related to their mothers' reported satisfaction. The satisfaction scores of both parents were correlated with the regard of their son. Only one of a possible 12 significant relationships was found in the groups of female adolescents. The urban females' regard correlated with their mothers' satisfaction.

Although the analysis did not reveal a great number of significant relationships, five of a possible 24, those that were found consistently held up through an analysis of partial correlations. Regard continued to maintain significance through all partials for the rural males (see Table 16). Regard of both urban groups continued to significantly relate to their mothers' satisfaction. It is

Table 16. Zero-order Correlations and Partial Correlations of Mothers' and Fathers' Satisfaction with their Relationship with their Children and the Empathy, Congruence and Regard the Adolescents Perceive they Exhibit Toward their Parents.

		Adolescent Group			
Parent Group	Variable (Variable Controlled)	Urban		Rural	
		Males	Females	Males	Females
Fathers' Satisfaction Scores	R	.1933	.0370	.2580*	.1243
	E	.0401	.0718	.0799	.0644
	C	.0291	.0261	.0139	.1149
	R(E)	.1895	.0319	.2776*	.1397
	R(C)	.1917	.0323	.2623*	.1476
	R(E,C)	.1886	.0301	.2838*	.1591
	E(R)	.0536	.0851	.0811	.0719
	C(R)	.0446	.0406	.0303	.1640
Mothers' Satisfaction Scores	R	.2756*	.2781*	.3033*	.1616
	E	.0554	.0928	.0896	.1282
	C	.3066*	.1980	.1247	.0829
	R(E)	.2709*	.2732*	.3259*	.1915
	R(C)	.2225 ^t	.2475 ^t	.2914*	.1794
	R(E,C)	.2260 ^t	.2461 ^t	.3138*	.2049
	E(R)	.0146	.1051	.0924	.0925
	C(R)	.2720*	.2091	.0980	.0780

* $p < .05$

^t $p < .07$

evident that regard was the only factor that was significantly related to the parents' satisfaction in a somewhat consistent manner. In addition to the significant correlations that were found, trends in the anticipated direction were found between regard and mothers' satisfaction for both urban groups when partialling out congruence and when partialling out both congruence and empathy. Thus, with the exception of the rural females where no significant correlations were found, there does appear to be a consistent relationship between regard exhibited by the adolescents and their mothers' level of satisfaction with her relationship with her children, even when partialling out the effects of empathy and congruence. As noted, the rural adolescent males' regard correlated with both parents' satisfaction through all the partials. Empathy and congruence do not appear to have much effect and none of the factors were found to be significant for the rural females which is an interesting contrast to the findings of H:2.

A regression analysis for interaction effects, presented in Table 17, indicated no significant two way interactions for any of the groups. However, significant three-way interactions ($E \times C \times R$) were found in both groups of male adolescents. For the urban males these interactions contributed significantly to the "satisfaction with children" scores of both parents. In the group of rural males, the relationship was highly significant with the mother's satisfaction but did not appear to affect the fathers' reported level of satisfaction.

The findings on hypothesis four are somewhat mixed but, with a few specific exceptions, the results generally do not support the hypothesis.

Table 17. Regression Analysis of the Interaction Effects of the Empathy, Congruence and Regard the Adolescents Perceive they Exhibit Toward their Parents on the Parents' Satisfaction with their Relationship with their Children

Parent Group	Adolescent Group	N	r^a	R^2	R^2	R^2	R^2
				F(add) ^b	F(add) ^b	F(add) ^b	F(add) ^b
				E x C	E x R	R x C	E x R x C
Fathers' Satisfaction Scores	Urban Females	43	.10025	.10563 F=.23	.10389 .15	.10519 .21	.16243 2.60
	Urban Males	50	.14042	.14443 .21	.14044 .001	.19103 2.81	.22682 4.69*
	Rural Females	34	.06202	.06212 .003	.08388 .69	.06432 .07	.09933 1.08
	Rural Males	42	.11844	.14379 1.10	.11918 .03	.11889 .02	.14563 1.08
Mothers' Satisfaction Scores	Urban Females	43	.00621	.01302 F=.26	.00825 .08	.01103 .19	.02708 .75
	Urban Males	50	.03765	.07581 1.86	.07595 1.87	.06508 1.32	.16015 6.13*
	Rural Females	34	.04064	.05468 .43	.04868 .25	.04444 .12	.06884 .79
	Rural Males	42	.08675	.15104 2.80	.12521 1.63	.12203 1.49	.36668 15.03***

p < .001

*
p < .05

a Pearson Correlation of parents' satisfaction with their relation with their children with E, C, R exhibited by adolescent

b F scores for the additional variance explained by the interaction

The chief exception to this general assessment is the factor of regard which did significantly relate to parental satisfaction levels particularly for the parents of rural males. Two other noteworthy findings in the analysis of this hypothesis were the discovery of significant three way interactions in the two groups of males and the lack of significant correlations in the groups of female adolescents, particularly the rural group.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis in this investigation are rather mixed. Even though the general hypothesis were not supported in many instances, some clear and significant relationships were demonstrated. Further, the findings do support conclusions in several different areas and allow for some interesting implications. In addition, some of the results do suggest some issues that would merit further investigation.

The analysis of H:1 did demonstrate interaction effects between congruence and regard on marital satisfaction for three of the four groups. The first hypothesis was, interaction effects among empathy, congruence and regard would impact upon spouses' satisfaction with their marriage in a direction consistent with the contributions of the individual factors. The discovery of interaction effects indicates a multiplier effect when the two components are combined. This is suggestive of the systems theory concept of non-summativity or the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. The effect of the combined factors is greater than one would expect to find when adding together the effects of each separate factor. This was particularly true for low levels of these two components. Low levels of regard combined with low levels of congruence correlated with very low levels of marital satisfaction.

The analysis of correlations suggested a hierarchy of importance among the three factors. In relation to spouses' marital satisfaction,

regard appears to be the most important factor with congruence also indicating a strong relationship. A high level of congruence may even partially compensate for a lower level of regard. Although empathy was found to be significantly related to the marital satisfaction of both spouses, its effects do not seem to be as important as a contributor to marital satisfaction. Combining the findings of a hierarchy among the variables and an interaction effect between the two most important ones, regard and congruence, has some important implications for practitioners working with spouses in preventive or therapeutic settings. When the goal is to establish or reinforce couples' marital satisfaction it appears one of the more productive approaches would be to help them establish, identify and communicate to one another the extent to which they value, respect and esteem each other. Helping them to do so in a congruent or open manner will further contribute to marital satisfaction.

It must be remembered that these findings are based on the perceptions of the spouses. The crucial point then, is not how much regard a husband may have for his wife but whether or not she perceives his regard. Thus, assuming he has high regard the task becomes one of helping him learn appropriate ways of expressing that regard that will be meaningful to his wife. In instances where the level of regard is lower, congruence plays a more important role and trying to establish higher levels of congruence may contribute to marital satisfaction. When working with couples where both congruence and regard are low it appears doubtful that marital satisfaction can be significantly increased without finding ways to increase the perceived levels of regard or congruence and regard. These considerations would seem to be particularly relevant to instances where the perceptual abilities

of the spouses are low in a marriage of low openness. It would seem teaching such couples to communicate their regard should be a high priority. Regard has been stressed here because generally it appears that perceived high regard is sufficient for high marital satisfaction. These data suggest the perceived ability to be open and understanding are less important.

Another notable finding in the spousal data that recurred throughout the analysis of the other hypotheses, was the discovery of differences between the sexes. Although regard was significant for both sexes its relationship to marital satisfaction was more consistent and stronger for wives than for husbands. Differences were particularly evident in the urban group where regard was highly significant for the wives but failed to reach significance in some of the partial correlations for husbands. On the other hand, empathy and congruence were highly significant for the urban husbands but appeared to be of much less importance for their wives, failing to reach significance when the effects of regard were partialled out. While it would be inappropriate to generalize these findings on the basis of this one study, if the results should be replicated elsewhere, they suggest communication skill training programs should perhaps emphasize different skills for husbands and wives.

Two final considerations from the spousal data that at least deserve mentioning in this discussion are the interrelationship of the three factors and the apparent urban-rural differences. The analysis of the first hypothesis indicates that empathy, congruence and regard are interrelated rather than distinct and independent entities. It is impossible from this study to determine whether this overlap is due to the actual conceptual proximity of the factors, i.e. the

similarity of these phenomena in actuality or conceptually, or whether it is due to some common, as yet unidentified, components. In either case, the present findings suggest the appropriateness of grouping these factors together or including all three factors in communication skill training experiences. They also indicate the possibility that attaining a high level on one factor, particularly regard or congruence, may facilitate increasing the ability levels on the other components.

Any conclusions based on the urban-rural differences found in the spousal data would certainly be premature. However, the fact that such differences were found deserves mentioning. Most such differences were found between the two groups of husbands which may further limit the generalizability of this consideration. At least these differences suggest the need for more research to clarify the situation as community orientation (urban vs. rural) might be an important consideration in future research on family communication. It is possible that marital satisfaction for an urban population is based on different factors or at least a different priority among contributing factors than it is for a rural population although this study provides no hard evidence for such a speculation.

Expanding the view from spousal interaction to include parent-adolescent interactions and perceptions introduces some interesting considerations. There is a fairly consistent relationship between the parents' marital satisfaction and the adolescents' satisfaction with the relationship between their parents. Although a definite conclusion will have to await further research, there are two closely related, plausible explanations for this. The youth may be attuned to the parents' perceptions of their own marital satisfaction or there may be a shared view in the family regarding the spousal

relationship. The first explanation gives credit to the adolescents' perceptual abilities while the second is more dependent upon the parents' sharing their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their children.

Whatever the explanation for the similarities in the satisfaction scores may be, it is evident from the data that the groups of youth are not consistent in the degree to which they tune into their parents' relationships. The second hypothesis stated that the parents' perception of empathy, congruence and regard exhibited toward each other would directly affect the adolescents' satisfaction with the relationship between their parents. In the data for this hypothesis, the rural females' satisfaction bears a closer relationship to the spouses perceived levels of empathy, congruence and regard than is true of the other groups of adolescents. The relationships are also relatively strong for the rural males in the zero-order correlations. The correlations are relatively weak for the urban males and almost non-existent for the urban females. For the rural groups, significant correlations were found on nine of twelve factors. Only three of twelve zero-order correlations were significant for the urban group. Although the earlier mentioned cautions apply, once again these data suggest the presence of urban-rural differences. The higher order correlations make even finer distinctions. The partial correlations single out the rural females as the one group where the adolescents' satisfaction with the relationship between their parents is related to the parents' perceptions of empathy, congruence and regard. Once again, while the present data do not indicate why, intergroup differences were found. Generalizations based on this one study would be premature but the fact that such differences were found suggests this might be a possible consideration for future researchers.

The two different interaction analyses that were completed on H:2 data suggest the adolescents' satisfaction ratings are more closely tied to the interaction of factors of an individual parent rather than to the effects of a single factor interacting between the two parents. Examination of the interaction data also hints the youth are more in tune with the mother than the father as four of the five significant interaction effects are on the mothers' variables. However, the analysis of correlations does not support this distinction so the evidence is inconclusive.

Similar to the findings for the first hypothesis, the data for hypotheses two, three and four suggest a hierarchy among the variables under consideration in this study. However, the order of items is not consistent. The analysis of the first hypothesis suggested regard was of greatest significance followed in order by congruence and then empathy. The data for H:2 support the primary importance of regard but seem to reverse the relative importance of empathy and congruence. The fact that regard maintained its position of primary importance here may be due not so much to the youths' own perceptions of the importance of regard as to their perceptions of the parents' views on the importance of regard.

Further evidence to support this idea can be drawn from the data on H:3. Recall that H:3 speculated that the level of empathy, congruence and regard the adolescent perceives to be exhibited by his/her parents toward him/her would directly affect the adolescents' satisfaction with his/her relationship with the parents. In this case, the youth are in essence reporting on their perceptions of their parents' levels of empathy, congruence and regard displayed toward the youth. These parental levels are correlated with the youth's sense of satisfaction

with their relationship with their parents. From the youths' perspective, empathy appears to be of primary importance, congruence second, and regard is ranked least important. In fact, it is only in the group of urban females (where most of the correlations were significant) where the youths' satisfaction rating significantly correlates with regard. It is important to note the partial correlations indicate whenever empathy is partialled out of regard, regard fails to maintain significance. This discussion supports the view that the important factor for the adolescent's satisfaction with the relationship with his/her parents is whether or not the adolescent senses s/he is understood by the parents.

In H:4 the parents' satisfaction with their children is correlated with the adolescents' reported levels of empathy, congruence and regard they exhibit toward their parents. In this case the youth are reporting the factor levels and the parents are reacting to the factors as well as the factor levels. Although not many of the relationships were significant, 13 of the 15 that were significant and all four cases where trends were noted, involved the factor of regard. The other two significant relationships involved congruence and none involved empathy. Thus in H:4, which moves back to a perspective where it might be argued the parents are ranking the factors, the same hierarchy (regard, congruence and empathy) discovered in H:1 is repeated here.

To summarize this phase of the discussion, from the parents' perspective it appears the three factors form a hierarchy from greatest to least important of regard, congruence and empathy. The data from H:3 with additional support from H:2 appear to indicate that this hierarchy from the youths' perspective is just the opposite,

ranking empathy as most important and regard as least important. If this should be borne out in future research it raises some important issues.

These speculations are particularly interesting when juxtaposed with the age old complaints in the battles between adolescents and their parents. Parents are often heard to complain they cannot understand their teenagers and they don't get any respect from them. On the other hand, the classic complaint of teens is one of not being understood by their parents. From this teens often extend the argument to "how can I respect someone who doesn't respect (possibly a synonym for 'understand'?) me?" In this scenario parents and teens may be asking each other for what they most value but, of the three factors, it is the factor considered least important by the other party. Thus the circular argument between parents and teens, the parents first want respect and then they will try to understand. On the other side of the fence, the teens want to be understood first and from this base of understanding, they contend respect will follow. The evidence in this data for these speculations is far from conclusive. However, this particular issue seems to be worthy of further pursuit and, if confirmed, holds the promise of providing significant insight into parent-adolescent relationships. The data here does at least suggest that parents and adolescents may well have different perspectives which is an important consideration for clinicians and others doing work on family communication. Two rather important implications for communication skill trainers are the possible need to teach different skills to different family members and the need to sensitize family members to the different characteristics and perspectives of the other family members.

Distinctions based on sex or type of community are more spurious than the generation distinction discussed above. In fact, these distinctions were too random to draw any concrete conclusions. Nevertheless, some level of distinction in terms of number of significant correlations, did appear among the groups in all four hypotheses but no general pattern emerged. The distinctions for H:1 were already discussed. With each of the other three hypotheses, one particular group showed a considerably larger number of significant relationships across the total analysis for that hypothesis. In H:2 the rural female adolescents showed 16 significant relationships to nine for the rural males, five for urban males and only four for urban females. Thus, the rural group showed 25 significant relationships compared to nine for the urban groups. The urban females distinguished themselves on H:3, displaying eight significant relationships compared to three for rural women and two for each of the male groups. The analysis of H:4 indicates nine significant relationships for rural males, six for urban males, two for rural females, and none for urban females. There is clearly no basis for forming any conclusions about these distinctions, but curiosity requires the raising of the question, "why the differences?" Further speculation and investigation on this issue will be left to others.

The sparse number of significant findings in hypotheses two, three and four merits some comment. Here again no firm conclusions are offered. However, some speculating seems appropriate. Certainly one of the possibilities of major concern is inadequacy of the measuring instruments that were used. This issue will be reserved for the next section of this discussion. Another possible explanation is satisfaction with family relationships, especially outside the spousal

relationship, is more closely related to factors other than those under consideration in this study. Whether or not this is so the results suggest the adolescents are not particularly attuned to the parents' marital satisfaction in more than a very general way. Given this, it is doubtful the adolescents are learning the skills or gaining an appreciation for the effects related to empathy, congruence and regard from their parents. This supports David Mace's (1977) contention that we do not naturally acquire the skills necessary for effective communication, ergo the need for effective communication skill building programs.

Limitations of the Study

There are four major limitations in this study that should enter into the evaluation of the results. One of the focal points of interest here is the nature of the items utilized for measurement. Most of the independent variable items for H:1 and H:2 have a considerable history of use and analysis as discussed in Chapter 3. The comparable items in H:3 and H:4 have much less of a background. Many of them were made up for this study. Thus, although reliability coefficients were computed or speculated at, the validity of the items remains an open question. Despite the fact that several of the items are worded very similar to the Relationship Inventory (Barrett-Lennard, 1962) items, it must be remembered that that instrument was developed for and has been used with adult populations. However, similar to Relationship Inventory (RI) items the new items may be, the fact that they are being used on an adolescent population rather than an adult population may preclude the argument that their similarity to RI items lends them some credibility or validity. Conclusions regarding

this issue can only be drawn after further research. For now, suffice it to say a beginning must be made at sometime and this appears to be a rather unique area of investigation requiring the taking of some such risks on the issue of validity. In support of the items, it must be stated that they were compiled by professional researchers who considered them to have face validity, at least. While the question of validity is still open on these items, the answer must rest on future research with the items.

A reminder about the possible non-specificity of the dependent measure in H:4 is appropriate here. This issue was discussed in Chapter 4. Basically, it suggests the lack of results on H:4 may be partly due to the wording of the dependent variable which makes it impossible to determine, in families with more than one child, which of the children the parents were considering when they answered to, "how satisfied are you with your relationship with your children?" The fact that significant results are no less sparse on H:3 than H:4 might suggest this non-specificity is not a problem. It might also be recalled that the regard measure on H:4 was limited to verbal expressions of regard which logically would tend to limit the relationship with regard. The fact that regard is the one item that consistently displayed significant relationships with the parents' satisfaction would tend to eliminate this alternative explanation. Despite possible counter-indications, it is necessary to keep in mind the possible limitations imposed by the use of these items.

A second major point is the source of the data. This study is based strictly upon self-report data from the perceptions of individuals. Thus complete confidence in these findings requires at least two major "leaps of faith." The first assumption required is that

subjects accurately reported their perceptions. Secondly, it assumes a close correspondence between subjects' perceptions and reality. The results of this study could be put forth with much more confidence if the data could have been cross validated through some other method such as observation of communication behavior within the families. Unfortunately such a multi-method approach is generally impractical in a study such as this of large samples from a rather large geographical area. Survey methods, even with their limitations, remain the most economical and feasible approach.

A third limitation of this study is the select nature of the sample which imposes some constraints on the generalizability of the results. Although the sample was randomly selected and is of substantial size compared to most studies on family communication, the requirements for eligibility of subjects limits the sample to intact families with an adolescent living in the home. A final concern is the lack of control on possible intervening variables. As mentioned earlier, the analysis undertaken here would not have been possible had such controls been imposed as they would have reduced the sample size too severely. Without such controls it is impossible to determine the effects of potential compounding factors.

Summary

The findings in this study indicate none of the four general hypotheses can be totally accepted nor should any be totally rejected. In the analysis of H:1, interaction effects between congruence and regard were found to contribute significantly to spouses' marital satisfaction in three of four groups and empathy and congruence showed such an effect in one group. Although these interactions were not

found in the other groups and empathy and regard showed no interaction effects, the discovery of some such effects suggests the need for future researchers to consider their possible presence and effects. Some implications were also drawn for practitioners. In addition to the interaction effects, an apparent hierarchy of regard, congruence and empathy was noted in the spousal data.

The basic test of H:2, zero-order correlations, shows the parents' perceptions of the spouses' empathy, congruence and regard is frequently significantly related to the adolescents' satisfaction with the relationship between their parents. With the exception of the urban females, most of the correlations with the other groups of adolescents were significant or showed a trend in the predicted directions, thus supporting the hypothesis. For some unexplained reason, the rural female adolescents displayed a particularly high number of significant relationships while the urban females were particularly low. Especially frequent relationships were found on the regard items followed by empathy and then congruence.

Significant findings were sparse in the analysis of H:3. However, some were found and the empathy factor was deemed to be particularly important here, followed by congruence and regard. Similar to H:2, and equally unexplainable, one group was substantially higher than the others in the number of significant relationships. In this case, it was urban females who were high, which appears to be in direct contrast to H:2 where they were the low group. The results on this hypothesis, as with the others, are mixed. The basic test of the hypothesis, Pearson's correlations, indicates the hypothesis is completely supported for urban females, is supported on all but regard for rural females, and holds only on the factor of empathy for the

two groups of male adolescents. The remaining relationships did not support the hypothesis. Some of the significant zero-order correlations failed to maintain significance through partial correlation analysis.

Correlation analysis of H:4 indicates less support for this hypothesis than for any of the others. What significant relationships were found supported the hypothesis on the regard factor but generally failed on congruence and showed no support for empathy. This suggested a hierarchy similar to that found in H:1 of regard, congruence and empathy.

Chapters one and two noted the significance of this study for one of the basic assumptions of marriage and family enrichment experiences or any experiences where communication skill training was to be used to enhance satisfaction with family relationships. The assumption being tested here was that there is a relationship between communication, which in this study was measured by empathy, congruence and regard, and satisfaction with family relationships. The findings of this investigation generally support this assumption and in no way do these findings challenge the validity of this assumption. Some of the specific findings in this study suggest a need for communication skills trainers to consider the specific nature of their group in order to provide an experience most appropriate for that particular group. This study suggests the possibility that parents and adolescents have different perspectives, i.e. that there are generational differences. The data also raises a question about the possibility of sex differences as well as urban-rural differences. Perhaps most important is the suggestion that additional research is required to clarify some of the issues that have been raised by this study and to replicate some of the findings of this study.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Items from the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory

Empathy measures

My spouse usually senses or realizes what I am feeling.

My spouse nearly always knows exactly what I mean.

My spouse realizes what I mean even when I have difficulty in saying it.

My spouse appreciates exactly how the things I experience feel to me.

My spouse usually understands the whole meaning of what I say to him/her.

Congruence measures

My spouse is openly him or herself in our relationship.

My spouse is usually willing to express whatever is actually on his/her mind with me, particularly any feelings about our relationship.

My spouse expresses his/her true impressions and feelings with me.

Regard measures

My spouse cares for me.

My spouse feels a true liking for me.

My spouse is friendly and warm with me.

My spouse respects me as a person.

My spouse feels a deep affection for me.

APPENDIX B

Edmonds' Marital Conventionalization Items

There are times when my mate does things that make me unhappy.	T	F
If my mate has any faults, I am not aware of them.	T	F
My marriage is not a perfect success.	T	F
My mate and I understand each other completely.	T	F
My mate has all of the qualities I've always wanted in a mate.	T	F

APPENDIX C

Adolescent Items

Regard from Parents (H:3)

My parents remind me how much I mean to them. .

My parents tell me they love me. .

Empathy from Parents

My parents do not really listen to what I say. .

My parents seldom realize how I feel. .

My parents usually understand what I am trying to say. .

Congruence from Parents

My parents say one thing but often mean something else. .

Regard to Parents (H:4)

I tell my parents I love them. .

Empathy to Parents

I seldom know how my parents really feel. .

Often I cannot tell what my parents are really thinking.

Congruence to Parents

I feel free to express my feelings.

APPENDIX D

Dependent Variables - The Satisfaction Measures

H:1 Marital Satisfaction Scale Items

How satisfied are you with your relationship with your spouse?

How satisfied are you with your spouse?

How satisfied are you with your marriage?

H:2 How satisfied are you with your parents' relationship with each other?

H:3 How satisfied are you with your relationship with your parents?

H:4 How satisfied are you with your relationship with your children?

APPENDIX E

Glossary of Abbreviations

A = adolescent

C = congruence

CONV = conventionalization

E = empathy

HMS = husbands' marital satisfaction

MS = marital satisfaction

R = regard

RI = Relationship Inventory

S = Satisfaction

WMS = wives' marital satisfaction

THE IMPACT OF EMPATHY, CONGRUENCE AND REGARD ON SATISFACTION WITH
FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AMONG PARENTS AND THEIR ADOLESCENTS

by

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A great deal of concern has been expressed over the years about the future of the American family. The family is often accepted as the central social structure or system in society. Statistics on divorce, family violence, etc. are viewed as omens of the impending demise of family life as we now know it. Periodic efforts are mounted to seek ways to strengthen family life. Strengthening family relationships is often touted as a key to enhancing family life. Family communication, in turn, is frequently identified as one of the crucial determinants of the quality of family relationships.

Communication is also assigned a place of prominence in the theoretical literature. It is viewed as a central element of interpersonal interactions from the perspectives of systems theory (Buckley, 1967; Russell, 1977), symbolic interaction (Goffman, 1959; Nunnally, 1971) and family development theory (Nunnally, 1971; Miller, 1971; Corrales, 1974). Communication theorists contend, "one cannot not communicate" (Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson, 1967, p.48) and further, that all behavior is communication.

Over the last decade a variety of marriage enhancement and/or family enrichment programs have been developed. Many of these programs are based on communication skill training. The assumption these programs make is communication is closely related to satisfaction with family relationships. This study is designed to test that assumption.

The samples included 98 families from an urban area and 83 families from a rural community. These randomly selected families each included a mother, father and at least one adolescent child living at home. Each member of the family responded to a set of self-report instruments. Family communication was measured by the constructs of empathy,

congruence and regard. Specific measures included items from the Relationship Inventory (Barrett-Lennard, 1962), Edmonds' Marital Conventionalization scale (1967) and several items compiled for this study. Empathy, congruence and regard were analyzed for their impact upon satisfaction with family relationships.

For analysis the samples were subdivided by sex. As Schumm (1979) indicates, empathy, congruence and regard do significantly correlate with spouses marital satisfaction. This study found interaction effects between congruence and regard also made a significant contribution to spouses' marital satisfaction. Other results were mixed with generally one or two of the factors relating to satisfaction with family relationships in each group. Adolescents appeared to be particularly attuned to the empathy the parents exhibit toward them. On the other hand, parents' satisfaction with their relationship with their children most consistently correlated with the regard displayed by the youth. This study demonstrated these factors do correlate with satisfaction with family relationships. The results varied from group to group indicating a need for communication skills training leaders to be sensitive to inter-group differences.

Generally the results support the assumption that improving communication will contribute to increased satisfaction with family relationships. A cautionary note must be added. There appeared to be a hierarchy of importance among the three factors. For the parents, regard appeared most significant and empathy least important. The adolescents' data suggest this order was reversed from the youths' perspective.

Four limitations to this study are: a very select sample (intact families with at least one adolescent child) was studied; the analysis

is based strictly upon self-report data; the validity of some of the items is open to question; and no controls were provided for some of the possible intervening variables. .