CHAPTER VI
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Margaret Mead while speaking of the modern adolescent says : "All around the world the youth is stirring, seeking a new place in a new kind of world ..... For all over the world a new age is struggling to be born, an age in which all children can grow up in families and all adolescents can have time to become individuals who are able to meet the demands of a fully adult life." The modern family, inspite of supposed weaknesses, especially in the urban environment, still has more to do with shaping the child's personality to fit group life in our society, than any other social group. Influences of the parental home are lifelong in their effects on the adjustment of the child. The emotional climate or the "psychological atmosphere" of the home directly influences the person's characteristic pattern of behaviour and his characteristic adjustment to life. What the adolescent desires most is the

possibility of communicating on a personal level in the family circle, to have relationships with parents that are free and more intense, which will provide him with the environment he needs for his personal growth.

Communication refers primarily to the level of direct-ness and openness of verbal emotional communication among family members. Basically it concerns the degree to which the members of a family discuss their feelings about each other and family issues. This kind of communication takes place in and evolves into a helping relationship where the mutual interaction between parents and adolescents stimulates growth in the adolescent.

Carl Rogers (1967) outlines the helping relationship as one which primarily facilitates personal growth in an individual. It is characterised by three fundamental attitudes in the helper - empathy, genuineness and positive regard. Good communication, free communication within or between men is always therapeutic. Real communication occurs when we avoid the tendency to evaluate and listen with understanding to another person.

Robert Carkhuff (1969) has gone deeper into the meaning of the helping relationship by proposing a model for communication. It is a three-dimensional model involving counsellor, client, and contextual variables. This model is proposed for use not only in a counsellor-client relationship, but also in other ordinary human relationships such as parent-child,

teacher-pupil and other such relationships. The persons
involved in the relationship may be assessed for helpful or
harmful functioning on 9 variables - empathy, respect,
genuineness, concreteness, confrontation, potency, self-disclosure,
immediacy and self-actualization. Each of these variables may be
assessed in the individuals concerned on a 5 point scale, which
would specify the level of functioning of both. Human functioning
in terms of the 9 variables and on level 3 and above is called
helpful functioning viz. it stimulates growth in the person.
Below level 3 the individual is supposed to be functioning at
a harmful level viz. he does not stimulate growth in the other
person. These are the common core of conditions conducive to
facilitative human experiences and are shared by all effective
interpersonal processes including those between parents and
children.

A survey of research in psychology sponsored by the
Indian Council of Social Sciences Research, New Delhi, states
that "the areas of personality and adjustment have been used by
investigators overlappingly. Parent-child relations which have
been extensively investigated in the U.S.A. has received very
little attention from Indian research workers. Sustained and
organized research on adolescents has been conspicuous by its
absence."

Most of the studies made in the U.S.A. and in Europe
are not directly related to the present study. They are
mainly studies on empathy and person perception made by

counselling and social psychologists. Others are on Parent-child relations and these investigate the influence of specific parental attitudes on child behaviour and personality. A few have been made on dogmatism as it influences parent-child relationships and personality in general. A study made by H.S. Eswara of Mysore University on family communication is the one that comes closest to the topic under consideration but the research techniques and methodology used in this study are specifically taken from the field of social psychology.

The present study is innovative in that it brings together the research experience from three fields of psychology, viz. counselling, developmental and social psychology. Inter-personal communication in the family is a subject that combines theoretical considerations and research techniques from varied branches of psychology and even from other disciplines. As such there is much scope in this topic for inter-disciplinary research. The human relations model provided by psychologists like Carl Rogers and Robert Carkhuff and other counselling psychologists have been applied to situations in the fields of social psychology, sociology and management. The present investigation, though not strictly speaking an interdisciplinary study, nevertheless demonstrates the application of research findings and techniques from one branch of psychology, that is, counselling, to studies made in another branch of psychology, that is, parent-child relations.

<u>Problem</u> <u>and</u> <u>Procedure</u> :   Interpersonal communication between parent and child is of paramount significance to help the growing child attain maturity.   Models of counselling have been successfully used to assess and improve interpersonal functioning not only between counsellor and client but also between parent and child, and teacher and pupil.   Carkhuff's model, in order to be successfully used would have to be adapted to Indian subjects and to the cultural conditions in this country.   Having this purpose in mind, the present investigator ventured to make a study which would clarify the existing pattern of interpersonal communication between parents and teenagers in 4 communities of Greater Bombay and which would also indicate whether interpersonal communication was related to the adjustment of adolescents.

The problem of the present investigation may therefore be stated as follows :   "To study the pattern of interpersonal communication between parents and adolescents in 4 communities of Greater Bombay, and to find the degree to which communication is related to the total adjustment of adolescents."

The major variables of the study were :
Level of communication of parents, total adjustment of adolescents, sex and community of parents and of adolescents.

In order that the results of the study might be further validated, three other mediating variables have also been taken into consideration.   These three variables are connected with interpersonal communication and influence it considerably.   They are :

Dogmatism or open-mindedness vs.close-mindedness of parents ;
family atmosphere and family adjustment as perceived by
adolescents.

The specific objectives of the study may be
summarised as follows :-

1) To study the relationship between level of communication
of parents and total adjustment of adolescents.

2) To study sex differences in the level of communication
of parents and total adjustment of adolescents.

3) To study community differences in level of
communication of parents and total adjustment of
adolescents.

4) To study the relationship between level of
communication and dogmatism of parents.

5) To study the relationship between level of
communication of parents and family atmosphere and
family adjustment as perceived by adolescents.

6) To study sex and community differences in dogmatism
of parents, family atmosphere and family adjustment
as perceived by adolescents.

The variables that were controlled were : Age of
adolescents and the socio-economic level of the families.
Only adolescents between the age of 15 and 17 years were taken
for the study. The study was restricted to the average middle

class family. Thus, socio-economic status which can and does influence interpersonal communication because of occupation, education and social status, is held constant.

With these objectives in mind, the following hypotheses were drawn up :-

1) There is a significant relationship between level of communication of father and mother and total adjustment of adolescents.

2) There is a significant relationship between level of communication of father and mother and family atmosphere as perceived by adolescents.

3) There is a significant relationship between level of communication of father and mother and family adjustment as perceived by adolescents.

4) There is a significant relationship between level of communication and dogmatism of father and mother.

5) There are significant sex and community differences in total adjustment of adolescents.

6) There are significant sex and community differences in the level of communication of father and mother.

7) There are significant sex and community differences in Dogmatism of father and mother.

8) There are significant sex and community differences in family atmosphere and family adjustment as perceived by adolescents.

<u>Tools Used</u> :   Data was collected both from parents and adolescents by using the Questionnaire Method.   The Adolescents' Questionnaire had 4 parts :-

1)   The Family Atmosphere Scale adapted from Morrow and Wilson.

2)   4 Open-ended questions on the family.

3)   Youth Adjustment Analyzer by Dr. (Miss) Mehroo Bengalee.

4)   The Family Adjustment Inventory by Dr. A.S. Patel.

<u>Sample</u> :   The sample consisted of 400 adolescents - boys and girls and their 800 parents drawn from 4 communities of Bombay city - Christian, Hindu, Zoroastrian and Muslim.   Each community was represented by 50 boys and 50 girls.   The adolescents were drawn from 9 schools spread over North, Central and South Bombay and their parents were contacted personally by the investigator in their homes.   In certain cases, where adolescents of certain communities were not available in sufficient numbers, families were directly contacted in neighborhoods where such groups lived.

<u>Procedure for Data collection</u> :   The adolescents were contacted through the Principals of schools.   They were between 15 and 17 years of age, whose parents knew English.   The Questionnaire was administered to them in the school in groups of 25 to 30. On an average they took about $1\frac{1}{2}$ hour to complete it.

The parents were reached through the adolescents and with the consent of the school principals.   They were contacted

personally in their homes and were briefed about the study so as to enlist their cooperation in answering the Questionnaire. However, they were not expected to answer it immediately. A stamped envelope was left behind requesting them to post the Answer Sheets to the investigator within 2 days.

<u>Procedure</u> <u>for</u> <u>Collective</u> <u>Analysis</u> <u>of</u> <u>Data</u> : The Answer Sheets of both Adolescents and Parents were scored and the data was analysed statistically using the following methods :-

    a)   Biserial correlations

    b)   Product moment correlation

    c)   Analysis of Variance

    d)   Tests of Significance (Chi-Square, t-test)

    e)   Simple percentages and averages.

<u>Results</u> : The study yielded some very interesting results. Most of them are supported by other research done previously in parent-child relationships. Some are new and enlightening and point the way to fresh applications in this field. The results may be summarised as follows :-

    1)   A positive and significant correlation was found between level of communication of father and mother and total adjustment of adolescents.

    2)   A positive and significant correlation was found between level of communication of father and mother and family atmosphere and family adjustment as perceived by adolescents.

3)   A positive and significant correlation was found
     between family atmosphere and family adjustment as
     perceived by adolescents.

4)   A positive and significant correlation was found
     between level of communication of father and mother
     and dogmatism of father and mother.

5)   No significant sex differences were found in any of
     the variables studied.

6)   Significant community differences were found in level
     of communication of father and mother, dogmatism of
     father and mother, total adjustment of adolescents,
     family atmosphere as perceived by adolescents.

Essentially our concern in this type of research is :
To what extent can we generalize findings when the group
studied is not representative of the larger population that we
want to understand ?   The problem in such cases is a difficult
one and the answer depends on what one is trying to study and
what methods are being used.

Paul Mussen (1960) clarifies this point and gives some
valuable reflections on the matter. "A distinction has sometimes
been made between what might be called statistical generalisation
and theoretical generalisation (Jahoda, Deutsch & Cook, 1951 ;
Cartwright, 1953). If one is interested in obtaining information
about populations, such as how many parents spank their children
or class differences in the use of punitive discipline,

statistical generalisation is paramount. In such studies,
representativeness of sample is crucial, for the data has no
meaning beyond the population the sample represents. However,
when one is studying relationships between variables as for
example between parental punitiveness and child aggression, the
question of theoretical generalization arises. Here the
findings are less tied to the representativeness of the sample
but the sample becomes relevant in another way .....
Representative samples are needed for statistical general-
isations and to supplement and test the limitations of theoretical
generalisations, but smaller and less adequate samples can be
used to test and generate theories and to study ongoing
processes. The ideal situation will exist when the two kinds
of studies are carried out in coordination so that the limits
of our theoretical generalisations can be checked statistically".

The results obtained in the present study, are
therefore more of a theoretical generalization. The correlates
of level of communication of parents found in the sample of
800 parents and 400 adolescents can be generalised to other
such middle class families in Bombay. They are highly
significant because they support the applicability of Carkhuff's
model of interpersonal relationships to Indian subjects and they
support above all, theoretical assumptions as well as research
evidence on the relationship that exists between parental
communication and child adjustment.

Limitations of the Study

1) The study was limited to the middle class family since introduction of the social class variable would make it very complex and also time consuming. However, the study would have been more interesting and richer if the 3 social classes could have been compared as regards the pattern of interpersonal communication between parents and adolescents.

2) The Scale for measuring the level of communication of parents consisted of Stimulus Statements, each of which had 4 possible responses. The scale was therefore structured. The Assessment of the level of communication of parents would have been more indicative of the communication pattern if the responses had been open-ended and even supplemented by taped excerpts of actual conversations between parents and their children. As mentioned before, open-ended responses were not used because of the difficulty of getting experts to rate such a large number of Questionnaires. The use of the tape-recorder in our middle class families would make the subjects very self-conscious and bias the information gathered. Nevertheless, the use of these techniques in a research of this type is highly desirable and leaves much scope for future research workers who may wish to go deeper into the area of interpersonal communication.

Suggestions for further study

-1) Similar studies may be carried out on the upper' and lower socio-economic classes as well as in rural areas to get a comparative view of the pattern of interpersonal communication between parents and adolescents.

2) The present investigation has attempted to give an over-all view of the communication pattern in 4 communities - Christian, Hindu, Zoroastrian and Muslim. Since community differences stood out so strongly in the pattern of interpersonal communication, a study in-depth of each of these communities would be able to fathom the factors that determine these differences in parents as well as in adolescents.

Conclusion :

"Ours is a society where gaps of all kinds exist, but if we dared bridge them, they'd be missed .....

A high school senior.

At the root of this problem of the generation gap, whether it is new today or whether it goes back 2500 years, is the difficulty experienced by both generations in communicating with each other. To communicate means "..... to share or impart, to signal or tell somebody about some feelings or knowledge" (Dubbe, 1965). But the act of communication involves both a sender and a receiver with something of common interest

flowing between the two, and until the recipient has received
and acknowledged the message of another individual, the act of
communication is not really considered to be complete.

Communication is especially important within the
family. "It is vital to basic human relationships in the one
social living unit which does most to shape individual character.
If wholesome, practical, affectionate, and secure relationships
are worthy to be generated and sustained, then easy flow of
thoughts and feelings is imperative." (Dubbe, 1965) Some
problems in communication are probably inevitable for most young
people. According to a study by Dubbe (1965), 95 % of all young
people do experience some difficulty when trying to bridge the
generation gap at some time, in regard to certain subjects, and
to some degree. When this situation becomes severe, it may
have far-reaching consequences on the adolescent's emotional
and social adjustment.

Students in this study made such typical statements as :

"I think parents should realize that this is a new
generation, and thy can't expect us to conform to- all the old
standards. Things that were not acceptable years ago are now
considered everyday things ....."

"I think the generation/is as it should be, may be
a little to the extreme, though. Many things adults say are
right, and many things the kids say are right. But neither
would ever admit to being wrong. I think that is the whole
problem."

" I think the trouble occurs when the teenager doesn't think of his mother and father as his friends as well as his parents, friends that want to help you and know more about you."

" To me, there isn't much of a communication gap between parents and their children. I get along fine with my folks (most of the time)."

" I just think that the gap is part of growing up."

Johnson (1961) hypothesized that although there will always be some gap, this problem has probably become a more frequent complaint during the past fifty years. With social changes occurring so rapidly, it has perhaps been inevitable that the generations would grow apart more rapidly as well. McLuhan (1964) feels that today's youth are different from those of the past. He believes that this generation, the first to be reared in the electronic age, is different because the medium of television controls their environment. Pacella (1967) has suggested ".... that television has tended to induce an alienation of family members from each other, since intrafamily communication has been replaced by the one way communication with television."

Whereas a few generations ago, parents expected unquestioning obedience from their children, today's parents in America tend to be more permissive, allowing their children to express their own points of view much more freely, a situation that sometimes backfires since young people's attitudes can seem quite alien and unacceptable to many of the older generation.

The gulf between the generations may also be due in part to shifts in customs and in part to differences in temperament between the generations, but it is basically typical of human nature. If there were no differences between a 15 year old and a 35 year old, it would be a sad commentary on the lack of individual growth and healthy ferment in our society. However, this natural conflict may be more intense today as a result of the speeded-up pace of change ; according to Neisser (1967) the amount of social, scientific, and technological innovation that once occurred over an interval of two or three decades now takes place in one.

It is only natural that as younger members of the family emerge into adolescence, there will be some difficulty in communication between the two generations. Young people will tend to withold information about their personal activities, they will be resentful of parents and other adults who try to pry this information loose from them, and they will become much more critical of adults in general. As a result of this often abrupt withdrawal, parents may respond by more prying or by withdrawing themselves, both responses resulting in a widening of the gap between the adults and youth. (Bienvenu, 1967)

How can adults and adolescents bridge the gap existing between them ? According to Johnson (1961), two prerequisites must exist before communication can effectively take place.

First, the adult and the adolescent must each be willing to give his attention to the other. Especially important is the parent's willingness to listen to his son or daughter at the moment he or she wants to talk. A second prerequisite for communication is the presence of mutually understood assumptions. The parents assume that they are responsible for the adolescent, love him, and believe what they do for him is in his own best interests. The adolescent assumes that he is an individual as important as others, who is about to become an adult with the right to begin having adult experiences. He believes he knows quite a lot and has difficult and important problems. Both generations must be able to understand these assumptions and willingly accept them, or satisfying communication between the two is likely to be rare indeed.

Specifically, parents, teachers, and other adults will need to ask themselves what they as individuals can do to keep open the communication links and to prevent the channels between the generations from becoming clogged. It is important for parents to begin as early as possible to talk openly with their children, to answer their questions fully and honestly, admitting when they do not know the answers. Such communication also involves listening with genuine interest and regard to what their young people have to say.

Next, it is important to avoid judging this restless generation solely by its appearance and/or the deeds of many by the misdeeds of a few. Young people also need more

confidence and trust from adults. Unfortunately, many adults
have overgeneralized about today's adolescents and regarded
them as a generation of troublemakers, who will inevitably become
delinquents unless adults get tough with them (Duvall, 1962).
If adults demonstrate a trust and a belief in young people,
they are likely to develop a trust and a belief in themselves,
thereby moving toward independence and maturity. Parents and
other adults who constantly pry into their offspring's
activities and behaviour are quite likely to stir up resentment
and cause static to occur in the communication lines.

Mothers and fathers, in turn, must acquire the trust
and confidence of their young people. Parents often make a
mistake when they fail to keep the secrets of their children
or tell tales about them which they regard as cute or funny,
for it is important to the adolescents' growing sense of self
that he have his privacy respected. Adolescents should not
feel that they are being compared to someone else. Parents
should avoid making comparisons between siblings and should
abstain from the temptation of trying to mold them into what
they think they should be. Perceptive, understanding adults
will assume the role of observant bystanders, ready to come
forward when help is needed, demonstrating interest in the
younger generation and its problems but being sparing with
advice. Even more important, the older generation should be
able to withdraw a certain distance when youths indicate that
they want to be on their own.

It is productive for family members to have an
opportunity to express themselves to each other. Family councils
or meetings can often promote such communication. By verbalizing
their feelings, ideas, and opinions, adolescents may influence
the feelings and beliefs of others in the family constellation.
And if young people are in turn exposed to their parents'
knowledge and experience, they are likely to develop a better
perspective on adulthood and its responsibilities and potentials.
If parents, educators, and other adults were willing to change
some of their own rigid, inflexible policies and traditions
toward youthful assertion of independence and individuality,
communication problems between the two generations might be
eased. As long as the older generation, however, continues to
insist that its standards are to remain sacred and unbroken,
then many adolescents will continue to violate them (Cross, 1967).

The present study which brought the investigator into
personal contact with more than 500 families in Bombay, has
been a unique and memorable experience. It was heart-warming
to touch that area of family life that involves the core of
the family members, viz. parent-child relationships.

"Conflicts between parents and teenagers", "Generation
gap", "Breakdown of communication" and such other statements
are common cliches applied to parents and adolescents.

However, there is more to the relationship than is
apparent in such cliches. Although all human relationships

are unique, those existing between parents and children create
a dynamic system. "The intimacy and intensity of contact and
the everyday interaction and interchange exist in an emotionally
charged atmosphere which is very much influenced by culture."
(Medinnus & Johnson). The emotional ties in the closely-knit
Indian family are not easily severed even in the face of conflicts
and misunderstandings. Inspite of the negative things mentioned
about parents by adolescents and about adolescents by their
parents, the overall feeling that was manifested in the course
of the present study, was a strongly positive one.

The following statements made by some adolescents
in the Questionnaire, regarding their parents and family,
are simple and touching in their spontaneity and sincerity.

" My home is a place of love, shelter and security."

" My home and family are the best things in my life.
Staying at home and living with family members gives me great
comfort and satisfaction."

" Many a time my father does not understand me, but
he tries and most of the time he succeeds."

Finally the strong emotional attachment to the family
in our Indian culture, could not be better expressed than in
the following realistic remark of a teenager :

" I would like to change my house, but I wish my family
would remain the same."

Undoubtedly, the home atmosphere of the typical average middle class family of Bombay has not yet lost its warmth, love and supportiveness. Although the communication pattern shows a larger percentage of harmful parents as compared with helpful parents, nevertheless the potential for helpful communication seems great, considering the general results of the study. Training programmes in interpersonal communication for parents and adolescents using Carkhuff's model seems very promising.

These are indeed difficult and complex times, but if there is one single word that would appear most important to stress to both parents and adolescents, it is communication. It is significant that among the intergenerational criticisms often heard, adults mention a "lack of dialogue with elders," while adolescents complain that "they won't listen to us." Despite the admittedly difficult problems posed by an increasingly complex, fragmented, rapidly changing world, the channels of communication must be kept open, or in some cases re-opened, between parents and their adolescent sons and daughters. For the fact is that they need each other, now as much as ever. The view of some social observers that parents and other adults have become irrelevant or even barriers to the psychological and social development of adolescents particularly young adolescents, may have a certain romantic appeal, but it is not substantiated by the facts.

In the world of tomorrow, adolescents will have to grow beyond the models their parents can provide, but they still need appropriate parental models to build on, and they need their parents' love and active concern. By the same token, parents need their children, not only for the greater meaning these young people can lend to existence, but also for the very real contribution they can make to the parents' own continuing development and their flexibility in understanding and coping with the inevitabilities of change. While adolescents clearly do not have as many answers to the problems of a troubled society as many of the more articulate among them think they do, they are often far more sensitive than adults to the relevant questions. By acknowledging the legitimacy of these questions, by struggling through the alchemy of love, to understand the unique needs, problems and concerns of today's adolescents, parents and other adults may gain a better understanding of their own world and hopefully even of themselves.

The words of Kahlil Gibran, quoted below, beautifully express this insight that parents need to have into their own children and into themselves and they serve as a fitting conclusion to this thesis.

"Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of Life's

longing for itself.

They come through you but not from you

And though they are with you yet they belong

not to you.

You may give them your love but not your thoughts

For they have their own thoughts.

You may house their bodies but not their souls

For their souls dwell in the house of to-morrow,

which you cannot visit, not even in your dream.

You may strive to be like them, but seek not

to make them like you.

For life goes not backward nor tarries with

yesterday."

("The Prophet").