Patterns of absolute, differential and structural continuity in perceptions of nurturance in mother-daughter, mother-son, father-daughter and father-son dyads

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Patterns of absolute, differential and structural continuity in perceptions of nurturance in mother-daughter, mother-son, father-daughter and father-son dyads

by

Phyllis G. Harris

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Human Development and Family Studies (Family Studies)

Program of Study Committee:
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Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa

2006

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DEDICATION

To my family,
God Bless that I was born to all of you

To my friends
God Bless that I was chosen by you to be your friend
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ABSTRACT

Parents’ and their adolescent children’s perceptions have found to have both similar and different perceptions of their parent-adolescent relationship (Carlson, Cooper, & Spradling, 1991; Comstock, 1994) with changes in perceptions of nurturing and/or warmth becoming more apparent during the adolescent transitional phase and as a function of parent - adolescent gender differences (Clark-Lempers, Lempers, & Ho, 1991).

Three waves of data were collected from Iowa parents with adolescent children in the sixth (11-to 13-years) or eighth grade (12-to 14-years) at the first wave of measurement responded at each wave of measurement to 21 parenting questionnaire items taken from Roberts, Block and Block (1984) Child Rearing Practicing Report, and from Schaefer’s (1965) Child’s Report of Parental Behavior Inventory.

Differential, absolute and structural continuity was assessed in parents’ and their adolescent children’s perceptions of parental nurturance. Differential continuity was investigated by correlating for mothers, fathers and the adolescent children their respective nurturance scores at wave 1, wave 2 and wave 3. Absolute continuity was assessed with 2 (gender of child or parent) by 2 (grade) by 3 (time) repeated measures ANOVAs to determine significant difference in mean scores between the 3 times of measurement. Structural continuity was investigated by running confirmatory factor analyses.

No evidence for differential continuity was found among mothers, fathers, nor the adolescent children in their respective perceptions of parental nurturance correlate across the 3 measurements. There was significant but low correlations between mothers’ perceptions of maternal nurturance, fathers’ perceptions of paternal nurturance and adolescent’s perceptions of parental nurturance at the 3 waves of measurement.

Absolute continuity for mothers and fathers were significant, with small decreases in their respective level of parental nurturance over time. The adolescent children perceived a significant but small increase for both mothers and fathers in their respective level of nurturance across time.

No evidence was found for structural continuity across the 3 different respondents at each point in time nor for structural continuity across the 3 waves of measurement. Therefore, the assumption that the same underlying uni-dimensional construct is measured across time or across respondents is not justified.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Carlson, Cooper, & Spradling (1991), Feinberg, Neiderhiser, Howe, & Hetherington (2001), and Lanz, Scabini, Vermulst, & Gerris (2001) have reported parent and adolescent differences in their respective perceptions of their shared environment, particularly in their perceptions of parenting styles and parenting behaviors such as discipline, monitoring, and nurturing (Alessandri & Wozniak, 1989; Atkinson & Blackwelder, 1993; Feldman & Gehring, 1988; Kerns, Aspelmeier, Gentzler, & Grabill, 2001; Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991; Paulson & Sputa, 1996; Seiffge-Krenke & Kollmar, 1998).

Steinberg and Morris (2001) suggested that adolescent developmental research could benefit from the examination of patterns present in parenting styles, behaviors and attitudes that remain consistent from late childhood to late adolescence (Aquilino, 1997). Compas, Hinden, and Gerhardt (1995) proposed adolescent developmental research should focus on both the continuities and the discontinuities present during adolescence. The purpose of this study is to examine age- and gender-related patterns of stability or continuity and instability or discontinuity in mothers’, fathers, daughters’, and sons’ perceptions of parenting behaviors during the transition from early to middle adolescence to late adolescence.

A significant number of these studies have assessed the perspective of only one family member or the perspectives of only one parent-adolescent dyad (mother-daughter) to the exclusion of other family members or dyads (Holmbeck & O’Donnell, 1991; Ruebush, 1994). Many have utilized measurement tools for parents and adolescents such as self-reports providing only a limited and skewed perspective of family member perceptions (Patterson, 1998).

Studies on parents’ and their adolescent children’s perceptions have found that they have both similar and different perceptions of their parent-adolescent relationship (Carlson, Cooper, & Spradling, 1991; Comstock, 1994). Both parents and adolescents reported that their perceptions of family communication and emotional affect were similar. According to Carlson and friends (1991), the aspects of family functioning that contribute to family stability such as family organization, communication and participation in social and religious activities are the concepts that are similar between adolescent and parent. However, adolescents reported lesser amounts of family cohesiveness, expression, and autonomy than reported by their parents.
Adolescent sons, daughters, mothers and fathers were found to have more separately or “distinct” perceptions of their father-adolescent relationship than their mother-daughter relationship. Carlson et al., (1991) reported adolescent daughters had very congruent perceptions of their father-daughter relationship with little discrepancy in their perceptions for task accomplishment, role performance, communication, affective expression, affective involvement, control, family values and family norms. When adolescent males and fathers’ responses were compared, adolescent sons reported to differ on several of the domains (task accomplishment, role performance, communication, affective expression, control, values, and norms).

Although fathers and sons differed in their perceptions, adolescent sons perceived their fathers as competent in their parenting. Adolescent sons and mothers differed on their perceptions of family values and norms and role performance with mothers reporting less satisfaction with their sons in these aspects of their relationship. Mothers and daughters were found to have differences in their perceptions of their mother-daughter relationship in most of the domains with the exception of affection involvement. For both sons and daughters, their mother-adolescent relationship was perceived as more difficult than their father-adolescent relationship.

Changes in perceptions of nurturing and/or warmth become more apparent during the transition from early to late adolescence and as a function of parent - adolescent gender differences (Clark-Lempers, Lempers, & Ho, 1991; Feinberg, Neiderhiser, Howe, & Hetherington, 2001; Grotevant, 1998; Paikoff, Brooks-Gunn, & Carlton-Ford, 1991; Richardson, Galambos, Schulenberg, & Petersen, 1984; Steinberg, 1990).

In the research on parenting four parenting styles are usually discussed: authoritative, authoritarian, neglectful and permissive (Baumrind, 1966, 1996, 1997). The authoritative parenting style is considered the most successful parenting style and is characterized by high levels of parental warmth, guidance, and support. The authoritarian or autocratic is defined as having less warmth, less support, but higher rates of structure and monitoring. Neglectful parenting is indicative of low levels of warmth, low guidance, and little monitoring; while the permissive parenting style is usually characterized by high levels of warmth accompanied by low levels of guidance and direction (Baumrind, 1966). Parenting research posits that effective parenting should encompass nurturance, discipline, and monitoring as equitable aspects of parenting contiguous with the child’s development (Dishion, Li, Spracklen, Brown, & Haas, 1998; Dishion & McMahon, 1998). Dishion and McMahon (1998) described equitable as the inclusion of all aspects of parenting having equal influences and
power and falling under the broad category of monitoring and coinciding with developmental, social, and psychological changes of adolescence.

Several studies (Clark-Lempers et al., 1991; Dishion, Li, Spracklen, Brown, & Haas, 1998; Kerr & Stattin, 2000; Stattin & Kerr, 2000; Richardson, Galambos, Schulenberg, & Petersen, 1984) reported gender and age-related differences among adolescents in their perceptions of these parenting styles. Atkinson and Blackwelder (1993) assert that the influence of gender in father-adolescent relationships have been difficult to examine as a consequence of gender-favorable maternal definitions of parenting. However, research has found considerable support of gender differences among male and female adolescents in their perspectives of maternal parenting.

Changes in perceptions of warmth become most significant in the father-daughter relationship during adolescence, as adolescent females begin to perceive their father as less warm, less nurturing, and less supportive (Feinberg et al., 2001; Galbo, 1984). Adolescent males tend to perceive their father-son relationship as more positive (Galambos & Almeida, 1992) than their mother-son relationships. Mothers and fathers perceive their parenting practices as being less about change and more about adjustment to their adolescents’ development changes (Arnett, 1999; Faber, 2002; Frick, Christian, & Wooton, 1999; Galambos & Almeida, 1992; Grotevant, 1998; McNally, Eisenberg, & Harris, 1991; Roberts, Block, & Block, 1984; Steinberg, 1990; Tein, Roosa, & Michaels, 1994).

Alessandri and Wozniak (1989), Aquilino (1997), Carlson, Cooper, & Spradling (1991), and Roberts, Block, & Block (1984) attribute the ability to have adaptable behaviors and perceptions over time in relationships as a primary source of the family’s long-term stability and well-being. Continuity, a conceptually ambiguous and operationally multifaceted term, is linked to the stability and life-long connections in family relationships (Caspi, 1998). Assessing continuity in family functioning is further complicated by the difficulties of conducting family-adolescent research using multiple perspectives (Holmbeck & O’Donnell, 1991; Ruebush, 1994; Patterson, 1998) and multiple instruments.

Caspi (1998) differentiates among the following types of continuity: differential, absolute, and structural. Differential continuity refers to whether or not the rank-order from highest to lowest (e.g. most nurturant to least nurturant) among different persons in their respective positions on some attribute, dimension, or trait (discipline, nurturing, monitoring, and warmth) stays the same over time, and is usually examined by
correlating the measurements made of an attribute in a group of individuals at one point in time with the measurements made of the same attribute in the same group of individuals at a subsequent point in time. Absolute continuity refers to whether or not the amount of an attribute changes or remains constant over time and is usually examined by comparing the average for an attribute in a group of individuals at one point in time with the average for the same attribute in the same group of individuals at a later point in time. Structural continuity measures whether or not a pattern of correlations among items indicating an attribute stays the same or changes over time and is usually examined by investigating whether or not the factorial structure for the items indicating the attribute is the same or different across time.

This research will attempt to assess whether or not differential, structural, and absolute continuity are present in mothers’ perceptions of their parenting, fathers’ perceptions of their parenting, and daughters’ and sons’ perceptions of both maternal and paternal parenting across three time points during early and middle adolescence.

One of the first studies to investigate differential and absolute stability was conducted by Roberts, Block, and Block (1984). They assessed parent-child rearing values and emphases from early childhood to early adolescence. A total of 65 mothers and 42 fathers completed the Child Rearing Practices Report (CRPR) when their child was 3 years of age and again at 12 years of age. The CRPR consists of 91 socialization items measuring such constructs as control, encouragement of independence, enjoyment of child, expression of affect, and others (Appendix item A). Differential stability was examined by calculating across-time correlations for each of the 91 items. Statistically significant correlations, indicating presence of differential stability, were obtained for 66 out of the 91 items for the mothers, and for 51 of the 91 items for the fathers. Absolute stability was investigated by running T-tests to compare the item mean at 3 years with the mean for the same item at 12 years with change or the absence of absolute stability indicated by finding significant mean differences among the items. This was established for 29 out of the 91 items for the mothers and 28 out of the 91 items for the fathers.

McNally, Eisenberg, and Harris (1991) examined differential and absolute stability in a sample of mothers who were interviewed regarding their parenting practices five times over an 8-year period with their children being seven or eight years of age at the time of the first interview. The instrument used also was the Child
Rearing Practices Report (CRPR), developed by Block (1965). In order to examine differential stability from
the first time of measurement when the children were seven or eight years of age, to the third time of
measurement, when they were eleven or twelve years of age, to the fifth time of measurement, when they were
fifteen or sixteen years of age, correlations were calculated between wave 1 and wave 3 to obtain behavioral
cluster scores, between the wave 3 and wave 5 scores, and the wave 1 and wave 5 scores. Considerable
consistency or stability was observed in the parenting responses. To examine absolute stability multivariate and
univariate MANOVAs were conducted. For three of the six behavioral clusters examined (independence and
control, affective quality of the relationship, and achievement) significant changes in mean scores were found.
The limitations of this study are that the sample is very small (N = 32) and that only mothers’ responses were
obtained.

Van Wel, ter Bogt, & Raaijmakers (2002) found the parent and adolescent bond to fluctuate as the
adolescent developed through all three developmental phases (early, middle, and late adolescence). They
assessed relationship stability between adolescents and parents in a study of 12-24 year old (n = 3,394)
adolescents during a three-wave longitudinal study. Van Wel and friends (2002) reported the parent-adolescent
bond became less positive during middle adolescence after being reasonably secure in early adolescence and
subsequently stabilized during late adolescence.

The van Wel, et al. (2002) study also assessed the influences of adolescent gender, stage development, and
peer interactions on stability in the parent-adolescent relationship. Van Wel, et al. (2002) found that changes in
their significant relationships were more distinct for female adolescents than for male adolescents. Although
the parent-adolescent relationship diminished in quality for parents and adolescents, the researchers emphasized
that both female and male adolescents and parents perceived their relationship as remaining satisfying and
rewarding. The study found that longitudinal research provides a more detailed picture of when and what
influences affect the adolescent-parent relationship from early-to middle and from middle-to-late adolescence.

Researchers (Arnett, 1999; Clark-Lempers, Lempers, & Ho, 1991; Grotevant, 1998; McNally, Eisenberg
& Harris, 1991; Steinberg, 1990) posited that the onset of changes in parenting behaviors and perceptions
usually begins in late childhood and/or early adolescence for both males and females. Buhrmester & Furman
Liesens (2000), and Helsen, Vollebergh, & Meeus (2000) have recommended the examination of father-daughter dyads, father-son dyads, mother-daughter dyads, and mother-son dyads to develop a more comprehensive picture of family members’ perceptions of their changing relationships.

Several hypotheses are proposed to study differential, absolute, and structural continuity or discontinuity in the perceptions of adolescents and of their parents. The literature on adolescent development shows that changes occur from early adolescence to middle adolescence and into late adolescence in the perceptions of adolescents’ and their parents’ perceptions about their significant relationships (Clark-Lempers et al., 1991; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985), in parental practices and behaviors (Tein et al., 1994), and in parental awareness (Alessandri & Wozniak, 1987; Bell et al., 2001). This study proposes to examine whether or not parents’ and adolescents’ perceptions of parental monitoring, nurturance/warmth and discipline are differentially, absolutely and structurally continuous or discontinuous.

The parent-adolescent relationship has been reported to continue throughout adolescence as the primary source of nurturance/warmth (Clark-Lempers, Lempers, & Ho, 1991; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985; Helsen, Vollebergh & Meeus, 2000; Paulson & Sputa, 1996; Richardson et al., 1984), supervision (Amato & Fowler, 2002; Dishion & McMahon, 1998; Kerr & Stattin, 2000) and guidance/discipline (Baumrind, 1996; Dishion, Li, Spracklen, Brown & Haas, 1998; Tein, Roosa & Michaels, 1994). Therefore, it is hypothesized that differential continuity will be present from time one to time two to time three in the mothers’, fathers’, daughters’, and sons’ perceptions of nurturance/warmth, monitoring, and discipline.

Changes in parent-adolescent relationships have been reported regarding the type and amounts of nurturance/warmth provided by the parents from early to late adolescence. For example, parents and adolescents have reported levels of mutual nurturance and warmth to decrease in their parent-adolescent relationship (Bell, Rychener, & Munsch, 2001; Buhrmester & Furman, 1987; Carlson, Cooper, & Spradling, 1991; Clark-Lempers et al., 1991; Paulson & Sputa, 1996; Smetana & Asquith, 1994; Youniss & Ketterlinus, 1987). In addition, monitoring has been reported to lessen from early to late adolescence (Dishion & McMahon, 1998; Kerr & Stattin, 2000; Stattin, 2000; Weller & Luchterhand, 1977). Gender differences have also been reported to be present in the perceptions of mothers and fathers regarding the type and manner in which monitoring and discipline are applied during early, middle, and late adolescence (Crouter, Manke,
McHale, 1995; Peters, 1994; Shek, 2000; Strom, Beckert, Strom, Strom, & Griswold 2002). Thus, this study hypothesizes that significant absolute discontinuity will be present from time one to time two and from time two to time three in the mean scores of mothers, fathers, adolescent males and adolescent females regarding their respective perceptions of nurturance/warmth.

Parents and adolescents have been found to hold distinctly different perceptions of parenting behaviors and attitudes at a particular time as well as over time (Carlson, Cooper, & Spradling, 1991). For example, adolescents reported their parent-adolescent relationship while nurturant and warm to be less nurturant and warm than was reported by parents (Carlson, Cooper, & Spradling, 1991). While Carlson et al (1991) attributes the differences to changes in developmental status of the adolescent, other studies attribute the differences to gender or to the particular make-up of the dyad, that is, mother-son, mother-daughter, father-son, or father-daughter (Collins & Russell, 1991; Comstock, 1994; Crouter, Manke, & McHale, 1995; Simmons & Blyth, 1987). It is thus hypothesized that the perceptions of mothers, fathers, daughters and sons of parental nurturance/warmth will be structurally discontinuous both at a particular time of measurement as well as from the first to the second to the third time of measurement.

Benefits of Study

While change is anticipated during the adolescent developmental process, adolescents and parents are expected to adjust to the adolescents’ developmental changes with minimal disruption. This ability to adjust allows families to adapt to their child’s transition and to maintain consistency in their relationships over time. Collins (1997) and Cornwell, Eggebeen, & Meschke (1996) assert that the underlying stability in parent and adolescent perceptions contributes to the families continuing their familial bond and mutual support across generations.

Serious discrepancies in perceptions between mothers, fathers, sons, and daughters are perceived to be threatening to the family system (Carlson et al., 1991; Tein, Roosa, & Michaels, 1994). The study of adolescents and parents’ perceptions could be beneficial in families experiencing familial discord as a result of a difficult adolescence. The ability to understand the perceptions of the adolescents as they relate to their parent-adolescent relationship could provide useful information for parents attempting to maintain or re-establish support and communication with their adolescent. Research on adolescent and parent perceptions will benefit
families, practitioners (teachers, social workers), and social entities (schools, community and religious organizations) with information that can be useful in comprehending the adolescent developmental process.

Studying the multiple perspectives of mothers’, fathers’ and their adolescent children’s perceptions among family members provide a more encompassing view of family functioning in families with adolescents than is provided by research on a single parent-child dyadic relationship. When adolescent and parent perceptions are studied at the onset of the adolescent developmental stage and throughout the adolescent transitional process, it provides data for identifying the continuous aspects of family perceptions. It also provides research data regarding when change occurs in family members’ perceptions, and what factors in the adolescent transition are influencing both change and stability.

Organization of this Study

The literature review in Chapter two will summarize the research on the respective perceptions of mothers, fathers, sons and daughters of their family relationships and of factors that influence the perceptions in mother-daughter, mother-son, father-daughter, and father-son relationships. Chapter three covers the methodology including a description of the subjects, the procedures, the instruments, and plan of analysis. Chapter four will present the results. The subsequent section, chapter five, is the discussion of the findings and conclusions. Chapter five also includes a discussion of the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research in the area of family members’ perceptions of their relationship across adolescence.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Adolescence has been defined as the onset of biological, physical and social changes starting in the beginning of the second decade of the human life-span that extend over a period of time and are accompanied by a unique set of expectations, behaviors, and attitudes among family members (Arnett, 1999; Fox, 1977; Lerner & Galambos, 1998). Many of the studies on the various perspectives of family members have led to the acknowledgement that discrepancies in perceptions are likely to occur between parent and child during adolescence. Many of these discrepancies in family perceptions may result from challenges by the adolescent to expected societal norms espoused by their parents regarding acceptable social behaviors, dating, curfew, decision-making, and career-choices (Alessandri & Wozniak, 1987; Amato & Fowler, 2002; Aquilino, 1997; Arnett, 1999). Adolescents may also challenge some of the very same perceptions they believe their parents value, since many parents may tend to respond to inquiries about family with more society-favored ideals of normative family functioning and environment.

Early adolescence marks the beginning of the biological and pubertal change processes accompanied by changes in the child’s perceptions of parents’ authority and parents’ perspectives of their child’s developmental progress and abilities (Comstock, 1994). Alessandri and Wozniak (1987, 1989) Arnett (1999), Comstock (1994), and Steinberg (1990) proposed that the most significant developmental changes occur during middle adolescence as the adolescent becomes more comfortable with themselves and less concerned with the perceptions of parents and other significant adults and as the adolescent begins to explore their autonomy, decision-making ability, and peer selection. On the other hand, Smetana and Asquith (1994) challenge Comstock’s (1994) contention by proposing that conflict between parents and adolescents has a tendency to increase during early adolescence rather than in middle adolescence when conflict and changes in family functioning become more stabilized.

In late adolescence, behavior is usually earmarked by more mature cognitive reasoning with significant adults and the ability to formalize thoughts and behaviors into concrete thinking patterns (Alessandri & Wozniak, 1987; Comstock, 1994; Kohlberg, 1984). During late adolescence the parent-adolescent relationship is expected to have normalized into a more egalitarian relationship, as the adolescent is able to influence the perceptions of their parents and identify their own perceptions of family, friends, future, and personal decisions.
Clearly, the adolescent and parent bond remains an important and continuous source of social support and intimacy throughout adolescence. Early adolescents still perceive their parents as someone with whom to share their daily experiences, discuss their same-sex relationships, and talk about their future plans. Both females and males reported being fond of their mothers and her ability to be understanding of them as individuals (Richardson, Galambos, Schulenberg, & Petersen, 1984).

**Theoretical Perspectives**

Several theories have been used to explain the complexities of parent-child functioning during adolescence. Attachment theory, family systems, psychoanalytic theoretical models, goodness-of-fit and gender-based theories have all been used to varying degrees of success in family and adolescent development. Grotevant (1998) contends that understanding the complexities of adolescence requires dialogue on the concomitant factors (e.g., biological changes) entrenched in adolescence as a result of puberty. These biological changes affect interactions with family and peers and are accompanied by changes in the physical, mental, and cognitive capacity of the adolescent to adjust to the transition. Grotevant (1998) described four components for guiding contemporary adolescent developmental research: a). assessing the “self-perceptions, competencies, values,” and intra-individual aspects which are inherent in the individual from pre-adolescence into adolescence; b) assessing the research on socio-biological changes that may be universal during adolescence, but are often affected by the social contexts and environment in which the child resides; c) assessing the process of change within the context of the individual’s inherent and/or continuous characteristics—“gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation”—inclusive of other influences (i.e., family structure, culture, social norms, racism); and d) assessing the adolescent’s personal framework for changes in significant relationships, identity development, emotional well-being, and social adaptability (p. 1099).

Previous research focused on the difficulty of the transitional process of adolescence and its subsequent effect on the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship (Collins & Laursen, 2004). Current theoretical perspectives highlight the adaptive and continuous aspects of parents and adolescents in their pursuit to maintain their relationship. Continuous models (i.e., attachment) for parent-adolescent relationships focus on the strong characteristics established during the early years of the relationship that provide a supportive foundation for later and/or stressful times. Collins and Laursen (2004) proposed that once attachment is
established it is redefined in adolescence to include sensitivity over parents’ well-being, playful interactions, helping, developing an interest in parent interests, and intimate disclosures. Collins and Laursen (2004) assert that adolescent attachment is accompanied by less intimate displays of affection (hugging, kisses, etc.) than displayed in childhood.

Limitations in adolescent research led Steinberg (1990) to propose that adolescence as a period of family discord is a misperception associated specifically with adolescence. Steinberg (1990) asserts that perceptions of family discord and/or disruption during adolescence are overblown and not at all a common aspect of family functioning; nor is family discord representative of all stages of the adolescent developmental process. Theoretical perspectives (e.g., psychoanalytical) generally focus on an extended period of overall disharmony, conflict, disruption, family division, and stress in the parent-adolescent relationship (Arnett, 1999; Galambos & Almeida, 1992; Steinberg, 1990).

Steinberg (1990) explains that psychoanalytic perspectives identify adolescence as a distinct and disjunctive stage from pre-adolescence and discounts the family history (e.g., perceptions, beliefs, and values) and parental connections brought by the child into adolescence. Since psychoanalytic and neo-analytic theories underscore the individuation process of adolescents from parents and consider the developmental process a source of parent-adolescent conflict, they disregard the mechanisms that establish a cooperative and consistent bond between parent and adolescent. Thus these theories fail to consider the long-term, continuously established family foundations used to guide behaviors and perceptions of family members.

Many studies fail to provide an understanding that adolescents’ perceptions of adolescence may change over time and/or adjust to accommodate external changes that occur in their social environment. Attachment theory proposes that family patterns and perceptions are established early in the parent-child relationship. These patterns are continued by parents and child throughout adolescence and continue into early adulthood. Bogenschneider et al (1997) assert that parenting is not a stable behavior, but is dependent upon the context previously influencing the family environment and the adolescent. Although these patterns are established early in childhood, Bogenschneider, Small, and Tsay (1997) propose that patterns are adaptable to the developmental and environmental changes affecting the family. The success of this adaptability is attributable to the perceived competence of the parent to adequately and appropriately parent the child. This ability to parent is influenced
by the child’s gender, personality, and willingness to be parented. Thus, it would seem that successful parenting would, in part, be a result of the goodness-of-fit between parent and child.

The goodness-of-fit theory proposed by Bogenschneider goes farther than Belsky’s premise was that the child’s personality, while a factor, was the least influential factor in the parent-child relationship. Bogenschneider et al (1997) describe “parental sensitivity” as an important aspect of parenting adolescents. Particularly, since adolescence is the time when many families are experiencing intricate and more frequent changes in their relationship. These increasingly more frequent and complex changes require the parents and the child to more often renegotiate and re-evaluate their relationship.

Bogenschneider, Small, & Tsay (1997) proposed that understanding normative adolescent development and parent perceptions in a goodness-of-fit model for adolescents and parents is apparent. The goodness-of-fit model originally proposed by Belsky (1984) theorizes that competent parenting is determined by parent characteristics such as psychological state, contextual support (marital, familial, community, socio-economic), and the child’s personality. Bogenschneider and associates (1997) explained that the goodness-of-fit model defines good parenting as an adaptive behavior, thus making the theory useful in assessing stable and changing perceptions. The model additionally proves useful for examining the influences of gender (adolescent), developmental age of the adolescent; the effects of different family types and structures (i.e., two-parent families, single-parent households) on adolescent development and family perceptions. Third, the model assesses the value of social support available to parents, stability of the marital relationship, and the parent personality.

Family Systems Theory (Carlson, Cooper and Spradling, 1991) provides a foundation for studying the multiple (shared and distinct) levels of family functioning. According to Carlson and associates (1991), Family Systems Theory assesses family functioning and family roles at the aggregate level (whole family), the individual level and the dyadic level (mother-daughter, mother-son, father-daughter, and father-son). According to Carlson and colleagues (1991), the “shared” and “distinct” perceptions of family members contribute to how well the family functions and to how well the family is able to facilitate the adolescent’s adjustment to change.
Gilligan (1982) explained that feminist theory describes the significance of gender differences in the behaviors associated with social roles and interactions between males and females. Gilligan points out that adolescence is experienced differently by males and females since they have different sexual identities shaped by their significant relationships and their understanding of their environmental context (family, social roles, community, opportunities). Also, the fact that traditional expectations for males and females are continually being challenged by societal changes contributes to the confusion experienced by adolescents, mothers, fathers, teachers, and researchers. Gilligan posited that societal expectations and roles dictate the perceptions adolescents have regarding their parents and vice versa, while social conventions dictate the perceptions parents have for gender-appropriate behaviors, attitudes, and goals for their adolescents.

While Gilligan’s 1982 feminist premise has been criticized on the emotional/relational aspects of the theory by more recent feminist perspectives, examining perceptions and differences by gender provides valuable insight into how families change or remain stable in light of pubertal, social, and biological changes during adolescence. Gilligan later (1987) suggested that adolescent developmental research is complicated by the emotional responses of adolescent females, and by the seemingly, more reasonable responses of adolescent males on research questionnaires. On this basis, Gilligan posits that adolescents will have difficulty providing precise and decisive responses when reporting their perceptions since most are framed by an emotional or an illogical gender-related response that does not accurately reflect the perceptions and circumstances of the parent-adolescent bond and the family environment.

According to Gilligan (1987), female adolescents are expected to respond to inquiries regarding their family and familial relationship more favorably, as they are more likely to feel a greater emotional connection to family members, while males would analyze the response and respond without the influence of emotion. Gilligan explains that adolescent females would look for a proper emotional response that would benefit all family members and their male counterparts would look for the correct and less emotional response. Gilligan also proposes that continuous or repeated inquiries of adolescent females about the family would eventually result in less confident responses as she searches what would be perceived as the correct or desired response. Males, on the other hand, would be expected to become more confident and assertive in their desire to respond correctly and accurately.
The contemporary idea of gender proposed by Comstock (1994) and Gilligan (1987) indicates that middle-adolescent females have become less concerned with behaving appropriately and being good than were females in pre-feminist years when the perception of being good was a valuable female trait. This feminist ideology of female behavior has affected how mothers and fathers perceive their adolescent females, their parent-adolescent interactions, and expected outcomes for their female child. Although gender differences are present at birth, it acquires new importance during adolescence in parent-adolescent relationships as the adolescents become more conscious of their sexual identity and gender roles (Collins & Russell, 1991). Crouter, Manke, and McHale (1995) and Simmons and Blyth (1987) assert this intensification in gender identity leads to discrepancies in perceptions present in father-daughter, father-son, mother-daughter, and mother-son relationships.

Ohannessian, Lerner, Lerner, and von Eye (1995) explained that the differences in perceptions of family relationships might be more a result of gender-related expectations than a result of normative parental attitudes and behaviors. Traditional female role definitions and behaviors dictate that the female adolescents remain more dependent upon her parents and parents be less willing to allow their female child to separate from the family unit than they would their male adolescent. Sons, on the other hand, are encouraged to be independent, spending more time away from home and family at an earlier age as preparation for their future as protectors and breadwinners.

Studies have supported the premise that gender influences mother-daughter, mother-son, father-daughter and father-son perceptions of their relationships (Bell, Rychener, & Munsch, 2001; Bogenschneider, Small, & Tsay, 1997; Harris & Morgan, 1991; Lanz, Scabini, Vermulst, & Gerris, 2001; Phares & Renk, 1998; Ruebush, 1994; Tein, Roosa, & Michaels, 1994). Clark-Lempers and colleagues (1991) found that adolescent perceptions of significant relationships are influenced by the age and gender of the adolescent. Mother-daughter, mother-son, father-daughter, and father-son dyads reported significant changes in the perceptions of their relationship during the transition from early to late adolescence. For instance, mothers of early adolescents perceived their relationships to be more difficult (Bell et al., 2001; Bogenschneider et al., 1997; Carlson et al., 1991) than did fathers in their paternal-adolescent relationship.

Adolescents in various developmental phases have reported different perceptions of their relationships and interactions with parents, family members, peers, and other significant adults. In late childhood, in early,
middle, and late adolescence the adolescent has reported different perceptions of their relationships with their mothers than with their fathers. Still, they report that both parental relationships have value for them and provide important nurturance and warmth throughout adolescence (Clark-Lempers et al., 1991; Montemayor, 1986).

Many of the theories have been able to contribute some understanding to the continuity that is present in the family during adolescence. Still, many are unable to grasp the complexity of subtle changes that may be simultaneously occurring among mothers, fathers, sons, and daughters in their perceptions of parenting.

### Parenting

**Parenting styles, practices, and behaviors**

Baumrind’s (1966) research identified certain parenting styles characterized by certain practices and behaviors as useful to assess parent effectiveness and child outcomes. Authoritative parenting is considered the most successful parenting style and is characterized by high levels of parental warmth, guidance, and support. The authoritarian or autocratic parenting style is defined as less warm and supportive, but with higher rates of structure and monitoring. The third parenting style is laisse-faire or neglectful indicative of low guidance, low structured monitoring, as well as low levels of warmth. Permissive, the fourth parenting style is usually characterized by high levels of warmth accompanied by low levels of guidance and direction. Although the parenting style research has primarily been limited to samples of young children and mothers, Baumrind’s research sets a baseline for assessing parenting styles and practices from early childhood to young adulthood. Baumrind (1996) declared that parenting style and parenting practices are fluid behaviors that are affected by age-related experiences, particularly for the responsiveness (warmth, nurturance) and demandingness (monitoring and discipline) style dimensions.

**Parenting roles and behaviors**

Traditional social expectations for fathers have changed as more mothers have entered the workforce. Atkinson and Blackwelder (1993) and Strom, Beckert, Strom, Strom, and Griswold (2002) assert that an earlier definition of fathering was one of providing financial support to the family system, supporting the mother in her role as primary caregiver, assisting with household duties (usually outside chores), and providing an environment that promoted the educational well-being of the child. This definition no longer meets
contemporary expectations of equal co-parenting for most aspects of the child’s well-being such as nurturing, interaction, caregiving, discipline, and monitoring.

LaRossa and Reitzes (1995) conducted a retrospective study of father involvement using letters written to talk show host and syndicated columnist, Angelo Patri, between 1925 and 1939. Mr. Patri, a New York City junior high school principal, hosted a radio advice program for parents. The letters from parents, including about five hundred from fathers, are part of a collection housed in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. The anecdotal study examined letters from fathers by measuring the number of words, syllables, grammar, community size, and child’s gender and age to determine types of parenting displayed by the father. The letters contrasted between those written by mothers and fathers, concluded fathers were less involved with the child than mothers based on the style, content, and length of fathers’ letters. For example, fathers wrote fewer letters, shorter in content, and more straightforward than those submitted by mothers.

LaRossa and Reitzes (1995) hypothesized that both fathers and mothers perceive themselves to have specific custodial roles, but fathers saw themselves as less responsible for the disciplinary aspects of parenting. However, content and style of letters written by the fathers suggested less traditional ideals of fathering during a time when traditional parenting roles were the expected norm. LaRossa and Reitzes explained fathers who sought assistance from the talk show and/or column may have expressed distinct gender-defined perceptions of their role and their child’s gender and less traditional fathering ideals. Finally, LaRossa and Reitzes (1995) surmised that fathers in the early 20th century might not have had uniquely different parenting behaviors than contemporary fathers.

Strom and others (2002) suggested that research on fathers should examine the “nontraditional variables,” affecting fathering. Strom and colleagues suggested that it has become more difficult to identify which parenting variables are influencing the relationship between father and adolescent with the changes in expectations for the types and level of nurturance, monitoring, and discipline fathers are presently expected to provide the children.

Strom et al. (2002) studied Caucasian fathers of male and female adolescents to understand their perceptions of fathers’ parenting ability. Fearful that studying fathers and adolescents as a pair might bias the responses, the researchers utilized a unique methodology in which adolescent subjects attending a school in one
school district were matched/paired to fathers from a different school district. Data from the paired fathers and adolescent subjects (10-14 years old) was collected to test perceptions of several relationship variables (communication, use of time, teaching frustration and satisfaction). Strom et al. (2002) found that time together, adolescents’ age and fathers’ socio-economic status were more significant factors in the relationship than adolescent’s gender. Fathers perceived themselves as less satisfied with adolescent’s response to criticism and expressed more dissatisfaction with their adolescent’s friends than as perceived by the adolescents.

Riesch et al. (1996) provided a qualitative look at the perspectives of Caucasian, mid-western fathers’ views of their own parenting skills, ideas, and goals for parenting their children. The fathers perceived their parenting was based on identifying boundaries, physical and emotional availability to their adolescent, adolescent’s adherence to perceived guidelines, the quality of parenting they themselves received as adolescents (by their own fathers), family structure, and learned interaction style. Fathers explained they used their own adolescent experiences and their parent-adolescent relationship to develop their present parenting style and ideals. Fathers reported that their parenting skills either replicated the parenting they received or reflected the way they chose to parent, as an alternative style, if they perceived their own upbringing to be deficient.

Crouter, Bumpus, Head, & McHale (2001) proposed that the research on adolescent-father relationships has not remained current with changes in expectations, attitudes, and behaviors held by contemporary parents. Strom, Beckert, Strom, Strom, and Griswold (2002) posited that the contemporary fathering paradigm is for fathers to actively participate in all aspects of the child’s developmental progress including discipline, nurturing, and monitoring.

**Nurturance and warmth**

Paulson (1994) asserted that any significant variance may be attributable to parents’ allowing the adolescent more independence for school, school-related activities, and social activities during middle and late adolescence than during early adolescence. Thus it could be ascertained that while parents and adolescents have similar perceptions of parenting functioning, subtle differences in perceptions may be a contributing factor to the adolescents’ development and changes in family interactions.

Paulson and Sputa (1996) partially replicated the findings of an earlier study conducted by Paulson (1994) on ninth-grade adolescents and parents regarding perceptions of parenting style and parent involvement.
Southeastern and mid-western ninth and twelfth grade adolescents and their parents were questioned in longitudinal research regarding their perceptions of their parents’ levels of demandingness and responsiveness. Paulson and Sputa (1996) calculated the importance of parent demandingness and responsiveness regarding the adolescents’ academic success, schoolwork, and activity participation to the adolescent. Adolescents from both regional areas were sampled during the first wave when they were ninth-grade students. The southeastern sample was re-sampled again three years later when the adolescents were in twelfth grade. The adolescents were asked to respond to a parental demandingness scale and a responsiveness scale, once for mothers and again for fathers. Parents, in turn, responded to the two scales regarding their own perceptions of parenting.

Paulson and Sputa (1996) reported that their research supported the previous findings (Noller & Callan, 1990; Paulson, 1994; Youniss & Smollar, 1985) that mothers were perceived to be more demanding and more responsive than their fathers, and both parents perceived themselves to be more involved in their adolescents’ life than perceived by their adolescent. More precisely, both ninth and twelfth grade adolescents perceived their mothers to be more involved and responsive in their academics and activities than their fathers. While the findings for the adolescents’ perceptions were similar during both phases of the study, some differences for mothers and fathers were found. For example, mothers were reported to become less responsive and involved from the ninth to the twelfth grade. Fathers, on the other hand, were not found to have significantly less involvement and responsiveness from the ninth to twelfth grade.

Paulson and Sputa (1996) found that mothers were more demanding and more responsive than fathers as confirmed by both adolescents and the parents. Ninth-grade adolescents reported they perceived their parents to rank lower on all five aspects (demandingness, responsiveness, achievement values, schoolwork and school involvement) of parenting than both mothers and fathers reported. This was later substantiated with a pattern that continued for twelfth-grade respondents. Fathers and mothers were reported to have similar perceptions of academic achievement, but mothers were found to be slightly more engrossed in the education of the children than fathers. Parent demandingness stayed consistent from ninth- to twelfth-grades, but adolescents felt that mothers and fathers were less nurturing during the twelfth grade than they were during the ninth grade.

These findings supported Paulson and Sputa’s hypotheses that adolescents and their parents reported differences in their perceptions of demandingness and responsiveness. Primarily, adolescents perceived their
parents as less demanding and less responsive than how parents perceived themselves. Also, the adolescents supported the Paulson and Sputa (1996) premise that perceptions of parenting style were adaptable to accommodate changes occurring concurrently with the adolescents’ development. One limitation of the Paulson and Sputa (1996) research was an inability to assert which family members’ perceptions were more straightforward and provide a more informative view of family functioning.

Parental monitoring

Dishion, Li, Spracklen, Brown, and Haas (1998) posited that the literature on parental practices proposes that all parenting behaviors and practices contribute equally to the child’s socialization and well-being. They described an equitable management thesis that includes most aspects of parenting (nurturing, monitoring, & discipline) that rank equitably in the adolescent’s developmental process with no one aspect outweighing another. Thus, monitoring is a primary aspect of child development, child outcomes, and family well-being requiring appropriately responsive levels of monitoring directly associated with the child’s age and/or developmental stage. Dishion and McMahon (1998) add that effective parenting encompasses several aspects of daily awareness between parent and child of that child’s actions, whereabouts, companions, and physical and emotional needs.

Parental monitoring is expected to change with the child’s developmental stage, but to continue throughout adolescence into early adulthood with parents continuing to assess the well-being of their child (Kerr & Stattin, 2000; Stattin & Kerr, 2000). In many instances, parents still provide the child with financial and social support well into early adulthood. However, the monitoring focus may change from protecting the child from accidental injury or harm from others during early childhood to preventive monitoring designed to stave off antisocial behavior. Change in parental monitoring during early, middle, and late adolescence centers on peer relationships, child whereabouts, academic success, and attempting to prevent or postpone anti-social behaviors such as drug use and risky sexual activity.

Adolescents with access to additional social and financial resources, other than those provided by the parent and/or family system, often report less need for parental control as they navigate adolescence (Weller & Luchterhand, 1977). Adolescent pubertal status and gender did not seem to be an important factor in their perceptions of control since they considered fathers and mothers to be equally controlling of their behaviors.
The premise that pubertal timing may have a greater influence on the perceptions of parents than on the perceptions of the adolescent suggests that adolescents may not fully perceive how they are expected by their parents to change as they mature (Savin-Williams & Small, 1986). As a result, adolescents may develop discrepancies in their perceptions compared to their parents’ perceptions about what is expected about their development and behaviors. For instance, early maturing females may be perceived as being socially adept, thus leading parents to more frequently re-evaluate their manner and quality of monitoring and control.

**Competent parenting**

Riesch et al. analysis (1997) of mothers with young adolescents (11- to 14-years old) identified six content themes mothers perceived as affecting their ability to parent adolescents (differences between ideals & practices; guiding principles; parenting confidence; parenting styles; stressors; communication). The mothers perceived their own parenting to be influenced by the parenting they received as a child and found it difficult to assess which behaviors were influenced by their parents or how they would modify their parents’ parental behaviors. Mothers also perceived that the guiding principles for parenting (love, family, values, & goals) were determinants of good parenting results. In spite of finding some pleasure in parenting an adolescent, mothers perceived they were not well prepared for it and did not feel very confident in their parenting.

Bogenschneider, Small, & Tsay (1997), using a self-reporting questionnaire, researched perceptions in a sample of 1,227 middle-to late-adolescent children (eighth-to twelfth-grades) whose responses were matched to the responses of both parents. The study assessed self-reported perceptions of their parents’ monitoring, parental responsiveness, and control. Bogenschneider et al. (1997) were able to match the responses of 324 mother-son dyads, 260 father-son dyads, and 250 father-daughter dyads from the larger sample.

Bogenschneider, Small, & Tsay (1997) hypothesized that parents who perceive themselves as having limited parenting abilities usually have adolescents with similar perceptions of their fathers’ and mothers’ parenting skills. Fathers that reported less stress in their parent-adolescent relationships also reported greater competence in their own parenting abilities. Fathers who perceived themselves to be generally competent parents, reported feeling less competent in their abilities to parent their female adolescent than in parenting their male adolescent. Competent fathers also felt that their daughters displayed more affective responses, were more
cooperative, more open to parental influence, easier to parent, had better academic success, and felt their daughter was instrumental in the quality of support the father received from his spouse.

Fathers who perceived themselves to be less competent in their fathering perceived their male and female children to be less socially adept, particularly their male children. Mothers with middle adolescents reported having less cooperation and less discussion than did mothers with younger or late adolescents. In contrast, the mothers reporting greater competence in their parenting were found to have a more responsive relationship with their adolescent than mothers with less competence in their parenting abilities. The study reported no differences in perceptions based on adolescents’ gender or age regarding the mothers’ competence to parent.

Competent fathers were found to have both male and female adolescent children who reported fewer social issues associated with parenting and less need to seek support from peers than the adolescents of less competent fathers. In fact, male adolescents seemed to fare better academically with competently perceived fathers (Bogenschneider, Small, & Tsay, 1997).

**Parent-Adolescent Relationships**

**Significant Relationships**

Bell, Rychener, and Munsch (2001) and Furman and Buhrmester (1985) agreed that studies of adolescents and their important relationships were guided by inadequately supported theoretical models as a result of an inability to concurrently examine the value of several adolescent relationships. Thus one shortcoming of adolescent studies is the quantity and types of relationships being researched. Furman and Buhrmester (1985) proposed that the relationships being investigated were an inadequate representation of all the different relationships experienced by the adolescent and felt it important to examine and compare a variety of relationships that adolescents experience during a specific period of time as well as any significant differences in the levels of intimacy, nurturance, and expectations related to each adolescent relationship.

Furman and Buhrmester (1985) the Network of Relationship Inventory (NRI), a ten-attribute instrument (see appendix B for NRI instrument), with predominantly Caucasian fifth- and sixth-grade adolescents and their parents to assess the level of significance of relationships with their mothers, fathers, grandparents, siblings, best peers, and special teachers. Although some change was present in many of the relationships, parents consistently ranked first among adolescents followed by their relationships with siblings, grandparents,
peers, and teachers. The study found that early adolescents reported decreasing levels of intimacy in their parent-child relationship compared to the level of intimacy in their relationship with their older late-adolescent sibling. Female subjects consistently rated their important familial relationships higher than males and were found to attribute more importance to the mother-daughter relationship than males to the father-son relationship. Perceived changes in the level of intimacy between parents and adolescent were shown to have little impact on redirecting the affections of adolescents for their parents; thus the parental relationship remained the most stable relationship for the adolescent as a source of affection, reliable alliance, enhancement of worth, and instrumental aid.

Furman and Buhrmester (1985) described the NRI as a useful tool for assessing significant relationships and posited that the Social Provision Theory was less indicative of adolescents’ social interactions than of adult relationships. Therefore, the findings may be less generalizable when used with an adolescent sample than with an adult sample. The study provided valuable cross-sectional insight into the importance adolescents place on their relationship with their parents as well as into the attributes that assist in maintaining contact and communication between adolescents and parents within the relationship.

A longitudinal study by Clark-Lempers, Lempers, and Ho (1991) detailed age and gender changes in perceptions of six significant relationships for early, middle, and late-adolescent males and females. Clark-Lempers et al. (1991) investigated perceptions of important adolescent relationships with parents, siblings, teachers, and peers that influence adolescent development. Adolescents reported to perceive significant relationships as providing several valuable qualities: admiration, affection, companionship, instrumental aid, nurturance, intimacy, and reliable alliance. The adolescents’ significant relationships, while a source of satisfaction, were also perceived as a source of conflict for the adolescent.

Adolescent subjects (11-to 13-years old) described their maternal relationship as high in admiration, affection, companionship, conflict, intimacy, nurturance, and satisfaction (Clark-Lempers et al., 1991). Middle adolescents (14-to 16-years old) perceived their mothers provided more admiration, affection, companionship, and satisfaction than that perceived by late adolescents (17-to 19-years). With few exceptions, adolescents of all ages perceived conflict with their mothers to be relatively significant and be more significant than any
conflict with their fathers. Early adolescents perceived sufficient support from their fathers, and perceived that this support lessened as they grew into middle and late adolescence.

Clark-Lempers et al. found significant main effects for gender in their 1991 study of male and female adolescents. For instance, males reported higher levels of companionship, instrumental aid, intimacy, nurturance, and satisfaction in their relationship with their fathers than the females reported perceiving in their father-daughter relationship. Males also perceived their father-son relationship had become less important as they aged from early-to late-adolescence; early-adolescent males described more positive relationships with their fathers than middle and late-adolescent males reported in their father-son relationships. Even into late-adolescence, males perceived their father-son relationship to be characterized by intimacy, nurturance, and minimal conflict (Clark-Lempers, Lempers, & Ho, 1991).

The Clark-Lempers and colleagues’ (1991) study on parent-adolescent dyads found early-adolescent males to rank similarly to early-adolescent females on nine attributes when compared to their middle and late adolescent peers. Middle-adolescent males reported significance on six of the nine attributes (admiration, affection, companionship, aid, alliance, & satisfaction), while early male adolescents perceived higher levels of maternal admiration, affection, companionship, conflict, intimacy, nurturance, and satisfaction than reported for their paternal relationships. Males described a decrease in levels of importance they assigned to their parent-child relationships as they matured, as opposed to females whose levels of significance remained fairly high throughout early, middle, and late adolescence (Clark-Lempers et al., 1991). Fathers reported experiencing positive relationships during early adolescence with both their female and male children, with decreases in some aspects of the relationship (intimacy, nurturance, and conflict) in later adolescence. This finding corroborated the premise that parental relationships take on less importance as the adolescent matures.

**Parent-adolescent agreement**

Agreement between parents and adolescents on their perceptions has been found to be directly associated with the age and gender of the adolescent and parent contingent upon the topic/issue (Bell, Rychener, & Munsch, 2001; Clark-Lempers, Lempers, & Ho, 1991). For example, in late adolescence the parent-adolescent relationship is perceived as less significant by the adolescent than during early and middle adolescence when
parents are somewhat idolized (Bell, Rychener, & Munsch, 2001; Buhrmester & Furman, 1987; Clark-Lempers et al., 1991; Smetana & Asquith, 1994; Youniss & Ketterlinus, 1987).

Carlson and others (1991) questioned the proposition that shared perceptions between parents and adolescent children provide benefits to the family’s well-being. Their study of early-adolescent males and females posited that a shared perception of the family assisted the family with maintaining family bonds, while discrepant or specific perceptions of the family were more directly related to assisting the adolescent with the separation process. Shared perceptions among family members are considered to be positively related to the well-being of the family and the long term well-being of the adolescent. Carlson and associates (1991) challenged whether adolescent competence is related to having a shared reality with their parents and other family relationships, and whether their perceptions provide them with the tools to function adequately outside the family system.

When male and female Caucasian adolescents’ perceptions were assessed and compared to the perceptions of fathers and mothers, Carlson et al. (1991) surmised that mothers and fathers had very different perceptions of their relationship with the adolescent. Carlson and colleagues (1991) contend that establishing an understanding of the father-adolescent relationship is complicated by a lack of comparative data, which leads to confusion over “distinct” and/or “shared” perceptions of the relationship. However, limited sources of research that assess the distinct perceptions of father-daughter, father-son relationships make understanding the intricacies of the relationship more difficult.

Adolescent developmental research (Carlson, Cooper, & Spradling, 1991; Tein, Roosa, & Michaels, 1994) suggests that parental awareness and perceptions were reciprocally influenced by the awareness and perceptions of the child and how the adolescent viewed their own presence in the family unit. While some studies have shown that the adolescent and the parent may have closely related, and in some cases “overlapping” perceptions, less research is available on how, why, and when changes are more likely to occur during adolescence (p. 341).

To resolve the problem of assessing shared and discrepant perceptions of multiple family members within current methodological and theoretical research limitations, researchers (Carlson et al., 1991; Tein et al., 1994) proposed the use of multiple collection methods. Carlson and associates (1991) selected several instruments
(Family Environment Scale, Family Assessment Measure, and Self-Perception Profile for Children) to test the validity of their multi-method concept. They found agreement between parents and their adolescent child in their perceptions of family management and family participation in religious activities, as well as in communication and involvement. The Carlson et al. (1991) study proposed early adolescents and their parents did not differ much in their perceptions of family conflict.

Tein and colleagues (1994) assessed family perceptions in a small sample of 4th, 5th, & 6th grade (N = 134) children attending a para-clinical prevention program for middle-school children of alcoholics. Tein’s study was an effort to replicate Schaefer’s (1965) research using the Child’s Report of Parental Behavior Inventory (CRPBI), a 26-item instrument that measures child’s responses regarding his/her perceptions of parental warmth/nurturance and guidance/control.

The study utilized multiple instruments and multiple methods of analysis to identify more precise indicators of child, mothers’ and fathers’ perceptions of parenting behaviors and attitudes than provided by the use of one instrument as in previously reported adolescent-parent agreement studies (Johnson, Shulman, & Collins, 1991; Noller & Callan, 1986; Schaefer, 1965; Schwarz, Barton-Henry, & Pruzinsky, 1985). Tein’s et al. research examined how closely the responses of pre-adolescents and the responses of the each parent correlated on acceptance, rejection, inconsistent discipline, firm control, and hostile control using such constants as gender and socio-economic status. According to Tein, Roosa, and Michaels (1994) parents and adolescents can have a successful relationship only if the adolescent was in agreement regarding parental behaviors with their parent(s). It would also be beneficial to parent-adolescent research if it were identifiable with which parent the adolescent perceived more agreement and how that agreement occurred since parent-adolescent agreement should be considered a sign of effective parenting. The authors described parent-adolescent agreement as: a) correlations of ratings of the same parenting construct by different informants are significant and high; and b) correlations of ratings of the same parenting construct with the different informants are significant and higher than the correlations between ratings of that particular constructs and ratings of other constructs by the same and different informants.

Tein and colleagues (1994) found several aspects of parent-adolescent agreement of interest. For example, when constructs were dichotomized children did not specify a difference in their perceptions of mothers or
fathers’ parenting behaviors. Mothers’ parenting behaviors were more positively perceived than fathers’ parenting behaviors by adolescents with the exception of firm control for which there was no significant difference. Tein et al. (1991) found children in more agreement with fathers than mothers over issues of discipline.

Tein et al (1991) reported that demographic variables such as child’s age, gender, risk factors (i.e., depression, parent alcoholic status), socio-economic status, family structure and parent education were more informative for family agreement assessment than non-demographic characteristics. For example, the study found parent education, socio-economic status, number of children, risk factors, child depression and conduct were influences in the child’s perception of mothers’ acceptance. Fathers self-reported that gender, parent education and income were influences in their perceptions of inconsistent discipline. Family income and risk factors affected mothers’ reports of inconsistent discipline, while risk factors were the primary influences on the hostile control and acceptance variables.

Tein et al. (1994) attributed the low reliability for some of the analysis primarily to mediating factors that have not been sufficiently defined by adolescent developmental theories and suggested that categorizing responses into simple high-low dichotomized categories is a limitation that serves as an obstacle to explaining the complexities of parent-child agreement. A second limitation in the Tein et al. study was an inability to distinguish which respondent is the more reliable informant of family functioning in parent-adolescent relationships. Finally, the findings provided limited insight into the adequate integration of multiple perceptions of adolescents, mothers, and fathers into an encompassing model that accurately explains how adolescents and parents define agreement in their relationship. To address limitations of the study, Tein and others have recommended that additional research be conducted using multiple instruments to increase instrument reliability.

Lanz, Scabini, Vermulst, and Gerris (2001) found evidence in a sample of families with early (9-to-12 years old) and middle adolescents (13-to-16 years old) for two types of congruency in family functioning. Familial congruency refers to aspects of the relationship about which family members share a common perception, and cultural congruency defines aspects and expectations of the parent-adolescent relationship
shared across multiple family systems. Lanz et al. (2001) posited that familial congruency in the perceptions of warmth, affection, nurturance and responsiveness determine their family members’ view of family functioning.

Discrepancies in family perceptions are seen as a function of the normal adaptation in the family system during which the child develops his or her own identity within the family system, while simultaneously learning to develop an identity separate of that from the family. A few studies (Barrera & Li, 1996; Bell et al., 2001; Clark-Lempers et al., 1991; Collins & Russell, 1991; Dekovic, Noom, & Meeus, 1997; Paulson & Sputa, 1996; Stefanko, 1987) have attempted to address gaps in adolescent developmental studies by assessing the perceptions of discipline, nurturance, monitoring, and warmth present among multiple family members.

Holmbeck and O’Donnell (1991) described four types of discrepancies that can occur between parents and adolescents: (a) differences in perceptions of family members as a result of each other’s attributes such as age, personality, beliefs in education, politics and religion, and behaviors (agreeing with rules regarding control, friends, etc.; (b) differences in perceptions of parents as individuals regarding their parenting and their parental expectations; (c) incongruent perceptions of expectations for behavior of the adolescent; and (d) incongruent views of the family functioning .

The most common discrepancies in perceptions (cohesiveness, parental involvement and communication) in parent-adolescent child dyads were related to family functioning. Adolescents reported perceiving their families as having less cohesiveness among family members, less independence, and less ability to express their perceptions within the family than did their parents. Adolescents reported their perceptions of the family functioning to vary from the reported perceptions of their parents disagreeing that they functioned with a compatible view of family and parents’ parenting. Early adolescents reported experiencing less parental involvement in cultural activities and more involvement in recreational activities than reported by parents (Carlson, Cooper, & Spradling, 1991). Overall, adolescents seemed to exaggerate the differences between themselves and their parents, while parents tended to report lesser degrees of difference between themselves and adolescent (Laursen, Coy, & Collins, 1998; Lerner & Knapp, 1975). According to Laursen, Coy, and Collins (1998), differences in reporting were found to correlate slightly with the adolescent developmental stage and parent gender to varying degrees. However, some the variance in the findings was attributed to the differences in number of participants in some age groups.
Lerner and Knapp (1975) reported that differences in mothers and adolescents responses varied from “one to two scale points” on sixteen of the items and over two points on several other items in a percentile range of 19% to 44% variance. Fathers, on the other hand, differed from their adolescent approximately 22% to 56% in their responses. Fathers were found to differ from their adolescent’s responses about 22% on eight items and 56% on an additional 20 items.

**Father-adolescent agreement**

Fathers and their early adolescent daughters (Carlson et al., 1991) reported closely related perceptions of all aspects of their mutual relationship. The Family Environment Scale (FES), the Family Assessment Measure II (FAM II), and the Self-Perception Profile for Children were used to assess the perceptions of thirty female sixth graders. The subjects were found to have perceptions that were highly correlated to their fathers’ perceptions of cohesion, expressiveness, conflict, independence, achievement, intellectual/cultural factors, recreation, morality/religious beliefs, organization and control. Daughters reported slightly lower perceptions of father expressiveness and comprehension of their daughter’s need for independence. Factors that resulted in minimal discrepancies (expressiveness and independence) between fathers and daughters were assessed negatively in terms of daughters’ well being.

Providing supportive data, Collins and Russell (1991) attribute less value to the premise that fathers have loftier expectations for sons than daughters, thereby displaying less emotional affect for the male child. Many of the fathers perceived their active involvement (i.e., participating in outdoor activities) was a significant display of affection for their son, thus requiring less emphasis on expressive and/or intimate displays. Fathers were perceived to be more distant in their interactions with adolescent sons primarily as a result that their activities were directed towards obtaining some objective, resolving an issue, providing advice, and not participating in verbal communication and sharing. However, Collins and Russell (1991) proposed that fathers might justify the separation of attention as necessary to build masculinity in their son. In spite of the detached presence and care displayed by fathers, most fathers were perceived as providing nurturance to the adolescent to accompany the caregiving provided by mothers.

Collins and Russell (1991) reviewed multiple articles on the perceptions, interactions, and family dynamics in families with pre-adolescent and adolescent children. Many of the studies have concluded that the
father-adolescent relationship is defined as a distant relationship, but is still perceived by the child as important to their life and well-being. During early childhood, fathers perceived their relationships with sons as different from their relationship with daughters and found their relationships remain consistent in childhood and adolescence (Collins & Russell, 1991; Ohannessian et al., 1995).

**Conflict**

Noller and Callan (1986) posited there would be inconsistencies between the perceptions of parents and their early adolescent offspring on family management (control), cohesiveness, expression (warmth), and social involvement. The inconsistencies do not necessarily contribute to an increase in conflict, but may instead function as contributing factors to assist the family through the individuation process. Noller and Callan (1986) tested an acceptable response concept on three parenting dimensions (warmth/support, conflict/negativity, and monitoring/control). The acceptable response concept is based on the premise that parents will respond more positively, and probably less accurately to inquiries in an effort to improve the image of their parenting. Adolescents on the other hand will most likely respond more precisely regarding the perceptions of family functioning without consideration of what outsiders may perceive. The study asserted that family members should have common or similar responses based on shared experiences and a shared environment – a common theme among family members.

Noller and Callan (1986) hypothesized that parents would attempt to respond to inquiries of family functioning with more socially acceptable responses (or shared-environmental perceptions) than adolescents. For instance, parents believe that they parent all their children similarly as not to provide one child with more nurturance, attention, and warmth than any of their other children. Adolescents, on the other hand, tend to respond with less socially acceptable (non-shared environmental perceptions) terms such as perceiving parents favoring one child over another.

Parents of 12-year-old adolescents (Noller & Callan, 1988) completed questionnaires regarding parent-adolescent relationships, marital satisfaction, schedules of family activities and involvement, and demographic information (age of parents, socio-economic status, education, etc.) used to match one family with another comparison family. “Insider” families were rated only by an “outsider” family in which the adolescent was the same age, sex, birth order, and in which the parent responses were similar on the marital quality scale. In total,
matched family sets with adolescents that both served as an “insider” family and an “outsider” family for the comparison.

As an additional measure to assess “insider” and “outsider” perceptions of involvement, dominance, and friendliness, trained observers rated videotaped interviews of no more than four families on family functioning. Both “insider” and “outsider” family responses were assessed using analysis of variance measures that were then correlated with the independent observer’s perceptions of both families.

In most cases, the observer correlated the responses of the “outsider” family than aligning with the “insider” family. Many of the “insider” family responses consistently perceived their matching counterpart family as less positive on family involvement and friendliness and, less effectively functioning than they perceived their family functioning. For example, “insider” families perceived themselves to be more involved and friendlier with each other than their counterpart family. Noller and Callan (1988) explained that the monitoring/control variable was not reported in the findings since there were consistently low correlations among family member responses.

Collins and Laursen (2004) assert that conflict is present in even the closest and most nurturing parent-adolescent relationships as a result of adolescents and parents renegotiating their roles from a hierarchical to an egalitarian relationship. According to Collins and Laursen (2004), the definition of conflict ranges from basic interpersonal unpleasantness to overt behavioral opposition and may not have the significant increases in early adolescence and the significant decreases in mid-adolescence that were previously reported. Instances of substantial change in conflict may have been more a result of an interest in the frequency of conflict versus the type, content, and manner of the conflict. Collins and Laursen (2004) posit that adolescent-parent conflict remains relatively unexplored, primarily as a result of the research being limited to cross-sectional, mother-child research.

Conflict in family functioning may be less detrimental to the parent-adolescent relationship than previously reported (Laursen, Coy, & Collins, 1998). Comstock (1994) proposed addressing conflict between parent and adolescent as a developmental aspect of the relationship that assists the adolescent in developing a separate and individuated identity from their parents. Montemayor (1986) explained that conflict might serve as a valuable communication tool to assist the family in isolating issues and concerns of family members.
depending upon the type of conflict and how that conflict is resolved. Comstock (1994) suggested that constructive conflict is often characterized by cooperative interaction, compatible growth of family members, and the relative well-being of family members.

Early, middle, and late adolescents have been found to form different perceptions of their parents, as a couple and as individuals. Adolescents have reported that they have a different relationship with their fathers than the one they share with their mothers (Colarossi, 2001; Ruebush, 1994; Strom, Beckert, Strom, Strom, & Griswold, 2002). Both parents were perceived by their early adolescents to be more conflictual (Steinberg, 1990) about commonplace issues such as cleaning their rooms, keeping curfew, and their household policies than parents of middle and late adolescents. The adolescents perceived their parents to place more importance on ordinary daily chores/tasks than they themselves assigned to the task and felt parents assigned a higher value to the tasks than the tasks warranted. Middle adolescence seemed to be the time when conflict was found to be more moderate or to be less prevalent in the parent-adolescent relationship than early or late adolescence.

Parents of middle and late adolescent children were perceived as less controlling and conflictual (Carlson et al., 1991; Smetana & Asquith, 1994). In late adolescence, conflict was found to ease into established patterns of interactions accompanied by less conflict over the normal household chore expectations for their adolescent. However, both parents and adolescents felt that parents had the right to govern their child for the child’s protection throughout adolescence.

While more conflict seems to be present between mothers and fathers with their early and middle-adolescent males and females, there was less obviously perceived conflict among families during late adolescence. In fact, Smetana and Asquith (1994) reported less conflict was perceived in families by mid-adolescence and even then most disagreements were over mundane issues more important to the parent. Still, the authors supported the fact that conflict may be purposeful in stabilizing family functioning to encourage adolescent maturity with the support of the family. Thus, conflict is more likely to arise in households where adolescents and parents (specifically mothers) have divergent expectations and perceptions of appropriate timing for developmental changes for their female or male children. Lastly, mothers and fathers reported adolescence as the most difficult parenting phase contributing to their anxiety over changes in their adolescent.
Mothers of adolescents perceived themselves to be responsive to the needs of their adolescent and more aware of their school and social-related activities regardless of the adolescent’s developmental stage (Paulson & Sputa, 1996). Mothers also perceived conflict to increase from late childhood to early adolescence regarding common household chores, adolescents’ appearance, appropriate behaviors, and adolescents’ increased need for additional money (Galambos & Almeida, 1992). Mothers of late adolescents perceived that conflict was negatively related to their mother-adolescent relationship and that during this time conflictual differences were perceived to be the fault of the adolescents’ inability to function competently. By contrast, conflict during early adolescence was perceived to be more closely associated with biological and cultural influences affecting the adolescent and family.

**Mother-adolescent relationship**

Mothers of early adolescent sons (Carlson et al., 1991) perceived their sons to be less effective in their ability to manage their goals and less emotionally accessible. Overall, mothers reported less overall satisfaction with their son’s affective communication and response to family values, rules, and norms than they did with their daughters.

The relationship between mothers and early maturing adolescent sons was found to have less frequent, but more intense disagreement when it occurred. Much of the disagreement between mother and son was directly associated with the amount of time the male child spent in the company of his mother. Since mothers and offspring usually spend more time together in one-on-one settings, mothers are perceived to have more emotional investment in their offspring; however, time spent together may also serve to foster discrepancies in perceptions of their relationship.

Studies reviewed by Collins and Russell (1991) also reported contradictory findings in the perceptions of mothers about power and control. Mothers were perceived to maintain a relative level of control over their adolescent sons concurrently with the son’s level of maturity, while the research found that adolescent males perceive their mothers’ control and discipline level to diminish with their level of maturity. According to Collins and Russell (1991), male children still consider their relationship with their mother to be positive, supportive, and nurturing well into late adolescence and perceived their mothers to be available to discuss their
academics, social relationships, activities, and feelings while fathers filled the role of advisor and conversationalist on non-intimate subjects.

Sons perceived their relationships with both parents to become more stressful during early adolescence, but reported that stress in the relationship stabilized shortly thereafter into an egalitarian relationship. During early adolescence, males reported their fathers provided more positive communication and advice than did mothers. As the adolescent males moved into late adolescence, many of them perceived more difficulty with parental permissiveness and parental control than their female counterparts. The young men also perceived their relationship with both parents to be reasonably affectionate, warm, and supportive (Jackson, Bijstra, Oostra, & Bosma, 1998). Adolescent males were less likely to perceive their parents as individuals, and more likely to see them as a couple and perceive both parents as having equal influence regarding parental decisions. In many cases, fathers were perceived as complying with their spouses on decisions affecting the adolescent.

Holmbeck and O’Donnell’s (1991) described their research as a short-term, longitudinal study since respondents were surveyed two times, six months apart. Mother and adolescent dyads (N = 99) participated in the first survey collection cycle and 86 mother-adolescent dyads participated in the second survey period. The responses of the first group were analyzed and used as comparison responses to the second group of respondents. Holmbeck and O’Donnell (1991) found consistency in the responses of both groups of respondents, and proposed the cyclical pattern found in the perceptions was attributed to the adolescent and mother renegotiating their relationship each time another new situation arose and was resolved. A pattern later substantiated in the Bell, Rychener, and Munsch (2001) research of parent-adolescent relationships.

Holmbeck and O’Donnell (1991) research identified several limitations in the study. First, the small number of subjects prevented analyzing the responses by race, social class, and family structure, categories that may influence adolescent and parent responses. Secondly, Holmbeck and O’Donnell (1991) suggested that the wide range in the ages of the subjects (10-to 18-years of age) clouded their ability to discern any real developmental changes from early to late adolescence since the constructs may not be equally “relevant” at one age range as in another. Holmbeck and O’Donnell (1991) explained that some of the constructs (i.e., desire for autonomy) might be more important in early adolescence than in late adolescence, thus preventing the determination of any discrepancies in the perceptions between parents and adolescents. Next, Holmbeck and
O’Donnell (1991) determined that some alternative design to the cross-sectional and short-term longitudinal study might provide a clearer picture of the situation. The last limitation suggested that the use of a self-reporting instrument, although able to identify any apparent discrepancies in normal family functioning, may well introduce some sample bias into the responses.

Smetana & Asquith (1994) found similar results to those of Clark-Lempers, Lempers, and Ho (1991) on changes in early, middle, and late adolescents’ perceptions of their significant adult-adolescent relationships. Using a small sample of only sixty-eight adolescent subjects from single and intact families, Smetana and Asquith (1994) attempted to define the categories in which parents and adolescents experience more contradictions. Variables were categorized into moral, social, and personal groupings and the study found that families of sixth grade early adolescents perceived more disagreement in their families than did eighth-and tenth-grade adolescent families (Smetana & Asquith, 1994). Parent responses and sixth grade adolescent responses were compared regarding family rules, guidelines and expectations for behavior. Sixth-grade adolescents reported having more governing rules for their social behavior than reported by tenth-grade adolescents and parents. Significant discrepancies were also reported over boundaries of legitimate parental authority with mothers and fathers agreeing that the adolescent should have some autonomy over his/her personal issues but not as much as expected by their adolescent. However, both parents and adolescents reported support for the parents’ right to protect the adolescent.

Smetana and Asquith (1994) explained that changes in the parent-child relationship begin to occur in early adolescence over issues of social convention and personal areas of authority. During this time, adolescents begin to expect that they should be allowed to select their peer relationships, use their free time, and control their personal self (smoking, alcohol, sex). In contrast, parents believe their authority continues to exist during all adolescent developmental stages well into early adulthood, and thus should be able to continue to exert their authority over the child using their own values and beliefs as the foundation.

Carlson et al. (1991) researched shared and distinct perceptions to find mothers and sons experience significantly divergent perceptions of their respective relationships, roles, principles, and expectations. Mothers reported experiencing a dissatisfactory relationship with their adolescent males as a result of their male child’s inability to share his feelings and resolve his emotional conflicts. Carlson et al. (1991) noted that separate and
distinct perceptions between adolescents and their mothers are not necessarily an example of negativity in the relationship since the adolescents’ desire to establish a separate identity and individual ideas (individuation and autonomy) should be a developmental goal of both adolescent and parent. However, the mother-daughter relationship was consistently ranked as more difficult than other dyadic relationships present in the family. Still, adolescent females more than adolescent males were perceived by their mothers to be more emotionally responsive, easier to monitor, and more likely to encompass similar values and behavioral attitudes (Carlson et al., 1991).

Dekovic, Noom, & Meeus (1997) described the expectations of mothers as transitory, culturally defined, and age-related resulting in mothers expecting disagreements between themselves and their adolescent children to increase during adolescence. According to the Dekovic and colleagues (1997) research, parents have an expectation of when certain behaviors will occur during adolescence, leading mothers to predict that their relationship with their female adolescent children would become more complicated than their relationship with their male adolescent children.

Adolescent Perceptions

Support, intimacy, and nurturance

The Paterson, Field, and Pryor (1994) study found gender and developmental differences present in perceptions in many adolescent developmental studies. Early adolescents consistently perceived their relationship with both mothers and fathers as more supportive and caring than middle and late adolescents perceived their parents. However, an important difference was noted for late-adolescent females, who perceived their mother-daughter relationship as more significantly valuable than other significant relationships. During middle adolescence, perceptions of parental support and availability were less positive than during early or late adolescence.

Adolescent females and males, 13-to 19-yrs. old, responded to twenty-five items on the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) regarding their perceptions of social (trust-based) and proximity (need-based) relationships support provided by their mothers and fathers (Paterson, Field, & Pryor, 1994). The data showed that adolescents’ perceptions changed from early-to mid-to late-adolescence regarding the support received from both parents. The adolescents reported they perceived their mothers as more caring, more
available, and better equipped to provide support than their fathers. Female adolescents perceived their relationship with their mother to be emotionally more rewarding than their emotional relationship with their father, while adolescent males perceived their mother-son relationship as sufficiently lacking in adequate emotional affection and support.

In addition to studying the effects of age and gender, (Clark-Lempers et al., 1991) assessed the significance of developmental stage influences. According to Clark-Lempers, Lempers, & Ho (1991) early adolescents reported their fathers provided significant support in all nine parenting attributes: admiration, affection, companionship, instrumental aid, intimacy, nurturance, reliable alliance, conflict and satisfaction. In contrast, middle adolescents reported higher levels of support on six of the nine attributes (admiration, affection, companionship, aid, reliable alliance, satisfaction) than reported by late adolescents for their paternal relationship.

**Adolescent female relationships**

Early, on-time, and late-adolescent females perceived their mother-daughter interactions to be more conflictual than their father-daughter connections. However, they still perceived the mother-daughter relationship to be one of their most supportive relationships (Savin-Williams & Small, 1986). The extent of complication inherent in mother-daughter and father-daughter relationships was reported in Youniss and Smollar’s (1985) research. Mothers were perceived as the nurturing moderator for the family willingly available to discuss personal topics and provide assistance more so than fathers. Adolescent females responded that the needs of the mother-daughter relationships were reciprocal, thus requiring the adolescent to be emotionally available to the mother and vice versa. Public and private school students (n = 115 ninth grade, n = 75 eleventh grade) responded to four items (two each for mother & father) regarding how well they perceived their mother and father knew them (Youniss & Ketterlinus, 1987). The female adolescents reported perceiving their fathers to have less knowledge of them than their mothers. The young women also felt their fathers would be less nurturing and warm, but would be more judgmental of them if they had more awareness of their lives. They reported they were less likely to disclose their personal thoughts to their fathers than to their mothers.

Richardson et al. (1984) research assessed significant differences between adolescents from intact- and single-parent families in their perceptions of their parents. Adolescents from mother-only families reported less
knowing and caring on the part of their parents regarding their whereabouts and condition, and even less with
the separated father than adolescents from intact families. Also, daughters from single-parent homes reported a
greater distance in their perceptions between themselves and their fathers than all the adolescents from both
samples.

Richardson et al. (1984) found that 34% of sixth-grade females reported less appreciation for their fathers’
understanding, thus selecting their mothers as a main source of intimacy and support. Seventh-grade females
felt they could discuss their cross-sex relationships less easily with their fathers than they could with their
mothers. They were less likely to disclose intimate details about themselves with their fathers than they would
share with their mothers. Early adolescents reported more negative perceptions of parental control and parent
availability than reported by middle-adolescent females and fewer negative perceptions of parental control and
availability were reported among late-adolescent females (Weller & Luchterhand, 1977). In addition, late-
adolescent females reported more estrangement from the family than did either middle or early-adolescent
females, while younger females reported higher connectedness to their family than middle-adolescent females.

The Buhrmester & Furman (1987) study of companionship and intimacy in pre-adolescent and early-
adolescent males (n=245) and females (n=202) found that pre-adolescent females (2nd and 5th grades) reported
higher disclosure intimacy with parents than in their other significant relationships. Late-adolescent females
reported their intimate peer relationships were equal to the intimacy associated with their parent relationships;
however, they perceived their relationship with their fathers to be one of their less intimate significant
relationships.

The study of relationships between fathers and daughters has not been an area of interest to the same
degree as the relationship between mothers and daughters (Perkins, 2001). A significant amount of the research
has been directed toward the role of fathers as breadwinners or has focused on negative fathering behaviors
such as discipline. Several studies (Collins & Russell, 1991; Carlson, Cooper, & Spradling, 1991; Youniss &
Smollar, 1985) found that female adolescents and their fathers’ perceptions were closely correlated on their
view of emotional display and level of competence.

Sixth, seventh, and eighth grade adolescents (N = 335) completed questionnaires in a cross-sectional study
of perceptions of family, time spent together in activities, conflict and discipline (Richardson et al., 1984). Two
randomly selected cohorts of subjects, born in 1967 and 1968, participated in a longitudinal study on multiple dyadic relationships (parents, siblings). Fathers of seventh and eighth grade females were perceived by their daughters as providing lesser amounts of support when compared with mothers. Female adolescents admitted they would seek interaction with their fathers on personal accomplishments and felt secure in their father-adolescent relationship. The adolescent females also admitted they would discuss personal and/or intimate topics with one or both parents.

Perkins (2001) assessed perceptions among late-adolescent females of their father-daughter interactions and of their fathers’ importance to their well-being. Perkins (2001) determined that adolescent females identified six categories of fathers’ functioning in which they described their fathers as doting, distant, demanding/supportive, domineering, seductive, and absent. Daughters who identified their fathers as “doting” had more positive perceptions of their fathers and of themselves than other categories of fathers. Daughters of doting and demanding/supportive fathers perceived a closer connection with their fathers than daughters who did not have doting fathers. Daughters of doting fathers felt that the relationship with their fathers allowed them to have the freedom to assert themselves as separate individuals from their fathers’ ideals and provided them with security. Perkins instead implied that this father-daughter alliance was an attempt by the daughter to keep the father connected to the family and to view him as an integral member of the family. Perkins saw fewer positives in the assertion that doting fathers were more beneficial to their development and well-being as perceived by daughters than non-doting fathers.

Daughters perceive their relationship with their fathers to be more distant, less emotionally available, and having less paternal awareness of their experiences than the relationships they have with their mothers. Adolescent females have reported perceiving their relationship with their fathers to be a less satisfactory relationship than their other significant relationships. The emotional distance between adolescent females and their fathers regarding social support may be indicative of the fathers’ having insufficient knowledge of their daughters’ personal needs. Still, daughters perceive father-daughter relationships as a valuable relationship, and daughters have reported perceiving their father-daughter relationship as being reasonably stable throughout adolescence and usually without major perturbation.
Adolescent male relationships

Males were found to have more positive perceptions of their relationship with their parents as a couple than as individuals with one exception (Weller & Luchterhand, 1977). Family estrangement was perceived to be highest during early adolescence, with a slight decrease during middle adolescence, followed by another slight increase as males reached late adolescence. Early-adolescent males, however, reported perceiving they sought the advice of their parents more frequently than did middle adolescents, while late adolescents reported negative perceptions of advice seeking from parents. Late-adolescent males reported more negative perceptions of the parents’ permissiveness and control compared to their early and middle adolescent counterparts and early adolescents reported slightly more negative perceptions of parental permission and control than middle-adolescent males.

Adolescent males explained that while they perceived value in their father-son relationships, they had less need for paternal protection or caretaking than females would need. They also expected their parents to provide less support, attention, affection, and to spend less time with them as they went from early adolescence to early adulthood. Mother-son relationships were perceived to be positive relationships by the adolescent males, since mothers were perceived as being nurturing, aware, and supportive throughout adolescence. Adolescent males perceived their mothers to be available to discuss their academics, social relationships, activities, and feelings while fathers filled the significant role of advisor and conversationalist on non-intimate subjects.

Male adolescents (Helsen, Vollebergh, & Meeus, 2000; Richardson et al., 1984) explained a decreased need for their fathers to provide them with physical and social care as compared to female adolescents; however, this paternal support was expected to lessen somewhat from early to middle adolescence. In fact, the perceived support was expected to lessen even more over time, eventually moderating during late adolescence. Sons reported that their relationship with their fathers had significant value to them and perceived their fathers’ understanding of them was an important aspect of their father-son relationship.

Literature Review Summary

Differences between adolescents and parents in perceptions of nurturance and warmth can arise when the perceptions of parents and society are at odds with the perceptions adolescents have of their parents, family, and environment (Bell, Rychener, & Munsch, 2001; Feldman & Gehring, 1988; Fox, 1977; Mounts, 2001; Noller &
Adolescents perceive that the role of one or both parents is to provide support (Barrera & Li, 1996; Clark-Lempers, Lempers, & Ho, 1991; Helsen, Vollebergh, & Meeus, 2000), nurturance (Baumrind, 1966; Demaray & Malecki, 2003), and intimacy (Hunter & Youniss, 1982).

Adolescent females and males have reported various differences in their perceptions of their mother-daughter, mother-son, father-daughter, and father-son relationships. Multiple researchers (Crouter, Manke, & McHale, 1995; Peters, 1994; Shek, 2000; Siegel, 1987; Strom et al., 2002) have determined that adolescent gender and parent gender influence parents’ expectations of how their child should develop, how they monitor their child, and how they interact and communicate with their offspring.

Adolescent gender was an influential factor in the perceptions of the mother regarding the adolescents’ behaviors, expectations, and attitudes. Mothers were very aware of developmental changes in their adolescent from early-to middle-to late-adolescence for both their girls and boys. Mothers perceived their male offspring to be more independent and self-sufficient in their daily activities than they perceived their daughters to be and also reported different perceptions of appropriate timing for social change (dating, curfew, employment) for their daughters than for their sons. Mothers perceived their daughters to need more monitoring, attention, and advice, to have more intimate same-sex friendships, and be less interested in spending time away from family than males. Mothers that perceived themselves to be competent parents reported having children that were more socially competent, academically successful, and more agreeable (Paulson & Sputa, 1996).

The mother and adolescent relationship is perceived as the most significant source of emotional and social support. In many of the studies, the mother-adolescent interactions were perceived to remain positive sources of support throughout adolescence. Although society’s expectations that mothers care for the home and children while fathers work outside the home have changed, mothers are still considered to be the primary caregiver for the child. Thus, mothers and adolescents spend more time together involved in a greater variety of activities and interactions than fathers and adolescents. Researchers posit that because of this profoundly connected relationship, mothers may display more commanding and obtrusive behaviors with their adolescent, and thus experience more stress in their relationships with both sons and daughters. Quite possibly as a result of the mothers’ definitions of her multiple roles, mothers perceive developmental changes in the adolescents as less positive and more difficult to accept than fathers.
For mothers, adolescence usually tests the values and goals they have for their child, their ideals of gender, and their confidence in parenting (Riesz, Coleman, Glowacki, & Konings, 1997; Small, Eastman, & Cornelius, 1988). Mothers are the primary source of social support (Barrera & Li, 1996; Clark-Lempers et al., 1991), and are the channels of communication between the family and adolescent (Sheehan & Noller, 1998; Small et al., 1988). Mothers are also seen as being the most significant source of conflict between parent and child (Montemayor, 1983) during adolescence.

Adolescent females have consistently reported perceiving their relationship with their mother as their primary source of intimacy, support, reliability, nurturance, and communication. Females also perceive that interactions, communication, and expectations evolve as a result of changes in their development and in the family environment.

While these findings have been collaborated in many studies, several of the studies indicated that mother-daughter relationships are also the most conflictual. The relationship between mother and daughter is perceived by the female adolescent as occasionally marred by conflict while continuously remaining a valuable relationship during adolescence. Some conflict has been attributed to the amount of time mother and daughter spend together, to the mother’s discomfort with adolescent’s biological and developmental changes, and to the mother’s need to monitor and protect the daughter, which leads the daughter to perceive her mother as controlling.

Adolescent daughters have reported their mother-daughter relationship as continuing to be significantly important to their developmental well-being throughout adolescence and into adulthood. Females perceive that their relationship will change to accommodate their developmental condition as they establish their personal lives as adult women. The adolescent females perceive that the support provided by their mother will change, but will remain available as they enter the workforce, marry, and become parents.

Nevertheless from the information provided by studies, it can be assumed that an increase in parent-adolescent child conflict may be a result of incongruency between the perceptions of the adolescent child and the perceptions of their parent(s). It could well be a distorted view among parents and adolescents of their actual relationship since parents and adolescents have been found to disagree on their perceptions of conflict, intimacy, support, and nurturance (Nollar & Callan, 1988; Ohannessian, Lerner, Lerner, & von Eye, 1995).
Research limitations

Adolescent development extends over several years of the lifespan and may be characterized by subtle changes in perceptions, attitudes, behaviors, and expectations of themselves and family. The transitional nature of adolescence requires empirically-based studies that provide baseline information at the onset of adolescence and also require reoccurring examinations during the transitional phases in the adolescents’ development.

Adolescent developmental studies have had limited success in theoretically defining the perceptions and comprehensions affecting parent-adolescent relationships which leads to difficulty assessing the validity of respondents’ perceptions in parent-adolescent dyads. The use of psychoanalytic, ecological, life course, social learning, family systems, and goodness-of-fit theories have provided some information on limited aspects of adolescent development such as conflict, home environment, and/or family continuity (Aquilino, 1997). However, these theories have provided little benefit in the way of assessing the perceptions of adolescents and other family members, nor the continuous aspects of family functioning present in the perceptions of adolescents and their parents.

The ability to empirically quantify aspects of continuity, stability, or consistency versus change in parenting styles and practices still remains inadequate because much of the research on parenting styles and practices during adolescence has been uni-dimensional. The findings have been reported for a single respondent (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987; Glasgow, Dornbusch, Troyer, Steinberg, & Ritter, 1997), emphasized the maternal relationship and/or if inclusive of father were treated as a parental unit (Herman & Dornbusch, 1997), were cross-sectional (Dominiquez & Carton, 1997; Gray & Steinberg, 1999; Paulson, 1994), or had sample limitations (Feldman, & Wentzel, 1995; Frick, Christian, & Wootton, 1999).

Adolescent developmental research has been limited to identifying which respondent is the more reliable informant in the relationship and has also failed to provide a theoretically-supported methodology that integrates the various perspectives of family members to provide an accurate picture of mother-daughter, mother-son, father-daughter, and father-son dyads (Tein et al., 1994). Because the perception of one family member, whether adult or adolescent, provides only a mono-dimensional perspective, it may not reflect what is actually occurring in the family (Steinberg, 1996). Similarly, the adolescents’ perspective of family functioning
may not be indicative of what is truly occurring in terms of parenting or what is actually occurring in mother-daughter, mother-son, father-daughter, and father-son relationships (Mounts, 2001).

Researchers (Mounts, 2001; Paulson & Sputa, 1996) have indicated that most previously conducted research on adolescent-parent relationships was limited by three major characteristics of the studies. First, most studies did not consider the perceptions of mothers and fathers separately but as a couple or pair. The second limitation was the exclusion of parents’ perceptions of their relationship, behaviors, and involvement with their adolescent. The results of such studies were primarily based on the perceptions of adolescents without comparisons to parental perceptions. The third limitation specifies research subjects were primarily in one developmental stage/age and findings were extrapolated to include all adolescent developmental stages. This methodology limited the information necessary to assess changes in parent-child relationships since the research provided minimal support that relationships are adaptive throughout the parent-adolescent lifespan and failed to establish sufficient baseline data for the study of adolescence (Paulson & Sputa, 1996).

Holmbeck and O’Donnell (1991) posited that much of the disagreement that arises between adolescent and parent is due to a difference in their perception of authority. The adolescent perceives that they are responsible for their own personal behaviors (chores, friends, etc.) while parents believe it is their continued role to supervise their adolescents’ contacts and behaviors. According to Holmbeck and O’Donnell (1991), cross-sectional and short-term longitudinal research found that adolescents usually align their beliefs more often with their fathers rather than their mothers. This may possibly occur as a result of the adolescents’ age and gender, shared beliefs with their parents, or willingness to accept their parents’ direction and guidance. This result was found to be more prominent in perceptions of political and religious principles and educational goals, and in issues arising from disagreement with their parents’ parenting. As part of a larger sample, the Holmbeck and O’Donnell (1991) study of early-to-late adolescents (n = 99) and their mothers were twice assessed for any discrepancies in their own and adolescent’s perceptions of decision-making and autonomy. Holmbeck & O’Donnell (1991) implied that any discrepancies in their findings were supported by both the cross-sectional and longitudinal analysis in which they found a cyclical and bi-directional pattern of behaviors with little and/or no age or gender significance.
Many of the studies conducted on adolescent development and adolescent perceptions are cross-sectional in nature (Bogenschneider et al., 1997; Harris & Morgan, 1991; Tein et al., 1994; Veneziano & Rohner, 1998), conducted on pre-adolescent children, and extrapolated to early adolescent attitudes and behaviors. These studies fail to isolate influences of gender, family structure, age of child, socio-economic status, and child’s temperament—all of which influence perceptions of family consistency and/or change (Tein et al., 1994). In addition to the one-party reports provided by parent(s) and/or the adolescents, many of these studies have provided insight at one point in time without providing a comprehensive view of what is occurring in the family system (Bell et al., 2001; Clark-Lempers et al., 1991; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985; Holmbeck & O’Donnell, 1991; Small, Eastman, & Cornelius, 1988).

Finally, questionnaire and/or interviews have inherent limitations in scope as well as their ability to accurately reflect the scope of the subjects’ comprehension of the concepts measured. Instrument collection methods provide one respondent’s comprehension of or supposition about the relationship, therefore again, providing a one-sided paradigm of family functioning. Holmbeck and O’Donnell (1991) and Youniss and Smollar (1985) explained that their instrument analysis revealed that subjects might provide socially acceptable responses to sensitive questions about family and family functioning, thus altering the respondents’ factual perspective to meet acceptable social standards.
CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Participants

The data for this dissertation research were collected for the Iowa Adolescence Project (Lempers & Clark-Lempers, 1989). The IAP was a longitudinal study extending from 1989 to 1991. Sample responses were collected from two-parent rural and/or farming families with a sixth or eighth grader. During the collection period, the ethnic population was approximated at less than 3% of the entire state population. The ethnic population would have been located in more urbanized areas. Racial identity information was not collected for the sample.

Data were collected from families living in one of 27 randomly selected school districts in Iowa. After the random selection process, the districts were classified by size (large, small) and by state location (northeast, northwest, southeast, southwest). The initial contact was made with parents with a letter specifying the details of the study such as time frame, number of contacts, and compensation. Of the families in the IAP close to 48% were farm families and the remaining 52% were non-farm families. The Hollingshead (1957) ranking system for identifying parents’ occupation and highest completed school grade was used to clarify socio-economic status of the families with a vast majority of families reported to be middle- and working-class households.

To participate in the study, families had to have two parents living in the home, with the target child in the sixth or eighth grade at the onset of the study, and have a sibling within three years of the target child. At the outset of the study, 726 families were screened, and 464 were identified as eligible to participate in the study with a final sample size of 398 families agreeing to participate. A total of 188 sixth- and 210 eighth-graders and their families took part in this study. Of the 188 sixth graders, 96 were female and 92 were male; of the 210 eighth graders, 104 were female and 106 were male. This group of sixth- and eighth-graders and their families were recruited for a three-wave longitudinal study on stress, support, and distress.

The sixth graders were 11-to 13-years in age, with a mean of 11.4 years, and the eighth graders were 12-to 14-years in age, with a mean of 13.4 years. Of the 398 families interviewed during the first wave of measurement, 382 were available for the second wave of measurement a year later, and 374 were available a year later for the third wave of measurement.
Procedure

Families that expressed an interest in participating in the study and met the criteria for participation responded by returning a brief questionnaire in self-addressed, stamped envelopes supplied by the principal investigators. A second contact was made with the families by telephone to schedule an appointment to meet with the family. The first visit consisted of reviewing details of the project with all participants, obtaining a signed and dated statement of informed consent from all participants, and responding to a set of questionnaires. The first visit constituted the first wave of measurement.

A total of 12 interviewers from the Survey Section of the Statistical Laboratory at a major Midwestern university were involved, and all had experience in interviewing. Each participant was asked to fill out his or her questionnaire in a separate room, if possible. After each participant completed this step of the process, the interviewer determined that all questions were answered and, if not, requested the respondent to provide his or her best answer. At the end of the interview session, the interviewer thanked the family for their participation, provided them with reimbursement for their time and effort, and informed them that the Survey Section would contact the family for two more visits. Total time needed for the visit varied among families from 1 to 1 1/2 hours. This procedure was the same for the second and third waves of measurement.

Measures

Demographics. A demographic questionnaire was used to determine for each family participant the age, gender, education, current occupation and employment (too young to be employed, part-time, full-time, full-time homemaker, unemployed, retired, disabled).

Parental Behavior Questionnaire. Mothers, fathers, daughters and sons each responded to 28 parenting items (Appendix C). Most (21) of the items were taken from Roberts, Block and Block (1984) Child Rearing Practicing Report, and from Schaefer’s (1965) Child’s Report of Parental Behavior Inventory; the remaining 7 items came from a variety of then recently published studies on parental monitoring. The items were chosen so as to represent the dimensions of parental nurturance, parent-child discipline and parental monitoring. The parents indicated for each item how often during the last year they had acted in certain ways towards their daughters or sons. An example is: How often did you show interest in what your child was learning at school? Response categories were never, seldom, sometimes, often and very often. The daughters and sons indicated
for each item how often during the last year their parents had acted in certain ways towards them. An example is: How often during the last year did your mother (father) praise you? The response categories again were never, seldom, sometimes, often and very often. The focus of this study will be on the nurturance items.

**Data analysis.** The interest of this study is on differential, absolute and structural continuity. Differential continuity refers to whether or not the rank-order among individuals from highest to lowest on some attribute, dimension, or trait (e.g., from most nurturant to least nurturant) stays the same over time, and is usually examined by correlating the measurements made of an attribute in a group of individuals at one point in time with the measurements made of the same attribute in the same group of individuals at a second point in time. Absolute continuity refers to whether or not the amount of an attribute changes or remains constant over time and is usually examined by comparing the average for an attribute in a group of individuals at one point in time with the average for the same attribute in the same group of individuals at a second point in time. Structural continuity measures whether or not a pattern of correlations present among items indicating the attribute stays the same or changes over time and is usually examined by investigating whether or not the factor structure for the items indicating the attribute is the same or different across time.

To investigate differential continuity, in each of the four subgroups (mothers, fathers, daughters and sons) exploratory factor analyses will be conducted on the parenting items at each of the three waves of measurement to determine which items at each measurement point form clusters (e.g., items forming a nurturance cluster at wave 1, wave 2 and wave 3) for each respondent. A total score will be calculated at each time of measurement by summing the scores over all nurturance items which load on the same factor (e.g., all the items with loadings of 0.35 which load on the same factor). For mothers, their factor scores for a cluster (e.g., nurturance) at the first wave of measurement will be correlated with their factor scores for the same cluster at time 2 and time 3 to determine the degree of differential continuity in mothers’ perceptions of her nurturant parenting. The same will be done with the fathers’, daughters’, and sons’ factor scores to get the degree of differential continuity in their perceptions.

In addition to these four groups of across-time correlations for the same respondent (mothers, fathers, sons and daughters) correlations within each wave of measurement will be conducted between mothers’,
sons’ or daughters’ factor scores to determine the degree of correspondence between different respondents (mothers-daughters, mothers-sons, fathers-daughters and father-sons) at each time of measure.

For each of the dyads (mother-daughter, father-daughter, mother-son and father-son) a difference score will be calculated at each time of measurement by subtracting the total cluster score of the adolescent child from the total cluster score of his or her parent. A 4 (type of dyad) by 2 (grade) by 3 (time) repeated measures ANOVA will be conducted on the difference scores to determine at each wave of measurement possible significant differences between the four dyads in the within-dyad similarity of perception of the nurturance attribute, and to investigate possible changes in those differences across the three waves.

To investigate absolute continuity, that is, changes over time in the amount of nurturance, a 2 (gender of child or parent) by 2 (grade) by 3 (time) repeated measures ANOVA will be conducted on each of the nurturance factor scores resulting from the exploratory factor analyses of the mothers’, fathers’, daughters’, and sons’ responses to the questionnaires. Gender and grade are the between-subjects factors, and time is the within-subjects factor. These repeated measures ANOVAs are conducted to investigate possible age- and gender-related changes over time in mean level of nurturance as reported by mothers, fathers, daughters, and sons.

To investigate structural continuity, that is, to determine whether or not the factorial structure of the nurturance items is the same for different respondents at the same time or for the same respondent across time, confirmatory factor analyses will be conducted.

The within-wave confirmatory factor analyses will determine whether or not mothers’ perceptions of their own parenting, fathers’ perceptions of their parenting, and the adolescent children’s perceptions of their parents’ parenting are all manifest indicators of the same underlying construct with the same factor loadings, at time 1 or time 2 or time 3. This constitutes a factorial invariance search across respondents at the same time of measurement. The across-wave confirmatory factor analyses will determine whether or not the same variables constrained to have the same factor loadings across time are indicative of the same underlying construct across the 3 waves of measurements. This constitutes a factorial invariance search across time.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Reliabilities of Measures

The reliability of the 21-parenting item questionnaire was determined by calculating for each of the participants at each wave of measurement Cronbach’s alpha which is a measure of internal consistency.

Table 1 shows the various alpha values. There was an increase in reliability for fathers’, mothers’, and target child’s responses for father responses. For the adolescent perceptions of mothers, the reliabilities were lower at time two with time three displaying the highest reliability for the three waves.

Table 1: Reliability coefficients for mother, father, and target children
Schaefer’s 21 parenting items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>WAVE 1</th>
<th>WAVE 2</th>
<th>WAVE 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>N of Cases = 398.0</td>
<td>N of Cases = 382.0</td>
<td>N of Cases = 374.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alpha = .76</td>
<td>Alpha = .94</td>
<td>Alpha = .95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>N of Cases = 398.0</td>
<td>N of Cases = 382.0</td>
<td>N of Cases = 374.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alpha = .72</td>
<td>Alpha = .92</td>
<td>Alpha = .94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target child =</td>
<td>N of Cases = 398.0</td>
<td>N of Cases = 382.0</td>
<td>N of Cases = 374.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>father</td>
<td>Alpha = .81</td>
<td>Alpha = .88</td>
<td>Alpha = .91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target child =</td>
<td>N of Cases = 398.0</td>
<td>N of Cases = 382.0</td>
<td>N of Cases = 374.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mother</td>
<td>Alpha = .79</td>
<td>Alpha = .77</td>
<td>Alpha = .83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Factor Analyses of the 21 Item Parenting Scale

Exploratory principal axis factor analyses with varimax rotation were run on the 21 parenting items at each wave of measurement for mothers, fathers, daughters, and sons. Nurturance items with loadings of .35 or higher on only one factor were retained; nurturance items with high loadings on more than one factor were discarded. Table 2 presents the results of the wave 1 factor analyses.
For fathers’ responses to the parenting items, eight nurturance items had loadings of 0.35 or higher on one factor, with loadings ranging from the lowest loading of .38 for item 5 (make whole life center around child) to the highest loading of .78 for item 2 (praise him/her). The scores on the eight items were summed up to derive a nurturance factor score for fathers at time 1 (fat1par). For mothers during wave 1 there were seven nurturance items that loaded on the same factor. The range of loadings was from .54 for item 8 (feel proud of the things your child did) to .78 for item 19 (give child lots of care and attention). The scores on the seven items were summed up and constituted the nurturance factor score for mothers at time 1 (mom1par).

There were seven parenting items that loaded on the same factor for the target adolescents’ view of the father, with factor loadings ranging from .61 for item 16 (tell others about the good things child did) to .80 for item 19 (give child lots of care and attention). Adolescent perceptions of mothers had seven items that loaded at wave 1 on the same factor. The seven items had loadings varying from .53 for item 16 (Tell others about the good things your child did) to .80 for item 19 (give child lots of care and attention). The scores on seven items were summed up to represent, respectively, the nurturance factor scores for the target child’s perceptions of fathers (tf1par) and mothers (tm1par).

The results of the exploratory factor analyses for wave 2 are shown in table 3. Eight nurturance items loaded on the same factor for fathers during the second wave of measurement. The factor loadings varied 

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### Table 2: Wave 1 factor analytic results of 21 parenting items for mothers, fathers, and target children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FATHERS</th>
<th>MOTHERS</th>
<th>TARGET CHILD = FATHER</th>
<th>TARGET CHILD = MOTHERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fpar1</td>
<td>.734</td>
<td>Mpar1</td>
<td>.624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fpar2</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>Mpar2</td>
<td>.623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fpar5</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>Mpar8</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fpar8</td>
<td>.615</td>
<td>Mpar12</td>
<td>.561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fpar12</td>
<td>.588</td>
<td>Mpar16</td>
<td>.574</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fpar16</td>
<td>.633</td>
<td>Mpar18</td>
<td>.629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fpar18</td>
<td>.647</td>
<td>Mpar19</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fpar19</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Tcfpar1  | .777   | Tempar1               | .779                   |
| Tcfpar2  | .798   | Tempar2               | .774                   |
| Tcfpar8  | .734   | Tempar8               | .671                   |
| Tcfpar12 | .728   | Tempar12              | .653                   |
| Tcfpar16 | .61    | Tempar16              | .53                    |
| Tcfpar18 | .645   | Tempar18              | .69                    |
| Tcfpar19 | .80    | Tempar19              | .80                    |

---
Table 3: Wave 2 factor analytic results of 21 parenting items for mothers, fathers, and target children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FATHER</th>
<th>MOTHER</th>
<th>TARGET CHILD = FATHERS</th>
<th>TARGET CHILD = MOTHERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>F2par1</td>
<td>.804</td>
<td>M2par1 .813</td>
<td>T2cfpar1 .792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2par2</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>M2par2 .86</td>
<td>T2cfpar2 .83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2par5</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>M2par8 .757</td>
<td>T2cfpar5 .44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2par8</td>
<td>.768</td>
<td>Mpar12 .703</td>
<td>T2cfpar8 .785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2par12</td>
<td>.745</td>
<td>Mpar16 .65</td>
<td>T2cfpar12 .731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2par16</td>
<td>.727</td>
<td>Mpar18 .672</td>
<td>T2cfpar16 .714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2par18</td>
<td>.715</td>
<td>Mpar19 .744</td>
<td>T2cfpar18 .698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2par19</td>
<td>.796</td>
<td>T2cfpar19 .81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

from .54 for parenting item 5 (make your whole life center around him/her) to .88 for the parenting item 2 (praise him/her). The scores on the eight items were summed up and constituted the nurturance factor score for fathers at the second wave of measurement (fat2par). For the mothers 7 nurturance items loaded on the same factor at wave 2, with the factor loadings ranging from .65 for parenting item 16 (tell others about the good things your child did) to .86 for the second parenting item (praise him/her). The seven wave 2 mothers' parenting items were combined into a summary variable named mom2par.

Adolescent responses for fathers had eight items that loaded on the same factor, with loadings ranging from .44 for item 5 (make your whole life center around him/her) to the high of .81 for item 19 (give him/her a lot of care and attention). The scores on the eight items were summed up and constituted the nurturance factor score for the fathers by adolescents at wave 2 (tf2par). For the adolescent perceptions of mothers 7 items loaded on the same factor, with the loadings ranging from .61 for item 16 (tell others about the good things your child did) to .82 for item 1 (let your child know he/she was appreciated, loved, and respected). The item scores for the seven items at wave 2 were summed up and constituted the factor score for the adolescents regarding mothers at wave 2 (tm2par).
Table 4: Wave 3 factor analytic results of 21 parenting items for mothers, fathers, and target children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FATHER</th>
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<th>TARGET CHILD = FATHER</th>
<th>TARGET CHILD = MOTHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F3par1</td>
<td>.818</td>
<td>M3par1 .82</td>
<td>T3cfpar1 .831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F3par2</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>M3par2 .82</td>
<td>T3cfpar2 .87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F3par8</td>
<td>.773</td>
<td>M3par12 .766</td>
<td>T3cfpar5 .49</td>
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<td>F3par12</td>
<td>.758</td>
<td>M3par16 .691</td>
<td>T3cfpar8 .777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F3par16</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>M3par18 .66</td>
<td>T3cfpar12 .748</td>
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<td>F3par18</td>
<td>.742</td>
<td>M3par19 .77</td>
<td>T3cfpar16 .726</td>
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<tr>
<td>F3par19</td>
<td>.837</td>
<td>T3cfpar18</td>
<td>T3cfpar19 .831</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For wave three seven parenting items were clustered on one factor for fathers. Item 3 (tell others about the good things your child did) had the lowest loading of .70 and item 2 (praise him/her) had the highest loading of .87. The seven parenting items for wave 3 for fathers were combined into a summary variable labeled fat3par. Six mothers’ parenting items were clustered together with a range of .66 for item 18 (show interest in what he/she was learning at school) to .82 for item 1 (let your child know he/she was appreciated, loved, and respected). The scores on the six items were added up and constituted the nurturance factor score for mothers at the third wave of measurement (mom3par).

Adolescent belief about fathers had eight parenting items loading on the same factor, with loadings ranging from .49 for item 5 (make your whole life center around him/her) to .87 for item 2 (praise him/her). The scores on the seven items were combined into a composite variable for wave three for the adolescent and fathers was labeled tf3par. There were eight parenting items clustered for the adolescents and mothers less, with loadings ranging from .40 for item 5 (make your whole life center around him/her) to .84 for item 2 (praise him/her). A summary variable was created by summing up the scores over the eight items (tm3par).
Correlational Analyses between Mothers’, Fathers’, and Adolescent Children’s Perceptions of Parental Nurturance

Correlational analyses were performed to ascertain any relationship that may be present among the variables. Table 5 shows the results. Surprisingly, neither for mothers’ perceptions of their own parenting, nor for fathers’ perceptions of their own parenting, nor for the female adolescents’ perceptions of their mothers’ and fathers’ parenting nor for the male adolescents’ perceptions of their mothers’ and fathers’ parenting were there significant relations between time 1, time 2 and/or time 3. This lack of across time significant relationships means that there is no differential continuity or stability for mothers’ and fathers’ perceptions of their own parenting and for adolescents’ perceptions of their parents’ parenting.

Looking at the cross-sectional correlations, at each time of measurement mothers’ perceptions of their own parenting was correlated with fathers’ perceptions of their own parenting. The correlations varied from .299 at time one to .267 at time two to .226 at time three (see table 5).

The mompar and adolescent male correlations were significantly related at .283 for time one, .251 at time two and .233 time three. The mompar and adolescent female correlations were more closely related at time one than times two and three. The time one correlation for the mompar-adolescent female variable at time one was.261 at the 0.01 significance level. Time two was found to be less significant with a correlation score of .177 at the 0.01 level and time three correlation score of .115 at the 0.05 significance level.

The fatpar variable was found to be significantly correlated to adolescent male and adolescent scores at each of the three times. The fatpar variable was most significantly related at time two .202 and less significantly correlated at time one (.188) and a decrease from time one and time two with a correlation score of .163 at the 0.01 significance level. The fatpar and adolescent female variables were correlated at .274 at time one with a slight decrease to .260 for time two and an increase in correlation from time two to time three with a correlation score of .352 at the 0.01 significance level.

Adolescent males and adolescent females were significantly correlated at each of the three times with a .729 correlation for time one, .668 at time two and a decrease at time three at .532.
Table 5: Correlational analyses of mothers’, fathers’, and target children’s perceptions of parental nurturance

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).</td>
<td>Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).</td>
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Repeated Measures ANOVAs of Mothers’, Fathers’ and Adolescent Children’s Perceptions of Parental Nurturance

To investigate absolute continuity, that is, changes over time in the amount of nurturance, several 2 (gender of child) by 2 (grade) by 3 (time) repeated measures ANOVAs were conducted on each of the nurturance factor scores resulting from the exploratory factor analyses of the mothers’, fathers’, daughters’, and sons’ responses to the questionnaires. Gender and grade are the between-subjects factors, and time is the within-subjects factor. These repeated measures ANOVAs are conducted to investigate possible main effects of time, gender and grade as well as possible interaction effects between time, gender and grade.

For mothers’ perception of their own nurturance the repeated measures ANOVA showed a significant main effect for time (Wilks’ Lambda = 0.57, F(2, 369) = 139.43, p = .000). The significant time effect was further analyzed by running Bonferroni adjusted pairwise comparisons in which mothers’ perceptions of their nurturance at time 1 were compared with their perception of their own nurturance at times 2 and 3. The pairwise analysis showed that there was no significant difference when comparing time 1, with a mean value of 28.68, and time 2, with a mean value of 28.72. However, the differences between time 1 and time 3, with a mean value of 24.36, and time 2 and time 3 were significant.
Table 6: Repeated measures ANOVA of mothers’ perceptions of maternal nurturance

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<sup>a</sup>: Exact statistic

There also was a significant main effect for gender (F(1, 370) = 8.99, p = 0.03) but not for grade. The mean for the female adolescents equaled 27.64 whereas the mean for the male adolescents equaled 26.92. None of the interactions reached significance.

The repeated measures ANOVA for fathers’ perceptions of their own nurturance show a significant effect for time (Wilks’ Lambda = 0.88, F(2,369) = 25.22, p = .000). The significant time effect was further analyzed by running Bonferroni adjusted pairwise comparisons in which fathers’ perceptions of their nurturance at time 1 were compared with their perception of their own nurturance at times 2 and 3. The pairwise analysis showed that there was no significant difference when comparing time 1 and time 2. However, the differences between time 1 and time 3 and time 2 and time 3 were significant.
Table 7: Repeated measures ANOVA of fathers’ perceptions of paternal nurturance

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a. Exact statistic

No significance was found for either adolescent gender or adolescent grade nor for any of the interaction effects.

The repeated measures ANOVA test for the adolescents’ perceptions of maternal nurturance showed a significant effect for time (Wilks’ Lambda = 0.97, F(2, 369) = 5.56, p = .004). The significant time effect was further analyzed by running Bonferroni adjusted pairwise comparisons in which adolescents’ perceptions of maternal nurturance at time 1 were compared with their perceptions of maternal nurturance at times 2 and 3. The pairwise analysis showed that there was no significant difference when comparing time 1 and time 2, and time 1 and time 3. However, the difference between time 2 and time 3 was significant. The only other significant effect was for gender, with the mean for the adolescent girls slightly higher (27.47) than the mean for the adolescent boys (26.75).
The repeated measures ANOVA test for the adolescents’ perceptions of paternal nurturance showed a significant effect for time (Wilks’ Lambda = 0.98, F(2, 369) = 4.13, p = .017). The significant time effect was further analyzed by running Bonferroni adjusted pairwise comparisons in which adolescents’ perceptions of paternal nurturance at time 1 were compared with their perceptions of paternal nurturance at times 2 and 3. The pairwise analysis showed that there was no significant difference when comparing time 1 and time 3, and time 2 and time 3. However, the difference between time 1 and time 2 was significant.

The table below provides the results of the repeated measures ANOVA for target children’s perceptions of maternal nurturance.

### Table 8: Repeated measures ANOVA of target children perceptions of maternal nurturance

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*a. Exact statistic*
Table 9: Repeated measures ANOVA of adolescent perceptions of paternal nurturance

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a. Exact statistic

The effect for gender was also significant (F(1.370) = 5.28, p = .022). The mean score for the female adolescents equaled 26.35, whereas the one for the male adolescents equaled 25.50.

**T-Tests of the Difference between Mothers’ and Fathers’ Perceptions of Their Nurturance, and between the Parents’ and their Adolescent Children’s Perceptions of Parental Nurturance**

Several t-tests were run to see if the scores for the mothers’ perceptions of their own nurturance differed from the scores of the fathers’ perceptions of their nurturance and if the scores of the parents’ perceptions of their own nurturance differed from the scores of their adolescent children’s perceptions of their parents’ nurturance. The null hypothesis in each of those comparisons is that there are no differences between the mothers and fathers, and between parents and their children in their respective perceptions. The alternative hypothesis is that there are differences. A significant finding means that the null hypothesis needs to be rejected and that whatever difference is found can not be ascribed to random chance.
Table 10: T-Tests of the difference in mothers’ and target child’s perceptions of nurturance

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<th>Upper</th>
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<td>.37116</td>
<td>-.0047</td>
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<td>1.954</td>
<td>381</td>
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<td>7.95332</td>
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<td>-1.5787</td>
<td>.0386</td>
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<td>-.5820</td>
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<td>.4096</td>
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<td>.267</td>
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To run these t-tests difference scores were created. Scores for fathers’ perceptions of their own nurturance were subtracted from the scores for mothers’ perceptions of their own nurturance to get the difference scores for mothers and fathers. At the first time of measurement, the average difference score between mothers’ and fathers’ perceptions of their own nurturance was 0.43 with a standard deviation of 0.62. The t-test showed a significant finding, indicating that the null hypothesis needed to be rejected (t (1,397) = 14.99, p = 0.000). A similar finding resulted for this comparison at the second wave of measurement (the average difference was 0.45 with standard deviation of 0.83, t (1, 381) = 10.64, p = 0.000) and at the third wave of measurement (the average difference was 0.26 with a standard deviation of 0.93, t (1, 373) = 5.48, p = 0.000). Scores for mothers’ perceptions of their own nurturance were on average statistically significantly higher than the scores for fathers’ perceptions of their nurturance at each of the 3 points of measurement, although substantially the difference was small in each case.

With respect to the parents’ perceptions of their own nurturance and their adolescent children’s perceptions of their parent’s nurturance, the first comparison looked at was between mothers and their adolescent daughters and sons. At each of the 3 points of measurement, scores for mothers’ perceptions of their own nurturance were statistically significantly higher than the scores for their adolescent children’s perceptions of their mothers’ nurturance. At the first wave of measurement, the average difference score was 0.25, with a standard deviation of 0.75; t (1,397) = 6.64, p = 0.000. At the second wave of measurement, the average difference score was 0.34, with a standard deviation of 0.85; t (1, 381) = 0.34, p = 0.000. And at the third wave...
of measurement, the average difference score was 0.58, with a standard deviation of 0.89; \( t (1, 373) = 12.62 \) with a p-value of 0.000. As before, the differences were statistically significant, but substantially speaking they were small.

The findings for the comparisons between fathers’ perceptions of their own nurturance and their adolescent children’s perceptions of their paternal nurturance were a little different. At the first time of measurement, the average difference score in this case was 0.05, with a standard deviation of 0.83; \( t (1, 397) = 1.15, p = 0.25 \), indicating a statistically non-significant difference which means that the null hypothesis of no difference cannot be rejected. At the second time of measurement the average difference score equaled 0.32, with a standard deviation of 0.94; \( t (1, 381) = 6.71, p = 0.000 \), indicating a statistically significant difference which means that the null hypothesis needs to be rejected and the alternative hypothesis of a systematic difference can be accepted. At the third time of measurement the average difference score was 0.57, with a standard deviation of 0.98; \( t (1, 373) = 11.33, p = 0.000 \), indicating a result similar to that at the second wave of measurement. So for this comparison scores for fathers’ perceptions of their own nurturance were on average statistically significantly higher than the scores of their adolescent children’s perceptions of their paternal nurturance, but as before, substantially speaking the differences were rather small.

Repeated Measures ANOVAs of the Differences between Mothers’ and Fathers’ Perceptions of their Nurturance, and of the Differences between Parents’ and their Adolescent Children’s Perceptions of their Parental Nurturance

To determine whether or not the differences between mothers’ and fathers’ perceptions of their own nurturance, and the differences between the parents’ and their adolescent children’s perceptions of their parental nurturance varied over time and by grade and sex of the adolescent child 3 repeated measures ANOVAs were performed.

The first repeated measure ANOVA in this section involved the analysis of whether or not the differences between mothers and fathers varied significantly from time 1 to time 2 to time 3 and by grade and sex of child. The repeated measures ANOVA showed a significant effect for the within-subjects factor of time: Wilks’s Lambda = 0.97, \( F (2, 369) = 6.63, p = 0.001 \). There were no significant effects for grade or sex of child, nor were there significant interaction effects. The significant time effect was further analyzed by running Bonferroni adjusted pairwise comparisons between time 1 and time 2, time 1 and time 3, and time 2 and time 3.
The time 1 versus time 2 pairwise comparison was not significant, with the average mean difference between
time 1 and time 2 equaling 0.02, with a standard deviation of 0.06, with a p-value of 1.00. The time 1 versus

time 3 pairwise comparison was significant, with the average mean difference between time 1 and time 3
equaling 0.21, with a standard deviation of 0.06 and a p-value of 0.002. A similar result was obtained for the
time 2 versus time 3 comparison, with the average mean difference equaling 0.20, with a standard deviation of
0.06 and a p-value of 0.007. While the results for the time 1 versus time 3, and for the time 2 versus time 3
comparisons are statistically significant, substantially speaking the changes from time 1 to time 3 and from time
2 to time 3 in the differences between mothers and fathers were rather small.

The second repeated measure ANOVA in this section involved the analysis of whether or not the
differences between mothers’ perceptions of their own nurturance and their adolescent children’s perceptions of
their mothers’ nurturance varied significantly from time 1 to time 2 to time 3 and by grade and sex of child.
The repeated measures ANOVA showed a significant effect for the within-subjects factor of time: Wilks’s
Lambda = 0.92, F (2, 369) = 15.24, p = 0.000. As in the first case, there were no significant effects for grade or
sex of child, nor were there significant interaction effects. The significant time effect was further analyzed by
running Bonferroni adjusted pairwise comparisons between time 1 and time 2, time 1 and time 3, and time 2
and time 3. The time 1 versus time 2 pairwise comparison was not significant, with the average mean
difference between time 1 and time 2 equaling -0.10, with a standard deviation of 0.06, with a p-value of 0.31.
The time 1 versus time 3 pairwise comparison was significant, with the average mean difference between time 1
and time 3 equaling -0.35, with a standard deviation of 0.06 and a p-value of 0.000. A similar result was
obtained for the time 2 versus time 3 comparison, with the average mean difference equaling -0.25, with a
standard deviation of 0.07 and a p-value of 0.001. While the results for the time 1 versus time 3, and for the
time 2 versus time 3 comparisons are statistically significant, substantially speaking the changes from time 1 to
time 3 and from time 2 to time 3 in the differences between mothers and fathers were rather small, as was the
case in the first comparison.

The third repeated measure ANOVA in this section involved the analysis of whether or not the differences
between fathers’ perceptions of their own nurturance and their adolescent children’s perceptions of their fathers’
nurturance varied significantly from time 1 to time 2 to time 3 and by grade and sex of child. The repeated
measures ANOVA again showed a significant effect for the within-subjects factor of time: Wilks’s Lambda = 0.84, F (2, 369) = 34.29, p = 0.000. As in the first and second case, there were no significant effects for grade or sex of child, nor were there significant interaction effects. The significant time effect was further analyzed by running Bonferroni adjusted pairwise comparisons between time 1 and time 2, time 1 and time 3, and time 2 and time 3. The time 1 versus time 2 pairwise comparison was now significant, with the average mean difference between time 1 and time 2 equaling -0.30, with a standard deviation of 0.07, with a p-value of 0.000. The time 1 versus time 3 pairwise comparison was significant, with the average mean difference between time 1 and time 3 equaling -0.56, with a standard deviation of 0.07 and a p-value of 0.000. The result for the time 2 versus time 3 comparison showed an average mean difference equaling -0.26, with a standard deviation of 0.07 and a p-value of 0.001. While the results for all 3 comparisons were statistically significant, substantially speaking the changes from time 1 to time 2, from time 2 to time 3, and from time 1 to time 3 in the differences between mothers and fathers were rather small, as was the case in the first 2 comparisons.

**Confirmatory Factor Analyses**

To test for structural continuity or stability confirmatory factor analyses were performed with the AMOS software program. To test for factorial invariance across respondents at the same time of measurement, a model was created in which the 4 variables of mothers’ perceptions of their own nurturance, fathers’ perceptions of their nurturance, and the adolescent children’s perceptions of their mothers’ and fathers’ nurturance were manifest variables constrained to have the same factor loadings on the same underlying construct, parental nurturance. At time 1 the model did not fit the data well at all, with a chi-square of 214.83 with 5 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.000, when a non-significant chi-square is desirable. The goodness of fit index (GFI) equaled 0.80 when a value of 0.90 or higher is desirable. The adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) was only 0.60 when a value of 0.90 or higher is desirable. The root mean square residual (RMR) equaled 4.97 when a value of 0.05 or less is desirable. The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was 0.325 when a value of 0.05 or less is desirable.

At the second wave of measurement the model did not fit the data well either, with a chi-square of 141.6 with 5 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.000. The GFI was 0.82, the AGFI equaled 0.68, the RMR was 5.31 and the RMSEA was 0.27, all values indicative of a badly fitting model. At the third time of measurement
results were similar, with a chi-square of 109.46 with 5 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.000. The GFI was 0.88, the AGFI equaled 0.76, the RMR was 6.06 and the RMSEA equaled 0.24. None of these results for these 3 models at the 3 waves of measurement indicated structural invariance across respondents.

To test for factorial invariance, a search across time a simultaneous confirmatory factor analysis for 3 subgroups was performed. Wave of measurement was the basis for the subgroup formation so there is a wave 1 subgroup, a wave 2 subgroup and a wave 3 subgroup. The 4 variables of mothers’ perceptions of their own nurturance, fathers’ perceptions of their nurturance, and the adolescent children’s perceptions of their mothers’ and fathers’ nurturance were manifest variables constrained to have the same loadings on the same underlying construct, parental nurturance, in each of the 3 subgroups. The results of this simultaneous confirmatory factor analysis showed a chi-square of 361.77 with 16 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.000, a GFI of 0.87 and a AGFI of 0.76, a RMR of 4.76 and a RMSEA of 0.14. The results are indicative of a model that does not fit the data well.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY

The perceptions of parents and their adolescents have been found to be both disparate and similar. Studies have found changes in perceptions of nurturance as the adolescent grows older and differences between male and female adolescents. Gender was also found to be a common influence in the perceptions of nurturance in father-daughter, father-son, mother-daughter and mother-son relationships.

This study focused on absolute, structural, and differential continuity of nurturance among parent-adolescent dyads. Differential continuity refers to whether or not the rank-order among individuals from highest to lowest on some attribute, dimension, or trait (e.g. from most nurturant to least nurturant) stays the same over time, and is usually examined by correlating the measurements made of an attribute in a group of individuals at one point in time with the measurements made of the same attribute in the same group of individuals at a second point in time. Absolute continuity refers to whether or not the amount of an attribute changes or remains constant over time and is usually examined by comparing the average for an attribute in a group of individuals at one point in time with the average for the same attribute in the same group of individuals at a second point in time. Structural continuity measures whether or not a pattern of correlations present among items indicating the attribute stays the same or changes over time and is usually examined by investigating whether or not the factor structure for the items indicating the attribute is the same or different across time.

Differential, absolute, and structural continuity were analyzed by running correlations, repeated measures ANOVAs, paired t-tests, and confirmatory factor analyses, respectively. Limitations of the study and implications for further research will conclude the study.

Differential Continuity

Exploratory factor analyses were conducted to identify the items which would constitute the nurturance construct for mothers’ perceptions of their parenting, fathers’ perceptions of their parenting, and male and female adolescents’ perceptions of their parents’ parenting, respectively. Items forming the cluster were aggregated into a composite variable at each wave of measurement, and the aggregated variables were correlated across the 3 times.
Mothers’ perceptions of their nurturance

No differential continuity was found for mothers’ perceptions of their own nurturance across the three times of measurement. That simply means that mothers’ relative rating of their own nurturance at any point of measurement is not related to their relative ratings of their own nurturance at any other points of measurement.

This finding is inconsistent with the findings of Paulson and Sputa (1996) that mothers’ responsiveness (nurturance & warmth) remains consistent from 9th to 12th grades. The finding in this study might fit with Holmbeck and O’Donnell’s (1991) as well as with Bell, Rychener and Munsch’s (2001) proposition that mothers and adolescents reevaluate and renegotiate their relationships frequently throughout early, middle and late adolescence, and that because of this reevaluation and renegotiating no differential stability might be present.

At each of the three points of measurement mothers’ perceptions of their own nurturance were related in statistically significant ways to fathers’ perceptions of their nurturance and to their adolescents’ perceptions of maternal nurturance but these significant relationships were at best very modest, varying between 0.26 and 0.30, indicating not much shared variance.

Fathers’ perceptions of their nurturance

As was the case for mothers, no differential stability or continuity was found for fathers’ perceptions of their nurturance across the 3 waves of measurement. Clark-Lempers, Lempers, & Ho (1991) documented considerable changes in the father-adolescent relationship from early to middle to late adolescence and the lack of differential stability in the present study most likely is related to the changing nature of the father-adolescent daughter and father-adolescent son relationships across adolescence.

Fathers’ perceptions of their own nurturance were related in statistically significant ways to their adolescent children’s perceptions of paternal nurturance, but, as with the mothers, these relationships were not strong at all and did not indicate a substantial overlap between the fathers’ and their children’s perceptions.

Adolescent teen perceptions of mothers’ and fathers’ nurturance

Adolescents’ perceptions of their parents’ nurturance at the three waves of measurement were not related to each other in statistically significant ways, again indicating no differential stability or consistency. This finding of no differential stability is inconsistent with findings of other studies such as Roberts, Block, and
Block (1984) and McNally, Eisenberg, and Harris (1991) but that inconsistency is difficult to interpret because of the many differences between studies in terms of which age periods are investigated (adolescence versus the transition of childhood to adolescence), the sources of information (parents only, children only, both parents and children), the dimension measured (nurturance versus monitoring versus control) and the specific questionnaire items.

At each of the three times of measurement, the adolescents’ perceptions of maternal nurturance were in statistically significant ways related to their perceptions of paternal nurturance, and these relationship were very substantial, varying between 0.53 and 0.73. This indicates a substantial overlap in how adolescents perceive their mothers and fathers in their respective nurturant parenting. This overlap might be the results of how mothers and fathers over time have established and consolidated a shared pattern in their respective parenting of their child. It is worth pointing out that whereas adolescents’ perceptions of maternal and paternal nurturance overlap substantially, no such substantial overlap exists between adolescents’ perceptions of parental nurturance and the parents’ perceptions of their own nurturance, at any of the points of measurement.

**Absolute Continuity**

Several repeated measures ANOVAs were performed to determine whether or not over the 3 points of measurement there were significant changes in the mothers’, fathers’ and adolescents’ perceptions of the level of nurturance. Many of the differences were supportive of previous research that changes in parenting behaviors and attitudes are likely to occur in adolescence.

**Mothers’ perceptions of their nurturance**

For mothers’ perceptions of their level of nurturance significant differences were found between the first and third wave of measurement and between the second and third wave of measurement, but not between the first and second wave of measurement. The change from time 1 and time 2 to time 3 was a decrease in perceived level of maternal nurturance. While the change in mothers’ perceptions from time 1 and 2 to time 3 was significant, the change appears to gradual and not very big, supporting Alessandri & Wozniak’s (1987) and Comstock, 1994; Arnett, 1990; Steinberg’s (1990) suggestion that change normally occurs gradually in early and middle adolescence and might stabilize in later adolescence. This finding of a gradual and small change supports Collins & Laursen’s (2004) premise that effective parenting is an adaptive and continuously
modifying behavior. This gradual change is also indicative of the goodness-of-fit model (Bogenschneider, Small & Tsay, 1997; Belsky, 1984) that good parenting allows for changes in parenting behavior and perceptions as a normative construct of family functioning.

It can also be concluded from the findings of the repeated measures ANOVAs that mothers perceive themselves to remain nurturing and responsive to their child regardless of the child’s age or developmental stage. The changes in perceptions alone do not seem to contribute to a detrimental relationship with the adolescent or to have a negative impact on the ability to parent and provide support (Steinberg, 1990).

Therefore it can be concluded that mothers do vary in their perceptions of their nurturance with the developmental stage of their adolescent. There was absolute continuity for mothers’ perceptions of their level of nurturance from time 1 to time 2 but not from time 1 to time 3 or from time 2 to time 3.

**Fathers’ perceptions of their nurturance**

The pattern of repeated measures ANOVA findings for fathers’ perceptions of their level of nurturance over time was very similar to that of the mothers. Fathers did not differ significantly in their perceptions of their level of nurturance from time 1 to time 2, but they differed from time 1 to time 3 and from time 2 to time 3, with a decrease in perceived level of nurturance in both comparisons. As was the case with the mothers, there were no significant results for the time and sex, time and grade, or time, sex, and grade interactions. Again the findings support that change is gradual and small. The hypothesis was that absolute continuity would not be present in the perceptions of fathers regarding their level of nurturance, and this was found for the time 1 – time 3 and the time 2 – time 3 comparisons.

While there was a statistically significant, but substantially very small gender difference for mothers’ perceptions of their level of nurturance, with a slightly higher level for girls than for boys, no gender difference was found in the repeated measures ANOVA for fathers’ perceptions of their level of nurturance. This finding is somewhat contrary to results that fathers have distinct and diminishing perceptions of nurturance for their offspring by gender. Thus, these findings fail to support the concept that fathers perceive themselves to be less nurturing of their adolescent son than of their adolescent daughter (Collins & Russell, 1991). Collins and Russell (1991) propose that the change is difficult to assess since the father-adolescent relationship is defined by less nurturance, warmth, and emotional support than the mother-adolescent relationship. In addition, father-son
and father-daughter relationships are seen as different in early childhood and it is most likely that those differences remain throughout childhood and adolescence.

Adolescent teen perceptions of maternal nurturance

For adolescents’ perceptions of the level of maternal nurturance the repeated measures ANOVA and the follow-up pairwise t-test indicated a significant difference between time 2 and time 3. In this case adolescent perceived a significantly higher but substantially small increase in the level of maternal nurturance from time 2 to time 3. No other time comparisons were significant, thus absolute continuity was present from time 1 to time 2, and from time 1 to time 3, but not from time 2 to time 3. The analysis also showed that mothers perceived themselves to be slightly more nurturant towards their daughters than towards their sons.

Clark-Lempers, Lempers & Ho (1991), Collins & Russell (1991), Crouter, Manke & McHale (1995) as well as Ohannessian, Lerner, Lerner & von Eye (1995) suggest that as the adolescents mature, gender becomes a more influential determinant in their perceptions of their parents’ parenting. Although gender seems to become more prominent, it was characterized by a small difference, far from indicating that the adolescent sons perceived their mother to be considerably less nurturing towards them than towards their daughters.

Adolescent teen perceptions of paternal nurturance

The repeated measures ANOVA with the follow-up pairwise t-tests found significant results for time and for gender. The follow-up t-tests showed no significant differences between time 1 and time 3, and between time 2 and time 3, but a significant difference between time 1 and time 2. Adolescents perceived a statistically significant, but substantially small increase from time 1 to time 2 in their level of paternal nurturance. This finding of the importance of time indicates the lack of absolute continuity for the time 1 – time 2 comparison. This finding is supportive of studies (Clark-Lempers et al, 1991; Paterson, Field & Pryor, 1994) that change is present in perceptions of adolescents from early to middle.

Adolescent females perceived a slightly higher level of paternal nurturance towards themselves than did the adolescent boys. This finding is consistent with others studies such as Clark-Lempers, Lempers & Ho (1991) and others indicating that in the father-adolescent boy relationship the emphasis is more on instrumental than on emotional exchanges in the relationship.
**Structural continuity**

To determine whether or not the same construct of nurturance was measured with different respondents and at the 3 different waves of measurement, confirmatory factor analyses were run. To test for factorial invariance across respondents at the same time of measurement, a model was created in which the 4 variables of mothers’ perceptions of their own nurturance, fathers’ perceptions of their nurturance, and the adolescent children’s perceptions of their mothers’ and fathers’ nurturance were manifest variables constrained to have the same factor loadings on the same underlying construct, parental nurturance. The results of this analysis did not show that the model fitted the data well at any of the 3 times of measurement. Therefore the assumption of structural or factorial invariance across the different respondents, mothers, fathers and adolescent children, cannot be made. Together with the significant but low correlations between mothers’ perceptions of their nurturance, fathers’ perceptions of their nurturance, and the adolescent children’s perceptions of their parents’ nurturance (see correlational results) these confirmatory factor analyses indicate that the presence of related but distinct constructs across the different respondents at each wave of measurement.

To test for structural invariance across time a simultaneous confirmatory factor analysis for 3 subgroups was performed. Wave of measurement was the basis for the subgroup formation so there is a wave 1 subgroup, a wave 2 subgroup and a wave 3 subgroup. The 4 variables of mothers’ perceptions of their own nurturance, fathers’ perceptions of their nurturance, and the adolescent children’s perceptions of their mothers’ and fathers’ nurturance were manifest variables constrained to have the same loadings on the same underlying construct, parental nurturance, in each of the 3 subgroups. Again, the results did not indicate a well fitting model. Therefore, the assumption that the same underlying uni-dimensional construct is measured across time is not justified.

**Theoretical Implications**

Most of the findings were not significantly indicative of any one theory. However, the continuous frameworks such as attachment and goodness-of-fit theories seem able to most closely explain some of the significant, but subtle changes that were found to occur from early to late adolescence.

Goodness-of-fit theory proposes that the child’s disposition affects the parents’ willingness and ability to nurture, primarily because children are unable, fail, and/or refuse to provide their parents with the information
regarding their needs, perceptions, and feelings. The theory proposes that perceptions are “reciprocal” behaviors in the parents subtly and continually adapt their receptiveness and emotional resources to the child’s behavior, needs, and attitudes. Thus, a poorly fitting relationship between parent and adolescent may result in the child feeling less comfortable sharing and discussing their lives with their parents. Any major disruption and/or disturbance could thus propel the family into distress, thus affecting the parents’ competence in their ability to parent. Therefore, it would be prudent to assume that parents experiencing more stress are less likely to be affectionate, supportive, and nurturing parents to their adolescent.

**Summary**

This study examine age-, time- and gender-related patterns of continuity or discontinuity in the perceptions of nurturance present in mother-adolescent daughter, mother-adolescent son, father-adolescent daughter and father-adolescent son dyads.

The adolescent developmental research suggests that adolescent research should examine the patterns present in family functioning that may remain continuous from early to late adolescence (Aquilino, 1997; Compas, Hinden & Gerhardt, 1995; Steinberg & Morris, 2001). Still others suggested that any serious or large discrepancies between parents and adolescents could exacerbate family discord into serious family dysfunction (Carlson, Cooper & Spradling, 1991; Tein, Roosa & Michaels, 1994).

The Carlson et al. (1991) research also suggested that family members have both distinct and shared perceptions of the parenting present in the family. These distinct and shared perceptions are affected by the adolescents’ age and gender. Clark-Lempers et al. (1991) suggested that gender and age-related change could be expected in how adolescents perceive their parents’ nurturance as well as other parenting behaviors.

Studying continuity patterns in family functioning has long been of interest to many researchers. Roberts, Block and Block (1965) sought to understand the continuity or changes that might be occurring in families with younger children. McNally, Eisenberg and Harris (1991) suggested the use of longitudinal analysis to understand continuity from pre-adolescence into late adolescence, while Tein, Roosa and Michaels (1994) proposed that the complexities of parent and adolescent family perceptions should be examined with the use of multiple instruments and multiple analyses. To address some of the limitations or concerns associated with
understanding the perceptions of adolescents and their parents, the present research used items from multiple parenting instruments, longitudinal data and several analytic techniques.

The exploratory factor analyses were quite useful in determining what constructs parents and adolescents use to define their understanding of parental nurturance for them. This provided a foundation for each family member’s perspective of their respective relationship. While many of the items that were manifest indicators of the latent construct of nurturance were present for each family member, there were some items that did not function as a manifest indicator of nurturance for all respondents. Mothers, fathers and adolescents have both shared and distinct behaviors and beliefs that imply nurturance.

Caspi’s definitions of absolute, differential and structural continuity were very useful for examining patterns of continuity and discontinuity that are occurring in mother-daughter, mother-son, father-daughter and father-son dyads. Overall, the evidence does not provide strong support for differential continuity nor for structural continuity. The findings with respect to absolute continuity are more mixed, with both evidence for absolute continuity as well as evidence for absolute discontinuity. However, no clear developmental pattern emerged for either absolute continuity or for absolute discontinuity.

Gender was not found to have as much influence on perceptions of family members as was expected given the theoretical perspectives of Comstock (1994), Gilligan (1982), and Ohannessian, Lerner, Lerner and von Eye (1995). Whenever statistically significant gender effects were found, they were very small in size. Also quite remarkable is the lack of significant interactions between gender and other variables of interest in the study.

Limitations of the study

Self-reporting instruments are able to provide only a snapshot of what is actually occurring at any time and from anyone’s person’s perspective. To some degree, this research was able to provide a broader idea of the perceptions present in the family but having mothers, fathers and their adolescent sons and daughters as respondents.

It would be beneficial to investigate patterns of continuity and discontinuity in a more current sample of adolescents. In the decade since the data was collected, parenting ideals and expectations may have been altered as a response to contemporary social norms and issues. There have been significant demographic shifts in the population, resulting in adolescent exposure to people from other socio-economic and cultural
backgrounds. There have also been significant shifts in exposure to music, television and social threats, thus making it more difficult for parents to parent. In addition, the data was collected on rural and/or farming families towards the end of the Midwest Farm crisis. During this period, farm families were experiencing a significant amount of economic and financial stress. The stress and economic hardship associated with the farm crisis would definitely have impacted the functioning of families, as well as the parents’ ability to parent positively and effectively. Thus, is alleged that sample responses may have been influenced by the historical context in which the data were collected.

The lack of ethnic and cultural diversity in the sample is a major limitation of this study. The interest in cultural differences in parenting has found that African American parents may have adapted less warm and nurturing parenting behaviors, in lieu of more strict and controlling behaviors as protection for their child against adverse or harsh social environments (Steinberg, 1991). For example, nurturance among African American families living in inner-city communities may be solely defined by the protection of the child from outside harm and not be indicated by hugs, kisses, or discussions of love. It can be hypothesized that some of the same parenting behaviors and perceptions for Caucasian parents would have a significantly different effect on African American and would manifest different outcomes based on their social environment.

Adolescent birth order may be an important variable in determining the perceptions of both parents and adolescents. First-born adolescents may experience a completely different relationship with parents than as reported by a middle-born or last-born adolescent. Gender is generally rated as an influential variable in determining the functioning and perceptions of adolescents and parents, it seems very likely that adolescent-birth order would be as influential factor in perceptions in gender.

However, the birth order research seems to have dwindled over the last few decades. In research instances when birth order was a factor, the findings were not reported specially to the birth order influences (Amato, 1987; Anderson, Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1989; Carlson, Cooper & Spradling, 1991)

**Benefits of the study**

The findings of this research may prove useful in assisting parents with the understanding of their adolescent children’s perceptions of their parenting. It can provide adolescents and parents both with a
comprehension of the shared and distinct perceptions present in their relationship that may be underlying any family discord.

This study may also assist child support sources (i.e., teachers, counselors) in understanding how adolescents are developing distinct perceptions of their relationship with their parents early in adolescence, and not in later adolescence when it is more difficult to intervene or provide appropriate support. Many parents are seeking information and support regarding parenting in contemporary times. The understanding of what, when, and how differences between parents and adolescents occur could be useful information for the establishment of adolescent-focused parenting courses. It seems that while much research has become available on adolescence, the changes occurring during adolescence stills remains a time of questions for parents, community, and teachers. It may also prove beneficial for the adolescent by providing them with an understanding that nurturance is adaptable, but still very much present in their parent-adolescent relationship. Thus, this research may be useful in preventing the onset of family discord before behavioral problems and concerns arise in late adolescence.

Overall, it can be articulated that despite of the changes that appear to be present in the perceptions of nurturance among parents and adolescents, adolescents still feel their parent-adolescent relationship is stable and supportive. This perception of the stability present is useful for families experiencing familial discord by providing the adolescent and family with a foundation to rebuild troubled relationships.
Bibliography


Appendix
Parenting items (21-items)

1. Let your child know he/she was appreciated, loved and respected?
2. Praise him/her?
3. Enforce a rule or not enforce a rule depending upon your mood?
4. Want to know exactly where your child was and what he/she was doing?
5. Make your whole life center around him/her?
6. Threaten punishment more often than you used it?
7. Nag him/her about little things?
8. Feel proud of the things your child did?
9. Scold him/her for disobeying or misbehaving?
10. Provide supervision and check up on him/her?
11. Take an interest in where your child was going and who he/she was with?
12. Listen to his/her ideas and opinions?
13. Yell at him/her?
14. Punish him/her by grounding or sending to room?
15. Punish him/her physically spank, slap, etc.)?
16. Tell others about the good things your child did?
17. Tell your child what time to be home when he/she went out?
18. Show interest in what he/she was learning at school?
19. Give him/her a lot of care and attention?
20. Only keep rule when it suited you?
21. Punish your child for doing something one day, but on a different day did not punish him/her for the same thing?