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MOTHERS’ ACCURATE PERCEPTION OF ADOLESCENTS’ GOALS IN DISAGREEMENT SITUATIONS

by

Leah J. Lundell

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
Graduate Department of Psychology
University of Toronto

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Abstract

Thirty-eight mother-adolescent dyads were interviewed about two disagreements in which they had recently engaged. The interviews were designed to tap adolescents’ goals in the disagreement situations as well as mothers’ accurate perception of these goals. Adolescents reported six types of goals: relationship, emotional support, autonomy, dominance, instrumental, and avoidance. Mothers’ perceptual accuracy of adolescents’ goals was computed and correlations with disagreement outcomes and measures of conflict in the dyad were tested. Correlations between maternal perceptual accuracy and maternal empathy, perspective-taking, feelings of control, parenting practices and a measure of dyadic functioning were also tested. Contrary to prediction, no significant relations were found between perceptual accuracy and any of the hypothesized variables. Some possible explanations for the absence of associations are discussed.
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Mothers’ perceptions of adolescents’ goals in disagreement situations

The importance of effective parenting for successful socialization and healthy child development is well established. However delineation of the specific processes by which parental practices affect children is an ongoing research concern (Maccoby, 1992). This concern has focused predominantly on examining the nature and etiology of the factors underlying negative or harsh parenting and as a result, has neglected determinants of more positive parenting, one class of which is parent personality qualities (Russell, 1997). The current research addresses this issue and attempts to identify characteristics of individuals that enable them to parent their children more effectively.

Parental Perspective-Taking

Increasingly, attention has been given to parenting cognitions as potential determinants of effective parenting (Collins, 1992; Gondoli & Silverberg, 1997; Goodnow & Collins, 1990; Grusec, Rudy, & Martini, 1997; Miller, 1988, 1995; Sigel, 1985; Sigel, McGillicuddy-DeLisi, & Goodnow, 1992; Skinner, 1985). The study of parenting cognitions is multidimensional, encompassing aspects of parenting thought that include reasoning, ideas, beliefs, expectations, attributions, and goals. Guiding this research is the presupposition that parents’ interpretations of their children’s actions guide their parenting behaviors, which, in turn, influence their children’s development (Murphy, 1992; Rubin & Mills, 1992).

One aspect of parental cognition that may contribute to positive parenting is parental perspective-taking or the ability to consider events from a child’s point of view.
A number of studies have found a link between parental perspective-taking and effective parenting practices (Dekovic & Gerris, 1992; Dekovic, Gerris, & Janssens, 1991; Gerris, Dekovic, & Janssens, 1997; Gondoli & Silverberg, 1997; Kochanska, 1997). Based on Newberger's (1980) cognitive-structural analysis of parental reasoning, Dekovic and others (Dekovic & Gerris, 1992; Dekovic, Gerris, & Janssens, 1991; Gerris, Dekovic, & Janssens, 1997) found that higher levels of parental reasoning were related to an authoritative parenting style, warmth, acceptance, and support. In addition, negative relationships were found between higher levels of reasoning and patterns of authoritarian and restrictive parenting. Of particular relevance here is that more sophisticated parental reasoning is characterized by an increased ability to consider a child's perspective in conjunction with one's own; that is to recognize a child as having his or her own, unique, needs and interests (Newberger, 1980; Newberger & Cook, 1983).

Additional evidence that parental perspective-taking underlies effective parenting comes from Kochanska (1997) who found that mothers who were high on perspective-taking were better able to establish mutually responsive relationships with their children. Such relationships were posited to be a foundation for successful socialization. Further, Gondoli and Silverberg (1997) found that mothers who were able to adopt their adolescents' perspectives tended to have higher levels of responsiveness. Responsiveness was defined by a greater acceptance of their adolescents, and promotion of their adolescents' psychological autonomy. These authors also suggest that a failure to recognize an adolescent's perspective will likely result in increased parental anger and increased parent-adolescent conflict. In support of the suggestion, low levels of
perspective-taking have indeed been associated with harsh or abusive parenting (e.g. Feshbach, 1987, Newberger & Cook, 1983).

What mediates the relationship between parental perspective-taking and effective parenting? One possibility is that parental perspective-taking promotes responsiveness or the ability to react sensitively and appropriately to a child’s signals, states, and needs. For example, in the area of discipline and compliance, parental awareness of a child’s cognitions and emotions enables parents to tailor their disciplinary techniques to match the child’s perceptions of and reactions to the conflict situation. The matching of parental response to the child’s state enhances the effectiveness of the discipline intervention and promotes greater acceptance of the parental message (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994).

In addition to, or perhaps because of, increased parental responsiveness, parental perspective-taking can also serve to minimize parent-child conflict. It can permit the achievement of “mutual cognitions” or shared perceptions of an event, which are often posited to be an important feature of harmonious parent-child relations (Goodnow & Collins, 1990; Grusec et al., 1997; Maccoby, 1992). For example, Smetana (1988) argued that much of parent-adolescent conflict stems from incongruent interpretations or perceptions of the same event. Similarly, Holmbeck and O’Donnell (1991) found that incompatible viewpoints among parents and their adolescents with regard to issues of decision-making and autonomy were associated with high levels of conflict. Finally, Collins (1992; Collins & Luebker, 1994) found conflict to be prevalent in situations where parent and adolescent expectancies for ideal behavior were discrepant.

The current study focuses on parent-child relations in adolescence, a time during which a salient parental goal might be to minimize conflict with children. The research
was undertaken from a contemporary perspective of parent-adolescent relations; one which focuses less on the “storm and stress” view of adolescence and more on the notion of adolescence remaining a time of support from and connection to parents (Holmbeck, Paikoff, & Brooks-Gunn, 1995; Smetana, 1989; Steinberg, 1988, 1990; Youniss & Smaller, 1985). Notwithstanding, adolescence remains a time during which the needs and desires of parents and adolescents are often conflicting, manifesting in increased frequency of disagreements. Issues of autonomy and control must be negotiated and parents must cope with their ambivalent feelings toward this process. This process need not be maladaptive, however; it largely depends on how parents and adolescents respond to the disagreements surrounding it. This in turn, depends in part on how disagreements are initially understood by the parties involved (Collins & Laursen, 1992). A parent’s ability to take the perspective of his or her child is critical to his or her understanding of the disagreement and subsequent sensitive and adaptive responding.

**Parental Perceptual Accuracy**

We suggest that a first step towards parental perspective-taking and responsiveness is parents’ accurate perception of their children’s thoughts and feelings. Perceptual accuracy studies from the cognitive developmental literature lend some support to the hypothesized relation between parental accuracy and effective parenting practices (e.g. Hunt & Paraskevopoulos, 1980; Miller, 1986, 1988; Miller, Manhal, & Mee, 1991). These studies focused on perceptual accuracy with respect to young children’s cognitive abilities. Hunt and Paraskevopoulos (1980) asked mothers to predict their children’s performance on a battery of IQ items. They found a strong, positive
correlation between maternal accuracy and children’s performance. They interpreted these findings in light of a “match hypothesis”: The greater a mother’s knowledge of her child’s abilities, the better able she is to match her teaching efforts to these abilities. Miller (1986, 1988; Miller et al., 1991) also found a positive relationship between maternal accuracy and child performance, confirming the conclusions drawn from the Hunt and Paraskevopoulos (1980) study. Miller (1988) provided a similar interpretation: More knowledgeable parents show more sensitive teaching and child rearing behaviors.

Beyond the examination of children’s cognitive abilities, there is one study to date that has looked at parental accuracy in perceiving children’s thoughts and affect in parent-adolescent disagreements. Hastings and Grusec (1997) looked at conflict outcomes as a function of the extent to which parents were able to accurately identify the thoughts and feelings of their adolescents in conflict situations. They found that fathers who were accurate had fewer conflicts with their children, perhaps because they used this information to prevent interactions escalating into conflict and to avoid future conflicts. Additionally, accurate mothers were more satisfied with the conflict outcomes and employed fewer power assertive strategies.

The present study derived from the findings of Hastings and Grusec (1997). It focused on conflict outcomes as a function of maternal accuracy in perceiving one discrete class of child cognitions in disagreement situations, namely adolescents’ goals. This focus was grounded in the premise that incompatible goals often underlie differing interpretations of an event, which is a primary component of parent-adolescent conflict (Smetana, 1988). Therefore maternal acceptance of adolescent goals might be a desirable outcome in the socialization process.
We reasoned that if a mother is to accept her adolescent’s goals in conflict situations, she must first possess the ability to accurately perceive them. This suggestion is based in part on a dual process model of parent-child agreement (Alessandri & Wozniuk, 1987, 1989; Cashmore & Goodnow, 1985; Furstenberg, 1971; Goodnow, 1992; Grusec & Goodnow, 1994). According to this model, the first process in achieving agreement involves the accurate or inaccurate perception of a position; and the second process involves the acceptance or rejection of this position. It follows that parent-child disagreement can result from either a failure to accurately perceive the position of the other or alternatively, from a failure to accept the position of the other. Some support for this accurate perception-acceptance link comes from studies of the intergenerational transmission of attitudes. These studies found a positive relationship between children’s accurate perception of a parents’ position and parent-child concordance on educational and occupational aspirations (Furstenberg, 1971), political orientations (Tedin, 1974), and educational goals (Smith, 1982). Although much of this literature has looked at how accurately children perceive the position or message of their parents, there is little reason to think that the same processes would not operate in the reverse direction. In other words, parent-child agreement may also rest on the ability of parents to accurately perceive the position or message of their children.

In sum, parents must possess accurate knowledge of their adolescents’ goals in order to accept them. Parents’ acceptance of their adolescents’ goals increases their motivation to assist in the attainment of them; that is, they will be more likely to organize their own goals to align them with those of their adolescents. This is important in light of the contention that parent-child interactions proceed more harmoniously under conditions
of mutual cognitions (e.g. Goodnow & Collins, 1990), goal compatibility (e.g. Shantz, 1987) or child-centered concerns (Dix, 1992).

It is worth noting that it may not always be in a dyad’s best interests for one person to adopt another’s goals as his or her own, especially when one is interacting with less mature partners as is the case with parents and children (Maccoby, 1992). However, it has been suggested that in late adolescence, parent-child relationships are renegotiated to become more mutual and cooperative, perhaps bearing a closer resemblance to status equals or peers (Grovetant & Cooper, 1986; Youniss & Smollar, 1985). In this case, adopting similar goals would be important for mutually beneficial interactions (Maccoby, 1992).

**Specific Hypotheses**

The main purpose of this study was to assess maternal perceptual accuracy of adolescent goals in disagreement situations and to relate maternal accuracy to both conflict outcomes and maternal qualities. Mothers were chosen for this study because there is some suggestion in the literature that mothers and adolescents experience greater conflict than do fathers and adolescents (e.g. Montemayor, 1982). This is perhaps due to the close and interdependent nature of mother-adolescent relationships (Laursen & Collins, 1994).

The first set of hypotheses concerns the level and intensity of mother-adolescent conflict. It was predicted that high levels of maternal perceptual accuracy would be related to fewer and less intense mother-adolescent conflicts. This relationship was anticipated despite that Hastings and Grusec (1997) found this association for fathers
only, and not for mothers. It was hypothesized that accurate knowledge of goals may be a more important contributor to decreased levels of conflict among a dyad than is accurate knowledge of other thoughts and feelings (e.g. anger, blame, etc.). In addition to the idea that accurate perception of goals is necessary for maternal acceptance of goals, other processes by which accurate perception of goals could affect conflict outcomes are also possible. Accurate perception could lead to parental interventions that take into consideration the adolescents’ goals, thus making the interventions more effective. Alternatively, accurate perception could lead to more effective modification of goals if they are not palatable to the parent.

In addition, it was expected that accurate mothers and their adolescents would experience decreasing levels of anger over the course of a disagreement and higher levels satisfaction with both the resolution of the disagreement and with each other’s handling of the disagreement. Some support for this prediction comes from the Hastings and Grusec (1997) study, in which perceptual accuracy was related to satisfaction with the outcomes of the disagreement for mothers.

A second set of hypotheses concerns characteristics of mothers that might be associated with maternal accuracy. Specifically, it was hypothesized that more accurate mothers would be more empathic, and would have greater perspective-taking ability, both in general and with respect to their own children. In addition, accurate mothers would be more likely to endorse positive parenting dimensions, including responsiveness, sensitivity, and warmth. It was also predicted that accurate mothers would have more adaptive self-efficacy appraisals as determined by feelings of control. Support for this hypothesis comes from Bugental and others (Bugental, 1992; Bugental, Blue, &
Mothers' perceptions of adolescents' goals

Cruzcosa, 1989; Bugental & Shennum, 1984) who have found that parents who think they lack control in challenging child rearing situations or who have threat-oriented relationship schemas show heightened arousal and reactivity when interacting with difficult children. This heightened arousal may render a parent less able to orient him or herself to the perspective of the child. In other words, it might impair a parent’s ability to accurately perceive the goals of his or her child.

A final set of hypotheses concerns the adolescents' perceptions of the mother-adolescent relationship. It was predicted that adolescents of accurate mothers would perceive their mothers as being more authoritative and responsive. In addition, these adolescents would be more likely than would adolescents of inaccurate mothers to perceive the mother-adolescent relationship as being healthy and adaptive.

To test these hypotheses, mothers and their adolescents were interviewed about two specific disagreements in which they had recently engaged. Both members of the dyad were questioned about the specific course of events surrounding the disagreement including their thoughts and feelings about the resolution. Adolescent interviews were structured to tap adolescents’ goals in the disagreement situations and the mother interviews were structured to tap the accuracy of mothers’ perceptions of their adolescents’ goals. After the interview, each participant completed a series of questionnaires. Maternal perceptual accuracy scores were computed and correlated with conflict outcomes and with information obtained from the questionnaires.
Method

Participants

The participants were 38 mother-adolescent dyads who resided in the same household. Adolescents were recruited from Introductory Psychology classes at the University of Toronto, for which they were given class credit for participation.

Adolescents ranged in age from 17 to 21 years (M = 19.37 years, SD = 0.76), and mothers from 43 to 59 years (M = 48.54 years, SD = 3.14). There were 22 female adolescents and 16 male adolescents. Twenty mothers were born in North America, 8 in Western Europe, 3 in Eastern Europe, 3 in Asia, 1 in Australia, 1 in New Zealand, 1 in Chile, and 1 in Jamaica. Thirty-four adolescents were born in Canada, 1 in Western Europe, 1 in Eastern Europe, 1 in Australia, and 1 in Jamaica. Thirty-two of the mothers lived with a spouse, 6 of the mothers did not. Mothers were also highly educated. Thirty-three of the 38 mothers had completed some college or university.

The adolescents were contacted by telephone and were given a brief description of what the study entailed. If they were interested, they were asked to discuss it with their mothers and a follow up telephone call was arranged to confirm their mothers’ willingness to participate. All participants were reimbursed for any parking expenses incurred.

Procedure

The study was conducted at a laboratory at the University of Toronto. Informed consent and demographic data were obtained for each member of the mother-adolescent
Mothers' perceptions of adolescents' goals

dyad. Demographic data included age, education, occupation, family composition, and ethnic identification.

Topics for discussion were established with the aid of the Issues Checklist (IC; Robin & Foster, 1989). The IC is a list of 44 issues that potentially lead to disagreements between parents and adolescents. Mothers and adolescents were asked to complete identical versions of the IC in which they recall discussions of issues (e.g. chores, curfew, drugs) that had occurred during the past several weeks. Participants were free to add any topics that were not on the list. For each issue, they were also asked to estimate how often these discussions occurred as well as the average anger intensity of the discussions on a 5-point scale, ranging from calm to angry.

After both members of the dyad had completed the IC, the interviewer compared the two lists and read aloud those issues that were overlapping. Using these issues as a memory guide, each member of the dyad was given the opportunity to suggest a specific incident for discussion. In those cases where specific incidents were not readily recalled, the investigators probed the dyad further with respect to the issues indicated on the checklist. Once two specific incidents were mutually agreed upon, the dyad was separated for the remainder of the study, which consisted of semi-structured interviews and a series of questionnaires.

Each member of the dyad was interviewed individually and privately about the selected disagreements. Adolescents and mothers were each asked to describe the events that led up to the disagreement and what happened during the disagreement. Adolescents were questioned about the thoughts and feelings they were experiencing during the disagreement, with a particular emphasis on any goals they may have had. Questions
designed to reveal adolescents’ goals included the following: What were you trying to achieve or accomplish? Did you have any particular goals? Did you want anything from your mother? How did you want the disagreement to end? Parallel questions were asked of the mothers in an effort to reveal how cognizant they were of their adolescents’ goals. These questions included the following: What was your son/daughter thinking and feeling during the disagreement? What was your son/daughter trying to achieve or accomplish? Did he/she have any particular goals? Did he/she want anything from you? How did he/she want the disagreement to end?

As part of the interview, both mothers and adolescents were asked to rate the intensity of the disagreement on a 5-point Likert-style scale (from least intense to most intense). In addition, both mothers and adolescents were asked to rate themselves and their partner on similar scales for (1) anger at the start of the disagreement (from not at all angry to very angry); (2) anger at the end of the disagreement (from not at all angry to very angry); (3) satisfaction with the outcome of the disagreement (from not at all satisfied to very satisfied). Finally, each member was asked to rate their satisfaction with both their own and their partner’s handling of the situation (from not at all satisfied to very satisfied).

After the interview, the participants were asked to complete several questionnaires. These questionnaires were designed to provide information about the following: maternal parenting practices, maternal feelings of control, maternal empathy and perspective-taking and the quality of the mother-adolescent relationship. Upon completion of the questionnaires, the study was fully explained to the participants. The entire process lasted approximately 1 ½ to 2 hours. One graduate psychology student
Mothers' perceptions of adolescents' goals

(female) and three undergraduate psychology students (two female and one male) conducted the interviews.

Measures

Maternal perceptual accuracy. Perceptual accuracy was defined as the adequacy of the match between an adolescent’s self-reported goals and his or her mother’s perceptions of these goals in the disagreement situations. A coding scheme for goals was developed from inspection of the responses to the goal questions in the adolescent interviews. Examination of these responses yielded six goal categories: relationship, emotional support, autonomy, dominance, instrumental, and avoidance goals. (See Appendix A for descriptions and examples of each goal category.) For each of the two disagreements discussed in the interview, each goal reported by the adolescent was assigned one of the six goal categories. It was possible that one disagreement contained more than one goal category, but not more than one instance of the same goal category was assigned to the same disagreement.

Mother’s responses to the parallel goal questions in her interview were coded using the same coding scheme. Matching goals (or “hits”) occurred when both the adolescent and the mother were assigned the same goal category for the same disagreement. Non-matching goals or errors occurred when there was a discrepancy in the goals reported by the adolescent and mother. Errors were classified as being one of two types: “misses” whereby the adolescent reported a goal that his or her mother did not, and “false alarms” whereby the mother reported a goal that her adolescent did not. Both types of errors were considered to have equal weighting or importance.
A perceptual accuracy score was calculated by subtracting the proportion of errors (both misses and false alarms) from the proportion of hits for each disagreement. Proportions were used in order to equate the dyads with respect to the total number of goal categories reported. For example if the total number of goals reported by a particular dyad was 3, the number of hits was 2 and the number of misses was 1, the perceptual accuracy score was calculated as follows: $2/3 - 1/3 = +0.33$. If the total number of goals reported was 5, the number of hits was 2, the number of misses was 1, and the number of false alarms was 2, the perceptual accuracy score would be: $2/5 - 1/5 - 2/5 = -0.20$. Higher scores reflect higher accuracy with perfect accuracy being $+1.00$ and perfect inaccuracy being $-1.00$. The perceptual accuracy scores for both disagreements were averaged to give an overall perceptual accuracy score for each mother.

**Level and intensity of conflict between mothers and adolescents.** This was measured using the Issues Checklist (IC; Robin & Foster, 1989) that was employed to generate topics for discussion among the dyad members. The IC yields three scores for each member: (1) the quantity of issues, which is obtained by summing the number of issues circled “yes”; (2) the mean anger intensity level of the issues circled “yes”; and (3) the weighted average of the frequency and anger-intensity level of the issues circled “yes”. This latter score is obtained by multiplying each frequency estimate by its associated intensity, summing the cross products, then dividing by the total of all of the frequency estimates. This gives an estimate of anger per discussion whereas intensity score reflects the average anger per issue, regardless of frequency.

**Anger and satisfaction within the disagreement situations.** The change in level of anger from the start of the disagreement to the end of the disagreement for both mother
Mothers' perceptions of adolescents’ goals

and adolescent was determined from the Likert scale questions in the interview. Similarly, both partners’ level of satisfaction with the outcome and with each other’s handling of the disagreement was also determined from the Likert scale questions in the interview.

**Maternal empathy and perspective-taking.** Maternal empathy and perspective taking was measured with Davis’s (1983) Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI). The IRI is a 28-item scale, which is comprised of four 7-item subscales, each of which taps an empathy-related construct. In the present study, only 3 subscales were of interest: (1) Perspective-taking, which assessed the tendency to adopt the psychological viewpoint of others (e.g. “I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their point of view”); (2) Empathic Concern, which assesses feelings of concern and sympathy for unfortunate others (e.g. “I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me”); and (3) Personal Distress, which taps one’s feelings of discomfort in reaction to the emotions of others (e.g. “In emergency situations, I feel apprehensive and ill-at ease”). Mothers were asked to rate how descriptive of themselves they felt each of the 21 statements was. Ratings were made on a 5-point scale, ranging from “does not describe me well” to “describes me very well”. All three subscales have satisfactory internal and test-retest reliabilities.

In addition, perspective-taking ability with respect to the target adolescent (as opposed to general perspective taking ability) was measured using a modified version of the Self-Dyadic Perspective-taking Scale (SDPT; Long, 1990). This scale was originally designed for use with married couples but for the purposes of this study, was modified for use with mothers and their children. Mothers were asked to rate how descriptive of
Mothers' perceptions of adolescents' goals

Mothers themselves thought each of 15 statements was (e.g. “I am good at understanding my son’s/daughter’s problems”). Responses were made on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Does not describe me well” to “Describes me very well”. The scale demonstrated adequate reliability and internal consistency.

Maternal appraisal of self-efficacy and control. The failure section of the Parent Attribution Test (PAT; Bugental et al., 1989) was used to assess mothers' feelings of control in care-giving situations. Mothers rated the importance of each of twelve potential causes of an unsuccessful interaction with a hypothetical child (e.g. how unpleasant a disposition the child had). Two subscales, a Child Control over Failure (CCF) and an Adult Control over Failure (ACF) were combined to yield a Perceived Control over Failure (PCF) score, which was a measure of perceived relative control between the respondent and a child. The validity of the PAT as a moderator of negative reactions to care-giving challenge has been demonstrated in a series of studies over the last 15 years (Bugental, Lyon, Lin, McGrath, & Bimbela, 1999).

Maternal parenting practices. Mothers' parenting practices were assessed both directly via mothers' self-report on the Parenting Practices Questionnaire (PPQ; Robinson, Mandelco, Olsen, & Hart, 1995) and indirectly, by collecting her adolescent’s perceptions of her parenting practices using a modified version of the same questionnaire. Thus, the adolescents reported on how they were parented by their mothers. This 62-item questionnaire was designed to empirically assess the three main types of parenting styles commonly studied: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive (Robinson, et al., 1995). It has the advantage of not only assessing global typologies (attitudes, values, beliefs), but it also identifies specific parenting practices. For the purposes of this study, parents were
asked to think back to when their child was in elementary school and to rate how frequently they exhibited stated behaviors (e.g. "I encouraged my child to talk about his or her troubles"). Ratings ranged from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). Twenty-seven authoritative items (Cronbach = 0.91) reflected warmth and involvement, reasoning and induction, democratic participation, and good natured/easy going style. Twenty authoritarian items (Cronbach = 0.86) reflected verbal hostility, corporal punishment, nonreasoning/punitive strategies, and directiveness. Finally, fifteen permissive items (Cronbach = 0.75) reflected lack of follow through, ignoring misbehavior, and self-confidence.

Adolescent perceptions of strengths and weaknesses in the mother-adolescent relationship. This was assessed with the F.A.M.III Dyadic Relationship Scale (FAM), a 42-item scale that was designed to provide an overall rating of functioning among specific dyads in the family as well as a rating for each of 7 constructs (Skinner, Steinhauer, & Santa-Barbara, 1983). The 7 constructs are: (1) Task Accomplishment, which is the successful achievement of a number of basic, developmental and crisis tasks (e.g. "My mother can never accept my answer to a problem"); (2) Role Performance, which is the differentiation and performance of various roles in the family (e.g. "My mother expects too much of me"); (3) Communication, which is the achievement of mutual understanding (e.g. "My mother takes what I say the wrong way"); (4) Affective Expression, which considers the content, intensity and timing of feelings (e.g. "When my mother gets angry with me, she stays upset for days"); (5) Involvement, which refers to both the degree and quality of family members' interest in one another (e.g. "My mother worries too much about me"); (6) Control, which refers to the process by which family
members influence one another (e.g. “My mother is always on my back”); and (7) Values and Norms, which refers to the background against which all family processes are considered (e.g. “My mother and I argue about how we spend our spare time”). Adolescents were asked to read statements describing the mother-adolescent relationship and then circle one of four responses, indicating the extent of agreement or disagreement on a scale from 1 to 4: “strongly agree”, “agree”, “disagree”, or “strongly disagree”. Raw scores for each subscale were converted into standardized scores and an overall score was determined by taking the mean score of the subscales. Higher scores indicate greater weaknesses and lower scores indicate greater strengths. The F.A.M. has internal consistency and reliability and has the ability to discriminate healthy from unhealthy families.

Results

Descriptive Data

Disagreement topics. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. The author coded all mother and adolescent interviews for content of disagreement. Disagreement topics were coded using a modified version of Smetana’s (1989) disagreement coding scheme. (See Appendix B for a description of each disagreement category.) In total, 76 disagreements were discussed. In descending frequency, mothers and adolescents reported having disagreements over regulation of interpersonal relations (18.4%), chores (15.8%), academics (13.2%), curfew (11.8%), interpersonal relations (10.5%), regulation of activities (9.2%), personality/behavioral style (7.9%), finances (6.6%), health and hygiene (3.9%), and physical appearance (2.6%).
Types of goals. Interviews were also coded for goals reported by the adolescent and goals perceived by the mother. The author coded all mother and adolescent interviews. A reliability coder coded 100% of the adolescent interviews and approximately 25% (10 interviews) of the mother interviews. Inter-rater reliability for each goal category was established using the Kappa measure of agreement. For adolescent-reported goals, Kappa values were 0.84 (relationship goals), 0.67 (emotional support goals), 0.85 (autonomy goals), 0.83 (dominance goals), 0.75 (instrumental goals), and 0.77 (avoidance goals). For mother-perceived goals, Kappa values were 0.89 (emotional support goals), 0.69 (autonomy goals), 0.77 (dominance goals), 0.90 (instrumental goals), and 0.62 (avoidance goals). Kappa values for relationship goals for mothers could not be computed because there were no relationship goals reported or perceived in the 10 interviews randomly selected for reliability coding purposes.

Table 1 displays the percentages of mothers versus adolescents, males versus females, and mothers of male versus mothers of female children, who reported each goal in either of the two disagreements. Adolescents reported a greater proportion of both dominance and avoidance goals than mothers perceived, $\chi^2_{(1)} = 3.62, p < .07$ for dominance goals and $\chi^2_{(1)} = 4.65, p < .05$ for avoidance goals. Mothers with female children perceived a greater proportion of emotional support goals than did mothers with male children, $\chi^2_{(1)} = 6.45, p < .05$. Mothers with male children perceived a greater proportion of instrumental goals than did mothers with female children, $\chi^2_{(1)} = 3.32, p < .07$.

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1 The interview question “How did you want the disagreement to end?”/“How do you think [adolescent] wanted the disagreement to end?” was dropped from the coding and analysis. In the majority of interviews, participants answered the question as though they were imagining an “ideal ending” and consequently, most answered it in the exact same way (e.g. “I wanted it to end well”/“She/he wanted it to end well”).
There were no significant differences in proportions of goals reported by male and female adolescents.

Table 1

Mother/adolescent and male/female differences in types of goals reported (% of whom reported goal in at least one of the disagreements)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Member of Dyad</th>
<th>Sex of Adolescent</th>
<th>Mother of Males/Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother (%)</td>
<td>Adoles. (%)</td>
<td>χ²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Support</td>
<td>55.3</td>
<td>63.2</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominance</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>3.62*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>57.9</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>4.65**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

† The chi-square test for equality of proportions is not reliable for these comparisons due to 50% of the cells having cell counts that are fewer than the minimum required.

*p < .07, **p < .05.

Mother/adolescent and male/female differences in thoughts and feelings about the disagreements as measured by the rating scales. Because all the dyads provided data on two disagreements, the responses of each member to the scaled items were averaged across both disagreements. Responses were analyzed using one-way ANOVAs with member of dyad (mother or adolescent) and sex of adolescent as the between-subjects factors. On average, mothers were more angry than adolescents at the start of the disagreement, F(1, 74) = 4.69, p < 0.05, with M = 2.80, SD = 1.21 for mothers and M = 2.25, SD = 1.01 for adolescents. Mothers were more satisfied with adolescents’ handling of the disagreement than were adolescents with mothers’ handling of the disagreement,
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F(1, 74) = 4.03, p < 0.05, with M = 3.00, SD = 1.12 for mothers and M = 2.51, SD = 0.99 for adolescents. Mothers reported less change in feelings of anger from the start to the end of the disagreements than did adolescents, F(1, 74) = 4.01, p < 0.05, with M = 0.05, SD = 1.57 for mothers and M = 0.74, SD = 1.41 for adolescents. There were no statistically significant differences between mothers and adolescents for ratings of intensity of disagreement (M = 3.33, SD = 0.96), final anger (M = 2.92, SD = 1.25), perception of other member's initial anger (M = 2.59, SD = 1.02), perception of other member's final anger (M = 2.82, SD = 1.11), satisfaction with handling (M = 3.13, SD = 0.96), satisfaction with outcome (M = 3.01, SD = 1.08), or perception of other member's satisfaction with outcome (M = 2.97, SD = 0.99).

Mothers perceived daughters to be more angry than sons at the start of the disagreement, F(1, 36) = 8.22, p < 0.01, with M = 3.14, SD = 1.19 for females and M = 2.19, SD = 0.68 for males. Daughters perceived mothers to be more angry at the end of the disagreement than did sons, F(1, 36) = 6.83, p < 0.05, with M = 3.20, SD = 1.07 for females and M = 2.38, SD = 0.81 for males. There were no statistically significant differences between females and males for mothers' ratings of intensity (M = 3.50, SD = 1.05), mothers' initial anger (M = 2.80, SD = 1.21), mothers' final anger (M = 2.86, SD = 1.39), mothers' anger change (M = 0.05, SD = 1.57), mothers' perceptions of adolescents' final anger (M = 2.79, SD = 1.19), mothers' satisfaction with handling (M = 3.13, SD = 0.95), mothers' satisfaction with adolescents' handling (M = 3.00, SD = 1.12), mothers' satisfaction with outcome (M = 3.07, SD = 1.18), or mothers' perception of adolescents' satisfaction with outcome (M = 3.07, SD = 1.09). There were no statistically significant differences between females and males for their own ratings of intensity (M = 3.16, SD =
Mothers’ perceptions of adolescents’ goals

0.84), initial anger (M = 2.25, SD = 1.01), final anger (M = 2.99, SD = 1.10), anger change (M = 0.74, SD = 1.41), perceptions of mothers’ initial anger (M = 2.43, SD = 0.92), satisfaction with handling (M = 3.13, SD = 0.99), satisfaction with mothers’ handling (M = 2.51, SD = 0.99), satisfaction with outcome (M = 2.96, SD = 0.99), or perception of mothers’ satisfaction with outcome (M = 2.87, SD = 0.88).

Mother/adolescent and male/female differences in maternal perceptual accuracy, conflict measures, and questionnaire measures. Maternal perceptual accuracy scores ranged from −1.00 (perfect inaccuracy) to 1.00 (perfect accuracy), with M = -0.27, SD = 0.50. There were no statistically significant differences in perceptual accuracy between mothers of daughters and mothers of sons. The means and standard deviations for measures of conflict, and the questionnaire measures are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2

Means and standard deviations for measures of conflict and questionnaire measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure of conflict</th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Adolescent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quantity of Issues</td>
<td>10.88</td>
<td>9.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger Intensity of Issues</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighted Freq. by Intensity</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>2.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire Measures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRI (Empathy)</td>
<td>5.53</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDPT (Perspective Taking)</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAT (PCF Scores)</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPQ: Authoritative Subscale</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>3.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian Subscale</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permissive Subscale</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F.A.M. III</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As measured by the Issues Checklist, females on average rated conflict issues as more intense (IC anger intensity score) than did males, F(1, 34) = 9.41, p < 0.01, with M
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\[ M = 2.59, SD = 0.76 \] for females and \[ M = 1.92, SD = 0.49 \] for males. Females also rated each conflict discussion as more angry (IC weighted frequency by intensity score) than males, \( F(1, 34) = 6.45, p < 0.05 \), with \( M = 2.75, SD = 0.92 \) for females and \( M = 2.04, SD = 0.71 \) for males. There were no statistically significant differences in any of the three measures of conflict between mothers and adolescents.

Mothers' and adolescents' reports of maternal parenting practices as measured on the Parenting Practices Questionnaire (Robinson et al., 1995) were positively correlated (\( r = 0.53, p < 0.01 \) for the authoritative subscale, \( r = 0.34, p < 0.05 \) for the authoritarian subscale, and \( r = 0.64, p < 0.01 \) for the permissive subscale). Nevertheless, mothers reported themselves to be more authoritative than did adolescents, \( F(1, 74) = 4.75, p < 0.05 \), with \( M = 3.96, SD = 0.48 \) for mothers and \( M = 3.69, SD = 0.59 \) for adolescents. There were no statistically significant differences between males and female respondents on any of the adolescent questionnaires, nor between mothers of males and females on any of the mother questionnaires.

**Correlational Data**

**Perceptual accuracy and its relation to conflict measures, disagreement outcomes.**

Maternal perceptual accuracy scores (PA) were correlated with the three IC conflict measures (quantity of issues, intensity of issues, weighted frequency by intensity) (Robin & Foster, 1989) for both mothers and adolescents. PA was also correlated with both mothers' and adolescents' average ratings of anger change in the disagreement, satisfaction with outcome, and satisfaction with their own and their partner's handling of the disagreement. Table 3 displays these correlations. No significant relations were found.
Table 3

Correlations between perceptual accuracy, measures of conflict, and conflict outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Maternal Perceptual Accuracy</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mothers</td>
<td>Adolescents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantity of issues</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensity of issues</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighted frequency by intensity</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger change</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with own handling</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>-.26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with partner’s handling</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with outcome</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>-.24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perceptual Accuracy and its relation to maternal qualities. PA was correlated with maternal empathy as measured by the IRI (Davis, 1983), with maternal perspective taking as measured by the IRI and the modified SDPT Scale (Long, 1990), and with feelings of control as measured by the PAT (Bugental et al., 1989). PA was also correlated with the authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive subscales of the PPQ (Robinson et al., 1995) as reported by the mother. Table 4 displays these correlations. No significant relations were found.

Table 4

Correlations between perceptual accuracy and maternal qualities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Maternal Perceptual Accuracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maternal empathy (IRI)</td>
<td>-.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal perspective-taking (SDPT)</td>
<td>-.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of control (PAT)</td>
<td>-.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarianism (PPQ subscale)</td>
<td>-.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritativeness (PPQ subscale)</td>
<td>-.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permissiveness (PPQ subscale)</td>
<td>-.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Perceptual Accuracy and its relation to adolescents' perceptions of the mother-adolescent relationship. PA was correlated with the authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive subscales of the PPQ as reported by the adolescent. PA was also correlated with each subscale score in addition to the overall score on the F.A.M. III dyadic relationship scale (Skinner et al, 1983). Table 5 displays these correlations. No significant relations were found.

Table 5

Correlations between perceptual accuracy, parenting practices and dyadic functioning (reported by the adolescent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Maternal Perceptual Accuracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarianism (PPQ subscale)</td>
<td>-.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritativeness (PPQ subscale)</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permissiveness (PPQ subscale)</td>
<td>-.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task accomplishment (FAM subscale)</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role performance (FAM subscale)</td>
<td>-.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication (FAM subscale)</td>
<td>-.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective expression (FAM subscale)</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement (FAM subscale)</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control (FAM subscale)</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values and norms (FAM subscale)</td>
<td>-.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall FAM score</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Analyses

Because we failed to detect any of the hypothesized relations involving perceptual accuracy, some additional, exploratory analyses were conducted. To assess the possibility that the goal coding scheme was too fine-grained, goals were grouped into 3 categories: emotional support and relationship goals ("positively oriented goals"), dominance and avoidance goals ("negatively oriented goals") and autonomy and instrumental ("neutral goals"). Maternal perceptual accuracy was re-calculated using the formula described
Scores ranged from -1.00 to 1.00 with $M = -0.05$, $SD = 0.52$. These scores were correlated with the same conflict measures, anger and satisfaction ratings, and questionnaire measures. Once again, no significant relations were found. Correlations ranged from $r = 0.00$ to 0.30.

Finally, to account for the possibility that a correlational analysis did not adequately capture any potential differences, PA scores were divided into 3 approximately equivalent groups (low accuracy $n = 10$, moderate accuracy $n = 15$, high accuracy $n = 13$). One-way ANOVAS were conducted on each of the measures of conflict, ratings scales, and questionnaire measures using PA as the between subjects factor. No significant differences were found among any of the three groups.

**Discussion**

**Summary of Findings**

Contrary to prediction, mothers' accurate perception of adolescents' goals in disagreement situations, as conceptualized and measured in the described manner, did not significantly relate to any measure of conflict among the dyad, anger or satisfaction felt in the context of the disagreements, or to any of the hypothesized maternal or dyadic characteristics.

Accurate mothers and their adolescents did not report having fewer conflicts nor did they report having less intense conflicts. Accurate mothers and their adolescents did not report decreased feelings of anger throughout the disagreements, nor increased levels satisfaction with either the outcome of the disagreements, with their own, or with their partner’s handling of the disagreements. Accurate mothers did not report higher levels of
empathy or perspective taking. They did not consistently endorse more positive parenting dimensions, nor did they report themselves as having more threat-oriented relationship schemas. Finally, adolescents of accurate mothers did not perceive their mothers as being more authoritative, nor did they report greater strengths and fewer weaknesses in their relationship.

**Explanation of Findings**

There are several possible explanations for the absence of associations found between maternal perceptual accuracy of goals and any of the variables considered here. First, most of the perceptual accuracy studies to date have examined parental perceptual accuracy with respect to children’s cognitive abilities (e.g. Hunt & Paraskevopoulos, 1980; Miller, 1986, 1988; Miller, Manhal, & Mee, 1991). The one study that extended its focus beyond cognitive abilities to look at thoughts and feelings in disagreement situations was that of Hastings and Grusec (1997). These authors found that accurate fathers, but not mothers, had fewer conflicts with their children. Given that the current study was conducted with mothers only, the failure of perceptual accuracy to correlate with number of conflicts between mothers and adolescents does replicate the findings of Hastings and Grusec. However, we hypothesized that perceptual accuracy of goals may play a more important role in the conflict resolution process than perceptual accuracy of feelings of anger and satisfaction, and assignment of blame and acceptability of behavior (which comprised the measure of accuracy in the Hastings and Grusec study).

Consequently, we expected a relation between perceptual accuracy and number of conflicts reported for mothers and adolescents. Hastings and Grusec (1997) also found
that accurate mothers, but not fathers, had greater satisfaction with conflict outcomes. The current study fails to replicate this finding: Accurate mothers did not report higher levels of satisfaction with the outcome of the disagreement.

One explanation for the lack of relations could be that for mothers, perceptual accuracy in isolation is not related to the level of disagreement experienced by the dyad. In other words, accurate mothers can still disagree. In the dual process model of parent-child agreement outlined above, accurate perception is described as a first step towards achieving agreement, and acceptance or rejection is the second step. In applying this model to goals in disagreement situations, we have looked at the first step only. Accurate perception of goals is indeed necessary for agreement, but it does not necessarily guarantee acceptance of goals. Perhaps for the conflict outcomes to be more satisfactory, mothers must accept the goals of their adolescent as legitimate. If mothers see their adolescents' goals as reasonable and valid, they will be more likely to actively tailor their behavior to assist their adolescents in achieving these goals.

Related to this idea is the relationship between adolescent and maternal goals. In this study, we looked solely at the adolescents' goals in disagreements. But mothers are likely to be concerned about achieving their own goals in disagreements as well, which include compliance and socialization goals. If an adolescent's goals are incompatible with his or her mother's goals, a mother may not be seriously motivated to ensure her adolescent's goals are met. For example, if a mother is threatened by her child's goals, or if her own goals take precedence over her child's goals, it is unlikely that the disagreement will end in a mutually satisfactory manner. Future studies involving perceptual accuracy of adolescent goals should include a measure of maternal acceptance
of adolescent goals. In addition, they should include the determination of maternal goals in the disagreement situation. Assessing levels of goal acceptance by the mother and goal congruence among the dyad would help to clarify any potential relationship between perceptual accuracy of goals and conflict outcomes.

Another explanation for the absence of associations between perceptual accuracy and conflict outcomes concerns the subjective experience of the adolescent during the disagreement. Perhaps it is not maternal perceptual accuracy per se that is important to the adolescent, but rather, it is his or her experience of maternal accuracy or of being understood that leads to more satisfactory outcomes. In follow-up studies, interview questions designed to tap the extent to which the adolescents felt they were being understood or how knowledgeable about their goals they felt their mothers were might have yielded stronger relations. It would also be interesting to determine if there is any correlation between actual maternal accuracy and adolescents’ reports of their mothers’ accuracy.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study is that it relied solely on the retrospective accounts of the participants. Both members of the dyad were asked to report the goals they recalled having as the disagreement was occurring. In light of this, it is impossible to distinguish between the participants’ actual goals at the time of the disagreement and the goals they reported subsequently, given time to reflect on the disagreement. This is perhaps more problematic for mothers’ reports of adolescents’ goals given that they may not have even considered these at the time. If a mother was not thinking about her adolescent’s goals
during the time of the disagreement, it would be difficult for her to adjust her behavior accordingly, within the context of that particular disagreement. Perhaps, conflict outcomes would be more satisfying the next time the dyad engaged in a similar disagreement (if indeed a mother did consider the goals of her child following each disagreement). In fact, during the interviews in the present study, many mothers had a difficult time responding to the goal questions, and expressed the concern that they had “never really thought about them”. Either a longitudinal design or a procedure requiring the dyad to engage in a conflict resolution task in the laboratory might be better able to shed some light on this issue.

Another limitation of this study is that it failed to consider differences in narrative expression that may have distorted maternal perceptual accuracy scores. There are undoubtedly age, gender and other individual differences in the ability to abstract goals from concrete wishes and desires. For example, an adolescent who is unable to abstract the goal of autonomy and independence seeking from the instrumental desire to “go to the concert” or to “drive the car” may have a mother who recognizes the instrumental goal but assigns a higher level label to it (e.g. autonomy). According to the coding scheme used in this study, the mother would be inaccurate. Incorporating some measure cognitive complexity into the design or coding scheme might capture these differences in ability to abstract and provide a more accurate picture of perceptual accuracy.

An additional limitation was the small sample size in this study, which did not permit detection of any potential interactions between perceptual accuracy and type of goal reported or perceived. It is quite conceivable that the pattern of inaccuracy may be an important factor. For example, if a mother perceives negatively oriented goals (e.g.
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dominance) when her child in fact reports positively oriented goals (e.g. relationship), this may be characteristic of certain maternal and relationship qualities than would the reverse pattern. Also certain types of goals may be more or less easy to read. A larger sample size would enable closer examination of relevant and potentially interesting interactions.

A final limitation to consider is the restricted nature of the sample. First, the participants consisted primarily of well-educated, middle class families who may not be representative of the general population. Second, because only older adolescents were included in this study, it was impossible to compare mothers of older and younger children with respect to perceptual accuracy. This limitation is considered in light of the view that socialization is increasingly considered a bi-directional process (Grusec & Kuczynski, 1980; Kochanska, 1997; Maccoby, 1984, 1992; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Consequently, certain characteristics of children may elicit more or less perceptual accuracy on the part of their parents. In other words, the “strength of the signal” may facilitate or diminish maternal perceptual accuracy. Older and younger children may differ in the extent to which they communicate their concerns and goals to their mothers, which in turn affects the salience of their goals. Further, the importance and consequences of perceptual accuracy may depend on the age of the adolescent.

Conclusion

A principal aim of this study was to address the nature of the perceptual accuracy-conflict link. In light of the negative findings, we could conclude that there is no link. However, this conclusion might be premature. Because perceptual accuracy is an ill-defined concept in the literature, little is known about its attributes. Is it a state or a trait?
Are parents consistent in their ability to accurately perceive their adolescent’s goals?

Does accuracy vary as a function of the type of goal? Does accuracy vary as a function of the context of the disagreement? There undoubtedly exist different forms of accuracy and these different forms may or may not be correlated with one another. Further, they may have different sources, correlates, and outcomes. The study described here was exploratory and was designed to clarify some of these issues. The fact that the hypothesized relationships did not emerge opens the door to many more interesting questions to probe in future, related studies.
References


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Appendix A
Coding scheme for adolescent goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOAL CATEGORY</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION OF GOAL</th>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Goal (REL)</td>
<td>1. This goal is not exclusively about the self; it may be to provide benefit for the relationship or be entirely other-focused.</td>
<td>1. “...he’s trying to put me at ease, by discussing it with me”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. This goal may include wanting to reassure mother or put mother at ease out of concern or consideration of mother’s feelings, not just out of concern for the self.</td>
<td>2. “...he would like it to end with mutual agreement”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. It may reflect a concern for maintaining a good relationship with the mother.</td>
<td>3. “...she would probably want me to feel good...you know because she’s a very giving kid so she would probably want me to feel ok”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. It may include wanting mutual agreement or a mutually satisfying resolution.</td>
<td>4. “I think he wanted to make it right again.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. “...she was trying to be responsive to our concerns”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Support Goal (ES)</td>
<td>1. This goal involves a desire for the mother to meet an emotional need.</td>
<td>1. “...she wanted us to understand why she did it...she wanted us to understand her position”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. This may include wanting the mother’s approval, emotional support, trust, sympathy, respect, forgiveness or understanding.</td>
<td>2. “...she’s just seeking understanding...a listening ear, I guess”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. This may include wanting the mother to acknowledge adolescent’s feelings or point of view.</td>
<td>3. “I think he would like me to see it from his perspective”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. “she was looking for our approval, our consent, our blessing”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy Goal (AUT)</td>
<td>1. This goal involves the expression of independence, the desire to make one’s own decisions, to do things on one’s own terms, or the assertion of one’s individuality or uniqueness.</td>
<td>1. “...to express his independence and the importance of his making his own decision...and having those decisions validated rather than me reacting negatively to them.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. This may be wanting the mother to recognize and acknowledge one’s independence, maturity and competence in handling one’s own affairs.</td>
<td>2. “…I think he was wanting a little bit more independence and more freedom from being with the parents.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. “she wants to be her own self and she doesn’t want to be E.’s little sister or L. and T’s daughter, she just really wants to be herself.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Dominance Goal (DOM)

1. This goal involves a desire to control or change the mother’s (or another’s) actions, feelings, or thoughts, usually in the interest of benefiting the self, NOT to benefit the other.
2. This may include wanting the mother to admit being in the wrong.
3. This could involve making the mother feel negatively (e.g. teasing).
4. It may include the venting of anger, frustration for “no reason”, taking out bad day on mom, etc.

### Instrumental Goal (INST)

1. This goal involves wanting to obtain or accomplish the concrete end result over which the disagreement erupted (i.e. obtaining permission to do something, or avoiding or getting out of doing something)
2. This is a goal that is specific to the disagreement situation (i.e. the disagreement was about wanting to achieve or accomplish something)

### Avoidance Goal (AV)

1. This is a goal which involves wanting to avoid or halt any further interaction and/or confrontation with the mother.
2. This may include not wanting to engage in the disagreement, or once engaged, wanting nothing else other that to end the disagreement as soon as possible.

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Dominance Goal (DOM)** | 1. “...oh...he wanted to tease me and see how I would react...I think he wanted to get a rise out of me”.
|   | 2. “…he gets her annoyed to make us aware that he sees this as really unfair...he’s trying to aggravate the situation to draw attention to it”.
|   | 3. “…she was trying to blow up, take it out on somebody, in a bad mood, I don’t know…”
|   | 4. “…he wanted me to smarten up and be tougher…” |
| **Instrumental Goal (INST)** | 1. “…us giving her permission to go out”.
|   | 2. “...his goal was to go to the concert”.
|   | 3. “…she would just like free access to the phone whenever she wanted”.
|   | 4. “…he wants to drive and that was basically his goal”.
| **Avoidance Goal (AV)** | 1. “…just never to discuss it.”
|   | 2. “...she would prefer for the whole issue not to happen, the whole thing to go away”.
|   | 3. “I think she’d rather avoid talking about it...it’s better to let it be and let it pass, and somehow things will fix themselves up”.
|   | 4. “…just to leave it alone and let it take care of itself”.

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Appendix B
Coding Scheme for Disagreement Content (Modified from Smetana, 1989).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chores (CH)</td>
<td>Concerns regarding family duties and responsibilities, such as doing the dishes, cleaning, walking the dog, setting the table, or shoveling snow, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Appearance (APP)</td>
<td>Concerns regarding acceptable standards of dress and appearance including hair, makeup use, condition or style of clothing, body piercing and tattoos, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality/Behavioral style (PERS)</td>
<td>Concerns regarding irritating personality traits or behavioral styles such as being very excitable, hyperactive, stubborn, or overtalkative, tardy, lazy, etc. Other examples may include having poor manners, engaging in argumentative behavior, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework/Academic Achievement/Career Issues (ACAD)</td>
<td>Concerns regarding homework, grades, course selection, or career decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Relations (IR)</td>
<td>Concerns regarding getting along with others such as fighting with siblings or friends, hitting, quarreling, arguing, teasing or hurting others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulation of Interpersonal Relations (REGIR)</td>
<td>Concerns regarding one’s choice of friends, decisions regarding when to see friends, participation in social activities such as parties or clubs, dating and sex, or other interaction with people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedtime/Sleep/Curfew (BED)</td>
<td>Concerns regarding appropriate times to be home after school or in the evening or when to go to bed or when to get up in the mornings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Hygiene (HEA)</td>
<td>Concerns regarding diet, health, substance use/abuse (e.g. smoking, drinking, drugs, caffeine), working out, sex (in the context of pregnancy/STD’s/birth control, etc.) Concerns regarding hygiene (e.g. cleanliness, brushing teeth, showers, washing hands before meals, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulation of activities (ACTIV)</td>
<td>Concerns regarding CHOICE or TIMING or DURATION of activities, such as telephone use, TV watching, internet, video games, music, practicing piano, sports, shopping, driving, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finances (FIN)</td>
<td>Concerns regarding spending habits, earning money, budgeting, being responsible with money, allowance, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>