

PARENT RECOGNITION OF THE PROBLEMS  
OF THEIR SECONDARY SCHOOL CHILDREN  
IN A SELECTED OREGON COMMUNITY

by

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# PARENT RECOGNITION OF THE PROBLEMS OF THEIR SECONDARY SCHOOL CHILDREN IN A SELECTED OREGON COMMUNITY

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Probably no group of individuals has been the object of so much research and discussion as the adolescents throughout this country. Numerous studies have been made of their characteristics, needs, and problems. From the extensive data which has been collected social scientists have been able to formulate many generalizations and principles which are useful for understanding and guiding youth.

In addition to a general understanding of adolescence, those who guide young people must know and understand each adolescent as a unique individual. Since parents are in a very strategic position for influencing the development and choices of their children, they should be well acquainted with the needs, problems, and attitudes of their own teen-agers.

#### Purpose of This Study

In 1934 the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection discovered a great need for research in the field of the family to find a basis for an adequate science of familial

relations (58, p. 3-7). Since then numerous studies have been undertaken to ascertain the dynamics and effectiveness of intrafamilial relationships. Recently considerable attention has been given to studying communication as a key factor in the interactive pattern of the family (6, p. 316-319). This present research was undertaken to gather additional information concerning the effectiveness of the communication processes between adolescents and their parents. It is traditionally assumed that there is a problem of communication between the generations. Even the literature of the ancients contains statements which indicate that adults and youth frequently have found it difficult to understand each other. Are these traditional assumptions true? Are parents unfamiliar with the needs of their youth?

#### Statement and Scope of the Problem

The major problem of this study was to determine how accurately a selected group of parents could identify the problems reported by their own adolescents. The writer also wished to find the answer to several related questions. Do fathers and mothers know the problems of their adolescents equally well? Do they know the problems of boys as well as they know the problems of girls? Do fathers know the problems of their daughters as well as they

know the problems of their sons? Do mothers know the problems of their sons as well as they know the problems of their daughters? Are parents as familiar with the problems of seniors as they are with the problems of freshmen? Can adoptive and stepparents estimate their teen-agers' problems as well as natural parents can? Can urban and rural parents identify their children's problems equally well? Does the birth order or sibling position have any relationship to the parents' ability to estimate the problems of their adolescents? Can mothers who are employed outside the home estimate the problems of their high school youth as well as mothers who are not thus employed? Does the amount of employment--full-time or part-time--affect the degree to which mothers know the concerns of their youth? Are the parents to whom these adolescents say they go with their problems better able to identify their children's problems than the parents to whom these adolescents say they do not go?

#### Hypotheses to be Tested

To achieve the purposes of this study the questions stated above were formulated into eleven hypotheses for testing.

1. What parents estimate to be the problems of their teen-agers is not significantly different from what the teen-agers say

are their problems.

2. There is no significant difference between the ability of fathers and the ability of mothers to estimate the problems of their high school pupils.
3. The ability of parents to estimate the problems of their daughters does not differ significantly from their ability to estimate the problems of their sons.
4. Fathers can estimate the problems of their daughters as well as they can estimate the problems of their sons.
5. Mothers can estimate the problems of their sons as well as they can estimate the problems of their daughters.
6. Adoptive and stepparents can estimate the problems of their high school children as well as natural parents can estimate the problems of their children.
7. Parents can identify the problems of seniors and the problems of freshmen equally well.
8. Urban parents and rural parents do not differ significantly from each other in their ability to estimate the problems of their high school children.
9. The sibling position of the child does not affect significantly the parent's ability to identify his problems; that is, there is no significant difference among the mean agreement

scores of parents of only children, of oldest children, of middle children, and of youngest children.

10. The employment status of mothers does not affect significantly their ability to identify the problems of their high school boys and girls.
11. Parents to whom children indicate they go with their problems and parents to whom children indicate they do not go with their problems do not differ significantly in their ability to identify their children's problems.

### Significance of the Study

Many individuals and institutions in American Society are greatly concerned about the youth of this generation. One author states:

Adolescent problems are a major concern of parents, schools, churches, other social agencies, and police departments in every section of our country. These problems are reflected in part by much of the antisocial behavior which has captured the headlines in the nation's press during the last few years (7, p. 203).

The increased complexity of our culture and the greater insecurities which this generation faces add to the adjustment difficulties of adolescents. The apparent increase in juvenile delinquency is further evidence of adjustment difficulties and of the need for

investigating the adolescent problems which give rise to maladjustments. Problem people seem to develop from persons with unsolved problems. Since the family is the primary matrix in which personality and character are shaped, it is doubly important that it provide the kind of environment which facilitates the solutions of problems.

If parents and teachers expect to help young people make of their growing-up period a happy and wholesome adventure, they must understand the problems which are being faced by their boys and girls during these years. Since the culture and society are in a period of rapid change, it is often difficult for parents to keep up with the new problems which these changes create for youth. Many parents concur that it is difficult for them to really understand such things as high school social life, money needs, and the needs for the family car. Yet it is highly important that parents be aware of the cultural and social influences on adolescent problems and have insight into the concerns of their young people. Parents who have such insights and to whom adolescents may go to discuss their problems frankly and freely can be of great assistance to youth as they seek to work through their conflicts and difficulties (14, p. 11, 12; 16, p. 1-11, 27; and 49, p. 80-84).

Since parental insight into the problems and needs of their youth is important for guiding them in their development, this research was undertaken to ascertain how well parents know what are the problems of young people. It was recognized that it does not necessarily follow that parents understand their adolescents, nor that adolescents discuss their problems with their parents, even if parents do know a significant number of the problems of their own children. However, if the evidence indicated that many parents were unfamiliar with the problems of their youth, this would seem to indicate a need for helping parents facilitate the communication process between their children and themselves.

It was thought that comparisons between subgroups in the study might likewise point up special educational needs among certain groups of parents. If foster and stepparents are less familiar with their teen-agers' problems than are natural parents, this would suggest the need for special effort on the part of such parents. If the problems of boys are less well known by parents than the problems of girls, or vice-versa, it would indicate that parents lose contact with one or the other sex more rapidly than with the other. If parents know the problems of seniors less well than they know the problems of freshmen, it would seem to indicate a decrease in sharing these problems as the adolescent grows older, or if



freshmen problems are less well known than senior problems, this would seem to indicate a relaxing of communication barriers as adolescents approach greater maturity. If working mothers know less about their youth than do mothers who are not employed outside the home, this would indicate a danger in outside employment for mothers; but if working mothers seem to keep in touch with the problems of their boys and girls as well as do mothers who are primarily homemakers, then any such danger would not be apparent.

#### Methods Used in the Study

A selected sample of 513 high school students described below, all of them either freshmen or seniors, were asked to indicate what they felt to be their problems by checking the SRA Youth Inventory. The parents of these very children were then given this same check list of problems and asked to check those items which they felt were of concern to their children. Using the child's responses as the key of "correct" answers, the parents were then all scored against their children's inventories. The intensity of the problem was not considered in the scoring. The item was considered correct if both the teen-ager and his parents agreed that it was or that it was not a problem. If either the parent or the child considered the item a problem to some extent, but the other

said it was not, the parent's response was marked incorrect. This constituted the basic data for the present study.

### Method of Sampling

The sample group of parents and their high school young people was limited to a single union high school district near the City of Portland, Oregon, in which both urban and rural people were represented. At the time the study was made there were 1204 young people enrolled in the school, approximately one-third coming from the city in which the high school is located, and two-thirds from the small towns and rural areas adjacent to this city. The 518 high school pupils who were included in the study at the initial stage of the research were all members of either the freshman or senior class, and were the pupils present on October 3, 1956. Later some of this pupil group were excluded either because they had not completed checking their inventories, had obviously not been serious or sincere in checking the inventory, or their parents had not adequately checked their inventories.

Seven of the inventories excluded from the study belonged to freshmen. Three of these freshmen failed to complete checking the inventory. Two freshmen boys marked every item on the inventory as a problem. Since some of these items were applicable to

girls only, it was likely that these boys were not serious when they checked their inventories. Two other freshmen boys checked as problems three items which pertain to girls only, and also checked the majority of the other items. These inventories seemed to have very questionable validity, so were also excluded. The parents of these seven freshmen were not asked to check inventories.

Seventy-eight other pupil inventories were not used in the study because neither of their parents responded by checking the inventories. An analysis of these parents is found in Table 19, Appendix D. Six other parent inventories were checked by the father only, and fifty-two were checked by mothers only. Details concerning these are found in Tables 20 and 21, Appendix D. Four hundred thirty-three pupil inventories remained in the study. Three hundred eighty-one fathers of these youth also checked and returned inventories, and 427 of their mothers checked and returned inventories.

Of the 433 pupils who remained in the study, 249, or 58 percent were freshmen, 184 or 42 percent were seniors. There were 206 boys and 227 girls, giving a percentage ratio of 48 to 52. The largest percentage of these, 42 percent, came from the rural areas of the district, 29 percent came from farms, and 14 percent came from rural non-farm homes. Thirty-one percent lived

within the city limits, 14.5 percent resided in the suburbs of the city, 11 percent came from the small towns in the district, while .5 percent came from suburban Portland. (Table 1)

Table 1

Residence of 433 High School Students Used in Study		
Residential Area	Number of Pupils	Percentage
Within the city	135	31
Suburban	62	14.5
Suburban Portland	3	.5
Rural, non-farm	61	14
Rural, farm	125	29
Village or Town	47	11

Twenty-six of these adolescents were only children, 12 were twins, 143 were middle children, 98 were the youngest in the family, 152 were the oldest, and 2 did not check their sibling position. (Table 2)

Table 2

Sibling Position of 433 High School Students Included in Study		
Sibling Position	Number of Pupils	Percentage
Only	26	6
Twin	12	3
Oldest	152	35
Middle	143	33
Youngest	98	22.5
Not Indicated	2	.5

Forty-four percent of the mothers were employed at the time this study was made, 29 percent full-time, and 15 percent part-time. (See Table 3)

Table 3

<u>Employment Status of Mothers of 431 High School Pupils*</u>		
<u>Employment Status</u>	<u>Number of Mothers</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Full-time	123	29
Part-time	66	15
None	242	56
Totals	431	100

\*Two pupils reported living with father only; mothers deceased.

Description of the Community from Which the  
Sample was Selected

Census data gathered by this high school and supplied to the investigator indicate that approximately 60 percent of the area of the county in which it is located is included within the boundaries of the union high school district, and about 15,000 of the 85,000 people living in the county. Seven thousand of these people live within the city and its suburbs, and the remainder live in small town or rural areas. A few live on the fringes of Portland.

The income for people living in the district is obtained from

several sources, but the major occupation of the area is farming. About 47 percent of the area's agricultural income is derived from livestock, and 53 percent from field crops and horticulture. A few small logging firms are to be found within the district, while one large mill is in a nearby city. An important and thriving electronic equipment manufacturer, the largest single employer in the county, is also within easy commuting distance. Two food processing industries are found in the city in which the high school is located.

The history of the district is tied up with the early pioneer heritage of the State of Oregon. Formerly known as Tuality District, it was first discovered in 1834 by John Wark and other British and French fur trappers, but it was between the years of 1840 to 1850 that the area was really settled by the white man. In those early years the total district included the counties of Washington, Clatsop, Columbia, and Multnomah. The city in which this study was made is still the county seat for one county, and was the county seat for the entire Tuality district from 1843-1854 (38, p. 1, 2).

A later wave of settlers which came to Oregon from 1850 onward saw many German, Swiss, and Dutch moving into the district. Several of the towns and villages of the district still bear names as memorials to the countrymen who founded them. Today's population is composed of descendants from these early settlers

and from many recent comers to the Oregon country, of whom this district has received a bountiful share (39, p. 1, 2).

### Instruments Used for Gathering the Data

Two instruments were used for gathering the data. One was a general information sheet, administered to the pupils just previous to their checking the inventories. Such information as the high school pupil's sibling position, the general location of his home, the parents' relationship to the child, whether natural, adoptive, or step, the working status of the mother, and the parent to whom the adolescent usually went with his problems were secured by means of this questionnaire. (See Appendix A)

The major instrument used was the SRA Youth Inventory, Form S (42). This booklet contains 296 statements of problems or questions which have to some extent bothered teen-agers across the United States. Thirty-seven of the items pertain to school life, 36 express concerns about what will follow high school, 44 items are personal problems of an emotional and attitudinal nature, 43 pertain to problems of getting along with others, 43 items are concerning relationships in the home and family, 32 are problems of boy-girl relationships and sex, 26 are expressions of health problems, and 35 are general items mostly related to philosophy of life and values.

The SRA Youth Inventory was developed by Benjamin Shimberg under the direction of H. H. Remmers at Purdue University. It was an outgrowth of Shimberg's doctoral dissertation at that institution, and had as its purpose the development of a survey tool and technique designed to be economical and efficient in providing educators with information about expressed problems of students in a particular school or community. Its function was to be that of a screening device and a diagnostic aid to high school counselors (47, p. 8).

The items in the inventory are expressed very nearly as high school pupils themselves state them. Teen-agers in forty different high schools were asked to state the problems which were of greatest concern to them. This provided the investigators with approximately five hundred anonymous essays on adolescent problems. The contents of these essays were analyzed, tabulated, and summarized to make up the basic set of items from which a questionnaire was constructed. An attempt was made to adhere as closely as possible to the language used by the pupils themselves. A few items were added from other checklists which were found in the literature survey. The items were tried out on over 15,000 teen-agers and refined until there remained 300 of them in the final questionnaire which Shimberg sent out for standardization purposes.



A stratified sample of 2500 pupils from schools which participate in the Purdue Opinion Panel was used as the standardization group. From the data gathered centile norms were developed for area raw scores for rural girls, rural boys, urban girls, and urban boys for each of the four grades in high school (47, p. 32-63 and 40, p. 11-20). Later, norms were developed for seventh and eighth grade pupils as well (41, p. 18-21). At the date of writing this thesis no examiner's manual for Form S, with norms and interpretive data, had yet been published.

The validity of an instrument such as the SRA Youth Inventory is difficult to determine. When the term validity is applied to an aptitude or achievement test it usually is an index concerning how well the test measures what it is supposed to measure. It is preferably determined by correlating scores on the test with some outside criterion such as school marks, or how rapidly some task is learned.

The SRA Youth Inventory is supposed to indicate what a student believes are his problems. Whether these are a valid measure of his real problems may be questioned. To find some outside criterion for these problems would be very difficult. But the items which an individual checks as his problems do have logical validity for him. As long as he feels the item is a problem for him, it is a matter of concern to him, whether the problem is real or not.

The measures of validity which Remmers and Shimberg used were biserial coefficients of correlation of individual items in an item analysis. Each item was correlated with a total score of the category to which it had been assigned. Hence, validity is determined against the criterion of internal consistency.

The range of biserial correlations for most areas is between .30 and .70. In terms of internal consistency the inventory does seem to have a fair degree of validity. Particularly in the area of "My Home and Family" is there a marked consistency with some of the correlations as high as .95.

The authors of the Youth Inventory cite a study made by Ullmann of the National Institute of Mental Health. In this study the SRA Youth Inventory was shown to be an effective instrument for screening of maladjusted students whose overt behavior did not indicate their maladjustment. Ullmann concludes that the Basic Difficulty items of the inventory have validity for differentiating maladjusted from well adjusted adolescents (43, p. 8, 9).

Using the Kuder-Richardson Case II procedure the authors found reliabilities for the eight areas of the test to range from .75 in the area of "Health" to .94 in the area of "My Home and Family". In all the areas except that of "Health" the reliability coefficients were sufficiently high (.84 and above) to warrant confidence in the

consistency of separate area scores. Test-retest reliabilities for the entire inventory range from .72 to .89 (43, p. 5, 6, and 40, p. 13, 14).

### Administration of the Inventories

The SRA Youth Inventory, Form S, was administered to all the seniors and all the freshmen who were present at the cooperating union high school on October 3, 1956. The seniors received the inventories in their English classes, and the freshmen received their inventories in their social studies classes. The regular classroom teachers, who had previously been briefed by the investigator, administered the inventories and were assisted by upper division psychology majors from Cascade College. The instructions given to the pupils were similar to those contained in the Examiner Manual for Form A. (See Appendix B for instructions to pupils.) After the first period classes one change was made in the instructions. In the first period classes the pupils were instructed to check all of the items in the little circle if the item were not a problem, and in one of the squares if the item were a problem. During the first period it was discovered that some of the slow-reading freshmen were having difficulty getting through the inventory. Consequently, during the remainder of the school day pupils were asked to check only

those items which were problems or were of concern to them.

How much the responses of pupils were altered by this change in instructions cannot be stated with certainty. Some investigation into this problem of response set has been made. Remmers and Shimberg cite a study made with the SRA Youth Inventory by Myer in which instructions were varied among three groups of subjects. One group was asked to mark those items which expressed their problems. A second group was requested to mark only those items which did not express their problems. A third group was asked to mark every item, using one symbol for those items which were problems and another symbol for items which were not problems. After analyzing his results Myer found that there were no significant differences among the responses of these groups. His conclusion was that there did not seem to be a response set as a result of these differences in instructions (43, p. 7).

Inside the inventory at the time it was administered were two items, each bearing the same number that was stamped in the name space on the face of the inventory. One was a card on which the pupil was asked to write his name. From these cards a list of the names of the pupils with their corresponding numbers was compiled. This list was used to check off parents' inventories as they were completed and returned to the school. The other item

enclosed with each inventory was a general information sheet, referred to earlier in this report. Before checking the inventories the pupils were instructed to write their names on the cards and then to fill in the general information sheets. After these were picked up by the monitors and the classroom teachers the pupils proceeded to check the inventories. Most of the pupils completed the inventories with ample time remaining. A few freshmen in the first period classes found it difficult to complete the checking. Seven persons did not complete their inventories satisfactorily, and these were not included in the study.

On the day prior to the administration of the inventories to the pupils a letter introducing the study was mailed to the parents. This letter was signed by the high school principal and contained his endorsement. (See Appendix C, Form 1) On the day following the administration of the SRA Youth Inventory to the high school pupils each pupil was given a sealed envelope containing two inventories, a return envelope, and a set of instructions to parents. (See Appendix C, Form 2) The inventory which each parent received had on it the same number as was on the inventory checked by his own boy or girl. The identification number was also stamped on the envelopes. By using the lists prepared on the previous day the teachers were able to distribute correctly-numbered inventories to the pupils.

It was at this point that the pupils were informed that the purpose of the study was to inquire into how well parents know their teen-agers. They were instructed by their teachers to take the enclosed inventories home to their parents. They were also requested to avoid discussing with their parents how they had checked the inventory until the parents had checked it and sealed it in the return envelope.

Seventy-eight percent of the inventories were returned to the high school within two weeks after they were sent home. One hundred fourteen sets of inventories sent home were not returned to the school prior to the beginning of the interviewing. Seventy-four of those which had been returned were either completed by one parent only, or were checked by neither parent. After the returned inventories were carefully checked, it was found that only sixty-three percent of the inventories were returned and checked. One hundred eighty-eight sets of parents' inventories were either not returned or were only partially completed.

#### Interview of Parents

To get a better response from the parents and to discover any objections which the parents might have to the research project, an attempt was made to interview the 188 sets of parents who had

not checked the inventories. In 10 of the homes there were both a senior and a freshman. This reduced the number of families to be interviewed to 178. One hundred forty-two homes were actually visited. The parents of 20 of these high school children could not be located. Sixteen pairs of inventories came in to the school while the interviewing was being carried forward, and consequently, these parents were not interviewed.

An informal interviewing technique was used. The primary objective of the interview was to acquire the cooperation of the parents. A second objective was to discover objections to and reasons for not filling out the inventory. The third objective was to discover, if possible, something of the family life conditions and the interpersonal relationships between parents and their high school children. A tentative plan of conversation was followed in most of the interviews. First, the investigator introduced himself by name, and identified himself as the person making a study of the problems of teen-agers in the union high school district. The second phase of the interview was to find out if the parents had received the inventories and the covering letter. A copy of the inventory was displayed while the direct question was asked, "Did you recently receive from the high school an envelope containing two little booklets like this with a letter explaining what you were to do with them?"

If the parents had previously returned the inventories to the high school, but had not checked them, this question was not asked. In every instance except one the parents said they had received the inventories. One mother said she was not sure they had. The third step of the interview was to tell the parents that the purpose of this call was to answer any questions they might have about the study or about the inventory and to give assistance in checking the items. The investigator tried to avoid giving much assistance in checking the items, lest he should suggest responses to the parents. During the third step of the interview the investigator listened for objections or for reasons for not checking and returning the inventory. A somewhat different approach was followed with those parents who had returned the inventories unchecked to the school. The interviewer stated that he observed that the parents had kindly returned the inventory to the school, but had not checked the items. It was then pointed out that most people have at least a few concerns, so possibly the parents were so busy at the time the inventories were brought home they did not have time to check them. The purpose of the call, to answer questions and give assistance, was then stated. During the interview observations were made of the home and any clues to intrafamily relationships were noted.



Prior to the interviewing program the investigator set up a card file for those parents who were to be interviewed. On the card was the name of the parent, name of the high school pupil, their identification number, their address, and a notation concerning whether or not the inventory had been returned to the school. Immediately after each interview a notation was made on the card concerning the parents' reasons and/or objections to checking the inventory, the home conditions and relationships observed, and the parents' response to the interview.

A follow-up letter was also sent to the parents. It was mailed out in December, two months after the inventories were sent to their homes. Enclosed with this letter was a post card on which parents could check what had happened to their inventories. (See Appendix C, Forms 3 and 4)

### Treatment of the Data

To facilitate handling the mass of data used in this study the responses of the high school pupils and their parents were transferred to IBM cards for sorting and counting. A deck of nine cards was used for each set of parents and their child. The first ten columns of each card contained coded identification data. Column 11 was used to identify the card numbers. The teen-ager's

responses were punched into the remaining even-numbered columns, and the coded agreements among father, mother, and child were punched into odd-numbered columns. From these detail cards a summary card was punched for each parent and for each child. The summary cards contained the "score" which each parent made in estimating what he or she considered were the high school youth's problems.

The significance of each parent's score was tested by comparing it with a probable score based on the normal curve (22, p. 251-254). This assumed that the parent had a fifty percent chance of guessing correctly each item. The .05 level of confidence was used as the criterion of significance.

Comparisons were also made between the several parental subgroups outlined in the hypotheses. This was done by computing the mean agreement score for each subgroup. The significance of the differences between or among these means was tested by the method of analysis of variance (22, p. 269-284). The .05 level of confidence was again used as the criterion for significance.

#### Limitations of the Study

1. Since the study was conducted in one community only, the findings of the study may not be true elsewhere in the State of

Oregon, nor for some larger population. The community selected was chosen because it sampled urban and rural populations, and was close to a metropolitan area, but the investigator has no real evidence that it typifies the population for Oregon in general.

2. The study was confined to seniors and freshmen only. It therefore probably does not give a true picture of the relative frequency of problems for a cross section of high school students. In certain problem areas Remmers and Shimberg found some differences among the four high school grades with respect to the number of problems checked (40, p. 19, 20).

3. The degree of sincerity and seriousness of the respondents was unknown. The teachers and monitors who administered the inventories reported that with but few exceptions the pupils seemed to be serious as they checked the inventories. A few of the freshmen were observed laughing and conversing with their neighbors as they went through the booklet. Whether or not they checked their inventories sincerely is not known. A few freshmen inventories were excluded from the study because the respondents checked items which obviously did not pertain to them.

4. The seriousness of the parents' responses is even more difficult to determine. From observations made during interviewing the investigator believes that most of the parents interviewed took

the study seriously, even though some objected to it. But there is the possibility that some of the parents did not give much thought to their responses. A few parents checked items which obviously did not pertain to their children because they were appropriate for the opposite sex only. Just how many others may have been careless in their checking of the inventory cannot be determined. Since the findings are based on the assumption that the respondents answered with seriousness, the findings should be checked by further study.

5. The degree to which parents may have collaborated with their teen-agers would also limit the findings of the study. This is an unknown factor. Although no parent received a perfect score, twelve of them did agree with their children on 270 or more of the 296 items on the inventory. Ten of these were parents of children who had checked very few problems. The other two were parents of children who had checked a moderate number of problems. It is possible that these and other parents may have conferred with their children concerning which items to mark as problems. For these twelve inventories the investigator made a careful comparison of the way parents had checked the booklets with the way their children had checked them. He found that although the parents and their children did agree very well concerning which items were problems, they frequently disagreed concerning the intensity of the problem.

What the parent considered to be a most serious problem his child often considered to be a moderate or small problem, and what the parent considered to be a small or moderate problem, his child frequently considered to be a most serious problem. Although these differences seem to be evidence against collusion, we cannot be sure that some did not take place.

6. How much the parents collaborated with each other as they checked the inventories also is not known. It is possible that in some instances both inventories may have been checked by the same parent. In some instances the parents agreed with each other very closely, which suggests the possibility of collaboration. In most instances, however, in which fathers and mothers had nearly equal total agreement scores, the specific items missed were different.

7. The possibility of a difference in response set induced by the different instructions given to the pupils could affect the accuracy of the study. (Supra, p. 18) About one-sixth of the pupils were told to check all the items in the squares if they were problems, and in the circles if they were not problems. The other five-sixths were told to check in the squares those items only which were problems. The items which they did not consider to be problems could be left unchecked. Although the average number of

items checked by each of these two groups was approximately the same, there may have been some response set induced by a change of directions.

8. Finally, individual response sets for checking inventories may limit the study. Some people may have had a propensity to check many items, even if they were of only slight concern, or perhaps were of concern in the past. Others may have checked only those items which were really troublesome to them. Some people exaggerate their problems, while others minimize the things which concern them. How much these individual differences affect the findings of this study is not known.

### Summary

A clear understanding of the needs and problems of adolescents is needed by parents if they are to succeed in guiding youth through their maturing years. This study was undertaken to find out how well parents can identify the concerns and problems of their own teen-agers, and to see if some groups of parents are better able to identify these problems than are others. To a selected group of high school seniors and freshmen in a single high school district the SRA Youth Inventory, Form S, was administered in the fall of 1956. This inventory was chosen because the instrument had

been carefully prepared through the facilities of the Purdue Opinion Panel by Remmers and Shimberg, had evidence of validity and reliability, and contained national norms. The same instrument was sent home with the pupils to their parents who were to check those items which they felt were problems to their children. By the use of a code numbering system parents were matched with their children and scored against their children's responses. The study has validity for parents of seniors and freshmen in the community in which it was made, and may be pertinent to other communities of similar population composition. To the extent that the respondents were serious in their answers and did not collaborate with each other the study should indicate how well parents can recognize those things which are problems to their own high school boys and girls.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Studies of the Problems of Adolescents

Following the days of G. Stanley Hall numerous studies have been made of the needs and problems of adolescents. A few of these studies will be cited here as background for this investigation.

Many writers point out that it is the nature of adolescence, combined with the nature of Western society and culture, which makes of the teen years such a problem period. Biologically, sociologically, and psychologically youth is a period of accelerated change and transition (2, p. 2; 20, p. 1; 27, p. 7; 31, p. 1-3). During this period the individual undergoes a marked change physically, has a reawakening of intellectual growth, is crystallizing and reappraising his values, is acquiring a new status as an individual with his peers and with members of the opposite sex.

Ruch has defined adolescence as the "not quite age" (46, p. 166). While the teen-ager moves away from childhood to adulthood he is not quite either child or adult. Potentially he is an adult, but socio-economic factors, the demands of an increasingly complex social order, and his own lack of experience force him to remain in a role and status of total or semidependency. Thus high



school youth in this generation find themselves faced not only with the traditional and biological problems which come with maturity, but with additional restraints, frustrations, and demands from a social order in transition.

Most of the adolescent's problems cited in the literature seem to be related to his own biological development, to some phase of the teen-ager's transition to adult roles and status, to the impositions of society which are designed to prepare him for adult roles, and to the frustrations and conflicts which the youth feels as he grows up (28, p. 218-221).

The specific problems of adolescents which investigators have isolated differ according to the purposes of the persons doing the research, and the manner in which the research was conducted. Landis emphasized the personal and psychological problems of youth in the categories which he isolated. The inexperience, insecurity, uncertainty, and conflicts of youth pervade his list. He finds feelings of inferiority as youth's number one problem. Other problems he lists, in the order of their frequencies among youth, are day-dreaming and solving problems by fantasy, sex adjustments and anxieties, anxieties about personality and temperament traits, problems of faith and religion, problems associated with establishing independence, and learning to make sound decisions (31, p. 1-3).

Grant, who attempted to consolidate numerous pieces of research concerning the problems of adolescents, found that the problems of youth were many and diversified. The problems isolated varied significantly in their frequency in accordance with the nature of the community environment and the maturity level of youngsters being observed. Grant also found that the lack of uniformity in the classification of problems by the investigators makes comparisons of studies difficult. He noted that in the identification of specific problems there was a significant variation among the results obtained by the investigators he studied and suggested that this may be due in part to the techniques of the investigator, the time of year of the study, and the manner in which the study was explained to the adolescents. Although there was a difference in the problem-categories used by the various investigators, most of them did report problems under the classifications of educational, vocational, social, home, moral, curriculum, and health. Areas in which problems were most frequently reported in the studies which Grant investigated were school and vocation, finance and economic security, and social relationships with peers/(23, p. 293-297).

The review of the literature made for this research supports the conclusions made by Grant. The variety of instruments

used by the investigators and the different approaches and purposes guiding the research projects makes summarization of these studies difficult. Most of the studies, however, found teen-agers concerned about problems related to school work, problems of choosing and preparing for a vocation, problems of social relationships, particularly with peers, problems of personality and character development, problems related to heterosexual development, problems of home and family relationships, problems of health, and miscellaneous problems related to the adolescent's increasing awareness of the complexities of his world (9, p. 387-390; 10, p. 1-15, 86-94; 19, p. 26-57; 57, p. 24-90; 60, p. 210-213; 41, p. 1-6; 24, p. 33-35; 36, p. 119-128; 47, p. 45-55). Withey found that the majority of the pupils in his study desired help with problems related to school work, choosing and preparing for a vocation, and finding a job (60, p. 210-213). Cheney also found a genuine desire for help in these areas, but discovered also that the pupils he studied had discussed their problems with adults only superficially, if at all (9, p. 387-390). Fasnacht found that among the pupils he studied the greatest concern was over self-improvement and getting good school grades (19, p. 26-57). Problems in the category of "About My School" were expressed most frequently in Clapp's study, while those in the category of "My Home and Family" were checked least

frequently (10, p. 50-75). Shimberg, Moore, and Grow, each using a different measuring device, also found problems related to school work and to events immediately succeeding high school days most frequently mentioned by high school youth, and problems related to family relationships among the least frequent (24, p. 33-35; 36, p. 118-128; and 47, p. 45-55).

### Problems in Parent-Adolescent Relationships

Although, in general, the majority of youth do not have frequent nor intense problems in their home and family relationships, there is evidence that for many adolescents the relationships with their parents are often marked with misunderstanding and conflicts. One author writes, "Some disagreement between young people and members of their household is so universal that it can be regarded as normal" (35, p. 412). Many of these disagreements are of little importance and create no serious disturbance to the parent-adolescent relationship. Yet, some teen-agers seem to be frequently an annoying and perplexing problem to adults, and adults often are a problem to teen-agers. Numerous authors have written of the lack of understanding between the generations and have attempted to give explanations for this state of affairs (3, p. 193-206; 12, p. 18-21; 20, p. 5; 31, p. 4-8; 50, p. 393-414; 51, p. 182; 55, p. 436-437).

Wexberg points out that many of these parent-adolescent misunderstandings are a consequence of the change taking place in the relationship between parents and their children. This is a period when the individual must become progressively more self-reliant and learn to make many decisions for himself. In this developmental process teen-agers often fluctuate between wanting to be independent and wanting to be dependent. This constant fluctuation offers a serious problem to adults who have developed routines and patterns of predictability. Some parents try to resolve the problem by seeking to perpetuate their authority and thus often mar a relationship of mutual confidence. Other parents vacillate, at times treating their adolescents as if they were adults, and at times as if they were children (31, p. 4-8; 48, p. 32; 56, p. 600).

Studies of the points of conflict and areas of disagreement indicate that spending money, outside activities and social life, sharing work, attitudes toward and preparation of school work, points of view concerning clothes and personal appearance, habits and manners, and use of the family car are the predominant issues (3, p. 193-206; 31, p. 4-8; 50, p. 393-414). Stott also found adolescents were critical of temperamental traits and behaviors of parents which affected the family. Many teen-agers criticized the personal habits and behaviors of parents, especially of fathers.

But, interestingly, nearly two-thirds of the youth in his study had no criticism to offer (50, p. 393-414). Where there are disagreements and conflicts parents and adolescents must be reasonable and try to work through their problems by discussion. Cooperative programs between schools and parents may be developed for discovering the areas of disagreement and ways of coping with them (3, p. 193-206).

### Reasons for Parent-Adolescent Conflicts

Most authorities in the field of adolescent development concur that since one of the major developmental tasks of adolescence is emancipation from parents and establishing independence, a certain amount of conflict between parents and teen-agers is likely (1, p. 226-231; 11, p. 322-328; 25, p. 42; 44, p. 238-240). Freeing themselves from dependence upon parents and from childish submission to authority is often an acute problem for adolescents.

Frequently the pattern of childhood has been one of unquestioned obedience without any doubt of the parents' wisdom. The child so reared, on reaching adolescence, is faced with a dilemma. To be considered self-directive and to have initiative, some judgments of his own are expected by his peers and by his teachers. If no opportunity has been afforded for this development, the adolescent is faced with the problem of challenging the authority of his parents in

order to comply with social expectations of the peer group and other adults. Parents need to prepare for this period by gradually moving from a program of strict supervision to one in which the adolescent is expected to exercise self-control (4, p. 236-241; 11, p. 322-328; 21, p. 246-248; 54, p. 224).

The problem of adolescent emancipation is made more difficult for adults because of the inconsistencies of the teen-agers themselves (34, p. 44; 5, p. 13, 15). The drive for independence in adolescents is linked with an uncertainty that is equally strong, which accounts, in part, for their indecisions and ups and downs.

At adolescence the individual boy and girl are attracted to life outside the protecting home; they want to be accepted by their contemporaries, to explore the fascinating world of people and taste the experiences that seem so rich and full. But their desire to go out to life is not unmixed with a need for continued protection and security; indeed, the more they venture out, the more they need to feel they can return home and find help and reassurance (21, p. 248).

The adolescent's striving for acceptance by the peer culture often seems threatening to adults. Many parents have too completely forgotten their own youth, particularly their early adolescence and the emotional states originally associated with those years. They have forgotten the importance of being acceptable to peers and the strong drive for conformity. Instead, their attention is fixed on the increased mobility of adolescence and its dangers, and the fact that

the adolescent peer group definition of situations is often in conflict with parent definitions. In view of the dangers, parents worry about how much freedom to permit. Consequently, the ambivalent emotions and attitudes of adolescents toward parental authority is matched by the parents' struggle between wishing to control the adolescent and wishing to liberate him (21, p. 246-248; 29, p. 343; 30, p. 152-156).

In the struggle to become accepted by his peers the high school youth feels he must devalue his parents. He becomes critical of them in many ways. Often he becomes secretive, silent, almost untouchable. His chums become better resources for facts and more valued guides to action than are the parents. Yet, even though the adolescent may be critical of his parents, he still wants them to be static and fixed, and sets up his parents as a source of control. In fact, his parents may often be used as scapegoats to provide him with an escape from activities and situations in which he feels he cannot or does not wish to participate. This emphasizes the need for parents to be stable and secure in their own lives, but at the same time tolerant and understanding of their adolescents (5, p. 13-15 and 34, p. 44).

A final factor which seems to promote conflict between adolescents and their parents is the rapid changes which are taking



place in Western culture. Because society is changing at an increasing speed, many parents lack exact definitions and attitudes toward many situations. Even in matters of morals and religion many parents lack clear-cut conclusions and convictions (30, p. 152-156). Davis points out that it is only in Western societies that one finds extreme examples of parent-adolescent conflict, although these conflicts are becoming more frequent in the Orient. He gives evidence to support the hypothesis that this phenomenon results from the rapid social changes in Western cultures which, combined with the universal factors related to adolescent development, increase the parent-adolescent problem (13, p. 523-535).

#### The Problem of Parent-Adolescent Communication

If parents are to adequately understand their high school youth and be a source of guidance in times when counsel is needed, the lines of communication between the generations must be kept open. Communication is the key to the interactive process within the family (6, p. 316-319; 33, p. 24).

Communication is a basic need of all people, whatever their relationship to each other. Good communication with our children, as part of our care and love for them, is an essential to which we should give at least as much thought and attention as we do to good diet and housing. We must learn to express our ideas and affections more freely,

and practice the art of responding and of evoking responses from others. And above all, we must seek ways to keep the lines of communication open, so that the members of our families may reach each other with the fullness of their understanding (33, p. 26).

Parents and young people who are able to talk freely and frankly with each other about whatever concerns them are better able to work out their problems and conflicts. This is a two-way process requiring mutual respect, confidence, and genuine affection on the part of both parents and young people (16, p. 26, 27).

Some studies have been made of the degree to which teenagers do confide in their parents and the effect of intrafamilial relationships on personal adjustments. One of the most famous of these studies was made in 1934 by the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection. Twenty-two percent of the high school youth investigated in this study tell their joys and troubles to their fathers almost always, 50 percent do sometimes, and about 28 percent almost never do. Forty-eight percent tell their joys and troubles to their mothers almost always, almost 42 percent do sometimes, and about 10 percent almost never do (48, p. 133).

From a questionnaire study of 4504 seniors in the State of Washington, Elias found that the majority of both sexes showed a willingness to consult parents. Only about a fourth of the total

group seldom or never discussed their problems with their parents. Although girls more often than boys were willing to talk over their problems, in the group which seldom or never discussed their problems the sex ratio was approximately one to one (17, p. 28-246).

Williams' questionnaire study of high school students revealed that the majority had a very wholesome attitude toward their homes. However, he found that 25 percent of the youth he investigated did not generally talk over their problems with their parents, and a little more than 6 percent talked over none of their problems with any members of their families. About one-half did not discuss serious problems with their parents (59, p. 283-285).

Twenty juniors from a high school in Rochester, New York, were interviewed by Holman in a search of adolescent attitudes toward seeking help with personal problems. This small group of high school students, in general, would not seek help for problems in the following areas: difficulties with parents and difficulties with members of the same sex. Girls were reluctant to discuss problems of personal appearance. Boys and girls had little inclination to seek help relative to problems of adjustment to the other sex. They were most willing to discuss vocational problems, problems related to school, and problems related to money and jobs. Parents were still the preferred persons from whom to seek help except for

problems the teen-agers were having with their parents, problems of boy-girl relations, and difficulties in relation to school work. For these either the peer group or other adults were preferred (27, p. 1-31).

Dubbe made a study of problems which 100 randomly selected college freshmen felt they could not discuss with their parents. The subjects which men and women students found most difficult to discuss with their parents were petting and sex. Other items of intermediate difficulty were marriage, courtship, engagement, misbehavior, beliefs, and health habits. At the top of the list of reasons for the difficulty was the feeling of no need to talk with parents. The desire for and achievement of self-reliance was the reason second in rank. Girls more often than boys gave "no time for talking" as a reason. "Conservative parents" was found to be a strong reason for most of the group, particularly for father-son and mother-daughter relationships. Ninety-nine percent of the students investigated experienced some difficulty in discussing one or more subjects with their parents (15, p. 1-10, 52-61).

It is evident, then, that during the adolescent years there is a tendency on the part of many youth to become less communicative with their parents. This seems to be an aspect of the child's attempt to establish independence. Thoughtful parents desire to

facilitate this emancipation process, but still work to maintain good rapport with their youth so that they may be approachable for guidance.

### Sociological Factors Related to Parent-Adolescent Adjustments

Recently two studies were made of sociologically different adolescent groups to see if they differed from each other in personal and familial adjustments (17 and 37). Elias compared the adjustment problems of urban and rural youth by studying 4504 seniors from 154 high schools in the State of Washington. A questionnaire of 390 items was used to gather information about relationships with the family, with the school, with peer groups, and with the community (17, p. 1-9). Nye studied 1472 adolescents from the eighth and eleventh grades from fifteen public schools in the State of Michigan to find if specified socio-economic groups differed from each other with respect to adolescent-parent adjustments. The pupils were categorized into subgroups of farm, open country, nonfarm, village, small town, fringe, and urban. Other factors also considered in his study were the number of siblings in the home, employment status of the mother, whether or not the home was broken by divorce, death, or separation, and the socio-economic level of the

family. A questionnaire containing 31 adolescent-mother, 31 adolescent-father, and 6 adolescent-parent items was used to gather information about five general areas of adjustment (37, p. 1-20).

### Differences Between Urban and Rural Youth

Although these studies differed from each other with respect to specific purposes and techniques of investigation, they did concur in one conclusion--that urban youth, in general, were somewhat better adjusted to their parents than were their country cousins (17, p. 28-50 and 37, p. 24-33, 119-148). Nye found that as urbanism declined, adjustment to parents declined also, with one exception: the town family ranked below both village and fringe families. A portion of the rural-urban differences seemed to be related to differences in the socio-economic level of the family, but even with socio-economic factors held constant, residence still remained a significant variable. Elias found that city youth more frequently talked over their personal problems with their parents and had significantly fewer adjustment problems in the area of the family. Farm youth indicated more personal-social problems than did any other group. Nye advanced the hypothesis that the poorer family adjustment of the farm teen-ager is associated with the rapid social changes taking place in the present generation, coupled with

the rural youth's increased contacts with urban youth, the latter obviously having more privileges. The farm adolescent feels he belongs to an inferior class, and this feeling affects his adjustments with his parents. Nye believes this is supported by the finding of his study that farm youth with a socio-economic level equivalent with city youth were almost as well adjusted to parents as were the comparable city group (37, p. 334-339).

Other differences between urban and rural youth were also reported by Elias. For example, rural youth, in general, were more uncertain about their plans for the future and were more status conscious than were urban adolescents. Farm youth, in particular, showed greater concern about problems of social adjustment than any other group. City youth were more certain than rural adolescents that they should continue education, worried more over school marks, and were less generally dissatisfied with course offerings, although they more frequently complained of unfriendly teachers. These and other findings of the study indicated that urban and rural youth differ from each other with respect to their adjustments to parents and with respect to some of the problems which are most frequently of concern to them (17, p. 28-246).

The Adjustment Problems of Boys Compared with  
the Adjustment Problems of Girls

Nye found no significant differences between boys' and girls' adjustment to parents in early adolescence. Middle adolescent boys, however, showed a poorer adjustment than girls of the same age. Toward the end of high school boys manifested significantly poorer adjustment to parents than was true for boys in the eighth grade. This was not found to be true for girls (37, p. 121-126).

Elias' study also revealed some interesting differences between high school boys and girls. There were a variety of differences related to specific adjustment problems within the family. Girls were more critical of the material aspects of their homes than were boys. Girls more frequently reported that their conduct had parental approval than did boys, that they more frequently needed and desired parental counseling, and that parents respected their opinions. The dating activities of girls, however, were less likely to meet with parental approval than those of boys. Rural boys were in greater agreement with their parents on many issues than were city boys, but rural girls reported greater disagreement than did city girls (17, p. 93-132).

Other investigators also have found some differences between adolescent boys and girls with respect to adjustments to



parents. Stott found that the frequency of criticism of both parents by girls was significantly higher than that of boys. Small town girls in particular were critical (50, p. 393-414). From an analytical study of interviews held with adolescent boys and girls over a five-year period Block found that some of the parent-adolescent problems which were a source of conflict with a high percentage of girls were the basis of disturbance for few boys, and vice versa. She also found that the girls in her study showed a significantly higher mean percentage of conflicts with their mothers than did the boys (3, p. 193-206). Clapp found that girls checked more adjustment problems than boys, (10, p. 135) but the White House Conference study indicated that girls were more willing to discuss their problems with their parents (58, p. 133, 274, 275).

#### Effect of Broken Homes on Adjustment

In Nye's study broken homes, on the average, showed poorer adolescent-parent adjustment than did nonbroken homes. But not all adolescents were affected alike by broken homes. Some of the youth who were best adjusted to their parents came from such homes. Loss of the mother appears to be more detrimental to adolescent-parent adjustment than is loss of the father (37, p. 123, 124). Other studies indicate that homes which have been broken by death, separation,

dissertation, or divorce usually create problems for teen-agers. Youth from these homes check more personal and family problems and have a higher incidence of delinquency. They also tend to do poorer school work. Children living in homes in which there is a stepparent frequently manifest more nervous symptoms, evidencing emotional strain. This does not appear to be true if the stepparent came into the home when the child was very young, but older children and adolescents find the new relationship with a stepparent hard to accept (11, p. 321; 29, p. 202-221; 45, p. 50-55; 53, p. 319-364).

#### Effect of the Employment Status of the Mother

Employed mothers are usually considered a handicap to parent-child adjustments. There is evidence that some mothers who work outside the home fail to adequately supervise their households, and misbehavior develops as a result of their neglect. Young children whose mothers are employed appear to feel less self-reliant and more insecure in their family relationships than children whose mothers are not employed. They sense a lack of cordial relationship with other people and are often referred to guidance clinics for withdrawing tendencies (29, p. 210-221 and 45, p. 50-55). Essig and Morgan found that girls whose mothers were employed outside the home were, on the average, more poorly adjusted to family life

than were those whose mothers did not work. Among these girls, who were freshmen and sophomores in high school, there was a greater feeling of lack of love, understanding, and interest between parents and their daughters. They showed a greater lack of cooperation with their parents and had less appreciation for them. Their responses indicated that there was little time or inclination for family discussion of problems in homes in which both parents are employed. Consequently, family communication frequently broke down in such homes. A greater number of these girls felt that their parents were not interested in their affairs and problems, and that their parents would not listen to what they had to say (18, p. 219-233). Nye, on the other hand, found that families in which the mother was employed part-time showed, on the average, better parent-adolescent adjustments than either families in which the mother worked full-time or not at all. When the factor of socioeconomic level was held constant these differences were even increased. In middle class families in which mothers worked part-time, a significantly better parent-adolescent adjustment was found. Somewhat poorer parent-adolescent adjustments were found in families where the mother was employed full-time (37, p. 121-123).

### Studies of Parents' Understanding of Adolescents

A technique for measuring mutual understanding between adolescents and parents was developed by Tarwater to find out how well parents and their own youth could predict one another's answers to questions on two inventories. On one inventory the high school youth checked items to tell how they felt about themselves, and on a second inventory they tried to predict how their parents would respond for them. Parents were asked to check one inventory according to the way they felt their adolescents would respond and a second inventory according to the way they felt their adolescents really were. By comparing the responses of the adolescents on their first inventory with the responses of the parents on their first inventory, an index of the parents' understanding of their children was developed, and by comparing the responses of the youth on their second inventory with the responses of their parents on their second inventory, an index of the adolescent's understanding of his parents was established.

Tarwater found that the parents, in general, were able to predict a significant number of their adolescents' problems, but his data also indicate that the adolescents understood their parents better than the parents understood them. Those adolescents who had

the fewest problems were the best predictors of their parents' responses, and those parents who made the best predictions of their children's responses had children with fewer problems. He also found that these teen-age children showed more acceptance of their parents than the parents realized. The greatest disagreements between parents and the adolescents were over problems of peer relationships and questions involving the self. Parents missed on these items by a significant amount (52, p. 11-14).

By means of an interviewing technique Langford and Alm administered the California Test of Personality to a small group of twelve-year-old boys and girls and their parents to discover parental understanding of their children's feelings, self-concepts, and social concepts. The children answered the questions of the test for themselves, and the parents were asked to respond as they thought their particular child had responded. The data revealed that the parents underestimated their children's feelings and concepts of their self-adjustment, but overestimated their feelings and concepts of their social adjustment. These parents made better predictions of their children's responses on questions pertaining to social adjustments than they did on those pertaining to personal adjustment (32, p. 30-49).

Cass paired twenty-one seriously maladjusted adolescents with twenty-one well adjusted adolescents to find out if there were any relationship between juvenile maladjustment and mothers' awareness of their youth and between juvenile maladjustment and maternal control. The awareness of the mother was indicated by her ability to predict her son's or daughter's preferences, ambitions, and fears. Mothers of socially maladjusted children displayed significantly less ability to predict their children's preferences and fears than did mothers of socially well adjusted children. Among delinquent children low maternal awareness and high maternal control combined were significantly more prevalent than was true for the nondelinquents (8, p. 101-104).

Moore attempted to discover how well six different adult groups in Malden, Massachusetts, could identify the problems of the high school pupils there. A check list of problems was prepared from statements submitted by the pupils themselves and was administered to 1377 pupils at Malden High School. This same check list was also mailed to six different adult groups who were instructed to check the inventory according to what they thought were the problems of the average high school boy or girl. Inventories were sent to 314 parents, randomly selected, from whom there were 264 responses. No attempt was made to match the responses of the

teen-agers with the responses of their parents. Seventy-six high school teachers, 40 clergymen, 64 church leaders other than clergy, 34 leaders of community service agencies, and 70 employers also submitted estimates of teen-agers' problems. On the basis of a rank-order correlation technique Moore concluded that the high school teachers have the best understanding of high school pupils' problems, but the parents were a close second. The correlation coefficients were .61 and .59, respectively. The teachers tended to overestimate the pupils' problems, while the parents tended to underestimate their problems. Teachers especially overestimated the number of problems the high school youth were having in the area of home and family relations, while the parents greatly underestimated the frequency of problems the youth were experiencing in personal adjustment (36, p. 1-14, 122-128).

The problems of 360 randomly selected pupils from six junior high schools in four cities in northern Illinois were studied by Grow. The investigator was interested in finding out not only what the expressed problems of these pupils were, but also in discovering how well three adult groups connected with these pupils: their school administrators, their teachers, and their parents, could identify their problems. He administered the 1950 revision of the Mooney Problem Check List, Junior High School Edition, first to the pupils,

and then later to each of the three adult groups (24, p. 1-18). For each of the groups tested the percentage of problems checked in each of the seven areas was computed. On the basis of the percentage of problems checked in each area Grow arranged the seven areas of the test in a rank order of importance for each of the subgroups and computed rank-difference correlations between the pupils and each of the three adult groups.

The correlation between the parents' estimates of their teenagers' problems and the teenagers' own report of their problems was .429, which, although significant, is low (24, p. 76, 77). Since only 139 answer sheets were returned by either of the parents of the 360 pupils (24, p. 16), a high degree of confidence could not be placed in this statistic. The rank-difference correlations between pupils and administrators and pupils and teachers was lower than that of parents. Grow concludes that the low positive correlation between what pupils report as their problems and what the adult groups consider to be the pupils' problems is evidence that these adult groups have poor understanding of the concerns of junior high school pupils. He concludes, further, that the degree of the adults' understanding is proportional to the social distance of the junior high school pupil from the respective adult group. The shorter the distance, the greater the understanding. Parents seemed to understand their teenagers' problems



better than did the teachers, and teachers understood them better than did the administrators (24, p. 76-86).

### Summary

Numerous studies have been made of the problems which are of concern to youth. Because these studies were various in their approaches and purposes, and because a variety of instruments and techniques was used by the investigators, the findings of these studies present a diversity of adolescent problems. Most of the studies reviewed concur, however, that youth's most frequent problems are related to the school and to concerns about what shall follow high school. Although these studies find a low frequency of problems in the area of home and family relations, the problems which do exist often result in misunderstanding, conflict, and barriers to communication.

Many of the conflicts and disagreements which arise between parents and their teen-agers seem to be related to the changes which are a part of the developmental process during adolescence. Youth are seeking to emancipate themselves from their parents as they move toward more adult roles. The conflicts and insecurities which adolescents and their parents feel during this period appear to be complicated by the changes which are taking place in the contemporary world,

particularly in Western society.

Parents and high school youth who are able to discuss their problems frankly and freely are better able to work out their problems and conflicts. The studies reviewed for this investigation indicate that some adolescents discuss most of their problems with their parents, a larger group discuss some of their problems with their parents, and less than a third seldom or never discuss any of their problems with their parents.

Rural youth appear to be somewhat more poorly adjusted to their parents than are city youth. City youth tend to discuss their problems with their parents more than do rural youth. The specific problems of the two groups also appear to be somewhat different.

The studies reviewed indicate that in general boys have more problems of adjustment with their parents than do girls, although one study found girls to be more critical. The specific problems of the boys and girls appear to be influenced somewhat by urban-rural considerations.

Teen-agers who come from broken homes and homes in which there is a stepparent tend to have somewhat poorer adjustment to parents than do children who come from nonbroken homes. There is a wide variability in the parent-adolescent adjustments in broken homes, however. Relationships with stepparents appear to be better

if the child was very young when the stepparent came into the home.

Studies concerning the effect of mothers' outside employment on parent-adolescent relationships do not agree in their findings. Some investigators cite evidence indicating that rapport between parents and their children tends to deteriorate when both parents are employed outside the home. Other evidence indicates that part-time employment for the mother fosters better parent-adolescent adjustments.

The studies surveyed for this research indicate that parents are aware of many of the problems of adolescents, but are less able to predict how youth feel about themselves. Parents of seriously maladjusted youth appear to know less about their children than do parents of well adjusted youth. Some studies indicate that parents know their adolescent's problems better than do any other adult groups. One study, however, found that teachers could identify the adolescents' problems somewhat better than could parents.

No studies were found in which parents were matched with their own teen-agers and asked to check what they thought were their own teen-agers' problems. Two investigators asked parents, along with other adults, to estimate the problems of teen-agers, but neither of these investigators compared the parents' responses with the responses of their own children. Several studies were found in

which parents were asked to predict how their teen-agers felt about themselves, or what were their teen-agers' ambitions or fears, but the specific procedures used for this present study appear to have been used by no one.

## CHAPTER III

### ANALYSES OF THE DATA AND FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

#### Teen-Ager Frequency Count on Problem Check List

A frequency count was made of the items of the inventory to find out how often each was considered to be a problem by the high school youth in this study. The items marked most frequently as problems were, in general, those marked most frequently in the standardization studies for the SRA Youth Inventory. School problems and concerns for after high school years seem to be foremost in the minds of the adolescents (40, p. 1-5, 15-18, and 41, p. 7,8).

#### Details of Responses

##### 1. My School

"I worry about getting good grades, " was the item most frequently checked by the pupils in this study. Seventy-nine percent checked this as a problem. Other items related to school work which were checked by 60 percent or more of the adolescents were: "I wish I knew how to study better, " "I have difficulty taking notes, " "I need to learn how to prepare for tests, " "I wish I could be more calm when I recite in class, " "I would like to get some practical

work experience, " "I have difficulty expressing myself in writing, " "I need to learn how to spell better, " and "I have difficulty expressing myself in words. "

## 2. After High School?

The second area of the Youth Inventory is concerned chiefly with problems of finding a job, choosing a career, or going to college. Many problems in this area were checked by at least half of the sample group of students. Sixty percent or more checked the following as problems to them: "What are my real interests?" "What shall I do after high school?" "For what work am I best suited?" "I would like to know more definitely how I am doing in my school work." "Do I have the ability to do college work?" "What courses will be most valuable to me later on?" "What career shall I pursue?" "What jobs are open to high school graduates?" "How do I go about finding a job?" Almost all of the items related to going to college were checked as problems by fifty percent or more of these high school youth. These questions and problems indicate the concern these pupils have for getting information which will help them decide what vocation they shall follow in adult years and how they shall prepare themselves for their careers.

## 3. About Myself

Problems related to the individual and his personal

adjustment make up the third group of questions in the inventory. Most of the "basic difficulty items" which mental hygiene experts agree are indicators of emotional disturbance are found in this category (40, p. 12, 13). Although a lower percentage of these youth checked items in this area as problems to them than did in the first two categories, 62 percent checked worrying about tests and worrying over little things as concerns to them. Between 50 and 60 percent indicated that the following were problems to them: "I'm easily excited." "I have trouble keeping my temper." "I'm nervous." "I often do things I later regret." "I'm afraid of making mistakes." "I'm afraid to speak up in class." Although the proportion of these high school youth who had serious difficulties is not large, there is evidence that many needed help in achieving healthier personal adjustment. Some of the personal problems of concern to at least two-fifths of the high school youths in this study were:

- 44% could not help day dreaming.
- 47% had guilt feelings about things they have done.
- 47% felt they are not popular with their peers.
- 48% had their feelings easily hurt.
- 49% felt they were not so smart as other people.
- 45% hesitated to take responsibility.

42% said they must always be "on the go".

42% checked they must learn to keep their heads when things go wrong.

42% were trying to get rid of an undesirable habit.

41% often felt lonesome.

41% wished they could overcome being careless.

41% wanted to discuss their personal problems with someone.

#### 4. Getting Along with Others

The intense desire of young people to be liked and to conform to the social expectations of their peers is revealed by the responses of this sample. Seventy percent said they wanted people to like them better, 71 percent wanted to make more friends, 64 percent said they needed to develop more self-confidence, and 61 percent wished they could carry on a pleasant conversation. Their social sensitivity is also indicated by the fact that 66 percent were bothered by stage fright when speaking before a group, and 62 percent were concerned because "some kids are left out of things."

#### 5. My Home and Family

A large majority of the teen-agers in this study indicated they have very few problems in getting along with parents and siblings. Fifty percent wished they could be of more help to their



families, and 49 percent said they worried about their parents' problems. Some of the sore spots in family relations are emphasized by the finding that 40 percent of these youth felt they could not discuss personal things with their parents, 39 percent wished their families would do more things together, 38 percent wished their parents would let them make more of their own decisions, and 38 percent said they were afraid to tell their parents when they had done something wrong.

#### 6. Boy Meets Girl

Problems related to getting dates, conduct on dates, standards of right and wrong, the need for sex information, and courtship, love, and marriage were not so frequently checked as were questions about school and after high school. Yet, many were concerned about several questions in this area. The percentage checking some of these items may have been higher if sophomores and juniors had also been included in the sample. However, Remmers' and Shimberg's study shows that boy-girl problems tend to become less frequent as teen-agers move through the high school years (43, p. 15, 16), except that problems related to serious courtship and marriage increase somewhat. None of the "boy meets girl" problems was checked by as many as 50 percent of these high school youth, but some items were checked as problems by

40 percent or more.

46% were concerned about seldom having dates.

46% did not know how to keep the opposite sex interested in them.

45% were bothered by dirty stories or vulgar talk.

45% were concerned about what things one should consider in selecting a mate.

42% wondered what are good manners on a date.

41% wanted to know how to prepare for marriage and what things cause trouble in marriage.

40% did not know what to do on a date.

#### 7. Health

Three problems in the category of health were of concern to 50 percent or more of the youth in this study: wanting to gain or lose weight, wanting to improve posture and body build, and wanting to get rid of pimples. These are the same items that stood out as frequently mentioned problems in Remmers' and Shimberg's study (41, p. 6). It should be noted also that approximately one-third of these high school youth indicated their teeth needed attention and that they had eyes which bothered them.

#### 8. Things in General

The items in this category are focused chiefly on ethical,

religious, and social problems. Although many of these items were of concern to few students, a large group of these youth indicated a deep concern over world affairs, community problems, and conflicts over religious and ethical questions. Items checked by 40 percent or more of the youth were:

64% felt teen-agers are often criticized unfairly.

47% wanted to learn how to get the most for their money.

45% felt they were not living up to their religion.

45% wanted to know how they could help to make the world a better place in which to live.

42% said they were worried about the next war.

42% wanted to know what they could do about juvenile delinquency.

40% wanted to learn to use their leisure time wisely.

#### Number of Parents Who Can Identify Their Adolescents' Problems

The primary purpose of this study was to determine if parents can identify the problems of their teen-agers. The first hypothesis stated in Chapter I was: "What parents estimate to be the problems of their teen-agers is not significantly different from what the teen-agers say are their problems."

It was assumed that what the high school youth checked as their problems were the "correct" responses. Consequently, each parent was scored by using his or her teen-ager's answer sheet as the key. The degree or intensity of the problem was not considered in scoring the parents' inventories. If both considered the item to be a problem to some degree, even if they did not agree on the intensity, the parent's response was considered correct. The parent was marked incorrect when he said the item was not a problem if his child said it was a problem to some degree; or, if the child said it was not a problem and the parent marked it as a problem to some degree.

We may test the significance of the score of each parent by assuming that he merely guessed, and that his score does not differ significantly from what he could have achieved by chance. Since each parent had a fifty-fifty chance of guessing correctly how his child had marked each item, the probable average number of the 296 items which could be guessed would be 148. The mean of this probable, or "correct by guess" distribution, then, would be 148. The variability of this probability distribution may be estimated by the formula  $\sigma = \sqrt{npq}$  (22, p. 247-254), in which  $\sigma$  is the standard deviation,  $n$  is the number of items in the inventory,  $p$  is the probability of guessing each item correctly, and  $q$  is the probability

of guessing it incorrectly. The estimated standard deviation of this probability distribution would be the square root of  $296 \times 1/2 \times 1/2$  which equals 8.602. At the .05 level of confidence, which is accepted as the criterion for significance in this study, the parent score would have to be 1.65 standard deviations above the mean, if the null hypothesis is to be rejected.  $8.602 \times 1.65$  equals 14.2033. To be sure at the .05 level of confidence that a parent knew anything about his child's problems, his score would have to be at least 148 plus 14.2033, or 162.2033. A score of 162 would be scarcely significant, but scores of 163 and above would be significant at the .05 level.

The average number of items which fathers answered correctly was 192.5, and the average number of items which the mothers answered correctly was 194.6. Both of these scores are very significant, since there is less than one chance in 100 of such scores being made by pure guessing. Thus, it appears that the "average" parent in our sample probably knows a significant number of his teen-ager's problems.

It should be pointed out, however, that 84 of the 381 fathers who participated in the study did not have statistically significant scores. Forty of these were fathers of sons, and 44 were fathers of daughters. Eighty of the 427 mothers in the study did not have

statistically significant scores. Forty of these were mothers of sons, and 40 were mothers of daughters. In terms of percentages, 22 percent of the fathers, 19 percent of the mothers, and 20 percent of the total parent group had scores sufficiently low that they may have achieved by guessing.

### Comparisons Between Subgroups of Parents

The second purpose of this study was to compare specified groups of parents to see if any significant differences existed among them. Hypotheses 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 each involve the comparison of two groups only (Supra, p. 4, 5). To test these hypotheses means were computed for each subgroup, and the significance of the difference between means was determined by the method of analysis of variance. When there are only two means to be compared, the variance ratio,  $F$ , is equal to  $t^2$ . Essentially, then, the  $F$ -test and the  $t$ -test are the same in comparisons which involve two groups only (22, p. 213-222; 281-284). Throughout the thesis the .05 level of confidence was used to establish the significance of a statistic. At the .01 level a statistic was considered very significant. The null hypothesis was rejected whenever the statistic reached the .05 level of confidence.

The data used for testing these hypotheses have been

summarized in Tables 22-26, Appendix E. Table 4 shows the computed F-ratios for those comparisons which involved two groups only, and the F-ratios needed at the .05 level if the differences are to be considered significant.

### Comparisons of Agreement Scores

#### 1. Fathers Versus Mothers

Table 4 shows the average agreement scores of mothers to be 2.1 points higher than that of fathers, but this difference is not statistically significant. It seems that the fathers who checked the inventories knew the problems of their teen-agers as well as did the mothers.

#### 2. Parents of Sons Versus Parents of Daughters

The scores of fathers and mothers were combined to give Table 24 in Appendix E which sets forth the basic data for testing hypothesis 3. Table 4 shows the average agreement scores for parents of daughters to be 3.3 points higher than that of parents of sons. This difference, however, is not statistically significant. Therefore, it seems that these parents probably know the problems of their sons about as well as they know the problems of their daughters.

Table 4  
Analysis of Variances Between Parent Subgroups  
Involving Two Means Only

Groups Compared	N	Means	Dif- fer- ence	Computed F- Ratio	df	*F-Ratios Needed .05 Level
Fathers vs. mothers	381 427	192.5 194.6	2.1	.442	1 and 806	3.85
Parents of boys vs. parents of girls	388 420	191.9 195.2	3.3	1.094	1 and 806	3.85
Fathers of boys vs. fathers of girls	185 196	191.8 193.1	1.3	.078	1 and 379	3.87
Mothers of boys vs. mothers of girls	203 224	191.9 197.0	5.1	1.416	1 and 425	3.86
Natural fathers vs. foster fathers	342 39	192.0 196.6	4.6	.424	1 and 379	3.87
Natural mothers vs. foster mothers	407 20	194.9 189.4	5.5	.271	1 and 425	3.86
Fathers of fresh- men vs. fathers of seniors	220 161	188.7 197.6	8.9	3.602	1 and 379	3.87
Mothers of fresh- men vs. mothers of seniors	246 181	192.6 197.4	4.8	1.255	1 and 425	3.86

\*The symbol df means degrees of freedom. F-ratios needed at .05 level indicates the number value necessary for the statistic to be significant at the stated level of confidence.



### 3. Fathers of Daughters Versus Fathers of Sons

The average agreement scores for fathers of daughters was only 1.3 points higher than the average agreement score for fathers of sons. The difference is not statistically significant. Apparently, the fathers in this sample are as well acquainted with the problems of their sons as they are with the problems of their daughters.

### 4. Mothers of Sons Versus Mothers of Daughters

Table 4 shows the mothers of daughters to have a somewhat higher average agreement score than the mothers of sons. But the 5.1 points difference is not statistically significant. The evidence provided by this sample indicates that the apparent difference between the agreement scores of mothers of sons and mothers of daughters may be accounted for by chance.

### 5. Natural Parents Versus Foster and Stepparents

In the study there were 39 of the 381 fathers who were either stepfathers or foster fathers. Of the 427 mothers, 20 were either stepmothers or foster mothers. The adoptive and stepfather group had an average agreement score 4.6 points higher than did the natural fathers; the adoptive and stepmother group had an average agreement score 5.5 points lower than the natural mothers. But since neither of these differences is statistically significant, we accept the null hypothesis that the apparent differences between

natural parents and foster and stepparents is not indicative of a real difference between these groups.

#### 6. Parents of High School Freshmen Versus Parents of High School Seniors

Of the 381 fathers who checked inventories, 220 were fathers of freshmen, and 161 were fathers of seniors. The average agreement score for the fathers of seniors was 8.9 points higher than the average agreement score for fathers of freshmen. Although the F-ratio is not significant at the .05 level of confidence, it approaches significance. It is significant at the .07 level of confidence. There were 246 mothers of freshmen and 181 mothers of seniors. The mothers of the seniors had a 4.8 point higher average agreement score than did the mothers of freshmen, but this agreement score was not statistically significant. On the basis of the .05 level of confidence we have established for this study we accept the null hypothesis that the apparent difference between agreement scores of parents of freshmen and parents of seniors is not indicative of a real difference between these two groups.

#### 7. Urban Parents Versus Rural Parents and Small Town Parents

The purpose of this comparison was to discover if rural and urban parents differed from each other significantly with

respect to their ability to identify the problems of their adolescents. The high school students and their parents were originally classified as to residence into six categories (Supra, p. 11), but because of the small number in some categories were reclassified into the four categories indicated in Table 5. Although the differences between average mean scores for fathers range from 3.0 to 10.2, on the basis of the analysis of variance presented in Tables 6 and 7, these differences are not statistically significant. Since there are no significant differences among the four residence means, the differences between the rural and urban means in the sample would also not be significant (22, p. 278), and the null hypothesis would be accepted.

Table 5

Mean Scores of Parents According to Residence Groupings				
Residence Location	Fathers		Mothers	
	Number	Mean	Number	Mean
Urban	117	191.8	135	191.2
Suburban	59	185.6	61	194.7
Village or Small Town	35	188.8	46	188.0
Rural	170	196.1	185	198.7
Totals	381	192.5	427	194.6

Table 6

Analysis of Variance in Agreement Scores  
of Urban and Rural Fathers

Source of Variation	df	Variance	Computed F-Ratio	F-Ratio Needed .05 Level
Total	380			
Among residences	3	1832.17	.89	2.63
Within residences	377	2066.60		

Table 7

Analysis of Variance in Agreement Scores  
of Urban and Rural Mothers

Source of Variation	df	Variance	Computed F-Ratio	F-Ratio Needed .05 Level
Total	426			
Among residences	3	2198.32	1.13	2.63
Within residences	423	1945.26		

### 8. Parents of Oldest Children, Middle Children, Youngest Children, and Only Children Compared

In an attempt to find out if parents had better insights into the problems of children occupying one sibling position, rather than another, the high school students were classified into the four categories at the beginning of this paragraph. Twins were excluded from this analysis, since there were very few of them in the study. Table 8 shows the number of parents for each category and the average score for the parents in each category.

Table 8  
Mean Scores of Parents Classified  
According to Sibling Position of the Child

Sibling Position	Fathers		Mothers	
	Number	Mean	Number	Mean
Only child	23	209.8	27	217.4
Oldest child	137	191.6	150	193.4
Middle child	120	192.2	141	194.9
Youngest child	91	192.6	99	193.9
Totals	371	193.2	417	195.6

Both fathers and mothers of only children have higher agreement scores than do any other parents. The difference between the mean score of the fathers of only children and the mean score of the fathers in the category next highest is 17.2 points.

The difference between the mean score of the mothers of only children and the mean score of the mothers in the category next highest is 22.5 points. Although these differences appear to be considerable, on the basis of analysis of variance they are not statistically significant. The variability of the scores within each sibling position is so great that the variability between groups appears to be explainable by chance. Sibling position does not seem to be a significantly influential factor in the parents' ability to identify the problems of their children. See Tables 9 and 10.

Table 9

Analysis of Variance of Agreement Scores Among Fathers  
Classified According to the Sibling Position of the Child

Source of Variation	df	Variance	Computed F-Ratio	F-Ratio Needed .05 Level
Total	370			
Among siblings	3	2290	1.11	2.63
Within siblings	367	2057		

Table 10

Analysis of Variance of Agreement Scores Among Mothers  
Classified According to the Sibling Position of the Child

Source of Variation	df	Variance	Computed F-Ratio	F-Ratio Needed .05 Level
Total	416			
Among siblings	3	4624.18	2.44	2.63
Within siblings	413	1891.79		

9. Employed Mothers Versus Mothers Who Are Not

Employed Outside the Home

Two hundred thirty-six of the 427 mothers in the study were not employed outside the home, 129 were employed full-time, and 62 were employed part-time. The mean agreement scores of these mothers is recorded in Table 11. The greatest difference of agreement scores is between mothers employed part-time and mothers not employed outside the home--a difference of 14 points. The differences among these means is not statistically significant. See Table 12 for analysis of variance.

Table 11

Mean Scores of Mothers Classified According to Employment Status		
Employment Status	Number	Mean
No employment outside the home	236	198.5
Full-time employment outside the home	129	192.5
Part-time employment outside the home	62	184.5
Totals	427	194.6

Table 12

Analysis of Variance of Agreement Scores of Employed and  
Unemployed Mothers

Source of Variation	df	Variance	Computed F-Ratio	F-Ratio Needed .05 Level
Total	426			
Among mothers employment	2	5,499.53	2.85	3.02
Within mothers employment	424	1,930.28		

Employed mothers seemed to know the problems of their teen-agers about as well as did the mothers who gave full time to being homemakers. Even though the difference between the average agreement scores of mothers who are employed part-time outside the home and mothers who are not employed outside the home appears to be considerable, this difference seems to be explainable on the basis of chance factors in sampling. Moreover, the difference between the average score of mothers who are employed full-time and mothers who are not employed is even less than the difference between



mothers employed part-time and mothers who are not employed. If outside employment were to have any effect upon a mother's ability to identify the problems of her teen-agers, it would be expected that the mother who is employed full-time would have less knowledge of her adolescent's problems than the mother who is employed part-time. Thus, it appears that the employment status of the mother does not affect significantly her ability to recognize her adolescent's problems.

10. Parents Whose Children Discuss Their Problems With Their Parents Versus Parents Whose Children Do Not Discuss Their Problems With Their Parents

To the investigator it seemed likely that parents whose teen-agers discussed their problems with them would be better able to identify their children's problems than would parents whose children did not have the benefit of such communication. On the general information check sheet administered in the high school each teenager was asked to check to whom he went with his problems: neither parent, to the father, to the mother, or to both about equally. On the basis of this information each parent group (father group and mother group) was subdivided into four categories: (1) those whose children discussed their problems with neither parent; (2) those whose children usually discussed their problems with their fathers;

(3) those whose children usually discussed their problems with their mothers; (4) those whose children discussed their problems with both parents. Table 13 shows the number of children in each of these categories and the average agreement score for the parents who are classified according to the respective category.

Table 13

Parents to Whom Children Usually Go With Their Problems					
	Parent with Whom Adolescent Discusses Problems				
	Neither	Father	Mother	Both	Total
Number of Fathers	56	17	169	139	381
Average Score	175.8	195.1	192.6	198.7	192.5
Number of Mothers	65	17	202	143	426
Average Score	181.6	194.4	195.5	199.2	194.6

Although the differences between the mean agreement scores of some of these subgroups seem to be considerable, on the basis of analysis of variance these differences are not statistically significant. See Tables 14 and 15.

Table 14

Analysis of Variance Among Fathers When Compared on the Basis of  
Parent to Whom Child Reports He Goes With His Problems

Source of Variation	df	Variance	Computed F-Ratio	F-Ratio Needed .05 Level
Total	380			
Among parental help groups	3	396	.19	2.63
Within parental help groups	377	2078		

Table 15

Analysis of Variance Among Mothers When Compared on the Basis of  
Parent to Whom Child Reports He Goes With His Problems

Source of Variation	df	Variance	Computed F-Ratio	F-Ratio Needed .05 Level
Total	426			
Among parental help groups	3	4719	2.44	2.63
Within parental help groups	423	1931		

It seemed possible, however, that making comparisons among the four groups might have distorted the data. To check this possibility the data were reclassified into two-category tables for both the fathers and the mothers. The 56 fathers of children who said they went to neither parent with their problems were combined with the 169 fathers whose children reported they went to their

mothers with their problems. This formed a category of fathers whose children did not talk over their problems with their fathers. The 17 fathers whose children said they went to their fathers with their problems were combined with the 139 fathers whose children indicated they went to both parents with their problems. This formed a category of fathers whose children did discuss their problems with their fathers. See Table 16.

Table 16

Analysis of Variance of Agreement Scores of Fathers Whose Children Come to Them With Their Problems Compared With Fathers Whose Children Do Not Come to Them With Their Problems

Father Groups Compared	No. of Fathers	Mean Score	Difference	F-Ratio	df	F-Ratio Needed .05 Level
Children go to father	156	198.34	9.94	4.64	1 and 379	3.87
Children do not go to father	225	188.4				

These two groups were then compared by the method of analysis of variance. The difference between fathers whose children discuss their problems with their fathers and fathers whose children do not discuss their problems with their fathers is statistically significant.

Table 17

**Analysis of Variance of Agreement Scores of Mothers Whose Children  
Come to Them With Their Problems, Compared With Agreement  
Scores of Mothers Whose Children Do Not Come to Them  
With Their Problems**

<b>Mother Groups Compared</b>	<b>Number of Mothers</b>	<b>Mean Score</b>	<b>Dif- fer- ence</b>	<b>F- Ratio</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>F-Ratio Needed .05 Level</b>
Children go to mother	345	197.03	12.75	4.84	1 and 425	3.86
Children do not go to mother	82	184.28				

The mothers also were classified into two categories. The 65 mothers of children who said they went to neither parent with their problems were combined with the 17 mothers whose children indicated they preferred to discuss their problems with their fathers. The 202 mothers whose children stated they discussed their problems with their mothers were combined with the 143 mothers whose children stated they discussed their problems with both parents. See Table 17. These two categories of mothers, those whose children do not discuss their problems with their mothers and those whose children do discuss their problems with their mothers, were compared by the method of analysis of variance. The difference between these two categories is significant at the .05 level of confidence. Statistics indicate that both fathers and mothers whose children confide in

them are better able to identify their children's problems than are the parents whose children do not confide in them.

The parents of children who stated they discussed their problems with both parents were compared with parents whose children stated they discussed their problems with neither parent.

Table 18 shows the number of parents in each of these categories and their average score.

Table 18

Parents of Children Who Discuss Their Problems With Both Parents Compared With Parents of Children Who Discuss Their Problems With Neither Parent

Parent Groups Compared	No. of Parents	Mean Score	Dif-ference	F-Ratio	df	F-Ratio Needed	
						.05	.01
Children discuss problems with both	282	198.97	20.02	14.0	1 and 401	3.86	6.70
Children discuss problems with neither	121	178.95					

The difference of 20.02 score points between the means of these two sets of parents was treated by the method of analysis of variance. The obtained F-ratio is found to be significant at the .01 level of confidence. It appears that those parents whose children discuss their problems with both parents have a greater ability to identify the problems of their children than do those parents whose

children discuss their problems with neither parent.

### Comparison of the Findings of This Study with Findings Reported in the Literature

In general the problems which were most frequently of concern to the high school youth in this study are the same as those which Shimberg found were most frequently of concern to youth across the country (40, p. 1-5, 15-18 and 41, p. 7,8). In both studies school problems and concern over what lay beyond high school were foremost in the teen-agers' minds. Also, both studies indicate that the number of high school boys and girls who are in sharp conflict with their parents is a minority. Although the findings of other studies (9, 10, 19, 23, 36, and 60) differ somewhat from this, these differences may, in part, be due to the differences in the instruments used and the purposes of the studies. Most of them found the problems in the area of the home and family were least frequent. The weight of the evidence supports the conclusion that as adolescents mature and seek to establish their independence, barriers to communications and misunderstandings arise. The constant changes which are taking place in the developing adolescent frequently create problems and conflicts between the parents and their teen-ager (1, p. 226-231; 3, p. 236-241; 11, p. 322-328; 13, p. 523-535;

21, p. 246-248; 25, p. 42; 31, p. 4-8; 35, p. 412; 44, p. 238-240; 54, p. 224; and 56, p. 600). But these do not seem to be the major concerns of youth.

Most parents in this study knew a significant number of the problems of their teen-agers. This is in agreement with the findings of Tarwater's study (52, p. 11-14). These findings may seem to be contradictory to the statements of many authorities in the field of adolescent development. Several writers on parent-adolescent relationships feel that teen-agers and parents do not understand each other (3, p. 193-208; 30, p. 152-156; 35, p. 412; 56, p. 600; and 59, p. 283-285). Parents, however, may recognize the problems of their own teen-agers without really understanding the teen-agers themselves. Research findings also indicate that there are specific problems which youth do not, or feel they cannot discuss with their parents (15, p. 1-10, 52-61).

In the light of the findings of the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection (58, p. 133 and 302) that adolescents discuss their problems with their mothers more frequently than they do with their fathers, it seemed probable that mothers would be able to identify significantly more of their teen-agers' problems than would be true for fathers. This present research supports the findings that teen-agers prefer the mother as a confidant, but does



not find mothers significantly more able to identify the teen-agers' problems.

Both Nye and Elias found important differences between adolescent boys and girls with respect to their relationships to and adjustments with their parents (17, p. 28-246 and 37, p. 121-126). The White House Conference on Child Health and Protection found that girls confide in their parents more than do boys. It seemed probable, in view of these previous studies, that parents would be able to identify the problems of their daughters better than they would the problems of their sons. The findings of this study, however, indicated that parents of daughters were not able to identify significantly more problems than were parents of sons. It appears that sons, as well as daughters, do let parents know what most of their problems are. It may be that both sons and daughters are selective in discussing certain personal problems with their parents. This was the finding of Holman (27, p. 4-7). Elias found that urban and rural girls and urban and rural boys differed from each other with respect to how they confided in their parents and the nature of the problems they discussed (17, p. 28-246). These urban-rural differences may tend to reduce some of the differences which might exist between parents of adolescent girls and parents of adolescent boys, if they all resided either within the city or in the rural areas.

It seemed likely to the investigator that the natural parents would be able to identify more of the problems of their teenagers than would foster or stepparents. Nye's finding that adolescent-parent adjustment was poorer in broken homes than it was in non-broken homes (37, p. 121-126), seemed to support this theory. The findings of this study, however, showed no significant differences between the agreement scores of foster and stepparents and the agreement scores of natural parents. Since the foster parent and stepparent groups were very small, totalling 39 fathers and 20 mothers, the findings are far from conclusive. Four stepfathers and six stepmothers did not check the inventories (Appendix D, Tables 19, 20).

One might expect that as children progressed through high school the nature of their adjustment with their parents would change. Nye's study indicates that this is so (37, p. 121-126), particularly for boys. If such differences in parent-adolescent adjustment between high school freshmen and high school seniors existed in this study, it seemed to have little or no effect upon the parents' ability to identify the problems of their teenagers. The mean agreement score for parents of seniors was not significantly different from the mean agreement score for parents of freshmen.

In view of the literature reviewed for this thesis, the

finding of this study that rural and urban parents were about equal in their ability to identify the problems of their youth was somewhat unexpected. Both Nye and Elias found differences between urban and rural parent-adolescent relationships. If these differences in parent-adolescent relationships existed between urban and rural youth in the present study, they did not seem to affect the parents' ability to identify the teen-agers' problems.

Much criticism has been made of working mothers. But the working mothers in this study appeared to be as conversant with the problems of their teen-agers as were non-working mothers. Nye also found that employed mothers were not so much a handicap to parent-child adjustments as is usually believed (37, p. 119-124).

### Summary

Each parent's responses on the SRA Youth Inventory were scored by comparing them with the responses of his or her child. The number of items on which the parent and child agreed became the agreement score.

The frequency with which the teen-agers checked each item on the check list as a problem was computed.

Since the major purpose of the study was to find if parents could identify the problems of their high school youth, each parent's

score was tested for significance. The scores of the majority of parents were found to be significant.

The total parent group was divided into a number of sub-categories for the purposes of comparison. By means of the method of analysis of variance the significance of differences between and among these categories was computed.

Some of the findings of this study are in agreement with the findings of other research. Other findings disagree with what might be expected. A more complete summary and interpretation of the findings will be presented in the concluding chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this research was to find how well a selected sample of parents could identify the problems of their own high school boys and girls. A subsidiary purpose was to compare subgroups of parents within the sample to determine if some parents could identify the problems of their teen-agers better than could others.

Four hundred thirty-three high school seniors and freshmen and their parents were included in the study. The high school pupils checked the items in the SRA Youth Inventory, Form S, which they felt represented their own problems. The parents also checked the items in the inventory which they felt indicated the problems of their teen-agers. Every parent was scored against his own high school student's responses. These scores became the basic data for testing the hypotheses of this research.

#### Summary of the Findings

The findings of this study are expressed in terms of the eleven hypotheses which were stated in Chapter I. The first

hypothesis was tested by determining if the average agreement score of the parents was high enough to be unlikely to have occurred by chance at the .05 level of confidence. The other hypotheses were tested by analysis of variance, using the .05 level of confidence as the criterion of significance.

Within the community in which this study was made, based upon the data which was gathered, the following conclusions about parents of high school youth seem to be supported:

1. Parents recognize many of the problems of their teen-agers. On the average, what the parents in this study estimated to be the problems of their teen-agers was not found to be significantly different from what the teen-agers reported as their problems.

Although 20 percent of the parents had agreement scores too low to be statistically significant, the majority had scores sufficiently high to indicate that they probably recognized many of the problems of their own youth.

2. Fathers and mothers know their adolescents' problems equally well. There appears to be no significant difference between the ability of the fathers and mothers in this community to estimate the problems of their high school pupils.

3. The ability of the parents to estimate the problems of their sons does not differ significantly from their ability to estimate

the problems of their daughters.

4. Fathers estimate the problems of their daughters as well as they estimate the problems of their sons.

5. Mothers identify the problems of their sons as well as they identify the problems of their daughters.

6. Foster parents and stepparents appear able to estimate the problems of their high school children as well as natural parents can.

7. Parents appear able to identify the problems of high school seniors and high school freshmen equally well. No significant difference was found between the agreement scores of parents of these two groups.

8. Urban parents and rural parents do not differ significantly from each other with respect to their ability to estimate the problems of their high school youth.

9. The sibling position of the child does not appear to be related significantly to the ability of parents to predict the problems of their high school children. Even though parents of only children did have an average score considerably higher than did parents who had more than one child, the difference was not statistically significant.

10. The employment status of mothers does not appear to

affect significantly their ability to identify the problems of their high school boys and girls. Although the mean score of mothers who were employed full-time was higher than the mean score of mothers who were employed part-time, and the mean score of mothers who were not employed outside the home was higher than the mean score of employed mothers, the differences were not statistically significant.

11. Parents to whom teen-agers indicate they go with their problems appear able to identify significantly more of their children's problems than do parents to whom the teen-agers indicate they do not go. The differences between the mean agreement score of parents whose children went to both parents with their problems and the mean agreement score of parents of children who went to neither parent was found to be very significant. Parents whose children discussed their problems with both parents appeared to know significantly more about their children than did parents whose children discuss their problems with neither parent.

### Interpretation of the Findings

Most parents in this study could estimate a significant number of the problems of their teen-agers. This may appear contradictory to the widely-held belief that parents do not understand



their adolescents. Parents, however, may be able to estimate the problems of their youth without understanding in an appreciative and sympathetic manner the teen-agers themselves.

When the investigator began this study it seemed probable that there would be significant differences between some of the subgroups into which the parents were separated. The literature reported earlier in this study indicated certain differences which might influence the ability of parents to identify their teen-ager's problems. Since adolescents tend to discuss their problems with their mothers more than with their fathers, it seemed probable that mothers would recognize significantly more of the teen-ager's problems. This present research did not find mothers more able than fathers to identify the teen-ager's problems. One possible explanation for this could be that fathers and mothers frequently collaborated when they filled in their problem check lists. This did not appear to be the case, although there may have been some discussion between parents. Another possible explanation is that fathers and mothers usually discuss between themselves the problems which the teen-agers may discuss with one parent only, which may tend to neutralize the advantage of the mothers.

Since girls tend to confide in their parents more than do boys, it seemed probable that parents would be able to identify the

problems of their daughters better than they would the problems of their sons. The findings of this study, however, indicate that parents can identify the problems of both sons and daughters equally well. Apparently parents receive as much communication from their sons as they do from their daughters concerning their problems.

Urban parents and rural parents in this study were not significantly different in their ability to identify their adolescent's problems. Since the city used for this study is comparatively small, with essentially a rural atmosphere, the youth who live there may not be as markedly different from rural youth as would be true for youth who live in a more metropolitan city. The union high school situation may also tend to reduce the differences which would exist between rural and urban youth if they attended separate high schools. On the other hand, when urban and rural youth are integrated in a school situation, there is an increased possibility that these young people will compare their family situations. If one group felt its home situation was inferior to that of the other, this could increase the problem of parent-adolescent relationships.

The findings of this study showed no significant differences between the agreement scores of foster and stepparents and the agreement scores of natural parents. Since the foster parent and stepparent groups were very small, these findings are inconclusive.

Parents whose children confide in them and discuss their problems with them were found to be able to identify significantly more of their teen-ager's problems than were parents whose children did not come to them with their problems. This appears to be the most important finding of the present study. The insight which these parents had into the concerns and problems of their teen-agers did not seem to be too much related to whether the family resides in the city or on the farm, whether the child is a boy or a girl, whether the youth is a freshman or a senior, a natural child or a foster or stepchild, an only child, oldest child, middle child, or youngest child, or whether the mother is employed or not employed. What seemed to matter was the quality of the relationships which existed within the individual family units. Parents who succeeded in keeping open the channels of communication between themselves and their youth, parents to whom youth felt they wanted to turn with their problems were the parents who best understood the problems of their teen-agers.

#### Further Research Indicated

Several problems needing further study have been raised by this investigation.

1. Would urban and rural parents be significantly different in their ability to identify their adolescents' problems if

such a study as this were conducted in communities which are exclusively urban or exclusively rural?

2. Would a study such as the one made by Tarwater reveal any significant differences in parent-adolescent understanding between natural parents and foster or stepparents?
3. What are the general developmental changes in parent-adolescent relationships during the high school years, and how do these changes influence the communication process?
4. In what ways do adolescent boys differ from adolescent girls with respect to their relationships with their parents during high school years?
5. Does sibling position have any influence upon parent-adolescent relationships and understandings?
6. How much are intrafamilial relationships and communications affected by outside employment of mothers?
7. What are the factors which turn some teen-agers from discussing their problems with their parents?
8. How well can teen-agers identify the problems of their parents?
9. How well do parents know the interests of their adolescent children? The attitudes of their adolescent children?
10. Are parents of children who are classified as delinquent

as able to identify the problems of their teen-agers as are parents of children who are not so classified?

11. Are children whose parents cannot identify a significant number of their problems different in attitudes toward their parents and families from those whose parents can identify most of their problems?
12. Can parents estimate the problems of their teen-agers better in some areas than in others? For example, can parents identify their adolescents' school problems better than they can identify problems in the area of boy-girl relationships?
13. Does the age of the parents affect their ability to identify the problems of their teen-agers?
14. Does the educational status of the parents affect their ability to identify the problems of their teen-agers?
15. Does the socio-economic status of the parents affect their ability to identify the problems of their teen-agers?

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## APPENDIXES

## APPENDIX A

General information sheet administered to pupils

## GENERAL INFORMATION

No. \_\_\_\_\_

On the questions below will you please check the answers which fit you?

1. Which one of the following are you in your family?

- \_\_\_\_\_ only child
- \_\_\_\_\_ a twin
- \_\_\_\_\_ middle, or in-between child
- \_\_\_\_\_ youngest child

2. If you are a twin, what is your position in the family?

- \_\_\_\_\_ only children in the family
- \_\_\_\_\_ oldest children in the family
- \_\_\_\_\_ in between other children in the family
- \_\_\_\_\_ youngest children in the family

3. Check which one of the following best states the location of your home.

- \_\_\_\_\_ within the city limits of \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ in a residential area close to \_\_\_\_\_ city limits
- \_\_\_\_\_ in a residential area close to Portland city limits
- \_\_\_\_\_ in the open country, but non-farm
- \_\_\_\_\_ in some village or town other than \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ on a farm

4. Are you married?

- \_\_\_\_\_ yes
- \_\_\_\_\_ no

5. Please check whichever ones of the following people live in your home at the present time:

- |                  |                       |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| _____ own father | _____ adoptive father |
| _____ own mother | _____ adoptive mother |
| _____ stepfather | _____ guardian father |
| _____ stepmother | _____ guardian mother |

6. Does your mother work outside the home? (Check the right answer.)

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, full-time (30 or more hours per week)
- ☐ Yes, part-time (less than 30 hours per week)

7. To which one of your parents do you usually go to discuss your problems?

- ☐ father
- ☐ mother
- ☐ both about the same
- ☐ neither parent

## APPENDIX B

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR ADMINISTERING INVENTORIES

The booklet you have in front of you is not a test. Instead, it is a check-list which should help you find out how you feel about some of the problems that concern high school students. All of us have problems. We can understand ourselves and others better if we know what these problems are. If you will answer frankly how you feel about each of the questions in this inventory, we at \_\_\_\_\_ High will be able to help you make your school life more enjoyable and profitable.

Over 15,000 students all over the United States helped prepare this youth inventory by indicating what their problems were. One of the first things we can do with the results is to compare the answers given by freshmen and seniors in this school with the answers given by these other students all over the country. Most of all, we will know how all of you together feel about the questions. Using this information as a guide we will be better able, and will really try to make your school experience more valuable to you.

Another very important reason for your careful checking of this inventory is to help adults everywhere to have a better understanding of the problems which really concern teen-agers. These

inventories are being administered to you today as a part of a survey on youth problems being made under the supervision of Oregon State College. Mr. Keith Bell, who is a professor of psychology at Cascade College, is the investigator. Tomorrow you will be given an opportunity to assist in another part of the study.

Please be assured that no one desires to pry into your private or individual affairs. What is wanted is information about high school students in general. No one will ever know how you, as an individual, check the items. Therefore, please do not sign or write your name on the booklet. But when you are told to do so, will you please print your name on the card which is inside the inventory booklet. Obviously, this card could be attached to your booklet, but it will not be, nor will your name ever be connected with your booklet, unless you should request it. You may be confident of this. When all the information is gathered which is needed for the study this card with your name on it will be returned to you. You should keep this card. You may wish to talk with your counselor about your problems, but he will not be able to find your booklet unless you tell him its number. The purpose for your signing your names on this card is to help the investigator with some checking and matching in the process of gathering information.

Now, will you all do these things together?

1. Print your name on the card inside your inventory. The monitor will pick them up.
2. Fill in all the information on the front of the booklet except your name. Do not put your name on the booklet.
3. Look at the general information sheet inside the inventory. Will you quickly check the answers which are true for you? The monitor will pick up these sheets.
4. Now look at the front page of your booklet, and we will read the directions together. You read them to yourselves while I read them out loud. (Read the directions ...)

Ask if there are any questions. (Don't take too long with this)

If you find some words which you do not understand, raise your hand, and the monitor will help you.

Do not take too long on any item. If it does not seem like a problem, check the circle and move quickly to the next item.

You may begin.



## APPENDIX C

## FORM I

Letter of introduction sent to parents by principal  
prior to beginning of study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Union High School

October 2, 1956

C  
O  
P  
Y

Dear Parent:

Within a few days you will receive an inventory and a letter from Mr. Keith A. Bell asking you for some judgments and opinions which only you can give. The responses which you give will form a very important part of a study which Mr. Bell has been authorized to make in the \_\_\_\_\_ Union High School district. This authorization comes from Oregon State College and from local school officials.

Let me explain just a little bit about Mr. Bell and his study. Mr. Bell is a doctoral student at Oregon State College. He has been employed as a part-time instructor under the General Extension Division of the Oregon State System of Higher Education. At present he is Director of Student Personnel and a professor of psychology and education at Cascade College in Portland.

Now, a word about his study. A number of writers on family life state that there are many parents who do not fully understand their teen-agers, and that many teen-agers do not fully understand either themselves or their parents. But there actually has been little investigation into the truth of these statements. It is further declared by students of social problems that the school is responsible for assisting both parents and their teen-agers to develop better family understanding and relationships. The school is willing to accept the challenging responsibility. But before the school can fulfill this obligation to the community it must find out where the blind

spots and weak points are. Mr. Bell is conducting his study to give us such background information.

We are urging all parents in the sample group who will be included in this study to please cooperate 100 percent with Mr. Bell. All information which he gathers will be kept strictly anonymous and confidential. No one will ever be personally identified, nor will anyone's individual affairs ever be disclosed to anyone. What is wanted is the collective information on all seniors and freshmen, with the judgments of their parents about them. Mr. Bell is not interested whatever in investigating individual cases.

It is very important that everyone who receives a request to answer one of the inventories does so. Since you are a part of a sample group selected from \_\_\_\_\_ High School (the parents of all the freshmen and all the seniors), the validity and accuracy of the study depends upon a 100 percent return of the inventories. We believe you all will cooperate gladly and fully in this important study.

Thank you kindly for this courtesy.

Sincerely yours,

Principal

## APPENDIX C

## FORM 2

Covering letter sent to parents with SRA Youth Inventories

C

O

P

Y

Union High School  
October 4, 1956

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Under the supervision of Oregon State College a serious attempt is being made to discover what are the problems which concern high school youth and how well we, as adults, understand them and their problems. \_\_\_\_\_ has been selected as a high school which is representative of high school students in the Willamette Valley.

To find the answer to our questions we are using the SRA Youth Inventory, two copies of which are enclosed with this letter. This inventory was developed by Purdue University after a very careful and extensive study of the problems of 15,000 high school students. The statements and questions included in the inventory are stated exactly as they were expressed by the pupils themselves.

On Wednesday, October 3, the Youth Inventory was checked by all the seniors and all the freshmen at \_\_\_\_\_ High School. One or more of these teen-agers comes from your home. We appreciate the courteous cooperation these pupils have given and have pledged to these young people that no one will ever know how they, individually, checked the inventory.

One further study is desired. We would like to find out what we, as adults, think the problems are of our high school boys and girls. For this I am asking your cooperation and help.

Enclosed are two inventory booklets, one marked for the father and one marked for the mother. (Stepparents, foster parents, and guardians also, please fill in the inventories.) Will you please go through this inventory to find those statements or questions

which you think are problems for your teen-ager who is either a freshman or a senior at \_\_\_\_\_ High? (If more than one of your children brings home a set of inventories, will you please check the inventories for each one of your youth?)

DIRECTIONS FOR CHECKING THE INVENTORY. Read each statement in the questionnaire carefully. If it expresses something which you feel is a problem to your adolescent, mark one of the three boxes. If you think the statement does not apply to him or her, mark the circle. If you feel it is one of his or her most serious problems, mark the big box. If it is a moderate problem, according to the way you feel, mark the middle box. If you feel it is a small problem, one of occasional concern, mark the small box.

Please do not sign your name on the booklet. The code number on the cover makes it possible to match the answers of parents with those of their teen-agers without knowing the identity of anyone. It is not the purpose of this study to investigate the problems or affairs of individuals. Rather, its objective is to determine how well parents, in general, understand what are the problems of their teen-agers.

Parents, please do not talk to each other about your answers to the inventory items, nor with your teen-ager before you fill out the inventory. Afterward, you may do so if you desire.

As soon as you both have completed checking your booklets, place them in the enclosed envelope and seal it. Then please send it back to the high school with your boy or girl who brought it home.

Please accept my sincere appreciation for the thoughtfulness and time which I am sure you will give to this task. The validity and accuracy of this study depends upon you. In return for your cooperation your high school will be given a summary of the findings of the study. It is believed that this information will help both parents and teachers do a better job of guiding and educating the youth of our land.

I shall be grateful to you for your assistance.

Sincerely yours,

/S/ Keith A. Bell

Doctoral Student  
Oregon State College

## APPENDIX C

## FORM 3

Follow-up letter sent to  
parents

C

O

P

Y

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Union High School  
December, 1956

Dear Parent or Guardian:

You will be interested to learn that eighty percent of the parents who were asked to check what they thought were the problems of their high school boys and girls have already returned the Youth Inventories to the high school. For this good response I am very grateful. Since you parents are very busy, particularly in the fall of the year, the time which you take to fill in one of these booklets usually has to be stolen from some other duty. This eighty percent response indicates how genuinely interested are the parents of \_\_\_\_\_ youth in the problems and concerns of their boys and girls.

Since you are part of a sample group of parents who are supplying information for this study, it is very important that all of you check and return the inventories. If all of you will check what you think are the problems of your teen-agers, we shall be better able to determine how well parents in general understand what are the concerns of youth.

The high school teacher who sent home the inventories with your teen-ager says that he does not have a record of their having been returned. Undoubtedly, you have intended to check and send them back, but one thing or another has kept you from it. Or maybe you have sent them back, but they have been delayed in reaching the teacher. You can help me greatly if you will take just a few moments to check the appropriate answers on the enclosed post card and drop it in the mail.

Several parents have asked me, "Just why do you want to make this study? What are you getting out of this?" My answer is two-fold. First, I am genuinely interested in finding out how well parents understand their youth. The opinion has long been circulated that parents get out of touch with their children about the time that the children reach their teens. This may be a false notion, and if it is, it should be exploded. On the other hand, if there are areas in which we, as parents, are blind to teen-age problems, surely we want to find out what those areas are. High school youth need to be understood if they are to be given adequate guidance. My second reason is purely selfish. The information I am gathering will be used as the basic material for a doctoral thesis I am writing at Oregon State College.

I will be deeply appreciative if you will send me the enclosed post card. If you still have those inventories at home, can you check them and return them soon?

Very truly yours,

Keith A. Bell

## APPENDIX C

## FORM 4

Return card enclosed with follow-up letter

Our reason for not checking and returning the Youth Inventories before now is as follows:

\_\_\_\_\_ We've been so busy that we haven't had time to get them checked; will do so in a few days.

\_\_\_\_\_ We have not received the inventories. Please send us some.

\_\_\_\_\_ We would like a little more explanation about your study. Could you pay us a visit?

\_\_\_\_\_ We have checked and returned them; we can't see why you don't have them.

Other reason:

## A P P E N D I X D

## ANALYSIS OF HOMES FROM WHICH NO PARENT OR ONLY ONE PARENT

## CHECKED THE INVENTORY

Table 19

<u>Analysis of the 78 Sets of Parent Inventories Which were not Checked</u>	
<u>Reason or Circumstances</u>	<u>Number of Parent Pairs</u>
Parents not located or were unidentified	18
Parents agreed to check, but did not; seemed interested	11
Parents felt inventory violated family privacy	10
Stepparents in the home	7
Parents said checked inventories were sent to school	6
Girl married; withdrew from school	4
Parents out of state during research	4
Both parents working; too busy	4
Pupils dropped out of school (non-marriage)	3
Parents felt inventory inapplicable to child	3
Families moved away before interviewed	2
Parents did not understand what was wanted; after explanation agreed to check, but did not	1
No parents; foster parents recent	1
Illiteracy and apathy	1
Parents recently divorced; children with grandmother	1
Teen-ager requested parents not to return the inventory	1
<u>Total</u>	<u>78</u>

Table 20

<u>Analysis of Six Inventories Checked by Fathers Only</u>	
<u>Reason or circumstance for mother not checking</u>	<u>Number</u>
Mother deceased	2
Mother too ill to check	2
Mother said she had checked and returned inventory to school	2
<u>Total</u>	<u>6</u>



Table 21

<u>Analysis of Fifty-Two Inventories Checked by Mothers Only</u>	
<u>Reason or Circumstance for father not checking</u>	<u>Number</u>
Father deceased	18
Parents divorced; father not in home	9
Father in sharp conflict with child	5
Father unhappy with child's school relationships	4
Disinterested; saw no value of study for themselves	4
Father out of state working	3
Stepfather; knew too little about child	3
Father's mother objected to the study	2
Failed to contact father	1
Family moved away before father could be contacted	1
Father in State Hospital	1
Father seriously ill	<u>1</u>
Total	52

## APPENDIX E

## Supplemental Tables of Data Used in the Research

Table 22

Summarization of Fathers' Scores on SRA Youth Inventory			
Sex	Sons	Daughters	Combined
N	185	196	381
$\Sigma X$	35,491	37,840	73,331
$\Sigma X^2$	7,202,547	7,696,060	14,898,607
ss	393,838.45	390,623.27	784,602.90
$s^2$	2,140.43	2,003.20	2,064.74
s	46.26	44.76	45.44
Mn	191.8	193.1	192.5

Table 23

Summarization of Mothers' Scores on SRA Youth Inventory			
Sex	Sons	Daughters	Combined
N	203	224	427
$\Sigma X$	38,962	44,135	83,097
$\Sigma X^2$	7,893,644	9,107,015	17,000,659
ss	415,627.03	411,040.78	829,437.90
$s^2$	2,057.56	1,843.23	1,947.04
s	45.36	42.93	44.13
Mn	191.9	197.0	194.6

Table 24

Summarization of Combined Parents' Scores on SRA Youth Inventory

Sex	Sons	Daughters
N	388	420
$\Sigma X$	74,453	81,975
$\Sigma X^2$	15,096,191	16,803,075
ss	809,466.23	803,311.61
$s^2$	2,091.65	1,917.21
s	45.73	43.79
Mn	191.9	195.2

Table 25

Summary for Adoptive, Stepparent, Guardian Group  
and Natural Parents

	Father		Mother	
	Natural Parent	Adoptive Parent	Natural Parent	Adoptive Parent
N	342	39	407	20
$\Sigma X$	65,664	7,667	79,309	3,788
$\Sigma X^2$	13,326,470	1,572,137	16,242,533	758,126
ss	718,982.00	68,883.43	788,190.29	40,678.80
$s^2$	2,108.45	1,707.46	1,941.36	2,140.99
s	45.92	41.32	44.06	46.27
Mn	192.0	196.6	194.9	189.4

Table 26

## Summary for Parents of Freshmen and Parents of Seniors

	Father		Mother	
	Freshmen	Seniors	Freshmen	Seniors
N	220	161	246	181
$\Sigma X$	41,523	31,808	47,368	35,729
$\Sigma X^2$	8,290,393	6,608,214	9,619,028	7,381,631
ss	453,304.23	324,059.57	498,184.81	328,805.36
$s^2$	2,069.88	2,025.37	2,033.41	1,826.70
s	45.50	45.00	45.09	42.74
Mn	188.7	197.6	192.6	197.4