THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Themes of Hostility and Harm in Early Adolescents' Story Compositions:

Past and Present

by

Rosalynde Bates

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

CALGARY, ALBERTA

AUGUST, 1997

0-612-24644-2

Canada

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate

Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Themes of Hostility and Harm in Early

Adolescent's Story Compositions: Past and Present" submitted by Rosalynde Bates in

partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science.
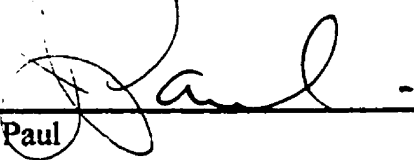
_____
Dr. A. McKeough

Department of Educational Psychology

_____
Dr. D. McDougall

Department of Educational Psychology

_____
Dr. J. Paul

Graduate Division of Educational Research

_____
Date

ii

ABSTRACT

This exploratory study was designed to investigate if the adolescent "voice" would substantiate the statistics reflecting adolescents' increasing exposure to and engagement in hostility and harm. That is, are adolescents concerned about their personal health?

For the purpose of this study, two groups of adolescents, six years apart, were asked to write a "problem story." The stories were then analyzed to examine: 1) the themes present in the stories, with particular attention to themes of hostility and harm; 2) the amount or instances of hostility and harm; 3) the nature or degree of hostility and harm; and 4) the nature of the hostility and harm perpetrated.

Analysis of the narratives revealed that the adolescents are concerned about their health as the themes of hostility and harm increased over time. As well, the instances and degree of hostility and harm increased over time. However, no differences were revealed in the nature of the hostility and harm perpetrated.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to two very important people. First it is dedicated to my husband Jason. His support has been the one constant in my life for the past nine years. That you love me is something I've never questioned. You have played an important role in my completion of this project and I look forward with excitement to you being a part of my future accomplishments.

This work is also dedicated to the person who's importance was only brought to light once he was taken from me. I regret that I was unable to understand his messages. Georgie I always knew what a special person you were, but I don't think I ever spoke the words. I love you and I'll always miss you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The period of adolescence has been the subject of psychological debate for decades. It has been presented as both a period of storm and stress (e.g., Hall, 1904) and a time of relative calm (e.g. Bandura, 1972). Regardless of the position one accepts, "adolescence is a time of rapid change, physiologically, cognitively, psychologically and socially" (Rubenstein, 1991, p.220).

These changes begin between the ages of 10 to 14 years, known as the period of early adolescence. Early adolescence is characterized by biological changes that lead to identity issues and provoke concerns with body image (Rubenstein, 1991). Cognitively, early adolescents think concretely; they tend to think about events in terms of their own experience rather than hypothetically (Rubenstein, 1991). As well, these adolescents may feel as if they are on display. At the same time, "they may also feel invulnerable to the usual problems in the world, which can lead to risk-taking behaviors" (Rubenstein, 1991).

These risks behaviours or conflicts are both intrapersonal and interpersonal in nature. The former center on issues such as; identity development, suicidality, sexuality, and substance abuse. To illustrate, on average 43% of Canadian youth aged 15-24 drank at least once a week in 1989. As well, 30% of these young Canadians identified themselves as smokers and 15.5% were cannabis users (Statistics Canada, 1989).

Sexual development during adolescence can also lead to risk behaviours. The pregnancy rate, although it decreased between 1975-1985 (Statistics Canada, 1992), is again an increasing concern. From 1986-1989 the rate increased by 11% for those aged

15-19 (Statistics Canada, 1992). Teenage mothers face a higher risk of dropping out of school and failing to reach their educational goals (Rubenstein, 1991). As well, sexual activity among adolescents is now accompanied by the threat of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and other sexually transmitted diseases (Takanishi, 1993).

Adolescent suicide is also an area of national concern. Although completed suicides are uncommon in early adolescents, research has revealed that most children have a basic understanding of suicide by grade 5 and small percentages disclose suicidal thoughts or parasuicide (non-lethal, attempted suicide and deliberate self-harm) (Normand and Mishara, 1992). It is thought that the data gathered on parasuicide may be an underestimate as "...there are no generally accepted reporting procedures; provinces do not gather systematic data on suicide attempts, and many non-lethal attempts are not identified as such" (Health Canada, 1994). It has been noted, however, that completed suicides for adolescents have increased at a greater rate than all other age groups.

Self-harm is not the only source of difficulty to which adolescents are exposed. Adolescents encounter social conflict from without throughout their daily lives. The nature of these interpersonal conflicts can be very different ranging from discord in relation to parents and peers to physical, sexual, and mental victimization. Statistics Canada reported 23% of all violent crime victims to be adolescents (between 12 and 19 years of age), double their representation in the 1990 population (1992). As well, both adolescents and children (less than 12 years) comprised a larger proportion of victims of sexual assault than did adults (20 years and older). If one considers that sexual assault

accounted for 13% of the total violent offenses, then of every 10 reported sexual assault victims, four were adolescents and four were children (Statistics Canada, 1992).

In summary, then, these statistics reveal that adolescents are increasingly exposed to hostile acts and they are engaging more frequently in harmful behaviours. Further, there has been a marked increase in substance abuse, suicide, sexual activity, abuse, and exposure to violence and crime.

This hostility and harm has traditionally been measured through the use of surveys and questionnaires. These techniques require adolescents, or their parents, to make limited responses to predetermined questions. The information gained from such methods expresses, in large part, the "voice" of the researcher. That is, the researcher will include items which will provide information regarding his or her area of interest. However, the inclusion of these items shape the results that can be obtained. It is necessary, then, to generate items that are representative of the experiences of the population being studied (Compas, Davis and Forsythe, 1985). Thus, in order to balance this researcher bias, the adolescent "voice" must be heard.

Narrative is a tool which allows for the "voice" of the individual to be studied. Individuals talk and write about what they know, feel and believe, therefore one can determine the concerns of each individual by examining his or her stories. To a certain extent one's creative writings are analogous to one's diary. Bruner (1990) described the individual as both a storyteller and part of the story. Narratives then present the voice of the individual as the story is told.

Statement of Purpose

This study was designed, primarily, to determine if the adolescent "voice" would support the statistics reflecting teenagers' increasing exposure to hostility and harm. This purpose entailed an expansion of the present research in the area of adolescent concerns by examining the issues or themes in adolescents' narratives to generate a generalizable inventory of adolescent concerns. Traditionally, methodology has required adolescents to respond to predetermined items on research measures. These studies have not allowed the adolescents to generate their own issues of concern, thus their "voice" has not been heard. Specifically, this research study was designed to investigate the following questions:

1.   What are the adolescents' concerns as elicited from the thematic content of their fictional narratives? Does the theme frequency change over time? Does the theme frequency change as a function of age? Does the theme frequency differ as a function of gender?

2.   Do the narratives exhibit themes of conflict or hostility and harm? If yes, does the "degree" of hostility and harm differ across time? Does the "degree" of hostility and harm change as a function of either age or gender?

3.   What is the interpersonal and intrapersonal nature of the hostility and harm perpetrated in the stories? Does the nature of perpetration change as a function of time? Does the nature of perpetration change as a function of either age or gender?

Organization of Thesis

In Chapter II research in the area of adolescent risks and concerns is reviewed. Then, narrative theory is examined and presented as a framework for studying these concerns. Chapter III outlines the methodology of this study. First, subjects are described, with particular reference to criteria for participant selection. Then procedures for task administration and thematic scoring of the narratives are outlined. Chapter IV presents the results of the qualitative and quantitative analysis. The final chapter discusses the results and posits the use of narrative as a tool in the area of adolescent mental health. Methodological issues specific to the participant group and the use of narrative analysis are discussed. Furthermore, limitations and implications of this project are outlined and recommendations are made for future research.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Statistics reveal that adolescents encounter an increasing amount of risk and concerns with each generation. But what do these issues entail? The present study unites several research disciplines to examine the health and social concerns of adolescents. This chapter begins with an overview of the current research in the field of adolescent health. The contemporary risks of adolescence are explored and then the concerns as identified by adolescents are outlined. As well, this examination addresses the research methods utilized in these studies; the utility of predetermined checklists as compared to open-ended responses is examined. This comparison is followed by the presentation of narrative as a forum for the study of adolescent concerns. Subsequent to this argument, hypotheses are formulated as to the self-generated concerns of adolescents when identified through narrative analysis. As well, developmental differences in the expression of these issues and possible changes in thematic content across time are hypothesized.

Adolescent Health

Whether one views adolescence as a period of conflict or a time of relative calm, it is indisputably a time of developmental change involving physical, sexual and psychological growth. Because of the many changes occurring during this period, the study of adolescent health is complex and dynamic. Perry and Jessor (1985) presented a model of adolescent health which consists of four domains. These domains, 1) physical health: physical and physiological functioning, 2) psychological health: subjective sense

of well being, 3) social health: role fulfillment and social effectiveness, and 4) personal

health: realization of individual potential, interact to maintain a state of equilibrium (see

Figure 2.1 for a graphic representation of this model). However, given the challenging

nature of the adolescent experience, the balance of these domains is often in flux.

Neinstein and Blum (1991) wrote,

> "During adolescence the teenager often feels an isolated
> uneasiness in one of these areas. In attempt to alleviate this
> transient discomfort, a behavior is adopted or decision made
> that will pose great risk in the other domains. For example,
> isolation and fear of rejection from friends (social) and
> personal feelings of inadequacy and being different
> (psychological) may influence the young person to adopt a
> peer behavior, such as smoking, that poses an inherent risk
> to physical health...Other choices not only may pose risks in
> other domains of health but...may significantly compromise
> health in the domain of which the benefit of well-being is
> sought(p.202).

These intrapersonal behaviours are not the sole risks encountered by adolescents,

however. The health of adolescents is challenged daily by interpersonal conflict, ranging

from familial discord to exposure to violence and crime.

Risks of Adolescence

"The adolescent experience in the 1990s is unlike the adolescent experience of

any adult--parent or grandparent. Adolescents today face greater risks to their current

and future health than ever before" (Takanishi, 1993, p.85). The health of adolescents is

of such concern that multidisciplinary researchers united in Gent, Belgium, in 1994 to

hold the International Conference on Conflict and Development in Adolescence. "The

general idea that guided this conference is that adolescence...is [a time] especially

susceptible to evoking all kinds of internal and external conflict. Conflict was...defined

Figure 2.1

Perry and Jessor's (1985) Domains of Adolescent Health
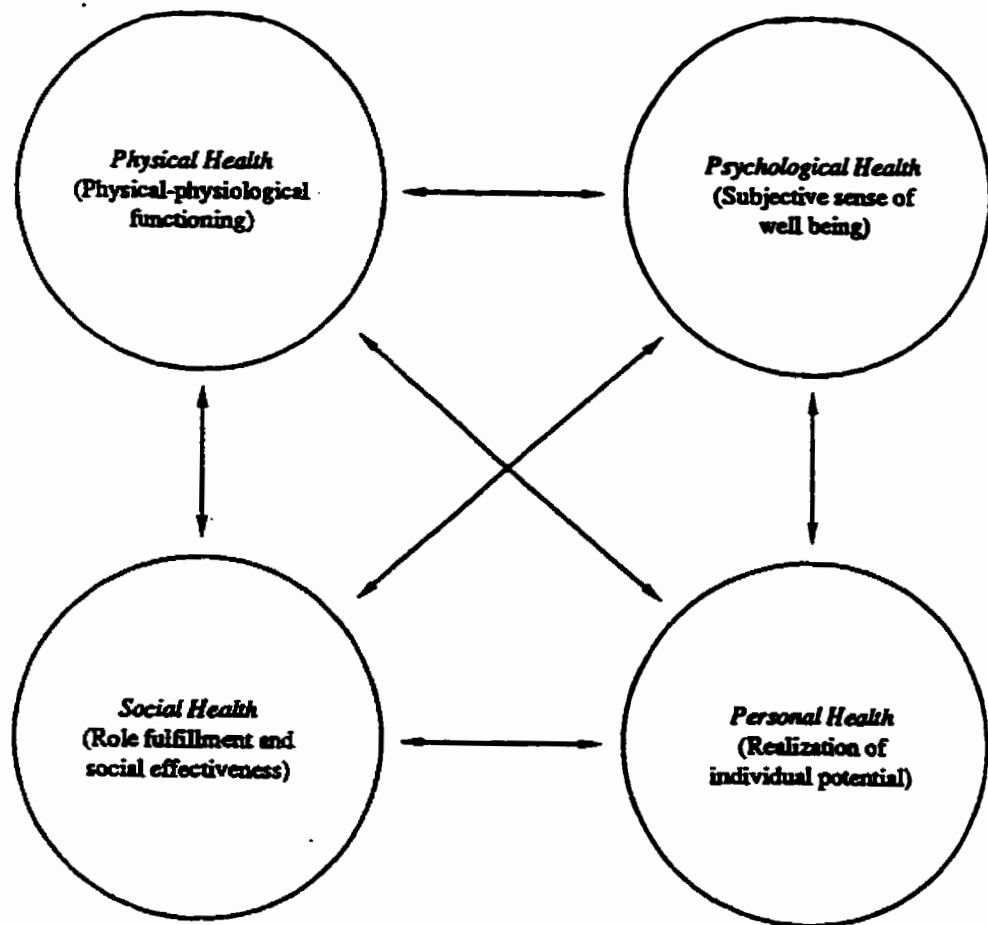
[as]: conflict in relation to parents, friends, school, sexuality, moral and identity development, depression and suicide, psychosomatic developments and all kinds of risk situations" (Dekovic, 1996).

So concerning are these risks that the National Association of State Boards of Education and the American Medical Association issued a document entitled National Commission on the Role of School and Community in Improving Adolescent Health (1990) in which they called for action to reverse dangerous trends in adolescent health (Males, 1992). The trends cited were as follows: 1) social and emotional problems which includes depression and suicide and school attendance and performance; 2) substance abuse including drug use and drinking and driving; 3) violence which includes homicide and violence in schools; 4) sexual activity including pregnancy, births to unmarried teenagers, and sexually transmitted diseases; 5) crime; and 6) runaways and homeless youth.

The current risks to American adolescents have been examined by researchers from a variety of disciplines (see Hanson & Carta, 1995; Langer & Warheit, 1992; Rubenstein, 1991; Takanishi, 1993). For the purpose of this study, the research conducted by Rubenstein (1991) will be presented. She examined data obtained by national surveys and found the following issues to be of national concern: 1) substance use; 2) injuries; 3) depression and suicide; 4) violence; 5) school; 6) sexuality, pregnancy and childbearing; and 7) sexually transmitted diseases. Rubenstein (1991) determined substance use to be a serious problem among teenagers. Although smoking showed signs of declining among males, it was actually increasing among females. As well, during the

last month, approximately 1 in 10 teenagers had smoked marijuana, 1 in 15 had tried cocaine, and 1 in 5 eighth and tenth graders had sniffed glue (Rubenstein, 1991).

Unintentional injuries are often the result of risk behaviours, including substance use. Rubenstein (1991) reported that over 50% of the adolescents surveyed indicated that they did not wear seatbelts the last time they rode in a car. Furthermore, those adolescents revealed that within the last month they had ridden with a driver who was under the influence of drugs or alcohol (Rubenstein, 1991).

It has been suggested that these risk behaviours are sometimes acts of parasuicide, but are often accidentally lethal. The rate of adolescent suicide has more than doubled within the last quarter century and is currently the third leading cause of death among 15- to 24-year-olds (Rubenstein, 1991). However, due to the under reporting of youth suicide these figures may actually be an underestimate of adolescent suicide.

Further risks are encountered by adolescents in the form of violence from without. Rubenstein's (1991) research determined that interpersonal hostility (e.g., rape, robbery, assault) occurs at the highest rate among individuals 12-to 24-years-old. This is true even for the early adolescents, 12-to 14-years-old. As well, two thirds of these adolescents reported having been robbed, threatened, or attacked at school in the past year (Rubenstein, 1991).

Teen pregnancy is a risk encountered by adolescents engaging in sexual activities. Rubenstein (1991) indicated that the onset of sexual activity is occurring at earlier ages when adolescents are inconsistent in their use of birth control due to peer pressure, inability to plan ahead, and feelings of invulnerability. This increase in unprotected

sexual activity has also led to an increase in the number of adolescents infected with a sexually transmitted disease. Approximately 2.5 million adolescents are infected each year (Rubenstein, 1991).

In summary, Rubenstein's (1991) research revealed an increase in the amount of risk behaviours among adolescents over the last decade. Furthermore, adolescents increasingly face violence and abuse as threats to their health. If however, we are to effectively reduce these risks and threats to adolescents' health, we need to identify if the adolescents themselves regard these statistics to be of concern. Complicating this issue is the lack of an operational definition of adolescent concerns. Included in the research are such terms as: problem situations; life events; social stress; hassles; and finally, adolescent concerns.[1] Furthermore, the research instruments utilized in these studies are as diverse as the terminology.

Adolescent Concerns

As noted, it is important to identify the concerns of adolescents to improve the state of adolescent health. Based upon previous research, Violato and Holden (1988) utilized a survey method to examine adolescent concerns. They predicted a four factor model of adolescent concerns which included the following four general themes: 1) Future and Career; 2) Health and Drugs; 3) Personal Self; and 4) Social Self. These researchers elicited responses from 439 students (236 males-60%; 176 females-40%) ranging in age from 12 to 19 years (mean age = 15.2 years) on a 14 item questionnaire. The participants were asked to indicate their degree of concern for each item on a 4 point

---

[1] For the purpose of this study, "adolescent concerns" will be used as an umbrella term.

Likert scale (1, never concerned; 2, sometimes concerned; 3, frequently concerned; 4, constantly concerned). The items were then analyzed and a goodness of fit index to the proposed four factor model was calculated (=.958). Violato and Holden (1988) found that the predicted factors were supported by the data. That is, Future and Career, Health and Drugs, Personal Self and Social Self are the four main themes which tend to underlie the majority of adolescent concerns (Violato & Holden, 1988). Table 2.1 illustrates the factor loading of the variables.

If one examines these four factors, it becomes evident that they closely resemble the four domains of adolescent health outlined by Perry and Jessor (1985). Violato and Holden's (1988) Future and Career factor is analogous to Perry and Jessor's (1985) Personal Health domain. The Future and Career factor includes the issues of grades, career, future schooling, part-time jobs, and extracurricular activities and the Personal Health domain encompasses these issues as it entails the realization of individual potential. The Health and Drugs factor can be likened to the Physical Health domain as both address the physical-physiological functioning of adolescents (e.g., sexual impulses, drug problems, smoking problems, and alcohol problems). The Personal Self factor is similar to the Psychological Health domain in that both encompass issues relating to the adolescents' subjective sense of well-being (e.g., parents, peers, siblings, and identity). Furthermore, the Social Self factor is analogous to the Social Health domain. The Social Health domain addresses issues of role fulfillment and social effectiveness which parallel the Social Self issues such as identity and peers. The similarities among these items reveal how adolescents' health and their concerns are interwoven. Thus, it can be

Table 2.1

Factor Loadings of the 14 Concern Variables

Variable	Factor I: Health and Drugs	Factor II: Future and Career	Factor III: Personal Self	Factor IV: Social Self
1. Appearance				*
2. Parents			*	
3. Friends			*	*
4. Family			*	
5. Identity			*	*
6. Sex	*			*
7. Drugs	*			
8. Smoking	*			
9. Alcohol	*			
10. Grades		*		
11. Activities		*		*
12. Career		*		
13. Future School		*		
14. Part-time job		*		*

Violato and Holden, 1988

reasonably concluded that adolescents are concerned with items or events which directly affect their health.

In addition to the factor analysis, Violato and Holden (1988) established a hierarchy of concerns based upon the calculated mean rating of each item for the total sample, for gender and for grade. See Table 2.2 for a summary of these results. For the total sample, participants were most concerned with grades (mean =3.01). Career (mean =3.00) and appearance (mean =2.92) ranked second and third respectively. Participants seemed least concerned about alcohol use (mean =1.65), drug abuse (mean =1.49) and smoking (mean =1.47) as these variables ranked 12th, 13th and 14th.

Statistically significant gender differences were noted on the appearance and grades variables as females indicated greater concern about these items than did males. The mean rating for appearance was as follows: females, mean =3.14; males, mean =2.78. For the grades variable the rating was as follows: females, mean =3.13; males, mean =2.92. No other significant gender differences were evident for the remaining variables.

Statistically significant grade differences were observed for a number of the variables. Violato and Holden (1988) found the older participants (Grades 11 and 12) to be more concerned about grades, career and future schooling than were the younger participants (Grades 8 and 9) (see Table 2.2). Furthermore, the researchers determined that the Grades 10 and 11 participants were more concerned about identity than were the younger and older participants. Finally, the younger participants (Grades 8 and 9) were more concerned with drugs and smoking than were the middle (Grades 10) and older

Table 2.2

Mean Rating of Seriousness of Variable of Concern

Variable	Total sample n= 439	Male n=263	Female n=176	Grade				
				8 n=97	9 n=56	10 n=135	11 n=58	12 n=93
1. Grades	3.01	2.92	3.13a	3.23	2.79	2.93	3.09	2.96a
2. Career	3.00	3.02	2.98	2.86	2.64	3.10	3.13	3.16b
3. Appearance	2.92	2.78	3.14b	3.07	3.00	2.87	3.18	2.62b
4. Future Schooling	2.83	2.81	2.87	2.91	2.38	2.92	2.96	2.84b
5. Identity	2.36	2.34	2.39	2.25	2.25	2.39	2.75	2.26b
6. Job	2.28	2.30	2.26	2.30	2.11	2.33	2.46	2.14
7. Activities	2.20	2.18	2.22	2.37	2.13	2.14	2.23	2.12
8. Family	2.1	2.08	2.13	2.18	2.05	2.16	2.13	1.99
9. Friends	2.08	2.02	2.18	2.23	2.02	2.06	2.32	1.87a
10. Parents	2.00	1.99	2.02	1.98	1.91	2.07	2.05	1.97
11. Sex	1.94	1.98	1.86	2.10	1.79	1.94	2.09	1.78
12. Alcohol	1.65	1.66	1.63	1.67	1.44	1.67	1.59	1.72
13. Drugs	1.49	1.49	1.48	1.62	1.32	1.53	1.21	1.50a
14. Smoking	1.47	1.44	1.51	1.71	1.29	1.50	1.25	1.34b

a $p < .05$.
b $p < .01$.

Violato and Holden (1988).

participants (Grades 11 and 12).

Violato and Holden (1988) have presented a statistical hierarchy of 14 adolescent concerns and their results have since been replicated (see Adwere-Boamah & Curtis, 1993; Sahin & Sahin, 1995). Furthermore, Violato and Holden (1988) expressed that the "pop" topics depicted in the media including sex, alcohol, drugs and smoking are not of serious concern to adolescents. This conclusion suggested, then, that adolescents are not concerned with the statistics that reflect their increasing engagement in risk behaviours or intrapersonal harm. However, their reasoning can be questioned in that participants were asked to respond to predetermined items on an adult-generated questionnaire. It is possible that the variables may have been different if the adolescents were prompted to generate their own items of concern. As well, if one agrees with the previously posited position that adolescents are concerned with those events which directly affect their health, then it would follow that violence and crime (interpersonal hostility) would be an item of concern.

Adolescent "daily hassles" were examined by Kohn and Milrose (1993) in their study to validate a new measure of adolescent concerns, the Inventory of High-School Students' Recent life Experiences. Eighty two females and 94 males with a mean age of 16.71 (SD=2.41; range = 13-24) were asked to rate 49 items representing daily hassles on a four-point scale of exposure over the past month. The researchers conducted a factor analysis that identified eight factors. The factors are as follows: 1) Social Alienation, including such items as disagreements with family and gossip concerning someone you care about; 2) Excessive Demands, including too many things to do at once and a lot of

responsibilities; 3) Romantic Concerns, including dissatisfaction about romantic relationship(s) and decisions about romantic relationship(s); 4) Decisions about Personal Future, including important decisions about education and important decisions about future career; 5) Loneliness and Unpopularity, including loneliness and being ignored; 6) Assorted Annoyances and Concerns, including social disagreements over smoking and poor health of a friend; 7) Social Mistreatment, including being taken advantage of and having trust betrayed by a friend; and 8) Academic challenge, including struggling to meet others standards of performance at school and struggling to meet personal standards of performance at school.

The researchers found excessive demands to be of greatest concern to the participants as the three most commonly cited items were "not enough time to do the things you enjoy most (93.8%), "too many things to do at once (93.2%)" and "a lot of responsibilities (92.6%). It was also determined that females reported more hassles than males in all areas except personal futures and academic challenge. On these two factors no gender differences were identified.

As with the research conducted by Violato and Holden (1988), the participants in this study were required to respond to predetermined items. It has been speculated that the items included in a measure influence the results that can be obtained (Compas, Davis & Forsythe, 1985; Williams & Uchiyama, 1989). Compas, et al. wrote, "Adult professionals and researchers may not accurately identify the experiences of adolescents, because they are hindered by differences in age, the limits of knowledge in the field, theoretical biases, and the differences in perspective between individuals reporting on

their own behaviour and judgments made by external observers"(1985, p.678). Thus, if one wishes to identify the problems of adolescents one must have the adolescent generate those areas of concern.

Cavell and Kelley (1994) utilized this technique in their examination of problem situations encountered by adolescents. Two hundred seventy one 7th, 9th and 11th grade subjects completed an open-ended questionnaire that required written descriptions of situations that did not go well in a variety of areas (eg. family, friends, school and personal). A total of 4005 problem situations were generated and then collapsed to yield a final pool of 157 items. These items were then rated for frequency by a second group of adolescents using a 5 point Likert scale. Subjects were asked, "How often does this situation happen to you?" with 1 equaling rarely (about once every 6 months or less) and 5 equaling very frequently (about twice a week or more often).

Analyses were then conducted to determine the number of factors. The following seven factors in order of frequency of problems were identified: 1) Parents, including such situations as parents are too nosy and parents say no to your going out with undesirable peers; 2) Siblings, including situations such as sibling borrows something of yours without asking and younger sibling complains when they can't do what you do; 3) School, including such situations as teacher is mean to everyone including you and teacher ignores you and doesn't call on you; 4) Make Friends, including such situations as peers ignore or overlook you and peers don't like you because you say or do the wrong things; 5) Keep Friends, including such situations as friend ignores you and friend lies to you; 6) Problem Behaviour, including such situations as you want to drink (alcohol) but

your parents object and you acted impulsively and got into trouble with the law; and 7) Work, including such situations as employer unfairly criticizes your work and employer asks you to do a task that you don't want to do.

The frequency of problem situations was also determined as a function of participants' grade and gender. Grade-level differences in frequency ratings were found on five of the seven factors: Parents; Siblings; School; Make friends; and Keep friends. "...seventh graders had significantly higher frequency scores than 11th graders on all five scales, and that 9th graders scored higher than 11th graders on four of the five scales (all but Make friends). Analyses also revealed that 7th graders viewed situations on the Siblings, Make Friends, and Keep Friends scales as significantly more frequent than did 9th graders" (Cavell & Kelley, 1994, p.232). Gender differences in frequency of problem situations were less evident as male participants rated only two scales, Problem behaviour and Work situations, as significantly more common than did female participants.

By allowing the participants to generate their own items, Cavell and Kelley (1994) seem to have developed a representative instrument for assessing the concerns of adolescents. However, these results are confounded by the prompt utilized to develop the problem situations. The researchers requested descriptions of situations in the areas of family, friends, school and personal. Thus, their prompt shaped the factors that were obtained.

This limitation was recognized by Compas, et al. (1985). These researchers gathered open-ended lists of major and daily events from 658 adolescents (411 female

and 247 male). The sample consisted of 239 early adolescents (138 females and 101

males) aged between 12 and 14 years, 257 middle adolescents (152 females and 105

males) between the ages of 15 and 17 years and 162 older adolescents (121 females and

41 males) aged between 18 and 20 years. The participants were given two prompts: 1)

"...In the blank spaces below, please describe in your own words any *daily hassles* or

pleasures which have happened to you in the past 6 months" and 2) "List what you would

consider the *major events*, either positive or negative, which have happened in the past 6

months of your life..."(p.680-681). Daily hassles and pleasures are defined by the

researchers, but examples of these events are not outlined. Thus, the researchers have

ensured the objectiveness of their prompt.

Compas et al. (1985) found that the open-ended lists generated a set of 213

events. One hundred forty eight of these events, such as friend having emotional

problems, change in birth control use and feeling pressured by friends, were not

previously included in the existing measures of adolescent life events. The omission of

these and other events suggests that these scales provide a limited description of

adolescent life events (Compas et al., 1985). The researchers determined that the open-

ended responses more accurately reflected the concerns of the participants. The

adolescents wrote about a number of life events over and above those included in the

existing measures, thus one can conclude that predetermined checklists are not

necessarily reflective of the adolescent experience. Rather, the open-ended responses

allowed the adolescents to narratively organize their experiences.

Narrative as Meaning Making

Throughout history individuals have worked to organize and interpret their experiences. Sigmund Freud was one of the first theoreticians to turn this daily activity into a scientific practice. He provided his patients with a medium, psychoanalysis, which required the construction of personal narratives. The events that Freud's patients recounted were narrative in form; they conformed to the basic story schema. That is, they provided "a setting or orienting information, followed by an initiating event or problem besetting the protagonist [the patient], an internal response of the protagonist, a problem resolution attempt [catharsis], and a consequence" (Fivush, 1991, p.60). Thus, in telling their stories Freud's patients were able to make meaning of past events within present social context. Freud himself wrote of a young girl's personal narrative, "This diary is a gem. Never before, I believe, has anything been written enabling us to see so clearly into the soul of a young girl, belonging to our social and cultural stratum,..." (Paul, 1921, p.7).

This narrative exploration into one's soul or intrapersonal realm has many applications. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) wrote, "the storied qualities of qualitative textual data [narrative]...enable the analyst to consider both how social actors order and tell their experiences and why they remember and retell what they do" (p. 57). The process of remembering and retelling is the basis of autobiography and is a natural derivative of human development. "We are all tellers of tales. We each seek to provide our scattered and often confusing experiences with a sense of coherence by arranging the episodes of our lives into stories" (McAdams, 1993).

Adolescence has often been presented as a scattered and confusing period (e.g., Hall, 1904). It is a time of new experiences which often demand much reflection. It would follow then, that the narrative mode of thought is a useful tool for adolescents to make meaning of their experiences. Individuals continually organize life events in a consistent pattern which, in turn, influences the way events are remembered and experienced (Omer & Strenger, 1992). As has been presented, this organization occurs through narrative thought.

The narrative mode of thought is based upon the temporal and causal ordering of events of two types: 1) those that take place in the physical world, on the "landscape of action" and 2) those that take place in the mental life of the character, on the "landscape of consciousness" (Bruner, 1986). This dual operation of narrative thought allows an individual to make meaning of both the concrete aspects of an experience, and their own or other's intentional or mental states (Bruner, 1986; 1989; 1990). Thus, it is posited that Bruner's (1986) landscapes of action and consciousness provide the necessary connection allowing adolescent concerns to be studied within a narrative framework. That is, adolescent concerns have been identified as both interpersonal and intrapersonal in nature. Ultimately, interpersonal and intrapersonal events are composed of both the landscape of consciousness and the landscape of action (Bruner, 1986). These landscapes are interconnected, however one can preside over the other given the individual's cognitive development.

Cognitive Developmental Progression of Narrative

Bruner (1987) supported the interaction between narrative theory and cognitive

psychology. He wrote that individuals construct meaning for themselves and this

construction occurs in the form of narrative;

> Narrative imitates life, life imitates narrative. "Life" in this
> sense is the same kind of construction of the human
> imagination as "a narrative" is. It is constructed by human
> beings through active ratiocination, by the same kind of
> ratiocination through which we construct narratives. When
> somebody tells you his life ...it is always a cognitive
> achievement ...In the end, it is a narrative achievement.
> (p.13)

Bruner (1990) argued"...that the important cognitive processes of our species lie

in the interpretive processes by which events are given meaning..."(Feldman, Bruner,

Kalmar & Renderer, 1993). The individual's cognitive ability to integrate and give

meaning to experience is more fully outlined by the neo-Piagetian theorists.

Neo-Piagetian Stages of Cognitive Development

Case (1985, 1992) proposed four major stages of cognitive development and they

are as follows: (a) the sensorimotor stage (1-18 months), (b) the scripted social action[2]

stage (18 months-5 years), (c) the intentional stage (5-11 years) and (d) the interpretive

stage (11-19 years). See Figure 2.2 for a graphic representation of this system.

---

[2] The Neo-Piagetian stages of cognitive development were originally developed using
logico-mathematical labels. However, given the social nature of the current study the
"social" labels have been adopted.

Figure 2.2

Schematic Representation of a neo-Piagetian Theory of Cognitive Development (Case, 1985).
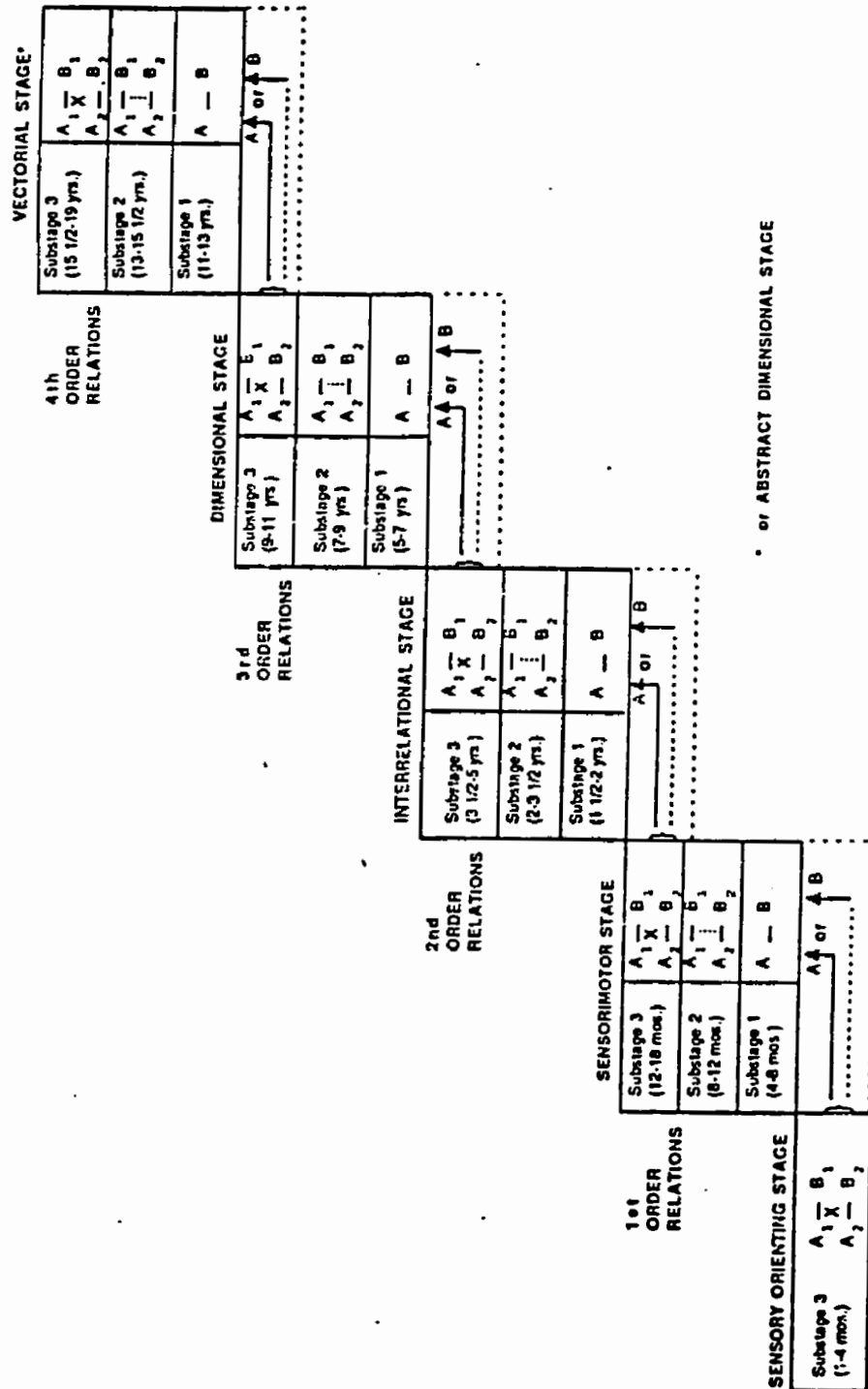
Each of these four general stages consists of three recurring substages, each with corresponding ages. At each substage knowledge structures are assembled and coordinated. That is, throughout their development, children are active participants in their organization of experience; they actively integrate the world into their existing cognitive structures (Case, 1992). As a result of this integration, the coordinated structure becomes a consolidated concept and serves as a building block for the next stage of development. Through this process children develop conceptual structures as they progress through the cognitive stages. Progression through these four stages is generally dependent upon: 1) experience, for example an individual who has frequent exposure to a particular concept may develop the knowledge structure at an increased rate, and 2) maturational factors, such as processing capacity, that generally regulate the upper limit of knowledge structure development (Case, 1992).

Central Conceptual Structures

Neo-Piagetian theorists propose that individuals develop knowledge structures which are powerful organizing schemas that are domain specific in their field of application (McKeough, 1991). These structures, labeled central conceptual structures, consist of internal networks of semantic nodes and relations which must be learned and may be culturally specific in their content. That is, these central conceptual structures are influenced by the cultural and social environments. One such structure is the Central Social Structure.

Central Social Structures

Central social structures are schemas that children develop in effort to organize their social worlds (McKeough, 1990). Children generate ideas about how things should be and as they grow they develop increasingly complex reasons for their beliefs.

Three distinct social structures and their corresponding ages have been identified through the use of a narrative "problem story" prompt (see Case & McKeough, 1990; McKeough, 1987, 1990, 1991) and are as follows:

1. *A scripted event structure* (2-4 years), in which human actions are connected by way of causal, referential and temporal relations. Thus a child using a scripted event structure might tell the following story: *"It was raining and there was a girl and she put on her boots and she played."* A child at this stage typically does not make references to mental states in his or her story, rather the social world would be represented in terms of completed events or actions. Thus, the story occurs primarily on the landscape of action (see Bruner, 1986).

2. *An intentional structure* (5-11 years), in which people's actions are tied together by mental states, such as desires and feelings, which underlie them. Utilizing an intentional structure an older child might tell the following story: *"One of Roger's biggest problems was all his friends had left him and no one liked him because they thought he was dumb and they only did it cause he failed grade 4 and now no one like him not even his old best friend Wally. Roger was depresed (sic) and never did anything but grumble and pout."[3]* This example illustrates that a child between 5 and 11 years

---

[3] This example and the following were taken from stories written by participants in the current study.

uses references to mental states, for example *"depresed"* to express the greater concepts

of peer rejection, in effort to understand and give meaning to social situations. As a

result, the child constructs a more detailed and differentiated schema of social

understanding that distinguishes between, yet links, the physical and mental realms.

Thus, a child at this stage is beginning to forge a link between the landscape of action

and the landscape of consciousness (see Bruner, 1986).

3. *An interpretive structure* (12-18 years), in which the relations among an

individual's actions and mental states are established on the basis of long-standing

psychological traits and personal history. Thus, between 12 to 18 years children begin to

utilize a personal style when narrating. An adolescent's story might resemble the

following example, *"The wall had started to be built. Not a wall of concrete or stone,*

but a mental wall that no one, except for Rachel herself, could move or tear down. The

wall was just about finished...The last time I saw her she had the wall completely

built...Rachel had gotten into her mother's medicine cabinet and consumed an entire

bottle of tranquilizers. She died 3 hours later." At this level the mental states, such as

the narrator's grief and the protagonist's mental anguish, are established through the

narrator's attempt to understand the experience. Thus, the interaction between the

landscape of action and the landscape of consciousness is strongly established with the

latter presiding over the former (see Bruner, 1986).

The above structures illustrate developmental changes in youngsters' ability to

interpret and internalize social events. However, just as cognitive development

influences ones ability to interpret experience, social development is evidenced in the expression of that interpretation.

Social Development and Narrative

It has been posited that individuals write about what they have experienced in effort to comprehend their social environments (Bruner, 1986, 1987, 1990; Feldman, Bruner, Kalmar & Renderer, 1993; McKeough, 1987, 1990, 1991; Omer & Strenger, 1992). Howard (1994) examined this position as she hypothesized that the narratives constructed by behaviourally disordered boys would reflect their deficits in social reasoning. She utilized thematic analysis to examine the violent and conflictual content of stories written by 16 behaviourally normal and 14 conduct disordered adolescent males. The stories were rated as containing extreme, less extreme, or mixed violence by calculating frequencies for the explicit mention of violence that was a) physical, b) verbal, or c) occurring in the world of thought. This classification scheme is outlined in Table 2.3 and presents corresponding examples from Howard's (1994) research.

Howard (1994) found that the stories generated by a group of 14 conduct-disordered boys (8, 10 and 12 years, mean = 11.1 years) contained significantly more themes of violence and conflict than the stories of a group of 16 behaviourally normal boys (mean = 11.5 years). Based upon the principle that one will write about what one knows, it can be concluded that each participant was interpreting his social experiences in his story writing.

Table 2.3

Themes of Conflict and Aggression

<u>Extreme forms of conflict or violence:</u>

1) Are extreme forms of physical violence or antisocial actions carried out against

person/property (e.g., torture, assault, shooting, stabbing, beating, arson, theft?)

2) Is extreme hostility expressed as angry words, threats, curses (e.g., "I told him I would

beat him up", "he said he would kill me"?)

3)Is extreme aggression contemplated (thoughts or dreams) or intended (e.g., "I wished

he were dead", "I thought about beating him up", "I almost took a knife"?)

<u>Less extreme forms of conflict or violence:</u>

1) Are less extreme acts of aggression carried out (e.g., bullying, chasing, shoving,

pushing, fighting, rejecting?)

2) Is less extreme hostility expressed verbally (e.g., teasing, insults, arguments?)

3) Is less aggressive conflict contemplated or intended (e.g., "I thought he might hurt

me", "I wished I would have pushed him back", "I almost hit him"?)

Howard (1994).

Summary

Adolescence is a period of growth and change and a time when new concerns are encountered. There exists a plenitude of research in the area of adolescent risks and concerns. However, this research is limited in that it calls on adolescents to respond to items which adults have determined to be of importance. It is posited that narrative analysis is a useful research tool as it permits an extension of this work. Telling stories allows individuals to interpret and understand life events. Bruner (1987) wrote that we "account for our own actions and for the human events that occur around us principally in terms of narrative, story, drama..."(p.94).

It is thought that concerns identified in the stories of adolescents will extend beyond those currently included in research checklists. As well, given the statistical evidence indicating society's increasing exposure to violence and the fact that individuals narrate to organize experience, it is believed that these stories will contain increasing references to hostility and harm.

Specifically, the hypotheses of the current study are as follows:

1. Concern Themes:

    a) Given current statistics and that individuals write about what they know or have been exposed to, the adolescents will write increasingly about themes of hostility and harm across time.

    b) The frequency of themes of hostility and harm will increase as a function of age of participant.

c) Given that males are traditionally more aggressive than females, the stories will evidence gender differences in the frequency of hostility and harm themes.

2. Instances of Hostility and Harm:

a) Given the statistics which indicate an increase in adolescents' exposure to and engagement in violence, the stories will exhibit increased instances of hostility and harm across time.

b) Given that older adolescents have had more opportunity to be exposed to violence, age differences will be evidenced in the instances of hostility and harm.

c) Given that males are traditionally more aggressive than females, the stories will evidence gender differences in the instances of hostility and harm.

3. Degree of Hostility and Harm

a) Given the statistics which indicate an increase in adolescents' exposure to violence, the stories will exhibit more extreme hostility and harm across time.

b) Age differences will be evidenced in the extreme nature of hostility and harm in the stories.

d) Gender differences will be evidenced in the extreme nature of the hostility and harm.

4. Perpetrator of Hostility and Harm

Given that older adolescents are more interpretive, that is they think about and analyze events on the landscape of consciousness (see Bruner, 1986), the stories generated by older participants will exhibit more instances of intrapersonal harm.

Chapter III

RESEARCH DESIGN

General Method

This study was designed to expand on previous research that, traditionally, has

identified prevalent adolescent concerns through the use of adult-generated checklists. A

comparison of story content elicited from two groups of academically average early

adolescents was conducted to determine adolescent issues as generated by the

participants themselves. The first data set, to be referred to as Time 1, was collected in

1987 (McKeough, 1988). The second set, Time 2, was collected in 1993 (Genereaux, in

preparation).[4] These data sets were selected as research has revealed an increase, during

this six year time period, in the amount of interpersonal and intrapersonal risk, such as

substance use, suicide, teenage pregnancy, and abuse, encountered by adolescents

(Health Canada, 1994; Rubenstein, 1991; Statistics Canada, 1989, 1992).

Procedure

Time 1 Participants

Forty-nine participants, aged 10-to 14-years comprised the Time 1 group. Of this

group, 17 (35%) were male and 32 (65%) were female. All participants were enrolled in

middle socioeconomic neighbourhood schools located in a large Western Canadian city.

Participant selection was conducted through a two-step process. First, teachers identified

---

[4] The data sets analyzed in this study were originally collected for two S.S.H.R.C. funded
research projects awarded to Dr. A. McKeough. Permission for multiple analyses was
given by participants' guardians. Precautions were taken to maintain the confidentiality
of the participants involved.

students who performed in the average to high average range in Language Arts. Second, the Vocabulary sub-test of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children Revised (WISC-R) (Wechsler, 1974) was administered to assess the students' general word knowledge and expressive vocabulary. Those individuals whose scaled scores fell between 10 and 15 points were included in the sample.

Time 2 Participants

Fifty-five participants, aged 10-to 14-years comprised the second group. Of the 55 participants, 25 (45%) were male and 30 (55%) were female. All participants were enrolled in middle socioeconomic neighbourhood schools located in the same metropolitan centre in Western Canada. Inclusion criteria was again determined in a two-step procedure. First, Time 2 participants were identified from a large previously collected sample (n=153) as having average story writing ability (see Genereaux, in preparation). Second, those students were administered the Similarities sub-test of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children Third Edition(WISC-III) (Wechsler, 1991) to assess the students' knowledge of verbal concepts and abstract verbal reasoning. Like the Time 1 participants, those individuals whose scaled scores fell in the average range were included in the sample.[5] Demographic data for both groups are presented in Tables 3.1 and 3.2.

---

[5] The Vocabulary subtest and the Similarities subtest can both be considered valid predictors of an individual's verbal knowledge. Statistical analysis has shown the intercorrelation between these two subtests to be 0.69.

Table 3.1

Demographic Statistics for Participating Adolescents Time 1

Age	Group Total n=49	Gender		Mean Vocabulary Scaled Score
10	n=17	m=5	f=12	12.4
12	n=12	m=4	f=8	12.1
14	n=20	m=8	f=12	11.9

Table 3.2

Demographic Statistics for Participating Adolescents Time 2

Age	Group Total n=55	Gender		Mean Similarities Scaled Score
10	n=20	m=8	f=12	10.55
12	n=19	m=9	f=10	10.79
14	n=16	m=8	f=8	10.5

<center>Task Description</center>

Two tasks were administered to all the study participants. First, for screening

purposes the Vocabulary sub-test of the WISC-R was administered to the Time 1

participants and the Similarities sub-test of the WISC-III was administered to the Time 2

participants. Second, each participant was asked to respond to the following narrative

prompt: "Write a story about someone who is about your age who has a problem he or

she wants to solve" (McKeough, 1988). The participants were also told that the story

could be true, but it did not have to be. These "problem stories" were chosen for analysis

as the very nature of the prompt encourages the discussion of some type of conflict or

concern.

<center>Scoring Criteria</center>

Two methods were used to score all the stories; first the theme relating to general

adolescent concerns was identified and then the amount and degree of conflict or

hostility and harm in each story was further delineated. Those stories containing

references to hostility and harm were then further analyzed to identify the interpersonal

or intrapersonal nature of the harm perpetrated.

General theme identification was based upon previous research in the area of

adolescent concerns. The research conducted by Violato and Holden (1988) was selected

as a template for story classification as a researcher questionnaire was used to obtain

data. Thus, it was thought that possible differences in the researcher "voice" versus the

adolescent "voice" could be detected if the adolescents discussed topics additional to

those included in the predetermined checklist. Further, their findings have been

replicated with similar results (see Adwere-Boamah and Curtis, 1993; Sahin and Sahin, 1995), thus one can assume the representativeness of the items included in the research measure. Violato and Holden (1988) developed a four factor model of adolescent concerns (see Chapter II, Table 2.1), and the factors are as follows: (1) Health and Drugs; (2) Future and Career; (3) Personal Self; and (4) Social Self. For the present study these category headings were maintained. However the examples provided by Violato and Holden (1988) as representative of each category did not capture all aspects of the present data. Therefore, the range of items within each category was expanded. Further, given the statistics which indicate the adolescent's increasing exposure to conflict a fifth category, Hostility and Harm, was developed. These changes and the thematic scoring scheme that emerged is presented in Chapter IV. Story classification thus occurred through the identification of concern themes by considering the primary topic of the story without "reading between the lines" for the underlying message. If a story had more than one topic, the primary topic was chosen for classification purposes.

Once the concern themes were identified, all the stories were further analyzed with respect to the presence of conflict. Specifically, the stories were rated according to amount and degree of hostility and harm. For the purpose of this study hostility and harm were operationally defined as antagonistic, hurtful or damaging behaviours.

Hostility and harm was scored in two ways. First, the stories were divided into T-units, or terminable units. T-units are defined as "a single clause plus whatever subordinate clause or non-clauses attached to, or embedded within, the main clause. A clause is defined as a subject (or coordinated subjects) with a finite verb or coordinated

verb" (Hunt, 1977, p.92-93). Thus, T-units are the smallest grammatically correct segment that a passage can be divided into without creating groups of words without meaning. These T-units were then counted to determine the amount of hostility and harm in each story. This analysis is discussed further in Chapter IV.

The second step in analyzing the conflict in the narratives involved determining the degree of hostility and harm by assigning an overall rating of either "extreme", "less extreme" or "mixed" to each story containing T-units which referenced harm or hostility. Following Howard (1994), frequencies were tabulated for the explicit mention of violence that was a) physical, b) verbal, or c) occurring in the world of thought (e.g., dreams or intentions) (see Chapter II, Table 2.3). Based upon Howard's (1994) research, the scoring system for this study was developed and is presented in the following chapter.

Following the above scoring of all the narratives, those stories containing hostility and harm were further analyzed. This analysis involved a classification of the hostility and harm perpetrated. Stories were categorized as exhibiting interpersonal hostility if the perpetrator was someone other than the main character. A classification of intrapersonal harm required the main character to be the perpetrator.

Summary

The current study was designed to substantiate statistics which reveal an increase in the amount of risk encountered by early adolescents by identifying the concerns of individuals at 10, 12 and 14 years of age. The data was collected from one group of participants in 1987 and a different group in 1993. Participants were asked to write a "problem story."

Two different methods were used to analyze all stories. A general thematic classification was conducted to identify the concerns of the adolescents at differing developmental levels, across time, and according to gender. The thematic classification was based upon previous adolescent concerns research (Violato & Holden, 1988). However, some expansion of the items included in each category was required and these will be presented in Chapter IV. Following the general classification, the stories were rated according to amount and degree of conflict, specifically hostility and harm. The amount of hostility and harm in each story was calculated using previously developed scoring methods (Howard, 1994). The methods then used to rate the hostile and harmful stories were developed utilizing previous research as a model.

Further analysis was then conducted on those stories containing reference to conflict to identify the interpersonal or intrapersonal nature of the hostility and harm perpetrated. Results of the qualitative and quantitative analysis are presented in Chapter IV.

Plan of Analysis

Due to the exploratory nature of this study, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to analyze the data. Qualitative methods were used to uncover the themes present in the stories. Because the qualitative method of investigation is often criticized as being mere speculation (Jaeger, 1988), however, quantitative methods were used to supplement the qualitative findings in effort to conduct disciplined inquiry. That is, the methods can withstand scrutiny and can be replicated by future researchers (see Jaeger, 1988). Qualitative analysis was conducted first to identify the themes in the

stories and the amount and degree of hostility and harm present. As well, the nature of the perpetration of hostility and harm was determined. Following the qualitative analysis, quantitative methods were used to provide a check on the results. Chi square analysis was conducted to assess age, gender, and time differences in the theme frequencies. Chi square was also conducted to determine age, gender, and time differences in the degree of the hostility and harm and the perpetration of hostility and harm. As well, ANOVA was conducted to identify the main effects of age, gender, and time and the interaction of these variables on the amount of hostility and harm in the stories.

Chapter IV

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this exploratory study was to expand on the current research in the area of adolescent concerns by utilizing the "voice" of the adolescent to substantiate current statistics in the area of adolescent risks. The thematic content of 104 early adolescents' stories (49 at Time 1 and 55 at Time 2) was examined to identify the adolescents' concerns as generated by the participants themselves.

The Four Factor Model of Adolescent Concerns which was developed by Violato and Holden (1988) and supported by further research (see Adwere-Boamah and Curtis, 1993; Sahin and Sahin, 1995) was used as a guideline for classifying the narratives thematically. However, following a review of the adolescent risks literature which cites increasing adolescent exposure to violence, it was hypothesized that the stories would contain thematic reference to hostility and harm; a fifth category. It was also hypothesized that differences in the amount and degree (extreme, less extreme or mixed) of hostility and harm would be evident. To test that hypothesis, existing scoring methods (see Howard, 1994) were adapted to fit the current data set. As well, it was hypothesized that there would be differences in the interpersonal and intrapersonal nature of the harm perpetrated. Categorical scoring was used to test this latter hypothesis. Analyses were used to determine whether statistically significant differences, relating to age and gender, existed between the participants in the two data sets.

Results are presented for each hypothesis and the scoring criteria utilized are

outlined. All scoring was conducted by the researcher with reliability checks performed

by a trained rater blind to the age, gender and time of participation of the adolescents.

Inter-rater reliability correlations are presented for each scoring method utilized. All

conflicts were resolved through discussion.

Hypothesis 1: Concern Themes

The first hypothesis was that the adolescents' concerns as identified through

analysis of their narratives would reflect current statistics and thus, they would write

most frequently about hostility and harm. Violato and Holden's (1988) four-factor model

of adolescent concerns was used as a template for story classification, but items were

added to better reflect the story content of the present study and to reflect the statistics on

adolescent risk behaviour. Five theme categories were delineated. These categories and

the respective topics are presented in Table 4.1. In what follows, each category is

described and an illustrative story segment is presented:[6]

1) Health and Drugs, including drug problems, smoking problems, alcohol

problems, pregnancy, safety/basic needs, eating disorders, and death. The topics

included in this category reflect aspects of the physical-physiological functioning of

adolescents. The following story segment involves the primary topic of eating disorders

and thus, the story was classified in the Health and Drugs category.

"*...recently things have been very hard for me. with finals and without parents*

around, My Mothers allways gone, I started a diet I began to pour out everything to

---

[6] The story examples are presented as originally written. Thus, spelling and grammatical
corrections have not been made.

Table 4.1

Topics Included Within Each Category

Theme	Category 1: Health & Drugs	Category 2: School & Future	Category 3: Personal Self	Category 4: Social Self	Category 5: Hostility & Harm
Drug Problems	*				
Smoking Problems	*				
Alcohol Problems	*				
Pregnancy	*				
Safety/basic needs	*				
Eating Disorders	*				
Death	*				
School Attendance/ Performance		*			
Extracurricular Activities		*			
School Violence		*			
Parent Conflict			*		
Sibling Conflict			*		
Identity			*		
Family			*		
Pets (missing/death)			*		
Personal Appearance				*	
Romance				*	
Peer Acceptance/ Rejection				*	
Theft					*
Kidnapping					*
Homicide					*
Abuse					*
War					*
Bombing					*
Suicide					*

Note: Italicized topics were included in the theme categories to better reflect the story content of the present data.

Shawn even though he's a guy I felt very comportable talking to him. "And well" I continued "my diet consists of nothing except water, and when I do eat I eat lots really fast and then I force myself to pouk it up" "Your belimic?" asked Shawn, "Of course not it's just a diet don't be so stupid!!" I demanded.

...I was about to bite into a nice juicy hamburger when all of a sudden, I woke up. It seemed like I was only sleeping for about 20 mins but 2 hours had passed by. My stomahce growled and I felt my self becoming very hungary. I opend my chest witch I got for my 17th birthday and I began shoving food in my mouth all of it at once, cookies, chips, candy, cheeses, cornuts, chocolate, wagon wheels, gummie bears, popcorn, and tons of other things I stoped eating and began to cry. I looked in the mirror hanging on my wall, all I could see was a big fat slob, covered in crumbes with black eyes from my make-up, I looked closer and I could see my father "I love you for Who you are Jamie don't ever change" I got really mad and bursted into tears, I was letting everything out, I was dirty from the food and my room was a disaster. My eyes were black because of my mascara but I didn't care I kept crying I just couldn't help it, I started to choke on my tears and this happened the way it usually happens. I became very dizzy and tryed to run for the bathroom. I started to vomit up all of the junk I had eaten. I knew the more I puked the skinyer I would become. I puked and puked until my throat was torn.

...I Years Later, I am 18 years old and I wiegh 75 pounds my wieght had decreased so much. I can't even support myself, I am being feed from a tube inside me I have almost killed myself so many times, I am in the hospital now and will be for a long time, I would do anything to be the way I was before, but I want everyone to rember to

learn from my mistake, and that is the only positive thing that came out of all this. I'll

always rember my Father saying "Jamie, I love u for who you are and don't ever

change" The End" (12 year old female, Time 2)

2) School and Future[7], including school attendance and performance,

extracurricular activities, and school violence. The topics encompassed in this category

address the adolescent's realization of individual potential through school and

extracurricular activities. The following story segment deals with the topic of school

performance and thus was classified in the School and Future category.

" "I'm home," John yelled. "Where have you been?" asked his mother. "Oh, I

was at volleyball practice. Well I've got lots of homework so I better get started." "Just

wait a moment. What did you get on your social exam?" "Oh it was. Let's see...I

forget," John said trying to convince his mom. "you couldn't have. Now tell me!"

"43%," said John. "What, I don't understand you, you can never get a good mark."

You see, John never got good grades and it wasn't because he didn't want to, but he

could never study. On the night before the test he wouldn't study. the nest day when he

got his test back, he then wished he had studied. but he would always think about it after

the test and not before it. One day he got so fed up he went to the school counsellor.

"I'm tired of getting poor grades." "Well maybe you just aren't put out to have a lot of

brains." "But I want to get good grades." "Well, have you ever studied for a test?"

"No." "So you want good marks but you don't study. That will never work you're going

to have to study a log before an exam, if you want a good mark. You can's just wish that

---

[7] The label of this category was changed from Future and Career (Violato and Holden, 1988), to School and Future to better reflect the story content of the present study.

you had studied, when the test is over. Here are some pamphlets on study skills, they should help you. When is your next test?" "Two weeks from today" John remarked. "I want to see you right after that test." "Okay." When John got home he read the pamphlet, 1)Get plenty of rest and exercise, 2) plan how much you are going to study on a schedule. The next evening John started studying night after night. Until the day came, he didn't have pains in his stomach which he normally did and he didn't have that feeling that he was going to fail. The day after, he got his mark back. Wow. 92%. "I must have the wrong paper," but it had his name on it. right after he went to the counsellor's office and told him his mark. "Gee I am very proud of you, I knew you could do it"." (12 year old female, Time 1)

3) Personal Self, including parent conflict, sibling conflict, identity, family, pets (missing or death). The topics included in this category reflect the adolescent's subjective sense of well-being. The following story segment provides an example of the pets topic and thus was classified in the Personal Self category.

"I wish I still had Tux around to play with me Mechelle Smith said to herself. I really miss him, but then again he was quite old But I guess you couldn't blame him.

I think I'll go swimming with my friend Danielle. at the pool...SPLASH! That was fun Danielle yelled. ya I said but it would be more fun if Tux were here. Oh come on Daniellle said we came here to have fun I know it hurts but if you keep thinking about it it will hurt evenmore your right Mechelle said. I'll race ya to the diving bard Mechelle yelled sure Danielle yelled back. Tux used to love the diving board Mechelle said to herself as she ran across the pool deck.

...The next morning all Mechelle could think about was Tux. Mabey it was that far far away in the back of her head she had a little box that was full of warm memories like the times when they used to play frisbee at the park on warm summer days and when they used to walk along the beach with the spring breeze blowing in there faces. Well that box was full and it was overflowing real quick and alot of those memories were falling out. that afternoon Mechelle went to memorial park where her family had buried him she left a fresh rose and one of his favorite dog bones as she walked home tears ran down her cheeks she was very depressed but going to visit his grave made her feel a little bit better. A couple of months later she was going on and about with her life ad she never got depressed about Tux again but then she never forgot what a good friend he was. (10 year old female, Time 2)

4) Social Self, including personal appearance, romance, and peer acceptance or rejection. The topics included in this category address issues of role fulfillment and social effectiveness. The following story segment involves the primary topic of peer rejection and thus, was classified in the Social Self category.

"...Bill had a problem. He liked this girl very much. They had gone out once before. Bill was getting sick and tried of her always being mad at him so he broken up with her. Now he want to go out with her agian. Bill found from one of the other girls that Christy feels the same way. No problem now he can ask her out again. Wrong, Bill doesn't know what the other guys will say so he won't ask her out although he wants to.

bill wants to talk to one of the guy on his opinion but he doesn't know how to confront him. You see this guy has a mental barrier around him. He's like the head guy

the chief. Sometime him and Bill get along realy well but other it seems he want nothing

to do with Bill. Bill wants to say something to Ed, the head guy, but he doesn't want to

lose the friendship they kind of have. That night Bill calls Ed and they start to talk again

Bill asks him and the answer he gets knocks him off his bed. Ed starts giving him advise

good advise. Bill hang up from talking to Ed and say to himself "You never know unless

you try" try Bill did. The nest day he asked her out. She said "yes", there happy with

each other and they both agree that they never should have broken up in the first place.

Everythings going great for Bill until he finds out that Ed has been saying behind

his back. Bill got mad he starts insoulting Ed. They become bitter enemies. A couple of

weeks they become good friends again and Bill asked Christy out." (14 year old male,

Time 1)

5) Hostility and Harm, including theft, kidnapping, homicide, abuse, war,

bombing, and suicide. The topics included in this category reflect instances of violence

or conflict, both interpersonal and intrapersonal. The following story segment provides

an example of the suicide topic. Thus, the story was classified in the Hostility and Harm

category.

"The wall had started to be built. Not a wall of concrete or stone but a mental

wall that no one, except for Rachel herself, could move or tear down. The wall was just

about finished, their must have been little men working in her head 24 hours a day.

Rachel first felt the layers being laid one upon the other at the beginning of the

second school term. She had always been a girl that everyone enjoyed, even the

teachers. But she had slowly started to change. Her friends noticed, and her teachers

tried not to....I never really knew if Rachel saw her wall, or if she did, what would she do

about it. I wish I had. Rachel would probably still be here today.

Quitting the band and the volleyball was just the first big step...One day she even

began to cry. I couldn't do anything to stop her from crying. She wasn't "good old

Rachel" anymore. She was a stranger I couldn't even relate to....

The last time I saw her she had the wall completely built. That night I received a

call from Rachel's parents. Rachel had gotten into her mother's medicine cabinet and

consumed an entire bottle of tranquilizers. She died 3 hours later.

Maybe Rachel felt that this was the only way over her wall. The large step

forward was not a large step at all it was a small plan so many people use as a way out.

I wish that I had the ability to help her, but I didn't and I can't help her now. I miss

Rachel, as many people do, but we have to keep living and put her death behind us, not

her memories." (14 year old female, Time 1)

An inter-rate reliability check was conducted on the theme categorization. Two raters agreed on 90.9% of the categories assigned. Disagreements were resolved through discussion. For illustrative purposes, the topic frequencies and overall category frequencies at Time 1 and Time 2 have been collapsed and are provided in Table 4.2.

To assess age, gender and time differences in category frequencies a Chi Square analysis was conducted. Significance was not obtained for participant age or gender.

Table 4.2

Theme Frequency for All Participants (Time 1 and Time 2)

Theme	Category 1: Health & Drugs	Category 2: School & Future	Category 3: Personal Self	Category 4: Social Self	Category 5: Hostility & Harm
Drug Problems	4 (3.8%)				
Smoking Problems	1 (1.0%)				
Alcohol Problems	2 (1.9%)				
Pregnancy	3 (2.9%)				
Safety/basic needs	9 (8.7%)				
Eating Disorders	2 (1.9%)				
Death	2 (1.9%)				
School Attendance/ Performance		4 (3.8%)			
Extracurricular Activities		16 (15.4%)			
School Violence		2 (1.9%)			
Parent Conflict			2 (1.9%)		
Sibling Conflict			2 (1.9%)		
Identity			0 (0.0%)		
Family			2 (1.9%)		
Pets (missing/death)			4 (3.8%)		
Personal Appearance				1 (1.0%)	
Romance				4 (3.8%)	
Peer Acceptance/ Rejection				12 (11.5%)	
Theft					4 (3.8%)
Kidnapping					1 (1.0%)
Homicide					13 (12.5%
Abuse					5 (4.8%)
War					4 (3.8%)
Bombing					1 (1.0%)
Suicide					4 (3.8%)
Category Total	22.1%	21.2%	9.6%	16.3%	30.8%

However, significance was reached for time of participation (Chi square (4) =21.61, p=<.05) as Social Self decreased from 30.6% (15/49) at Time 1 to 3.6% (2/55) at Time 2 and Hostility and Harm increased from 14.3% (7/49) at Time 1 to 45.5% (25/55) at Time 2. Table 4.3 presents the percentage means for each category at Time 1 and Time 2.

Hypothesis 2: Instances of Hostility and Harm

The second hypothesis more closely examined the instances of hostility and harm present in the stories.

Hypothesis 2a

Hypothesis 2a stated that given the statistics that indicate an increase in adolescents' exposure to and engagement in violence, the stories will contain more instances of hostility and harm across time.

A three-way ANOVA (with amount of hostility and harm as the dependent variable) was conducted to determine the effects of gender (male, female), age (10, 12, 14 years), and time (Time 1, Time 2).[8] The ANOVA showed a significant time effect (F=7.73, p<.01). That is, there was more hostility and harm present in the Time 2 stories than the Time 1 stories.

Hypothesis 2b

Hypothesis 2b stated that age differences would be evidenced in the instances of hostility and harm. The ANOVA revealed a significant age effect (F=9.56, p<.01). That is, the amount of hostility and harm in the stories increased at each age level. Figure 4.1 presents the mean amount of hostility and harm at each age level. However, more

---

[8] Five of the 104 stories (4.8%) were discarded to eliminate outliers.

Table 4.3

Percentage means for each category at Time 1 and Time 2

Theme Category	Time	
	1	2
Health and Drugs	18.4	25.5
School and Future	26.5	16.4
Personal Self	10.2	9.1
Social Self	30.6	3.6
Hostility and Harm	14.3	45.5

Figure 4.1

Amount of Hostility and Harm Across Time

Mean #
T-units
(H&H)

10 Year Olds   12 Year Olds   14 Year Olds

Participant Age

Time 1
Time 2
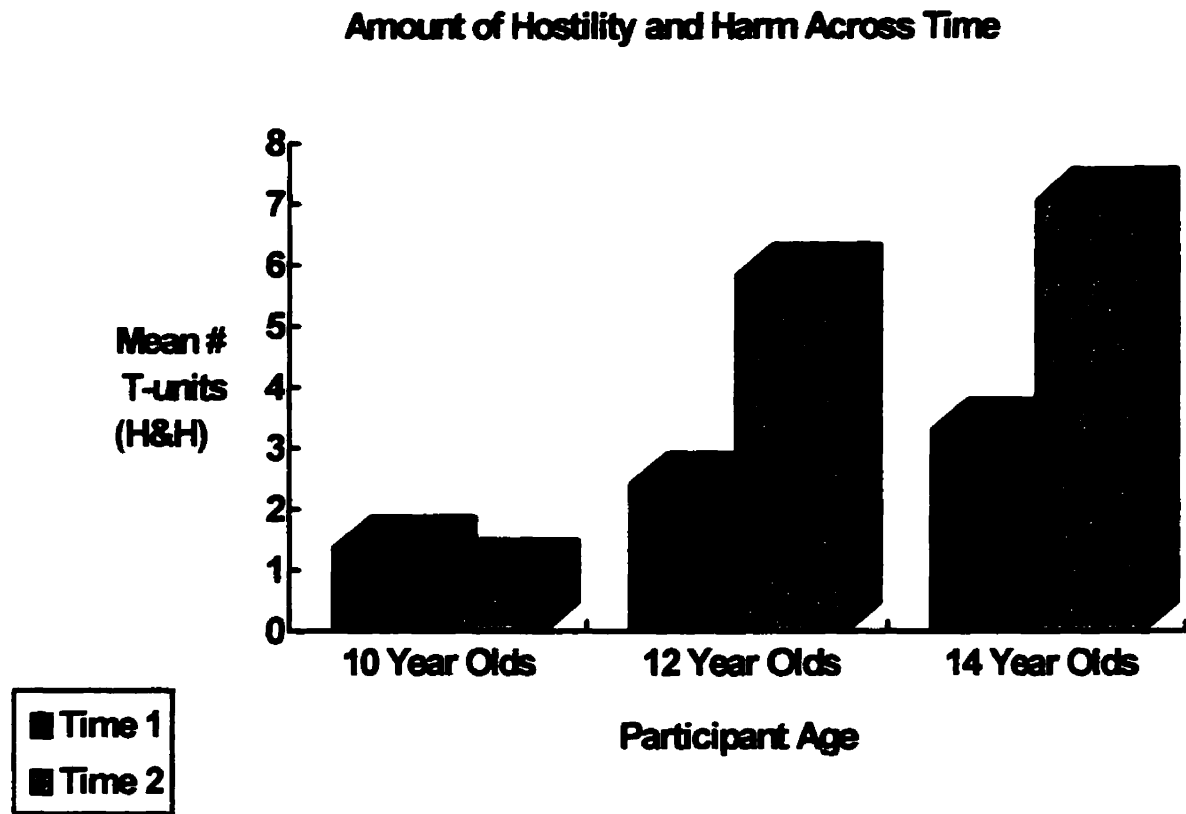
interesting is that significance was obtained for an age by gender interaction(F=4.61, p<.05) as the stories written by 14 year old females exhibited a greater amount of hostility and harm than did the stories written by 14 year old males. Figure 4.2 provides a graphic representation of this finding.

Hypothesis 2c

Hypothesis 2b stated that gender differences would be exhibited in the instances of hostility and harm in the stories, as males are traditionally more aggressive than females. The three-way ANOVA did not reveal a significant gender effect. However, a significant interaction effect was obtained for time by gender (F=5.28, p<.05) as the females at Time 2 exhibited a greater amount of hostility and harm in their stories than did the males at Time 2. Figures 4.3 provides a graphic representation of this finding.

Hypothesis 3: Degree of Hostility and Harm

Hypothesis 3a

Hypothesis 3a stated that given current statistics regarding adolescent risks the nature of the hostility and harm in the stories would become more extreme across time. To investigate this hypothesis, an overall rating of either "extreme", "less extreme" or "mixed" was assigned to each story containing T-units which referenced harm or hostility. Frequencies were calculated for the explicit mention of violence that was a) physical, b) verbal, c) occurring in the world of thought (e.g., dreams or intentions), or d) interpreted by the protagonist as being hostile or harmful. Following the frequency count, the stories were classified as having extreme or less extreme hostility and harm.
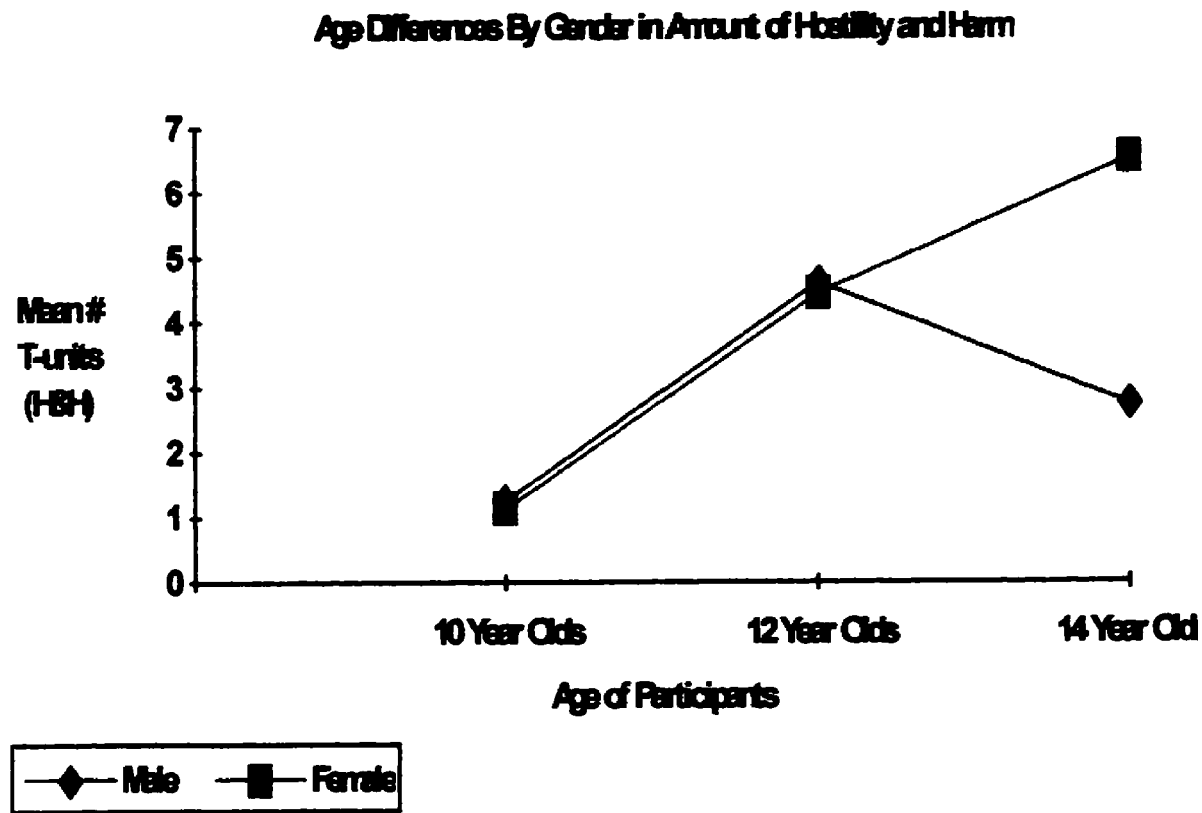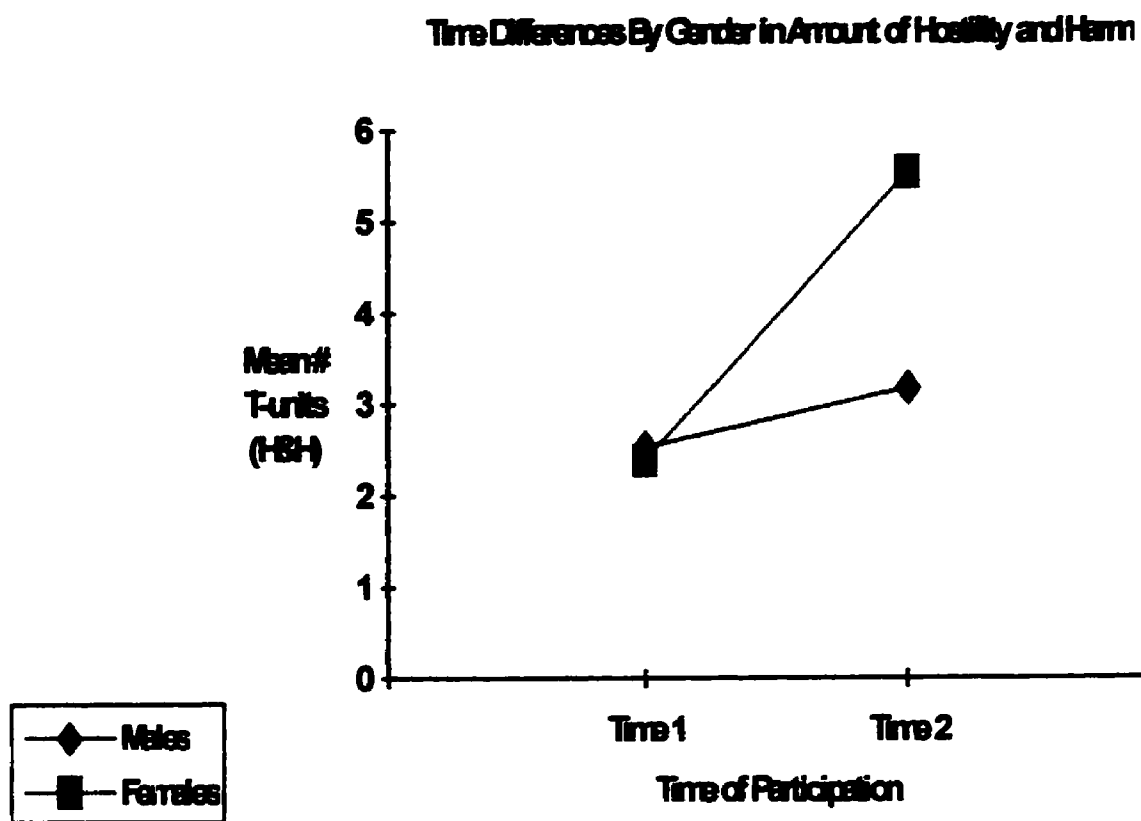
Figure 4.2

Age Differences By Gender in Amount of Hostility and Harm

Mean #
T-units
(H&H)

Age of Participants

Male   Female

Figure 4.3

Time Differences By Gender in Amount of Hostility and Harm

As well, a "mixed" category was used for stories which exhibited equal instances of extreme and less extreme references to hostility and harm. For example, if a story contained one reference to extreme hostility (shooting) and one reference to less extreme harm (insulting) the story was given a "mixed"" rating. If the story contained two references to extreme hostility and one reference to less extreme harm, it was given a rating of extreme hostility and harm. Stories containing no references to hostility and harm were given a rating of "lacking".

An inter-rater reliability check was conducted on the degree of hostility and harm assigned to the stories. Two raters agreed on 95.2% of the ratings given. Disagreements were resolved through discussion. The scoring system is outlined in Table 4.4.

A Chi Square analysis was conducted to test hypothesis 3a. Significance was obtained for time of participation (Chi square (3) =11.83, p<.01) as the proportion of stories exhibiting extreme hostility and harm increased from 6/49 (12.2%) at Time 1 to 21/55 (38.2%) at Time 2. As well, the stories containing mixed hostility and harm decreased from 22/49 (44.9%) at Time 1 to 11/55 (20.0%) at Time 2. See Figure 4.4 for a graphic representation of this information.

Hypothesis 3b

Hypothesis 3b stated that age differences would be present in the extreme nature of the hostility and harm in the stories. The above outlined scoring scheme was used to investigate this hypothesis. Chi Square analysis was conducted and significance was not obtained for age differences in degree of hostility and harm in the stories.

Table 4.4

Themes of Hostility and Harm

Extreme forms of hostility or harm:

1) Are extreme forms of physical hostility or antisocial actions carried out against

person/property (eg., kidnapping, abuse, suicide, torture, assault, shooting, stabbing,

beating, theft)?

2) Is extreme hostility expressed as angry words, threats, curses (eg., "Derek, I'm going

to kill that dog", "if you won't listen to me then maybe your father can knock some

sense into you")?

3) Is extreme hostility contemplated (thoughts or dreams) or intended (eg., "Ron almost

wanted to get shot", "Would she die")?

4) Is the hostility interpreted or received by the protagonist or storyteller as extreme

(eg., "I heard a blood curdling scream pierce the air. It came from me", "they were

afraid of being shot or killed")?

Less extreme forms of hostility or harm:

1) Are less extreme acts of harm carried out (eg., bullying, fighting, rejecting,

drug/alcohol/smoking problems, eating disorders?)

2) Is less extreme hostility expressed verbally (eg., teasing, insults, arguments?)

3) Is less aggressive harm contemplated or intended (eg., "He knew that it was no good

for him", "I feel as though I need to get her back")?

4) Is the hostility interpreted or received by the protagonist or storyteller as less extreme ·

"Todd had given up trying to be friends and now Roger had absolutely nothing",

"Gustavo cried himself into a deep sleep")?

Figure 4.4

Story Rating By Degree of Hostility and Harm
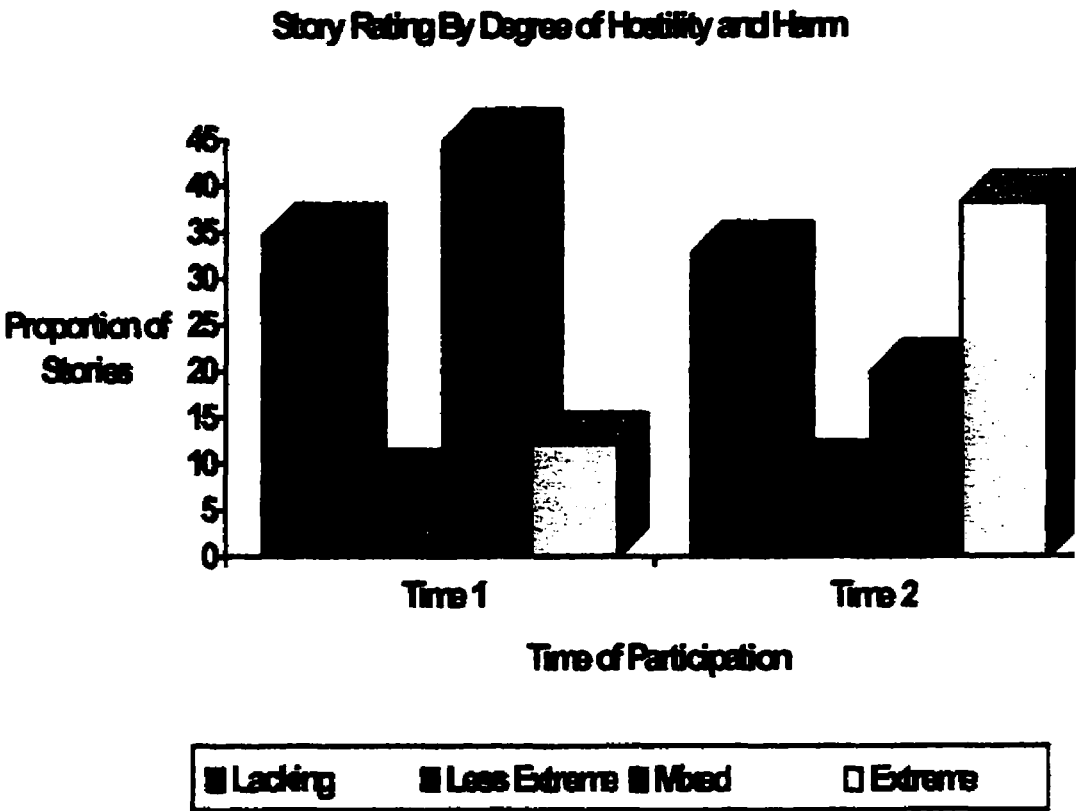
<u>Hypothesis 3c</u>

Hypothesis 3c stated that gender differences would be evidenced in the degree of hostility and harm in the stories. Statistical analysis did not support this prediction.

<div align="center">Hypothesis 4: Perpetrator of Hostility and Harm</div>

The forth hypothesis examined the interpersonal and intrapersonal nature of the hostility and harm perpetrated. It has been presented that Bruner's (1986) landscapes of action and consciousness both compose interpersonal and intrapersonal events. Thus, given the developmental progression of narrative toward an interpretation of the landscape of consciousness (see Bruner, 1990: Case and McKeough, 1990; McKeough, 1987, 1990, 1991), it was hypothesized that the stories generated by older participants will exhibit more instances of introspection and thus deal with intrapersonal harm to a greater extent. Intrapersonal harm was defined as "self" inflicted while interpersonal harm was defined as "other" inflicted.

Chi square analysis was conducted to test this hypothesis. A significant age difference between the interpersonal and intrapersonal nature of the hostility perpetrated was not obtained.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

<u>Concern Themes</u>

The participants wrote most frequently about themes of Hostility and Harm. Followed by Health and Drugs, School and Future, Social Self, and Personal Self respectively. The statistical analysis revealed a significant increase in the number of Hostility and Harm stories from Time 1 to Time 2.

Hostility and Harm

The statistical analysis of the amount of hostility and harm present in the stories revealed that there was significantly more hostility and harm present in the Time 2 stories than the Time 1 stories. As well, an age effect was noted as there was an increase at each age level (10, 12, and 14 years) in the amount of hostility and harm present. However, a significant age by gender interaction was revealed as the 14-year-old females exhibited significantly more instances of hostility and harm in their stories than did the 14-year-old males. Although no significant main effect for gender was obtained, there was a significant interaction effect for time by gender. That is, the 14-year-old females at Time 2 exhibited a significantly greater amount of hostility and harm in their stories than did the 14-year-old males at Time 2.

Statistical analysis revealed an increase from Time 1 to Time 2 in the nature of hostility and harm in the stories. There were a greater number of stories reflecting extreme hostility and harm at Time 2 as compared to Time 1.

Perpetrator of Hostility and Harm

Statistical analysis did not reveal age differences in the interpersonal or intrapersonal nature of the hostility and harm perpetrated.

future research are discussed. As well, methodological issues and limitations of the study are examined.

Concern Themes

It has been posited that the adolescent experience can be captured most accurately by having adolescents themselves report on their behaviours (Compas et al., 1985). That is, if adolescents generate the research items then the information gathered will be more reflective of their actual concerns. Thematic analysis, then, was conducted on adolescents' narratives to identify these concerns.

The first hypothesis was that the adolescent "voice" would more closely parallel current statistics and thus, the participants would write most frequently about themes of hostility and harm. A tally of theme frequency supported this prediction. It is suggested, then, that adolescents, when provided the opportunity to identify their own areas of concern, will write about issues which directly affect their health. Further, offering adolescents a fictional context might have contributed to their willingness to articulate their concerns. In contrast to the survey research reviewed herein, which asked participants to identify personal concerns, a fictional context allows participants to express concerns to which they might not want to be personally connected. More specifically, although a young woman might not indicate that she, personally, spends time worrying about sexual activity because of social desirability factors, she might write about the topic because she views it as a concern of adolescents in general.

It was expected that the frequency of stories about hostility and harm would increase over time, given that the narrative mode of thought is a tool by which

individuals organize and interpret their experiences (Bruner, 1986, 1989, 1990; Gergen & Gergen, 1988; Omer & Strenger, 1992). The results indicated that participants at Time 2 wrote more frequently about themes of hostility and harm than did participants at Time 1. This suggests that adolescents are concerned with the violence around them and that they are aware of the potential harm and risk to their person. The data revealed that over three times more references were made to hostility and harm at Time 2 that Time 1. One explanation for this finding is that this increase reflects the general increase in violence in our society as well as youngsters' constant exposure to that violence through the media.

Hostility and Harm

Again, given the statistics that indicate an increase in adolescents' exposure to and engagement in violence, the participants' narratives were analyzed to examine the amount and degree of hostility and harm present.

Instances of Hostility and Harm

Recall that the stories were analyzed for explicit mention of hostility and harm by dividing the stories into T-units. The T-units were then counted to determine the amount of hostility and harm in each story. It was predicted that the stories written at Time 2 would contain greater amounts of hostility and harm than those written at Time 1. As predicted, there was more hostility and harm present in the stories at Time 2. It is thought that this increase in the amount of hostility and harm present across time is a reflection of society's increasing exposure to violence and risk. It can be assumed that the participants at Time 2 have had more exposure to hostility and harm.

It was also hypothesized that the stories generated by the male adolescents would contain more instances of hostility and harm than those generated by female participants. This hypothesis was not supported by the data. Rather, statistical analysis revealed that the stories written by older females (14 years) contained a greater amount of hostility and harm than did the stories written by older males (14 years). As well, the females at Time 2 exhibited a greater amount of hostility and harm in their stories than did the males at Time 2. Traditionally, males were considered to be more aggressive than females. It is thought that these results are a reflection of society's view of the genders, as females sometimes struggle to receive the same recognition as their male counterparts. Perhaps the large amount of hostility and harm is an overcompensation on the part of the females. However, it is also possible that the greater amount of hostility and harm is a reflection of the females' exposure to violence. Perhaps the female participants had experienced a greater amount of hostility and harm than the male participants.

Degree of Hostility and Harm

Recall that frequencies were calculated for the explicit mention of hostility and harm that was a) physical, b) verbal, c) occurring in the world of thought (e.g., dreams or intentions), or d) interpreted by the protagonist as being hostile or harmful. Following the frequency count, the stories were classified as having extreme or less extreme hostility and harm. Given current statistics that cite adolescents' increasing exposure to violence, it was predicted that the nature of the hostility and harm in the stories generated by Time 2 participants would be more extreme than that generated by Time 1 participants. Statistical analysis supported this prediction as the proportion of stories

exhibiting extreme hostility and harm increased from Time 1 to Time 2. It is thought that this finding is a reflection of the type of violence encountered in society. More specifically, the extreme nature of violence perpetrated by the media has increased. For example children's cartoons are more violent today than 10 years ago and the degree of violence presented on television news programs has increased. Further, it is thought that this increase is reflective of more direct exposure such as domestic violence and gang-related violence. Society's awareness of these issues has increased and it is thought that the adolescents' writings reflect this awareness.

As well, it was hypothesized that the stories written by male participants would exhibit more extreme hostility and harm than those written by female participants. However, this hypothesis was not supported by the data as no significant gender differences in the degree of hostility and harm were noted. It is suggested that this finding reflects the societal trend toward more violent acts being committed by females. Again, this trend is being perpetrated by the media as women are increasingly being portrayed as predators rather than prey.

<center>Perpetrator of Hostility and Harm</center>

It has been posited that Bruner's (1986) landscapes of action and consciousness in narrative compose both interpersonal and intrapersonal social events. Further, the developmental progression of narrative through the landscapes of action and consciousness has been presented (see Bruner, 1990; Case & McKeough, 1990; McKeough, 1987, 1990, 1991). Thus, the participants' narratives were analyzed to

determine developmental differences in the interpersonal and intrapersonal nature of the hostility and harm perpetrated.

Recall that those stories exhibiting explicit mention of hostility and harm were classified as interpersonal if the perpetrator was someone other than the main character and intrapersonal if the perpetrator was the main character. Thus, the other-inflicted versus self-inflicted nature of the hostility and harm was examined. Given that 14 year olds are able to write stories occurring on the landscape of consciousness, it was hypothesized that the stories generated by older participants would exhibit more instances of intrapersonal harm. Results of the analysis did not support these predictions as no significant age differences were noted. This finding may be a result of the scoring methods used. It is thought that a structural analysis (see McKeough, 1987, 1990, 1991) may have been more sensitive to the developmental nature of the hostility and harm perpetrated.

Implications

Results of this research indicate that adolescents are concerned with their personal health. When provided the opportunity to have their voice heard, the adolescents in this study wrote about issues extending beyond those usually included in research measures. Their areas of concern were more reflective of those risks identified by current statistics.

Not only did the adolescents write most frequently about themes of hostility and harm, their stories across time also included increasing amounts of hostility and harm. Further, the extreme nature of the hostility and harm in their stories increased over time.

While interesting, this finding is also cause for concern. It begs the question of what effect this exposure to violence is having on adolescents.

One method of discerning the effects of experience is through the use of narrative therapy (see Allan, 1978; Farkas & Yorker, 1993; McAdams, 1993; Pardeck, 1994; Sarbin, 1986). When viewed from this perspective, the data utilized in the present investigation can be seen as expressing the adolescents' concerns in story form. It is thought that a conscious exploration of the stories might have therapeutic value. That is, in writing about their concerns adolescents are identifying areas of difficulty. A further discussion of those concerns, as expressed through story themes, allows the adolescent to make sense of her experience and possibly eliminate that experience as a stressor.

In summary, it was expected that the adolescent voice would substantiate the statistics that reveal adolescents' increasing exposure to and engagement in hostility and harm. It is possible that their voice can be utilized to foster an understanding of experience, thus initiating change in society's exposure to and acceptance of violence.

Future Directions

This study identified that the adolescents were most concerned with hostility and harm. Further, it was identified that the older adolescents wrote stories containing greater amounts of hostility and harm than did the younger adolescents. It was proposed that the older adolescents had possibly been exposed to greater amounts of hostility and harm, thus accounting for the discrepancy between age groups.

Future research should examine not only the amount of violence the adolescents are exposed to, but also the form or mode of exposure. Exposure to violence can be both

direct and indirect; domestic violence is and example of direct exposure while media violence is an example of indirect exposure. The effects of media violence on children and adolescents have been well documented (see Moliter & Hirsch, 1994; Rajecki, McTavish, Rasmussen, Schreuders, Byers & Jessup, 1994; Wood, Wong & Chachere, 1991). What may be of interest to future researchers is whether the adolescents' thematic story content would vary given the different modes of exposure. Is indirect violence more difficult to interpret or vice versa? Another factor that should be considered when examining the amount and form of violence participants experience is socioeconomic status. Research has demonstrated variation along these two dimensions, as a function of socioeconomic status (Hanson & Carta, 1995). Thus, future research should consider socioeconomic status as an independent variable to accurately identify the life experiences of each participant.

In effort to further explore the application of these findings, future researchers may benefit from including a comparison group (e.g., adolescents currently in therapy) to assess the generalizability of the concern topics identified. It is thought that the difficulties of the comparison group would be documented. Thus, when their stories were analyzed the accuracy of the concern themes identified could be assessed. This accuracy could also be confirmed if the participants were questioned as to the topic of their stories after the narratives were analyzed.

Limitations of the Current Study

An important limitation of this study is that the participants were not contacted to verify their story topics. It is thought that this confirmation would increase the validity of

the concern themes identified. However, given the confidential nature of the previously

collected data sets, this verification was not possible.

As well, the socioeconomic status of each participant was not obtained. Rather,

the participants were all members of a middle socioeconomic neighbourhoods. Given

the variation possible in these neighbourhoods, it may have been beneficial to identify

the socioeconomic status of each participant. Further, as research has shown that

socioeconomic status is an important factor in youngsters' experiences of violence

(including amount and degree), the failure to ascertain participant socioeconomic status

undoubtedly limited the specificity of the conclusions that can be drawn from this work.

Another limitation is the discrepancy between the age of the participants (10-to

14-years) and the age of the adolescents included in the government statistics (10-to 18-

years). It is thought that reporting statistics for 10-to 14-year-olds would have been more

reflective of the early adolescent experience.

Another concern is the subjective nature of the thematic scoring system.

Classification categories were developed by reading the narratives and following a

review of the literature. The scoring system may have been more valid if the stories

themselves were used to develop all categories and several inter-rater reliability checks

were conducted. However, it should be noted that a 90.9% reliability rating was obtained

for the categories identified.

Of additional concern are the scoring methods used to discern the interpersonal

and intrapersonal nature of the hostility and harm perpetrated. It is thought that the

categorization scheme utilized was not sensitive enough to identify the subtle differences

in content. Rather, scoring for character depiction (see Howard, 1994) or conducting a structural analysis (see McKeough, 1987, 1990, 1991) may provide more detailed information on the perpetration of hostility and harm.

It is felt that caution must be used in the generalization of the results. Although the sample size was not small, 104 participants represent a small percentage of adolescents. It must be remembered, then, that this study was exploratory in nature and should be replicated before the results are generalized to a larger population.

Summary

This exploratory study was designed to determine adolescent concerns in light of statistics that indicate the adolescent's increasing exposure to hostility and harm. The voice of the adolescent was used to identify these concerns and it was found that the adolescents wrote most frequently about themes of hostility and harm. Furthermore, an increase in the amount and degree of hostility and harm over time was revealed.

These findings have application for future research. It is important that future research examine the adolescent's mode of exposure to hostility and harm. It is possible that the amount and nature of the hostility and harm exhibited in the stories will vary given the mode of exposure. That is, individuals exposed to domestic violence may exhibit more extreme hostility and harm in their stories than those exposed to media violence. This study has identified that adolescents are aware of their increasing exposure to violence, future research would benefit from examining the effects of different modes of hostility and harm.

REFERENCES

Adwere-Boamah, J., & Curtis, D. A. (1993). A factor analysis of a four-factor model of adolescent concerns revisited. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 22(3), 297-312.

Allan, J. A. (1978). Serial storytelling: A therapeutic approach with a young adolescent. Canadian Counsellor, 12(2), 132-137.

Bandura. A. (1972). The stormy decade: Fact or fiction? In D. Rogers (Ed.), Issues in Adolescent Psychology (2nd ed.). New York: Appleton Century Crofts.

Bruner, J. (1986). Actual Minds, Possible Worlds. Cambridge: University Press.

Bruner, J. (1987). Life as narrative. Social Research, 54(1), 11-32. Bruner, J. (1990). Culture and human development: A new look. Human Development, 33, 344-355.

Case, R. (1985). Intellectual Development: Birth to Adulthood. Toronto: Academic Press.

Case, R. (1992). Neo-Piagetian theories of child development. In R. J. Sternberg & C. A. Berg (Eds.), Intellectual Development (p. 161-196). Cambridge: University Press.

Case, R., & McKeough, A. (1990). Schooling and the development of central conceptual structures. International Journal of Education, 13, 827-948.

Cavell, T. A., & Kelley, M. L. (1994). The checklist of adolescent problem situations. Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 23(3), 226-230.

Coffey, A., & Atkinson, P. (1996). Making Sense of Qualitative Data. London: Sage.

Compas, B. E., Davis, G. E., & Forsythe, C. J. (1985). Characteristics of life events during adolescence. American Journal of Community Psychology, 13(6), 677-691.

Dekovic, M. (1996). International conference on conflict and development in adolescence. Crisis, 17(1), 44-45.

Farkas, G. S., & Yorker, B. (1993). Case studies of bibliotherapy with homeless children. Issues in Mental Health Nursing, 14, 337-347.

Feldman, C., Bruner, J., Kalmar, D., & Renderer, B. (1993). Plot, plight and dramatism. Human Development, 36, 327-342.

Fivush, R. (1991). The social construction of personal narratives. Merril-Palmer Quarterly, 37(1), 59-79.

Gergen, K. J., & Gergen, M. M. (1988). Narrative and the self as relationship. Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 21, 17-56.

Genereaux, R. (in preparation) [Children's structural story content]. Unpublished raw data.

Hall, G. S. (1904). Adolescence (Vol. I & II). New York: Appleton.

Hanson, M. J., & Carta, J. J. (1995). Addressing the challenges of families with multiple risks. Exceptional Children, 62(3), 201-212.

Health Canada (1994). Suicide in Canada: Update of the Report of the Task Force on Suicide in Canada (Cat. No. H39-107/1995E).

Howard, M. (1994). Aggressive and Normal Boys Story Telling. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

Jaeger, R. M. (Ed.) . (1988) . Complementary Methods For Research in Education. Washington: American Educational Research Association.

Kohn, P. M., & Milrose, J. A. (1993) . The inventory of high-school students' recent life experiences: A decontaminated measure of adolescents' hassles. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 22(1), 43-55.

Langer, L. M., & Warheit, G. J. (1992) . The pre-adult health decision making model: Linking decision-making directedness/orientation to adolescent health-related attitudes and behaviors. Adolescence, 27(108), 919-942.

Laursen, B., & Collins, W. A. (1994) . Interpersonal conflict during adolescence. Psychological Bulletin, 115(2), 197-209.

Males, M. (1992) . The code blue report: Call to action or unwarranted "dirism"? Adolescence, 27(106), 273-282.

McAdams, D. P. (1993) . The Stories We Live By. New York: William Morrow.

McKeough, A. (1987) . A neo-Piagetian Analysis of Adolescents Performance on Composing and Scientific Reasoning Tasks. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting. Washington, DC.

McKeough, A. (1990) . Teaching Central Conceptual Skills: A Developmental Approach to Discourse Composition and Recall. (S.S.H.R.C. Final Report). University of Calgary, Department of Educational Psychology.

McKeough, A. (1991) . Neo-Piagetian theory goes to school: Program development and program delivery. Exceptionality Education Canada, 1, 1-17.

Moliter, F., & Hirsch, K. W. (1994). Children's tolerance of real-life aggression after exposure to medial violence: A replication of the Drabman and Thomas studies. Child Study Journal, 24(3), 191-207.

Neinstein, L. S., & Blum, R. W. (Eds.). (1991). Adolescent health issues. In W. R. Hendee (Ed.), The Health of Adolescents (p. 181-183). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Normand, C. L., & Mishara, B. L. (1992). The development of the Concept of Suicide in Children. Omega Journal of Death and Dying, 25(3), 183-203.

Omer, H., & Strenger, C. (1992). The pluralist revolution: From the one true meaning to an infinity of constructed ones. Psychotherapy, 29, 253-261.

Pardeck, J. T. (1994). Using literature to help adolescents cope with problems. Adolescence, 29(114), 421-427.

Paul, C. (Ed.). (1921). A Young Girl's Diary. New York: Thomas Seltzer.

Perry, C. L., & Jessor, R. (1985). The concept of health promotion and the prevention of adolescent drug abuse. Health Education Quarterly, 12(2), 168-184.

Rajecki, D. W., McTavish, D. G., Rasmussen, J. L., Schreuders, M., Byers, D. C., & Jessup, K. S. (1994). Violence, conflict, trickery and other story themes in TV ads for food for children. Journal of Applied Social Science, 24(19), 1685-1700.

Rubenstein, E. (1991). An overview of adolescent development, behavior and clinical intervention. Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services, 4, 220-225.

Sahin, N., & Sahin, N. H. (1995). Dimensions of concern: The case of Turkish adolescents. Journal of Adolescence, 18, 49-69.

Sarbin, T. R. (Ed.). (1986). Narrative Psychology. New York: Praeger.

Siddique, C. M., & D'Arcy, C. (1984). Adolescence, stress and psychological well-being. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 13(6), 459-473.

Statistics Canada (1989). Juristat Service Bulletin (ISSN 0715-271X). Ottawa: Government Publications.

Statistics Canada (1992). A Portrait of Families in Canada (Cat. No. 89-523E). Ottawa: Government Publications.

Takanishi, R. (1993). The opportunities of adolescence: Research, interventions and policy. American Psychologist, 48(2), 85-87.

Tolan, P., Miller, L., & Thomas, P. (1988). Perception and experience of types of social stress and self-image among adolescents. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 17(2), 147-163.

Violato, C. & Holden, W. B. (1988). A confirmatory factor analysis of a four-factor model of adolescent concerns. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 17(1), 101-113.

Wechsler, D. (1991). The Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Third Edition. New York: Psychological Corporation.

Wechsler, D. (1974). The Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised. New York: Psychological Corporation.

Williams, C. L., & Uchiyama, C. (1989). Assessment of life events during adolescence: The use of self-report inventories. Adolescence, 24(93), 95-118.

Wood, W., Wong, F. Y., & Chachere, J. G. (1991). Effects of media violence on

viewer's aggression in unconstrained social interaction. Psychological Bulletin, 109(3),

371-383.

IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (QA-3)

150mm

6"
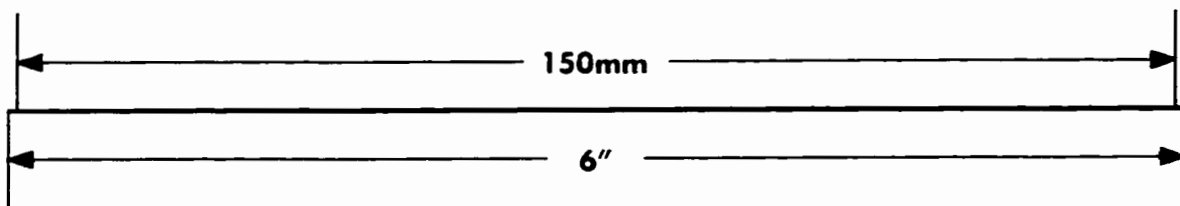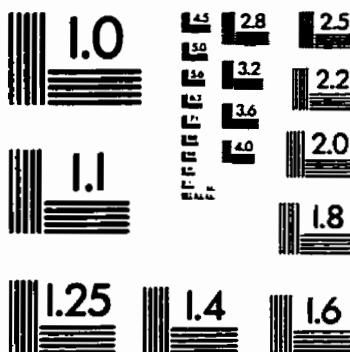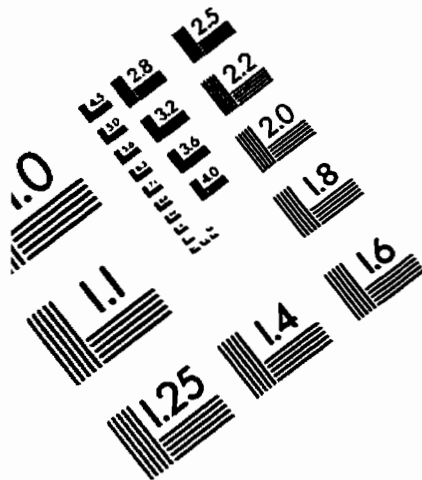
APPLIED IMAGE . Inc
1653 East Main Street
Rochester, NY 14609 USA
Phone: 716/482-0300
Fax: 716/288-5989

© 1993, Applied Image, Inc., All Rights Reserved