

# INCORPORATING HUMAN ENERGY FIELDS INTO FAMILY RESEARCH AND THERAPY

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## ABSTRACT

The study of family interactions has a long tradition from different disciplines and methodologies, but one area ignored is the investigation of human energy fields (HEFs). While the concept has been around for centuries, only recently has it been utilized in Western contemporary practice. Combining emotional expression, family processes, and HEF perspectives, this study was developed to investigate the relationship between emotional expression and HEF interactions in relation to reported closeness between parents and adolescents. The methodology was designed to analyze self-report and observational data on 56 dyads and triads within two-parent families with a high school adolescent. The data were analyzed in terms of simple correlations and a step-wise regression. The findings are discussed along with implications for further research and therapy with adolescents and families.

**KEYWORDS:** Human energy fields, Family closeness, Family research, Observation of energy fields, Family emotional expressiveness, Family therapy Qualified

## INCORPORATING HUMAN ENERGY FIELDS INTO FAMILY RESEARCH AND THERAPY

The study of interaction and communication within families has a long rich tradition, with important contributions being developed from several different disciplines and methodological approaches.<sup>1</sup> Some of the early work by Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson, in particular, identified the impact of embedded messages and the problems they create within families.<sup>2</sup> The whole issue of dysfunctional family communication has played an important role in the areas of family research and family therapy because of the early work of people who identified the significance of communication elements and patterns.

One of the methods that had been particularly helpful in advancing our understanding of communication process has been observational research. For example, while topics and methods of communication have long been recognized as an important part of the research on marital couples, details and patterns lately have been recognized through observational work for the critical role they play. Gottman and associates, for example, have begun to identify the importance of communication patterns, both verbal and emotional, on the happiness and success of couples staying together.<sup>3,50</sup> While the early work looked at general communication, it was only when detailed and intricate patterns were identified that researchers began to understand the crucial role that

such patterns had on many areas of a couple's relationship. Interestingly enough, it was primarily through the observational methodology that such patterns were identified, because most couples were not sufficiently aware of their own patterns to describe them through self-report.

In the area of parent-adolescent interaction, again communication was identified as an important element of good relationships, especially when adolescents felt sufficiently comfortable to talk to parents about sensitive topics.<sup>4</sup> Yet it was through observational research that particular impacts of communication patterns on the functioning of families were identified. Looking at families where youth were involved in the juvenile justice system compared to those who were not, Alexander and associates identified how positive feedback cycles of family communication patterns were beneficial in families while defensive patterns tended to be destructive and associated with problematic outcomes.<sup>5,6,7</sup>

Affective qualities are important in understanding problem behaviors in a smaller but significant group of families.<sup>8,9</sup> For example, there is a relationship between family communication and juvenile delinquency.<sup>7</sup> There also is a long history of research relating level of expressed emotions to schizophrenic behavior, especially with regard to predicting relapse rates.<sup>10,11</sup> In addition, avoidance of conflict and expression of emotions were common characteristics found in psychosomatic families.<sup>12</sup> Yet disclosure occurs when there is perceived parental affection.<sup>13</sup>

Another intriguing area of work closely related to communication research but never directly connected is the investigation of human energy fields (HEF).<sup>14</sup> The concept of fields, such as energy, was introduced conceptually in the West by Michael Faraday in the 1840s, although energy concepts and practices have existed for over 5,000 years in the East and for centuries in the West.<sup>15,16</sup> Increasingly, a variety of disciplines including biology, physics, physiology, psychology, child development, and different approaches to intervention have been working with ideas about energy, and increasingly it is included in recent scientific investigations.<sup>16-28</sup>

For most scholars in this area, HEF are composed of what most describe as subtle energies, which often can be felt and seen when one becomes more sensitive to them. In this case, energy is not only electromagnetic, but also are the forces that hold the chemical and biological in place.<sup>17,29</sup> This subtle energy, which has many different frequencies or levels of subtleness, is composed of three primary and interconnected pieces: the aura or the energy around the body, the meridians or energy inside the body, and the chakras or energy transformers of the body.

While HEF elements have been ignored for a long time within a western approach to science, more recently there has begun to be an incorporation of such factors into the medical field.<sup>30-32</sup> This has included not only physicians and psychiatrists, but the National Institutes of Health which fund research in this area, journals, such as the

Journal of Alternative and Complimentary Medicine, and professional organizations, such as the International Society for the Study of Subtle Energies and Energy Medicine.

Yet when physicists and biologists begin talking about energies that make up our entire world, they are not talking just about a limited area of energy within or around the body. Nor are they talking about a stagnant, limited concept of what we mean by energy. Most people think of energy as something that is produced when we eat or when generators create something like electricity. In contrast, scholars are talking about a basic element of which everything is composed. Rather than the biological holding the energy into place, Burr, from his extensive biological work at Yale University on plants and humans, argues that it is the energy that holds the biological in place.<sup>17</sup> It is energy that is most fundamental to our being, and in fact composes our being as well as the world around us. In addition, there is greater evidence that energy, information, and consciousness all are synonymous.<sup>19-21,29,33-35</sup> Thus, energy not only holds information, but rather it is information, in contrast to being some inanimate object that simply exists. In fact, Schwartz and Russek argue that energy also contains memory, even extending the “mind” of the individual “through morphic fields” and that information is shared from many levels of subtle energy in and around the individual that give rise to intervention techniques helpful to the person.<sup>15,24,28</sup>

Although there are increasing investigations of energy fields, there has been little systematic research that has focused on adolescents or family interactions.<sup>14</sup> White outlines some developmental issues corresponding to the seven chakras, but she provides no empirical support for her conclusions.<sup>36</sup> Kunz also discusses aspects of development in relation to energy fields, but again there is no empirical work to support the ideas.<sup>37</sup> There is some research to suggest that the energy fields of adolescents are different than typical adults.<sup>38,55</sup> But the focus of that research was on individual fields rather than a study of interaction between individuals.

There is no previous research that focuses on the interaction of HEF within a family.<sup>14</sup> Yet, given what we know about families and HEF, there is a strong possibility that such interactions play an important role within families and provide some useful information beyond the other ways of assessing family communication.

Combining family systems, family communication, and HEF perspectives, this study was developed to investigate connections at many different levels between adolescents and their parents. Based on the previous research, this investigation included a triangulation of different elements (communication, connection, affective expression, and family functioning) using two different methods (self-report and observational research). In this research, communication went beyond the traditional definitions of shared understanding or producing impact to include the sharing of subtle energy

information, even if family members were not aware of such exchange.

The present investigation attempted to rectify the problems of previous research. Communication and affective interactions were observed in both dyadic and triadic settings. Self-reports from each family member were included, connecting self-report and observational data. Finally, different observable interactions were connected to subjective experiences of both parents and adolescents in relation to feelings of closeness, communication skills, subjective expressiveness, and the interactions within the energy fields of the three family members.

## METHODOLOGY

### PROCEDURES AND PARTICIPANTS

While conducting research in a natural setting has many advantages, it was necessary to conduct this study in a laboratory setting. Of course, people might act differently in such a setting, while others may be fairly comfortable or not be impacted by the physical context. Such a setting, however, offered the advantage of allowing the research to be conducted under controlled conditions and in a consistent manner, an advantage that took precedence over setting consideration. The procedures were fairly complicated, and consistency across the families was important for validity purposes.<sup>39</sup> In the end, the conversations observed with many of these families became quite intense and appeared rather natural, supporting the decision to use the laboratory setting.

The methodology for the current study was designed to look at interactional differences in two-parent families with an adolescent (ages 14-18). The procedure was set up to observe a parent-adolescent dyad as well as the triad under two conditions. The first condition was the discussion of fun times the family has had together in the past. The adolescent and one parent (randomly selected) began the discussion while the second parent was asked to complete an additional questionnaire. After about 8-10 minutes of discussion, the parent who completed the questionnaire was reintroduced into the room to join the discussion, which continued for another 8-10 minutes. Then the first parent was asked to leave the room to complete the same questionnaire while the second adolescent-parent dyad began a discussion of difficult or challenging times the family experienced in the past. After completing the questionnaire, the parent would reenter the room to complete the discussion of challenging times as part of a triad. In each case, the family was asked to make a short list and then pick one or more topics to discuss for the 16-20 minutes total time under each condition. Although the dyads were different under the two conditions, this procedure allowed for coding of dyads and triads under each of the two conditions. Thus, all four cells (fun vs. challenging; dyad vs. triad) were coded for the HEF for all 56 families. While mothers or fathers began the fun or challenging time discussions, which one began each family discussion was randomly determined.

The families were identified from a random list of high school students living in the local

community. Potential participants were telephoned, told about the study, and asked if they were interested in participating. Families were told about the procedures and given a small amount of money (\$30 per family) to cover any expenses they might incur. This allowed for a more random sample than usually is the case in such studies. The participation rate of those called was 34.8 %, which is relatively high given the time involvement and the need to come to the university lab in order to participate in the project.

There were 52 two-parent families who participated in the study. This sample of families was comprised of 42 Caucasian families (79%), two African American families (4%), five Hispanic families (11%), one Asian-American family (2%), and two of mixed heritage (5%). The families were about half middle class and about half working class. Eighty three percent of the families were in their first marriage, 14% were remarried, and 3% were separated (attending with their spouses). While the marital status included remarried families, the adults were the biological parents of the adolescent who participated in the study. The average age of the mother was 42, with 94% of them employed, and over half having attended some college. The average age of fathers was 43, with 96% employed and having attended some college on average. The average age of the adolescents was 15 years and in the 10th grade. Just over half of the adolescents were females (56%), while 44% of the adolescents were male. Because of the small number of families in the study, it would have been

risky to conduct separate models for male and female adolescents. In addition, gender of adolescent was not correlated with adolescents reporting closeness to mother or to father. For these reasons, the models were not done separately for male and female adolescents.

## QUESTIONNAIRES

Each family member completed a questionnaire with basic demographic data, a question about how close they felt to the participating adolescent or parents, and four standardized instruments. The four instruments included the Family Expressiveness Questionnaire (FEQ), the Affective Communication Test (ACT), the Emotional Self-Disclosure Scale (ESDS), and the Family Assessment Device (FAD).<sup>40-43</sup>

Family Expressiveness Questionnaire was designed to measure a family's overall emotional expressive environment.<sup>40</sup> It consists of 40 written scenarios using a nine point scale ranging from not at all frequently to very frequently. The measure contains 10 items in each of four subscales that represent the affect dimensions of positive (P) and nonpositive or negative (N), crossed by the power dimensions of dominant (D) and nondominant or submissive (S). These two aspects were used as they represent "two of the dimensions most discussed by nonverbal researchers".<sup>40</sup> Thus, the four subscales are Positive-Dominant (PD), Positive-Nondominant (PS), Nonpositive-Dominant (ND), and Nonpositive-Nondominant (NS). The items included such scenarios as "Showing forgiveness to someone who broke a favorite

possession," and "Showing contempt for another's actions."

The Affective Communication Test is a self-report measure of individual differences in affective expressiveness.<sup>41</sup> This instrument consists of 13 items with a nine point scale indicating the extent to which each statement is true or false as it applies to the respondent (not at all true to very true). The items in this measure included statements such as, "When I hear good dance music, I can hardly keep still," and "I can easily express emotion over the telephone."

The Emotional Self-Disclosure Scale was designed "to assess how willing people are to discuss specific emotions with different disclosure recipients".<sup>42</sup> This measure uses a five point Likert scale from not at all willing to totally willing. The measure consists of 40 items which cover eight distinct emotions using five items for each scale. These emotions include 1) depression, 2) happiness, 3) jealousy, 4) anxiety, 5) anger, 6) calmness, 7) apathy, and 8) fear.

The fourth scale in the basic questionnaire for parents and adolescents was the Family Assessment Device, a measure developed to describe structural and organizational properties and patterns of transactions within families.<sup>43</sup> This is a 48 item instrument that uses a four point scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The 48 items are used to measure seven subscales: 1) problem solving, 2) communication, 3) roles, 4) affective responsiveness, 5) affective involvement, 6) behavioral control, and 7) general functioning. Items used in this scale

include such questions as “Planning family activities is difficult because we misunderstand each other,” and “When someone is upset, other family members know why.”

While dyads were initiating discussions, the other parent was asked to complete another questionnaire that included three additional short scales. These three scales included the Parent-Adolescent Communication scale, the FACES III measure of family cohesion and adaptability, and a series of 12 questions that asked how much each parent talks with the participating adolescent about different topics.<sup>44,45</sup>

The Parent-Adolescent Communication scale was designed to assess the quality of communication that takes place in families.<sup>44</sup> This measure contains 20 questions and uses a five point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Half of the items are phrased positively (“I can discuss my beliefs with my child without feeling restrained or embarrassed”) while the other half are phrased negatively and require recoding the responses before combining them into a total indicator (“Sometimes I have trouble believing everything my child tells me.”) Because of the extensive length of the adolescent questionnaire and the design of the study that included time for parents but not adolescents to complete another questionnaire, these last three measures were asked only of the parents. Thus, there are no self-report data available from the adolescent for these measures.

The FACES III measure was developed and revised to assess family cohesion and

adaptability, two prominent aspects of family functioning in the literature.<sup>45</sup> This measure has been used extensively in family research, especially in terms of family functioning. This measure contains 20 items, 10 to measure cohesion and 10 to measure adaptability. This measure uses a five point scale of “almost never”, “once in a while”, “sometimes”, “frequently”, and “almost always” for each of the items. This instrument includes such items as “Family members ask each other for help,” (Cohesion) and “In solving problems, the children’s suggestions are followed” (Adaptability).

The last measure included a list of 12 topics often discussed by parents and adolescents. These items used a seven point scale from “Never” to “More than once a week.” The topics included the amount of time spent on homework, difficulty growing up today, dating experiences, personal feelings about sexual behavior, difficulty being a teenager, facts about human reproduction, expected behavior toward the opposite sex, importance of school success, how to behave on a date, facts about birth control, feelings about birth control, and what is right and wrong about sexual behavior. The responses were added together to get a total amount of discussion about sensitive topics with their adolescent, as reported only by the parents.

### **OBSERVATIONAL CODING**

In addition to the questionnaires, an observational coding was conducted for this study. All of the coding was completed from videotaped sessions using trained coders. The coding form focused on

interactions in HEF between the participants in dyads and triads during the positive and challenging discussions. This form was developed from the work by Leigh et al. on young children and the work by Karagulla and Kunz with adults.<sup>25,46</sup> From the work by Metzker & Leigh, it was clear that coding of energy fields could be completed from either live observation or videotape, as there seems to be no apparent difference in the outcomes between the two methods.<sup>26</sup> In this case, the observations were made from videotapes, as the family interactions were completed as part of an earlier study. This allowed for review of the videos if there were any questions about the interactions without fear of losing any data. Three minute (six through eight) segments were used to code the interactions between the triads and dyads. This part of the video was chosen in order to code the family once they were well into the discussions while also less likely to have completed such discussions in order to get as natural a segment of the family interaction as possible within a laboratory setting. Using videotapes for coding also allowed us maximum freedom to schedule the families without having to worry about schedule conflicts or complications with the observers.

There were many different aspects of the energy fields that were coded for each individual in the family, including the amount of light (low, moderate, high), the observable light density, the width of the field, the amount of energy flow, the perceived velocity of the energy field

(erratic, slow, moderate, fast), as well as illuminations and dark areas in the field. In addition, observers recorded connections they observed in the field and how any connections changed when the other parent came into the room or with the second dyadic interaction. Finally, observers at the end of the four segments coded the overall quality of the energetic connections (static to dynamic), the overall strength of the connections (weak, moderate, strong), where the strongest connection occurred (between parents or a parent-adolescent dyad), and whether the fields could be described as enmeshed, connected, or disengaged.

With each of the coding systems, at least an 80% average agreement rate was achieved (81.3%) with training of coders, an acceptable minimum for observational research.<sup>47</sup> During the training, problems in consistency were identified and reviewed in order to achieve the accepted minimum. For the HEF coding, people in the community who already were used to seeing energy fields were found and trained for the specific coding in order to have them understand this exact scheme and make sure they had a common understanding without the added complication of trying to train people to see energy fields and use people who had little experience doing so. Although people who already were able to see energy were used as coders in this study, others argue that this skill can be taught easily.<sup>48,49</sup>

## DATA ANALYSIS

The standardized self-report instruments



were combined for scores on each of the scales or subscales (if they existed in the instrument) and entered in the analysis separately for each parent and for adolescents. Summary items for the human energy field coding also were entered as part of the analysis. Pearson correlations between the subscales of the four instruments as well as the HEF observational coding items were run separately for the four dependent variables. Those variables with a significant simple correlation with each dependent variable were included in a regression analysis. The correlations were run separately for each dependent variable of mother's reported closeness to her adolescent, father's reported closeness to the adolescent, and the adolescent's reported closeness to his/her mother and father. Because of the small number of families ( $n=52$ ) and the larger number of independent variables (eight to ten for each dependent variable), a stepwise regression was used in order to include only those variables that would have a significant change on the total explained variance. The results of these regression analyses identified the significant standardized coefficients from the stepwise analysis for those variables that provided the greatest explained variance without including a large number of variables with a relatively small sample, which would further complicate the results. Separate analyses were conducted for mothers reporting closeness to adolescent, fathers reporting closeness to adolescents, adolescents reporting closeness to mothers, and adolescents reporting closeness to fathers.

## RESULTS

### QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

The results of the Pearson correlations for each of the dependent variables are shown in Table 1. As can be seen, there were elements from each person's perspective that were related to mothers reported closeness to adolescents and adolescents reported closeness to mothers. Fathers self-reported factors were related to reported closeness for mothers, fathers, and adolescent reported closeness to both parents. Fathers also had the greatest variety of influence in terms of the number of different subscales that were related to reported closeness. In contrast, there were no adolescent self-reported subscales that were significantly correlated with fathers reporting closeness to adolescents. In addition, there were no mother self-reported subscales that were significantly correlated with adolescents reported closeness to fathers. Interestingly, there were key elements of the HEF coding system that were significantly correlated with reported closeness for each of the four dependent variables.

The eight significantly correlated variables with mothers reporting closeness to adolescents were entered into a stepwise regression, and the results are shown in Figure 1. Only three variables entered into the regression: mother's report of the cohesion scale ( $\beta=.26^*$ ), the overall quality of the connections in the human energy fields ( $\beta=.29^*$ ), and father's report of the communication subscale on the FAD ( $\beta=-.25^*$ ). The other variables did not contribute significantly in order to be entered into the equation. The

Variable:	Mother Close A	Father Close A	Adolescent Close M	Adolescent Close F
Mother: Behavior Control – FAD			.39	
Mother: Affective Response – FAD		.35		
Mother: Affective Involvement – FAD	.33			
Mother: Communication Scale	.32			
Mother: Cohesion Scale	.38	.28		
Father: Positive Dominance – FEQ				.12
Father: Negative Dominance – FEQ				-.09
Father: Happiness – ESDS			.34	.39
Father: Calmness – ESDS			.32	.34
Father: Roles – FAD			.37	
Father: Affective Response – FAD		.35		
Father: Affective Involvement – FAD		.32		
Father: Communication Scale	-.34	.28		.30
Father: Cohesion Scale	.29	.36		.38
Adolescent: Communication – FAD			.39	
Adolescent: Problem Solving – FAD				.50
Adolescent: Affective Response – FAD	.27			
Adolescent: Affective Involvement – FAD				.41
Strength of HEFs	.31		.29	
Quality of HEFs	.38	.29		.38
Coalitions in the HEFs			.29	.42
Energy Flow of Parent 1		.31		

Table 1. Pearson Correlations Between Independent and Dependent Variables

total  $R^2=.29$ , and the Adjusted  $R^2=.25$ . In this case, one variable from mothers, one from the energy field assessment, and one from fathers were most predictive of mother's reporting closeness to adolescents. Interestingly, fathers' reports of communication were negatively related to mothers reporting closeness, the opposite of what might be expected in a family where higher communication theoretically would lead to greater closeness.

There were seven variables that had significant simple correlations with fathers reporting closeness to adolescents from mothers self-reports, father self-reports, and energy field assessments. These were entered into a stepwise regression for fathers reporting closeness to adolescents. Only one of the seven variables ended up being

entered into the model, father's report of the cohesion scale ( $\beta=.36^{**}$ ). All of the others did not add significantly to the explained variance, which was quite small overall ( $R^2=.13$ , and the Adjusted  $R^2=.11$ ). Neither the mother's self-reports, adolescent self-reports, nor energy field assessments, had a significant influence on fathers reporting closeness to adolescents.

There also were seven variables significantly correlated with adolescents reporting closeness to mothers, at least one from each of the four perspectives (mother, father, adolescent, and energy field assessments). These variables were entered into a stepwise regression on adolescents reporting closeness to mothers. The results can be seen in Figure 3. Of the seven variables, three again were sufficiently significant to be entered

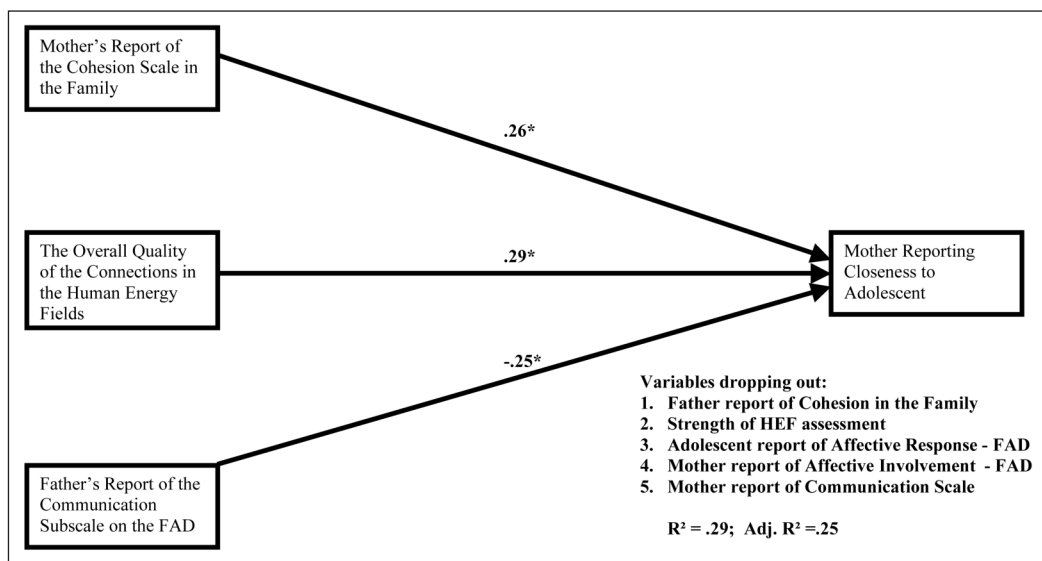


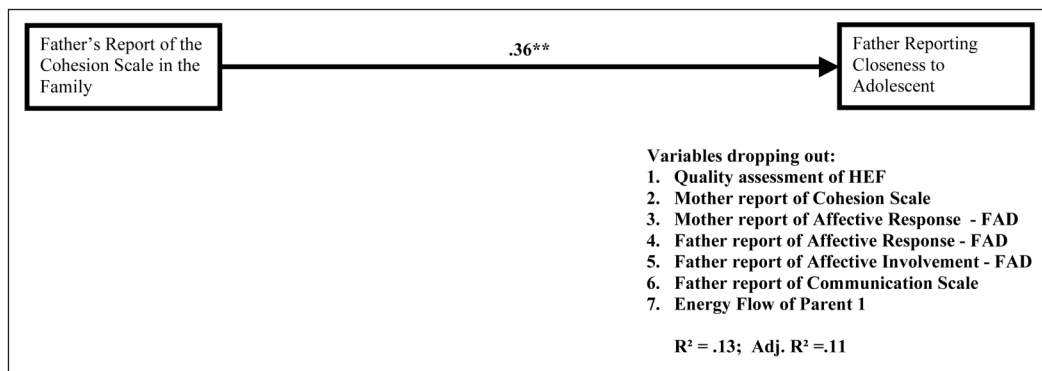
Figure 1. Stepwise Regression Model for Mother's Report of Closeness to Adolescent

into the regression: adolescent reports of the communication subscale of the FAD ( $\beta=.41^{**}$ ), father reports of the calmness subscale on the ESDS ( $\beta=.28^*$ ), and mother reports of the behavioral control subscale on the FAD ( $\beta=.27^*$ ). The overall explained variance was good, with a total  $R^2=.33$ , and the Adjusted  $R^2=.29$ . In this case, one factor from each of the family member's

perspectives was related to adolescent self-reported closeness.

Finally, the 10 variables that had significant correlations with adolescents reporting closeness to fathers were entered into a stepwise regression on that dependent variable. Of the 10 variables, again three variables were sufficiently significant to

Figure 2. Stepwise Regression Model for Father's Report of Closeness to Adolescent



enter the equation, the others dropping out. These three variables were adolescent reports of problem solving ( $\beta=.37^{**}$ ), father reports of the happiness scale on the ESDS ( $\beta=.28^*$ ), and the assessment of coalitions in the human energy fields ( $\beta=.24^*$ ). Again, there was good total explained variance, with a total  $R^2=.39$ , and the Adjusted  $R^2=.36$ . Again, one variable from three different perspectives was related to adolescents reporting closeness to fathers, one from adolescents, one from fathers, and one from the energy field assessments. In this case, greater closeness was reported when the major coalition in the energy field was identified between the parents rather than a coalition between one parent and the adolescent.

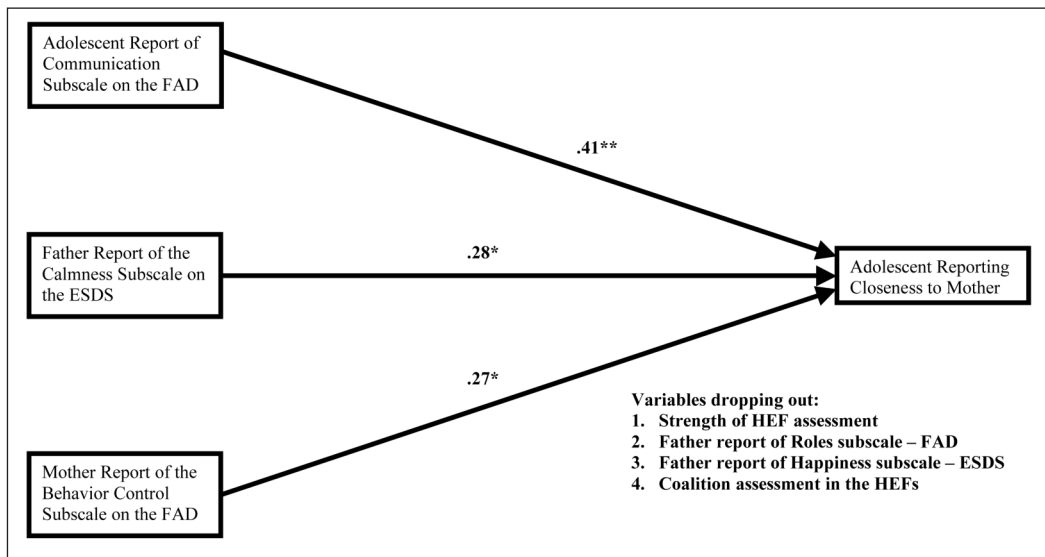
### QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

The results of the quantitative analysis provide some useful information about

factors that are related to parents and adolescents reporting closeness within a family. There are other aspects about the family, however, which also appear to be important and useful information that is not seen in the quantitative results. This is especially true regarding dynamics of family interactions assessed in the energy fields, an aspect of families typically not included in research projects.

As a part of the observational study of the energy fields of parents and adolescents as they discuss positive and challenging situations that have occurred in the past, observers were asked to identify what they saw in terms of changes when the second parent entered the discussion, moving from a dyadic interaction to one of triads. In many cases, there was a reaction in the energy field that is not typically observed physically. For example, when the father

Figure 3. Stepwise Regression Model for Adolescent's Report of Closeness to Mother

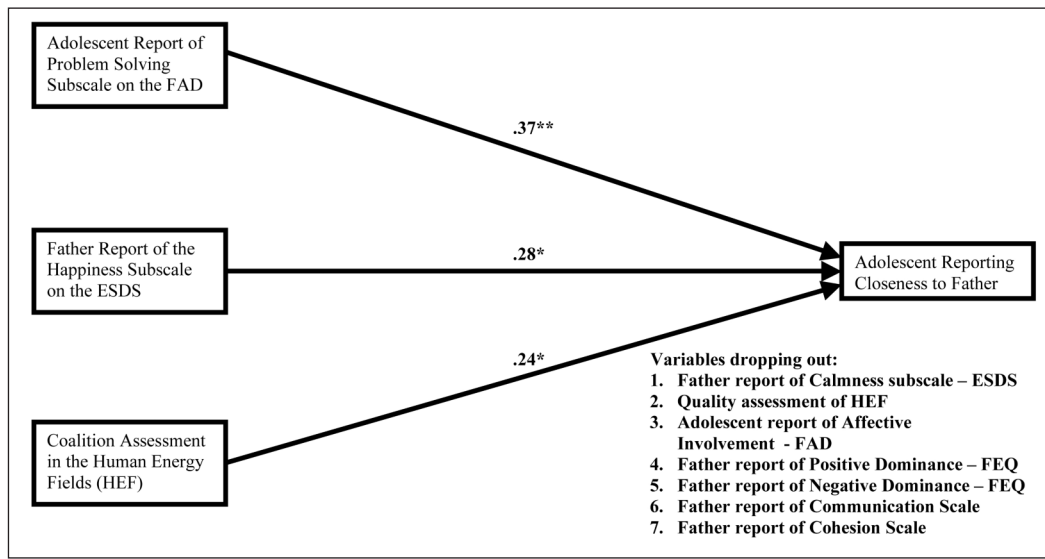


entered into discussions, sometimes the mother's field would change, and in other cases the change took place with the adolescent. This seemed to be particularly true if an energetic coalition seemed to occur between the mother and adolescent. In one case, the mother's field appeared to become "more guarded," with the field changing from a more open, interactive field to one that was more disengaged and closed down, moving away from the adolescent and the father. In another case, the fields between a father and son are active and interacting, but both fields pull back and close down more when the mother enters the room. In this case, the energetic coalition seemed to occur with the father and son. There are several other examples of such responses, especially when the entering parent had pretty "strong" energy. Such responses provide an additional source of information about family patterns and dynamics to

professionals who access and use such information.

Another interesting pattern that occurred in several cases was the energetic "reaching out" that seemed to occur. In this case, an adolescent would become more energized by the connection, as if she/he were connecting through a parent. While such a coalition has been identified by others either from self-report, discussion, or observation, the energetic connections provide a different "picture" of the interactions. For example, an adolescent seemed to be calmed energetically by such a connection, although it was not as observable physically. In another case, the 4th chakra (heart chakra) dilated when a parent entered the room. Observers also reported energy shifts, with the fields changing to "spikey" or a dramatic decrease in energy when topics changed to more challenging

Figure 4. Stepwise Regression Model for Adolescent's Report of Closeness to Father



situations. In other cases, energy cords seemed to be sent from an adolescent to a parent during such topic discussions, again as if they are trying to make some type of contact or connection during difficult times.

When energetic connections occurred, they most often were described coming from the area of the 4th (or heart) chakra; 51% of the time with one parent and 63% of the time with the other parent. This area of the field typically is associated with heart connections and relationships. The second most frequent area was around the 3rd chakra (29% with one parent and 12% with the other), which typically is identified with issues of power and self-identity. Thus, most of the time the connections are coming from one of two areas in the field, a dynamic that can help us see another aspect of family interactions that typically are not included in our understanding of family patterns.

One other area that seems useful to include has to do with the connections or lack of connections between the parents in two-parent families. In some cases, there was little to no connection, or even a withdrawal when the other parent entered a room as described above. At other times, however, there were strong connections that seemed very harmonious between the parents. For example, an observer described a “strong, rose pink chord at the 4th chakra” between the two parents. In another case, the observer described a “melding together of the auric fields, again with a rose cord at the 4th chakra, appearing very

“harmonious.” With another couple, the observer described a figure 8 energy form connecting the heads and shoulders of a couple that again was described as pink and turquoise. One observer described a blue ring connecting the 4th chakras of the two parents. In these cases, the parents seemed to have the strongest connection in the family, an important aspect of family dynamics with adolescents and another way to assess what is occurring in families.

These observational descriptions do not “prove” the contribution of the human energy fields. Yet they do add an element that could be very useful in expanding our view and understanding of family dynamics and interactions. This would be true not only for family research, but they could be especially effective in applied settings, such as working with family members in the therapeutic setting.

## DISCUSSION

This project was developed as an investigation of factors that are related to parents and adolescents reporting closeness within a two-parent family. Two elements that were particularly central were the emotional expressiveness in the family and the role of human energy field elements and changes that might relate to expressed closeness by parents to their adolescent and by adolescents to their parents.

It appears that reported closeness is a complex phenomenon, being related to other people’s perceptions of what is

occurring in the family as well as aspects of the energy fields. Fathers seem to play an important role, although it does not always seem to be positive. Certainly fathers had the greatest number of different scale and subscale reports, and their self-reports were significantly correlated with every reported closeness in the family. In most cases, the more they reported happiness, calmness, and affective response or involvement in a family, the more likely they and others reported closeness. However, self-reported negative dominance was related to lower reports of adolescent closeness to fathers, although it dropped out of the stepwise model. Their level of communication also was negatively related to mother reports of closeness to adolescents, and this factor was one of the three final influences. In this case, the less fathers report communication in the family, the more mothers report closeness to adolescents. It seems that when fathers are less communicative in families, mothers connect more to adolescents, which may not be the most positive influence on families overall. This would be an important aspect to investigate further, especially seeing if such a relationship impacts outcomes as family cohesion and parent-adolescent coalition formation.

It also is interesting that it was fathers reporting calmness and happiness in families that were significantly related to adolescents reporting closeness to mothers and closeness to fathers respectively. Apparently, it is as much about the atmosphere in families that are important aspects of perceived closeness. While the adolescent's view of communication was the

single most important factor, the atmosphere calmness and happiness impact feelings of closeness with parents. And it seems to be fathers who play such a role for these adolescents at least.

There also was an interesting difference in focus in reported closeness by adolescents with mothers in contrast to fathers. For closeness to mothers, good communication in the family and mother's involved in terms of behavior control were important factors. For closeness to fathers, a greater focus was on problem solving and having the strongest energetic coalition between the parents were important factors. While other factors had significant simple correlations and may be significant with a different or larger sample, these factors seem to suggest differences in orientation between closeness to mothers and closeness to fathers which may fall along some expressive compared to more pragmatic and structural elements when focusing on fathers. Again, it would be useful to investigate such findings further to see the relationship with family functioning or other family outcomes as they also related to the gender of parents.

One of the main questions in this study was whether the inclusion of human energy fields added anything of significance to the research on family relationships and dynamics. From the qualitative analysis alone, it is clear that including HEF can add a significant element to the research. For both mothers reporting closeness to adolescents and adolescents reporting closeness to fathers, aspects of the human

energy fields were one of the three significant factors in the stepwise regression analysis. In this case, whether the energy fields were observed as static or dynamic was significantly related to mothers reporting closeness. When observers rated the overall energy fields as more dynamic, mothers also were more likely to describe their relationship to their adolescent as close. While it is not clear exactly how such an observation is related, there certainly is a significant partial correlation between the two family elements. In this case, it is hypothesized that as the fields are more open, flowing and dynamic, there is also a greater feeling of closeness that occurs between mothers and adolescents. When fields are more closed down and protective, it most likely is harder for mothers to feel as close to their adolescents. While there probably is not always a direct causal relationship here in all cases, there probably is an aspect of how one feels a connection in families, maybe more so with mothers, in contrast to feeling distance. Many things in a family most likely are related to this, but this may be an important element to increasingly include in family research to understand the dynamics of closeness and connection in families. In addition, observing a closer energetic connection between parents rather than a coalition between a parent and adolescent is an important factor related to adolescents reporting greater closeness to fathers. Again, this probably is not a direct causal influence, and the concept of parental coalitions being important has a long history in family research. Yet inclusion of the energetic coalition as a significant factor

when other related variables were not sufficiently significant to enter the equation may suggest that such an element in families may have a contribution not offered by others perspectives. These, along with the other simple correlations provide support for the contribution of HEF elements in family research.

In addition to the quantitative, it is argued that qualitative aspects of the HEF dynamics also offer additional perspectives that can be important both in the research of and application to family settings. Including energetic connections and changes may well provide increasing elements of family interactions, relationships, and dynamics that have thus far been ignored in family research and yet provide a unique contribution. In addition, there are applications to applied settings, such as family therapy, that could be important in understanding and working with families.

## **APPLICATION TO FAMILY THERAPY**

As mentioned earlier, there seem to be some important human energy field aspects about families that could be useful in a family therapy setting. First, paying attention to the energy connections could provide useful information about coalitions, reactions, and how family members relate to each other. This can be especially useful because most people do not seem to be aware of their energy fields and therefore may be less inclined to hide or try to change such



connections and interactions. In this way, such information may provide a very candid view of the family relationships and dynamics. It also could provide very important information about families that one would not access through any other means or measures.

When one begins to pay attention to energy field dynamics, it is useful to see how connections are made, what reactions occur when family members make comments or either pull away or reach out energetically to another family member. While language, physical, and nonverbal information is very important in understanding what occurs in families, the energy field dynamic provides another important source of information typically not accessed consciously or intentionally by most family therapists. Many therapists get a “feel” for some things going on in families, which may well be a part of the energy field dynamic, but they may not be accessing the information in a more conscious or intentional manner. This may be a useful element for therapists to begin accessing in a more systematic way.

While many people do not “see” the energy fields, most, if not all of us, can begin accessing the information simply by paying attention to it. Energy fields are vibrational information that is more subtle than the physical, yet one can “feel” the same vibrational information that others “see.” While the method used in this study was to observe the energy fields, others seem to access the same information intentionally through feeling it. Thus, the information is not dependent on being able to see the

fields, but rather learning to pay attention to the information at what ever level is most available to professionals. In addition, people argue that seeing the field can be taught to people, although we have not included this process in the current study.<sup>48,49</sup> In the process of developing the procedures for this and related research, we certainly have honed skills in accessing this subtle information in different ways, which seem to be open to all people who are interested in doing so.<sup>25,26</sup> Thus, it is quite likely that family therapists also could increase these skills, like other therapeutic skills, such as paying closer attention to nonverbal communication and underlying meanings in communication, common skills developed in the family therapeutic training process.

In addition to elements of subtle energy fields identified in this research project, there appear to be many other related aspects that may have direct application to the therapeutic process. Such elements include understanding when people are energetically present or absent in a session, when and under what therapeutic circumstances people go away or leave the setting energetically, even when remaining physically. It also could be useful to pay attention to what people are doing energetically that may be different or even in conflict with what they are saying and doing physically. Finally, it may be useful to begin to see where people are holding energetic experiences in the field or body, or sharing some of that during interactions that could help clarify other family members’ experiences in the therapy setting.

The current project was a pilot study to see how emotional expression and human energy fields were related to reporting of closeness by parents and adolescents within families. We hope that this investigation provides some useful ideas to stimulate further research that would include HEF aspects in the investigations. In addition, we hope that some of the utility of HEF might begin to infiltrate the family therapy setting to provide addition information and insights about family members and family dynamics that would assist in the family therapy process.

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