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THE PREDICTION OF CHILDREN'S SEXUAL ATTITUDES AND KNOWLEDGE FROM PARENTAL ATTITUDES: A CROSS CULTURAL STUDY

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To my husband and my children

for their understanding and encouragement

throughout my studies.

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I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work and that I have not submitted it for a Master of Arts degree to any other University.

J. Rostowsky

ABSTRACT

Research into sexuality has not focused strongly on adolescents between the ages of twelve and eighteen years. This is a critical stage of emotional, social and intellectual development and the home is one of the most influential factors in the sex education of children. Therefore, within a social learning framework, the present study sought to ascertain which parental attitudes and child-rearing practices predict differing sexual attitudes and sexual knowledge in children. A cross-cultural research design was employed, and 73 White and 80 Coloured families with a total of 299 adolescent children of both sexes, aged between thirteen and eighteen years, participated. A significant departure from previous research was that both fathers' and mothers' attitudes were measured and relationships to their own children's sex knowledge and attitudes were assessed. In both cultural groups, mothers' and fathers' attitudes towards their sons and daughters were assessed separately.

From multiple regression analyses the data revealed significant relationships between parental child-rearing styles and children's sex knowledge, psychological conservatism and sexual attitudes, but of differing size and direction in the two cultural groups. Coloured parents' child-rearing styles and social attitudes are more strongly related to their children's attitudes than are White parents' attitudes. In particular, the attitudes of Coloured mothers' and their children's attitudes show wide-ranging relationships. Coloured parents appear to structure relationships in terms of discipline and authority more than do the White group.

In both cultural groups mothers' attitudes show a stronger relationship to their children's sex attitudes and knowledge, emphasising the mothers' responsibility for the sexual socialisation of children of both

sexes.

The rejecting style of mothers' correlates with their children's attitudes in the same way in both cultural groups and with both sexes. This is in contrast to the disciplinarian, indulgent and protective child-rearing styles, where the relationships with children's attitudes appear to be more culture-specific.

The following findings are applicable to both cultural groups. Mothers' rejecting style is related to reduced restrictiveness and lower conservatism. Parental indulgence correlates with lower psychological conservatism and lower teenage sexual restrictiveness. Parental discipline correlates with increased psychological conservatism and sexual restrictiveness in children. Limited correlations were apparent between parents' psychological conservatism factors and those of their children, indicating a discontinuity in values between parents and their children.

Suggestions were made for further research in this area.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been evidence of a growing awareness that the process of the acquisition of one's social sex role and the quality of that sexuality have profound implications for the individual and form major aspects of personality (Calderone, 1976; Katz, 1979). Sexuality designates the end result of the process of sexualisation (Calderone, 1976). It describes the total person as male or female and includes all sex-related thoughts, feelings, fantasies, self-images, information, experiences, attitudes and behaviour. The individual's sex role, perhaps more than any other social role, directs much "behaviour, emotional reaction, cognitive functioning and covert attitudes and general psychological and social adjustment" (Mussen, 1969, p.708).

Because of this broad conception of sexual attitudes and their pervasiveness in the cognitive, emotional and social development of the individual, an investigation into some of the sources of these attitudes is important.

Psycho-Social Sources of Sexuality

Psychological and sociological theory and empirical evidence support the view that behaviour patterns, values and attitudes are transmitted primarily through the parent-child relationship (Bandura, 1969, 1977; Freud, 1927; Johnson, 1963; Hetherington, 1967, 1975; Hoffmann, 1977; Hurlock, 1975; Mischel, 1970).

The main socialising agents in infancy, in childhood and to some extent into adolescence are the parents (McKinney, Fitzgerald & Strommer, 1977; Spence & Helmreich, 1978). The home is one of the most influential of all institutions in the sex education of children (Calderone, 1976; Fox & Inazu, 1980; Jacobson, 1976; Kilander, 1970; Schofield, 1967). Sex education does not consist only of direct instruction. Avoidance, repression,

suppression, shock, parents' attitudes to their own and their children's bodies and bodily functions are all forms of sex education, as are attitudes to masculinity and femininity and the manifestations of these roles. The mechanisms for the development of sexuality reside in the patterns of non-sexual interaction of parents and children (Gagnon & Simon, 1973; Money & Ehrhardt, 1972).

From clinical reports it is postulated that many sexual and relationship problems are due to distorted attitudes and inadequate sexual information (Masters & Johnson, 1970, 1976; Friday, 1977). Such attitudes are important as they may affect adjustment in teenage, marriage and family relationships.

This dissertation examines sexual attitudes at the period of adolescence, for reasons which will be set out later. However, since it has been established that education in sexuality is a continuous process commencing at birth, some brief consideration will be given to sex-role learning during childhood. Freud has influenced our thinking greatly in the area of childhood sexuality. Freud (1927, 1945) emphasised the importance of this period in the emergence of sexuality and he also developed the concept of identification. He defined it as the process which "endeavours to mould a person's ego after the fashion of one that has been taken as a model" (Freud, 1927, p.62). Social Learning theory, which provides a framework for the present study, and arising from non-psychoanalytic traditions, takes the view that, through a process of modelling or internalisation, children tend to acquire the characteristics of their parents. In Social Learning approaches identification does not indicate a supposed internal state or process hypothesised to explain the occurrence of the child's modelling behaviour; it is rather an alternate label for modelling or for parent/child likenesses (Bandura, 1969, 1974, 1977). This theory holds that the factors which are central

to sex-typing and sex-role development are differential rewards and punishments, modelling, generalisation and observational learning. Sex-role learning is considered to be a continuous process occurring throughout childhood and adolescence (Stein 1976).

In accordance with previous research using a Social Learning perspective, (Heilbrun, 1965; Bandura, 1969; Bowerman & Bahr, 1973; McDonald, 1977, 1980) identification is defined as the modelling in thought, feeling or action after another person. Parental identification is seen as a specific case of identification with the modelling agent being the father and/or mother.

The principal elements which have been studied in relation to modelling are :

- those concerning the motives for modelling. These motives may be desire for rewards or the achievement of skills or status of the model;
- what sort of subject/model similarities are acquired by identification;
- which are the characteristics of the model that determine the strength of identification.

These areas have been studied in relation to children of all ages up to and including late adolescence.

Empirical studies have shown that observational learning depends on characteristics or attributes of the model, such as nurturance or rewarding power. Fathers who are warm and powerful have sons who identify with them and display high masculinity, even though their own fathers may not be highly masculine (McDonald, 1977, 1980; Mischel & Grusec, 1966; Mussen & Distler, 1960; Mussen & Rutherford, 1963). Another factor that has been shown to influence observational learning is similarity between observer and model. People attend more closely to same-sex models

(Hetherington & Franke, 1967). It has been shown that children are more frequently rewarded for watching and imitating same-sex models than cross-sex models. Boys are highly motivated to imitate a masculine figure rather than a feminine one (Lynn, 1974).

Many of these findings have been questioned in more recent research (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974). In an exhaustive review of studies on sex-role learning and modelling, these authors conclude that children have not always been shown to resemble the same-sex parent in behaviour. When offered the opportunity to imitate either a male or female model, they do not typically select a same-sex model; their choices appear to be fairly random. It becomes necessary, therefore, to examine alternative sources for the explanation of motivation for identification. A model currently gaining influence is the social power theory of identification. This model assumes that the controller of resources in the family, such as financial power, decision-making ability, authority, knowledge or skills and nurturance, is the main source of imitative behaviour (Bahr, Bowerman & Gecas, 1974; Bandura, 1969, 1974, 1977; McDonald, 1977, 1980; Smith, 1970).

In the area of identification and sex-role learning the results are confusing and contradictory, and the issue regarding the extent of and motivation for identification with same and opposite-sex parents clearly requires further elucidation. In addition, the vast majority of studies in this area have been methodologically flawed. The father/child, mother/child relationship and children's sex-role development were often assessed from children's reports of parents' behaviour (Armentrout & Burger, 1972; Heilbrun, 1965, 1976; McDonald, 1977, 1980; Mussen & Distler, 1960; Sears, 1970). Further, this assessment was frequently based on children's retrospective recall. This method is suspect because children may not be able to separate mothers' and fathers' behaviour

sufficiently clearly, as is evident from the exceptionally high correlations between mothers' and fathers' power variables (McDonald, 1977, 1980). In addition it has been demonstrated that the child's perception of parental attitudes and behaviour differs from parents' own reports (LoPiccolo, 1973; Reiss, 1967; Wilson, 1973). In other studies on identification, information about the father and the children was inferred from maternal reports (Hetherington, 1965; Sears, 1970, 1972). This method is clearly deficient, since the mother's assessment of her husband's or children's behaviour is not necessarily objective or her reporting accurate. Clearly there is no substitute for personal reporting of attitudes or more appropriately observation of behaviour. The present study overcomes the deficiencies of previous studies in having both father and mother report their own attitudes and child-rearing behaviours in the present, and not retrospectively.

The Roles of Mother and Father in Child-Rearing

Psychological literature has concentrated on the mother's role in child-rearing, while the father has remained a somewhat anonymous figure (Biller, 1971; Nash, 1965; Pilling & Pringle, 1978; Walters & Stinnett, 1971). Some reasons for the neglect of the father have been his relative unavailability to investigators, and the stress on infancy as a crucial period in development, thus accentuating the mother's role in child-rearing. Perhaps, and this is most important, the mother's role is institutionalised, whereas the father's role has been less well-defined (Rogers, 1969). Fein (1978) delineates three historical conceptualisations of fathering: the traditional, aloof and distant father; the modern perspective, where the father is concerned with contact with the child and its effect on sex-role identity and cognitive development. Finally, the emergent perspective, suggesting that men have the capacity to be

effective nurturers of children (Fein, 1978). In line with this emergent perspective, this study examines the assumption that the father plays a role equal to that of the mother during the adolescent period.

Research shows that the impact that fathers have on their sons differs from that which they have on their daughters, and similarly with mothers (Block, 1976, 1979; Harrington, Block & Block, 1975; Lamb & Baumrind, 1978; Margolin & Patterson, 1975). Sex-differentiated child-rearing patterns are the norm. Both mothers and fathers are more willing to tolerate aggression, less tolerant of affect expression and more likely to use firm, strict and physical punishment with sons. Fathers emphasise the importance of personal responsibility and independence for sons (Block, 1979). Greater supervision and restrictiveness of daughters than of sons was reported by both parents, but particularly by mothers (Block, 1979). Research also indicates that paternal warmth and involvement are associated with the general facilitation of interpersonal heterosexual and marital adjustment among daughters (Biller, 1976; Fish & Biller, 1973; Fisher, 1973). Further, it is reported that overt marital hostility shows significant correlations with behaviour problems of boys, but is not significantly correlated with problems in girls (Emery & O'Leary, 1979; Porter & O'Leary, 1980). It is hypothesised that fathers display less angry behaviour towards their spouses in their daughters' presence, or that girls have superior ways of coping with the stress of marital discord (Porter & O'Leary, 1980).

Independence is fostered in girls when their parents are more strict and less nurturant than average (Block, 1971; Lamb & Baumrind, 1978; Radin, 1976). Block (1973) and Lynn (1974) contend that the father is a more crucial force than is the mother in shaping the sex-typing of the child, both male and female. McDonald (1977, 1980) supports this view with the findings that relationships are generally stronger for fathers

than for mothers with adolescents of both sexes. However, this research was based on college students' perception of parental power. Clearly, there is a need for further investigation of parental effects, based on mothers' and fathers' own reporting of child-rearing practises and attitudes. The present study may demonstrate which child-rearing styles are the most rewarding ones in terms of being the stronger source of identification for adolescents across sexes.

Child-Rearing Attitudes

Child-rearing refers to all the interactions between parents and their children, whether deliberate or not. These interactions include the parents' expressions of attitudes, values, interests and beliefs as well as their caretaking behaviour.

Within the social learning framework, the kinds of child-training experienced by an individual determine the kind of personality that is developed. People with different personalities are likely to have varying attitudes (Triandis, 1971). The sort of control which parents exert has been shown to relate significantly to the adolescent's personality development and social growth (McKinney et al, 1977).

Some of the major dimensions of child-rearing practices on which research has been centred are: disciplinarian, rejecting, protective and indulgent styles (Pumroy, 1966). The present research will examine interaction along these dimensions.

Disciplinarian parents have been shown to represent the [illegible]e of the continuum from over-indulgent parents. Disciplinarian attitudes may be associated with healthy adjustment in children (Gildea, Glidewell & Kantor, 1961), particularly if the discipline is authoritative. However, the usual effect of autocratic control (strongly disciplinarian) is to produce a combination of rebellion or dependency (Baumrind, 1971;

Balswick & Macrides, 1975) according to the child's initially passive or strong personality. Authoritarian control with strong physical punishment has been correlated with the development of strong militarism in sons, particularly when mothers, more than fathers, enforce discipline (Mantell, 1974). Children may become hostile to their parents, often deeply resenting their control and domination and may less often identify with them. When these children do succeed in challenging parental authority, they may become rebellious, sometimes overtly aggressive and hostile, display more behaviour problems and manifest emotional problems (Balswick & Macrides, 1975; Weiner, 1970; Hetherington, Stowie & Ridberg, 1971). The effect that this style has on the adolescent may vary with the sex of the child. Disciplinary techniques which foster self-reliance seem to facilitate the emergence of assertive, independent behaviour in girls (Kelly & Worrell, 1976). These are qualities which could be termed 'masculine' and are conducive to psychological health (Crandall, 1972; Kelly & Worrell, 1976).

A protective child-rearing style tends to restrict the child from exposure to risks. Since much of the socialisation process involves risk-taking of some sort, a parental attitude of over-protection may impede the child from gaining a measure of his/her competence (Hurlock, 1975). This style of parent may produce children who are passive and dependent - 'feminine' type behaviours, which may be detrimental to their well-being (Rebecca, Hefner & Olechansky, 1976). Barling (1978) found that a protective child-rearing style from the mother was associated with increased externality of locus of control. This may mean stricter adherence to external rules and controls and thus a more conservative personality type in children. The protective parent would be emotionally involved with the child (Baumrind, 1971).

The rejecting parent displays a style of rearing that has been

identified as one of the most detrimental to the well-being of the child (Hetherington et al, 1971). It is also consistent and stable over time (Brody, 1969; Gildea et al, 1961), thereby having a profound effect on children. Maternal attitudes of rejection have been associated with lack of self-confidence, dependence and sexual anxiety among sons and a tendency to withdraw from social situations, thus affecting heterosexual adjustment (Winder & Rau, 1962). The rejecting parent would evidence emotional detachment (Baumrind, 1971) and this may impede their children from being able to model on their parents. Therefore, they may be impeded from socialising adequately. Since alternative models will have to be sought, these youngsters may be extremely vulnerable to outside models who may be more accepting of them. To these children the values of the peer group might be particularly salient and within these families the 'generation gap' might be particularly marked.

Indulgent parents are by definition high on warmth, and involvement with their children and high on permissiveness (Baumrind, 1971). Parental over-indulgence and over-solicitude lead to inadequately socialised, spoiled, pampered adolescents, who will be ill-prepared to accept frustration or responsibility or show proper regard for others (Rice, 1978). They become self-centred and domineering. Without set limits on their behaviour, they may become insecure, disoriented and unsure (Role, 1971). These personality characteristics might affect sexual attitudes particularly, since behaviour in other spheres is not separable from sexual behaviour.

A great deal of empirical evidence is available in regard to the effect of various child-rearing patterns on the young child and the adolescent. However, very little is related directly to adolescent sexual attitudes and knowledge. The major portion of the available research is predictive of general behavioural dispositions, such as rebelliousness

(Balswick & Macrides, 1975), general acting out (McCord & McCord, 1964); and responsibility and autonomy (Elder, 1968; Kandel & Lesser, 1969). Since the adolescent is clearly involved in various forms of sexual behaviour and research shows many demands for abortions in adolescence, illegitimate births and teenage marriages and divorces (Dryfoos, 1975; Phipps-Yonas, 1980; Reichelt, 1979), the antecedent interaction within the family may be of importance. Twelve million of the twenty nine million Americans, aged 13-19, have experienced sexual intercourse (seven million boys and five million girls). Teenagers in America account for 46% of out-of-wedlock births and 31% of abortions (Reichelt, 1979).

One of the most important influences upon the adolescent is the emotional climate of the family (Hurlock, 1975; Rice, 1978). Conflict between parents has a detrimental effect on children (Jacob, 1975; Porter & O'Leary, 1980; White, 1972). This is particularly so when there is inter-parental disagreement on child-rearing (Grant & Kantor, 1961; Balswick & Macrides, 1975; Block, 1972). This leads to conflicting expectations of the adolescent, and to inconsistent reinforcement. Scheck (1973) reports that this situation leads to adolescents being more externally than internally oriented in their behaviour.

For this reason, this study assesses the child-rearing styles of both the mother and the father. In addition, when paternal and maternal views of child-rearing are compared, the resulting data offer much richer insights into family life (Bartz & Levin, 1978).

The Importance of Studying the Adolescent

The period of adolescence commences with the advent of puberty. The physical changes which occur in young people are variable in timing and in quality, but it is at this time that parents, peers and society in general redefine the adolescent in sexual terms to a significant degree.

Sex roles and heterosexual relationships become highly salient. The sex-role identity that was formulated during childhood undergoes a broadening in conceptualisation during adolescence (Gagnon, 1973; Lamb, Owen & Chase-Lansdale, 1979; Newman & Newman, 1979).

Research into sexuality has focused primarily on adults or college students (Christensen & Gregg, 1970; Hall & Wagner, 1972; Kinsey, 1953; Reiss, 1967; Spanier, 1975; Zey-Ferrell, Tolone & Walsh, 1978), or on sex-role learning and identification of preadolescent children (Biller, 1971; Hetherington & Franke, 1965; Lynn, 1974, 1976). At present the group we know least about is the high school population (ages 12-18), despite the fact that this is a critical stage of social, intellectual and emotional development. The majority of research within this section of the population has examined sexual attitudes and behaviour (Kantner & Zelnick, 1972; Hass, 1979; Offer, 1971; Sorenson, 1973) without relating these attitudes or behaviours to parental attitudes. Those studies which do take cognisance of parental attitudes have assessed mothers' attitudes only (Inazu & Fox, 1980; Jessor & Jessor, 1974) and/or daughters' attitudes only (Hunt, 1974; Inazu & Fox, 1980), or have relied on children's reports of perceived parental attitudes and behaviour (Block, 1973; LoPiccolo, 1973; McDonald, 1977, 1980). The present study will seek to correct some of the above deficiencies by correlating measures of male and female adolescent attitudes with those of their own mothers and fathers.

From puberty onwards, the adolescent will participate in dating, courting, petting, "going steady", masturbation and sexual intercourse. In order to develop towards mature sexuality, the adolescent must acquire knowledge about sex and sexual behaviour. The most common sources of sexual information have been found to be peers, parents, schools, books and siblings, although not necessarily in that order (Hurlock, 1975;

Shipman,1968; Thornburg, 1975). The groups studied in the present research might present an interesting picture in this regard, since until very recently no sex education was given in schools in South Africa. During the past few years other provinces in this country have introduced family life education programmes, but the view of the Transvaal Education Department is that the home is the rightful domain for the sexual education of children and it has no place in the school programme. Further, there is widespread censorship of visual and written material on sex and sexuality in South Africa, even that of a scientific and teaching nature.

Research has shown that parents often do not give adolescents adequate information (Shipman, 1968; Thornburg, 1975). In fact, only the mother/daughter relationship is at all adequate in this regard (Matteson, 1975). This is very often occasioned by the fact that the mother has to prepare her daughter for menarche. After the start of puberty many mothers offer little additional information (Thornburg, 1975; Welbourne, 1978). The higher the mothers' educational level, the more often she is a source of information (Welbourne, 1978). The more accepting mothers' attitudes are, the more likely they are to discuss personal-social issues with daughters and sex information with sons (Welbourne, 1978). Surprisingly, fathers have been found to contribute minimally to the sexual education of their children, even their sons (Fox & Inazu, 1980; Gagnon, 1973; Schofield, 1965, 1973; Thornburg, 1975; Welbourne, 1978).

Thornburg (1975) reports that peers are a significant source of information on contraception, ejaculation, petting and prostitution. However, Schofield (1965, 1973) reported that much of the information obtained from friends is inaccurate and even obscene. Teenagers reported that parents' advice concentrated on moral problems and was vague and unspecific (Schofield, 1965, 1973). This observation lends support to the rationale of this research: that is, that it is the parents' general attitudes that contribute to the quality of adolescent sexual attitudes

and knowledge.

Schools in other countries are reported to be a significant source of information on sexual factors such as abortion and venereal disease (Schofield, 1965; Sorenson, 1973; Thornburg, 1975). In South Africa very little such information is available from schools or from the media. On this basis one might predict that South African teenagers are relatively poorly informed and have relatively unfavourable attitudes. Individuals with greater knowledge and understanding regarding sex and sexuality will probably have more favourable attitudes and therefore are more likely to practice more desirable behaviour (Kilander, 1971). For example, there is evidence that the quality and quantity of information a girl receives at menarche affects her mothering capacity (Sherefsky, Liebenberg & Lockman, 1973).

The prediction of behaviour from attitude has received considerable support in recent literature (Calder & Ross, 1973; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977; Eagly & Himmelfarb, 1978). However, considerable controversy and ambiguity continue to be evident as to the nature of this relationship (Bagozzi, 1978; Bentler & Speckart, 1979; Schwartz, 1978). In particular, the question remains unanswered of whether attitudes are a reliable indicator of behaviour, or conversely. However, an examination of this relationship is beyond the scope of this study.

Gagnon & Simon (1973) stress that the practice of naming the child's general behaviour as separate from those that the parent conceives as being "sexual" has a powerful effect on the child's ultimate sexual identity. As the child's abilities increase in the motor, cognitive and language areas, the influential people around him broaden their input in terms of clarity of labelling and information. However, very often this does not occur in the area of sexual activity. Parental influence in connection with their children's sexual development occurs in response

to the use of words or the evidence of activities that the adult defines as "sexual". Adult response may take several forms:

- labelling the behaviour as sexual and evincing disapproval of the child's words or actions;
- mislabelling the behaviour;
- non-labelling the behaviour, either by proffering a judgement without a specific label or by ignoring it.

This mislabelling or non-labelling is of major significance in children's development in terms of the "fragmentary elements of what will become sexual attitudes, values, knowledge and behaviours" (Gagnon & Simon, 1973, p.38). Further, while parents tend to decrease their habit of judging behaviour without naming it in other areas of learning, they retain it in the sexual area almost entirely until the child is fully grown. Thus, to a large extent, learning about sexuality in our society is frequently associated with guilt and anxiety and lack of openness between parents and children. Clearly, parents' conservatism and particular child-rearing attitudes, such as a strongly disciplinarian style or a stress on social acceptance, might have significant effects on their children's learning of sex knowledge and on their sexual attitudes.

The Gender Gap

Differences between males and females may be marked at the period of adolescence, for a number of reasons. This stage of development encompasses many physiological and psychological changes, which differ for the two sexes. They differ in the rate and level of attainment of maturity, and in the socio-cultural expectations held for each sex. They differ too in the child-rearing experiences and the way in which each sex adapts to the internal and external changes occurring (Hauck, 1970). Therefore, it is important to specify age and gender groups for which

data is valid. Early, middle and late adolescents have different sets of expectations, attitudes and behaviours in regard to sexuality (McKinney et al, 1977).

One result of socialisation into traditional sex roles is the suppression of adolescent female sexuality (Jacobson, 1976). Growing out of traditional sex roles is the "double standard", which has been very strong in our society. Males are proud of their sexual conquests, while females often suffer loss of self-respect for having engaged in sexual intimacies outside of marriage (Schalmo & Levin, 1974; Staton, 1975). Older adolescent males experience pressure from peers and from their own internalisation of gender-specific learning to gain sexual experience (Mahoney, 1980). The female feels it is her social and moral responsibility to keep the sexual part of the dating relationship within prescribed limits (Friday, 1977; Newman & Newman, 1979). Whilst there undoubtedly has been a narrowing of the double standard of sexual behaviour and attitudes, females continue to report less masturbation and premarital intercourse (Antonovsky, Shoham, Kavenaki, Lancet & Modan, 1979; Jessor & Jessor, 1975; Juhasz, 1976; Micklin, Thomson & Gardner, 1977; Sorenson, 1973; Vener & Stewart, 1974). Antonovsky et al (1979), postulate that one of the reasons for females remaining less sexually active before marriage, even under permissive conditions such as a kibbutz environment, is the pattern of sex-role socialisation which stresses their future role as wives and mothers.

The Concept of Sex-Role Identity

Whilst there has been much emphasis on changing sex-role stereotypes during the past decade, even recent research demonstrates the existence of a high degree of similarity in traits being differentially ascribed to males and females (Antonovsky et al, 1979; Williams, 1979;

Zey-Ferrell et al, 1978). Until recently emphasis has been placed on the importance of males and females achieving the appropriate sex-role identity. Much evidence was cited that those persons achieving this identification were better adjusted, happier and more stable (Kagan, 1964; Mussen, 1969). Currently it is becoming evident that the values attached to traditional sex-typing are questionable (Stein, 1976). Instrumental and expressive roles, male and female roles, are not necessarily opposites and both men and women can be placed on a continuum for many attributes and qualities. Recent clinical findings indicate that adrogynous persons display flexible behaviour in a wide variety of situations, in contrast to highly sex-typed individuals, and this is of great advantage to their psychological health (Bem, 1975; Kelly & Worrell, 1976; Pleck, 1975; Rebecca, Heffner & Olechansky, 1976). The social climate in terms of male/female functioning is clearly changing and there are changes in sex roles. This study will make a contribution to knowledge in this area by examining whether males and females are adhering to the traditional concepts of polarisation of the functioning of the two sexes in our society.

The Generation Gap

Clearly the gender gap has be a major topic in psychological literature, just as has the generation gap. This latter concept implies a discontinuity in values between youth and their parents. The term is, however, an ambiguous and pejorative one (Tolor, 1976). It has been taken to mean a clash of values between young and old, a relative lack of communication or a pervasive disagreement in many areas of life (Freeman, 1972; Keniston, 1968; Mead, 1970; Orloff & Weinstock, 1975)

Whilst research in this area has been voluminous, it has not been definitive. Connell (1972) concluded that the parent/child correlations

covering a wide range of attitudes, whilst positive, tended to be low, the median being only 0.2. Freeman (1972) found the gap to exist in the areas of student unrest, drugs and sexual behaviour, with similarities being evident regarding work and marriage. Munns (1972) takes the position that students conform more to peer values than to parental values, whilst Frederickson (1972) maintains that in the f . areas he investigated, those of family, education, ethics and relig .n, the family was perceived to be the major determinant of attitudes. Mantell (1974) believes that while peer groups can influence attitudes and behaviours they act, not as originators, but as reinforcers of the values developed earlier in the family. Lerner, Schroeder, Renitzer & Weinstock (1972) report that parents and children differ only in intensity and not in the direction of their attitudes, while Orloff (1975) proposes that the items actually have different meanings for the two generations. Curtis (1975), in contrast to the above viewpoints, concludes that there is no evidence that friends become more influential throughout the life cycle. He maintains that there is an increasing independence in opinion formation rather than a shift from parents to peers.

Much of the methodology of these studies is again questionable. Whilst Freeman (1972) interviewed both parents and college students about their own attitudes, the relationships are given between groups and not between pairs. That is, he did not match parents with their own children, but simply compared scores of the two generations. Connell (1972) concluded that there were far more group correspondences than pair correspondences with respect to most attitudes, so that Freeman's methodology creates a bias in the results. Munns and Frederickson relied on children's reports of parents' attitudes. This method is unreliable, particularly in the light of Boshier's (1973) finding that children considered their mothers and fathers to be significantly more conservative than they actually were by self-report.

The question of whether adolescents conform more to the values of peers or parents clearly requires further investigation. This study will examine differences between genders and generations, both within pairs and within groups.

Psychological Conservatism

The conservative personality has been shown to favour the conventional in social institutions, holds anti-hedonistic views, believes in strict rules and punishments (external authority) and is a religious fundamentalist (Webster & Stewart, 1973; Wilson & Bagley, 1973). Conservatism has been shown to be a dimension of decided importance (Barling & Evans, 1978; Barling & Fincham, 1979; Nias, 1973). Being a multi-dimensional construct it is helpful in accounting for the individual's experiential world (Kerlinger, 1973). Further, there is evidence that psychological conservatism is of value in predicting various other behaviours and attitudes. Eysenck (1976) states that general social attitudes correlate highly with sex attitudes, and conservatism correlates negatively with permissiveness, stress on phsyical sex and libido.

Militarism/Punitiveness, Anti-hedonism, Ethnocentricism, and Religion/puritanism were found by Wilson (1973) to characterise adults' conservatism, whilst children's conservatism shows major factors of Religion, Ethnocentricism, Punitiveness and Sex (Nias, 1973).

There has been much exploration of this construct, and a comparable factor structure has emerged in South Africa (Barling & Evans, 1978; Wilson & Shutte, 1973), New Zealand and Britain (Bagley, Wilson & Boshier, 1970, the United States and Korea (Wilson, 1973; Wilson & Lee, 1974). However, the factor structure of conservatism does tend to be influenced by the specific culture in which it is measured (Barling & Evans, 1978). South African society is characterised by its authoritarianism (Orpen, 1975).

Considerable prejudice, social conformity (Barling & Fincham, 1979), social acceptance and ethnocentricism are evident (Barling & Evans, 1978; Orpen, 1975; Morse & Orpen, 1975). Substantial social distance is evident between race groups (Heaven, 1978; Groenewald & Heaven, 1977). In addition, there is a powerful religious ethic (Barling & Evans, 1978; Michener, 1978; Loubser, 1978). The state holds a strong degree of control over sex matters, although "cloaked in religious terms and concepts" (Barling & Evans, 1978, p.8). Further South Africa offers opportunities for true cross-cultural research, in that, due to existing legislation, two distinct cultural groups live close to one another, while being totally isolated educationally and socially, and to a lesser extent, economically.

The factors that have emerged for adults in South Africa are Control, Ethnocentricism, Anti-hedonism and Social Acceptance. For the children the factors are Religion, Ethnocentricism, Social Acceptance, Sex and Punitiveness.

Barling & Evans' study (1978) from which the above factors were obtained was carried out on White university students, who may be considerably more liberal than the general population. The other sample used in that research and in that reported by Barling & Fincham (1979) were primary school children. Thus it would be valuable, being cognisant of the situation of the White and Coloured communities in South Africa, to examine attitudes of these two groups, both adolescent and adult. Finally, since the factor labelled 'Control' accounted for 54.3% of the variance in the adult sample in Barling & Evan's research, it was thought that this might influence children's sexual attitudes and knowledge considerably.

Within-Family Conservatism

Nias (1973) has emphasised that children's conservatism may reflect the internalisation of parental prohibitions. Boshier (1973) found that conservative mothers produce conservative daughters, and conservative fathers are followed by conservative sons. The present study might illuminate the issue of the transmission of attitudes within families.

Boshier & Izard (1972) found mothers high on conservatism to use dominating, rejecting or indulgent child-rearing styles. These researchers postulate a circular pattern of cause and effect operating in regard to child-rearing practices and the development of conservative-liberal attitudes in children.

The Cross-Cultural Method in Psychology

Cross-cultural psychology is basically a methodological strategy (Malpass, 1977). It is a way of focussing on methodological and conceptual issues that are infrequently encountered in unicultural research. It is a way of determining the degree to which information about behaviour and functioning in one culture can be applied to people in general. The concern that theories should be universally applicable is the dominant motive for conducting cross-cultural research (Triandis, Malpass & Davidson, 1972, 1973; Whiting, 1968). All cross-cultural comparisons are "static-group comparisons" (Campbell & Stanley, 1966). That is to say that subjects are not randomly assigned to different levels of a treatment variable.

One of the areas in which there has been some concern in the field of cross-cultural psychology is the appropriate definition of a case. Naroll (1964) proposed the 'cultunit':

> a group of territorially contiguous people who not only are domestic speakers of mutually intelligible dialects but also belong to the same state or contact group.
>
> Naroll, 1964, p.286.

Whiting (1968) argues that a single definition such as that offered for the cultunit is not appropriate for all research. "Local communities may be the more appropriate unit for the study of kinship or child-rearing." p.697.

Young (1965) and Murdock (1966) agree that the local community is the most appropriate unit for cross-cultural research. Whiting (1968) further holds that in studies which consider child-rearing variables, there is a theoretical as well as a practical motivation for choosing the local community as a unit. In small homogenous communities the typical or average individual is much easier to find and more likely to represent the majority.

> ... since the individual sampling universe is small in a local community as compared to a larger society, ethographic statements are much more likely to be valid.
>
> Whiting, 1968. p.698.

Whiting describes four criteria which he sees as relevant for maximising cultural homogeneity.

1. Members have frequent face-to-face contact with one another;
2. They speak the same dialect;
3. They have some degree of sovereignty. This sovereignty could refer to such events as a meeting to maintain communal facilities such as 'a path or a men's home or a P.T.A. meeting.'

   Whiting, 1968, p.699.

4. They have a group name.

The White and the Coloured group in South Africa of subjects studied in this research both fulfil each of the above descriptions and conditions.

The racial problems in South Africa are focussed on the confrontation between the Whites, whose ancestors emigrated to this continent from Europe, and the Blacks, whose ancestory is African (Edelstein, 1973).

Between these two groups are the Coloureds; mixed blood, Western-oriented, but with roots in Africa. Both the Coloured and the White groups are minorities in South Africa. However, power rests entirely in the hands of the White population and the Coloured people are less privileged in the spheres of economics, housing and education. The Coloured are required to live in specially delineated areas, separate from the Whites and from the Blacks and Asians. The most important social differentiation in South Africa is on racial lines. It is woven into the fabric of everyday life, and the 'race' of an individual affects virtually every aspect of life.

The Coloured community has traditionally been shown to be of lower socio-economic status than the Whites (Horrell, 1974; Lever, 1978; Theron, 1976), and conservatism has been shown to increase with low socio-economic status (Reiss, 1967; Staples, 1978; Wilson, 1973). Coloured education is separate from and inferior to that of the White population. In 1979 83% of all Coloured children at school were still in the lowest classes, that is, up to and including Standard Four, (Survey of Race Relations, 1979, p.511). The standard of teaching is seriously handicapped by the shortage of properly qualified teachers. This deficiency might become manifest in the adolescent development of the children. Almost fifty percent of the Coloured population live below the "supplemented living level" and "there is an exceptionally high incidence of undernourishment and malnutrition" (Theron, 1976, p.261), which may have an effect on physical and mental development. Poor housing and inadequate community amenities have "adverse effects on adolescent children" (Theron, 1976, p.61).

Within the Coloured community it would appear that attitudes within families and between generations have undergone dramatic change. The present generation of teenagers have become aware of and resistant to their less privileged position in the community and have proceeded to actively protest against the restrictions placed upon them. Their parents

in many instances do not support or approve of their militant attitudes. (Race Relations News, 1980). Thus the attitudes of the two generations clearly require examination.

Summary of Motivation for the Present Research Study

Diepold & Young (1979) in a review of twenty years of research into adolescent sexual behaviour, stressed that future research is in dire need of improved methodological designs incorporating appropriately designed sample selections, instruments and statistical procedures.

This study will seek to redress some of the deficiencies of previous research by :

- using fathers and mothers to report their own attitudes and child-rearing styles, in the present and not retrospectively;
- using adolescents (male and female) in the age ranges of thirteen to eighteen years, in order to assess maturational differences in sexual attitudes and knowledge;
- assessing pair correspondences within families and not group correspondences only. This will aid our understanding of the process of identification within the family;
- providing a more specific measure of both parental attitudes and children's atttiudes, by using more than one measure for each group;
- using the cross-cultural research method, in order to gain insight into the different processes involved in attitude transmission within families.

Additional areas this study seeks to illuminate are :

- the relative power or reward inherent in differing child-rearing styles;
- the degree to which males and females are adhering to traditional concepts of differential functioning of the

two sexes in our society;

- whether mothers and fathers differ in approaches to child-rearing and in their general attitudes;
- the relative influence of parents and peers on the adolescent;
- the sources of sex information for adolescents.

For this purpose, adult attitudes and child-rearing styles were measured and their children's sexual attitudes and knowledge were measured.

METHOD

Subjects

The subjects studied were intact families, White and Coloured, with a minimum of one child between the ages of thirteen and eighteen years. The minimum number of children participating in the survey from each family was one and the maximum number was four. The sample consisted of the numbers given below:

TABLE 1

Children:

	White		Coloured	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Age 13	14	14	1	8
Age 14	12	11	11	13
Age 15	11	12	15	16
Age 16	9	15	13	17
Age 17	15	13	16	13
Age 18	11	10	14	15
Total	72	75	70	82
	N = 147		N = 152	

Adults:

The parent population consisted of two groups, White and Coloured. In the White group N = 146, 73 mothers and 73 fathers. In the Coloured group N = 160, 80 mothers and 80 fathers. $\bar{X}$ age of White fathers = 46,5

years, SD = 4,33; White mothers = 41,5 years, SD = 3,64; Coloured fathers = 47,7 years, SD = 6,88 and Coloured mothers = 43,9 years, SD = 5,50.

Procedure

The researcher approached a number of teachers, social workers, marriage and education counsellors in both the White and the Coloured communities. This was especially important in the latter community, as the practice of using 'interviewers' of the same race and socio-economic status as the respondents in minority populations aids in the establishment of rapport and helps eliminate any suspicions the community may have about being studied (Weiss, 1977). The researcher gave the following explanation of the study :

> I am conducting research into the relationship between parents' general attitudes and adolescent social and sexual attitudes and knowledge. I require families to fill in some questionnaires and I ask you to enlist the cooperation of three of four families.

All those involved were informed of the purpose and aims of the research. Among these were :

- increased understanding of family dynamics and the acquisition of values within the family;
- increased understanding of teenage values regarding sex and sexual behaviour;
- increasing knowledge of the areas in which information was lacking among teenagers. The outcome of the study might be to structure programmes to increase teenagers' understanding and knowledge of sexual matters.

The 'interviewers' were instructed to impart this information to the families participating in the research. The voluntary nature of participation was stressed as was confidentiality of material gathered.

This was emphasised both verbally and on the consent form at the beginning of each questionnaire (See Appendix A).

Weiss (1977) states :

> All social science researchers accept some responsibilities to their respondents. These include honesty about the nature and purposes of the research; safeguards against harm and privacy (the right to refuse to participate and the right to confidentiality of their responses).
>
> Weiss, 1977, p.21

Whilst much survey research is carried out via the postal service, each family who agreed to participate in this survey was contacted and instructed personally. The mother of the family was usually the member who agreed to the family completing the form, although in some instances it was the father. It was suggested that the family sit down together for approximately thirty minutes and complete the forms, without any prior discussion. The researcher then arranged a time, perhaps a few days later, when the completed forms could be collected. This procedure was repeated until sufficient numbers of children of the required ages had completed the forms.

The Questionnaires

The instruments used to assess parental attitudes and child-rearing styles were respectively :

1. The Conservatism Scale;
2. The Maryland Parental Attitude Scale (MPAS).

The Conservatism Scale

This scale was developed by Wilson and Patterson (1970) in an attempt to overcome the criticism levelled at previous tests used to measure conservatism and related concepts, for example, the California F-Scale (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson & Sanford, 1950) and the Dogmatism Scale (Rokeach, 1960).

One of the shortcomings of these scales is that they are strongly contaminated by acquiescence effects, but the degree of acquiescence is difficult to assess. Thus, agreement and acquiescence become confused. Other causes of concern to Wilson and Patterson were 'multi-negative grammar' and 'evaluative wording' (Wilson & Patterson, 1970, p.44). Therefore they constructed a scale which requires an instant, affective response to the central issue, contained in a single word. Thus the evaluation occurs only in the response, not in the items as well, and the context does not produce confusion. The scale is economical in both cost and time. It is shown to be internally consistent, has satisfactory reliability (Cronbach's Alpha: .93; split-half reliability: .94), (Wilson, 1973, p.56). Orpen (1971) has shown that the method of presentation of the 50 items is relatively free of social desirability.

The factors of the conservative personality that the Conservatism Scale incorporates are :

1. Militarism/punitiveness, measured by such items as, 'military drill', 'dagga laws', 'patriotism'.
2. Anti-hedonism, measured by items such as, 'nudist camps', 'bible', 'truth' and 'divorce'.
3. Ethnocentricism, measured by items such as, 'White superiority', 'mixed marriage' and 'apartheid'.
4. Religion/Puritanism, measured by items such as, 'divorce', 'chastity', 'nude swimming', 'kissing'.

The fifty items selected were ordered in an alternating pattern of positively and negatively scored items. A '?' category is included because the forced use of dichotomous responses may induce resistance in respondents (Wilson & Patterson, 1970). Further, it is known that neutral responses represent valid and consistent positions which cannot be overlooked.

The Children's C-Scale

The C-Scale has very obvious advantages in usage with children: "less concentration and verbal sophistication being required for meaningful responses to short items". (Nias, 1973, p.93). This is supported by Barling (1979). Insel & Wilson (1971) made the items more specific without altering the sense, for example, 'Sabbath Observance' became 'Sunday School'. Correlations between the Adult and Children's version of the scale administered to girls aged 12 to 16 years old is .86, so they may be viewed as almost equivalent. The structuring of children's attitudes appears to be "qualitatively different from that of adults", (Nias, 1973, p.111). With adults, religion appears to be aligned with ethnocentricism and punitiveness as part of a general factor of 'Conservatism'. With children, a general factor emerges which is a broad religion and 'good' behaviour factor, with ethnocentricism and punitive items loading negatively. The structure in children can be explained in terms of what they consider right and wrong, and appears not to be the complex interaction of personality dispositions and motivations, as it is in adults. The scale can be scored for the clearly defined factors of religion, ethnocentricism, punitiveness and sex (Wilson, 1973). However, in the present research factors were used which had emerged in research in South Africa, since the factors emerging have been shown to be culture-specific (Barling & Evans, 1978). The adult factors are Control, Ethnocentricism, Anti-hedonism and Social Acceptance. These factors explained 54.3%, 20.7%, 14.7% and 10.3% of the variance respectively. To ensure that the items were meaningful and appropriate to a South African sample, four items were altered in the adult scale. 'Straight jackets' became 'dagga laws'; 'beatniks' became 'hippies'; 'empire building' became 'citizen commandoes' and 'Coloured people' became 'Black consciousness'. Only one item required revision in the children's scale: 'Church' became 'Church-synagogue'

(Barling & Evans, 1978). A total Conservatism score can also be obtained from the scale. An individual can score between one and a hundred; the lower the score the lower the conservatism.

The MPAS

This is an instrument designed to measure self-reported child-rearing attitudes. The scale was developed by Pumroy (1966). His prime objective in developing the scale was to control the social desirability set of respondents. This factor was known to influence previously widely-used scales, such as the Parent Attitude Scale (PAS), (Shoben, 1949), and the Parental Attitude Research Instrument (PARI) (Schaefer & Bell, 1958). The MPAS is a 95 item forced-choice scale. The first five items are not scored, as they are practice items. The scoring yields four constructs, namely rejecting, disciplinarian, protective and indulgent parent types. The reliability is satisfactory. Test-retest correlations over a three-month period for the four scales ranged between .62 and .84 (Pumroy, 1966; Tolor, 1967). The split-half reliability has been corroborated by more recent research (Swenson, 1970), and is reported by Pumroy as ranging between .62 and .84 (Pumroy, 1966).

Pumroy's choice of items for the scale were made by accumulating items used in other parental attitude scales, in addition to items from materials on child-rearing. The items were written in the third person, modified and rephrased to avoid duplication of items and to ensure that they were consistent with each other. Finally, they did not refer specifically to mother or father but were equally applicable to both parents. Pumroy (1966) developed the parental types and the description from the literature on parental types and he defined five categories :

1. Indulgent Parents. These parents are primarily child-centred. There are attempts at disciplining the child, but the child

is aware that the rules are not firm and can be dispensed with. The child is not encouraged to develop or display initiative and has his/her own way in most instances. The child is the recipient of spontaneous gifts and treats and a great deal of warmth and affection from the parents. Few responsibilities are placed upon the child.

2. Disciplinarian parents make explicit various rules and expectations for the child and the child is expected to conform to the parents' expectations. If the child transgresses, he will be punished, but in a fair and consistent manner. The child is expected to display responsibility early and to achieve, sometimes beyond his/her ability.

3. Rejecting parents generally hold negative feelings towards the child, which feelings may be openly hostile. The child is subjected to discipline and punishment, but the discipline and punishment is a reflection of the parents' hostility and not always fairly related to the child's behaviour. This attitude may generate hostility in the child, leading to behaviour which may reinforce the parents' negative feelings.

4. Protective parents are principally concerned with protecting the child from danger and risks. This leads them to being excessively careful of the child, and performing tasks for the child instead of expecting independent behaviour.

5. Indifferent parents have no strong feelings for the child, either positive or negative. They are principally concerned with their own lives and show little concern for or interest in their children's activities. There are few restrictions placed on the child.

Each item retained in the MPAS had the agreement of six of the nine psychologists who participated in the validity study, as to which category the item belonged. They were unable to discriminate between the 'Indifferent' and 'Rejecting' items, and these were then combined into the 'Rejecting' category.

An item analysis was then conducted, showing the percentage of subjects who answered each item at each of the four levels of social desirability, and the category the psychologists placed each item in as a type of parent. Two items were paired together if they each represented a different type of parent, and approximately the same percentage of answers fell in each category of social desirability. This resulted in the 90 pairs of items chosen, and the five 'buffer' items mentioned previously were added to familiarise the respondents with the scale.

Means, standard deviations and split-half reliability of the MPAS were found by Swenson (1970) to be comparable to those reported by Pumroy (1966) and interscale correlations essentially the same as those of Pumroy (1966) have been reported by Brody (1965), Swenson (1970) and Tolor (1967). These findings support the rationale underlying the identification of specific scales in the MPAS relating to varying parental attitudes. The negative correlations between the 'Disciplinarian' and 'Indulgent' scales and between the 'Protective' and 'Rejecting' scales as expected according to scale definitions, are consistent throughout the research (Lillico, 1979; Pumroy, 1966; Swenson, 1970). However, an anticipated positive correlation between the 'Indulgent' and the 'Protective' scales is reported as negative (Swenson, 1970; Tolor, 1967). This suggests that the accuracy of definition of one or both of the scales may be suspect.

The MPAS has some validity since observations of maternal interaction with children and mothers' scores on the Disciplinarian and

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