



**The influence of parenting goals on adolescent psychosocial adjustment**

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**Thesis submitted for the degree of  
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## Statement

*This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.*

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6/10/2006  
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(Psalm 30:12)

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## **Abstract**

This project, conducted in South Australia, draws upon the theoretical frameworks provided in the parenting, social cognition and relationships literatures. The principal hypothesis governing the research was that variations in parenting goals would give rise to how parents responded to their children, both cognitively and behaviourally (e.g., in terms of parenting behaviour, attributions for behaviour and emotional responses). These factors would then influence the nature of family functioning and ultimately young people's level of psychosocial functioning. A series of three studies was therefore conducted to explore the influence that mothers' beliefs and values, operationalised in terms of parenting goals, have on family functioning and adolescent wellbeing as mediated or moderated by how parents interacted with their adolescents and interpreted their behaviour.

The purpose of the first study (Study 1) was to understand the nature of mothers' parenting goals (i.e., what do they feel to be important when parenting teenagers) and how these beliefs influenced their affective responses to teenagers. This section also asked parents to identify which situations were most likely to require specific parenting responses, so that vignettes used subsequently in the project were based on real-life and relevant examples of parent-adolescent conflict. A second part of this study examined the relationship between mothers' endorsement of these parental goals and adolescent well-being.

The findings were based on a qualitative and exploratory study of 37 mother-adolescent dyads as well as a series of self-report psychometric measures. In the semi-structured interview mothers' were asked to respond to broad questions on relationship-centred goals, parent-centred goals and child-centred empathic and socialisation goals. Consistent with other recent research which has questioned the primacy afforded to the goal of parental compliance, the results showed that most mothers were not solely focused on parental needs or adolescent compliance. On the contrary, child-centred goals, including considering the child's needs and showing physical affection were strongly endorsed by many parents. The study also highlighted the degree of variability in parental goals. The results, however, found some support for a direct association between specific parenting goals and family functioning, and parenting goals and adolescent psychosocial functioning.

Study 2 was a quantitative study which assessed the main and indirect effects that mothers' parenting goals had on maternal attributions, behaviours and emotional responses, and how each of these factors ultimately influenced adolescent adjustment and family functioning (i.e., whether they moderated or mediated the effects of parenting goals on family and adolescent functioning) . The participants in this study comprised 103 mother-adolescent pairs. Mothers were asked to consider the importance of eight pre-generated parenting goals within four specific situations. They were also asked to rate their emotional and attributional response to the four situations. Teenagers' perceptions of mothers' parenting goals, emotional responses and attributions within the four situations

were also measured. In addition, teenagers' were asked to complete the Child Reports of Parents Behavioural Inventory (Schludermann & Schludermann, 1970) which measured parenting behaviours. An initial series of analyses examined the importance of the different types of parenting goal (parent, child and relationship centred) across the different scenarios identified in Study 1. The results confirmed the prediction that mothers' goals would not be static from one situation to another and that context therefore influenced parenting goals. For example, when parents were faced with situations involving public perceptions, parent-centered concerns were more likely to be emphasised. Child and relationship concerns were more likely to be emphasised in more private contexts. Similar results were obtained using both parental and adolescent reports, and the findings highlighted the important similarities and differences between parental and adolescent perceptions of parenting goals.

A second series of analyses examined the direct relationship between parenting goals and adolescent functioning, as well as the extent to which this relationship was mediated or moderated by family functioning, parenting behaviours and attributions, or parental emotional responses (as rated independently by both mothers and teenagers). In terms of the direct relationship, the results showed the more teenagers perceived mothers to be interested in relationship-centred goals, the more well-adjusted teenagers seemed to be. When taken as a whole, the results generally found limited support for the predictions that attributions, affective responses, or parental behaviours would mediate the relationship between parenting goals and

adolescent wellbeing. However, some evidence for moderation was found, and particularly in relation to the role of parental emotional responses. In particular, it was found that relationship-centred goals appeared to be associated with poorer outcomes depending upon the mothers' emotional responses. In particular, if mothers expressed excessive anger during altercations with teenagers, outcomes tended to be poorer despite the high endorsement of relationship-centred goals. Indeed, even when there were high expectations of compliance, this was beneficial for adolescent well-being as long as mothers did not react aggressively when teenagers failed to comply. In addition, relationship-centred goals were not as strongly associated to teenagers' positive moods and attachment to mother when teenagers perceived mothers to worry too much about challenging altercations with them. In other words, there was some evidence that mothers' emotional responses played a more important role in maintaining family functioning and good adolescent functioning than attributions and parental other parental behaviours. Such effects were more likely to be observed when the results were based on teenage perceptions rather than just mothers' self-reports.

The objective of Study 3 was to assess whether mothers' cognitions (parenting goals, attributions) and affective states (emotions, moods) interacted with maternal trust or was directly related to adolescent adjustment. The participants in this study comprised 123 mother-adolescent pairs. Self-report measures of maternal trust were collected using Kerr, Stattin and Trost's (1999) Parental Trust scale. In this study mothers' general parenting goals were

assessed rather than their parenting goals in specific situations. Maternal trust was positively associated with healthy adolescent adjustment, although there were differential effects according to the gender of the teenager. The findings suggest that sons were more greatly affected by mothers' level of trust in them than daughters. As anticipated, more relationship-centered goals were positively associated with mothers' level of trust in both sons and daughters. When mothers believed more strongly in the goal of providing love and care for their children, and this was combined with trust, this appeared to be associated with stronger attachments with parents, particular amongst boys. Maternal attributions were shown to have a negative influence on maternal trust. It appeared that mothers who were prone to making strong personality and intentionality attributions for teenagers' challenging behaviours were less likely to be trustful of their teenagers. Mothers' emotions did not appear to affect the trust they placed in their teenagers. Nor did they influence the conditions in which trust might be associated with adolescent outcomes. Mothers' negative moods, on the other hand, were more strongly related to the extent to which mothers were able to trust their teenagers.



## **Chapter One**

### **Title: Project Aims**

#### **1.1 General Introduction**

“People told me it was hard raising a teenager, but I *never* expected it to be this hard”. This statement is not uncommon amongst ordinary parents with normal, healthy adolescent children. Parenting a teenager is popularly accepted to be a difficult process and there have been many books and articles written to provide parents with advice and strategies to assist them as their children make the transition into adolescence. The broad aim of this project, therefore, was to undertake a detailed study of parental experiences with teenagers, in particular, to understand why mothers are able to respond appropriately and effectively to difficult interactions with their teenagers on some occasions, but not at other times. Furthermore, it aimed to explore why some parents, albeit a minority, find this process of parenting teenagers very difficult, despite their best intentions.

A fundamental assumption of this research is that there is considerable variability in the ways parents think, feel and behave towards teenagers across different situations and contexts. This understanding of parenting is embedded in the developmental systems theory of human development (Lerner, Rothbaum, Bolous & Castellino, 2002). Such a view is seen to be inconsistent with many traditional parenting theories which have typically assumed that parental behaviours and responses are generally consistent across time and situations. According to this tradition, it is assumed

that it is possible to identify specific parenting styles, each of which has its own identifiable set of values, behaviours and standards (Baumrind, 1971; Hoffman 1970) and that parenting practices will vary depending on the style of parenting (Dornbusch et al., 1987). Although such parenting styles are not considered entirely invalid or without empirical support, more contemporary developmental and socialisation researchers have argued that there are a number of the assumptions that are inherent within these traditional models of parenting that are subject to challenge. A particular criticism is that parenting styles and practices are static and inflexible and that parents only have one main socialisation goal - training children to be compliant to parental expectations (Grusec, Goodnow, & Kuczynski, 2000; Hastings & Grusec, 1998). Consequently, it is argued that insufficient consideration had been given to the notion that parental cognitions, behaviours and affective states may be subject to greater variations across different contexts (Smetana, 1994).

Accordingly, contemporary parenting researchers have begun to place greater emphasis on the study of variations in behaviour, but also the extent to which these are underlined by differences in parenting cognitions, in particular, the different objectives or goals that parents have when raising young children (Dix, 1992; Hastings & Grusec, 1998; Kuczynski, 1984). The present project seeks to continue and extend this exploration of parenting goals by assessing the importance mothers ascribe to different goals, the consistency of these goals for mothers (and between mothers), and how parenting goals affect the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship and adolescent well-being.

## 1.2 The Rationale of Parenting Goal Research

In other words, it is suggested that that mothers' beliefs and values play an important role in influencing the nature of parent-adolescent interactions and that these, in turn, influence adolescent psychosocial adjustment. Surprisingly, there has been a paucity of research on the study of parental values and beliefs to validate this assumption. This omission has been not so much due to a lack of theory to support such a view, but may be more strongly related to the fact that, until recently, beliefs and values have been ascribed too difficult to measure and that it has been easier to confine research largely to studies of what parents do, rather than what they believe. However, in recent years, it has been suggested that parental values and beliefs can be reliably measured if they are operationalised in terms of parenting goals. As Bugental and Johnston state:

"Goals....serve as a vehicle through which parents translate global parenting values into specific parenting actions, and as a mechanism for organising these actions" (2000, p. 335).

Some important contributions to the understanding of how parental beliefs and values guide and direct parenting behaviours was undertaken by Kuczynski (1984) who focused on the short-term and long-term goals of parents with young children and how this affected their parenting practices. This was followed by Dix's (1992) suggestion that parenting goals should be divided into three broad categories: parent-centred goals, child-centred socialisation goals and child-centred empathic goals. Grusec and Goodnow (1994) added a third category to this list, which they referred to as relationship-

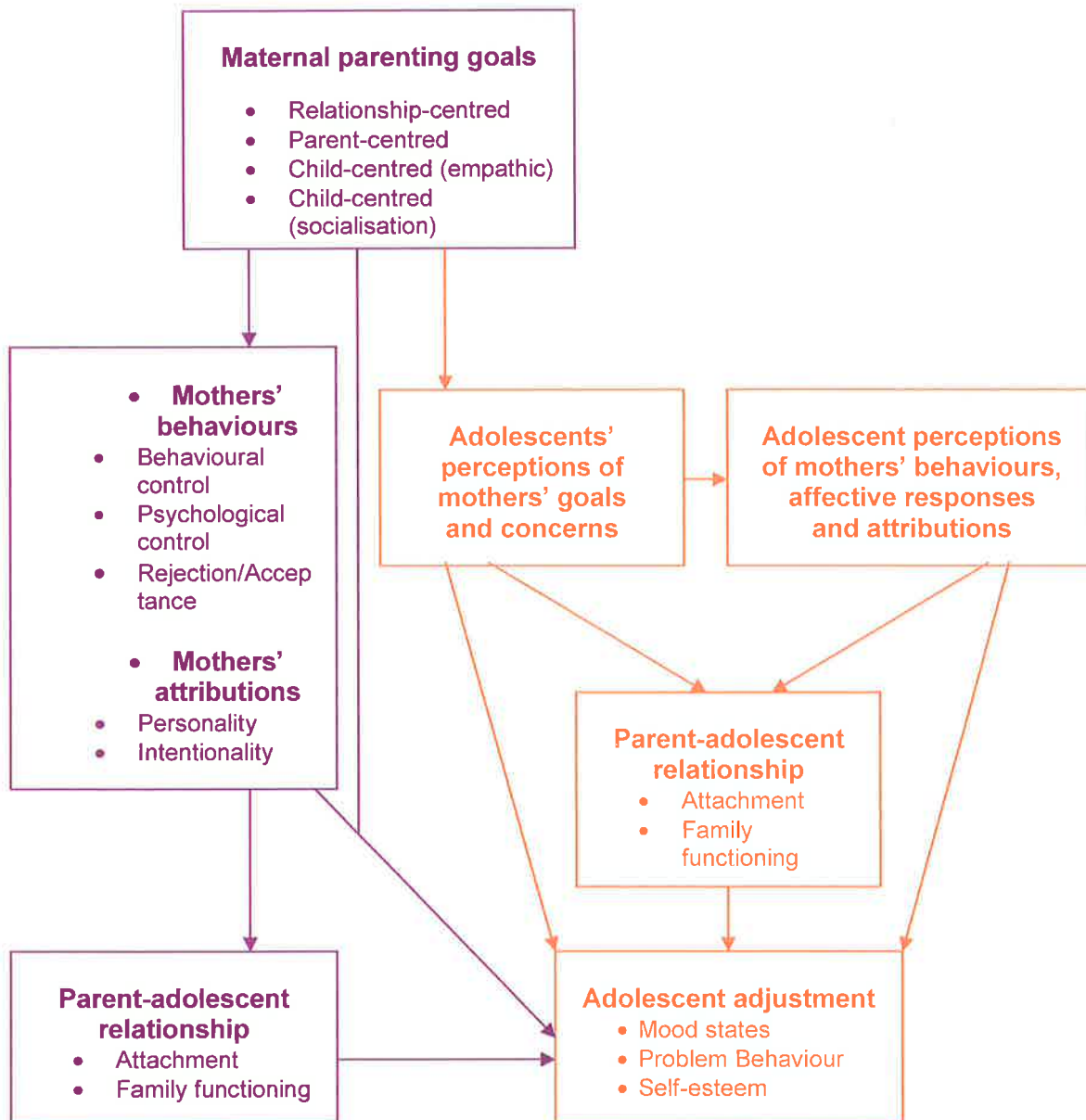
centred goals. Smetana (1994) further found that parenting goals were predictive when they were situationally based. In her study of conceptions of parental authority and domain-specific responses to transgressions, she found that parental responses varied depending on the "*nature of the act*". Finally, Hastings and Grusec (1998) examined the influence that parenting goals had on the disciplinary styles used by parents with young children. Included in their series of studies was the mediation role of attributions and parental affective responses in the relationships between parenting goals and discipline techniques.

Although previous research into the role of parenting goals has been sparse and not always consistent in its focus, it is nonetheless possible to integrate these different concepts in a way that guides further research. Such a conceptual diagram is provided in Figure 1. The assumption of this approach is that variations in maternal behaviour and other cognitive processes arise as a result of variations in mothers' parenting goals. As indicated, these can be divided into four main centres of concern: relationship-centred goals, parent-centred goals, child-centred empathic goals and child-centred socialisation goals. Different goals lead to differences in parenting behaviour, in how mothers understand and interpret adolescent behaviour, and also in how they respond emotionally. For example, a parent who is very parent-centred and expects strict obedience would be expected to apply greater behavioural control, be more likely to attribute disobedience to some aspect of the teenager's disposition, and become more upset and angry, than a parent who does not endorse this goal as strongly. The parents' emotional and attributional

responses will then affect their relationship with their teenager (e.g., how attached they feel, how much they trust them) and therefore how well the family functions. It is then assumed that this general level of attachment and family functioning will ultimately influence adolescent adjustment (i.e., the teenager's self-esteem, behaviour and general mood). In other words, central to Figure 1 is the idea that there are potentially two layers of mediation. Maternal behaviour, attributions and emotions are seen as factors which mediate the relationship between parenting goals and the level of family functioning and attachment. Family functioning and attachment then mediate the relationship between these intermediate behaviours and cognitions and adolescent adjustment, although parenting behaviour, attributions and emotions are also seen to have a direct influence on adolescent adjustment. All of these variables can potentially be captured via self-report measures obtained from mothers. However, as Figure 1 also importantly indicates, it can also be undertaken through teenagers' perceptions of the same variables. As will be emphasised throughout this project, although maternal self-report is important, there is growing evidence that teenagers' perceptions of the same maternal variables may be potentially more critical in determining how parenting variables ultimately influence teenagers' attitudes towards their parents, and their general psychosocial adjustment.

The principle strategy for investigating the series of relationships described in Figure 1 was to conduct both correlation and regression analysis testing for both direct relationships initially, and then mediation models. For example, the main effects of parenting goals on the quality of the parent-

adolescent relationship (attachment to mother and perceptions of family functioning) and adolescent adjustment (self-esteem, problem behaviours and mood states) were considered initially, and then attributions, emotions and maternal behaviour were entered into regression models first, to determine whether the original relationship between goals and functioning still held. Although only mediated relationships are implied by Figure 1, a detailed series of moderation or interaction analyses were undertaken as well (i.e., whether behaviour, emotions and attributions moderated the strength of the relationship between parenting goals and family functioning). Such analyses were justified on the grounds that there is a need to consider the full complexity of possible relationships that may be involved, but also some research literature that suggests that moderation models were also possible, rather than complete mediation. Such analyses were conducted for both maternal self-report and also adolescent perceptions of maternal variables. Similar analyses were then repeated to examine the final link in the chain; namely, the relationship between parental behaviours, attributions and emotions and adolescent adjustment (i.e., as mediated by family functioning and attachment).



*Figure 1.1: Mothers' reports and adolescent perceptions of maternal parenting goals: The direct or indirect effects of parenting goals on the quality of parent-adolescent relationship and adolescent adjustment.*

The general model described in Figure 1 and based on the studies described above was also supplemented by Collins and Luebker's (1993) "Expectancy-violation-realignment" model which provided a conceptual

justification for studying parenting as a more variable and adaptive process. According to Collins and Luebker, the transitional years of adolescence is a period in which parents and teenagers struggle to find a “balance between continuity and change”. Change refers to the need for parents to accommodate adolescents’ need for autonomy and independence, and this may require adapting and altering the expectations and goals parents set for themselves and their teenagers. Continuity refers to the important role that parents play in continuing to support their teenagers as they negotiate their way through the challenges of adolescence. Based on Collins and Luebker’s model it was hypothesised that relationship-centred goals would be of primary importance to both mothers and teenagers. For this reason, this project endeavoured to broaden the content of relationship-centred concerns by including within it a measure of parental trust, a factor that has been identified in recent research as integral to healthy parent-adolescent relationships.

### **1.3 Main objectives**

In summary, the main objectives of this research project were:

- To establish whether parenting goals are associated with adolescent well-being or whether this relationship is mediated by the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship.
- To establish whether parenting behaviours, attributional styles and affective states are related to parents’ beliefs and values (operationalised in terms of parenting goals).



- To explore the relationships between parenting goals and other parenting processes and how these, together, influence the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship and adolescent adjustment.

#### **1.4 Structure of the Thesis**

The thesis contains two main sections: a literature review and a summary of empirical findings. The first part of the literature review discusses the nature of parenting roles for adolescent children; a brief review of traditional models of parenting and their limitations; and the links between adolescent psychosocial adjustment and the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship. The second part reviews studies which have examined parental influences on adolescent outcomes. These influences include parenting goals, parenting attributional processes, parenting behaviours (parental control and rejection-acceptance) and parental affective states.

Section 2 contains the results of three empirical studies. All three studies use contemporaneous and correlational designs. This being the case, it is not possible to make any inferences of causal relations or directions of effect from the findings. The first study (Study 1) was essentially exploratory using a mixed-methods approach with as strong a quantitative component as a qualitative one. It was designed to place the more detailed research into a local context. The first aim of this study was to ascertain the importance Australian mothers gave to different parenting goals and to explore situations they have been in with their teenagers that were pertinent to the goals discussed. These situations (or scenarios) were then used in subsequent studies of the project. A

second aim was to examine how mothers' affective responses to teenagers were related to the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship. Affective responses were seen to reflect the importance mothers gave to parenting goals or the reaction mothers' had when their goals had been hindered.

Having ascertained the nature of the goals that parents feel to be most important, the aim of Study 2 was to determine to what degree the importance of goals varied across specific situations. In this study mothers were asked to read four vignettes which described some common altercations, or conflicts, that can occur between teenagers and their parents (i.e. not getting out of bed in time for school). Mothers and teenagers were asked to rate the importance mothers ascribed to eight pre-generated parenting goals in each of the situations; how upset, worried or angry mothers would feel in these situations; and whether mothers thought teenagers' behaviours were intentional and attributable to internal factors such as their teenagers' personality or disposition. This study assessed the consistency of parenting goals across different situations, and the direct effects of parenting goals on the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship and adolescent adjustment. A separate chapter was dedicated to the influence of mothers' parenting goals on maternal behaviours (parental control, rejection-acceptance), attributional tendencies (disposition and intention) and emotions (worry, upset, anger). Mediation and moderation models of analyses were used to assess whether adolescent adjustment was influenced by the relationship between parenting goals and these other parenting variables.

The final study focused predominantly on maternal trust in teenage children. In recent research maternal trust has been identified as an integral component of healthy parent-adolescent relationships (Kerr, Stattin, & Trost, 1999). A major objective of this study was to identify whether trust could be considered a reliable and valid component of mothers' *relationship-centred concerns/goals*. Another objective was to assess whether adolescent adjustment was influenced by the level of trust mothers placed in their teenagers. Finally, mediation and moderation models of analyses were used to assess whether mothers' cognitions (goals, attributions) and affective states (emotions, moods) interacted with, or moderated the relationship between trust and adolescent adjustment.

A final summary chapter discusses the limitations of the studies and provides suggestions for future research on parenting goals and family processes.



**Section A**

**Literature Review**



## **Chapter Two**

### **Adolescent Psychosocial Adjustment and the Quality of the Parent-Adolescent Relationship**

#### **2.1 Overview**

This chapter focuses primarily on the significance of the parental role during adolescence and the influence it has on adolescent adjustment and the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship. The key indicators of adolescent adjustment identified and discussed in this review are teenagers' self-esteem, mood states, and behavioural problems. From the numerous components which could have been selected to represent the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship, this project has chosen to focus on teenagers' attachment to their parents and their perceptions of family functioning. Prior to an in-depth literature review on these specific areas of interest, attention has been given to the theories and assumptions of traditional parenting research. This chapter outlines the significant contribution traditional research has made to an understanding of effective parenting. It also considers contemporary researchers' concerns about some of the major limitations of traditional parenting models and the assumptions central to them.

#### **2.2 The parental role**

Internalisation and socialisation are two commonly used terms in the parenting literature which help to define parenting roles. Internalisation refers to children's awareness and adoption of the values and attitudes of society, and the associated socially-acceptable behaviours that go with them. An essential

feature of internalisation is that children are motivated by intrinsic or internal factors rather than by fear of external consequences (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994). Socialisation, on the other hand, refers to the environment parents provide for children to facilitate internalisation. Lerner, Brennan, Noh and Wilson state that:

"the parent's role is to provide the child with a safe, secure, nurturant, loving and supportive environment ....(to) allow the child to develop the knowledge, values, attitudes, and behaviours necessary to become an adult making a productive contribution to self, family, community and society" (1998, p. 5).

### **2.2.1 The parenting role during adolescence**

In parenting research it is often assumed that parents play a significant role in children's development throughout adolescence. However, this assumption has not gone unchallenged in research on adolescence. In fact, some researchers have stressed the importance of adolescent emotional autonomy (emotional distance from parents and non-dependency on parents) for positive developmental outcomes (Chen & Dornbusch, 1998; Silverberg & Steinberg, 1986). Furthermore, researchers have suggested that adolescence is "a time of storm and stress" for the parent-adolescent relationship (Freud, 1958) and that, during this time, peer influence supersedes parental influence (Montemayor, 1983). Researchers who adhere to this point of view argue that interactions between parents and teenagers become more volatile because teenagers need to assert their autonomy and independence. Teenagers' increasing desire to organise their own lives leads them to detach themselves



from their parents and bond more closely with their peers (Blos, 1979; Greenberger & Chen, 1996; Hall, 1904).

Despite this, a number of researchers have questioned whether adolescence is in fact a time of “storm and stress”. Instead they argue that most parents and adolescents live relatively harmonious lives together, despite the increasing number of conflicts between them during the teenage years (Collins & Laursen, 1992; Grotevant & Cooper, 1986; Laursen, Coy, & Collins, 1998; Smetana, 1994; Steinberg, 1990; Youniss & Smollar, 1985). The everyday conflicts that do occur are regarded as adaptive rather than destructive because of their role in facilitating important changes in the way parents and teenagers interact with one another (Gecas & Seff, 1990). These changes produce in teenagers the ability to recognise the inequalities that surround them in their family relationships and the desire to challenge the things they see as unfair (Collins, 1988). Steinberg and Sheffield-Morris (2001, p. 88) suggest that this

“process of disequilibrium in early adolescence is typically followed by the establishment of a parent-adolescent relationship that is less contentious, more egalitarian, and less volatile (Steinberg, 1990)”.

Furthermore, researchers have begun to question whether adolescent individuation requires teenagers to become “separated” from their parents. Noom, Dekovic and Meeus (1999) argue that supportive relationships are integral to teenagers accessing and exploring their own autonomy and individuation from parents. Others have suggested that a healthy balance of both connectedness and separateness is the best predictor of adolescent

wellbeing (LeBlanc, 2001; Noack & Puschner, 1999; Silverberg & Steinberg, 1986).

Lerner et al. (2005) suggest that the proponents of the “storm and stress” understanding of adolescent development rely heavily on a deficit model of youth and neglect the concept of positive youth development. They state that adolescent literature prior to the last decade has viewed positive youth development as the absence of adolescent problem behaviour and has failed to recognise the potential for teenagers and their relationships to thrive during adolescence. The study of Positive Youth Development (PYD) is intensifying as the constructs associated with it become more well-defined. These constructs are known as the Five C’s which include: competence (social and cognitive), confidence, connection, character, and caring/compassion. Lerner et al. (2005, p. 19) state that the concept of PYD is best understood within a developmental contextualism model of human development

“this theoretical model affords optimism that all young people, when they develop in the context of communities rich in assets aligned with their strengths, may evidence positive development (Benson, 2003)”

### **2.3 Traditional parenting theories**

To appreciate fully the basis of contemporary approaches to parenting research it is essential to understand traditional parenting theories. The next section provides a brief summary of the findings of two of the most influential traditional parenting theories to date. This is followed by a discussion of the methodological limitations of these theories and the underlying assumptions that may account for these limitations.

Parenting research became a popular area of interest in the 1970s with the work of Baumrind (1971) and Hoffman (1970). Baumrind was known for her typology of parenting styles and Hoffman for his differentiation of parents' disciplinary practices. These models of parenting have been the foundation of much of the existing research in this field. Baumrind's typology originally consisted of three parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive, with a fourth, neglectful parenting, added at a later date. The definitions for each are as follows:

**Authoritative parenting style:** These parents are highly supportive and open with their children. They encourage two-way communication based upon reasoning and recognition of different viewpoints. Although they teach their children to respect the standards society places upon them, they also encourage individuality and independent thinking. They expect mature behaviour and reinforce their children when it is demonstrated. They believe that, as children mature, they should be given a high degree of direction in the form of clear rules and standards of behaviour. Hence, they implement firm control when they see it as necessary but do not use force or "hem their children in with restrictions" (Baumrind, 1989, p. 353).

**Authoritarian parenting style:** These parents demand respect and have an absolute set of standards which are not open for debate, in which two-way communication is not acceptable. They expect obedience without question and employ forceful and punitive methods to combat disobedience. They do not encourage individuality and give little emotional support but insist upon "respect

for authority, work, tradition and the preservation of order" (Dornbusch et al., 1987, p. 1245).

**Permissive parenting style:** The style of these parents is almost the reverse of the authoritarian style. They are warm and affectionate with their children. They have few expectations and do not require their children to conform to societal demands. They rarely punish or discipline and, when they do, it is non-punitive. Self-reliance is encouraged and a great deal of autonomy is granted. Ultimately, they do not feel they should direct or control their children's behaviour (Baumrind, 1989).

**Neglectful parenting style:** Brenner and Fox (1999) defined this style as "parents who are under-involved with their children and respond minimally to either the child's needs or the child's behaviour" (p. 343).

Baumrind's typology of parenting styles illustrates how parents can affect the emotional, psychological and social development of their children and adolescents. Her typology was based on a configuration of four factors: how the parent communicated with the child; the type of authority they used (firm control or restrictiveness); how nurturing they were (eg, were they warm or affectionate with the child); and their expectations regarding the child's behaviour. Each factor was affected by and contributed to the other coexisting factors.

Hoffman (1970), in his study of parent's socialisation techniques, differentiated between parent's who relied heavily on power assertive approaches; parents who used affective approaches (such as love withdrawal);

and parents who placed a great deal of importance on reasoning with their children. Parents who used the former two approaches were less likely to promote children's internalisation of moral values than those relying on the latter approach (the reasoning approach). However, the parents who were most likely to be successful in instilling moral values in their children were those who combined a greater use of reasoning with relatively less power assertion.

Hoffman (1970) and Baumrind (1971) essentially drew the same associations between parents' child rearing practices and child outcomes, despite the fact that they emphasised different factors and used different terminologies. For example, Baumrind's authoritative parent was similar to Hoffman's parent who used reasoning techniques. These parents were said to promote self-esteem and a feeling of inner competence within their children, and this contributed to children having a greater sense of control over their own lives and being more likely to internalise their parents' values. Conversely, the children of authoritarian or power-assertive parents lacked confidence, felt disempowered, and were less likely to internalise parents' values and more likely to exhibit antisocial or immoral behaviours.

Research in the last two decades has successfully generalised Baumrind's typology across a number of different populations. Many researchers have related her theory to varied sample sizes, different cultures, and varying socio-economic and family structures. Outcome studies based on her research showed that children of authoritative parents had greater *academic performance* (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987; Hess & Holloway, 1984; Steinberg, Elmen, & Mounts, 1989; Steinberg,

Lambourn, & Dornbusch, 1992); *self-esteem, emotional autonomy* (Baumrind, 1989, 1991b; Buri, 1989; McBride-Chang & Chang, 1998; Steinberg, Mounts, Lambourn, & Dornbusch, 1991); *social responsiveness and independence* (Baumrind, 1971); *psychosocial maturity* (Greenberger, 1982; Steinberg, Elmen & Mounts, 1989); *less deviance* (Baumrind, 1991b); *and positive self-perceptions* (Glasgow, Dornbusch, Troyer, Steinberg, & Ritter, 1997).

### **2.3.1 Limitations of traditional parenting theories**

In recent times some of the methodological approaches of traditional parenting research have been called into question. Contemporary parenting researchers have suggested that traditional models of parenting have a number of limitations. They argue that these limitations are often a result of the questionable assumptions that underpin traditional theories. Four main areas of concern have been raised. First, it has been argued that parenting typologies (configurations of numerous parenting practices) make it difficult to tell which parenting factors play an influential role in child outcomes and which factors do not (Lewis, 1981). For example, it is unclear whether the effects of the authoritarian parenting style on child outcomes are due to punitive discipline practices, lack of communication, or parents' use of demands rather than requests. Is it a combination of these factors that influences outcomes, or are each of these factors influential in their own right? Second, some ambiguity in the meanings of the constructs used within traditional models can be confusing. For example, "*reasoning*" could mean parents discussing consequences with children, or parents talking about other people's feelings with their children or,

parents making informative or non-informative statements (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994). The interchanging of terminology in this way can threaten the reliability of findings. Third, there may be difficulties generalising the models to other cultures or to families of different socio-economic status. The associations between parenting style and child outcomes in the traditional models may only be applicable to white, middle class families. Fourth, the models do not take into account important factors such as the stability of the family, the age and sex of the child, or the child's temperament (Grusec, Goodnow, & Kuczynski, 2000).

Grusec and colleagues (1994, 2000) have challenged three assumptions which are at the heart of traditional parenting theories. In the place of these assumptions they have proposed three alternative assumptions that they believe provide a more reliable basis from which contemporary models of parenting can be developed. Grusec and Goodnow (1994) first question the assumption that parenting styles are static, that is, that parenting techniques and responses are consistent across different situations and events. They contend that parenting responses and practices should be seen as flexible, rather than static. They view parenting behaviours as variable, in that different situations elicit different responses from parents depending on how significant the situation is for them. Accordingly, where traditional models have measured parenting on a single dimension, they argue that parenting behaviours should be measured on numerous levels or dimensions and in specific rather than general situations. Grusec, Goodnow and Kuczynski (2000) secondly criticise traditional models for not taking into account "child effects". In their view a focus

on unidirectional processes over-emphasises the role of parents in parent-child interactions. Instead, they argue that bidirectional processes (parent and child effects) should be considered in future research to ensure that the co-joint effects of parent-adolescent characteristics are examined. Grusec and colleagues thirdly criticise traditional models which assume that parents' main socialisation goal is focused on training children to be totally compliant to parental expectations and values. They dispute this assumption on the basis of individual differences that exist between parents' socialisation goals. For example, some parents want their children to question the values presented to them, whereas other parents expect only partial compliance to the standards and values they encourage in their children. In summary, Grusec and colleagues have proposed that parenting styles and practices are flexible; that there are reciprocal influences (parent-adolescent effects) in family processes; and that individual differences in parenting goals can have differential effects on adolescent adjustment.

#### **2.4 Adolescent psychosocial adjustment**

In light of ongoing discussion about the effects of parenting on adolescent adjustment, the following section provides a brief outline of some of the established research findings related to this topic. The discussion focuses on the more familiar components of adjustment, such as adolescent self-esteem, negative affective states and problem behaviours. Attention is also given to the determinants of adolescent psychosocial adjustment with particular emphasis on the role of parent and family variables.



Self-esteem, problem behaviour, and depressive symptomatology are three factors most commonly used as indicators of adolescent psychological adjustment. Coopersmith refers to self-esteem as:

“the evaluation which the individual makes and customarily maintains concerning himself/herself; it expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval, and indicates the extent to which the individual believes himself/herself to be capable, successful, significant and worthy” (1967, p. 4).

Self-esteem is synonymous with one's sense of self. Hence, high self-esteem has been found to be associated with a healthy self-worth (Harter & Marold, 1992; Harvey & Byrd, 1998); feelings of optimism (Belle, 1990a; McFarlane et al., 1995b; Oliver & Paull, 1995); and constructive problem-solving strategies (Fletcher et al., 1995; Goldsmith, 1985; Rosenberg, 1965). Adolescents' self-esteem has also been found to be strongly and inversely related to depression (Chiariello & Orvaschel, 1995; De Ross, Marrinan, Schattner & Gullone, 1999; Pike et al., 1996). Depressed adolescents suffer from feelings of worthlessness and heightened levels of sadness (Rice, 1990). Adolescent depression has, in turn, been associated with delinquency, poorer school performance, less adaptive problem-solving abilities, and poor social skills (Chiarello & Orvaschel, 1995; Linver & Silverberg, 1995; McFarlane, Bellissimo & Norman, 1995b; Miklowitz, 1994). Hence, adolescent problem behaviours are other indicators of adolescents who suffer from low self-esteem and depression and are, thus, reflective of psychosocial maladjustment. A number of studies have also found that the prevalence of delinquent behaviours

in teenagers is positively associated with high levels of anxiety and suicidal behaviour (Harter & Marold, 1994; Rosenberg, Schooler, & Schoenbach, 1989).

Numerous empirical studies have suggested that gender differences account for some of the variability in the psychosocial adjustment of adolescents, particularly in relation to differences in levels of depression (Garber, Keiley, & Martin, 2002; Wade, Cairney, & Pevalin, 2002; Wichstrom, 1999). Some researchers have argued that, although depression levels increase for both males and females in their adolescent years, girls' are usually more vulnerable to depression than boys (Wade, Cairney, & Pevalin, 2002). Other researchers have found no significant gender differences in adolescents' depressive symptomatology (Baron & Joly, 1988; DuBois et al., 1995; Kaplan et al., 1984; Mitchell et al., 1988).

Some researchers have argued that this variability in findings between studies may be due to the age and maturity of the adolescent samples (Cairney, 1998; Kandel, & Davies, 1986; Petersen, Sarigiani, & Kennedy, 1991). Garber, Keiley, and Martin (2002) found that male and female adolescents between the ages of 15 to 18 years tended to have elevated levels of depressive symptoms, whereas recent studies have shown that adolescent boys' depression levels remain relatively stable while girls depression levels tend to increase with age. Boys tend to experience depressive symptoms at a later age than do girls, and usually with less intensity (Garber, Keiley, & Martin, 2002; Ge et al., 1994; Ge et al., 2001; Hankin et al., 1998).

An important finding relevant to this discussion is that children's and adolescents' psychological wellbeing appears to be related to parental

psychological health (Heaven, 1994; Kaslow, Gray, Deering, & Racusin, 1994).

There is increasing evidence to show that the likelihood of offspring having positive self-esteem is higher if parents share this characteristic (Heaven, 1994). Similarly, depression in offspring is more likely if parents suffer from heightened levels of depression (Beardslee, Versage, & Gladstone, 1998; Garber, Keiley, & Martin, 2002; Goodman & Gotlib, 1999). For example, Downey and Coyne (1990) reported that children of clinically depressed parents were six times more likely to suffer from depressive symptoms than were children of non-depressed parents. However, the relationship between parental depression and adolescent depression is not clearly understood.

In summary, adolescent self-esteem and adolescent depression are inversely related and are key indicators of adolescent psychosocial health. Furthermore, adolescent problem behaviours are indicators of adolescents who suffer from low self-esteem and depression. Although gender and age differences may provide some partial explanation for the inconsistency in findings, their role does not appear to be clear-cut. In light of the association between family factors (eg, parental psychological wellbeing) and adolescent adjustment, there is a need to understand the cognitive and affective mechanisms that govern parental responses to teenagers, and how these mechanisms affect the psychological health of teenagers. The following sections of this literature review will examine some of the research models and the relevant studies that have been developed in the last decade in relation to parental cognitions and affective processes and how these can affect child development.

## 2.5 The dynamics of the parent-adolescent relationship

Research that assumes a strong association between parental influence and adolescent development has itself been compartmentalised into two main areas of interest, each of which has different underlying assumptions. One area of interest is focused (eg, described previously in section 2.3) on parenting styles (ie, permissive, authoritative) and parenting behaviours (ie, monitoring) and how these characteristics affect child and adolescent outcomes. The assumption underlying this research is that it is *what parents do* that determines the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship and subsequent child outcomes. The other, and more recent, area of interest relates predominantly to the role of cognitive-affective processes and how these influence parenting behaviours. The principal assumption of this research is that effective parenting is best determined by considering the reasons *why parents do what they do*. This will be explained in subsequent chapters in this research project.

Relatively few models have considered how parental cognitions and parental emotional processes affect adolescent psychosocial development. One exception is Collins and Luebker's (1994) expectancy-violation-realignment model. They propose a three-stage process to explain how the parental role changes during adolescence to accommodate adolescents' need for autonomy and independence, while parents remain consistent in the provision of ongoing emotional support for their teenagers. In this model Collins and Luebker refer to the parental role being a "dynamic balance between

continuity and change" (1994, p. 65). Incorporated within the model is the mediating role of parental cognitive and affective processes. These processes influence how parents respond when adolescents violate parental goals or expectations, and how adaptable parents need to be in order to meet the changing demands of the parent-adolescent relationship.

In the first stage of their model (the expectancy stage) Collins and Luebker state that parents bring to the parent-adolescent relationship a number of parenting goals and values which they consider to be integral to their parenting role. The second stage (the violation stage) focuses on the teenagers' cognitive and emotional development and the subsequent questioning, challenging and violation of their parents' expectations and goals. These actions are not seen as a malicious attempt to frustrate parents, but as a consequence of the inherent desires within the maturing adolescent to promote their own autonomy and independence. The third stage of the model (the realignment stage) discusses the conflictual interactions that are a likely result of teenagers' nonconformity to parents' wishes or values. The realignment process takes place when parents relinquish old expectations of behaviour and replace them with new expectations and new parenting behaviours that are more appropriate for the age and maturity of their teenager.

A well-adjusted parent-adolescent relationship is marked by the willingness of parents and teenagers, at different times, to alter their expectancies or their behaviours in some way for the sake of preserving the relationship. Dysfunctional relationships occur when neither party attempts to

resolve the conflict or reduce the negative feelings expressed to the other party.

Collins and Luebker state that dysfunctional relationships are an indication of

“developmental issues in both generations [which] may affect both the likelihood of expectancy violations and the process of forming or altering expectancies” (1994, p. 68).

The expectancy-violation-realignment model takes into account the mechanisms that determine change and continuity of function. Collins and Luebker suggest that cognitive and emotional processes directly affect how parents form expectations; the significance they place on the violation of an expectation; and their reaction when a violation has occurred. At the same time they argue that these mechanisms are only likely to be activated under certain conditions. Parents are more likely to notice and react to violations of their expectations when other cognitive structures are operating. The following examples illustrate this point. First, when parenting goals are threatened, parents may display negative emotions toward their teenagers. Second, when parents have unrealistic expectations about the emotional and psychosocial maturity of teenagers, they may be more inclined to make biased attributions about their teenagers' behaviours (ie, a parent may put their young child's messy bedroom down to a lack of learning, but interpret their teenager's messy bedroom as rebellion). A final example refers to parents' understanding of their role in repairing or restoring the parent-teenager relationship after conflict has occurred. Parents who have a tendency to believe their teenagers have intentionally rejected family values or boundaries for selfish reasons, also tend to think the onus is on the teenager to make amends for causing the conflict in

the first place. These parents do not tend to recognise their role as educator in conflict resolution when they clash with their teenagers. In other words, the role of parental cognitive structures can clearly affect the way parents' behave toward their teenagers. The influence that parental cognitions and behaviours have on adolescent psychosocial development is discussed in detail in the following chapter.

## **2.6 The quality of the parent-adolescent relationship**

### **2.6.1 Overview**

There is little contention about the proposition that parent-adolescent relationships undergo numerous changes as the demands of adolescence are met. Opinions diverge, however, on issues such as the strength of the bond between parents and their teenagers, the role of parents during adolescence, and the influence parents have on adolescent psychosocial adjustment. Some researchers argue that teenagers, as they mature, increasingly detach themselves from their parents and become more reliant on their peer relationships for support (Blos, 1979; Freud, 1958). Consequently, parental influence on adolescent psychosocial development is said to decline (Papini & Roggman, 1992). Armsden and Greenberg (1987) and Paterson, Pryor and Field (1995) dispute this view, arguing that the bond between parents and adolescents alters and adapts but is still valuable and meaningful for both parent and teenager, and thus continues to have a significant influence on adolescents' psychosocial adjustment. Noom et al. (1999) argue that the misapprehension about the decline in the parent-adolescent bond is due to

unreliable measures being used in adolescent development studies. They propose that the belief in the decline of the parent-adolescent bond is due to the assumption that autonomy and attachment are the antithesis of a single construct rather than two distinctly separate constructs. A further complexity arises from Rice's (1990) meta-analysis of adolescent attachment studies which revealed that younger adolescents (high school aged) were more strongly attached to their parents than older ones (college age). Consequently, it was proposed that the relationship between adjustment and attachment may not be consistent across all phases of adolescence.

Many factors are likely to account for adolescent psychosocial health. However, it is argued that family factors, particularly teenagers' attachment to mothers and their perceptions of family functioning, contribute significantly to adolescent psychosocial adjustment.

### **2.6.2 Adolescent attachment**

Attachment has been loosely defined as "the repercussion of the quality of [teenagers'] relationship with parents" (Noom et al., 1999, p. 772). Other researchers define it in terms of an emotional, enduring and intense bond with parents that is based on trust and open communication (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). Those who view attachment from a cognitive-affective perspective state that it is:

"a pervasive cognitive feeling that governs the manner in which individuals relate to other aspects of their environment throughout the course of their life" (Harvey & Byrd, 1998, p. 94).



The parent-adolescent bond has been identified as a highly influential factor in shaping adolescent psychosocial wellbeing. Studies on the relationship between adolescent psychosocial adjustment and attachment to parents have found that secure attachment has been positively and significantly associated with higher self-esteem (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Noom et al., 1999; Paterson, Pryor, & Field, 1995). According to Van Wel, Ter Bogt, and Raaijmakers (2002) attachment to parents can influence adolescent wellbeing across a number of dimensions including identity development (Allen et al., 1994); self-image (Wenk et al., 1994); life satisfaction (Leung & Leung, 1992); social competence (Paterson et al., 1995); emotional problems (Lasko et al., 1996) and problem behaviours (Windle & Miller-Tutzauer, 1992). Teenagers who have a strong attachment to their parents often perceive their parents to be highly supportive of them. Supportive parents provide teenagers with a sense of stability as they cope with, and negotiate, their way through the new challenges and experiences that arise during adolescence (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Grotevant & Cooper, 1986; Noom et al., 1999).

At the same time there is also a misapprehension that attachment to parents automatically declines as a result of adolescents' age and increasing desire for autonomy. This is founded on the assumption that autonomy and attachment are mutually exclusive and are at the extreme ends of the same continuum (Noom, Dekovic & Meeus, 1999). It has been argued, however, that attachment and autonomy should be measured on two separate dimensions, from low to high. For example, adolescents' perception of autonomy will be high when they perceive high parental support. Noom, Dekovic and Meeus state

that educators (ie, parents, teachers) should be aware that autonomy and attachment are two distinct developmental goals that have positive adaptive functions:

“Educators should aim to stimulate the cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects of both autonomy (the ability to choose, the ability to trust oneself and the ability to act) and attachment (the ability to communicate, the ability to trust others, and the ability to collaborate)” (1999, p. 780).

Paterson, Pryor and Field (1995) further suggest that there are no age-related differences in the association between attachment and adolescent psychosocial adjustment. The nature of attachment may change as teenagers develop and mature, but its degree of influence on adolescent psychosocial adjustment remains constant throughout adolescence (Ainsworth, 1989; Greenberg et al., 1983; Ryan & Lynch, 1989). Ryan and Lynch (1989, p. 341) showed that individuation does not happen “from parents, but rather with them” and this interaction contributes to healthy adolescent psychosocial adjustment in numerous ways (cited in, Noack & Puschner, 1999).

To summarise, the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship can be operationalised in terms of attachment. Attachment can be defined in numerous ways: an emotional bond to parents; a pervasive cognitive feeling that directs the way a teenager relates to parents; or, the function of the way one positively or negatively views significant others. Secure attachment to parents is associated with healthy teenage adjustment: it is positively related to higher self-esteem, and it is negatively related to behavioural problems and depression. Although, the dynamics of parent-adolescent interactions may

change as the teenager requires increasing levels of independence and autonomy, the level of connectedness between parents and teenagers nonetheless remains an important factor in their relationship and continues to be influential during early adulthood.

### **2.6.3 Family functioning**

Family functioning is defined in terms of the level of cohesion and harmony within the family unit (Aydin & Oztutuncu, 2001). Billings and Moos (1984) stated that an indication of positive family functioning was the way family members supported one another. Partridge and Kotler (1987) proposed that positive family functioning was integral to adolescent wellbeing. In studies of maladaptive families it has been shown that poor family functioning may increase adolescent delinquency (Shek, 1997; Tolan & Lorion, 1988), and increase the risk of developing psychopathological behaviours (Combrinck-Graham, 1990; Jacob, 1987; Martin et al., 1995; McFarlane et al., 1995), such as depression (Allen, Hauser, Eickholt, Bell, & O'Connor, 1994; Billings & Moos, 1984; Pike, McGuire, Hetherington, Reiss, & Plomin, 1996; Shek, 1997), and, suicidal ideation (Mckenry, Tishler, & Kelly, 1982).

Adolescents' perceptions of family functioning have been shown to be closely associated to adolescent wellbeing (Partridge & Kotler, 1987). Aydin and Oztutuncu (2001) found that adolescents from Turkish families who had positive perceptions about family functioning, had fewer internalised behaviour problems (negative thoughts and depression) and higher self-esteem levels than adolescents who perceived poorer family functioning (Billings & Moos,

1984; Heiss, 1996; Kaslow et al., 1994; Shagle & Barber, 1995; Sweeting & West, 1995).

Again, consistent with the findings described above, there is some support for gender differences in the association between family functioning and adolescent psychological adjustment. It has been found that female adolescents are more susceptible to the influence of family emotional climate than are male adolescents (Eisenberg et al, 1992; Jaycox & Repetti, 1993; Shek, 1997). Mandara and Murray (2000) found that gender moderated the effects of family functioning on self-esteem. Female adolescents with higher self-esteem tend to have more positive views of their family's functioning, whereas self-esteem did not appear as influential in the perceptions held by males. However, when male and female adolescents' perceptions of family functioning were low their levels of self-esteem were comparable.

#### **2.6.4 Limitations of research on the parent-adolescent relationship and adolescent adjustment**

The effects of family factors on adolescent adjustment are often limited by the tendency of researchers to concentrate only on the main effects between variables rather than their interactive effects. The significant main effects that are reported are usually small, and this indicates the need to consider more complex effects or other variables. Another limitation of some previous research is that it has relied on single-informant data. Shek (1997) has argued that the validity of some studies on adolescent adjustment and family functioning is questionable because the findings are based solely on the

responses from either the parent or the adolescent (Martin et al. 1995; McFarlane, Belissimo, & Norman, 1995). Shek (1997) refers to Prange et al.'s (1992) multi-informant study which showed that there was a stronger association between adolescent reports of family functioning and adolescent adjustment than between parents' reports of family functioning and adolescent adjustment. He suggested that one explanation for this finding was that adolescents' awareness of family difficulties and struggles could be greater than that of their parents. Others such as Buri (1989) maintained that adolescent self-esteem was better predicted by adolescents' perceptions of their parents' behaviour than by parents' self-report of parenting behaviours.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Parenting Cognitions, Behaviours and Emotions**

#### **3.1 Overview**

This chapter reviews the theories and models of parenting in relation to parents' social cognitions, parental behaviours, and the affective states of parents. Since the number of studies that could be considered in a review of this nature is extensive, the discussion is primarily focused on studies that have examined the differential effects of parenting cognitions, behaviours, and affective states on children's adjustment (preferably older children/adolescent adjustment). Some exceptions were made for studies that explored the bi-directional effects of parenting processes on one another. This was of interest given that one of the key objectives of this project is to explore how parenting goals interact with other parenting processes to influence adolescent adjustment.

#### **3.2 Social cognition: Parental cognitions**

Two critical cognitive factors that are said to influence parental effectiveness are *parenting goals* and *parental attributions*. The former topic has received very little attention in the parenting literature. The latter topic, on the other hand, has received considerable attention but the focus has tended to be on parental attributions for young children's behaviour rather than on adolescents' behaviour. In their review of social cognition and family research, Bugental and Johnston (2000) state that parental beliefs were traditionally regarded as constructs that were too difficult to measure. In recent times,

however, the study of parenting goals has been recognised as a useful and effective way to assess parental attitudes and values. In relation to parenting attributions, Bugental and Johnston state that researchers need to draw an important distinction between attributional inferences and attributional style. The former term refers to intentional problem-solving practices (event-dependent cognitive processes) to facilitate one's understanding of family relevant experiences. The latter term, which has received much less attention, is concerned with the attributional biases of parents (schematic cognitive processes) and the effect they have on parental behaviours. For example, blame-oriented attributions are associated with a tendency for parents to act harshly toward their children when disciplining them (Nix et al., 1999; Smith Slep, & O'Leary, 1998). Admittedly, it is likely that attributional inferences and attributional style are in "continuous interaction", so the differentiation between these constructs is difficult, but drawing the distinctions nonetheless appears worthwhile. In the following sections a critical review is provided of the role of parenting goals and attributional inferences and styles in parenting research.

### **3.2.1 Parenting-cognition theories and models**

Fiske and Taylor (1991) state that much of the parenting cognition research results from the amalgamation of ideas found in social-cognitive theories and relationship theories. Together, these areas of research have contributed to our understanding of the social interaction between people in close relationships. Relationship theories have shown that relationships affect the way people process information. They have shown that people commonly

rely on emotional, automatic, and unintentional processing when dealing with significant people in their lives. Social cognitive theories, on the other hand, are more concerned with what psychological structures exist to facilitate the way people understand and interpret their interactions with others. Reis and Downey state that:

“social cognitive processes probably reflect people’s need to make sense of interactions with others, to understand the relational implications of behaviour, and to act within a relational context” (1999, p 99).

#### **(a) Theories of self-regulation**

The study of self-regulation is one of many approaches used by social scientists to explain human behaviour. The findings from this field of interest have shed light on how parenting research can explore the role of motivation in parents’ decision-making, and assess its influence on parenting behaviours and affective responses. There are numerous theories of how self-regulation should be operationalised, but those that are most applicable for the parenting literature are the interactionist theories. These acknowledge the role of both environment and self in the regulation of behaviour. Interactionist theories can be diverse in the assumptions they make; for example, some suggest that behaviour is a *product* of personal and situational influences, whereas others such as social-cognitive theory assume that behaviour

“serves as a source of information in the process of self-regulation. When we observe our behaviour, and take note of the consequences of our actions, we are potentially better placed to either maintain our direction, or to redefine our goals” (Purdie, 1994, p. 10).



Karoly's (1993) five-stage model of self-regulation describes the factors that are integral in effective behaviour regulation: goal selection, goal cognition, directional maintenance, reprioritisation, and goal termination. Empirical research on goal selection has been very limited. Even basic questions such as why people choose one goal over another have yet to be adequately explored (Purdie, 1994). One explanation for this is that goals have generally not been viewed as dependent variables, and therefore have not been expected to change across situations (Karoly, 1993). In relation to the factors influencing goal selection, Purdie (1994) states that two key determinants of the choices people make are self-relevant factors, that is, expectations, affective factors, and self-conception (Cantor & Fleeson, 1991; Markus & Wurf, 1987) and contextual and personal factors (Cantor & Fleeson, 1991).

Hence, to control behaviour effectively the individual needs to be aware of their personal goals and expectations and be continually evaluating whether their behaviours are advancing these goals. Central to this process is the ability to notice when desired behaviours and actual behaviours are incongruent. The detection of these discrepancies ensures that one's goals are not undermined, and increases the likelihood that they will be achieved (Purdie, 1994).

#### **(b) Schematic and event-dependent information processing**

Behaviour regulation often occurs automatically. In situations that are typical and predictable people feel at liberty to rely on unconscious or preconscious ways of processing information (i.e. schemas). This is known as automatic or schematic information processing and refers to the rapid, efficient,

and unintentional matching of new stimuli with existing schemas (Bargh, 1996; Wegner & Bargh, 1998). Fiske and Taylor (1991) argued that people may be inclined to rely more on their schematic processes when they are in situations in which they feel comfortable.

By contrast, in new situations or in situations where one feels one's goals are being threatened, individuals will think more strategically about their behaviour. This is known as event-dependent processing (Cantor & Kihlstrom, 1985) and refers to the processing of information which is slow, voluntary, intentional and effortful (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). In anxiety-driven situations goals become more salient, and individuals will pay more attention to new information in their environment.

### **3.2.2 Social cognition and family research**

Smetana (1994) suggests that it is important for researchers to appreciate that parenting cognitions and behaviours can vary depending on contextual or situational factors. This variance in parents' thoughts and actions is apparent in studies on parental discipline where different situations require different types of parental responses. For example, when children are misbehaving in public, parents will often respond with more coercive behaviours to control their children than they would use if they were in a private context. In addition, parents' beliefs and behaviours vary around domain-specific responses to transgressions. For example, moral disputes are associated with parental reasoning techniques, whereas violation of conventional rules will elicit from parents more coercive, demanding

behaviours. Finally, parents' beliefs will vary around conceptions about their authority. In light of this, Smetana (1994) emphasises the need for future research to examine parenting beliefs, practices and behaviours within specific contexts. It is only then that the interaction between these variables can be reliably measured and their implications for child development understood.

### **3.3 Parenting goals**

Contemporary socialisation researchers who adhere to information-processing models of behaviour have proposed that parenting goals are a key determinant of parenting behaviours (Dix & Grusec, 1985; Goodnow, 1988). Hastings and Grusec (1998) state that parents can have more than one parenting goal, and goals can fluctuate depending on the situation. Furthermore, these goals could be regarded as critical factors in determining parenting practices (Dix, 1992; Kuczynski, 1984) and parent-child conflict, both generally and in specific interactions. Dix noted that

“goals have received little empirical attention from parenting researchers, despite the central role they hold in many theories of the causes of parenting behaviour... Parenting goals are portrayed as organising cognitions, defining the outcome that a parent hopes to achieve during an interaction with a child, and thereby influencing the behaviour that a parent is likely to use” (1992, p. 465).

Social context seems to play a significant role in the diversity that exists in parenting goals today. Therefore, when considering parenting goals it is important to make a distinction between global parenting goals and contextually-bound parenting goals. Some researchers argue that the former

type of goals are best defined as parental values because they reflect parents perspectives over a period of time and tend to be relatively stable, whereas contextually-bound goals reflect “in-the-moment” parenting cognitions that appear to be driven by the details of a specific situation. This distinction can be illustrated in terms of the parent who believes strongly in children being obedient (global parenting goal) yet in any given situation another goal may take priority, such as the child’s happiness or bonding with the child (contextually bound or context specific goals).

Regardless of this distinction it is evident that different parents have different parenting goals and ways of expressing those goals. Some parents are not satisfied with their children’s partial compliance to their wishes and demands; others respect their children’s right to express different viewpoints particularly if they have tolerable ways of expressing and negotiating their position. Some parents’ may be more concerned with developing a healthy and happy relationship with their children whereas others may concentrate more on promoting good manners and appropriate behaviours (Goodnow, 1994; Grusec & Goodnow, 1994; Hastings & Grusec, 1998). These individual differences in global parenting goals (values) can affect the way different parents view the same situation. For example, parenting goals can affect how parents interpret the meaning of an agreement or a disagreement. Finally, their goals may differ depending on the age of the child or how much they believe their child has the cognitive skills to carry out their requests or expectations (Goodnow, 1994).

To date, a limited number of studies have established a few specific features pertaining to parenting goals. First, parenting goals can be categorised in terms of several different centres of concern including, according to Hastings and Rubin (1999)

- **Parent-centred goals:** Often short-term goals which seek compliance or obedience from children. The aim is to block or prevent children's behaviour.
- **Child-centred goals:**
  - Empathic child-centred goals:* The emphasis is on children's happiness and their other emotional needs.
  - Socialisation child-centred goals:* The emphasis is on teaching children important values, or lessons and developing interpersonal and social skills.
- **Relationship-centred goals:** The emphasis is on the quality of the parent-child relationship and fostering close bonds with children.

Second, the immediacy of parental concerns can vary depending on the situation, in particular, whether parents are interested in short-term or long-term outcomes across each of the three main centres of concern (Kuczynski, 1984). Hastings and Grusec (1998) conducted a study to assess the effect of different parental goals during conflictual interactions between parents and young children. They found that parents were far more concerned about short-term goals when they were in public rather than when they were in the privacy of their own home.

Third, different parenting goals can give rise to different behavioural responses (Hastings & Grusec, 1998; Kuczynski, 1984). For example, parents who have strong parent-centred concerns tend to rely heavily on power-assertive tactics so that they can control their children's immediate behaviours; parents with strong child-centred concerns prefer to reason with their children and are focused on their children's internalisation of family values and social standards; and parents who are highly interested in relationship-centred concerns are most likely to be supportive, warm and open to compromise in hope of strengthening the family bond (Hastings & Grusec, 1998).

Parenting goals are not, in and of themselves, predicants of good or bad parenting. The context determines how appropriate, or inappropriate, a goal may be. For example, a mother who expects her teenager to get out of bed when directed would be said to be driven by the parent-centred goal *obedience*. If her reason for this demand is because she will be late for work by the teenagers lack of compliance then this could be considered a reasonable expectation. If the reason for her demand is because she does not think it is appropriate for her teenager to stay in bed after 7 am in the morning then this may be a less appropriate use of her authority. More so, it would be the way the mother asserted her power (ie. firm, critical or abusive) that would determine the effectiveness of her parenting.

### **3.3.1 Parental trust: a relationship-centred goal?**

In their study of parenting goals, Hastings and Grusec (1998) observed that the associations between relationship-centred goals and other parenting

processes have important implications for effective parenting and require more in-depth study. To date, relationship-centred goals are the least understood category of the three centres-of-concern. In this project it is suggested that, in light of the parent-adolescent relationship, the items that pertain to this category need further clarification and development. The parenting goal of trust is one item that has recently been identified as one which could enhance an understanding of the effects of relationship-centred concerns on parent-adolescent interactions and adolescent adjustment. It has been suggested that for a number of reasons parental trust in one's teenager is a very important factor during adolescence (i) Trust and closeness are strongly entwined factors that develop and grow simultaneously (Holmes & Rempel, 1989). Therefore, if a parent wants to maintain a close relationship with their teenager they must endeavour to trust them. (ii) There is a good deal of time in each day where parents are not able to be present or are not able to control where their teenagers are or what they are doing. Therefore, they have no other option than to trust the information that their teenagers give them about their daily activities and concerns (Kerr, Stattin, & Trost, 1999). (iii) Trust in teenagers' ability to make their own decisions is essential when learning to accommodate their desire for greater autonomy (Noom et al., 1999). Kerr et al. in their seminal study on parental trust, purported that:

"parents must stop relying on their own vigilance, discipline and control and begin relying on their child's responsibility and integrity" (1999, p. 737).

To date, the only research on trust that has been conducted (other than the Kerr et al. study) is in relation to trust in partner relationships. These studies

have found that trust is dependent on ones' beliefs about their partner's integrity, compassion and kindness (Griffin, 1967; Lorr, 1975; Rotter, 1971). With some direction from these studies, Kerr, Stattin and Trost (1999) conducted their own study on trust in the parent-adolescent relationship. They assessed whether parental trust can be predicted by parental knowledge of their teenager's previous delinquent acts, and by teenagers' willingness to tell their parents about their daily activities, feelings and concerns. They hypothesised that parental knowledge of teenagers' delinquency would affect parental trust, and that this would, in turn, affect family functioning. Furthermore, they predicted a positive association between parents' perceptions of the parent-child relationship and the level of trust they had in their child. They also predicted an association between children's perceptions of the parent-child relationship and children's perceptions of how much their parents trusted them. Finally, they predicted that lack of trust would be associated with dysfunctional relationships. To observe the association between trust and parents' knowledge, they controlled for actual child delinquency.

Kerr, Stattin and Trost's (1999) study involved 1186 Swedish fourteen year-olds and 1077 of their parents. It examined parental knowledge concerning children's prior delinquency, children's feelings and concerns, and their daily activities and behaviours. They also examined the source of their knowledge (teenagers' self-disclosure, parental solicitation of information, and parental control). The source of knowledge was considered important because



it could elucidate the mechanisms that linked parental knowledge to parental trust.

The findings suggested that trust was most influenced by knowledge about prior delinquent behaviour, general school activities, and free-time activities. The source of information that was most strongly associated with trust was child-disclosure. This finding was later validated by Stattin and Kerr's (2000) study on parental monitoring which showed that teenage delinquency was more strongly associated with teenagers' willingness to disclose information than with the level of parental monitoring (parental solicitation and control). The findings also indicated that children's delinquency and poor parent-child relationships were mediated by parental trust. In this study Stattin and Kerr postulated that:

"A good parent-child relationship, which should operate preventatively, should be a two-way process, including both the parents' solicitation of knowledge and control of their children's behaviour and the children's willingness to make their parents part of their lives" (2000 p. 1083).

In conclusion, Kerr et al. postulated that parental knowledge was an important factor in parental trust and this construct needed to be studied in its own right; they argued

"if we had labelled our parental knowledge measure 'monitoring' ...then trust would have been added to the long list of monitoring correlates and it would have been assumed that parental tracking and surveillance are linked to high trust...control and solicitation had virtually no independent relationship to trust" (2000, p. 749).

Kerr et al. suggested that the parenting literature would benefit from future research that focused on how and why child disclosure was linked to

adjustment; what role the goal of trust had in influencing teenagers' self-disclosure; and how parents could facilitate open and healthy communication between themselves and their teenagers.

Despite the fact that parenting goals are integral factors in many of the theories of parenting behaviours (Dix, 1992; Collins & Luebker, 1993) research into parenting goals, particularly relationship-centred goals, is quite sparse. Nevertheless, there are two important studies that have made a valuable contribution to the assessment of the relationship between parenting goals and other social cognitions (ie, attributions, self-efficacy beliefs), as well as the reciprocal processes inherent in parent-child interactions (Goodnow, 1994; Grace, Kelley, & McCain, 1993; Smetana, 1997; Smetana & Asquith, 1994).

### **3.3.2 Studies on parental goals**

In Hastings and Rubin's (1999) transactional model of parental beliefs, it is suggested that pre-existing characteristics of mothers and children predict both the mothers' beliefs and their subsequent responses to aggressive or withdrawn children. To test this theory Hastings and Rubin conducted a longitudinal study over two years to identify

"some of the common underlying cognitions that are associated with apparently disparate behaviours [to] help clarify a level of consistency across domains of parenting" (1999, p. 726).

In the first year of the study, data were collected from 65 mothers and their two-year old children. The findings showed that mothers' parent-centred goals were focused primarily on controlling their children's aversive behaviour and ensuring that there would be no further misbehaviour. They relied more on

power assertion and were less likely to encourage non-aggressive ways of dealing with peers than other mothers. Reasoning techniques were not implemented very often by these mothers and they did not teach their children how to self-regulate their emotions and behaviours.

Hastings and Rubin (1999) identified only twelve mothers whose behaviours towards their aggressive children were indicative of short-term, or empathic child-centred goals. These mothers were primarily concerned with their children's happiness, and so rewarded aggressive behaviours with reassurance and consoling behaviours. However, as previous research has shown, rewarding negative- attention seeking or aggressive behaviour does not teach children what is wrong with their behaviour (Hastings & Rubin, 1999). Children need to learn that there are consequences for poor or inappropriate behaviour, and that there are preferable ways of acting when similar situations occur in the future. Hastings and Rubin concluded from the findings that:

"[if] intervention work could target mothers' focus of concern [goals] when intervening in their children's disputes, possibly more effective socialisation responses could be encouraged" (1999, p. 739).

A series of studies was conducted by Hastings and Grusec (1998) to assess the role of parenting goals in children's socialisation. Two of the studies were correlational in nature, and aimed at understanding the relationship between parenting goals and parents' behaviours, as well as parenting goals and parental attributions. The third study was an experimental study which was designed to establish whether parents' centres of concern (ie, parent-centred, child-centred or relationship-centred) were associated with their parenting

behaviours and affective states. Hastings and Grusec's interest in parenting goals arose from observing variations in parents' affective responses and discipline strategies when responding to different child-rearing situations. In addition, they observed that different parents, in similar child-rearing situations, differed in their affective responses and discipline strategies. They hypothesised that this behavioural variability was a result of differing parenting goals, and that certain behaviours would be associated with certain goals. They also hypothesised that the attributions parents made about their children's behaviour played a mediatory role between parenting goals and behaviour.

Study 1, of the series of studies, involved 48 parents and 55 adults without children. The majority of the participants were Caucasian and the mean age of the parents was 34 years old. The participants were presented with five brief vignettes. Each described a difficult interaction between a parent and a six year-old child. After each vignette the participants were asked how they would have handled the situation. Following this they were given 6 pre-generated parenting goals (two parent-centred, two child-centred and two relationship-centred goals), and asked to rate (on a 6-point Likert scale) how important each of the pre-generated goals would have been to them in that situation.

The findings supported the importance of parenting goals and suggested that there was an association between parenting goals and parenting behaviour. Parent-centred goals were positively associated with the use of power assertion techniques whereas child-centred goals and relationship-centred goals were negatively associated with the use of such techniques. Parenting goals became more parent-centred during public displays of

misbehaviour. The authors considered this to be a result of the parent feeling embarrassed or worried that their parenting skills were being scrutinised, or because the parents were concerned that their child's tantrum may have upset or disturbed others. In private settings, parents were far more concerned with long-term child-centred and parent-centred goals. Thus, it appeared that some parenting goals are more salient or more common than others, depending upon the situation.

Study 2 involved 65 mothers and 31 fathers, each with a child between five and seven years of age. Data was collected using a structured telephone interview. Half of the parents were asked to recount a difficult interaction with their child that had occurred in private. The other half of the parents were asked to recount a difficult interaction with their child that had occurred in public. All parents were then asked to specify the goal they believed they were striving for during that encounter, and then asked questions concerning their attributions for the behaviour. In particular, they were asked whether the child's behaviour was due to the child's personality or the situation, and how intentional the behaviour had been. Finally, parents' empathy was measured by using two subscales of the Interpersonal Reactivity Inventory (Davis, 1983).

The results of Study 2 showed that parents' centre of concern was predictive of their parenting behaviour. Parents who placed a priority on their relationship with their children were more responsive and less dominating in their interactions with them. Conversely, parents with parent-centred goals were more dominating and relied much less on responsive type behaviours (ie,

love, comfort or praise). The findings also showed that attributions predicted the relationship between domineering behaviour and parent-centred long-term goals, and domineering behaviour and child-centred short-term goals. In particular, the authors showed that parents were most concerned about controlling their child's immediate behaviour when the conflict was public. When the conflict was in private, parents tended to focus on their long-term goals, such as their children's internalisation of values: a child-centred goal that requires more time spent listening to their children's point of view.

The correlational nature of Study 1 and Study 2 made it difficult to establish cause and effect within these studies. Nevertheless, it would appear from the findings that parenting goals were associated with parenting behaviours and affective behaviours. However, it could be argued that the explanations given by parents for their behaviours were influenced by their own theories concerning the links between beliefs and behaviour (Hastings & Grusec, 1998). Accordingly, to establish cause and effect, Hastings and Grusec conducted an experimental study (Study 3). In this study, to test Dix's (1991, 1992) proposal that different affective states would accompany different parenting goals, parent-centred goals were manipulated to examine what effect this would have on parenting behaviour and on parents' emotions.

The sample in this study comprised 44 parents and 53 adults without children. Each participant was asked to read six vignettes that described potentially difficult interactions between a parent and their six year-old child. Each vignette began with a brief stem story. Half of the participants received

one stem story and the other half another. Each stem story had three endings based on the three different parenting goals: child-centred, parent-centred and relationship-centred goals. After each vignette the participants were asked an open-ended question about what they thought their response would have been to the six year-old child. Following this they were asked to rate how annoyed, concerned, upset, and sympathetic they would have felt in those situations. All responses were rated on 7-point Likert scales (1: Not at all, up to 7: Extremely).

The results of Study 3 showed that when the centre of concern was manipulated, parenting behaviours and affective states were significantly affected by parenting goals. When participants were asked what strategy they would employ to gain the child's compliance (parent-centred goal) power-assertive behaviours were most likely to be chosen rather than responsive behaviours. When participants were asked what strategy they would employ to treat the child equitably (relationship centred-goal), they were found most likely to choose behaviours that were responsive, sympathetic, less negative and less power assertive. Finally, when participants were asked what strategy they would employ to instruct the child on social and interpersonal skills (child-centred goals) they were more likely to choose behaviours that promoted reasoning and acceptance, while calmly and consistently maintaining control.

"Study 3 confirmed that participants did not use parenting goals only as a post hoc rationalisations for the child-rearing behaviour... It is likely goals function in unison with other cognitions, thus serving to organise and guide parents' causal interpretations of and affective reactions to children's behaviour" (Hastings & Grusec, 1998, p. 478).

Parent-centred goals elicited feelings of annoyance and concern, and reduced participants' empathy towards the child and their wants or needs. By contrast, relationship-centred goals made participants more open to the child's desires and elicited greater warmth and support from the adult. Child-centred concern elicited both negative and positive emotions from the adults. Hastings and Grusec concluded that the significant relationships between parenting goals and parental emotions were comparable with the relationships between parenting goals and parental behaviours.

These findings were generally in agreement with previous research and can be interpreted in two ways. First, the relationship between parental anger and power assertion may have been determined by a mutual connection to parenting goals, attributions or other cognitive process (Dix 1991, 1992; Dix et al., 1986, 1989). Alternatively, it is possible that emotions and goals have a combined effect on behaviour: for example, a parent might give their child a number of directives in an effort to get them to behave obediently. However, if the child is resistant to these directives, the parent might become angry and, as a result, more domineering and punitive in the process of asserting their authority over the child.

A number of researchers have proposed pathway models to illustrate how parental beliefs are linked to the psychosocial and/or academic development of children. Brody, Flor, and Gibson (1999) are amongst these researchers, and have extended this area of research to include the effects of financial stressors on mothers' cognitive and behavioural processes. Their



study was comprised of 139 African American single mothers with children between the ages of 6 to 9 years old. All of these women lived in the rural areas of Georgia and most were living below the poverty line (82 %).

Brody et al. (1999) hypothesised that mothers' cognitions (self-efficacy beliefs and developmental goals) would mediate the relationship between mothers' perceptions of insufficient income and their ability to display appropriate parenting skills necessary to promote children's competence. They also hypothesised that competence-promoting parenting practices would facilitate children's capacity to regulate their own emotions and therefore contribute to better academic and psychosocial outcomes for children.

These hypotheses were derived from the findings of previous studies that demonstrated a significant association between financial pressures and parents' inability to provide effective parenting (Elder, Eccles, Ardel, & Lord, 1995; Luster & Kain, 1987; Simons, Whitbeck, Conger, & Melby, 1990).

Mirowsky and Ross (1989) suggested that financial stress indirectly affects parenting self-efficacy because parents lose confidence in their ability to control or influence their own lives, not to mention the lives of their children.

Brody et al.'s (1999) study found that mothers' perceptions of their financial position influenced their perceptions about the effectiveness of their parenting (consistent with findings from Conger et al., 1992 and Elder, et al., 1995). Furthermore, mothers who were confident about their parenting skills were more likely to endorse and pursue healthy developmental goals for their children (eg, being respectful, a good education, the ability to co-operate with others and being well-behaved). Bandura (1991) argued that when people

perceive themselves as competent they set higher goals for themselves and become more committed to achieving them (Bandura, 1991). Brody and colleagues' findings did not, however, reveal the anticipated link between parents' developmental goals and competence-promoting parenting practices found in previous studies. For this reason, they suggested that previous studies may not have adequately taken parenting goals into account, and suggested that this would be a useful avenue to pursue in future research.

### **3.3.3 Adolescents' perceptions of parenting goals**

Having considered parenting goals, their influence and their origins, it seems appropriate given concerns about an exclusive reliance on parental self-report, to examine adolescents' perceptions of their parents' goals and the accuracy of these perceptions. At present, the only study that has investigated this issue is that of Knafo and Schwartz (2003). In their study values were defined as

“desirable, abstract goals that apply across situations (e.g., freedom, social order, pleasure, obedience: Schwartz, 1992). Values serve as guiding principles in people's lives, as criteria they use to select and justify actions and to evaluate people and events” (2003, p. 595).

Knafo and Schwartz suggest three processes that aid accurate perceptions: (i) the availability of parental messages (Funder, 1995); (ii) the comprehensibility of messages; and (iii) adolescents' motivation to attend to the messages.

- Availability is the extent to which the message captures adolescents' attention in a way that makes it appear important to them (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994).

- **Comprehensibility is the extent to which the message is in line with the cognitive capacity of the teenager.**
- **Motivation refers to the extent to which teenagers are willing to attend to messages, and this is often dependent upon their closeness to parents and the respect they have for their point of view.**

**Knafo and Schwartz (2003) outlined three key factors that are likely to contribute to more accurate perceptions by teenagers of parental values. These include: parental value communication, value agreement in the family, and parenting dimensions and styles.**

- **Parental value communication refers to the need for consistency in the presentation of messages over time, and also the need for frequent discussion of the values so the adolescent will be familiar with their content.**
- **Value agreement refers to the degree to which mothers and fathers agree about parenting values.**
- **Authoritative parenting styles are more likely to motivate teenagers to attend to parental messages, more so than other parenting styles (see section 2.3).**

**In their study of 547 Jewish parents and their adolescent children aged between 15 and 19 years old, Knafo and Schwartz found that adolescents' perceptions of their parents' values were positively correlated with parental warmth, parents' actual agreement on values and perceived parental agreement. The factors that correlated negatively with adolescents' perceptions**

of their parents' values were value conflict (lack of agreement between parents), indifferent parenting, and authoritarian parenting.

In relation to the processes involved in aiding the accurate perception of messages (availability, comprehensibility and motivation), Knafo and Schwartz found that repeated exposure did not always lead to greater *availability* of the message because of "ceiling effects" (ie, "I've heard it all before") that caused a reduction in adolescents' attention to the message. In addition, the comprehensibility of a message tended to be poorer in situations where adolescents were emotionally distressed or confused. Poor communication from parents in the form of inconsistent or derogatory behaviours and/or messages made it difficult for adolescents to obtain an accurate comprehension of the messages. Finally, adolescents' *motivation* to attend to parental messages was found to be a crucial factor in the accuracy of their perceptions, in that the majority of the variables measured in the study significantly correlated with accuracy because of their role in motivating teenagers to attend to messages.

### **3.3.4 Summary**

These studies have shown that "goals of parents are identifiable and quantifiable and function as important cognitive determinants of parenting behaviours" (Hastings & Grusec, 1998, p. 476). The operationalisation of "parenting goals" in terms of centre of concern has a great deal more reliability than assuming parents have only a single parenting objective. Future research

is necessary to establish what variables determine whether a parent will be child-centred, relationship-centred or parent-centred.

Grusec and colleagues (1994, 2000) suggest that there are still many questions to be answered in relation to parenting goals, such as:

- How do parents select their goals?
- How do goals differ from one another (ie, short-term; long-term goals)?
- What level of agreement is expected between parents and teenagers?
- Do goals elicit proactive or reactive behaviours (ie, positive responses or reactionary responses to teenagers' transgressions)?

Furthermore, research needs to examine the associations between parenting goals and other parenting processes and how the combination of these processes influences children's development.

### **3.4 Parental attributions**

#### **3.4.1 Attributions: Definitions and theories**

Gleitman (1999) suggests that people who endeavour to find explanations for a situation or another's behaviour often engage in the process of attribution. Attributions are the judgments people make about the characteristics and intentions of an event or another person. Attribution theory is predominantly interested in the information people acquire to make causal explanations, and how this then affects their own thinking and behaviours. Fritz Heider (1958), the founder of attribution theory, proposed that people have a strong need to understand and explain what is going on around them. People

endeavour to piece together the information they have about a person or situation and then infer what they consider to be a tenable reason for the behaviour. Heider argued that the processes people use to assess and judge their surroundings are rational and systematic (though they may still be biased or inaccurate in some way). Heider suggested that attributions allow for the efficient and effective processing of information, making it immediately more accessible and understandable so that one feels able to predict and control their environment without needing to apply a great deal of effort.

There are a number of attribution models that have contributed to an understanding of the processes involved in parents' inferences about children's actions. Two of the models most pertinent to the objectives of this project are Jones and Davis' model (1965) of correspondent inferences and Weiners' (1980) attribution model. Jones and Davis' model directs attention to the ideas people construct about another's behaviour due to the constraints on them by others or by environmental factors. Parents will make attributions about disposition and intentionality on the basis of what they believe about the situational constraints on children. For example, using this model, it can be predicted that a parent will make dispositional attributions for their child's behaviour when:

“they believe the effects of their child's behaviour were knowingly and intentionally produced in the absence of serious constraints on the child's freedom” (Dix & Grusec, 1985, p. 207).

On the other hand, Weiner's model argues that locus of causality, stability of cause, and controllability are the dimensions on which people base

their inferences of others' behaviour (Weiner, 1974, 1986). Locus of causality can be either internal or external, that is, the behaviour or the event can be determined by the characteristics of the person (eg, their disposition) or by characteristics of the environment. Stability refers to the extent to which a person's behaviour will be consistent over time or subject to change. Behaviour that has been determined by stable factors (eg, a lack of intelligence) should occur again whereas behaviours determined by unstable factors (eg, tiredness or luck) are not expected to occur again. Controllability of cause is ascertained based on whether or not an individual has the ability to control his or her actions. Intentionality or responsibility is usually deduced based upon whether an action was controllable or uncontrollable. All of these factors, including the locus of causality, stability of cause, and controllability, play an important role in determining the type and intensity of emotional reactions. They also have significant influence on the beliefs about the recurrence of behaviour and various behavioural tendencies (Fiske & Taylor, 1991).

### **3.4.2 Parenting and attribution biases**

Attributional bias refers to aspects of dysfunctional information processing. The social cognition literature recognises a number of different types of attribution bias that have been frequently observed in studies of cognitive processes in human relationships. To detail even some of the more familiar biases is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, examples of them will be illustrated in the sections which follow.

A phenomenon that is worth commenting on, because it is extremely pertinent to the parenting literature, is parental positive bias (Dix & Grusec, 1985; Miller, 1995). This term refers to a tendency for parents to regard altruistic or desirable acts produced by their children to be intentional, dispositional and stable, and for undesirable acts to be perceived as situational, transient and unstable. Goodnow, Knight and Cashmore (1986) argued that this bias was adaptive in that it enhanced parent-child relationships.

Gretarsson and Gelfand (1988) refer to two alternative hypotheses which could account for parental positive bias. The first is that parents may assume that, even though they are not able to observe their children's behaviour at all times, what they do see is representative of the child's overall behaviour. The second alternative based upon Nisbett and Ross' (1980) cognitive model states that parents are strongly influenced by culturally bound beliefs which suggest that all children are inherently virtuous. Consistent with this, Dix et al. (1986), in their study of parents' inferential and affective reactions to children, found that parents tended to make similar attributional judgements about the behaviour of unfamiliar children as they did about their own children.

It has become a widely accepted opinion that positive parental bias is a stable cognitive characteristic that is common to many parents. However, Gretarsson and Gelfand (1988) believe such opinions should be treated cautiously because parental cognitions about children's behaviour should be seen as variable and dependent on both parent and child effects. In their own study, Gretarsson and Gelfand hypothesised that child effects (ie, children's age, gender and problem behaviours) would be determining factors in the



inferences that parents drew about children's behaviour. They hypothesised that children with greater behavioural problems would elicit more negative attributions from their mothers than children with fewer behavioural problems. Mothers of difficult children would attribute their behaviour to dispositional, stable and intentional factors. They also predicted that the older the child was, the more likely it was that mothers would attribute negative characteristics. Finally, gender stereotypes would predict mothers' inferences of their daughters' prosocial behaviours; they would be seen as more dispositional and stable than sons' positive behaviours. On the whole, the findings of their study indicated that mothers were optimists about their children's behaviour. Mothers' tended to attribute positive characteristics of their children to stable, intentional, dispositional factors, and negative characteristics to transitory, situational constraints (consistent with positive bias phenomenon). They viewed their children as more responsible for prosocial acts than antisocial acts. Finally, mothers were shown to attribute the misconduct of older children and children with behavioural problems to more dispositional and intentional factors.

### **3.4.3 Dix and colleagues: A series of studies on parental attributions**

Dix and colleagues (Dix & Lochman, 1990; Dix & Reinhold, 1991; Dix, Reinhold & Zambarano, 1990; Dix, Ruble, Grusec & Nixon, 1986; Dix, Ruble & Zambarano, 1989) undertook a series of studies to assess the effect of parental attributions on parents' affective states and behaviours. These were all cross-sectional studies which used either a between-subject approach or a within-subject approach. Some of the studies considered how child variables (eg, age,

gender and/or valence of a child's behaviour) affect parents' attributions. Other studies focused more on how individual differences in parents (e.g., immediate mood, chronic emotional states and abusiveness) affected the attributions they made for their children's behaviour. The following section outlines some of these studies in greater detail.

Dix, Ruble, Grusec and Nixon (1986) conducted two studies to assess the relationship between parental attributions, parents' affective states, and parents' behaviour. This was a cross sectional study with a within-subject approach that looked at the valence outcomes (whether the behaviour was positive or not) for children's behaviour. Included in this sample were 95 parents, either mothers or fathers who had a child between the ages of four and thirteen years. The participants were asked to read vignettes that described an interaction between a parent and a misbehaving child. Half of the participants were asked to read three vignettes where the child failed to be altruistic, and the other half were asked to read three vignettes where the child was violating a particular social norm.

Dix et al. (1986) made numerous predictions about child effects on parental attributions and parental optimism about children's characteristics. The two studies clearly confirmed four of the major predictions. First, the attributions parents made for children's behaviour was influenced by the children's developmental level. Second, the causal explanations parents made for children's behaviour influenced their affective reactions. Third, the increasing age of the child affected the intensity of the parents' negative emotional reaction to the misconduct. Generally, the older the children, the more likely it

was that their behaviour was seen to be dispositional, intentional and under their control. Furthermore, the older the child the more they were held accountable for their behaviour. Fourth, how parents viewed the behaviour (desirable/undesirable) affected the attributions they made for it. For example, children's altruistic acts were viewed by parents to be intentional, under their children's control, and due to their children's disposition. In contrast, parents were less likely to view their children's selfish acts in this way.

Dix and Lochman's (1990) study of parental attributions took a between-subject approach to look at whether parents with aggressive children were more inclined to make negative attributions about their children and their behaviours than parents with non-aggressive children. Dix and Lochman derived a 3-step model for their hypothesis from Weiner's cognition-emotion model. Step 1 of their model was concerned with the information processes required for parents to examine the external and internal constraints that existed for children. Step 2 examined the attributions parents made about children and their behaviour. The attributions measured were intentionality, disposition, control, responsibility and blame. Step 3 assessed parental affective responses and the decisions parents made about how stern to be when their children misbehaved.

Dix and Lochman's (1990) study involved 47 mothers of boys aged between nine and fifteen years. The mothers were of similar age, education, income, race, employment and marital status. Fifteen of the mothers had boys who were receiving clinical treatment for aggression; the remainder of the mothers had sons with normal aggression levels. The mothers were asked to

watch videotapes of mother-son interactions where the mother confronted her son about an undesirable behaviour and the son then responded in an inappropriate manner (either he fails to take responsibility for his behaviour or he behaves disrespectfully towards his mother). One of the key differences between the four tapes was the parenting technique of the mother. Two of the tapes depicted mothers using positive parenting techniques (sympathetic, supportive but firm, and explicit about their expectations); the other two tapes depicted mothers using negative parenting techniques (sarcastic, critical, and a tendency to complain or nag so that the child could not be clear of their mother's expectations). Following the tapes the participating mothers had to make attributions about the unknown children's behaviour in relation to their intent, disposition and responsibility. The mothers were also asked to rate the responsibility of the parent for the tone of the parent-child interaction, and how forceful a response the parent thought was necessary in the situations presented to them.

The findings showed that the social cognitions, affective reactions and behavioural responses of mothers whose sons were aggressive were more negative to the children in the video than those of mothers whose sons were non-aggressive. This difference, however, could not be attributed to the deficits in information-processing skills of mothers whose sons were aggressive. The conclusions these mothers drew about the parent-child interactions in the videotape were similar to those drawn by mothers of non-aggressive sons. In fact, all the mothers regardless of their sons' aggressiveness believed that the mothers in the video who had negative parenting techniques were

unconstructive or unhelpful in aiding a positive response from their children. They decided that these mothers should be held more responsible for their children's behaviour, and that less force should be used to make the children comply. However, if the mothers felt the children in the video had fewer situational constraints on them (ie, poor parenting) they were likely to make more negative attributions about their behaviour.

Hence, the results showed that information-processing deficits did not provide an explanation for the negative attributions that mothers' with aggressive sons' made about their sons' behaviour, but it was still unclear what factors accounted for the differences between the responses of mothers' with aggressive and non-aggressive sons. Dix and Lochman (1990) suggested two possibilities. First, the attributional biases that mothers produce in response to the behaviour of their aggressive sons may not necessarily precede their son's behavioural problems, but be a result of these problems. According to Kelley (1967) biased attributions are elicited when behaviour continues over an extended period of time, when the behaviour is consistent across different situations, and when the behaviour is relatively uncommon in others. Dix and Lochman argue that this would be the most common context in which mothers with aggressive sons would make their judgements. However, the fact that the children in the videotapes were unknown to the mothers suggests that the biases cannot be child effects. Dix and Lochman state:

"Even if they [biases] result from living with a difficult child – these biases come from within the parent and are independent of the behaviour being judged" (1990, p. 436).

Dix and Lochman's second explanation for the differences between mothers' attributions related to the characteristics of the mother. In most cases, mothers with aggressive sons tended to be more aggressive than mothers of non-aggressive sons. They question whether aggressive boys' behaviours are influenced by parent effects in terms of poor parenting skills, lack of child-centred concerns and negative attribution biases for children's behaviour.

Another study within the series of studies of parental attributions was conducted by Dix, Reinhold and Zambarano (1990). Dix et al. hypothesised that mothers' immediate mood states (another parent effect) would influence the attributions they made for children's behaviour. Social cognitive research has shown that negative moods make people more prone to cognitive biases, such as holding negative impressions of others; having pessimistic expectations; and blaming others or making them responsible for perceived failures (Blaney, 1986; Bower, 1981; Clark & Isen, 1982). On the basis of this, Dix et al. wanted to establish whether parents' moods, particularly negative ones, would bias the way they processed information about their children's behaviours. They examined how parents' moods affected parents' expectations, causal explanations, judgements of responsibility, and discipline decisions.

The participants in Dix et al.'s (1990) study were 48 mothers from diverse ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, who had children between the ages of six and eight years. The mothers were asked to watch three brief videotapes of different mother-child interactions. In each of the tapes a mother explicitly asks her child to do something; in half the tapes the children are non-compliant; in the other half the children's response is ambiguous (they showed

the children continuing playing for another 12 seconds, but their ultimate response was never shown). Half of the participants watched the tapes with the ambiguous ending whereas the other participants watched the tapes in which the children were non-compliant. All the participants were asked to watch the tapes at three different times – one tape when they were happy, one tape when they were angry, and one tape when they were in a neutral mood.

After viewing each of the tapes, the participants were assessed on their expectations about the child's behaviour, disposition, and pleasantness. They were also asked to predict how difficult the situation might become and how much sternness the mother might have to apply. In addition, participants were asked to comment on their own children's behaviours. They were asked about some of the common problems they faced with their children; how serious they thought the behaviours were; how they thought their children might behave in three target situations. Finally, each participant was asked to rate their child on three specific personality dispositions.

The findings of this study showed that mood affected mothers' causal explanations for children's misbehaviours. When participants were angry, they were more inclined to have negative expectations about the children's behaviour. Furthermore, they were more likely to attribute dispositional, intentional, and controllable factors to children's behaviour and more likely to suggest that the children be held responsible and accountable for their actions. When mothers were angry they were more accepting of stern and forceful reactions to misbehaviour than when they were less angry. Finally, mothers were more accepting of sterner responses to children's deviant behaviour when

the behaviour was ambiguous, that is, when they could not tell whether the behaviour was intentional or not.

Interestingly, the findings showed that mothers in happy moods also made more negative attributions about non-compliant behaviours than mothers in neutral moods. This was explained in terms of mood-contrasting effects where people who are already aroused in some way are more sensitive to emotionally arousing stimuli (Isen et al., 1988). In other words, mothers in a happy mood will be more sensitive to negative behaviours that threaten their happiness and, therefore, will attribute negative attributions to that behaviour.

The final study in this series was conducted by Dix and Reinhold (1991). Their study was similar to that of Dix, Reinhold and Zambarano (1990) except that they were also interested in the influence that parental child-rearing beliefs (which they measured using the authoritarian parenting scale of the Block Child Rearing Practices Report: 1965) had on parental attributions. Their findings revealed that parenting beliefs significantly affected the inferences mothers made about children's misconduct, and this influenced the level and intensity of distress they experienced. Specifically, authoritarian mothers, more than other mothers, expected immediate compliance from children; they were more likely to attribute non-compliance to intentional factors; they held the children responsible and accountable for their actions. Dix and Reinhold concluded from their study that:

"transient mood states, cues from immediate interaction, and stable ideologies about child-rearing all influence mothers' inferences about why children disobey maternal requests and whether children are responsible for that disobedience" (1991, p. 267).



### **Summary of Dix and colleagues' studies**

Based on these, and other similar studies, Miller argued that "attributions are related in sensible, predictable ways to parental behaviour at the level of group patterns and group comparisons" (1995, p. 1575). Attributions appear to influence both parental affect and parental behaviours. Parents' inferences regarding misbehaviour or non-compliance influenced the degree of negative affect they experienced. Furthermore, parent effects (beliefs, moods, poor parenting) influenced the cognitive processing of parents, which, in turn, influence parent's affective responses and their behaviours. Angry, happy and authoritarian parents made more causal attributions of intent, disposition and control. They were also more likely to hold children responsible for their behaviours, believe they had the knowledge to know better, and blame them for their behaviour. Attributions of knowledge, intentionality and responsibility increased with children's age; parents were more upset by the behaviour of older than of younger children. Delayed non-compliance and non-compliance elicited different responses from mothers. Delayed non-compliant behaviour was tolerated because mothers reasoned that their children did not have the developmental capacity to understand what was expected of them. In contrast, non-compliance was not tolerated as it was viewed as outright disobedience. Positive behaviours were perceived as internal, stable and controllable traits in children and were often rewarded by parents. Dix and Grusec (1985) concluded from these findings that attributions were important parenting mechanisms because they mediated the relationship between children's behaviours and parent's responses to those behaviours.

#### **3.4.4 Other studies on parental attributions**

There is a paucity of research on the role of cognitive variables (beliefs, attributions and expectations) in conflictual mother and teenager interactions. One of the relatively few studies in this field has been conducted by Grace, Kelley and McCain (1993). They aimed to assess the role that mothers' and teenagers' expectations and attributional processes played in conflict situations. The participants in the study were 122 adolescents, between the ages of 12 to 18 years, and 115 of their mothers. The families were similar in terms of being white, middle-class, and intact. The participants were asked to complete two questionnaires: the first assessed the level of conflict between mother-adolescent dyads and the second assessed the types of expectations and attributions the dyads made during conflictual situations. Grace, Kelley and McCain classified the cognitive variables according to the following definitions:

“Expectations are defined as covert behaviours that precede a response and relate to the likelihood that a response will occur, whereas attributions are covert behaviours that follow a response and involve explanations of the behaviour or event (Robin and Foster, 1989). For example, rigid expectations might include beliefs that teenagers should always be obedient (Vincent Roeling & Robin, 1986) whereas negative attributions might consist of explaining behaviour as selfishly motivated” (1993, p. 199).

Hence, the clash of interests that can often occur in parent-adolescent dyads may be the result of the interaction between the dyad's competing expectations and attributions. Poor communication, anger and an inability to resolve conflict

are the outcomes of inflexible expectations and negative attributional styles (Hotelling, 1980; Robin & Foster, 1989).

Grace, Kelley and McCain's (1993) study revealed an association between negative attributions and the degree of conflict in the parent-adolescent relationship. The dyads that interpreted the behaviour of the other as intentional, selfish, motivated and blameworthy had more conflicts than dyads that made less negative attributions for one another's behaviour. Grace et al. identified responsibility and blame as the most significant factors in determining the intensity and frequency of conflictual interactions. They believed that these variables could probably account for the differences in normal levels of conflict in parent-adolescent relationships and dysfunctional levels of conflict.

Hastings and Rubin (1999) turned their attention to the role of parental beliefs in understanding the association between child effects, parental attributions and parental responses to children's behaviours. They proposed that parent's schematic expectations of children's behaviours influenced how they would respond in future parent-child interactions. For example, mothers whose children are consistently aggressive over time and across different situations eventually engender an impression that the behaviour is representative of dispositional, intentional and stable features in their children. These beliefs then inform the parent of the discipline strategies they will need to employ in the future. For example, studies have shown that mothers of aggressive children make negative attributions for their children's behaviours, and have a tendency to rely on stricter and more coercive disciplinary

strategies than mothers of normal children. This type of negative parenting is detrimental for children as it results in them feeling more frustrated and angry and provokes further undesirable behaviours from them, which in turn, elicit further negative parental responses. This cycle of events is an example of the mutually reinforcing effects of ongoing negative dyadic responses within perturbing parent-child interactions (Patterson, Reid & Dishion, 1992).

The findings from Hastings and Rubin's study showed that

"in almost every instance in which toddler's aggression and or withdrawal made contributions to the prediction of maternal beliefs, the effect was moderated by an interaction with maternal attitudes (authoritarian, protective) or the sex of the child" (1999, p. 736-737).

Mothers who held authoritarian childrearing beliefs tended to make dispositional rather than situational attributions about pre-school children's aggressive behaviours. Negative attributions for behaviour would elicit strong emotional responses (anger, disgust, disappointment) and forceful discipline techniques in attempt to control the children. In addition, mothers' responses were determined, in part, by the gender stereotypes they held: for example, mothers expressed more anger when their sons exhibited aggressive behaviours than when their daughters did. Hastings and Rubin concluded that:

"The aggression-authoritarian interactions suggest that certain attitudes may make mothers more vulnerable to influence by their children's characteristics. The combination of early childhood aggression and maternal authoritarianism may be especially maladaptive. Angry, accusatory and forceful reactions from mothers may foster further child aggressiveness...contributing to a cycle of negative reciprocity (1999, p. 737)".

Finally, Smith Slep and O'Leary (1998) conducted a study which aimed to assess the effect mothers' attributional processes had on their subsequent emotional and behavioural responses. It was hypothesised that mothers who were susceptible to attributional biases were more likely to use harsh discipline strategies than parents who were not prone to making misattributions for their children's behaviour. The study was comprised of 44 Caucasian mothers who had toddlers whom they felt were difficult children to raise. The mothers were given one of two vignettes; both vignettes were similar in that they both included a child that was expected to misbehave. The difference between the vignettes was that one vignette placed the responsibility of the misbehaviour on the child (their need for attention, wanting their own way) and the other vignette placed the responsibility on circumstances beyond the child's control (child's age, underdeveloped self-control skills). The vignettes were intended to elicit behavioural and affective responses from mothers according to the attribution of the particular vignette given to them.

A number of interesting findings emerged from Smith-Slep and O'Leary's study. Mothers who had attributed their children's behaviour to controllable factors tended to over-react more than mothers who had attributed the misbehaviour to factors beyond their children's control. Parental behaviours were also strongly associated with child outcomes. Children who had overly-reactive mothers experienced a greater degree of negative affect which contributed to further problem behaviours. The researchers proposed that the joint effects of parent-child cognitive processes were instrumental in

maintaining the behaviours of both the parent and the child. This is summarised in the following statement:

"the affect, cognitions, and behaviours of the mothers, and the children probably exerted reciprocally causal and self-maintaining influences, as suggested by Bugental" (Smith-Slep & O'Leary, 1998, p. 241).

Smith-Slep and O'Leary state that these results have shown that cognitive manipulations of attributions do not have to be labour intensive or complicated to be effective, although as suggested, the results from this study should not be generalised to populations of older children, fathers, or different cultural and social economic backgrounds without further research.

### **3.5 Parenting behaviours**

#### **3.5.1 Overview**

In this thesis it has been assumed that variations in maternal behaviour and other cognitive processes arise as a result of variations in mothers' parenting goals. Hence, this section of the review focuses on parental behaviours that may be challenging to the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship and, in turn, to adolescent adjustment. Two particular areas of interest are *parental control* (behavioural control and psychological control) and *parental rejection*. The former behaviour was selected because it was seen to conflict with adolescents' craving for greater autonomy and independence and, therefore, likely to be an ongoing issue for parents and teenagers during adolescence. The latter behaviour was selected in light of the extensive literature on the importance of warmth and acceptance in the parent-adolescent relationship (see previous chapter). It was surprising however, to find there was

a paucity of studies conducted to assess the effects of parental rejection on adolescent adjustment.

### **3.5.2 Parental Control**

Schaefer (1965) disaggregated parental control into two major constructs - psychological control and behavioural control. Gray and Steinberg defined psychological control in terms of "the relative degree of emotional autonomy that parents allow" (1999, p. 575); whereas, behavioural control was defined as "the level of monitoring and limit setting that parents used". Barber has argued that the common practice of aggregating behavioural control and psychological control into single typologies (Baumrind, 1978, 1991; Steinberg, 1990; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992; Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn & Dornbusch, 1991) has undermined "the identification of any unique effects of the individual forms of parenting" (Barber, 1996, p. 3297).

Gray and Steinberg (1999) conducted a study to assess the association between parental control and adolescent adjustment. The sample consisted of 8,700 adolescents from a diverse ethnic and socioeconomic population. The adolescents were asked to fill in a two part self-report questionnaire which included an authoritative parenting scale with three subscales: an acceptance-involvement subscale; a behavioural supervision and strictness subscale (behavioural control); and a psychological autonomy granting subscale (psychological control). The questionnaire also measured four adolescent outcomes: behavioural problems; psychosocial development; internal distress; and academic competence. The study showed that when parental control was disaggregated into two distinct components, behavioural and psychological

control, each brought to bear different effects on adjustment.

Psychological control was predictive of emotional health particularly in the form of internal distress and psychosocial development. Behavioural control, on the other hand, was more likely to be predictive of problem behaviours. Academic achievement was associated with modest levels of behavioural control and greater autonomy. Positive psychosocial development was predicted by high degrees of psychological autonomy, high levels of parental involvement, and the provision of firm standards for behaviour. High behavioural control seemed to facilitate self-regulating practices (eg, self control, avoidance of drug use). Conversely, behavioural autonomy seemed to facilitate greater self-competence and self-confidence in both the social and academic arenas. These adolescents were less prone to anxiety, depression and low self-esteem.

Barber (1996) conducted three consecutive studies to show that psychologically controlling behaviours were different from behaviourally controlling behaviours. Furthermore, he showed that psychological control had a unique effect on child development, particularly in terms of its association with internalised behavioural problems. Study 1 was based on data used from a 1990 school-based survey of 875 adolescents in Tennessee. Barber included 802 of these adolescents in his study. In 1990, they would have been in either grade 5, 8 or 10. Parental psychological control was measured using the *Psychological Control versus Psychological Autonomy Scale* of the Child Report of Parent Behaviour Inventory (CRPBI: Schaeffer, 1959; 1965a; 1965b) Behavioural control was also measured using a five-item *Monitoring Scale*



(Brown, Mounts, Lamborn & Steinberg, 1993). Monitoring was considered to be a good measure of behavioural control because it was often reflected in families' management and regulation standards (Patterson & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1984). The third measure was the *Anxious/Depressed and Delinquent Subscales* of the Child Behaviour Checklist – Youth Self Report (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1987) which assessed teenagers' internalised and externalised behaviour problems respectively.

The findings of this study showed that adolescents who had high psychological control scores also had high depression scores. Behavioural control, however, was not shown to be significantly associated with depression. On the other hand, the study did show that adolescents who had high behavioural control scores commonly had low delinquency scores. However, psychological control was not significantly associated with delinquency.

The objective of Study 2 was to test an observational tool - *The Psychological Control Scale – Observer Rating (PCS-OBS)* designed to measure the parent's behavioural display of psychological control. The scale assessed six major behavioural characteristics: constraining verbal expressions; invalidating feelings; personal attack; guilt induction; love withdrawal; and erratic emotional behaviour. Depression was measured using the Depressed Mood score from the parent version of the Diagnostic Interview Schedule for Children (DISC; Fisher, Shaffer, Wicks, & Piacentini, 1989). Delinquency was measured using the Delinquent subscale of the Child Behaviour Checklist (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983). The findings revealed an association between psychological control and depression, but only in the

mother-daughter dyads. An unexpected finding was the association between behavioural control and depression, but only in the father-son dyads.

Delinquency was associated with behavioural control, but only for the mother-child dyads but not for the father-child dyads.

Study 3 was a longitudinal survey designed to test a new self-report measure of psychological control: the Psychological Control Scale-Youth Self Report (PCS-YSR) that assessed "invalidating" feelings, including constraining verbal expressions, personal attack, and love withdrawal. Behavioural control was measured by the 5-item monitoring scale used in Study 1. Depression was measured by the Child Depression Inventory (CDI: Kovacs, 1992). Delinquency was measured by the delinquent subscale of the CBCL\_YSR, as in Study 1.

This study's longitudinal design substantiated many of the correlational findings in the initial study. Psychological and behavioural control was shown to influence the development of youth difficulty, even after controlling for the stability of problem behaviours and their effect on parenting behaviours. As it was not limited by a cross-sectional design, this study had the ability to reveal the reciprocal relationship that existed between these variables. The survey showed that earlier adolescent depression and delinquency significantly predicted later parental psychological control. Parents whose children were exhibiting delinquent behaviours the year before became less behaviourally controlling and more psychologically controlling a year later. Barber stated:

"These studies have been useful for disaggregating parenting typologies that have dominated parenting literature. The analyses presented here suggest that psychological and behavioural control, common components of prevailing typologies, are meaningfully different. When measured

separately it becomes apparent that not only are they negatively related to each other (as all 3 studies indicate) but they appear to function differently vis-à-vis discrete youth characteristics" (1996, p. 3314).

Barber warned that positive psychological interventions and psychological control were not interchangeable behaviours. He argued that the former behaviour is a positive influence that encourages children to be aware of, and sensitive to, important issues (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994), whereas the latter behaviour has a negative effect on children's emotions and the way they evaluate themselves. To validate this argument, Barber referred to the studies by Hauser et al. (1984) and Hauser (1991) which showed that parent-child interactions such as explaining, expressing curiosity, and engaging in joint problem solving were effective in enhancing individuality and children's ego development (psychological autonomy). Conversely, interactions that devalued, judged, withheld, or appeared distracted and indifferent, tended to constrain the child and hindered the development of individuality (psychological control).

The link between parent's psychologically controlling behaviour and their children's depressive symptoms has been observed in clinical studies of depression. Clinicians would commonly report that people who suffer from depression often have controlling parents whose behaviours were over-intrusive, guilt inducing, and negatively evaluating (Burbach & Bourdin, 1986). In addition, depressed clients' descriptions of their relationships with parents suggested that the relationships were often undifferentiated or enmeshed (Bowen, 1978; Minuchin, 1974).

Pettit, Laird, Dodge, Bates and Criss (2001) sought to examine the antecedents of behavioural and psychological control in early adolescence. They linked behavioural control to parent's socialisation practices and psychological control to parent's need for power in the parent-adolescent relationship (usually the result of their own dysfunctional family history). Behavioural control was operationalised in terms of parental monitoring and supervision (Patterson, Reid, & Dishion, 1992). The findings showed that parents of preschool children who had a proactive parenting style subsequently tended to engage in high parental monitoring of early adolescents. On the other hand, parents of preschool children who had a harsh parenting style subsequently tended to engage in high levels of psychological control of early adolescents. There was a negative association between delinquency and monitoring, and a positive association between psychological control and adolescent anxiety, depression, and delinquent behaviour. In addition, a distinct pattern of behaviours and outcomes emerged in the findings. Harsh disciplinary practices were associated with externalising problems (Dodge, Pettit & Bates, 1994; Pettit, Bates, & Dodge, 1997). This association determined how psychologically controlling parents would be which, in turn, predicted internalised behavioural problems in adolescents - rather than externalised behavioural problems (Pettit, Laird, Dodge, Bates & Criss, 2001).

From the findings, Pettit et al. proposed that parents who wanted to contain their children's behavioural and psychological autonomy used harsh discipline tactics. The findings also indicated that proactive parenting, and later behavioural control, was moderated by mothers' perceptions of their children's

behavioural adjustment. Only when mothers perceived their children to have high externalising problems did proactive parenting determine later behavioural control (monitoring). A finding in the study that Pettit et al. did not expect was the association between high proactive parenting and later psychological control. It was suggested that people involved in high proactive parenting may have a tendency toward over-protective behaviours. This intrusive form of behavioural management inhibits children's exploration of assertiveness and independence. In summary, the findings in this study provided support for the idea that associations between early and later parenting can be moderated by family context (Pettit & Laird, 2002).

### **3.5.3 Rejection / Acceptance**

Parental rejection is based on the subjective feelings of adolescents (Hale, Van Der Valk, Engels & Meeus, 2005). Teenagers' experiences of affection, warmth and support from their parents will determine how accepted or rejected they will feel (Rohner, Khaleque, Couroyer & Connecticut, 2004). In other words, the quality of the affectional bond will determine whether, or not, teenagers' believe their parents are interested in them or concerned about them (Robertson & Simons, 1989).

Rohner, Khaleque, Couroyer and Connecticut (2005) suggest that the acceptance/rejection construct is composed of four different types of behaviour: warmth/affection; hostility/aggression; indifference/neglect; and undifferentiated rejection. They purport that parental rejection affects the psychosocial adjustment of all children regardless of their culture, gender, age or ethnicity.

On the basis of adolescents' self-reports it has been shown that parental rejection is positively associated with externalised problem behaviours which include behaviours such as hostility and aggression, and conduct disorders. It is also negatively associated with internalised problem behaviours such as depression and emotional instability. Furthermore, rejection is inversely associated with adolescent self-esteem and self-adequacy. Rejected adolescents are likely to have distorted mental representations which they inadvertently seek to maintain by ways of:

“selective attention, selective perception, faulty styles of causal attribution, and distorted cognitive information processing, rejected individuals are expected... to self-propel along qualitatively different developmental pathways from accepted or loved people” (2005, p. 312).

Other researchers have drawn a connection between teenagers' feelings of insecurity and detachment and their perceptions of parental indifference and uninvolved involvement with their lives (Hill & Holmbeck, 1986; Papini & Roggman, 1992; Ryan & Lynch, 1989; Turner, Irwin & Millstein, 1991; Turner, Irwin, Tschann & Millstein, 1993). Burge and Hammen (1991) also drew a connection between negative parental rearing behaviour and adolescent depression. Mother-child dyads were given a topic to discuss where they were likely to disagree, and a negative interaction was likely to occur. Observations were made of the quality of the interactions between mother and child. Children's depressive symptoms were monitored at the initial interview, and again after a six month interval. The findings revealed that certain parental rearing practices,

particularly high levels of rejection and low levels of emotional warmth, were positively associated with increased levels of depressive symptoms in children.

There is also evidence to show that adolescent perception of rejection is positively associated with mothers' negative affective states (See Section 3.6.1 for the relevant studies).

### **3.6 Parental moods and emotions and parenting effectiveness**

In a review of parent-adolescent relationships, Steinberg (2001) stated that parents can undergo a great deal of stress just in trying to cope with, and adjust to, the demands and challenges that accompany their teenagers' transition through adolescence. As yet, how this stress affects their mental health and their ability to parent effectively is not clearly understood. Ambert (1997a, 1997b) conducted qualitative and survey studies of parents of adolescents with severe behavioural difficulties. The findings showed that parents felt their mental and physical health had been compromised as a result of the shame and distress they felt in relation to their teenager's delinquent behaviour. Consequently, these parents (either from the need for self-preservation, despair or some other reason) found themselves to be less responsive to their teenager, less able to manage and discipline effectively, and ultimately more detached from their teenagers. These findings were even more strongly observed in families which lacked social supports or had minimal help from mediation services.

### **3.6.1 Mothers' negative affect and parenting effectiveness**

Parental psychological wellbeing has been shown to be a strong determinant of adolescent psychosocial adjustment. Roberts (1999) in her review of depression in children and adolescents states that depressed mothers are less actively involved in their children's lives and less able to express positive emotions, reactions or behaviours towards their children (Cole & Rehm, 1986; Tarullo, DeMulder, Martinez, & Radke-Yarrow, 1994). In addition, the parenting literature suggests that parental responsiveness mediates the relationship between parental distress and children's adjustment. Parents who suffer from severe emotional distress are less warm and supportive of their children (Downey & Coyne, 1990; Gelfand & Teti, 1990) and this detachment can negatively affect their offspring's adjustment (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Steinberg, 1990).

Needless to say, the mechanisms that govern the association between parental adjustment and adolescent adjustment are under-researched. There is still a need to establish how specific cognitive and affective processes affect the way parents interact with their teenage children during challenging altercations with them (Roberts, 1999). Steinberg (2001) suggests that the findings from Silverberg and Steinberg's (1990) study show that parent-adolescent conflicts are more distressing and emotionally perturbing for parents than they are for teenagers. In their study it is proposed that parents tend to suffer from longer-lasting effects of negative interactions, while teenagers walk away relatively unaffected by quarrels. Steinberg states:



“the day-to-day conflicts over mundane matters that psychologists had dismissed as unimportant were, in fact, unimportant to teenagers but were a significant source of distress for parents” (2001, p. 6).

Downey and Coyne (1990) found that the cognitive processes of depressed mothers can cause them to make attributional biases regarding their children’s behaviour, thus affecting how they respond to their children. In an earlier study, Gondoli and Silverberg (1997) endeavoured to discover whether cognitive processes, specifically parental perspective-taking and perceived parenting efficacy, played a mediatory role in the association between parent’s mild emotional distress and parental responsiveness. Gondoli and Silverberg found that distressed mothers felt unable to handle many of the parenting situations in which they found themselves. In addition, it was found that mothers who felt confident in their parenting role were more responsive to their teenagers, warmer, and more accepting of the adolescent’s need for psychological autonomy. They concluded that individual differences in mood predict individual differences in parenting, even when non-clinical levels of emotional distress are considered.

### **3.6.2 Mothers’ emotions and parenting effectiveness**

The paucity of research on the effect of parental emotions on parenting effectiveness and adolescent adjustment suggests that researchers assume emotions have a minimal role to play in parental decision-making, problem solving, and parental behaviours (Zajonc, 1980b). Nevertheless, there is a growing belief amongst social cognition researchers that the influence of emotion on cognitive processing is much greater than previous theories have

supposed (Berscheid, 1982, 1983; Clark & Isen, 1982; Mandler, 1984). Mandler (1984) states that emotion arousal is a trigger that compels the individual to assess specific events or situations in the environment that would warrant their attention. Specifically, emotions are aroused if a person perceives that their goals are being interrupted in some way. An interruption can either enhance or hinder one's goals. If the individual perceives that their goals are being hindered they are likely to experience negative emotions, whereas positive emotions are likely if they perceive the reverse as the case. The intensity of emotion will be determined by the extent of the interruption and the level of arousal experienced (Fiske & Taylor, 1991).

Berscheid (1982, 1983) derives his theory of emotion in close relationships from Mandler's theory of emotion. He states that people in close relationships often have interdependent goals; these can be basic goals such as doing chores together, or more complex goals like struggling to cope with a rebellious teenager. The more complex the goal the greater the emotion experienced if it is interrupted or violated. Ironically, the closest relationships can appear to be the most dispassionate ones, simply because their interdependent goals are still working well for them. If goals are not being challenged or threatened then emotions are not aroused and the relationship continues to run smoothly (Fiske & Taylor, 1991).

Dix (1991) proposes that emotions and cognitions are interrelated. He states that emotions can predict cognitive processing, such as how effective the individual is in processing information. Conversely, cognitive structures (such as goals) can be highly predictive of emotions. In relation to parental emotions,

for example, when parents feel their goals are being achieved this can evoke in them strong positive emotions, but when they feel their concerns are being undermined by their children, it is likely to evoke in them strong negative affective responses.

Dix (1991) states that research on parental emotions is limited, and proposes that this is primarily because it has been assumed that emotions are stable traits which can be measured on a uni-dimensional scale, from positive emotions at one end to negative emotions at the other. In his review of the relevant parenting literature, Dix (1991) found that there have been few studies that have examined parents' understanding of their own emotions; the effect their emotions have on their children; the strategies parents use to regulate the expression of negative affect, such as anger; or, when parents choose to use these strategies. Furthermore, many of the studies that have been conducted have failed to differentiate between parental emotions, parental attitudes and parental behaviours. Consequently, it is unclear

"to what extent affective processes, rather than cognitive or behavioural processes, are responsible for the ineffective parenting occurring in distressed families" (Dix, 1991, p. 4).

Over a decade after Dix's review, the "course and consequences" of parental affective states has still not been satisfactorily investigated (Kim, Conger, Lorenz, & Elder, 2001). This is surprising for two reasons. First, it is known that the frequency and duration of conflictual interactions between parent-adolescent dyads, though generally viewed as normative in most families, increases the intensity of negative affect for both parents and

teenagers (Laursen, Coy, & Collins, 1998; Paikoff & Brooks-Gunn, 1991). Second, there has recently been some recognition that the challenges and changes of adolescence can have quite severe effects on parents' own mental health or psychological adjustment (Ambert, 1997; Lerner, Brennan, Noh, & Wilson, 1998; Steinberg, 2001; Stern & Smith, 1999). Many parents find it difficult to adjust to the new boundaries their teenagers set in terms of the expression of affection, and the degree of independence they expect (Laursen & Collins, 1994; Paikoff & Brooks-Gunn, 1991). These issues can have a significant toll on the parent-adolescent relationship (Ambert, 1997).

### **3.6.3 The reciprocal effects of affective states**

It has been found that the ability to regulate one's emotions (to control or modify negative and positive affect) is paramount for the operation of constructive social interactions and personal development (Bandura, 1986; Larsen, 2000). Dix (1991) states that poor parental modelling of affect regulation can lead to children learning poor emotion-linked behaviours that, in turn, feed back into a cycle of interactions between parent-child dyads that undermines their relationship and threatens the long-term psychosocial adjustment of the child. Implicit within relationships that are characterised by a high amount of negative emotion or a low amount of positive emotion is a lack of, or breakdown of, processes that facilitate mutual adaptations. Mutual adaptations assist parents and children in achieving their own desired outcomes while simultaneously promoting a healthy and fulfilling relationship with each another (Bugental & Shennum, 1984; Westerman, 1990).

Kim, Conger, Lorenz and Elder (2001) suggest that an important factor to consider when assessing the affective aspects of parent-adolescent interactions is the intensity of emotions that occur for these dyadic relationships during the adolescent years (Laursen, Coy & Collins, 1998; Paikoff & Brooks-Gunn, 1991). To investigate this, they conducted a longitudinal study of parents' and children's expression of negative emotions to assess the joint effects of intense negativity within parent-adolescent dyadic interactions. The study consisted of 451 two-parent families and at least one of their teenage children living in the rural areas of Iowa, U.S.A. Their findings showed that negative affect between parents and their teenagers was mutually reinforcing, and began during early adolescence. This was consistent with the findings of Conger and Ge's (1999) and with Patterson's (1982) escalation hypothesis. Patterson (1982) theorised that the onset of emotionally negative interactions between parents and adolescents is a precursor to ongoing expressions of negative affect, which intensify over time. Kim et al.'s findings also showed that the reciprocal nature of expressions of negative affect determined how rapidly emotions would intensify with time, but also the rate at which they would recede once negative confrontations had reached their upper limit. They stated that:

“On average, parents of target adolescents with initially high levels of negative emotion expressed to parents tended to be on a trajectory that showed an initially steeper linear increase and a later, more rapid decrease in negative emotion expressed to target adolescents. Similarly, parents high initial level of negative emotion expressed to adolescents significantly predicted adolescent rapid increases as well as later declines in negative emotions expressed to parents” (Kim et al. 2001, p. 787).

Kim et al. also proposed the notion of a ceiling relating to the expression of negative emotions in interactions between parents and teenagers. The parents and adolescents who exceeded this limit were often in threat of a break-down in the parent-adolescent relationship as a result of violence or separation.

#### **3.6.4 Emotions and parenting goals**

Dix (1991) suggests that normative parental emotions urge or motivate parents to fulfil parenting goals such as caring, comforting, protecting, teaching or disciplining their children. Emotions compel parents to act toward their children in ways that are appropriate to the demands of the situation (ie, to lavish affection on their child; to exercise firm but loving discipline). Parents who have maladaptive emotional processes (ie, depressed or detached parents) do not feel motivated in the same way as normative parents.

Researchers have found that dysfunctional parenting is often due to a lack of "child-related affect", which means a lack of parental concern for their children's needs, wants or desires. Child-related affect ensures that parents respond to their children in a manner that is quick, appropriate and constructive.

Dysfunctional parenting, on the other hand, indicates a concern for immediate parent-centred goals and an inability to respond to their children or to situations in the most appropriate or adaptive manner. The emotional detachment of these parents results in slow, inappropriate or unsupportive responses to children (Bousha & Twentyman, 1984; Crittenden, 1981; Vasta, 1982).

In summary, the role of emotions in parenting is extremely important. Dix proposes that :

"Conceptions of parenting that ignore emotions ignore the heart of the matter. Emotions both bind and destroy parent-child relationships. They determine how and how well parents respond to children and over time how successfully development proceeds. To understand child rearing, researchers must understand the concerns about which parents care most and the emotions that control their attempts to promote them" (1991, p. 20).

Moreover, it is important to take into account the role of positive emotions in normative populations. Previously, it was assumed that positive emotions simply mirrored the effects of negative emotions, inasmuch as they had the opposite effects of negative emotions. However, researchers are now acknowledging that positive emotions should be measured on a separate continuum as they have their own specific and distinct function (Frijda, 1986, Isen, 1987). As yet, only a few studies have been conducted which look at the role of positive affect on the quality of parent-adolescent relationships. In most cases positive affect has been operationalised in terms of family closeness and supportive behaviours (Lerner, Brennan, Noh & Wilson, 1998). In addition, there is much to learn about this relationship between parental beliefs and emotions and how their relationship works to impact on the parent-adolescent relationship and adolescent psychosocial adjustment.





**Section B**

**Empirical Studies on  
Parenting Goals**



## **Chapter Four**

### **Mothers' Beliefs, Values and Affective Responses in Relation to Parenting a Teenager**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Adolescence is a challenging and eventful time, full of change and transition, not only for teenagers but also for their families. Collins and Luebker (1994) suggest that coping with an adolescent child can be very distressing and debilitating for parents because they have difficulty adjusting to the cognitive, psychological and emotional changes that occur during adolescence (Silverberg & Steinberg, 1987; Small, Eastman & Cornelius, 1988). In their expectancy-violation-realignment model, Collins and Luebker suggest that parents need to learn to adopt a parental role that differs from the one they had when their teenager was a child. Parents who are willing to alter their expectations and make the necessary adaptations to a more egalitarian relationship with their teenager are thought to be better equipped to provide the emotional and psychological support their teenager might need during the course of their teenage years. Unfortunately, not all parents are able to successfully accommodate the demands of adolescence. Instead, they can become progressively more anxious and stressed by the ambiguousness of their parental role, angry by the recurring violations of family values, and fearful that their teenagers will become emotionally detached from them.

It is a proposition of this study and throughout this project that parental beliefs, values and attitudes about adolescence and the parenting role during this

stage of their teenagers' life will have dramatic consequences for the parent-adolescent relationship. However, to date, there has been little research, particularly qualitative research, conducted to assess the parental beliefs and ideas about adolescence. Traditionally, beliefs, values and attitudes were thought to be too difficult to measure (Bugental & Johnston, 2000). However, more recently, researchers have suggested that these parenting processes can be operationalised in terms of parenting goals. As Bugental and Johnston point out:

"Goals serve as a vehicle through which parents translate global parenting values into specific parenting actions, and as a mechanism for organising these actions" (2000, p. 335).

Contemporary models and theories of parenting behaviours often depict parenting goals as one of the key cognitive components governing parenting practices (Collins & Luebker, 1994; Dix, 1992). However, despite the recognition of their influential role, there has been a paucity of empirical studies conducted to understand them. Dix states:

"goals have received little empirical attention from parenting researchers, despite the central role they hold in many theories of the cases of parenting behaviour... Parenting goals are portrayed as organising cognitions, defining the outcome that a parent hopes to achieve during an interaction with a child, and thereby influencing the behaviour that a parent is likely to use" (1992, p. 465).

As a result, individual and group differences in parenting goals and the influence they have on parent-child relationships remain somewhat of a mystery (Dix & Grusec, 1985; Goodnow, 1988). According to Karoly (1993) one reason for this may be the assumption that goals are dependent variables which are not expected to change across situations. Grusec and colleagues (1994, 2000)

advance a similar explanation for the lack of attention given to parenting goals in the parenting literature. In their view, traditional parenting models have assumed that normative parents are driven largely by one principal socialisation goal, namely, *to train their children to be totally compliant to parental expectations and values*. However, this view is disputed by Grusec and colleagues who argue that it is a static and inflexible way to view parenting. Instead, they propose that in the present social climate there appears to be significant variability in the parenting goals of parents. Such goals can vary from those of some parents who expect their children to comply completely with their wishes, to those of others encouraging their children to question family values. Alternatively, goals can extend from parents simply wanting their children to behave appropriately in public, to other parents disregarding their children's inappropriate behaviour for the sake of maintaining a happy harmonious household (Goodnow, 1994; Grusec & Goodnow, 1994; Hastings & Grusec, 1998).

In accordance with Collins and Luebker's (1993) model, the present project proposes that maternal relationship-centred goals would be of greatest influence during the adolescent years. Levine, Stein and Liwag (1999) proposed that parents who place greater importance on understanding their children's perspective on events, and who empathise with the way their children feel about the event, are more likely to enjoy a better relationship with their children (ie, greater connectedness) than parents who do not have these same attitudes (Crockenberg & Litman, 1990; Farber & Mazlish, 1980; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Consistent with this view, Collins and Luebker's (1994) expectancy-violation-

realignment model stresses the need for parents to understand the importance of relationship-centred goals in order to accommodate the changing needs of their adolescent children. The gap in the parenting literature in relation to the parenting goals of mothers with adolescent children is the impetus for this thesis.

Prior to the beginning of this thesis, the principal researcher attended an unstructured focus group meeting of parents with teenage children. This meeting showed that no matter how well parents understood the importance of being authoritative in their relationship with their children, they still struggled with understanding how to commit to this style of parenting when their children became "obstinate" teenagers. There were two main *affective* issues which many of the parents seemed to be trying to deal with. The first was how they were supposed to behave toward their teenagers in terms of showing them physical and verbal affection, when their teenagers apparently felt uncomfortable with this kind of display of emotion. The second issue these parents faced was knowing how to respond when their teenagers frequently challenged parental authority by violating family values and standards. They questioned whether it was appropriate to express to their teenager how upset and angry their behaviour made them. They were also unclear about whether having any expectation of compliance to family standards was reasonable or not. The observations made during this unstructured meeting provided the incentive in this project to assess how mothers' affective responses toward their teenagers affected the parent-adolescent relationship and adolescent well-being. Hence, in the first study of this project, mothers were asked about the importance they assigned to showing

*affection* to teenage children, and how they expressed their *anger* towards teenagers during challenging interactions with them.

Having considered the role of parents' affective responses on the parent-adolescent relationship it seemed pertinent to ensure that this study also gave due consideration to the role of child effects on parent-adolescent interactions (ie, teenagers' expression of positive, negative or indifferent emotions towards mothers). Kim, Conger, Lorenz and Elder (2001) conducted a longitudinal study on the reciprocal nature of negative affect in 451 parent-child dyadic interactions. Their findings showed that the expression of negative affect was mutually reinforcing, and its onset tended to occur during early adolescence. The study which is described in this chapter is a cross-sectional design and so is not able to assess the reciprocal nature of parent-adolescent affective responses over time, but it can nevertheless begin to explore how the affective responses of teenagers are related to mothers' global parenting goals.

This study has attempted to take into consideration both the negative and positive affective responses teenagers have toward their mothers. Previously, it was assumed that positive affective reactions simply mirrored the effects of negative affective reactions inasmuch as they were assumed to give rise to the opposite effects. However, researchers are now acknowledging that positive reactions should be measured on separate dimensions because they have their own specific and distinctive functions (Frijda, 1986; Isen, 1987).

#### **4.2 Objectives and Aims**

The present study was divided into two main areas of interest. First, it explored mothers' ideas about their global parenting goals (see section 3.3) and their parental role during adolescence. Second, it surveyed mothers' affective responses toward their teenagers. The key areas of interest were the importance of showing teenagers affection and mothers' anger responses to disobedience or non-compliance.

The specific aims of this study are as follows:

1. To assess mothers' ideas about their parenting goals based on four main centres-of-concern: parent-centred, relationship-centred, child-centred empathic, and child-centred socialisation concerns.
2. To survey mothers' beliefs about the importance of expressing affection to their teenagers; the factors that influence the level of importance they assign to affection; and, mothers' thoughts and observations in relation to teenagers' response to affection.
3. To analyse whether maternal expression of affection is related to the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship (attachment, family functioning) and adolescent psychosocial adjustment (self-esteem, depression, problem behaviours). It is expected that affectionate mothers will have a stronger bond with their teenagers and more well-adjusted teenagers than unaffectionate mothers.



4. To survey mothers' thoughts about their responses to teenagers when they are angry about their disobedience or non-compliance.
5. To analyse whether maternal anger-responses are related to the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship and adolescent psychosocial adjustment. It is expected that calm and controlled mothers will have a stronger bond with their teenagers, and more well-adjusted teenagers than aggressive mothers will have.
6. To survey mothers' observations of their teenagers' positive, negative or indifferent affective responses or dispositions toward them.
7. To assess the relationship between mothers' affective responses (affection and anger) and teenagers' dispositions. It is hypothesised that mothers who show affection to their teenagers and remain calm when they become angry are more likely to have adolescents with more positive dispositions than are mothers who are unaffectionate and/or aggressive when angry.
8. To assess whether teenagers' dispositions were related to their perceptions of the quality of the parent- adolescent relationship.

### **4.3 Method**

#### **4.3.1 Participants**

The participants comprised 37 pairs of mothers and their adolescent children (17 males, 20 females) between the ages of 12 and 18 years (mean age = 14.5 years). The decision to interview mothers and not fathers was a pragmatic

one, based on the time constraints for the interviewer. Mothers were more accessible and more frequently available to be interviewed. Ainsworth (1989) and Bowlby (1982) argue that children's attachment to mothers is a stronger predictor of self-esteem than attachment to father. Paterson, Pryor and Field (1995) also propose that adolescents' attachments to their fathers and mothers affect their self-esteem in similar ways. It was stipulated that mother-teenager dyads had to be biologically related.

The majority of families, 23 (62.2%) lived in the Southern Metropolitan area of Adelaide, South Australia; 6 (16.2%), 5 (13.5%) and 3 (7.9%) of the families lived in the Northern, Eastern, and Western metropolitan areas, respectively. All participants were of European Australian descent. The family structure of the participants in this study consisted of two-parent families, 23 (62.2%), blended families, 2 (5.4%) and single-parent families, 12 (32.4%). The young people were recruited from local high schools and through Youth and Parent Services at UnitingCare Wesley (formerly known as Adelaide Central Mission). Only one teenager within each family was interviewed. This person's selection was based on upon the next birthday method<sup>1</sup>. Teenagers with mental disabilities were not included in this study.

#### **4.3.2 Procedure**

Community Centres, churches and sporting venues were contacted as a means of recruiting participants for this study. To abide by privacy laws it was

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<sup>1</sup> If there was more than one teenager in the household the researcher asked to interview the teenager whose birthday was coming up next.

requested that the site co-ordinators approach parents to ask them for permission to give their telephone number to a PhD researcher in relation to a study on parenting. Counsellors at Youth and Parent Services at UnitingCare Wesley were also contacted and were asked to approach clients in a similar manner as stated above. The purpose of this contact was to include within this study parents and teenagers who were having severe problems in their interpersonal relationship with one another. The researcher made phone contact with all the mothers and asked if they would be willing to participate in the study.

All interviews were conducted by the researcher and all took place in the participants' homes. The interview with mothers was divided into two parts. First, there was the open-ended interview which included pre-designed prompts if the mothers were struggling to answer the question. Second, mothers and then the teenagers were presented with a set of four psychometric scales which they were asked to complete. Mothers were also asked to fill in a Child Behavioural Checklist and a demographic information sheet with questions such as annual income, number of children, education level, ethnicity, employment and teenager's age and gender.

To reduce the risk of socially desirable responses the researcher stressed that no moral judgements would be made on the basis of the answers mothers provided as there was a great deal of evidence to show that raising an adolescent could be highly stressful for parents. The researcher also encouraged mothers to be as open and honest as possible because their responses would be highly valuable in improving the knowledge and practices of family counselling

and intervention services. Finally, the researcher assured the participants that they should feel under no obligation to respond to any of the questions if they felt uncomfortable or unhappy about answering them, and that they could terminate the interview at any point. To further reduce the risk of socially desirable responses the researchers met with mothers and teenagers separately. All participants were told that the study was completely anonymous and confidential. They were also told they could terminate the study at any point if they so desired.

#### **4.3.3 Psychometric Measures**

Most of the measures were based on mothers' and adolescents' self-reports other than the Child Behavioural Checklist (CBCL), which was filled in by the parent.

**(a) Family Functioning:** Both parent and teenager filled in the general subscale of the Family Assessment Device (FAD: Epstein, Baldwin, & Bishop, 1983). The rationale behind this was to increase internal consistency and reduce individual rater-bias. Schwarz, Barton-Henry, and Pruzinsky's (1985) study sought to test the reliability of aggregating multiple rater scores on parental child-rearing behaviour. They found that the internal consistency of aggregated scales (mother, father, child and sibling) were higher than the internal consistency of the individual scales. Furthermore, having the perceptions of more than one person in the family produces greater convergent validity and control for demand effects than are likely in self-rating procedures. Other studies have confirmed these findings by showing that composite scores increased the reliability and validity of

the measures (Rushton, Brainerd & Pressley, 1983; Schwartz, Strickland & Krolick, 1974).

The general family functioning subscale is comprised of 11 items relating to how well parents and teenagers get along together. Participants were asked to consider comments such as "I accept my teenager for who they are / My parents accept me for who I am" and "My teenager can talk to me when they feel sad/I can talk to my parents when I feel sad". They were asked to rate the items on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). The alpha reliability of this scale was .92.

**(b) Attachment Scale:** This scale, developed by Kerr and Stattin (2000), focused predominantly on the strained relationship between the parent and the adolescent. Questions focused mostly on possible negative aspects of the relationship, for example, "How often do you feel disappointed with your mother? How often do you feel your teenager is disappointed with you?" and "Do you wish that your mother was different? Does your teenager wish you were different?" Participants were asked to rate their responses from 1 (always) to 5 (never) or from 1 (not at all) to 5 (totally). The alpha reliability of this scale was .88, the test-retest reliability coefficient was .75.

**(c) Self-Esteem:** The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965) measures the negative and positive feelings that participants have about themselves. There were 10 statements including such examples as "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself" and "I wish I could have more respect for myself". Participants'

responses for each statement were scored on a four point rating scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). The alpha reliability of this scale was .78, the test-retest reliability coefficient ranged between .82 and .88.

**(d) Depression:** Beck's Depression Inventory (BDI: Beck & Beck, 1972)

comprised of twenty-one groups of statements that looked at how the individual had been feeling over the past couple of weeks. The questions were concerned with such things as pessimism, self-dislike, suicidal thoughts, agitation etc.

Participants were asked to rate their answers from 0 (not their experience) to 3 (very much their experience). The alpha reliability of this scale was .86, the test-retest reliability coefficient ranged from .88 to .91.

**(e) Child Behaviour Checklist:** The parent filled in the Syndrome Scales (internalising and externalising problems/behaviours) of the revised CBCL

(Achenbach, 1991). This consisted of 13 items of anxious/depressed; 8 items of withdrawn/depressed; 11 items of somatic complaints; 11 items of social problems; 15 items of thought problems; 10 items of attention problems; 17 items of rule-breaking behaviour; 18 items of aggressive behaviour, and 17 items of other problems. Overall, the checklist was divided into three subgroups: internalising problems (32 items), externalising problems (36 items) and other problems (18 items). Parents were asked to rate whether each of the items described their teenager from 0 (not true) to 2 (very true). A high score on this checklist would mean that the child had severe behavioural problems. This scale

was altered for the analysis: "0 to 2" was changed to "1 to 3". The alpha reliability of this scale was .86, the test-retest reliability coefficient was .95 to 1.00.

#### 4.3.4 Reliability Analysis

Reliability analyses were performed on the different measurement scales to ensure they possessed adequate levels of internal consistency. Table 4.1 shows that each of the scales used for mothers and teenagers in this study had good internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha values > 0.80 or greater. One item was removed from the teenagers' BDI scale; this item related to their interest in sex and was considered irrelevant and inappropriate in the context of this study. The internal consistency of this scale was not severely affected by the deletion of this item (.87).

Table 4.1  
*Reliability Analysis for Principle Measures: Perceptions of Attachment, Family Functioning, Self-esteem, BDI and CBCL*

	<u>No. of cases</u>	<u>No. of items</u>	<u>Cronbach's Alpha</u>
<b>Mothers</b>			
• Attachment	37	8	.87
• Family Functioning	37	11	.87
• Self-Esteem	37	10	.88
• BDI	37	21	.92
• CBCL	37	105	.97
<b>Teenagers</b>			
• Attachment	37	8	.89
• Family Functioning	37	11	.84
• Self-Esteem	37	10	.89
• BDI	37	20	.87

#### **4.3.5 The Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the 37 mothers, and each took approximately one and a half hours. This time frame included responses to the psychological scales which were conducted after the interviews.

##### **(a) Analysis of interviews**

The researcher's first objective was to conduct a content analysis on the data collected on mothers' goals and teenagers' affective responses to mothers. Information from the participants was condensed in such a way that it became systematically comparable. This study used a methodological approach to qualitative analysis outlined by Strauss (1987). It constitutes a grounded theory that is based on inductive and deductive analytical approaches to assessing data.

Audiotapes of all the interviews were made to ensure that an accurate account of participants' words and meanings was established. This procedure made it possible for the researcher to make notes on any ideas, thoughts or perceptions that the participants communicated or emphasised during the course of the interview. These field notes enabled the researcher to place the participants' message or responses within a broader contextual framework. Subsequently, the interviews were transcribed and the field notes were added at the appropriate places.

The initial process used in analysing the data was open-coding. This entailed counting specific units within the data. Units in this study consisted of words, phrases and concepts. A new category was made for each unit that did



not fit under an existing category. Categories, as they grew and developed, went through a continual consolidation process. This meant some categories were merged with others, other categories that had expanded into two or three different themes were divided, and some more extraneous categories were removed completely. The overall objective was to ensure that all categories were distinct from the others, representative of the data, and well-defined. Strauss (1987) emphasises the importance of minutely analysing the data in this way to ensure that there has been an extensive theoretical coverage of the information provided. Once the open-coding process was complete a more intense process was initiated, known as axial coding (Strauss, 1987). Axial coding aims at narrowing down the terms within each category into specific clusters or meanings. At this point theoretical coding becomes more important than content coding.

Conceptual relationships and patterns between and within the categories were sought after. Eventually, a few key categories or themes, pertinent to the issues being explored, became apparent. The remaining categories seemed to generally support, substantiate, or extend the ideas of the key categories. During the theoretical coding stage, the researcher continually referred back to the actual data to ensure that she did not bias the findings by her own views on the subject at hand. To ensure the validity of the coding process, the researcher engaged two other colleagues to identify what key categories existed in the transcripts and the sub-categories which were consistent with them.

### **(b) Content of semi-structured interviews**

The interview questions were divided into three major sets. The first set of open-ended questions was in relation to mothers' global parenting goals. This data was collected to explore the content of mothers' goals and to ensure that this project was accurate in its representation of mothers' goals in the current social climate. Only global parenting goals are assessed in this study, however, these findings will be used to develop a comprehensive questionnaire about parenting goals in the second study (see Chapter 5: Method, p. 155).

Previous studies have repeatedly identified a number of universal concerns held by parents. These include goals such as the desire for manners, obedience, and the child's happiness (Kohn, 1977; LeVine, 1988). In the present study eight pregenerated goals, outlined by Dix (1992) and Grusec and Goodnow (1994), were the starting points for mothers to discuss their views and concerns. There were two parent-centred goals (ie, compliance and mothers' own needs); two relationship-centred goals (ie, love/affection, respect/ cooperation); two child-centred socialisation goals (ie, productivity and manners) and two child-centred empathic goals (ie, teenagers' present happiness and safety). The specific questions in this study were as follows:

- "How would you describe a good parent-adolescent relationship?"
- "How would you say you generally act and feel when your own needs are hindered by your teenager's needs or wants?"
- "What level of compliance do you expect from your teenager when you give them specific instructions?"

- “How concerned are you with your teenager’s happiness and other emotional needs? How does this compare with other concerns you may have such as whether they are well-mannered or obedient to authority?”
- “What are your views about training your teenager to be a productive and useful member of society; and how important do you really think this is?”
- “How would you explain your parental role in relation to the safety issues your teenager may face?”
- “Do you have any other thoughts about your role as a parent that have not been covered by the above questions?”

There was a high level of interrater agreement for responses within each of the categories which ranged from 86 % to 94 % with a mean interrater agreement of 92 %. In the cases where raters had coded units differently, consensus was sought to determine what the most appropriate coding should be. All Cohen’s kappas were found to be 0.5 or higher indicating moderate to high levels of agreement between the raters.

The second set of questions focused on mothers’ ideas about showing affection to their teenager, and how they perceived their own anger-responses to disobedience or non-compliance. The main questions were as follows:

- “How affectionate are you with your teenager? How important do you think it is to show affection and warmth to your teenager? Why do you think it is, or is not, important?”
- “When do you get angry with your teenager? What sorts of things do you say/do to your teenager when you are angry with them? What are your thoughts about the way you act when you are angry?”

A number of other questions were asked in an effort to understand the role that teenagers' affective responses have on mothers' views about parenting adolescents. These were as follows:

- "What positive emotion does your teenager express towards you?"
- "What negative emotion does your teenager express towards you?"
- "Is your teenager ever indifferent towards you?"

These questions were each followed by a single question to determine the frequency of the teenagers' responses:

- "How often do these (positive/negative/indifferent) emotions occur?"

There was a high level of inter-rater agreement for each of the categories and sub-categories in this section, which ranged from 84 % to 91 % with a mean interrater agreement of 87%. In the cases where raters had coded responses differently, consensus was sought to determine what the most appropriate coding should be. Once again, all Cohen's kappas were found to be 0.5 or higher indicating moderate to high levels of agreement between the raters.

The third and final set of questions was designed to help compose four relevant and valid *vignettes* that could be used in subsequent studies. Mothers were asked to recall "two or three challenging interactions with their teenagers in the last six months and how they would describe these events in terms of *typical behaviour* for their teenager". The four interactions most commonly reported by all mothers were used to help design the vignettes for Study 2 and Study 3. To ensure reliability, a colleague was asked to sort the data into groups and subgroups, according to the similarity of the situations reported. The mean inter-

rater agreement was 90% (see the Methodology section of Study 2 for the four vignettes).

#### 4.3.6 Analysis of qualitative and quantitative data

When possible, qualitative data was coded so that quantitative analysis could be conducted to assess the relationships between adolescent psychosocial adjustment, the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship, and mothers' responses to interview questions. The coding that was used can be seen in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2  
*Codings used for the importance mothers' gave to showing affection, how mothers expressed their anger, and mothers' observations of adolescent disposition*

<b>Parenting goals</b>	<b>Showing affection</b>	<b>Anger responses</b>	<b>Adolescent disposition</b>
Parent-centred	Important	Talk with them or speak firmly to them	Positive
Child-centred • empathic • socialisation	Not important	Physically or verbally aggressive	Negative
Relationship-centred			Indifferent

#### 4.4 Results

All the significant tests in this section are two-tailed and have an alpha level of .05, except where indicated.

#### **4.4.1 Overview**

The semi-structured interviews of this study allowed for the qualitative analysis of mothers' responses to such things as (a) their beliefs about adolescence and their parenting goals; (b) their beliefs about the needs and wants of their teenage child and how this affected their goals; and (c) their understanding of their affective reactions to conflict situations with their teenagers. The responses from the qualitative study were coded so that some preliminary quantitative analysis could be conducted. The coding of qualitative responses made it possible to explore the relationship between mothers' beliefs and goals, mothers' and adolescents' affective responses, mothers' and adolescents' wellbeing, and the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship.

#### **4.4.2 Demographic characteristics of the sample**

Table 4.2 shows that nearly two-thirds (62.1%) of the mother-teenager dyads visited in this study were in homes with two biological parents, and just over one-third (37.8%) were in homes with a single-parent or blended family. (There were only two blended families in this study and the mothers were the biological parent of the teenager interviewed). It can be seen that the distribution of male teenagers and female teenagers was similar in both two-parent households and single-parent households.

**Table 4.3**  
*Distribution of male and female teenagers according to family structure, mothers' education and mothers' occupation*

	N	<u>Family Structure</u>		<u>Mothers Education</u>		<u>Mother: Occupation</u>	
		2-parent	Single & blended	Grade 1-TAFE	University & Post Grad	Home & blue collar	White collar & rofessional
		<u>N (%)</u>	<u>N (%)</u>	<u>N (%)</u>	<u>N (%)</u>	<u>N (%)</u>	<u>N (%)</u>
<b>Male Teens</b>							
<b>Age: 12 to 18</b>	17	10 (27.0)	7 (18.9)	11 (29.7)	6 (16.2)	5 (13.5)	12 (32.4)
<b>Female teens</b>							
<b>Age: 12 to 18</b>	20	13 (35.1)	7 (18.9)	12 (32.4)	8 (21.6)	10 (27.1)	10 (27.1)
<b>All teenagers</b>							
<b>Age: 12 to 18</b>	37	23 (62.1)	14 (37.8)	23 (62.2)	14 (37.8)	15 (40.5)	22 (59.5)

TAFE: technical college; Home: home duties

Twenty-three (62.2%) of the mothers were educated as far as High School or technical college (TAFE) and 14 (37.8%) of the mothers had a university or post-graduate degree. More teenagers had mothers with a High School or technical college (TAFE) education than mothers with a tertiary education. There were 12 (59.5%) mothers in white collar occupations (56.8) or professional occupations (2.7%). Fifteen (40.5%) of the mothers had home duties (16.2%) or were students (8.1%) or in blue collar (16.2%) occupations. There were twice as many mothers with sons in white collar/professional occupations than home duties/blue collar occupations. The mothers of daughters were evenly distributed between white collar/professional occupations and home duties/students/blue collar occupations.

In twenty (54%) of the families the combined income was below 50,000 dollars/annum and 16 (43.2%) families had a combined income above 50,000 dollars/annum. There was missing data for only one of the participating families.

In general, more male teenagers (11 of 16) belonged to families with income below 50,000 dollars, and more female teenagers (11 of 20) belonged to families with income above 50,000 dollars.

Chi-square tests were performed to assess any association between the demographic variables (family structure, income, mother's education, and mother's occupation). Although the majority of the analyses between the variables showed no significant associations, there were some significant relationships between family structure and three of the other variables. Chi-square analyses found significant associations between family structure and mother's occupation, mother's education, and combined income. Mothers in two-parent households were more likely to be found in white collar or professional occupations, whereas single parent mothers were in blue collar occupations or home duties,  $\chi^2(1, N = 37) = 8.91, p < .05$ . Furthermore, mothers in two-parent households were found to have significantly higher education levels and significantly higher income levels than mothers in single-parent households,  $\chi^2(1, N = 37) = 6.11, p < .05$ ;  $\chi^2(1, N = 37) = 17.33, p < .05$ , respectively.

#### **4.4.3 Psychological adjustment and demographic differences**

In Table 4.3 the means and standard deviations of all participants' scores on independent sample t-test showed that there were no differences in self-esteem scores and depression scores between boys in the two different age groups (12 to 14 year-olds and 15 to 18 year-olds). Furthermore, there were no differences between self-esteem and depression scores for girls in these two age groups. There were, however, significant differences between male and female



teenagers' scores in the younger age groups. Girls aged 12 to 14 years had lower self-esteem scores ( $M = 27.8$ ,  $SD = 5.17$ ) than did boys ( $M = 33.3$ ,  $SD = 3.57$ ) of the same age,  $t(16) = 2.65$ ;  $p < .05$ ,  $d = -1.26$ . Furthermore, 12 to 14 year-old girls also had higher BDI scores ( $M = 32.7$ ,  $SD = 9.80$ ) than boys ( $M = 24.3$ ,  $SD = 3.54$ ) of the same age,  $t(16) = -2.40$ ;  $p < .05$ ,  $d = 1.26$ . There were no significant differences between boys and girls behaviour scores.

**Table 4.4**  
*M (SD) scores for mothers' and teenagers' scores on each of the psychological measures*

	All Mothers <u>N</u> = 37	All Teenagers <u>N</u> = 37	Male Teenagers <u>N</u> = 17	Female Teenagers <u>N</u> = 20
	<u>M</u> <u>SD</u>	<u>M</u> <u>SD</u>	<u>M</u> <u>SD</u>	<u>M</u> <u>SD</u>
BDI (Range = 20 to 80)	27.4 (7.15)	28.4 (6.97)	26.0 (5.09)	30.4 (7.81)
Self-Esteem (Range = 10 to 40)	31.0 (5.10)	29.5 (4.94)	31.8 (4.12)	27.6 (4.85)
Attachment (Range = 8 to 40)	27.2 (3.89)	29.5 (5.03)	31.4 (4.30)	28.0 (5.17)
Family Functioning (Range = 11 to 44)	33.0 (5.56)	33.0 (5.55)	33.4 (5.17)	32.7 (5.96)
CBCL Total: (Range = 112 to 336)	N/A	140.8 (26.98)	144.1 (29.39)	137.9 (25.15)
CBCL: Internal Problems (Range = 26 to 78)	N/A	33.4 (6.82)	33.4 (7.71)	33.3 (6.17)
CBCL: External Problems (Range = 35 to 105)	N/A	44.5 (6.82)	45.9 (9.49)	43.4 (10.33)
CBCL: Other Problems (Range = 51 to 153)	N/A	62.9 (11.82)	64.8 (13.58)	61.3 (10.16)

Independent sample t-tests also showed that sons' attachment to mothers ( $M = 31.35$ ,  $SD = 4.30$ ) was significantly greater than daughters' attachment to

mothers, ( $M = 28.0$ ,  $SD = 5.17$ ),  $t(35) = 2.15$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $d = 0.72$ ). Furthermore, paired sample t-tests revealed a significant difference between sons' attachment scores ( $M = 31.35$ ,  $SD = 4.30$ ) and mothers' perception of their son's attachment, ( $M = 27.12$ ,  $SD = 3.50$ ). In other words, teenage sons were more attached to their mothers than their mothers perceived them to be,  $t(17) = -3.53$ ,  $p < .05$ , ( $d = 1.09$ ). There were no significant differences in mothers' and daughters' scores.

#### **4.4.4 Preliminary Analyses:**

##### **Adolescent adjustment and perceptions of the parent-adolescent relationships**

Before conducting analyses specific to the principal aims of this investigation, it was useful to assess the associations between mothers' and teenagers' psychosocial adjustment scores, attachment scores, and perceptions of family functioning scores. These are described in the correlation matrix provided in Table 4.4. Partial correlations were conducted to control for teenagers' age, but these did not reveal any significant changes in the magnitude of the correlations.

The correlation matrix in Table 4.4 shows that, as teenagers' attachment scores increased, so did their level of self-esteem and their perceptions of family functioning. However, further analysis showed that this association existed only for daughters,  $r(20) = .62$ ,  $p < .01$ , and not for sons. No age group differences were revealed.

Table 4.5

*Correlations between teenagers' scores on the psychometric scales and mothers' scores on the psychometric scales (includes intercorrelations between teenagers scores on the different scales)*

	<b>Teenager (N = 37)</b>							
	<b>CBCL Internal</b>	<b>CBCL External</b>	<b>CBCL Social</b>	<b>CBCL Total</b>	<b>FF</b>	<b>Attachment</b>	<b>Depression</b>	<b>Self- esteem</b>
<b>Mother</b>								
Depression	.36*	.30	.43**	.39*	-.39*	-.30	-.11	.00
Attachment	-.44**	-.57**	-.43**	.50**	.83**	.35*	-.04	.11
FF	-.53**	-.69**	-.51**	-.61**	.99**	.41*	-.01	.11
<b>Teenager</b>								
Self-esteem	-.08	.12	.13	.08	.11	.53**	-.70**	-
Depression	.22	.05	.11	.12	-.01	-.33	-	-
Attachment	-.02	.00	.06	.02	.41*	-	-	-
FF	-.53	-.69**	-.51**	-.61**	-.61**	-	-	-

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$  FF = Family Functioning

Further analyses showed that mothers' and teenagers' perceptions of family functioning were perfectly correlated. Correlation analyses also showed that, as teenagers' perception of family functioning increased, mothers' perceptions of teenagers' attachment to them also increased. Furthermore, as teenagers' problem behaviours increased (mothers' CBCL reports), mothers' BDI (depression) scores also increased. However, more refined correlational analyses revealed that this association was significant only for mothers and sons [maternal depression and internalised behaviour ( $r = .66^{**}$ ), externalised behaviour ( $r = .73^{**}$ ), social problems ( $r = .75^{**}$ ), total problem behaviours ( $r = .75^{**}$ )] and not for mothers and daughters [maternal depression and internalised behaviour ( $r = .07$ ), externalised behaviour ( $r = -.01$ ), social problems ( $r = .11$ ), total problem behaviours ( $r = .06$ )]. Boys' behaviour scores were highly, positively, and significantly correlated with mothers' depression, whereas female

teenager's behaviour scores were not significantly correlated with the mothers' depression scores; despite there being no significant differences between sons' and daughters' behaviour. In other words, mothers' reports of boys' behaviour was associated more strongly with the mothers' level of depression.

#### **4.4.5 Mothers' reports on global parenting goals (Aim 1)**

##### **(a) Parent-centred goals**

Mothers were asked how they would generally act and feel when their own needs were hindered by their teenagers' needs or wants. The most common themes are illustrated in the following comments from mothers: "I love doing all that *looking after them* stuff"; "I tend to put my needs on the back burner while the kids are at this age"; "I'll do whatever they need – kids are kids only for a short time"; "I can feel angry more because they don't appreciate my needs or my sacrifices"; "Sometimes I feel worthless, I am only here to drop them off, pick them up, and cook their meals"; and "I may feel annoyed, frustrated but not resentful because it is a choice I have made".

Mothers were also asked what level of compliance they expected from their teenagers when they were given specific instructions. The responses from mothers were either in terms of *complete or partial obedience* or a willingness to discuss both viewpoints and negotiate a suitable compromise.

##### **(b) Child-centred goals: empathic and socialisation concerns**

Mothers were asked about their thoughts on the importance of their teenagers' happiness but also on their beliefs about training their teenagers in

good manners. Mothers tended to respond to the question by prioritising one goal over the other. Mothers who prioritised manners tended to respond in the manner illustrated by the following comments: "I focus most on my teenager's manners because manners are an important sign of respect for others. My teenager can work out their own happiness"; and, "Sometimes my teenager's present happiness has to be forfeited for manners because manners will help them to get the most out of the world". On the other hand, mothers also tended to prioritise happiness over manners: "My teenager's happiness concerns me more than their manners because I can see how mannerly they are but I can't necessarily see how happy they are"; and, "Happiness comes out of good relationships and good manners are more likely if a person is happy. Therefore, my teenager's happiness is most important to me".

Mothers were asked to consider what they thought was important about their teenager being a productive and useful member of society (socialisation concerns). The most common themes to emerge from mothers' responses was a desire that their teenagers would be a dependable, useful member of society; a person who cares for the needy in society; or a person who achieves things for themselves in society.

Finally, mothers were asked to explain what role they had in relation to the safety of their teenager. Some of the representative responses included: "I see their safety as my responsibility. I try to ensure they do not do things by themselves or with people I don't approve of"; "I check, with other parents, all arrangements around transport, supervision and safety. I decide whether it is

suitable for them to go somewhere or not”; I expect my teenager to give me complete details of their plans and then, if necessary, we will negotiate on who they go with and where they go”; and, “They are old enough to do what they want, when they want, with whoever they want. They make their own decisions and suffer whatever consequences come from those decisions”.

### **(c) Relationship-centred goals**

When mothers were asked to consider how they would describe a good parent-adolescent relationship, two main themes emerged from their responses. The first was the importance of love and care in the relationship. When asked to expand on their answers nearly all the mothers used terms such as affection, kindness and support. The second there was having a high level of respect for one another and a willingness to make compromises. When asked to define respect, six different themes were evident: value the person and their opinions (14 mothers); listen to them (15 mothers); give them space and privacy (9 mothers); watch how you treat them: what you say to them and what you do for them (10 mothers); consider their feelings (10); give them freedom to make choices and decisions (16 mothers).

## **4.4.6 Mothers’ beliefs about the importance of affection (Aim 2)**

### **(a) Mothers’ beliefs about showing affection to their teenagers**

Table 4.5 shows that 75% of parents stressed that showing affection to their teenagers was extremely important; the other 19% (2 mothers did not respond to this question) believed that showing affection to their teenager was

only relatively important or not important. These responses were also analysed in relation to the demographic characteristics of the families, including the age and gender of the teenagers. No significant demographic, age or gender differences were identified.

Table 4.6  
The level of importance that mothers ascribed (%) to showing warmth and affection to their teenagers

	N	Affection was not seen as very important	Affection was stressed as very important
		N (%)	N (%)
<b>All parents:</b>	35	7 (18.9)	28 (75.7)
<b>Male teenagers</b>	16	4 (10.8)	12 (32.4)
<b>Female teenagers</b>	19	3 (8.1)	16 (43.2)
<b>12 to 14 years old</b>	17	4 (10.8)	13 (35.1)
<b>15 to 18 years old</b>	18	3 (8.1)	15 (40.5)
<b>Family structure</b>			
<b>Two-parent families</b>	22	4 (10.8)	18 (48.7)
<b>Single/blended families</b>	13	3 (8.1)	10 (27.0)
<b>Income:</b>			
<b>up to \$49,999/annum</b>	19	5 (13.5)	14 (37.8)
<b>\$50,000+/annum</b>	15	2 (5.4)	13 (35.1)
<b>Mother's education:</b>			
<b>High School - TAFE</b>	21	4 (10.8)	17 (46.0)
<b>University/Post-graduate</b>	14	3 (8.1)	11 (29.7)

### (b) Mothers' reasons for the importance of showing teenagers affection

Figure 4.1 summarises the principal reasons why parents believed showing affection and warmth to their teenager was important. Multiple responses were possible, and the findings showed that mothers gave five principal reasons for showing affection towards their children. These included the numerous psychological benefits; the belief that it facilitates bonding; helps to

balance out the difficult teenage years; teaches them to express warmth to others; and, that it is a necessary part of human nature (value system). These reflections are described in detail below.

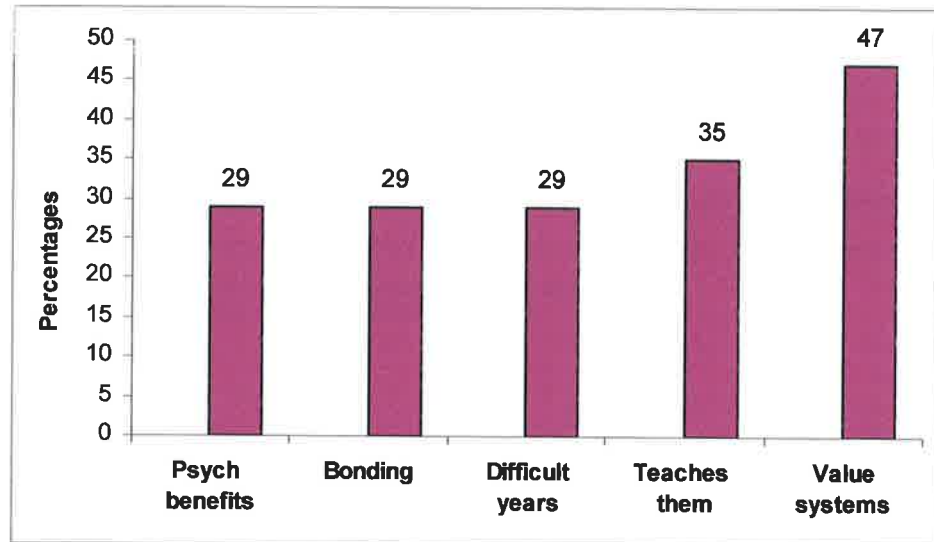


Figure 4.1. Reasons why mothers endorsed the importance of affection

#### i. Psychological benefits

In their statements, one third of the mothers felt that their teenagers experienced psychological benefits on account of the affection shown to them. These benefits were captured in such statements as, “so they can feel safe and secure”; “it helps her to tackle life”; “it helps their self-esteem”; “it settles you when you are upset”. Similarly, other mothers said that the expression of affection was important because it “promotes good self-esteem”; “it builds confidence in them”; “it provides assurance that they are lovable”; “it gives them security”; “it reinforces your love for them”; “It settles them when they’re upset”; and “It’s good for them”.



## **ii. Importance of bonding and the family home**

In this category one third of mothers drew a distinct connection between affection and the family: "We have always been a huggy family". Affection was seen as an integral part of family life, and it was important that their teenagers knew that they could always find affection at home. The majority of these mothers felt that affection played an integral role in the "bonding" of their relationship with their teenager. Other terms related to bonding were "contact"; "building a relationship"; "strengthens the relationship"; "a positive force"; and "a continued connection". One mother felt that showing affection to her daughter "maintained something [she] had with her when she was little". Another mother hoped that showing affection to her teenager would reassure them that they could "come to [them] with their problems", indicating that this parent made an association between trust and affection.

## **iii. Difficult teenage years**

One third of mothers stated that the teenage years were difficult years because of the changes, challenges and difficulties teenagers experience. One mother summed it up in the comment "Teenagers have to put up with a lot of crap". Another stated "Affection helps them get through the hard times". Similarly, other mothers said that affection was a useful tool in counteracting the negative thoughts teenagers often have about themselves ("Teenagers often feel they hate themselves"). Hence, the positive experience of affection would help support their teenagers through the struggles and trials they were likely to encounter during adolescence. These mothers had recognised that their teenagers were at

a vulnerable stage in their emotional development; in general, they were more concerned about their teenagers *feeling* they were loved as opposed to *knowing* they were loved.

#### **iv. Teaches teenagers**

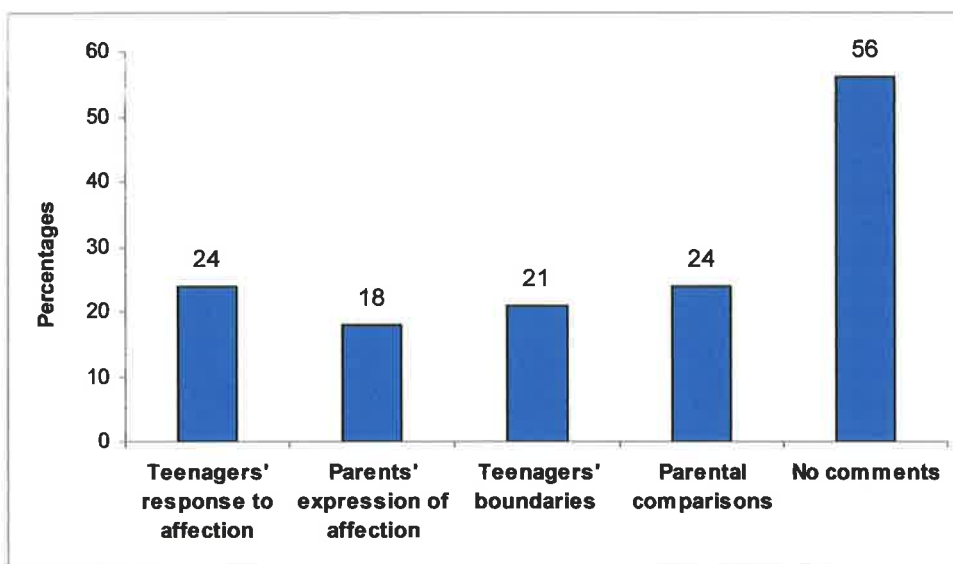
Over a third of the mothers believed their teenagers needed to “learn” how to express their love to others; these parents believed that showing their teenager affection mediated this process. One mother stated “affection has to be instilled in us”. Another mother stated that it was important for a teenager to be comfortable with affection, for example, they needed to see that “touching was a normal part of close relationships”. These mothers emphasised the importance of their teenagers *knowing* (as opposed to *feeling*) that they were loved. For one reason or another, the majority of these mothers wanted their children to be seen as affectionate people.

#### **v. Value systems**

Many mothers had specific beliefs about the role affection had in life generally. For example, as some mothers suggested: “Love is an activity”; “Love is action”; “It should be seen as normal”; “It is a physical reminder of my love”; “It is one of the five love languages”; “It is part of human behaviour”; and “Any emotions are important”. There was a specific group of parents in this category who felt that affection was a basic human “need”, stating: “We need affection...everyone needs it”; “All humans need to be touched”; “It is human nature – it is an inherent need within us”.

**(c) Mothers' thoughts and observations in relation to teenagers' response to affection**

Figure 4.2 summarises the principal reasons why mothers felt it was difficult to show their teenagers affection. The findings showed that over half of mothers made no additional comments about the importance of showing affection or their feelings surrounding the topic. The remainder of mothers spoke about how teenagers responded when affection was shown to them; their own need to show their teenager affection; the boundaries that teenagers initiate that limit the expression of affection; and the comparison drawn by mothers between younger and older children's responses to affection. These reflections are described in detail below.



*Figure 4.2.* Percentages of mothers who identified reasons for why it is difficult to show teenagers affection

### **i. Teenagers' reactions to affection**

Eight (24%) mothers commented on their teenagers' reaction to the affection expressed towards them. The mothers in this category, most of whom had sons, stated that their teenagers were not very affectionate towards them. Some of these communicated feelings of being rejected by their teenagers; one mother in particular felt her son used affection to manipulate her. However, three parents felt their affection was received and reciprocated by their teenager. One of them suggested that her daughter treated her better because she was affectionate with her: it affects "how they react to you...how they behave towards you". Two mothers commented that "part of them really wants it" and "I think he likes it deep down".

### **ii. Maternal behaviours in relation to expressing affection**

The five mothers (18%) in this category made specific reference to how they found themselves responding to their teenager in relation to showing them affection. These responses were varied and ranged from forgetting to show affection to their teenager to demanding affection from their teenager. One mother commented that her teenagers did not expect affection from her; she explained that this was why she "forgot to show it" or was "too busy to show it". Another mother stated that physical affection with her teenage boy had ceased and been replaced by verbal affection in the form of laughter, joking and talking things over with one another.

For a few parents "timing" had become the important issue: determining when the appropriate time was to express affection to their teenager. They made

statements such as “I never know when the timing is right”; “I take my cues from them”; and, “It’s tricky...I wonder why I bother”. It appeared that most mothers felt they needed to learn new ways of expressing their affection to their teenagers. They still believed, however, that the expression of affection had a positive affect on teenagers – even if it was only verbally delivered and even if the teenager appeared not to want it.

### **iii. Mothers’ responses to teenage boundaries**

Seven (21%) of the mothers spoke about the necessity of allowing teenagers to set new boundaries for themselves (“You need to respect their need for space”). However, their responses to the limitations many teenagers placed on the expression of affection, as a result of their new boundaries, were more varied. Some mothers appeared quite disheartened by this stage of adolescence; making comments such as “Sometimes I have to distance myself”; “If you can get near”; and, “Part of them pushes you away”. Other mothers took a more philosophical approach to their teenager’s “avoidance of affection”, viewing it as an “empowering” time for their teenager because it helped them to “initiate their own boundaries” or to gain “independence”.

### **iv. Comparisons between children’s and teenagers’ need for affection**

Eight mothers (24%) made some reference to the differences between children’s and teenagers’ need for affection. Half of these mothers felt that teenagers were less affectionate or needed less affection than younger children. The comments from these mothers were: “Teens are not as affectionate as

children”; “At this stage - teens don’t look for affection”; “They can’t accept it”; and “Teens pull away from affection”. However, the other half of the mothers believed that, where affection was concerned, age did not matter. These mothers reasoned that “Age doesn’t matter; all children need it”; “I show my affection [to my teenagers] I don’t think it is reserved just for children”; “All children need it no matter how old”; and “All children need love, affection and warmth”.

#### **4.4.7 Maternal affection, parent-adolescent relationships and adolescent adjustment (Aim 3)**

The decision was made to maintain the alpha level of all analyses in this study at 0.5, even though the sample size was quite small. Clearly, caution must be applied to the results as 5% of the significant findings may be due to chance. Sensible interpretation of the findings will be achieved by not attaching too much significance to the results that are shown to be significant. The aim of the analyses contained in the following sections help to determine whether the findings are conceptually consistent with previous studies.

Independent t-tests were performed to assess whether mothers’ goals of showing affection (important/not very important) was related to teenagers’ psychosocial adjustment (self-esteem, depression and problem behaviours). No significant differences were observed. Furthermore, independent t-tests revealed only one significant difference between mothers’ goals of love (showing affection was important/not very important) and teenagers’ perceptions of the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship (family functioning and attachment). Teenagers whose mothers stressed the importance of affection ( $M = 30.1$ ,  $SD = 5.05$ ) were

more attached to their mothers than teenagers whose mothers placed less importance on showing their teenagers affection ( $M = 25.6$ ,  $SD = 2.37$ ),  $t(33) = -2.29$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $d = 1.21$ . However, there was a gender difference. The findings showed that sons whose mothers emphasised the importance of affection were more strongly attached to their mothers ( $M = 32.2$ ,  $SD = 3.94$ ) than sons whose mothers had less regard for showing their teenagers affection ( $M = 27.0$ ,  $SD = 1.41$ ),  $t(14) = -2.60$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $d = 1.94$ . No significant findings relating to attachment to mothers and maternal affection were obtained in analyses involving daughters.

#### 4.4.8 Mothers' responses to teenagers when they are angry (Aim 4)

Mothers were asked, "What response do you have to your teenager when you are angry with them for being disobedient or non-compliant?" Their responses were coded in terms of whether they were calm and controlled, or volatile and short-tempered when angry with their teenager (see Figure 4.3).

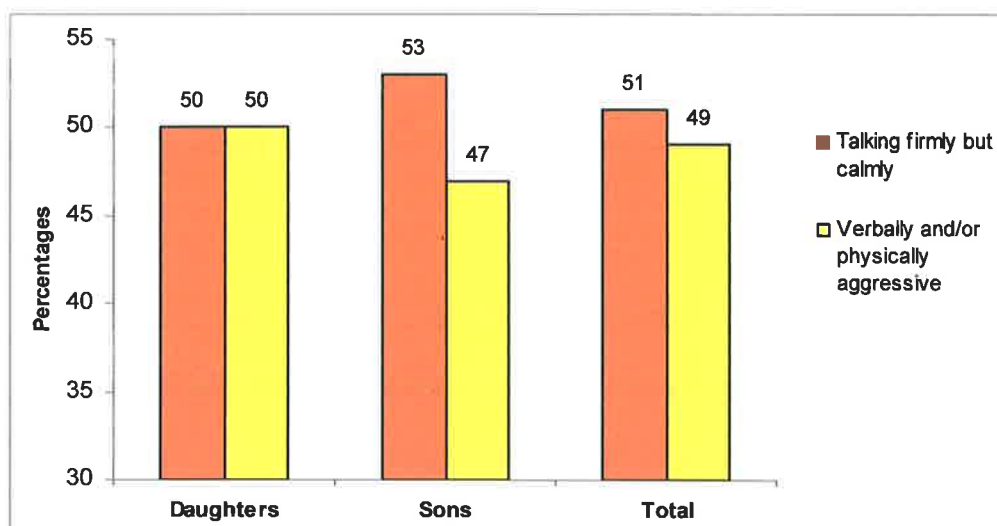


Figure 4.3. Mothers' anger-responses when goals of compliance or obedience are violated

**(a) Talk with them or speak firmly to them (9 daughters, 10 sons)**

Nine of the nineteen mothers said they tended to talk to their teenagers rather than raise their voice or yell at them. They focused on staying calm, cool and rational so they could keep communication open with their teenager and explain to them what it was that they did not like about the situation. Comments included "I try to think before I speak"; "If I lose my cool I'd say sorry" and "We might sit silently for awhile". Some of the mothers spoke about specific strategies such as: focusing on the behaviour and not on the person; discussing more appropriate ways of doing things; explaining that certain actions have consequences; reminding teenagers of the rules and giving warnings.

The other ten of the nineteen mothers stated that when they were angry with their teenagers they almost always spoke to them in a stern or raised voice. Most mothers commented on other accompanying behaviours in anger-provoking situations: cross facial mannerism; threats; ultimatums; and nagging. Some of the mothers commented on the types of abrupt statements they used: "Don't argue"; "Listen"; "That won't be tolerated"; and, "That's a silly thing to do". Most of these mothers felt that though they stayed calm, they still made it perfectly clear how angry they were.

**(b) Physically or verbally aggressive (9 daughters, 9 sons)**

Twelve of the eighteen mothers in this category stated that their initial reaction when angry with their teenager was to yell at them. Accompanying behaviours included throwing things around, banging things, or slamming doors. There were diverse reports in relation to mothers' reactions after a yelling



episode. These ranged from yelling first and then talking it through with their teenager; yelling and then ignoring their teenager; yelling and then forgetting about it; and yelling followed by nagging. These parents often accompanied their responses with comments such as: "I probably say all the wrong things [while I am yelling]"; "I nag until they acknowledge I am right and they are wrong" and "I nag until he responds - which he doesn't". One mother described her yelling episodes as a time when she can be seen, and heard, to "scream like a banshee".

Six mothers said they have been known to be physically aggressive towards their teenagers when they were angry, but this occurred only "sometimes" or "did not occur often". Mothers of teenage sons were twice as likely as mothers of teenage daughters to resort to aggressive behaviour. All these mothers reported yelling or screaming at their teenagers. Accompanying behaviours ranged from hitting, pushing, slapping, making threats, throwing things at them, swearing at them, or criticising them and saying things such as: "They were lazy" or "They were an idiot". Some of these mothers felt their responses were sometimes inappropriate; making comments such as "I say some frightful things"; and "I know it's not right". One of the mothers, who sometimes hit their teenagers when they were angry with them, said they would try to control this by throwing things at them instead.

#### **4.4.9 Mothers' anger responses, adolescent adjustment and parent-adolescent relationships (Aim 5)**

Independent sample t-tests were used to assess whether mothers' anger responses (talk to them versus physical or verbal aggression) was related to adolescent adjustment (self-esteem, depression and behaviour). The findings did not reveal any significant differences in teenagers' adjustment when mothers responded to them either in an aggressive or calm manner. However, further analysis revealed a significant gender difference  $t(18) = -2.30, p < .05, d = 1.09$ . Daughters whose mothers were verbally/physically aggressive when angry had greater behavioural problems ( $M = 149.6, SD = 28.82$ ) than daughters of mothers who expressed their anger in a much calmer manner ( $M = 126.2, SD = 14.17$ ).

Independent sample t-tests were conducted to assess whether teenagers' perceptions of the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship (family functioning and attachment) differed according to how mothers expressed their anger (talk to them/physical or verbal aggression). No significant differences were observed for attachment. There was, however, a significant difference between teenagers' perceptions of family functioning according to the mothers' use of anger responses. Teenagers whose mothers were physically and/or verbally aggressive when angry rated their family functioning to be poorer ( $M = 30.6, SD = 5.61$ ) than teenagers whose mothers spoke to them calmly during anger-provoking situations ( $M = 35.3, SD = 4.50$ ),  $t(35) = 2.86, p < .05, d = -0.93$ . Further analysis, however, revealed significant gender differences in these findings. Daughters whose mothers were aggressive when angry perceived family functioning to be significantly poorer

( $M = 28.8$ ,  $SD = 5.05$ ) than daughters whose mothers were calmer and more composed ( $M = 36.5$ ,  $SD = 4.06$ ;  $t(18) = 3.76$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = -1.69$ . There were no similar differences for sons' perceptions of family functioning and mothers' anger responses.

#### 4.4.10 Mothers' observations of adolescent disposition (Aim 6)

Figure 4.4 summarises mothers' reports of their teenager's general disposition (positive, negative or indifferent) towards them over the last six months.

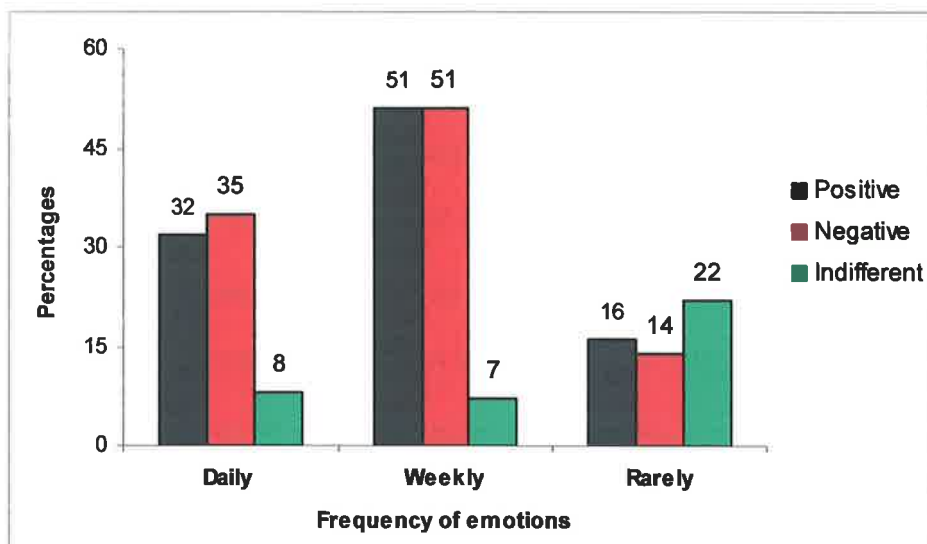


Figure 4.4. Mothers' reports on their teenager's expression of positive, negative and indifferent emotions towards them

Figure 4.4 shows that over a third of mothers felt that positive emotions were shown to them on a daily basis; half of the mothers felt positive emotions were shown to them on a weekly basis; and the remaining mothers reported that their teenagers rarely expressed positive emotions towards them. In relation to teenagers' expression of negative emotions towards mothers, the findings were

quite similar to the expression of positive emotions. A total of 15 percent of mothers felt that their teenagers were indifferent towards them on a daily or weekly basis, whereas 22 percent of mothers felt that their teenagers were rarely indifferent towards them. Mothers' reports of indifference were quite confusing at times. This may be a result of some parents concluding that withdrawn behaviour was a negative emotion whereas others interpreted it as indifference towards them. A detailed account of mothers' comments on adolescent expressions of affect is provided below.

**(a) Mothers as recipients of teenagers' positive affective states**

A total of 12 different types of positive emotions or behaviours were reported by the 37 parents interviewed. These were: affectionate (hugs, cuddles etc.); happy; caring, thoughtful deeds; says "I love you"; affirmation; patient; comforting; sensitive; shares humour; shares things with them (joys, difficulties); appreciative; and respectful. Some mothers found it difficult to answer the question about how often their teenagers showed them positive affection. These mothers were provided with predetermined prompts to assist them.

Physical affection from teenagers was the most common category reported by mothers. This was generally in the form of hugs, cuddles and other loving gestures. The second most commonly reported category (across the three groups) was affirmation. This was expressed in terms of support and encouragement. Sensitivity and sharing were the next most common categories.

**(b) Mothers as recipients of teenagers' negative affective states**

Mothers were asked how often their teenager showed negative emotions towards them, and how those emotions were expressed. Overall a total of 12 different types of negative emotions were reported by the 37 parents interviewed. These were: impatience; irritation; anger; annoyance; frustration; silent treatment; sadness; disappointment; sharp tongue; withdrawal; stubbornness; arrogance; and disrespect.

Five (14%) of the mothers stated that their teenager rarely expressed negative emotions towards them. If they did, it was in the form of anger, frustration or annoyance. Nineteen (51%) of the mothers stated that their teenager expressed negative emotions to them sometimes. Frustration was the most common emotion reported; anger was second, followed by stubbornness. Thirteen (35%) of the mothers stated that their teenager expressed negative emotions toward them on daily basis. Anger and frustration were reported to be the most commonly expressed emotions by teenagers. Irritation was the second most common, followed by impatience. Two mothers in this category felt their sons were disappointed in them, and two mothers felt their teenagers were sometimes sad in their company.

**(c) Mothers as recipients of teenagers' indifference**

Indifference was operationalised in terms of being withdrawn, unconcerned/uninterested, or unresponsive. Twenty-two (60%) mothers stated that their teenagers were never indifferent toward them. Eight (22%) of the mothers said that their teenagers were indifferent towards them on a daily basis.

Unconcerned and withdrawn were the most commonly reported behaviours. These mothers felt that their teenagers were wrapped up in their own worlds and uninterested in them as parents. It is interesting to note that seven of these parents also said their teenager responded to them with negative emotions on a daily basis (which doesn't sound very indifferent). Seven mothers stated that their teenagers were indifferent toward them a couple of times a week.

#### **4.4.11 Mothers' affective responses to teenage dispositions (Aim 7)**

Chi-square tests were conducted to assess whether the importance mothers gave to the goal of love (in terms of showing affection) influenced teenagers' affective states (indifference, positive and negative emotions). The results did not reveal any significant differences. Chi-square tests were also performed to assess whether there were significant relationships between mothers' anger responses (speaking calmly or behaving aggressively) and teenagers' affective states. Only one significant finding was detected, mothers who were aggressive when angry were more likely to have teenagers who were indifferent to them on a daily basis, than were mothers who were not aggressive when angry,  $\chi^2(1, N = 37) = 10.90, p < .05$ .

#### **4.4.12 Teenage dispositions and parent-adolescent relationships (Aim 8)**

##### **(a) Teenagers' positive emotions and the parent-adolescent relationship**

One-way ANOVA was used to assess whether teenagers' expression of positive emotions (daily, sometimes or never) was significantly related to teenagers' perceptions of the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship (family

functioning, attachment to mother). The findings indicated that only teenagers' attachment to mother differed significantly across the groups  $F(2, 34) = 5.71$ ,  $p < .01$ . A post hoc test (Tukey HSD) showed that there was no significant difference between the daily group ( $M = 29.8$ ;  $SD = 4.91$ ) and the sometimes group ( $M = 31.1$ ;  $SD = 4.48$ ). There was a significant difference, however, between these two groups and the never group ( $M = 24.0$ ;  $SD = 3.29$ ); teenagers in the daily and regular groups were more attached to their mothers than were those in the never group.

#### **b) Teenagers' negative emotions and the parent-adolescent relationship**

One-way ANOVA was used to assess whether teenagers' expression of negative emotions (daily, sometimes or never) was significantly related to teenagers' perceptions of the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship (family functioning, attachment to mother). The findings indicated that teenagers' attachment to mother  $F(2, 34) = 5.47$ ,  $p < .01$  and perceptions of family functioning  $F(2, 34) = 12.07$ ,  $p < .001$  differed significantly in relation to the frequency of negative affect that was expressed. A post hoc test (Tukey HSD) showed that, for attachment, there was no significant difference between the teenagers who sometimes expressed negative affect towards mothers ( $M = 30.68$ ;  $SD = 4.15$ ) and those who never did ( $M = 33.20$ ;  $SD = 6.10$ ). There was, however, a significant difference between these groups and the teenagers who expressed negative affect towards mothers on a daily basis ( $M = 26.39$ ;  $SD = 4.37$ ). Teenagers who never, or only sometimes, expressed negative affect

towards their mother were more attached to their mothers than those who expressed negative affect on a daily basis.

In relation to teenagers' perceptions of family functioning and the expression of negative affect, the Tukey post hoc tests showed that there was no significant difference between the teenagers who sometimes expressed negative affect towards mothers ( $M = 35.37$ ;  $SD = 4.10$ ) and those who never did ( $M = 36.40$ ;  $SD = 5.13$ ). There was a significant difference, however, between these groups and the teenagers who expressed negative affect towards mothers on a daily basis ( $M = 28.23$ ;  $SD = 4.48$ ). Teenagers who never or only sometimes expressed negative emotions to their mothers perceived that their families functioned better than did teenagers who expressed negative affect on a daily basis.

### **(c) Teenagers' indifference and the parent-adolescent relationship**

One-way ANOVA was used to assess whether the frequency of teenagers' indifference to mothers was significantly related to their perceptions of the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship (family functioning and attachment to mother). The findings indicated that attachment  $F(2, 34) = 5.42$ ,  $p < .01$  and family functioning  $F(2, 34) = 7.33$ ,  $p < .01$ , once again, differed significantly across the groups. A post hoc test (Tukey HSD) showed that for attachment there was no significant difference between the teenagers who showed varying levels of indifference towards mothers ( $M = 30.86$ ;  $SD = 5.24$ ) and the teenagers who were never indifferent towards mothers ( $M = 30.77$ ;  $SD = 4.77$ ). There was a significant difference, however, between these groups and the teenagers who



were indifferent to mothers on a daily basis ( $M = 24.88$ ;  $SD = 2.59$ ). Teenagers who expressed indifference only a few times a week or never were more attached to their mothers than those who expressed indifference on a daily basis.

The Tukey post hoc tests for family functioning showed there was a significant difference between the teenagers who were indifferent to mothers on a daily basis ( $M = 27.63$ ;  $SD = 4.37$ ) and the teenagers who were never indifferent towards mothers ( $M = 35.14$ ;  $SD = 5.25$ ). Teenagers who were never indifferent to their mothers perceived their families to function better than did teenagers who were indifferent on a daily basis.

To summarise, the above findings show that mothers' beliefs about showing affection and their anger-responses to challenging situations were sometimes related to the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship. Adolescent adjustment, on the other hand, appeared to be relatively unrelated to these behaviours. The one exception was the finding that aggressive mothers tended to have daughters with greater behavioural problems than did mothers who were calm and composed. Finally, this study showed that teenagers' disposition was generally unrelated to the importance mothers gave to showing affection. However, if mothers were aggressive when angry, then teenagers tended to become more distant and withdrawn from mothers.

Most teenagers' dispositions were shown to oscillate between positive and negative affective responses to mothers. These mood swings did not appear to negatively affect teenagers' perceptions of the parent-adolescent relationship. It could be assumed that the mood swings simply reflect the emotional rollercoaster

of adolescence. However, it was notable that teenagers who were aggressive or indifferent on a daily basis perceived the quality of the parent –adolescent relationship to be quite poor. Conversely, if teenagers were positively disposed towards mothers on a regular basis, be it daily or weekly, teenagers' reports showed that they tended to be more strongly attached to their mothers, irrespective of their perceptions of family functioning.

#### **4.5 Discussion**

It would appear from this study that there is a good deal of consistency in the overall concerns that parents have when raising teenage children in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (ie, safety, manners, teen happiness, respect, obedience, etc). In accordance with Dix's (1992) theory, this study found that these concerns can be divided into child-centred concerns, parent-centred concerns, and relationship-centred concerns. However, there is a considerable amount of variability in the level of significance mothers give to each of these concerns, and this may reflect the role that *child effects* play in the different associations, such as the adolescent's age or gender and the affective responses of teenagers.

In terms of the specific content of parent-centred concerns (global goals of own needs and adolescent obedience), a high percentage of mothers reported that their own needs, more often than not, took second place to their teenagers' needs. Their thoughts, feelings and responses to this phenomenon, however, were quite diverse. Some mothers felt highly enthusiastic and privileged in their

“doting” parental role. Others were more resigned to the fact that they had chosen to have a family and therefore were obligated to make certain sacrifices.

Mothers’ concerns with adolescent obedience centred on three different expectations regarding acceptable levels of adherence. Some mothers expected complete obedience to their requests; other mothers were content with partial obedience; and others reported negotiating suitable compromises with their teenagers. Nucci and Weber (1995), in their study of social interactions between young children and mothers, found that mothers rarely negotiated with children over conventional, moral or prudential behavioural issues. It was only in relation to personal issues that negotiation was seen to be acceptable. Smetana and Asquith (1994) and Smetana (1995) also found this regulation of issues to be true of parents with adolescent children when they assessed parenting in terms of traditional parenting styles (ie, authoritarian, authoritative, or permissive). They found that moral issues were generally not open for negotiation. However, in relation to the other issues, the distinction between what is, and is not, negotiable was dependent on the parenting style of the parent.

The responses mothers gave in relation to violations of their goals of obedience and compliance could be divided between two categories. It was clear from the findings that mothers generally would have liked to respond to disobedience or non-compliance in a manner that was calm and composed. However, nearly half of the mothers reported responding to their teenagers in either a verbally or physically aggressive manner (or both) when they were angry. Further gender comparisons showed that daughters of mothers who became

aggressive when angry were more likely to have greater internalised and externalised behavioural problems, and were more likely to perceive a poorer level of family-functioning than were daughters of mothers who were calm and collected. By contrast, sons' wellbeing and perceptions of the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship did not appear to be affected by mothers' anger responses. However, it was notable that mothers who were aggressive when angered by teenagers' disobedience were more likely to have teenagers who were indifferent to them on a daily basis than were mothers who were calm and collected when angered by disobedience.

Conger and Ge's (1999) study and Patterson's (1982) escalation hypothesis may help to explain these findings. Patterson (1982) theorised that the onset of emotionally negative interactions between parents and adolescents is a precursor to ongoing expressions of negative affect which intensify over time. Conger and Ge (1999) found that an affective response (negative or positive) that is repeatedly expressed by one person to another within a parent-adolescent dyad would eventually be reciprocated by the other person in the dyad. Kim, Conger, Lorenz and Elder's (2001) findings also showed that the reciprocal nature of expressions of negative affect determined how rapidly emotions would intensify with time, but also the rate at which they would recede once negative confrontations had reached their upper limit. They pointed out that

“parents' high initial level of negative emotion expressed to adolescents significantly predicted adolescent rapid increases as well as later declines in negative emotions expressed to parents” (Kim et al. 2001, p. 787).

The findings of the present study show that teenagers do not necessarily respond to angry and aggressive mothers in a volatile manner. It could be argued that because mothers are often in a position of power teenagers need to resort to less offensive reactions. This may explain why some teenagers appear to be indifferent to their mothers' attacks. Their choice to withdraw from their mothers may be a strategic move designed to infuriate and upset them. Future qualitative research on the thought processes of teenagers with aggressive mothers would be very informative for helping to understand teenagers thought processes during conflict with mothers.

In terms of child-centred goals there was not a great deal of divergence between mothers' concerns. Some mothers prioritised happiness over manners, and visa versa. Most mothers saw the value in their teenager being considered a productive member of society. How this was enacted out differed somewhat, particularly in terms of whether mothers' felt it benefited them or their teenagers. The most drastic differences found in mothers' child-centred goals were related to an understanding of who should be responsible for teenagers' safety: the mothers or the teenagers themselves.

Finally, there did not appear to be a great diversity in the factors deemed as important for a healthy parent-adolescent relationship (relationship-centred goals). Mothers commonly emphasised the importance of a loving, caring relationship with their teenagers, as opposed to a respectful relationship that was based on a willingness to make compromises. The descriptive terms used to

represent mothers' meanings of love/caring and respect/compromise were quite different. Affection, support and kindness were the terms associated with the former construct, and listening, freedom to make decisions, space, and privacy were some of the terms associated with the latter construct. It could be argued, therefore, that love and care represent the more affective component of a good parent-adolescent relationship, whilst respect and compromise reflect a more knowledge-based and instructive component.

In the present study, three-quarters of the mothers interviewed placed an extremely high level of importance on showing physical affection to teenagers, particularly because of its benefits to the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship and teenagers' psychological wellbeing. Generally, these mothers suggested that affection was an inherent part of human nature. They felt that all people, regardless of age or gender, needed affection. Noller and Fitzpatrick (1993) and MacDonald (1997) have identified physical affection as a factor implicit within the constructs of warmth and responsiveness. However, the lack of studies focusing on parental affection is puzzling, particularly as affection receives a great deal of attention in popular psychology, and is strongly encouraged by many of the prevailing ideologies in western society.

Despite the considerable importance ascribed to parental expressions of affection, the present study shows that its effects were relatively minimal. Sons (but not daughters) were more strongly attached to affectionate mothers than to unaffectionate mothers. However, self-esteem, depression levels, and problem behaviours of teenagers with affectionate mothers were not significantly different

from those of teenagers whose mothers were unaffectionate. Furthermore, teenagers' affective states (indifference, positive and negative emotions) were not shown to be affected by the level of importance mothers ascribed to showing teenagers affection.

The findings showed that teenagers generally oscillated on a fairly regular basis between positive and negative feelings towards mothers. It could be suggested that the variability in the expression of different emotions is more a reflection of the teenagers' own emotional adjustment and development than a measure of their attachment to mothers. Having said this, it is apparent that the frequency of teenagers' affective responses towards mothers is, to some extent, an indication of the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship. For example, teenagers who expressed negative and indifferent emotions to mothers on a daily basis were shown to rate the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship more poorly than did teenagers who expressed these emotions weekly or rarely. Conversely, teenagers who displayed positive emotions toward mothers on a daily or weekly basis were more attached to mothers than were teenagers who rarely expressed positive emotions to mothers. MacDonald (1997) in his evolutionary perspective on the role of warmth in families stated that:

"The human affectional system may be conceptualised as a reward system... Intimate relationships are therefore naturally pleasurable to the participants and are actively sought after. Their termination is met with disappointment and grief, while there is eager anticipation of reunion with a loved one... The reward system idea implies that the affectional system is above all a motivational system" (p. 382).

MacDonald argues that a parent-child relationship based on warmth and affection promotes the child's internalisation of parental values and a desire to comply with parents' wishes (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). These interactions, however, also are highly motivating and rewarding to parents, and therefore become of great significance to them. It would be interesting to know if the goal of loving and caring would be of greater importance to mothers than respect and compromise. It would also be interesting to explore whether these two components affected adolescent adjustment and the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship differently. These areas of interest will be examined in the subsequent study of this project.

Goodnow and Collins (1990) have proposed that parenting goals are demanding and complex cognitions. This is reflected in the issues that arise when considering the nature of parenting goals such as: How do parents combine goals for themselves and their children? How does one prioritise one set of goals over another? What are reasonable compromises? Take for example the balancing of goals that is required of mothers who desire to show their teenagers affection, desire to be shown affection, and recognise and respect their teenagers' boundaries that say no to affection.

The findings of this study suggest that parenting goals may often be incompatible, and that parents may struggle with the difficulty of balancing their own concerns with adolescent concerns and the needs of the family unit. Moreover, these difficulties may be further compounded if parents are not skilled at modifying their expectations according to the demands of different situations,



or are unskilled at adequately prioritising their goals. As Grusec, Rudy and Martini pointed out:

“Parents who act to maintain harmony and a positive relationship may be creating conditions under which it is easier to demand compliance and internalisation in areas which they are less willing to compromise. To ignore or yield at least partially to a child’s inappropriate behaviour, then, in the interest of not stressing the relationship, may make it easier to intervene in the case of the other” (1997, p. 270).

Although many mothers would, in theory, seem to understand the need to accommodate the changes of adolescence, it appears many are still distressed, perplexed, or even angered by the reality of doing this. For example, the awareness that mothers had of teenagers’ need to set new boundaries for themselves did not seem to alleviate the feelings some felt of being “pushed away” or unwanted. Research to explore this further would be useful for developing a greater understanding of parenting cognitions. The angst mothers in this sample experienced may be associated with parenting self-efficacy and feelings of failure (Bandura, 1988, 2003). It may be a result of the ambiguity of the parental role during adolescence, or it may reflect a threat to the family unit itself. Alternatively, it may reflect the confusion that mothers can feel when they try to balance different or conflicting goals, as discussed earlier.

It is likely that most parents *get over* their feelings of despair in the perceived changes in the parent-adolescent relationship and eventually make the adjustments that are necessary. It could be argued that the emotions parents feel are a motivating factor helping them to move on and alter their priorities.

Fiske and Taylor refer to the argument that emotions can often be useful in organising ones goals, stating:

“one can examine not only how interruptions cause emotion,...but also the reverse: how emotions cause interruptions. Emotions can act as controls on cognition, alerting people to important goals...and they divert people from pursuing one goal and point them toward pursuing another goal that has meanwhile increased in importance” (1991, p. 433).

Thus, rather than pursuing physical affection, parents may turn their attention to alternative forms of showing warmth and acceptance such as laughing, talking, joking and listening. Clearly, dysfunctional cognitions and debilitating emotional reactions limit some parents' ability to think strategically about what goals are worth pursuing, and what goals are not. For example, some mothers admitted using manipulative behaviours to try and make their teenagers show them the affection they desired, regardless of their knowledge that this sort of behaviour would only contribute to the likelihood of further detachment (if, in fact, the teenager was detached in the first place).

To conclude, Noller and Fitzpatrick suggest that the primary characteristics of love in family relationships involve “sharing, communication, honesty, intimacy, trust, understanding and openness” (1993, p.75). Thus, it may be more beneficial to mothers who desire a healthy and mutually satisfying relationship with their teenagers, to involve themselves in those things their teenagers consider to be important. This may entail concentrating more on communication and trust, and worrying less about expressing physical affection.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Parenting Goals and Adolescent Well-being**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

Social cognitive theories examine the psychological structures that are in place to facilitate the way people understand and interpret their interactions with others (Reis & Downey, 1999). It has been recognised for some time that peoples' goals are at the heart of the way they think, feel, and act in any given situation. When relationship theorists incorporated goal research into their studies, they found that the most important goals held by individuals revolve around their relationships with other people, particularly those referred to as "significant others" (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). In the last couple of decades, the parenting literature has advocated strongly for studies that focused on the social cognitive processes of parents and how these processes influence parenting practice, and in turn, child development. However, the study of parental cognitions has so far been limited to parental attributions for children's behaviour. Despite this, there remains much to be learnt about the influence that parental beliefs have on effective parenting. The present study has attempted to combine some of the theoretical principles of social cognitive research, relationship research, and parenting research as part of an investigation into mothers' parenting goals and the influence they have on the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship and, in turn, adolescent well-being.

Research in the last decade has made a valuable contribution to identifying some specific characteristics of parenting goals. As stated in the

previous chapter, the research relating to parenting goals has focused predominantly on the goals of mothers with young children. These studies have been useful for discovering the main characteristics of goals and their influence on parental behaviours, and have yielded three important findings. First, parenting goals can be categorised in terms of the focus of their concern: parent-centred, child-centred or relationship-centred goals (Hasting & Rubin, 1999). Second, the immediacy of parental concerns can vary depending on whether parents are concerned with short-term or long-term outcomes (Kuczynski, 1984). Third, different parenting goals appear to predict specific behavioural responses (Hastings & Grusec, 1998; Kuczynski, 1984). For example, power assertive parents tend to be concerned with controlling their children's immediate behaviours (parent-centred), whereas parents who focus on the quality of the parent-child relationship (relationship-centred) are most likely to be supportive, warm and open to compromise (Hastings & Grusec, 1998). *See Chapter 3 p. 45 for further details of these three characteristics of parenting goals.*

The present study seeks to extend Hastings and Grusec's research on the parenting goals and behaviours of parents with young children, to the study of parenting goals and the effects these can have on adolescent development. The necessity of understanding parental goals during adolescence is supported by social-cognition research. This research has shown that intentional and effortful cognitive appraisal processing, such as that involved in the consideration of one's goals, is more likely to occur when family members are subject to periods of

change or disequilibrium (eg, during the period of adolescence) than when families remain relatively stable (Bugental & Johnston, 2000).

Another finding arising from this research is that parenting goals (and the parental role) go through a series of transformations during adolescence. Collins and Luebker (1993), in their expectancy-violation-realignment model, propose that parents initially attempt to uphold the goals and values they previously encouraged when their teenagers were younger children. However, as a result of cognitive and emotional maturation (and the subsequent desire for autonomy and independence), teenagers tend to increasingly question, challenge, and often violate their parents' expectations and goals. In well-adjusted families this should result in parents realising that they need to replace some of their previous expectations/goals with ones that are more appropriate for the age and maturity of their teenager. Thus, on the basis of social cognitive research and parenting theories, it is argued that research relating to the parenting goals of parents with young children cannot necessarily be generalised to the parenting goals of parents with adolescent children.

In line with contemporary models of parenting which have moved away from the traditional assumption that all parents have a single socialisation goal (ie, the expectation of total compliance), this study seeks to understand what goals are important to parents during adolescent development. The idea that parenting goals are not static but flexible, that they are changeable depending on the situation, and also can vary between parents, justifies the need for a more in-depth investigation. According to Grusec, Goodnow and Kuczynski (2000), it has

yet to be established what individual and group differences exist in parenting goals and what consequences result from these differences. Accordingly, one of the important features of this study is that it seeks to assess parenting goals (in specific situations) using multiple informants. Mothers' reports of parenting goals and their effects have been analysed together with teenagers' perceptions of mothers' goals. Teenagers' perceptions are considered particularly important for this study in that it has been suggested that teenagers' cognitive interpretations of family processes can have a direct impact on their own adjustment. McLoyd, Jayaratne, Ceballo, and Borquez (1994), for example, found that economic stress can have a direct effect on adolescent adjustment based on adolescents' interpretations of the family's situation. The more attention teenagers direct towards the needs and worries of their parents, the more distressed they can become. In support of this, Matza, Kupersmidt and Glenn (2001) reviewed a number of studies that found that children's positive perceptions of parents were significantly associated with greater child self-esteem (Hazzard, Christensen & Margolin, 1983), greater emotional autonomy (Smetana, 1995) and low levels of anxiety, depression and delinquency (Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn & Dornbusch, 1991). As a consequence, Buri (1989) has proposed that children's perceptions of parental nurturance and authority can, in fact, be a better predictor of child self-esteem than parents' reports of these variables. In other words, there is clear evidence that children's perceptions of parental attributes and the parent-child relationship provides important information, regardless of how consistent these views are with parental reports.

Another limitation of previous studies that is addressed by the current study is the use of single outcome measures. Bradley and Corwyn (2002) argue that limiting the dependent variable in this way impedes an understanding of the complex effects of family processes on differing aspects of adolescent adjustment. For example, if one found that relationship-centred goals and adolescents' positive mood were positively associated, it might be tempting to assume that an inverse relationship exists between relationship-centred goals and adolescents' negative mood. However, such a conclusion ignores the possibility that negative and positive moods may not be opposite ends of a single continuum (Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988). For this reason, and to avoid such errors, Bradley and Corwyn propose that the assessment of multiple outcomes will lead to a broader and more accurate depiction of the role of family processes in adolescent well-being. Accordingly, the present study has sought to address this issue by assessing a number of dimensions of adolescent psychosocial adjustment and the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship. Adolescent adjustment has been measured in terms of self-esteem, problem behaviour, positive mood and negative mood. The quality of the parent-adolescent relationship has been measured in terms of family functioning and attachment (these factors have been discussed in detail in the previous chapters).

## **5.2 Aims and hypotheses**

1. The first aim of this study was to explore the importance ascribed to eight global and contextually-bound parenting goals based on mothers' reports and adolescent perceptions of mothers' goals

- It was hypothesised that mothers would stress the importance of relationship-centred and child-centred goals due to the strong maternal bond they have with their children.
  - It was also hypothesised that mothers would not consider parent-centred concerns to be of great consequence (this expectation was based on the qualitative findings from Study 1 which showed that mothers generally felt their own needs were on the “back-burner” while raising both young children and adolescents). Conversely, it was hypothesised that teenagers, due to their struggle for greater autonomy and independence from parents, would perceive mothers as being more focused on parent-centred concerns.
2. To assess whether mothers’ parenting goals are static or flexible, that is whether they vary or are consistent across different scenarios or contexts.
- It is expected that mothers’ parenting goals will be flexible and vary according to the situation. However, it is also expected that some goals may be more flexible than others (ie, the expectation of mutual respect and compromise may always be a high priority for mothers whereas the expectation of obedience may vary depending on the presence of other people).
3. To examine the associations between contextual-bound parenting goals, the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship (attachment to mother and family functioning), and adolescent adjustment. Are adolescents better adjusted and have better relationships with their mothers if their mothers hold certain goals?



## **5.3 Method**

### **5.3.1 Participants**

The participants in this study comprised 103 pairs of mothers and their adolescent biological children (47 males, 56 females) aged between 12 and 18 years (mean age = 15 years). Only one teenager within each family was interviewed. In cases where there was more than one teenager in the home, the selection was based upon the next- birthday- method. Teenagers with mental disabilities were not included in this study.

The families all lived in the Southern Metropolitan area of Adelaide, South Australia. The vast majority were of European Australian descent. There were 74 (71.8%) two-parent families, 11 (10.6%) blended families, and 18 (17.3%) single-parent families. Twenty-nine (28.7%) of the mothers were in white collar employment; 22 (21.8%) were in blue collar employment, and nearly half of the mothers (49.5%) worked in the home. The family income of the participants was grouped into three income blocks: 30 (28.8%) had a family income of \$50,000 and over; 40 (38.5%) had a family income between \$20,000 and \$49,999; and 24 (23.1%) had a family income below \$20,000. Nine (8.1%) of the participants were not comfortable with disclosing their income level.

### **5.3.2 Procedure**

To abide by privacy laws the families were initially contacted via School Support Officers (SSOs) at the local high schools. The Principals or Vice Principals of schools requested SSOs to contact all parents whose names had

been randomly selected from school attendance lists to ensure approval was given to pass their phone numbers on to the researcher.

Potential participants were made aware that the study would require a substantial amount of time (between 1 to 2 hours), which included the interview with their teenager. All interviews were conducted by the researcher and all took place in the participants' homes. The interviews with both the parent and the teenager were held separately in order to reduce the risk of socially desirable responses. Participants were told that the study was completely anonymous and confidential, and that they could withdraw from the study at any point.

The questionnaires for the mothers were divided into two parts. In Part 1, mothers were asked to give their responses to the importance of eight parenting goals. In Part 2 mothers were presented with a set of six psychometric scales to complete and a demographic information sheet with questions such as annual income, number of children, education level, ethnicity, employment and teenager's age and gender. The teenagers only needed to respond to sections of Part 1 (the importance mothers gave to parenting goals in specific situations) and Part 2 (the battery of six psychometric scales).

### **5.3.3 Questionnaires**

In the first section of Part 1 mothers were asked to rank the importance of eight global parenting goals. The eight goals were as follows: safety issues concerning your teenager; your teenager's manners; a loving relationship with your teenager; your own happiness (own needs) in the relationship; your teenager's happiness; mutual respect and compromise in the parent-adolescent

relationship; teenager being considered a productive member of society; teenager's obedience/compliance. In the second and third sections of Part 1, mothers were asked to consider the eight different parenting goals again. The differences between these sections were that in the second section no specific context was given when mothers were asked questions about their parenting goals and the feelings that related to them. This section was used primarily to evoke mothers to think in-depth about each of the goals. The objective was to elicit responses to section three that were reliable representations of parenting goals during specific parent-adolescent interactions. The process of analysing the relationships between mothers' global goals, mothers other parenting characteristics, and adolescent adjustment was intended. This proved to be a very convoluted process and the results, for the most part, were not significant. As a result, the analyses using mothers' global goals have not been reported in this chapter. In the third section the contextually-bound goals were assessed using 5-point Likert scales (1 = Not at all; 5 = Completely).

In section two the questions were as follows (each question was originally accompanied by a 5 point Likert scale):

**a) Loving and caring relationship**

1 2 3 4 5      How important to you is a loving and caring relationship with your teenager?

**b) Mutual respect/compromise**

1 2 3 4 5      How important is it to you that your relationship with your teenager is based on mutual respect and compromise?

**c) Compliance** (This question was recoded for analysis.)

Imagine you need your teenager to comply with your wishes but they were unwilling to do so, would you want:

1	2	3
complete obedience	partial obedience, without discussion	discuss both viewpoints and negotiate a response

**d) Mothers' own needs**

- 1 2 3 4 5 I love looking after them. (This statement was recoded for analysis.)
- 1 2 3 4 5 I can feel angry because they don't appreciate my needs or my sacrifices.
- 1 2 3 4 5 Personal space is not an issue for me at all – it will come. (This statement was recoded for analysis.)
- 1 2 3 4 5 Sometimes I feel worthless, I am only here to drop them off, pick them up, and cook their meals.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I tend to put my needs on the back burner while the kids are at this age. (This statement was recoded for analysis.)
- 1 2 3 4 5 I'll do what ever they need – kids are kids only for a short time. (This statement was recoded for analysis.)
- 1 2 3 4 5 I may feel annoyed, frustrated but not resentful, because it is a choice I have made.

**e) Safety**

- 1 2 3 4 5 I see their safety as my responsibility. I try to ensure they do not do things by themselves or with people I don't approve of.
- 1 2 3 4 5 First I make them aware of the issues then I give them a lot of freedom to make their own decisions on what they will do. (This statement was recoded for analysis.)
- 1 2 3 4 5 I check, with other parents, all arrangements around transport, supervision and safety. I decide whether it is suitable for them to go somewhere or not.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I expect my teenager to give me complete details of their plans and then, if necessary, we will negotiate on who they go with and where they go.
- 1 2 3 4 5 They are old enough to do what they want, when they want, with whoever they want. They make their own decisions and suffer whatever consequences come from those decisions. (This statement was recoded for analysis.)

**f) Teen happiness**

- 1 2 3 4 5 My teenager's happiness concerns me more than their manners because I can see how mannerly they are but I can't necessarily see how happy they are.

1 2 3 4 5 Happiness comes out of good relationships and good manners are more likely if a person is happy. Therefore, my teenager's happiness is most important to me.

**g) Manners**

1 2 3 4 5 I focus most on my teenager's manners because manners are an important sign of respect for others. My teenager can work out their own happiness.

1 2 3 4 5 Sometimes my teenager's present happiness has to be forfeited for manners because manners will help them to get the most out of the world.

**h) Productivity**

1 2 3 4 5 It is very important to me that my teenager becomes a productive and useful member of society (ie, achieves things for others in society, achieves things for themselves in society, or both)

In section three mothers were asked to decide how important or relevant each of their parenting goals were in four separate scenarios. The eight (content specific) parenting goals assessed were as follows:

- 1 2 3 4 5 A loving and trusting relationship with my teenager
- 1 2 3 4 5 Assessing my own needs, wants and desires
- 1 2 3 4 5 Compliance from my teenager without delay
- 1 2 3 4 5 Ensuring my teenager's happiness
- 1 2 3 4 5 Ensuring my teenager uses their manners
- 1 2 3 4 5 Ensuring my teenager's safety
- 1 2 3 4 5 Ensuring my teenager is a productive and useful member of society
- 1 2 3 4 5 A relationship with my teenager based on mutual respect & compromise

**5.3.4 Vignettes**

Participants were asked to read four vignettes that depicted conflictual interactions between mothers and adolescent children. It was thought that if the situations given to the mothers resembled situations they had experienced with their teenagers, then it was likely that their responses to the questionnaire would be more accurate. For this reason, in the design of Study 1, mothers were asked to recall some specific challenging situations or conflicts they had experienced

with their teenager in the previous six months. The questions they responded to were (a) Can you describe to me an occasion when you were confronted with a “challenging” behaviour or a poor attitude from your teenager? (b) What did you say or do? (c) Was this typical behaviour/attitude for your teenager, why or why not? The four most commonly reported experiences by mothers in Study 1 provided the content of the vignettes in this study. The four vignettes are as follows:

**Vignette 1**

You receive an absolutely *enormous* phone bill because your teenager has been using the mobile phone rather excessively. They do not have any money to help pay for their share of the bill.

**Vignette 2**

You have been busy all day. When you get home your teenager’s stuff is all over the house. You have visitors arriving shortly and ask your teenager to tidy up quickly. They are on the computer playing a game they can’t save and they say they will do it in a little while – but a little while will probably be too late.

**Vignette 3**

Your teenager regularly stays in bed too long on a school morning and because they don’t want to be late for school, they are always asking you to drive them. (This often threatens to make you late for your appointments.)

**Vignette 4**

Your teenager speaks very rudely to you when you ask them to help around the house. (They are tired because they had been to a sleep-over the night before.)

After each vignette, mothers were asked to respond to three sets of questions which focused on their affective responses, their parenting goals, and their attributions for the teenager's behaviour in each of the situations.

***Please note: The hypotheses, analyses and discussion of the findings from Study 2 have been divided between two chapters (Chapter 5 and 6). The following measures (mothers' affective responses, attributions and behaviours), and their relationship with parenting goals and adolescent well-being will be considered in Chapter 6.***

### **5.3.5 Mothers' affective responses to vignettes (1<sup>st</sup> set of questions)**

For each of the four situations, mothers were asked to consider how they would feel if the situation had occurred in their own home. On a 5-point Likert scale they were asked to rate, how angry, worried, and upset they would feel in each of the situations (1 = Would not feel that way at all; 5 = Feel it very strongly).

### **5.3.6 Mothers' attributions for teenagers' behaviours (3<sup>rd</sup> set of questions)**

Mothers were asked to consider why their teenagers might have behaved the way they did in each of the situations. They were asked: "If you discovered that your own teenager had been in a situation like this, would you say their behaviour was determined by:

(a) Their teenager's personality (as opposed to the situation they were in).

Mothers were asked to make a personality attribution on a 4-point scale (1 = The

situation – completely; 2 = The situation – partially; 3 = Their personality – partially; and 4 = Their personality – completely).

(b) The intentionality of their teenager's actions. Mothers were asked to make an intentionality attribution using a 4-point scale (1 = Not at all; 2 = Slightly; 3 = Somewhat; and 4 = Completely).

### **5.3.7 Psychometric Measures:**

#### **(a) Child Reports of Parents' Behavioural Inventory (Modified version):**

Teenagers filled in the CRPBI (Schludermann & Schludermann, 1970). This was a 23-item scale used to assess how teenagers perceive their parents. In the present study the scale has been slightly modified with only the three most relevant categories administered:

- I. **Psychological autonomy versus psychological control.** This included 4 sub-categories and 8 items. The scoring for this ranged from 8 to 24. No re-coding of items was necessary. A high score meant mothers were psychologically controlling, a low score meant they were not.
- II. **Firm control versus lax control.** This included 2 sub-categories and 4 items. The scoring for this ranged from 4 to 12. No re-coding of items was necessary. A high score meant mothers were lax in their behavioural control; a low score meant mothers had a high level of behavioural control.
- III. **Acceptance and rejection.** This included 4 sub-categories and 11 items. The scoring for this ranged from 11 to 33. Eight of the items needed recoding (the scores for questions 4, 5, 7, 9, 12, 13, 20 and 22 were reversed: 1 = 3, 2 = 2, 3 = 1) A high score indicated mothers were very



rejecting of their teenager; a low score meant they were very accepting of their teenager.

The scores from the three categories could also be aggregated to get an overall behaviour score for mothers (range 23 to 69). A high score reflected negative behaviour and a low score reflected more positive behaviour. However, a score of 27 is considered the most effective behaviour because it allows for some flexibility in behavioural control. Each item was scored out of three. Teenagers had to decide if the statement resembled what their mother was like: 1 = Not like her; 2 = Somewhat like her; and 3 = A lot like her. The alpha reliability of this scale was .86, the test-retest reliability coefficient ranged from .89 to .91.

**(b) Positive and Negative Affect Schedule:** Teenagers filled in the two 10-item scales of the PANAS (Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988). There are 10 words that describe positive affect states and 10 words that describe negative affect states. Participants are asked to indicate how well each word described the way they had felt over the past couple of months. Scoring ranged from 1 = Very slightly to 5 = Extremely. When it came to the collating of scores, the positive affect scores were added together separately from the negative affect scores. This was because the authors of this scale argue that these two constructs should not be measured by placing them at either end of a continuum; rather, they are separate entities that need to be measured accordingly. The range for both the positive and negative affect scales was 10 to 50. A high positive affect score represents a

high good mood state, whereas a high negative affect score represents a very poor mood state. The alpha reliability of this scale ranged from .86 to .90 for positive affect, and .84 to .87 for negative affect.

**(c) Child Behaviour Checklist, (Boyle et al., 1987).** This consisted of 16 items relating to behavioural problems. Some examples are: destroyed his/her own things; was mean to animals; stole things outside the home. For each item mothers were asked to rate the child from 0 to 2: 0 = never; 1 = sometimes; 2 = often. The score range for this scale was 0 (no problems) up to 32 (very severe problems). This scale was altered for the analyses: "0 to 2" was changed to "1 to 3".

**(d) Self-Esteem:** Teenagers filled in the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965). See the Methodology section of Study 1.

**(e) Attachment Scale:** Kerr and Stattin (2000). Teenagers filled in this scale, see the Methodology section of Study 1.

**(f) Family Functioning:** Teenagers filled in the Family Assessment Device (FAD: Epstein, Baldwin, & Bishop, 1983). Only the General Family Functioning subscale from the Family Assessment Device was used. See the Methodology section of Study 1.

### 5.3.8 Reliability Analysis

Reliability analyses were performed on the different measurement scales to ensure they possessed adequate levels of internal consistency. Table 5.1 shows that each of the scales used for mothers and teenagers in this study had good internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha values > 0.70.

Table 5.1

*Reliability analysis for the principal measures: Perceptions of attachment, family functioning, self-esteem, PANAS and CRPBI*

	No. of cases	No. of items	Cronbach's Alpha
<b>Mothers</b>			
• Attachment	103	8	.84
• Family Functioning	102	11	.85
• Self-Esteem	102	10	.85
• CBCL	102	16	.87
<b>Teenagers</b>			
• Attachment	101	8	.90
• Family Functioning	98	11	.91
• Self-Esteem	102	10	.85
• PANAS	98	20	.77
- positive mood only	98	10	.82
- negative mood only	98	10	.87
• CRPBI	98	23	.77
- autonomy v/s control	100	8	.70
- firm control v/s lax control	100	4	.72
- acceptance v/s rejection	99	11	.80

## 5.4 Results

All the significant tests in this section are two-tailed and have an alpha level of .05 except where indicated.

### 5.4.1 The demographic characteristics of the sample (Section 1)

Table 5.2 shows that over two-thirds (71.8 %) of the mother-teenager dyads visited in this study were in homes with two biological parents, with the remainder in

single-parent or blended families (28.2 %). As observed previously, the distribution of male teenagers and female teenagers was similar, although there were with slightly more females in both two-parent households and single/blended parent households.

Table 5.2

*The distribution of male and female teenagers according to family structure, mothers' income and mothers' occupation*

	<u>Family Structure</u>		<u>Mothers' Occupation</u>			<u>Mothers' Income</u>		
	Two-parent	Single & blended	Blue Collar	White Collar	Home Duties	Under 20,000	20,000-50,000	Over 50,000
	<u>N</u> (%)	<u>N</u> (%)	<u>N</u> (%)	<u>N</u> (%)	<u>N</u> (%)	<u>N</u> (%)	<u>N</u> (%)	<u>N</u> (%)
Male Teenagers Age 12 to 18	35 (34.0)	12 (11.7)	11 (10.9)	10 (9.9)	26 (25.7)	7 (7.7)	19 (20.9)	14 (15.4)
Female Teenagers Aged 12 to 18	39 (37.8)	17 (16.5)	11 (10.9)	19 (18.8)	24 (23.8)	17 (18.7)	21 (23.1)	13 (14.3)
All Teenagers Age 12 to 18	74 (71.8)	29 (28.2)	22 (21.8)	29 (28.7)	50 (49.5)	24 (26.4)	40 (44.0)	27 (19.7)

Seventy-seven (76.2 %) of the mothers were educated as far as high school and 24 (23.8 %) of the mothers had a TAFE diploma or university degree. Chi squared analysis found no significant associations between the education levels of mothers with daughters and mothers with sons,  $\chi^2 (1, N = 101) < 1$ . There were 29 (28.7 %) mothers in white collar occupations<sup>1</sup>, 22 (21.8 %) mothers in blue collar employment, and half of the mothers were in home duties (49.5 %). Again, Chi squared analysis found no significant associations in employment for mothers of sons and mothers of daughters,  $\chi^2 (2, N = 101) < 1$ .

<sup>1</sup> The distinction between blue collar and white collar employment was based on an arbitrary classification where participants were categorised as either manual or non-manual labourers.

Table 5.2 also shows that the combined income of twenty-four (23.1%) of the families was below 20,000 dollars/annum; 40 (38.5 %) families had a combined income between 20,000 and 50,000 dollars/annum; and, 27 (26.0%) families had an income over 50,000 dollars/annum. The comparative 2006 census data for South Australia (Health Monitor Data collected by the Department of Families and Communities) indicates that the sample had a lower income distribution than the general population (43% of homes have income over 50,000 dollars/annum).

Seventeen (18.7%) female teenagers and 7 (7.7%) male teenagers belonged to families with income levels below 20,000 dollars/annum. There was a relatively even distribution of male (19, 20.9%) and female (21, 23.1%) teenagers in families that earned between 20,000 and 50,000 dollars/annum. Similarly, there was an even distribution of male (14, 15.4%) and female (13, 29.7%) teenagers in families that earned over 50,000 dollars/annum. There were no significant associations between family income and teenagers' gender in this study  $\chi^2 (2, N = 91) = 3.02, p > .05$ . Furthermore, there were no significant associations between family income and the age of teenagers in the sample  $\chi^2 (2, N = 91) < 1$ .

Chi-square tests were performed to assess any association between the demographic variables (family structure, income, mothers' education and mothers' employment). Although the majority of the analyses showed no significant associations, there were some significant relationships between family structure, mothers' employment and combined income. Chi-square analyses found significant relationship between family structure and mothers' employment

$\chi^2(2, N = 101) = 11.88, p < .05$ . Mothers in two-parent households were more likely to be found in white collar employment whereas single parent mothers were in blue collar employment or worked at home. In addition, mothers in two-parent households were found to have significantly higher income levels than mothers in single/blended families  $\chi^2(2, N = 91) = 28.52, p < .001$ . Sixty-two percent of the single/blended-parent families had an income less than 20,000 dollars/annum, whereas only 9.2% of the two-parent families had an income of less than 20,000 dollars/annum. Finally, as would be expected, there was also a significant relationship between combined income and mothers' employment  $\chi^2(4, N = 90) = 16.27, p < .01$ .

#### **5.4.2 Psychological Measures: Descriptive Statistics**

Table 5.3 provides the means and standard deviations for the scales that measured the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship: family functioning and attachment. The Table also gives the means and standard deviations for adolescent adjustment: self-esteem, problem behaviours, positive moods and negative moods.

On face value, mothers' and teenagers' scores on each of the scales were relatively compatible, as were the scores between male and female teenagers. Paired sample t-tests were conducted to assess if any significant differences existed between mothers' and teenagers' view of the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship (family functioning and attachment) and mothers' and teenagers' self-esteem. Although this data could be analysed using multivariate techniques such as Hotellings  $T^2$  (t-squared) in which the effects of different

dependent measures are assessed simultaneously, Huberty and Morris (1989) have shown that such methods are unnecessary if one has an interest in determining the effects of individual dependent measures. In other words, if one intends to analyse variables at a univariate level, it adds little to show that they differ at a multivariate level (using MANOVA).

The findings showed that mothers perceived family functioning to be better than teenagers perceived it to be  $t(94) = 4.54, p < .001, d = 0.43$ ). Conversely, teenagers' reports of attachment to mothers was stronger than mothers' perceptions of teenagers' attachment to mother  $t(99) = 6.22, p < .001, d = 0.61$ ). Independent t-tests were performed to identify any sex differences in relation to the perceived quality of the parent-adolescent relationship and psychosocial adjustment of teenagers. The findings revealed significant differences in terms of sons' and daughters' psychosocial adjustment, which are consistent with the findings from previous research on adolescent gender differences. Sons had significantly higher self-esteem and more positive moods than did daughters  $t(99) = 2.60, p < .05, (d = 0.53)$ ; and  $t(95) = 2.87, p < .01, (d = 0.60)$  respectively. Furthermore, the problem behaviours of sons were found to be significantly greater than the problem behaviours of daughters  $t(100) = 2.72, p < .01, d = 0.60$ .

**Table 5.3**  
*M (SD) scores for mothers' and teenagers' on each of the psychometric scales*

	<b>All Mothers</b>	<b>Teenagers</b>	<b>Sons</b>	<b>Daughters</b>
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
<b>Family Functioning (Self-report)</b> Range = 11 to 44	35.5 (4.94) <u>N</u> = 101	33.1 (6.22) <u>N</u> = 98	32.1 (5.69) <u>N</u> = 42	34.0 (6.57) <u>N</u> = 55
<b>Attachment (Self-report)</b> Range = 8 to 40	29.0 (3.77) <u>N</u> = 103	31.8 (5.38) <u>N</u> = 100	31.3 (5.32) <u>N</u> = 44	32.3 (5.49) <u>N</u> = 56
<b>Self-Esteem (Self-report)</b> Range = 10 to 40		30.8 (4.56) <u>N</u> = 102	32.1 (3.67) <u>N</u> = 45	29.8 (5.00) <u>N</u> = 56
<b>PANAS (Self-report)</b>				
• Positive mood Range 10 to 50		34.7 (6.71)	36.7 (5.54)	32.9 (7.13)
• Negative mood Range 10 to 50		20.0 (7.07) <u>N</u> = 98	19.1 (5.14) <u>N</u> = 43	20.7 (8.32) <u>N</u> = 54
<b>Teen Behaviour (Mothers' perceptions)</b> Range = 16 to 48	18.8 (3.64) <u>N</u> = 102		19.9 (4.69) <u>N</u> = 47	17.9 (2.03) <u>N</u> = 55

### 5.4.3 A survey of mothers' parenting goals (Section 2)

The following section begins with an assessment of mothers' general opinions about the importance of eight pregenerated parenting goals: loving/caring; mutual respect; teen happiness; safety; manners; productivity; mothers' own needs; and compliance. Following this assessment, the mothers were asked to reconsider the importance of these goals when they were confronted with four different conflictual interactions with their teenagers. Repeated measures ANOVAs were performed to assess the importance and consistency of these goals across the situations. Teenagers' perceptions of mothers' parenting goals were also assessed to provide further information concerning mothers' views of the importance of the eight pregenerated parenting



goals mentioned above. Paired sample t-tests were conducted to assess the differences between mothers' reports of their goals and teenagers' perceptions of mothers' goals.

#### **5.4.4 Parenting goals based on mothers' reports and adolescents' perceptions of mothers' goals (Aim 1)**

##### **i) The global parenting goals mothers ranked as their greatest priority**

Mothers were asked to rank the eight pregenerated (global) parenting goals in terms of importance. This initial analysis of parenting goals was designed to explore the current beliefs in South Australia concerning the parenting of teenagers. The findings reported in Table 5.4 represent mothers' ranking of their first or second most important goals when raising a teenager. In Table 5.4 it can be seen that the goals of love, safety, mutual respect, and teen happiness were most commonly rated by mothers as the most important goals (1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup>) when raising a teenager. The remaining four goals: productivity, compliance, manners, and own needs were rated as the most important goals by only a few mothers.

In relation to mothers' *centres of concern* the findings indicate that when mothers have to prioritise their goals they place a higher value on relationship-centred concerns (RC: loving and mutual respect goals) and child-centred empathic concerns (CCE: teen happiness and safety goals) than on parent-centred concerns (PC: compliance and own needs goals) and child-centred socialisation concerns (CCS: manners and productivity goals).

**Table 5.4**  
*The number of times that mothers gave a parenting goal first or second priority over all other goals*

<b>Mothers' reports (N = 103)</b>	
<b>Parenting goals:</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> response</b>
Loving and caring	65
Safety	42
Mutual respect	37
Teen happiness	36
Productivity	17
Compliance	5
Manners	4
Mothers' own needs	1

## **ii) The level of importance mothers gave contextually-bound parenting goals**

Mothers were then asked to report the importance they ascribed to each of the pregenerated parenting goals within the context of four challenging situations involving their teenager. In this assessment mothers were not required to prioritise one goal over another. Table 5.5 provides the total mean scores and standard deviations for each of the eight parenting goals (the scores for each goal were summed across the situations). Reliability analyses were also performed to assess the consistency of each of the four goals across the four scenarios. Cronbach's alpha in Table 5.5 shows that the majority of mothers' goals were shown to be quite stable across the four scenarios. Mothers' goal of safety was shown to be the least reliable of all the goals with an alpha rating of .66.

**Table 5.5**  
*Totalled Means (SDs), one way repeated measures ANOVAs of mothers' parenting goals (Range 4 to 20) and reliability analysis of parenting goals*

	<i>M</i>	<i>(SD)</i>	<b>LSD post-hoc Pairwise comparisons</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alphas across scenarios</b>
Mutual respect	17.1	(2.93)	1 > 2-8*	.84
Loving and caring	15.5	(3.36)	2 > 5-8*	.84
Productivity	14.8	(3.95)	3 > 5-8*	.84
Compliance	14.7	(3.63)	4 > 5-8*	.80
Manners	13.6	(3.75)	5 > 8*	.81
Mothers' own needs	13.5	(3.35)	6 > 8*	.75
Safety	12.9	(4.75)	7	.66
Teen happiness	12.2	(3.68)		.84

\* $p < .05$

\*range based on ratings of 1-5 x 4 scenarios

Table 5.5 shows that one-way repeated measures ANOVAs were conducted to assess the differences between the means for each of the goals. The findings show that the goal of mutual respect was of greatest concern to mothers when they were confronted with challenging interactions involving their teenagers. There was no significant difference between the second, third and fourth scores (loving and caring, teenagers' productivity and compliance from teenagers). Scores for these three, however, differed significantly from the remaining four goals (manners, mothers' own needs, teenagers' safety and teen happiness). The goal of teen happiness was significantly lower than the mean scores of all the other parenting goals, except safety. This suggests that in conflictual interactions with teenagers, mothers were least concerned with the desire to ensure their teenagers' immediate happiness, and most concerned about a loving and respectful relationship with their teenager.

### iii) Teenagers' perceptions of the level of importance mothers gave to contextually-bound parenting goals

Table 5.6  
Totalled Means (SDs), one way repeated measures ANOVAs of teenagers' perceptions of mothers' parenting goals and reliability analyses of parenting goals

	<i>M</i>	( <i>SD</i> )	LSD post-hoc Pairwise comparisons	Cronbachs Alphas across scenarios
Mutual respect	15.3	(3.74)	1 > 2-8*	.88
Compliance	14.3	(3.39)	2 > 6-8*	.84
Manners	14.1	(3.56)	3 > 6-8*	.77
Productivity	13.9	(3.90)	4 > 6-8*	.84
Loving and caring	13.5	(4.01)	5 > 7-8*	.86
Safety	12.8	(4.63)	6 > 8*	.84
Mothers' own needs	12.1	(3.45)	7	.77
Teen happiness	11.7	(3.91)		.84

\* $p < .05$

Teenagers were surveyed concerning their perceptions of the importance they believed their mothers ascribed to each of the parenting goals. Table 5.6 provides the total mean scores and standard deviations for each of the eight parenting goals in order of importance. Reliability analyses were also performed to assess the consistency of each of the four goals across the four scenarios. Cronbach's alpha in Table 5.5 shows that teenagers' perceptions of mothers' goals were shown to be quite stable across the four scenarios.

One-way repeated measures ANOVAs were conducted to assess the differences between the means for each of the goals. The findings show that mutual respect was seen by teenagers to be of greatest importance to mothers (as this mean was significantly larger than the means of the other seven parenting goals). The next most important was compliance, then manners, productivity, and loving/caring, which were significantly different from the mean scores for safety, mothers' own needs, and teen happiness. Once again, the

lowest mean score was for the goal of teen happiness. The findings in Table 5.6 indicate that during conflictual interactions between mothers and teenagers, teenagers perceive their mothers to be least interested in CCE concerns, particularly teenagers' happiness. However, teenagers acknowledged that mothers also did not generally prioritise their own needs above those of the teenager.

To summarise, the findings from mothers and teenagers reports on parenting goals were quite consistent. In specific situations, RC concerns were still of key importance to mothers, and these were followed by a relatively strong interest in both CCS goals and parent-centred goals. CCE concerns, on the other hand, were of least importance to mothers. These findings were similar to teenagers' reports, in that teenagers perceived RC concerns, CCS concerns, and compliance (a PC concern) to be issues about which their mothers were most concerned. CCE concerns, particularly teen happiness, and mothers' own needs were perceived to be of least importance to mothers.

It was notable that mothers' reports on parenting goals, tended to be somewhat different when they were asked to prioritise global goals and when they considered goals in specific situations. When choosing between global goals, the majority of mothers considered RC concerns and CCE concerns to be of most value when raising a teenager. However, when considering specific interactions with their teenagers mothers reported CCE concerns to be of least importance to them, and CCS issues to be considerably more important.

iv) The significant differences and similarities between mothers' reports teenagers' perceptions of mothers' contextually-bound goals

Table 5.7

One-sample *t*-tests showing the within-family correspondences of mothers and teenagers reports of mothers' goals in the different scenarios

Mother-Teenager (N = 38; df = 97)			
	<i>M</i>	( <i>SD</i> )	<i>t</i> (97)
<b>Situation 1</b>			
Loving and Caring	0.63	(1.27)	4.93***
Mothers' own needs	0.46	(1.66)	2.74**
Compliance	0.26	(1.44)	< 1
Teen happiness	0.07	(1.56)	< 1
Manners	-0.30	(1.61)	< 1
Safety	-0.23	(1.71)	< 1
Productivity	0.31	(1.50)	< 1
Mutual respect	0.46	(1.16)	3.92***
<b>Situation 2</b>			
Loving and Caring	0.39	(1.43)	2.68**
Mothers' own needs	0.58	(1.43)	4.03***
Compliance	0.05	(1.47)	< 1
Teen happiness	0.17	(1.51)	< 1
Manners	-0.20	(1.61)	< 1
Safety	-0.19	(1.99)	< 1
Productivity	0.09	(1.68)	< 1
Mutual respect	0.37	(1.34)	2.73**
<b>Situation 3</b>			
Loving and Caring	0.47	(1.71)	2.73**
Mothers' own needs	0.17	(1.53)	< 1
Compliance	0.18	(1.47)	< 1
Teen happiness	0.10	(1.67)	< 1
Manners	0.07	(1.84)	< 1
Safety	0.28	(1.84)	< 1
Productivity	0.46	(1.53)	2.96**
Mutual respect	0.50	(1.45)	3.43**
<b>Situation 4</b>			
Loving and Caring	0.39	(1.58)	2.43*
Mothers' own needs	0.20	(1.34)	< 1
Compliance	-0.15	(1.46)	< 1
Teen happiness	0.09	(1.68)	< 1
Manners	-0.17	(1.51)	< 1
Safety	0.11	(1.87)	< 1
Productivity	0.10	(1.64)	< 1
Mutual respect	0.43	(1.44)	2.94**

\**p* < .05 \*\**p* < .01 \*\*\**p* < .001

Situation 1 = Large mobile phone bill; Situation 2 = Turning off computer & tidying lounge; Situation 3 = Not getting out of bed in time for school; Situation 4 = Speaking rudely to mother

One sample t-tests were performed to assess within-family correspondences between mothers' reports, and their teenagers' reports, of parenting goals for each of the scenarios. Table 5.7 shows that the most significant differences were found between mothers' reports and their teenagers' reports when focusing on the goals of loving and caring, mothers' own needs, and mutual respect.

Paired sample t-tests were also performed to compare how mothers' and teenagers' reports on mothers' parenting goals differed from a group perspective. Table 5.8 shows the significant differences found in each of the individual situations and when the four scores for each goal were totalled. It could be argued that the use of Manova, with post-hoc comparisons would be a more appropriate analysis for this comparison. However, this was decided against based on Huberty and Morris' argument already discussed in Section 5.4.2.

The findings in Table 5.8 show that there were significant differences between the goals of mutual respect and loving/caring. Mothers reported a greater concern for these goals than teenagers. In most cases the magnitude of the difference in the means was moderate. When the four mean scores for each goal were totalled, the goals of mutual respect and loving were again found to be significantly different, and their Cohen's *d* statistic indicated moderate effect sizes. Cohen states that "the effect size index for the *t* test of the difference between independent means is *d*, the difference expressed in units of (ie, divided by) the within-population standard deviation" (1992, p. 157). Using this

calculation a small effect size = .20, a medium effect size = .50 and a large effect size = .80.

The only other goal on which mothers and teenagers differed significantly was mothers' own needs. In two of the four situations (when the 4 means for each goal were totalled) mothers reported significantly higher concerns for their own needs than teenagers' perceived them to have.

Table 5.8  
*Paired-sample t-tests showing the differences between mothers' goals and teenagers' perceptions of mothers' goals across the four different scenarios (totals included)*

	Mother		Teenager		<i>t</i> (97)	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i>	( <i>SD</i> )		
<b>Situation 1</b>						
Mutual respect	4.4	(0.90)	4.0	(0.98)	3.92***	.43
Loving	4.1	(0.99)	3.5	(1.15)	4.93***	.56
Own needs	3.2	(1.16)	2.7	(1.10)	2.74**	.44
<b>Situation 2</b>						
Mutual respect	4.2	(0.91)	3.8	(1.10)	2.73**	.40
Loving	3.7	(1.08)	3.3	(1.18)	2.68**	.35
Own needs	3.8	(1.08)	3.2	(1.17)	4.03***	.53
<b>Situation 3</b>						
Mutual respect	4.2	(0.89)	3.7	(1.15)	3.43**	.49
Loving	3.8	(1.05)	3.3	(1.28)	2.72**	.43
<b>Situation 4</b>						
Mutual respect	4.3	(0.88)	3.9	(1.15)	2.94**	.39
Loving	3.9	(1.00)	3.5	(1.16)	2.43*	.37
<b>Total differences across situations</b>						
Mutual Respect	17.1	(2.97)	15.3	(3.75)	3.81***	.54
Loving	15.4	(3.37)	13.5	(4.02)	3.82***	.51
Own needs	13.5	(3.36)	12.1	(3.47)	3.15**	.41

\**p* < .05 \*\**p* < .01 \*\*\**p* < .001

Situation 1 = Large mobile phone bill; Situation 2 = Turning off computer & tidying lounge; Situation 3 = Not getting out of bed in time for school; Situation 4 = Speaking rudely to mother



### 5.4.5 The consistency of parenting goals across different scenarios (Aim 2)

#### i) The consistency of mothers' goals across different scenarios

One-way repeated measures ANOVAs with post-hoc comparisons were performed to determine the level of consistency that existed in mothers' parenting goals across the four situations.

Table 5.9

Means, (SDs) and post hoc comparisons for mothers' reports of parenting goals across the four scenarios (Range = 1 to 5)

	<b>Loving &amp; Caring</b>	<b>Mutual Respect</b>	<b>Own Needs</b>	<b>Compliance</b>
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
Situation 1	4.2 (0.98)	4.4 (0.90)	3.2 (1.16)	3.7 (1.18)
Situation 2	3.7 (1.07)	4.2 (0.91)	3.8 (1.06)	3.9 (1.10)
Situation 3	3.8 (1.05)	4.2 (0.88)	3.4 (1.17)	3.7 (1.15)
Situation 4	3.9 (1.01)	4.3 (0.87)	3.2 (1.06)	3.4 (1.17)
	<i>F</i> = 9.5 (3,306) <i>p</i> < .001	<i>F</i> = 2.7 (3,306) <i>p</i> > .05	<i>F</i> = 10.5 (3,306) <i>p</i> < .001	<i>F</i> = 5.7 (3,306) <i>p</i> < .01
<b>LSD Post-hoc comparisons:</b>	1 > 2*, 3*, 4* 4 > 2*	1 > 2*, 3* 4 > 2*, 3*	2 > 1*, 3*, 4* 3 > 1*, 4*	1 > 4* 2 > 1*, 3*, 4* 3 > 4*
	<b>Safety</b>	<b>Happiness</b>	<b>Manners</b>	<b>Productivity</b>
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
Situation 1	3.5 (1.44)	3.1 (1.10)	3.1 (1.20)	3.8 (1.24)
Situation 2	2.8 (1.48)	2.9 (1.14)	3.4 (1.09)	3.6 (1.23)
Situation 3	3.5 (1.31)	3.1 (1.16)	3.4 (1.25)	3.9 (1.08)
Situation 4	3.1 (1.51)	3.1 (1.05)	3.7 (1.17)	3.6 (1.25)
	<i>F</i> = 13.2 (3,306) <i>p</i> < .001	<i>F</i> = 1.6 (3,306) <i>p</i> > .05	<i>F</i> = 21.5 (3,306) <i>p</i> < .001	<i>F</i> = 4.5 (3,306) <i>p</i> < .01
<b>LSD post-hoc comparisons:</b>	1 > 2*, 4* 3 > 2*, 4* 4 > 2*	1 > 2* 3 > 2* 4 > 2*	2 > 1* 3 > 1* 4 > 1*, 2*, 3*	3 > 2*, 4*

\**p* < .05

Situation 1 = Large mobile phone bill; Situation 2 = Switching off computer and tidying lounge;  
 Situation 3 = Not getting out of bed in time for school; Situation 4 = Speaking rudely to mother

The findings, as seen in Table 5.9, show that the mean scores for some of the goals tended to differ across the situations. There were significant differences between the mean scores for the goals of loving, own needs, teenagers' safety and teenagers' manners across the four scenarios. This suggests that the importance of these particular goals depends on the particular situation. For example, mothers' own needs were of primary importance when mothers had visitors coming around (Scenario 2), they were quite important when she wanted to get to work on time (Scenario 3) but were much less important in the scenarios where the effects of the situation did not involve other people (Scenario's 1 and 4). Conversely, the mean scores for the goals of mutual respect, teen happiness, productivity and compliance did not fluctuate significantly across the different situations. This may suggest that these parenting goals are less influenced by outside pressures. Furthermore, the goals of mutual respect and teen happiness were consistently perceived to be of greatest and least importance, respectively.

**ii) The consistency of teenagers' perceptions of mothers' goals across the four scenarios**

One-way repeated measures ANOVAs with post hoc comparisons were performed to determine the level of consistency in teenagers' perceptions of mothers' concerns across the four scenarios.

The findings, in Table 5.10, show that the mean scores for the goals of compliance, safety, manners and own needs tended to fluctuate across the four scenarios, with the differences being quite significant. It could be suggested from this that teenagers observe their mothers to be less consistent in terms of their

concern for these four goals. The goals of loving, mutual respect, teen happiness, and productivity, on the other hand, were seen to be more consistent in that their level of importance did not fluctuate to the same degree as the other goals. The goals of mutual respect and teen happiness were consistently perceived to be of greatest and least importance, respectively.

Table 5.10  
Means (SDs) and post hoc comparisons of teenagers' perceptions of parenting goals across the four scenarios

	<b>Loving &amp; Caring</b>	<b>Mutual Respect</b>	<b>Own Needs</b>	<b>Compliance</b>
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
Situation 1	3.5 (1.15)	4.0 (0.97)	2.7 (1.10)	3.4 (1.04)
Situation 2	3.3 (1.18)	3.8 (1.11)	3.2 (1.17)	3.8 (1.03)
Situation 3	3.3 (1.28)	3.7 (1.15)	3.2 (1.14)	3.5 (1.02)
Situation 4	3.5 (1.15)	3.9 (1.14)	3.0 (1.06)	3.6 (1.04)
	<i>F</i> = 2.7 (3,294) <i>p</i> < .05	<i>F</i> = 2.8 (3,294) <i>p</i> < .05	<i>F</i> = 8.0 (3,294) <i>p</i> < .001	<i>F</i> = 6.7 (3,294) <i>p</i> < .001
<b>LSD Post-hoc comparisons:</b>	1 > 2*, 3* 4 > 2*, 3*	1 > 3*	2 > 1*, 4* 3 > 1*, 4*	2 > 1*, 3*, 4*
	<b>Safety</b>	<b>Happiness</b>	<b>Manners</b>	<b>Productivity</b>
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
Situation 1	3.7 (1.37)	3.0 (1.19)	3.4 (1.17)	3.4 (1.12)
Situation 2	3.0 (1.51)	2.7 (1.17)	3.6 (1.14)	3.5 (1.23)
Situation 3	3.3 (1.34)	3.0 (1.22)	3.3 (1.25)	3.5 (1.17)
Situation 4	3.0 (1.37)	3.0 (1.19)	3.9 (1.09)	3.5 (1.23)
	<i>F</i> = 13.1 (3,294) <i>p</i> < .001	<i>F</i> = 3.2 (3,294) <i>p</i> > .05	<i>F</i> = 8.9 (3,294) <i>p</i> < .001	<i>F</i> = 0.0 (3,294) <i>p</i> > .05
<b>LSD Post hoc comparisons:</b>	1 > 2*, 3*, 4* 3 > 2*, 4*	1 > 2* 3 > 2* 4 > 2*	2 > 1*, 3* 4 > 1*, 2*, 3*	

\**p* < .05

Situation 1 = Large mobile phone bill; Situation 2 = Switching off computer and tidying lounge;  
Situation 3 = Not getting out of bed in time for school; Situation 4 = Speaking rudely to mother

It could be argued that computing so many one-way repeated-measures ANOVA's increases the risk of family-wise inflation of the error rate and that a

preferable analyses would be to conduct two 4 x 8 (scenario x goal) repeated-measures ANOVA's, one for mothers reports and the other for teenagers reports. The argument against this is two-fold: first, interactive analyses are less powerful. Second, a 4 x 8 repeated-measures ANOVA would be difficult to interpret and would result in the need for a multitude of simple effects analyses anyway. For these reasons, the analyses that were conducted were seen to be the most suitable for this study.

In summary, it would appear that mothers' and teenagers' reports of parenting goals were relatively consistent with one another. In both the mothers' and teenagers' reports it became apparent that the goals of own needs, safety and manners were the goals that fluctuated most, depending on the situation. The only difference between mothers' and teenagers' reports was that mothers' goal of loving and caring tended to fluctuate depending on the situation, whereas from teenagers' reports, mothers' goal of compliance was not strongly influenced by the nature of the situation. In contrast, mutual respect and teen happiness appeared to be highly stable across respondents and across situations.

#### **5.4.6 Contextually-bound parenting goals, parent-adolescent relationships and adolescent adjustment (Section 3)**

##### **i) Preliminary analyses**

Pearson correlations were conducted to assess the association between teenagers' adjustment scores and teenagers' scores on their perceptions of the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship.

Table 5.11  
Correlations of teenagers' family functioning, attachment and psychosocial adjustment scores

	<u>FF</u>	<u>Attach</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>PM</u>	<u>NM</u>	<u>Problem Behaviour</u>
<b>Family Functioning</b>	-	.82**	.49**	.34**	-.28**	-.36**
<b>Attachment</b>		-	.41**	.33**	-.21*	-.27**
<b>Self Esteem</b>			-	.60**	-.46**	.02
<b>Positive Mood</b>				-	-.13	.14
<b>Negative Mood</b>					-	.07

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

FF = family functioning; Attach = attachment to mother; SE = self-esteem; PM = positive mood; NM = negative mood

The findings in Table 5.11 reveal a number of significant associations between teenagers' adjustment scores and teenagers' perceptions of the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship. Teenagers' self-esteem and positive mood improved as the quality of the relationship with parents improved. Furthermore, teenagers' negative mood and problem behaviours increased as the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship declined. It is worth noting that teenagers' problem behaviour scores were not significantly associated with adolescent self-esteem or mood states.

Table 5.12 shows that Pearson correlations were performed to assess the relationships between mothers' reports of parenting goals and the relationships between teenagers' perceptions of parenting goals. Correlations were based on the aggregated score of the means from each scenario for each goal. The noteworthy findings in relation to teenagers' perceptions of mothers' goals (above the diagonal), were the strong associations between loving and mutual respect (RC concerns) and their strong associations with CCE and CCS concerns. The

goal of loving was not significantly associated with PC concerns (compliance and own needs) but there was a modest association between the goals of mutual respect and compliance. The only negative association was between mothers' own needs and teen happiness, but this was also very modest.

Table 5.12

*Correlations of mothers' reports of parenting goals (below the diagonal) and teenagers' perceptions of mothers' goals (above the diagonal)*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Loving (1)	-	-.05	.19	.68**	.50**	.69**	.43**	.60**
Own needs (2)	.15	-	.30**	-.20*	.18	-.07	.22*	.06
Compliance (3)	.16	.43**	-	.22*	.50**	.17	.31**	.26**
Happiness (4)	.63**	.07	.17	-	.43**	.67**	.32*	.45**
Manners (5)	.37**	.23*	.48**	.38**	-	.54**	.50**	.51**
Safety (6)	.61**	.04	.11	.61**	.41*	-	.46**	.54**
Productivity (7)	.50**	.12	.35**	.40**	.54**	.44**	-	.57**
Respect (8)	.62**	.19	.34**	.35**	.51**	.37**	.57**	-

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

Mothers' reports of parenting goals (Table 5.12 - below the diagonal) were correlated with teenagers' reports. Relationship-centred concerns were strongly associated with all child-centred concerns (empathic and socialisation concerns). The goal of loving, however, was not significantly associated with parent-centred concerns (compliance and own need goals) although there was a moderate association between the goals of mutual respect and compliance.

#### **5.4.7 Exploring the relationship between contextually-bound parenting goals and adolescent outcomes (Aim 3)**

##### ***i) The significant associations between mothers' and teenagers' reports of parenting goals (in specific situations) and adolescent outcomes***

Pearson correlations were conducted to assess the relationship between parenting goals and adolescent outcomes. The findings did not reveal any significant association between *mothers' reports* of parenting goals and adolescent outcomes. However, there were some significant correlations between *teenagers' perceptions* of mothers' parenting goals and adolescent outcomes. The findings in Table 5.13 show that as teenagers' perceived relationship-centred concerns and child-centred concerns to be of increasing importance, the better the quality of the perceived parent-adolescent relationship. Conversely, as teenagers perceived mothers to have an increasing interest in their own need goals, their view of the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship deteriorated.

In relation to adolescent psychosocial adjustment, Table 5.13 shows there were only a few associations between teenagers' perceptions of mothers' goals, and adolescent adjustment. If teenagers' perceptions of mothers' interest in mutual respect were stronger, teenagers were more likely to have higher positive mood scores, lower negative mood scores, and fewer problem behaviours. The stronger the teenagers' perception that mothers had an interest in simply loving them, the lower the teenagers' negative mood. In addition, the more mothers were seen to focus on their own needs, the lower the teenagers' self-esteem

scores. Compliance, teen happiness, and safety goals were not significantly associated with any adolescent outcomes.

Table 5.13

*Correlations of teenagers' perceptions of mothers' contextually-bound goals and adolescent outcomes*

	<u>TFF</u>	<u>TATT</u>	<u>TSE</u>	<u>TPM</u>	<u>TNM</u>	<u>TBehave</u>
<b>Loving</b>	.35**	.32**	.10	.12	-.14	-.21*
<b>Mutual Respect</b>	.29**	.30**	.16	.25*	-.24*	-.20*
<b>Own needs</b>	-.29**	-.29**	-.24*	-.01	.15	-.01
<b>Compliance</b>	.07	-.04	-.01	.14	-.17	-.06
<b>Happiness</b>	.27**	.34**	.03	.15	-.12	-.09
<b>Safety</b>	.27**	.34**	.18	.18	-.15	-.09
<b>Manners</b>	.22*	.16	.08	.14	-.17	-.15
<b>Productivity</b>	.16	.09	.12	.18	-.22*	-.03

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  TFF = family functioning; TATT = attachment, TSE = self-esteem, TPM = positive mood, TNM = negative mood, TBehave = teenagers' behaviour

## ii) Is the variance in adolescent outcomes predicted by mothers' parenting goals?

Regression analyses were performed to test the contribution that teenagers' perceptions of mothers' goals made to the outcomes in this study. The findings showed that perceptions of mothers' goals significantly contributed to the variance in teenagers' views of family functioning and attachment to mother (see Table 5.14), but did not contribute significantly to the variance in adolescent self-esteem, behaviour, or mood states (hence, they are not shown in Table 5.14)



Table 5.14

*Regressions showing the contribution of teenagers' perceptions of mothers' goals in relation to the variations in adolescent outcomes*

		$\beta$	$SE$	$R^2$	Beta	$t$ -value
<b>Teens' family functioning</b>						
Step 1	Age	1.35	1.33		0.11	< 1
	Gender	2.14	1.32	.03	0.17	< 1
Step 2	Age	0.99	1.27		0.08	< 1
	Gender	1.18	1.31		0.09	< 1
	Loving and caring	0.47	0.25		0.31	< 1
	Mothers' own needs	-0.66	0.20		-0.37	3.38**
	Compliance	0.16	0.22		0.09	< 1
	Teen happiness	-0.33	0.27		-0.21	< 1
	Manners	0.14	0.25		0.08	< 1
	Safety	0.06	0.21		0.04	< 1
	Productivity	0.07	0.20		0.04	< 1
	Mutual respect	0.16	0.23	.25	0.10	< 1
<b>Teens' attachment</b>						
Step 1	Age	1.16	1.12		0.11	< 1
	Gender	0.60	1.11	.01	0.06	< 1
Step 2	Age	0.39	1.06		0.04	< 1
	Gender	-0.20	1.10		-0.02	< 1
	Loving and caring	0.10	0.21		0.08	< 1
	Mothers' own needs	-0.37	0.17		-0.25	2.25*
	Compliance	-0.09	0.18		-0.06	< 1
	Teen happiness	0.04	0.23		0.03	< 1
	Manners	0.06	0.21		0.04	< 1
	Safety	0.19	0.18		0.17	< 1
	Productivity	-0.15	0.17		-0.11	< 1
	Mutual respect	0.31	0.19	.23	0.22	< 1

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

Table 5.14 shows that the goals of love, mothers' own needs, compliance, teen happiness, manners, safety, productivity and mutual respect, taken together, explained 25 percent of the variance in teenagers' family functioning scores  $F(10,83) = 2.76, p < .01$ . However, the goal of own needs was the only goal that made a significant, unique contribution to the prediction of family functioning. Table 5.14 also shows that the goals of loving, own needs, compliance, teen happiness, manners, safety, productivity and mutual respect, taken together, explained 23 percent of the variance in teenagers' attachment scores  $F(10, 85) = 2.55, p < .05$ . Although, it was only mothers' own needs goals

that made a significant, unique contribution to attachment scores. Nevertheless, some caution must be expressed about these results because of the number of significance tests conducted. Furthermore, one could argue that for a mother to be less concerned with her own needs is an implicit component of both family functioning and teenagers' attachment to mothers.

To summarise, in exploring the relationship between parenting goals and adolescent outcomes it was found that, unlike mothers' reports, adolescents' perceptions of mothers' goals were significantly associated with a number of adjustment and relationship outcomes. The associations between parenting goals and the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship were not as strong as expected but then, associations between parenting goals and adolescent adjustment scores were even smaller. When teenagers perceived mothers to be actively pursuing relationship-centred concerns, particularly mutual respect, their positive mood and self-esteem tended to be higher, and they tended to score lower on measures of negative mood and problem behaviours. Parenting goals were shown to significantly contribute to the variance in the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship (but not to adolescent adjustment). However, of the seven goals it was only the goals of loving/caring and mothers' own needs that made unique contributions to the prediction of the overall quality of parent-adolescent relationships. Once again, these results were not as strong as expected.

#### 5.4.8 Exploratory Analyses: The mediating or moderating role of the parent-adolescent relationship

##### *i) Do teenagers' perceptions of the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship moderate the relationship between mothers' reports of parenting goals and adolescent psychosocial adjustment?*

Hierarchical regression analyses were performed to assess if interactions between mothers' reports of parenting goals and teenagers' view of the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship predicted adolescent adjustment. Sixteen two-way interactions were included (eg, goal of love x attachment; goal of love x family functioning; goal of mutual respect x attachment; goal of mutual respect x family functioning). Once again caution should be expressed about these results as one could suggest that the probability of a significant result is likely when a large number of analyses are performed.

Table 5.15  
*Hierarchical regression showing the contribution of teenagers' perceptions of mothers' parenting goals and teenagers' attachment in relation to variations in adolescent behaviour scores*

Teenagers' perceptions	$\beta$	$R^2$	$R^2$ change	Beta	t-value
<b>Teenagers' behaviour</b>					
Step 1					
Age	-0.98			-0.13	< 1
Gender	-2.22			-0.30	3.14**
Safety (st)	0.13			0.17	< 1
Attachment (st)	-0.15	.18	.18	-0.22	2.34*
Step 2					
Age	-0.90			-0.12	< 1
Gender	-1.91			-0.26	2.74**
Safety (st)	1.11			0.14	2.90**
Attachment (st)	0.28			-0.42	< 1
Safety (st) x Attachment (st)	-0.04	.24	.06	-0.41	2.61*

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$  (st) = standardised

Table 5.15 shows that only teenagers' problem behaviour was predicted by a significant interaction between mothers' safety goals and teenagers' attachment

to mother  $F(5,93) = 5.75, p < .0001$ . The plotting of this interaction, as shown in Figure 5.1, revealed that if mothers reported taking greater control over teenagers' safety, teenagers' behaviour scores tended to be lower, but only when the teenagers' attachment to their mothers was low.

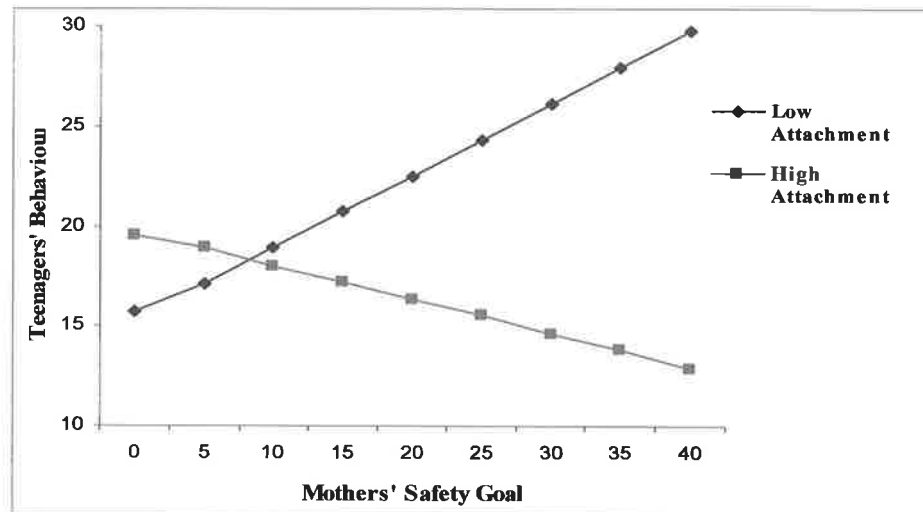


Figure 5.1. The moderating role of teenagers' attachment to mother

As gender was shown to have a unique contribution to the variance in teenagers' behavioural problems, further detailed analyses were performed to assess whether the plotting of this interaction was still significant when males and females were assessed independently. The findings of Figure 5.1 applied to male teenagers only  $F(4, 39) = 4.26, p < .001$ . If mothers took greater control over their sons' safety, sons' behaviour problems tended to lower, but only when the sons' attachment to mother was low. A similar relationship was not observed for sons who had strong attachments to their mothers. None of the relationships reached significance when these analyses were applied to daughters.

**ii) Do teenagers' perceptions of the parent-adolescent relationship mediate the relationship between teenagers' perceptions of mothers' goals and adolescent psychosocial adjustment?**

Hierarchical regression analyses were performed to explore whether adolescent perceptions of the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship mediated the relationship between teenagers' perceptions of mothers' goals and adolescent adjustment. Previous correlational analyses, as seen in Table 5.13, showed that teenagers' problem behaviours were significantly and negatively correlated with the goal of love ( $r = -.21, p < .05$ ) and the goal of mutual respect ( $r = -.20, p < .05$ ). Furthermore, the goal of mutual respect was significantly and negatively correlated with teenagers' negative mood ( $r = -.24, p < .05$ ) and significantly and positively correlated with teenagers' positive mood ( $r = .25, p < .05$ ). Finally, the goal of own needs and adolescent self-esteem were negatively correlated ( $r = -.24, p < .05$ ).

However, the hierarchical regression analyses, in Table 5.16, show that family functioning mediated the relationship between: (i) teenagers' problem behaviours and perceptions of mothers' goals of love  $F(4, 88) = 5.99, p < .0001$ ; (ii) teenagers' problem behaviours and teenagers' perceptions of the goal of respect,  $F(4, 88) = 5.92, p < .0001$ ; and (iii) teenagers' self-esteem and teenagers' perceptions of the goal of own needs  $F(4, 89) = 13.12, p < .0001$ . The hierarchical regression analyses, in Table 5.16, also show that attachment to mother mediated the relationship between: (i) teenagers' problem behaviours and perceptions of mothers' goals of love  $F(4, 90) = 4.11, p < .01$ ; (ii) teenagers' problem behaviours and teenagers' perceptions of the goal of respect  $F(4, 90) =$

4.00,  $p < .01$ ; and (iii) teenagers self-esteem and teenagers' perceptions of the goal of own needs  $F(4, 91) = 7.96, p < .0001$ . In other words, all the coefficients for the goals were reduced once the mediating variable had been included in the analyses.

**Table 5.16**  
*Hierarchical regression showing the significant mediating role of family functioning and attachment between teenagers' perceptions of mothers' goals and adolescent adjustment*

		$\beta$	$R^2$	$R^2$ change	Beta	$t$ -value
<b>Teenagers' Problem Behaviours</b>						
Step 1	Age	-1.28			-0.17	< 1
	Gender	-2.01			-0.27	2.77**
	Family Functioning	-0.18	.21	.21	-0.31	3.18**
Step 2	Age	-1.27			-0.17	< 1
	Gender	-1.94			-0.26	2.63*
	Family Functioning	-0.17			-0.29	2.81*
	Goal of Loving (teen)	-0.05	.21	.00	-0.05	< 1
<b>Teenagers' Problem Behaviours</b>						
Step 1	Age	-1.06			-0.14	< 1
	Gender	-2.03			-0.27	2.76**
	Attachment	-0.16	.15	.15	-0.23	2.36**
Step 2	Age	-1.04			-0.14	< 1
	Gender	-1.89			-0.25	2.52*
	Attachment	-0.14			-0.20	< 1
	Goal of Loving (teen)	-0.09	.15	.00	-0.09	< 1
<b>Teenagers' Problem Behaviours</b>						
Step 1	Age	-1.28			-0.17	< 1
	Gender	-2.01			-0.27	2.77**
	Family Functioning	-0.18	.21	.21	-0.31	3.18**
Step 2	Age	-1.25			-0.17	< 1
	Gender	-1.99			-0.27	2.69**
	Family Functioning	-0.18			-0.30	3.00**
	Goal of Respect (teen)	-0.02	.21	.00	-0.02	< 1
<b>Teenagers' Problem Behaviours</b>						
Step 1	Age	-1.06			-0.14	< 1
	Gender	-2.03			-0.27	2.76**
	Attachment	-0.16	.15	.15	-0.23	2.36*
Step 2	Age	-0.99			-0.13	< 1
	Gender	-1.95			-0.26	2.61*
	Attachment	-0.15			-0.21	2.06*
	Goal of Respect (teen)	-0.07	.15	.00	-0.07	< 1
<b>Teenagers' Self-Esteem</b>						
Step 1	Age	0.43			-0.17	< 1
	Gender	-3.08			-0.27	3.86***
	Family Functioning	0.40	.36	.36	-0.31	6.33***
Step 2	Age	0.44			-0.17	< 1
	Gender	-3.02			-0.27	3.79***
	Family Functioning	0.37			-0.30	5.69***
	Goal of Own needs (teen)	-0.14	.37	.01	-0.02	< 1
<b>Teenagers' Self-Esteem</b>						
Step 1	Age	0.38			0.04	< 1
	Gender	-2.64			-0.29	3.12**
	Attachment	0.35	.24	.24	0.40	4.41***
Step 2	Age	0.35			0.04	< 1
	Gender	-2.63			-0.29	3.13**
	Attachment	0.32			0.37	3.85***
	Goal of Own needs (teen)	-0.17	.26	.02	-0.13	< 1

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$

***iii) Do mothers' parenting goals mediate the relationship between teenagers' problem behaviours and the parent-adolescent relationship?***

No significant findings were obtained for either mothers' reports of parenting goals or teenagers' perceptions of mothers' goals, even when mother-son and mother-daughter scores were disaggregated.

**5.4.9 Summary**

To summarise, only one significant interaction between mothers' reports of goals and the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship was found to affect adolescent adjustment. A significant interaction was found between safety goals and teenagers' attachment to mothers that made a significant contribution to explaining variance in teenagers' problem behaviours, particularly the behaviour of male teenagers. Furthermore, the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship was not found to mediate the relationship between mothers' reports of parenting goals and adolescent adjustment.

The quality of the parent-adolescent relationship was not found to moderate the relationship between teenagers' perceptions of mothers' goals and adolescent adjustment. However, mediation models did reveal that family functioning and attachment to mother were significant links in the relationships between teenagers' perceptions of mothers' goals of love and mutual respect, and sons' behaviour. In addition, mediation models revealed that family functioning and attachment to mother were significant links in the relationship between the goal of mothers' own needs and daughters' self-esteem. Finally, teenagers' perceptions of family functioning and attachment were not shown to



mediate the relationship between mutual respect and teenagers' negative and positive moods.

## **5.5 Discussion**

This chapter has viewed parental attitudes and responses as “dynamic” processes that fluctuate, depending on the characteristics of parents, children, and the nature of the situation (Dix & Branca, 2003). Having said this, it is still assumed that there are a number of parenting goals that are common to most parents across different situations.

### **(a) The importance of different parenting goals**

In Study 1 of this project and in previous parenting studies, parents are seen to be concerned with issues centred on children's safety, happiness, obedience, manners, etc. (Hoffman, 1988; Kohn, 1977). Although many goals were found to be consistent or universal, the present study has also shown that the importance of these goals may fluctuate depending on whether mothers were asked to consider their importance globally, or whether they were asked to consider them in specific interactions with their teenager. This is consistent with Hastings and Grusec's (1998) findings which showed that during conflictual interactions, the motivations of parents with young children were often situation-specific.

In the present study, mothers' general opinions and specific reports of relationship-centred concerns were comparable. The majority of mothers considered relationship-centred concerns (RC: loving/caring and mutual respect

goals) to be of most value when raising a teenager. Furthermore, the value of this concern did not fluctuate substantially across the four specific hypothetical interactions with teenagers. On the other hand, differences were found between mothers' global goals and contextually-bound goals when reporting on the importance of parent-centred and child-centred concerns. Parent-centred concerns (PC: compliance and own needs) were of relatively little concern or value according to mothers' general opinions. Only a few mothers rated the importance of these goals any higher than 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> place. However, when mothers considered specific interactions in which they were at odds with their teenager, they acknowledged that parent-centred concerns were of considerable importance to them.

A model of motivation known as the "implicit expectancy by value calculation" (Dix & Branca, 2003) may provide an explanation for mothers' self-motivated concerns taking precedence over such goals as teen happiness, manners, and safety in specific situations. This model suggests that parents will evaluate which goals are of greatest concern in an interaction (ie, socialisation concerns, own needs, child-orientated concerns). This is a process known as "encoding". Parents need to decide whether the immediate situation will compromise one goal more than another, a process known as "a value calculation". For example, in the situation where the teenager was being rude to the parent *because* they were tired after sleeping over at a friend's house, the parent had to decide whether to promote socialisation goals (manners), child-

oriented goals (sympathy with the teenager) or relationship-centred goals (mutual respect).

This model would also help to explain the contradiction found between the levels of concern mothers ascribed to teenagers' safety and happiness when they considered these goals generally, as opposed to when they considered them in specific situations. The present study found that, when speaking generally, mothers' greatest concerns were teenagers' safety (consistent with Shim, 1997, in Dix and Branca, 2003) and teen happiness. However, in specific situations, these two particular goals (or child-centred empathic concerns) were found to be of less importance. Clearly, while encoding their concerns in each of the situations and calculating their value, these goals were not going to be affected in the long run by the specific interactions at hand. Thus, mothers had decided that more was to be accomplished in the immediate situation by prioritising other more pressing goals. It could be argued that Collins and Luebker's (1994) accommodation theory of parenting values and practices fits well into this explanation. If parents are to maintain a healthy relationship with their teenager they will be required to prioritise different goals from those they had when their teenagers were young children. For example, although safety is always of profound importance to parents, in immediate conflictual situations, where parents' and teenagers' concerns are incompatible, it is beneficial to parents to make a value calculation that accommodates their teenagers' concerns. This may mean forgoing the goal of safety for more immediate and productive goals (considering the circumstances) of mutual respect and trust,

thus demonstrating to their teenager a belief in their ability to be responsible for their own safety.

Another way of understanding the differences between mothers' global goals and goals in specific situations is by considering the content of their goals. For example, the goal of compliance was of considerable importance in specific situations but, was rated as less important overall. In the initial qualitative study described in the previous chapter, many mothers reported feeling unmotivated to seek teenager's compliance because they felt it was often a difficult and unrewarding exercise. Based on these lines of thinking it is not surprising that mothers' greatest concerns, when speaking generally, did not include the goal of compliance. A possible reason why mothers' concern for compliance from teenagers becomes more important in specific situations can be accounted for by Bugental and Johnston's (2000, p. 315) suggestion that, in arousing situations, such as conflicts with teenagers, parent-centred concerns can become far more salient, and the motivation to achieve them more urgent.

It is still not clear from this study whether mothers' global parenting goals are guided by, or reflect, societal and cultural opinions on how to raise a teenager. Future qualitative research would do well to examine mothers' opinions as to how much opinions are influenced by the environment the mothers are in. It could be inferred from the findings that, when mothers speak generally about their goals and concerns, they are drawing from public opinion. However, parents are still selective in what they embrace as their own from surrounding societal messages, and this can be seen in their responses to specific situations.

Furthermore, different social networks and subcultures within society can provide parents with quite diverse views on the expectations and standards they might adopt as parents of teenagers. Thus, parents may select the values or societal norms that match most closely to their own beliefs.

Conflicting values in society may explain the contradictions that can exist in parental beliefs and parental practices (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994).

### **(b) Consistency of parenting goals**

The use of a multiple informant approach in this study was valuable because it showed that teenagers' perceptions of mothers' contextually-bound goals were quite compatible with mothers' reports of their goals. For example, teenagers' perceived relationship-centred concerns, child-centred socialisation concerns, and the goal of compliance (a component of parent-centred concerns) were shown to be most important to mothers. Conversely, child-centred empathic concerns and own needs goals were perceived to be significantly less important. In addition, the findings showed that the level of importance ascribed to some goals (i.e., own needs, teenagers' safety and manners) tended to fluctuate depending on the interactions that were described in the specific situations, whereas the level of importance for other goals (ie, mutual respect, teen happiness, productivity, compliance - mothers' only, and love - teenagers only) remained constant across all situations. Hence, it could be argued that the inconsistencies in mothers' parenting cognitions are as common as the consistencies, a finding which supports Juang and Silbereisen's (1999) views about mothers' child-rearing practices.

There were some discrepancies between mothers' and teenagers' reports on mothers' goals. One of the major differences was that, although mothers and teenagers agreed that relationship-centred concerns were of greatest importance to mothers, teenagers rated the actual level of interest in this concern as less important than mothers rated it. Having said this, it is also worthwhile to qualify this point by acknowledging that teenagers' responses were based on their interpretation of goals within difficult parent-adolescent interactions. If asked to consider mothers' goals in more positive circumstances, their responses may have been quite different.

The differences between mothers' and teenagers' perceptions of parenting goals may be explained by the differences in the attention that parents and teenagers direct towards different types of information when evaluating each other as well as conflictual interactions (Smetana, 1994). Parents' child-rearing beliefs and their general views about teenagers (which could be highly culturally bound) may affect the way they perceive and describe their parenting goals, whereas teenagers' reports may be more strongly influenced by the way parents convey or communicate their parenting goals and accompanying beliefs to the teenager. Few studies on adolescent perceptions of parents' beliefs have been concerned solely with the accuracy of these perceptions; many have not attributed any significance to the effect adolescent perceptions have on outcomes regardless of whether they are accurate or not. In this study it is argued that adolescent perceptions and interpretations of mothers' goals (Cashmore & Goodnow, 1985; Moskowitz & Schwartz, 1982), or what they might

wish to believe about mothers' intentions (Goodnow, 1988), can influence significantly adolescent outcomes.

Finally, this study detected an interesting similarity between mothers' and teenagers' reports in relation to the importance of goals and their link to particular scenarios. The findings showed that in Scenario 1 (mobile phone incident) and Scenario 4 (being tired and rude) relationship-centred concerns had the highest scores. In Scenario 2 (tidying the lounge) and Scenario 3 (getting out of bed) parent-centred concerns had the highest scores. High scores for child-centred concerns did not consistently emerge in relation to any particular scenario.

Hastings and Grusec (1998) found that parent-centred concerns were most important to participants during negative interactions with children in public situations. They proposed that embarrassing situations provide a strong incentive for parents to first and foremost eradicate the problem before dealing with other long-term goals. Thus, in the present study, it could be inferred that the reason mothers' parent-centred concerns were most important in Scenarios 2 and 3 was because these scenarios involved parents' concerns about public perceptions. Mothers did not want visitors to arrive and find the lounge messy, and they did not want their teenagers to be late for school because the teacher might think the mother was not a good parent. In addition, the mother was being made late for her appointments and this would also reflect badly on her.

This inference may also extend, in part, to the connection between relationship-centred concerns and Scenarios 1 and 4. These two scenarios did not immediately involve public perceptions and therefore this gave time to

parents to prioritise their greatest goals – mutual respect and love/trust.

Furthermore, the motivation to prioritise relationship-centred goals may have come from mothers' understanding of adolescence (ie, teenagers did not realise how costly mobile phones are; teenagers are supposed to stay up until all hours when sleeping over so they are bound to be grumpy the next day). An alternative explanation may be that mothers' own feelings of responsibility may have made them more responsive to relationship-centred concerns (ie, they allowed their teenager to go to a sleepover knowing they would not get any sleep; perhaps they had not trained them enough to realise the cost of mobile phone conversations, or they should have realised they were not responsible enough to have a mobile phone yet). Finally, the lack of an obvious connection between child-centred concerns and any specific scenario may be explained by these concerns being predominantly static long-term goals which may not have seemed as relevant or pertinent to the specific scenarios being addressed.

**(c) The associations between contextually-bound parenting goals, the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship and adolescent adjustment**

It was expected in this study that the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship would mediate, or moderate, the relationship between parenting goals and adolescent adjustment. This hypothesis was based on the findings of Collins (1990), Smetana and Asquith (1994) and Smetana (1995) who have shown that adolescents' perceptions of parental values, and their response to them, can have a significant impact on the parent-adolescent relationship. It was also based on studies which have shown that significant associations exist



between adolescent perceptions of the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship and adolescent adjustment (Barber & Rollins, 1990; Fauber, Forehand, Thomas & Weirson, 1990; Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts & Dornbusch, 1994; Weiss & Schwarz, 1996).

Very little support was found for this hypothesis. The findings showed that only a few of the parenting goals were associated with the different components of adolescent adjustment. Furthermore, there was only one significant association between mothers' reports of parenting goals, the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship, and adolescent adjustment. This one exception was the finding that teenage boys' problem behaviours increased when mothers were overly involved in their safety, but this was only in cases where sons were not highly attached to their mothers. Thus, teenagers who are strongly attached to their parents have fewer externalised behavioural problems, a finding which is consistent with previous studies on the parent-adolescent relationship (Sim, 2000; Steinberg, 1986). However, this study has shown that teenagers with strong attachments to mother respond more positively to mothers' child-centred empathic concerns and, in turn, their psychosocial adjustment is healthier. The findings from Sims' (2000) study of adolescent attitudes toward parents showed that teenagers who were more inclined to believe that parental monitoring practices were parents' way of expressing care and concern had a strong attachment to parents and fewer behavioural problems. Conversely, teenagers who were more inclined to attribute parents' monitoring practices to a lack of parental trust or a desire to restrict teenagers' autonomy, may not have had as

strong a bond with parents, and were therefore possibly more likely to act out their frustration with parents through rebellious or defiant behaviours.

The findings in this study indicated that, the more teenagers perceived mothers to be interested in pursuing a relationship with them, the more well-adjusted they were. An example of the influence of teenagers' perceptions of mothers' goals is shown in the finding that mothers who were seen to value mutual respect and a loving and caring relationship with their teenagers, had teenagers who reported having more positive moods and fewer negative moods and problematic behaviours. This supports the recent findings of Delsing et al. (2005) which showed an association between trust and teenagers' behavioural adjustment. They found that "trust explained on average 20% (externalising) and 38% (internalising) of the variance in adolescents' problem behaviour scores" (p. 141).

The significant associations between the goals of love and sons' behaviour, and the goal of mutual respect and sons' behaviour, were mediated by sons' perceptions of family functioning and attachment to mothers. The expectation that teenagers' level of self-esteem would be higher if they perceived their mothers to have greater interest in relationship-centred and child-centred concerns was not confirmed. Instead, the present study found that teenagers' level of self-esteem was lower for daughters who felt their mothers' were highly concerned with their own needs. The reasons for this finding are unclear, and need to be explored qualitatively, because few (if any) studies have explored the

effects that mothers' perceived attention to their own needs has on adolescent development.

The findings showed that the strength of mother-adolescent bonds increased as mothers invested more energy in pursuing relationship-centred concerns and child-centred empathic concerns. Although this may seem like a rather obvious finding, it would appear that mothers are unaware of just how attached their teenagers are to them. In this study and Study 1 of this project, teenagers (regardless of age), reported stronger feelings of attachment to mothers than mothers perceived them to have. Mothers' misperception of their teenagers attachment to them may lead them to feel increasingly alienated and sometimes rejected by their adolescent children (as indicated in Study 1). However, this distress is likely to be unfounded as there is evidence to show that teenagers still need to feel connected to, and supported, by their parents as they learn to negotiate their separateness and independence from them (Henricson & Roker, 2000; Steinberg & Sheffield-Morris, 2000).

To conclude, there is a growing body of evidence in the parenting literature to substantiate the claim that adolescents' perceptions of parental values and behaviours can be highly informative (Buri, 1989). It is argued teenagers' reports provide important information about their subjective experience and should, therefore be given due attention regardless of their accuracy in relation to parents reports. It has been suggested that the aggregating of participants' scores on a measure will improve the accuracy of the measure. However, this procedure conceals the discrepancies between

participants' reports which can be highly informative about family processes and crucial when drawing inferences from ones findings (Collins, 1991; Holmbeck & O'Donnell, 1991; Smetana, Crean & Daddis, 2002).

The findings from this comparative study of mothers' reports and teenagers' perceptions of parenting goals supports Steinberg's (1991) claim that there is a need for "a new perspective of the family – one that emphasises the different viewpoints and stakes that each member brings to the family" (p. 2). The present study seems to give some support to the claims of a growing number of researchers that adolescent perceptions of parental beliefs and actions can influence adolescents' behaviour and adjustment (Moskowitz & Schwartz, 1982; Smetana, Crean, & Daddis, 2002). It could be argued that the greater correspondence between teenagers' reports of mothers' goals and teenagers' reports of their own adjustment and functioning is due to *shared method variance*. The same individuals provided the data on the predictor and the outcome measures, so it was not surprising that their data were correlated. However, as mentioned previously an element of caution is necessary when interpreting some of these findings as there were a large number of tests for significance performed which may increase the likelihood of Type 1 errors.

The scenarios that were used reflect a specific subset of the types of interactions shared by parents and teenagers. The focus was mainly on difficult and challenging parent-adolescent interactions which had the potential to elicit negative responses from both parties and demanded some form of discipline on

behalf of the parent. Future studies on the effects of parenting goals in more positive contexts could be very beneficial in extending this line of research.

## Chapter 6

### The Relationships between Contextually-Bound Parenting Goals and other Parenting Processes

#### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the final objectives of Study 2, namely, the relationship between contextually-bound parenting goals and maternal behaviours, attributions, and emotions, and the effect they have on the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship and adolescent adjustment. Where possible, both theoretically and statistically, mediation and moderation models have been employed to analyse the data. Once again, adolescents' perceptions of mothers' parenting goals have been explored.

The relationship between parents' discipline strategies and children's internalisation of societal standards is widely documented in the parenting literature (Baumrind, 1971, 1991a, 1991b; Greenberger, 1982; Steinberg, Mounts, Lambourn & Dornbusch, 1991). There is also evidence to suggest that parenting goals contribute to individual differences in parental behaviours toward children (Dix, 1992; Hastings & Grusec, 1998; Kuczynski, 1984) and, therefore, play an important role in children's socialisation. Hastings and Grusec (1998) found significant relationships between parent-centred concerns and power assertive behaviours; relationship-centred concerns and reasoning behaviours; and child-centred concerns and reasoning or responsiveness behaviours. They concluded from their findings that "a variety of behaviours were associated with specific goals, and some behaviours were used equally in the pursuit of different goals" (p. 478).

The parental behaviours of interest in the present study are psychological control, behavioural control, and rejecting behaviours. There is some evidence to suggest that adolescent psychosocial adjustment can be affected by these parenting behaviours, predominantly because of the considerable effects they can have on the adolescents' feelings of connectedness or separateness from parents, otherwise known as their individuation from parents (Allen, Hauser, Bell & O'Connor, 1994; Collins, 1990; Steinberg, 1990).

### **Parental control: Behavioural and psychological**

It has been a common practice within parenting research to consider behavioural and psychological control together (Baumrind, 1978, 1991). However, this practice undermines the conceptual distinction between these two forms of control. It has been argued by Barber (1996) and others that these constructs should not be measured by placing them at two ends of one continuum because this may obscure the unique relationship that each construct has with adolescent adjustment (Barber, 1996), behaviour (Pettit, Laird, Dodge, Bates & Criss, 2001), and psychosocial maturity (Steinberg, Elmen, & Mounts, 1989). As Barber points out:

“When measured independently, it becomes apparent that not only are they [psychological and behavioural controls] negatively related to each other...but they appear to function differently vis-à-vis discrete youth characteristics” (1996, p. 3314).

Parental psychological control is used by parents who want their teenagers to be, or remain, emotionally dependent on them. The most common techniques parents have been known to use are intrusiveness, emotional

manipulation (guilt induction, love withdrawal), and hostility (Barber & Harmon, in Pettit et al., 2001). Limiting adolescent independence in this way can have serious negative consequences for young people's emotional, cognitive and interpersonal development. Furthermore, a high level of exposure to these behaviours can hinder adolescents' sense of self-worth, identity and psychological autonomy (Barber, 1996; Steinberg, 1990). Studies have shown that psychological control is predictive of anxiety, depression, loneliness (Barber, 1996; Gray & Steinberg, 1999) and delinquent behaviour (Pettit et al., 2001). Barber suggests that psychological control is conveyed through general parenting style rather than parenting practices (Darling & Steinberg, 1993), particularly because adolescents' perceptions, or subjective experiences of parental attitudes, are not domain specific.

Behavioural control refers to "parental behaviours that attempt to control or manage children's behaviour" (Barber, 1996, p. 3296). An imposition of a high level of behavioural control involves continual monitoring, supervision and regulation of children's whereabouts, the activities they are involved in, as well as the friends with whom they associate (Brown, Mounts, Lamborn & Steinberg, 1993; Barber, Olsen & Shagle, 1994).

Behavioural control, in terms of *parental monitoring*, has been proclaimed a highly successful strategy for parents who wish to prevent adolescent problem behaviour. However, Kerr and Stattin (2000) have argued that the studies which have obtained this finding may not have measured what they suggested they were measuring. Although these studies were thought to have measured the



behavioural monitoring practices of parents, Kerr and Stattin suggest they have instead only measured parental knowledge about their children's behaviours and whereabouts. Thus, it is *parental knowledge* that contributes to the effectiveness of behavioural control and so, it would seem, the importance of parents' monitoring practices has yet to be determined. Studies have shown that lax behavioural control has been associated with disruptive adolescent behaviour (Chamberlain & Reid, 1991, 1998), illegal substance use, smoking, poor academic achievement, unhealthy peer relationships (Henggeler, 1999; Henggeler & Lee, 2003) and risky sexual activity (Barber, 1996; Smetana, Crean & Daddis, 2002). Conversely, high behavioural control facilitates self-control and other self-regulating practices which are useful for inhibiting drug use (Gray & Steinberg, 1999) and delinquent behaviour (Pettit et al., 2001).

### **Parenting goals and parental control**

It has been theorised that parenting goals (ie, child-centred socialisation concerns) are antecedents to parents' behavioural control practices but have little to do with the motivations of parents who seek to exert psychological control over their children. Parents who exercise psychological control practices are often directed by "intrapsychic disturbances" related to their own developmental history. Their emotional and psychological manipulation of their children is motivated by a self-centred desire to keep their children dependent upon them (Barber & Harmon, in Barber, 2001). Accordingly, the present study seeks to test the relationship between parenting goals and parental control and, in turn, their relationship with adolescent outcomes. Consistent with Hastings and Grusec's

(1998) study in which the variability in parenting goals was shown to affect the variability in parents' discipline strategies, it is expected that variations in the parenting goals of mothers with teenage children will contribute to the variability in the parental control on which they rely. Specifically, it is expected that mothers' relationship-centred goals and child-centred goals will be positively associated with behavioural control.

### **Parenting goals and acceptance-rejection**

The acceptance/rejection construct is composed of four different types of behaviour: warmth/affection; hostility/aggression; indifference/neglect and undifferentiated rejection (Rohner, Khaleque, & Cournoyer, 2004). As with psychological control, parental acceptance-rejection is based on the subjective experience of teenagers and is therefore more strongly linked to parenting style than to parenting practices. As a result, there may be no "clear behavioural indicators that the parents are neglecting, unaffectionate or aggressive towards [their children]" (Rohner, Khaleque, & Cournoyer, 2004, p. 7). Generally, adolescent perceptions of warmth, support, and affectionate bonds with parents will determine the level of acceptance or rejection they report. Rohner et al.'s (2004) study has shown that adolescents' perception of rejection from parents explains 26% of the variability in children's psychological maladjustment. Furthermore, rejection has been associated with a lack of trust, hostile and aggressive behaviours, low self-esteem, low self-efficacy and other internal distresses. Thus, in the present study it is expected that mothers' reports, and more so teenagers' perceptions, of relationship-centred goals will be significantly

associated with their perceptions of acceptance-rejection. This view is based on the assumption that relationship-centred goals encompass many of the factors associated with parenting style (ie, warmth, emotional bonds, etc.) and according to Rohner, Khaleque, & Cournoyer's (2004, 2005) theory, parenting style will strongly affect whether teenagers feel they are accepted or rejected by their parents.

### **Parenting goals and maternal emotions**

Emotion research has shown that emotional arousal arises from the thwarting of ones' expectations or goal-directed activity (Mandler, 1975, 1990). Parenting studies have shown that aroused emotions prompt parents to comfort, protect, praise or criticise their children (Dix, 1991). These affective messages are not only communicated by the spoken word, but also through expressive behaviours such as gestures, facial expressions and tone of voice. Consistent, clear messages make parental goals or concerns more salient to the teenager and, depending on the health of the parent-adolescent relationship, will induce a response from the teenager that helps to advance or hinder parental objectives. Thus, it could be argued that parents' emotional responses play a role in conveying parental concerns, values or wishes to their children (Dix, 1991).

There has been relatively little research on parenting emotions, although some researchers have acknowledged the vital role these play in models of family processes. For example, in Collins and Luebker's (1993) expectancy-violation-realignment model, parental affective processes are of paramount importance when determining the significance parents place on the violation of

an expectation. As previously discussed in Chapter 1, these processes influence how parents respond to the violations, how able they are to accommodate adolescents' increasing need for autonomy and independence and, how inclined they are to provide ongoing emotional support even during the most challenging interactions with their teenagers.

There has been a gradual accumulation of evidence which shows that strong emotional reactions accompany particular parenting concerns and goals. For example, there is now some evidence to show that parents who are highly motivated by child-centred socialisation goals are likely to have strong emotional reactions to things that threaten their children's social and moral development, but are less likely to have an intense reaction to those things that threaten other less child-oriented goals (Batson, 1987; Dix, 1991; Dix, Ruble, Grusec & Nixon, 1986; Eisenberg et al., 1989). In a recent study, Hastings and Grusec (1998) found that parents with child-centred concerns tended to have strong reasoning skills, relatively firm expectations of their children, and were adept at regulating the expression of negative affect. Parents with relationship-centred concerns were sympathetic to children's life challenges, highly responsive, and also very skilled at restraining or managing their negative emotions. By contrast, parents with primarily parent-centred goals were more likely to expect compliance from children and often relied on power assertive behaviours to attain obedience. These parents were the most easily upset and annoyed if their goals were hindered or threatened. Once again, previous studies in this field have focused predominantly on mothers with young children. The present study, therefore,

seeks to assess the importance of parents' emotions in the parent-adolescent relationship. It questions whether maternal emotions mediate the relationship between parenting goals and adolescent outcomes. It also examines whether interactions between parenting goals and mothers' emotive reactions have a combined effect on adolescent and family outcomes.

### **Parenting goals and maternal attributions**

Attribution theory states that a central factor in interpersonal relationships is the ongoing appraisals that people make about other people and their behaviours. Incorporated in this is the need to examine how people make inferences about motives and traits, including decisions on whether these arise from qualities internal to the person being observed, or are situationally determined. The attributions people make will then determine whether their goals are being advanced or hindered, and this will affect their ultimate responses (Dix & Grusec, 1985). Nix et al. (1999) suggest that the attributions parents make for their children's behaviour helps to explain the inconsistencies in their emotional responses across a variety of situations (Miller, 1995). These attributional processes may also account for the discipline strategies parents choose to employ (Bugental & Shennum, 1984; Dix et al., 1986; Holloway & Hess, 1985).

Numerous studies have shown consistent and predictable links between children's behaviours and parental attributions. However, as Dix (1991) argues, in drawing inferences about the types of attributions parents make about behaviour, one must also take into account parents' understanding of child development. The extent to which parents are aware of the developmental

capacities of children at different ages can significantly affect the inferences they make regarding children's behaviours. A failure to account for children's developmental level can often result in misattributions about the disposition of the child and the intentionality of their behaviour, and can potentially lead to negative emotional responses in parents' inappropriate parental behaviours (Dix, Ruble, Grusec & Nixon, 1986).

Whether similar misattributions are also observed amongst parents with adolescent children is less well documented. The fact that adolescents' capabilities are relatively well-defined by mid-adolescence makes the likelihood of misattributions based on developmental limitations less likely. However, the interpersonal changes in the parent-adolescent relationship, particularly due to the altercations that occur as teenagers struggle for autonomy and independence, may lead parents to make negative attributions about teenagers' behaviours. The present study, therefore, seeks to explore the importance of parental attributions in linking parental goals to adolescent wellbeing, either directly or by an interaction between goals and mothers' attributions.

The present study has taken into consideration a methodological limitation identified in previous research of family processes. McLoyd (1998) argues that discrepancies between studies on parenting styles, parenting practices, parenting cognitions (ie, attributions) and adolescent social competence are largely due to the confounding of family indicators. He argues that the analyses used in many studies are based on mediator models alone, and that drawing conclusions about relationships between variables when there are no significant

associations (or low associations) may lead to inaccurate inferences. Baron and Kenny (1986) instead suggest that a greater emphasis should be placed on moderator models. In this study, both the direct or main effects of parenting goals on adolescent outcomes, as well as the mediating and moderating affects of other factors on the relationship between goals and adolescent outcomes (as seen in subsequent chapters) are therefore considered.

## **6.2 Aims and hypotheses**

The specific aims of this chapter are as follows:

1. To examine the relationship between mothers' contextually-bound parenting goals and maternal behaviours. In addition, to assess whether variability in mothers' parenting goals will contribute to variability in maternal behaviours (rejection/acceptance; psychological control; behavioural control).
  - ❖ It is expected that both mothers' reports and teenagers' perceptions of mothers' relationship-centred goals and child-centred goals will be positively associated with behavioural control and inversely related to rejecting behaviours and psychological control.
  - ❖ It is expected that teenagers' perceptions of mothers' parent-centred concerns, particularly the goal of "own needs", will be positively associated with rejecting behaviours.
2. To explore whether maternal behaviours mediate or moderate the relationship between maternal goals, adolescent adjustment, and the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship.

- ❖ It is expected that maternal behaviours will moderate or mediate the relationship between parenting goals and adolescent outcomes when teenagers' reports of mothers' goals are assessed.
3. To examine the relationship between mothers' contextually-bound parenting goals and maternal attributions. A component of this will be to assess whether parenting goals are antecedents to maternal attributions.
- ❖ It is expected that parent-centred goals would be significantly and positively associated with personality and intentionality attributions (both mothers' reports and teenagers' reports).
  - ❖ Conversely, relationship-centred or child-centred goals were expected to be inversely related to reports of personality and intentionality attributions.
4. To assess whether maternal attributions mediate or moderate the relationship between maternal parenting goals and adolescent outcomes.
- ❖ It is expected that the strength of the findings will be greater when based on adolescents' perceptions of the variables than when based on mothers' reports. This is because teenagers' perceptions are likely to affect their subjective experience.
5. To examine the relationships between maternal parenting goals and maternal emotions (upset, worry and anger).
- ❖ It is expected that parent-centred goals would be significantly and positively associated with anger, whereas relationship-centred and



child-centred goals would be significantly and positively associated with worry and how upset mothers become.

6. To assess whether maternal emotions mediate or moderate the relationship between maternal parenting goals and adolescent outcomes.
  - ❖ It is expected that the relationships will be stronger when based on mothers' reports of the variables than when based on teenagers' perceptions, particularly for feelings of upset and worry.

### **6.3 Method**

See previous chapter.

### **6.4 Results**

All the significant tests in this section are two-tailed and are based on an alpha level of .05 except where indicated.

#### **6.4.1 Descriptive findings**

The findings in Table 6.1 showed that in relation to mothers' behaviours, sons felt significantly more psychologically controlled by mothers than daughters ( $t(97) = 2.10, p < .05, d = 0.43$ ). There were no significant differences in sons' and daughters' perceptions of maternal behavioural control to mothers' behavioural control. Nor were there any significant differences in sons' and daughters' perceptions of the quality of their relationship with their mothers. Finally, t-tests were conducted to assess if there were age differences in mothers' and teenagers' psychometric scores (12 -15 year olds vs. 16 to 18 year olds). The

only significant difference detected was in teenagers' reports of mothers' behavioural control  $t(97) = 2.34, p < .05, d = 0.46$ ). Older teenagers reported mothers to be more behaviourally controlling ( $M = 6.8, SD = 1.68$ ) than did younger teenagers ( $M = 6.0, SD = 1.80$ ). There were no significant age differences in relation to mothers' psychologically controlling behaviours.

**Table 6.1**  
*M (SD) scores for teenagers' reports on the Child Report of Parents Behaviour Inventory*

	Teenagers	Sons	Daughters
	<i>M SD</i>	<i>M SD</i>	<i>M SD</i>
<b>CRPBI (Teenagers' perceptions)</b>			
• Psychological control: Range 8 to 24	13.7 (3.11)	14.4 (2.95)	13.1 (3.14)
• Behavioural control: Range 4 to 12	6.4 (1.79)	6.7 (2.06)	6.1 (1.54)
• Acceptance v/s Rejection: Range 11 to 33	17.2 (4.05)	17.4 (3.64)	17.0 (4.38)

#### **6.4.2 Preliminary analyses: Parenting goals and maternal behaviours**

A preliminary set of correlational analyses were conducted to assess (a) The associations between maternal behaviours and parenting goals; and (b) The associations between mothers' parenting behaviours and adolescent outcome scores (ie, quality of the parent-adolescent relationship and adolescent wellbeing). This initial set of analyses was necessary to ensure that subsequent tests for mediation were valid, so that hierarchical multiple regression analyses could be utilised to determine whether parenting behaviours mediated the relationships between parenting goals and adolescent outcomes. Hierarchical regression analyses were also conducted to assess whether the relationships

between maternal goals and adolescent outcomes were moderated by parenting behaviours.

Table 6.2 shows that the more teenagers felt rejected or psychologically controlled by mothers, the poorer they perceived the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship to be. Furthermore, the more teenagers felt they were rejected by their mothers, the poorer their self-esteem, the lower their positive mood scores, and the higher their negative mood scores. Adolescents' psychosocial adjustment was not, however, significantly associated with behavioural or psychological control.

**Table 6.2**  
*Correlations of mothers' behaviours and adolescent outcome scores*

<b>Parental Control</b>	<b>Family Functioning</b>	<b>Teen Attachment</b>	<b>Self-Esteem</b>	<b>Positive Mood</b>	<b>Negative Mood</b>	<b>Problem Behaviours</b>
Psychological control	-.44**	-.37**	-.14	-.04	.05	.15
Behavioural control	-.04	-.01	-.14	-.09	-.10	.03
Acceptance/Rejection	-.80**	-.74**	-.38**	-.36**	.22*	.17

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

### **6.4.3 The associations between parenting goals and maternal behaviours (Aim 1)**

The first aim of this study was to assess the relationship between mothers' and teenagers' reports on the associations between maternal parenting goals and maternal behaviours (psychological control; behavioural control; rejection). Analyses were also conducted to assess whether parenting goals could be considered antecedents to maternal behaviours.

### Mothers' reports

Contrary to expectations, mothers' self-rated scores on parenting goals were not significantly associated with maternal behaviours. For this reason, these correlations have not been recorded here in the interest of parsimony.

### Teenagers' perceptions

Table 6.3 shows that, although a number of significant associations existed, few of them were as expected. For example, teenagers' perceptions of mothers' relationship-centred goals and child-centred goals were not associated with behavioural control. In addition, the goals of trust/love, own needs and teen happiness were associated with psychological control. Relationship-centred and child-centred goals were inversely related to rejecting behaviours. Finally, as expected, the own needs goal was associated with rejecting behaviours.

Table 6.3  
*Correlations of teenagers' perceptions of mothers' goals and mothers' behaviours*

Teenagers' Perceptions:	Psychological Control	Behavioural Control	Rejecting Behaviours
Loving and caring	-.32**	.04	-.38**
Mutual respect	-.17	.13	-.38**
Compliance	.05	.09	-.01
Mothers' own needs	.36**	-.09	.28**
Teen happiness	-.36**	.12	-.35**
Safety	-.11	-.03	-.31**
Manner	-.14	-.14	-.23*
Productivity	.11	.06	-.18

\*p < .05 \*\*p < .01

The results in Table 6.3 show that teenagers were less likely to perceive mothers as psychologically controlling the more they perceived them to be concerned with the goals of love and teen happiness. Furthermore, teenagers felt

increasingly more rejected by mothers if they scored their mothers lower on the goals of love, mutual respect (RC concerns), teen happiness, safety (CCE concerns) and manners. The only positive associations depicted in Table 6.3 were those between mothers' own need goals and teenagers' sense of being psychologically controlled, and feelings of rejection. If mothers' own need goals were cited as more important, mothers were seen as being more rejecting and psychologically-controlling in their behaviours. Hence, these results confirm, in part, the expectation that variations in parenting goals will contribute to variability in mothers' behaviours, particularly rejection and psychological control. The exception to this was the finding that behavioural control was not significantly associated with mothers' parenting goals. It is also noteworthy that the only significant findings were in relation to teenagers' perceptions of mothers' goals.

#### **6.4.4 Parenting goals as antecedents to maternal behaviours**

##### **Mothers' reports**

Three ordinary least squares regression analyses were conducted to assess the predictive contribution that mothers' parenting goals scores had on maternal behaviours. No significant results were obtained.

##### **Teenagers' perceptions**

Three ordinary least squares regression analyses were also conducted to assess the predictive contribution of teenagers' scores for parenting goals on reported maternal behaviour.

**Table 6.4**  
*Regressions showing the contribution of mothers' parenting goals in relation to variations in mothers' behaviours*

<b>Teenagers' Perceptions</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b>part</b>
<b>Psychological control</b>						
Loving and caring	-0.23	.11		-0.01	-2.09*	-.18
Mothers' own needs	0.25	.09		0.15	2.84**	.25
Compliance	0.08	.10		0.28	< 1	
Teen happiness	-0.21	.11		-0.23	< 1	
Manners	-0.19	.11		0.22	< 1	
Safety	0.23	.09		0.10	2.44*	.21
Productivity	0.21	.09		-0.17	2.22*	.19
Mutual respect	-0.11	.10	.34	-0.02	< 1	
<b>Rejection</b>						
Loving and caring	-0.18	.15		-0.18	< 1	
Mothers' own needs	0.32	.12		0.28	2.65*	.24
Compliance	0.06	.13		0.05	< 1	
Teen happiness	-0.06	.15		-0.06	< 1	
Manners	-0.09	.15		-0.08	< 1	
Safety	0.04	.13		0.05	< 1	
Productivity	0.02	.13		0.02	< 1	
Mutual respect	-0.28	.14	.27	-0.26	-2.00*	-.18

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

Table 6.4 shows that parenting goals significantly predicted maternal rejecting behaviours and psychologically controlling behaviours. When teenagers' perceptions of parenting goals were entered into the regression equation they explained 34 percent of the variance in mothers' psychologically controlling behaviours  $F(8, 88) = 5.53, p < .001$ . An examination of the t-values shows that the goals of loving/caring, safety, own needs, and productivity made unique significant contributions to the prediction of mothers' psychologically-controlling behaviours.

Table 6.4 also shows that parenting goals significantly explained 27 percent of the variance in mothers' rejecting behaviours  $F(8,88) = 3.98, p < .001$ .

An examination of the t-values, however, shows that only the goals of mutual respect and own needs made unique significant contributions to the prediction of mothers' rejecting behaviours.

#### **6.4.5 Parenting goals, maternal behaviours and adolescent outcomes (Aim 2)**

The aim of this section is to (a) Test whether maternal behaviours mediate the relationships between parenting goals and adolescent behaviours and (b) Test whether maternal behaviours moderate the relationships between parenting goals and adolescent relationship.

##### **(a) The mediating role of maternal behaviours**

Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were used to assess the mediatory role of mothers' behaviours in the relationship between teenagers' perceptions of mothers' goals and adolescent outcomes. (No analyses were performed for mothers' reports because no significant associations were found.) See Chapter 5 (Table 5.12) for the associations between parenting goals and adolescent outcomes.

##### **Teenagers' perceptions**

Table 6.5 reveals how mothers' psychologically-controlling behaviours were shown to mediate the relationship between the goal of mothers own needs and family functioning  $F(3, 90) = 11.53, p < .001$ . These results suggest that, when mothers had a greater interest in the goal of own needs, they were more inclined to use psychologically-controlling behaviours to manage teenagers.

These teenagers were then more likely to have a negative view of family functioning.

Table 6.5  
*Hierarchical regressions of the mediating role of maternal psychologically-controlling behaviours*

Teenagers' Perceptions		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> Change	Beta	<i>t</i> -value	part
<b>Family Functioning</b>								
Step 1	Psychological control	-0.91	.19	.21	.21	-0.45	-4.89***	(-.45)
Step 2	Psychological control	-0.63	.20			-0.32	-3.40**	(-.29)
	Loving & caring	0.37	.15			0.24	2.54*	(.24)
	Mothers' own needs	-0.30	.17	.28	.07	-0.17	< 1	(-.18)
<b>Attachment</b>								
Step 1	Psychological control	-0.66	.16	.16	.16	-0.40	-4.19**	(-.40)
Step 2	Psychological control	-0.43	.17			-0.26	-2.48*	(-.22)
	Loving & caring	0.30	.13			0.23	2.35	(.22)
	Mothers' own needs	-0.29	.15	.23	.07	-0.19	< 1	

\**p* < .05 \*\**p* < .01 \*\*\**p* < .001

Table 6.5 also shows that mothers' psychologically-controlling behaviours mediated the relationship between the goals of teen happiness, own needs and loving, and attachment to mother  $F(3, 92) = 9.14, p < .001$ . When mothers had a greater level of interest in their own needs they were more inclined to use psychologically-controlling behaviours to manage their teenagers. These teenagers were then more likely to have a low opinion of the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship.

Table 6.6 reveals how mothers' rejecting behaviours mediated the relationships between parenting goals and adolescent adjustment, and parenting goals and the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship. Specifically, Table 6.6 shows that mothers' rejecting behaviours mediated the relationships between the goals of mutual respect and mothers' own needs, and family functioning  $F(3, 91)$



= 52.66,  $p < .001$ . Table 6.6 also shows that mothers' rejecting behaviours mediated the relationship between the goals of mutual respect and mothers' own needs, and attachment to mothers  $F(3, 92) = 37.33, p < .001$ . Mothers who were highly concerned about relationship-centred goals were less rejecting of their teenagers (Table 6.3); these teenagers were, in turn, more likely to have a positive opinion of family functioning and to be strongly attached to their mothers (Table 6.6). Conversely, mothers who had a high concern for own needs goals were more rejecting of their teenagers (Table 6.3); these teenagers were, in turn, more likely to have a poorer opinion of family functioning and were not strongly attached to their mothers (Table 6.6).

Table 6.6 also shows that mothers' rejecting behaviours mediated the relationships between mothers' own needs goals and teenagers' level of self-esteem  $F(2, 94) = 9.41, p < .001$ . Mothers who were perceived to be highly self-focused tended to be less accepting of their teenagers (rejecting behaviours. See Table 6.3); these teenagers, in turn, were likely to suffer from poor self-esteem. Finally, mothers' rejecting behaviours mediated the relationship between the goal of mutual respect and teenagers' positive mood  $F(2, 90) = 7.85, p < .01$ . Mothers who had a strong interest in the goal of mutual respect tended to be more accepting (or less rejecting) of their teenagers. These teenagers, in turn, were likely to have a more positive disposition.

Table 6.6  
*Hierarchical regressions of the mediating role of maternal rejecting behaviour*

Teenagers Perceptions		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> Change	Beta	<i>t</i> -value	part
<b>Family Functioning</b>								
Step 1	Rejection	-1.23	.10	.63	.63	-0.79	-12.57***	(-.79)
Step 2	Rejection	-1.20	.11			-0.76	-10.65***	(-.68)
	Mutual respect	-0.01	.12			-0.01	< 1	
	Mothers' own needs	-0.13	.12	.64	.01	-0.07	< 1	
<b>Attachment</b>								
Step 1	Rejection	-0.96	.09	.54	.54	-0.73	-10.46***	(-.73)
Step 2	Rejection	-0.90	.11			-0.69	-8.54***	(-.60)
	Mutual respect	0.06	.11			0.04	< 1	
	Mothers' own needs	-0.17	.11	.55	.01	-0.11	< 1	
<b>Self-Esteem</b>								
Step 1	Rejection	-0.44	.11	.14	.14	-0.38	-4.01***	(-.38)
Step 2	Rejection	-0.39	.11			-0.34	-3.43**	(-.32)
	Mothers' own needs	-0.21	.13	.17	.03	-0.16	< 1	
<b>Positive Mood</b>								
Step 1	Rejection	-0.62	.16	.14	.14	-0.37	-3.85**	(-.34)
Step 2	Rejection	-0.62	.16			-0.37	-3.85***	(-.26)
	Mutual respect	0.21	.23	.15	.01	0.09	< 1	

\**p* < .05 \*\**p* < .01 \*\*\**p* < .001

### (b) The moderating role of mothers' behaviours

One hundred and forty-four hierarchical regression analyses (8 goals x 3 maternal behaviours x 6 youth outcomes) were performed to determine whether there were any interactions between mothers' parenting goals and mothers' behaviours in relation to adolescent adjustment and the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship. This large number of analyses increased the risk of family-wise error and as only three significant findings were obtained it is very likely these results are attributable to chance. Nevertheless, the results have been reported for interest sake.

## Mothers' reports

Table 6.7  
Hierarchical regressions showing the contribution of mothers' reports of parenting goals and mothers' behaviours in relation to variations in adolescent adjustment.

		$\beta$	SE	$R^2$	$R^2$ change	Beta	t-value	part
<b>Teenagers' negative mood</b>								
Step 1	Age	0.67	0.55			0.13	<1	
	Gender	2.39	1.46			0.17	<1	
	Mothers' own needs (st)	0.10	0.22			0.05	<1	
	Rejecting behaviour (st)	0.43	0.18	.09	.09	0.25	2.38*	(.24)
Step 2	Age	0.62	0.54			0.12	<1	
	Gender	2.14	1.43			0.15	<1	
	Mothers' own needs (st)	-1.50	0.70			-0.72	-2.13*	(-.21)
	Rejecting behaviour (st)	-0.73	0.52			-0.42	<1	
	x Rejecting behaviour (st)	0.12	0.05	.15	.06	1.04	2.38*	(.24)
<b>Teenagers' negative mood</b>								
Step 1	Age	0.71	0.54			0.14	<1	
	Gender	2.36	1.46			0.16	<1	
	Mother' compliance (st)	-0.11	0.20			-0.06	<1	
	Rejecting behaviour (st)	0.43	0.18	.08	.08	0.25	2.37*	(.24)
Step 2	Age	0.66	0.52			0.13	<1	
	Gender	2.54	1.42			0.18	<1	
	Mothers' compliance (st)	-1.86	0.68			-0.97	-2.73**	(-.27)
	Rejecting behaviour (st)	-0.92	0.54			-0.52	<1	
	x Rejecting behaviour (st)	0.14	0.05	.15	.07	1.20	2.67**	(.26)
<b>Teenagers' Behaviour</b>								
Step 1	Age	-0.42	0.27			-0.15	<1	
	Gender	-2.28	0.75			-0.31	-3.05**	(-.29)
	Mothers' safety (st)	0.14	0.08			0.18	<1	
	Psychological control (st)	0.04	0.12	.14	.14	0.04	<1	
Step 2	Age	-0.47	0.27			-0.17	<1	
	Gender	-2.06	0.73			-0.28	-2.84**	(-.26)
	Mothers' safety (st)	-0.42	0.22			-0.54	-2.29*	(-.21)
	Psychological control (st)	-0.63	0.27			-0.52	<1	
	Mothers' Safety x Psychological control (st)	0.06	0.02	.20	.06	0.98	2.73**	(.25)

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  (st) = standardised

Table 6.7 shows that adolescent outcomes could be predicted by some significant interactions between mothers' reports of their parenting goals and mothers' behaviours. There was a significant interaction between the strength of mothers' own needs goal and rejecting behaviours in the prediction of teenagers'

negative mood  $F(5,87) = 2.78, p < .05$ . The plot of this interaction is shown in Figure 6.1; mothers' high and low rejecting scores were based on a median split of the scores. The Figure reveals that there was a significant positive association between mothers' own needs goals and teenagers' negative mood when mothers had high rejecting behaviours, whereas the effect was not significant when mothers had low rejection scores.

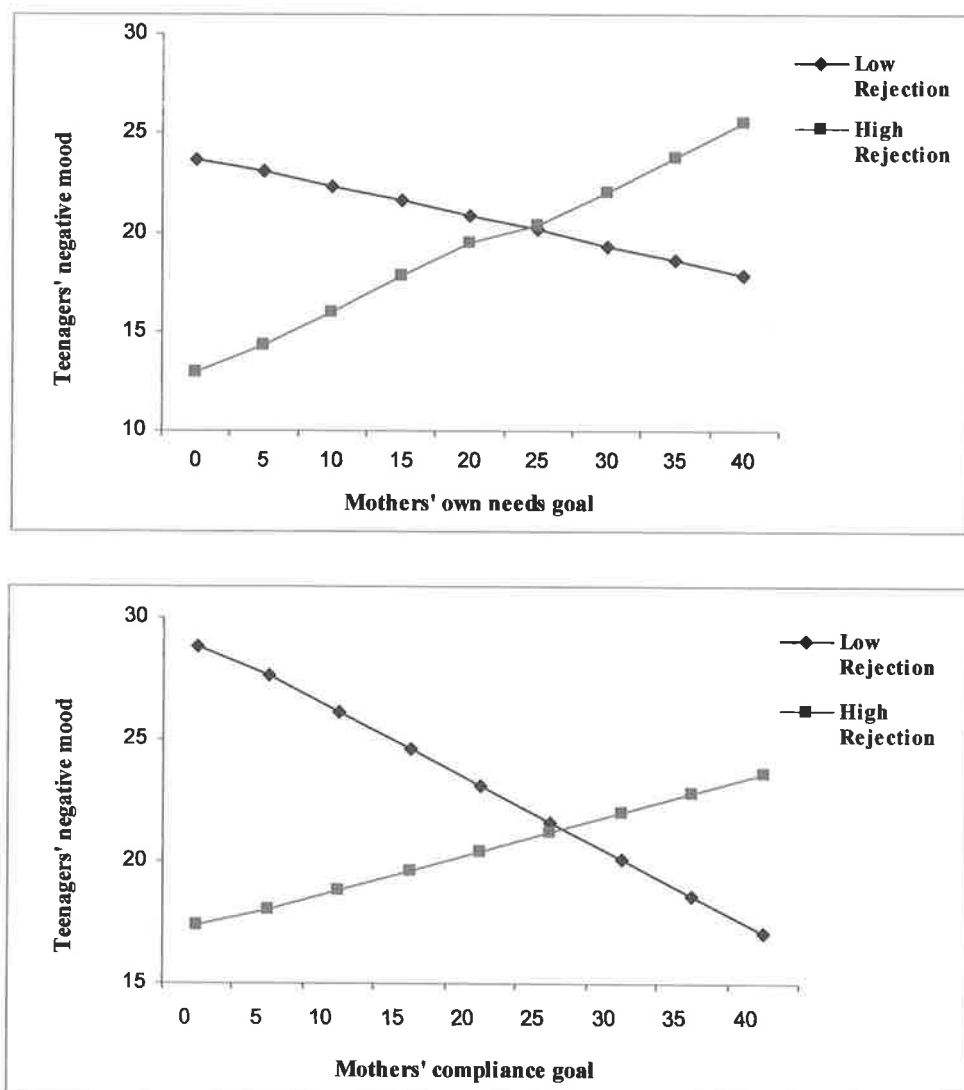


Figure 6.1. The moderating role of mothers' rejecting behaviours between own need goals and teenagers' negative moods

Table 6.7 also indicates a significant interaction between the goal of compliance and mothers' rejecting behaviours in relation to teenagers' negative mood  $F(5,87) = 3.38, p < .01$ . The plot of this interaction is shown in Figure 6.1; again mothers' high and low rejecting scores were based on a median split of the scores. This Figure reveals a negative association between mothers' compliance goals and teenagers' negative mood when mothers had fewer rejecting behaviours, but the effects were not significant when mothers had high rejecting behaviours. Table 6.7 also shows that there was a significant and positive interaction between mothers' endorsement of safety goals and mothers' psychologically-controlling behaviours in relation to teenagers' problem behaviours  $F(5,92) = 4.70, p < .001$ .



Figure 6.2. The moderating role of mothers' psychologically-controlling behaviours

As shown in Figure 6.2, a plot of this interaction revealed a significant, positive association between mothers' safety goals and teenagers' problem behaviour when mothers were more psychologically-controlling but there was no

significant relationship when mothers were less psychologically-controlling. (The psychological control scores were based on a median split of the scores.)

### **Teenagers' perceptions**

Hierarchical regression analyses were performed to assess the effects of which maternal behaviours moderated the relationship between teenagers' perceptions of mothers' goals and adolescent outcomes. The findings did not reveal any significant interactions.

#### **6.4.6 Preliminary Analyses: Parenting goals and maternal attributions**

In this section of the questionnaire mothers were asked to consider their teenagers' behaviour in light of each of the four scenarios, and to what they attributed that behaviour (ie, intentional vs. not intentional). Teenagers were also asked to provide their perceived maternal attributions for teenagers' behaviour. The higher the score on each attribution scale the greater the tendency for mothers to make that attribution.

Before analysing the relationship between mothers' parenting goals and maternal attributions, it seemed appropriate to conduct single-sample t-tests to assess the within-family correspondence between mothers' reports and teenagers' reports of mothers' attributions. One-way repeated measures ANOVAs with post-hoc comparisons were also performed to determine how mothers' attributions and teenagers' perceptions of mothers' attributions varied across the four scenarios.

Table 6.8

*One-sample t-tests showing the within-family correspondences of mothers' reports and teenagers' reports of mothers' attributions in the different scenarios*

Mother-Teenager				
	<i>M</i>	<i>(SD)</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t(97)</i>
<b>Situation 1</b>				
Personality Attributions	0.02	(1.06)	95	< 1
Intentionality Attributions	0.30	(1.42)	96	2.08*
<b>Situation 2</b>				
Personality Attributions	0.10	(1.14)	97	< 1
Intentionality Attributions	0.28	(1.14)	97	2.40*
<b>Situation 3</b>				
Personality Attributions	0.01	(1.25)	95	< 1
Intentionality Attributions	0.14	(1.14)	97	< 1
<b>Situation 4</b>				
Personality Attributions	0.10	(1.24)	95	< 1
Intentionality Attributions	0.33	(1.18)	96	2.76**

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$

Situation 1 = Large mobile phone bill; Situation 2 = Turning off computer & tidying lounge; Situation 3 = Not getting out of bed in time for school; Situation 4 = Speaking rudely to mother

Table 6.8 reveals that there were no significant differences between mothers' reports of personality attributions and teenagers' perceptions of their mothers' personality attributions. However, in three of the four situations mothers' reports of intentionality attributions and teenagers' perceptions of mothers' intentionality attributions were shown to be significantly different.

Reliability analyses were also conducted to assess the consistency of mothers' and teenagers' reports of mothers' attributional tendencies across the four scenarios. Cronbach's alpha for mothers' reports of personality attributions were relatively weak (.65) compared to teenagers' reports (.73). Cronbach's alpha for mothers' reports of intentionality attributions were moderate (.73) and similar to teenagers' reports (.74).

## Mothers' reports

In Table 6.9 mothers' attributions for teenagers' behaviour can be seen to vary slightly between the different scenarios. In Situations 2 and 3 mothers attributed teenagers' behaviour much more to their personality than they did in Situations 1 and 4. Mothers' intentionality attributions were similar across most of the situations, although mothers felt that teenagers' use of the mobile phone was not as intentional as their other behaviours.

Table 6.9  
Means (SDs) and one way repeated measures ANOVAs of maternal attributions (Range 1 to 4)

Mothers' reports	Personality (N = 99)		Intentionality (N = 99)	
	<i>M</i>	( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i>	( <i>SD</i> )
Scenario 1	2.27	(0.92)	2.00	(0.96)
Scenario 2	2.71	(0.80)	2.38	(0.99)
Scenario 3	2.57	(0.95)	2.44	(0.95)
Scenario 4	2.20	(0.91)	2.21	(0.92)
	<i>F</i> = 10.6 (3,288)		<i>F</i> = 7.2 (3,294)	
	Eta <sup>2</sup> = .10		Eta <sup>2</sup> = .07	
	<i>p</i> < .001		<i>p</i> < .01	
<b>LSD Post-hoc comparisons:</b>	2 > 1*, 4*		2 > 1*	
	3 > 1*, 4*		3 > 1*	
			4 > 1*	

\**p* < .05 Scenario 1: excessive mobile phone bill; Scenario 2: turning off computer and cleaning lounge; Scenario 3: sleeping in on school day; Scenario 4: speaking rudely to mother after sleepover

## Teenagers' perceptions

The findings in Table 6.10 are based on teenagers' perceptions of mothers' attributional style. Personality and intentionality attributions appear to be relatively consistent across the situations, and also very similar to mothers' reports (ie, personality attributions were strongest in Situations 2 and 3 and teenagers' mobile use was not seen to be as intentional as other behaviours).



Paired sample t-tests were conducted to assess the overall differences between mothers' self-rated reports and teenagers' perceptions of mothers' attributions for behaviour. No significant differences were revealed between mothers' and teenagers' personality attribution scores. However, mothers and teenagers differed in their ratings for intentionality attributions  $t(93) = -2.83, p < .01; (\eta = .08)$ . Teenagers felt that mothers viewed adolescent behaviour in the different scenarios to be more intentional ( $M = 10.1, SD = 2.83$ ) than mothers actually reported adolescent behaviour to be ( $M = 9.1, SD = 2.74$ ).

Table 6.10

*Means (SDs) and one way repeated measures ANOVAs of teenagers' perceptions of mothers' attributions (Range 1 to 4)*

Teenagers' perceptions	Personality (N = 99)		Intentionality (N = 99)	
	M	(SD)	M	(SD)
Scenario 1	2.28	(0.85)	2.29	(1.03)
Scenario 2	2.60	(0.84)	2.66	(0.93)
Scenario 3	2.59	(0.93)	2.56	(0.87)
Scenario 4	2.35	(0.95)	2.55	(0.92)
	$F = 5.4 (3,288)$ $Eta^2 = .05$ $p < .001$		$F = 4.6 (3,294)$ $Eta^2 = .05$ $p < .01$	
<b>LSD Post-hoc comparisons:</b>	2 > 1*, 4*		2 > 1*	
	3 > 1*, 4*		3 > 1*	
			4 > 1*	

\* $p < .05$ 

Scenario 1: excessive mobile phone bill; Scenario 2: turning off computer and cleaning lounge;  
Scenario 3: sleeping in on school day; Scenario 4: speaking rudely to mother after sleepover

#### 6.4.7 Parenting goals and maternal attributions (Aim 3)

The following section examines the associations between parenting goals, and maternal attributions on the basis of mothers' reports and teenagers' perceptions.

### Mothers' reports

The associations between mothers' reports of parenting goals and maternal attributions were not as expected (Table 6.11). Parent-centred goals were not significantly associated with personality and intentionality, although the associations were positive. For the most part, relationship-centred and child-centred goals were not significantly associated with personality and intentionality attributions. A couple of moderate connections were revealed, however, between mothers' attributions and adolescent outcomes. Teenagers whose mothers were more inclined to attribute behaviour to personality factors or see it as intentional tended to have a poorer view of family functioning and displayed more problematic behaviours than did teenagers whose mothers were less likely to make these attributions.

Table 6.11  
*Correlations showing the relationships between mothers' reports of parenting goals, attributions, and adolescent outcomes*

	Mothers' Personality Attributions	Mothers' Intentionality Attributions
<b>Mothers' reports of goals</b>		
Loving and caring	-.09	-.25*
Mutual respect	-.04	-.20
Teen happiness	.03	-.11
Safety	-.09	-.10
Mothers' own needs	.05	-.15
Compliance	.10	.11
Manners	.04	.09
Productivity	.23*	.07
<b>Adolescent Outcomes</b>		
Family Closeness	-.18	-.15
Family Functioning	-.25*	-.25*
Attachment	-.20	-.15
Self-Esteem	.05	-.13
Positive mood	.18	-.09
Negative mood	.04	.13
Problem Behaviour	.44**	.29**

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

## Teenagers' perceptions

Table 6.12 reveals the relationships between teenagers' perceptions of maternal attributions and mothers' goals, and maternal attributions and adolescent outcomes. As expected there were numerous negative associations between maternal attributions and relationship-centred and child-centred goals.

Table 6.12  
Correlations showing the relationships between teenagers' perceptions of mothers' attributions, perceptions of mothers' goals and adolescent outcomes

	Teenagers' Perceptions of Personality Attributions	Teenagers' Perceptions of Intentionality Attributions
<b>Teen perceptions of goals</b>		
Loving and caring	-.07	-.36**
Mutual respect	-.06	-.22*
Teen happiness	-.17	-.24*
Safety	-.20*	-.20
Mothers' own needs	.34**	.26**
Compliance	.20*	.10
Manners	.10	-.16
Productivity	.07	-.14
<b>Adolescent Outcomes</b>		
Family Closeness	-.25*	-.29**
Family Functioning	-.32**	-.27**
Attachment to mother	-.37**	-.24*
Self-esteem	-.23*	.18
Positive Mood	.05	.05
Negative Mood	.16	.15
Problem Behaviour	.05	.05

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

Table 6.12 also shows the expected positive associations between maternal attributions and parent-centred goals. Some of the notable associations were those between the goal of own needs and intentionality and personality attributions. If teenagers viewed mothers to be more interested in their own needs, they also saw them as being more likely to make intentionality and personality attributions. Conversely, if mothers were viewed to have a greater interest in relationship-centred and child-centred empathic concerns, they were

seen as less likely to make personality and intentionality attributions. Moreover, if mothers made more personality and intentionality attributions, teenagers' perceptions of the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship were poorer. Finally, in relation to adolescent adjustment, it was found that if mothers had a greater tendency to make personality attributions for adolescent behaviours, teenagers tended to have lower self-esteem.

#### **6.4.8 Parenting goals as antecedents to attributional tendencies**

The previous correlation analyses showed that there were a number of significant associations between parenting goals and parenting attributions. The following section examines the unique contribution that each of the parenting goals made to each type of attributional rating. Thus, ordinary least squares regression analyses were conducted to assess the contribution of individual parenting goals to variations in attributional ratings.

##### **Mothers' reports**

When mothers' reports of their parenting goals were entered together into a regression equation (Table 6.13) they explained 17 percent of the variance in mothers' personality attributions  $F(8, 88) = 2.17, p < .05$ . However, only the goal of productivity made a significant unique contribution to mothers' personality attributions. An examination of the part correlation showed that productivity (.35) accounted for 12 percent of the total contribution to the variance. Hence, only productivity was shown to influence the likelihood of mothers' personality attributions for teenagers' behaviours in challenging situations. However, caution

should be expressed here as a Type 1 error is likely to have occurred as a large number of correlations had been performed.

Furthermore, Table 6.13 shows that, when mothers' reports of their parenting goals were entered together into a regression equation, they explained 19 percent of the variance in mothers' intentionality attributions  $F(8, 90) = 2.63$ ,  $p < .05$ . In this analysis, the only significant predictor was the goal of mutual respect ( $t = 2.02$ ,  $p < .05$ ). However, an examination of the part correlation showed that mutual respect (-.19) accounted for only 4 percent of the total contribution to the variance. Hence, only mutual respect was shown to influence the likelihood of mothers' intentionality attributions for teenagers' behaviours in challenging situations. It should be stated that caution needs to be exercised in inferring too much from these findings as the large number of variable used in this analysis increases the probability of Type 1 errors.

**Table 6.13**  
*Regressions showing the contribution of mothers' parenting goals in the variations of maternal attributions*

<b>Mothers' Reports</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b>part</b>
<b>Personality</b>						
Loving	-0.16	.12		-0.21	< 1	
Own needs	0.06	.08		0.08	< 1	
Compliance	0.00	.08		0.01	< 1	
Teen Happiness	0.16	.10		0.22	< 1	
Manners	-0.08	.09		-0.11	< 1	
Safety	-0.11	.07		-0.22	< 1	
Productivity	0.23	.09		0.49	3.56*	.35
Mutual Respect	-0.13	.12	.17	-0.16	< 1	
<b>Intentionality</b>						
Loving	-0.18	.13		-0.21	< 1	
Own needs	-0.16	.09		-0.19	< 1	
Compliance	0.12	.10		0.15	< 1	
Teen Happiness	-0.03	.10		-0.04	< 1	
Manners	0.13	.10		0.17	< 1	
Safety	-0.02	.08		-0.03	< 1	
Productivity	0.17	.09		0.23	< 1	
Mutual Respect	-0.27	.13	.19	-0.28	-2.02*	-.19

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

### **Teenagers' perceptions**

When teenagers' perceptions of mothers' parenting goals were entered together into a regression equation (Table 6.14) they explained 19 percent of the variance in teenagers' perceptions of mothers' personality attributions  $F(8, 88) = 2.50, p < .05$ . However, only the goal of own needs made a significant unique contribution to the prediction of personality attributions. An examination of the part correlation showed that own needs (.21) accounted for only 4 percent of the total contribution to the variance. Hence, teenagers' perceptions of parenting-goals, particularly own needs, appear to be related to whether they thought mothers' would, or would not, make personality attributions for teenagers' behaviours in challenging situations.

Table 6.14

*Regressions showing the contribution of teenagers' perceptions of mothers' parenting goals in relation to the variations of teenagers' perceptions of maternal attributions*

Teenagers' Perceptions	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i> -value	part
<b>Personality</b>						
Loving and caring	0.09	.10		0.14	< 1	
Mothers' own needs	0.18	.08		0.24	2.19*	.21
Compliance	0.08	.09		0.11	< 1	
Teen happiness	-0.05	.10		-0.08	< 1	
Manners	0.10	.1		0.13	< 1	
Safety	-0.16	.09		-0.29	< 1	
Productivity	0.05	.09		0.08	< 1	
Mutual respect	-0.07	.10	.34	-0.11	< 1	
<b>Intentionality</b>						
Loving and caring	-0.28	.11		-0.40	-2.67**	-.25
Mothers' own needs	0.21	.09		0.26	2.65*	.23
Compliance	0.14	.10		0.17	< 1	
Teen happiness	0.02	.11		0.02	< 1	
Manners	-0.11	.11		-0.13	< 1	
Safety	0.11	.09		0.18	< 1	
Productivity	-0.07	.09		-0.10	< 1	
Mutual respect	-0.01	.10	.23	-0.01	< 1	

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

Furthermore, when teenagers' perceptions of mothers' parenting goals were entered together into a regression equation they explained 23 percent of the variance in teenagers' perceptions of mothers' intentionality attributions  $F(8, 89) = 3.23, p < .01$ . However, only the goals of love and own needs made a significant unique contribution to the prediction of intentionality attributions. An examination of the part correlation showed that the goals of loving and caring (-.25) and own needs (.23) accounted for 6 percent and 5 percent, respectively, of the total contribution to the variance. Hence, the parenting goals of loving and mothers' own needs, appear to be related to whether mothers' will, or will not, make intentionality attributions for teenagers' behaviours in challenging situations.

#### **6.4.9 Parenting goals, maternal attributions and adolescent outcomes (Aim 4)**

The aim of this section is to (a) To test whether maternal attributions mediate the relationships between parenting goals and adolescent adjustment; and (b) To test whether maternal attributions moderate the relationships between parenting goals and adolescent outcomes.

##### **(a) Parenting attributions as mediators**

Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were used to assess the mediatory role of mothers' attributions in the relationship between teenagers' perceptions and mothers' goals and adolescent outcomes. (No analyses were performed for mothers' reports because there were no significant associations found between parenting goals and adolescent outcomes.) The results revealed no significant evidence that the relationship between teenagers' perceptions of mothers' goals and adolescent outcomes was mediated by maternal attributions.

##### **(b) Parenting attributions as moderators**

Ninety-six hierarchical regression analyses (8 goals x 2 maternal attributions x 6 youth outcomes) were performed to determine whether there were any interactions between mothers' parenting goals and mothers' attributions in relation to adolescent adjustment and the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship. This large number of analyses increased the risk of family-wise error and as only two significant findings were obtained it is very likely these results



are attributable to chance. Nevertheless, the results have been reported for interest sake.

### **Mothers' reports**

The following section aims to assess whether the relationships between mothers' parenting goals and adolescent outcomes were moderated by mothers' attributions for teenagers' behaviour. Hierarchical regression analyses did not reveal any significant interactions between mothers' goals and mothers' attributions which would predict adolescent outcomes. On the basis of mothers' reports, this suggests that parenting attributions do not moderate the relationship between mothers' parenting goals and adolescent outcomes.

### **Teenagers' perceptions**

This section aims to assess whether the relationship between teenagers' perceptions of mothers' goals and adolescent outcomes are moderated by teenagers' perceptions of mothers' attributions. Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to test whether there were any significant interactions between perceptions of mothers' goals and perceptions of attributions (personality and intentionality) that would predict adolescent outcomes. In Table 6.15 it can be seen that there were significant interactions between mothers' attributions and teenagers' perceptions of mothers' own need goals.

The quality of the parent-adolescent relationship was not predicted by interactions between teenagers' perceptions of mothers' parenting goals and attributional tendencies. However, in terms of adolescent adjustment, Table 6.15

shows that adolescent self-esteem was predicted by the significant interaction between intentionality attributions and the goal of own needs  $F(3, 93) = 5.27, p < .01$ ; and by a significant interaction between personality attributions and the goal of own needs  $F(3, 92) = 4.10, p < .01$ .

Table 6.15

*Hierarchical regressions showing the contribution of teenagers' perceptions of mothers' parenting goals and maternal attributions in relation to adolescent outcomes*

Teenagers' perceptions		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> change	Beta	<i>t</i> -value
<b>Self-esteem</b>							
Step 1	Personality	-0.30	.19			-0.17	< 1
	Mothers' own needs	-0.23	.14	.08	.08	-0.17	< 1
Step 2	Personality	0.50	.43			0.28	< 1
	Mothers' own needs	0.39	.33			0.29	< 1
	Mothers' own needs x Personality	-0.10	.05	.12	.04	-0.77	2.07*
Step 1	Intentionality	-0.19	.17			-0.12	< 1
	Mothers' own needs	-0.28	.14	.07	.07	-0.21	2.06*
Step 2	Intentionality	1.03	.46			0.64	2.23*
	Mothers' own needs	0.62	.35			0.47	< 1
	Mothers' own needs x Intentionality	-0.13	.05	.15	.08	-1.17	2.83**

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$

The plots of the interactions between mothers' own needs goals and maternal attributions, as seen in Figure 6.3, show that the more teenagers perceived their mothers to be concerned with their own needs, the lower their self-esteem, but this occurred only when teenagers perceived mothers to have a strong tendency to regard teenagers' behaviour as intentional  $F(1,37) = 5.56, p < .05$  and attributable to their personality  $F(1,31) = 6.41, p < .05$ .

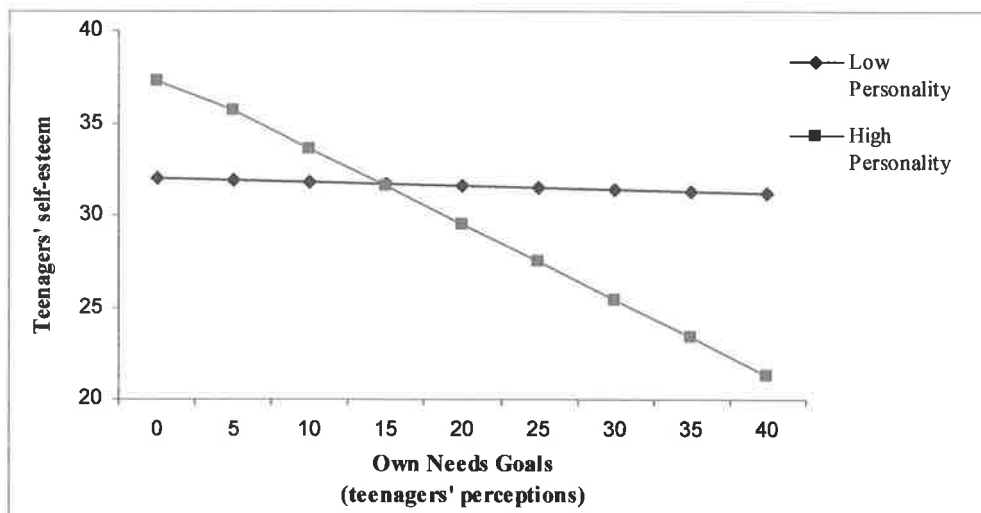
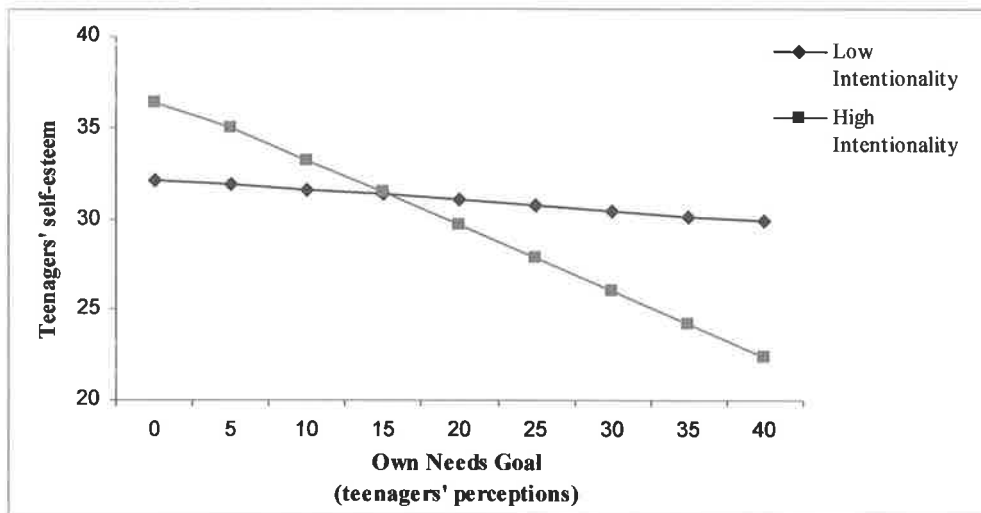


Figure 6.3. The moderating role of teenagers' perceptions of mothers' personality and intentionality attributions between the goals of own needs and teenagers' self-esteem

The hypothesis that the strength of the associations between mothers' parenting goals, maternal attributions, and adolescent outcomes would be greater and more numerous for adolescent reports than mothers' reports, was supported to some extent, although it is again important to exercise some caution due to the number of analyses undertaken in this section.

#### 6.4.10 Preliminary analyses: Parenting goals and mothers' emotions

The following section assesses the relationship between mothers' emotions and parenting goals. The main objective of this section is to examine the associations between parenting goals and mothers' emotions, and whether mothers' emotions moderate the relationship between parenting goals and adolescent outcomes.

Before analysing the relationship between mothers' parenting goals and maternal emotions, it seemed appropriate to conduct single-sample t-tests to assess the within-family correspondence between mothers' reports and teenagers' reports of mothers' emotions.

Table 6.16  
One-sample t-tests showing the within-family correspondences of mothers' reports and teenagers' reports of mothers' emotions in the different scenarios

		Mother-Teenager			
		<i>M</i>	<i>(SD)</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t(97)</i>
<b>Situation 1</b>					
	Angry	0.38	(1.43)	96	2.62*
	Worried	0.81	(1.23)	93	6.38***
	Upset	0.42	(1.46)	97	2.83**
<b>Situation 2</b>					
	Angry	0.13	(1.27)	97	< 1
	Worried	0.47	(1.46)	96	3.20**
	Upset	0.47	(1.41)	97	3.30**
<b>Situation 3</b>					
	Angry	0.07	(1.45)	96	< 1
	Worried	0.50	(1.62)	96	3.01**
	Upset	0.20	(1.51)	95	< 1
<b>Situation 4</b>					
	Angry	-0.17	(1.40)	96	< 1
	Worried	0.33	(1.66)	96	< 1
	Upset	0.13	(1.66)	96	< 1

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$

Situation 1 = Large mobile phone bill; Situation 2 = Turning off computer & tidying lounge; Situation 3 = Not getting out of bed in time for school; Situation 4 = Speaking rudely to mother

Table 6.16 reveals that there were a number of significant differences between mothers' reports of emotional reactions to the four situations and teenagers' perceptions of their mothers' emotional reactions in the four situations. The greatest differences occurred in Situation 1 and 2.

### Mothers' reports

Before analysing the relationship between mothers' parenting goals and maternal emotions, it seemed appropriate to conduct one-way repeated measures ANOVAs with post-hoc comparisons to determine how mothers' emotions varied across the four scenarios.

Table 6.17  
Means (SDs) and one way repeated measures ANOVAs of mothers' emotions (Range 1 to 5)

Mothers' reports	Anger (N = 100)		Worry (N = 99)		Upset (N = 100)	
	<i>M</i>	( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i>	( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i>	( <i>SD</i> )
Scenario 1	4.16	(0.90)	4.25	(0.80)	3.93	(0.98)
Scenario 2	4.02	(0.89)	3.67	(1.08)	3.78	(1.00)
Scenario 3	3.73	(1.01)	3.76	(1.05)	3.48	(1.15)
Scenario 4	3.79	(1.08)	3.38	(1.20)	3.55	(1.13)
	<i>F</i> = 5.7 (3, 297) Eta <sup>2</sup> = .05 <i>p</i> < .001		<i>F</i> = 14.9 (3, 294) Eta <sup>2</sup> = .13 <i>p</i> < .001		<i>F</i> = 5.0 (3, 297) Eta <sup>2</sup> = .05 <i>p</i> < .01	
<b>LSD Post-hoc comparisons:</b>	1 > 3**, 4** 2 > 3*, 4*		1 > 2**, 3**, 4** 3 > 4*		1 > 3**, 4** 2 > 3*	

\**p* < .05

Scenario 1: excessive mobile phone bill; Scenario 2: turning off computer and cleaning lounge;  
Scenario 3: sleeping in on school day; Scenario 4: speaking rudely to mother after sleepover

In Table 6.17 mothers' emotions for teenagers' behaviour can be seen to vary slightly between the different scenarios. In Situations 1 and 2, mothers felt more strongly about teenagers' behaviour than they appeared to do in Situations

3 and 4. Mothers were more angry, worried and upset about the mobile phone bill than they were about the other situations (although this behaviour was not seen to be as intentional as the other behaviours of the teenagers.) Mothers were next most angry and upset by teenagers' refusal to clean up the lounge in time for their visitors' arrival.

### **Teenagers' perceptions**

The results in Table 6.18 are based on teenagers' perceptions of mothers' emotions across the four situations. It can be seen that teenagers did not perceive mothers' emotions to vary considerably across the four situations. In fact, in terms of mothers' anger, teenagers perceived mothers to be angrier about them being rude after their sleepover (Situation 4) than because they would not get out of bed (Situation 3). Furthermore, teenagers perceived mothers to be more upset about them running up a large mobile phone bill (Situation 1) than because they would not get out of bed. Generally, however, anger and upset were not shown to vary much across the four situations. There were significant differences concerning how worried teenagers perceived their mothers to be in the different situations. Mothers, it was thought, would be significantly more worried about the mobile phone bill than they would be about the teenager cleaning the lounge (Situation 3) before visitors arrived, or about rude behaviour when they were tired after a sleepover.

Table 6.18  
Means (SDs) and one way repeated measures ANOVAs of teenagers' perceptions of mothers' emotions (Range 1 to 5)

Teenagers' reports	Anger (N = 99)		Worry (N = 99)		Upset (N = 100)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>(SD)</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>(SD)</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>(SD)</i>
Scenario 1	3.78	(1.09)	3.48	(1.08)	3.55	(1.19)
Scenario 2	3.87	(1.10)	3.20	(1.17)	3.32	(1.12)
Scenario 3	3.61	(1.14)	3.22	(1.09)	3.27	(1.15)
Scenario 4	3.91	(0.96)	3.04	(1.13)	3.40	(1.19)
	$F = 2.1 (3,294)$ $Eta^2 = .02$ $p > .05$		$F = 3.7 (2,294)$ $Eta^2 = .04$ $p < .01$		$F = 1.9 (3,297)$ $Eta^2 = .02$ $p > .05$	
<b>LSD Post-hoc comparisons:</b>	4 > 3**		1 > 2*, 4**		1 > 3*	

\* $p < .05$  Scenario 1: excessive mobile phone bill; Scenario 2: turning off computer and cleaning lounge;  
Scenario 3: sleeping in on school day; Scenario 4: speaking rudely to mother after sleepover

Paired sample t-tests were conducted to assess the overall differences between mothers' self-rated reports and teenagers' perceptions of mothers' emotions as a result of teenagers' behaviour. Only one significant difference was revealed between mothers' and teenagers' anger scores. Mothers and teenagers differed in their ratings of how angry mothers were about the mobile phone incident (Situation 1)  $t(96) = 2.62, p < .05$ . Mothers and teenagers differed in their ratings of how worried mothers were across the mobile phone incident  $t(93) = 6.38, p < .001$ ; cleaning the lounge (Situation 2)  $t(96) = 3.20, p < .01$ ; and teenagers' rudeness to mother after a sleepover  $t(96) = 3.01, p < .01$ . Finally, mothers and teenagers differed in their ratings of how upset mothers were about the mobile phone incident  $t(97) = 2.83, p < .01$  and the cleaning of the lounge  $t(97) = 3.30, p < .01$ . On every occasion where a difference was revealed

between mothers' and teenagers' scores, the mother had rated herself angrier, more worried or upset than her teenager would have thought her to be.

Table 6.19 shows that teenagers generally gave lower scores on their ratings of mothers' emotions than mothers did themselves. Furthermore, teenagers' reports of their own emotions in specific situations were lower than mothers' scores.

Table 6.19  
*M (SD) scores for mothers' and teenagers' emotional reactions to specific situations*

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i> (Range 4 to 20)	<i>(SD)</i>
<b>Anger</b>			
Mothers' report	100	15.7	(2.56)
Teen perception	99	15.2	(2.87)
Teenagers' own anger	95	12.2	(3.63)
<b>Worry</b>			
Mothers' report	99	15.1	(2.64)
Teen perception	99	12.9	(3.13)
Teenagers' own concern	95	9.9	(3.49)
<b>Upset</b>			
Mothers' report	100	14.7	(2.81)
Teen perception	100	13.5	(3.47)
Teenagers' own upset	95	11.8	(5.10)

Paired-sample t-tests showed that there were no significant differences between mothers' reports and teenagers' perceptions of the degree of anger they would experience in specific situations. However, there were significant differences in the level of worry and upset that was reported by mothers and teenagers. Mothers felt they would be more worried by the interactions with their teenagers than perceived by teenagers  $t(93) = 5.53, p < .001$ . In addition, mothers felt they would be more upset by the interactions with their teenagers than teenagers perceived them to be,  $t(95) = 2.91, p < .01$ .



#### **6.4.11 Parenting goals and maternal emotions (Aim 5)**

The following section examines the associations between mothers' emotions, parenting goals, and adolescent outcomes. Pearson correlations were conducted to assess the association between mothers' emotions and parenting goals, and mothers' emotions and adolescent outcomes, based on mothers' own reports and teenagers' perceptions.

##### **Mothers' reports**

When Pearson correlations were conducted to assess the associations between mothers' emotions and the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship and teenagers' adjustment, no significant associations were found. However, Table 6.20 summarises the significant associations between mothers' emotions and parenting goals. As expected, anger was significantly and positively associated with parent-centred concerns. When mothers were highly interested in their own needs and expected immediate compliance from teenagers they were likely to get extremely angry when these goals were hindered. Also as expected, worry was significantly and positively associated with mothers' relationship-centred and child-centred goals. Mothers would become quite worried by interactions with teenagers that appeared to hinder their expectations of a loving and respectful relationship with their teenager. The positive associations between feelings of upset and parent-centred goals were not expected, but neither were they surprising. Mothers who were highly interested in their own needs and expected a high degree of compliance from teenagers were likely to become quite upset when these goals were hindered. Finally, there was

a positive association between mothers' feelings of worry and the goal of compliance. When mothers expected a high degree of compliance from teenagers they tended to become quite worried when it did not occur. Only teen happiness was not significantly associated with any of mothers' emotions during conflictual situations.

Table 6.20  
*Correlations showing the associations between mothers' emotions and mothers' parenting goals*

Mothers' reports on parenting goals	Mothers' reports on their emotions		
	Anger	Worry	Upset
Loving and caring	-.05	.30**	.12
Mothers' own needs	.28**	.18	.27**
Compliance	.35**	.28**	.34**
Teen happiness	-.11	.17	.15
Manners	.24	.29**	.22
Safety	-.01	.23*	.16
Productivity	.00	.22*	-.02
Mutual respect	.06	.28**	.07

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

### Teenagers' perceptions

Pearson correlation analysis revealed no significant associations between teenagers' perceptions of mothers' emotions and teenagers' perceptions of mothers' goals. However, there were some significant associations between mothers' emotions, the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship, and adolescent outcomes. Table 6.21 shows that teenagers who perceived their mothers to become more worried gave higher ratings on components of the parent-adolescent relationship and the positive mood scale. In addition,

teenagers who perceived their mothers to become angrier had more problematic behaviours. Table 6.21 indicates no significant associations between how upset mothers became and adolescent outcomes.

**Table 6.21**  
*Correlations showing the associations between teenagers' perceptions of mothers' emotions, the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship and adolescent adjustment*

Adolescent adjustment	Teenagers' perceptions of mothers' emotions		
	Anger	Worry	Upset
Problem behaviour	.22*	.03	.09
Self-esteem	-.07	.03	-.06
Positive Mood	.04	.21*	.10
Negative Mood	.07	-.05	.02
Family Closeness	-.01	.32**	.09
Family Functioning	-.11	.32**	.09
Attachment to mother	-.18	.24*	.04

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

#### 6.4.12 Parenting goals as antecedents to maternal emotions

The previous correlation analyses showed that there were a number of significant associations between mothers' reports of emotions and parenting goals. The following section examines the contribution that parenting goals make to the variation in mothers' emotions. Using ordinary least squares regression analyses, it also seeks to establish the predictive power of individual parenting goals over in relation to the other parenting goals (ie, their unique contribution to the variance).

### Mothers' reports

Table 6.22 shows that the parenting goals explained 21 percent of the variance in mothers' anger responses to teenagers' behaviour  $F(8, 91) = 3.11, p < .01$ . Only the goal of compliance made a unique contribution to mothers' anger responses. An examination of the part correlation ( $r = .24$ ) indicates that the desire for compliance from teenagers uniquely explained 6 percent of the total variance in mothers' anger scores.

Table 6.22  
Regressions showing the contribution of mothers' parenting goals in relation to the variations in mothers' emotions

Mothers' Reports	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	Beta	<i>t</i> -value
<b>Anger</b>					
Loving	-.16	.12		-.01	> 1
Own needs	.11	.08		.15	> 1
Compliance	.19	.08		.28	2.36*
Teen Happiness	-.16	.09		-.23	> 1
Manners	.15	.09		.22	> 1
Safety	.05	.07		.10	> 1
Productivity	-.11	.08		-.17	> 1
Respect	-.02	.12	.21	-.02	> 1
<b>Upset</b>					
Loving	.07	.13		.08	> 1
Own needs	.10	.09		.12	> 1
Compliance	.25	.09		.32	2.74**
Teen Happiness	.03	.10		.04	> 1
Manners	.09	.10		.13	> 1
Safety	.09	.08		.16	> 1
Productivity	-.20	.09		-.29	-2.25
Respect	-.09	.13	.21	-.09	> 1

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

Table 6.22 also shows that the parenting goals explained 21 percent of the variance in the level of upset mothers experience during conflictual interactions with teenagers  $F(8, 91) = 7.56, p < .01$ . Only the goals of compliance and productivity made a unique contribution to mothers' ratings of how upset they

would become. An examination of the part correlations for compliance ( $r = .28$ ) and productivity (.23) indicates that the desire for compliance from teenagers uniquely explains eight percent of the total variance in mothers' level of "upset", whereas the desire for teen productivity uniquely explained five percent of the total variance in mothers' scores on the upset variable. Finally, parenting goals explains 16 percent of the variance in the level of worry mothers experienced  $F(8, 90) = 2.19, p < .05$ . However, none of the goals made a unique contribution to the total variance in how worried mothers became.

### **Teenagers' reports**

Contrary to mothers' reports, no significant findings were revealed when Pearson correlations were conducted to assess the associations between teenagers' perceptions of mothers' emotions and teenagers' perceptions of mothers' parenting goals.

#### **6.4.13 Parenting goals, maternal emotions and adolescent outcomes (Aim 6)**

##### **(a) Mothers' emotions as mediators**

Mediation analyses were not performed due to the lack of significant associations between mothers' reports of emotions and adolescent outcomes, and the lack of associations between teenagers' perceptions of mothers' parenting goals and maternal emotions.

##### **(b) Mothers' emotions as moderators**

The following section examines whether the relationship between mothers' parenting goals and adolescent outcomes were moderated by mothers'

emotional responses to teenagers' behaviour. One hundred and forty-four hierarchical multiple regression analyses (8 goals x 3 maternal behaviours x 6 youth outcomes) were conducted to test whether adolescent outcomes were predicted by an interaction between mothers' goals and mothers' emotions. This large number of analyses increased the risk of family-wise error and as only five significant findings were obtained it is very likely these results are attributable to chance. Nevertheless, the results have been reported for interest sake.

### **Mothers' reports**

Only one significant interaction was revealed after exploring numerous possible interaction effects between different parenting goals and mothers' different emotional responses to teenagers' behaviour. Teenagers' negative mood was predicted by a significant interaction between mothers' goal of mutual respect and mothers' anger emotion  $F(3, 90) = 3.60, p < .05$ . ( $R^2 = .11$ ;  $AR^2 = .08$ ;  $Beta = 2.16$ ;  $t = 2.76, p < .01$ ). The plotting of this interaction (see Figure 6.4) showed that if mothers' goal of mutual respect was stronger, teenagers tended to experience more negative moods, but only when mothers expressed high levels of anger in conflictual interactions with their teenager  $F(1,31) = 5.43, p < .05$ . The plot also showed that if mothers rated mutual respect more highly, teenagers' negative mood scores were lower, but only when mothers expressed low levels of anger in conflictual interactions with their teenager  $F(1,59) = 9.59, p < .01$ .

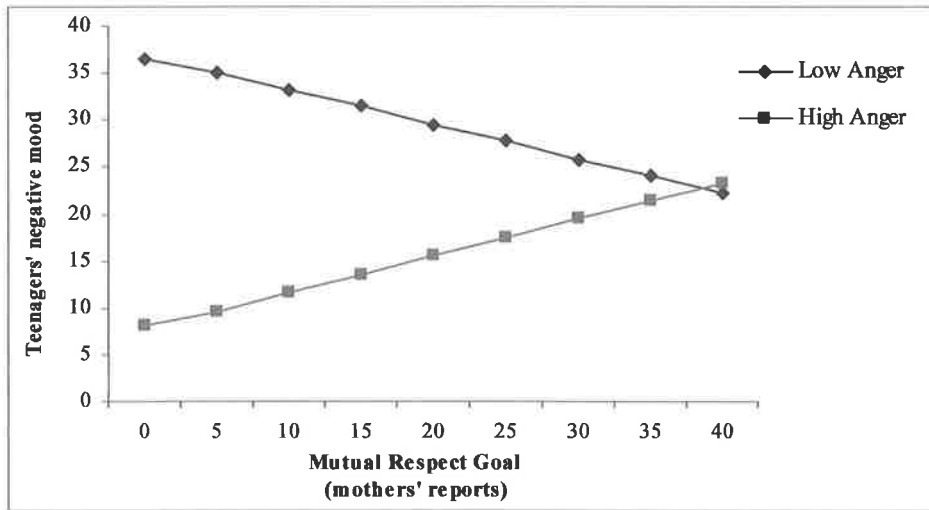


Figure 6.4. The moderating role of mothers' anger between the goal of mutual respect and teenagers' negative mood

### Teenagers' perceptions

Four significant interactions emerged in the hierarchical multiple regression analyses of teenagers' perceptions of mothers' emotions and goals and their predictive power on adolescent outcomes. Tables 6.22 and 6.23 show that adolescent adjustment and adolescent perceptions of the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship were significantly influenced by the interactions between mothers' goals and mothers' emotions. Thus, the findings suggest that teenagers' perceptions of their mothers' emotions in some specific situations moderate the relationship between parenting goals and adolescent outcomes. Table 6.23 shows that teenagers' positive mood was predicted by a significant interaction between mothers' level of worry and the goals of respect  $F(3, 89) = 5.35, p < .01$ ; the goals of safety  $F(3, 89) = 4.35, p < .01$ ; and the goals of compliance  $F(3, 89) = 4.24, p < .01$ .

Table 6.23

*Hierarchical regressions showing the contribution of teenagers' perceptions of mothers' goals and emotions in relation to variations in adolescent outcomes*

		<b>B</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup>change</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>t-value</b>
<b>Positive mood</b>							
Step 1	Mutual Respect	0.41	.18			0.23	2.27*
	Worry	0.42	.22	.10	.10	0.19	< 1
Step 2	Mutual Respect	1.73	.58			0.97	2.97**
	Worry	2.06	.73			0.94	2.84**
	Respect x Worry	-0.15	.06	.15	.05	-1.14	2.38*
Step 1	Safety	0.21	.15			0.15	< 1
	Worry	0.43	.23	.07	.07	0.20	< 1
Step 2	Safety	1.19	.42			0.83	2.82**
	Worry	1.44	.46			0.65	3.10**
	Safety x Worry	-0.11	.05	.13	.06	-0.92	2.48*
Step 1	Compliance	0.19	.20			0.10	< 1
	Worry	0.45	.23	.06	.06	0.20	< 1
Step 2	Compliance	-1.04	.51			0.53	2.06*
	Worry	-0.94	.57			-0.43	< 1
	Comply x Worry	0.14	.05	.13	.07	0.99	2.64*
<b>Behaviour</b>							
Step 1	Compliance	-0.11	.11			-0.10	< 1
	Anger	0.31	.13	.06	.06	0.24	2.36*
Step 2	Compliance	-1.47	.38			-1.34	3.88***
	Anger	-0.99	.37			-0.78	2.70**
	Comply x Anger	0.13	.04	.19	.13	1.73	3.75***

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$

The plotting of the interactions between mothers' goals of mutual respect and safety and teenagers' perceptions of mothers' worry (see Figure 6.5) shows that if teenagers perceived their mothers to be greatly concerned with the goals of mutual respect and safety they were likely to have more positive dispositions, but this occurred only when teenagers perceived their mothers to have low levels of worry. These associations were not significant when mothers had high levels of worry. In contrast, the plotting of the interaction between mothers' goal of compliance and teenagers' perceptions of mothers' worry (see Figure 6.6) shows that, if teenagers perceive their mothers to have high expectations of compliance they were likely to have more positive dispositions, but this occurred only when



teenagers perceived their mothers to be significantly worried by interactions with them. There was no significant association between teenagers' positive mood and the goal of compliance when mothers were perceived to have low levels of worry.

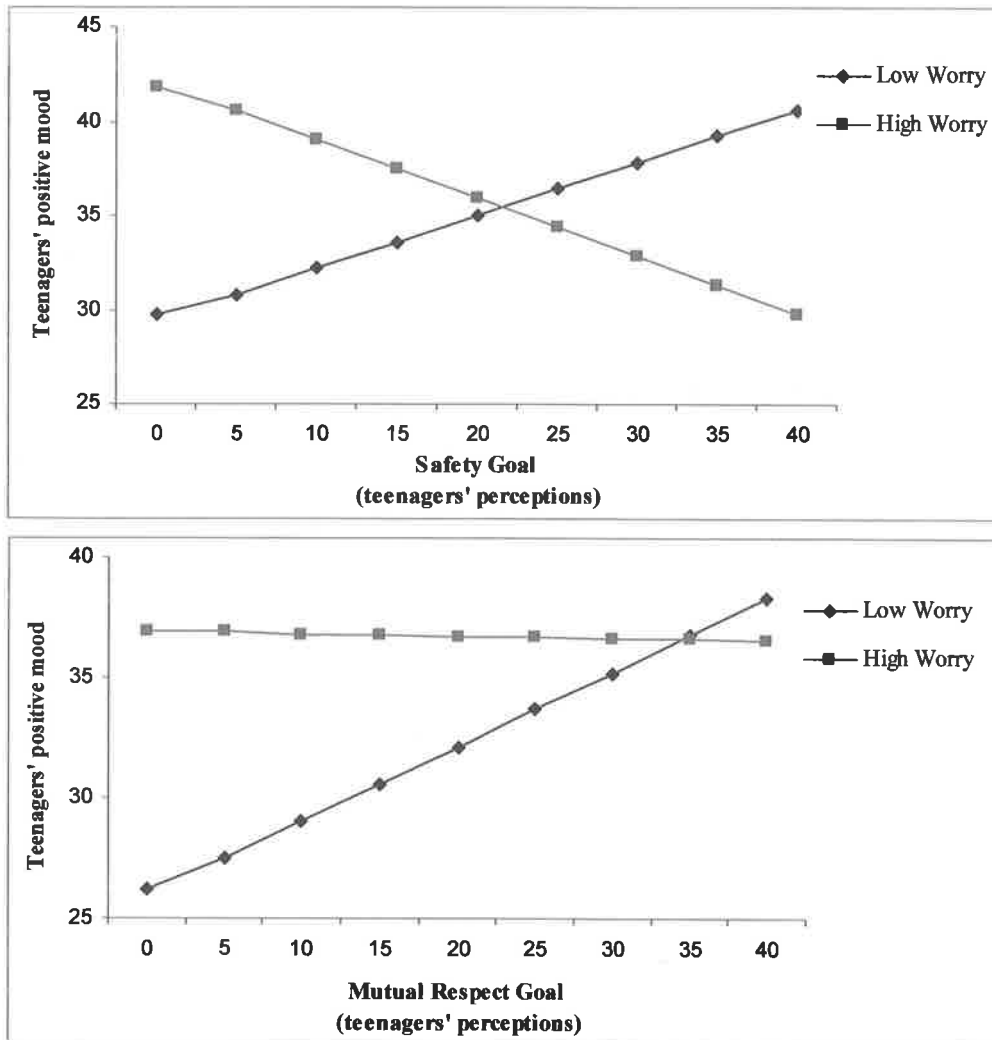


Figure 6.5. The moderating role of mothers' worry in the relationship between the goals of safety and mutual respect, and teenagers' positive mood

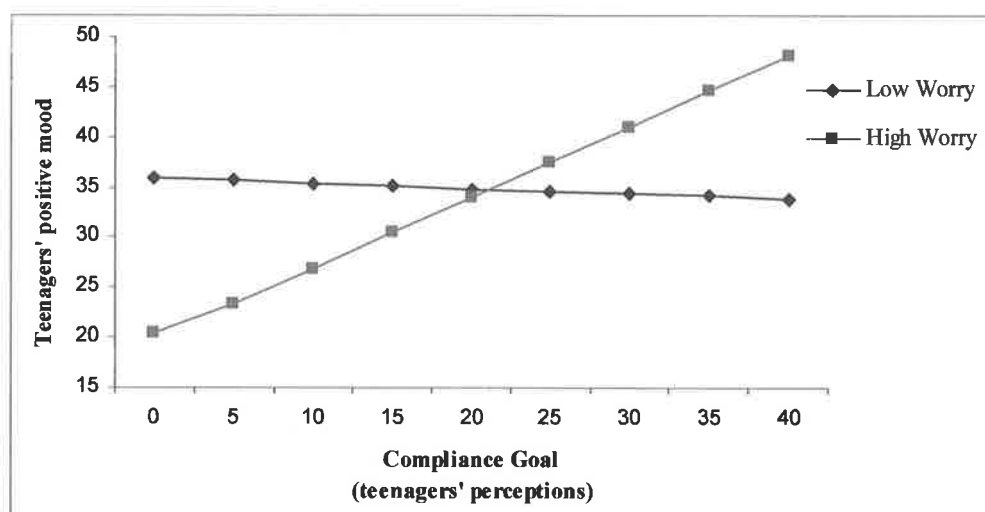


Figure 6.6. The moderating role of mothers' worry in the relationship between the goal of compliance and teenagers' positive mood

In addition to the above results it can be seen in Table 6.23 that teenagers' behaviour was predicted by significant interactions between the goal of compliance and feelings of anger  $F(3, 92) = 3.06, p < .05$ .

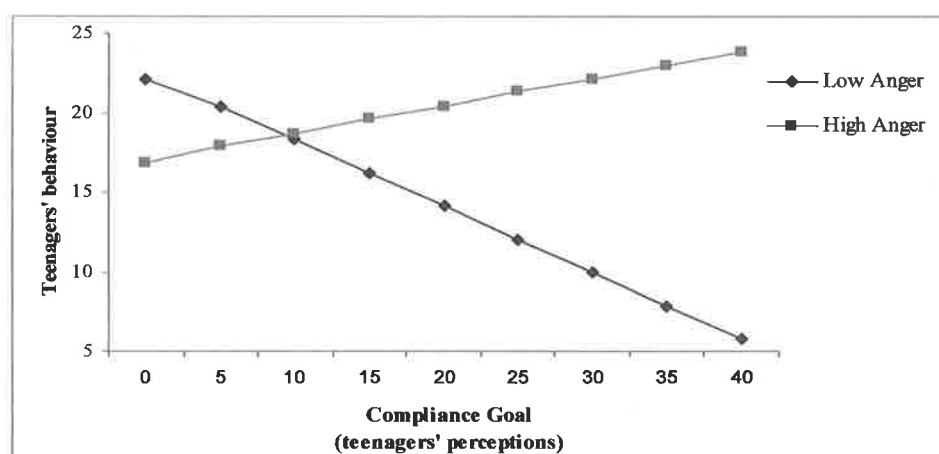


Figure 6.7. The moderating role of mothers' anger in the relationship between mothers' goal of compliance and teenagers' behaviour

In Figure 6.7 the plotting of this interaction shows that if teenagers perceive their mothers to be more concerned with compliance, they would have

fewer problem behaviours, but this occurred only when mothers controlled their anger responses during altercations with teenagers  $F(1,60) = 12.76, p < .01$ ).

**Table 6.24**  
*Hierarchical regressions showing the contribution of teenagers' perceptions of mothers' goals and emotions in relation to variations in the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship*

Family Functioning		<b>B</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup>change</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>t-value</b>
Step 1	Loving	0.47	.15			0.31	3.19**
	Worry	0.54	.19	.20	.20	0.27	2.83**
Step 2	Loving	1.30	.42			0.84	3.09**
	Worry	1.34	.43			0.67	3.15**
	Loving x Worry	-0.10	.05	.23	.03	-0.75	2.10*
Step 1	Teen happiness	0.35	.16			0.22	2.24*
	Worry	0.57	.20	.15	.15	0.29	2.93**
Step 2	Teen happiness	1.34	.48			0.84	2.78**
	Worry	1.42	.44			0.71	3.26**
	Happiness x Worry	-0.11	.05	.19	.04	-0.83	2.16*
<b>Attachment</b>							
Step 1	Loving	0.38	.13			0.29	2.97**
	Worry	0.33	.16	.14	.14	0.20	2.04*
Step 2	Loving	1.08	.36			0.83	3.00**
	Worry	1.02	.37			0.61	2.78**
	Loving x Worry	-0.08	.04	.18	.04	-0.76	2.09*
Step 1	Teen happiness	0.41	.13			0.30	3.10**
	Worry	0.33	.16	.15	.15	0.20	2.03*
Step 2	Teen happiness	1.30	.40			0.97	3.25**
	Worry	1.10	.36			0.66	3.03**
	Happiness x Worry	-0.10	.04	.20	.05	-0.90	2.36*

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

In relation to teenagers' view of the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship, teenagers' perceptions of mothers' feelings of worry and how upset they became was seen to moderate the associations between mothers' goals and teenagers' perceptions of family functioning and attachment. Table 6.24 also shows that teenagers' view of family functioning was predicted by interactions between teenagers' perceptions of feelings of worry and the goal of love  $F(3, 90) = 9.10, p < .001$ ; and the goal of teen happiness  $F(3, 90) = 7.20, p < .001$ . The

plotting of these interactions, seen in Figure 6.8, revealed that if teenagers perceived mothers to have a strong interest in the goals of love and teen happiness, they tended to view family functioning more positively, but this occurred only when they perceived their mothers to be less worried by altercations with them. Finally, in Table 6.24, teenagers' attachment to mothers was predicted by the significant interactions between how worried mothers were and the goals of love  $F(3, 92) = 6.83, p < .0001$ ; and teen happiness  $F(3, 92) = 7.61, p < .0001$ .

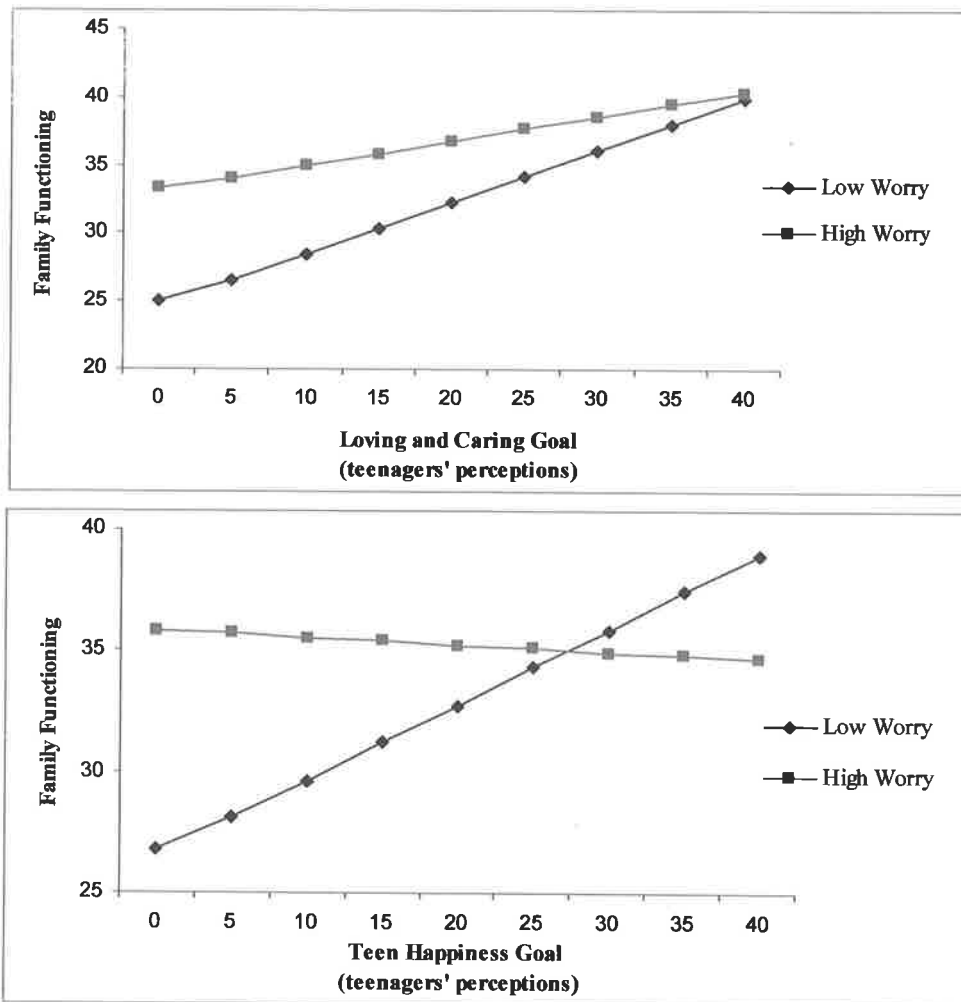


Figure 6.8. The moderating role of mothers' worries in the relationship between mothers' goals of teen happiness and loving/caring, and teenagers' perceptions of family functioning

Plotting these interactions revealed that if teenagers that felt that their mothers were highly concerned with the goals of love and teen happiness they tended to feel more attached to mothers, but only when they felt their mothers were not overly worried by parent-adolescent altercations (see Figure 6.9).

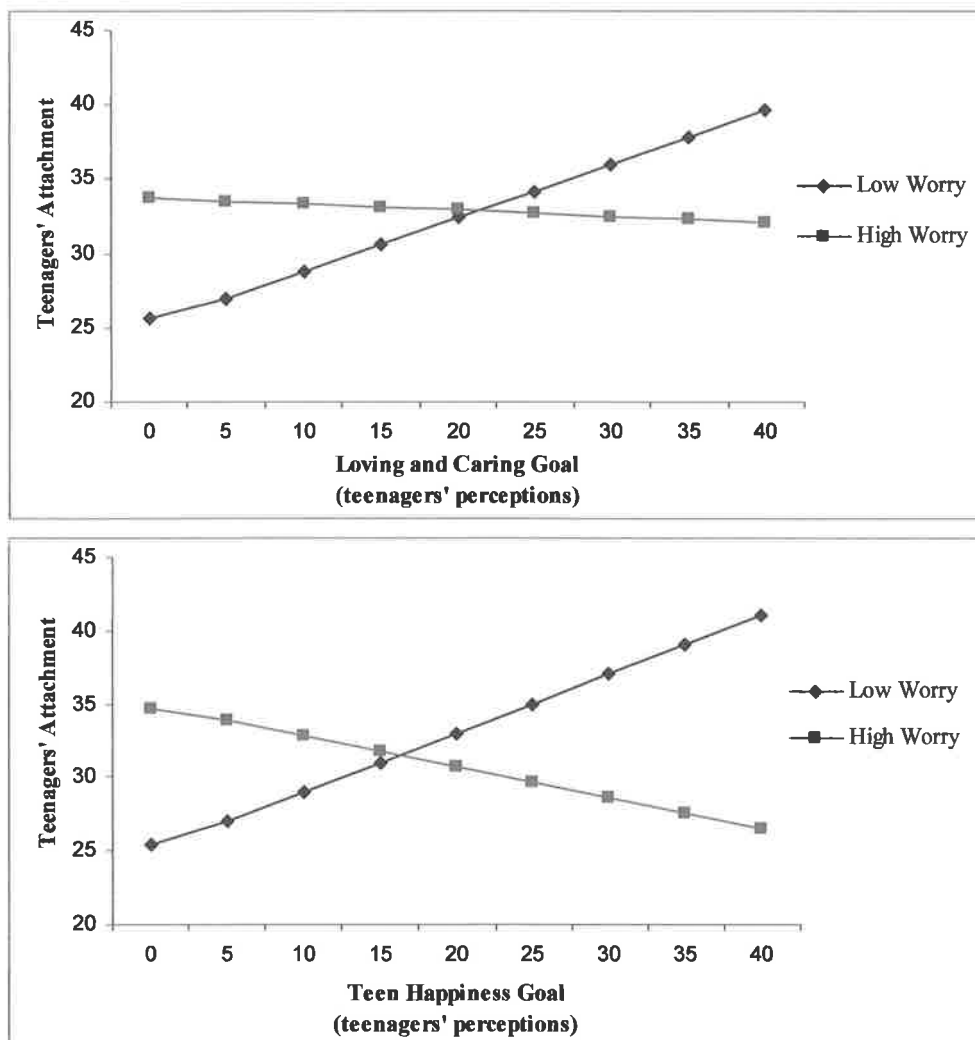


Figure 6.9. The moderating role of mothers' worries in the relationship between mothers' goals of teen happiness and loving/caring, and teenagers' attachment to mothers

In summary, the relationships between teenagers' perceptions of mothers' goals, maternal emotions and adolescent outcomes were stronger and more

numerous than mothers' reports. All four effects show that relationship-centred goals and child-centred empathic goals predict positive adjustment most strongly when mothers are *not* seen as being highly worried.

## 6.5 Discussion

The intention of this chapter was to determine whether maternal behaviours, attributions, and emotions were integral mechanisms that linked parenting goals to adolescent adjustment and the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship. Previous research has shown how these factors are related to one another (Flavell & Ross, 1981), and there is evidence to show that positive and negative arousal will elicit specific and differential parenting behaviours from mothers (Dix 1991; Rubin & Mills, 1990). Studies have also established links between maternal attributions and parenting behaviours (Dix, Ruble & Zambarano, 1989; Miller, 1995; Nix et al., 1999; Rudy & Grusec, 1999). Moreover, parental emotional reactions to children's aggression or misbehaviour mediate the relationship between parents' attributions and children's behaviour (Miller, 1995; Rubin & Mills, 1990; Smith & O'Leary, 1995).

Although theories of parenting often suggest that parenting goals drive parents' actions, thoughts, and feelings during interactions with their children (Dix, 1991), there have been few studies conducted that have substantiated this supposition. Therefore, one of the aims of the present chapter was to explore whether parenting goals were related to maternal behaviours, attributions and emotions.

### **Maternal behaviours and parenting goals**

The present study has shown that variations in mothers' parenting goals are likely to contribute to the variations in the psychologically controlling and rejecting behaviours of parents. However, the findings in this study differ from those of Barber and Harmon (cited in Pettit et al., 2001) in two ways. First, this study has shown that both psychological control and rejecting behaviour were directly associated with parenting goals (albeit only teenagers' perceptions of mothers' goals and not mothers' reports of their goals). This was in contrast to the suggestions of Barber and colleagues that psychologically-controlling parents were not so much influenced by parenting goals as by "intrapsychic disturbances" related to their own developmental history. Second, this study has shown that parenting goals were not directly associated with mothers' level of behavioural control, regardless of whether the findings were based on mothers' reports or teenagers' perceptions of parenting goals. Again this was in contrast to Barber and Harmon's theory that parents with strong child-centred goals (ie, children's internalisation of family values and societal standards) relied extensively on behavioural control practices.

However, these results are consistent with the proposals found in Rohner et al.'s (2005) study of family processes. They suggest that behaviours such as psychological control and parental acceptance-rejection are measured most accurately in terms of the subjective experiences of teenagers, rather than on the basis of explicit behavioural indicators. They propose that adolescent perceptions of warmth, aggression, support and indifference from parents will determine the

level of acceptance-rejection they report. Darling and Steinberg (1993) noted this in their assertion that parenting style is

“a constellation of attitudes towards the child that are common to the child and create an emotional climate in which the parents' behaviours are expressed” (p. 493).

The majority of the significant associations in this study came from teenagers' perceptions of mothers' goals rather than mothers' reports of their parenting goals. In fact, mothers' reports did not reveal any direct associations between parenting goals and maternal behaviours. One could argue that this may have been a result of maternal behaviour being measured on the basis of teenagers' reports only. Thus, future research based on mothers' self-reports of behaviour may provide some interesting results to consider. In fact, significant relationships between mothers' reports of parenting goals, maternal behaviours, and adolescent outcomes were only found when moderation models of analyses were performed. However, even these findings were likely to be the result of chance due as the number of significant findings was less than 5% of the analyses that were performed. Nevertheless, without attaching too much significance to the findings, it was revealed that under certain conditions, mothers' behaviours appeared to influence the relationship between parenting goals and adolescent adjustment (but not on the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship). Teenagers were more likely to experience frequent and intense negative moods if their mothers had a strong interest in their own needs and were non-accepting (rejecting) of their teenagers. Conversely, teenagers were less likely to experience frequent and intense negative moods if their mothers



had high expectations of compliance but were also highly accepting (rather than rejecting) of their teenagers. At first glance, the latter relationship seems counter intuitive as it is usually assumed that teenagers do not like being told what to do. However, this finding makes more sense if interpreted in the light of Maccoby and Martin's (1983) studies in which they found that mothers who were highly motivated by both relationship-centred and parent-centred concerns (i.e. compliance) were more likely to have socially competent children, whereas mothers who were interested solely in relationship-centred concerns were more likely to have children with greater problem behaviours. They concluded that the latter mothers' lack of parent-centred expectations had undermined their parental influence.

Likewise, Ambert (1991) argues that teenagers may become confused and uncertain about their identity if they have not been adequately trained to take responsibility for their actions. This confusion is likely to intensify if parents are unsupportive of their teenagers, or if they overestimate their teenagers' ability to cope with the various perplexing issues of adolescence. Ambert refers to Bronfenbrenner's (1985) concerns that in unstable social climates teenagers are more vulnerable and susceptible to numerous risks and dangers. As a result they require a greater degree of supervision and support in coming to understand how to manage their environment.

The only other noteworthy finding related to mothers' reports of parenting goals and the moderating role of maternal behaviours, was that mothers who felt highly responsible for their teenagers' safety were inclined to use

psychologically-controlling behaviours. Such parents were more likely to have teenagers with more problematic behavioural problems.

At this point it should be acknowledged, that Herman et al. (1997) found no gender differences in their study of parental control and adolescent problem behaviours. However Conger, Conger and Scaramella (1997) and Pettit et al. (2001) did find significant gender differences in their studies of the effects of psychological control on adolescent adjustment, but in their studies the significant findings pertained only to teenage girls and not to teenage boys. Pettit et al's. study showed that, the more mothers relied on psychologically-controlling behaviours, the more daughters reacted by exhibiting an increase in external behavioural problems. However, unlike in the other studies, Pettit et al. took into consideration the attributions mothers made about daughters' behaviours. Mothers who were more inclined to make dispositional attributions (ie, antisocial personality) rather than situational attributions for their daughters' behaviour were also more inclined to rely on psychological control when managing their daughters. Clearly, more in-depth research is needed which focuses on the complex array of possible associations between parental variables. Nevertheless, the findings of the present study suggest that researchers should be cautious about drawing conclusions concerning the direct effects of maternal behaviours on adolescent adjustment before considering the role that mothers' cognitions play in the overall outcomes.

In contrast to the findings based on mothers' reports, there were numerous direct relationships between teenagers' perceptions of parenting goals

and maternal behaviours. It was interesting to note that nearly all the goals except compliance and productivity were significantly associated with rejecting behaviours, but only the goals of love, own needs were associated with psychologically-controlling behaviours. Furthermore, the links between parenting goals and maternal behaviours were more likely to influence the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship than adolescent adjustment. Only mothers' rejecting behaviours mediated the relationship between parenting goals and adolescent adjustment. Mothers who were highly interested in their own needs and who were prone to rejecting their teenagers were likely to have teenagers with low self-esteem. Conversely, mothers who had a high interest in a relationship with their teenager, based on mutual respect, and who were not prone to rejecting behaviours, were likely to have teenagers who experienced frequent positive moods. Clearly, measuring teenagers' perceptions of how their mothers think and behave provides greater insights into the subjective experiences of teenagers, and the effects these experiences have on teenagers' psychosocial adjustment.

### **Maternal attributions and parenting goals**

The relationship between parenting goals and maternal attributions was not as strong or as consistently observed as that between parenting goals and maternal behaviours. Nevertheless, the findings provide further support for the proposition that teenagers' perceptions provide important information in understanding family processes. In this set of analyses, mothers' reports did not reveal any mediating or moderating role of maternal attributions in the

relationships between parenting goals, the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship, and adolescent adjustment. Conversely, analysis of teenagers' reports showed that adolescents' self-esteem was affected by the combination of mothers' own need goals and maternal attributions (both personality and intentionality). Mothers who were perceived to be highly focused on their own needs were likely to have teenagers with poorer self-esteem, but only if the mothers had a strong tendency to think that their teenagers' challenging behaviours were intentional and/or attributable to their personality. Once again, a great deal of caution should be taken when attaching any significance to these findings as they were the only significant results (less than 5% of the analyses) obtained from a myriad of tests.

In the present study, the role of specific parenting goals has been considered in place of mothers' global beliefs about children's socialisation. It could be argued that this study has provided further support for the importance of studying specific social cognitions in parent-child interactions. For this reason, these findings may contribute to a more intricate, yet ordered, understanding of the processes involved in effective parenting (Grusec & Mammone, 1995).

## **Maternal emotions and parenting goals**

According to Dix:

“Emotions are barometers for relationships because they reflect parents’ assessments of how well interactions are proceeding and, over time, how well relationships with children are proceeding” (1991, p. 19).

Although this statement was made over twenty-five years ago, our understanding of parental emotions has not advanced very far at all. In the past, parental emotions have been viewed as stable traits that could be measured on a single dimension (ie, positive emotions on one end of a continuum and negative emotions on the other). However, it is now accepted that parents’ emotions can change and intensify according to the concerns they have, the situations they are in, or the children they are dealing with (Bandura et al., 2003). The majority of studies conducted to date on parental emotions have tended to focus on the effects of maternal depression on parenting effectiveness (Downey & Coyne, 1990; Gelfand & Teti, 1990). Few studies have specifically addressed the affects of anger, worry, and upset feelings during parent-child interactions. Neither the analyses of mothers’ reports nor the analyses of teenagers’ perceptions found maternal emotions to mediate the relationship between parenting goals, the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship, and adolescent adjustment. However, mothers’ reports and teenagers’ reports did show that maternal emotions interacted with parenting goals to influence these outcomes, again caution has to be applied when attaching too much significance to these findings as they are likely to be the result of chance. Nevertheless, teenagers’

reports tended to reveal more frequent and stronger associations between variables than did mothers' reports.

Generally, the role of maternal emotions in the relationship between parenting goals and the outcome variables was not as strong as anticipated. However, it was noteworthy that relationship-centred goals were shown to be less influential in the parent-adolescent bond if teenagers felt their mothers were worrying too much about their altercations with them. Similarly, teenagers were more likely to have positive moods if their mothers emphasised the importance of a loving and respectful relationship with their teenagers, while not being overly-concerned or worried about clashes with them.

The manner in which mothers communicated their high expectations of compliance from teenagers seemed to have the strongest influence on adolescent adjustment. For example, mothers who were clearly worried about their interactions with teenagers, but still expected high levels of compliance from them, were likely to have teenagers with positive dispositions (moods). On the other hand, mothers who tended to get extremely angry when their high expectations of compliance were not adhered to, were likely to have teenagers with significant behavioural problems and negative dispositions. This suggests that despite teenagers' increasing demands for independence and autonomy, they do benefit from or respond to parental values or boundaries when these are expressed within an atmosphere of overall concern for their wellbeing. However, teenagers do not appear to respond well to mothers who are highly negative and reactive when their demands are not met. Such reactions may suggest to

teenagers that their mothers care more about their own standards than they do about their teenagers' opinions and feelings.

An analysis of mothers' reports revealed that mothers who were highly concerned about the level of mutual respect in the parent-child relationship were likely to have teenagers who experienced frequent and intense negative moods, but only if mothers expressed high levels of anger in disputes with their teenagers. Alternatively, when mothers were able to control their anger during conflicts with teenagers then the pursuit of mutual respect in the parent-adolescent relationship was accompanied by a decline in teenagers' negative moods. One could assume from these findings that the expression of high levels of anger from mothers undermines the goal of mutual respect, particularly as the teenager may feel that their views or person were not being respected. Furthermore, if mothers were expressing strong negative emotions, then their ability to think or act rationally may be impaired (Vasta, 1982). Mothers are then less likely to process information efficiently; as a result they will rely heavily on rigid thought patterns and ideas to understand their teenagers' behaviours. If this is the case, teenagers are likely to be even more frustrated by their mothers' response and this may, in turn, heighten their negative mood state (Vasta, 1982).

The current study also revealed some interesting information concerning teenagers' accuracy in determining how upset, worried, or angry mothers can feel after an altercation with their teenager. The findings showed that mothers felt they would be far more worried and upset by conflicts with their teenagers than teenagers thought they would be. However, in relation to how angry mothers

would be after a conflict, both mothers' and teenagers' reports were similar. These findings may reflect how mothers manage their emotions. It is likely they internalise their feelings of upset and worry, whereas anger is a volatile emotion, hence it is more visible and easier to identify. Furthermore, it has been proposed that teenagers attribute far less meaning to the conflicts they have with their parents than parents are inclined to do. Therefore, they are far less likely to recognise the level of angst their parents are actually going through because they have given much less thought to an incident after, or during, its occurrence (Steinberg, 2001).

On the whole, this study not only shows that teenagers are capable of a certain degree of accuracy in judging mothers' goals, but also supports the proposal that teenagers' reports provide important information when studying family processes and adolescent adjustment. Teenagers' accuracy in understanding parenting goals may not be as important a component as the effects of their perceptions on their subjective experience, but the level of accuracy does add strength to the argument that adolescent reports are valid measures for understanding family processes. Finally, the results of this study were consistent with previous studies that have found measures of children's wellbeing to be more strongly related to children's reports of parental nurture and parental control than parents' reports (Buri, 1989; Matza, Kupersmidt & Glenn, 2001).

To conclude, Goodnow and Collins (1990) pointed out that there are numerous different starting points from which parenting goals can be assessed.



This study has shown that mothers' behaviours toward their adolescents are likely to be influenced by the goals that they promote (Dix & Branca, 2003). Furthermore, parenting goals can have both positive and negative consequences for adolescent development and the parent-adolescent relationship. It could be argued that the findings of the present study provide support for Bugental and Johnston's (2000) assertion that "cognitions organise family interactions" and that parental responses to children will be determined largely by the goals that are activated in any given situation (whether parents are conscious of their goals or not). Thus, the findings of this study are in accordance with Dix and Branca's statement that parents have

"detailed and complex networks of goals and concerns that organise interactions with children to ensure children's safety, obedience and happiness, as well as the development of cultural-moral manners, values and competencies" (Dix & Branca, 2003 p. 174) .

## **Chapter 7**

### **Maternal Trust: A Relationship-Centred Goal?**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

In the previous two studies relationship-centred goals were found to be important determining factors in adolescent wellbeing and the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship. Relationship-centred goals were measured in terms of how loving and caring the parent-adolescent relationship was, and how important mutual respect and compromise were to the relationship. The seminal studies of Kerr, Stattin & Trost (1999) and Williams (2003) on the integral role played by maternal trust in effective parenting have shed some light on the importance of this factor in parent-adolescent relationships. Thus, it would appear that maternal trust in teenagers would be a further factor to include in the relationship-centred goal construct. This project seeks to extend the existing research on maternal trust and its effect on adolescent outcomes by exploring how maternal trust interacts with other cognitive and affective parenting processes to influence adolescent adjustment and the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship.

In traditional models of parenting, relatively little research has been directed towards the "inherent dialectical pushes and pulls" within the parent-adolescent relationship (Williams, 2003). It has been suggested that the level of conflict between parents and teenagers may increase during adolescence, predominantly because of the very different perceptions held by both parties during this phase of development (Noller & Callan, 1991; Williams, 2003). The

way parents and teenagers view one another can lead to misunderstandings, poor communication, and varying degrees of parent-adolescent conflict.

Noom, Dekovic and Meeus (1999) argue that supportive relationships are integral to teenagers accessing and exploring their own autonomy and individuation from parents. Furthermore, they argue that a person's sense of autonomy promotes feelings of connectedness because "the more fully volitional and intrinsically motivated a relationship is, the more likely it is to be characterised by satisfaction and trust" (1999, p. 771). The importance of autonomy for teenagers is founded in the concept that teenagers need to establish their own identity and individuality (Noack & Puschner, 1999).

Individuation can be measured in terms of teenagers' separateness from, and connectedness to, parents (Collins, 1990; Steinberg, 1990). Separateness, according to LeBlanc (2001), refers to the "redefinition of family roles and boundaries" which enables the teenager to become increasingly independent of their parents. Connectedness, on the other hand, has been defined by Barber, Stolz, Olsen and Maugham as:

"a tie between the child and significant other persons...that provides a sense of belonging, an absence of aloneness, a perceived bond.

Depending on the intimacy of the context, this connection is produced by different levels, degrees or combinations of consistent, positive, predictable, loving, supportive, devoted and/or affectionate interaction" (in Barber, 2005).

Traditionally, it has been suggested that successful individuation involved an increase in separateness from parents and a concomitant decline in connectedness. More recently, however, researchers have proposed that a

healthy balance of both connectedness and separateness appears to be the best predictor of adolescent wellbeing (LeBlanc, 2001; Noack & Puschner, 1999; Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986). Therefore, a strong dialectic tension exists for parents and teenagers as they attempt to balance the level of connectedness and separateness within the context of family relationships (LeBlanc, 2001). Although a theoretical framework exists to explain the link between these constructs, there is still very little understanding of how these factors are “communicatively negotiated” between parents and teenagers (Williams, 2003).

Noom et al. (1999) suggest that parental trust may play a significant role in the level of connectedness a teenager feels toward their parent, and how willing a parent may be to allow their teenager the autonomy they desire. Similarly, Kerr, Stattin and Trost (1999) suggest that less trusting parents are more likely than trusting parents to restrict their teenagers' freedom to make their own decisions and choices. In addition, studies have shown that parents who mistrust their teenagers because of prior delinquent behaviours are more likely to become emotionally uninvolved and unsupportive of their teenagers (Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986; Noom, Dekovic & Meeus, 1999). It is the proposition of this study, therefore, that less trusting mothers will have teenagers who feel less attached to them and feel less connected to mothers than teenagers with more trusting mothers. Furthermore, less trusting mothers will be more likely to have relationships more strongly influenced by teenagers' feelings of separateness, and these may have adverse affects on adolescent psychosocial adjustment.

Kerr et al. argue that “parents must stop relying on their own vigilance, discipline, and control and begin relying on their child’s responsibility and integrity” (1999, p. 737). They state that the dearth of empirical research on parental trust is surprising given the apparent effects it appears to have on the parent-adolescent relationship and adolescent adjustment. Indeed, prior to Kerr et al’s study, the only other studies that exist on trust in interpersonal relationships are those that have focused on trust between adult partners in intimate relationships (Larzelere & Huston, 1980; Rempel, Holmes, & Zanna, 1985).

On the basis of the findings from studies on partner trust, Kerr, Stattin and Trost (1999) hypothesised that parental trust would be predicted by the knowledge that parents had about their children’s feelings and concerns, past misdeeds, and daily activities. They proposed that the source of parental knowledge would be a significant determining factor in the degree of trust parents had in their teenagers. Three different sources were examined: child self-disclosure (spontaneous disclosure of information); parental solicitation of information (directly asking the teenager or their friends); and parental control (awareness that comes from rules and restrictions). Kerr et al’s study revealed a number of significant findings: (a) Teenagers’ spontaneous disclosure of information was the source of knowledge most strongly associated with parental trust; (b) Parental control was not as strongly associated with parental trust as had been expected from previous research findings; (c) Adolescent adjustment (delinquency, depressed mood and self-esteem) was more strongly associated

with child disclosure than the other two sources of knowledge; (d) Parental trust was strongest when parents were aware of prior delinquent behaviour and the child's general activities; and (e) Parental trust was significantly associated with the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship.

### **The role of adolescent self-disclosure, maternal affective states and maternal attributions on maternal trust**

The findings from Kerr, Stattin and Trost's (1999) study of parental knowledge raised some important research questions. The first of these were: *How parents encouraged or trained their children to disclose information about their activities and feelings.* Williams (2003) suggests that the "dialectical tension" (open communication or closed communication) within personal relationships is the mechanism that links child disclosure to parental trust (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). A parent's mistrust of their teenager (and vice versa) has been shown to affect open and honest communication between both parties (Williams, 2003; Wilmott, 1996) and, as a result, teenagers may become more reliant or dependent on their relationships with their peers (Kerr et al., 1999). Conversely, parents who are able to affirm their good opinion of their teenagers by communicating that they believe in them or have faith in their ability to do the *right thing* are more likely to facilitate feelings of self-worth and self-efficacy in teenagers. This is likely to promote a cycle of communication that is positive, and provides an optimal environment for spontaneous self-disclosure (Williams, 2003).

Williams also argues that, if teenagers feel compelled by parents to disclose more information than they feel comfortable with, they may feel that their personal boundaries are being threatened and so become more defensive, resentful and evasive (Golish & Caughlin, 2002). Despite this, it has been found that teenagers are generally quite tolerant of parents overstepping their boundaries. It is only when parents' behaviour communicates a lack of trust that the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship may be affected (Petronio, 1994). For this reason, the present study incorporates an adolescent self-disclosure measure into its design to assess how important self-disclosure is in determining the level of trust mothers have in their adolescent children.

The present study also aimed to assess how mothers' moods (positive and negative) and emotions (ie, anger, worry, upset) affect maternal trust during challenging interactions with their teenagers. Previously, it has been argued that emotion plays a minimal role in decision-making (Zajonc, 1980) because it is assumed to be an affective behavioural response to cognitive factors rather than a stimulus in its own right. However, there is a growing belief by other researchers that emotion has a great influence on cognitive processing (Clark & Isen, 1982; Damasio, 1996) and therefore is an important factor to consider when studying relationships. Fiske and Taylor (1991) argue that a clear distinction should be drawn between moods and emotions when studying the relationship between affect and cognition in interpersonal relationships. There has been a tendency in existing research to blur these variables, making it difficult to ascertain exactly what contribution they make to cognitive processing.

Accordingly, the present study includes measures of both mood states and emotional experiences of mothers in specific interactions with their teenagers.

This study also conducted a further examination of the role of mothers' attributional tendencies in relation to teenagers' behaviour. In previous studies, Gretarsson and Gelfand (1988) found that mothers were generally optimistic about their children's behaviour. They tended to attribute positive characteristics to stable, intentional, dispositional factors, and negative characteristics to transitory, situational constraints (consistent with positive bias phenomenon). However, mothers with older children and children with consistently troublesome behaviours were more likely to attribute the child's behaviour to dispositional, stable, and intentional factors (more negative attributions). Thus, child variables, such as children's age, gender and problem behaviours, were determining factors in the inferences that parents made about children's behaviour. In light of this, the present study hypothesised that, although mothers are normatively positively biased toward their own children, those that reach the point of making negative attributions for a troublesome teenager's behaviour are also likely to be far less trusting of them.

## **7.2 Aims and hypotheses**

1. To establish whether maternal trust reflects mothers' interest in, and is associated with, relationship-centred goals.
2. To assess whether significant associations exist between mothers' trust and attachment to mother, adolescent individuation, and adolescent adjustment



- ❖ It is expected that higher levels of maternal trust will be positively associated with higher levels of adolescent self-esteem and positive mood, and inversely related to negative mood and problem behaviours.
- ❖ It is also expected that maternal trust will be positively associated with attachment and connectedness, and inversely related to separateness from mother.
- ❖ Finally, it is expected that if teenagers disclose more information to mothers then maternal trust will be greater.

In addition, the study will assess whether maternal trust mediates the relationships between adolescents' problem behaviour and relationship scores, and finally, whether adolescents' level of self-disclosure mediates the relationships between maternal trust and adolescents' relationship scores.

3. To establish whether child effects (adolescent problem behaviour, teenagers' self-disclosure, gender and age) are related to maternal trust in teenagers

- ❖ It is expected that mothers will be less trusting of their daughters than their sons due to sons' greater tendency toward risky behaviours during adolescence. Similarly, mothers are likely to be more trusting of younger teenagers than older teenagers due to older teenagers tendency toward risky behaviours.
- ❖ It is also expected that mothers who teenagers have more severe problem behaviours will be less trusting of their teenagers than mothers who teenagers have fewer problem behaviours; and mothers whose teenagers disclosure more information to them about their feelings and activities will be more trusting of their teenagers than mothers whose teenagers are less willing to disclose such information.

4. To explore the extent that parent effects (mothers' moods, emotions and cognitions) related to maternal trust. In addition, this study will examine whether these effects will remain significant after controlling for child effects (problem behaviours, age and gender)
  - ❖ It is expected that mothers' negative moods and emotionally-reactive responses (anger, upset and worry) will be inversely associated with maternal trust, whereas mothers' positive moods will be positively associated with maternal trust.
  - ❖ It is expected that as maternal moods and emotions fluctuate, so too will the level of trust mothers have in teenagers.
  - ❖ It is expected that mothers who have a tendency to think teenagers' challenging behaviours are intentional and attributable to personality, will be less trusting of their teenagers.
  - ❖ It is expected that relationship-centred goals will be positively associated with maternal trust and parent-centred goals will be inversely related to maternal trust.
  - ❖ It is expected that mothers' with high parent-centred goals will be less trusting of their teenagers due to mothers' feelings that teenagers have little regard for their needs, feelings and desires.
  
5. To assess whether mothers' moods, emotions or cognitions have a mediate the relationship between maternal trust and attachment to mother, adolescent individuation, and adolescent adjustment

6. To assess whether mothers' moods, emotions or cognitions have a moderate the relationship between maternal trust and attachment to mother, adolescent individuation, and adolescent adjustment

## **7.3 Method**

### **7.3.1 Participants**

The participants in this study consisted of 123 pairs of mothers and an adolescent child (57 males, 66 females) between the ages of 12 and 18 years (mean age = 15 years). It was stipulated that mother-teenage dyads had to be biologically related. Only one teenager within each family was interviewed. In cases where there was more than one teenager in the home, selection was based upon the next- birthday- method. Teenagers with mental disabilities were not included in this study. The decision to interview mothers only was a pragmatic one based primarily on the time constraints of the project and the accessibility of mothers.

The families all lived in the Southern Metropolitan area of Adelaide, South Australia. The vast majority were of European Australian descent. The family structure of the participants in this study consisted of two-parent families, 85 (69.1%), and single parent or blended families, 38 (30.9%). Thirteen (10.6%) of the mothers were professionals; 63 (51.2%) of the mothers were in white collar employment; 15 (12.2%) were in blue collar employment, and 30 (24.4%) of the mothers worked in the home. The combined income of the participants was grouped into three income blocks: 53 (43.1%) had an income \$50,000 and over;

50 (40.7%) had an income between \$20,000 and \$49,999; and 16 (13.4%) had an income below \$19,999. Four (3.0%) of the participants were not comfortable with disclosing their income level.

### **7.3.2 Procedure**

Half of the participants in this third study were contacted through the local high schools. Teenagers' names were randomly selected from school attendance lists and their mothers were then contacted. Once again, to abide by privacy laws contact with mothers was conducted by High School Support Officers (SSOs). The SSOs briefly outlined the objectives of the research to the mothers and then they requested if they could pass the mothers phone number on to the researcher. The other half of the participants were recruited through the assistance of third year psychology students.

Participants were told the study would take approximately one hour to complete. All interviews took place in the participants' homes. The interviews with both the parent and the teenager were held separately in order to reduce the risk of socially-desirable responses. Participants were told that the study was completely anonymous and confidential, and that they could withdraw from the study at any point.

The questionnaires for the mothers were similar to the questionnaires in Study 2. They were divided into three parts: the first and second parts were in relation to mothers' parenting goals, emotions and attributional tendencies. The third part was a battery of four psychometric scales. Mothers were also asked to

complete a demographic information sheet which included questions about annual income, number of children, education level, ethnicity, employment and teenager's age and gender. The teenagers were required to complete six psychometric scales.

### **7.3.3 Measures**

#### **(a) Questionnaire on mothers' general parenting goals (Section 1)**

Mothers were given a comprehensive set of general questions concerning eight different parenting goals. These questions were based on the statements mothers made in Study 1. For each, they were asked to consider the importance of eight different parenting goals. In Study 2 a questionnaire was designed to assess mothers' beliefs or feelings about these eight parenting goals. They were asked to respond to each statement, using a 5-point Likert scale, in terms of how well it represented their own beliefs or feelings on the issue (1 = Not at all; 5 = Completely). In Study 3 only the most reliable statements were used to represent each of the parenting goals. Cronbach's Alpha (CA) was used to assess the reliability of the statements measuring the global goals of: own needs (CA = .75), safety (CA = .81), productivity (CA = .65), happiness (.64) and manners (.59). The reliability of the statements for the goals of compliance, loving and caring, and mutual respect were not measured using Cronbach's Alpha because mothers' responses for these goals (Study 1) were quite consistent and only two questions for each category was necessary. A 5-point Likert scale was used in Study 3 to measure mothers' responses to how well the statements represented their own beliefs and feelings about each of the issues (1 = Not at all; 5 =

Completely). The scores for each set of statements related to the eight parenting goals were aggregated so that a single score represented each goal. The statements used in the analysis of parenting goals were as follows:

**a) Loving and caring relationship**

1 2 3 4 5      How important to you is a loving and caring relationship with your teenager?

1 2 3 4 5      How loving and caring is your relationship with your teenager?

**b) Mutual respect/compromise**

1 2 3 4 5      How important to you is a relationship with your teenager based on mutual respect and willingness to make compromises?

1 2 3 4 5      How respectful and co-operative is your relationship?

**c) Compliance**

1 2 3 4 5      How importantly do you rate your teenagers' complete obedience to your requests?

1 2 3 4 5      How obedient is your teenager to your requests?

**d) Mothers' own needs**      (These statements were recoded for analysis.)

1 2 3 4 5      I love looking after them.

1 2 3 4 5      Personal space is not an issue for me at all – it will come.

1 2 3 4 5      I tend to put my needs on the back burner while the kids are at this age.

1 2 3 4 5      I'll do what ever they need – kids are kids only for a short time.

**e) Safety**

1 2 3 4 5      I see their safety as my responsibility. I try to ensure they do not do things by themselves or with people I don't approve of.

1 2 3 4 5      I check, with other parents, all arrangements around transport, supervision and safety. I decide whether it is suitable for them to go somewhere or not.

1 2 3 4 5      I expect my teenager to give me complete details of their plans and then, if necessary, we will negotiate on who they go with and where they go.

- 1 2 3 4 5 They are old enough to do what they want, when they want, with whoever they want. They make their own decisions and suffer whatever consequences come from those decisions. (This question was recoded for analysis.)

**f) Teen happiness**

- 1 2 3 4 5 My teenager's happiness concerns me more than their manners because I can see how mannerly they are but I can't necessarily see how happy they are.

- 1 2 3 4 5 Happiness comes out of good relationships and good manners are more likely if a person is happy. Therefore, my teenager's happiness is most important to me.

**g) Manners**

- 1 2 3 4 5 I focus most on my teenager's manners because manners are an important sign of respect for others. My teenager can work out their own happiness.

- 1 2 3 4 5 Sometimes my teenager's present happiness has to be forfeited for manners because manners will help them to get the most out of the world.

**h) Productivity**

- 1 2 3 4 5 It is very important to me that my teenager becomes a productive and useful member of society.

**(b) Mothers' emotions and attributions in specific situations (Section 2)**

**Vignettes**

Participants were asked to read the same four vignettes that were used in Study 2. After each vignette mothers were asked to respond to the way they would feel about the situation had they been in it, and how they would interpret their teenager's behaviour if they had acted this way in any of the situations.

**Mothers' affective responses to vignettes**

For each of the four situations, mothers were asked to consider how they would feel if the situation had occurred in their own home. They were asked to rate, on

a 5-point Likert scale how angry, worried and upset they would feel in each of the situations (1 = would not feel that way at all; 5 = would feel it very strongly).

**(c) Mothers' attributions for teenagers' behaviours**

Mothers were asked to consider why their teenagers might have behaved the way they did in each of the situations. They were asked: "If you discovered that your own teenager had been in a situation like this, would you say their behaviour was determined by (i) their personality (as opposed to the situation they were in); (ii) the intentionality of their teenagers actions. Mothers were asked to rate each of the attributions using 4-point scales (1 = Not at all; 2 = Slightly; 3 = Some what; and 4 = Completely).

**(d) Psychometric Measures:**

The measures in this study were based on self-report, except for the Child Behavioural Checklist (CBCL), which was completed by mothers.

**Parental Trust Scale:** This scale, developed by Kerr, Stattin and Trost (1999) assessed how trustworthy mothers felt their teenagers were on a range of issues. There were six questions: Do you trust that your child will not hang out with bad people? Do you trust that your child will be careful with her/his money? Do you completely trust your child to take responsibility for his/her life? Do you trust that your child will try his/her best in school? Do you trust that your child will not do anything dumb during his/her free time? Do you trust that what your child says he/she is going to do on a Saturday night is true? Participants were asked to rate



their responses from 1 (Yes, completely) to 5 (No, not at all). The alpha reliability measure was 0.81. This scale was recoded for analyses so that a high score would represent mothers' high level of trust in their teenagers.

**Self-Disclosure Questionnaire:** This scale, developed by Kerr, Stattin and Trost (1999) assessed how willing teenagers were to tell their mothers about their daily activities and concerns. There were five questions: Do you spontaneously tell your mum about your friends (ie, which friends you hang out with and how they think and feel about various things)? How often do you usually want to tell your mum about school (ie, how each subject is going; your relationship with teachers)? Do you keep a lot of secrets from your mum about what you do in your free time? Do you hide a lot from your mum about what you do at nights and at weekends? Do you like to tell your mum about what you did and where you went during the weekend? Participants were asked to rate their responses from 1 (Always) to 5 (Never). The alpha reliability measure was 0.78. Questions 3 and 4 were recoded in this scale so that a high score on each question meant that teenagers were very open with mothers.

**Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA).** This scale was developed by Armsden and Greenberg (1987). Only the 25 items relevant to trust and communication in the mother-adolescent relationship have been used. (The questions relating to peer relationships were not necessary.) Some of the items used in this study are as follows:

1. My mother respects my feelings.
2. I wish I had a different mother.

3. My mother accepts me as I am.
4. My mother can tell when I am upset about something.
5. I tell my mother about my problems and troubles.
6. I feel angry with my mother.
7. I do not get much attention from my mother.
8. My mother helps me to talk about my difficulties.
9. My mother understands me.
10. I trust my mother.

Participants were asked to rate the items according to how true the statement was for them: 1 = Almost never or never true; 2 = Not very often true; 3 = Sometimes true; 4 = Often true; 5 = Almost always or always true. This scale was shown to have high reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .81). A number of the items were recoded so that a high score represented a high attachment to mother.

**Individuation:** Individuation was measured using the Connectedness and Separateness scales that were developed by Hofer and Noack (1992, in Noack & Puschner, 1999). This measure was used to provide information on the way teenagers related to their mothers in terms of their connectedness to, and separateness from them.

**i. Connectedness Scale:** This scale had five items which assessed the "socio-emotional bonds" between teenager and mothers. I like to discuss many things with my mum. I openly tell my mum what I think and what I feel. I have a good relationship with my mum. It is important to me to keep to agreements with my parents, even if this is inconvenient. It is important to me

to get along with my parents. Participants were asked to rate their responses from 1 (always or totally) to 5 (never or not at all). When tested the alpha reliability was 0.80. All the items were recoded in this scale so that a high score represented a high sense of connectedness.

**ii. Separateness Scale:** This scale had six items designed to measure how “self-directed” the teenager’s life was. The items were as follows: What I am doing for school or for my job is only my business. My mum should not be concerned with how my room looks. I think it is right if my mum wants my room orderly. It is fine with me if my mum knows what I talk about with my friends. I know best what is good for me. What I spend my money on is my own business. Participants were asked to rate their responses from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Items 3 and 4 were recoded in this scale so that a high score represented a high sense of separateness. This scale was said to have a moderate reliability (Cronbach’s alpha = .72 to .79.) However, in the present study the findings showed the reliability to be low. Hence, items 5 and 6 were removed to increase the reliability to .61.

**Self-Esteem:** The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965). See the Methodology section of Study 1.

**Child Behavioural Checklist:** Boyle, et al. (1987). See the Methodology section of Study 2.

**Positive and Negative Affect Schedule:** PANAS – Watson, Clark & Tellegen (1988). See the Methodology section of Study 2.

### 7.3.4 Reliability Analyses

In Table 7.1 the reliability of each of the measures used in this study has been presented. It can be seen from the Cronbach's alpha that nine of the twelve measures had very strong reliability (over .80). Teenagers' positive mood and self-esteem scores had moderate reliability (.75); only the separateness scale had marginally acceptable reliability of .61, which was probably due to the low number of items included in the scale.

Table 7.1  
Reliability analysis for scales of self-disclosure, trust, moods (PANAS), attachment (IPPA), connectedness, separateness, self-esteem and behaviour (CBCL).

	<u>No. of cases</u>	<u>No. of items</u>	<u>Cronbach's alpha</u>
<i>Mothers</i>			
PANAS: Positive mood	123	10	.86
PANAS: Negative mood	123	10	.86
Self-disclosure	121	8	.86
Trust	123	6	.82
<i>Teenagers</i>			
CBCL: Behaviour	123	16	.86
PANAS: Positive mood	122	10	.74
PANAS: Negative mood	122	10	.81
Self-esteem	122	10	.87
Self-disclosure	122	5	.75
IPPA: Attachment	121	25	.92
Connectedness	121	6	.80
Separateness	121	4	.61

## 7.4 Results

All the significant tests in this section are two-tailed and have an alpha level of .05 except where indicated.

### 7.4.1 Preliminary Analysis

#### (a) The demographic characteristics of the sample

As indicated in Table 7.2 over two-thirds of the mother-teenager dyads visited in this study were in homes with two-biological parents, with the remaining dyads from single-parent or blended families. The proportions of male teenagers and female teenagers was similar, although there were slightly more females in both two-parent households and single/blended parent households. Chi-square analysis did not reveal any significant gender or age differences in relation to family structure.

Table 7.2  
*The distribution in percentages of male and female teenagers across family structure, family income and mothers' occupation*

	<i>N</i>	Family structure		Income			Mothers' Occupation		
		2-parent	Single & blended	<i>N</i>	Below \$50,000	Above \$50,000	<i>N</i>	Employed	Home Duties
		<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)		<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)		<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)
<b>Male teens</b>	57	40 (70.1)	17 (29.9)	53	26 (49.1)	27 (50.9)	55	42 (76.4)	13 (23.6)
<b>Female teens</b>	66	45 (68.1)	21 (31.8)	66	40 (60.6)	26 (39.4)	66	49 (74.2)	17 (25.7)
<b>Total</b>	123	85 (69.1)	38 (30.9)	119	66 (55.5)	53 (44.5)	121	91 (75.2)	30 (24.8)

It can also be seen in Table 7.2 that the combined income of 66 (55.5%) of the families was below 50,000 dollars/annum; 53 (44.5 %) families had a

combined income over 50,000 dollars/annum. Chi-square analyses revealed no significant differences in this distribution of income. Neither were there any significant findings for the distribution of male and female teenagers across the income levels. There was, however, a marginally significant difference in the distribution of ages within income levels  $\chi^2(1, N = 119) = 3.88, p > .05$ . There was a higher number of younger teenagers ( $N = 43; 36.1\%$ ) in the below 50,000 dollars/annum income group than there were older teenagers ( $N = 23; 19.3\%$ ) in that income group. There were no significant age differences in the higher income levels.

Finally, Table 7.2 shows that three quarters of the mothers were employed outside the home. It can be seen that the distribution of male teenagers and female teenagers was similar, though there were with slightly more females in the employed and home duties groups. Once again there were no significant findings for an association between mothers' employment and teenagers' gender or age.

Thirty-five (28.7%) of the mothers were educated as far as grade twelve; 52 (42.6%) graduated from high school/TAFE; and 35 (28.7 %) of the mothers had a university degree/post-graduate degree. Chi square analysis found no significant associations between the education levels of mothers, and teenagers' age or gender.

#### **(b) Descriptive Information on Mothers' and Teenagers' Responses to the Psychometric Measures**

Table 7.3 shows teenagers' scores on each of the psychometric measures: psychosocial adjustment (self-esteem, behaviour and moods);

individuation (connectedness and separateness), attachment to mothers; and self-disclosure. In addition, Table 7.3 shows mothers' parental trust and self-disclosure scores and mother's positive and negative moods scores.

Table 7.3  
*M (SD) for teenagers' and mothers' responses on each of the psychometric measures*

	Total scores			Male teenagers			Female teenagers		
	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>(SD)</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>(SD)</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>(SD)</i>
Connectedness (Range = 5 to 25) Teenager	121	23.3	(3.59)	56	22.9	(3.41)	65	23.6	(3.73)
Separateness (Range = 6 to 30) Teenager	121	18.9	(3.30)	56	18.8	(3.52)	65	18.9	(3.12)
Attachment (Range = 25 to 125) Teenager	121	97.2	(15.02)	56	97.2	(13.94)	65	97.2	(16.0)
Self-esteem (Range = 10 to 40) Teenager	122	29.8	(4.78)	56	31.3	(4.50)	66	28.6	(4.70)
Behaviour (Range = 16 to 48) Teenager	123	18.9	(3.71)	57	19.6	(4.82)	66	18.3	(2.25)
Positive mood (Range = 10 to 50) Teenager	122	33.3	(7.64)	56	35.4	(7.78)	66	31.6	(7.14)
Mother	123	37.9	(6.58)	57	38.1	(6.89)	66	37.6	(6.34)
Negative mood (Range = 10 to 50) Teenager	122	20.7	(6.46)	56	19.3	(5.82)	66	21.8	(6.79)
Mother	123	18.9	(6.30)	57	19.1	(6.70)	66	18.8	(5.98)
Self-disclosure Teenager (Range = 5 to 25)	121	17.8	(3.49)	55	17.2	(3.32)	66	18.3	(3.57)
Mother (Range = 8 to 40)	121	30.4	(4.73)	56	30.0	(4.87)	65	30.8	(4.60)
Trust (Range = 6 to 30) Mother	123	24.9	(3.97)	57	24.6	(4.04)	66	25.1	(3.92)

Independent sample t-tests showed that there were no significant gender differences in relation to the scores on the scales that measured behaviour, self-disclosure, connectedness, separateness, and attachment to mother. However, there were significant differences for the scales measuring self-esteem  $t(120) = 3.18, p < .01, d = 0.59$ ; positive mood  $t(120) = 2.75, p < .01, d = 0.51$ ; and negative mood  $t(120) = -2.20, p < .05, d = -0.41$ . The findings showed that male teenagers had higher self-esteem than female teenagers. In addition, male teenagers had more positive mood scores than female teenagers. Finally, male teenagers had lower negative mood scores than female teenagers.

Preliminary analysis was conducted to assess the relationships between adolescent adjustment and the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship (see Table 7.4). The findings show that sons' problem behaviours were significantly associated with the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship. Poorer problem behaviour scores for sons were associated with a reduced sense of connectedness and attachment to mothers, as well as a greater sense of separateness from mothers. Daughters' problem behaviours were not significantly associated with the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship. However, teenage self-disclosure and self-esteem were significantly associated with the parent-adolescent relationship. The results suggested that the more attached and connected teenagers felt to their mothers, the more willing they were to disclose to them information about their daily activities and concerns. Furthermore, teenagers who felt more connected and attached to mothers had better self-esteem. Daughters who felt more connected and attached to mothers



also felt less separated from mothers (this was not found for sons). Finally, the findings varied considerably in terms of the nature of the relationships between teenagers' positive and negative moods and the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship, and their relationship with teenagers' connectedness to, and separateness from their mothers. For daughters, the higher their positive mood scores, the more connected and attached they were to their mothers and the less their sense of separateness from mothers. However, sons' positive mood scores were higher if they had stronger attachment to mothers. Conversely, daughters' negative mood was poorer the weaker their attachment to their mothers.

Table 7.4  
*Correlations of the relationships between teenagers' views of the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship and adolescent psychosocial adjustment*

	Problem Behaviour	Self-Esteem	Positive Mood	Negative Mood	Self-Disclose	Connect	Attach
<b>Teenager's separateness</b>	.21*	-.31**	-.29**	.15	-.54**	-.60**	-.57**
- Sons	.29*	-.17	-.02	.00	-.61**	-.54**	-.50**
- Daughters	.14	-.42**	-.55**	.24	-.53**	-.69**	-.63**
<b>Teenagers' connectedness</b>	-.32**	.38**	.36**	-.07	.77**	-	.77**
- Sons	-.47*	.30**	.29**	-.09	.77**	-	.73**
- Daughters	-.09	.52**	.49**	-.10	-.77**	-	.79**
<b>Teenagers' attachment</b>	-.24**	.47**	.32**	-.22*	.69**	-	-
- Sons	-.42**	.44**	.25	-.20	.75**	-	-
- Daughters	-.02	.53**	.40**	-.25*	.66**	-	-

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$

#### 7.4.2 Maternal trust and relationship-centred goals (Aim 1)

Table 7.5 shows that mothers' goal of trust in their teenagers was strongly and positively associated with the goals of loving/caring, mutual respect, compliance and safety. Thus, trusting mothers not only desire a loving and respectful relationship with their teenagers but also had high expectations that

teenagers would comply with their needs and wishes. The only other significant relationship between maternal trust and the remaining parenting goals was the negative, but relatively weak, association between maternal trust and mothers' expectations that teenagers will be well mannered. Trusting mothers had little concern about how well mannered their teenagers were. However, further analysis showed that this relationship applied only to mothers with daughters, and not to mothers with sons. Finally, Table 7.5 shows that maternal trust was positively associated with the goal of safety. Once again this result applied only to mothers with daughters and not to mothers with sons.

Table 7.5  
*Correlations of the relationships between mothers' goal of trust and mothers' other parenting goals*

	Loving & Caring	Mutual Respect	Comply	Own Needs	Teen Happiness	Safety	Manners	Productivity
<b>Maternal trust</b>								
All teens:	.37**	.48**	.42**	.01	-.07	.09	-.19*	-.10
Sons only:	.35**	.45**	.47**	.10	-.04	-.07	-.04	-.26
Daughters only:	.41**	.54**	.39**	-.06	-.09	.26*	-.34*	.07

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  Comply = goal of compliance

### 7.4.3 Maternal trust and adolescent outcomes (Aim 2)

#### (a) Associations between maternal trust and adolescent outcomes

When the scores of male and female teenagers were combined, the findings showed that nearly all the expected relationships between maternal trust and adolescents' attachment to mother, individuation, and psychosocial adjustment were supported (see Table 7.6). The findings show that, if teenagers were more trusted, they tended to have higher self-esteem, more positive moods,

stronger attachments, and scored higher on the measures of separateness and connectedness. Conversely, as maternal trust in teenagers decreased, teenagers tended to score higher on measures of problem behaviour. The one exception to the predicted findings was the lack of a significant negative association between maternal trust and teenagers' negative mood.

However, when the scores of mothers with sons and mothers with daughters were considered separately, some notable gender differences were observed. The significant associations between maternal trust, adolescent adjustment and attachment to mothers were more commonly observed for mothers with sons than they were for mothers with daughters. The findings showed that mothers' lower trust scores for sons tended to be associated with greater and more negative mood states. However, it was also shown that the more mothers trusted their sons, the higher their sons' scores on self-esteem and positive mood. Furthermore, the findings suggested that the more mothers trusted their sons, the more their sons were likely to disclose information about their daily activities and concerns, and the more attached and connected to their mothers they were likely to feel.

Table 7.6 shows that there were only a few significant associations were found between maternal trust and the outcome scores of female teenagers. The findings indicated that greater behavioural problems in daughters were associated with reduced maternal trust. However, the more daughters felt their mothers trusted them the more positive their mood scores, and the less they felt separated from their mothers. Daughters' sense of connectedness and

attachment to mothers was not significantly associated to maternal trust, and neither was their self-esteem, negative moods, or desire to disclose information about their daily activities.

**Table 7.6**  
*Correlations of the relationship between mothers' trust and adolescent wellbeing and the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship*

	<b>Problem Behaviours</b>	<b>Self-Esteem</b>	<b>Positive Mood</b>	<b>Negative Mood</b>	<b>Teen Self-Disclosure</b>	<b>Connectedness</b>	<b>Separateness</b>	<b>Attachment</b>
<b>Maternal Trust</b>								
Sons:	-.44**	.42**	.08	-.30*	.32*	.44**	-.15	.33*
Daughters:	-.51**	.17	.38**	-.01	.20	.22	-.35**	.19
All teenagers:	-.44**	.26**	.21*	.12	.26**	.32**	-.24*	.25**

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

**(b) The mediating role of maternal trust in the relationship between adolescent problem behaviours, adolescent individuation and attachment to mothers**

Hierarchical regression analysis were conducted to assess whether maternal trust was an important link between adolescent problem behaviours and adolescents' connectedness, separateness, and attachment to mothers. The findings, summarised in Table 7.7, show that maternal trust mediated the relationship between problem behaviours, teenagers' sense of separateness from mothers, and their attachment to mothers. Once trust was controlled for, the positive association between problem behaviours and separateness was no longer significant  $F(4, 116) = 3.69, p < .01$ ; and the negative association between problem behaviours and attachment was no longer significant  $F(4, 116) = 2.97, p < .05$ . However, the negative association between problem behaviours and connectedness remained significant, although substantially reduced  $F(4, 116) =$

5.06,  $p < .01$ . Thus, the findings suggest that poorer teenager behaviour tends to be associated with less trust. Lower trust is then associated with poorer attachment, and a greater sense of separateness.

**Table 7.7**  
*Hierarchical regressions of the contribution that teenagers' self-disclosure and behavioural problems make in relation to attachment and connectedness to mothers and separateness from mothers*

<b>Attachment</b>		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> change	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i> -value	part
Step 1	Age	2.62	2.71			0.09	< 1	
	Gender	-0.76	2.69			-0.03	< 1	
	Maternal Trust	0.99	0.36	.07	.07	0.25	2.72**	.24
Step 1	Age	2.62	2.69			0.09	< 1	
	Gender	-1.47	2.70			-0.05	< 1	
	Maternal Trust	0.70	0.40			0.17	< 1	
	Problem Behaviours	-0.68	0.40	.09	.02	0.17	< 1	
<b>Connectedness</b>								
Step 1	Age	0.52	0.63			0.09	< 1	
	Gender	0.58	0.63			-0.03	< 1	
	Maternal Trust	0.28	0.08	.12	.12	0.25	3.60***	.31
Step 1	Age	0.53	0.62			0.09	< 1	
	Gender	0.34	0.63			-0.05	< 1	
	Maternal Trust	-0.20	0.09			0.17	2.31*	.20
	Problem Behaviours	-0.20	0.10	.15	.03	0.17	2.12*	-.18
<b>Separateness</b>								
Step 1	Age	-0.92	0.49			-0.17	< 1	
	Gender	0.55	0.49			0.10	< 1	
	Maternal Trust	-0.17	0.06	.09	.09	-0.24	-2.2**	-.24
Step 1	Age	-0.93	0.49			-0.17	< 1	
	Gender	0.69	0.49			0.12	< 1	
	Maternal Trust	-0.12	0.07			-0.17	< 1	
	Problem Behaviours	0.12	0.07	.11	.02	0.16	< 1	

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$

### (c) Gender differences

Table 7.8 reveals the mediatory role of trust in the relationship between problem behaviours, individuation and attachment when the scores of mothers

with sons and mothers with daughters are disaggregated. These findings reveal the associations between daughters' problem behaviours and their sense of separateness from mothers is the only relationship mediated by maternal trust  $F(3, 52) = 3.06, p < .05$ . Thus, daughters with serious behavioural problems tended to have less trusting mothers, and when mothers are less trusting, daughters appear to have a greater sense of separateness from their mothers. There were no significant associations between maternal trust and daughters' attachment and connectedness to mothers (see Table 7.4) so the mediatory role of trust in the relationship between daughters' problem behaviours, attachment and connectedness scores were not analysed.

Table 7.8  
*Gender differences in the contribution that teenagers' problem behaviours make in relation to the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship*

Daughters' Separateness		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> change	Beta	<i>t</i> -value	part
Step 1	Age	-0.75	0.63			-0.14	< 1	
	Maternal Trust	-0.24	0.08	.14	.14	-0.36	3.06**	-.36
Step 2	Age	-0.76	0.63			-0.14	< 1	
	Maternal Trust	-0.27	0.10			-0.40	2.82**	-.33
	Problem Behaviours	-0.09	0.18	.14	.00	-0.07	< 1	
<b>Sons' Connectedness</b>								
Step 1	Age	0.25	0.88			0.04	< 1	
	Maternal Trust	0.36	0.11	.44	.44	0.43	3.37**	.42
Step 2	Age	0.40	0.83			0.06	< 1	
	Maternal Trust	0.22	0.11			0.27	< 1	
	Problem Behaviours	-0.25	0.09	.54	.10	-0.35	2.69	-.31
<b>Sons' Attachment</b>								
Step 1	Age	2.68	3.74			0.10	< 1	
	Maternal Trust	1.04	0.46	.12	.12	0.30	2.28**	.29
Step 2	Age	3.32	3.58			0.12	< 1	
	Maternal Trust	0.49	0.49			0.14	< 1	
	Problem Behaviours	-1.00	0.40	.21	.09	-0.35	2.53*	-.31

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 7.8 also shows that the relationship between sons' behavioural problems and their attachment to mothers  $F(3, 52) = 3.06, p < .05$ ; and sons' behavioural problems and their sense of connectedness to mothers  $F(3, 52) = 7.15, p < .000$ , was not mediated by mothers' level of trust in their sons. Hence, it would appear that sons' problem behaviours have a direct impact on their relationship with their mothers. There were no significant associations between maternal trust and sons' sense of separateness from mothers (see Table 4) so the mediatory role of trust in the relationship between sons' problem behaviours and separateness scores was not analysed.

**(d) The mediating role of adolescent self-disclosure in the relationships between maternal trust and adolescent individuation, and maternal trust and adolescents' attachment to mothers**

Partial correlations were conducted to assess whether teenagers' self-disclosure mediated the relationship between maternal trust and quality of relationship scores. The findings showed that sons' self-disclosure mediated the relationship between maternal trust and sons' attachment to mothers ( $r = .33$  to  $.14$ ) but self-disclosure did not mediate the relationship between maternal trust and sons' connectedness to mothers ( $r = .44$  to  $.32$ ). Conversely, because maternal trust and daughters' self-disclosure were not significantly associated to begin with ( $r = 0.20$ ) there was no point assessing the mediating role of daughters' self-disclosure in the relationship between maternal trust and daughters' sense of separateness from mothers.

#### **7.4.4 Maternal trust and adolescent problem behaviours, self-disclosure, gender and age (Aim 3)**

Hierarchical regression analyses were performed to assess whether teenagers' age, gender, problem behaviours and self-disclosure explained variance in maternal trust. Table 7.9 shows that age, gender and self-disclosure were not significant factors when considered independently in the regression equation. In Step 1 of the multiple regression analysis, see Table 7.9, teenagers' age, gender, self-disclosure and problem behaviours accounted for 22% of the variance in maternal trust. However, only teenagers' problem behaviours made a unique significant contribution to this finding. An examination of the part correlation showed that problem behaviours (-.39) accounted for 15 percent of the total contribution to the variance in maternal trust.

However, in Step 2 of the regression analysis age and gender were shown to be significant factors when they were considered in conjunction with teenagers' problem behaviours. There were significant interactions between problem behaviours and age, and problem behaviours and gender, showing that maternal trust can be dependent on whether the teenager is male or female or aged between 12 to 15 years or 16 to 18 years  $F(6, 115) = 8.54, p < .0001$ .



**Table 7.9**  
***Hierarchical regression of teenagers' self-disclosure and problem behaviours on maternal trust***

Maternal trust		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> change	Beta	<i>t</i> -value	part
Step 1	Age	0.26	0.65			0.03	< 1	
	Gender	-0.29	0.66			-0.04	< 1	
	Problem behaviour	-0.44	0.09			-0.41	-4.83***	-.39
	Self-disclosure	0.18	0.10	.22	.22	0.16	< 1	
Step 2	Age	-5.80	2.41			-0.72	-2.41*	-.19
	Gender	6.24	2.93			0.79	2.13*	.17
	Problem behaviour	-0.53	0.40			-0.49	< 1	
	Self-disclosure	0.20	0.09			0.17	2.11*	.16
	Problem behaviour x Gender	-0.50	0.21			-0.94	-2.33*	-.18
	Problem behaviour x Age	0.44	0.17	.31	.09	1.00	2.63*	.20

\**p* < .05    \*\**p* < .01    \*\*\**p* < .001

The plotting of these interactions (see Figure 7.1) showed that mothers initially trusted younger teenage children more than older teenagers. However, they became significantly less trusting of 12 to 15 year-old teenagers as their behaviour became poorer  $F(1, 68) = 40.22, p < .0001$ . Mothers trust in 16 to 19 year-old teenagers declined as their behaviour worsened but this finding was not significant,  $F(1, 51) = 3.86, p < 1$ . Figure 7.1 also shows that mothers were significantly less trusting of both male  $F(1, 55) = 13.4, p < .001$  and female teenagers  $F(1, 64) = 23.0, p < .001$  as problem behaviours worsened. However, mothers' trust in teenage daughters is always greater than their trust in teenage sons.

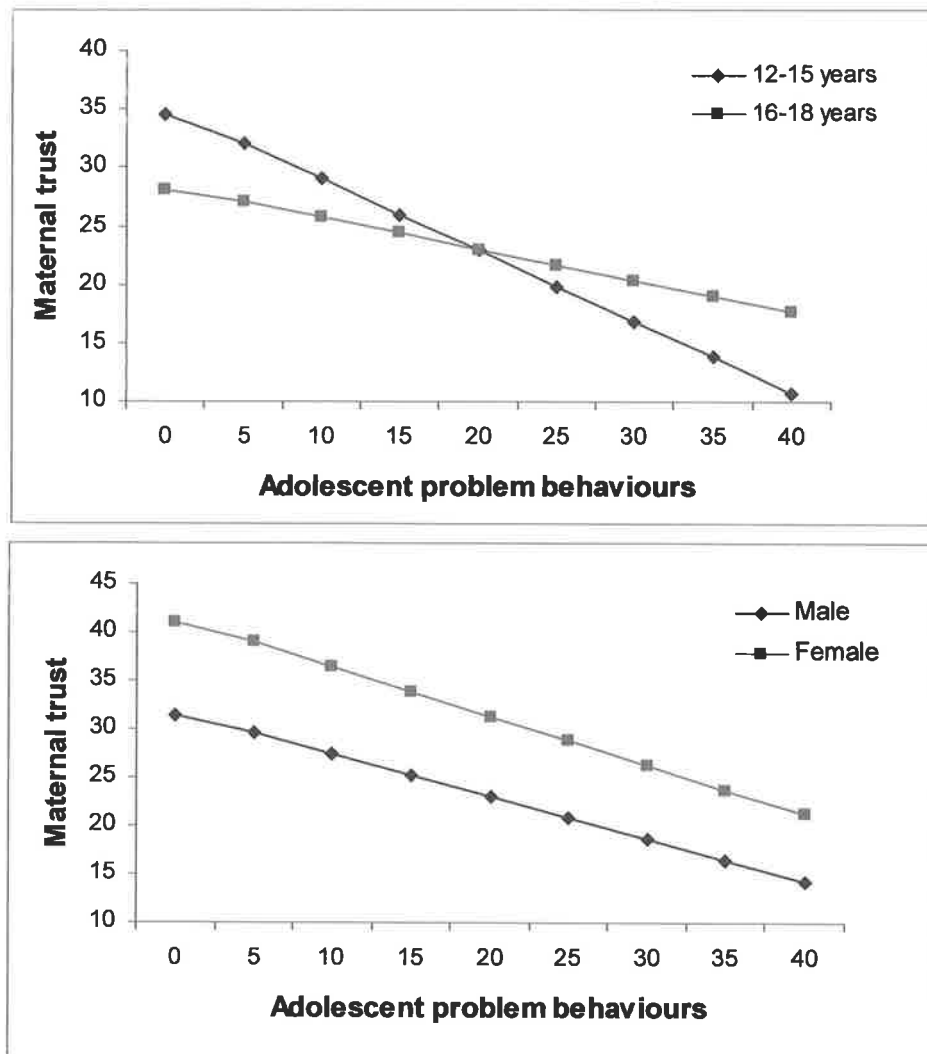


Figure 7.1. The association between adolescent problem behaviours and maternal trust when adolescent age and gender are taken into consideration

#### 7.4.5 Mothers' affective states, cognitions and trust in teenagers (Aim 4)

Preliminary analyses using Pearson correlations were conducted to assess the interrelationship between maternal trust, mothers' affective states (moods and emotions) and cognitions (parenting goals and attributional tendencies) as seen in Table 7.10. Paired sample t-tests were conducted to assess whether the emotions, moods and cognition scores for mothers with sons were significantly different from the scores of mothers with daughters. Only two

significant differences were found. The goal of manners was significantly more important  $t(120) = 2.12, p < .05, d = 0.38$  to mothers of teenage sons ( $M = 5.35, SD = 1.90$ ) than it was to mothers of teenage daughters ( $M = 4.65, SD = 1.77$ ). In addition, the goal of productivity was significantly more important  $t(106) = 2.05, p < .05, d = 0.40$  to mothers of teenage sons ( $M = 4.62, SD = 0.53$ ) than it was to mothers of teenage daughters ( $M = 4.38, SD = .67$ ).

Table 7.10  
*Correlations of the relationships between mothers' trust, affective states, attributions and adolescent wellbeing and the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship*

	Problem Behaviour	Self-Esteem	Positive Mood	Negative Mood	Self-Disclose	Connect	Separate	Attach	Maternal Trust
Mothers' negative mood	.36**	-.33*	-.01	.24**	-.33**	-.44**	.36**	-.47**	-.60**
Mothers' positive mood	-.18	.25**	.33**	.02	.23*	.26**	-.14	.31**	.22*
Mothers' anger	.01	-.08	.06	.01	.07	.08	.06	.00	-.12
Mothers' worry	-.06	-.10	.10	.11	-.03	.01	.01	-.03	.01
Mothers' upset	.01	-.13	.10	.12	-.02	.01	.10	.03	-.25**
Personality Attribution	.24**	-.19*	-.12	.01	-.12	-.21*	.07	-.16	-.37**
Intentionality Attribution	.35**	-.09	-.07	.10	-.11	-.15	.21*	-.13	-.43**

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  Connect = Teen connectedness; Separate = Teen Separateness; Attach = Attachment to mother

### (a) The effects of mothers' moods and emotions on the level of trust they have in their teenagers

Table 7.10 shows that maternal trust was significantly and positively associated with mothers' positive mood ( $r = .22^*$ ) and significantly and negatively associated with mothers' negative mood ( $r = -.60^{**}$ ). In addition, maternal trust was significantly and negatively associated with mothers' level of upset ( $r = -.25^*$ ) but was not significantly associated with the other emotions: anger and worry.

The multiple regression analysis, as seen in Table 7.11, show that mothers' emotions and moods explained 39 percent of this variance  $F(7, 114) = 10.25, p < 0001$ . However, only mothers' negative mood appears to significantly predict maternal trust. An examination of the part correlation showed that negative mood (-.52) accounted for 27 percent of the total contribution to the variance of maternal trust. Hence, the hypothesis that mothers' negative moods would contribute to the variance in maternal trust was supported, but mothers' positive moods and emotional reactivity (upset, worry and anger) did not make the significant contribution that had been expected.

In the following multiple regression analysis in Table 7.11, the effect of mothers' negative mood on maternal trust was assessed while controlling for teenagers' behaviour, age and gender. Observing the  $R^2$  change it can be seen that mothers' negative mood significantly predicted a further 19% of variance in mothers' level of trust  $F(6, 116) = 17.05, p < .001$ , over and above that of teenagers' Problem behaviour x Gender and Problem behaviour x Age. An examination of the part correlation showed that negative mood (-.43) still accounted for 19 percent of the total contribution to the variance in maternal trust.

A further analysis was conducted to assess whether mothers' negative mood was a significant predictor of maternal trust when sons' and daughters' scores were considered independently. The findings were consistent with those described for teenagers generally, albeit the findings were stronger for sons  $F(4, 52) = 15.57, p < .0001$  than for daughters  $F(4, 61) = 11.73, p < .0001$ .

Table 7.11

*Hierarchical regressions of the contribution that mothers' moods make in relation to variations in maternal trust (including how mothers negative mood mediates the relationship between teenagers behaviour and maternal trust)*

Maternal trust		$\beta$	SE	$R^2$	$R^2$ change	Beta	t-value	part
Step 1	Gender	0.49	0.73			0.06	< 1	
	Age	0.33	0.73	.01	.01	0.04	< 1	
Step 2	Gender	0.43	0.59			0.05	< 1	
	Age	-0.39	0.61			-0.05	< 1	
	MNM	-0.36	0.05			-0.57	7.07***	-.52
	MPM	0.07	0.05			0.12	< 1	
	Annoyed	0.01	0.13			0.01	< 1	
	Worried	0.04	0.11			0.03	< 1	
	Upset	-0.08	0.13	.39	.38	-0.06	< 1	
<b>Maternal trust</b>								
Step 1	Gender	5.92	2.96			0.75	2.00*	.16
	Age	-6.03	2.44			-0.76	2.47*	-.19
	Problem behaviour	-0.64	0.40			-0.59	< 1	
	Problem behaviour x Gender	-0.46	0.21			-0.87	2.13*	-.18
	Problem behaviour x Age	0.46	0.17	.28	.28	1.04	2.68**	.21
Step 2	Gender	5.28	2.56			0.67	2.07*	.14
	Age	-4.33	2.12			-0.54	2.05*	-.14
	Problem behaviour	-0.26	0.35			-0.25	< 1	
	Problem behaviour x Gender	-0.39	0.19			-0.75	2.13*	-.14
	Problem behaviour x Age	0.29	0.15			0.65	< 1	
	Mothers' negative mood	-0.30	0.05	.47	.19	-0.48	6.42***	-.43

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$ 

**(b) The effects of mothers' attributional tendencies during challenging interactions with teenagers, on mothers' level of trust in teenagers**

The findings in Table 7.12 show that mothers who have teenagers with severe behavioural problems were more likely to believe their teenagers' actions in specific situations to be intentional and attributable to their personality (rather than to more situational factors). The findings in Table 7.12 also show that more trusting mothers were less likely to think their teenagers' challenging behaviours were intentional and attributable to their personality.

**Table 7.12**  
*Hierarchical regressions of the contribution that maternal attributions make in relation to variations in maternal trust (includes controlling for maternal moods and teenagers' problem behaviours)*

Maternal Trust		$\beta$	SE	$R^2$	$R^2$ change	Beta	t-value	part
Step 1	Age	0.41	.73			0.05	< 1	
	Gender	0.41	.73	.00	.00	0.05	< 1	
Step 2	Age	0.74	.66			0.09	< 1	
	Gender	0.04	.65			0.01	< 1	
	Personality	-0.33	.13			-0.23	2.43*	-.20
	Intentionality	-0.54	.16	.22	.22	-0.32	3.40**	-.28
<b>Maternal Trust</b>								
Step 1	Age	0.31	.66			0.04	< 1	
	Gender	-0.16	.67			-0.02	< 1	
	Problem Behaviour	-0.47	.09	.20	.20	-0.44	-5.25***	-.44
Step 2	Age	0.59	.62			0.07	< 1	
	Gender	-0.29	.62			-0.04	< 1	
	Problem Behaviour	-0.34	.09			-0.32	-3.80***	-.30
	Personality	-0.28	.13			-0.19	-2.19*	-.17
	Intentionality	-0.39	.16	.31	.11	-0.23	-2.46*	-.19

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$

The multiple regression analyses, as seen in Table 7.12, show that when controlling for teenagers' age and gender, maternal attributions explained 22 percent of the variance in maternal trust  $F(4,116) = 823, p < .0001$ . An examination of the part correlations showed that personality (-.20) and intentionality (.28) accounted for 4 percent and 8 percent of the total contribution to the variance, respectively. When teenagers' problem behaviours were also controlled for (see Table 7.12), personality and intentionality attributions were still shown to be significant predictors of maternal trust  $F(5, 115) = 10.23, p < .001$ .

Further analyses did not reveal any major differences to the above findings when the scores of mothers with sons and mothers with daughters were disaggregated.

#### 7.4.6 Exploratory analyses

##### (a) Do adolescent problem behaviours or mothers' moods moderate the relationship between maternal attributions and maternal trust?

Multiple regression analyses did not reveal any significant interactions between mothers' moods and maternal attributions. Hence, mothers' moods did not appear to moderate the relationship between maternal attributions and maternal trust. One significant interaction, however, was found when assessing the effects of teenagers' problem behaviours and maternal attributions on maternal trust, as seen in Table 7.13. Teenagers' problem behaviours were shown to moderate the relationship between intentionality attributions and maternal trust. The plotting of this finding (Figure 7.2) revealed that mothers who were more inclined to view their teenagers' responses to conflictual situations as intentional, were less trusting of their teenagers, but this finding was significant only for mothers whose teenagers had a high degree of behavioural problems  $F(1, 49) = 12.86, p < .01$ . There was no significant association between intentionality attributions and maternal trust when teenagers had less severe behavioural problems  $F(1, 69) = 1.62, p > 1$ .

A further analysis was conducted to assess whether the findings in Table 7.13 differed when the scores for mothers with sons and mothers with daughters were analysed independently. No major differences were found.

Table 7.13

*Hierarchical regression of the contribution that teenagers' problem behaviour and mothers' intentionality attributions make towards the variations in maternal trust*

Maternal Trust		$\beta$	SE	$R^2$	$R^2$ change	Beta	t-value
Step 1	Age	.51	.63			.06	< 1
	Gender	-.20	.63			-.03	< 1
	Problem behaviour	-.36	.09			-.34	-3.98***
	Intentionality	-.54	.14	.29	.26	-.32	-3.80***
Step 2	Age	.41	.62			.05	< 1
	Gender	-.13	.62			-.02	< 1
	Intentionality	.65	.47			.38	< 1
	Problem behaviour	.06	.18			.05	< 1
	Intentionality x Problem behaviour	-.08	.03	.33	.04	-.93	-2.68**

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$

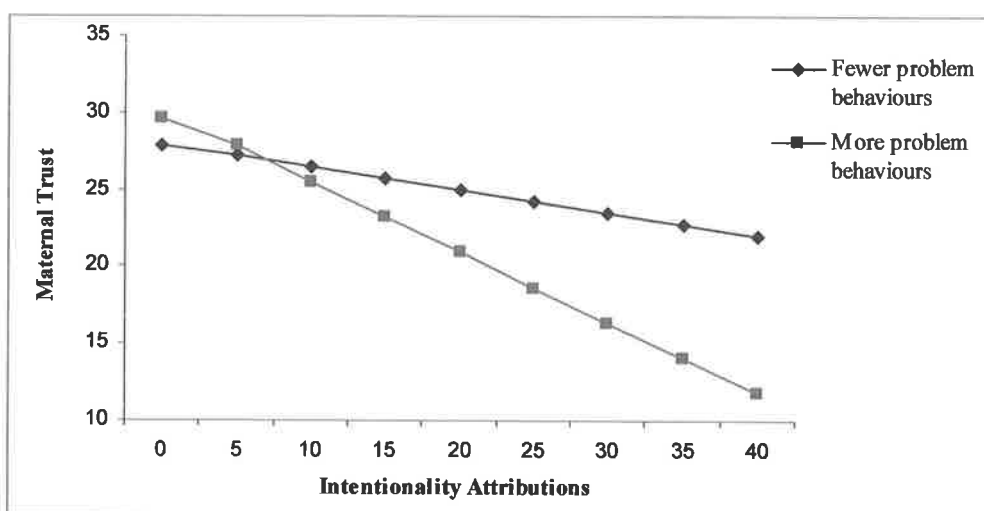


Figure 7.2. The combined affects of adolescent problem behaviours and mothers' intentionality attributions on maternal trust

### (b) The effects of mothers' global parenting goals on their level of trust in their teenagers

The expectation that relationship-centred goals would be positively associated with maternal trust was supported (Table 7.5). Mothers who were highly concerned about having both a loving and a respectful relationship with the



teenager, tended to trust their teenagers more than mothers who were not as interested in these relationship-centred goals. Table 7.5 also shows that the expectation that parent-centred concerns (goals of own needs and compliance) would be significantly and inversely related to maternal trust, was not supported. On the contrary, mothers' own needs goals were not significantly associated with maternal trust, whereas the goal of compliance was positively associated with maternal trust. Mothers who expected a high degree of compliance from their teenagers tended to put more trust in their teenagers than did mothers who expected less compliance from teenagers.

Table 7.14

*Hierarchical regression of the contribution that mother' general parenting goals make in relation to the variations in maternal trust*

Maternal trust	$\beta$	SE	$R^2$	$R^2$ change	Beta	t-value	part
Step 1							
Gender	0.53	0.75			0.07	< 1	
Age	0.73	0.75	.01	.01	0.10	< 1	
Step 2							
Gender	0.56	0.64			0.07	< 1	
Age	0.81	0.65			-0.11	< 1	
Loving and caring	0.36	0.40			0.09	< 1	
Mutual respect	1.26	0.36			0.36	3.50**	.28
Compliance	0.80	0.26			0.29	3.09**	.25
Mothers' own needs	0.18	0.11			0.15	< 1	
Teen happiness	-0.08	0.18			0.04	< 1	
Safety	0.04	0.09			0.04	< 1	
Manners	-0.25	0.19			-0.12	< 1	
Productivity	-0.58	0.56	.39	.38	-0.09	< 1	

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$

The multiple regression analysis, as seen in Table 7.14, show that mothers' general parenting goals explained 39 percent of the variance in the trust mothers would put in their teenage children  $F(10, 95) = 5.96, p < .001$ . However, only the goals of mutual respect and compliance were shown to be significant predictors of maternal trust. An examination of the part correlation showed that

mutual respect (.28) and compliance (.25) accounted for 8 percent and 6 percent, respectively, of the total variance in maternal trust.

However, further analysis showed that when the scores for mothers with sons and mothers with daughters were disaggregated, the findings between them were quite different. The general parenting goals of mothers with sons explained 44 percent of the variance in trust  $F(9, 39) = 3.78, p < .01$ . Once again, mutual respect (.30) and compliance (.29) were the only goals to make a unique contribution to the variance in maternal trust, accounting for 9 percent and 8 percent of the variance, respectively. By contrast, the parenting goals of mothers with daughters explained 41 percent of the variance in the trust mothers had in their daughters  $F(9, 47) = 3.59, p < .01$ . However, none of the parenting goals were found to make a unique contribution explaining variance in maternal trust.

#### **7.4.7 Mothers' moods, emotions or cognitions as mediators of the relationships between maternal trust and adolescent outcomes (Aim 5)**

Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to assess whether the relationships between maternal trust and adolescent outcomes remained significant when parent effects were controlled for (Table 7.15).

**Table 7.15**  
*The mediating role of maternal cognitions and affective states on the relationships between maternal trust and adolescent psychosocial adjustment*

	<b>Mediating role of maternal cognitions and affective states</b>			
	<b>Love &amp; Caring</b>	<b>Mutual Respect &amp; Compromise</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	<b>Mothers' Negative Mood</b>
<b>All teenagers:</b>				
Trust and teen self-esteem	$r = .19$	$r = .13$	n/a	n/a
<b>Teenage girls:</b>				
Trust and daughters' positive mood	n/a	$r = .22$	$r = .22$	n/a
Trust and daughters' separateness	n/a	$r = -.11$	$r = -.20$	$r = -.11$
<b>Teenage boys:</b>				
Trust and sons' self-esteem	n/a	n/a	n/a	.12
Trust and sons' problem behaviours	n/a	n/a	n/a	-.25
Trust and sons' connectedness	n/a	n/a	n/a	.22
Trust and sons' negative moods	$r = -.24$	n/a	n/a	n/a
Trust and sons' attachment	$r = .18$	n/a	n/a	n/a
Trust and sons' self-disclosure	$r = .20$	n/a	n/a	n/a

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$  n/a = not applicable  $r$  = partial correlation

The only noteworthy findings, shown in Table 7.15, were that relationship-centred goals were shown to mediate the relationship between maternal trust and adolescent self-esteem. The findings from partial correlations showed that there was no longer a significant relationship between maternal trust and adolescent self-esteem when the goal of loving was controlled for. There was also no longer a significant relationship between maternal trust and adolescent self-esteem when the goal of mutual respect was controlled for.

When the scores of mothers with daughters and mothers with sons were disaggregated, some gender differences were found (Table 7.15). Mothers' goals of compliance and mutual respect were shown to mediate the relationship

between maternal trust and daughters' positive mood, and maternal trust and daughters' sense of separateness. Finally, mothers' negative mood was shown to mediate the relationship between mothers' trust and daughters' sense of separateness. In each case, when mothers' goals of compliance, mutual respect and mothers' negative moods were controlled for, the relationships between these variables were no longer significant.

Mothers' negative mood was found to mediate the significant relationships between mothers' trust and their sons' self-esteem, problem behaviours, and sense of connectedness. In addition, mothers' goal of loving and caring was shown to mediate the significant relationships between mothers' trust and their sons' negative mood, attachment to mother, and self-disclosure. In each case, when mothers' negative moods and goal of love and caring were controlled for, the relationships between the variables were no longer significant.

#### **7.4.8 Mothers' moods, emotions and cognitions as moderators of the relationships between maternal trust and adolescent outcomes (Aim 6)**

No significant interactions were detected so the results have not been reported.

#### **7.4.9 Exploratory analyses: The parent-adolescent relationship as mediator of the relationships between maternal trust and adolescent wellbeing**

The Pearson correlations in Table 7.4 and Table 7.6 show the significant relationships between maternal trust, attachment, separateness and connectedness, and adolescent psychosocial adjustment. Hierarchical regression

analyses were conducted to assess whether the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship (attachment, separateness and connectedness) mediated the relationship between maternal trust and teenagers' self-esteem, positive mood, problem behaviours and self-disclosure. In Table 7.16 the results show that attachment, connectedness and separateness all mediated the relationship between maternal trust and adolescents' self-esteem (except separateness), positive mood and self-disclosure. However, none of the relationship variables mediated the relationship between maternal trust and adolescent problem behaviours.

Table 7.16

*The mediating role of the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship on the relationships between maternal trust and adolescent psychosocial adjustment*

	Mediating role of parent-adolescent relationship		
	Attachment	Connectedness	Separateness
<b>All teenagers:</b>			
Maternal trust and teen self-disclosure	$r = .18$	$r = .01$	$r = .15$
Maternal trust and teen self-esteem	$r = .17$	$r = .16$	$r = .20^*$
Maternal trust and teen positive mood	$r = .09$	$r = .11$	$r = .15$
Maternal trust and problem behaviours	$r = .40^*$	$r = -.39^{**}$	$r = -.42^{**}$
<b>Teenage girls:</b>			
Maternal trust and daughters' positive mood	n/a	n/a	$r = .24$
<b>Teenage boys:</b>			
Maternal trust and sons' self-disclosure	$r = .12$	$r = -.03$	n/a
Maternal trust and sons' self-esteem	$r = .32^*$	$r = .34^*$	n/a
Maternal trust and problem behaviours	$r = -.36^*$	$r = -.30^*$	n/a

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$  n/a = not applicable  $r$  = partial correlation

When the scores of mothers and daughters, and mothers and sons were assessed independently, the findings were quite different. The significant

relationships between maternal trust, the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship, and adolescent adjustment can also be seen in Table 7.4 and Table 7.6. In Table 7.16 it can be seen that only daughters' sense of separateness mediated the relationship between maternal trust and daughters' positive moods. Mothers who had a higher level of trust in their daughters had daughters whose sense of separateness from them was less intense, and daughters whose sense of separateness was less intense experienced more frequent positive mood states. Conversely, sons' sense of connectedness and attachment to mothers mediated only the relationship between maternal trust and sons' willingness to disclose information to mothers about their daily activities and concerns (Table 7.16). Hence, mothers who were more willing to trust their sons had sons who felt more connected and attached to them; sons who felt more connected and attached to mothers were more willing to disclose information to them.

### **7.5 Discussion**

The present study has shown that parental trust in teenagers may be an important element in enhancing adolescent well-being and promoting healthy parent-adolescent relationships. Many of the findings in this study substantiate those found in Kerr, Stattin and Trost's (1999) study of parental trust. In the present study maternal trust was shown to have a positive effect on teenagers' self-esteem and positive moods. In addition, teenagers with trusting mothers had fewer behavioural problems and were found to be more willing to talk with their mothers about their daily activities and concerns. Such teenagers felt more highly attached and connected to their mothers, and expressed fewer feelings of

separateness. However, it should be noted that not all these associations applied equally to both mother-son relationships and mother-daughter relationships.

When mothers' and sons' scores and mothers' and daughters' scores were disaggregated, the findings revealed a number of differences. Sons with trusting mothers felt more attached and connected to their mothers, and were more willing to tell their mothers about their daily activities and concerns. Furthermore, sons with trusting mothers had greater self-esteem, fewer behavioural problems, and less intense negative moods than sons whose mothers were less trusting.

By contrast, only a few significant associations were revealed between maternal trust and teenage girls' outcomes. If daughters felt trusted by their mothers they were likely to enjoy more frequent positive moods, have fewer behavioural problems, and their sense of separateness from mothers was less intense. However, there was no relationship between maternal trust and daughters' level of self-esteem, negative moods, attachment and sense of connectedness to mothers, or a willingness to disclose information to their mothers. These findings suggest, therefore, that sons are more greatly influenced their mothers' degree of trust in them than daughters are. The descriptive analyses showed that teenage boys were shown to have higher self-esteem and more positive moods than teenage girls. However, there were no significant gender differences found in teenagers' problem behaviours, self-disclosure, and the three relationship scores. Thus, there is no obvious reason why gender differences would have affected the relationship between maternal trust and male and female outcomes.

Contemporary parenting research has stressed the importance of studying bidirectional family processes when considering parenting influences on adolescent development. In the present study, it was found that teenagers' age, gender and self-disclosure were not consistently related to mothers' level of trust (unless assessed independently of teenage behaviour), although teenagers' self-disclosure was shown to be positively associated with maternal trust. Once again, this finding was relevant only for mothers with sons, and not for mothers with daughters. Mothers who were more trusting of their sons, had sons who were more willing to tell them about their daily activities and concerns and this, in turn, appeared to strengthen their sons' attachment to them.

Teenagers' behavioural problems, on the other hand, were clearly related to the level of trust mothers had in their teenagers. When behaviour was being assessed, the sex and age of the teenager were important factors in influencing how trusting mothers were likely to be of their teenagers. For example, the results showed that mothers of both daughters and sons trusted their teenagers less if they had challenging behavioural problems. There was no significant association between maternal trust and 16 to 18 year-old teenagers with challenging behavioural problems. However, on the whole, mothers were shown to trust their daughters more than their sons.

In contrast to what was expected, maternal trust was not shown to mediate the relationship between sons' behavioural problems and the quality of their relationship with their mothers (in this case, their attachment or connectedness to mothers). Neither did the findings confirm Kerr et al.'s (1999)



proposition that maternal trust would mediate the relationship between daughters' behavioural problems and their relationship with mothers (ie, their sense of separateness from mothers). Kerr et al. may have drawn this conclusion because of their assumption that untrusting mothers are "emotionally uninvolved and unsupportive" of their teenagers (1999, p. 750). In their view, adolescents' delinquent behaviours affect mothers' ability to trust their teenagers, and this will ultimately lead mothers to be emotionally withdrawn from them. This may well be true, but there is no evidence in Kerr et al.'s study to show that mothers who feel they can no longer trust their teenagers will inevitably become unsupportive and uninvolved in their teenagers' lives.

In addition to child effects on maternal trust, this study also sought to explore how maternal trust was affected by other parenting processes such as mothers' affective states and parenting cognitions. Contrary to expectations, mothers' emotions did not prove to be predictive of maternal trust; neither did mothers' emotions appear to be significant in influencing the conditions in which trust might be associated with adolescent outcomes.

Mothers' negative moods, on the other hand, had quite a strong affect on mothers' level of trust in their teenagers. The more negative moods mothers felt, the less trusting they were, regardless of whether teenagers had problem behaviours or not. There was also some evidence of the mutual influence of maternal trust and mothers' negative moods on adolescent outcomes, although this applied to the mother-son relationship and not to the mother-daughter relationship. Mothers who were unable to trust their sons had more intense and

frequent negative moods. This negative mood had a detrimental affect on sons' self-esteem, behaviours, and sense of connectedness to mothers. This finding is generally consistent with previous research that has shown that the parent-adolescent relationship (and adolescent adjustment) can be severely affected by mothers who experience intense negative affect, particularly that associated with adolescent misconduct (Ambert, 1997; Steinberg & Sheffield Morris, 2001; Stern & Smith, 1999; Lerner, Brennan, Noh, Wilson, 1998).

Ambert (1997a; 1997b) found that parents of children who were continually involved in public misconduct experienced feelings of inadequacy and shame because they were unable to manage their children's behaviour. Often these parents would become detached and unresponsive toward their teenagers as a means of coping with their own feelings of failure as a parent. This was consistent with the findings of other studies that showed that parents who are emotionally distressed are less responsive and less nurturing of their teenagers than are non-distressed parents (Belsky, Cmic, & Woodworth 1995; Conger et al; 1984; Elder, Liker, & Cross (1984). This, therefore, may explain the connection Kerr et al. made between maternal mistrust and withdrawal from teenagers. However, it is important to keep in mind that mothers' negative moods were an important characteristic drawing these factors together.

The characteristics that differentiate moods from emotions may provide an explanation as to why moods rather than emotions have an affect on maternal trust. Schwarz (1990) argues that emotions are instantaneous and intense reactions to specific events. The reason for their occurrence on most occasions

is relatively evident, and generally they do not last for long periods of time. In contrast, moods tend to be a result of

“a series of mildly pleasant or unpleasant events...which collectively leave one in a generalised positive or negative feeling state. Moods, therefore, do not have easily identifiable causes. They may come about gradually, and they tend to last longer than emotions” (1990, p. 536).

Schwarz goes on to say that the global nature of moods tends to affect peoples' ability to evaluate information and make non-biased judgements. In contrast, emotions are less likely to deviate from the facts because they are usually locked into a specific event (eg I was angry because he swore at me). People in negative moods are more likely to retrieve negative memories on which to base their judgements. Fiske and Taylor explain this in terms of moods “influencing judgement in a mood-congruent direction” (1991, p. 460). Thus, mothers' moods are likely to bias how mothers evaluate their parenting efficacy, their goals, and their views of their teenagers.

Maternal trust was also shown to be influenced by mothers' cognitions in terms of their interpretations of adolescents' behaviours (maternal attributions) and their parenting expectations (parenting goals). Mothers' negative attributional tendencies for teenagers with problem behaviours were consistent with previous attributional studies showing mothers made biased attributions for the behaviour of aggressive or disobedient children (Dix & Lochman, 1990; Dix & Reinhold, 1991). Furthermore, as expected, the present study found that mothers who had the tendency to make negative attributions for teenagers' challenging behaviours were less able to trust their teenagers. It had been envisaged that adolescents'

problem behaviour would mediate the relationship between mothers' attributional tendencies and maternal trust, but this was not the case. Rather, it was shown that mothers were less trustful when they interpreted their teenagers' behaviour as intentional, but this was only if teenagers' behavioural problems were excessive.

Although this finding may seem obvious, it does raise some interesting implications for clinicians in family mediation services in terms of how much mothers' tendency to presume the worst of their teenager perpetuates the teenagers' behavioral problems. Clinicians' anecdotal reports have suggested that parents' attributions are often quite legitimate and may be perpetuated by teenagers' behaviour, but there are also times when teenagers' behaviour reflects the lack of trust, and consequent limitations on freedom. This begs the question whether mothers' lack of trust also means mothers' unwillingness to grant their teenagers the autonomy they require and desire.

The importance mothers gave to parenting goals was generally a strong indicator of how trusting mothers would be of their teenagers, and there was some evidence to show that these variables mutually influenced the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship and/or adolescent wellbeing. Although parenting goals in general appeared to be related to mothers' level of trust in both sons and daughters, the goals of mutual respect and compliance had particular importance for the level of trust mothers' had in sons only (not mothers' trust in daughters). Having said this, it was interesting to find that the goals of mutual respect and compliance were shown to be important factors linking maternal trust to

daughters' outcomes. The association between mothers' expectations of greater obedience from daughters than from sons is consistent with previous research on goals being differentially associated with the gender of the child (Piotrowski & Hastings, 1999). Mothers who were more trusting of their daughters were more concerned with issues around mutual respect and compliance. The more concerned mothers were with issues around mutual respect and compliance, the more positive their daughters' moods were, and the less intense was their sense of separateness from mothers. It could be inferred from these findings that mothers interpret compliance to their wishes as a reflection of the respect teenagers have for them. Hence, compliance could be the result of daughters' willingness to make compromises and to co-operate with mothers for the sake of the parent-adolescent relationship. This may well be the case, as daughters whose mothers have these expectations did have more positive dispositions generally.

Conversely, the relationship between maternal trust and sons' outcomes was not mediated by mothers' goals of mutual respect and compliance. Rather, the goal of loving and caring was shown to be an important factor linking maternal trust to sons' outcomes. For example, mothers who were more trusting of their sons tended to place a greater emphasis on the goal of loving and caring. The more loving and caring mothers were the more sons felt attached to their mothers, the less moody they were, and the more willing they were to disclose information to mothers about their daily activities and concerns.

Finally, this study has shown that teenagers' views or responses to the relationship they have with their mother (attachment, connectedness, separateness) does in some situations mediate the relationship between trust and adolescent adjustment. The finding that greater levels of maternal trust reduced daughters' sense of separateness from mother and improved their positive mood state contributes to previous research on the role of connectedness to and individuation from parents during adolescence. It would appear to support Noack and Puschner's (1999) findings that teenagers who have a greater level of detachment from parents than connectedness to parents are at greater risk of dysfunctional adjustment than teenagers who have a higher level of connectedness to parents. Noack and Puschner refer to Ryan and Lynch's (1989) statement that individuation from parents does not happen "from parents but rather with them" (p. 341) and results in healthier psychosocial adjustment. Hence, a degree of separateness is not necessarily a bad thing. It is a necessary component of change that adolescents have to go through, but it should definitely not be separate from a strong parental bond and a climate of support and trust. In other words, a healthy balance of separateness and connectedness allows for a healthy way of negotiating and renegotiating family boundaries (LeBlanc, 2001).

## Chapter 8

### Summary and Conclusions

#### 8.1 Overview

Traditional parenting researchers have focused on the overt behaviours of parents as the main influence on children's development. Underlying this focus has been the assumption that parents convey their beliefs and values through their actions, and it is these actions that affect children's well-being (Goodnow, 1988). Consequently, little regard has been given to the idea that parents are *thinking beings*, people who are driven by specific parenting goals which affect how they act, think and feel when relating to their children (Goodnow & Collins, 1990). Dix and Branca have pointed out that:

“human behaviour has been seen to be purposive, that is initiated, directed and motivated by people's desire to satisfy basic drives or promote other concerns and objectives. Yet despite their importance to psychology in general, goal concepts rarely have been used to understand parenting” (2003, p. 167).

This conspicuous gap in the parenting literature provided the impetus for the present research project. The main objective of this project was to shed some light on the role parenting goals may have in influencing other parenting mechanisms. The specific aims of this project were: (a) To examine the content and consistency of mothers' parenting goals; (b) To examine the relationships between parenting goals, and parenting behaviours, attributional tendencies and affective states; and (c) To explore whether the relationships between parenting

goals and other parenting processes influenced the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship and adolescent psychosocial adjustment. In general, the results of the studies in this project suggest that some context-specific parenting goals are important determinants of other parenting mechanisms and of the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship. The relationship between parenting goals and these factors, together, have significant implications for adolescent well-being.

The first study in this project explored the *categories, scripts, and schemas* mothers held about the adolescent years, their role as a parent of an adolescent, and their parenting goals during these years. This data was highly informative in terms of what was, and was not, important to mothers when raising their teenager. In general, the findings showed that mothers had very clear beliefs about adolescence, about parenting an adolescent, and the impact that the transitional period of adolescence had on themselves as parents. Furthermore, it was clear that these beliefs were translated into very definite global parenting goals (values). However, a common insecurity amongst mothers was detected when they discussed the adequacy of their affective responses towards teenagers. Most mothers were disconcerted by the fact that, although they felt that showing affection towards their teenagers was extremely important, they were also aware that this expression of care was often not welcomed. In relation to conflicts with teenagers, nearly half the mothers in the study felt unable to control their anger during challenging interactions with teenagers. It appeared this was often due to how mothers interpreted their teenagers'



behaviour during these interactions (ie they don't care, they don't listen, they keep doing it, they think they know better).

In the second study the importance and consistency of parenting goals were analysed quantitatively. It appeared that most mothers had similar views about which goals (global) were important to them. The consistency in mothers' responses is likely to be a reflection of the societal beliefs about adolescence that parents either consciously, or unconsciously, adopt as their own (Goodnow & Collins, 1990). A few decades ago parental child-rearing practices tended to emphasise politeness, conformity or obedience (Alwin, 1990). However, as society has changed, so have the beliefs and goals of parents (Ambert, 1997, p. 52). Bronfenbrenner (1985) predicted that, as society becomes more fragmented and parents become more socially isolated, parents' values will become progressively more diverse. He claims that few parents now belong to a community where there is a high consensus regarding values, and he refers to this as the "unravelling of the social fabric" (cited in Ambert, 1997, p. 243).

The findings of the second study indicated that mothers' relationship-centred goals (global and contextually-bound) were of greatest importance to them. However, there was a discrepancy between the importance of child-centred empathic goals, child-centred socialisation goals, and the consistency of parenting goals. Parent-centred and child-centred socialisation goals were given far more significance when considered in specific situations than when considered generally (global goals). In contrast, child-centred empathic concerns were given far less significance when considered in specific situations rather than

when considered generally. Dix and Branca (2003) suggest a number of different factors that could compel parents to advance a parenting goal that would, otherwise, be at odds with their preferred (or ideal) long-term parenting goals. The most common incentives for parents are to do with issues of value-calculations, accommodation, and saliency of goals.

Implicit value calculations (discussed in Chapter 5) have to do with the choices parents make when it is necessary to prioritise one goal over another. A decision is made based on which of their goals would have the greatest bearing on, or which are most beneficial to, the family environment at a specific moment in time (eg where parents for some specific reason have to put their own needs before their teenagers' need, such as, the mothers' need to see the doctor, or do the shopping rather than giving their teenager a driving lesson). Accommodation refers to the parents' decision to prioritise their teenagers' interests over their own, in the hope that such compromises will teach them to make similar compromises on other occasions. Dix and Branca propose that:

"At the heart of accommodation is altering children's motivation. In essence, accommodation changes the child from one motivated to undermine what parents seek to one motivated to promote it" (2003, p. 181).

Accommodation strategies are central to Collins and Luebker's expectancy-violation-realignment model (1994). They suggest that parents' should be gradually gearing the relationship they have with their teenagers towards one that is increasingly egalitarian and satisfying to both parties. To do this, they need to relinquish, regularly, what *they think is best* on an issue, and allow their teenagers to make their own judgments about it, particularly if the

issue relates to them personally. Nevertheless, it is important that parents make sound judgements during this time. Accommodating teenagers' desires or requests is not appropriate if the teenager is not old enough or mature enough to handle the responsibility they are given.

Lastly, the saliency of an issue refers to how aware parents are of whether their parenting goals are being enhanced or hindered in a particular situation or interaction (Grusec, Goodnow & Kuczynski, 2000; Hastings & Grusec, 1998).

The present project showed that parent-centred goals became more salient when the scenarios involved other people, or when mothers were concerned about the perceptions of friends, teachers or work colleagues (eg the scenario concerning cleaning up the lounge for visitors). Alternatively, relationship-centred goals were given priority in the scenarios that did not involve others, in which mothers felt they could afford to put their relationship with their teenager first (mobile phone bill).

## **8.2 Parenting goals and adolescent adjustment**

This project has shown that contextually-bound parenting goals were significantly associated with adolescent outcomes. However, only relationship-centred and parent-centred goals appeared to have a significant influence on adolescent self-esteem, problem behaviours, and teenagers' positive and negative mood states. Furthermore, specific centres-of-concerns (ie relationship-centred concerns) and goals were more likely to be associated with certain characteristics of adolescent adjustment than other centres-of-concerns and goals. In particular, mothers' own need goals (a parent-centred concern) was the

only parenting goal of the eight pre-determined goals that was shown to influence adolescent self-esteem. However, this finding applied only to daughters and not to sons. Mothers who were highly self-focused tended not to be very accepting (rejecting behaviour) of their daughters so that when conflicts or quarrels arose they were likely to interpret daughters' behaviour as intentional and due to their personality. Daughters who felt misread and rejected in this way were likely to have a poor sense of self-esteem.

Relationship-centred concerns (goals of loving/caring and mutual respect/compromise) were associated with adolescent problem behaviours. It appeared that teenagers who perceived their mothers to have very little interest in a loving and respectful relationship with them tended to have greater behavioural problems than did teenagers who perceived their mothers to be highly concerned with relationship-centred goals. In addition, mothers' tendency to make intentionality attributions for teenagers' behaviour was shown to strengthen the association between parenting goals and teenagers' behavioural problems.

Only mothers' goal of mutual respect (a relationship-centred concern) was associated with teenagers' positive and negative mood states. Teenagers who perceived their mothers to be highly interested in the goals of mutual respect frequently enjoyed positive moods. On the other hand, teenagers who felt their mothers were not interested in a relationship based on respect experienced recurrent negative moods. Maternal rejecting-accepting behaviours were an integral link between these variables. Teenagers who had a healthy, positive

disposition were more likely to feel accepted by their mothers. However, if teenagers felt their mothers were overly worried by altercations with them, the goal of mutual respect would not have the same beneficial effect on teenagers' moods.

One of the few significant findings from the analyses of mothers' reports of parenting goals indicated that, if mothers had a strong desire for respect in their relationship with their teenagers but were unable to control their anger during altercations with them, they tended to have sons with more negative dispositions. Sons in particular seemed to be frustrated and confused by mothers' expectations of mutual respect on the one hand, and outbursts of anger on the other.

Finally, an unanticipated set of findings, concerned the effects of mothers' expectations of compliance on teenagers' positive moods, negative moods, and problem behaviours. Although the goal of compliance was not directly associated with adolescent adjustment, there were some significant interactions between this goal and maternal emotional states and maternal behaviours. Mothers who had high expectations of compliance from teenagers were more likely to have teenagers who frequently enjoyed positive moods, especially if the teenagers detected that their mothers were suitably worried about their interactions with them. On the other hand, teenagers' negative moods appeared to be aggravated by mothers who desired a strong level of compliance from their teenagers, yet were highly rejecting in their behaviours toward them. Lastly, mothers who had high expectations of compliance from their teenagers but who became extremely

angry with them when they were noncompliant, were likely to have teenagers with significant behavioural problems.

It was noteworthy that mothers' child-centred empathic concerns and child-centred socialisation goals were not significantly associated with adolescent adjustment scores. One could assume that because child-centred goals are of primary importance during children's formative years, they are less likely to have the same significant effect that parent-centred and relationship-centred concerns can have on teenagers in the present.

Thus, it is suggested that positive adolescent outcomes are generated when mothers have a strong concern for relationship-centred goals: loving/caring, mutual respect/compromise and, as argued in the present study, maternal trust. However, the healthiest relationships are those where mothers balance relationship-centred goals with relatively strong expectations of compliance from their teenagers. This needs to be qualified by the understanding that when mothers' expectations of compliance are violated by their teenagers these mothers need to be able to address the situation in a manner that is calm, reasonable and respectful of their teenagers' viewpoints. One could argue that this finding is consistent with Baumrind's (1991a, 1991b) authoritative parenting typology.

### **8.3 Maternal trust**

Maternal trust was shown to be positively associated with daughters' positive mood and sons' self-esteem and negatively associated with sons' problem behaviours and negative moods. There was an interesting link between

how trusting mothers were of their sons (only) and mothers' negative moods. The less trusting mothers were of their sons, the more sons experienced intense negative moods. This, in turn, appeared to have an adverse affect on sons' self-esteem and exacerbate any behavioural problems their sons may have had.

The strong association between maternal trust and the goals of loving/caring and mutual respect/compromise seems to suggest that maternal trust would be a valid and reliable factor to be considered within the relationship-centred construct. Maternal trust and the goal of mutual respect tended to be similarly associated with adolescent adjustment. However, gender differences were more evident in the relationships between maternal trust and adolescent adjustment than they were in the relationships between mothers' other parenting goals and adolescent adjustment. Furthermore, relationship-centred goals were shown to provide important links between trust and adolescent outcomes. For example, maternal trust was positively associated with daughters' positive moods and negatively associated with sons' negative moods. It was noteworthy that the goal of mutual respect mediated the relationship between maternal trust and daughters' positive moods. The goal of loving and caring mediated the relationship between maternal trust and sons' negative moods. Hence, daughters' positive disposition appeared to flourish in a trusting and respectful family environment, whereas sons' negative disposition tended to become less intense in a trusting and loving family environment.

#### **8.4 Adolescent individuation**

It seemed pertinent to include measures of individuation (separateness and connectedness) in an exploratory study of parental trust as individuation has been considered a critical factor for healthy adolescent development. However, there have been fairly significant divergences of opinion between researchers on whether teenagers should remain connected to their parents, or become separated from them, if they are to develop into well-adjusted teenagers. It has been argued that adolescent independence cannot be fully realised by teenagers until they detach themselves from their parents (Blos, 1967; Erikson, 1968; Freud, 1958). Other researchers contend that a strong sense of connectedness with parents enables teenagers to explore their independence to a greater degree because they know their parents will be there to support them should it become necessary (Greenberg, Seigal & Leitch, 1983 cited in Van Wel, Ter Bogt & Raaijmakers, 2002; Noller, 1994, 1995).

Although adolescent independence was not a measure included within this project, the present project did find that teenagers' sense of connectedness to mothers facilitated healthy adolescent adjustment, whereas their sense of separateness from mothers had the reverse effect. However, there were important gender differences in these findings. For example, teenage boys were shown to be highly connected to their mothers when their mothers were very trusting of them, whereas teenage girls' feelings of connectedness were not significantly affected by maternal trust. On the other hand, teenage girls' sense of separateness from mothers was strong when they felt their mothers did not trust



them, whereas teenage boys' sense of separateness was relatively unaffected. Only mothers' negative moods were shown to mediate the relationships between maternal trust and teenagers' connectedness to, or separateness from, mothers.

It was interesting to find that the goals of mutual respect and compliance interacted positively with maternal trust to reduce teenage girls' sense of separateness from their mothers. This reduced sense of separateness in daughters also meant that they experienced more frequent positive moods. Hence, once again the connection between maternal trust and relationship-centred goals could be noted, as well as the positive role of the goal of compliance.

### **8.5 Parenting goals and the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship**

Parenting goals were more strongly and commonly associated with teenagers' attachment to mothers and their perceptions of family functioning, than they were to adolescent adjustment. Moreover, the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship was found to mediate the relationships between parenting goals and adolescent adjustment.

The way mothers behaved towards their teenagers was an important link in the associations between mothers' parenting goals and adolescents' view of the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship. Mothers who were seen to be highly motivated by the goals of loving/caring and mutual respect were more likely to be accepting (rather than rejecting) of their teenagers, and less likely to use psychological control compared to mothers who lacked interest in such goals. The teenagers of mothers with strong relationship-centred often viewed

the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship very positively. Alternatively, mothers who were highly self-focused (strong own need goals) were more rejecting of their teenagers, and had a greater tendency to use psychological manipulation to control them than did mothers who were less self-focused. The teenagers of mothers with strong own need goals were less attached to their mothers and more likely to think negatively about the way their family functioned.

Surprisingly, maternal upset and anger did not mediate or moderate the relationships between parenting goals and the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship. However, teenagers' perceptions of the level of worry (possibly the anxiety) their mothers experienced during altercations with them was shown to affect the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship. However, this was only when teenagers' perceptions of worry was combined with mothers' goals of respect, loving, teen happiness and own needs. Conversely, teenagers who felt their mothers were not suitably worried or anxious about negative interactions with them, and who felt mothers were highly self-focused, were not strongly attached to their mothers.

Gender differences were apparent in some of the associations found. The degree of concern mothers had for a loving and respectful relationship with their sons influenced how attached sons felt to their mothers, and how positively they viewed family-functioning. The more positive sons felt about the quality of their relationship with mothers, the less significant their problem behaviours appeared to be. In contrast, it was the emphasis mothers put on their own needs that had the greatest impact on daughters' attachment to mothers, and their perceptions

of family functioning. The poorer daughters' view of the quality of their relationship with their mother, the poorer their own sense of self became.

Once again, a link between maternal trust and relationship-centred concerns was evident when considering the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship. Maternal trust was strongly and positively associated with teenagers' attachment to mothers. In addition, it was shown that mothers who had a high level of trust in their sons often had a strong commitment to a loving and caring relationship with them, and, consequently, these sons had a strong attachment to their mothers. Another important link between maternal trust and sons' attachment to mothers was the willingness of sons to tell their mothers about their daily activities and concerns. The more trusting mothers were, the more sons wanted to disclose information to them; the more sons disclosed information, the more attached to their mothers they appeared.

### **8.6 Contributing role of other parenting mechanisms**

It was expected that attributional tendencies would play a much greater role than they did in the relationship between parenting goals and adolescent outcomes. Nevertheless, there were some occasions when adolescent adjustment (but not the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship) was affected by interactions between attributional tendencies and parenting goals. Thus, there was some support for Blumberg and Silvera's (1998) notion that the individual's motivation plays an important role in their attributional behaviour. Blumberg and Silvera argue that people are often inclined to use the least amount of effort possible when processing information. This is evident in the

reliance people put in their pre-existing expectations of another person to help them determine the reasons for that person's behaviour. This lack of motivation to attend to all the relevant information, according to Blumberg and Silvera, increases the likelihood of fundamental attribution errors (Ross, 1977). In other words, if people are not motivated enough to ensure that they have made an accurate assessment of another person's behaviour, they are likely to make dispositional judgements about that behaviour rather than considering the situational information. This project has shown that parents' motivation (parenting goals) can affect the attributions they make for adolescent behaviour in challenging situations. Grace, Kelley and McCain (1993) proposed that clashes which occur between parent-adolescent dyads are often a result of pre-existing expectations of either the parent or the teenager:

"rigid expectations might include beliefs that teenagers should always be obedient...whereas negative attributions might consist of explaining a behaviour as selfishly motivated" (1993, p. 199).

In terms of the relationship between parenting goals and maternal emotions and moods this project provided some interesting results. Teenagers generally perceived mothers to be less worried, upset or angry by parent-adolescent altercations or conflicts than mothers reported feeling in these situations. This is consistent with the suggestion of Smetana (1988) and Collins (1990) that adolescents often imbue conflicts with far less meaning than their parents give them, and as a result they are far less upset by the disputes than parents are. It is likely that these disputes are not relationship breakers, but they may certainly take a toll on parents' mental health. However, the study did show

that when teenagers perceived a high degree of maternal worry in conjunction with parenting goals (particularly relationship-centred goals) it was more likely to have a detrimental effect on their relationship with mothers and on their positive mood. The reasons for this are unclear. One explanation is that when teenagers do detect high levels of maternal worry it is because these mothers actually have significant anxiety problems that affect their parenting goals and their relationship with their teenager. Future research would be necessary to confirm this assumption.

On the whole, the effects of mothers' anger responses were not shown to be as detrimental to adolescent outcomes as expected. Basic emotion research and some studies of parenting have suggested that negative emotions may be adaptive for parents if they are not excessive or chronic (Johnson & McGillicuddy-DeLisi, 1983). Isen, Means, Patrick & Nowicki (1982) proposed that low to moderate levels of negative affect lead to simple problem solving and to fewer checks on information than do high levels of negative affect. Excessive negative emotions can undermine parents ideal parenting goals. This was substantiated by the findings in the initial qualitative study of this project which showed that daughters whose mothers were highly aggressive when angry were likely to have had greater behavioural problems than daughters whose mothers were calm and collected when angry. One reason strong emotion may disrupt parenting is its tendency to increase short-term, self-focused motives, and decrease long-term child-focused motives (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Emotion brings urgency to interaction and leads to "the preponderance of short-term over

long-term gain" (Frijda, 1986, p. 476). Short-term motives can be adaptive for parents, but not adaptive for child-rearing. They can undermine parenting when they are consistently stronger than motives to correct, teach, support, or respond to the needs of children. Hence, in this project when the goals of compliance and mutual respect interacted with greater maternal anger, adolescent problem behaviours and negative moods were shown to deteriorate. It could be inferred from this that the way mothers express their anger in these situations appears to undermine the respect and compliance they otherwise wish to promote in the parent-adolescent relationship.

The relationships between parenting goals and parenting behaviours were not quite as expected. Behavioural control was not significantly associated with either parenting goals or adolescent outcomes. The reason for this was probably due to the scale used to measure behavioural control. Firm control and lax control were two ends of the same continuum (rather than being on separate continuums), with a healthy level of control being closer to the firm control end than to the lax control end. Thus, any relationships that might have existed between parenting goals and behavioural control may have been obscured by the lack of a distinct lower limit for unhealthy control and a distinct upper limit for healthy control.

The relationships between parenting goals, psychological control, and parental acceptance-rejection became more evident when based on the subjective experiences reported by teenagers, rather than on mothers' reports. Furthermore, based on teenagers' experiences of mothers' goals and behaviours

the joint affects of these processes on adolescent outcomes became more apparent.

### **8.7 Multiple informants**

In this project teenagers' scores and mothers' scores on the majority of the measures were remarkably consistent with one another. This finding helps to substantiate and extend Moskowitz and Schwarz's (1982) suggestion that adolescents can accurately report on mothers' parenting practices. This project shows that adolescents can also accurately report on mothers' parenting goals. The only noteworthy differences in adolescent scores and mothers' scores were in relation to attachment to mothers, the strength of mothers' emotions during altercations with teenagers, and intentionality attributions. The findings showed that teenagers, on the whole, reported being more attached to their mothers than mothers believed them to be. In addition, mothers reported much stronger emotional reactions to challenging interactions with teenagers than teenagers thought they would have. Finally, teenagers perceived their mothers would make much higher intentionality attributions for their behaviours than mothers actually reported.

It can be argued that the variations in parents and adolescent viewpoints on family interactions can in themselves provide valuable information from which to base inferences. Moskowitz and Schwarz (1982) suggest that whether or not adolescents are accurate in their summation of parenting practices is fairly immaterial, as it will be teenagers' perceptions of those practices that will guide their behaviour, one way or the other. Similarly, in this project it has been

assumed that regardless of the accuracy of teenagers' perceptions of mothers' parenting goals, behaviours, emotions and attributional tendencies, the information attained has probably provided a more thorough, if not better, understanding of the affects of these processes on the adolescents' world than if conclusions had been drawn on the basis of mothers' reports alone.

Certainly, the overall findings indicated that measures of adolescent outcomes were more strongly related to adolescent reports on parenting goals and other parenting mechanisms than they were to mothers' reports. Shek (1997) came to a similar conclusion in his study on the relationship between family functioning and adolescent adjustment. He surmised that "perhaps adolescents are more sensitive to their family problems than parents are". Smetana, Crean and Daddis suggest that the "utility of different informants' reports may depend on the particular parenting behaviour [or parenting goals] being assessed, as well as the particular outcome of interest" (2002, p. 281).

### **8.8 Limitations and future research**

Although this project yielded a number of useful findings, it is important to highlight a number of limitations. Although the size of the samples was large enough to perform the required analyses, larger sample sizes would possibly have made the results more reliable, particularly when disaggregating scores by gender. In addition, the generalisability of the findings is limited by the fact that the vast majority of the participants were Caucasian Australians. A study on parenting goals is likely to differ in significant ways across different social and cultural contexts (Rudy, Grusec & Wolfe, 1999).



There were also some limitations in the design of the study. Most importantly, as this project was exploratory and based on correlational and cross-sectional data, causal inferences cannot be made. For this reason, and due to the specific nature of the characteristics of the samples, the generalisability of the findings are limited. Despite this, some confidence in the inferences arises from the findings in these studies due to their consistency with the proposed theoretical models outlined throughout the project. Nevertheless, one has to acknowledge that it is likely that adolescent and parental characteristics are mutually influencing (Petersen & Leigh, 1990) and that adolescent psychosocial adjustment may well inform parents of the parenting goals they should pursue. This point draws attention to a shortcoming in these studies in relation to the lack of attention given to adolescent characteristics that may possibly affect the parenting goals of mothers (ie temperament or personality).

Another limitation of the present project is that the studies were based on family processes in the mother-adolescent relationship. It is likely that the interactions between two parents and their adolescent child would differ considerably to those of one adult and a teenager. Furthermore, the four vignettes were limited in their coverage of the issues relevant to parent-adolescent interactions. For example, there were no scenarios depicting a safety risk for teenagers, a moral dilemma, or even a positive interaction between mothers and teenagers. The nature of the findings may have been different if mothers and teenagers were asked to comment on a few of their own real-life experiences.

Clearly, one of the limitations in the statistical analysis of this project was the increased risk of Type 1 error due to the number of tests that needed to be performed for some of the hypotheses. This risk was a result of the number of variables that were being considered in the studies. Some may suggest that the Bonferroni correction/adjustment procedure could help to alleviate this problem. However, it was felt that reducing the risk of a Type 1 error in this way would only increase the chances of making a Type two error. This would mean no effect or difference would be declared, while in fact an effect existed. Hence, truly important differences are seen to be non-significant. A further weakness in the Bonferroni procedure is that the interpretation of a finding relies on the idea that all null hypotheses are true simultaneously, as a result the interpretation of single finding can not be considered in isolation of the other tests. On the basis of these limitations the decision was made not to apply the Bonferroni corrections to the analyses that were performed. Rather, I chose to provide a description of which tests of significance were performed, and when significant findings were revealed I emphasised the need to consider the interpretation cautiously (particularly as numerous other tests had been performed that were not significant).

Lastly, since the scale to measure parenting goals was not standardised the findings have to be taken with a certain degree of caution. However, in defence of this, it must be emphasised that this was an exploratory study in which the reliability of the questionnaires was continually assessed and refined between the different studies.

There are numerous avenues for future research on parenting goals.

Clearly, longitudinal data would allow for more confident reporting on the direction of effects between parenting goals and parenting behaviours, attributional tendencies, and affective states. A longitudinal study would also help to ascertain the degree of influence that adolescent characteristics have on parenting goals. Furthermore, if data was collected for mothers of younger children as well as older children it would be possible to test whether the importance of parenting goals changes as children move from childhood into the adolescent years. This information could also be informative because it may be able to reveal how the changing beliefs and values of mothers impact on the way parents and teenagers interact with one another.

This project measured mothers' parenting goals in specific situations and mothers' parenting goals generally. It would be interesting therefore to conduct a study which compared the effects these two types of goals have on the quality of the parent –adolescent relationship and on adolescent adjustment. Another avenue worth investigating would be the importance mothers give to parenting goals when they were asked to consider vignettes concerning teenagers' academic performance. It is likely that child-centred socialisation goals (eg productivity) would take precedence over relationship-centred goals when parents are asked to consider their responses to vignettes focused on school achievements and teachers' reports. In addition, it would be interesting to know the effects that mothers' parenting goals had on adolescent academic performance (Are child-centred socialisation goals positively associated with

academic achievement?). Future studies on the effects of parenting goals in more positive contexts could be very beneficial in extending the parenting goal research. In this project the context of the goals focused predominantly on difficult and challenging parent-adolescent interactions.

This study was based on mothers' reports of parenting goals and teenagers' perceptions of their mothers' goals. However, it would be important in future research to consider spousal reports of mothers' goals as well as fathers' reports of their own parenting goals. Unfortunately, this is beyond the scope of this study, but is acknowledged as being integral to a greater understanding of family processes.

In Study 3, the findings showed that as the goal of trust (mothers' reports) varied so too did the quality of parent-adolescent relationships, and adolescent adjustment. Thus it was disappointing that due to the time restrictions on this project it was not possible to assess the relationship between maternal trust and maternal behaviours and their combined effects on adolescent outcomes. Furthermore, the findings were based solely on mothers' reports of their level of trust in their teenagers. It would have been useful to compare these results with adolescents' perceptions of maternal trust, particularly as measures of adolescent outcomes were more strongly related to adolescent reports on parenting goals than mothers' reports.

Lastly, the importance mothers give to parenting goals may depend largely on the family's socioeconomic background. Family income, parents' education, parents' employment, ethnicity, and family structure are all factors that

can limit parents' capacity to parent their children effectively. Empirical studies have shown that significant differences exist between high and low SES parents' attitudes, expectations, and styles of interacting with children. For example, high SES parents engage children in more conversations, read to them more, and provide more teaching experiences than do low SES parents (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). This suggests the parenting goals of low and high SES parents are considerably different. The reason for this, argue Bradley and Corwyn, is that low SES parents experience "more threatening and uncontrollable life events" (2002, p. 381). These events increase the degree of stress parents experience, and this elicits more *reactive responding*. Taylor and Seeman define reactive responding as "chronic vigilance, acting on the basis of environmental demands rather than self-generated goals, having simple, short-term goals...reacting emotionally" (1999 p. 382).

To conclude, this project has shown that an understanding of the motivational basis of parental behaviour (from both mothers' and teenagers' perspectives) is integral to a broader appreciation of the affects of parenting goals on the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship and adolescent adjustment. Continued research in this area will help to identify, more conclusively, how challenges to specific parenting goals will effect other parenting mechanisms and, in turn, the overall well-being of teenagers. Furthermore, this project has shown that research needs to go beyond simply understanding the processes that govern parenting practices and behaviours; it also needs to explore what is at the heart of functional and dysfunctional

parenting goals. In terms of effective parenting this project has substantiated Collins and Luebker's (1994) claims that a well-adjusted parent-adolescent relationship is marked by parents' (and teenagers') willingness to alter their expectations of, and behaviours toward, one another for the sake of preserving and enhancing the quality of their relationship. This project has shown that mothers and teenagers are more likely to enjoy a healthy parent-adolescent relationship if mothers' are strongly motivated by the goals of love, respect, trust, and teenage compliance. Moreover, if teenagers' perceive their mothers to have a strong interest in the goals of love, respect, trust, and teenage compliance, then the likeliness of a positive parent-adolescent relationship is even greater. In turn, the psychosocial adjustment of teenagers' may also be significantly enhanced.

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**Appendix 1**  
**Study 1: Questionnaire**

## Study 1

### Open-ended questionnaire

#### 1. Questions designed to explore mothers' thoughts on two contentious issues for parents with adolescent children

- 1.1 How affectionate are you with your teenager? How important do you think it is to show affection and warmth to your teenager? Why do you think it is, or is not, important?
- 1.2 When do you get angry with your teenager? What sorts of things do you say/do to your teenager when you are angry with them? What are your thoughts about the way you act when you are angry?

#### 2. Questions designed to assess how mothers interpret their teenagers' affective responses towards them

- 2.1 What positive emotions would you say your teenager expresses towards you? [Do not prompt] *However, if prompting is required: Do they show sensitivity, patience, encouragement, comfort, affection, joy?* How often do each of these emotions occur? How do you feel about this?
- 2.2 What negative emotions would you say your teenager expresses towards you? [Do not prompt] *If prompting is required: Do they show anger, frustration, annoyance, disappointment, sadness, irritation?* How often do each of these emotions occur? How do you feel about this?
- 2.3 What indifferent emotions would you say your teenager expresses towards you? [Do not prompt] *If prompting is required: Are they unconcerned, withdrawn, unresponsive, uninterested?* How often do each of these emotions occur? How do you feel about this?

### **3. General questions on parental goals**

- 3.1 How would you describe a good parent-teenager relationship? How important would this be to you?
- 3.2 How would you say you generally feel when your needs (ie, time to yourself, compliance from your teenager) are hindered by your teenager's needs or their behaviour? How often does this occur?
- 3.3 What are your views about training your teenager to be a productive and useful member of society; and how important do you really think this is?
- 3.4 How concerned are you with your teenager's happiness and other emotional needs? How does this compare with other concerns you may have such as whether they are well mannered or obedient to authority?
- 3.5 What role as parent do you take in relation to the safety of your teenager?
- 3.6 When and how do you discipline your teenager?
- 3.7 Do you have any other thoughts about your role as a parent that have not been covered by the above questions?

### **4. Questions designed to assess appropriate content for vignettes**

- 4.1 Can you describe to me an occasion when you were confronted with a challenging behaviour by your teenager? What did you say or do? Was this typical behaviour for your teenager? Why or why not?
- 4.2 Can you describe to me an occasion when you were confronted with a poor attitude from your teenager. What did you say or do? Was this an attitude your teenager usually has? Why or why not?



**Appendix 2**  
**Study 2: Questionnaire**

## Study 2: Part 1 (Mothers)

### Mothers' reports on the importance of parenting goals

- 1. Using the list below, consider the things that are important to you as a parent with a teenage child. Please decide from the 8 options below which is your first priority as a parent, your second priority as a parent, your third priority as a parent, etc., until you have rated all 8 options in order of importance.**

- |  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| 1. Safety issues concerning your teenager:                         | Priority: _____ |
| 2. Your teenager's manners:  | Priority: _____ |
| 3. A loving relationship with your teenager:                       | Priority: _____ |
| 4. Your own happiness/comfort in the relationship:                 | Priority: _____ |
| 5. Your teenager's happiness:                                      | Priority: _____ |
| 6. Mutual respect in your relationship with your teenager:         | Priority: _____ |
| 7. Encouraging your teenager to be a productive member of society: | Priority: _____ |
| 8. Obedience from your teenager:                                   | Priority: _____ |

- 2. People can have different understandings of what is meant by "a good relationship" with their teenager. Please rate the importance you place on both these definitions by circling a number from 1 to 5: (1 = unimportant; 5 = extremely important).**

1 2 3 4 5      How important to you is a loving and caring relationship with your teenager?

1 2 3 4 5      How important is it to you that your relationship with your teenager is based on mutual respect and compromise.

- 3. Please circle the number that best expresses your response in the following situation. Imagine you need your teenager to comply with your wishes but they were unwilling to do so, would you...**

1. Expect complete obedience anyway
2. Allow for partial obedience, without discussion
3. Discuss both viewpoints and negotiate a response



- 4. For each statement below circle a number from 1 to 5 that best describes how you feel about your daily life as a parent of a teenager (1 = Never; 2 = Rarely; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Usually; 5 = Always).**

- 1 2 3 4 5 I love looking after them
- 1 2 3 4 5 I can feel angry because they don't appreciate my needs or my sacrifices
- 1 2 3 4 5 Personal space is not an issue for me at all – it will come
- 1 2 3 4 5 Sometimes I feel worthless, I am only here to drop them off, pick them up, and cook their meals
- 1 2 3 4 5 I tend to put my needs on the back burner while the kids are at this age.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I'll do what ever they need – kids are kids only for a short time
- 1 2 3 4 5 I may feel annoyed, frustrated but not resentful because it is a choice I have made

- 5. Consider how you approach your teenager's safety. Please circle the number next to the statement that best describes your actions in a usual week. (1 = Not like me at all; 5 = Very much like me)**

- 1 2 3 4 5 I see their safety as my responsibility. I try to ensure they do not do things by themselves or with people I don't approve of
- 1 2 3 4 5 First I make them aware of the issues then I give them a lot of freedom to make their own decisions on what they will do
- 1 2 3 4 5 I check, with other parents, all arrangements around transport, supervision and safety. I decide whether it is suitable for them to go somewhere or not
- 1 2 3 4 5 I expect my teenager to give me complete details of their plans and then, if necessary, we will negotiate on who they go with and where they go
- 1 2 3 4 5 They are old enough to do what they want, when they want, with whoever they want. They make their own decisions and suffer whatever consequences come from those decisions

**In thinking about this situation and imagining that this was your teenager, what goals would you have as a parent in dealing with this particular situation?**

**Please indicate your response by circling a number between 1 to 5 for each of the following concerns. (1 = Unimportant; 5 = Extremely important).**

My major concerns in this situation would be:-

- |    |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | A loving and caring relationship with my teenager                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. | Assessing my own needs, wants and desires                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. | Compliance from my teenager without delay                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. | Ensuring my teenager's happiness  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. | Ensuring my teenager uses their manners                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. | Ensuring my teenager's safety   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. | Ensuring my teenager becomes a productive and<br>useful member of society | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. | A relationship with my teenager based on mutual<br>respect & compromise.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**Parent's interpretation of the situation.**

**i) If you discovered that your own teenager had been in a situation like this, would you say their behaviour was determined by:**

1	2	3	4
The situation (completely)	The situation (partially)	Their personality (partially)	Their personality (completely)

**ii) In a case like this, how intentional do you think their actions would have been?**

1 = Not at all      2 = Slightly      3 = Somewhat      4 = Completely

**Situation 2:** You have been busy all day. When you get home your teenager's stuff is all over the house. You have visitors arriving shortly and ask your teenager to tidy up quickly. They are on the computer playing a game they can't save and they say they will do it in a little while – but a little while will probably be too late.

**Mothers were asked to respond to the same questions as shown above.**

## Study 2: Part 2 (Mothers)

### Mothers' reports on their parental goals, attributions and emotions in specific situations

The second part of this questionnaire contains 4 specific situations that occur fairly regularly for parents in different households around Adelaide. Please imagine yourself in each of the situations and then answer the questions that follow. Please remember to answer the questions with only one teenager in mind – the one participating in this study.

For your consideration: the results from this study will be most reliable and useful if you give your *real reactions* to the situations not your ideal ones.

Thank-you for your participation. It is greatly appreciated.

**Situation 1:** You receive an absolutely *enormous* phone bill because your teenager has been using the mobile phone rather *excessively*. They do not have any money to help pay for their share of the bill.

**Imagine this situation occurred in your own household with your own teenager. How upset would you feel about it?** Please circle a number between 1 to 5 that best expresses how you think you would feel in this situation (1 = Would not feel that way at all; 5 = Feel it very strongly).

<b>Angry:</b>	(1 = Not angry at all; 5 = Very angry)	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
<b>Worried:</b>	(1 = Not worried at all; 5 = Very worried)	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
<b>Upset:</b>	(1 = Not upset at all; 5 = Extremely upset)	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>

**6. Read each of the statements below and consider how much you agree with them. Please circle from 1 to 5 your thoughts on your teenager's happiness (1 = Totally agree with this statement; 5 = Totally disagree with this statement)**

1 2 3 4 5      My teenager's happiness concerns me more than their manners because I can see how mannerly they are but I can't necessarily see how happy they are

1 2 3 4 5      Happiness comes out of good relationships and good manners are more likely if a person is happy. Therefore, my teenager's happiness is most important to me

**7. Read each of the statements below and consider how much you agree with them. Please circle from 1 to 5 your thoughts on your teenager's manners (1 = Totally agree with this statement; 5 = Totally disagree with this statement)**

1 2 3 4 5      I focus most on my teenager's manners because manners are an important sign of respect for others. My teenager can work out their own happiness

1 2 3 4 5      Sometimes my teenager's present happiness has to be forfeited for manners because manners will help them to get the most out of the world

**8. Consider how important it is for you that your teenager is a productive member of society. Please circle a number from 1 to 5 on how important it is to you that your teenager is a productive and useful member of society (1 = Not at all; 5 = Very much).**

1 2 3 4 5      It is very important to me that my teenager becomes a productive and useful member of society (i.e., achieves things for others in society, achieves things for themselves in society, or both)

**Situation 3:** Your teenager regularly stays in bed too long on a school morning and because they don't want to be late for school, they are always asking you to drive them. (This often threatens to make you late for your appointments.)

***Mothers were asked to respond to the same questions as shown above.***

**Situation 4:** Your teenager speaks very rudely to you when you ask them to help around the house. (They are tired because they had been to a sleep-over the night before.)

***Mothers were asked to respond to the same questions as shown above.***

## Study 2: Part 2 (Teenagers responses)

### Teenagers' perceptions of their mothers' parenting goals, attributions and emotions in specific situations

**Situation 1:** Your parent receives an absolutely *enormous* phone bill because you have been using the mobile phone rather excessively. You do not have any money to help pay for your share of the bill.

**Imagine this situation occurred in your own household with your own parent. How upset would they feel about it?** Please circle a number between 1 to 5 that best expresses how you think you would feel in this situation (1 = Would not feel that way at all; 5 = Feel it very strongly).

**Angry:** (1 = Not angry at all; 5 = Very angry) 1 2 3 4 5  
**Worried:** (1 = Not worried at all; 5 = Very worried) 1 2 3 4 5  
**Upset:** (1 = Not upset at all; 5 = Extremely upset). 1 2 3 4 5

**What would be your parent's major concerns in this *particular* situation?**  
**Please indicate your response by circling a number between 1 to 5 for each of the concerns below (1 = Unimportant; 5 = Extremely important).**

Their major concerns in this situation would be:-

1.	A loving and caring relationship with me	1 2 3 4 5
2.	Their own needs, wants and desires	1 2 3 4 5
3.	Compliance/obedience from me without delay	1 2 3 4 5
4.	Ensuring my happiness	1 2 3 4 5
5.	Ensuring I use my manners	1 2 3 4 5
6.	Ensuring my safety	1 2 3 4 5
7.	Ensuring I become a productive and useful member of society	1 2 3 4 5
9.	A relationship with me that is based on mutual respect & compromise.	1 2 3 4 5

**Teenagers' perceptions of parent's interpretation of the situation.**

- i) How do you think your parent's would interpret a situation like this one? Would they say your behaviour in a situation like this one was determined by:**

1	2	3	4
The situation (completely)	The situation (partially)	Your personality (partially)	Your personality (completely)

- ii) How intentional (on purpose) do you think your mother would think your actions were?**

1 = Not at all      2 = Slightly      3 = Somewhat      4 = Completely

**Situation 2:** Your mother has been busy all day. When she gets home your stuff is all over the house. She has visitors arriving shortly and ask you to tidy up quickly. You, however, are on the computer playing a game that you can't save and so you say you will do it in a little while – but a little while will probably be too late.

**Teenagers were asked to respond to the same questions as shown above.**

**Situation 3:** You regularly stay in bed too long on a school morning and because you are going to be late for school you often ask your mother to drive you there. (This makes them late for their appointments.)

**Teenagers were asked to respond to the same questions as shown above.**

**Situation 4:** You speak to your mother very rudely when she asks you to help around the house. (You are tired because you had been to a sleep-over the night before.)

**Teenagers were asked to respond to the same questions as shown above.**





**Appendix 3**  
**Study 3: Questionnaire**

### Study 3

#### Part One: General Parenting Goals

**Please note: throughout this questionnaire it is important that you answer the questions with one specific teenager in mind all the way through – that teenager should be the one who is also participating in this study.**

##### a) Loving and caring

1 2 3 4 5      How important is a loving and caring relationship with your teenager, to you?

1 2 3 4 5      How loving and caring is your relationship with your teenager?

##### b) Mutual respect/compromise

1 2 3 4 5      How important to you is a relationship with your teenager based on mutual respect and willingness to make compromises?

1 2 3 4 5      How respectful and co-operative is your relationship?

##### c) The level of compliance that is expected is:-

1 2 3 4 5      How importantly do you rate your teenagers' complete obedience to your requests?

1 2 3 4 5      How obedient is your teenager to your requests?

##### d) Own needs

1 2 3 4 5      I love looking after them

1 2 3 4 5      Personal space is not an issue for me at all – it will come

1 2 3 4 5      I tend to put my needs on the back burner while the kids are at this age

1 2 3 4 5      I'll do what ever they need – kids are kids only for a short time

##### e) Safety

1 2 3 4 5      I see their safety as my responsibility. I try to ensure they do not do things by themselves or with people I don't approve of

1 2 3 4 5      I check, with other parents, all arrangements around transport, supervision and safety. I decide whether it is suitable for them to go somewhere or not

1 2 3 4 5 I expect my teenager to give me complete details of their plans and then, if necessary, we will negotiate on who they go with and where they go

1 2 3 4 5 They are old enough to do what they want, when they want, with whoever they want. They make their own decisions and suffer whatever consequences come from those decisions

#### **f) Happiness**

1 2 3 4 5 My teenager's happiness concerns me more than their manners because I can see how mannerly they are but I can't necessarily see how happy they are

1 2 3 4 5 Happiness comes out of good relationships and good manners are more likely if a person is happy. Therefore, my teenager's happiness is most important to me

#### **g) Manners**

1 2 3 4 5 I focus most on my teenager's manners because manners are an important sign of respect for others. My teenager can work out their own happiness

1 2 3 4 5 Sometimes my teenager's present happiness has to be forfeited for manners because manners will help them to get the most out of the world

#### **h) Productivity**

1 2 3 4 5 It is very important to me that my teenager becomes a productive and useful member of society

### **Part Two: Mothers' reports on their parenting goals, attributions and emotions in specific situations**

The next few pages contain 4 specific situations that occur fairly regularly for parents in different households around Adelaide. Please imagine yourself in each of the situations and then answer the questions that follow. Please remember to answer the questions with only one teenager in mind – the one participating in this study.

For your consideration: the results from this study will be most reliable and useful if you give your *real reactions* to the situations not your ideal ones. Thank-you for your participation. It is greatly appreciated.

**Situation 1:** You receive an absolutely *enormous* phone bill because your teenager has been using the mobile phone rather excessively. They do not have any money to help pay for their share of the bill.

**Have you been in a similar situation as this one with your teenager?**

**Yes / No**

**Imagine this situation occurred in your own household with your own teenager. How upset would you feel about it? Please circle a number between 1 to 5 that best expresses how you think you would feel in this situation (1 = Would not feel that way at all; 5 = Feel it very strongly).**

<b>Angry:</b>	(1 = Not angry at all; 5 = Very angry)	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
<b>Worried:</b>	(1 = Not worried at all; 5 = Very worried)	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
<b>Upset:</b>	(1 = Not upset at all; 5 = Extremely upset).	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>

**In thinking about this situation and imagining that this was your teenager, what goals would you have as a parent in dealing with this particular situation?**

**Please indicate your response by circling a number between 1 to 5 for each of the following concerns. (1 = Unimportant; 5 = Extremely important).**

My major concerns in this situation would be:-

- |     |   |                  |
|-----|---|------------------|
| 1.  | A loving and caring relationship with my teenager                         | <b>1 2 3 4 5</b> |
| 2.  | Assessing my own needs, wants and desires                                 | <b>1 2 3 4 5</b> |
| 3.  | Compliance from my teenager without delay                                 | <b>1 2 3 4 5</b> |
| 4.  | Ensuring my teenager's happiness  | <b>1 2 3 4 5</b> |
| 5.  | Ensuring my teenager uses their manners                                   | <b>1 2 3 4 5</b> |
| 6.  | Ensuring my teenager's safety   | <b>1 2 3 4 5</b> |
| 7.  | Ensuring my teenager becomes a productive and<br>useful member of society | <b>1 2 3 4 5</b> |
| 10. | A relationship with my teenager based on mutual<br>respect & compromise.  | <b>1 2 3 4 5</b> |

**Parent's interpretation of the situation**

**ii) If you discovered that your own teenager had been in a situation like this, would you say their behaviour was determined by:**

1	2	3	4
The situation (completely)	The situation (partially)	Their personality (partially)	Their personality (completely)

**ii) In a case like this, how intentional do you think their actions would have been?**

1 = Not at all      2 = Slightly      3 = Somewhat      4 = Completely

**Situation 2:** You have been busy all day. When you get home your teenager's stuff is all over the house. You have visitors arriving shortly and ask your teenager to tidy up quickly. They are on the computer playing a game they can't save and they say they will do it in a little while – but a little while will probably be too late.

***Mothers were asked to respond to the same questions as shown above.***

**Situation 3:** Your teenager regularly stays in bed too long on a school morning and because they don't want to be late for school, they are always asking you to drive them. (This often threatens to make you late for your appointments.)

***Mothers were asked to respond to the same questions as shown above.***

**Situation 4:** Your teenager speaks very rudely to you when you ask them to help around the house. (They are tired because they had been to a sleep-over the night before.)

***Mothers were asked to respond to the same questions as shown above.***

