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MOTHERS’ AND ADOLESCENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP: SHARED OR DIVERGENT REALITIES?
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A common stereotype of parent-adolescent relationships is that parents and their adolescents are constantly at odds and experience great discord in their relationship. To what extent does this stereotype accurately reflect parent-adolescent relationships? Data from a larger, on-going study of parent-adolescent relationships were analyzed to address this question. Eighty-nine mother-adolescent pairs participated in this study. The adolescents were from grades six through twelve; the majority were female, Caucasian, and from two-parent homes. Both members of each pair independently completed the Parent Behavior Scale (PBS) and the Parent-Adolescent Relationship Questionnaire (PAQ). These surveys provide assessments of the extent to which parents provide their adolescents with support and supervision, facilitate autonomy and independence, and express warmth and affection. On the PAQ, parents were asked to respond to the items as they thought their adolescent would respond. Correlational analyses of the scales revealed a number of statistically significant positive correlations among mothers’ and adolescents’ perceptions of parental behaviors and relationship quality; thus, mothers and adolescents appear to have shared, rather than divergent perceptions of their relationship. However, the magnitudes of the significant correlations often varied substantially, indicating that although the perceptions were shared, they were not shared perfectly. It was also found that mothers’ and adolescents’ perceptions of parental supervision increased with adolescents’ age. Additional analyses (e.g., results for mother-daughter versus mother-son pairs) will be discussed along with theoretical implications.