

# MULTI-METHOD ASSESSMENT OF PARENT-ADOLESCENT UNDERSTANDING

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## Abstract

This research examines family communication patterns and parent-adolescent understanding using video replay and questionnaire methods for assessing understanding.

Individuals from fifty families, each including two parents and an adolescent child, completed questionnaires, held a family discussion, and tried to reconstruct the thoughts of other family members while watching a videotape of the discussion. Results indicated that family members had little understanding of what others were thinking during family discussions. Fathers' understanding of children was particularly low. Understanding scores derived from questionnaire items were not associated with understanding scores derived from the video replay sessions, suggesting that the two methods tap separate dimensions of family understanding. Some understanding scores derived from the questionnaires were positively correlated with family conformity-orientation and negatively correlated with family conversation-orientation and parent-child relationship satisfaction. The results suggest that conformity-oriented families may achieve higher understanding in some areas, but parents and children appear more satisfied when perspectives are more freely expressed and loosely understood.

## Introduction

Cognitive and identity changes in adolescence often lead to family conflicts and presumably impact mutual understanding between parents and adolescents. A number of previous studies have found that parents and adolescents provide different accounts of the family (e.g., Callan & Noller, 1986), but these studies do not examine parent-adolescent understanding directly. Our research considers parent-adolescent understanding and communication in the context of family conflict. In general, we assume that communication patterns mediate understanding of and adaptation to adolescent changes. This is not to say, however, that the influence of communication is straightforward. In fact, research with married couples and intimate partners suggests otherwise (see Sillars, in press). For one thing, understanding is a broad concept with many levels. Depending on what aspects of understanding are assessed, studies find different associations between understanding, communication patterns, and relationship adjustment (Ickes & Simpson, 1997; Sillars, in press).

Ickes (1993) distinguished several approaches to the study of understanding and related areas of interpersonal perception. One approach examines understanding of relatively stable and general attitudes or perceptions (Laing, Phillipson, & Lee, 1966; Sillars & Scott, 1983). This approach relies on questionnaire methods in which both members of a relationship report their own perceptions and try to anticipate the responses of the other party (i.e., their “direct perspective” and “meta-perspective” respectively). A second, more recent approach examines understanding of specific thoughts associated with interactions, or what Ickes and colleagues have called empathic accuracy (see Ickes, 1997). In this approach, members of a dyad watch a videotape of their own interaction, report what they were thinking while the interaction took

place, and try to anticipate the partner's thoughts. This approach focuses on more specific and transitory perceptions that are directly associated with communicative acts. Our research utilizes both approaches to understanding in parent-adolescent relationships and examines the association between understanding in each of these domains.

### Method

Fifty families, each including a mother, father, and adolescent child, participated in the research. Consenting families came to a university research lab where they completed questionnaires, held a family discussion, and provided reports while viewing a videotape of the discussion.

### Sampling

Families were recruited for the research by telephone. A simple random sample was selected from a comprehensive phone list of children attending public middle-schools in a medium-size, Midwestern, U.S. city. Families were first sent an informational letter and then contacted by telephone. The letter explained the purpose of the study and described basic procedures, such as the location of the study, time required, compensation, and activities involved. Families were offered \$40 for their participation. Phone interviewers asked to speak with one parent and followed a phone script. The following criteria were used to qualify families for the research: 1) All three family members (two parents and adolescent child) gave voluntary consent to participate. 2) Both parents participating in the study were directly involved in the child's upbringing. 3) The adolescent child spent at least 50% of his or her time in the household of the parent who was contacted. 4) All family members were fluent in English.

Parents could include stepparents or unmarried partners residing in the same household. Single-parent families were excluded from the research. We did not directly exclude same-sex parents, but there were no same-sex parents in the sample. Phone calls were conducted at variable times and interviewers made three attempts to contact a family before replacing them in the sample. Phone interviews continued until the target number of 50 consenting families was achieved.

The mean age was 42 for mothers ( $SD = 4.4$ ) and 43 for fathers ( $SD = 5.0$ ). Eighty-six percent of mothers and 78% of fathers had not been involved in a previous marriage. Children in the study were all between the ages of 11-14 and attending middle school (grades 6-8). There were 22 daughters and 28 sons. Despite the use of random sampling methods, the sample was predominantly Caucasian, well educated, and mid to upper income. Ninety-two percent of mothers and 94% of fathers were Caucasian. Sixty percent of mothers and 74% of fathers had earned a college degree (B.A. or B.S.). Twenty-two percent of mothers and 52% of fathers had completed a post graduate degree. Seventy-four percent of the sample had a household income of \$50,000 or greater (as reported by mothers). In part, these demographics reflect the location of the research, which is home to both the state capital and a large public university, thus attracting a large number of career professionals. In addition, there were a number of single-parent families and non-English speakers who were excluded from the study, thus increasing the homogeneity of the sample.

### Procedures

Appointments were scheduled with families during evenings and weekends over a four month period. Family members came to the research lab together and spent approximately 1½ hours at the lab. Three research assistants were present at each appointment. Upon arriving at

the lab, family members received an orientation to the research and signed consent forms. Parents and children signed separate forms, the child's form being a simplified version of the parents' form. During the orientation period family members were informed that they would each complete questionnaires about topics that cause disagreements in families and participate in a discussion about these topics, which would be videotaped. The family was also told that each person would watch the videotape later and answer questions about it. Finally, family members were advised that their responses to questionnaires and videotapes would be confidential, other family members would not see their responses, and they could decide to stop participating in the research at any time.

Each family member completed two questionnaires, one prior to the discussion and one afterwards. The pre-discussion questionnaire elicited perceptions of parent-adolescent conflicts, whereas the post-discussion questionnaire measured family communication patterns, relationship satisfaction, demographics, and other variables. Each family member was escorted to a separate, private room to complete the questionnaires. Upon completion of the pre-discussion questionnaire, family members were brought together in a common room with lounge chairs and a coffee table arranged to resemble a living room. A video camera was concealed in an adjacent, darkened room. Although the camera was not visible, the family was aware that they would be videotaped. The family was left alone for a brief period without specific instructions to allow them to acclimate to the setting. Subsequently, the research assistant returned, explained the discussion task, and again left the room. The family was given a list of eight topics that represent typical areas of disagreement between parents and adolescents. These discussion topics covered the same issues that were included in the pre-discussion questionnaire. The topics were:

- The amount of time you spend together as a family.
- Getting chores done on time without hassles.
- Giving criticism or showing appreciation to one another.
- How much money the son/daughter receives and how it is spent.
- Getting homework done, giving help with schoolwork, or showing interest in homework.
- The amount of time the son/daughter spends with friends and/or how parents react to friends.
- Listening to one another and showing respect.
- The amount of responsibility and freedom given to the son/daughter.

Each family member chose one of these issues for discussion. Families were asked to talk about the three issues one at a time, including: 1) whether each topic represented an area of disagreement; 2) how it was affecting the three family members; and 3) what they can do to solve the problem. The family was asked to discuss the topics in a particular order, determined by the seating position of family members. Seating position was randomly assigned by the research assistant. The discussion was interrupted after 15 minutes.

Immediately following the discussion, family members were directed to separate rooms, accompanied by a research assistant. Here they watched a videotape of the discussion and responded to questions. The same video signal, controlled from a single location, was shown simultaneously in the three rooms. Every 90 seconds the videotape was paused and family members were asked to report what they were thinking at that point in the discussion and what they believed the other two family members were thinking. These procedures were modeled after Icke's method for assessing empathic accuracy (Ickes & Tooke, 1988), with some adaptation to

coordinate the reports of three (rather than two) persons. Reports from video replay sessions were later transcribed and coded to reveal understanding of on-line thoughts.

Before leaving the research lab, family members completed a second questionnaire, again in separate rooms. They were then brought together, debriefed, and dismissed.

### Questionnaire Measures

The pre-discussion questionnaire consisted of a parent-child version of the Areas of Change Questionnaire (ACQ, Jacob & Seilhamer, 1985). In this measure, parents indicate (on a 7-point scale) whether they would like their child to change his/her behavior in a number of areas (e.g., getting together with friends, completing chores promptly, showing interest in school). Conversely, children indicate whether they would like the parent to change various behaviors (e.g., doing things with the child, giving the child responsibility, helping the child with school work). Both parent and child versions of the ACQ were shortened to 16 items, mostly by eliminating redundant items. The child filled out separate Areas of Change Questionnaires for the mother and father. Representative items from the ACQ are reported in Table 1.

The ACQ was also adapted to assess parent-adolescent understanding. After completing one set of items identifying desired changes in their child's behavior, parents completed another set of items identifying changes in their own behavior that they thought the child would like. These reports represent parental "meta-perspectives" (Laing, Phillipsen, & Lee, 1966), that is, the parents' perceptions of the child's perspective. Children also reported changes in their own behavior that they thought parents would like (i.e., child meta-perspectives; see Table 1). Finally, to provide a measure of father-mother understanding, fathers and mothers filled out the ACQ as they thought the other parent would respond. Understanding scores were derived from

these items based on a correlation procedure that treats the item (rather than the subject or family) as the unit of observation (see Sillars, Pike, Jones, & Murphy, 1984). That is, the 16 items indicating the meta-perspective of one person (e.g., how the mother thinks that the son wants her to change) were correlated with the 16 items indicating the “direct perspective” of another person (e.g., how the son wants the mother to change). This procedure yields an understanding score for each parent-child dyad and eliminates some confounds that can occur when simple difference

Table 1

Representative items from the ACQ

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Areas of Change Questionnaire (ACQ)

<u>I want my <b>father</b> to:</u>						
more much	much	less	some		some	
more	less		what		what	
			less		more	
...do things with me. +3	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
...show interest in my school +3	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
work.						
...give me responsibility. +3	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
...tell me how to spend money. +3	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
...let me go out with my friends +3	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
when I want to.						
<u>My <b>father</b> would like <b>me</b> to:</u>						
more much	much	less	some		some	
more	less		what		what	

			less		more	
...enjoy going out with the +3 family	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
...complete my chores promptly +3	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
...get together with my friends. +3	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
...ask him for money. +3	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
...make my own decisions. +3	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2

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scores are used to measure understanding (i.e., effects due to “elevation” and “differential elevation;” see Cronbach, 1955).<sup>1</sup>

The post discussion questionnaire included the Revised Family Communication Patterns instrument (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994; Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990), a measure of parent-child relationship satisfaction, demographics, and other items that are not relevant here. The RFCP consists of 26 Likert style items that measure communication norms in the family from the perspective of different family members. There are two subscales in the RFCP: family conversation-orientation, which refers to the open exchange of ideas and feelings, and family conformity-orientation, referring to the use of parental power to enforce conformity. Table 2 reports representative items from the RFCP, worded from the perspective of the child. RFCP scores of mother, father, and child were averaged to create a single score for each family on conversation-orientation and conformity-orientation. The alpha reliability was .90 for family conversation-orientation and .87 for family conformity-orientation. Before computing these summary measures, we compared RFCP scores of sons and daughters to ensure that the scores were not confounded with the child’s gender. There were no significant differences in individual

or family RFCP scores attributable to the child's gender.

Lacking an established measure of parent-child relationship satisfaction that was suited to our purposes, we constructed a simple measure consisting of five Likert-style items. Table 2 reports these items worded from the perspective of the child. The child filled out the satisfaction measure twice (i.e., once for each parent), whereas the parents completed the measure only for the child who attended the study. Alpha reliabilities for the measures of parent-child relationship satisfaction were between .84 and .92.

Table 2

Parent-Child Relationship Satisfaction and RFCP Items\*

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Parent-Child Relationship Satisfaction

My father and I have fun together.  
My mother and I enjoy doing things together.  
My father and I get along well.  
I am happy with the way things are going with my mother.  
I have a good relationship with my father.  
My mother and I have fun together.  
My father and I enjoy doing things together.  
My mother and I get along well.  
I am happy with the way things are going with my father.  
I have a good relationship with my mother.

Revised Family Communication Patterns Instrument (RFCP)

Conversation-orientation

My parents often ask my opinion when the family is talking about something.  
In our family we often talk about topics like politics and religion where some  
persons disagree with others.  
I can tell my parents almost anything.  
In our family we often talk about our feelings and emotions.  
My parents and I often have long, relaxed conversations about nothing in  
particular.

Conformity-orientation

My parents often say things like "You'll know better when you grow up."  
My parents sometimes become irritated with my views if they are different  
from theirs.  
My parents feel that it is important to be the boss.  
My parents often say things like "You should give in on arguments rather than  
risk making people mad."  
When anything really important is involved, my parents expect me to obey  
without question.

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Note. Judgements were made on 5-point scales (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

## Coding

Transcripts from the video replay sessions were coded to indicate mutual understanding of immediate thoughts during the family discussion. The thoughts that a person reported at each interval in the discussion (i.e., direct perspectives) were compared with thoughts attributed to that person by another family member (i.e., meta-perspectives). The following point system was used to assign a score for understanding at each 90 second interval:

3 = Most thoughts attributed to another person match the other person's direct perspective.

2 = Some thoughts attributed to another person match the direct perspective but the overlap is less than 50%.

1 = The specific thoughts attributed to another person do not match the direct perspective, although the topic is the same.

0 = Direct and meta-perspectives refer to different topics.

Since direct and meta-perspectives were assessed at 10 intervals in the discussions, these scores were summed and averaged to provide summary scores for understanding of immediate thoughts.

## Results

### Understanding of Immediate Thoughts During Family Discussions

Results indicated that family members had little understanding of what others were thinking during family discussions. Seventy-six percent of meta-perspectives reported during the

video replay sessions did not directly match any part of the direct perspective reported by the other family member (i.e., a score of “0” or “1”). Twenty-nine percent of meta-perspectives were not even about the same topic as direct perspectives reported by the other family member (a score of “0”). Only 7% of meta-perspectives were mostly in agreement with direct perspectives of the other family member (a score of “3”). Table 3 reports the mean understanding scores from the video replay sessions. The means and standard deviations are all low, given a possible range of 0-3.

Table 3

Mean Understanding of Thoughts During Family Discussions

Child’s Understanding of Father	<u>M</u> = 1.06, <u>SD</u> = .39
Child’s Understanding of Mother	<u>M</u> = 1.08, <u>SD</u> = .34
Father’s Understanding of Child	<u>M</u> = .87, <u>SD</u> = .31
Father’s Understanding of Mother	<u>M</u> = 1.06, <u>SD</u> = .35
Mother’s Understanding of Child	<u>M</u> = 1.03, <u>SD</u> = .32
Mother’s Understanding of Father	<u>M</u> = 1.02, <u>SD</u> = .32

A repeated measures ANOVA was performed to determine whether understanding scores varied according to family relationship and the child’s gender. The within subjects factor in this design, family relationship, consisted of the six understanding scores derived from the video replay sessions (i.e., the child’s understanding of the father, the child’s understanding of the mother, and so forth). The child’s gender was a between subjects factor. There were no main effects or interactions associated with the gender of the child, however, there was a significant

multivariate effect for family relationship ( $F=4.6$ ,  $p<.01$ ,  $df=5,41$ ,  $\eta^2=.36$ ).<sup>2</sup> To help interpret this effect, we performed deviation contrasts, comparing the understanding score for a particular family relationship with the average of all other relationships. The overall effect of family relationship was primarily due to father-child understanding. Less understanding was shown by fathers toward their children by comparison with the average of all other family relationships ( $F=19.6$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

Table 4 reports correlations between understanding of immediate thoughts, family communication patterns, and parent-child relationship satisfaction. The correlations show evidence of reciprocity in parent-adolescent understanding. That is, the child's understanding of the father was positively correlated with the father's understanding of the child ( $r=.52$ ). Similarly, the child's understanding of the mother was positively correlated with the mother's understanding of the child ( $r=.42$ ). In addition, there were several other positive associations among understanding scores, suggesting that understanding in one family domain carried over into another. This pattern appears to suggest that understanding of immediate thoughts is influenced by broader family characteristics. However, the results do not identify specific family characteristics associated with understanding. Family conversation-orientation, family conformity-orientation, and parent-child relationship satisfaction did not predict understanding of immediate thoughts during family discussions.

#### Understanding of Desired Areas of Change

A different pattern of results emerged when family understanding was assessed according to the Areas of Change ratings. The mean understanding scores derived from the ACQ are given in Table 5. Overall, family members showed moderate understanding of changes desired by

other family members. (Since the ACQ understanding scores were based on correlations, a score of .3 to .5 suggests a moderate association between direct and meta-perspectives). However, adolescents' understanding of change desired by parents was somewhat lower than parents'

Table 4

Pearson Correlations between Understanding of Immediate Thoughts, Family Communication Patterns, and Relationship Satisfaction

	C und of F	C und of M	F und of C	F und of M	M und of C	M und of F
C und of M	.34*					
F und of C	.52**	.31*				
F und of M	.18	.35*	.45**			
M und of C	.20	.42**	.32*	.24		
M und of F	.31*	.28	.33*	.16	.53**	
Conversation-Orientation	-.01	.01	-.07	-.04	-.03	-.05
Conformity-Orientation	-.10	.20	.12	.17	.03	-.04
C sat with F	.15	.11	-.02	-.09	.23	.14
C sat with M	.13	.24	-.08	-.06	.15	.11

F sat with C	.22	.17	.05	.05	.04	.15
M sat with C	-.09	.02	.06	.12	.12	

Note. C=Child, F=Father, M=Mother, Und=Understanding, Sat=Satisfaction.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$  (two-tailed test).

understanding of change desired by adolescents. This impression was confirmed by a repeated measures ANOVA that tested the effects of family relationship and gender on ACQ understanding. As in the analysis of immediate understanding, there were no main effects or interactions associated with the gender of the child, however, there was a significant multivariate effect for family relationship ( $F=5.6, p<.001, df=5,42, \eta^2=.40$ ).<sup>3</sup> Deviation contrasts revealed that children's ACQ understanding of fathers ( $F=6.6, p<.05$ ) and mothers ( $F=10.1, p<.01$ ) were lower than the average of other understanding scores. On the other hand, fathers' understanding of mothers' ( $F=7.1, p<.01$ ) and mothers' understanding of children ( $F=6.2, p<.05$ ) exceeded the average of other understanding scores.

Table 5

Mean ACQ Understanding Scores

Child's understanding of Father	M = .31, SD = .25
Child's understanding of Mother	M = .30, SD = .29
Father's understanding of Child	M = .41, SD = .32
Father's understanding of Mother	M = .46, SD = .23
Mother's understanding of Child	M = .46, SD = .27
Mother's understanding of Father	M = .40, SD = .31

Table 6 reports correlations between ACQ understanding, family communication patterns, and parent-child relationship satisfaction. Again, there are several positive correlations

among understanding scores, indicating that understanding in one relationship tends to carry over into other relationships. However, reciprocity is demonstrated in only one case. The mother's understanding of the father was positively correlated with the father's understanding of the mother. Other results indicate that understanding of other family members by the father and

Table 6

Pearson Correlations between Understanding of Desired Change, Family Communication Patterns, and Relationship Satisfaction

	C und of F	C und of M	F und of C	F und of M	M und of C	M und of F
C und of M	.43**					
F und of C	.16	.19				
F und of M	.26	.53**	.31*			
M und of C	.14	.24	.49**	.13		
M und of F	.44**	.42**	.27	.46**	.15	
Conversation-Orientation	.03	.17	-.40**	-.13	-.14	-.20
Conformity-Orientation	.24	.13	.42**	.38**	.33*	.42**
C sat with F	.02	.03	-.50**	-.26	-.21	-.19
C sat with M	.05	.01	-.54**	-.23	-.34*	-.15
F sat with C	-.04	-.03	-.31*	-.22	-.12	-.26
M sat with C	-.07	.05	-.42**	-.18	-.28	

Note. C=Child, F=Father, M=Mother, Und=Understanding, Sat=Satisfaction.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$  (two-tailed test).

mother was greater in families that stressed conformity. In addition, fathers' understanding of change desired by the child was negatively correlated with family conversation-orientation ( $r = -.41$ ). These somewhat surprising results suggest that the higher levels of understanding were

accomplished through parental enforcement of conformity, not by an open exchange of ideas. This might explain a further counter-intuitive result. Specifically, parental understanding was negatively associated with the child's relationship satisfaction. The father's understanding of the child correlated negatively with the child's satisfaction with the father ( $r = -.50, p < .01$ ). Similarly, the mother's understanding of the child correlated negatively with the child's satisfaction with the mother ( $r = -.34, p < .05$ ).

Overall, the results reveal a pattern in which parental understanding was greater but parent-child relationship satisfaction was lower in more conformity-oriented families. This picture is confirmed by other correlations that are not included in Table 6. Family conformity-orientation was negatively correlated with all measures of parent-child relationship satisfaction, including the child's satisfaction with the father ( $r = -.35, p < .05$ ), the child's satisfaction with the mother ( $r = -.29, p < .05$ ), the father's satisfaction with the child ( $r = -.35, p < .05$ ), and the mother's satisfaction with the child ( $r = -.47, p < .01$ ). On the other hand, family conversation-orientation was positively correlated with measures of relationship satisfaction, including the child's satisfaction with the father ( $r = .58, p < .01$ ), the child's satisfaction with the mother ( $r = .64, p < .01$ ), the father's satisfaction with the child ( $r = .60, p < .01$ ), and the mother's satisfaction with the child ( $r = .47, p < .01$ ).

Finally, we compared understanding scores derived from the questionnaire items with understanding scores derived from the video replay sessions. When we paired equivalent measures (for example the child's understanding of the father according to the two methods), there were no significant correlations between ACQ understanding and understanding of immediate thoughts. These two measures appear to tap separate dimensions of family

understanding.

## Discussion

A certain degree of misunderstanding occurs in all human relationships but the topic is especially germane to parents and adolescents, given developmental changes and family conflicts that typify this period of family life. Intuitively, families who encourage an open exchange of ideas and feelings should also promote mutual understanding and adaptation to adolescent changes. However, this intuitive outlook was only partly confirmed by our research. Clearly, there is a strong association between family ratings of conversation-orientation and parent-adolescent satisfaction. However, conversation-orientation did not predict parent-adolescent understanding except in one instance where the association was negative.

The relationship between understanding, family communication patterns, and relationship satisfaction is complex, in part because there are many domains in which understanding can be assessed. Further, the same family relationships may reflect understanding in certain areas and misunderstanding in others.

Our research examined understanding in terms of specific, transitory thoughts associated with interaction and more general perceptions of desired changes in parent-adolescent relationships. There is a logical connection between these facets of understanding, even if the empirical connection proves to be elusive. Presumably, broader inferences about family conflict and areas of desired change are developed and reinforced during specific interactions. Yet, understanding scores derived from the ACQ questionnaires were not associated with understanding scores derived from the video replay sessions. Thus, these two measures appear to tap separate dimensions of family understanding.

The ACQ understanding scores are most comparable to items used by Sillars et al. (1984) to measure husband-wife understanding. In that study husbands and wives reported on sources of marital conflict, both from their own perspective and from the perspective of their partner. A surprising result of the research was that husband-wife understanding had a negative association with marital satisfaction. A similar result occurred in the present study. Parental understanding of the child's perspective correlated negatively with the child's relationship satisfaction. This result can be interpreted in a variety of ways, however, we suspect that it says little about potential effects of understanding on parent-adolescent satisfaction. A simpler explanation is that sources of conflict and desired changes are more clearly expressed and understood when there is greater conflict and dissatisfaction. Conversely, when there is less conflict and dissatisfaction, it is more difficult for the parent to judge what the adolescent would like to change.

The association between family conformity-orientation and understanding lends further support to the above interpretation. Greater conformity was associated with higher parental understanding but lower relationship satisfaction. A high conformity-orientation might bring parent-adolescent differences into sharper focus and thereby increase understanding, although at some expense to the relationship. Thus, conformity-oriented families achieved higher levels of understanding in some areas, but parents and children were more satisfied with one another when perspectives were more freely expressed and loosely understood.

When understanding was assessed from the video replay sessions, understanding scores were strikingly low. Fathers were especially poor at judging the specific thoughts of children, however, all family members showed little understanding of what others were thinking during the

family discussion. The measures of family communication patterns used in this research were not related to understanding of immediate thoughts. Although the explanation for this null result is open to conjecture, differences in the level of generality of note. That is, the measure of understanding was derived from specific, transitory thoughts, whereas the measure of communication patterns (i.e., the RFCP) was based on global reports concerned with stable and general family patterns. A fine-grained analysis of observed interactions might reveal greater correspondence between communication patterns and inferred thoughts. Future analyses of these data will focus on specific conversation sequences that predict understanding and on qualitative features of meta-perspectives that reveal inferential processes in communication.

## Notes

1. Sillars et al. (1984) also controlled the effects of assumed similarity and agreement on understanding scores through a procedure that utilized partial correlations. The same procedure could not be employed in the present study because parents and adolescents did not respond to identical items when recording direct perspectives. That is, there was no way to assess “agreement.”

2. Forty-seven families were included in this analysis. The recall data from three families was missing due to faulty recordings.

3. Forty-eight families were included in this analysis. ACQ understanding scores could not be computed for two families due to incomplete questionnaires.

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