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# Parent-child connectedness : moving beyond traditional attachment theory

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PARENT-CHILD CONNECTEDNESS: MOVING BEYOND TRADITIONAL  
ATTACHMENT THEORY

by

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A Major Research Paper  
presented to Ryerson University

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in the Program of  
Early Childhood Studies

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**PARENT-CHILD CONNECTEDNESS: MOVING BEYOND TRADITIONAL  
ATTACHMENT THEORY**

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Master of Arts  
Early Childhood Studies  
Ryerson University

**ABSTRACT**

The present paper provides a systematic review of the current literature on Parent- Child Connectedness (PCC) through a critical analysis of existing research on the topic. By focusing on the numerous ways the construct of PCC extends beyond the scope of traditional Attachment Theory, this paper attempts to make PCC more relevant to individuals of varied age, gender, culture and socioeconomic backgrounds. An explanation of PCC as a dependent variable is presented as a means of strengthening the understanding of the construct, and an extensive evaluation of its theoretical foundations is included in order to operationalize this understanding. This paper concludes by suggesting the benefit in broadening the awareness of PCC and by providing recommendations for future research.

**Key Words:**

Parent- Child Connectedness

Family Strength

Mutuality

Transactional Model

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## Parent- Child Connectedness: Moving beyond Traditional Attachment Theory

Children require continual attention, support, intimacy and warmth from their parents, making the role of parenting one of the toughest and most continuous tasks to undertake. “Having children makes you no more a parent than having a piano makes you a pianist” (Levine, 1995). To fulfill the role of a parent requires the highest degree of personal commitment, responsibility, involvement and passion. The relationship between parents and children is delicate and qualitatively distinct from any other (Stacey, 1996). As a result, the bond between parents and children is both irreplaceable and most crucial to a child’s psychological and physical development (Lamanna & Riedmann, 2003).

In today’s society where stressful demands such as longer work hours and more expensive child care being placed on families; and where we acknowledge the existence of a growing variety of family types in existence, this crucial bond between parents and children is increasingly difficult to sustain in the conventional sense (Lamanna & Riedmann, 2003). However, parents and children who are in need of mutual support and affection, still form the basis of every family grouping. Parent-Child Connectedness (PCC) has emerged as a dynamic research area which investigates the relationship and interaction between parents and children.

PCC is an extension of the concept of attachment. Traditional attachment theory is a result of the work of Ainsworth and Bowlby (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). Bowlby argued that an infant develops an attachment with its primary caregiver, and that as a result, this primary caregiver serves as the infants secure protection base (Bowlby, 1969). Ainsworth expanded on Bowlby’s notion of attachment and noted three types: secure, avoidant and resistant attachment (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). Both Ainsworth and Bowlby believed that a child’s primary

caregiver is most commonly its mother. They argued that from birth a strong bond is formed between mother and child and that this bond lays the groundwork for the mother to shape a child's personality and character more than anyone else (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991).

Attachment theory can be summed up by the following statement,

"...observation of how a very young child behaves towards his mother, both in her presence and especially in her absence, can contribute greatly to our understanding of personality development" (Bowlby, 1969, p.3).

Research into parent-child connectedness explores the attachment that is established between parents and children, and the ways in which identities and concepts of self are shaped through interaction with one another (Stacey, 1996). PCC is concerned equally with the connectedness children develop and maintain with their mothers and with their fathers. PCC does not assume that a child's mother will always be its primary caregiver. The connectedness between parents and children has been recognized in the literature as a protective factor for a wide variety of health and social behaviours (Bean, Roller & Wilson, 2006). The results of many of these research studies in this area provide compelling support for the ways in which a strong connection between parents and children can safeguard children from the many challenges and risks apparent in today's world (Lezin, Roller, Bean, & Taylor, 2004). In fact, PCC has been found to serve as a protective factor for 33 different adolescent health behaviours, including those involving mental health, drug abuse prevention, academic achievement and violence prevention (Franke 2000; Markham et al. 2003; Lezin et al., 2004). However, many vital issues related to further delineating the concept of PCC still lack sufficient research attention (Lezin et al., 2004). This paper will explore the various ways in which PCC can offer a more interactive approach compared to traditional attachment theory. It will attempt to explain the various dimensions of PCC and to explain ways of identifying it as a construct. It will also address

questions related to the effects of varied family types and culture on the development of PCC. Research studies conducted with samples from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds will be taken into account in an attempt to specifically examine PCC's cultural relevance. Lastly, it will seek to provide an explanation of some possible ways for educators and practitioners working with families today to help raise awareness of PCC, and in turn help strengthen it by implementing appropriate interventions.

### Theoretical Framework

In order to establish the understanding of a construct, it is necessary to evaluate the theoretical foundations on which it is based. The construct of Parent-Child Connectedness combines elements of numerous theories, and by doing so encompasses and synthesizes a wide range of ideas. Therefore, it would not be accurate to say that PCC is based on a single theory, but rather that it can be analyzed and understood through the lens of any one of a number of relevant theories.

#### *The Transactional Model*

The transactional model provides one paradigm for understanding PCC. This model developed by Sameroff and Chandler in 1975 suggests that parent-to-child effects are not the sole causal factor of the quality of the relationship between parents and a child (Crouter & Booth, 2003). Instead, the transactional model recognizes that children have inherent attributes, and proposes that child-to-parent effects are just as salient a factor as parent-to-child effects, in the formation of a relationship between parents and their child (Sameroff, 2004). In other words, this model provides a developmental framework based on the notion that infant development is not a function of either the infant nor of its environment alone.

Another central concept of the transactional model is that the effect a child has on parents is just as important as the effect that parents have on a child (Sameroff, 2004). Congruent with the transactional model, PCC recognizes the active role that both parents and child play in developing and maintaining a strong and lasting emotional connection to one another. Mutual attachment is a central component of PCC and the quality of the emotional bond between parents and child, otherwise known as the degree of PCC, is measured based on the extent to which the emotional bond is mutually experienced and is felt to be mutually satisfying to parents and child.

According to the concept of PCC, both parent and child are held accountable for creating the trust which serves as the foundation for PCC (Lezin et al., 2004). In fact, in order for PCC to operate at all, both child and parent(s) must take an active role in fostering it. In other words, PCC must be bidirectional (Lezin et al., 2004). A strong consensus exists among researchers today that parent-child relationships are bi-directional (Stattin & Kerr, 2003). Family researchers note that effective family processes include elements of co-operation, co-ordination, and co-regulation between parents and children over time (Stattin & Kerr, 2003). Interestingly these three elements (co-operation, co-ordination and co-regulation) are also central components of PCC as noted by several researchers (see Duncan, 1999; Stinnet & Defrain, 1985; Lezin et al., 2004).

Ensuring that children are actively involved in specific behaviours helps them to take such an active role, and in turn helps strengthen levels of PCC in a family (Duncan, 1999). For example, if a child feels empowered to create the scheduling of shared activities for a given day or week in a household, it creates a sense of responsibility and accountability for that child towards family shared activity (Lezin et al., 2004). It is important to note that while child initiative is crucial, certain aspects of connectedness must come from parents. Such aspects include monitoring, supervision and boundary- setting (Bean et al., 2006).

#### *Developmental Perspective*

Numerous developmental theories also serve as a foundation from which the concept of PCC is formed. Kerr and Stattin (2003) note that both the affective quality of the parent-child relationship (indicated by warmth, support and emotional ties), and the regulatory-supervisory side are equally important. Although these two components of the parent-child relationship may seem to be competing ideas, what is important to note is the need for these two aspects to both

vary according to the age of the child (Kerr & Stattin, 2003). In other words, "... direct paternal supervision and control must gradually yield to co-regulation of behaviour and eventual self-regulation" (Menaghan, 2003, p. 153-154). Put another way, both nurturance and firm limits are necessary with young children in order to arrive at healthy adolescent outcomes (Perry, 2006).

Contemporary theories of child development stress the necessity of both parent and child effects operating in a bidirectional manner (Deater-Deckard, Atzaba-Poria & Pike, 2004). This parent-child mutuality begins early in infancy and should be sustained throughout the human lifespan (Deater-Deckard et al., 2004).

### *Bowen Family Systems Theory*

Bowen Family Systems Theory, developed in 1978 by Dr. Murray Bowen, is a theory of human behaviour which views the family as an emotional unit and uses systems analysis to describe the various interactions within the unit (Titelman, 1998). Systems analysis looks at the family as a social system in which each individual family member serves as a different element (Maccoby, 2003). Bowen theory operates based on the assumption that by nature family members are intensely emotionally connected (Titelman, 1998), and therefore exists as another fitting theoretical basis for PCC.

The concept of differentiation is crucial to Bowen theory in that it provides a way of characterizing the different patterns family members exhibit to show their emotional oneness and separateness (Titelman, 1998). Bowen asserts that every human being is born with an innate sense of "self". However, any given individual's family relationships during childhood and adolescence determine how much "self" they will develop (Titelman, 1998). In other words, the emotional interdependence in a family differs according to the levels of self- differentiation of its members. The more intense the emotional interdependence in a family, the less is the family's

capacity to successfully adapt to potentially stressful events (Titelman, 1998). Bowen explains this concept by stating that a person with a well-differentiated "self" recognizes their realistic dependence on their family members, but is able to stay calm and clear headed enough in the face of conflict, criticism, and rejection by others in their family. By doing so, they are able to distinguish between logical thinking based on facts, and thinking which tends to be overwhelmed and clouded by emotionality (Titelman, 1998). Such differentiation in thinking helps guide an individual's decision making about important family issues and ultimately assists someone in acting in the best interest of the family group, as a result of thoughtful choice, rather than as a forced response to relationship pressures.

#### *Family Dynamics Approach*

Applying the concepts of family dynamics to PCC, children are seen as the building blocks of the family's structure (McHale & Crouter, 2003). A child's existence alone provides opportunities for particular family patterns (McHale & Crouter, 2003). According to family dynamics theory, as a child develops throughout childhood and adolescence, its mother and father develop alongside as well. Therefore, the family structure in which a mother and father carry out their respective parenting roles, serves as the context for this adult development (McHale & Crouter, 2003). Family dynamics theory defines influence among family members as a set of reciprocal processes that unfold over time (Maccoby, 2003). In this way, instead of influence stemming from one source in a unilateral manner, each family member adapts to the general roles and functions within the family, as well as to that of each other family member individually (Maccoby, 2003). Research has shown that a child's compliance or resistance is dependent upon a history of parental responsiveness and most importantly, shared positive affect



from infancy onward (Kochanska, 1997). The degree of parental firmness has also been noted as a key factor in a child's parental compliance or resistance (Kochanska, 1997).

These four theories provide a framework around which the understanding of PCC can be based, since the central ideas of each of these theories directly relate to the theme of PCC. As demonstrated above, the Transactional Model, Developmental Perspective, Bowen Family Systems Theory and Family Dynamics approach all provide concrete explanations of the ways in which PCC can operate symbiotically within a family. Each of the ideas demonstrated in every one of these theories capture some of the diverse elements of PCC by demonstrating its transactional nature. In this manner and through combination, they all validate the importance of conceptualizing children, fathers and mothers equally as central and active agents within a family, and in the manifestation of PCC experienced by any given family. Therefore, each of these four theories exists as an appropriate theoretical basis for the construct of PCC.

## PCC and Attachment Theory

The purpose of this section will be to compare and contrast PCC and Attachment Theory. A central idea arrived at through this analysis is PCC's inclusion of more influential agents in the parent-child relationship as compared to what is typically described in Attachment Theory. As well, it is important to note the distinction between how the two theories understand attachment. PCC is concerned with the shared attachment between parents and child, whereas Attachment Theory is primarily concerned with the dependent attachment between mother and child primarily. Lastly, it is relevant to consider the focus of PCC (not equally seen in Attachment Theory) on the ongoing attachment between parents and child, beyond the early developmental years, and into adolescence and young adulthood.

*Bi-directional vs. unilateral approach*

Despite stemming from traditional attachment theory, PCC takes a more interactive approach and focuses on a broader scope of issues (Lezin et al., 2004). Traditional attachment theory, originally developed by John Bowlby in the late 1960's focuses primarily on the mother and child relationship and views the child as essentially dependent on its mother (Lamanna & Riedman, 2003). Like many early theories of socialization, attachment theory is a top-down theory in which children are seen as highly impressionable and parents as highly influential (Maccoby, 2003). Kuczynski describes traditional attachment theory as a unilateral model in which parents play the dominant and active role in determining parent-child relationships (Kuczynski, 2003). PCC on the other hand takes a bidirectional approach and acknowledges each of the mother, father and child equally as active agents in the process of attachment (Kuczynski, 2003).

*Mutual Attachment*

Instead of focusing on an infant's first attachment to its mother, however, PCC is concerned with the mutual attachment which develops from infancy and more importantly on the ways in which it is maintained and persists in an equally satisfying way for both parents and children (Lezin et al., 2004). Like attachment theory, PCC focuses on the role that parents play. However, unlike attachment theory which predicts that parents will either respond or not respond to cues from infants, PCC explores the ways in which parents and children influence each other, not only during the stage of infancy but also throughout the childhood and adolescent stages of development (Lezin et al., 2004).

Consistent with the notion of PCC, Maccoby (2003) argues that the parent-child relationship must be looked at as a social relationship in which causality of influence is located within the relationship rather than within any behaviour or characteristic of a single social partner. Compared to traditional Attachment Theory, PCC suggests the need to consider the child as actively involved in establishing and maintaining the connectedness that develops in a family. Additionally, through PCC the importance of more primary individuals in a child's life is noted, rather than just focusing on the mother.

### Defining Parent-Child Connectedness

Parent- child connectedness has been defined as a positive and high quality emotional bond between parents and child (Bean et al., 2006). This emotional bond is mutual in that it is felt by both parents and child and is sustainable since it is maintained over time as the child grows older (Lezin et al., 2004).

#### *Components of the Emotional Bond*

This emotional bond referred to as PCC, is characterized by the degree of mutual intimacy, closeness and warmth in the relationship between children and parents (Lezin et al., 2004). Therefore, parent-child connectedness is represented by a relationship of caring and trust in which children and parents enjoy spending time together, communicate easily, feel understood and loved, respect and support each other and share a sense of security and optimism about the future (Lezin et al., 2004).

A common misconception is to think of parent-child connectedness as being the same as parent-child communication. While communication is a key aspect of connectedness, it is important to note that it alone does not comprise connectedness (Rolleri, Bean & Ecker, 2006).

#### *Family Strength*

There are several synonyms for parent-child connectedness that exist in the literature. Some of the most common are mutual attachment, mutuality, parent-child bonding and family strength (Lezin et al., 2004). Among the synonyms for PCC, the term “family strength” is one of the most common. The notion of family strength is intended to help families draw upon the resources available to them in order to enhance the strength they possess as a family unit. By doing so, the family is able to increase the stability of the relational bonds between family members (Stinnet & Defrain, 1985).

*Characteristics of family strength*

Stinnet and Defrain (1985) identified five characteristics of family strength. These characteristics are: mutual attachment, quality time, effective communication, commitment and religious orientation. Research reveals that families that develop these five characteristics are better able to meet present day challenges, since the unity they develop makes it possible for them to draw upon each other as effective resources when needed (Stinnet & Defrain, 1985).

Other researchers have expanded upon Stinnet and Defrain's five characteristics of family strength, adding several more key components of family strength. Duncan (1999) notes nine essential components of family strength; namely, caring and appreciation, time together, encouragement, commitment, communication, adaptive ability, spirituality, community and family ties and clear roles.

Duncan's model developed in 1999 seems to differ in a few critical ways from Stinnet and Defrain's original model. Firstly, Duncan's substitution of the term "religious orientation" with "spirituality" stresses the importance of a value system in families. It may also be a more fitting term for families today, since many families do not consider themselves to be highly religious, but still describe themselves as maintaining a sense of spirituality (Walsh, 1999). This spirituality serves as the basis of the family belief system and helps to ground each family member's understanding of right and wrong, to establish children's respect for their parents, as well as a clear understanding of the role of each family member, and to help the family unit establish traditions, rituals and beliefs (Walsh, 1999). Research has also shown spirituality to play a stress- buffering role in helping individuals cope with stressful situations and life events (Maton, 1989). Since families constantly undergo stressful events and are continually faced with

challenging situations, an established sense of spirituality can play a key role in helping build strong families (Duncan, 1999; Walsh, 1999).

The second notable way in which Duncan's model of family strength differs from that of Stinnet and Defrain is its inclusion of the component termed "adaptive ability". Every family faces continual changes that bring with them, difficulty and even adversity (McCubbin, McCubbin, Thompson, Han, & Allen, 1997). Whether it is finding ways to overcome financial obstacles, struggling to balance time spent together with the varied work and school schedules of individual family members, reaching milestones, finding ways to adjust demands and expectations according to appropriate life stages of family members, managing each member's physical and psychological health, or finding ways to relate and cater to each other's changing interests, needs and desires, no family escapes the necessity of adapting (McCubbin, McCubbin, Thompson, Han, & Allen, 1997). When families possess the ability to adapt and succeed in maintaining established patterns of functioning after being challenged and confronted with risk factors such as those listed above, they are considered to be resilient (McCubbin, McCubbin, Thompson, Han, & Allen, 1997). It therefore seems logical for Duncan to include "adaptive ability" as an essential component of family strength.

A third important variation in Duncan's model is the component termed "community and family ties". It is more common than not for families today to develop and sustain strong ties with members of both their extended family and their community (Lamanna & Riedmann, 2003). Since the concept of PCC (or family strength) identifies the necessity of recognizing the contributions of extended family members and close members of the community in any given family's life (Lezin et al., 2004), the component "community and family ties" seems to be an appropriate addition to the understanding of what family strength is comprised of.

In order to design effective interventions for families at risk of low PCC, both researchers and practitioners have placed importance on defining the concept of family strength (Amatea et al., 2006). Research reveals that families considered to be resilient, demonstrate a similar process of family life. Four main categories of family life have been identified: the family's beliefs and expectations, the family's emotional connectedness, the family's organizational style and the quality of family learning opportunities (Amatea et al., 2006). In relation to strengthening PCC, particular emphasis in educational and professional interventions must be placed on the family's emotional connectedness. Attempts at increasing levels of PCC should focus on training family members to view each other as a source of mutual emotional support, value spending time with each other, celebrate good times and provide emotional support and reassurance in bad times, and to engage in open communication and collaborative problem solving (Amatea et al., 2006). Most importantly, children and parents need to be taught appropriate ways of expressing themselves emotionally (Amatea et al., 2006).

Perhaps it would be useful to consider the concept of *funds of knowledge* when designing interventions for families aimed at strengthening levels of PCC. The funds of knowledge perspective states that all families inherently as a unit possess strategic and cultural resources. These resources can be used to strengthen the bonds between family members (in other words to build "family strength") as well as to help immigrant families assimilate into the new culture that surrounds them while simultaneously enriching that new culture with the spirit and customs of their home culture and maintaining a feeling of home (Moll, Amanti & Gonzalez, 2005). According to funds of knowledge, the traditions and experiences of all families are educational and beneficial. They therefore must be valued and we must strive to incorporate and welcome all families into the educational process (Moll, Amanti & Gonzalez, 2005). Parent's and student's

suggestions can serve as valuable tools for the development of more inclusive and beneficial programs in schools for children and their families. Another important thing to remember is that although immigrant and refugee students and parents need to learn from us they also have much to teach us (Moll, Amanti & Gonzalez, 2005). Therefore, teachers must find ways to involve students and their parents together in both discovering and later sharing their particular family's funds of knowledge with the class (Moll, Amanti & Gonzalez, 2005).

### *Mutuality*

Since various factors have been shown to affect levels of PCC, one can characterize PCC as a dependent variable. The interactive relationship between PCC and other variables is demonstrated when altered environmental, emotional and social factors change the degree of PCC experienced (Deater-Deckard, 2004). Mutuality is a crucial component of PCC and is a term often used synonymously with PCC. Mutuality is explained as a dependent variable that differs between each parent-child pair in predictable ways (Deater-Deckard, 2004).

### *Dyadic Mutuality*

Mutuality has been operationalized using a model that includes three key factors. The first, parent and child co-responsiveness involves the responsiveness of both parent(s) and child and considers whether the responsiveness is immediate or conditional. The second factor, cooperation, involves important elements of communication such as discussion, planning and problem-solving. Reciprocity, the third factor looks at both verbal and non-verbal interaction and is concerned with such things as matching emotion, eye contact and turn-taking (Kochanska, 1997; Deater-Deckard et al., 2004). Deater-Deckard et al (2004) suggest that these interrelated dimensions are evident even in brief observations of parent-child interactions.

As stated by Deater-Deckard et al., (2004),



“Mutuality... represents a truly bidirectional construct, with evidence from family and behavioral genetic studies suggesting that child attributes, as well as parent attributes, causally contribute to the nature and quality of mutuality within each dyad” (Deater, Deckard et al., 2004, p. 610).

In this way, mutuality includes aspects of joint attention and behaviour and can be thought of as “international synchrony” (Deater-Deckard, 2004). This suggests that mutuality is part of the warm and emotionally secure relationship between parents and child, otherwise known as Parent-Child Connectedness (Harrist & Waugh, 2002). The connections between mutuality and children’s developmental outcomes are seen when children learn to self-regulate their behaviours and emotions through co-regulation of interaction with their parents (Deater-Deckard, 2004). This learning of self regulation occurs when children begin to interpret the warmth and reciprocity of the relationship they have with their parents (otherwise known as mutuality) as a measure of their own self-worth (Deater-Deckard, 2004).

Research has demonstrated correlations between mutuality and a range of factors such as socioeconomic status (SES), maternal personality, psychopathology (e.g. depression, schizophrenia), and cultural attitudes (Kochanska, 1997; Harrist & Waugh, 2002). For example, results of a 2002 study revealed that dyads in higher socioeconomic status households showed more mutuality (Harrist & Waugh, 2002). This finding replicated previous research (Deater-Deckard & O’Connor, 2000). This 2002 study set out to address the question of whether a Caucasian versus Indian British group difference in parent-child mutuality exists. Results of this study revealed a 13% variance in dyadic mutuality scores between Anglo and Indian participants. This effect was not a result of socioeconomic status. The researchers responsible for this study suggest that this difference is indicative of variations in cultural codes. In this way, they propose that English culture is more child-centered since it places emphasis on children’s autonomy and independence. Indian culture on the other hand is hierarchical, placing the father at the top of the

hierarchy followed by the mother and then the children. By doing so, the authors believe, Indian culture places emphasis on children's obedience rather than independence (Harrist & Waugh, 2002). Acculturation played a key role in these findings. Another study found that Indian parents who did not solely speak their native language with their children but also spoke English with them, who had emigrated earlier and who had less traditional cultural attitudes, more closely resembled the Anglo parents level of mutuality with their children, compared to Indian parents with stronger ties to their native culture (Harrist & Waugh, 2002).

### *Gender and Mutuality*

Surprisingly little is known about the ways in which parent-child mutuality differs for mothers and fathers. Many cultures position childbearing as an activity that is central to a woman's role in the family (Deater-Deckard, 2004). As a result of these cultural implications, the attitudes and behaviours of males may become affected, causing them to be less oriented toward childbearing than their female counterparts (Lamb, 1997). Research has revealed parental gender differences in the amount of contact mothers and fathers have with their children, as well as in the typical types of interaction that is seen between children and their mothers compared to their fathers (Deater-Deckard, 2004). Interestingly, studies of parent-child interactions in industrial countries show that even in homes where both mother and father work full-time, fathers spend less time interacting with their children (Lamb, 1997). Research has also shown fathers to typically not be responsible for the daily care of their children, such as driving them to and from school and appointments, feeding and bathing them (Lamb, 1997). As a result, the majority of the time fathers spend with their children is in playful interaction (Lamb, 1997).

Barber and Thomas (1986) found that parents tend to provide more companionship to the same-sex child. Results from their study show daughter's self-esteem to be predicted by general

support from their mothers and physical affection from their fathers. For sons on the other hand, self-esteem was predicted by companionship from their mothers and sustained contact with their fathers (Barber & Thomas 1986). This supports the notion that different types and frequency of interaction have different effects for children based on their sex.

What is quite compelling is that some studies show that despite these gender differences in parental interactions with children, fathers are just as capable as mothers to be sensitive, responsive and nurturing caregivers, and even to be the sole or primary caregiver when provided with the opportunity to do so (Harrist & Waugh, 2002).

Parenting roles and relationships between parents and children both differ by gender. This means that the relationships between mothers and daughters, fathers and daughters, mothers and sons, and fathers and sons are qualitatively different across cultures (Lezin et al., 2004). Since parenting roles are culturally defined, mothers have traditionally been, and continue to typically be the primary caregiver responsible for childrearing. As a result, mothers tend to spend more time with their children, while fathers are more likely to participate in play interactions with their children (Lamb, 1997). However, the question remains of whether this difference exists simply due to availability of opportunity and adherence to traditional gender roles. One must continue to investigate what the results of some research studies have already demonstrated. Namely, whether if provided with the opportunity to do so, fathers would prove capable at carrying out the primary caregiver role for their children (Harrist & Waugh, 2002).

Mutuality begins early in infancy and is maintained throughout adolescence and adulthood. Several components of mutuality emerge from early childhood. These include co-operation, prosocial interactive behaviour, matching of positive affect, co-responsiveness on behavioural measure and joint attention, captured by indicators such as eye contact (Deater-Deckard, 2004).

It is important to note that while mutuality has been found to be substantially correlated with positive affect (e.g., affection and warmth), mutuality and positive affect should be distinguished in measurement (Deater-Deckard, 2004). The combination of dyadic mutuality and positivity is associated with optimized social-emotional outcomes for children as well as competence in other social relationships, such as those with peers (Deater-Deckard, 2004). This means that while mutuality is a crucial component of the parent-child interaction and the resulting connectedness of this interaction, they are not simply one in the same. However, both PCC and Mutuality are concerned with the development of a mutually responsive and reciprocal pattern of interaction (Harrist & Waugh, 2002).

### Paternal and Maternal Influences

Traditional attachment theory places focus on a child's attachment to its mother. PCC on the other hand, considers a child's attachment to both its mother and father to be of equal importance (Lezin et al., 2004). However, a very limited amount of information is available specifically concerned with fathers, their connectedness with their children, and the ways in which it might actually differ from maternal connectedness.

#### *Father-Child Connectedness*

Current literature indicates that father-child connectedness has not been adequately studied (Bean et al., 2006). A possible explanation for this lack of information may lie in the prominence placed on the mother-child bond in traditional Attachment Theory, since it is traditional attachment theory that serves as the principal theoretical foundation for PCC. Another possible explanation may be an adherence to stereotypes of fathers as not being prominently involved in the social or emotional lives of their children, but serving a financial or playmate role in their children's lives instead (Bean et al., 2006). It seems evident that awareness must be raised of the ways in which paternal interaction, even if qualitatively different than maternal interaction, is positively correlated to a variety of children's health and behavioural outcomes (Bean et al., 2006). A common misconception in this regard seems to be that frequency of contact is the most important factor in determining whether or not contact provides a benefit in a child's life. Lezin et al. (2004), note however, that in 63 studies of non-resident fathers and children's well-being, emotional measures like closeness and support did not depend on the frequency of the contact. The key to PCC lies in the actual occurrence of the parenting behaviour, rather than in its frequency necessarily (Lezin et al., 2004)

The authors of a *Child Trends Research Brief* state that while mothers and fathers generally do interact differently with their children, strong similarities exist in the ways that both mothers and fathers influence their children. Striking similarities between mothers and fathers are particularly evident in the ways that they influence children to become socially competent, morally responsible, academically successful and mentally healthy individuals (Child Trends 2003). Both mothers and fathers that demonstrate warmth, support, school involvement and monitoring, consistently experience higher levels of connection with their children (Pruett, 1997).

### *Gender Socialization*

The Penn State Family Relationship Project points to several significant effects of gender socialization in the family (Maccoby, 2003). This ongoing longitudinal study involves two cohorts of dual-earner families. These families are of mixed ethnic backgrounds (McHale & Crouter, 2003). The first cohort includes families with a firstborn and second-born sibling in middle childhood (averaging 10 and 8 years of age respectively), and the second includes families with a firstborn and second-born sibling in adolescence (averaging 15 and 13 years of age respectively) (Maccoby, 2003). An important thing to note is that all families in this study are two-parent families with intact marriages (Maccoby, 2003). A benefit from this study is the ability to dedicate equal attention to mothers and fathers as well as to study two children in each family. This enables a comparison not only across different families but also within them. Findings from the Penn State Family Relations Project suggest that the sex of a child serves as an important moderator of the effects of family experiences. A specific link was found between father's attitudes (traditional or not) and children's personality qualities. In families with more traditional fathers, fathers' attitudes were linked in opposite ways to the personalities of girls and

boys. Girls displayed more traditionally feminine (expressive vs. instrumental) qualities and boys displayed more traditionally masculine (instrumental vs. expressive qualities). In comparison, in families with fathers that held less traditional attitudes, girls and boys were more similar, meaning that girls were less stereotypically feminine and boys were less stereotypically masculine (McHale & Crouter, 2003). These findings came from a study involving families of mixed ethnic backgrounds, and one can therefore conclude that they apply across cultures. What is important to note is that this link between father attitude and child personality was moderated by the sex of the child (McHale & Crouter, 2003). Applying the concepts of family dynamics to this finding, one can conclude that by virtue of their own characteristics, children help shape their own development as well as the course of family interactions (McHale & Crouter, 2003). This indicates that children's behaviour is not only shaped by the treatment of their caregiver(s) but their innate characteristics also shape their caregiver(s) behaviour. In addition to characteristics related to the sex of a child, various aspects of a child's innate disposition such as mood, intensity, reaction to stimuli, activity level and attention span (collectively known as temperament) have a direct correlation with the style of parenting that is adopted and the possible behaviour problems that result (Ainsworth, 1978).

### *Father-mother Interaction*

Since PCC operates based on a transactional paradigm, it is important to examine research on the relationship between spouses and to explore the ways in which characteristics of the spousal relationship in turn affect levels of PCC (Chambers, Schmidt & Wilson, 2006). Within the broad group of fathers, research has found that young, low-income fathers are an especially important subgroup to study since certain experiences unique to this type of fathers, directly affect levels of parental involvement (Miller, 1997). Numerous studies report that adolescent

fathers note the positive correlation between a strained relationship with their child's mother and lack of involvement with their child (Allen & Doherty, 1996; Cervera, 1991). For instance, results from a 1991 study show that unless some degree of commitment to the father-mother relationship exists, it is difficult for a paternal role to develop and be sustained (Cervera, 1991). Generally, research suggests that unless some degree of commitment to the father-mother relationship exists, the development of a paternal role is difficult (Cervera, 1991).

One factor found to directly affect both the quality of the father-mother relationship and paternal involvement in a child's life is readiness for childbirth (Chambers et al., 2006). A 2000 study examining the relationship between unintended first pregnancies and the mental health of 124 cohabitating couples, found that men who reported an unintended pregnancy also reported more symptoms of depression (Chambers et al., 2006). The couples participating in this study were of mixed origins. Interestingly, the men reporting more symptoms of depression explained their depressive symptoms partially as a result of difficulties in their couple relationship and inadequate social support (Chambers et al., 2006).

A 2006 study of 1,025 fathers reporting being in a romantic relationship with their child's mother, found that not all young, low-income fathers respond to the transition to parenthood in the same way (Chambers et al., 2006). The research does not indicate more specific characteristics of the sample of low-income fathers. Such information would be useful in analyzing the generalisability of the study. Three subtypes of young, low-income fathers were identified: ordinary (67%), overwhelmed (23%) and aggressive (10%). Findings from this suggest the importance of recognizing the diversity among fathers in order to develop and implement interventions that are better suited to their needs (Chambers et al., 2006). In other



words overwhelmed fathers need not be provided with the same aids as aggressive fathers, and vice versa.

Consistent findings across studies have revealed how characteristics of the father-mother relationship directly affect father involvement in a child's life (Chambers et al., 2006). Engrained in the concept of PCC is the notion that each parent plays a vital role in a child's life. PCC is understood as a dependent variable. One key factor directly affecting the level of PCC experienced in any given family is the degree of both paternal and maternal involvement. It therefore seems logical to suggest that further research is necessary to explore the ways in which greater involvement on the part of both sexes of parents can be fostered.

### Social and Cultural Influences

The research project conducted by ETR and its associates considered information accumulated from observations and discussions with infants, school-age children, adolescents, and their parents as well as educators and professionals working with children and their families (Lezin et al., 2004). All of these different populations, as well as their respective cultures, family structures and environments were taken into account (Lezin et al., 2004).

Similar to attachment theory, PCC considers the type of parenting style adopted to be of utmost importance (Lezin et al., 2004). In this way, parenting style is considered a central element of PCC. Research indicates that the optimal parenting style which correlates positively with high PCC is authoritative parenting (Lezin et al., 2004). With this style of parenting, high levels of warmth and responsiveness are effectively balanced with moderate levels of control and demandingness (Lamanna & Riedman, 2003; Steinberg & Morris, 2001).

#### *Authoritative Parenting*

Authoritative parenting has been linked by many studies to positive emotional adjustment, higher school performance, and overall maturity in childhood and adolescence (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). The results of many studies have indicated that children raised by authoritative parents consistently rated themselves and were objectively rated by others to demonstrate higher levels of social competence and maturity than children raised by permissive, authoritarian, neglectful or indifferent parents (Baumrind, 1991). Although the sample for the study investigating the influence of parenting style on adolescent competence and substance use (Baumrind, 1991), included 139 adolescents and their parents from a predominantly affluent, well-educated, Caucasian population, the positive effects of the authoritative parenting model appear to apply across different races and ethnicities both within the United States, as well as

across cultures outside of the United States (Steinberg 2001; Lezin et al., 2006). In fact, Steinberg (2001) argues,

“minority children raised in authoritative homes fare better than their peers from nonauthoritative homes with respect to psychosocial development, symptoms of internalized distress, and problem behavior.”

Findings from a study in which researchers utilized the Parental Bonding Instrument to measure psychological distress, noted that across cultures, the combination of high control and low caring by parents predicted psychological distress in children and that punishing control was linked to aggressive behavior (Chambers, Power et al. 2000). In other words, parents who rely on psychological control tend to criticize their children’s ideas, make them feel guilty, ignore them, threaten them, criticize them, fight and argue with them. Parents who employ a more authoritative parenting style instead tend to try and solve problems jointly with their children, and generally make their children feel unworthy and unvalued through combining warmth and control (Conger, 1997).

Bean et al., (2006), explored the issue of whether authoritative parenting applies across cultures further. In order to gain a more detailed understanding of how the individual components of authoritative parenting (maternal support, behavioral control, and psychological control) operate in different ethnic populations, these researchers examined the ways that each individual component of authoritative parenting related to adolescent functioning measures (such as self-esteem and academic achievement) in African-American and European- American adolescents. Findings indicated some cultural differences. For example, maternal support was a reliable predictor of self esteem and academic achievement in African-American adolescents, while behavioural control was a significant predictor of academic achievement and self esteem in European-American adolescents (Bean et al., 2006).

Findings such as this suggest the need for continued investigation on the interaction between culture and various parenting behaviours. It also suggests that with authoritative parenting, it is possible for all three of its dimensions to operate either in combination or individually when influencing adolescent behaviours (Lezin et al., 2006).

#### *Applicability to varied family types*

Compared to traditional attachment theory, PCC provides a more inclusive approach for understanding parents and children today. PCC does not only apply to two parent families of homogenous background (Rolleri et al., 2006). Instead, by recognizing how PCC operates in different types of families, the diversity in family structures as well as the variety of racial, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds currently seen in families today, is recognized (Lezin et al., 2004). Thus, PCC acknowledges the profound influence of the family unit, regardless of its structure or background of its members.

There are numerous ways in which PCC applies outside the context of traditional two parent families and extends to a wide variety of family types such as foster, adopted, families affected by divorce and single parent homes (Lezin et al., 2004). It is imperative to recognize the possibility of adults other than parents serving an important and even traditionally parenting role in a child's life (Bean et al., 2006). PCC encourages the recognition of these adults even though they are not in an official parenting role, and acknowledgement of the role they can play in providing guidance, warmth and the opportunity for an emotional bond to be formed. The point is that PCC comes from an adult who takes on a parenting role. This adult does not necessarily have to be the biological parent or someone who legally holds the title of parent through marriage, such as in the case of a step parent (Bean et al., 2006). Rather PCC supports the benefit in identifying and validating those adults who functionally fulfill a parenting role but may not

biologically or legally hold the title of parent. Often these adults are members of a child's extended family or close members of their community (Lezin et al., 2004).

Another important point is that even in the most dysfunctional of situations; some positive aspects of connection can be nurtured and sustained (Lezin et al., 2004). It is also important to note that even those who did not experience high levels of PCC in their own childhood, can promote and practice it in their families later in life (Lezin et al., 2004).

### *Poverty and PCC*

Whether experienced within a family or throughout the larger neighbourhood in which a family lives, poverty has the potential to affect levels of PCC (Lezin et al., 2004). In various influential ways, poverty directly impacts the dynamics within a family (Taylor et al., 2002). Poverty has been found to be positively correlated with increased levels of family stress and negatively correlated with the amount of time parents have available for family activities and supervision of their children (Taylor et al., 2002). This means that poverty is related to PCC primarily through its impact on the quality of parenting (Lezin et al., 2004).

Research shows the cognitive stimulation provided to children to be less in families living in poor neighbourhoods, families with lower incomes, families where the level of maternal education is lower and single parent households (Klebanov, Brooks-Gunn et al., 1997). Research has also shown the communities with the highest child maltreatment rates to be those with conditions including poverty, unemployment, single parent female-headed households, racial segregation, abandoned housing, and population loss (Coulton, Korbin, Su, & Chow, 1995).

### *Mediation of Poverty Effects*

Despite these findings on the adverse effects of poverty on family dynamics and parenting behaviour, it is possible to develop and maintain high levels of PCC even in the face of such

obstacles (Lezin et al., 2004). Jarrett (1995) found that in order to overcome the risks associated with living in poverty, parents actively monitored their adolescent's behaviour and social partners, and made a conscious effort to create supportive relationships both within and outside the home. Other findings focusing on African American families living in poverty, demonstrate a benefit in parents discussing the necessity of earning good grades in school and finding a good job in the future with their adolescents in order to overcome the obstacles experienced as a result of poverty (Jayaratne, 1993).

Parents' supportive behaviour has shown to be a key factor in buffering the effects of poverty for families of various cultural backgrounds (Sampson & Laub, 1994; Klebanov, et al., 1997). Often when faced with poverty, parents become less affectionate and accepting of their children, thereby increasing the risk of their children's adjustment problems (Sampson & Laub, 1994). Research seems to suggest that by providing structure, flexibility, connectedness, and social and economic resources, families can serve the role of buffers in stressful circumstances (Lezin et al., 2004). As stated by Walsh (1998) families can function as "shock absorbers" in even the most difficult situations (Lezin et al., 2004). Drawing on the concept of family strength, if able to persevere in the face of adversity, families demonstrate the knowledge of how to use one another as useful resources. By doing so, they become aware of the strength they possess as a family unit. In this way, adversity can actually provide an avenue through which relational bonds within the family unit are strengthened and secured (Duncan, 1999).

### *Culture and Parental Involvement*

The role of home language maintenance is an important one to consider when evaluating the impact of culture on PCC. Parents have a unique role to play in maintaining the home language. Parents maintain the home language by using it constantly with children when

conversing about school, peers, and life in general (Cummins & Swain 1986). In fact research has shown maintenance of the home language to be a predictor of better learning of the English language and eventual bilingualism for children (Cummins & Swain 1986). If parents are excluded from the daily education children receive while at school, the gap between parents and their children can widen. Without any structured incorporation of home and school life, the time spent at school can actually act as a catalyst to the separation of parent from child (Cummins, 1986). This may lead the youth to believe their parents have little to offer in terms of their education. Schools can contribute to the maintenance of home language and in turn communication between parents and children, by building home language library collections and by providing lists of places where parents and children can attend classes in their home language in their neighbourhood (Cummins, 1986). In addition, if children, throughout their academic career, are encouraged to share what they learn in the school systems, parent-child communication will most likely improve. This not only keeps the lines of communication open between children and their parents throughout youth, but in turn offers the parents a clearer window into their children's lives and paves the way to better parenting (Cummins, 1986).

Cross-cultural studies are increasingly focusing on variations between cultures in the ways parents interact with their children (Harkness & Super, 1992). Since research has often failed to recognize the culturally bound characteristics of father interaction, the emergence of ethnographic data that provides a culturally sensitive approach to understanding the involvement of fathers in family life is extremely important (Chambers et al., 2006). Research also suggests the need to re-evaluate the stereotypical social, economic and cultural assessments of low-income fathers and the need to consider the within-group variability among this subgroup of fathers (Roy, 1999). In one study, researchers found that contrary to general stereotypes about

African-American, low-income fathers, many of these fathers do provide financial support, are employed and do engage in childcare activities (Roy, 1999). Findings such as this stress the necessity of considering the diversity that exists among low-income, unwed, nonresident fathers (Chambers et al., 2006). Since shared activity between parents and children is an essential element of PCC it is important to consider findings such as this, as evidence of the need to re-evaluate current methods of analysis of parent-child interaction.

Rather than steadfastly relying on established stereotypes of culture or gender when assessing the interaction between a child and their parent(s), a great benefit seems to lie instead in individualizing this assessment to each specific family, as well as in broadening the scope of the activities believed to constitute positive and beneficial interaction between a parent and child.



## Identifying PCC

In order to arrive at meaningful conclusions about parent-child connectedness and to effectively design interventions aimed at strengthening it, research must extend further than defining the concept and must identify ways of measuring it.

### *Essential Components of PCC*

As means of gaining insight into how PCC operates, a variety of researchers have collaborated in identifying the following main components of PCC (Lezin et al., 2004): attachment/bonding, warmth/caring, cohesion, support/involvement, communication, monitoring/control, autonomy granting and maternal/paternal characteristics.

Other researchers have developed different components they believe to be central to the concept of PCC. Brook, Whiteman et al (1993) noted four essential components of the mutual attachment process between parents and children that contribute to high parent-child connectedness. Identification refers to the degree to which the child identifies with its parents' values. Lack of conflict, is characterized by joint problem solving and open communication between parents and child. Warmth is concerned with the presence of an intimate, affectionate and enduring bond between parents and child. The final component, involvement, indicates how "child centered" the parents are (Brook, Whiteman et al., 1993). According to this understanding, the presence of each of these factors plays a role in creating a warm emotional climate in the family and in turn positively affects the development of parent-child connectedness (Brook, Whiteman et al., 1993). When families have such a warm emotional climate, they are referred to as having family strength (Moore, 1993).

It appears that according to Brook, Whiteman et al (1993), a warm emotional climate is the fundamental condition required for the development of PCC. Each of the four components they

have identified (identification, lack of conflict, warmth and child- centeredness) are necessary contributing factors to a warm emotional climate and therefore, their existence or non-existence affects the level of PCC experienced. Lezin et al., (2004) on the other hand have identified eight more general components of PCC. They see these eight components as contributing to the existence of a positive and high quality emotional bond between parents and child (otherwise known as high levels of PCC). Both groups of researchers describe PCC in a way that reciprocation is set up as the crucial principle underlying all components of PCC. Despite the different terms used for each of the components of PCC, the need for mutual communication and a shared sense of family roles and functions, seems to be consistently noted.

#### *Centralizing the Importance of Trust*

In 2004, Educational Training Research Associates (ETR) developed a model to illustrate how the process of PCC operates (See Appendix A). Trust lies at the core of the model, as the necessary foundation from which PCC develops (Lezin et al., 2004). Trust is seen as stemming from the existence of four key elements. Namely, physical and emotional support, protection, openness and encouragement (Lezin et al., 2004). According to this model, when these four elements are effectively communicated to a child by the parent(s), a climate of trust is created where children and parent(s) communicate positive reactions to one another in a bidirectional manner (Lezin et al., 2004). Several other factors contribute to the climate of trust such as shared activity and structure. Interestingly these other factors can also create conflict in the parent-child relationship. However if conflicts are negotiated and resolved in a mutually satisfying and effective manner, they can in fact strengthen the climate of trust experienced by parent(s) and child (Lezin et al., 2004).

## Measuring PCC

*BDI Logic Model*

The Behavior-Determinant-Intervention (BDI) Logic Model is a template for graphic depictions that demonstrate causal mechanisms behind behaviours aimed at achieving a health goal (Rolleri, Bean & Ecker, 2006). In 2006, ETR created a BDI Logic model that depicts the seven specific parent behaviours that establish, maintain and/or increase levels of PCC (Rolleri et al., 2006). By organizing the BDI logic model in this way, the specific behaviours that promote the achievement of PCC as a health goal are clearly depicted (See Appendix B), and the determinants of parent behaviour are seen as protective factors (Rolleri et al., 2006).

Included in the Logic Model created by ETR is a list of behaviour determinants ranging from 7-46 in number per behaviour (See Appendix C). This BDI Logic Model was created based on data collected from three years of research on PCC which included an extensive literature review, focus group study conducted in five cities with African American and Latino parents and teens living in low socioeconomic areas, an online survey about PCC with adolescent reproductive health professionals, detailed interviews with adolescent reproductive health practitioners and site visits with the staff working in programs with a specific PCC focus (Rolleri et al., 2006). Unlike other logic models, this model designed by ETR is unique in that it sets up PCC as the health goal itself, rather than as a determinant of behaviours.

A limitation of this BDI Logic Model is its sole focus on what parents can do to establish, maintain and/or increase levels of PCC. Since PCC is understood as a mutual emotional bond between parents and child, it is important to also identify the specific behaviours that children and teens can engage in to establish, maintain and/or increase levels of PCC. ETR Associates is currently conducting research aimed at developing such a BDI Logic Model and intends to have it available in the near future (Rolleri et al., 2006). In theory, this model will further the

understanding of the bidirectional nature of PCC and will provide concrete behavioural exams for children and teens of how they can be accountable for establishing, maintaining and increasing levels of PCC.

### *Variance in Measurement Tools*

Since no single scale designed specifically to measure PCC exists, numerous researchers have developed different measurement scales for the construct of PCC and its related elements. A total of thirteen different scales that measure constructs closely linked with PCC exist (Lezin et al., 2004).

Furman and Buhrmester (1995) developed a Parent-Child Relationship Questionnaire (PCRQ) with both a parent and a child version. Both the child and parent version consist of 57 items each (See Appendix D). Both child and parent respondents are asked to rank each item on a scale ranging from 1 to 5 (1 being “hardly at all” and 5 being “extremely much”). This questionnaire is useful in that it provides a separate form for children and parents to each fill out. In this way, questions specifically designed for both children and parents to each be able to understand and find meaningful are included. A limitation of this questionnaire is its inclusion of questions more applicable to individuals of middle to high socioeconomic status as opposed to those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds as well as to those parents and children of Western origins. For example, the question, “Some parents want their children to spend most of their time with them, while other parents want their children to spend just some of the time with them. How much does this parent want you to spend most of your time with him or her?” seems to be very culturally bound. Another question, “How much does this parent not let you go places because he or she is afraid something will happen to you?” appears to be highly dependent on the socioeconomic status of a family (Furman & Buhrmester, 1995).

In their study on teen perceptions of parent-child connectedness, Ackard et al (2006) chose to measure PCC on two dimensions. The first, “opinions valued” placed emphasis on how important participants considered parental opinions to be as well as on comparing the value of parental opinions to opinions of friends. The second dimension of PCC, “communication and caring” quantified the degree to which participants felt they could talk to their parents about problems, as well as how much they felt their parents cared about them (Ackard et al., 2006).

Numerous scales, designed to measure constructs closely related to or part of PCC, have been used in studies investigating PCC in children and adolescents. In their study on differential trajectories of parent-child relationships and psychosocial adjustment in adolescents, Noack and Pushner (1999), used a scale developed by Hofer et al in 1992. The scale developed by Hofer et al., consists of eleven items and measures both connectedness and separateness (See Appendix E). The five items concerned with connectedness ask questions related to the socio-emotional bonds linking parents and adolescents (Noack & Pushner, 1999).

Dwairy et al. (2006) administered the Multigenerational Interconnectedness Scale (MIS) to 2, 893 Arab adolescents in eight different Arab societies in their study investigating adolescent-family connectedness among Arabs (Dwairy, Achoui, Abouserie, & Farah, 2006). The MIS, developed by Gavazzi and Sabatelli (1987) contains three subscales measuring emotional, financial and functional connectedness between adolescents and family (See Appendix F). The Emotional and Functional Connectedness subscales are the MIS subscales most relevant to the concept of PCC. The Emotional (or psychological) Connectedness subscale is a 15 item subscale that evaluates the participant’s degree of emotional dependence on family members as well as their need for family approval., while the Functional Connectedness subscale is an 8 item subscale that assesses the sharing of daily routines within the family (Dwairy et al., 2006). The MIS scale is useful in that it separates questions related to emotional connectedness, financial

connectedness and functional connectedness. In this way it may be easier to isolate what specific factors are affected by and even dependent on socioeconomic status and cultural factors.

A clear benefit lies in the development of a scale, specifically designed to measure PCC. ETR recognizes the advantage of developing such a scale and is therefore currently pursuing funding to do so (Bean et al., 2006). Some researchers suggest the benefit in educators and practitioners working directly with children and their families, contributing their thoughts on what a scale designed to measure PCC should like and what specific items it should include (Bean et al., 2006).

### The Power of PCC

Results from the above-mentioned 2006 study on teen perceptions of PCC, indicated that an overwhelming number of participants (75.5% of girls and 82.2% of boys) valued their parents' opinions over their friends when it came to serious decisions; and that 88.6% of girls and 90.8% of boys felt very much cared about by their parents (Ackard et al., 2006). Schools with diverse racial/ethnic and socioeconomic profiles were targeted for participant recruitment in order to increase diversity within the sample (Ackard et al., 2006). These results indicate high levels of PCC experienced by participants. For both male and female participants, low PCC, characterized by valuing friends' opinions over parents and feeling unable to talk to parents about problems, was strongly associated with scores indicating body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem and depression (Ackard et al., 2006).

Clark & Ladd (2000) conducted a study investigating how features of the parent child relationship affect children's social development and particularly their relationships with peers. Results demonstrated that children experiencing a high level of PCC tended to have a strong prosocial orientation which resulted in them having more mutual and harmonious friendships and higher levels of peer acceptance in kindergarten (Clark & Ladd, 2000). Other studies also focusing on connections between the parent child relationship and peer relations, found that high PCC correlated positively with peer popularity while low PCC correlated positively with peer rejection (Harrist et al., 1994).

Results from a study conducted in 2005, supported the notion that parent-child relationships are a source of strength that can foster more positive outcomes for children and young adults of risk (Orbuch, Parry, Chesler, Fritz & Repetto, 2005). In this study, childhood cancer survivors who reported more positive parent-child relations scored higher on selective

measures of quality of life (Orbuch et al., 2005). These results indicated that PCC is particularly important to psychological and spiritual aspects of survivors' quality of life (Orbuch et al., 2005). Emotional connections and openness between parents and childhood cancer survivors were noted as particular aspects of PCC that played a strong role in buffering against the adverse psychological effects of childhood cancer (Orbuch et al., 2005). Many studies show dysfunctions in parenting and family dynamics to be risk factors for later child maladjustment (Borkowski, Ramey & Bristol-Power, 2002; Collins et al., 2000; Maccoby, 2000).

Mutuality between parent and child has also been associated with optimal social-emotional outcomes. These social-emotional outcomes include indicators of child adjustment that are both externalizing (such as lower levels of aggression and delinquency) and internalizing (such as lower levels of depression and anxiety). as well as indicators of social competence (such as successful peer relationships) (Deater-Deckard, 2004). Interestingly, research has also shown mutuality to be positively correlated with the development of a conscience (Kochanska, 1997).



## Conclusion

### *Importance of the PCC Paradigm*

Consensus exists around the notion that children are the building blocks of a family's structure (McHale & Crouter, 2003). According to the concept of PCC, attachment is a gradual bonding process beginning in early childhood and lasting throughout adolescence and young adulthood (Lezin et al., 2004). Through PCC, families are provided with a stable emotional bond characterized by positive affect. This bond in turn allows families to organize the placement of structure needed for parents to regulate children's behaviour and subsequently teach them to self-regulate their own behaviour (Lezin et al., 2004). It is also through this bond that children are encouraged to develop psychological autonomy and to feel welcome to express their developing thoughts and feelings to their parents (Lezin et al., 2004). The concept of PCC takes into account the variance in the form this bond between parents and child can take by recognizing the influence of culture, individual temperament and family history (Lezin et al., 2004). By doing so, PCC provides a current and inclusive framework from which to assess the parent-child relationship. Numerous studies document the protective value of PCC. As noted by Blum and Rinehart (1997), when the number of parents in a household, the income level of a family, and the ethnicity of a family are controlled for, children who report feeling connected to a parent are protected against many different health risks. These risks include emotional distress, suicidal cognitions and behaviours, drug use, violence and early sexual activity.

### *Implications for Intervention*

Since PCC has been demonstrated to be such an influential topic of interest, more focused interventions aimed at increasing the level of PCC experienced in families seem to be necessary. Parental involvement has shown to be a strong predictor of children's social, emotional,

academic and behavioural outcomes and therefore, an important factor in the development and maintenance of PCC (Jeynes, 2003). Research consistently finds that parental social networks are directly related to family functioning and child well-being (Lezin et al., 2004). This means that the larger a parent's social network, the greater their involvement both at home and at school (Sheldon, 2002). This suggests the need to identify isolated parents and make efforts to connect them to others in their school and community networks (Lezin et al., 2004).

Educators and professionals working with families must make more of an effort to move beyond a reliance on traditional attachment theory when designing interventions for families aimed at strengthening PCC (Orbuch et al., 2005). Conscious effort must be made to not adhere to stereotypes of mothers as the primary caregivers for children and to instead include both mothers and fathers directly in their children's development (Orbuch et al., 2005). Interventions tailored to the particular characteristics of the individuals involved would be more effective in preventing issues such as lack of communication between spouses, poor money management, anger and frustration, which would in turn increase levels of parental involvement in children's lives (Chambers et al., 2006).

An important direction for intervention may lie in recognizing the profound influence of adults other than parents, in a child's life, in circumstances where both parents or even one parent may not be present or involved in a child's life (Lezin et al., 2006). It seems that validating these individuals and their efforts to provide the warmth, closeness, support and guidance traditionally associated with a biological or legal parent, would serve to benefit a large number of both children and adults (Bean et al., 2006). In order to do so, it is necessary to rely less heavily on traditional definitions of family and parenting and to focus instead on ways in which the positive qualities directed at children by adults in their extended family or close

community, create a relationship of trust and a strong foundation for children to rely upon for guidance and support as they move toward the transition into adolescence (Lezin et al., 2004).

Interventions need to be aimed at helping families clearly define the roles among their members. Families that are organized with appropriate role relationships among members tend to experience high levels of emotional connectedness (Amatea et al., 2006). Families in which parents maintain a clear leadership role but still provide children with appropriate amounts of autonomy and involvement in decision making, or in other words exercise authoritative parenting, consistently report high levels of PCC (Lezin et al., 2003 & Amatea et al., 2006; Steinberg, 2001). Several researchers note the importance of older children participating in rule-making (Steinberg, 2001; Duncan, 1999). A family's ability to include an older child in rule-making is part of adaptive ability, one of the components of family strength suggested by Duncan (1999).

There is consensus surrounding the notion that adolescence is a major developmental milestone that can be very challenging for families (Steinberg, 2001). In order to assist with parent-child relations through adolescence, researchers recommend several key actions. First, in order to better understand a child's behaviour, parents need to obtain basic information about the developmental changes of adolescence (Steinberg, 2001). Secondly, in order to adapt to their child's changing needs, parents need to have basic information about effective parenting during the adolescent years (Baumrind, 1991). For example, research has determined that although authoritative parenting styles are effective both in childhood and in adolescence, there is an added dimension referred to as psychological autonomy granting that is crucial in adolescence. This is the extent to which parents permit adolescent sons and daughters to develop their own opinions and beliefs (Steinberg, 2001). The opposite of psychological autonomy granting, known

as psychological control, can become intrusive for adolescents who interpret this parental behaviour as overprotective (Steinberg, 2001). Lastly, in addition to understanding how individual adolescent children are changing, parents need to understand how they are changing as well as how their family is changing as a unit (Baumrind, 1991)

Steinberg, a leading family researcher, made the following statement to the Society for Research on Adolescence in 2001:

“We can stop asking what type of parenting most positively affects adolescent development. We know the answer to this question...The challenges ahead involve finding ways to educate adults with regard to how to be authoritative, and help those who are not authoritative to change” (Steinberg, 2001, p. 13).

Educators and practitioners must also focus on helping families realize the everyday things they can do to increase the degree of PCC experienced. Reinforcing the importance of shared family rituals, celebrations and traditions no matter how simple or complex can help to strengthen PCC. Daily shared activities such as storytelling, grooming, grocery shopping, cooking, serving and eating meals together, joking and even television watching are often neglected but can in fact have powerful influences in the development and maintenance of PCC (Amatea et al., 2006).

#### *Recommendations for Future Research*

Greater attention must be paid to the concept of family strength, and the recognition that no single attribute makes a family strong. Research must continue to focus on identifying the combination of characteristics that is crucial to the development of family strength (Child Trends, 2002). Unfortunately, a scale that explicitly measures PCC does not exist. Because the only current measure of PCC is thirteen individual scales that merely measure a number of

constructs closely associated with PCC (See Appendix H), it would also seem beneficial to develop a universal measurement tool specifically for the construct of PCC itself.

In their study evaluating the impact of a parent education program, Toumbourou & Gregg (2002) found that school-based parent education appeared to reduce risk factors for youth suicide. These results were consistent for both youth whose parents participated in the intervention as well as for those who had not directly participated but had been indirectly affected through friendship networks and communication among parents. Communication repeatedly appears in the literature as a topic that needs to receive greater attention in family-based counseling and support interventions (Bean et al., 2006).

In order to raise awareness of what PCC is as well as the ways in which it applies to a variety of families with different structures and ethnic backgrounds, it would be advantageous to develop a large-scale public health campaign with the objective of educating parents, children, adolescents, educators and practitioners. A logical place to start would be to promote PCC intervention activities (See Appendix G(a) and G(b)) in schools and community social settings, as a way of beginning the process of PCC becoming a common term, utilized and considered daily by parents, children, educators and practitioners alike.

Although research is increasingly considering the effects of culture, there still is a noticeable gap in the literature surrounding this topic. It would be valuable and appropriate for future research to consider how measures of PCC may be more fitting for white populations than others, since they may have been designed for white populations to begin with (Lezin et al., 2004). If this is in fact the case, research must investigate how these measures can be made more inclusive and culturally sensitive by considering the different manner in which culture affects the manner by which individuals conceptualize, define and understand PCC.

Another noticeable gap in the present literature exists on the topic of paternal involvement and influence in children's' lives. Further research is necessary to bring the amount of knowledge on the topic of paternal involvement to one that equals that of maternal involvement (Bean et al., 2006). A further benefit would lie in detecting ways that fathers can and should remain involved and influential in a child's life even in the face of demanding work schedules or in the case of divorce, and in designing interventions aimed at helping them do so.

Families must be seen as alliances. There is no friendship and no love, like that of a parent for a child and of a child for its parent. In the words of Theodore Reik, "Romance fails us and so do friendships, but the relationship of parent and child, less noisy than all the others, remains indelible and indestructible, the strongest relationship on earth" (Lamanna & Riedmann, 2005, p. 67). It is therefore, appropriate to conclude that we would derive a substantial benefit in devoting further research to exploring the influential topic of Parent-Child Connectedness in order to further reinforce this unparalleled relationship. When necessary resources are accumulated to widely disseminate information on what PCC is and how it can be strengthened, family life and society at large will surely benefit. If families in fact constitute the cornerstone of society, then the existence of strong and highly connected families will ensure the ongoing viability and survival of a strong society.

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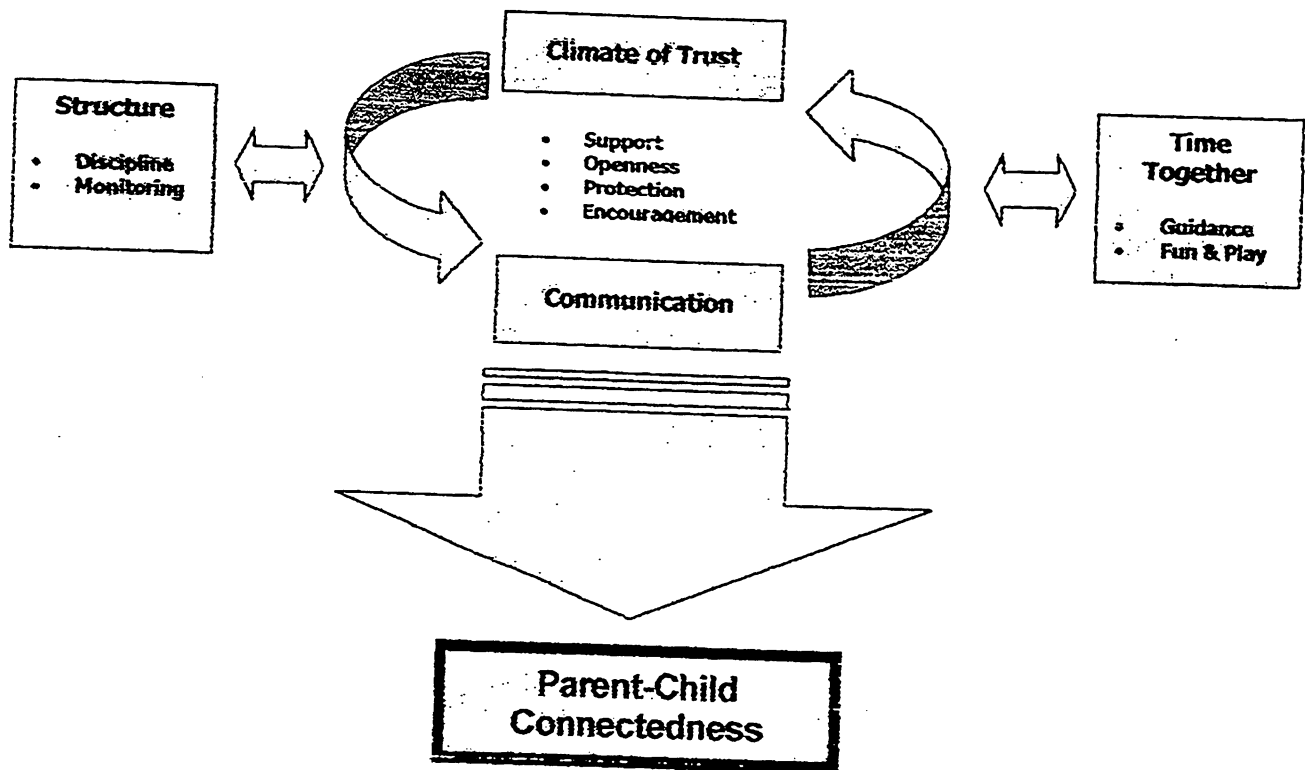
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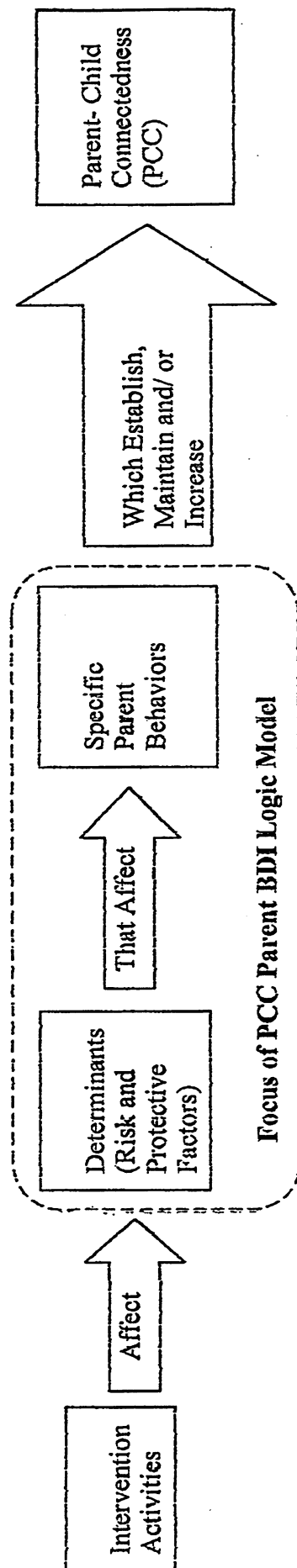
## Appendix A

### *ETR Diagram of the PCC Process*



## Appendix B

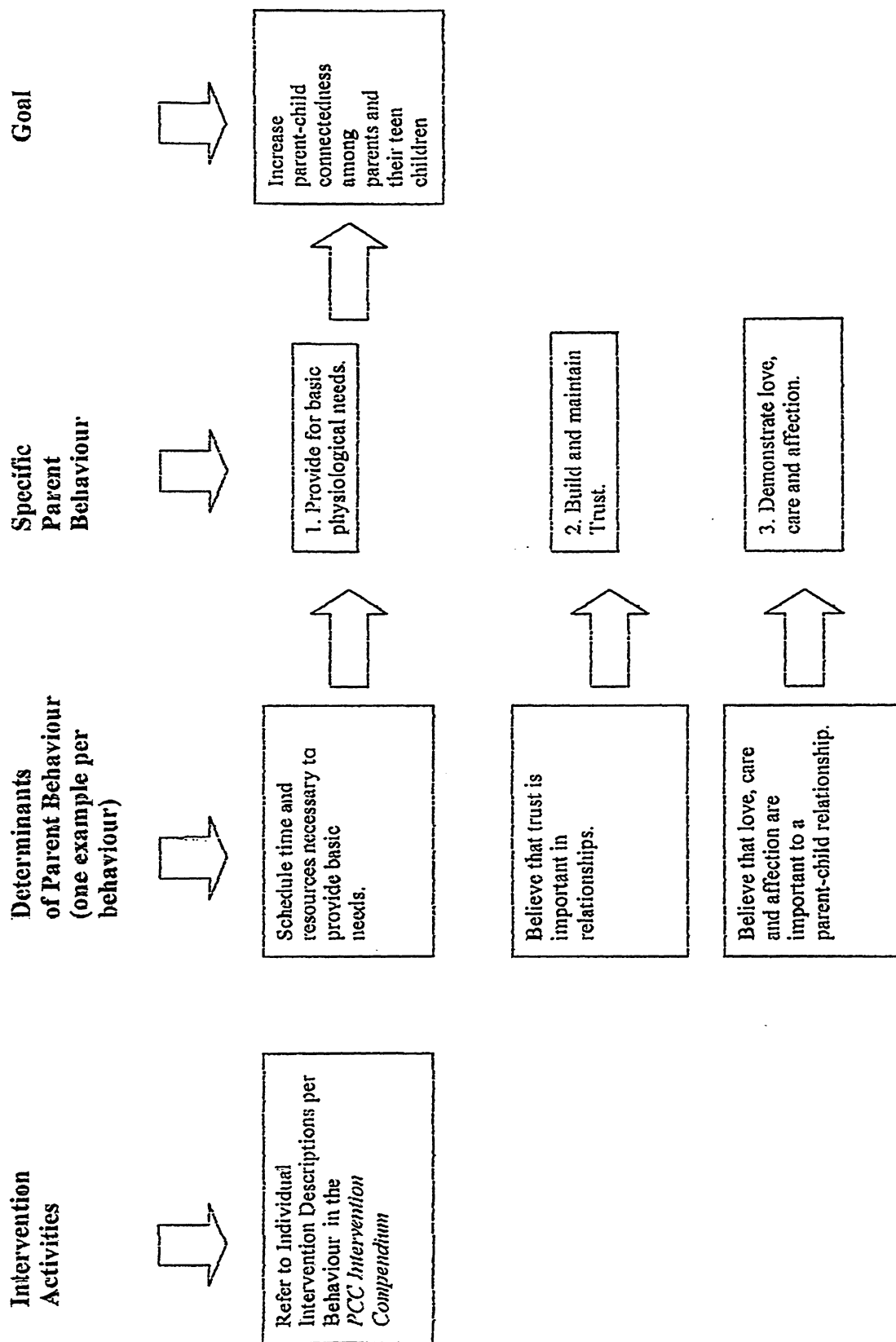
### *A Logic Model of Parent-Child Connectedness*



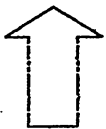


## Appendix C

### *Parent-Child Connectedness BDI Logic Model*

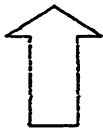


Obtain sufficient financial resources to support shared activity in addition to meeting basic physiological needs.



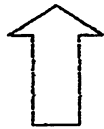
4. Share activity.

Believe that preventing and resolving conflict is important to a healthy parent-child relationship.



5. Prevent, negotiate and resolve conflicts.

Understand adolescent development, especially a teen's growing need for autonomy, to ensure that expectations are realistic.



6. Establish and maintain structure.  
a) Establish expectations  
b) Conduct effective monitoring  
c) Conduct effective discipline  
d) Use positive reinforcement

Demonstrate constructive management of emotional reactions to various (potentially difficult) topics.



7. Communicate Effectively.  
a) Receive messages effectively  
b) Understand messages  
c) Send messages effectively

## Appendix D

### *Sample Child Questionnaire- Parent- Child Connectedness*

#### PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE (PCRQ)

W. Furman

#### CHILD VERSION

Instructions: Please answer all questions.

This questionnaire is about my MOTHER FATHER (circle one)

My name: \_\_\_\_\_ (completed by)

Hardly at All	Not Too Much	Somewhat	Very Much	EXTREMELY Much
1	2	3	4	5
1. Some parents want their children to spend most of their time with them, while other parents want their children to spend just some of the time with them. How much does this parent want you to spend most of your time with him or her?				1 2 3 4 5
2. How much does this parent not let you go places because he or she is afraid something will happen to you?				1 2 3 4 5
3. How much do you and this parent care about each other?				1 2 3 4 5
4. How much do you and this parent disagree and quarrel with each other?				1 2 3 4 5
5. How much do you and this parent do nice things for each other?				1 2 3 4 5
6. How much do you and this parent like the same things?				1 2 3 4 5
7. Some parents praise and compliment their children a lot, while other parents hardly ever praise and compliment their children. How much does this parent praise and compliment you?				1 2 3 4 5
8. How much does this parent order you around?				1 2 3 4 5
9. How much do you and this parent tell each other everything?				1 2 3 4 5
10. How much does this parent spank you when you misbehave?				1 2 3 4 5
11. How much do you admire and respect this parent?				1 2 3 4 5
12. How much does this parent admire and respect you?				1 2 3 4 5
13. Some parents take away privileges a lot when their children misbehave, while other parents hardly ever take away privileges. How much does this parent take away your privileges when you misbehave?				1 2 3 4 5
14. How much does this parent show you how to do things that you don't know how to do?				1 2 3 4 5
15. How much does this parent yell at you for being bad?				1 2 3 4 5
16. How much does this parent ask you for your opinion on things?				1 2 3 4 5
17. How much do you and this parent go places and do things together?				1 2 3 4 5
18. How much does this parent make you feel ashamed or guilty for not doing what you are supposed to do?				1 2 3 4 5

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 19. Some parents talk to their children a lot about why they're being punished, while other parents do this a little. How much does this parent talk to you about why you're being punished or not allowed to do something? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. How much does this parent want you to do things with him or her rather than with other people?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. How much does this parent not let you do something you want to do because he or she is afraid you might get hurt?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. How much do you and this parent love each other?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. How much do you and this parent get mad at and get in arguments with each other?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. How much do you and this parent give each other a hand with things?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. Some parents and children have a lot of things in common, while other parents and children have a little in common. How much do you and this parent have things in common?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 26. How much does this parent tell you that you did a good job?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 27. How much does this parent tell you what to do?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28. How much do you and this parent share secrets and private feelings with each other?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29. How much does this parent hit you when you've been bad?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 30. How much do you feel proud of this parent?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 31. Some parents feel really proud of their children, while other parents don't feel very proud of their children. How much does this parent feel proud of you?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 32. How much does this parent forbid you to do something you really like to do when you've been bad?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 33. How much does this parent help you with things you can't do by yourself?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 34. How much does this parent nag or bug you to do things?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 35. How much does this parent listen to your ideas before making a decision?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 36. How much do you play around and have fun with this parent?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 37. Some parents make their children feel bad about themselves a lot when they misbehave, while other parents do this a little. How much does this parent make you feel bad about yourself when you misbehave?              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 38. How much does this parent give you reasons for rules he or she makes for you to follow?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 39. How much does this parent want you to be around him or her all of the time?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 40. How much does this parent worry about you when you're not at home?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 41. How much do you and this parent have strong feelings of affection (love) toward each other?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 42. How much do you and this parent argue with each other?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 43. Some parents and children do special favors for each other a lot, while other parents and children do special favors for each other a little. How much do you and this parent do special favors for each other?         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 44. How much are you and this parent alike?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 45. How much does this parent say that he or she liked what you said?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 46. How much does this parent make you do things?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 47. How much do you and this parent talk to each other about things that you don't want others to know?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 48. How much does this parent punish you by giving you a paddling when you've done something wrong?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 49. Some children think very highly of their parent, while other children don't think so highly of their parent. How much do you think highly of this parent?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 50. How much does this parent think highly about you?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 51. How much does this parent punish you by sending you to your room or making you stay home?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 52. How much does this parent teach you things that you don't know?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 53. How much does this parent pick on you when you don't deserve it?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 54. How much does this parent respect your opinion?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 55. Some parents and children spend a lot of free time together, while other parents and children spend a little free time together. How much free time do you and this parent spend together? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 56. How much does this parent let you know that other children behave better than you do?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 57. How much does this parent give you reasons for decisions about what you can and can't do?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### PARENT VERSION

This questionnaire was completed by MOTHER FATHER (circle one)

The phrase "this child" refers to: \_\_\_\_\_ (completed about)

- | Hardly at All  | Not Too Much | Somewhat | Very Much | EXTREMELY<br>Much |   |
|--|--------------|----------|-----------|-------------------|---|
| 1  | 2            | 3        | 4         | 5                 |   |
| 1. Some parents want their children to spend most of their time with them, while other parents want their children to spend just some of the time with them. How much do you want this child to spend most of his/her time with you? | 1            | 2        | 3         | 4                 | 5 |
| 2. How much do you not let this child go places because you are afraid something will happen to him or her?  | 1            | 2        | 3         | 4                 | 5 |
| 3. How much do you and this child care about each other?   | 1            | 2        | 3         | 4                 | 5 |
| 4. How much do you and this child disagree and quarrel with each other?  | 1            | 2        | 3         | 4                 | 5 |
| 5. How much do you and this child do nice things for each other?   | 1            | 2        | 3         | 4                 | 5 |
| 6. How much do you and this child like the same things?  | 1            | 2        | 3         | 4                 | 5 |
| 7. Some parents praise and compliment their children a lot, while other parents hardly ever praise and compliment their children. How much do you praise and compliment this child?  | 1            | 2        | 3         | 4                 | 5 |
| 8. How much do you order this child around?  | 1            | 2        | 3         | 4                 | 5 |
| 9. How much do you and this child tell each other everything?  | 1            | 2        | 3         | 4                 | 5 |
| 10. How much do you spank this child when he or she misbehaves?  | 1            | 2        | 3         | 4                 | 5 |
| 11. How much do you admire and respect this child?   | 1            | 2        | 3         | 4                 | 5 |
| 12. How much does this child admire and respect you?   | 1            | 2        | 3         | 4                 | 5 |
| 13. Some parents take away privileges a lot when their children misbehave, while other parents hardly ever take away privileges. How much do you take away this child's privileges when he/she misbehaves?                           | 1            | 2        | 3         | 4                 | 5 |
| 14. How much do you show this child how to do things that he or she doesn't know how to do?  | 1            | 2        | 3         | 4                 | 5 |
| 15. How much do you yell at this child for being bad?  | 1            | 2        | 3         | 4                 | 5 |
| 16. How much do you ask this child for his or her opinion on things?   | 1            | 2        | 3         | 4                 | 5 |
| 17. How much do you and this child go places and do things together?   | 1            | 2        | 3         | 4                 | 5 |

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18. How much do you make this child feel ashamed or guilty for not doing what he or she is supposed to do?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. Some parents talk to their children a lot about why they're being punished, while other parents do this a little. How much do you talk to this child about why he or she is being punished or not allowed to do something? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. How much do you want this child to do things with you rather than with other people?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. How much do you not let this child do something he or she wants to do because you are afraid he or she might get hurt?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. How much do you and this child love each other?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. How much do you and this child get mad at and get in arguments with each other?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. How much do you and this child give each other a hand with things?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. Some parents and children have a lot of things in common, while other parents and children have a little in common. How much do you and this child have things in common?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 26. How much do you tell this child that he or she did a good job?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 27. How much do you tell this child what to do?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28. How much do you and this child share secrets and private feelings with each other?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29. How much do you hit this child when he or she has been bad?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 30. How much do you feel proud of this child?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 31. Some children feel really proud of their parents, while other children don't feel very proud of their parents. How much does this child feel proud of you?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 32. How much do you forbid this child to do something he or she really likes to do when he or she has been bad?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 33. How much do you help this child with things he or she can't do by him- or herself?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 34. How much do you nag or bug this child to do things?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 35. How much do you listen to this child's ideas before making a decision?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 36. How much do you play around and have fun with this child?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 37. Some parents make their children feel bad about themselves a lot when they misbehave, while other parents do this a little. How much do you make this child feel bad about himself or herself when he or she misbehaves?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 38. How much do you give this child reasons for rules you make for him or her to follow?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 39. How much do you want this child to be around you all of the time?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 40. How much do you worry about this child when he or she is not at home?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 41. How much do you and this child have strong feelings of affection (love) toward each other?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 42. How much do you and this child argue with each other?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 43. Some parents and children do special favors for each other a lot, while other parents and children do special favors for each other a little. How much do you and this child do special favors for each other?             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 44. How much are you and this child alike?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 45. How much do you tell this child you liked what he or she did?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 46. How much do you make this child do things?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 47. How much do you and this child talk to each other about things that you don't want others to know?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 48. How much do you punish this child by giving him or her a paddling when   |   |   |   |   |   |

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 49. How much do you think highly of this child?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 50. Some children think very highly of their parent, while other children don't think so highly of their parent. How much does this child think highly of you?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 51. How much do you punish this child by sending him or her to his or her room making him or her stay home?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 52. How much do you teach this child things that he or she doesn't know?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 53. How much do you pick on this child when he or she doesn't deserve it?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 54. How much do you respect this child's opinion?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 55. Some parents and children spend a lot of free time together, while other parents and children spend a little free time together. How much free time do you and this child spend together?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 56. How much do you let this child know that other children behave better than he or she does?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 57. Some parents give their children reasons for their decisions about what they can and can't do a lot, while other parents do this a little. How much do you give this child reasons for decisions about what he or she can or can't do? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

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**Scoring instructions:** The full-length instrument contains 57 items; the short version includes 40 items. There are 19 subscales (see following paragraphs) and five factors (warmth/W, personal relationship/PR, disciplinary warmth/DW, power assertion/PA, possessiveness/PO). The instrument author recommends use of the longer form for those interested in specific scale scores and the briefer version for those interested in factor scores. The short form consists of the first 40 items of the 57-item questionnaire.

The scales, their constituent items, and corresponding factors for the 57-item measure are as follows: possessiveness/PO (1, 20, 39), protectiveness/PO (2, 21, 40), affection/W (3, 22, 41), quarreling/PA (4, 23, 42), prosocial/PR (5, 24, 43), similarity/PR (6, 25, 44), praise/DW (7, 26, 45), dominance/PA (8, 27, 46), intimacy/PR (9, 28, 47), physical punishment/PA (10, 29, 48), admiration of parent/W (11, 30, 49), admiration by parent/W (12, 31, 50), deprivation of privileges/PA (13, 32, 51), nurturance/PR (14, 33, 52), verbal punishment/PA (15, 34, 53), shared decision making/DW (16, 35, 54), companionship/PR (17, 36, 55), guilt induction/PA (18, 37, 56), and rationale/DW (19, 38, 57).

Scales, their constituent items, and factors for the 40-item brief version are possessiveness/PO (1, 20, 39), protectiveness/PO (2, 21, 40), affection/W (3, 22), quarreling/PA (4, 23), prosocial/PR (5, 24), similarity/PR (6, 25), praise/DW (7, 26), dominance/PA (8, 27), intimacy/PR (9, 28), physical punishment/PA (10, 29), admiration of parent/W (11, 30), admiration by parent/W (12, 31), deprivation of privileges/PA (13, 32), nurturance/PR (14, 33), verbal punishment/PA (15, 34), shared decision making/DW (16, 35), companionship/PR (17, 36), guilt induction/PA (18, 37), and rationale/DW (19, 38).

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## Appendix E

### *Sample Adolescent Questionnaire- Parent- Child Connectedness*

#### *Items in the connectedness scale*

- (1) I like to discuss many things with my parents.
- (2) I openly tell my parents what I think and what I feel.
- (3) I have a good relationship with my parents.
- (4) It is important to me to keep to agreements with my parents, even if this is inconvenient.
- (5) It is important to me to get along with my parents.

#### *Items in the separateness scale*

- (1) What I am doing for school or for my job is only my business.
- (2) My parents should not be concerned with how my room looks.
- (3) I think it's right if my parents want my room to be orderly. (-)
- (4) It's fine with me if my parents know what I talk about with my friends. (-)
- (5) I know best what is good for me.
- (6) What I spend my money on is just my business.



## Appendix F

### *Multigenerational Interconnectedness Scale*

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**TABLE 1**  
**Items and Loadings on Three Subscales of the**  
**Multigenerational Interconnectedness Scale ( $n = 2,471$ )**

<i>Subscale</i>	<i>Item</i>		<i>Factor</i>		
			<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
Emotional Connectedness	1	I feel upset when family members do not approve of people I am intimate with.			
	2	I feel guilty about continuing a relationship with someone family members do not like.			
	3	When . . . family member disapproves something I have done, I feel obliged to change . . .			
	4	I rely on family members' approval to let me know I am doing things right.			
	5	I feel obliged to spend time with family.			
	6	If I did not follow advice that a family member offered, I would feel guilty.			
	7	I feel guilty when I do not take the side of a family member in a disagreement with others.			
	8	When family members ask me to do certain things, I feel guilty when I have to say no.			
	9	I become upset when family members criticize my behavior.			
	10	I ask whether or not family members approve of people I am intimate with.			
	11	I feel obliged to stop associating with friends my family members do not like.			
	12	When I am told I have done something which hurt other family members I feel guilty.			
	13	I become upset at the thought of telling a family member they are interfering in my life.			
	14	There are certain things I do for members of my family because I have a obligation to.			
	15	I choose friends that family members will like and feel comfortable with.			
Financial Connectedness	16	Family members help me pay for large transportation costs.			
	17	I pay for my own clothing.			
	18	Family members help me pay for major life expenses.			
	19	Family members give me money to spend on pleasurable things for myself.			
	20	Family members help me pay for necessary purchases.			
	21	Family members buy me things I need but have not yet bought myself.			
	22	I pay for my own transportation expenses.			
	23	I am able to borrow money from family members when I am short of cash (excluded because of the negative item-scale correlation).			
Functional Connectedness	24	Family members watch T.V. and go to the movies with me.			
	25	I am involved in hobbies with family members.			
	26	Family members spend leisure time with me doing nothing in particular.			
	27	I help family members with everyday household duties and cleaning.			

(Continued)

**TABLE 1**  
**(Continued)**

<i>Subscale</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Factor</i>		
		<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
	28 I help family members with chores and tasks.			
	29 Family members are involved in sports and recreational activity with me.			
	30 I take vacations with members of my family.			
	31 I ask for family members' advice when I am dealing with difficulties.			

NOTE: Loadings less than .20 are omitted

## Appendix G(a)



### *Sample PCC Intervention Activity*

# **Connectedness and the "Emotional Bank Account"**

## **Introduction**

The following information is provided for the program offering this PCC activity to parents and/or teens.

**Time Required:** 45 minutes

## **Setting and Audience**

This is a *self-directed activity* for use by both parents and teens ages 14-19. It is written at a 7<sup>th</sup> grade reading level. The activity could be introduced in a variety of ways:

- As a homework assignment given to youth to be completed independently or with their parents,
- As an activity handed out to parents as part of a workshop or support group, or
- As an activity posted online.

## **Activity Rationale**

For both parents and children, the teen years can be a tough time to try to maintain a positive emotional connection. Parents want what's best for their children, and almost every parent works hard to raise their children well. Parents make decisions that are necessary to keep teens safe, or to teach them important skills or life lessons. However, these decisions sometimes make teens feel less connected to them, at least for a little while. It is important that teens learn to respect these decisions. It is also equally important that teens feel respected and appreciated for who they are.

This activity will give parents and teens a way to estimate the level of connectedness in their relationship with each other. It will also show them some ways to keep a healthy level of connectedness.

## **Activity Description**

Participants in this self-directed five-part activity will:

1. Read some examples of complaints parents and teens have about each other.
2. Read a story about Keisha and her mother and learn about the "emotional bank account."
3. Assess how things are going in their relationship with their own parent or teen.
4. Learn about two ways to increase the deposits you are making in their family member's emotional bank accounts by: a) getting more in touch with their parent's or teen's world, and b) sharing appreciations.

## **Activity Objectives**

After completing this activity parents and/or teens will be able to:

- Explain the concept of the "emotional bank account;"
- Estimate the current balance in the "emotional bank account" with their parent or teen;
- Determine their current balance, or level of connectedness;
- Name at least one new thing they have learned about their teen's or parent's world; and
- Name one characteristic they value in their teen or parent.

## Appendix G(b)



### *Sample PCC Intervention Activity*

# **Using Positive Reinforcement to Increase Connectedness**

## **Introduction**

The following information is provided for the program offering this PCC activity to parents and/or teens.

**Time Required:** 45 minutes

## **Setting and Audience**

This is *a self-directed activity* for parents and teens ages 13-19. It is written at a 7<sup>th</sup> grade reading level. The activity could be used in a variety of ways:

- As a homework activity for youth to be completed independently or with their parents;
- As an activity handed out to parents as part of a workshop or support group; or
- As an activity posted online.

## **Activity Rationale**

Parents and teens often fall into a habit of focusing on negative things. This stands in the way of their having a close, connected relationship. Parents may react with frustration or anger because of the challenges involved in parenting a teen. Teens may make mistakes as they try to walk the path to adulthood. They want their parents to remember that they probably repeated mistakes when they were teens, too! While these mistakes are normal, they can scare parents. Parents may then react in ways that are harsh and critical. Also, parents often get frustrated when teens make the same mistakes over and over again.

Teens want more independence. They question the decisions and authority of parents more often than they did when they were younger. They want to be treated as adults even though they are still trying to figure out what that means. Sometimes parents don't recognize these facts, don't give independence and criticize teens for their mistakes, instead of supporting them. As a result, teens feel powerless and discouraged and are drawn into negative thinking.

This activity will help parents and teens identify their tendencies toward being drawn into negativity. It will also help them learn to use positive reinforcement as a way to increase their connectedness with each other.

## **Activity Description**

This is a six-part activity:

- Part 1: About "Knee-Jerk" Reactions
- Part 2: Criticism: A Common Knee-Jerk Reaction
- Part 3: Recovering from Knee-Jerk Reactions
- Part 4: Using Positive Reinforcement
- Part 5: Examples of Positive Reinforcement
- Part 6: Wrap-up

In Parts 1 and 2, parents and teens will learn about "knee-jerk reactions"- reactions that are driven by emotion. They will look at how to prevent these reactions, while also acknowledging that these reactions are going to happen. In Part 3, parents and teens are given a three-step method for recovering from knee-jerk reactions and repairing the damage they do to connectedness. Parts 4 and 5 of the activity focus on one of the three steps, positive reinforcement. Positive reinforcement is defined and they are shown how to use it to maintain or improve connectedness. In Part 6, parents and teens think about their own relationships and list some behaviors that they want to increase.

## **Activity Objectives**

After participating in the activity, parents and/or teens will be able to:

- Identify "knee-jerk" reactions.
- Forgive themselves for their "knee-jerk" reactions.
- Understand how a concern differs from a criticism.
- Move from "knee-jerk" reactions to other positive behaviors.
- Use the three methods for giving positive reinforcement.

---

## Using Positive Reinforcement to Increase Connectedness

### Part 1

#### About “Knee-Jerk” Reactions

Time Required: 3 minutes

Relationships between parents and teens are full of emotions like laughter, joy, fear, anger, worry and pride. Often, parents and teens act from the emotions they’re feeling. While it’s normal to act on your emotions, it’s also important to recognize that emotional reactions can come out abruptly and without thinking about them.

Emotional reactions that happen abruptly can be called *knee-jerk reactions*. This name comes from the fact that these reactions are *reflexive*, meaning automatic. They are like the muscle reflex that makes your leg move when a doctor taps your knee with a rubber hammer.

It is important to have relationships with parents and teens where it is okay to express emotions. Feeling your raw emotional reactions is normal and healthy. However, expressing them without thinking about how they might affect the other person doesn’t always produce the best results in relationships.

There will be times when we have knee-jerk reactions. We can’t always help it—that’s why it’s called a “reflex!” Recognize this fact and **don’t expect yourself to be perfect!** Knee-jerk reactions are not the end of the world. Relationships between parents and teens are strong enough to handle a few knee-jerk reactions without too much damage. Usually any damage done to connectedness by knee-jerk reactions can be fixed.

### Part 2

#### Criticism: A Common Knee-Jerk Reaction

Time Required: 15 minutes

Parents and teenagers usually have complaints about each other. It’s a normal part of any relationship. To stay close to each other despite your complaints, it’s good to be able to talk about things that are bothering you. It helps you understand each other better and fix the cause of the complaint, if possible.

The best way to talk about what's bothering you is to state a concern. Here's what we mean by stating a concern:

**Concerns:** Are specific — *limited to one situation*. They describe *how you feel*.

*Example:* "I am upset because you didn't take out the garbage **tonight**."

What usually happens when someone has a knee-jerk reaction is that instead of stating a concern, they *criticize* the other person. Criticism is different from stating a concern:

**Criticism:** Is *very general* or "global" and *blames* the other person. You'll often find the word "always" or "never" in a criticism. Criticisms get worse if you start name-calling.

*Example:* "I can **never** depend on you. You **never** take out the trash. You're lazy."

Stating a concern is a skill you can learn and practice. Remember, it takes time to change the way you communicate. Teach yourself this skill one step at a time using these three steps:

### **Learning to State Concerns Instead of Criticisms**

1. **Recognize** when you have criticized or complained instead of stating a concern.
2. **Set a goal** to state what you're feeling as a concern in the next similar situation.
3. **Think ahead** about how you will state a concern **and practice** how you will say it. Write it down or practice saying it in front of a mirror to help you get it right.

To help practice this skill, complete the worksheet titled "Concern or Criticism?" on the following pages.



## Appendix H

### *Instruments Used to Measure PCC and its Elements*

<b>Instrument</b>	<b>Authors</b>	<b>Cited in</b>	<b>Measures</b>
Assessment of Child Monitoring	Hetherington, 1992	Formoso, et al., 2000	Extent to which parents supervise children
Attachment Styles Questionnaire	Hazan & Shaver, 1987	Finzi et al., 2002	Adults' attachment style (secure, anxious/ambivalent, avoidant)
Behavioral Control Scale	Barber, Olsen & Shagle, 1994	Sartor & Youniss, 2002	How much parents know about child's social activities (friends, how they spend money, what they do after school and with their free time)
Child Report of Parent Behavior Inventory, Acceptance Subscale	Schaefer, 1965	Barber & Olsen, 1997	Description of parents from child's perspective (makes me feel better; enjoys doing things with me)
Communicator Style Measure (CSM)	Norton, 1978	Mueller & Powers, 1990	Verbal and paraverbal interaction: friendly, relaxed, dramatic styles
Conditional Support Scale for Parents	Harter & Marold, 1994	McVey et al., 2002	Extent to which support from the mother and father is conditional on child meeting high parental expectations
Conflict Behavior Questionnaire	Robin & Poster, 1989	Black et al., 1997	Level of conflict experienced in interactions with parents
Conflict Tactics Scale	Straus, 1979	Earls, McGuire, & Shay, 1994	Frequency in last year of parent use of verbal aggression, reasoning, and physical force to resolve problems with child
Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale (FACES II)	Olson et al., 1985	Barnett et al., 1991	Loyalty, trust, respect, and a sense of competency within the family; degree to which family members feel connected

Instrument	Authors	Cited in	Measures
Family Assessment Device (FAD)	Epstein et al., 1983	Stein et al., 2000	Problem solving, communication, roles, affective responsiveness, affective involvement, behavioral control, general functioning
Family of Origin Scale	Ryan et al., 1995	O'Byrne et al., 2002	Parenting style, intimacy, autonomy, characteristics of healthy parent-child relationships
Interpersonal Relationship Scale	Barber & Shagle, 1992	Sartor & Youniss, 2002	How often child engages in communicative, supportive, and conflictual behaviors with mothers and fathers
Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA)	Armsden & Greenberg, 1987	Woodward et al., 2000	Adolescents' perceived attachment to parents via communication, trust, and alienation
Maternal Social Support Index (MSSI)	Pascoe & French, 1990	Earls, McGuire, & Shay, 1994	Amount of social support available for a range of child-rearing activities
Multicultural Events Schedule for Adolescents (MESA), Family Conflict Scale	Gonzalez, et al., 1999	Formoso, et al. 2000	Frequency of serious conflict; e.g., refusing to speak to each other, serious fight
Parent Bonding Instrument (PBI)	Parker et al., 1979	Chambers et al., 2000	Care and control, maternal and paternal
Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale	Conger, Conger, & Scaramella, 1997	Barber & Olsen, 1997	Openness, the free flow of information (and how people deal with problems (holding back or discussing)
Parental Acceptance-Rejection/Control Questionnaire (PARQ/Control)	Rohner, 1990	Kim & Rohner, 2002	Youth perceptions of parental warmth/affection, hostility/aggression, indifference/neglect, rejection, and control (permissiveness-strictness)
Psychological Control Scale – Youth Self Report	Barber, 1996	Barber & Olsen, 1997	Autonomy and parental psychological control (parent dominates, invalidates feelings, controls, blames, criticizes, punishes, rejects/withdraws, is

Instrument	Authors	Cited in	Measures
			emotionally erratic)
Raising Children Scale	Greenberger, 1988	Earls, McGuire, & Shay, 1994	Dimensions of control: authoritarian (harsh), authoritative (firm/responsive) and permissive (lax)
Relationship with Father Inventory	Schwarz, 1994	Zazzaro et al., 1998	Father-child coalition and emotional attachment to father
Scale of Intergenerational Relationship Quality (SIRQ)	Chase-Landsdale et al., 1992	Clark & Ladd, 2000	Infant-parent interaction

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