VERBAL COMFORTING INTENTIONS IN ADOLESCENCE: AGE, GENDER, AND EMPATHIC CHARACTERISTICS

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MANUSCRIPT ONE

Verbal Comforting Intentions in Adolescence:

Age, Gender, and Empathic Characteristics

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Family Relations and Child Development

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ABSTRACT

Communicative responsiveness, a social skill that enables individuals to respond effectively to the emotional states of others, and comforting intentions (actual intended behavior), are investigated in this study of males and females aged 13 to 17. A sample of 149 adolescents completed various paper and pencil questionnaires and responded verbally to a videotaped scenario requiring the comforting of a same-sex friend who has just experienced a humiliating social rejection. Results of hierarchical multiple regression analyses indicate a significant relationship between the cognitive aspects of empathy (perspective taking, fantasy empathy) and communicative responsiveness for males; emotional components of empathy (personal distress, empathic concern) were found to be significantly related to level of comforting intentions for males. For females, a significant relationship was found only between empathic concern and communicative responsiveness. Age was not found to be a significant predictor of communicative responsiveness or comforting intentions for either males or females. Implications are discussed.

Introduction

The idea that empathy is a major determinant of prosocial and altruistic responding has been widely accepted among psychologists (Eisenberg & Miller, 1987). Prosocial responding is often defined as "voluntary behavior intended to benefit another, such as helping, sharing, and comforting" (Davis, 1983a, p. 113). Davis (1980) writes that altruistic behaviors (acts motivated by sympathy and desire to adhere to internalized moral principles) also fall within the category of prosocial responding. Interest in this area dates back several centuries and is often attributed to the necessity of interpersonal relationships to promote individual health and happiness as well as to societal needs to control harmful behaviors in order to ensure adequate human functioning and survival (Eisenberg, 1989).

For this reason, many researchers consider empathy and related prosocial behaviors to be a natural adaptation to the evolution of human societies. Children as young as two years old have been found capable of interpreting the physical and psychological states of others (Zahn-Waxler & Radke-Yarrow, 1990). These children are also believed to have the rudimentary behavioral repertoires necessary to alleviate discomfort in distressed others (Emde, 1985). Thus, comforting responses play a potentially important role

in the quality of interpersonal relationships, even from the early stages of preoperational thought (Samter & Burleson, 1990).

Given that the developmental stage of adolescence marks advances in both cognitive and communicative capabilities, empathy during this age range (roughly ages 13 to 19 years) is characterized by gains in both perspective taking and empathic concern as well as in communicative responsiveness, a conceptualization of the effectiveness of an individual in empathic responding. Deficiencies in empathic capabilities are often attributed to maladaptive early learning experiences; some children and adolescents, for example, have been found to have difficulty distinguishing between different emotional states such as angry and sad (Emde, 1985). Over time, inappropriate response patterns may lead to maladjusted, or antisocial, behavior. During adolescence, however, specialized training in prosocial behavior has been found to increase individual levels of perspective taking, empathic understanding, tolerance, and altruistic actions (Chalmers & Townsend, 1990; MacQuiddy, Maise, & Hamilton, 1987). Empathic understanding of an individual's problems is, in fact, used successfully in therapy to promote such behavioral changes (Rogers, 1975).

Adequate development of empathic characteristics and their subsequent behavioral manifestations are vital to optimal personal development, especially during adolescence. Without such skills, adolescents may be unable to establish and maintain quality relationships and may suffer from negative evaluations from peers and family. The ability to successfully comfort distressed others is particularly important given that the handling of "everyday hurts and disappointments" often determines the qualities of our lives (Burleson, 1985, p. 253).

Gender Differences in Empathy during Adolescence

Past literature finds little agreement in the area of gender differences in empathy. Females appear to have an advantage in empathic responding although many studies were inconclusive as to the nature and extent of that advantage (Eisenberg, 1991; Eisenberg & Lennon, 1983). For example, Feshbach (1982) contends that females respond more empathically than males overall but that males display equal levels of cognitive understanding of the situations in question. Hoffman's (1977) review of literature found "no consistent sex differences" in children's (ages 3 to 11) ability to identify the affective state of another person,

suggesting that males and females do not differ in their capacity for perspective-taking (p. 727)."

Unfortunately, very little research exists in this area for adolescents. Using the Interpersonal Reactivity Index, Davis and Franzoi (1991) investigated stability and change in adolescent self-consciousness and empathy over middle to late adolescence. Using a sample of 206 high school students (male=103, female=103) from a suburb in upper Michigan, Davis and Franzoi (1991) tested students ranging in age from ninth to twelfth grades at one year intervals for four successive years. Intercorrelating the IRI with another written self-report measure, the Fenigstein et al. (1975) Self-Consciousness Scale, Davis and Franzoi (1991) assessed gender differences through mean comparisons and found females scored significantly higher in empathic concern, personal distress, and fantasy as well as in public self-consciousness, social anxiety, and perspective taking. The authors note, however, that as in earlier findings, differences in the area of perspective taking were not as great as in other variables (Davis & Franzoi, 1991). These results (test-retest correlations) were also found to remain stable or change predictably over time as the adolescent matured, leading Davis and Franzoi (1991) to conclude that middle adolescence may be a time of heightened self-

attention and concern for others more for females than for males.

Eisenberg et al. (1991) conducted a longitudinal, intra-individual study of prosocial development in adolescence using Bryant's (1982) Empathy Scale with a sample of three groups of predominantly white, middle class children; these subjects (n=110) had been tested seven times over an eleven-year time frame from the ages of 4-5 to 15-16. In addition to Bryant's Empathy Scale, the subjects were also administered four verbal moral reasoning scenarios, three subscales of the IRI (Fantasy excluded), and various scales concerning altruism and social desirability. Using multivariate analysis, Eisenberg et al. (1991) found significant gender differences in levels of moral reasoning, empathic responding, and helping behaviors in favor of females.

Specifically, females used role-taking and sympathetic reasoning earlier and more frequently than males, were assessed as more mother-oriented and self-reflective than males on the basis of their responses to the IRI, and appeared more likely to actually engage in prosocial activity than males given their scores on the measures of altruism (Eisenberg et al., 1991). Eisenberg et al. (1991) note that although males do begin to catch up in empathic

tendencies as they mature, adolescent females tend to remain true to the stereotypical view of women as being more empathic than men.

Cohn (1991) studied sex differences in the course of personality development using Loevinger's (1976) principles of ego development that include some aspects of empathy and prosocial reasoning. Employing Loevinger and Wessler's (1970) Washington University Sentence Completion Test (WUSCT) as a guideline, Cohn conducted a meta-analysis of 112 published studies and 165 unpublished studies and discovered moderately large sex differences among junior and senior high school students. These results once again favored females. Cohn writes, "although young boys [about thirteen] remain bound by egocentric concerns, young girls move toward a period of social conformity; as boys enter a conformist period, girls approach a period of emerging self-awareness" (1991, p. 261). Thus, even though adolescents appear to mature at the same rate, girls seem to "maintain a constant lead" over boys, which, given previous results concerning the relationship between level of reasoning and prosocial inclinations, has extensive implications for empathic capabilities as well as tendencies (Cohn, 1991, p. 261).

Shelton and McAdams, (1991), using their Visions of Morality Scale as well as the IRI and a measure of political inclination, surveyed 82 male and 99 female Catholic high school students and again discovered significant self-reported empathic differences between adolescent males and females. Results of their multiple regression analysis reveal that females achieved a higher total VMS score of private, interpersonal, and social morality as well as higher scores on the four subscales of the IRI although, as expected, differences in perspective taking ability were not as great (Shelton & McAdams, 1991). Interestingly, these scores were found to have a high correlation with liberal political tendencies in high school females. On a positive note, the authors conclude that their "overall findings suggest the possibility of a general prosocial orientation in [both male and female] high school students (p. 935)."

Finally, in related research Ford et al. (1989) found that high school boys made fewer socially responsible choices on a questionnaire index than did girls; male choices were also described as "more a function of self-interested emotions (p. 419)," leading these researchers to conclude that issues concerning responsibility for others are "more problematic" for adolescent boys than girls (p. 420). In an earlier study of adolescent personality, Stein,

Newcomb, and Bentler (1986) report that females scored higher on measures of generosity, law abidance, orderliness, and religious commitment than males. Thus, current research would seem to support the long-held belief that, as measured by self-report measures, females are more empathic than males during the developmental period of adolescence.

Statement of the Problem/Purpose of the Study

The development of comforting communication skills in childhood and adolescence has been found to follow patterns similar to that of overall cognitive development (Burleson, 1982). That is, as cognitive accomplishments become more sophisticated with advancing age, so do the child or adolescent's abilities to respond appropriately to the emotional states of others. An important distinction is drawn between empathy, which Eisenberg and Miller (1987) define as the "affective state that stems from the apprehension of another's emotional state or condition, and that is congruent with it (p. 849)," and comforting, which Burleson (1985) defines as "those [active] message strategies [that have] the intended function of alleviating or lessening the emotional distress arising from a variety of everyday hurts and disappointments" (p. 253). Thus, a person cannot truly be perceived as being empathic without

acting upon his or her inclinations to behave prosocially (Stiff et al., 1984).

The relationships between the various aspects of empathy (defined by Davis (1983a) as perspective taking, empathic concern, personal distress, and fantasy, which is the ability or tendency to become emotionally involved in the plight of a fictitious character) and actual behavioral responses or intentions have received little attention in current scholarship, especially in the area of adolescence. Comforting is a crucial interpersonal skill at any age, although the developmental tasks of adolescence (i.e., forming significant and/or intimate relationships, solidifying a personal sense of identity, achieving autonomy) necessitate interaction with others to an extent not previously experienced by the individual (Erikson, 1968).

Therefore, prosocial inclination and behavior (or lack thereof) has important ramifications on individual development and perhaps even life course direction in that antisocial children and adolescents are commonly found to be rejected by their peers (Dodge, 1983; Burleson et al., 1986). Peer rejection, in turn, has been found to be associated with a host of negative outcomes such as high rates of conflict, aggression, immature behavior, drug

usage, and juvenile delinquency (Ladd & Price, 1987; Simons, Conger, & Whitbeck, 1988). The goal of the present study is to examine relationships between the antecedents of prosocial behavior and actual male and female comforting intentions. Stated specifically, this study asks, "What are the relationships between each of the following variables (perspective taking, empathic concern, personal distress, fantasy empathy, and age) and the actual comforting intentions of male and female adolescents?"

Further, "what are the relationships between each of the following variables (perspective taking, empathic concern, personal distress, and fantasy empathy, and age) and male and female communicative responsiveness, defined and measured by Stiff et al. (1984) as a "social skill that enables individuals to respond effectively to the emotional states of others (p. 2)"

Definition of Terms

Affective empathy: Involves an emotional reaction on the part of an individual to the observed experiences of another (Hoffman, 1984).

Altruism: Behavior such as helping or sharing that promotes the welfare of others without conscious concern for one's own self-interest (Hoffman, 1984).

Cognitive empathy: Involves an understanding of the internal state of another without an emotional reaction (Hoffman, 1984).

Comforting: Those message strategies that have the intended function of alleviating or lessening the emotional distress arising from a variety of everyday hurts and disappointments (Burleson, 1982).

Communicative responsiveness: A social skill that enables individuals to respond effectively to the emotional states of others (Stiff et al., 1984).

Empathy: Fundamental social skill which allows the individual to anticipate, understand, and experience the point of view of other people (Hoffman, 1984).

Empathic concern: The tendency to experience the affective reaction of sympathy and compassion for others (Davis, 1980).

Empathic communication: those communication strategies or acts that are provoked or guided by emotional concern for others (Meyer et al., 1988).

Fantasy empathy: The ability to imaginatively transpose oneself into the feelings of fictitious characters (Davis, 1980).

Personal distress: The tendency to experience personal feelings of discomfort and unease in response to the distress of others (Davis, 1980).

Perspective taking: The cognitive ability to see things from others' points of view without an affective response (Davis, 1980).

Prosocial behavior: Acts such as helping, sharing, cooperating, comforting, defending, donating, and rescuing that are intended to promote the welfare of others (Miller, 1991). This term is occasionally used interchangeably with altruism.

Social cognition: How children and youth conceptualize other people and how they come to understand the thoughts, emotions, intentions, and viewpoints of others (Selman & Byrne, 1974).

Social competence: A person's ability to function effectively in the family and broader social context (Peterson & Leigh, 1990).

Sympathy: Concern for others based on the apprehension of another's state (Eisenberg et al., 1991). Sympathy is often conceptualized as an understanding **about**, whereas empathy is viewed as an understanding **with** (Rogers, 1975).

Conceptual Framework: Social Cognitive Theory

Selman and Byrne (1974) define social cognition as "how children and youth conceptualize other people and how they come to understand the thoughts, emotions, intentions, and viewpoints of others (p. 803)." Inspired by both the cognitive developmental perspective of Piaget and social attribution theory, social cognitive theory emphasizes how social understanding progresses through predictable, invariant stages much like those described by Piaget (Piaget, 1926; Miller, 1993). For example, the early stage of egocentrism (up to age 6) is characterized by the child's inability to make distinctions between his or her own perspective and the perspectives of others (Selman & Byrne, 1974). This stage parallels Piaget's stages of sensorimotor and preoperational thought in that role taking and communication deficits exist as a result of a naturally egocentric orientation.

Middle childhood, the second stage, encompasses ages 6 to 10 and is defined by the child's achievement of the abilities to both infer other's intentions, feelings, and thoughts and understand that he or she can be the object of another person's thinking (Selman & Byrne, 1974). Ages 10 and 11 mark the beginning of the third stage, mutual role-taking. In this stage, children are aware that others can

take one's own perspective at the same time that the child can comprehend the perspective of the other person.

Finally, as children enter adolescence (around age 12), the ability to take roles beyond two people occurs in a stage known as the "generalized other," a term first conceptualized by George Herbert Mead. Mead (1934) defined the generalized other as a synthesis of what we imagine significant others think of us and believed its acquisition played a determining role in self-concept. Thus, adolescents in this stage would be expected to place an increased importance on self-evaluation as well as the evaluation of others. Piaget (1926) would classify this age range within the stage of formal operations; during this time period the individual makes significant gains in abstract and quantitative thought, with subsequent increases in perspective-taking and other skills related to empathy (Hoffman, 1981).

Social cognitive theory, therefore, assumes that as a child progresses in his or her development, cognitive abilities increase which, in turn, results in an increased capacity to understand the viewpoints of others. According to Hoffman (1981), this fine-tuning of assessment capability allows the individual to develop strategies that will increase his or her positive self evaluation (as well as

evaluations by others) by responding appropriately to the emotional cues of others.

Research Questions

1. Are the perspective taking abilities of adolescent females and males related to their communicative responsiveness?

2. Are the levels of male and female adolescent empathic concern related to adolescent communicative responsiveness?

3. Are the levels of personal distress reported by adolescent females and males related to their communicative responsiveness?

4. Are the levels of male and female adolescent fantasy related to their communicative responsiveness?

5. Are the ages of adolescent females and males related to communicative responsiveness?

6. Are the perspective taking abilities of adolescent females and males related to their comforting intentions?

7. Are the levels of male and female adolescent empathic concern related to adolescent comforting intentions?

8. Are the levels of personal distress reported by adolescent females and males related to their comforting intentions?

9. Are the levels of male and female adolescent fantasy related to their comforting intentions?

10. Are the ages of adolescent females and males related to comforting intentions?

Hypotheses

This study will examine the following hypotheses:

H1: The level of perspective taking as measured by the Davis (1983) Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) will be positively related to communicative responsiveness of female and male adolescents.

H2: The level of empathic concern as measured by the IRI will be positively related to communicative responsiveness of adolescent males and females.

H3: The level of personal distress as measured by the IRI will be negatively related to communicative responsiveness of female and male adolescents.

H4: The level of fantasy as measured by the IRI will be negatively related to communicative responsiveness for adolescent males and females.

H5: Age will be positively related to the communicative responsiveness of adolescent females and males.

H6: The level of perspective taking as measured by the Davis (1983) Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) will be positively related to comforting intentions of female and male adolescents.

H7: The level of empathic concern as measured by the IRI will be positively related to comforting intentions of adolescent males and females.

H8: The level of personal distress as measured by the IRI will be negatively related to comforting intentions of female and male adolescents.

H9: The level of fantasy as measured by the IRI will be negatively related to comforting intentions for adolescent males and females.

H10: Age will be positively related to the comforting intentions of adolescent females and males.

Methodology

Sample. Participants for this study were 149 adolescents who participated in a larger study of caring. Subjects ranged in age from 13 to 17 (mean=14.77) and were recruited from an Oklahoma community with research facilities through advertising and snowballing techniques.

Subjects received $15 for participating in the study.

A pilot study of 10 adolescents attending a private religious school was utilized to refine the procedures and coding protocol; data from a sample of 149 adolescents was then collected for the purpose of this analysis.

Demographic characteristics of the sample were as follows: 49.3% (n=74) were male and 50.7% (n=75) were female. The racial composition of the sample was: 80% (n=120) white, 6.7% (n=10) Native American, 5.3% (n=8) African American, 2.7% (n=4) Hispanic, 2.0% (n=3) Asian, and 3.3% (n=5) other or not reported. The subjects reported the following family forms: 60% (n=90) resided with both their biological mother and father, 7.3% (n=11) lived in stepfather family households, 2.7% (n=4) lived in stepmother family households, 17.3% (n=26) lived in one-parent mother households, 4.0% (n=6) lived in one-parent father households, 3.3% (n=5) live in adoptive families, and 2.0% (n=3) reported other living arrangements.

Data Collection. Participants who responded to project advertising or were gained through snowballing techniques were seen by appointment in a specially prepared suite of rooms on the campus of a large southwestern university. Upon arriving at the research site, participants were given an overview of the session's events, allowed to ask questions,

and, once parental consent was formally attained, instructed to complete a variety of paper and pencil self-report questionnaires as well as several other instruments that do not pertain specifically to this study. Relevant measures are described more thoroughly in the following section. This phase of the research process required 30 to 45 minutes. Level of measurement of the variables was interval.

Next, participants were led individually to a video screening room where they watched specially developed vignettes (also described in the following section) that required both written and verbal responses. Written reactions were obtained through the use of rating scales designed to tap emotional responses to the video content; these written responses were not used in the current study. Verbal responses were obtained through the use of brief interviewing techniques that allowed the participants to elaborate on their emotional states as well as their personal experiences and comforting strategies. These verbal responses were prompted through the use of an interview schedule (see Appendix D) that included such questions as "What would you do in this situation?" and "Why did you decide on that course of action?"

Finally, upon completion of the video segment, the participants were allowed to ask questions or discuss the

experience and were thanked for their cooperation. At this time a research associate explained the payment protocol and gave the name of who to contact if the check did not arrive within a specified amount of time. Finally, participants were also asked not to share any information pertaining to the study with others that may also participate in the future.

Instrumentation. Participants were required to complete self-report questionnaire measures as well as respond to specially created video vignettes. The multidimensional concept of empathy was assessed by the Davis (1980) Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI), a 28-item self-report questionnaire consisting of four subscales. These four subscales include questions pertaining to Perspective Taking (PT), Empathic Concern (EC), Personal Distress (PD), and Fantasy empathy (FS). Sample questions include "When I am reading an interesting story or novel, I imagine how I would feel if the events of the story were happening to me" (FS) and "When a friend tells me about his good fortune, I feel genuinely happy for him" (EC). Representative questions from the remaining subscales include "I sometimes feel helpless when I am in the middle of a very emotional situation" (PD) and "If I'm sure I'm right about something I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments" (PT).

Responses vary along a Likert-type five-point continuum from "Does Not Describe Me At All" to "Describes Me Very Well." Using a sample of 201 male and 251 female university students during the initial instrument construction process and a second sample of 579 male and 582 female university students for final confirmation of the questionnaire, Davis (1980) reports that all four subscales have satisfactory internal consistency and test-retest reliabilities, ranging from .71 to .77 and .62 to .71, respectively. Results of the current study yielded Cronbach's alphas of .75 for the fantasy subscale, .73 for perspective taking, .74 for empathic concern, and .73 for personal distress.

Age and gender information were collected using standard demographic fact sheets. (See Appendix E for the complete battery of self-report questionnaires used in the current study).

Empathic communication traits were assessed by a modified version of the Stiff et al. (1984) Index of Communicative Responsiveness, a 10-item Likert-type scale that measures an individual's conceptualization of him or herself as an empathic or nonempathic person. Sample questions include "I usually have a knack for saying the right thing to make people feel better when they are upset" and "My friends come to me with their problems because I am

a good listener." Responses vary along a four-point continuum of "Does Not Describe Me At All" to "Describes Me Very Well." Using confirmatory factor analysis, Stiff et al. (1984) established internal consistency at .70 and stability at .79. This particular scale, however, has not previously been used with adolescents and was modified by the researcher for age-appropriateness. Results of the current study yielded internal consistency at .85 for the modified instrument.

Comforting intention was assessed by coding videotaped verbal responses to professionally produced vignettes that depicted situations in which another person (family member, stranger, peer) is in a situation that might elicit caring behavior. The first two video scenarios (which were not included in the present study due to the fact that the participants were asked what they would do in the situation, not what they would say) required the participant to decide whether or not to volunteer assistance to a new student at school and whether to assist a sibling after a quarrel with a parent.

The prologue of the vignette used in this study states that the participant is at a school dance with a very good friend (same sex) who has been watching a peer of the opposite sex dance with various partners all evening. The

friend points out the person of interest and indicates that he/she thinks about her/him "all the time." The other character (whom the participant is to think of as him or herself) responds that the person of interest is very attractive. The friend states he or she would like to ask the person of interest to dance. The other character encourages the friend to ask the person of interest to dance. The friend hesitates. The other character reminds the friend that the person of interest says "hi" in the halls at school. The friend notes that this person once sat by him/her in the lunchroom, even when other seats were available. The other character again encourages the friend to ask the person of interest to dance. The friend does. The person of interest declines, peers laugh, and another peer makes a negative comment. The friend returns to the other character and states how badly he or she feels. (Video vignette transcripts of the scenario are contained in Appendix D).

Immediately after viewing the videotaped vignettes, participants were asked to complete a short rating scale (not of interest in the current study) and verbalize how they would respond to the disappointed peer who had been publicly rejected at a school dance and had just "approached" the participant. Responses were classified by

the researcher into one of ten response categories developed by Applegate (1980). Applegate's Hierarchic Coding System for Quality of Comforting Response ranges from Level Zero (No Response) to Level Three (Recognition and Elaboration of Individual Perspectives). Thus, participant responses range from an inability or unwillingness to respond to the situation to explicit acknowledging and legitimizing of the others' feelings, with denial of the situation and implicit recognition of the individual's perspective falling between the two extremes. Applegate (1980) reports inter-rater reliabilities ranging from .88 to .99, with an average reliability of .94. Inter-rater reliability was established at .88 in the current study. (Applegate's hierarchy is contained in Appendix F).

Data Analysis. This study was guided by a correlational design; that is, this research sought to determine how the predictor variables (perspective taking, empathic concern, personal distress, fantasy, and age) related to the criterion variables (communicative responsiveness and quality of comforting intentions). Correlation coefficients were examined to assure that no correlations between predictor variables exceeded .75 in order to address potential problems related to multicollinearity (Cohen & Cohen, 1983).

Using hierarchical multiple regression analyses, four research models (i.e., the same models were examined separately for females and males) were tested. For each of the models, Step 1 involved the entry of the age of the adolescent to allow for the examination of the incremental variance accounted for by this variable. In Step 2, the four dimensions of empathy (perspective taking, empathic concern, fantasy, and personal distress) were entered as predictors of the criterion variables.

In the first hierarchical multiple regression analysis for females, Step 1 and Step 2 (described above) involved the entry of age and the dimensions of empathy as predictors of adolescent communicative responsiveness. The second hierarchical multiple regression analysis involved the entry of age and the dimensions of empathy as predictors of comforting intention. These same two models were tested for males using two additional hierarchical multiple regression analyses.

Combined Response Frequencies

Using the Applegate (1980) Hierarchic Coding System for Quality of Comforting Strategies, an analysis of the frequency of participant responses to the rejected peer was conducted. Results indicate that the majority of

participants (54.4%) responded at Level One, followed by Level Two (31.6%), Level Zero (8.7%), and finally, Level Three (5.4%).

Participants at Level One (n=71) are in the Applegate (1980) category of "Denial of Individual Perspective." In this category, adolescents choose to respond to the distress of a peer in a social situation by either implicitly or explicitly denying the legitimacy of the peer's distress. Of the adolescents in this category, 43 fall into the subcategory of "challenges the legitimacy of the other's feelings" in that they chose to directly inform the friend that the situation did not warrant such an emotional reaction. For example, one female adolescent remarked that "it's no big deal." Many males echoed this sentiment, stating that there's "no reason to get upset" and "it doesn't matter so don't feel bad."

Thirty Level One respondents fit into the subcategory of "Ignores the Other's Feelings." Participants in this category responded with such comments as "let's do something else" or "let's leave," responses that resemble higher level strategies to divert the peer's attention but that lack the recognition that the peer is in need of an empathic response. The remaining Level One respondents (n=8) fall into the subcategory of "Condemns the Feelings of the

Other." These adolescents chose to openly berate the friend for letting the situation get to him or her. For example, several adolescent males reported that they'd respond by laughing at the distressed friend. One male stated that "I'd laugh at him [the distressed peer] because it's funny and because I know he'd laugh at me if it was me instead of him." One female adolescent predicted that she'd tell the distressed friend "not to be so stupid."

Level Two respondents accounted for 31.6% of the total sample. This group (n=47) chose to respond to the distressed peer with an "Implicit Recognition of the Individual's Perspective." Most commonly, adolescents at this level chose to soothe the friend by diverting his or her attention to more pleasant things or to past successes (n=25). For some adolescents, offering the prospect of a dance with a different person served to divert the distressed friend's attention. Other adolescents chose to use sarcasm and humor as a diversionary device, sometimes at the expense of the male or female who refused to dance with the friend. One adolescent male remarked that he'd "try to cut her [the friend's object of interest] down" in a way that would make the friend laugh.

Fourteen adolescents fit into the Level Two subcategory of "Acknowledges Without Attempting to Help." These teens

made remarks such as "that's too bad" and "better luck next time," but did not attempt to comfort the distressed friend. The remaining participants in Level Two (n=8) chose to offer a "Nonfeeling Response or Explanation" to the situation, citing that "maybe he [or she] really is too tired to dance" or that "you deserve somebody better."

Thirteen participants either elected to say nothing to the distressed peer or could think of nothing to say. These teens account for 8.7% of the total sample and fit into the Applegate (1980) Hierarchic Coding System at Level Zero, or "No Response." One adolescent male stated that he just "wouldn't know" what to say so he wouldn't say anything. These respondents tended to be younger and perhaps lacked personal experience in dating matters.

The smallest percentage of participants (5.4%, n=8) responded at the highest level of comforting effectiveness and sensitivity. Applegate's (1980) Level Three corresponds to those individuals that offer "Explicit Recognition of Individual Perspective" to their distressed peers. Four teens (all female) functioned at the highest subcategory of helping the distressed peer to gain a perspective of the situation while offering emotional support. One female adolescent said that "I would cry with her [the distressed friend] and talk to her as long as she wanted to talk about

it." Another female said that she'd hug her friend and make sure that she knew what a good person she is, thereby focusing on salvaging the friend's self-esteem.

Three participants at Level Three chose to offer "Truncated Explanations" while trying to remedy the situation. These teens focused on possible reasons why the object of interest might refuse the friend's invitation to dance, often offering a significant amount of detail. These explanations were intended to relieve the discomfort of the friend by campaigning for the possibility that the friend wasn't rejected for personal reasons. These participants sometimes even offered to put in a good word for their friend or would offer some other form of action.

The remaining participant at Level Three fell into the category of "Elaborated Acknowledgment." This participant, a female, responded to the distressed peer by focusing on the friend's feelings and offering personal experiences intended to inform the friend that she was not alone in having had this experience. This teen asked questions about how the incident made her friend feel, but fell short of the higher response subcategory of "helps gain perspective" by failing to offer any coping strategies to the friend.

A final six adolescents did not fit into any of the categories of the Applegate (1980) Hierarchic Coding System.

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These adolescents chose surprisingly active responses to the distressed friend's situation, often opting to confront the object of desire rather than comfort the friend. One female adolescent reported that she'd "go chew the guy out" and make him feel bad for having hurt the feelings of her friend. While this may be intended to relieve the distress of the friend, Applegate (1980) would not classify such behavior as a comforting attempt.

Results of Hierarchical Multiple Regression

The means, standard deviations, and correlations among the variables for girls (see Table 1) and boys (see Table 2) are presented in the Tables 1 and 2.

Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here

In Step 1 of the hierarchical multiple regression for communicative responsiveness for females (see Table 3), age was not a significant predictor of communicative responsiveness. In Step 2, one of the four primary predictor variables was significantly related to communicative responsiveness

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Insert Table 3 about here

Specifically, empathic concern (B=.42, $p \leq .05$), an emotional component of empathy, was significantly related to communicative responsiveness, indicating that those adolescents scoring the highest on that portion of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Davis, 1980) also reported high levels of perceived ability to respond effectively to others. The two cognitive components of empathy, perspective taking (B=.09) and fantasy empathy (B=-.03), were not significantly related to communicative responsiveness. Personal distress, another emotional component of empathy, exhibited a nonsignificant beta of -.01. The final model (Steps 1 and 2 combined) accounted for 20% of the variance in female communicative responsiveness.

In Step 1 of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis for the predictors of adolescent male communicative responsiveness (see Table 4), age was not significant. In Step 2, perspective taking (B=.36, $p \leq .01$) and fantasy empathy (B=.42, p $\leq$.01) were significant, indicating that the cognitive components of empathy were relevant in predicting communicative responsiveness for boys. Personal distress (B=-.01) and empathic concern (B=-.05) were not

significant predictors. The overall model for male communicative responsiveness accounted for 40% of the total variance.

Insert Table 4 about here

In Step 1 of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis for adolescent females' comforting intentions (see Table 3), age was not significant. Step 2 of this analysis revealed that comforting intentions for girls were not predicted by any of the four components of empathy. Perspective taking was not significant at ($B=-.17$), fantasy empathy at ($B=.21$), personal distress at ($B=.01$), and empathic concern at ($B=.10$). Although the final model was not significant, it accounted for 8% of the total variance in female comforting intentions.

In step 1 of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis for adolescent males' comforting intentions (see Table 4), age was not significantly related to comforting intentions. In Step 2 of this analysis, male comforting intentions were predicted by personal distress ($B=-.24$, $p>.05$) and empathic concern ($B=.32$, $p \leq .05$), the emotional components of empathy. The cognitive components of empathy were nonsignificantly related to comforting level:

perspective taking at ($\underline{B}$=-.12) and fantasy empathy at ($\underline{B}$=.12). Seventeen percent of the total variance in male comforting intentions was accounted for in the final model.

Discussion

The results provide support for five of the ten stated hypotheses. Specifically, communicative responsiveness was significantly predicted by empathic concern (a form of emotional empathy) for girls; for boys, perspective taking and fantasy (two forms of cognitive empathy) were significant predictors of communicative responsiveness. The hypotheses were not supported between any of the predictor variables and comforting intentions for girls. In contrast, comforting intentions in males were predicted by personal distress and empathic concern (two forms of emotional empathy). Age was not a significant predictor of communicative responsiveness or comforting intentions for either males or females.

Male Communicative Responsiveness. The finding that the cognitive components of empathy (perspective taking and fantasy empathy) were significantly related to communicative responsiveness for males is logically supported given that adolescents with advanced abilities to consider the feelings of significant others or fictional characters would be more

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likely to <u>think</u> of themselves as able to respond appropriately. For males, who are perhaps not as socialized as females to consider the feeling of others (Eisenberg, 1991), heightened cognitive awareness of empathic issues would be expected to result in heightened communicative responsiveness in that recognizing distress in peers would relate to an increased number of opportunities to behave prosocially.

Thus, adolescent males who see themselves as having higher abilities to recognize emotionally tense situations are more likely to have experienced success in such dealings, and would therefore ascribe to themselves greater perceived communicative responsiveness. The finding that the emotional components of empathy (personal distress and empathic concern) were not significantly related to male communicative responsiveness further underscores the importance of cognition in male empathic responding.

<u>Female Communicative Responsiveness.</u> It is not clear, however, why perspective taking and fantasy empathy were not significant predictors of communicative responsiveness for females as hypothesized. Perhaps other factors, such as the emotional components of empathy, are more relevant to female communicative responsiveness. The finding that emotional concern (but not personal distress) was significantly

related to female communicative responsiveness hints at the possibility that it is the emotionality of a situation that relates to perceived effectiveness in empathic communication for females. Females may respond more emotionally to some events, such as the friend's rejection at the school dance, and may have therefore learned to respond more effectively from experience.

A second explanation is that, due to socialization practices, females may already function at elevated levels of perspective taking and fantasy empathy, may have had a higher number of opportunities to behave prosocially, and may therefore attribute their feelings of competency or incompetence in communicative responsiveness to other factors such as perceived popularity with peers or overall self-esteem (Eisenberg & Lennon, 1983). Further study of this aspect of female communicative competence is needed.

Male Comforting Intentions. Male comforting intentions were significantly related to personal distress and empathic concern, the emotional components of empathy. This result is best explained by male empathic socialization. Males are often socialized to refrain from displaying emotions (e.g., "boys aren't supposed to cry") and may therefore feel less comfortable in the company of those who become openly emotional. Males who experience empathic concern and

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personal distress in situations such as the school dance would then be less likely to seek ways to effectively console their peers. Thus, males may indeed be paralyzed by strong emotion as is typically hypothesized about personal distress and empathic concern.

Female Comforting Intentions. Female comforting intentions were not predicted by any of the four components of empathy. One possible explanation is that females may choose to comfort others based on the circumstances of the situation instead of their own empathic tendencies. For example, an adolescent wishing to be accepted into a certain group may either over- or underplay her comforting behavior based on what she believes the group values. In some instances, comforting others may be viewed negatively, perhaps as evidence that the individual is "tco nice" or overly softhearted. Thus, females may match their comforting levels tc what they perceive is an appropriate exchange between themselves and the other person. Further investigation of adolescent comforting intentions across a variety of situations and types of relationships is therefore warranted.

Age. The finding that age is not a significant predictor of either communicative responsiveness or comforting intentions for both boys and girls is somewhat

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surprising. Social cognitive theory (Selman & Byrne, 1974) would predict that as the adolescent matures and gains important experience in interpersonal relationships, self-concept regarding the effectiveness of helping skills would increase to at least a moderately high level. A possible explanation of this finding could be that experiences prior to adolescence (middle to late childhood, for example) provide important feedback about effective helping strategies. Thus, participants could move into and through the ages of adolescence with an already concrete sense of themselves as able (or unable) to comfort others; this established self-concept would then influence their actual behavior in situations with distressed peers. Individual differences in this area would then be unrelated to age and instead related to experience.

Low Overall Responding. One factor that may account for the limited findings, especially those related to girls, is that the majority of adolescents in this study exhibited low level empathic responding (as measured by the Applegate Hierarchy) is that peer comforting is only one context in which adolescents could be expected to respond empathically. Perhaps there are elements in the school dance scenario that serve to decrease high level comforting.

For example, Clark et al. (1987) suggest that perhaps responders sometimes engage in downplaying the situation in order to help the sufferer "save face." Adolescents may believe publicly visible displays of distress to be worse than the actual trigger event and will respond to others' experiences accordingly. In response to the dance scenario, for instance, an adolescent may think that a caring response to the distress of a close friend would be to brush off the event so that the friend would not be embarrassed later by his or her emotional reaction. Not talking about the event would then fall into the category of "being cool."

Additionally, Rosen et al. (1987) report that would-be helpers are sometimes spurned by those they are trying to comfort. Adolescents may have had a significant number of such experiences, leading them to be cautious when acknowledging other's emotional states. It is, for instance, often considered "bad etiquette" to attend to someone who has just committed or experienced some slight social faux pas. For example, individuals who visibly stumble or physically fall are often mortified when a witness asks if everything is okay or offers assistance; the polite thing to do, it would seem, is to pretend that nothing happened. For some adolescents, the dance scenario may fall into the category of "insignificant" little events that should be

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politely brushed off in the name of preserving the ego.

Thus, the desirability of providing comforting in different situations may be a function of individual perspectives on the importance of various events; someone unwilling to respond in depth to the dance scene, for instance, may be quite competent at consoling a friend whose pet had just died. Trobst et al. (1994) report that "emotion plays an important role in support provision in that providers' feelings of concern are a strong determinant of their supportive responses" (p. 46).

Future studies in the area of adolescent empathy may wish to focus on those variables (such as "saving face") that may contribute to low empathic responding. Contexts other than peer social encounters need to be studied, and earlier age ranges (such as middle and late childhood) should be considered in order to provide baseline data for comparison.

Implications

Many researchers (Eisenberg & Lennon, 1983; Ford et al., 1989; Hoffman, 1977; Stein, Newcomb, & Bentler, 1986) contend that both parental socialization practices in early childhood and the tendency for adolescents to adopt strictly

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gender-stereotyped behaviors in order to gain peer acceptance contribute to the discrepancy between male and female empathic responding. Adolescents of both sexes could benefit from instruction in empathic communication; given differential socialization, adolescent males may find this type of educational experience especially constructive.

The establishment of a "normative" value of comforting level by age might be useful in determining where interpersonal relationship intervention might be needed. This could lead to the development of intervention programs for the "empathically impaired" that would likely focus on training in the cognitive components of empathy such as perspective taking.

Chalmers and Townsend (1990), Hatcher et al. (1994), and MacQuiddy, Maise, and Hamilton (1987) report encouraging results in their early attempts to "teach" empathy. Perhaps as interest grows in the area of adolescent empathy, practitioners will begin to look at empathy training as a prevention strategy for a wide variety of adolescent at-risk issues.

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Table 1.

Correlations Among Variables, Means, and Standard Deviations for the Female Model (N=75)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Age of adolescent	1.00	.23*	.02	-.16	.13	.08	-.01
2 Perspective taking	.23*	1.00	.10	-.12	.37**	.24*	-.11
3 Fantasy	.02	.10	1.00	.06	.43**	.16	.24*
4 Personal distress	-.16	-.12	.06	1.00	.11	.02	.05
5 Empathic concern	.13	.37**	.43**	.11	1.00	.44**	.13
6 Communicative responsiveness	.08	.24*	.16	.02	.44**	1.00	.01
7 Comforting level	-.01	-.11	.24*	.05	.13	.01	1.00
Mean	14.91	15.33	17.56	11.67	20.89	26.85	3.21
Standard Deviation	1.59	4.44	5.35	5.30	3.91	6.10	2.13

*$p \leq .05$; **$p \leq .01$

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Table 2.

Correlations Among Variables, Means, and Standard Deviations for the Male Model (N=74)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Age of adolescent	1.00	.26*	.05	-.43**	-.08*	.17	-.11
2 Perspective taking	.26**	1.00	.42**	-.16	.47**	.53**	.08
3 Fantasy	.05	.42**	1.00	.05	.62**	.54**	.25*
4 Personal distress	-.43**	-.16	.05	1.00	.14	-.07	-.10
5 Empathic concern	-.08	.47**	.62**	.14	1.00	.38**	.32**
6 Communicative responsiveness	.17	.53**	.54**	-.07	.38**	1.00	.20
7 Comforting level	-.11	.08	.25*	-.10	.32**	.20	1.00
Mean	14.64	13.00.	13.27	9.36	16.24	22.07	3.05
Standard Deviation	1.50	5.16	5.29	4.83	4.81	7.63	1.75

*p ≤ .05; **p ≤ .01

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Table 3.

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses of Age, Dimensions of Empathy, and Adolescent Females' Comforting Level and Communicative Reponsiveness (N=75)

	Communicative Responsiveness				Comforting Level			
Predictor variables	b	SE	B	ΔR2	b	SE	B	ΔR2
Step 1: Age				.00				.00
Age of adolescent	.12	.43	.00		.02	.16	.02	
Step 2:Dimensions of empathy				.19				.08
Perspective taking	.13	.16	.09		-.08	.61	-.17	
Fantasy	-.03	.14	-.03		.08	.05	.21	
Personal distress	-.01	.13	-.01		.00	.05	.01	
Empathic concern	.65	.20	.42*		.05	.08	.10	
Multiple Correlation (R)				.45				.28
Multiple Correlation Squared (R^2)				.20				.08
Adjusted R^2				.14				.02
F-Value				3.48**				1.24

*$p \geq .05$, **$p \leq .01$; b = unstandardized betas, B = standardized betas.

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Table 4.

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses of Age, Dimensions of Empathy, and Adolescent Males' Comforting Level and Communicative Reponsiveness (N=74)

	Communicative Responsiveness				Comforting Level			
Predictor variables	b	SE	B	ΔR2	b	SE	B	ΔR2
Step 1: Age				.03				.01
Age of adolescent	.21	.55	.04		-.19	.15	-.17	
Step 2:Dimensions of empathy				.38				.16
Perspective taking	.53	.17	.36**		-.04	.05	-.12	
Fantasy	.60	.18	.42**		.04	.05	.12	
Personal distress	-.02	.17	-.01		-.09	.05	-.24*	
Empathic concern	-.08	.21	-.05	.38	.12	.06	.32*	.
Multiple Correlation (R)				.64				.41
Multiple Correlation Squared (R^2)				.40				.17
Adjusted R^2				.36				.11
F-Value				9.23**				2.76*

*$p \geq .05$, **$p \leq .01$; b = unstandardized betas, B = standardized betas.

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MANUSCRIPT TWO

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Verbal Comforting Intentions in Adolescence:

Age, Gender, and Empathic Characteristics

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Author's Note: This article was written as part of the fulfillment of the requirements for the Masters degree in Family Relations and Child Development, and appears within the context of the thesis titled: VERBAL COMFORTING INTENTIONS IN ADOLESCENCE: AGE, GENDER, AND EMPATHIC CHARACTERISTICS. This article is written to submit to Journal of Adolescent Research for review. Funding for this study was provided through a grant, "Family Antecedents of Adolescent Caring," awarded by the Lilly Foundation to Dr. Carolyn Henry.

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ABSTRACT

Communicative responsiveness, a social skill that enables individuals to respond effectively to the emotional states of others, and comforting intentions (actual intended behavior), are investigated in this study of males and females aged 13 to 17. A sample of 149 adolescents completed various paper and pencil questionnaires and responded verbally to a videotaped scenario requiring the comforting of a same-sex friend who has just experienced a humiliating social rejection. Results of hierarchical multiple regression analyses indicate a significant relationship between the cognitive aspects of empathy (perspective taking, fantasy empathy) and communicative responsiveness for males; emotional components of empathy (personal distress, empathic concern) were found to be significantly related to level of comforting intentions for males. For females, a significant relationship was found only between empathic concern and communicative responsiveness. Age was not found to be a significant predictor of communicative responsiveness or comforting intentions for either males or females. Implications are discussed.

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The idea that empathy is a major determinant of prosocial and altruistic responding has been widely accepted among psychologists (Batson et al., 1981; Eisenberg & Fabes, 1990; Hoffman, 1977). Prosocial responding is often defined as "voluntary behavior intended to benefit another, such as helping, sharing, and comforting" (Davis, 1983a, p. 113). Given that the developmental stage of adolescence marks advances in both cognitive and communicative capabilities, empathy during this age range is characterized by gains in both perspective taking and empathic concern (Davis & Franzoi, 1991), as well as in communicative responsiveness, a concept defined by Stiff et al. (1984) as "a social skill that enables individuals to respond effectively to the emotional states of others" (p. 2).

An important distinction is drawn between empathy, which Eisenberg and Miller (1987) define as the "affective state that stems from the apprehension of another's emotional state or condition, and that is congruent with it" (p. 849), and comforting, which Burleson (1985) defines as "those [active] message strategies [that have] the intended function of alleviating or lessening the emotional distress arising from a variety of everyday hurts and disappointments" (p. 253). Thus, a person cannot truly be perceived as

empathic without acting upon his or her inclinations to behave prosocially (Stiff et al., 1984).

Behaving prosocially is vital to optimal personal development, especially during adolescence. Without such skills, adolescents may be unable to establish and maintain quality relationships and may suffer from negative evaluations from peers and family. The ability to successfully comfort distressed others is particularly important given that the handling of "everyday hurts and disappointments" often determines the qualities of our lives (Burleson, 1985, p. 253). Prosocial inclination and behavior (or lack thereof) has important ramifications on individual development and perhaps even life course direction in that antisocial children and adolescents are commonly found to be rejected by their peers (Dodge, 1983; Burleson et al., 1986). Peer rejection, in turn, has been found to be associated with a host of negative outcomes such as high rates of conflict, aggression, immature behavior, drug usage, and juvenile delinquency (Ladd & Price, 1987; Simons, Conger, & Whitbeck, 1988).

The relationships between the various aspects of empathy (defined by Davis (1983a) as perspective taking, empathic concern, personal distress, and fantasy empathy, which is the ability or tendency to become emotionally

involved in the plight of a fictitious character), and perceived communicative responsiveness as well as actual behavioral response or intention have received little attention in current scholarship, especially in the area of adolescence. The goal of the present study is to examine relationships between the antecedents of prosocial behavior and actual male and female communicative responsiveness and comforting intentions. The relationships between age, communicative responsiveness, and comforting intentions are also investigated.

Gender Differences in Empathy during Adolescence

Gender differences are an important consideration in any investigation of empathy. Females appear to have an advantage in empathic responding although many studies were inconclusive as to the nature and extent of that advantage (Eisenberg, 1991; Eisenberg & Lennon, 1983). For example, Feshbach (1982) contends that females respond more empathically than males overall but that males display equal levels of cognitive understanding of the situations in question. Hoffman's (1977) review of literature found "no consistent sex differences" in children's (ages 3 to 11) ability to identify the affective state of another person,

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suggesting that males and females do not differ in their capacity for perspective-taking" (p. 727).

Using the Interpersonal Reactivity Index, Davis and Franzoi (1991) investigated stability and change in adolescent self-consciousness and empathy over middle to late adolescence. Davis and Franzoi (1991) found females scored significantly higher in empathic concern, personal distress, and fantasy as well as in public self-consciousness, social anxiety, and perspective taking. These results were found to remain stable or change predictably over time as the adolescent matured, leading Davis and Franzoi (1991) to conclude that middle adolescence may be a time of heightened self-attention and concern for others more for females than for males.

Eisenberg et al. (1991) conducted a longitudinal, intra-individual study of prosocial development in adolescence using Bryant's (1982) Empathy Scale. Eisenberg et al. (1991) found significant gender differences in levels of moral reasoning, empathic responding, and helping behaviors in favor of females. Specifically, females used role-taking and sympathetic reasoning earlier and more frequently than males, were assessed as more self-reflective than males, and appeared more likely to actually engage in prosocial activity than males (Eisenberg et al., 1991).

Cohn (1991) studied sex differences in the course of personality development using Loevinger's (1976) principles of ego development. Employing Loevinger and Wessler's (1970) Washington University Sentence Completion Test (WUSCT), Cohn conducted a meta-analysis of 112 published studies and 165 unpublished studies and discovered moderately large sex differences among junior and senior high school students. These results once again favored females.

Shelton and McAdams, (1991), using their Visions of Morality Scale (VMS), surveyed 82 male and 99 female Catholic high school students and again discovered significant self-reported empathic differences between adolescent males and females. Results of their multiple regression analysis reveal that females achieved a higher total VMS score of private, interpersonal, and social morality although, as expected, differences in perspective taking ability were not as great (Shelton & McAdams, 1991).

Methodology

Sample

Participants for this study were 149 adolescents who participated in a larger study of caring. Subjects ranged in age from 13 to 17 (mean=14.77) and were recruited from an Oklahoma community with research facilities through

advertising and snowballing techniques. Subjects received $15 for participating in the study.

Demographic characteristics of the sample were as follows: 49.3% (n=74) were male and 50.7% (n=75) were female. The racial composition of the sample was: 80% (n=120) white, 6.7% (n=10) Native American, 5.3% (n=8) African American, 2.7% (n=4) Hispanic, 2.0% (n=3) Asian, and 3.3% (n=5) other or not reported. The subjects reported the following family forms: 60% (n=90) resided with both their biological mother and father, 7.3% (n=11) lived in stepfather family households, 2.7% (n=4) lived in stepmother family households, 17.3% (n=26) lived in one-parent mother households, 4.0% (n=6) lived in one-parent father households, 3.3% (n=5) live in adoptive families, and 2.0% (n=3) reported other living arrangements.

Procedure

Participants responded to project advertising or were gained through snowballing techniques. Subjects were provided with consent forms and basic information about the project and scheduled appointments in a university research laboratory on the campus of a large southwestern university. When the subjects arrived for their appointments, consent forms were collected. Participants were required to complete

self-report questionnaire measures as well as respond interviews after viewing a specially created video vignette.

Measurement

Self-Report Questionnaires. The demographic variables of age and gender were assessed using standard fact sheet items. The multidimensional concept of empathy was assessed by the Davis (1980) Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI), a 28-item Likert type self-report questionnaire consisting of four subscales: Perspective Taking, Empathic Concern, Personal Distress, and Fantasy. Sample questions include (a) "When I am reading an interesting story or novel, I imagine how I would feel if the events of the story were happening to me" (Fantasy), (b) "When a friend tells me about his good fortune, I feel genuinely happy for him" (Empathic Concern), (c) "I sometimes feel helpless when I am in the middle of a very emotional situation" (Personal Distress), (d) and "If I'm sure I'm right about something I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments" (Perspective Taking). Responses choices ranged from 0= "Does Not Describe Me At All" to 4= "Describes Me Very Well."

In initial instrument construction with samples of college students, Davis (1980) reported reliabilities ranging form .62 to .77 on the subscales. Results of the current study yielded Cronbach's alphas of .75 for the

fantasy subscale, .73 for perspective taking, .74 for empathic concern, and .73 for personal distress.

Empathic communication traits were assessed by a modified version of the Stiff et al. (1984) Index of Communicative Responsiveness, a 10-item Likert-type scale that measures an individual's conceptualization of him or herself as an empathic or nonempathic person. Sample questions include: (a) "I usually have a knack for saying the right thing to make people feel better when they are upset" and (b) "My friends come to me with their problems because I am a good listener." Responses choices ranged from 0 = "Does Not Describe Me At All" to 4 = "Describes Me Very Well." Using confirmatory factor analysis, Stiff et al. (1984) established internal consistency at .70 and stability at .79. This scale, however, has not previously been used with adolescents and was modified for age-appropriateness as was recommended by the creator (Personal communication, Sept. 13, 1993). Results of the current study yielded internal consistency at .85 for the modified instrument.

Comforting intention was assessed by coding videotaped verbal responses to a professionally produced vignette that depicted a situation in which another person (a peer) is in a situation that might elicit caring behavior. The prologue of the vignette study states that the participant is at a

school dance with a very good friend (same sex) who has been watching a peer of the opposite sex dance with various partners all evening. The friend points out the person of interest and indicates that he/she thinks about her/him "all the time." The other character (whom the participant is to think of as him or herself) responds that the person of interest is very attractive. The friend states he or she would like to ask the person of interest to dance. The other character encourages the friend to ask the person of interest to dance. The friend hesitates. The other character reminds the friend that the person of interest says "hi" in the halls at school. The friend notes that this person once sat by him/her in the lunchroom, even when other seats were available. The other character again encourages the friend to ask the person of interest to dance. The friend does. The person of interest declines, peers laugh, and another peer makes a negative comment. The friend returns to the other character and states how badly he or she feels.

The participant is then asked by an interviewer to verbalize how they would respond to the disappointed peer who had been publicly rejected at a school dance and had just "approached" the participant. Responses were classified by the researcher into one of ten response categories developed by Applegate (1980). Applegate's Hierarchic Coding

System for Quality of Comforting Response ranges from Level Zero (No Response) to Level Three (Recognition and Elaboration of Individual Perspectives). Thus, participant responses range from an inability or unwillingness to respond to the situation to explicit acknowledging and legitimizing of the others' feelings, with denial of the situation and implicit recognition of the individual's perspective falling between the two extremes. Applegate (1980) reports inter-rater reliabilities ranging from .88 to .99, with an average reliability of .94. Inter-rater reliability was established at .88 in the current study. Results indicate that the majority of participants (54.4%) responded at Level One, followed by Level Two (31.6%), Level Zero (8.7%), and finally, Level Three (5.4%).

Data Analysis. This study was guided by a correlational design; that is, this research sought to determine how the predictor variables (perspective taking, empathic concern, personal distress, fantasy, and age) related to the criterion variables (communicative responsiveness and quality of comforting intentions). Correlation coefficients were examined to assure that no correlations between predictor variables exceeded .75 in order to address potential problems related to multicollinearity (Cohen & Cohen, 1983).

Using hierarchical multiple regression analyses, four research models (i.e., the same models were examined separately for females and males) were tested. For each of the models, Step 1 involved the entry of the age of the adolescent to allow for the examination of the incremental variance accounted for by this variable. In Step 2, the four dimensions of empathy (perspective taking, empathic concern, fantasy, and personal distress) were entered as predictors of the criterion variables.

In the first hierarchical multiple regression analysis for females, Step 1 and Step 2 (described above) involved the entry of age and the dimensions of empathy as predictors of adolescent communicative responsiveness. The second hierarchical multiple regression analysis involved the entry of age and the dimensions of empathy as predictors of comforting intention. These same two models were tested for males using two additional hierarchical multiple regression analyses.

Results

The means, standard deviations, and correlations among the variables for girls (see Table 1) and boys (see Table 2) are presented in the Tables 1 and 2.

In Step 1 of the hierarchical multiple regression for communicative responsiveness for females (see Table 3), age

Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here

was not a significant predictor of communicative responsiveness. In Step 2, one of the four primary predictor variables

Insert Table 3 about here

was significantly related to communicative responsiveness. Specifically, empathic concern (B=.42, $p \leq .05$), an emotional component of empathy, was significantly related to communicative responsiveness, indicating that those adolescents scoring the highest on that portion of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Davis, 1980) also reported high levels of perceived ability to respond effectively to others. The two cognitive components of empathy, perspective taking (B=.09) and fantasy empathy (B=-.03), were not significantly related to communicative responsiveness. Personal distress, another emotional component of empathy, exhibited a nonsignificant beta of -.01. The final model (Steps 1 and 2 combined) accounted for 20% of the variance in female communicative responsiveness.

In Step 1 of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis for the predictors of adolescent male communicative responsiveness (see Table 4), age was not significant. In Step 2, perspective taking ($B=.36$, $p \leq .01$) and fantasy empathy ($B=.42$, $p<.01$) were significant, indicating that the cognitive components of empathy were relevant in predicting communicative responsiveness for boys. Personal distress ($B=-.01$) and empathic concern ($B=-.05$) were not significant predictors. The overall model for male communicative responsiveness accounted for 40% of the total variance.

Insert Table 4 about here

In Step 1 of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis for adolescent females' comforting intentions (see Table 3), age was not significant. Step 2 of this analysis revealed that comforting intentions for girls were not predicted by any of the four components of empathy. Perspective taking was not significant at ($B=-.17$), fantasy empathy at ($B=.21$), personal distress at ($B=.01$), and empathic concern at ($B=.10$). The final model accounted for 8% of the total variance in female comforting intentions.

In step 1 of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis for adolescent males' comforting intentions (see

Table 4), age was not significantly related to comforting intentions. In Step 2 of this analysis, male comforting intentions were predicted by personal distress (B=-.24, p>.05) and empathic concern (B=.32, $p \leq$.05), the emotional components of empathy. The cognitive components of empathy were nonsignificantly related to comforting level: perspective taking at (B=-.12) and fantasy empathy at (B=.12). Seventeen percent of the total variance in male comforting intentions was accounted for in the final model.

Discussion

Communicative responsiveness was significantly predicted by empathic concern (a form of emotional empathy) for girls; for boys, perspective taking and fantasy (two forms of cognitive empathy) were significant predictors of communicative responsiveness. Female comforting intentions were not predicted by any of the empathy variables. However, comforting intentions in males were predicted by personal distress and empathic concern (two forms of emotional empathy). Age was not a significant predictor of communicative responsiveness or comforting intentions for either males or females.

Male Communicative Responsiveness. The finding that the cognitive components of empathy (perspective taking and

fantasy empathy) were significantly related to communicative responsiveness for males is logically supported given that adolescents with advanced abilities to consider the feelings of significant others or fictional characters would be more likely to think of themselves as able to respond appropriately. For males, who are perhaps not as socialized as females to consider the feeling of others (Eisenberg, 1991), heightened cognitive awareness of empathic issues would be expected to result in heightened communicative responsiveness in that recognizing distress in peers would relate to an increased number of opportunities to behave prosocially. The finding that the emotional components of empathy (personal distress and empathic concern) were not significantly related to male communicative responsiveness further underscores the importance of cognition in male empathic responding.

Female Communicative Responsiveness. It is not clear, however, why perspective taking and fantasy empathy were not significant predictors of communicative responsiveness for females as hypothesized. Perhaps other factors, such as the emotional components of empathy, are more relevant to female communicative responsiveness. The finding that emotional concern (but not personal distress) was significantly related to female communicative responsiveness hints at the

possibility that it is the emotionality of a situation that relates to perceived effectiveness in empathic communication for females. Females may respond more emotionally to certain events and may have therefore learned to respond more effectively from experience.

A second explanation is that, due to socialization practices, females may already function at elevated levels of perspective taking and fantasy empathy, may have had a higher number of opportunities to behave prosocially, and may therefore attribute their feelings of competency or incompetence in communicative responsiveness to other factors such as perceived popularity with peers or overall self-esteem (Eisenberg & Lennon, 1983). Further study of this aspect of female communicative competence is needed.

Male Comforting Intentions. Male comforting intentions were significantly related to personal distress and empathic concern, the emotional components of empathy. This result is best explained by male empathic socialization. Males are often socialized to refrain from displaying emotions (e.g., "boys aren't supposed to cry") and may therefore feel less comfortable in the company of those who become openly emotional. Males who experience empathic concern and personal distress in situations such as the school dance

would then be less likely to seek ways to effectively console their peers.

Female Comforting Intentions. Female comforting intentions were not predicted by any of the four components of empathy. One possible explanation is that females may choose to comfort others based on the circumstances of the situation instead of their own empathic tendencies. For example, an adolescent wishing to be accepted into a certain group may either over- or underplay her comforting behavior based on what she believes the group values. Further investigation of adolescent comforting intentions across a variety of situations and types of relationships is therefore warranted.

Age. The finding that age is not a significant predictor of either communicative responsiveness or comforting intentions for both boys and girls is somewhat surprising. Social cognitive theory (Selman & Byrne, 1974) would predict that as the adolescent matures and gains important experience in interpersonal relationships, self-concept regarding the effectiveness of helping skills would increase to at least a moderately high level. A possible explanation of this finding could be that experiences prior to adolescence (middle to late childhood, for example) provide important feedback about effective helping

strategies. Thus, participants could move into and through the ages of adolescence with an already concrete sense of themselves as able (or unable) to comfort others.

Low Overall Responding. One factor that may account for the limited findings, especially those related to girls, is that the majority of adolescents in this study exhibited low level empathic responding as measured by the Applegate Hierarchy. Given that peer comforting is only one context in which adolescents could be expected to respond empathically, perhaps there are elements in the school dance scenario that serve to decrease high level comforting.

For example, Clark et al. (1987) suggest that perhaps responders sometimes engage in downplaying the situation in order to help the sufferer "save face." Adolescents may believe publicly visible displays of distress to be worse than the actual trigger event and will respond to others' experiences accordingly. In response to the dance scenario, for instance, an adolescent may think that a caring response to the distress of a close friend would be to brush off the event so that the friend would not be embarrassed later by his or her emotional reaction.

Rosen et al. (1987) report that would-be helpers are sometimes spurned by those they are trying to comfort. Adolescents may have had a significant number of such

experiences, leading them to be cautious when acknowledging other's emotional states. It is, for instance, often considered "bad etiquette" to attend to someone who has just committed or experienced some slight social faux pas. For example, individuals who visibly stumble or physically fall are often mortified when a witness asks if everything is okay or offers assistance; the polite thing to do, it would seem, is to pretend that nothing happened. For some adolescents, the dance scenario may fall into the category of "insignificant" events that should be politely brushed off in the name of preserving the ego. Thus, the desirability of providing comforting in different situations may be a function of individual perspectives on the importance of various events; someone unwilling to respond in depth to the dance scene, for instance, may be quite competent at consoling a friend whose pet had just died. Trobst et al. (1994) report that "emotion plays an important role is support provision in that providers' feelings of concern are a strong determinant of theirsupportive responses" (p. 46).

Future studies in the area of adolescent empathy may wish to focus on those variables (such as "saving face") that may contribute to low empathic responding. Contexts other than peer social encounters need to be studied, and

earlier age ranges (such as middle and late childhood) should be considered in order to provide baseline data for comparison.

Table 1.

Correlations Among Variables, Means, and Standard Deviations for the Female Model (N=75)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Age of adolescent	1.00	.23*	.02	-.16	.13	.08	-.01
2 Perspective taking	.23*	1.00	.10	-.12	.37**	.24*	-.11
3 Fantasy	.02	.10	1.00	.06	.43**	.16	.24*
4 Personal distress	-.16	-.12	.06	1.00	.11	.02	.05
5 Empathic concern	.13	.37**	.43**	.11	1.00	.44**	.13
6 Communicative responsiveness	.08	.24*	.16	.02	.44**	1.00	.01
7 Comforting level	-.01	-.11	.24*	.05	.13	.01	1.00
Mean	14.91	15.33	17.56	11.67	20.89	26.85	3.21
Standard Deviation	1.59	4.44	5.35	5.30	3.91	6.10	2.13

*p ≤ .05; **p ≤ .01

Table 2.

Correlations Among Variables, Means, and Standard Deviations for the Male Model (N=74)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Age of adolescent	1.00	.26*	.05	-.43**	-.08*	.17	-.11
2 Perspective taking	.26**	1.00	.42**	-.16	.47**	.53**	.08
3 Fantasy	.05	.42**	1.00	.05	.62**	.54**	.25*
4 Personal distress	-.43**	-.16	.05	1.00	.14	-.07	-.10
5 Empathic concern	-.08	.47**	.62**	.14	1.00	.38**	.32**
6 Communicative responsiveness	.17	.53**	.54**	-.07	.38**	1.00	.20
7 Comforting level	-.11	.08	.25*	-.10	.32**	.20	1.00
Mean	14.64	13.00.	13.27	9.36	16.24	22.07	3.05
Standard Deviation	1.50	5.16	5.29	4.83	4.81	7.63	1.75

*p ≤ .05; **p ≤ .01

Table 3.

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses of Age, Dimensions of Empathy, and Adolescent Females' Comforting Level and Communicative Reponsiveness (N=75)

	Communicative Responsiveness				Comforting Level			
Predictor variables	b	SE	B	ΔR2	b	SE	B	ΔR2
Step 1: Age				.00				.00
Age of adolescent	.12	.43	.00		.02	.16	.02	
Step 2:Dimensions of empathy				.19				.08
Perspective taking	.13	.16	.09		-.08	.61	-.17	
Fantasy	-.03	.14	-.03		.08	.05	.21	
Personal distress	-.01	.13	-.01		.00	.05	.01	
Empathic concern	.65	.20	.42*		.05	.08	.10	
Multiple Correlation (R)				.45				.28
Multiple Correlation Squared (R^2)				.20				.08
Adjusted R^2				.14				.02
F-Value				3.48**				1.24

*$p \geq .05$, **$p \leq .01$; b = unstandardized betas, B = standardized betas.

Table 4.

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses of Age, Dimensions of Empathy, and Adolescent Males' Comforting Level and Communicative Reponsiveness (N=74)

	Communicative Responsiveness				Comforting Level			
Predictor variables	b	SE	B	ΔR2	b	SE	B	ΔR2
Step 1: Age				.03				.01
Age of adolescent	.21	.55	.04		-.19	.15	-.17	
Step 2:Dimensions of empathy				.38				.16
Perspective taking	.53	.17	.36**		-.04	.05	-.12	
Fantasy	.60	.18	.42**		.04	.05	.12	
Personal distress	-.02	.17	-.01		-.09	.05	-.24*	
Empathic concern	-.08	.21	-.05	.38	.12	.06	.32*	.
Multiple Correlation (R)				.64				.41
Multiple Correlation Squared (R^2)				.40				.17
Adjusted R^2				.36				.11
F-Value				9.23**				2.76*

*$p \geq .05$, **$p \leq .01$; b = unstandardized betas, B = standardized betas.

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APPENDIX A

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

An Introduction to Adolescent Empathy

For many individuals, the mere idea of the developmental stage of adolescence conjures up unpleasant images of selfishly rebellious adolescents wreaking havoc upon their unsuspecting and undeserving families and social environments. These viewpoints are, of course, perpetuated by a sensationalistic media and just enough true-to-life case scenarios of adolescent misdeeds and antisocial behavior. Despite these remnants of the so-called "storm and stress" philosophy that once permeated adolescent research, today's teenagers are increasingly credited with higher capacities for perspective taking and socially responsible behavior.

Research on empathy is slowly shifting from focusing primarily on moral attainments in early childhood to the study of subsequent adolescent functioning. Given the growing number of adolescent empathy studies, researchers such as Nancy Eisenberg, Mark H. Davis, and Martin Hoffman consider the rich developmental opportunities of adolescence

an ideal time frame in which to investigate the development of prosocial behavior.

Adolescence is a time of transition. Stage theorists such as Erik Erikson view adolescence as a time of exceptional change that often includes such tasks as identity formation, assertion of independence, and the negotiation of relationships with peers and significant others (Erikson, 1968). While these are important developmental considerations, perhaps the most important attainment of the study of empathy is the adolescent's shift in thought processes. Adolescence is, in Piagetian terms, distinguished by the attainment of the stage of formal operations in cognitive development that includes the ability to reason abstractly (Piaget, 1926). Combined with social experience, this hallmark of development is generally acknowledged to increase the accuracy of the adolescent's perspective-taking and thus foster the capacity for heightened empathic understanding and behavior (Hoffman, 1984).

Davis and Franzoi (1991) make the important distinction between adolescent capacities and actual tendencies in the following manner: "A capacity refers to one's ability to engage in some mental activity- the ability to adopt another's perspective, or to attend to one's own internal

states. A tendency, in contrast, refers to the likelihood of actually adopting another's perspective or attending to one's own internal states (p.71)." Possessing a capacity does not, of course, ensure that such an ability will be utilized; the study of adolescent empathy becomes particularly interesting, however, given that most normal adolescents are capable of empathic responding and differ primarily in their tendencies to act upon these responses (Davis & Franzoi, 1991).

Many of these differences in empathic tendencies appear to be related to gender differences; current research and possible implications in this area will be explored in detail in the forthcoming sections. First, however, a definition of empathy is in order as is an investigation of the methods used to assess empathy in adolescence.

Dilemmas in Defining Empathy

Davis and Franzoi (1991) write that "empathy has long been viewed as a fundamental social skill which allows the individual to anticipate, understand, and experience the point of view of other people (p. 70)." Yet, a "cognitive-affective debate" has ensued in recent years as to whether empathy is primarily cognitive or affective in nature (Houston, 1990). Cognitive empathy is often viewed as

intellectual role-taking or perspective-taking; affective empathy, on the other hand, involves an "emotional reaction on the part of the individual to the observed experiences of the other" (Davis, 1983a, p. 115).

Assessing Empathy in Adolescence

Empathy in adolescence is often assessed using modified adult paper-and-pencil measures such as Bryant's (1982) modification of Mehrabian and Epstein's (1972) Index of Emotional Empathy. Simply titled "An Index of Empathy for Children and Adolescents," Bryant's affective measure includes thirty-three items to be answered in a yes/no format. Sample questions include "People who hug and kiss in public are silly," and "Some songs make me so sad I feel like crying."

Bryant (1982), like Mehrabian and Epstein (1972), considers empathy to be a trait. Mehrabian and Epstein (1972) make the distinction between an empathic state, which is a temporary inclination to behave prosocially based on present circumstances, and empathy as a trait, in which an individual's personality characteristics compel him or her to behave prosocially across all situations. Bryant's scale also makes allowances for reading levels as well as cross-sex and same-sex differences. Given that children of

particularly the middle childhood range are significantly less empathic to peers of the opposite sex, Bryant (1982) has quite charmingly coined such a phenomenon the "cootie effect" and notes that it occasionally carries over into adolescence.

A more recently developed measure gaining popularity in use with adolescents is Shelton and McAdams' (1990) Visions of Morality Scale (VMS). This measure reworks Kohlberg's (1975) cognitive-developmental stage view to include moral components of everyday life. The VMS is described as being "sensitive to three dimensions which are necessary for everyday morality: (1) a human constitutive component which is universally experienced by all human beings (empathy); (2) the inclusion of a behavioral component which reflects actual behavior (prosocial inclinations); and (3) a view of morality that is multilevel (private, interpersonal, and social)" (Shelton & McAdams, 1990, p. 87).

The Visions of Morality Scale includes forty-five Kohlberg-style moral scenarios on which subjects are asked to respond along a seven-point Likert-type scale which ranges from "I would definitely do what the statement says" to "I would definitely not do what the statement says" (Shelton & McAdams, 1990). Examples of morality scenarios include "I am walking alone and I find a dollar on the

street. I pick it up and continue walking. I pass a group of people who are collecting money for muscular dystrophy. I drop the dollar that I found into their basket" and "I am involved in a heated argument with a classmate about a historical date. I read a few days later in a library book that my classmate is right. I apologize for the argument and admit that he/she is right" (Shelton & McAdams, 1990, pp. 937-939).

Empathy as A Multidimensional Concept

As the movement toward an integration of cognitive and affective components in the study of adolescent (as well as life span) empathy increased, multidimensional measures were developed to meet the demands of this new focus of research. Davis (1980) developed the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI), the first integrative, individualistic measure of empathy. This 28-item self-report measure consists of four seven-item subscales which tap four distinct aspects of empathy: Perspective Taking (PT), Empathic Concern (EC), Personal Distress (PD), and Fantasy (FS).

Perspective Taking. Perspective taking is described as the portion of the scale which assesses the tendency to spontaneously adopt the psychological point of view of others. Influenced by Piaget (1932) and Mead (1934), Davis

(1983a) stresses the "importance of this capability for nonegocentric behavior- that is, behavior that subordinates the self (or the self's perspective) to the larger society" (1983a, p. 115). Unlike Davis' other dimensions of empathy in which responses are seen as vicarious, perspective taking is often viewed as more intellectual (cognitive) and deliberate in nature. Because of its strong ties to cognitive maturity, perspective taking increases with advancing age and social experience (Eisenberg, 1987).

Perspective taking has been found to be positively related to prosocial behavior by a host of researchers (Underwood & Moore, 1982; MacQuiddy, Maise, & Hamilton, 1987; Chalmers & Townsend, 1990). Higher levels of self-esteem, social competence, and quality of interpersonal relationships have also been found to be related to high levels of perspective taking ability; lower levels of perspective taking ability, on the other hand, have been associated with higher levels of nervousness, anxiety, and insecurity in both childhood and adolescent samples (Davis, 1983a). In adult samples, competencies in perspective taking have been consistently linked to increased quantity and quality of helping behaviors (Burleson, 1983; Batson et al., 1987.) This finding is expected by some researchers (Hoffman, 1977; Burleson, 1984; Davis, 1983a) to hold true

for adolescents as well but the relationship has not been well tested.

Empathic Concern. The Empathic Concern subscale assesses "other-oriented" feelings of sympathy and concern for unfortunate others. Often associated with measures of altruism, empathic concern is characterized by influences on behavior that are immediate, direct, and involuntary (Batson et al., 1981; Davis, 1980). That is, empathic concern is viewed as a vicarious affective response to evocative emotional stimuli (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1990). Davis found high levels of empathic concern to be related to high levels of individual emotionality and sensitivity to others. For example, those individuals high in empathic concern were found to have higher levels of prosocial inclination as judged by their willingness to either donate to the annually televised muscular dystrophy contest (Davis, 1983a) or to assist a distressed confederate when escape from the situation was easy (Batson et al., 1987). Furthermore, those individuals high in empathic concern report less loneliness, less anxiety, and less unease in social situations than those who score lower in this tendency (Davis, 1983a).

Personal Distress. In contrast to empathic concern, the Personal Distress subscale measures "self-oriented" feelings of personal anxiety and unease in interpersonal settings

(Davis, 1980). Personal distress is associated with high levels of physiological arousal in which the individual can be described as alarmed, upset, worried, or disturbed (Batson et al., 1987). These feelings may induce some individuals to act prosocially in order to alleviate their personal feelings of stress, although most research has consistently reported these individuals to demonstrate lower levels of helping behavior (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1990; Batson et al., 1987; Eisenberg et al., 1989). Thus, personal distress is viewed as a vicarious affective response to evocative stimuli that is not related to altruism (Batson et al., 1981). High levels of personal distress have also been found to be related to low levels of self-esteem and a decreased quality of interpersonal relationships (Davis, 1983a).

Fantasy. Davis (1980) reports that the Fantasy subscale of the IRI taps respondents' tendencies to transpose themselves imaginatively into the feelings and actions of fictitious characters in books, movies, and plays. This tendency is believed to be related to high levels of loneliness, shyness, emotional vulnerability, and interpersonal anxiety and thus may not effect social relationships although those individuals who score highest on this subscale also score relatively high on the

perspective taking, empathic concern, and personal distress subscales (Davis, 1983a).

The multidimensional format of the IRI has been used extensively with adolescent and college-age samples; Davis lists social competence, self-esteem, emotionality, sensitivity to others, and intelligence as five potentially related constructs that are particularly salient to this age range (1983a). Influenced by the theoretical works of Hoffman (1977), Davis (1983a) writes that "the rationale underlying the IRI is that empathy can best be considered as a set of constructs, related in that they all concern responsiveness to others but are also clearly distinguishable from each other (p. 113)."

As with Bryant's (1982) Index of Empathy for Children and Adolescents and the Visions of Morality Scale, gender differences were found to exist in studies utilizing the IRI. A discussion of research findings in gender differences using these three assessments follows.

Gender Differences in Empathy during Adolescence

A basic review of past literature finds little agreement in the area of gender differences in empathy. Females appear to have an advantage in empathic responding although many studies were inconclusive as to the nature and

extent of that advantage (Eisenberg, 1991; Eisenberg & Lennon, 1983). For example, Feshbach (1982) contends that females respond more empathically than males overall but that males display equal levels of cognitive understanding of the situations in question. Hoffman's (1977) review of literature found "no consistent sex differences" in children's (ages 3 to 11) ability to identify the affective state of another person, suggesting that males and females do not differ in their capacity for perspective-taking (p. 727)."

Unfortunately, very little research exists in this area for adolescents. Using the Interpersonal Reactivity Index, Davis and Franzoi (1991) investigated stability and change in adolescent self-consciousness and empathy over middle to late adolescence. Using a sample of 206 high school students (male=103, female=103) from a suburb in upper Michigan, Davis and Franzoi (1991) tested students ranging in age from ninth to twelfth grades at one year intervals for four successive years. Intercorrelating the IRI with another written self-report measure, the Fenigstein et al. (1975) Self-Consciousness Scale, Davis and Franzoi (1991) assessed gender differences through mean comparisons and found females scored significantly higher in empathic concern, personal distress, and fantasy as well as in public self-

consciousness, social anxiety, and perspective taking. The authors note, however, that as in earlier findings, differences in the area of perspective taking were not as great as in other variables (Davis & Franzoi, 1991). These results (test-retest correlations) were also found to remain stable or change predictably over time as the adolescent matured, leading Davis and Franzoi (1991) to conclude that middle adolescence may be a time of heightened self-attention and concern for others more for females than for males.

Eisenberg et al. (1991) conducted a longitudinal, intra-individual study of prosocial development in adolescence using Bryant's (1982) Empathy Scale with a sample of three groups of predominantly white, middle class children; these subjects (n=110) had been tested seven times over an eleven-year time frame from the ages of 4-5 to 15-16. In addition to Bryant's Empathy Scale, the subjects were also administered four verbal moral reasoning scenarios, three subscales of the IRI (Fantasy excluded), and various scales concerning altruism and social desirability. Using multivariate analysis, Eisenberg et al. (1991) found significant gender differences in levels of moral reasoning, empathic responding, and helping behaviors in favor of females.

Specifically, females used role-taking and sympathetic reasoning earlier and more frequently than males, were assessed as more mother-oriented and self-reflective than males on the basis of their responses to the IRI, and appeared more likely to actually engage in prosocial activity than males given their scores on the measures of altruism (Eisenberg et al., 1991). Eisenberg et al. (1991) note that although males do begin to catch up in empathic tendencies as they mature, adolescent females tend to remain true to the stereotypical view of women as being more empathic than men.

Cohn (1991) studied sex differences in the course of personality development using Loevinger's (1976) principles of ego development that include some aspects of empathy and prosocial reasoning. Employing Loevinger and Wessler's (1970) Washington University Sentence Completion Test (WUSCT) as a guideline, Cohn conducted a meta-analysis of 112 published studies and 165 unpublished studies and discovered moderately large sex differences among junior and senior high school students. These results once again favored females. Cohn writes, "although young boys [about thirteen] remain bound by egocentric concerns, young girls move toward a period of social conformity; as boys enter a conformist period, girls approach a period of emerging self-

awareness' (1991). Thus, even though adolescents appear to mature at the same rate, girls seem to "maintain a constant lead" over boys, which, given previous results concerning the relationship between level of reasoning and prosocial inclinations, has extensive implications for empathic capabilities as well as tendencies (Cohn, 1991, p. 261).

Shelton and McAdams, (1991), using their Visions of Morality Scale as well as the IRI and a measure of political inclination, surveyed 82 male and 99 female Catholic high school students and again discovered significant self-reported empathic differences between adolescent males and females. Results of their multiple regression analysis reveal that females achieved a higher total VMS score of private, interpersonal, and social morality as well as higher scores on the four subscales of the IRI although, as expected, differences in perspective taking ability were not as great (Shelton & McAdams, 1991). Interestingly, these scores were found to have a high correlation with liberal political tendencies in high school females. On a positive note, the authors conclude that their "overall findings suggest the possibility of a general prosocial orientation in [both male and female] high school students (p. 935)."

Finally, in related research Ford et al. (1989) found that high school boys made fewer socially responsible

choices on a questionnaire index than did girls; male choices were also described as "more a function of self-interested emotions (p. 419)," leading these researchers to conclude that issues concerning responsibility for others are "more problematic" for adolescent boys than girls (p. 420). In an earlier study of adolescent personality, Stein, Newcomb, and Bentler (1986) reported that females scored higher on measures of generosity, law abidance, orderliness, and religious commitment than males. Thus, current research would seem to support the long-held belief that, as measured by self-report measures, females are more empathic than males during the developmental period of adolescence.

Introduction to Empathic Communication

Stated simply, empathic communication can be defined as those communication strategies or acts that are provoked or guided by emotional concern for others (Meyer et al., 1988). Although empathy is the guiding force behind prosocial behaviors such as comforting, helping, and donating, an individual cannot be perceived as being empathic without verbalizing his or her understanding of the situation and concern for the individual experiencing the distress (Stiff et al., 1984). Thus, the concepts of comforting and

communicative responsiveness take on special significance in the study of empathy and prosocial behavior.

Comforting. The concept of comforting refers to those message strategies that are specifically intended to "alleviate or lessen the emotional distress" of others (Burleson, 1984, p. 140). Thus, comforting can be viewed as a communicative reaction to others' emotions that is both functional and prosocial. Of course, mere possession of such skills does not ensure that the adolescent will choose to use them; the desire and will to engage in empathic communication is usually conceptualized as emotional empathy, or affective responding.

In the limited research conducted in this area with adolescents, teens have been found to become more sensitive, cooperative, and helpful in their message strategies with advancing age (Burleson, 1982). High levels of sensitivity to others have been found to be related to advanced levels of comforting responses in adolescence (Burleson, 1983). These findings have important implications for interpersonal relationships in that research using child and adult samples has found that skill in comforting was the one variable that best predicted social acceptance and peer popularity (Burleson, 1985), which are two concepts of great importance to adolescents.

Communicative Responsiveness. Communicative responsiveness can be defined as a "social skill that enables individuals to respond effectively to the emotional states of others" (Stiff et al., 1984, p. 2). Although this concept is similar to comforting, Stiff et al. (1984) believe that responses to positive everyday occurrences are just as meaningful as those to negative occurrences. In this case, empathy could either enhance or detract from communicative responsiveness in that it is the effectiveness of the response, not the message per se, that is viewed as being the most important (Stiff et al., 1984). Communicative responsiveness is thus viewed as being as equally related to communicative competence as it is to empathy.

Summary

Cognitive and communicative advances in adolescence make this developmental stage an ideal time in which to study empathy and prosocial behavior. As adolescents increase in perspective taking ability and communicative responsiveness, comforting abilities are expected to increase as well. Empathic characteristics (perspective taking, empathic concern, personal distress, and fantasy empathy) are known to be related to prosocial behavior, but their relationships to quality and quantity of comforting

strategies are not yet known. Finally, gender differences in empathy in adolescence appear to be in favor of females; in other age groups, this finding is much less conclusive. Overall findings, however, reveal that most adolescents respond adequately to others' emotional needs.

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APPENDIX B

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study was designed to determine if empathic characteristics (perspective taking, empathic concern, personal distress, and fantasy empathy), communication abilities (communicative responsiveness), and age predict comforting intentions (dependent variable) in male and female adolescents. The findings will give a better understanding of why some individuals who feel empathically do not respond empathically in appropriate situations; this information could prove useful in future at-risk interventions and curriculum development.

Sample

Participants for this study were obtained through association with a larger project funded by the Lilly Endowment Research Grants Program for Youth and Caring, which is designed to measure the development of caring in adolescence. Subjects ranged in age from 13 to 17 (mean=14.77) and were recruited from an Oklahoma community with research facilities through advertising and snowballing techniques. A pilot study of 10 adolescents was utilized to

refine the procedures and coding protocol; data from a sample of 149 adolescents was then collected for the purpose of analysis. Subjects received $15 for participating in the study.

Demographic characteristics of the sample were as follows: 49.3% (n=74) were male and 50.7% (n=75) were female. The racial composition of the sample was: 80% (n=120) white, 6.7% (n=10) Native American, 5.3% (n=8) African American, 2.7% (n=4) Hispanic, 2.0% (n=3) Asian, and 3.3% (n=5) other or not reported. The subject reported the following family forms: 60% (n=90) resided with both their biological mother and father, 7.3% (n=11) lived in stepfather family households, 2.7% (n=4) lived in stepmother family households, 17.3% (n=26) lived in one-parent mother households, 4.0% (n=6) lived in one-parent father households, 3.3% (n=5) lived in adoptive families, and 2.0% (n=3) reported other living arrangements.

Data Collection

Participants responding to project advertising or gained through snowballing techniques were seen by appointment in a specially prepared suite of rooms on the campus of a large midwestern university. Upon arriving at the research site, participants were given an overview of

the session's events, were allowed to ask questions, and, once parental consent was formally attained, instructed to complete a variety of paper and pencil self-report questionnaires as well as several other instruments that do not pertain specifically to this study. Relevant measures are described more thoroughly in the following section. This phase of the research process required 30 to 45 minutes.

Next, participants were led individually to a video screening room where they watched specially developed vignettes (also described in the following section) that required both written and verbal responses. Written reactions were obtained through the use of special rating scales designed to tap emotional responses to the video content. Verbal responses were obtained through the use of brief interviewing techniques that allowed the participants to elaborate on their emotional states as well as their personal experiences and comforting strategies. These verbal responses were prompted through the use of an interview schedule (see Appendix C) that included such questions as "What would you do in this situation?" and "Why did you decide on that course of action?"

Finally, upon completion of the video segment, the participants were allowed to ask questions or discuss the experience and were thanked for their cooperation. At this

time a research associate explained the payment protocol and gave the name of who to contact if the check did not arrive within a specified amount of time. Finally, participants were also asked not to share any information pertaining to the study with others that may also participate in the future.

Instrumentation

Participants were required to complete a number of self-report measures as well as respond to specially created video vignettes. The multidimensional concept of empathy was assessed by the Davis (1980) Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI), a 28-item self-report questionnaire consisting of four subscales. These four subscales include questions pertaining to Perspective Taking (PT), Empathic Concern (EC), Personal Distress (PD), and Fantasy empathy (FS). Sample questions include "When I am reading an interesting story or novel, I imagine how I would feel if the events of the story were happening to me" (FS) and "When a friend tells me about his good fortune, I feel genuinely happy for him" (EC). Representative questions from the remaining subscales include "I sometimes feel helpless when I am in the middle of a very emotional situation" (PD) and "If I'm

sure I'm right about something I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments" (PT).

Responses vary along a Likert-type five-point continuum from "Does Not Describe Me At All " to "Describes Me Very Well." Using a sample of 201 male and 251 female university students during the initial instrument construction process and a second sample of 579 male and 582 female university students for final confirmation of the questionnaire, Davis (1980) reports that all four subscales have satisfactory internal and test-retest reliabilities, ranging from .71 to .77 and .62 to .71, respectively. Results of the current study yielded Cronbach's alphas of .75 for the fantasy subscale, .73 for perspective taking, .74 for empathic concern, and .73 for personal distress.

Empathic communication traits were assessed by a modified version of the Stiff et al. (1984) Index of Communicative Responsiveness, a 10-item Likert-type scale that measures an individual's conceptualization of him or herself as an empathic or nonempathic person. Sample questions include "I usually have a knack for saying the right thing to make people feel better when they are upset" and "My friends come to me with their problems because I am a good listener." Responses vary along a four-point continuum of "Does Not Describe Me At All" to "Describes Me

Very Well." Using confirmatory factor analysis, Stiff et al. (1984) established internal consistency at .70 and stability at .79. This particular scale, however, has not previously been used with adolescents and was modified by the researcher to be language and age-appropriate. Results of the current study yielded internal consistency at .85 for the modified instrument.

Age and gender information were collected using standard demographic fact sheets. (See Appendix E for the complete battery of self-report questionnaires).

Comforting intentions, the dependent variable, were assessed by coding videotaped verbal responses to vignettes that depict situations in which another person (family member, peer, stranger) is in a situation that might elicit caring behavior. Examples of video scenarios include responding to a good friend's disappointment at being rejected at a school dance, deciding whether or not to volunteer assistance to a new student at school, and assisting a sibling after a quarrel with a parent.

The prologue of the vignette used in this study states that the participant is at a school dance with a very good friend (same sex) who has been watching a peer of the opposite sex dance with various partners all evening. The friend points out the person of interest and indicates that

he/she thinks about him/her "all the time." The other character (whom the participant is to think of as him or herself) responds that the person of interest is very attractive. The friend states he or she would like to ask the person of interest to dance. The other character encourages the friend to ask the person of interest to dance. The friend hesitates. The other character reminds the friend that the person of interest says "hi" in the halls at school. The friend notes that this person once sat by him/her in the lunchroom , even when other seats were available. The other character again encourages the friend to ask the person of interest to dance. The friend does. The person of interest declines, peers laugh, and another peer makes a negative comment. The friend returns to the other character and states how badly he or she feels. (Video vignette transcripts are contained in Appendix D).

Immediately after viewing the videotaped vignettes, participants were asked to complete a short rating scale (not of interest in the current study) and verbalize how they would respond to the disappointed peer who had been publicly rejected at a school dance and had just "approached" the participant for comforting. Responses were classified by the researcher into one of ten response categories developed by Applegate (1980). Applegate's

Hierarchic Coding System for Quality of Comforting Response ranges from Level Zero (No Response) to Level Three (Recognition and Elaboration of Individual Perspectives). Thus, participant responses range from an inability or unwillingness to respond to the situation to explicit acknowledging and legitimizing of the others' feelings, with denial of the situation and implicit recognition of the individual's perspective falling between the two extremes. Applegate (1980) reports inter-rater reliabilities ranging from .88 to .99, with an average reliability of .94. Inter-rater reliability was established at .88 in the current study. (Applegate's hierarchy is contained in Appendix F).

Data Analysis

This study was guided by a correlational design; that is, this research sought to determine how the predictor variables (perspective taking, empathic concern, personal distress, fantasy, and gender) related to the criterion variables (communicative responsiveness and quality of comforting intentions). Correlation coefficients were examined to assure that no correlations between predictor variables exceeded .75 in order to address potential problems related to multicollinearity (Cohen & Cohen, 1983).

Using hierarchical multiple regression analyses, four research models (i.e., the same models were examined separately for females and males) were tested. For each of the models, Step 1 involved the entry of the age of the adolescent to allow for the examination of the incremental variance accounted for by this variable. In Step 2, the four dimensions of empathy (perspective taking, empathic concern, fantasy, and personal distress) were entered as predictors of the criterion variables.

In the first hierarchical multiple regression analysis for females, Step 1 and Step 2 (described above) involved the entry of age and the dimensions of empathy as predictors of adolescent communicative responsiveness. The second hierarchical multiple regression analysis involved the entry of age and the dimensions of empathy as predictors of comforting intention. These same two models were tested for males using two additional hierarchical multiple regression analyses.

Limitations of the Study

Given that participants were obtained through advertising and snowballing techniques, selection bias is a serious threat and generalizability is therefore limited due to a nonrepresentative sample. For example, because

participants were responsible for arranging their own transportation, the possibility that significant differences exist between those with and without means of participating in the study will remain unexamined. Furthermore, although efforts were made to train coders and research assistants to perform uniformly and consistently, testing conditions may have varied upon occasion, thus imperceptibly impacting the results.

Other valid considerations include the level of similarity between participants and video vignette characters and the usage of hypothetical scenarios to tap actual comforting intentions. Dissimilarities between individuals have been shown to decrease responsiveness (Eisenberg, 1991); this study was only able to control for similarities in age, race and gender, thus leaving other possibly important factors such as level of attractiveness, clothing preference, and interpersonal style unaccounted for. Furthermore, although care was taken to construct vignettes applicable to a wide range of personal experiences, using hypothetical scenarios to test real-life response abilities has raised objections from many researchers (Eisenberg, 1991; Hoffman, 1984; Batson et al., 1987) in that participants are often aware of the fictitious

nature of the scenario and thus may respond in ways that they believe the researcher would deem socially appropriate.

A final concern is the selection of the school dance scenario as the only means of studying adolescent comforting. Adolescents may not attach a great deal of significance to social rejection of this sort, instead viewing the experience as transitory in nature and not worthy of extended discussion. It is quite possible that a different scenario would have provided vastly different results.

Predicted Results

For each of the variables hypothesized to have a positive relationship with comforting intentions (perspective taking, empathic concern, and age), the results should confirm these predictions. Increasing age, for example, should be positively correlated with increases in comforting behavior because higher levels of cognitive maturity enable adolescents to feel more capable of initiating positive changes in the emotional states of others.

For variables assumed to have a negative relationship with comforting intentions (personal distress and fantasy), the results were also expected to confirm these predictions.

High levels of personal distress, for instance, may lead some individuals to engage in decreased amounts of comforting behavior because of strong needs to remove themselves from emotionally overtaxing situations (Batson et al., 1987). Individuals high in fantasy empathy, on the other hand, have been found in some studies (Davis & Franzoi, 1991; Eisenberg et al., 1991) to be more shy and introverted, and thus may lack the social skills necessary to make successful interventions.

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APPENDIX C

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APPENDIX D

MALE ADOLESCENT FILM VIGNETTE (WITH A PEER FRIEND)

Prologue: You are at a school dance visiting with your very good friend, Jason. Jason has been watching a certain girl dance with different guys all night long.

Jason: There's that girl I've been telling you about. I think about her all the time.

You: Man, is she good-looking!

Jason: I told you she was hot. I'd love to ask her to dance.

You: Well, why don't you ask her?

Jason: I don't know if she would.

You: You said she always says "Hi" in the halls at school.

Jason: Yeah...and she did sit next to me once in the lunchroom, even though there were other places.

You: I think you should go for it. You'll never know unless you ask.

Jason: You're right! I'm going to do it! *(Jason walks over to the table where the pretty girl is sitting. Also at the table are three other guys and two girls). (To pretty girl)* Would you like to dance?

Girl: *(Disdainfully)* Thank you, but not right now.

I'm kind of tired.

Guy One: *(Laughs with the rest of the crowd at the table).* Talk about crash and burn! *(Everyone at the table laughs again.)*

Jason: *(Walks back over to you, is obviously embarrassed and disappointed.) (To you)* I feel like a complete idiot.

(At this point the interviewer asks "you" what you would say or do to help your friend.)

FEMALE ADOLESCENT FILM VIGNETTE (WITH A PEER FRIEND)

Prologue: You are at a school dance visiting with your very good friend, Jaime. Jaime has been watching a certain boy dance with different girls all night long.

Jaime: There's that boy I've been telling you about. I think about him all the time.

You: Man, is he good-looking!

Jaime: I told you he was hot. I'd love to ask him to dance.

You: Well, why don't you ask him?

Jaime: I don't know if he would.

You: You said he always says "Hi" in the halls at school.

Jaime: Yeah...and he did sit next to me once in the lunchroom, even though there were other places.

You I think you should go for it. You'll never know unless you ask.

Jaime: You're right! I'm going to do it! *(Jaime walks over to the table where the cute guy is sitting. Also at the table are three other guys and two girls). (To cute guy)* Would you like to dance?

Boy: *(Disdainfully)* Thank you, but not right now.

I'm kind of tired.

Girl One: *(Laughs with the rest of the crowd at the table).* Talk about crash and burn! *(Everyone at the table laughs again.)*

Jaime: *(Walks back over to you, is obviously embarrassed and disappointed.) (To you)* I feel like a complete idiot.

(At this point the interviewer asks "you" what you would say or do to help your friend.)

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE- PEER VIGNETTE

What does caring mean to you?

Two other video vignettes regarding family members and strangers are discussed.

In the third video, you were with your good friend who was turned down by Aaron/Erin to dance because he/she said he/she was too tired. What would you have done in this situation?

How did you decide on *(insert their answer)?*

What are some other things you could have done instead of *(insert their answer)*?

Tell me about a similar situation where you were with a friend who had been disappointed. What did you do?

How did you feel after you helped him/her?

How do your friends show you they care about you?

Which of the three video situations did you relate with the most? Explain your answer.

APPENDIX E

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY RELATIONS AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

ADOLESCENT FAMILY RESEARCH PROJECT

PART I: Complete the following items:

1. How old are you? ____________ years old

2. What is your grade in school? Circle your answer.

   6 7 8 9 10 11 12

3. What is your sex? Circle your answer.

   1 Male   2 Female

4. What is your race? Circle your answer. If other, please specify.

   1 Black   3 White   5 Mexican American (Hispanic)
   2 Asian   4 American Indian (Native American)   6 Other____________

5. Do you live in a: Circle your answer.

   1 Town/city   2 Rural area

6. Do you live at home? Circle your answer.

   1 Yes   2 No

   If no, with whom do you live? ____________

7. Which of the following best describes your biological parents? Circle your answer.

   1 Married   3 Separated   5 Single
   2 Divorced   4 Widowed   6 Other, please explain____________

8. Which of the following best describes the parents or guardians with whom you live? Circle your answer.

   0 Both biological mother and biological father
   1 Biological father and stepmother
   2 Biological mother and stepfather
   3 Biological father only
   4 Biological mother only
   5 Adoptive mother and adoptive father
   6 Some other person or relative. Please describe___
   ____

For this section answer questions about the parent(s), stepparent(s), or guardian(s) **with whom you are currently living.**

9. What is the current employment status of your father/stepfather (male guardian)? Circle your answer.

   1 Full-time (more than 35 hours per week)
   2 Part-time (less than 35 hours per week)
   3 Not-employed, looking for work
   4 Not employed
   5 Not applicable (no father figure)
   6 Do not know

10. If your father/stepfather (male guardian) is employed, what is his job title? Please be specific.

    ____
    ____

11. What does your father/stepfather (male guardian) do? Please give a full description such as: "helps build apartment complexes" or "oversees a sales force of 10 people."

    ____
    ____

12. What is the current employment status of your mother/stepmother (female guardian)? Circle your answer.

    1 Full-time (more than 35 hours per week)
    2 Part-time (less than 35 hours per week)
    3 Not-employed, looking for work
    4 Not employed
    5 Not applicable (no mother figure)
    6 Do not know

13. If your mother/stepmother (female guardian) is employed, what is her job title? Please be specific.

    ____
    ____

14. What does your mother/stepmother (female guardian) do? Please give a full description such as "teaches chemistry in high school" or "works on an assembly line where car parts are made."

    ____
    ____

15. Circle the highest level in school that your mother/ stepmother (female guardian) has completed.

    1 Completed grade school
    2 Some high school
    3 Graduated from high school
    4 Vocational school after high school
    5 Some college, did not graduate
    6 Graduated from college
    7 Post college education (graduate school/law school/medical school)
    8 Other training after high school, please specify,
    ____
    9 Do not know

16. Circle the highest level in school that your father/ stepfather (male guardian) has completed.

1 Completed grade school	5 Some college, did not graduate
2 Some high school	6 Graduated from college
3 Graduated from high school	7 Post college education (graduate school/law school/medical school)
4 Vocational school after high school	8 Other training after high school, please specify, ______________________
	9 Do not know

17. If you live in a remarried or a single parent family how frequently do you have contact with the parent you do not live with?

1 Daily	4 Once a year	7 Not applicable
2 1-4 times a month	5 Every few years	
3 Every few months	6 Never	

18. How many miles does your other parent live from you?

1 20 miles or less	3 60-100 miles	5 Not applicable
2 20-59 miles	4 Over 100 miles	

19. If you live with a parent and a stepparent, how many years have they been married to each other?

_______ Years _______ Not applicable

This section deals with your siblings **both in and outside your home** - brother(s)/ sister(s), stepbrother(s)/stepsister(s), adopted brother(s)/adopted sister(s), half brother(s)/half sister(s).

20. List the relationship and age of each sibling.

Relationship	Age	Relationship	Age
Ex. halfbrother	17		

Davis (1983) Interpersonal Reactivity Index

The following statements inquire about your thoughts and feelings in a variety of situations. For each item, indicate how well it describes you by choosing the appropriate number on the scale at the top of page: 0, 1, 2, 3, 4. When you have decided on your answer circle the number on the answer sheet after each question. READ EACH ITEM CAREFULLY BEFORE RESPONDING. Answer as honestly as you can. Thank you.

ANSWER SCALE:

0	1	2	3	4
Does Not Describe Me At All		Describes Me Sometimes		Describes Me Very Well

1.	When I am reading an interesting story or novel, I imagine how I would feel if the events in the story were happening to me.	0	1	2	3	4
2.	I really get involved with the feelings of the characters in a novel.	0	1	2	3	4
3.	I am usually objective when I watch a movie or play, and I don't often get completely caught up in it.	0	1	2	3	4
4.	After seeing a play or movie, I have felt as though I were one of the characters.	0	1	2	3	4
5.	I daydream and fantasize, with some regularity, about things that might happen to me.	0	1	2	3	4
6.	I am never affected by what I see in a movie or on television.	0	1	2	3	4
7.	Becoming extremely involved in a good book or movie is somewhat rare for me.	0	1	2	3	4
8.	When I watch a good movie, I can very easily put myself in the place of a leading character.	0	1	2	3	4
9.	Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place.	0	1	2	3	4
10	If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments.	0	1	2	3	4
11.	I can always see the other person's point of view when discussing or arguing a point.	0	1	2	3	4
12.	I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective.	0	1	2	3	4
13.	I believe that there are two sides to every question and I try to look at them both.	0	1	2	3	4
14.	I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the "other person's" point of view.	0	1	2	3	4
15.	I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision.	0	1	2	3	4
16.	When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in his or her shoes" for a while.	0	1	2	3	4

ANSWER SCALE:

0	1	2	3	4
Does Not Describe Me At All		Describes Me Sometimes		Describes Me Very Well

17.	I always understand how people feel.	0	1	2	3	4
18.	When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards them.	0	1	2	3	4
19.	I am always concerned about family, friends, and strangers.	0	1	2	3	4
20.	When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them.	0	1	2	3	4
21.	I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.	0	1	2	3	4
22.	I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person.	0	1	2	3	4
23.	It does not bother me to see other people in need.	0	1	2	3	4
24.	I never care if people think I am concerned about them.	0	1	2	3	4
25.	Sometimes I don't feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems.	0	1	2	3	4
26.	Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal.	0	1	2	3	4
27.	I am often quite touched by things that I see happen.	0	1	2	3	4
28.	When I see someone who badly needs help in an emergency, I go to pieces.	0	1	2	3	4
29.	I sometimes feel helpless when I am in the middle of a very emotional situation.	0	1	2	3	4
30.	I always help people in need, even in emergency situations.	0	1	2	3	4
31.	In emergency situations, I feel apprehensive and ill-at-ease.	0	1	2	3	4
32.	I am usually pretty effective in dealing with emergencies.	0	1	2	3	4
33.	Being in a tense emotional situation scares me.	0	1	2	3	4
34.	When I see someone get hurt, I tend to remain calm.	0	1	2	3	4
35.	I tend to lose control during emergencies.	0	1	2	3	4

Stiff (1984) Index of Communicative Responsiveness

The following statements inquire about your thoughts and feelings in a variety of situations. For each item, indicate how well it describes you by choosing the appropriate number on the scale at the top of the page: 0, 1, 2, 3, 4. When you have decided on your answer, circle the number on the answer sheet after each question. READ EACH ITEM CAREFULLY BEFORE RESPONDING. Answer as honestly as you can. Thank you.

ANSWER SCALE:

0	1	2	3	4
Does Not Describe Me At All		Describes Me Some of the Time		Describes Me Very Well

1.	I can usually find the right thing to say to make people feel better when they are upset.	0	1	2	3	4
2.	I usually respond well to the feelings and emotions of others.	0	1	2	3	4
3.	I always say the right things to make people feel better.	0	1	2	3	4
4.	Others think of me as the type of person who understands how people feel.	0	1	2	3	4
5.	I am the type of person who can say the right thing at the right time.	0	1	2	3	4
6.	It is not important for me to say things to make people feel better.	0	1	2	3	4
7.	My friends come to me with their problems because I am a good listener.	0	1	2	3	4
8.	I like to say things to make others feel good.	0	1	2	3	4
9.	Members of my family come to me with their problems.	0	1	2	3	4
10.	I want others to think I am a caring person.	0	1	2	3	4
11.	Others tell me I know what to say to people who are upset.	0	1	2	3	4
12.	I like to be able to help others when they need help.	0	1	2	3	4
13.	I usually know what to say to people to help them when they come to me with their problems.	0	1	2	3	4
14.	I never know what to say when others come to me with their problems.	0	1	2	3	4
15.	I do not care if others think I am a caring person.	0	1	2	3	4

APPENDIX F

APPLEGATE (1980) HIERARCHIC CODING SYSTEM FOR QUALITY OF COMFORTING STRATEGIES

0. No Response.
Speaker cannot think of anything he or she might say in response to the situation.

I. Denial of Individual Perspectivity.
The speaker condemns or ignores the specific feelings that exist in the situation for the person addressed. Such denial may either be explicit (e.g., direct criticism of the other's feelings) or implicit (e.g., by citing rules which, in effect, derogate the feeling being experiences by the other and focus on the way the other **should** feel or act).

1. Speaker condemns the feelings of the other.
"I'd tell her she had no reason to feel that way about not getting invited, and if she felt that way, she was no friend of mine."

2. Speaker challenges the legitimacy of the other's feelings.
"There's nothing to be upset about- It's just an old party."

3. Speaker ignores the other's feelings.
"I'd tell her there have been other parties and she should be happy about going to them."

II. Implicit Recognition of Individual Perspectivity
The speaker provide some acceptance and/or positive response to the feelings of the other, but does not explicitly mention or elaborate those feelings.

4. Speaker attempts to divert the other's attention from the distressful situation and the feelings arising from that situation.
"When it's my party I'll invite you."

5. Speaker acknowledges the other's feelings, but does not attempt to help the other understand why those feelings are being experienced or how to cope with them.
"I'm sorry you didn't get invited to the party."

6. Speaker provides a nonfeeling-centered explanation of the situation intended to reduce the other's distressed emotional state.

III. Explicit Recognition and Elaboration of Individual Perspectivity

The speaker explicitly acknowledges, elaborates, and legitimizes the feelings of the other (and even other parties involved in the situation). Such strategies include an attempt to provide a general understanding of the situation and the feelings present there; coping strategies are suggested in conjunction with and as a compliment to an explication of the other's feelings.

7. Speaker explicitly recognizes and acknowledges the other's feelings, but provides only truncated explanations of these feelings (often coupled with attempts to "remedy" the situation).
"I know you feel bad about not going to the party, but you're my friend- lots of people like you. When my party comes up, I'll invite you."

8. Speaker provides an elaborated acknowledgment and explanation of the other's feelings.
"Gee, I'm really sorry about the party. I didn't mean to make you feel bad by mentioning it, but I know I did. It's not fun being left out. Maybe it's a mistake. I'll talk to Sharon, okay?"

9. Speaker helps the other to gain a perspective on his or her feelings and attempts to help the other see these feelings in relation to a broader social context or the feelings of others.
"Well, I'd tell her that I really understand how she feels, that I haven't been invited to a special party sometimes and I know it hurts- you can feel rejected. But I'd say maybe Jean really wanted to have you but her parents wouldn't let her invite everybody. And that I've had parties where I couldn't invite everybody I wanted, and she probably has too. So it doesn't mean that Jean doesn't like her or anything, just maybe her mom was letting her have like only a few people."

Applegate, J.L. (1980). Adaptive communication in educational contexts: A study of teachers' communication strategies. Communication Education, 29, 158-170.

APPENDIX G

Arizona State University

Department of Communication
Tempe, Arizona 85287-1205
602/965-5095

9-13-93

Dawn,

Enclosed is a copy of the unpublished paper you requested. You have my permission to use the communicative responsiveness scale in any of your research projects.

Sincerely,

Jim Stiff

Oklahoma State University
COLLEGE OF HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

Department of Family Relations and Child Development
243 Human Environmental Sciences
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078-0337
405-744-5057, FAX 405-744-7113

Dear Student/Parent:

Thank you for your interest in participating in our study of how family backgrounds and experiences affect caring behavior in adolescents.

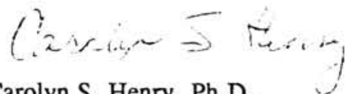
Attached is a consent form that provides details about the study and how the responses will be used. ***At the beginning of the research session, the adolescent must present the consent form, signed by both the student and his or her parent/guardian.***

The research session is scheduled for ______________________________ in the Human Environmental Sciences building at Oklahoma State University in room 144.

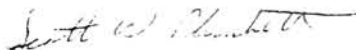
Each research session will last approximately 90 minutes. Each participant will be mailed $15 following participation in the study. All information shared in the session will be confidential and used only for the research study.

Once again, thank you for your interest in the project.

Sincerely,



Carolyn S. Henry, Ph.D.
Associate Professor and Project Director



Scott W. Plunkett, M.Ed.
Research Assistant

Dawn Parton, B. S.
Research Assistant

jj

CONSENT FORM

"I, ______________________________, hereby agree to participate in the following procedures conducted by Dr. Carolyn S. Henry, or associates or assistants of her choosing:

(1) to complete a confidential self-report questionnaire about family dynamics and developmental issues;
(2) to view three brief video vignettes and complete a rating sheet about my response to the vignettes;
(3) to participate in an videotaped interview about the vignettes and my views on family or personal issues; and
(4) to allow the confidential videotaped interview to be viewed by members of the research staff for research purposes only.

I understand that my participation in the research project will last approximately 90 minutes and that I will receive $15 for completing participation in the study. I authorize the use of the data collected in the project as part of a study on family background and adolescent development and that the data may be used in future research studies.

This is done as part of an investigation entitled "Family Antecedents of Caring Behavior in Adolescents" designed to (1) develop measures of social concern in adolescents, and (2) examine how family and individual factors relating to caring. The results will be used to expand the understanding of how family and personal factors relate to social concern.

I understand my name will not be identified with any data collected in the project and the questionnaires and videotapes will be considered for the confidential research use only. I understand that at no time will my name be used in association with the videotaped interview or questionnaire. I understand that this form will be kept in a locked file cabinet, separated from the videotapes and questionnaire responses. I understand that viewing of the videotapes will be for research purposes only and that except when the videotapes are being used for the research project, the videotapes will be kept in a locked file cabinet. The videotapes will be viewed only by members of the current or future research teams who are authorized by the project director and who have signed an agreement to assure the confidentiality of information about the participants. I understand that my participation is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time without penalty after notifying the project director.

I may contact Dr. Carolyn S. Henry at telephone number (405) 744-5057. I may also contact University Research Services, 001 Life Sciences East, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078; Telephone: (405) 744-5700.

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date: ____________________ Time: ____________________(a.m./p.m.)

Signed: ____
Signature of Subject

____
Signature of Parent or Guardian (required to participate in the study)

I certify that I have personally explained all elements of this form to the subject or his/her representative before requesting the subject or his/her representative to sign it.

Signed: ____
Project Director or her authorized representative

VITA

Dawn Annette Parton

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: VERBAL COMFORTING INTENTIONS IN ADOLESCENCE: AGE, GENDER, AND EMPATHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Major Field: Family Relations and Child Development

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born May 10, 1970 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, the daughter of Leon D. and Neta S. Parton.

Education: Graduated from Sapulpa High School in Sapulpa, Oklahoma in May 1988; received Bachelor of Science degree in Family Relations and Child Development with an emphasis in Family Sciences from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May 1992. Completed the requirements for the Master of Science degree with a major in Family Relations and Child Development at Oklahoma State University in July 1996.

Professional Organizations: National Council on Family Relations; Oklahoma Council on Family Relations; Kappa Omicron Nu; Phi Kappa Phi; Phi Upsilon Omicron.

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH

Date: 01-28-94 **IRB#:** HE-94-015

Proposal Title: FAMILY ANTECEDENTS OF CARING BEHAVIOR IN ADOLESCENTS

Principal Investigator(s): Carolyn S. Henry

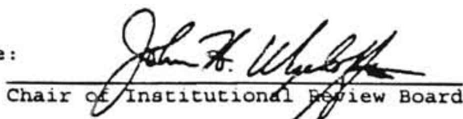
Reviewed and Processed as: Expedited

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

APPROVAL STATUS SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT NEXT MEETING.
APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR ONE CALENDAR YEAR AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL. ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Reasons for Deferral or Disapproval are as follows:

Provisions received and approved.

Signature: 
Chair of Institutional Review Board

Date: January 31, 1994