

GIVING ADOLESCENTS A VOICE:
An Interactive Method For Studying Adolescence

by
Lia Fatels
B.A., University of Waterloo, 1990

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirement for the Degree of

ACCEPTED

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of Sociology

DEAN

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

Dr. R.L. Ogmundson, Supervisor (Department of Sociology)

Dr. J.E. Veevers, Departmental Member
(Department of Sociology)

Dr. N.L. Galambos, Outside Member (Department of Psychology)

Prof. J.P. Anglin, External Examiner
(School of Child and Youth Care)

© LIA FATELS, 1993

University of Victoria

All rights reserved. Thesis may not be reproduced in whole
or in part, by photocopy or other means without permission of
the author.

Supervisor: Dr. R.L. Ogmundson

ABSTRACT

For years, a storm and stress view presided over academics' understanding of adolescence. Some recent academic literature, however, has challenged this hypothesis. The public and the media, on the other hand, still buy into this view of adolescents. This thesis explores an interactive method of studying adolescents and compares its findings with those of traditional survey methods used by other researchers. The methodology involved: (1) conducting informal interviews with some youth and developing a survey based on questions suggested by them, (2) distributing the survey to the group, and (3) analyzing the findings and sharing them with the participants for their feedback.

The main finding of the present survey is that, when compared to the other Canadian sociological surveys, the overall impression of adolescents from this study is more positive. The adolescents surveyed seemed to be happy, healthy and hopeful of the future. The differences between this survey and others might result, in part, from the fact that the questions asked in the present study were known to be important to the participants (because they chose them) and because the participants were given the chance to explain their answers (i.e. questions were open-ended). These findings reinforce the idea that representatives of the group to be surveyed should be involved in the design process and that the respondents' own words might provide more insight than statistics alone.

In the future, the survey instrument could be used either alone or with other methods combining both participant and researcher concerns for greater insight into adolescents' lives. Repeating the interview stage periodically would serve as a feedback loop. Whatever the method or methods chosen,

generalizations about a group of people based on age alone (or any single criterion) must be made very carefully. It is recommended, therefore, that policy and program development, academic research and media studies should involve input from some teens at every stage of research in order to ensure that adolescents are given a voice.

Examiners:

[REDACTED]
Dr. R.L. Ogmundson, Supervisor (Department of Sociology)

[REDACTED]
Dr. J.E. Veevers, Departmental Member
(Department of Sociology)

[REDACTED]
Dr. N.L. Galambos, Outside Member (Department of Psychology)

[REDACTED]
Prof. J.P. Anglin, External Examiner
(School of Child and Youth Care)

CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	ii
CONTENTS	v
TABLES & FIGURES	vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	viii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Concept of Adolescence	4
1.2 Theories of Adolescence	7
1.3 Previous Methods	11
1.4 Previous Studies' Impressions of Youth	19
CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY	23
2.1 Procedures	23
CHAPTER 3: FINDINGS	33
3.1 Interview Findings	34
3.1.1 Significant People	34
3.1.1.a) Friends	35
3.1.1.b) Parents	38
3.1.1.c) Self, Independence and Age	40
3.1.2 Significant Issues	42
3.1.2.a) School	42
3.1.2.b) The Future	44
3.1.2.c) Religion	45
3.1.2.d) Environment	46
3.1.2.e) Gender Issues	47
3.1.3 Message to Adults	50
3.2 The Questions	53
3.3 Survey Findings	59
3.3.1 Significant People	59
3.3.1.a) Friends	61
3.3.1.b) Parents	64
3.3.1.c) Self-Image	66
3.3.2 Significant Issues	68
3.3.2.a) School	71
3.3.2.b) Future	72
3.3.2.c) Religion	74
3.3.2.d) Environment	76
CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION	80
4.1 Participant Feedback	80
4.2 Method Revisited	85
4.3 Future Direction	93
BIBLIOGRAPHY	96

Contents (continued)

Page

APPENDICES

Appendix A. Consent Form	105
Appendix B. Survey	107
Appendix C. SPSSPC Crosstabs Printout	115
Appendix D. Summary of Findings Presented to Respondents	127

TABLES

	Page
Table I - Opinions on Various Groups of People . . .	60
Table II - Relationships with Family Members	65
Table III - Amount Respondents Worry about Various Issues	69
Table IV - Opinions about Different Issues	70

FIGURES

Figure I - Participant Contacts	28
---	----

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all of the participants in the study for your input and enthusiasm; Dr. Richard Ogmundson for your encouragement and guidance; Dr. Jean Veevers and Dr. Nancy Galambos for your involvement and suggestions; the Sara Spencer Foundation for financial support; Mom and Dad for helping me get through my teen years; and John for letting me revert back every once in awhile.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

For years, a storm and stress view presided over academics' understanding of adolescence.¹ Storm and stress is characterized by contradictions, wide swings in mood and emotion, oscillating thoughts, feelings and actions, turbulence and conflict (Santrock 1987:14). Recent academic literature, however, has challenged this hypothesis. The public and the media, on the other hand, still buy into it. This thesis explores an interactive method of studying adolescents that has the aim of allowing adolescents to direct the research in a way such that more accurate portrayals of adolescent life may emerge. Such research might help to change the stereotyped impressions of youth.²

Yankelovich indicates that many of the stereotypes about youth are inaccurate and that widespread generalizations about adolescents have developed based on information about a limited group of adolescents (1974 in Santrock 1990:23). Similarly, Offer and his colleagues (1988:2) do not support the storm and stress view but believe that a majority of adolescents are competent human beings without deep emotional turmoil (1988 in Santrock 1990:23). Montemayor and Flannery

¹Adolescence is defined as "the period of transition between childhood and adulthood" (Santrock 1990:28); "a psycho-social-biological stage of development that corresponds to changes in many areas which accompany [this] transition" (Offer et al. 1988:1); "the period of physical and psychological development from the onset of puberty to maturity" (The Houghton Mifflin Canadian Dictionary, 1980).

²For purposes of stylistic relief, the terms adolescent, youth, teen, teenager and the young will be used interchangeably.

(1990:294) indicate that "the data now available suggest that many differences between children and adolescents emerge gradually rather than suddenly. In most cases, change begins in childhood and continues throughout adolescence". Such an observation further disputes the portrayal of adolescence as a period of storm and stress or tumultuous change. According to Manning (1983:823),

some of our most cherished beliefs about adolescence are myths. Explanations of the behaviour of youth, the origin of adolescence, and the extent of the generation gap are often based on assumptions rather than on a critical examination of historical literature and contemporary research. Decisions based on such assumptions have far-reaching effects on adolescents as a result of their influence on educational practices, interpersonal relationships and counselling programs.

Critiquing the storm and stress hypothesis, most academics have emerged with more positive evaluations of adolescents' relationships, adjustments and functioning. Unfortunately, the media, by and large the general public (probably influenced by the media) as well as some researchers continue to hold this negative view of adolescence.

A report by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (1981:312), indicating that the capacities of a majority of young people remain unused and that self-marginalization is an inevitable consequence of present-day urban existence, does not help to change the image of adolescents (and may have a more far-reaching audience than most academic research). Textbook authors Conger and Petersen

(1984:607) characterize adolescence in terms of a new alienation, increased feelings of loneliness, feelings of rootlessness and a decreased sense of purpose and direction in life (which cited on its own as it is here may evoke negative behavioral expectations). Meanwhile, the media continue to be selective in their descriptions of adolescence, generally reporting on large-scale survey findings. A recent article on Bibby and Posterski's latest book (ie. 1992, third since 1985) stated: "What Posterski and Bibby found is by no means all bad but frequently disturbing all the same" (Times Colonist Nov.30, 1992). (In fact, as I will show later, the interpretations were more disturbing than the findings.)

As researchers, we cannot control the media. However, if we ensure that respondents in our surveys are given the opportunity to be involved in the development of the survey questionnaire and in the interpretation of findings, ie. from beginning to end, we can at least make sure that what is presented reflects who is being represented. Thus, this thesis uses such a method to determine what differences and similarities in findings and impressions concerning youth result from their more active involvement in the research process.

This first effort at such an approach restricts itself mainly to consideration and comparison with Canadian, sociological surveys. The sample is small and neither representative nor random, but is not intended for

generalization; instead, the goal of the research is to provide a descriptive account of the method and its findings in order to determine its value for future examinations of adolescents. Before describing the method, the present chapter surveys historical, theoretical and empirical literature on adolescence in order to delineate the conventional wisdom.

1.1 Concept of Adolescence

The concept of adolescence was formally introduced and labelled at the turn of this century (see G. Stanley Hall, 1904), marking the beginning of its scientific study. This followed from a change in perception in the Victorian era of the role of adolescence. Whereas the Middle Ages defined the main objective of this life stage as one of building character, the Victoria era began to view the developmental task of adolescence as focusing more on identity choice. Adolescence was perceived for the first time as constituting a distinct life stage. Adolescents were viewed as being conforming, vulnerable, passive, awkward and indecisive about certain issues (Baumeister 1986:98). The acknowledgement of this separate stage (i.e. neither child nor adult) changed the social and economic status of adolescents toward greater dependence on adults, toward less responsibility, toward less commitment to future (adult) identities, and toward having more options for choosing adult identities. The smooth, well-

defined transition to adulthood as characterized in the Middle Ages is reported to have changed forever to an uncertain and problematic one.³

The "roaring twenties" introduced the expression "flaming youth" (Rice 1984:13) to describe adolescents. Reports of increases in radical protest groups critical of the government are used to characterize the youth of the 1930s. The Great Depression, followed by World War II, brought with it serious economic and political concerns which replaced the hedonistic adolescent values of the 1920s (Santrock 1990:19). The economic developments of the years after 1945, including new technologies, new modes of consumption, and a different labour force, produced new family structures and redefined communities, once again changing the portrayal of adolescents (Holmes and Silverman 1992:4). This prosperity which continued into the fifties enabled youth to develop their own collective identity.

Klein (1990) summarizes the social development of adolescence up to this point as follows:

Basically, industrialization occurring during the later 1800s created the need for a stage of adolescence; the Depression created the legitimized opportunity for adolescence to become differentiated from childhood and adulthood; and the mass media influence/blitz of the 1950s crystallized

³ There is likely a middle-class bias in this description, as adolescents are categorized into a single group. The Victorian Era, characterized by industrialization, urbanization and public education, is reported to have provided many adolescents with more freedom and less direction, changing both the social and psychological nature of the youth experience (Baumeister 1986:103).

this life stage by giving it a reality all its own (1990:456).

The present conception of 'the teenager' is said to have resulted from the market discovery in the 50s and 60s of this newly defined affluent and expanding consumer group of young people (Willis 1990:17).

However, the 1960s terminated this era of "adolescence as tranquillity" (Gillis 1974:185). According to the literature, this decade served to restore the social and political independence of youth depicted in the 1920s.⁴ Youth were portrayed as angry, assertive and idealistic. During the 1970s, "teenagers were stereotyped as apathetic, conservative, and self-serving. The 1980s yielded descriptions of adolescents fearful about the state of the planet while indulging in expensive personal gratification" (Holmes and Silverman 1992:4). Bibby and Posterski (1992:95) use the phrase "frightened generation" in their description of Canadian teenagers in the 90s as well as the "crisis generation" (1992:73-74, 87). They interpret their findings throughout their latest text as "many indicators of an increasing emphasis on the individual over the group in Canadian society" (1992: 10, 164).

⁴ This "independence" may actually be overstated. 1920s' youth appealed to business to justify their behaviour and the hippies counterculture of the 60s was based on traditional values of parents and the times (Baumeister 1986:118). Hence, if adolescents were examined within the context of society, their behaviours may no longer seem in opposition (from interviews).

From this delineation of the history of the concept of adolescence, we are led to assume that since the Victorian era, when teenagers were given more options, this life stage has become problematic for its occupants and adults around them. Generally youth have always been portrayed as hedonistic and self-serving, yet the media and the public continue to be shocked and surprised about "teenagers today". The present study affords youth an opportunity to comment on these characterizations of them and contribute to their written history.

1.2 Theories of Adolescence

Traditional theories of adolescence often emphasized discontinuity. Santrock (1987:24-5) defines discontinuity as an abruptness of change from one stage of development to the next, including changes in expectations, life experiences, life tasks and biological changes. This may reinforce the negative impressions of adolescence and its members. Parents and teachers are told to anticipate conflict; these attitudes in turn may influence their interactions with and characterizations of teenagers. Therefore, these types of theories perpetuate stereotypes.

If the inclusion of theoretical positions in general textbooks is an indication of theories' acceptance, this review contends that (1) few recent sociological theories are considered in the study of adolescence and (2) many of those

that are cited emphasize discontinuity. For example, the writing of social psychologist Kurt Lewin (1939) is still included in recent texts on youth. According to Fuhrmann (1986), Lewin was interested in the effects of the environment and its expectations on behaviour. He believed that dramatic changes in adolescents and the environment cause stress for adolescents. Fuhrmann describes Lewin's "marginal man" as the adolescent accepted as neither a child nor an adult. Discrepancies in expectations along with rapid physical and emotional changes are said to lead to tremendous conflict for teenagers (Fuhrmann 1986:19-20).

As suggested, adolescents are not always blamed for this conflict and stress. Still, sociologist Allison Davis' (1944) description of how the social environment leads to problems for youth implies that this life stage is viewed as a time to get through as quickly as possible. In her work on socialization, she argued that one important control on adolescent behaviour is "socialized anxiety". Haviland and Scarborough (1981:111) explain Davis' theory as follows: socialized anxiety becomes an internal guide to behaviour and determines to a considerable extent what norms and values the adolescent will seek and support. The culture defines for the adolescent which values and norms will lead to a reduction in anxiety. The amount of turmoil experienced in adolescence is related to the degree to which adolescents are made to conform to social norms. Middle class adolescents experience a

maximum amount of stress because they are the group most expected to conform to the norms of our society [causing them to experience discontinuity].

Kingsley Davis (1940) is another prominent name included in theoretical discussions of youth. He argues that generational conflict is inevitable as parents forget what it was like to be teenagers or cannot keep up with the rapidly changing times. Adams and Gullotta (1989:37) interpret the work of Kingsley Davis as indicating that because modern society changes very rapidly, each new generation is reared in a social milieu different from that of the previous generation. Parents find it difficult to guide the new generation and clashes are inevitable. Davis (1940 as reported by Adams and Gullotta 1989:38) provides four reasons for conflict: (1) Parents cannot keep up with teenagers physically. In response, social systems limit competition to avoid feelings of jealousy but, in the process, a wide variety of opportunities for youth diminish leading to heightened frustration and ensuing conflict with parents. (2) Youths dream of utopian ideals, while parents have become pragmatic. Different perspectives on life lead to conflicting communication between the generations. (3) Parental authority seems less meaningful since it was moulded in a different social milieu. Conflict easily arises. (4) Many parents find it hard to let the adolescent go. They continue to provide direction when often it is neither desired nor necessarily

appropriate.

Adams and Gullotta (1989:7) also mention the more recent work of Hans Sebald. In his writing, Sebald (1977:4-5) says that "adolescence in the sociological sense refers to the experience of passing through the unstructured and ill-defined phase that lies between childhood and adulthood. In other words, adolescence refers to the crisis of discontinuity of statuses, which creates a social environment with uncertain and diffuse guidelines". He views adolescence as comprising a period of confusing changes and ambiguous role expectations. According to Sebald, the reactions of teenagers to certain characteristics of Western culture develop into behaviour patterns that are defined as typically adolescent. These emotional reactions include embarrassment, anxiety, resentment, withdrawal, uncertainty, confusion, ambiguity and disorientation (1977:107).

The notion of discontinuity is often presented by the media as a problem; this is sometimes strengthened by the characteristics researchers use to define this concept. With effort, though, some of the concepts derived from more general theories emphasizing continuity might be applied to studies of adolescence. For example, Ritzer (1988:90-1) indicates, in his discussion of structural functionalism, that Talcott Parsons (1951) saw socialization as a lifelong process. According to Sebald (1977:13), structural functionalists grant that adolescents may be confronted with role conflict but that

these do not necessarily constitute problems per se. Of symbolic interactionist George Herbert Mead's (1934) work, Ritzer (1988:179) says: "To acquire a more coherent sense of self, children must move [from the play stage] on to the game stage, in which they develop the ability to take a more generalized view of the situation and of the self. In Mead's terms, adolescents learn to take the role of the 'generalized other'" [leading to a harmonious sense of self]. These understandings would lead to very different research approaches which in turn might lead to very different impressions of teens.

As researchers we must question ourselves regarding the beliefs we hold, the questions we ask as a result and the influence we have on the findings. An alternative, as proposed by this thesis, is to put aside the theories and instead let the adolescent subjects direct the substance of the research.

1.3 Previous Methods

A wide range of techniques has been used in sociological studies of young people. For example, Bibby and Posterski (1985,1988, 1992) administered questionnaires to large numbers of Canadian adolescents, Becker (1953) studied marijuana users by conducting structured interviews, Whyte (1955) participated in the life of an Italian slum, Baron (1989) used field work to study street youth in Victoria and Jankowski (1986) used a

combination of methods in his investigation of the political attitudes of Chicano youth. Every method holds advantages and disadvantages in terms of answering certain types of questions and providing certain types of data.

Surveys have probably been used most often in the area of adolescence. These predominantly quantitative methods are used in order to allow generalization and prediction. The survey method can be used to study a large number of subjects, on a variety of topics, with often prearranged codification of responses (Newman and Newman 1986:394-5).

Surveys often use rating scales to describe and categorize persons, characteristics and other variables. In Canada, Bibby and Posterski (1985, 1988, 1992) have used their survey data based on closed-ended questions and scales to generalize about youths' values, concerns, enjoyments, beliefs and expectations.⁵ However, many such surveys have used undergraduate students for their samples, or youths aged 15-24 years (Posterski and Bibby 1988; Lanphier and Perez 1983; Kuhn and McPartland 1954). This can lead to questions of validity when their findings are generalized to adolescents. Survey methods often allow for rigorous sampling techniques and linear, causal analyses. Still, they generally use limited numbers of adult-derived closed-ended categories, which do not

⁵Bibby and Posterski's latest study does include some quotes from teens. Maybe they are starting to ask for qualitative explanations and for this they should be congratulated; however, they appear to still be generating the questions and response categories themselves.

always reflect adolescents' concerns (eg. the questions) or responses (eg. the categories). The lack of opportunity for the youths to explain their answers encourages researcher interpretation, which may lead to misunderstanding (as will be demonstrated in chapter three). For all of these reasons, the traditional survey method (whereby researchers make up the questions and interpret the results) may be inadequate as the sole method of investigation.

Other methods, including fieldwork and informal or open-ended interviews allow more input from participants. For example, Glaser and Strauss (1967) advocate the use of the constant comparative method in order to analyze large quantities of qualitative data and observations. They say that

theory based on data can usually not be completely refuted by more data or replaced by another theory. Since it is too intimately linked to data, it is destined to last despite its inevitable modification and reformation (1967:4).

They call this grounded theory. According to Kirby and McKenna (1989:81), this method allows observations to be compared in order to demonstrate relationships between observations. Lofland (1971:7), also recognized as part of the grounded theory tradition, states: "In order to capture the participants in their own terms, one must learn their analytic ordering of the world, their categories for rendering explicable and coherent the flux of raw reality." Connell et al. "stress the need for research to be 'organized in a

fundamentally different way - by and with the people it is ultimately supposed to benefit'" (1982:216 as cited by Kirby and McKenna 1989:26). Kirby and McKenna (1989:28) refer to this as "research from the margins" (i.e. the margins of the production of knowledge).⁶ They are concerned with how research skills can enable people to create knowledge (1989:17).

The above viewpoint advocates authentic dialogue between researchers and participants in which all participants are respected as equally knowing subjects. Becker's (1953) "Becoming a Marijuana User" is also said to strive for this authentic or 'grounded' approach (from Wallace and Wolf 1986:218). His data were obtained through personal interviews. His sampling technique consists of including additional interviewees until the researcher decides that the sample is of adequate size (see also Rose 1982 for notes on Becker). Denfeld (1974: Preface), working within a similar framework, advocates first person accounts for their possible contribution to the development of theories.

Field studies with young people have also been effective in uncovering everyday life experiences. Researchers enter

⁶Sandra Kirby hosted multiple sessions at the CSAA Meetings at the Learned's (May 1992) which were well attended. Kirby and McKenna's (1989) text is used in the graduate methods course offered by the UVic sociology department. The method used in this thesis, which was inspired in part from their writing, has been supported in conversations with individuals from the fields of Sociology, Anthropology, Child and Youth Studies and Women's Studies as well as parents and teens.

natural settings and obtain information through conversations but also through the observation of behaviour. Whyte (1955) spent four years living and interacting with the participants in Street Corner Society. Cohen went to his subjects and spoke with them and observed them in everyday situations in order to reach his conclusions in Delinquent Boys (1955). Baron (1989) met his participants on the street and interviewed them in their surroundings. (See also Brake 1985; Coffield et al. 1986; Schwartz 1987; Klaczynski 1990).

These qualitative studies are usually more descriptive than inferential. They usually do not attempt random sampling techniques and therefore do not often lend themselves to statistical generalization to all adolescents.⁷ They are also often very time consuming. With all this in mind, they do, however, provide new insights. New understandings of both frequently studied groups and of groups not normally encountered by academics may be achieved if researchers are receptive to participant input. Experiments, biographies or diaries may also be employed to provide an even more well-rounded picture of the individuals/group under consideration. Experiments would allow us "to more precisely determine whether something is causing an adolescent to act, feel, or think in a particular way" (Santrock 1987:72; 1990:75).

⁷Qualitative studies of adolescents have generally concentrated on specific segments of this population - such as the working class of Britain and Australia or slum areas in the United States, and to a lesser extent in Canada (eg. Blanshard Court, Victoria).

According to Newman and Newman (1986:396), experiments provide conclusions about causal relationships but "we cannot be certain that the laboratory situation is applicable to the 'real world'". Field experiments, on the other hand, give us confidence about the authenticity of the behaviour observed but they are more difficult to control (1986:398). Written text, such as diaries, autobiographies, letters and newspaper stories provide data for the life history method, its usefulness depending on the completeness of obtainable records (Kirby and McKenna 1989:81).

The various methods outlined above can be combined in a multimethod approach. As the various methods have weaknesses that are different, their combined findings may be accepted with far greater confidence (Brewer and Hunter 1989:17). Therefore, surveys can supplement more informal techniques. Similarly, open-ended interviews, participant observation and field studies can add a new dimension to structured questionnaires. For example, Jankowski (1986) used questionnaires, in-depth interviews and participant observation in his three phase study. (See Denzin 1970 on triangulation).

Another attempt at combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies involved Falchikov's (1989) Q-technique in her study of adolescent self-perception. Her subjects were asked to sort a collection of items on a continuum ranging from "most like me" to "least like me". The result was a model of

each person's subjective view of her or himself. However, the model places limited emphasis on social influences and some of the phrases were derived and grouped by the researcher.

Kuhn and McPartland (1954, 1960) also undertook to develop a qualitative survey. A single open-ended question: "Who am I?" directs the study. The responses are categorized dichotomously either as consensual (or socially-agreed upon) or as subconsensual, meaning requiring further explanation. For example, the characteristics boy, son, brother, or other physical descriptors are consensual responses whereas adjectives such as vegetarian, peace-loving or thoughtful are more reflective or subconsensual. (See Kuhn and McPartland 1954; Kuhn 1960; Zurcher 1977 for further explanation and analysis.) The purpose is to determine whether individuals will state socially recognized self-definitions first, which would measure the extent of influence of others on an individual's identity. (This method was considered difficult and ineffective by the initial participants in the present study.)

The Canadian survey by Holmes and Silverman (1992:3) attempts to "hear the voices, thoughts and opinions of young [people] themselves." They included in their survey six open-ended questions covering whom the adolescents in their sample (1603 females, 1604 males) would select to invite to their school; what the most important concerns, problems or fears are at the present time "for you and people your age"; topics

of interest for which the respondents can easily get information; topics about which they would like information; and what questions they would ask other young people. Holmes and Silverman say that the commentaries breathe life into the survey (1992:6). However, the questions were derived from "literature on adolescence, concerns of members of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, and the authors' own experience with young women and with the women's movement in Canada" (1992:94). Also, much of the analysis excludes the data on the boys in the sample, so that comparisons across gender are absent, and they did not follow up on the questions the youths posed which may, in the youths' minds, be the questions we should be asking in order to fully understand them and what is important to them.

Finally, in Decima Research's (Toronto, April 1991) Canadian study, they attempt to "tackle some of the most pervasive and negative myths about teens", to "listen to teens and learn from them". These researchers used extensive questioning and large numbers of categories. Although quantitative, Decima Research's questionnaire tries to accommodate variations in perception and experience. Unfortunately, as the survey was undertaken as a market research project, I was unable to get further information on the study.

All of these previous methods have provided additional insight into particular areas of adolescence.

Open-ended interviews and field work have allowed in-depth examinations of select groups. Surveys have provided general understandings of large groups of people. The present study suggests that the advantages of a number of different methods can be gained through a combination of methods together with greater involvement of participants in all phases of the research.

1.4 Previous Studies' Impressions of Youth

When one looks up Sociology of Adolescence at the University of Victoria library, books such as Vanguards & Followers; The Underground Revolution; Teen-age Tyranny; The Doom of Youth; Growing Up Forgotten; The Postponed Generation; and The Stormy Decade catch one's eye. Fortunately, recent literature appears to provide more positive descriptions than those offered by these 1960s and 70s titles. Reported findings on adolescents in the last decade are improving but as long as the media continue to report on the "disturbing" findings of (academic) researchers such as Bibby and Posterski, innovative methods must continue to be explored to better represent teens.

What directed this thesis, in terms of findings, were the overall impressions or interpretations that have been reported

with regard to adolescents.⁸ Two types of studies of adolescence seem to prevail in sociology. A large branch of the discipline appears to only deal with social problems and therefore researchers in this group concentrate on issues of unemployment, sex, drugs, crime or poverty from the outset (see Becker 1953; Whyte 1955; Snedeker 1982; Jenkins 1983). They react to a reality and try to explain it. This work has been insightful. We have been able to learn about groups we would not ordinarily confront eg. drug users, prostitutes, those living in housing developments. However, these studies do not tell us about youth in general. Still, emphasis on individual aspects of youth or on deviant groups frighten people or influence them into thinking that these findings are more serious and more representative than they sometimes are. As Grinder (1973:31) says:

The narrations of adolescent tribulations and deviance command rapt attention on television and in the popular press, greatly augmenting advertising revenues, which lead in turn to greater emphasis on adolescent escapades. The tradition of using improprieties of youth to formulate a viewpoint on adolescent development is a long one.

Another group of social scientists, such as Freneete (1985), Decima Reseach (1991), Holmes and Silverman (1992) and Bibby and Posterski (1992), have attempted to let the data speak for themselves in determining whether problems exist or

⁸These comments refer mainly to Canadian, sociological research. Many in the field of psychology appear to be more willing to question the storm and stress view (eg. Montemayor, Adams and Gullotta (1990).

not. These data are encouraging. However, whether by the questions asked or the interpretations that follow, the results of a large number of sociological surveys are defined as "disturbing". For example, Rogers and Ginzberg's (1992:1) Adolescents at Risk begins: "Too many of our teenagers are not becoming responsible adults." The book contains chapters on adolescent sexuality, alcohol and other drug use and abuse, AIDS, and violence. There are no chapters on family, education, religion, values or self-concept, topics that might point out the positive attributes of youth. A majority of large surveys do include the above headings in their evaluations of youth. In fact, as will be seen in chapter three, the present study shares many of the general themes. It is not the broad areas of study, however, that are suspect but the way in which the questions and answers are treated. Snedeker (1982:vii) indicates:

"Libraries are filled with empirical studies of family environment, educational achievement, and the transition of youth from school to work. There are ample statistics to prove a researcher's biases and to dress them up as objective analyses. Even in this conservative era, the output of youth reports continues; yet answers and solutions remain elusive."

Maybe solutions remain elusive because there are no easy solutions; nonetheless, I suggest that an alternative approach might point to a different understanding of adolescence. The focus of the present study is its method; the purpose is to involve the youth I am trying to understand in that method. We must get to know youth better in order to address real

problems - if they exist - or to prevent problems by listening to adolescents' needs.

Specific examples of previous findings will be included in chapter three in order to compare them with the findings of the current study and to examine differences in conclusions in terms of the questions asked, the methods used and the interpretations rendered.

The next chapter provides a step by step description of the methodology used in this study, which included an informal interview stage, the generation of a questionnaire, and the distribution of this questionnaire. The chapter also discusses the problems encountered and the actions taken for their resolutions.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

This research is on adolescents, for adolescents and with them. It considers a variety of themes, many of which are introduced by the participants. The methodology initially involved informal interviews with fifteen adolescents in order to provide in-depth qualitative profiles. As part of these interviews, the participants were also asked to develop questions they would like to see asked of other adolescents. These were combined in the form of a questionnaire and were distributed to the same youth (plus five additional ones) to be filled out in private. The results were analyzed. Then the findings were brought back to eleven of the original participants for feedback. This method of asking youth what questions should be asked in order to understand their life experiences provides an interactive approach to studying adolescence. It may add new insight into the world of teens; at the same time it is meant to challenge some of the assumptions held by many survey methodologists concerning the construction of questions and the interpretation of findings.

2.1 Procedures

I began my research with a literature review focusing on sociological studies and later concentrating mainly on Canadian surveys. I knew I wanted to do research on adolescence but I had not selected a topic yet. It seemed to me that, over and over, findings from these studies were

generalized carelessly and were often unreasonably negative. Although more recent empirical work seemed more positive in their evaluations of young people, I started questioning the questions that propelled the old as well as some of the more recent research - where they came from and who made them up. In most of the surveys, it appeared that the researchers designed them independently of their respondents. I decided to let some youth come up with questions for a study in order to see if their questions would be different and if the findings would differ from recent national sociological studies based on the phrasing of the questions. A few other surveys, such as the ones done by Decima Research (1991) and Holmes and Silverman (1992), concluded their surveys by asking their respondents what questions they would ask young people. This effort supported the notion and value of more youth involvement in research development. I wondered if, given a chance, adolescents would focus on the same subjects and reach the same conclusions as those reported by the media with reference to some Canadian surveys.

It seemed obvious that the first part of the method should involve unstructured, open-ended interviews with some teenagers. I believed that from these conversations the main concerns and issues of these youth would emerge.¹ I

¹Considerable effort was expended to ensure that the interviews remained consistent with the goal of allowing the youth to direct the discussions. I admit, though, that the more information I gathered, the more difficult it was, as I wanted to ask the others what they thought of previously discussed topics.

interviewed fifteen 14-15 year old youths. They were obtained through contacts, through introductions by their peers, and by word of mouth. The first two to be interviewed were a fourteen year old daughter and fifteen year old son of two female friends. These teenagers vaguely knew of each other (or at least each others' mothers) and went to the same school. However, they were in different grades (9 and 10, respectively) and had different peer groups. As I had been introduced previously to these first two teenagers, they already had agreed to talk with me by the time I set up the interviews. All of the other appointments were arranged by telephone, at which time I was able to introduce myself (as I did not know any of the participants aside from the first two) and to explain my research goals and purposes. In all but three of the instances I met the participants in their homes but three preferred to meet me at my house.

The first female introduced me to a female friend and was present at her interview. I gave all of the participants the choice to be interviewed on their own (which was viewed as preferable) or with their friend (which proved useful in terms of group dynamics and so that they could carry the conversation and I could sit back and listen). I also gave the participants the choice of topics. Specifically, I went to the interviews with no outline except a consent form, as required by the University of Victoria (see Appendix A).

The initial boy also gave me a name and phone number of a friend of his. Making this contact and arranging the eventual interview that followed was more difficult. First, when I called, this boy had never heard of me or the study. He did agree to be interviewed, but the conversation did not run very smoothly at first. I had to do more prodding and ask more questions (in other words, talk more) than in the previous interviews. The boys in general were not as vocal, especially with regard to themselves. They seemed to feel more comfortable answering concrete questions. It would be a shame, though, not to put in the effort to get their input. All of them had an opinion on what adults thought of them and what they wanted to tell adults, and they came up with some interesting questions. When interviewing this second boy, I asked very general questions regarding what and who were important to him, what he thought of himself and who influenced this opinion. These topics had already been outlined in the consent form and they were advanced only as starting points from which to develop a dialogue. In the end, the meeting was successful as he shared with me his concerns regarding what happens to a person when they die. He said he spent a lot of time thinking about life, religion, fantasy... He was curious to know his peers' thoughts on these issues, but said that he never talked about these things with them.

The second participant from the first contact (the second girl; see Figure I) urged two of her friends, one boy and one

girl, to call me and I was able to interview both of them in their homes. The girl contacted yet another female friend who chose to meet me at my house, thus providing me with five interviews (and many questions) from the one contact.

The chain from the other initial contact (recall two boys) stopped after the second interview as the second boy did not feel his friends would participate "unless you pay them". I left it at that as by this time, I had made a few more contacts through adult friends, not to mention the fact that I did not have the funds to pay them.

Two other sets of two females were interviewed. The first two were interviewed separately in their homes. With the second two, the initial contact was interviewed alone at my house, then the next week the three of us reconvened in my living room.

Finally, I met a brother and sister and interviewed the girl alone and at that time set up an appointment with the boy. He promised to ask two of his friends to participate as well and, as it turned out, he brought them with him to the interview. It resembled a roundtable discussion. I sat back as much as possible and let the three of them direct the conversation, but occasionally I attempted to get beyond the topics of girls, music and cars. However, as these topics were the ones they wanted to discuss I mainly just tried to get them to articulate their feelings about the different topics and to identify any related issues.

I took notes during the interviews, which seemed more casual than a tape recorder. In fact, I did use a tape recorder, alongside my notetaking, when interviewing the three boys together but the sound was of poor quality and they directed some of their comments more to the machine than to myself or to each other.

 FIGURE I
 PARTICIPANT CONTACTS



 KEY:

M Male
 F Female
 * Interviewed with initial respondent present
 ** Interviewed three together, initial contact with two friends
 *** Participated in survey only
 ^ Participated in interview only

Figure I demonstrates the order in which the participants were obtained. The first line represents the initial contacts, and the chains run vertically. Therefore, from six contacts, the last two being acquired through one connection, I was able to talk with 15 youths (9 girls, 6 boys), including both individual and group sessions. The search for new participants ended when saturation was reached, i.e. when responses were becoming repetitive. As Kirby and McKenna

(1989:138) indicate,

"saturation occurs when added information does not reveal new understanding about relations or abstractions. When categories are saturated, there is enough information to make statements with a comfortable degree of certainty."

This also follows Becker's (1953) technique of continuing to include additional interviewees until the researcher decides that the sample is of adequate size (as reported by Rose 1982:9).

For the purposes of this thesis, I felt that more data at this point would have invited superficial interpretations and taken the focus away from the methodology and from the participants. The goal of the study was to derive and pretest a new approach to the understanding of adolescence. The focus was the development of the questions for the questionnaire. It was very important at this stage to establish and maintain relationships with some teens. I wanted to stay focused on the people, not get bogged down by data. At fifteen, a natural ending point was realized. I wanted a range of responses in order to test the methodology, but at this point I was not aiming for statistical significance. I stopped interviewing when no new information or questions were advanced. I had also achieved a range of participants across the variables: age, gender, ethnicity, religion and parents'

marital status.²

Two specific questions were asked to each participant at the end of the interviews. These were: (1) **If you were the interviewer and wanted to know about people your own age better, what would you ask them?** and (2) **What are you interested in knowing about people your own age?** The answers to these questions became the basis for the next stage of the project - the questionnaire.

The adolescents that were interviewed proposed twenty-nine questions (see section 3.2). These were used to generate the questionnaire in Appendix B. My only input was the ordering and rewording of a few of the questions in order that they read impartially. The first part of the study, then, involved conversations in person, sometimes with more than one youth at a time, during which questions were derived by the youth. The survey stage combined these questions into a written questionnaire which was answered by the respondents in private. The use of multiple methods (i.e. interviews and questionnaires) permits cross-validation of research procedures and findings (Webb et al. 1966; Denzin 1978; Brewer and Hunter 1989:13).³ It was believed that this combination

²As acknowledged in Chapter 1, a sample of 15 non-random participants cannot be statistically compared to surveys of thousands of teens. However, if questions and emphases (conclusions) are different, the completeness or accuracy of other methods may be in question.

³Likewise, components of this method might be combined with other methods for a multi-method approach.

of procedures might lead to the development of a method suited to the goals of both quantitative and qualitative researchers, a survey method that might accomplish the same aims as unstructured methodologies if the right questions are asked.

The questionnaire was distributed to twenty youth, the fifteen who were interviewed and five new ones in order to verify that it could be completed independently by individuals with no previous introduction to the material. Only two of the additional five were returned. Fortunately, the responses were not significantly different from those of the youth that participated in the interviews and questions development. Thirteen of the fifteen original participants filled in their questionnaire; one girl handed in a blank one and another participant lost his. It took twice as long to distribute and collect them (i.e. 4 months) than it took to find and interview the fifteen participants (i.e. 2 months, averaging 2 per week). Even then, the collection involved multiple phone calls and, in some cases, numerous pick-up attempts.⁴ In all, ten females and five males answered the questionnaire.

The questions and data from the interviews and questionnaires were then compiled, and are presented in chapter 3. The results were brought back to interested

⁴In future, I might suggest gathering the participants together to complete the questionnaire. In the present study, I was comparing the technique of allowing the teens to fill out the survey in private with the interview method. It should be explained to the participants for whom and for what purpose they are taking part in the study and initially some teenagers should help to develop the questions (and response categories, if used).

participants for comment. Based on their feedback, the methods were re-evaluated. Recommendations for future studies conclude the thesis.

CHAPTER 3: FINDINGS

Chapter 3 presents the findings of the interviews and the questionnaires. Part 1 recounts the interviews in terms of the various themes that manifested themselves. These conversations highlighted important concerns in the teenagers' lives, which they then translated into questions. Part 2 lists the participants' questions and compares them with those which have been used in previous studies. Part 3 examines the findings from the survey, and includes frequencies and crosstabulations for some of the responses.

The findings represent the views of the participants. Their own words are used to explain concepts and ideas, hopefully leading us to an enhanced understanding of these teenagers. If the method fosters new and different findings, its future use with more youth could lead to careful generalization and theory building or it could be used along with other methods. Comparing the findings of the present study with those reported in other research is one way of evaluating the method.¹

¹The comparisons are limited mainly to other Canadian sociological surveys realizing, as stated in chapter 1, that they only represent a portion of the work being done on adolescence. However, as these types of surveys continue to be conducted and their findings reported by the media, their methods should be continually reexamined. Furthermore, this thesis suggests that all survey researchers might consider involving youth more in design and evaluation.

3.1 Interview Findings

When I began doing the research, it was my belief that in order to understand the participants, it would be useful to know who was important to them; what they thought adults think of them and of teenagers, in general; what was important to them; and who they believed themselves to be and what they thought of themselves. I brought these ideas to the interviews but strived to allow the youth to direct the discussions and their words to illustrate the various points.

The conversations are discussed under general areas which presented themselves. As many of the topics represent recurring themes in previous literature, previous findings are introduced and compared.

3.1.1 Significant People

In the interviews we spoke about a lot of different people, whoever the participants chose to speak about. I tried very hard not to ask specific questions about parents or peers (significant others reported in previous studies) but let them decide who was important. Still, friends and parents were mentioned most frequently as significant others. As one teenager indicated, there are certain things you talk to peers about and certain things you talk to parents about.

"There are some things you don't talk to parents about, not because you can't generally, but more because they are not interested."

So much was said about peers and parents, in fact, that each

group merits its own section in this discussion.

3.1.1.a) Friends

The participants told me that good friends can talk to each other about anything, they help each other through things. They are "something to be sure of, that's always there".

"I can tell [best friend] anything, she understands."

This "anything" that friends talk about includes guys, sex, homework, goals, the environment, friends, family, etc. As one girl put it:

"Our topics of conversation range from talking about a spot of cream on the table to world politics."

There are different categories of friends. One respondent explained it as follows.

"FRIENDS (capital letters) are those you can tell anything to, do anything with; Friends (capital F) are those you have a good time with; and friends (small f) are those you have classes with."

Similarity is one basis for this categorization. A few participants mentioned feeling closer to friends going through the same things. Their friends are often, but not always, the same age as them and they share the same interests and goals. Although the participants want to be like their friends, they generally said they do not feel pressure from them. One girl indicated:

"My friends influence me; at the same time I don't think peer pressure exists. They introduce me to people I wouldn't ordinarily meet. They don't make me do anything I don't want to... I think if my family was closer, they'd have a greater impact; my friends are more my family."

Bibby and Posterski (1992:10) interpreted their finding of a drop from 91% to 84% between 1984 and 1992 in the proportion of teens who view friendship as "very important" as indicative of society's increased emphasis on the individual. In general, however, previous research cites the importance of friendship (Bibby and Posterski 1985; Coleman and Hendry 1990; Brake 1980; Decima Research 1991). The present study went further than some other research efforts by allowing the participants to explain in their own words the meaning of these relationships and their feelings about same aged peers.

For instance, the participants wanted to make it clear that they are all unique individuals. Still, a few participants informed me that some schools can be defined by the "types" of teens who attend them - a "group" orientation. Students at "preppy" schools judge other students based on looks; other schools were characterized as snobbier, attended by "rich bitches"; and still another school was viewed as having a wider mix of students with fewer stereotypes.

In many interviews, talking about peer pressure and similarities and differences among students led to conversations about popularity. Not one of the participants put him/herself in the popular group. In characterizing himself, a boy claimed that 90% of teens are really popular

and that 10% are different and ended by stating that he was definitely not popular (meaning that he is in the minority group). Another boy affirmed that he, too, was not popular but that his friend could fit into any group and that everyone likes his friend. This argument was repeated over and over throughout the interviews.

It may not be "popular", though, to admit one's popularity.

"People always think 'others' are in the popular group. Then there are those with inflated egos who think they're popular but they're not."

A few participants questioned whether the need for popularity is not insecurity. Regarding a friend who often flirts, a girl said that this friend has different personalities for different people and that when no one important is around, she tries less to prove herself.

Others simply "don't care" about popularity, they say. One girl thought popular people are just phoney. A number of participants indicated that being in the social scene is not important, but fitting in with those who are considered significant is desired. One girl believed that the need to be accepted by whichever group one wants to belong to proves that everyone wants approval and works towards being "popular".

Finally, according to at least a few of the participants, popular people do not necessarily constitute an honourable group to be associated with.

"People [adults] misjudge a lot. It's the popular group who get drunk, steal from their parents ... They're just popular because they're rich."

3.1.1.b) Parents

Relationships with parents were generally viewed by the participants as very positive. Parents may care too much, may "drive you crazy", but they try to be there for you, although "they're often busy" in some cases.

Some participants indicated that their relationship with their parents at the moment is mainly based on material needs. As one girl said:

"I told my mom I'd be my own mother now - until she mentioned driving me everywhere."

Most have close relationships with their parents although some remarked that it is getting more difficult to talk to them. A number of participants said that their parents criticize teenagers' music and worry about drugs and alcohol. One felt that her father did not trust teens, in general, but that he did trust her friends. Another said that her father was in fact less protective than her mother and, she thought, than other teens' parents. This girl added, though, that getting along better with her father than her mother does not mean that she loves him more.

One participant appeared to have the ideal relationship with her parents.

"I have a lot of freedom but they still know what's going on with me - a lot of trust."

Many explained that there comes a time when teenagers must take what they have learned from their parents and make their own decisions.

"Parents influence you a lot when you're young; only thing to go by. When you get older, you start seeing what's around you, start making decisions - may blatantly contradict what they have told you. Still, they influence values, what you think is ok/not ok. A lot of values come from how you grew up. An example is prejudice. A kid at school puts down those not like him. That view comes from how his parents are. It has to do with age, listening to parents' views, being very conscious of what people think of you - he might not have reached the stage yet where you start to question things."

All in all, parents and family appear to be very important to the participants.

"I care about what my family thinks; small problems would be more difficult if I couldn't talk to my family."

Research by Leonard (1984), Bibby and Posterski (1985; 1988) and Decima Research (1991) report similar findings; still, Bibby and Posterski (1985:69) say that family members do not provide much understanding and help, nor necessarily bring enjoyment. More recently, Bibby and Posterski (1992:10) report an even further decline, between 1984 and 1992, in the percentage of teens who indicate receiving high levels of enjoyment from their mothers and fathers - another indicator they believe of an increasing emphasis on the individual. Explanations provided by the participants indicate that there are different ways of interpreting findings. This study suggests that the youths' own words might provide more insight than statistics alone.

3.1.1.c) Self, Independence and Age

Most of the participants appear to like themselves and feel comfortable with their own opinions. Occasional feelings of self-consciousness or anger directed towards themselves is not denied but they generally indicated having healthy opinions of and thinking positively about themselves. A few added that liking themselves is a prerequisite to good relationships with others.

A majority of the participants said that they influence themselves the most. They explained that if they did not value their own opinions, no one else would.

"I guess it's most important how I think of myself, but others are important to me too."

In general, it appears that others' opinions are considered in decision-making but that the participants' own opinions remain central.

"If I could go either way, then I'll go with others. If I definitely want to do something, then generally it comes down to me."

Most also feel comfortable being their age (14-15). They indicated that life is neither easy nor hard right now (similar to Lipsitz, 1977). At the same time, most look forward to being a little older. Older (16-17 yrs) means more independence, more freedom, "being able to drive" and to go where they want.

On independence, the message from these teens is that they want it. They want the support of family but want to be able to make their own choices. This includes where they go,

when they come home, what religious orientation they follow, and how hard they try at school. A majority believe in rules but think there are too many of them.

"I'm self-motivated, aware, conscientious, able to make more decisions than people would think, adults don't realize how independent I am (can be); I probably have it a lot better than others. Teenagers my age are probably independent, but parents don't let them."

Others feel that it is not the number of rules, but the rules themselves that are the problem.

"For a time we [participant and her mother] were more like sisters, then she redefined our roles, took control. I think I'm responsible enough to get out of a place I don't want to be. Not too many rules, but rules that are there are ridiculous - I ended up sleeping at a friend's."

Most want more freedom than they have. In order to gain this freedom, some said they strive to show that they can be trusted. Parents' trust makes them feel independent. (See survey findings for more on trust.)

Although dreams about the future include independence and moving away from home, most are not ready to give up the security of family quite yet.

"It is important that I have a fair say in family matters, in what I'm allowed to do. But it is also important that I'm comfortable, not worrying about little problems. Family offers security so you don't have to worry about little things."

These self descriptions do not necessarily support Melucci's (1989:50-1) depiction of an uncommitted youth population who enjoy a position of affluent marginality; they simply want to be recognized as independent individuals. In

fact, given the chance, many of the participants spoke at length about the problems of the world and felt a responsibility in solving them. This is also more encouraging than Conger and Petersen's (1984:607) report of a "diffuse sense of self". Lanphier and Perez' (1983:1) finding that British Columbia's high (the highest in Canada) rate of single parent families results in a loss in feelings of security and self-esteem for youth is not supported in the interviews. Some Canadian national cross-sectional (i.e. one time) surveys which have based these conclusions on closed-ended questions and percentage comparisons may not have obtained the whole picture (Bibby and Posterski 1985, 1988, 1992; Lanphier and Perez 1983).

3.1.2 Significant Issues

The participants also had many issues or "things" they wanted to discuss. Where prodding was necessary, I asked them what was important to them, what they do. The topics of school, the future, religion and the environment are similar to those of conventional studies; however, differences were found in the responses and interpretations.

3.1.2.a) School

Opinions of school ranged from very important to not important "although it probably should be". Some felt that teachers teach things the participants do not need to know.

Still, most spoke of university - some indicated that they planned courses with the future in mind, but many consider post-secondary education to be a long way off and they have not thought that far ahead.

School serves two functions according to the participants. It is a place to meet friends, and therefore the social scene at school is important.

"School is hell. It's important. I don't know if what they teach you is so important, but the social interaction is important."

Secondly, school and education are seen as necessary to get jobs.

"University is inevitable. I'm afraid to get into Dairy Queen, the labour force, and be stuck there."

There are mixed feelings about school. Although most of the participants agree that it is necessary, that maybe it should be more important, many said that "something is missing". They want the material to be relevant to their lives and to the events happening in the world around them. Others, not knowing how school can be changed to be more meaningful, just want to get through it.

Posterski and Bibby (1988:26) also report on teenagers' awareness of the necessity of school. However, they say that for one-third of Canadian youth school is a "problem area"; the reasons are not explained by them (1988:22). Holmes and Silverman (1992:42) report that school is important to most girls and boys, but that this does not mean that they all like it, especially boys (1992:48). The participants explained in

the interviews why school can at the same time be important but disliked or a problem.

3.1.2.b) The Future

Some of the participants in the present study indicated dreaming about the future but, generally, they spoke of living for today.

"I think about right now. I don't know about the future, don't know what I'm going to do with my life, the world. I want to know things, I should start reading again, keep up with things around me. I live for today, my friends. I don't know enough about the present to think about the future - it bothers me, you can't have an opinion if you don't know enough."

Although this quotation expresses the feelings of many of the participants about the present, the future carries different meaning for the various teens interviewed. For example, the fourteen year old participants were the most likely to look forward to the future. One girl, who professed not to have many friends but to feel peer pressure, anticipated the freedom that the future would bring. Most of the fifteen year olds, not knowing what they wanted to do with their lives, although not worried, were not in a rush to become adults. The predominant attitude was: "The future will come when it comes". Thus, Klein's (1990:461) determination that enough years are not allocated for the successful resolution of the developmental tasks of adolescence may be overstated. Likewise, Holmes and Silverman's (1992:24) closed-ended question which asked the respondents whether they

planned their school subjects with the future in mind may not translate into their conclusion that youths' emphasis is predominantly on the future. Most conventional survey questions do not allow participants to explain that both the present and the future are important and that this attitude is not necessarily incongruous.

3.1.2.c) Religion

Although religion was not determined to be important to a majority of the participants, many of those interviewed expressed opinions on the topic. The main problem with organized religion appears to be that there are too many boundaries and rules. Those who do take part felt that it should be their choice and those who do not follow any faith agreed. Everyone should decide for themselves.

"Personally, it would be a waste of time and energy but I think that for some it is a way out of nasty situations. One must not be judged for his or her beliefs."

For a few, religion is an important component in their lives. One even said his life revolves around religion. Some read literature and go to church activities and services. However, others believe religions get mixed up and move away from their purpose. One participant regarded reality, philosophy, religion, life as a state of mind. She added that her parents think her disinterest in religion is a form of rebellion and she does not deny that this might be true. The words of the participants help explain Conger and

Petersen's (1984:581) statement that religion becomes more abstract and less literal during adolescence (see also Conger 1991:486). Bibby and Posterski's (1992:50) impression that "organized religion is in serious trouble with young people" appears to gain more support than their finding that "80% of teenagers continue to identify with Canada's religious groups". When these phrases are reported without the youths' words to explain them, though, they are left open to interpretation. As well, they are often translated beyond their intention (e.g. into other areas of youths' lives).

3.1.2.d) Environment

The participants were interested in what other teens thought about environmental issues. Many said that they used to think the world would be destroyed i.e. by nuclear war or by our mismanagement of the environment, but that they do not think so as much anymore. They recognize their role in its recovery, whether or not they are ready to take on the responsibility or know what they can do.

"I used to watch the news but I got depressed.
Nothing I can do."

They get their information from the television, in magazines and at school. Most use blue boxes and recycle, but some felt guilty for not doing enough.

Environmental issues were mentioned by almost every one of the teens interviewed as important concerns, similar to previous studies. Many provided examples to explain their

viewpoints. One participant extolled the benefits of composting. Another said that in her daydreams about the future, she is riding her bike in order to save the environment. Another had attended an ecology camp. Some are upset with companies that pollute. One girl said she did not eat at McDonald's for a year and a half "and now they have changed from plastic to paper". One maintained that we must be aware of every choice we make and make conscientious choices.

"If you're aware, that's half the battle."
However, one professed: "Litter is my sin.", and a few others said they were more concerned when they were younger and wondered if people are overreacting. Comparisons with other studies are made in section 3.3.

3.1.2.e) Gender Issues

Gender issues were not of great importance to the participants except with regard to terminology and attitudes on equality. The participants wanted to be called "girls and boys" (as opposed to women and men) or "you guys". It is not the terms, though, but connotations that sometimes cause problems.

"Sometimes when an adult says girl you think of someone under ten."

They said that 'girl' and 'boy' sometimes sounded too young but they were acceptable. Likewise, the terms 'female' and 'male' were all right but they were said to sound academic.

With regard to equality, all agreed that anyone should be able to do anything. This referred both to employment and personal orientations. Based on the participants' own convictions and what they said regarding the attitudes of other teens, 14-15 year olds appear to generally support equality for all. However, some of the participants noted exceptions. For example, a fifteen year old girl indicated:

"Anyone can do anything; still, some males are threatened by homosexuality. We should just assume everyone is equal. It would be nice if we could get that across to everyone."

On the topics of sexism and feminism, the respondents contended that inequality was not an issue, especially in school where teachers are supportive and "other students don't let you get away with it". Still, interestingly (or unfortunately), a few of the girls interviewed explicitly mentioned anticipating discrimination in the future, especially in the workplace.

"It has improved since 50 years ago; still, women don't get paid the same [as men]. Women have to do twice as much to be equal to half a man. A lot of women think better, though. I rate myself equal, well maybe above men, and some women, too (laugh)."

A few others supported this outlook when asked. This is inconsistent with Holmes and Silverman's (1992:90) finding that most young women are unaware of the effects of gender-based inequality of opportunity. It also questions the notion that girls are less confident than boys (Posterski and Bibby 1988:15; Holmes and Silverman 1992:11) or, on the other hand, that girls in fact evaluate themselves more positively than

boys, as was found by Lackovic-Grgin and Dekovic (1990:839). The interview findings of the present study may not be enough to convince us that girls and boys are equally confident but they reinforce the importance of the participants' explanation in understanding statistics. In other words, statistics alone as offered by traditional surveys may not be enough to convince us that there are gender differences in this area, and may leave the findings open to researcher interpretation.

In Bibby and Posterski's latest study (1992:84), these authors interpret their finding that 51% of females and 28% of the males between 15-19 years old viewed gender inequality as a "very serious" problem as alarmingly high, more than in 1984 and above the level for adults. They do not mention, though, that this still represents a minority. Bibby and Posterski (1992:104) say that "more than one in two teenagers maintain that women do not have enough power" and that "roughly the same proportion say that women continue to experience discrimination". These numbers turn out to be 53% (just barely a majority) and 41% ("very roughly" the same percentage). They comment: "What is more than a shade disconcerting is the widespread hope of most young women that they can put the two roles of parenthood and career together, and still end up winning occupationally, financially, maritally and emotionally" (1992:150). I do not see why this is disconcerting and thought that this hopefulness that they could change the situation of today would be encouraging and

encouraged.

3.1.3 Message to Adults

There are mixed opinions about what adults think of the participants, and teens in general. Most of the participants thought that opinions depend on adults' experience with teens. The participants thought that those who know teenagers like them while strangers either give them the benefit of the doubt or stereotype them right away. A few agreed that,

"if you're out with your friends, they think you're a jerk; if you're by yourself, they think you're a sweet kid".

Some of the teens feel they are stereotyped as only thinking about drugs, alcohol, loud music "they just call it noise, as in turn down that noise", dating, getting in trouble, and sex "oh yah, don't forget sex", but adults are wrong according to those interviewed. It appears to these teens that people in their age group only get publicity when they do something wrong. Adults hearing about teens from the media, the participants argued, are getting a misrepresentation of youth as a whole. Opinions range from the people who think "teenagers all the way!" to those who think they are obnoxious, beer drinking... False opinions form from one bad encounter with a teen. According to many of the participants, adults only seem to be interested in scandalous things.

"Adults think we're lazy, we want everyone to do everything for us, we live in another world of TV and video games. Crime has gone up - hear it on the media, TV, adult books. I know it's not me or those I'm close to; it's annoying. We're not all the same, especially; we're all different. Most of us are pretty focused, we'll be o.k... Some are getting involved with some wrong things and it's going to hurt later, but not all of us. My dad is opinionated, knows we're not like them, but he generalizes. Teachers seem to think we're o.k. but that's why they're teaching."

One participant believed that there are different categories of adults. Teachers take adolescents for who they are and will work with them. Others think "oh, high school kids" and do not give them a chance. She concluded that adults' opinions depended on teenagers' images as a lot of adults judge teenagers on how they look. She wanted to give adults the following message:

"We are not all the same, we have varied opinions, we think over things more than adults would assume. We don't tell them everything about us so they can't think they know everything about us. They should definitely get to know us before they pass judgement; we know more than they would like to give us credit for."

Perhaps the reason why adults form stereotypes about adolescents is because they are scared of them. This was suggested in the interviews.

"It's not so much what they say as what they do; so many elderly people are scared of us, avoid contact. Teenagers do vandalize, rob, kill, but not all teens. Adults are scared how liberal and informed teens are, want us to be like they were, but then the world won't last. It comes from uncertainty, teens always had the rep of being bad guys. Times haven't changed that much; most adults who think we're rebellious were also, expect us to be, haven't forgotten, scared of us and how they once were."

Many of the teens provided messages for adults. One adolescent interviewed asked that adults put aside conceptions of them, "put down their guns" and get to know some teenagers before passing judgement. Another wanted to tell adults that it is important to have space, to be able to do more things. This participant, together with others, does not want to be treated as a child nor considered an adult but wants trust and independence. Finally, one of the boys believed that any adult could find a friend among teenagers if he/she wanted to as friendship, in his opinion, is or should be based on common interests and not on age.

To compare, Posterski and Bibby (1988) believe there is a cause for concern in the way young people perceive how adults relate to them. According to adolescents, they say, adults give the impression that they like teens, a majority of adults treat them courteously but, at the same time, demonstrate a lack of confidence in young people, do not respect their opinions and are failing to understand them (1988:45). This is consistent with the findings of the present study, albeit, generalized. According to an earlier study, Bibby and Posterski (1985:7-8) indicate that the teen version of their situation runs as follows: the years are exciting but difficult; adults always believe themselves to be right and are seen as wanting to treat youth as children whereas youth want to be given suggestions and guidelines instead of orders; and they are beginning to sense their own

individuality and are therefore led to question how they became what they are and to ponder what they will yet become. The basic demand by adolescents is to be able to live out the values of creativity, independence, and autonomy which they have learned from their society (1985:24). I do not have difficulty with their general findings. The participants would probably add that they are not all the same and that they are not that much different than adults. Although it is not indicated how Bibby and Posterski obtained their information, it is recommended that if a qualitative account of "what to tell adults" is included, open-ended questions be asked so that it is truly the youths' version of adolescence.

The next section discusses the questions which made up the questionnaire and compares them with those which have directed previous studies.

3.2 The Questions

At the end of the interviews, the participants were asked to come up with questions for a questionnaire. The topics were established in response to the two questions: (1) If you were the interviewer and wanted to know about people your own age better, what would you ask them? and (2) What are you interested in knowing about people your own age? This section lists the questions that were provided by the participants and compares them to the topic areas and design of previous surveys.

Twenty-nine questions² were posed by the participants. The first two girls came up with fourteen questions between them, most of the other participants offered two to four questions each, and three of the youth did not propose any specific topics for enquiry but said that they were interested in others' opinions on the subjects discussed in the interviews.

One topic was mentioned by four of the participants for inclusion in the questionnaire. The question reads:

- (1) How would you rate yourself/ other teens in awareness with regard to: global issues, politics, school?

The following questions were asked specifically by three of the interviewees:

- (2) What do you do, what are your interests? What do you do in your life, average day? In your spare time?
- (3) What do adults/parents think of you?
- (4) How can you tell adults that teens are not what is shown in the paper? How would you explain?

A few areas of inquiry were shared by two participants.

- (5) What do you think other people think of you? How do you react to those people?
- (6) If you could have anything in the world, what would you wish for?
- (7) What are you worried about? (clothes, hair)
- (8) When you look at yourself in the mirror, do you look ugly, feel ugly? Do you like yourself?

²Specifically, twenty-nine question areas were addressed. Participants' questions were combined into single expressions where this was possible without distorting the meaning.

- (9) What do you think of different issues? (school, teachers, environment, money, peace)
- (10) Do you think about today or the future; others or yourself?
- (11) Have you had sex?

The majority of questions were individual concerns emerging out of the conversations. These read as follows:

- (12) What's the point of putting people down? Why do you think some people put other people down?
- (13) Music preferences tell a lot about a person. What type of music do you like? Why? What does this say about you?
- (14) What do you think of other people? (teenagers, grown-ups, kids)
- (15) Do guys talk about girls as much as girls talk about guys, assuming girls talk about guys a lot?
- (16) How environmentally friendly are you? 1 -> 10 Explain.
- (17) Do you think your parents are cool, old? Do you love your parents? Do you like your parents?
- (18) If you have brothers and sisters, do you get along with them, love them?
- (19) Do your parents embarrass you, tell people things that aren't appropriate?
- (20) What do you feel is the best part of your body?
- (21) Who controls what you do, your opinions?
- (22) Are the 5% who break law during their teen years the same 5% who become adult criminals?
- (23) Do your parents trust you? Would it be easy to lose that trust?
- (24) If you have a problem, who do you talk to?
- (25) Are you happy with your life? What are your alternatives?

- (26) Why do you think that so many adults are interested in the economy, putting money before the world?
- (27) Do you feel peer pressure? Why?
- (28) Do you create, follow or ignore fads?
- (29) If you died tomorrow, what would you see?

The questions were combined into the survey format presented in Appendix B. The survey was given to the initial girl for inspection. Then, the questionnaire was given to each of the participants to complete in privacy. Findings are discussed in section 3.3.

Personal concerns of teens, or concerns of groups of them for that matter, are rarely asked for and therefore we can never be sure we are representing them fully - especially the reports that begin: "The adolescents indicated being most concerned about...", in response to a closed-ended question.

Open-ended questions distinguish this survey from many other recent Canadian sociological surveys. The differences in findings between the current study and those from previous research may be due to the content of the questions (what specifically is asked about the topics) as well as the way questions are asked (open or closed-ended). These differences in approach result in different understandings of youth. For example, while open-ended questions on various people and things and on the importance of the participant's own opinion in decision-making are included here, some researchers appear to have assumed that they know the range of the teens' questions and responses. Using a closed-ended approach, I may

not have discovered, for instance, the importance placed on university by the participants as most closed-ended questions allow yes/no response categories or provide a limited range of responses from which to choose. This information was revealed in an open-ended question regarding attitudes toward school. It was unanticipated and unsolicited from the participants. I also may not have learned that they talk to different people for different problems. Previous surveys, in questioning who youth speak with when they have a problem, have supplied categories of problems and categories of people in order to develop crosstabulations of responses. An open-ended question may result in less (or different) types of concerns being discussed but can provide more detail on the youths' opinions. Here, I followed the advice of Jackson (1988:86), which indicates:

"where a pilot study is conducted, and where the research team is uncertain about the appropriate response categories, it is a good idea to pose the question in an open-ended form, analyze the results, and then base the categories to be used in the final study on the categories suggested in the pilot study)".

Some questions, discussed by other researchers, were not included as important by the participants. Specific questions on values, employment prospects, attitudes towards sex and on sources of enjoyment as identified by Posterski and Bibby (1988) and questions on attitudes towards current events, teens' buying habits and their TV watching practices, as used by Decima Research (1991), were not derived by the adolescents

in the present study. Bibby and Posterski's 1992 survey also asked the teens about premarital sex, abortion, television viewing, Canadian culture, valued means, enjoyment, gangs and racial relations, all issues not addressed by the participants. We should be careful, therefore, in our interpretations of how widespread concerns about these issues are among adolescents. On the other hand, the inclusion of more participants may have resulted in these topics being covered.

Many of the questions that arose from the interviews in the present study reflect topics similar to those posed by some youth in response to the final question in Holmes and Silverman's (1992) Canadian study. They asked their respondents to indicate the questions they would want to ask their peers. Some of the most noted topic areas included relationships, life, self, school, sex and discrimination. Examples provided include: Are you ready for sex?; why do people discriminate?; is school where you can learn, or is firsthand experience better? (1992:80-1). This part of their study comes close to what I am attempting here but they do not cite many examples of the exact questions nor do they go any further with them. Their survey ends where the present one begins.

Finally, many of the questions posed by the adolescents in the present study are not very different from the questions (or question areas) included in previous surveys. The

differences in findings in fact are subtle. However, the explanations given can put the image of adolescents in a different light. Therefore, this study asks researchers to at least consider, in developing their methods, the inclusion of pretests, feedback loops or, better yet, some members of the group being studied in the development of questions and in deciding on the response categories.

3.3 Survey Findings

The questionnaire was divided into nine sections (see Appendix B). As with the interviews, the topics can be organized under the broad headings: Significant People and Significant Issues. An SPSSx computer program was used to perform frequency and crosstabulation analyses on some of the data. The results are based on the fifteen returned surveys and, similar to the interview findings, the youths' own words are included wherever possible to illustrate the points.³

3.3.1 Significant People

In the survey, the participants included a question on what adolescents think of different groups of people, specifically adults⁴, teens, parents, younger "kids" [their

³Less information was received on the questionnaires than in the interviews as the amount of data was limited by the questions.

⁴Adults in this question were first given the title "grown-ups" but the first participant from the interviews, who previewed the survey, thought this word had negative connotations.

word] and best friends (see Appendix B - Part A). According to the findings, the participants do not hold universal opinions regarding all adults, teens or young children, although the appraisals of these groups by the female respondents and the fourteen year olds appear more positive. As one respondent put it (in all 3 cases):

"I don't have a general opinion on [adults/ teens/ younger kids]. It depends on the individual."

Approximately half of the respondents gave positive ratings to their parents, and a strong majority, 13/15, hold positive opinions about their best friends. (See Table I).

TABLE I
OPINIONS ON VARIOUS GROUPS OF PEOPLE

Group	Opinion		
	Negative	Depends	Positive
Adults	26.7 (4)	60.0 (9)	13.3 (2)
Teens	20.0 (3)	66.7 (10)	13.3 (2)
Kids	13.3 (2)	66.7 (10)	20.0 (3)
Parents	20.0 (3)	33.3 (5)	46.7 (7)
Best friend	6.7 (1)	6.7 (1)	86.7 (13)

Other open-ended questions on significant others allowed the participants to describe important people in their lives, their relationship to the respondent, their opinions of the respondent and how important these opinions are perceived to be. Over half of the ratings by others of the teens were perceived to be positive (56.7%) and 23.3% of the time the opinion was said to "depend", was somewhat positive, or was variable. The participants try to live up to perceived

positive images of them. As one girl replied:

"Dance teacher - friend, teacher - she thinks I'm responsible, ambitious, caring, dedicated. - It is very important. I try to live up to it."

A boy stated:

"Dad - all positive. He wouldn't trade me for anything. - Very important. If he thinks highly of me it makes me want to do better."

Although these positive opinions offered by significant persons are generally viewed as important (two-thirds of the time), exceptions apply. For example, family members may be significant but their opinions may not matter or may only be "somewhat" important. A girl indicated that she takes her mother's opinion into account but decides for herself, a boy that his brother's opinion does not change the way he thinks.

Most significant people in the participants' lives are admired. They are counted on to provide support and encouragement and their opinions are usually valued. They are often people the respondents try to impress.

In the interview discussions on significant people and as reinforced by the survey answers, friends and parents are considered the most important people in the participants' lives. This first section of findings is discussed under the headings: Friends; Parents; and Self-Image.

3.3.1.a) Friends

According to Table 1, best friends get the most positive ratings. This conclusion is drawn from the participants'

responses to the open-ended questions in Part A of the survey with regard to what they think of other people (see Appendix B). Best friends are nice and understanding. They are inspirers, idea givers, and shoulders to cry on. Friends range from "cool dudes just like me" to people very different from the respondents. Friends often share the same interests and sense of humour. Perhaps most importantly, according to the participants, with friends one can talk freely and be oneself.

In the open-ended question asking participants to state important people and their impressions of the participants, friends were named 50% of the time. One participant said that her life-long friend (kindred spirit) would describe her as,

"slightly insane but no more insane than she herself is. I'm someone she can trust and someone she can talk to about anything. It's gotten to the point where we don't think about each other any more, we just are for each other. But again, her friendship tells me that at least one person thinks I'm worthwhile."

And of a good friend, a boy responded:

"We help each other with not-so-strong areas, we laugh together. It's great to know that I have a friend that I can count on."

A topic that arises in most discussions on youth is peer pressure. Although at least a few of the participants thought to include a question on it in the survey, 12/15 of the respondents indicated that they do not feel peer pressure. (Recall that the same sentiments were expressed in the interviews.)

"Friends don't care who I talk to, that's why I love my friends; I don't care who they talk to, I trust their judgement of people."

Many of the participants thought of peer pressure in the broader context of all adolescents. Therefore, in their opinions wanting to be like their friends and acknowledging that friends can influence you are not equivalent to peer pressure. Friends are said to introduce the participants to new people and experiences without making them do anything they do not want to. The result of this atmosphere of support without pressure that friends provide leads some of the participants to want to be like their friends, even to impress them.

"I often think they [friends] get sick of me but they say they don't. I'm self-conscious; I'm trying to improve my social skills. I try to be like my friends."

On the other hand, teens do not necessarily want to be like other teens. This is reflected in that ten of the fifteen questionnaire respondents indicated that they ignore fads. Friends often "happen to" like wearing the same kind of clothes (recall friendship based on similarity); fitting into the whole "social scene" is not their motivation.

These findings correspond with Bibby and Posterski's (1985:69) conclusion that friends provide the necessary help and understanding as well as Decima Research's (1991) discovery that youth are more likely to rely on friends when they have a problem than on any other individual. In the present study, the youth were given the opportunity to explain

their answers and their feelings.

3.3.1.b) Parents

With regard to relationships with family members, Table II indicates that 14 of 15 respondents say they love their parents and twelve and thirteen indicated liking their mother and father, respectively. These findings are similar to but perhaps more positive than comparable studies.

On trust, the survey indicated that 11/15 participants feel that their parents trust them, and the other four added the category "sometimes" to reflect their opinion (see Table II). The survey revealed, though, that approximately half of the participants feel it would be easy to lose that trust.

There was a pretty even split on the issue of whether the participants feel their parents are "cool", whereas a majority (60%) said that their parents were not old. A small majority (53.3% or 8/15) indicated that their parents do not embarrass them (see Table II).

TABLE II
RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILY MEMBERS

Relationship	Agreement			
	Yes	Sometimes	No	Not Applicable
Love mother	93.3 (14)	6.7 (1)	0.0	
Love father	93.3 (14)	6.7 (1)	0.0	
Like mother*	80.0 (12)	6.7 (1)	6.7 (1)	
Like father*	86.7 (13)	6.7 (1)	0.0	
Parents cool*	33.3 (5)	26.7 (4)	33.3 (5)	
Parents old	20.0 (3)	20.0 (3)	60.0 (9)	
Parents trust you	73.3 (11)	26.7 (4)	0.0	
Easy to lose trust	46.7 (7)	6.7 (1)	46.7 (7)	
Parents embarrass you	33.3 (5)	13.3 (2)	53.3 (8)	
Have siblings	80.0 (12)		20.0 (3)	
Like siblings	33.3 (5)	26.7 (4)	20.0 (3)	20.0 (3)
Love siblings	66.7 (10)	13.3 (2)	0.0	20.0 (3)

* Missing data - one respondent

Six of the participants' parents were married ie. live together, while nine respondents' parents were not living together. Parents' marital status seems to influence teens' opinions of adults, those whose parents are married holding slightly more positive opinions whereas the majority of the others indicated that it depends on the adult. On the other hand, the respondents whose parents were not together were more positive in their ratings of parents as "cool" versus

"old".

3.3.1.c) Self-Image

Most of them like themselves and feel comfortable with their own opinions. Six of fifteen answered that they like themselves while 8/15 responded that they usually do, and one said she does not like herself. (This last respondent was not interviewed.) Reasons for liking self included achieving goals, making oneself laugh, being sensitive, being good company, living up to one's standards, and having no reason not to like oneself. As one respondent stated:

"Because I am who I am and that's the way I come so that's the way I like myself."

Nonetheless, the participants, even though usually liking themselves, sometimes do not feel good enough for themselves, think of themselves as "lame, useless and stupid", get mad at themselves - but still generally they like who they are.

This self-esteem is reflected in a question on decision-making presented by one of the participants who wanted to know how important other teenagers felt they themselves were when making a decision. The qualitative responses demonstrate that personal opinions are very (6/13) or most important (7/13), according to the participants.

"It is what makes the decision."

Still, others' input might be acknowledged.

"My opinion is the most important in the making of any decision. I appreciate input from others sometimes. But ultimately I try to do what I believe to be best for myself."

A few explained that for a small decision their own opinion may not matter as much and they sometimes allow others to take over but for bigger decisions, the respondents have the final say - while still listening to others.

Another question asked the respondents how they feel and whether they like what they see when they look in a mirror. On a seven point scale, ranging from ugly to great, all of the youths judged themselves as average or better (i.e. two 4's, five 5's, six 6's, and one 7 - the seven from the girl who indicated not liking herself; problems associated with self-administered questionnaires will be discussed in Chapter 4.) Therefore, generally the participants like or accept what they look like, what they see in the mirror.

There were no significant differences in self images across age or gender, as all of the participants provided fairly positive self evaluations (based on their qualitative responses). This does not compare with earlier findings, as were discussed in the interviews (see 3.1.2.e). This survey can only question whether the conclusions were affected by the respondents' explanations, or lack thereof, in earlier studies.

3.3.2 Significant Issues

Various issues of concern to the participants and how much they worry about different things are represented in Parts B and C of the questionnaire (see Appendix B). The participants indicated worrying especially about the environment, school, relationships and world peace. Hair, clothes and looks are of little or some concern. Six of fifteen respondents do not worry about sex at all (5/10 girls and 1/5 boys). More participants worry about money than do not, 3/5 boys and 1/10 girls a lot and 5/10 girls some. Self-interest and money appear to be more important to the boys, less important to the fourteen year olds, and of somewhat greater concern to those participants whose parents are married. (See Tables III and IV and Appendix C.) These results are consistent with Posterski and Bibby's (1988:15) finding that males are more concerned about sex and money. Their most recent survey found that looks are very important to 51% of females and 53% of males and that 40% of adolescents think about sex very often and 45% sometimes (Bibby and Posterski 1992:93). On sex, Conger and Petersen (1984:279) say that adolescents demonstrate "greater openness about sex and greater tendencies to base decisions about appropriate sexual behaviour more on personal values and judgement, and less on conformity to institutionalized social codes" (see Conger 1991:242). This comment may better represent society today than specifically adolescents. Care must be taken to

explicate data fully (preferably allowing teens to explain them) and to place results in context.

TABLE III
AMOUNT RESPONDENTS WORRY ABOUT VARIOUS ISSUES

Issue	Amount Worry			
	None	A little	Some	A lot
Clothes	6.7 (1)	33.3 (5)	46.7 (7)	13.3 (2)
Hair	6.7 (1)	46.7 (7)	33.3 (5)	13.3 (2)
Looks	6.7 (1)	26.7 (4)	53.3 (8)	13.3 (2)
School	0.0	26.7 (4)	33.3 (5)	40.0 (6)
Environment	6.7 (1)	20.0 (3)	26.7 (4)	46.7 (7)
Sex	40.0 (6)	20.0 (3)	40.0 (6)	0.0
Money	13.3 (2)	20.0 (3)	40.0 (6)	26.7 (4)
Relations	0.0	13.3 (2)	46.7 (7)	40.0 (6)
Politics	26.7 (4)	33.3 (5)	26.7 (4)	13.3 (2)
Peace	0.0	26.7 (4)	20.0 (3)	53.3 (8)
Hunger	13.3 (2)	40.0 (6)	20.0 (3)	26.7 (4)

The participants worry about world peace. Worries about politics and world hunger are fairly evenly spread amongst all of the respondents. Controlling for gender indicated that the girls worry more about these issues. World hunger, specifically, appears to be of greater concern to those whose parents are married and to the younger teens (14 compared to 16 year olds).

TABLE IV
OPINIONS ABOUT DIFFERENT ISSUES

Issue	Opinion		
	Negative	"Depends"	Positive
School	53.3 (8)	26.7 (4)	20.0 (3)
Environment	26.7 (4)	20.0 (3)	53.3 (8)
Religion*	33.3 (5)	40.0 (6)	20.0 (3)
Future	26.7 (4)	60.0 (9)	13.3 (2)

* Missing data - one respondent

Many issues in the participants' lives are considered significant. Emphasis in the survey questions was placed on the topics: school, the future, religion, the environment (see Table I in response to Part B of survey). These issues are comparable to those discussed in the interviews and to some of the most prevalent themes reported in previous literature (although the specific aspects covered often vary).

Bibby and Posterski (1992:76) indicate that the most significant issues for teens are AIDS, the environment, child abuse, drugs, and teenage suicide. They continue that 50-60% of teenagers view racial discrimination, violence against women and the economy, "three fairly explicit 'staying alive, living well' issues" as very serious (1992:79). These authors identified four dominant personal concerns of adolescents: pressure to do well at school; never having enough time; lack of money; and wondering what they will do when they graduate (1992:88). These findings were based on ratings of "% viewing as very important" and not on asking youth to rank order these items; however, they are discussed as though this was the

case. Holmes and Silverman (1992:72) indicate that the top five reported concerns for female adolescents are drugs, relationships, school, self and the environment. For boys, drugs is at the top of the list as well, but this is followed by school, then relationships, the environment and alcohol. It seems surprising, given these results, that drugs did not come up in my conversations with fifteen youth. There may be any number of explanations for this including that they might not have felt comfortable discussing it with me; another explanation might be that teens do not, in fact, spend much time worrying about drugs (as well as some of the other issues researchers include). Only teenagers can answer this question.

3.3.2.a) School

Similar to previous studies, the respondents expressed contradictory views about school, saying at the same time that school is necessary but not necessarily well liked. School was judged negatively or as unimportant by over half (8/15) of the respondents, though four of the ten girls said their opinion depends on other factors (see Table IV). Additionally, more of the females worry about school a lot (5/10 compared to 1/5 males). The fifteen year olds provided the most positive evaluations while those whose parents are not married rated school more negatively.

Complaints refer to pressures - both peer and academic;

"School to me sometimes seems like a big fashion show. The people I am with usually aren't this way but there is still pressure to get good grades, etc..."

or complaints refer to the system.

"In my opinion, the school system doesn't really work. I'm not quite sure what the purpose of it is really, to prepare you for life and working? I don't think so."

Others defined school more positively, from "a place of learning, a place to find yourself," to "a place I have to go to so I might as well try and get something out of it". The present study let the participants openly explore their views about school and discuss the aspects that they viewed as important.

3.3.2.b) Future

The majority (9/15 or 60%) of the survey respondents expressed mixed feelings about the future (see Table IV). Five of ten (4 of 6 girls and 1 of 4 boys) said they live for both today and the future. In their answers, some explained that although they live day to day, they think about the future, or realize that their actions now will affect them later.

Their thoughts about the future cover both the future of the world and their future position. Many participants reflected on environmental concerns in which case "the future looks rather bleak unless changes are made".

"It is hard for me to have an optimistic view of the future with things the way they are. We are an incredibly self-destructive group of people. I can't see us lasting much longer without a complete change of system and revolution of ideas."

A 15 year old girl wondered whether current technological advances can be reconciled with environmental issues.

Therefore, some of the participants are a little scared about the future, believing it to hold a lot of problems - but perhaps a lot of solutions as well. One participant hopes it will be better than her present thoughts about the future, another hopes the world continues to be an "o.k." place and a third holds onto the thought that "anything can happen". Finally, one participant responded: "Personally, I can't wait!"

Emphasis on the future was seen less among the sixteen year old respondents than the fourteen year olds. Still, this is not consistent with Melucci's (1989) report of an uncommitted youth population. These adolescents are aware of environmental and world issues, and although some are not prepared to do anything about them, others indicated not knowing what they could do. Likewise, the extreme feelings of anxiety and marginalization over the array of opportunities available to youth as reported in previous literature may be overstated. I do not think the participants would agree with Hugh Klein's (1990:461) comment that "the requisite number of years are not allocated for the successful resolution of the developmental tasks of adolescence.

The findings are also not consistent with many researchers' emphasis on the future. For instance, Lanphier and Perez say the "youth place more emphasis on orientation toward human interpersonal relationships and especially to events in the future rather than in the present or in the past". Holmes and Silverman (1992:24) report that teens plan school courses with the future in mind and interpret this to imply that therefore youth live for the future. In these studies, though, findings confirming youth's emphasis on the future and their worrying about the future are based on closed-ended either/or type response categories. Recall that half of the adolescents in the present study explained that they live for both today and the future. Often, this response category is not offered, youth are not given a chance to explain or, more often, this conclusion is reached through researchers' indirect interpretations of a question or series of questions.

3.3.2.c) Religion

Eight of fifteen respondents indicated that they do not follow any religion. Of the others, three are Protestant, three Mormon, and one girl practises Wicca. Therefore, it is probably not surprising that 5/14 respondents expressed negative views of religion (especially those whose parents are not living together) and 6/14 provided qualified answers (implied "it depends") (see Table IV). A negative view read:

"I personally do not belong to or believe in any organized religion. I think people should have beliefs although I tend to view religious people as being somewhat ignorant and with many prejudices and I feel religion is used as a security blanket of sorts, something to explain the unexplained, to give people reason, hope and understanding where otherwise there would be none."

As suggested in the interviews, even participants who are affiliated with a religious organization thought that there were too many rules and regulations. Posterski and Bibby (1988:126) refer to religion as "sanctifying the status quo".

On the question concerning what happens after death (see Appendix B), three of the respondents shared a belief in reincarnation, three spoke of an afterlife (be it heaven or a spirit world) and eight of fourteen who answered indicated not knowing what to expect, although some of these believe there must be something after this life. One participant explained:

"I really hope there is something after you die. I would hate to believe that you just rot into the ground. Sometimes I think I would like to die to see what it's like and to see if dead relatives could really still watch over me."

This unknowing does not appear to cause fear, though. Two participants remarked specifically that although they did not know what would happen, they were not afraid of death. Bibby and Posterski (1992:54) report that two-thirds of their respondents believe in life after death and one-third think they will be reincarnated.

Posterski and Bibby's 1988 study indicated that " a majority of teens identify with religious groups but do not necessarily practice their doctrines, as they do not receive

enjoyment from them (1988:126). This identification was not found in the present study for the reasons explained above. Conger (1991:486) says that "religious beliefs are likely to become more abstract and less literal between the ages of 12 and 18." This hopefully is not meant to imply that youth are not thoughtful about their beliefs, as this would not be consistent with the present data.

3.3.2.d) Environment

Eight of fifteen participants expressed positive feelings about the environment whereas others felt unsure or pessimistic about where the world is going. All of the participants believe the environment to be a significant issue, as suggested by previous research.

"It is what we live in and we have to learn to respect it or how can we expect to survive."

Many of the participants spoke of the need for people to "stop preaching and saying what we've already done when they should be working together to do something for the future."

No one wants the environment destroyed. Although one indicated "it's just a fad", seven of fifteen are very worried about the environment and another four are worried "some". Two-thirds of the participants are somewhat environmentally friendly, and 3/15 judged themselves to be very environmentally friendly. "Somewhat" includes recycling and putting trash in its place to not buying aerosol cans to understanding the consequences of environmental damage to not

driving a car and composting. Those who answered "a little" gave similar responses but did not feel they always put in enough effort. Those who judged themselves very environmentally friendly write letters and protest clear-cutting or "scream at people who litter". Most of the participants try to live by the motto "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle". These findings are consistent with Holmes and Silverman's study (1992:72) in which environmental concerns were ranked fourth and fifth by their male and female respondents. The participants appear to be more aware of happenings around them than is suggested in other earlier reports (see Brake 1980; compare with Decima Research 1991). Perhaps the differences in interpretations result from the different questions and response categories (or open-ended format) used. In response to Posterski and Bibby's (1988:36) indication that youth are more oriented towards personal goals and are shown to demonstrate the attitude of "let the other person do it [deal with collective problems]", at least with regards to the environment, the participants explained that it is not necessarily that they do not want to help but that they do not know what to do.

By expressing some of my results in statistical form, I was able to compare them with other research findings. The open-ended question format allowed the youth to explain their answers and I was confident that the questions covered important topics for the participants. I tried not to

interpret the findings but allow the youths' words to explain them. I did not try to fit the findings into a prearranged agenda and at this point it was not my intention to rewrite the story of adolescents. The goal of the study was simply to test what has been done in the past by doing things a bit differently. Similar findings take on different meanings according to the way in which the questions are asked, the response categories, the explanations given and the context against which they are discussed. For example, on the question of who adolescents go to when they have problems, the open-ended response category allowed the respondents to explain that they confide in different people for different issues as well as explain the issues. As important as letting respondents explain themselves is to put the findings in context, questions on school, religion and the future providing good examples. (Comparisons of findings have been made throughout this chapter and will be further discussed in chapter 4.) Therefore, what I found was that we cannot understand a whole situation or group, no matter how good our questions are, without letting those involved explain what is happening and why. We can come closer to this goal by allowing some representatives of a group participate in developing questions and response categories, by using open-ended responses and/or by requesting feedback. The more involved adolescents are, the more accurate our findings become. This discussion suggests that the participants'

words, and not statistics or researcher's purposes or interpretations, should direct the findings chapter in any study.

In chapter 4, feedback from the participants is provided. The questions and the methodology are reexamined and their future applications are discussed.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

An aim of this research was to let the data speak for themselves, to let the participating teenagers tell their story. It seemed appropriate to begin this chapter by reviewing the feedback received from the youth on the findings. The methodology is then reexamined. The thesis ends with a look at possible future applications of this work.

4.1 Participant Feedback

As Singleton et al. (1988:296) suggest, I tried to "see the world from the subject's own frame of reference." It was my goal, as Dorothy Smith (1987:126) says, to "explicate rather than explain the actual ongoing concerting of human activity" of adolescents. The final stage of the research was to bring the findings back to interested participants, eleven of them, to determine whether (or to what extent) I met this goal. I brought Chapter 3 back to one of them and she provided comments on various points. For instance, on the statistics for those whose parents are married and those whose parents are not (recall the numbers were 6 and 9 respectively), I was worried about unrepresentativeness. She was not. She said she knew more teenagers whose parents are not married. (At this point, the results are not meant for generalization but I was hoping to represent a variety of youth.) On the importance of school, she added that "maybe it depends on if you're smart". She was surprised about what

1980's studies said about youth, particularly their emphasis on the distinctiveness of this age group. She responded: "Well, we're brought up in society, how different can we be." Overall, she complimented me on the questionnaire (and I complimented her back, for it was the participants who made up the questions), and she remarked that now some of the survey questions could be quantified, with categories based on their answers.

Another participant who saw the entire document insisted on reading it through while I sat with her, pen in hand, ready for her spontaneous comments. In reading the survey results, she expected more people to indicate that impressions of parents would "depend" and not be as positive as they were. (Although academics know that adolescents are positive about their parents, we do not often feed these results back to them.) She viewed a quote from another participant about sometimes feeling out of place with friends as "interesting" but then said it made sense, that people are constantly trying to fit in. On siblings, she added the opinion that feelings depend on whether they live with you. She also commented that she hated the phrase "significant other". On popularity, she indicated that there is not only one popular group and that people who are popular do not notice their popularity but "others sure do". There is no alternative to school, according to this girl, "not if you want to get into university". As well, in response to someone's statement that

teenagers "know more than they [adults] would like to give us credit for", this participant not only agreed but added that this is because of adults' "fear that we might undermine their power" and that adults think that by ignoring what youth have to say "it will go away". At the end of her questionnaire, this participant wrote: "Great survey. Asks lots of really good THOUGHTFUL questions. Thanks for including me!"

After these two reinterviews, I decided it was probably not necessary to have all of the participants read the whole document or all of the findings chapter. Instead, I presented them with a summary of Chapter 3 (see Appendix D)¹. I delivered nine summaries to participants' homes and phoned them over the next week for comments. My main concern was the accuracy of the results: whether the participants agreed with the findings and whether the findings represented them. The study received positive evaluations overall. One girl wrote notes on the summary and discussed them over the phone. She was surprised that other teens also went to their mothers for help and expected more people to say they went to their friends. She agreed with the survey finding that who teens go to with their problems depends on the issue. (This finding is consistent with other studies. The feedback loop provided the youth with the message that they are normal.) She said that her mother was interested in what she does and thinks and that

¹This Summary of Findings was later viewed as a mistake, as criticized in section 4.2.

she was therefore not represented by the generalization indicating the reverse. She also does not want to be older (does not want to drive), considers her parents more than just useful but as bearers of life and caregivers, and does not agree that moving out defines adulthood but instead believes that growing up involves accepting responsibilities, paying bills and being in control of your own life. University is not a long way off although this participant does not dwell on it (similar to a majority of the teens). She added that being aware "comes from everywhere" and that there are good things on TV as well as the negative aspects addressed by a few of the participants. With regard to the finding on following fads, she commented that people do not want to admit it (including her) but everyone is influenced - "even if you decided to wear a fig leaf, it came from somewhere." She concluded that the summary does represent her but that it is generalized, "it represents students in general", that "some things are not [her] but a lot is".

Another girl offered similar reflections (and objections). She did not feel that much of the summary pertained to her and was worried about some of the statements not reflecting the opinions of a majority of teens. Specifically, she indicated that in opposition to the reported findings, her parents are interested in anything she has to say, that the topics of life after death and fantasy are two significant areas of discussion amongst her and her friends,

that it scares her to think that other teens are only a bit worried about the future of our planet, that she does not look forward to moving out, that her parents are much more than just useful and that their trust would be very difficult to lose. She concluded by saying that researchers must look at individual people, not generalize just based on age, but she thought the present method came closer to the truth than closed-ended surveys and she requested to see the entire document.

Others' remarks were more succinct. One boy simply said that he generally agreed with the summary but that some parts of it were a little generalized (on these points I revealed some examples presented in the thesis, and we agreed that this is one problem with summarizing data). His specific concern was that the groupings at the end did not include him for which I explained that the identified groups were not assumed to be exhaustive; these self-characterizations were merely provided by some of the participants and contributed additional information.

Another girl was very kind in her appraisal. She did not disagree with any of the reported findings but interpreted them to mean that a lot of teenagers think alike (i.e. as she does). She commented that the format that I used to summarize the findings was more effective than if I had merely provided summary statistics of the responses. Her words: "You actually talked to us and it was reflected in the

summary." Other comments included: "In general, it's me. I wouldn't be upset with that description." Another said that it describes her and "a whole bunch of other people". On a few points this participant thought, "Oh, that's interesting" but she was not disappointed. Another merely stated: "It about wraps it up."

The participants' comments support the argument that a feedback loop is highly desirable in order to check their information and the accuracy of researchers' interpretations (and that the adolescents' views cannot be as easily summarized as attempted in Appendix D). In retrospect, I should have given all of them the opportunity to view the whole product. I ended up referring to the thesis for clarification of the summary and explaining how, as opposed to the summary, the thesis used their words to explain their "different" positions. In short, I made the very error that I had wanted to avoid; I over-simplified the lives, opinions and issues of these adolescents. Even if it is necessary to simplify the data, we have gone too far if we no longer represent those we are trying to understand.

4.2 Method Revisited

I believe that adolescents have something to contribute to our understanding of them - who they are, how they feel about themselves, and the social influences and experiences they encounter. The goal of this study was to test an

interactive method to try to know some teenagers better. I wanted to see whether this method would lead to different findings, in which case we might use it in a multi-method approach or to develop questions to add to national surveys. I presumed that the best strategy to accomplish this would be to involve adolescents in the study. In this way, some young people would have the opportunity to provide even more input into society's understanding of who they are.

The initial interview process was a critical element in the methodology. It was included in order to get a 'grounded' sense of some teens' realities. The information provided insight, provided comparisons against which the survey findings could be measured, and led to the development of the questions from which the questionnaire was conceived.

The survey instrument (Appendix B) was included in part to allow some adolescents the opportunity to participate in its development. Its contents provided useful information about the social lives of some teens and its open-endedness allowed these adolescents to examine their own thoughts and feelings about various topics of their choosing². We cannot assume that we remember what it is like to be a teenager nor that this knowledge would be relevant to the understanding of teens today. It appears that in many of the previous studies

²Considering that it was difficult for the teens to articulate about topics they chose, in studies where the topics are chosen by the researcher, it might be expected that some adolescents may not have an opinion on some of the included issues.

reviewed, the questions asked are adult questions about adult concerns. The present study questions whether we can gain an even more accurate understanding of teens and their worlds.

The methods remained flexible and their use contingent upon the findings of prior stages in the study. For example, it was decided after the interviews that the survey should be handed out and completed in private for comparison with the information obtained in the conversations. Further, I had planned to hand out and collect the surveys in the same order as the interviews and to compare each new survey to previously collected ones as they arrived. However, this was not possible as most of the surveys arrived within a short period of each other (in April 1992).

The method was viewed as the most honest approach I could think of. The participants were told the reasons behind each phase of the study and then were given as much control as they would take (i.e. with regard to the contents of both the interviews and the questionnaires, and the interpretations). When researchers go into a study with their own questions and categories and leave no room for explanation, then proceed to interpret the data and explain the answers, we must ask ourselves how well the findings describe the people being studied.

Regarding the questionnaire format, not enough room was given for the answers as most of the participants filled up the provided space for each answer and some had to continue on

the back of the sheet. This may suggest that studies using a closed-ended questionnaire format are missing out on a lot of information or getting false impressions. There is also concern with the length of the questionnaire. Long questionnaires often turn respondents off. If bored or "not in the mood" they do not take surveys seriously and, especially with closed-ended questions, they "have fun with them". These concerns made me consider whether I should have included so many questions, but I did not want to discriminate with only fifteen participants. Also, on the most part, I already had their commitment.

In terms of the analysis, the small number of respondents was advantageous in that some answers could be quantified for quick reference but, at the same time, the survey format allowed for their qualification by the respondents' own words. The analysis of Part B, opinions on "other things", is probably too simplistic as the distinction was made in terms of importance or positive/ negative attitudes, for which the question was not explicit. However, the qualitative data from both the questionnaires and interviews clarify any misconceptions.

The questions that were not able to be quantified, due to the variety of responses, provide rich qualitative data. For example, the answers to the question in Part D, "If you could have anything in the world, what would you wish for?", included happiness for self and others, a cleaner environment,

getting work done, becoming a doctor, everlasting money, power to do anything, and world peace. I do not know how a researcher would establish categories for this question without getting input from some youth.

Musical preferences (question F(x)), according to the respondents, can tell us many different things about a person: that they have varied tastes, do not follow the crowd, are strange or different, do not like people who are overpowering, are mellow, cool, like rap, like modern music, or are open-minded - very interesting but very individual.

On why some people put other people down (question H(i)), seven participants said people do it "to feel better about themselves". Other answers were similar, including to fit in, out of jealousy, because they do not know the people, and for power. It still may be more appropriate to discover from a comparison of the participants' replies that they hold similar views than to provide limited response choices.

Finally, in response to a qualitative question about the respondents' average day, interests and spare time, I was told about school, homework, chores, organized activities, as well as socializing, listening to music, reading and watching television. Three participants did not answer the question and three, all fifteen year old females, indicated having no spare time. (This questions Frenette's (1985:v) interpretation that 70 hours per week of youths' time is spent in leisure activities.) Reported interests included dancing,

spending time with friends, reading, watching TV, listening to music, crafts, biking, photography, writing letters, going for walks, and cooking. I would not have known where to start had I wanted to develop categories. I might not even have known to ask the question.

The preceding examples demonstrate important uses of qualitative questions. In a few cases, though, this question format proved problematic. For instance, question G(v) on relationships and intimacy is a bit overwhelming and asks at least four questions, including: what do you want, what do you have, what is intimacy, and how important is it to you? As a result, I lost a lot of qualitative data. Four respondents did not answer the question. One began her answer with "Wow!" (referring to the complexity of the question). Still, the respondents revealed that they look forward to relationships and intimacy, someone to be close to, but some are not ready or have other more important concerns at this time. One boy divided the question and answered as follows: What do you want? - everything; what do you have? - nothing; what is intimacy? - excellent question but I can't find a dictionary; how important is it [intimacy]? - I think it is pretty important. Good answers, but it suggests that the question should probably be revised.

Two other questions present false choices. Question F(viii) which asks: "Do you think about/live for today or the future? confused some of the participants. The word "mainly"

should be added so that the question reads: Do you mainly think about... Some of the respondents accommodated for this error by replying "both" and explaining their answer. (Closed-ended survey questions do not usually include the category "both".) Question H(iii) asks about teens' and the participant's priorities in the same question (see Appendix B for suggested changes). Most of the respondents provided two separate answers, but this should be altered before this question is used again.

The questions that provided "yes" and "no" response categories do not offer false choices but do not offer enough choices. Many participants rectified this problem by adding a column "sometimes". These researcher errors emphasize the need for pilot tests, for respondent participation throughout the study, and for methods which allow participants to qualify their responses.

The most significant conclusion of this study did not result from comparisons of data but from the interpretations assigned to the findings. From the previous studies included, it appears that in cases where researchers do not provide their respondents the opportunity to explain their answers they often take it upon themselves to interpret the findings. For example, Bibby and Posterski (1992) interpret their finding that only [their emphasis] 58% of teens think hard work is very important as emphasizing the importance of the individual and 43% enjoying school to be near the bottom of

the joy rankings whereas the fact that 41% rated the unequal treatment of women as very serious is taken to suggest that "teenagers solidly support the ideals of fairness and equality" (1992:104). It could be possible that the other teens thought hard work was important or somewhat important and that the rest indicated that school was reasonably enjoyable, but the authors only provided data on the "very" categories - unless it made their point stronger to combine ratings such as in the case of sources of enjoyment whereby "a great deal" and "quite a bit" are amalgamated. By comparison, as seen in chapter 3, the teens in the present study were given an opportunity to qualify seemingly contradictory responses for a more complete picture of their experiences. The teens provided explanations for the findings that school can at the same time be important and disliked or a problem area; that they make plans with the future in mind but generally live for today; that they are hopeful about the future while recognizing current gender issues; and that they are aware of what is happening around them. In some previous work, closed-ended questions have not allowed these qualifications. The present study challenges some of the conventional wisdom about adolescents and about the way we do research and offers some new considerations for a greater understanding of these individuals.

4.3 Future Direction

Participants' expressed concern over adults' impressions of teens, together with selective media coverage and some of the published findings about adolescents (eg. I have heard about Bibby and Posterski's (1992) "disturbing" findings on the radio and in the newspaper), have provided teens and adults alike with a disconcerting view of adolescence. This study has attempted to determine whether the method used can influence these outcomes. From differences noted in the questions (see 3.2) and the findings (see 3.1 and 3.3), it appears that the method used can indeed influence the conclusions. It is recommended, therefore, that adolescents be involved in developing the questions which direct studies about them and that respondents' explanations direct discussions of research findings.

The survey instrument might be used in the future on its own or in combination with other methods or researcher-developed questions. The interview stage, too, should be repeated periodically and with more groups of adolescents in order that the questions reflect the teens' "perceptions and attendant pressures of life within the present culture" (Denholm 1990:21) and to serve as a feedback loop. The inclusion of techniques which allow teens to participate in the development of questions and to provide explanations and feedback should lead us to better understand the adolescent experience and give adolescents a voice in their study. ¶

response to the final question on the survey, the teens suggested that questions for future studies include more emphasis on sex; thoughts about marriage and children, education, occupational aspirations and life goals; and the question: "Do teens have social classes, do they judge each other based on family income?" (This respondent says they do, and it really bothers her.) I do not think that the few closed-ended questions in some previous surveys satisfy these requests. For example, Bibby and Posterski ask 3 questions on premarital sexual attitudes and behaviour: (i) approve if love, (ii) approve if like, and (iii) if the respondent is sexually active (1992:39); and 3 on sexual attitudes: (i) do you agree that sex before marriage is alright if love, (ii) sex between two people of same sex is sometimes alright, and (iii) homosexuals are entitled to the same rights (1992:42). Under marriage and parental plans, they asked: Do you expect to get married? Do you expect to have children? (1992:34). The high numbers may be misleading as 88% of their respondents also approved of an unmarried couple living together and 70% approved of having children without being married. On the morning radio show on CBC, the interpretation of these findings were debated. I wonder if there would be less debate if the youths were asked to explain their answers with reference to the whole set of questions? Based on earlier approaches to these question areas (refer 4.2), I would want to further discuss with these teens how these topics should be

approached. From the results of the survey, areas recommended for inclusion in future research on adolescents are: open-ended questions on various people and things; the importance of teenagers' own opinions in decision-making; what they want to tell the world about themselves; their opinions on world problems, and problems involving people their own age; what they think of their lives; what their fears and concerns are... We can ask teens about anything we want; the hope of this thesis is that we consider involving some of them at all stages of the research.

In closing, Trojanowitz and Morash (1992:68) speak of the diversity of youth which must be recognized and nurtured. Holmes and Silverman (1992:91) speak of face to face meetings being necessary for the resolution of misunderstandings. This thesis agrees, and adds that generalizations about a group of people based on age must be made very carefully and that policy and program development, academic research and media studies should involve input from some teens. A recommended first step: to ask questions about things that are significant to youth phrased in a way that is meaningful to them.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adams, Gerald R. and Thomas Gullotta
1983 Adolescent Life Experiences. Monterey: Brooks/Cole
Publishing Company
1989 Adolescent Life Experience. Pacific Grove, California:
Brooks/Cole Publishing
- Adelson, Joseph
1979 'Adolescence and the generalization gap.' Psychology
Today 12:33-37
- Baker, Maureen
1985 What Will Tomorrow Bring? Ottawa: Canadian Advisory
Council on the Status of Women
- Bandura, Albert
1964 'The Stormy Decade: Fact or Fiction?' Psychology in the
School 1:224-231
- Baron, Stephen W.
1989 'The Canadian west coast punk subculture: A field study.'
Canadian Journal of Sociology 14(3):289-316
- Baumeister, Roy F.
1986 Identity. New York: Oxford University Press
- Becker, Howard S.
1953 'Becoming a marijuana user.' American Journal of
Sociology 59:235-242
- Bibby, Reginald W. and Donald C. Posterski
1985 The Emerging Generation. Toronto: Irwin Publishing
1992 Teen Trends: A Nation in Motion. Toronto: Stoddart
Publishing
- Block, Jack
1961 The Q-Sort Method in Personality Assessment and
Psychiatric Research. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C
Thomas
- Blos, P.
1962 On Adolescence. New York: Free Press
1967 'The second individuation process of adolescence.' In
R.S. Eissley (ed.), Psychoanalytic Study of the Child
(Vol.15). New York: International Universities Press.
- Bohrnstedt, George W. and David Knoke
1982 Statistics of Social Data Analysis. Itasca, Illinois:
F.E. Peacock Publishers

- Brake, Mike
1980 *The Sociology of Youth Culture and Youth Subcultures*.
Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul
- Brewer, John and Albert Hunter
1989 *Multimethod Research: A Synthesis of Styles*. Newbury
Park, California: Sage Publications
- Coffield, Frank, Borrill, Carol and Sarah Marshall
1986 *Growing Up at the Margins*. Philadelphia: Open University
Press
- Cohen, Albert
1955 *Delinquent Boys*. Illinois: The Free Press
- Coleman, John C.
1980 'Current contradictions in adolescent theory.' *Journal of
Youth and Adolescence* 7(1):1-11
- Coleman, John C. and Leo Hendry
1990 *The Nature of Adolescence*. New York: Routledge & Kegan
Paul
- Collins, Randall
1975 *Conflict Sociology: Toward an Explanatory Science*. New
York: Academic Press
- Conger, John Janeway
1991 *Adolescence and Youth*. New York: Harp College
- Conger, John Janeway and Anne C. Petersen
1984 *Adolescence and Youth*. New York: Harper and Row
- Connell et al.
1982 *Making A Difference*. Sydney: George Allen & Unwin
- Dacey, John S.
1982 *Adolescents Today*. Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foreman and
Company
- Davis, Allison
1944 'Socialization and adolescent personality.' In
*Adolescence: Yearbook of the National Society of the
Study of Education* 43(Part 1):?
- Davis, Kingsley
1940 'Sociology of Parent-Youth Conflict.' *American
Sociological Review* 5:523-535

Decima Research

1990 Street Beat (survey)

1991 Pepsi/YTV Street Beat (Toronto: Press Release April 4, 1991)

1991 Street Beat Summer '91 (survey)

Demos, John and Virginia

1969 'Adolescence in historical perspective.' Journal of Marriage and the Family 31:632-638

Denfeld, Duane

1974 Street-wise Criminology. Cambridge: Schenkman Publishing Company

Denholm, Carey J.

1990 'Keeping up with the times: Terms and characteristics of ten adolescent groups in Victoria, British Columbia and Calgary, Alberta.' B.C.Counsellor 12(2):14-22

Denzin, Norman K.

1978 The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company

Dreyer, Philip

1982 'Sexuality during adolescence.' In B.J. Wilman (ed.), Handbook of Developmental Psychology. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall

Elder, Glen H. Jr.

1980 'Adolescence in Historical Perspective.' In Joseph Adelson (ed.), Handbook of Adolescent Psychology. New York: Wiley

Erikson, Erik

1968 Identity: Youth and Crisis. New York: Norton

Falchikov, Nancy

1989 'Adolescent images of adolescence.' Journal of Adolescence 12: 139-154

Feather, Norman

1980 'Values in adolescence.' In J. Adelson (ed.), Handbook of Adolescent Psychology. New York: John Wiley

Frenette, Carmen

1985 Some Dimensions of the Social Integration of Canadian Youth. Ottawa: Department of the Secretary of State of Canada

- Fuhrmann, Barbara Schneider
1986 *Adolescence, Adolescents*. Toronto: Little, Brown and Company
1990 *Adolescence, Adolescents*. Toronto: Little, Brown and Company
- Gallup, George and David Poling
1980 *The Search for America's Faith*. New York: Abington
- Gessell, Arnold and L.B. Ames
1956 *Youth: The Years from Ten to Sixteen*. New York: Harper and Row
- Gillis, John R.
1974 *Youth and History*. New York: Academic Press
- Glaser, Barney G. and Anselm L. Strauss
1967 *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company
- Grinder, Robert E.
1973 *Adolescence*. New York: John Wiley and Sons
- Hall, G. Stanley
1904 *Adolescence*. New York: D. Appleton and Company
- Haviland, Jeanette M. and Hollis S. Scarborough
1981 *Adolescent Development in Contemporary Society*. New York: Litton Educational Publishing
- Hewitt, John P.
1984 *Self and Society: A Symbolic Interactionist Social Psychology*. Toronto: Allyn and Bacon
- Hill, J.P.
1983 'Adolescent development.' Paper presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Detroit
- Hollingshead, A.B.
1949 *Elmtown Youth*. New York: Wiley
- Holmes, Janelle and Eliane Leslau Silverman
1992 *We're Here, Listen To Us: A Survey of Young Women in Canada*. Ottawa: Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women
- Jackson, Winston
1988 *Research Methods: Rules for Survey Design and Analysis*. Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada

- Jankowski, Martin Sanchez
1986 *City Bound: Urban Life and Political Attitudes among Chicano Youth*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press
- Jenkins, Richard
1983 *Lads, Citizens and Ordinary Kids*. Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul
- Kett, Joseph
1977 *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America 1790 to Present*. New York: Basics
- King, A.J.C., Beazley, R.P., Warren, W.K., Hankins, C.A., Robertson, A.S., and J.L. Radford
1988 *Canada Youth and Aids Study*. Kingston: Queen's University
- Kirby, Sandra and Kate McKenna
1989 *Experience Research Social Change: Methods from the Margins*. Toronto: Garamond Press
- Klaczynski, Paul A.
1990 'Cultural-developmental tasks and adolescent development: theoretical and methodological considerations.' *Adolescence* 25:811-23
- Klein, Hugh
1990 'Adolescence, Youth and Young Adulthood.' *Youth and Society* 21(4):446-471
- Kuhn, Manfred H.
1960 'Self-attitude by age, sex and professional training.' *Sociological Quarterly* 9:39-55
- Kuhn, Manfred H. and Thomas A. McPartland
1954 'An empirical investigation of self-attitudes.' *American Sociological Review* 19:68-76
- Lackovic-Grgin, Katica and Maja Dekovic
1990 'The contribution of significant others to adolescents' self-esteem.' *Adolescence* 25(100):839-846.
- Lanphier, C. Michael and Ann Perez
1983 *Youth Canada: Problems and Prospects*. Ottawa: Social Trends Analysis Directorate
- Lefkowitz, Bernard
1987 *Tough Change*. New York: The Free Press
- Leonard, Peter.
1984 *Personality and Ideology*. London: Macmillan Education

- Lewin, Kurt
1939 'Field Theory and experiment in social psychology: Concepts and methods.' American Journal of Sociology 44:868-897
- Lipsitz, Joan
1977 Growing Up Forgotten. Toronto: D.C. Heath and Company
- Lofland, John
1971 Analyzing Social Settings. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company
- MacKie, Marlene
1987 Constructing Women and Men. Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada
- Mannheim, Karl
1953 'The sociological problem of generations.' In P. Kecskemeti (ed.), Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul
- Mead, George H.
1934 Mind, Self and Society. Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Melucci, Alberto
1989 Nomads of the Present. London: Hutchinson Radius
- Montemayor, Raymond, Adams, Gerald R. and Thomas P. Gullotta (eds.)
1990 From Childhood to Adolescence: A Transitional Period? Newbury Park: Sage
- Montemayor, Raymond and Daniel J. Flannery
1990 'Making the Transition from Childhood to Early Adolescence.' In Raymond Montemayor, Gerald R. Adams and Thomas P. Gullotta (eds.), From Childhood to Adolescence: A Transitional Period? Newbury Park: Sage
- Newman, Barbara M. and Philip R.
1986 Adolescent Development. Toronto: Merrill Publishing
- Norusis, Marija J.
1990 SPSS/PC + Statistics 4.0. Chicago: SPSS
- Offer, D. and J.
1975 From Teenage to Young Manhood. New York: Basic
- Offer, D., Ostrov, E., and K.I. Howard
1981 The Adolescent: A Psychological Self-Portrait. New York: Basic

- Offer, D., Ostrov, E., Howard, K.I., and R. Atkinson
1988 *The Teenage World: Adolescents' Self-Image in Ten Countries*. New York: Plenum
- Panel on Youth of the President's Science Advisory Council
1974 *Youth Transition to Adulthood*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Parsons, Talcott
1951 *The Social System*. Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press
- Posterski, Donald and Reginald Bibby
1988 *Canada's Youth: "Ready for Tomorrow"*. Ottawa: Canadian Youth Foundation
- Rice, E. Philip
1984 *The Adolescent: Development, Relationships, and Culture*. Toronto: Allyn and Bacon
- Ritzer, George
1988 *Contemporary Sociological Theory*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf
- Rogers, David E. and Eli Ginzberg
1992 *Adolescents At Risk*. San Francisco: Westview Press
- Rose, Gerry
1982 *Deciphering Sociological Research*. London: Macmillan Education
- Rosenberg, Morris
1979 *Conceiving the Self*. New York: Basic Books
- Santrock, John W.
1987 *Adolescence: An Introduction*. Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Publishers
1990 *Adolescence*. Iowa: Wm. C. Brown
- Schwartz, Gary
1987 *Beyond Conformity or Rebellion*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press
- Sebald, Hans
1977 *Adolescence: A Social Psychological Analysis*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall
- Singleton, Royce Jr., Straits, Bruce C., Straits, Margaret M. and Ronald J. McAllister.
1988 *Approaches to Social Research*. New York: Oxford University Press

- Smith, Dorothy
1987 *The Everyday World as Problematic*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press
- Snedeker, Bonnie
1982 *Hard Knocks: Preparing Youth for Work*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press
- Statistics Canada
1992 *Age, Sex and Marital Status*. 1991 Census of Canada, Catalogue Number 93-310. Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada
- Strauss, Anselm and Juliet Corbin
1990 *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*. Newbury Park: Sage
- Theodorson, George A. and Achilles G.
1969 *A Modern Dictionary of Sociology*. New York: Barnes & Noble Books
- Times Colonist, November 30, 1992, pg. A5.
- Trojanowitz, Robert C. and Merry Morash
1992 *Juvenile Delinquency: Concepts and Control*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall
- Unesco Press (eds.)
1981 *Youth in the 1980s*. Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- Wallace, Ruth A. and Alison Wolf
1986 *Contemporary Sociological Theory: Continuing the Classical Tradition*. Edgewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall
- Webb, E.J., Campbell, D.T., Schwartz, R.D., and L. Sechrest
1966 *Unobstrusive Measures: Nonreactive Research in the Social Sciences*. Chicago: Rand McNally
- Whyte, William Foote
1955 *Street Corner Society*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press
- Willis, Paul
1990 *Common Culture*. Buckingham: Open University Press
- Yankelovich, Daniel.
1974 *The New Morality: A Profile of American Youth in the 70s*. New York: McGraw-Hill

Zurcher, Louis A. Jr.
1977 The Mutable Self. Beverly Hills, California: Sage
Publications

Appendix A: Consent Form

Researcher: Lia Fatels (Graduate Student)
Department of Sociology
University of Victoria
(604) 721 7583

RESEARCHER'S STATEMENT**Purpose**

The main purpose of this study is to investigate identity. I am interested in how teenagers view the world, others around them and themselves. I want to know about those who are important to you, who you feel have influenced your attitudes and opinions, and about what society should understand about people your age.

Procedures

In the first part of the study, introductions will be made and we'll talk about whatever is important to you in order to get comfortable with each other. Then, hopefully you will answer some questions for me about yourself, about those who have influenced your life, and about the people and things that are important to you. I will ask that I can tape record or write down notes on our conversations in order that I can use your experiences to compare with other youths. Finally, I will ask you to complete a questionnaire covering some of the same material but also including some demographic (family background) information.

Both, questionnaire and interview sessions will be arranged at your convenience. University policy requires parental permission in studies dealing with persons under the age of eighteen. You are free to refuse to answer any question at any time with no explanation necessary. All information collected will be treated with great care. Identity of all participants will remain strictly confidential. Only I will have access to the file containing names and identification codes. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason.

Signature of Researcher

Date

PARTICIPANT'S STATEMENT

The research described above has been explained to me, and I voluntarily consent to participate in this research. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and understand that any question about the research or my rights as a participant I may have in the future will be answered by the researcher.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Date

Copies to:Participant
 Researcher

Appendix B: Survey

LIA FATELS
 DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
 UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA
 PH. 721-7583 (office) or 721-2226 (home)

This survey is a followup to interviews conducted with some Victoria teens. The questions are all derived from these participants in response to 2 questions: (1) If you were me, and wanted to know teens better, what would you ask them? and (2) What are you interested in knowing about people your age? (Remember, there are no wrong answers. You're the expert! And remember, this is just between you and me!)

A. Other People

Some participants wanted to know what you think of other people. Please, in the space provided, tell me what you think of the following people in your lives.

(i) Adults

(ii) Other teenagers

(iii) Younger kids

(iv) Your parent(s)

(v) Your best friend(s)

(vi) Any other significant person in you life. (Please name person, relationship)

B. Other Things

Others asked what you think of different things. Again, please tell me your opinions or thoughts on the following.

(i) School

(ii) The Environment

(iii) Religion

(iv) The Future

C. Worries

How much do you worry about the following issues?

	A lot	Some	A little	None
Clothes	—	—	—	—
Hair	—	—	—	—
Looks	—	—	—	—
School	—	—	—	—
The Environment	—	—	—	—
Sex	—	—	—	—
Money	—	—	—	—
Relationships	—	—	—	—
Politics	—	—	—	—
World Peace	—	—	—	—
World Hunger	—	—	—	—

D. What do you want?

If you could have anything in the world, what would you wish for?

E. Relationships at Home

(Please leave blank any question that does not apply to you.)

	Yes	No
(i) Do you love your parents?		
Mom	—	—
Dad	—	—
(ii) Do you like your parents?		
Mom	—	—
Dad	—	—
(iii) Do you think your parents are cool?	—	—
(iv) Do you think your parents are old?	—	—
(v) Do your parents trust you?	—	—
(vi) Would it be easy to lose their trust? Explain.	—	—
(vii) Do your parents embarrass you? If yes, what do they do or say? Give an example.	—	—
(viii) Do You have brothers/sisters?	—	—
If yes, do you get along with them?	—	—
Do you love them?	—	—

F. All About You

In the interviews, I expressed a desire to know about self impressions and about what others thought of the participants. In turn, the participants posed many of their own questions around this theme.

(i) What do you think other people think of you? Name 2 important people in your life and discuss what they think of you? How do you react to/ how important is their opinion of you?

Person 1 _____ Relationship _____
His/her opinion of you?

How important is this opinion to you? How does it change the way you think?

Person 2 _____ Relationship _____
Her/his opinion of you?

How important is this opinion to you? How does it change the way you think?

(ii) How important is your own opinion when making a decision? Explain.

(iii) If you have a problem, who do you talk to?

(iv) Do you like yourself? yes usually not usually no
Why? ___ ___ ___ ___

(v) When you look at yourself in the mirror, do you feel ugly, look ugly, or do you like what you see? (Circle appropriate # on scale)

I feel: ugly 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 great

What do you feel is the best part of your body? _____
Why?

(vi) Do you ever feel peer pressure? _____ (yes/no?) If yes, why or in what areas of your life?

(vii) Are you happy with your life right now? _____
(yes/no?)

What are your alternatives?

(viii) Do you **mainly*** think about/ live for today or **mainly** the future?

(ix) Into which category do you fall?

- (1) create fads _____
(2) follow fads _____
(3) ignore fads _____

(x) Some say that music preferences tell a lot about a person. What type of music do you like?

What does this tell me about you?

* Word added after distribution; see also H(iii)for changes.

G. Intimacy

- | | Yes | No |
|--|-----|-----|
| (i) Is there someone you are interested in? | ___ | ___ |
| (ii) If yes, does he/she know? | ___ | ___ |
| (iii) Does being intimate with someone or the thought of it make you nervous? | ___ | ___ |
| (iv) Have you had sex?
How do you know/ think you will know when you are ready? | ___ | ___ |

(v) Tell me your views on relationships and intimacy? What do you want, what do you have, what is intimacy, and how important is it to you?

H. A bit of This and That

(i) Some of your peers want to know your opinion on why some people put other people down. What do you think?

(ii) How environmentally friendly are you?

Not very	A little	Somewhat	Very
___	___	___	___

Explain:

(iii) Some of the participants expressed their view that **adults** are generally more interested in their own well-being (i.e. money) than they are in the world. What do you think?

What about **teens**?

What are your priorities?

(iv) Do you think those who break the law in their teenage years will continue to in adulthood? Why/why not?

Do you think that publicity on teen crimes influences some adults' opinions of all teens? Explain.

(v) When you die, what do you think you will see? What do you think comes after death?

(vi) Tell me about your average day? What are your interests, what do you do in your spare time?

(vii) How would you explain to others that teens are not all alike, that all teens are not well represented in the media?

(viii) What question did I forget to ask/ should be included in future surveys? Please answer your question for yourself.

I. Finally, some demographics

- a) Sex: Male _____ Female _____
- b) Age: _____ years old
- c) Country which your ancestors came from before North America:

- d) In which area of Victoria do you live? _____
- e) Father's occupation: _____
- f) Mother's occupation: _____
- g) Are your parents: married ___ divorced ___ separated ___
single ___ other ___
- h) Religion: _____

Appendix C: SPSSPC Crosstabs Printout

By Gender...

TODAY LIVE FOR TODAY OR FUTURE by GENDER MALE OR FEMALE

		GENDER		Row Total
Count Col Pct		MALE	FEMALE	
		1	2	
TODAY				
	1	2 50.0	1 16.7	3 30.0
BOTH	2	1 25.0	4 66.7	5 50.0
FUTURE	3	1 25.0	1 16.7	2 20.0
	Column Total	4 40.0	6 60.0	10 100.0

ADULTS OPINION OF ADULTS by GENDER MALE OR FEMALE

		GENDER		Row Total
Count Col Pct		MALE	FEMALE	
		1	2	
ADULTS				
	1	2 40.0	2 20.0	4 26.7
DEPENDS	2	3 60.0	6 60.0	9 60.0
POSITIVE	3		2 20.0	2 13.3
	Column Total	5 33.3	10 66.7	15 100.0

SCHOOL OPINION OF SCHOOL by GENDER MALE OR FEMALE

SCHOOL	Count Col Pct	GENDER		Row Total
		MALE	FEMALE	
		1	2	
NEGATIVE	1	3 60.0	5 50.0	8 53.3
DEPENDS	2		4 40.0	4 26.7
POSITIVE	3	2 40.0	1 10.0	3 20.0
	Column Total	5 33.3	10 66.7	15 100.0

WORSCH AMOUNT WORRY ABOUT SCHOOL by GENDER MALE OR FEMALE

WORSCH	Count Col Pct	GENDER		Row Total
		MALE	FEMALE	
		1	2	
A LITTLE	2	2 40.0	2 20.0	4 26.7
SOME	3	2 40.0	3 30.0	5 33.3
A LOT	4	1 20.0	5 50.0	6 40.0
	Column Total	5 33.3	10 66.7	15 100.0

WORSEX AMOUNT WORRY ABOUT SEX by GENDER MALE OR FEMALE

WORSEX	Count Col Pct	GENDER		Row Total
		MALE	FEMALE	
		1	2	
NONE	1	1 20.0	5 50.0	6 40.0
A LITTLE	2	1 20.0	2 20.0	3 20.0
SOME	3	3 60.0	3 30.0	6 40.0
	Column Total	5 33.3	10 66.7	15 100.0

WORMON AMOUNT WORRY ABOUT MONEY by GENDER MALE OR FEMALE

WORMON	Count Col Pct	GENDER		Row Total
		MALE	FEMALE	
		1	2	
NONE	1		2 20.0	2 13.3
A LITTLE	2	1 20.0	2 20.0	3 20.0
SOME	3	1 20.0	5 50.0	6 40.0
A LOT	4	3 60.0	1 10.0	4 26.7
	Column Total	5 33.3	10 66.7	15 100.0

WORPOL AMOUNT WORRY ABOUT POLITICS
by GENDER MALE OR FEMALE

WORPOL	Count Col Pct	GENDER		Row Total
		MALE 1	FEMALE 2	
NONE	1	2 40.0	2 20.0	4 26.7
A LITTLE	2	2 40.0	3 30.0	5 33.3
SOME	3		4 40.0	4 26.7
A LOT	4	1 20.0	1 10.0	2 13.3
	Column Total	5 33.3	10 66.7	15 100.0

HUNGER AMOUNT WORRY ABOUT HUNGER by GENDER MALE OR FEMALE

HUNGER	Count Col Pct	GENDER		Row Total
		MALE 1	FEMALE 2	
NONE	1	1 20.0	1 10.0	2 13.3
A LITTLE	2	3 60.0	3 30.0	6 40.0
SOME	3	1 20.0	2 20.0	3 20.0
A LOT	4		4 40.0	4 26.7
	Column Total	5 33.3	10 66.7	15 100.0

YOUMON SELF-INTEREST MOST IMP TO YOU
by GENDER MALE OR FEMALE

	Count Col Pct	GENDER		Row Total
		MALE 1	FEMALE 2	
YOUMON				
AGREE	1	2 40.0	2 25.0	4 30.8
DEPENDS	2	2 40.0	1 12.5	3 23.1
DISAGREE	3	1 20.0	5 62.5	6 46.2
	Column Total	5 38.5	8 61.5	13 100.0

By Age...

TODAY LIVE FOR TODAY OR FUTURE by AGE HOW OLD IN YEARS

	Count Col Pct	AGE			Row Total
		14	15	16	
TODAY					
TODAY	1		2 40.0	1 50.0	3 30.0
BOTH	2	2 66.7	2 40.0	1 50.0	5 50.0
FUTURE	3	1 33.3	1 20.0		2 20.0
	Column Total	3 30.0	5 50.0	2 20.0	10 100.0

ADULTS OPINION OF ADULTS by AGE HOW OLD IN YEARS

		AGE			Row Total
		14	15	16	
ADULTS					
	Count Col Pct				
	1	1 20.0	2 25.0	1 50.0	4 26.7
NEGATIVE					
	2	3 60.0	5 62.5	1 50.0	9 60.0
DEPENDS					
	3	1 20.0	1 12.5		2 13.3
POSITIVE					
	Column Total	5 33.3	8 53.3	2 13.3	15 100.0

SCHOOL OPINION OF SCHOOL by AGE HOW OLD IN YEARS

		AGE			Row Total
		14	15	16	
SCHOOL					
	Count Col Pct				
	1	4 80.0	3 37.5	1 50.0	8 53.3
NEGATIVE					
	2	1 20.0	2 25.0	1 50.0	4 26.7
DEPENDS					
	3		3 37.5		3 20.0
POSITIVE					
	Column Total	5 33.3	8 53.3	2 13.3	15 100.0

HUNGER AMOUNT WORRY ABOUT HUNGER by AGE HOW OLD IN YEARS

		AGE				
		Count			Row	
		Col Pct	14	15	16	Total
HUNGER						
	1			1	1	2
NONE			12.5	50.0		13.3
	2	1	4	1		6
A LITTLE		20.0	50.0	50.0		40.0
	3	2	1			3
SOME		40.0	12.5			20.0
	4	2	2			4
A LOT		40.0	25.0			26.7
	Column Total		5	8	2	15
			33.3	53.3	13.3	100.0

PARCOOL ARE PARENTS COOL by AGE HOW OLD IN YEARS

		AGE				
		Count			Row	
		Col Pct	14	15	16	Total
PARCOOL						
	1	2	3			5
NO		50.0	37.5			35.7
	2	1	3			4
SOMETIMES		25.0	37.5			28.6
	3	1	2	2		5
YES		25.0	25.0	100.0		35.7
	Column Total		4	8	2	14
			28.6	57.1	14.3	100.0

PAROLD ARE PARENTS OLD by AGE HOW OLD IN YEARS

		AGE				
		Count Col Pct				
			14	15	16	Row Total
PAROLD						
	1	2 40.0	5 62.5	2 100.0		9 60.0
	2	2 40.0	1 12.5			3 20.0
	3	1 20.0	2 25.0			3 20.0
		Column Total	5 33.3	8 53.3	2 13.3	15 100.0

YOUMON SELF-INTEREST MOST IMP TO YOU
by AGE HOW OLD IN YEARS

		AGE				
		Count Col Pct				
			14	15	16	Row Total
YOUMON						
	1			3 37.5	1 50.0	4 30.8
	2			3 37.5		3 23.1
	3	3 100.0	2 25.0	1 50.0		6 46.2
		Column Total	3 23.1	8 61.5	2 15.4	13 100.0

By Parents' Marital Status...

ADULTS OPINION OF ADULTS by MARITAL PARENTS MARITAL STATUS

	Count Col Pct	MARITAL		Row Total
		MARRIED 1	OTHER 5	
ADULTS				
NEGATIVE	1	1 16.7	3 33.3	4 26.7
DEPENDS	2	3 50.0	6 66.7	9 60.0
POSITIVE	3	2 33.3		2 13.3
Column Total		6 40.0	9 60.0	15 100.0

SCHOOL OPINION OF SCHOOL by MARITAL PARENTS MARITAL STATUS

	Count Col Pct	MARITAL		Row Total
		MARRIED 1	OTHER 5	
SCHOOL				
NEGATIVE	1	2 33.3	6 66.7	8 53.3
DEPENDS	2	2 33.3	2 22.2	4 26.7
POSITIVE	3	2 33.3	1 11.1	3 20.0
Column Total		6 40.0	9 60.0	15 100.0

RELIGION OPINION OF RELIGION
by MARITAL PARENTS MARITAL STATUS

RELIGION	Count Col Pct	MARITAL		Row Total
		MARRIED 1	OTHER 5	
Negative	1		5 55.6	5 35.7
Depends	2	3 60.0	3 33.3	6 42.9
Positive	3	2 40.0	1 11.1	3 21.4
	Column Total	5 35.7	9 64.3	14 100.0

WORMON AMOUNT WORRY ABOUT MONEY
by MARITAL PARENTS MARITAL STATUS

WORMON	Count Col Pct	MARITAL		Row Total
		MARRIED 1	OTHER 5	
NONE	1		2 22.2	2 13.3
A LITTLE	2	1 16.7	2 22.2	3 20.0
SOME	3	3 50.0	3 33.3	6 40.0
A LOT	4	2 33.3	2 22.2	4 26.7
	Column Total	6 40.0	9 60.0	15 100.0

HUNGER AMOUNT WORRY ABOUT HUNGER
by MARITAL PARENTS MARITAL STATUS

	Count Col Pct	MARITAL		Row Total
		MARRIED	OTHER	
		1	5	
HUNGER				
NONE	1	1 16.7	1 11.1	2 13.3
A LITTLE	2	1 16.7	5 55.6	6 40.0
SOME	3	1 16.7	2 22.2	3 20.0
A LOT	4	3 50.0	1 11.1	4 26.7
	Column Total	6 40.0	9 60.0	15 100.0

PARCOOL ARE PARENTS COOL by MARITAL PARENTS MARITAL STATUS

	Count Col Pct	MARITAL		Row Total
		MARRIED	OTHER	
		1	5	
PARCOOL				
NO	1	3 50.0	2 25.0	5 35.7
SOMETIMES	2	2 33.3	2 25.0	4 28.6
YES	3	1 16.7	4 50.0	5 35.7
	Column Total	6 42.9	8 57.1	14 100.0

PAROLD ARE PARENTS OLD by MARITAL PARENTS MARITAL STATUS

		MARITAL		
		MARRIED	OTHER	
		1	5	Row Total
PAROLD				
	Count Col Pct			
	1	3 50.0	6 66.7	9 60.0
	2	1 16.7	2 22.2	3 20.0
	3	2 33.3	1 11.1	3 20.0
	Column Total	6 40.0	9 60.0	15 100.0

YOUMON SELF-INTEREST MOST IMP TO YOU
by MARITAL PARENTS MARITAL STATUS

		MARITAL		
		MARRIED	OTHER	
		1	5	Row Total
YOUMON				
	Count Col Pct			
	1	1 16.7	3 42.9	4 30.8
	2	2 33.3	1 14.3	3 23.1
	3	3 50.0	3 42.9	6 46.2
	Column Total	6 46.2	7 53.8	13 100.0

Appendix D: Summary of Findings Presented to Respondents

In general, the youths were very mature, very aware. They do not like to generalize about adults' opinions of them but say that adults who know them like them, and those who do not know any teens have stereotyped views based on media coverage. While some people, including adults, put others down to make themselves feel better, certain grown-ups constitute significant persons in these teens' lives.

On significant persons, parents and friends were mentioned most often. In the interviews, a large number of the teens said they go to their parents, especially their mothers, when they have a problem although this was not as clearly expressed in the questionnaires. In the survey, most responded that who they go to depends on the concern. There are some things you don't talk to parents about, not because you can't generally, but more because they are not interested. Certain things you discuss with friends, or keep to yourself (eg. important questions - life after death, space, fantasy).

Environmental issues were mentioned as significant concerns. Many of the participants are a bit worried about the future of our planet, saying we must all work together, and many are interested in what other teens think about this. Some are aware, but admit that they could do more. Others are aware but do not like to think too much about it because they do not feel they can do anything or do not want to put in the effort at this time.

Most like being their age and are comfortable with themselves, although some mentioned they do not really know who they are. They would not want to be older yet (except maybe old enough to drive) and generally live for today while still contemplating the future.

Adulthood (at 16 or 18) is defined by moving out on your own, which most are not prepared to do yet. Parents are chauffeurs, providing food, clothing and shelter; teens recognize they have a good deal, or their parents remind them, so they realize their parents are "useful".

School ranges from very important to not important although it should be but the participants indicated that school teaches many things they do not feel they need to know. Most spoke of university but it is a long way off and most have not really thought of events that far ahead.

Most think they probably have enough freedom (although some would like more), think the rules are fair, and that communication is open. They feel that their parents trust them, at least sometimes, but half indicated in the questionnaire that it would be easy to lose that trust.

Being aware includes being aware of what they read and watch on TV. They quoted me numbers of sexually active adolescence and numbers supporting the importance of education and jobs. Many also freely commented on the "trash" on TV these days. The questionnaires demonstrated their awareness and concern over world issues.

Most are not bored or lonely. Friends and reading, along with the various (often great) number of organized activities for which they are involved occupy their free time.

The sample included self-proclaimed nerds (good students), the downtown gang, and rappers. None put themselves into the popular group, nor do any of them report following fads.

VITA

Surname: Fatels Given Names: Lia Maria

Place of Birth: St. John, N.B. Date of Birth: May 29, 1967

Educational Institutions Attended:

University of Victoria	1990-1993
University of Waterloo	1985-1990

Degrees Awarded:

B.A. (Honours)	University of Waterloo	1990
----------------	------------------------	------

PARTIAL COPYRIGHT LICENCE

I hereby grant the right to lend my thesis to users of the University of Victoria Library, and to make single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the Library of any other university, or similar institution, on its behalf or for one of its users. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by me or a member of the University designated by me. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Title of Thesis: Giving Adolescents a Voice: An Interactive Method For Studying Adolescence

Author



(Signature)

LIA FATELS
(Name in Block Letters)

Sept. 17, 1993
(Date)