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Parent Perceptions, Gender, and Maturity in College Students

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PARENT PERCEPTIONS,
GENDER, AND MATURITY
IN COLLEGE STUDENTS

by

Ruth C. Greenthal

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Masters of Arts

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VITA

The author, Ruth C. Greenthal, is the daughter of Cecile Adler Cliffer and the late Harold J. Cliffer. She was born on April 10, 1957, in Harvey, Illinois.

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CHAPTER I

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The focus of this thesis is how college students perceive their parents. "Parent perception" is one type of "person perception." Livesley and Bromley (1973) define "person perception" as:

the area of psychology concerned with how we 'perceive' or 'cognize' other persons - their intentions, attitudes, traits, emotions, ideas, abilities and purposes, as well as their overt behaviour and physical characteristics. (p. 1)

Interest in the area of person perception began in 1872 when Darwin concluded that certain facial expressions convey the same emotional states across many different human cultures (Freedman, Sears & Carlsmith, 1981). The implication of Darwin's work was that humans perceive emotional expressions of other persons in universal, invariant ways. More systematic research was conducted beginning in the early 1900's when Darwin's conclusion was called into question (Schneider, Hastorf & Ellsworth, 1979).

It was not until the 1960's, however, that researchers began to examine that aspect of person

perception known as parent perception. In parent perception, the subject of study is the child, while the parent is the one being perceived. Since the early years, there have been studies which have explored parent perception from perspectives ranging from those of four year olds (Emmerich, 1959) to the perceptions of 64 year old "children" (O'Neil & Reiss, 1984).

The present study is undertaken to investigate young adults' perceptions of their parents. The focus is on determining the relationship between parent perceptions and the gender of the subject, the roles of mother and father, and the level of the subjects' maturity. In essence, therefore, the study asks three questions: Do male and female students perceive their parents differently? Are fathers and mothers perceived differently? Do mature students perceive parents in a different manner than do immature students?

In the present study, 135 college students provided information on how they perceived their parents. Parent perception was assessed in terms of four basic dimensions: individuation, idealization, competency, and complexity. These dimensions were determined from subjects' responses to the Parent Perception Inventory (PPI, O'Neil & Reiss, 1984) and the Blatt Prose Description Method (Blatt & Chevron, 1976).

The level of the subjects' maturity was determined by two different measures. The Washington University Sentence Completion Test (WUSCT, Loevinger & Wessler, 1970) was used to measure ego development, as conceived by Loevinger (1976). The Thematic Apperception Test (TAT, Murray, 1943) was used to measure socioemotional maturity, as described by Stewart (1977). These two ways of looking at maturity are qualitatively different; however, both offer developmental perspectives.

The results of this study were expected to reveal that male and female subjects perceive their parents differently, and that there is a difference between the way that subjects see their mothers versus the way that they see their fathers. Furthermore, the level of the subjects' maturity is expected to be significantly related to parent perception. There has been some research in the area of parent perception focused on the impact of gender and age differences. These studies, along with a discussion of research in the more general area of person perception, are described below.

Person Perception

In the last thirty years, a significant body of research has investigated the accuracy of perceiver's judgments of other people's psychological attributes

(Bruner & Tagiuri, 1954; Taft, 1955). Studies in the area of perceiver accuracy have been criticized for having serious methodological problems (Schnieder, Hastorf & Ellsworth, 1979). Cronbach (1955) pointed out that the most frequently used method of measuring accuracy was not a straightforward one because it was affected by the manner in which subjects used the rating scales. After Cronbach's methodological critique, the use of the "accuracy" approach to studying person perception declined.

Asch (1946) initiated a new area of concentration in the field of person perception when he looked at "impression formation," the idea that an impression of a person is an organized, integrated conception of a person's personality. Studies have shown that impressions can be based upon a wide variety of information about the other person, such as indirect sources of information, appearance, expressive behavior, coping behavior, context, effects of stimulus variability (Livesley & Bromley, 1973). The effects of perceiver variables on impression formation have also been examined (Shrauger & Altrocchi, 1964). George Kelly's (1955) theory of personal constructs emphasized the active role that the individual plays in categorizing and interpreting the events s/he sees and

experiences in interacting with his/her world. This perspective can be traced throughout the person perception research literature. Research has shown that perceivers' implicit personality theories can influence their judgments of others; some evidence suggests that such theories may reflect perceivers' own personalities and past experiences (Berkowitz, 1980).

There are relatively few well-established findings in the person perception literature, partly because the processes and variables involved are obscure and complicated. It has been suggested that further research focus on the content and organization of naturally occurring impressions (Livesley & Bromley, 1973). The relationship between parents and their children is one area of observation which contains plentiful potential for "naturally occurring impressions."

Children's Perceptions of Parents

Dubin and Dubin (1965) concentrated a review of the research on the area of children's social perceptions, and pointed out that studies that have focused attention on parent-child relationships have not generally acknowledged that children respond to their own perceptions of their parents' behavior, as well as to

the behavior itself. This is a subtlety for which Hawkes (1957) had an explanation:

It is not sufficient or even realistic to assume that because a mother fondles a child, the child sees this attention as a sign that his mother loves him. It is not the physical nature of a stimulus which determines reaction but rather the way in which that stimulus is interpreted by the individual stimulated. In each case this will be a highly individual interpretation. (p. 47)

Hence it is clear that, although parental behavior is an objective event in the real world, it affects children only to the extent that they perceive it and in the form in which they perceive it.

Although perception can be looked at as an "individual" event, commonalities have been observed that can be studied systematically. Two areas in particular that seem prominent and which may reveal both commonalities within and differences between groups are gender and maturity. It is the objective of this study to explore gender and maturity effects. To be more specific about these gender and maturity factors, the next three sections of this introduction contain a review of the literature in the area of children's perceptions of their parents according to: parental roles of mother and father; the differences between how males and females view their parents; and differences according to age or maturity level of the subject.

Although these can be seen as discrete categories, they are by no means mutually exclusive and some of the studies most relevant to the present study examine more than one of the above-mentioned variables.

Children's Perceptions of Parents: Mothers vs. Fathers

One of the conclusions of Walters and Stinnett's (1971) review of the literature regarding parent-child relationships was that simplistic explanations are not adequate to explain the direction of causality involved in parent-child relationships. A major point in their review was that children can no longer be viewed solely as products of parental influence because there is evidence that children, themselves, exert powerful influences on parent-child relationships. Another conclusion that emerged from the 1971 literature review was that, although a vast portion of the literature on parent-child relationships was concerned with mother-child relationships, the literature of the 1960's indicated that the impact of fathers is of considerable significance. When one examines the parent-child literature of the 1970's and 1980's, it is apparent that there has been a marked increase of interest and research in the father's role in parenting.

There have been several studies that have

investigated the differences between children's perceptions of their mothers and those of their fathers. Kagan and Lemkin (1960), in a study of children of ages three to eight years, found that fathers were perceived as more competent, confident, fear-arousing, and punitive than mothers. Mothers were perceived as being "nicer," more nurturant, and more likely to give presents than fathers. The boys and girls chose the same sex parent as the model that they most wished to emulate and also as the parent that they liked "the best." The children also chose their opposite sex parent as the parent who "kissed" the most. Kagan, Hosken, and Watson (1961) studied symbolic conceptualizations of parents, from the point of view of children, ages six to eight years. Subjects agreed that the father, as compared to the mother, was stronger, larger, more dangerous, dirtier, darker, and more angular.

Vaughn's (1966) results indicated that rural school children had a basic view of their fathers as authority figures, while their attitudes toward their mothers were more complex. The subjects evaluated their mothers in terms of how well they responded to children's needs and their manner of child rearing. Meissner (1965) found evidence that differing perceptions of the mother and

father appear to become more dominant as adolescent boys progress through their high school years. More specifically, Meissner found that the typical relationship configuration that emerges is decidedly more positive in regard to the mother than it is in regard to the father, with the father becoming fixed with the role of mediator of parental authority and restriction, and the mother responding more to emotional needs. The trends in the data suggest that these perceptions become more prevalent as subjects move from their freshman to their senior year of high school.

In a recent cross-national study of childrens' perceptions of both mothers and fathers and their respective roles, Goldman and Goldman (1983) investigated children, ages five to fifteen, in Australia, England, North America, and Sweden. The researchers focused on how children perceive differences between mothers and fathers, and how they differentially perceive parental roles. Findings indicated that mothers were seen by all children as predominantly concerned with domestic duties, care of children, and low status occupations, and fathers were seen overwhelmingly in a leisure role, as occupier of high status occupations, and playing authority and leadership roles in the family.

Parent perception has been studied from the perspective of grown children, as well as young children. In a 1978 study, Klos and Paddock offered their contention, along with corresponding support from the literature, that researchers and theorists have underestimated the importance that normal late adolescents place on their relationships with their parents. These authors studied college students' assessments of their relationships with their parents on the criteria of self-disclosure, despite the risk of parental disapproval, openness to critical feedback from parents, and constructive confrontation when angry with parents. On a measure called the Relationship Status Scales, these concepts were operationalized as narrative interpersonal dilemmas to which subjects responded by indicating what they would do if they were involved in the hypothetical situations proposed. Evidence of construct validity was established through the use of other scales, and results indicated that sex of parent had no significant effects on relationship status scores.

Pipp, Shaver, Jennings, Lamborn, and Fischy (1985) also studied adolescent-parent relationships by assessing late adolescents' developmental theories about their affective relationships with their parents. Using

a retrospective method, they studied subjects' conceptions of changes from birth to the present in their relationships with their parents. Among the things that Pipp et al. examined were differences between the subjects' relationships with mothers and their relationships with fathers. The findings showed differences in the ways subjects portrayed these relationships. More responsibility was felt towards the mothers who were also seen as especially friendly, while relationships with fathers were marked by less equality and more perceived similarity.

Klos and Paddock's (1978) study was the only one of the above which reported no significant differences in the way children perceived their mothers versus the way they see their fathers. This may have been due to Klos and Paddock's measure which focused primarily on the perception of the parent-child relationship itself, as opposed to on the perception of the parent per se. However, Pipp et al. (1985) were able to find more relationship-oriented differences. Generally, with the exception of the Klos and Paddock study, it appears that the parents' roles of mother and father have significant impacts on childrens' perceptions of their parents.

The studies reviewed reinforce the idea that children perceive their parents in what might be

described as traditional stereotypical roles. Parke and Sawin (1980) support this conclusion with their observation that, in spite of trends supporting new roles for mothers and fathers, parental roles are still most commonly allocated in a traditional fashion. With this in mind, four hypotheses are considered for this section of the present study.

It is generally accepted that the pattern in our society is that child rearing has traditionally been the province of the mother (Moen, 1982). Moreover, Pleck and Rustad (1980) report that working women retain primary responsibility for most household and child care chores regardless of their employment status. Hence it would seem that children would see themselves as closer to their mothers and more separate from their fathers. On this basis, the first hypothesis is that students will perceive themselves as more individuated from their fathers than from their mothers. Secondly, it may well be easier to idealize a parent who is less available. Hence, the second hypothesis in this study is that students will idealize their fathers more than their mothers. Likewise, relatively less availability and familiarity may be another reason for children to perceive their fathers as more competent than their mothers (hypothesis 3). Vaughn's (1966) results

indicated that his school-aged subjects viewed their fathers in a more global and simplistic manner than they did their mothers. To explore the impact of societal changes in the last twenty years, as well as possible cohort differences, these findings should be retested. This study explores whether grown children describe their mothers in more complex terms than they do their fathers in the 1980's, twenty years later. The fourth hypothesis in this section is that students describe their mothers in more complex terms than their fathers. This prediction is an effort to corroborate and extend Vaughn's finding that children's attitudes toward their mothers are more complex than toward their fathers, perhaps because they have spent more time with mothers and witnessed more aspects of their mothers' behavior and personality.

Children's Perceptions of Parents: Males vs. Females

Although the literature contains numerous studies that address the effects of parental influences on children, there are few studies that focus on gender differences in children's perceptions of their parents (Walters & Stinnett, 1971). In Kagan and Lemkin's (1960) study of children three to eight years, the girls saw fathers as both more punitive and more affectionate

than did the boys in the sample. In the aforementioned Kagan et al. (1961) study, results indicated that girls were more likely than boys to view their mothers in a nurturant light and their fathers in a hostile light. The girls labeled fathers as more punitive and meaner than mothers, while the boys made no such distinction between the parents. In the above three studies, the female subjects appear to have responded to their parents with more intensity than the males did.

On the other hand, some studies have not found differences between the way in which males and females perceive their parents. In Klos and Paddock's (1978) study of late adolescents' relationships with their parents, the authors were unable to find significant effects for the sex of the subject. O'Neil and Reiss (1984) studied the perceptions that 79 women and 57 men between the ages of 20 and 64 had of their mothers. O'Neil and Reiss' results did not indicate any sex differences. Hence, the authors suggested that by age 20, men and women perceive their mothers in basically similar ways on a number of important dimensions, including individuation, idealization, competence, cognitive complexity, level of involvement in activity, potency, and positive and negative evaluation.

Klos and Paddock's (1978) and O'Neil and Reiss'

(1984) reported absence of sex differences is particularly interesting because gender differences have been reported in research on both childrens' relationships with their parents (e.g. Dubin & Dubin, 1965; Walters & Stinnett, 1971) and young adults' relationships with their parents (White, Speisman, & Costos, 1983). White et al. studied adults ages 22-26 years and their parents from the perspective that individuals have the potential to progress through qualitative developmental changes across the life span and, in addition, people experience these changes in their relationships with others. The authors explored the question of whether the developmental stage of an individual's relationship with his or her parents could be predicted from scores on measures of ego and psychosocial development. White et al. found sex differences in family relationship stage scores and overall sex differences in patterns of relationships with parents. Their results indicated that women generally showed more perspective on their mothers as separate people, while men tend to see their mothers primarily in relation to themselves, but were moving toward perspective on their mothers as unique individuals. The authors' expectation that psychosocial development was related to family relationship stage was

confirmed for women but not for men, as was the relationship between acquisition of an adult social role status (marriage, parenthood) and family relationship stage.

The results of the White et al. (1983) study are contrary to O'Neil and Reiss' (1984) suggestion that, by age 20, men and women perceive their mothers in basically similar ways on a number of important dimensions. When considering this gender issue, it is vital to take into account the variables in question, as it is feasible for there to be an absence of gender differences in relation to some variables and a presence of gender differences in relation to others. Further, studies that look at children's perceptions of their parents per se may differ methodologically from studies which explore perceptions of relationships, and these distinctions can lead to entirely different conclusions.

As has been outlined, there is controversy in the literature as to whether gender is a significant factor in parent perception and in what areas gender has an influence. Many studies neglect to look at both male and female subjects (e.g. Meissner, 1965) and/or both mothers and fathers (e.g. O'Neil & Reiss, 1984). In addition, there are some studies which have grouped subjects and/or parents together, without separating the

males from the females or the mothers from the fathers (e.g. Greenberg, et al, 1983). This gender distinction is especially important currently, when there has been a 79% increase in the number of single-parent families between 1970 and 1980, leading to a current rate of one in five household being headed by a single parent (Emery, 1982). Recent statistics also indicate that men are becoming increasingly involved in childrearing in the United States (Radin, 1982), which further necessitates studying both males and females in relation to both mothers and fathers. The present study explores parent perceptions with both male and female subjects in regard to their perceptions of both their male and female parents.

Based on the Kagan et al. (1961) finding that children see themselves as more similar to the parent of the same sex than to the parent of the opposite sex, it is hypothesized that females in this study will see themselves as more individuated from fathers than from mothers, and males will see themselves as more individuated from mothers than from fathers. This prediction incorporates the idea that, despite a variety of societal changes over the past 25 years, certain basic role identification tendencies have persisted over time. It is important to take into account differences

in levels of maturity in children, as well as gender differences in children and parents, to understand parent perception. These will be discussed in the next section.

Children's Perceptions of Parents: Age and Maturity

Meissner (1965) conducted a study which indicated that age has been related to parent perception. Trends in the data suggested that certain perceptions (see Mothers vs. Fathers section) become more prevalent as subjects advance through their high school years. This is only one of several studies which has addressed the question of whether subjects' age differences impact their perceptions of their parents.

In their 1965 review of the research on children's social perceptions, Dubin and Dubin also discussed the effects of children's age on their perceptions of adults. The authors point out that the research supports the notion that age is a significant determinant of the degree of realism of perceptions, and that age determines the subtlety of cues children use in their perceptions. They conclude that, with increasing age, children's perceptions of adults correspond more accurately with objective characteristics of people and, simultaneously, become grounded in more subtle

perceptual cues. However, Dubin and Dubin insist that the issue is more complicated because certain patterns persist (e.g. mother "preferred" over father) that cannot be explained by these general rules.

It was in the 1960's that children's perceptions began to be widely recognized as pertinent to family dynamics (Walters & Stinnett, 1971) but, over twenty years later, Beitchman et al. (1985) discuss the tendency for researchers to overlook the child's point of view. This is a "potentially serious omission," as Beitchman et al. stated, and overcoming this omission is necessary in order to have as accurate an understanding as possible of these human relationships. It appears that the current upsurge of interest in the field of psychology in the area of adult development has had an important impact on the research literature. There have been several recent studies exploring perceptions of parents from the viewpoint of older and even grown "children." It is noteworthy that, in the literature of the late 1970's and early 1980's, many authors have adopted for their focus adolescents' perceptions of their relationships with their parents, rather than adolescents' perceptions of their parents. It is difficult to know the reason(s) for this emerging pattern. It may be due to the (older) age of the

children being studied and the resulting increasing complexity of their relationships with their parents. Alternatively, it could be related to a general change in the direction of how parent perception is being studied. It could also reflect the current trend towards using a systems perspective, or some combination of the above. To this writer's knowledge, there has been no notation of this trend heretofore.

As previously described, Klos and Paddock (1978) used a relationship oriented focus to study normal late adolescents' relationships with their parents and were unable to find significant effects for the subjects' age. Another study exploring adolescents' perceptions of their relationships with their parents was conducted by Greenberg, Siegel, and Leitch (1983). The nature and importance of these relationships were evaluated in relation to well-being and in comparison to relationships with peers. The newly developed Inventory of Adolescent Attachments was used, as well as a life events checklist, and self-concept and life satisfaction measures. The authors hypothesized that, in their sample of 12 to 19 year olds, the quality of perceived attachments both to parents and peers would be related to well-being and that the quality of parental relationships would be a more powerful predictor of

well-being than would the quality of peer relationships. The findings confirmed the hypotheses, suggesting that it is useful to consider the quality of attachments to significant others as an important variable throughout the life span. Additionally, these authors failed to find main effects for age on the attachment variables or age interactions in the regression analyses, indicating that older adolescents were no more likely to report differences in utilization or in the quality of relationships with parents or peers than were younger adolescents. This finding was unexpected, since the sample spanned the entire early and middle adolescent age range.

Pipp et al.'s (1985) study of adolescent-parent relationships, as described in a previous section, examined changes in the parent-child relationship over time, as perceived retrospectively by subjects. The researchers' most clear and consistent result was that subjects altered their descriptions of parent-child relationships as a function of age. From infancy to their age at the time of the study, the 19 year old adolescents portrayed their relationships with their parents in two major ways. The subjects perceived themselves as gaining in responsibility, dominance, independence, and similarity (to their parents) from

infancy to the present, and described their parents as experiencing a decline on these dimensions. For variables indicating closeness and love, on the other hand, there was a marked discontinuity in patterns over time. This means that, although in general the subjects portrayed the development of their relationships with their parents as involving greater distance and relatively less love with age, the trend was abruptly reversed at the time of the study. At the time of the study, love was perceived to be more intense than at any other period, including infancy. The authors found this surprising and, based on the results, concluded that the process of individuation is still ongoing at the age of 19. Pipp et al. noted that it would be interesting to see whether the process of individuation continues throughout adulthood.

O'Neil and Reiss (1984) were able to survey a wide range of 20-65 year olds, to evaluate possible age-related trends in adults' perception of their mothers. The researchers used their newly developed Parent Perception Inventory (PPI) and Blatt's (1979) Prose Description of parents. The PPI is an inventory constructed by factor analysis resulting in 28 items which cluster into three factors: individuation, idealization, and competency. Individuation was

operationalized by items pertaining to the degree of dependence on parent and degree of perceived similarity and/or closeness. Idealization was defined by items pertaining to common negative qualities; the greater the reluctance to endorse such statements, the higher the degree of idealization. Competency was operationalized by items relevant to parents' abilities and responsibilities. The authors failed to find a significant age-related trend for the variable of idealization, and found that mothers are rated as less competent when they become elderly. Individuation was positively associated with age of the subject.

Blatt's Prose Description, also used by O'Neil and Reiss (1984), is a measure of cognitive complexity used to evaluate subjects' perceptions of their parents. Cognitive complexity is defined as the degree to which adults view their parents as complex people with a variety of attributes (Blatt, Wein, Chevron, & Quinlan, 1979). Blatt's procedure is to have subjects take five minutes to write a paragraph describing each of their parents. Each description is then scored on one of five conceptual levels of parental representation, which will be described later in this introduction. O'Neil and Reiss were unable to find significant age effects related to cognitive complexity, as measured by Blatt's

Prose Description.

Though intuitively one may expect age to be a significant factor in parent perception, the contradictory findings in the aforementioned studies (i.e. Meissner, 1965; Greenberg et al., 1983; Pipp et al., 1985; O'Neil & Reiss, 1984) suggest that there has not been consistent evidence in the literature to support this hypothesis. Considering the inconclusive research findings documented above, there may be a more pertinent factor than age in determining peoples' perceptions of their parents. It may be that peoples' perceptions of their parents differ according to their level of maturity, which is related to but different from age. Level of maturity may be a more subtle, but more critical factor than age in understanding parent perception.

Using Loevinger's (1976) model which will be described in the next section, Powers, Hauser, Schwartz, Noam, and Jacobson (1983) studied adolescent ego development and family interaction in families of psychiatrically hospitalized adolescents and families of adolescents with no psychiatric illness. They used the Developmental Environments Coding System (DECS, Powers, 1982) to code subjects' families discussing solutions for moral dilemmas. The DECS assesses twenty-four

different kinds of family behaviors that are indicative of cognitively stimulating behaviors, cognitively inhibiting behaviors, affective support, and affective conflict. Interrater reliability (Pearson product-moment) correlations ranged from .85 to .98. The authors found significant differences between levels of ego development in the patient and nonpatient adolescents, but no significant group differences in parents' ego development. These findings suggest that adolescent ego development cannot be accounted for by differences in parental ego development. The researchers also investigated the relationship between both affective and cognitive parental behaviors and their adolescents' ego development. They found that both mothers' and fathers' support of their adolescent (labeled "affective" as opposed to "cognitive") was positively correlated with adolescent ego development in the total sample and in the nonpatient group, whereas only the fathers' support correlated with adolescent ego development in the hospitalized group. In contrast, none of the categories of parental behavior hypothesized to be cognitively stimulating (competitive challenging, noncompetitive sharing of perspectives, and focusing) was positively correlated with adolescent ego development. Powers et al. concluded that hypotheses

that assume a positive linear relationship between cognitively stimulating interactions and development are too simplistic. The authors suggest that it may be more informative to explore the relationship between ego development and combinations of different behaviors or interaction patterns.

Another alternative would be to look at how level of ego development may be related to family members' perceptions of one another. This study will explore whether level of maturity is a significant factor in determining children's perceptions of their parents. Three hypotheses will be investigated. Since part of maturity includes the ability to separate self from parents and see parents in more realistic light, it is predicted that students who are more mature will be more individuated from their parents and will idealize their parents less than students who are less mature. Maturity also incorporates the idea of being able to integrate more complexity into one's perceptions; hence the hypothesis can be proposed that students who are more mature will describe their parents in more complex terms than students who are less mature.

Thus far, this introduction has outlined the literature to date in the field of parent perception, according to mothers vs. fathers, males vs. females, and

level of age or maturity. Several issues have been raised, the exploration of which will facilitate the understanding of the impact that parents have on their children, and to what the impact can be attributed. The present study will explore more specifically how the parental roles of mother and father, gender, and level of maturity are related to parent perception.

The Present Study

This study seeks to assess whether there is a significant relationship between grown children's perceptions of their parents and the three variables: parental roles of mother and father, gender of subject, and subjects' level of maturity. The hypotheses which will be explored predict that each of these variables is significantly related to parent perception. The constructs involved in this study, as well as the measures used to operationalize them, will be described below, and pertinent related research will be reported.

Parent perception has been identified as a complicated area of study due to the variety of ways it has been viewed in the literature. For the purposes of this study, parent perception is examined in terms of the four factors emerging from the PPI and Blatt's Prose Description. O'Neil and Reiss (1984) and Blatt et al.

(1976) have found individuation, idealization, competency, and cognitive complexity to be significant aspects of parent perception.

The Parent Perception Inventory (PPI, O'Neil & Reiss, 1984) is a newly developed research tool which measures parent perception. The PPI includes 28 items for which subjects report agreement/disagreement on a five point scale. These items cluster to form the three scales of individuation, idealization, and competency. The scales of individuation and idealization were chosen by O'Neil and Reiss because of theoretical suggestions in the literature that the parent-child relationship continues to develop on these variables after the child has become an adult. The scale of competency was selected because the authors hypothesized that grown adults' perceptions of their mothers' competency may vary systematically as their mothers grow older and perhaps more dependent on their children. O'Neil and Reiss' work included two studies, one of which was to evaluate test-retest reliability and factorial validity of the instrument, the details of which are in the Method section of this thesis. The other study O'Neil and Reiss conducted was to examine age-related trends in adults' perceptions of their mothers, which was discussed in the previous section. To this writer's

knowledge, other than the two mentioned, there have not as yet been studies published using the PPI since its 1984 inception. The PPI is used in the present study to assess three of the four parent perception factors which are examined.

The fourth parent perception factor in this study, cognitive complexity, is studied using Blatt's (1979) Prose Description. Blatt's measure is a method of assessing unstructured written descriptions of mother and father which yields cognitive complexity scores for each subject on each parent. As has been mentioned, each description is scored on one of five conceptual levels of parental representation. On the sensorimotor-preoperational level, the parent is described with an emphasis on the gratification or frustration s/he provides. What characterizes the concrete-perceptual level is a literalness, a globality, and a concreteness with little emphasis on part properties, in that the parent is experienced as a totality. On the external iconic level, there is a focus on part properties and on the parent as a separate entity in terms of his/her functional activities and attributes. On the internal iconic level again there is focus on part properties and on the parent in terms of what s/he thinks, feels, and values. Level five, or the conceptual representation

level, is the one in which the parent is described in an integrative and complex manner.

Blatt's theory, which is reflected in the nine possible scores that can be assigned to parental prose descriptions, is that through the course of development, object representations (such as that of the parents) become increasingly differentiated, integrated, and accurate (Blatt et al., 1981). Blatt et al. (1979) used the prose description in a study on parental representations and depression in normal young adults. The authors were able to show that the content and cognitive level of parental representations may be a central dimension in depression. In this study, Blatt et al. assessed concurrent validity by correlating dimensions of the parental description with ratings of mother and father obtained on a semantic differential. Significant positive correlations were found on several aspects of parent description with the semantic differential.

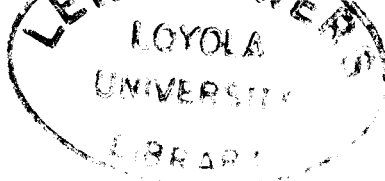
In their 1984 study, O'Neil and Reiss used Blatt's Prose Description to determine whether adults' concepts of their mothers increase in complexity as the adults get older. No age-related trend was found for the variable of conceptual complexity. As discussed earlier, perhaps level of maturity rather than age of

the subject is the pertinent variable in parent perception. This more subtle and possibly more critical variable in understanding parent perceptions is explored in the present study.

Level of maturity can be a rather subjective or abstract concept and, for research purposes, has been operationally defined. Loevinger's (1976) concept of ego development and Stewart's concept of socioemotional maturity, provide two methods of understanding maturity in ways that can be studied. They will be described below. An outline of relevant research associated with these will be included in the discussion. The theoretical differences between the two views of maturity will also be addressed.

Ego development, as conceived by Loevinger (1976), is an overall framework of meaning that a person uses to make sense of his/her experience. Loevinger's stages of ego development are positively correlated with chronological age, but Loevinger maintains that these stages do not correspond to particular ages. Loevinger outlines several ego stages arranged in progressive sequence from simplicity and globality to differentiation and integration. The first measurable stage is the impulsive stage (I-2), which is a time of egocentricity for the child. During this stage, the

child demands of and depends upon others for satisfaction of physical needs, and the child's impulses assist him/her in affirming a separate sense of self. In the self-protective stage (Delta) there is a shift in frame of reference from immediate to one in which gratification can be delayed and the child can anticipate short-term rewards and punishments. It is understood that there are rules, and the fear of getting caught is the motivation for compliance. The conformist stage (I-3) is the one in which the child shifts from an egocentric frame of reference to identification with a group. Group allegiance breeds conformity to rules and norms of the group, and stereotyping is commonplace. The self-aware level, also known as the transition between conformist and conscientious stages, is probably the modal level for adults in our society (Loevinger, 1976). In this stage there is an emergence of introspective capacities, increase in self-awareness, and a newfound appreciation of multiple possibilities in situations. In the conscientious stage (I-4), a capacity for self-criticism emerges, as well as a more complex and differentiated way of looking at others. This stage is the one in which the internalization of rules is complete, with inner rules taking precedence over external pressures. The individualistic level (I-



4/5), or the transition from conscientious to autonomous stages, is marked by a heightened sense of individuality and a concern for emotional dependence. In addition, there is greater complexity in conceptualizing interpersonal interactions than in prior stages. The distinctive mark of the autonomous stage (I-5) is the capacity to acknowledge and cope with inner conflict, and the individual at this stage reveals tolerance of ambiguity and high cognitive complexity. The highest, least understood stage is the integrated stage (I-6), in which there is a "consolidation of a sense of identity" (Loevinger, 1976, p. 26), which involves seeing reality as complex and multifaceted. Reaching this stage means that the individual is able to cherish individual differences rather than merely tolerate them. Table 1 presents Loevinger's stages of ego development concisely, in terms of impulse control, interpersonal style, conscious preoccupations, and cognitive style (Hauser, 1976, p. 933).

The Washington University Sentence Completion Test (WUSCT) has been developed as an instrument to measure level of ego development (Loevinger, 1976). The test was originally constructed for use with women (Loevinger & Wessler, 1970), and numerous forms of the WUSCT for both men and women have been constructed since.

Form 81-A, which is described in the Method section, will be used in the present study.

A variety of studies have been undertaken both to utilize and to assess Loevinger's sentence completion test. Hauser (1976) published an extensive review and critique of the measure, principally addressing reliability and validity issues. He maintained that the sentence completion test has been carefully constructed and standardized in terms of its form, administration, and scoring procedures. In assessing studies of the scoring procedures used for the sentence completion test, Hauser reported that consistently high reliability values by several different analyses have been documented. Redmore and Waldman (1975) investigated the reliability of the WUSCT. They conducted two studies in which internal consistency was high and split half reliability correlations were .85 and .90. Test-retest coefficients have been adequate (approximately .79), but the authors explain that sometimes retest scores are significantly lower than those from the initial test administration. Redmore and Waldman suggest that repeating the task may have inherently less meaning to subjects than the initial experience of responding to the test protocol. It has been demonstrated that test-retest reliability scores increase when subjects are

given a rationale for repeated administration.

In terms of discriminant validity, Hauser concluded that the sentence completion test is not simply equivalent to what is ordinarily termed "intelligence" or merely "verbal fluency." Hauser pointed out problems in predictive validity studies that have investigated the relationship between specific behaviors of children and their level of ego development (Cox, 1974; Blasi, 1972; Hoppe, 1972). In terms of construct validity, Hauser noted that one thing that several of the studies he reviewed have in common is the strong effect of chronological age on the correlations between ego development and other variables. Otherwise, Hauser found evidence confirming construct validity but pointed out the complexity of using this "milestone sequence" model which does not predict linear relationships between stages and variables.

Rozsnafszky (1981) examined the relationship between level of ego development and individual differences in personality that have been theorized to be associated with certain ego development levels. Subjects were 91 hospitalized male veterans who completed an 80 item Q set of personality descriptors. Results confirmed the predicted systematic relationships between subjects' Q-sort ratings and scores on the

sentence completion test, which provides additional evidence for the construct validity of the sentence completion test.

McAdams (1985) found further evidence for the construct validity of the sentence completion test in his work on "life stories." This author looked at people's identities as expressed through their own renditions of their lives as stories. One of the author's main lines of investigation was the relationship between certain aspects of subjects' life stories and their level of ego development. Subjects included two groups, one of 90 undergraduates and one of 50 middle-aged adult men and women. In these studies, ego development was used as a predictor of certain features or characteristics of life stories. Results showed that men and women scoring at high ego stages constructed life stories with a greater variety of plots than did subjects scoring low ego stages, indicating that high ego development is associated with greater differentiation in identity. McAdams used the sentence completion test to find other meaningful distinctions between low and high ego development. For example, subjects who were at high levels of ego development did not report more nuclear episodes (certain incidents which people use to define who they are, who they have

been, and perhaps who they are to become) in life stories than subjects low in ego development. However, subjects high in ego development did report more nuclear episodes classified as "turning points," episodes of change or transformation, than subjects low in ego development, indicating that a person high in ego development is more likely than someone low in ego development to view his/her life story as a dynamic narrative of change.

The other measure of maturity that will be used in this study is one developed by Stewart (1977). Stewart's construct of socioemotional maturity is conceptually different than Loevinger's. Loevinger's stages are intended as a progressive series of developmental stages, in which there is no place for regression and in which people are assigned one stage for any given point in their development. Stewart's method, on the other hand, identifies four discrete categories, and assumes that most normal adults' behavior includes elements of all stages, rather than reflecting exclusive concern with the issues of only one stage, as in Loevinger's system. Stewart describes the central dilemma in what she perceives as the continuous formation and integration of personality as: "to account for the persistence of a recognizable core of

personality which nonetheless changes over time in response to situational and developmental pressures for change" (p.118, Stewart & Healy, 1985). There is more fluidity, then, in Stewart's stages but both Loevinger's and Stewart's conceptions view maturity as concerning meaningful and orderly change.

Stewart has used the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT, Murray, 1943) to measure socioemotional maturity (Stewart, 1977, 1982, 1986). The TAT is a series of representations of prototypical situations on picture cards which was originally designed as a projective test and, upon analysis, reveals subjects' perceptions. TAT stories can be evaluated according to Stewart's stages, to yield a score for subjects' level of socioemotional maturity. This score may or may not correspond systematically to subjects' scores for level of ego development, as determined by the WUSCT. Such a determination is one goal of the present study.

Stewart's scoring system has been used to evaluate stories written by subjects. This method classifies subjects into one of four stages, the first one of which is the receptive (oral) stage. This stage involves a preoccupation with receiving, taking in, getting, or incorporating. Another stage is the autonomous (anal) stage, or the one concerned primarily with autonomy,

holding on, maintaining, or hanging on. The assertive (phallic) stage involves preoccupation with assertion, expanding, reaching out, or intruding. Finally, the integrated (genital) stage is the one involving integration, relating, committing, or connecting. Each of the above stages are viewed in conjunction with four major issues: relationships with authority figures, relationships with other people, inner feelings or affective responses, and orientation to action. In Stewart's system, in line with her theory, a single story can be scored for more than one stage within a single content area. Stewart's method yields a score which defines what is referred to as the individual's "modal stage." (See Table 2 for a brief outline of Stewart's scoring system.)

There have been studies which have documented reliability and validity for the use of the TAT in determining aspects of socioemotional maturity. In Stewart's (1982) study of internal processes of adaptation to external changes, average interrater reliabilities on the scoring subcategories (presence-absence category agreement coefficients) were reported to be between .87 and .94. The reliabilities on overall scores and summary scores were even higher. Internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) of the

measure were .69 for receptivity, .80 for autonomy, .78 for assertion, and .53 for integration. Given the nature of the sample, these figures were considered to be adequate.

Test-retest reliability of Stewart's scoring system was assessed using TATs collected over a one-week interval by Winter and Stewart (1977) for a study of power motive reliability. Test-retest coefficients were .45 for receptivity, .29 for autonomy, .47 for assertion, .47 for integration, .54 for weighted scale scores, and .37 for modal scores. These figures are considered to be rather high for a projective test (Stewart, 1982) and suggest that at least over short time periods this measure has considerable stability. Despite the measure being derived to differentiate discrete criterion groups and not to describe an empirical developmental sequence, Stewart (1982) found some minimal evidence from an internal analysis of the measure that it does assess a developmental sequence.

Stewart's (1982) study reported the methods used to cross-validate her scoring system. Results strongly indicated that the overall scores for each stance (receptive, autonomous, assertive, integrative) differentiated among the four behavioral criterion groups. The author concluded that there is reason to

believe that this measure does assess some important aspects of the inner psychological experience associated with stage-related behavior. In the 1982 study, Stewart presented evidence for the validity of the scoring system as an indicator of stage preoccupation and as an indicator of response to life change. The author demonstrated that emotional preoccupations with receptivity, autonomy, assertion, and integration are correlated with oral, anal, phallic, and genital behavioral preoccupations (e.g. eating, neatness, sex, and love and work) in a sample of college students. In another validation study, Stewart showed that college freshman from three different schools were most preoccupied with receptivity issues, and that students who were academically further along were more concerned with issues which the authors classified as developmentally more advanced.

Stewart, Sokol, Healy, Chester, and Weinstock-Savoy (1982) conducted five studies designed to test a general theory of adaptation or sequence of emotional stances to major life changes. They used TAT stories and scored protocols using Stewart's (1977) method. These authors were able to show that children entering school, middle-class students late in school, students in college, and women getting married and becoming mothers all seemed to

renegotiate a similar sequence of concern with receptive issues, then with issues of autonomy and assertion and, finally, with issues of integration. These studies provide a precedent for using Stewart's stages to outline a developmental sequence, as well as further documentation for construct validity for the use of Stewart's scoring system with the TAT.

Stewart, Sokol, Healy, and Chester (1986) recently conducted several longitudinal studies of children and adults in order to assess further the validity of a hypothesized process of internal adaptation to external life changes. The studies provided additional evidence for the TAT being an effective measure of socioemotional maturity. Results of these studies indicated that life changes precipitate a receptive, dependent stance toward the external environment and that the postchange period is characterized by gradual adoption of more assertive, or integrated, stances. From the evidence detailed above, it is clear that Stewart and her colleagues have conducted several studies to investigate children's and adults' adaptation to life changes which provide evidence that the TAT is an adequate measure of Stewart's conception of socioemotional maturity.

This study seeks to assess the relationships between parental roles, gender, and level of maturity

and grown childrens' perceptions of their parents. It is expected that the three independent variables will be significantly related to subjects' parent perceptions. More specifically, eight hypotheses will be explored in this study. It is predicted that:

- (1) subjects will perceive themselves as more individuated from their fathers than from their mothers;
- (2) subjects will idealize their fathers more than their mothers;
- (3) subjects will deem their fathers more competent than their mothers;
- (4) subjects will describe their mothers in more complex terms than their fathers;
- (5) female subjects will see themselves as more individuated from fathers than mothers, and male subjects will see themselves as more individuated from mothers than fathers;
- (6) subjects who are more mature will be more individuated from their parents than those who are less mature;
- (7) subjects who are more mature will idealize their parents less than subjects who are less mature; and
- (8) subjects who are more mature will describe their parents in more complex terms than subjects who are less mature.

The general theme underlying these predictions is that despite many changes over the past several decades in the American society, regarding both children's and parental roles, traditional modes and views have persisted. This study will explore this idea, from the perspective of college students in 1985.

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Subjects. Participants in this study were 135 undergraduate student volunteers, recruited from the Introductory Psychology class subject pool at Loyola University, in the fall of 1985. There were 64 males (47%) and 67 females (50%), with 4 subjects (3%) who failed to identify their gender. 73% of the students were in their freshman year of college, with 18% in their sophomore, 4% in their junior, and 6% in their senior years. The subjects were 98% single, 80% Catholic, 78% came from intact families, and 71% were living with their parents. The racial composition of the group was 77% white, 12% Asian, 6% Hispanic, and 4% black, with the average age of the subjects being 18.8 years.

Design and Procedure. The independent variables in this study are gender of subject (male, female), two levels of ego development (high, low), four levels of socioemotional maturity (receptive, autonomous, assertive, integrated), and the repeated factor of parental roles (mother, father). Ego development was measured by the Washington University Sentence

Completion Test (WUSCT), and the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) was used to yield socioemotional maturity scores, as measured by Stewart's socioemotional maturity scales. The independent variables were examined in terms of how they related to parent perception, as measured by the Parent Perception Inventory (PPI) and Blatt's Prose Description. The PPI was used to determine how individuated subjects were from their parents, as well as how much they tended to idealize their parents, and how competent they perceived their parents to be. Blatt's Prose Descriptions were scored for cognitive complexity, which yielded one of nine conceptual levels for each subject, regarding how they viewed each of their parents.

The data were collected on 13 different occasions, with an average of 10 subjects per group and a range of 4-18. Participants were informed that this study concerns relationships between grown children and their parents. Subjects were first shown a sequence of six cards from the TAT on a slide projector, one at a time for one minute each, with four minutes allotted for subjects to write a story about each picture. Subjects were then asked to complete the WUSCT form and, next, to take five minutes to write a prose description of each of their parents. The subjects then filled out a

demographic sheet which was constructed by the researcher, and the subjects' final task was to complete the PPI twice, once regarding each of their parents.

Ego Development and Socioemotional Maturity.

Washington University Sentence Completion Test (WUSCT).

The WUSCT (Loevinger & Wessler, 1970) has been developed as an instrument to measure level of ego development, as described by Loevinger (1976). Hauser (1976) and Loevinger (1979) have documented adequate interrater reliability correlations (between .71 and .77). Form 81-A was used, which consists of 18 sentence stems, the responses to which are used to determine one of seven possible levels of ego development for each subject. (See Table 1 for descriptive chart of ego development levels.) Examples of items:

2. Raising a family ...
5. Being with other people ...
10. When people are helpless ...
16. I feel sorry ...

The WUSCT consists of short directions for the subject followed by the 18 sentence stems, each of which subjects are instructed to complete so as to make full sentences. The WUSCTs were scored by an advanced undergraduate student trained in Loevinger's system. This scorer achieved 86% exact agreement and 97% either

Table 1 *

Milestones of Ego Development

Stage	Impulse control, "moral" style	Interpersonal style	Conscious preoccupations	Cognitive style
Presocial (I-1) Symbiotic (I-1)		Autistic Symbiotic	Self vs. nonself Self vs. nonself	
Impulsive (I-2)	Impulsive, fear	Receiving, dependent, exploitive	Bodily feelings, especially sexual and aggressive	Stereotypy, conceptual confusion
Self-protective (Delta)	Fear of being caught, externalizing blame, opportunistic	Wary, manipulative, exploitive	Self-protection, wishes, things, advantages, control	
Transition from self-protective to conformist (Delta/3)	Obedience and conformity to social norms are simple and absolute rules	Manipulative, obedient	Concrete aspects of traditional sex roles, physical causation as opposed to psychological causation	Conceptual simplicity, stereotypes
Conformist (I-3)	Conformity to external rules, shame, guilt for breaking rules	Belonging, helping, superficial niceness	Appearance, social acceptability, banal feelings, behavior	Conceptual simplicity, stereotypes, clichés
Transition from conformist to conscientious; self-consciousness (I-3/4)	Dawning realization of standards, contingencies, self-criticism	Being helpful, deepened interest in interpersonal relations	Consciousness of the self as separate from the group, recognition of psychological causation	Awareness of individual differences in attitudes, interests and abilities; mentioned in global and broad terms
Conscientious (I-4)	Self-evaluated standards, self-criticism	Intensive, responsible, mutual, concern for communication	Differentiated feelings, motives for behavior, self-respect, achievements, traits, expression	Conceptual complexity, idea of patterning
Transition from conscientious to autonomous	Individuality, coping with inner conflict	Cherishing of interpersonal relations	Communicating, expressing ideas and feelings, process and change	Toleration for paradox and contradiction
Autonomous (I-5)	Add: Coping with conflicting inner needs ^b	Add: Respect for autonomy	Vividly conveyed feelings, integration of physiological and psychological causation of behavior, development, role conception, self-fulfillment, self in social context	Increased conceptual complexity; complex patterns, toleration for ambiguity, broad scope, objectivity
Integrated (I-6)	Add: Reconciling inner conflicts, renunciation of unattainable	Add: Cherishing of individuality	Add: Identity	

NOTE: "Add" means in addition to the description applying to the previous level

* From Loevinger and Wessler, 1970, pp. 24,25

exact agreement or one stage off agreement with an expert rater. This was calculated by the rater's percent agreement with an expert rater, as documented in Loevinger and Wessler (1978). The scorer assigned each item one level of ego development, following which Loevinger's Ogive rules (Loevinger & Wessler, 1978) were used to achieve a Total Protocol Rating (TPR) for each subject's protocol. The Ogive rules for the 36 stem Sentence Completion Test were used and divided by 2 for the purposes of this study. Loevinger who consulted regarding this technique, agreed that there is not a more established method of assigning TPR's, using the 18 stem SCT form.

In this study, subjects were divided into two groups with respect to ego development, high (I-4 and above) and low (I-3/4 and below) (McAdams, 1985). McAdams justified this method of dividing subjects both theoretically and empirically. Theoretically, the author noted that the I-4 level seems to be the first and lowest level at which a post-conformist ego emerges. Despite hints of self-awareness arising in the previous stage, at level I-4 long-term self-evaluated goals and ideas, differentiated self-criticism, and a pervasive sense of responsibility become salient characteristics of the ego for the first time. Empirically, McAdams

noted that subjects tend to cluster at I-3/4 and I-4, and that data analysis and interpretation would be difficult if either a division was made at any other point in Loevinger's scheme or more than two divisions were made. McAdams' purpose was to assess the general utility of a single, broad distinction in structural complexity of the ego, which is also of concern in the present study.

Thematic Apperception Test (TAT). The TAT (Murray, 1943) is a series of representations of prototypical situations on picture cards, which was designed to be used as a projective device and, upon analysis, reveals subjects' perceptions. Subjects were instructed to view the slides for one minute, and then take four minutes to be imaginative in writing a story about each picture, including what was happening before the picture, what is going on in the picture, what transpires later, and what the characters are thinking and feeling. The six cards selected for this study are from Murray's original set of twenty: Cards 1, 2, 6GF, 6BM, 7GF, and 7BM. They picture, respectively: a young boy contemplating a violin which rests on a table in front of him; a country scene with a young woman in the foreground, with books in her hand, and in the background a man working in the fields, with an older woman looking on; a young woman

sitting on the edge of a sofa looking back over her shoulder at an older man with a pipe in his mouth who seems to be addressing her; a short elderly woman standing, with her back turned to a tall young man, with the latter looking downward with a perplexed expression; an older woman sitting on a sofa close beside a girl speaking or reading to her, with the girl - who holds a doll in her lap - looking away; a gray-haired man looking at a younger man who is sullenly staring into space (Murray's descriptions, Holt, 1978). Cards 1 and 2 were selected because they are commonly responded to with stories about parents and family relationships (Holt, 1978). The other four cards were selected because they include every possible gender combination of parent and child.

Stewart's scoring system (1977) was employed to evaluate the six TAT stories written by each subject. The investigator was trained by Stewart's Scoring Manual for Stages of Psychological Adaptation to the Environment (1977), and reached .85 reliability after going through nine sets of practice stories. This reliability level was determined by comparing the scorer's ratings on the practice stories to those of an expert scorer, as documented in the scoring manual. The rater then scored each story according to any of 16

categories - four stages (receptive, autonomous, assertive, integrated) across four issues (attitude towards authority, relations with others, feelings, orientation to action), as defined by the scoring manual. (See Table 2 for a descriptive chart of these categories.) This yielded 6 scores for each subject: 4 raw scores, one for each of the four stages; a modal score, which was the category with the highest total score of any of the four stages (receptive, autonomous, assertive, or integrated); and a corrected scale score which is a composite score, consisting of raw scores for each category multiplied by 1,2,3,4 respectively (receptive, autonomous, etc.), and then summed, all divided by a grand total of the amount of times the individual subject used each category.

Parent Perception. **Parent Perception Inventory (PPI).** The PPI (O'Neil & Reiss, 1984) is a new measure that was developed by way of responses to 60 original statements being submitted to a factor analysis using principal axis and varimax rotation. The first three rotated factors presented interpretable item clusters and, using a cutoff point for factor loadings of .40, 28 of the 60 items were identified as an item on one of three factors. These three major factors accounted for between 5.8 and 19.8% of the variance in the original

Table 2*

Brief Outline of Stewart's Scoring SystemCONTENT CATEGORIES ASSOCIATED WITH
BEHAVIORALLY DEFINED GROUPS

<u>Content Areas</u>	<u>Oral</u>	<u>Anal</u>	<u>Phallic</u>	<u>Genital</u>
<u>Attitude toward authority</u>	Authority is benevolent	Authority is critical, reprimanding	Opposition to authority	Authority is limited
<u>Relations with others</u>	Immediate gratification	Lack of gratification	Flight and exploitation	Mutuality, sharing
<u>Feelings</u>	Loss, despair, confusion	Anxiety about competence	Hostility, anger	Ambivalence
<u>Orienta- tion to action</u>	Passivity	Clearing of disorder	Failure, in context of confident attempt	Work com- mit- ment and involve- ment

* From Stewart, 1982, p.1105

sample. The test-retest reliability correlations are between .81 and .90, and were arrived at by computing Pearson product moment correlations from two separate testings of 44 of the 60 (73%) randomly selected subjects who participated in the initial testing and, two weeks later, in a reliability check (O'Neil & Reiss, 1984). The three factors are individuation, idealization, and competence. The items on the inventory are accompanied by five point agree/disagree rating scales (strongly agree, agree, don't know, disagree, strongly disagree). Examples of items:

Individuation: 1. I usually agree with my mother regarding other people.

8. I feel very close to my mother.

Idealization: 2. My mother can be selfish.

12. My mother is a difficult person to get along with.

Competency: 3. My mother has total confidence in herself.

27. My mother can solve most any problem.

Subjects were instructed to respond to items by circling the answer they thought most accurately described their parent. All subjects were given the PPI regarding their father first, followed by the PPI for their mother. The only difference between the two was that the words "mother" or "father" were inserted, accordingly, into each item on the correct form, along with appropriate

pronouns. The PPI scoring was objective and straightforward. Each item on the five point agree/disagree rating scale was assigned a number 1-5, such that higher numbers indicated higher scores on the respective scales. The sum of each subject's scores was found and recorded for each of the three scales (individuation, idealization, competency).

Blatt's Prose Description. Blatt's (1979) method of assessing unstructured descriptions of mother and father was used. In Blatt's (1981) manual for the Assessment of Qualitative and Structural Dimensions of Object Representations, the author reported that the Pearson product moment reliability correlation for judges' ratings of the conceptual level of parent descriptions was .78. To complete this measure, subjects were instructed to take five minutes to describe each of their parents (ten minutes total) in paragraph form. The investigator and one rater trained together to learn the Blatt scoring system, by practicing with sample parent descriptions from the Manual (Blatt, 1981), and then independently scoring five sets of 30 of the subjects' descriptions. The investigator and the rater together reached .72 (Pearson R correlation) reliability, after which one rater scored the remaining 120 descriptions (total 270 = 2 per

subject). Next, this one rater rescored all disagreements from the 150 subjects' descriptions which both raters had previously scored. Blatt's scoring system, which was elaborated in the introduction, consists of five levels (sensorimotor-preoperational, concrete-perceptual, external iconic, internal iconic, conceptual representation), each of which has a corresponding score. Single ratings between numbers 1-9 were assigned, according to manual descriptions, with in-between scores being scored as such (i.e. score 1 for sensorimotor-preoperational, score 3 for concrete-perceptual, and score 2 for in-between). The higher numbers indicate higher degrees of conceptual complexity. Two scores for each subject were recorded, one regarding the mother description and one regarding the father description.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Overview

In previous investigations, gender and age have been shown to impact people's views of their parents. Few findings have been consistent across studies. In this thesis, college students were studied to investigate the impact that subjects' gender, parental roles, and students' maturity have on perceptions of parents. An analysis was conducted to determine whether subjects differ according to their demographic characteristics. T-tests and chi-square tests were conducted to compare males and females, as well as to compare groups on the different levels of ego development and stages of socioemotional maturity. A series of four way ANOVAs with a repeated fourth factor were conducted, to examine group differences on each of the parent perception scales, namely competency, individuation, idealization, and cognitive complexity. Subjects' perceptions were analyzed as four 2 x 2 x 4 x 2 analyses of variance: gender (male, female) x ego development level (low, high) x Stewart modal stage (receptive, autonomous, assertive, integrated) x parental role (mother, father = repeated factor, with

each parent matched with each subject on each scale). Additionally, correlational analyses were conducted to determine relationships among the four dependent variable scales, in terms of mothers versus fathers.

Demographic Differences Between Males and Females

The analysis of subjects' demographic characteristics revealed that the male students in this study are significantly further along in terms of years of college than are the female students ($t(129) = 2.83, p < .01$). This was the only significant finding that emerged from the investigation of demographic characteristics.

Gender Differences in Parent Perception

Table 3 presents means and standard deviations of subjects' scores on the four parent perception scales used in this study. T-test results indicated that females describe their fathers in more complex terms than do males ($t(128) = -2.23, p < .05$). ANOVA revealed no significant main effects or two-way interactions regarding gender. However, a trend was observed in the two-way interaction between gender and parental role. As can be observed in Table 4, subjects tend to describe their opposite sex parent in more complex terms than

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations on Subjects' Parent
Perception Scale Scores

	GENDER OF SUBJECT					
	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	(n=64)		(n=67)		(N=135)*	
PARENT PERCEPTION SCALE	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
INDIVIDUATION						
Father	25.46	9.15	26.80	9.99	26.38	9.72
Mother	21.13	6.32	19.78	8.30	20.53	7.32
IDEALIZATION						
Father	36.89	6.82	35.64	7.23	36.12	7.32
Mother	40.34	5.20	39.69	5.88	40.06	5.48
COMPETENCY						
Father	32.54	4.89	31.59	5.37	31.93	5.28
Mother	31.06	4.53	31.07	5.38	31.12	4.93
COMPLEXITY						
Father	4.08	1.58	4.73	1.74	4.39	1.67
Mother	4.27	1.71	4.48	1.65	4.39	1.68

* N's vary due to missing data

they do their same sex parent. ($F(1,112) = 3.04$, $p < .10$). Although hypothesis 5 stated that female subjects would see themselves as more individuated from their fathers than their mothers, and that males would see themselves as more individuated from their mothers than from their fathers, the data did not support this prediction.

In summary, there was no support for the hypothesis regarding gender and the parent perception factor of individuation. However, results did reveal that there was a tendency for students to describe their opposite sex parent in more complex terms than their same sex parent. No significant differences between male and female students emerged in the findings on the variables of either idealization or competency.

Maturity and Parent Perception

Two-thirds of the subjects were categorized as low in ego development with the remaining one-third placed in the high ego development group. Tables 5 and 6 report frequency data for the two measures of maturity employed in this study. The frequency data reveals that there are more males than females at lower stages of ego development, and more females than males at higher stages. The opposite is true, however, for

Table 4

Mean Cognitive Complexity Scores as a Function of Gender
and Parental Role

PARENTAL ROLE	GENDER	
	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
	(n=64)	(n=67)
Father	4.08	4.73
Mother	4.21	4.47

socioemotional maturity. More females than males are found at the receptive and autonomous stages, while more males than females at the assertive and integrated stages. Despite these interesting observations regarding the frequency data, chi-square tests comparing these groups were not significant.

Subjects low in ego development were found to observe their fathers as more competent than did subjects high in ego development ($t_{(131)} = 2.06, p < .05$). Additionally, a trend in the data indicated differences across the four Stewart stages in perception of parental competency: receptive $M = 32.01$, autonomous $M = 30.29$, assertive $M = 31.28$, and integrated $M = 34.06$ ($F(3,112) = 2.18, p < .10$). According to these findings, subjects who scored at the receptive and integrated Stewart modal stages had similar and relatively higher means on the competency scale ($M = 33.04$), while the autonomous and assertive subjects were similar and had relatively lower group means on the competency scale ($M = 30.79$).

Hypothesis 6 stated that students who are more mature would be more individuated from their parents than those who are less mature. In terms of socioemotional maturity, a trend in the data indicated that subjects' individuation scores for mothers and fathers tended to be closer together for the integrated

Table 5

Frequencies and Percentages for Subjects' Level of Ego
Development

EGO LEVEL	GENDER					
	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	(n=64)		(n=67)		(N=131)*	
	<u>Freq</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>%</u>
I-2	8	12.50	3	4.48	11	8.40
I-3	0	0	0	0	0	0
I-3/4	38	59.38	37	55.22	75	57.25
I-4	16	25.00	19	28.36	35	26.72
I-4/5	2	3.13	7	10.45	9	6.87
I-5	0	0	1	1.49	1	.76

* N's vary due to missing data

Table 6

Frequencies and Percentages for Subjects' Modal Stewart
Stage Scores

STEWART MODAL	GENDER					
	Male (n=64)		Female (n=67)		Total (N=135)*	
	<u>Freq</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>%</u>
Receptive	31	48.44	43	64.18	74	54.81
Autonomous	11	17.19	11	16.42	22	16.30
Assertive	17	26.56	10	14.93	27	20.00
Integrated	5	7.81	3	4.48	8	5.93

* N's vary due to missing data

group than the other three groups ($F(3,112) = 2.35$, $p < .10$). (See Table 7.) No significant findings emerged from the data regarding individuation in terms of its relation to ego development.

Hypothesis 7 postulated that students who are more mature would idealize their parents less than students who are less mature. The data revealed that subjects low in ego development idealized their fathers more than did subjects with higher levels of ego development ($t(131) = 2.42$, $p < .05$). No differences between groups were found for mothers, thus supporting the hypothesis, but only for fathers. Groups of subjects at different stages of socioemotional maturity did not vary systematically on the variable of idealization.

Hypothesis 8 predicted that students who are more mature would describe their parents in more complex terms than students who are less mature. High ego subjects saw their fathers in more complex ways than did low ego subjects ($t(132) = -2.22$, $p < .05$). Although the data did not indicate that mothers were viewed in this same manner, a trend in the data revealed that subjects who scored high in ego development had a tendency to describe both parents in more complex terms ($M = 4.73$) than did their low ego counterparts ($M = 4.06$) ($F(1,112) = 3.45$, $p < .10$). Table 8 and Figure 1 illustrate these

Table 7

Mean Parent Perception Scores as a Function of Stewart
Modal Stage and Parental Role

	STEWART MODAL STAGE			
	<u>Receptive</u> (n=71)	<u>Autonomous</u> (n=22)	<u>Assertive</u> (n=27)	<u>Integrated</u> (n=8)
PARENT PERCEPTION SCALE				
INDIVIDUATION				
Father	25.31	28.77	26.67	22.87
Mother	20.96	18.45	20.81	21.12
IDEALIZATION				
Father	37.14	34.36	35.07	38.25
Mother	40.07	39.05	40.26	39.75
COMPETENCY				
Father	32.10	31.41	31.86	35.12
Mother	31.46	29.18	30.70	33.00
COMPLEXITY				
Father	4.58	4.18	4.33	3.87
Mother	4.49	4.09	4.15	4.38

results. No significant results emerged from the data regarding how subjects at different stages of socioemotional maturity viewed their parents in terms of complexity.

In this study, the results regarding maturity cannot be summarized in a simple manner. This complexity mirrors the nature of the construct itself and will be further elaborated in the discussion, following the report of the ways the subjects in this study view fathers and mothers.

Mothers versus Fathers in Parent Perception

Hypothesis 1 postulated that students would perceive themselves as more individuated from their fathers than from their mothers. In support of this prediction, the data indicated that subjects see themselves as significantly more individuated from their fathers ($M = 26.04$) than from their mothers ($M = 20.51$) ($F(1,112) = 25.66, p < .001$).

Hypothesis 2 stated that students would idealize their fathers more than their mothers. Contrary to the prediction, results showed that subjects see their mothers ($M = 36.30$) in significantly more idealized light than they do their fathers ($M = 39.91$) ($F(1,112) = 10.35, p < .01$).

Table 8

Mean Parent Perception Scores as a Function of Ego
Development and Parental Role

PARENT PERCEPTION SCALE	EGO DEVELOPMENT	
	<u>Low</u>	<u>High</u>
	(n=45)	(n=83)
INDIVIDUATION		
Father	24.99	27.98
Mother	21.34	18.98
IDEALIZATION		
Father	37.28	34.49
Mother	40.22	39.36
COMPETENCY		
Father	32.80	30.87
Mother	31.30	30.47
COMPLEXITY		
Father	4.17	4.87
Mother	4.28	4.47

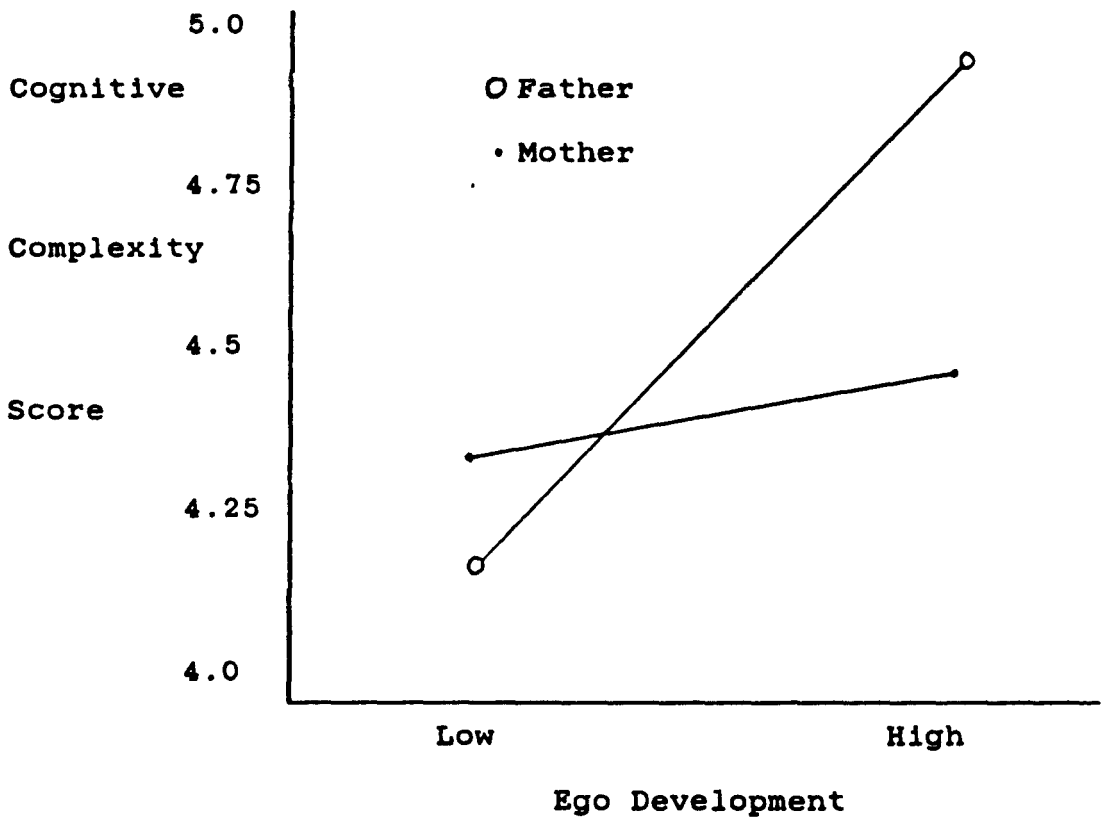


Figure 1. Mean cognitive complexity scores as a function of ego development and parental role.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that students would perceive their fathers as more competent than their mothers.

There was a trend in the data which indicated that subjects tend to perceive their fathers as more competent ($\bar{M} = 32.12$) than they do their mothers ($\bar{M} = 31.01$) ($F(1,112) = 2.99, p < .10$).

Analysis of variance data yielded no significant differences between the way that students described their mothers as opposed to their fathers, in terms of cognitive complexity. Hence, the results did not support hypothesis 4 which predicted that students would describe their mothers in more complex terms than their fathers.

Table 9 reports intercorrelations (Pearson r) between parent perception scales for subjects' mothers and their father. The data indicated that subjects perceive their mothers and fathers similarly in terms of how competent their parents are ($p < .001$), how individuated subjects are from their parents ($p < .001$), how much they idealize their parents ($p < .05$), and how complex the terms are in which they describe their parents ($p < .001$). In other words, on all four parent perception scales, there were significant correlations between the way subjects see their mothers and the way they see their fathers. These correlations also reveal

Table 9

Intercorrelations Between Parent Perception Scales for Mother and Father

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
<u>MOTHER</u>								
1. Competency								
2. Individuation	-.47***							
3. Idealization	.51	-.55***						
4. Complexity	-.07	.17	-.25**					
<u>FATHER</u>								
5. Competency	.34***	-.19*	.13	-.07				
6. Individuation	-.36***	.31***	-.22*	.03	-.60***			
7. Idealization	.32***	.23**	.21*	-.04	.63***	-.72***		
8. Complexity	-.05	-.03	-.15	.38***	.11	-.03	.03	
	* $p < .05$	** $p < .01$	*** $p < .001$					

that subjects who see their mothers as more competent are less likely to perceive themselves as individuated from their mothers ($p < .001$), and that the correlation between perceived competency of the father and individuation follows the same pattern as for mothers ($p < .001$). The correlations between competency and idealization follow a different pattern: as competency scores for both parents increase, subjects' tendency to idealize those parents also increases ($p < .001$). The correlations between subjects' individuation and idealization scores are in the same direction as those aforementioned correlations between competency and individuation. In other words, as subjects' individuation scores increased, their tendency to idealize their parents decreased ($p < .001$). The only discrepancy between correlations for mother and those for father was in relation to the correlation between idealization and complexity: as subjects' idealization scores for mothers increased, they tended to describe their mothers in less complex terms ($p < .01$); however, the corresponding situation for father was not significant.

The exploration of mothers vs. fathers in parent perception revealed that students in this study view themselves as more individuated from fathers than from

mothers, they idealize their mothers more than their fathers, they see fathers as more competent than mothers, and they do not describe mothers in more complex terms than fathers.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

This investigation promotes a greater understanding of relationships between grown children and their parents by examining how gender and maturity are related to college students' perceptions of their parents. It is particularly interesting to examine parent perceptions in the 1980's, while male and female roles and responsibilities are undergoing significant changes. Women are entering the work force in great numbers and men are becoming more involved in child care (Moen, 1982). Maturity is an important variable to explore primarily because previous studies have not shown consistent results regarding age differences.

In terms of ego development, the results supported hypothesis 8 which postulated that students who are more mature describe their parents in more complex terms than students who are less mature. The ego development data also partly supported hypothesis 7 which predicted that more mature subjects idealize both parents less than students who are less mature; these results were significant for fathers, but not for mothers. In addition, hypothesis 1, which stated that students perceive themselves as more individuated from their

fathers than from their mothers, was supported by the results. A trend in the data indicated that, as predicted by hypothesis 3, students tend to perceive their fathers as more competent than their mothers. The results regarding hypothesis 2, which predicted that students idealize their fathers more than their mothers, emerged in the opposite direction to that which was predicted. The remaining three hypotheses were not supported by the data. Some interesting results emerged which were not predicted and these too will be discussed below.

Hypothesis 8, which postulated that mature students describe their parents in more complex ways than the relatively less mature subjects, was supported by the ego development data. Loevinger's concept of ego development is partially defined by subjects at higher stages of ego development having a capacity to perceive the world in a more complex manner. Hence, the results of this study provide additional evidence for the construct validity of ego development as determined by Loevinger's Sentence Completion Test.

Hypothesis 7 predicted that students who are more mature idealize their parents less than students who are less mature. The ego development data supported this prediction for fathers, but not for mothers. Because

the concept of maturity includes the ability to see people, including parents, in a more realistic light, the finding for fathers makes sense. It is unclear as to what the reason may be that subjects high in ego development perceive their fathers as less ideal than low ego subjects but do not see their mothers in that manner. There may be a dynamic between mothers and their children, that does not exist between children and fathers, which causes children to continue to idealize their mothers as they mature. The finding in this study that students are more individuated from their fathers than their mothers (hypothesis 1) may be pertinent here. Perhaps, then, subjects' tendency to idealize corresponds somehow to the degree of individuation that they have achieved, part of which may be related to level of maturity. O'Neil and Reiss (1984) were unable to find significant age-related results for the variable of idealization in their study of grown children's perceptions of their mothers. Hence it may be that ego development is indeed a more important factor than age when it comes to idealization of parents. This finding requires further research for any conclusive statements to be made.

The results pertaining to hypothesis 1 in the present study revealed that subjects see themselves as

more individuated from their fathers than from their mothers. Results emerged in the predicted direction. Subjects saw themselves as more individuated from fathers than from mothers, which supports the idea that the 19 year old college students in this 1985 study see their mothers as the parent to whom they are most connected. This is not surprising, given that mothers bear children and that child rearing has traditionally been the province of the mother (Moen, 1982). This finding indicates that, for the subjects in this study, the recent influx of women into the work force and men in child care (Moen, 1982) has not altered at least this one aspect of parent perception. Due to the selective nature of this sample, the college students in the present study may or may not represent their cohort group. The subjects are part of a larger group of children who were born and raised in the mid-1960's and early 1970's, which can be viewed as a transitional era in which parental and occupational roles were just beginning to change. Perhaps the students were born too soon to be impacted by these changes or, alternatively, these changes may not have a significant impact on children's perceptions of their parents. It will be interesting to monitor this particular cohort group in further research, as well as to investigate how the

children born in the late 1970's, early 80's, and henceforth will view their parents.

A trend in the data supported hypothesis 3 which predicted that subjects would see their fathers as more competent than their mothers. When viewed along with the finding that subjects are more individuated from their fathers and idealize their mothers more than they do their fathers, it seems that subjects' perceptions of their fathers as most competent was not enough to persuade them to idealize their fathers more than their mothers. In other words, although conceptually the factors of competency and idealization could be related, the data indicate that one does not necessarily imply the other, when it comes to parent perception. The subjects' views of themselves as more individuated from fathers than mothers, of mothers as more ideal than fathers, and of fathers as more competent than mothers bring to mind Kagan and Lemkin's (1960) findings that fathers were perceived as more competent and mothers were perceived as more nurturant than fathers. Thus, it appears that there are some ways in which people's views of their parents have not changed, since the 1960 findings. As has been mentioned earlier, Parke and Sawin (1980) observed that, in spite of new roles for mothers and fathers, parental roles continue to be

allocated in a traditional fashion. It may be that at least some of the changes Moen (1982) refers to have not yet impacted and will in coming years. It is possible that the impact of these new roles occurs in other ways or, perhaps, that alterations in parental roles will not change basic ways in which children perceive their parents. As has been mentioned, the particular cohort group used in this study may also be unique in terms of their parent perceptions. Further exploration is necessary to better understand how parent perceptions change with the times.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that students would idealize their fathers more than their mothers. Results emerged contrary to this expectation. However, combined with the finding that subjects see themselves as more individuated from fathers than from mothers (hypothesis 1), the results confirm separation-individuation theory (Mahler, Pine & Bergman, 1975). Such theory integrates conceptions of individuation and idealization in a manner not previously done in this thesis. Proponents of separation-individuation theory maintain that the less individuated children are, the more they tend to idealize their mothers. That is, the closer the relationship between parent and child, the less of a capacity the child seems to have to view his/her parent

in a "real" and objective manner. This finding relates to subjects wanting to keep most sacred the parent to whom they feel the closest, rather than to idealize the parent whom they feel least close to, as was suggested by hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 4 which states that subjects describe their mothers in more complex ways than their fathers was not supported by the data. The data revealed significant correlations on all scales between the way subjects perceived their mothers and their fathers. This implies that, despite some differences in the ways subjects see their mothers as opposed to their fathers, there is a strong relationship between the way the subjects view their two parents on the parent perception scales used in this study. Vaughn (1966) had documented that his school-aged subjects viewed their fathers in a more global and simplistic manner than they did their mothers. It may be that this has changed in the twenty years since the Vaughn study or, perhaps, that older or more mature "children" do not differentiate their parents in this way. Again, the data supports separation-individuation theory. It would seem, according to this theory, that the less individuated or more fused children feel to their parents, the less capable they are of perceiving them with complexity.

The (relatively) less individuated child's decreased ability to perceive a parent with complexity corresponds, theoretically, with his/her decreased capacity to view a parent in a "real" and objective manner, as was previously discussed. The finding that students do not describe mothers in more complex ways than fathers can be understood most powerfully through separation-individuation theory.

This researcher predicted in hypothesis 5 that female subjects would be more individuated from their fathers than their mothers, and that males would be more individuated from their mothers than from their fathers. Kagan et al.'s (1961) finding that children see themselves as more similar to the parent of the same sex than to the parent of the opposite sex was not corroborated. Viewed together with the finding that students perceive themselves as more individuated from fathers than mothers, this finding can be more easily understood. Separation-individuation theory would have predicted that both male and female subjects would be more individuated from fathers than mother. The data support such a conclusion, rather than hypothesis 5.

Although no significant gender differences emerged regarding individuation, results indicated that there was a tendency for females to describe their fathers in

more complex terms than their mothers, and for male subjects to describe their mothers in more complex terms than their fathers. Here, separation-individuation theory does not explain the results. It would have predicted that both males and females describe fathers in more complex terms than mothers, due to people being more individuated from fathers, hence more capable of objectivity. This finding raises the question of what it means to describe a parent in relatively more complex terms. Blatt et al.'s (1981) conception is that through the course of development, object representations become increasingly differentiated, integrated, and accurate. Somehow, although subjects do not perceive themselves as closer to their same sex parent, they tend to be more capable of viewing their opposite sex parent in a more objective light. Because gender and maturity may be confounded in this study, as will be discussed below, this finding and subsequent interpretations must be regarded with caution. Further study, using Blatt's measure, may lend clarity.

In this study, males outnumbered females at low levels of ego development, and the reverse was true at Stewart's receptive and assertive stages. The reader must be reminded at this point that males in the sample have significantly more years of college than do

females. This artifact could confound the data, with the maturity variable being confused with that of gender. This means that interpretations must be regarded with caution. Research studies to date identify the two measures of maturity as different, despite their overlap. Stewart et al.'s (1986) most recent work on life changes indicates that people involved in significant life changes (here, perhaps, adjustment to college, since the majority of students are in their freshman year) tend to regress toward the receptive stance. From the results, it appears that female college students have a greater tendency to regress than males do. This data fits with Stewart et al.'s suggestion that perhaps the male sex role provides less comfortable room for the experience of receptive, dependent emotional states than the female role. Thus, males may be more uncomfortable adopting the receptive stance, and may struggle for autonomy and assertion sooner. In terms of males outnumbering females at low levels of ego development, Loevinger et al. (1985) documents that it has been difficult to find any consistent gender differences in levels of ego development. In the present study, it was informally observed that some males and no females responded to sentence completion items with answers which indicated

that they were not taking the test seriously, such as: "The thing I like about myself is I came to fill out this dumb questionnaire." Such answers are scored at low levels of ego development, and it is the researcher's impression that the format of the SCT may "provoke" males who would be so inclined in a way that the Prose Description format did not. On the other hand, it was observed that each subject seemed to respond to the Prose Description in a serious manner. The above would explain what appears to be a discrepancy in the results, if the view is taken that both these constructs measure a kind of developmental maturity.

Hypothesis 6 predicted that the more mature subjects would see themselves as more individuated from their parents than those relatively less mature, and hypothesis 7 postulated that more mature subjects would idealize their parents less than the relatively less mature subjects. Neither of these two hypotheses were borne out by the results. The rationale underlying these predictions was that since part of maturity includes the ability to separate self from parents and see parents in a more realistic light, such results would emerge in this study. Apparently, what is going on is more complex than that. For example, subjects at Stewart's integrated stage had individuation scores

which were closer together for their mother and father ratings than the scores at the other three stages. It may be, then, that students who are in a position of being more "mature" have a sort of equidistance from their parents that may have more to do with the individual than his/her parents, as opposed to the less mature who have not become "integrated" in terms of their parent perceptions.

Although there was no formal hypothesis regarding how subjects rated their perceptions of their parents' competency, the data revealed that on this scale subjects at Stewart's receptive and integrated stages saw their parents as significantly more competent than the autonomous and assertive stage subjects. This finding raises the issue of a limitation in the Parent Perception Inventory, which is that there is no built-in "control" for a more objective measure of parental competence. For example, some parents may be more competent than others, in an objective sense.

From the results of this study, it is possible to make some comments about the constructs and measures used. Blatt's Prose Description ostensibly yields levels of the degree of complexity with which subjects view their parents. However, the five levels of object representations used in this measure are based on

developmental psychological concepts derived from Piaget, Werner, and developmental psychoanalytic theory, and could easily be mistaken merely for another measure of maturity. In this study, then, the construct of cognitive complexity may not be distinct from either the construct of ego development or that of socioemotional maturity.

The measure of ego development used in this study was more powerful than the socioemotional maturity measure, in yielding results that facilitated the understanding of how young adults perceive their parents. It may be that ego development is more pertinent to students' perceptions of their parents or, alternatively, that there is not yet complete enough an understanding of what Stewart's concepts mean for the stages to be adequately understood in terms of their relationship to parent perception. Further research is needed to investigate this possible lack of clarity.

To this author's knowledge, the Parent Perception Inventory has not previously been used in a published study to assess perceptions of fathers. O'Neil and Reiss (1984) developed the measure for parent perceptions, but studied mothers and left the study of perceptions of fathers for future studies such as this one. Hence, the results of this study are the first of

their kind and need further research to corroborate the findings and increase the understanding of children's perceptions of their parents.

The Parent Perception Inventory is a new measure which has only been utilized in a few published studies. It seems to have potential for some useful research studies. However, it is important for researchers to keep in mind that there are a variety of variables involved in people's perceptions of their parents which do not seem to be adequately represented in presently available measures. Clearly, people's perceptions of their parents do not boil down to individuation, idealization, competency, and complexity. But this study showed that there are ways in which such perceptions can be predicted.

The restricted range in the sample of college students used in this study also puts constraints on the conclusions which can be drawn. It is recommended that in future research a less homogeneous sample be used to explore the interaction between gender and maturity in people's parent perceptions.

Several of the findings in this study corroborate separation-individuation theory, as explained by Mahler. Such theory seems useful to consider when investigating parent perceptions. This study has also suggested the

utility of looking at cohort differences, to assist in the understanding of the impact of societal changes on childrens' perceptions of their parents. It may be especially interesting to monitor members of the particular cohort group observed in this study, who were born into what might be called the transitional era in which parental and occupational roles were just beginning to change. Future cohort groups will need to be studied as well. Parent perception may change over time, too, hence longitudinal studies, with a wide range of ages studied over time, will shed immense light on children's perceptions of their parents.

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The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts.

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