THE CONSTRUCTION OF SELF-IDENTITY AND POSITIVE BEHAVIOURAL
CHANGE IN PREGNANT AND PARENTING YOUNG WOMEN

by

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Abstract

The purpose of this mixed method study was to investigate the relationship between the narrative construction of self-identity and positive change in antisocial behaviour in pregnant and parenting young women. It focused on two related aspects of identity development: (1) individuals’ conceptualizations of their personally salient self-values; and (2) “self-action coherence”: the process of constructing self-narratives that establish coherence between one’s personally salient self-values and behaviour. This study also included a qualitative exploration of how becoming a mother in adolescence and early adulthood is related to processes of identity development and behavioural change.

Participants were 27 pregnant and parenting young women (ages 16 to 22) recruited from youth-serving agencies in Toronto, Ontario. Participants completed a questionnaire on history of engagement in antisocial behaviour and a semi-structured interview that explored self-identity and critical life experiences.

Analyses of participant interviews suggest that positive behavioural change in pregnant and parenting young women is related to active engagement in self-reflection motivated by a convergence of meaning gleaned from a variety of life experiences, including the transition to motherhood. Quantitative findings suggest that: (1) an orientation to relational values is related
to lower reported recent engagement in antisocial behaviour; (2) self-action coherence develops across adolescence and early adulthood; and (3) self-action coherence is related to reported positive behavioural change. Overall, the findings suggest that an orientation to relationships is important for establishing positive patterns of behaviour and that positive behavioural change in pregnant and parenting young women involves a process of constructing personally salient self-values and establishing behaviours that cohere with these values.

The findings have theoretical implications relating to identity development in adolescence and early adulthood and its relations to behavioural functioning. The findings also have implications for applied work with pregnant and parenting young women with histories of antisocial behaviour.
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INTRODUCTION

“I never pictured myself having a baby at this young age, but I did...he is here and he’s my world”

Tia, Age 18

Research on pregnancy and parenting in adolescence and early adulthood has tended to focus on elucidating the numerous psychological and economic risks associated with early childbearing. Among those who experience early motherhood, young women with histories of severe conduct problems are at particularly high risk for a variety of poor outcomes, including health problems, incarceration, mental health problems, inadequate housing, poor educational outcomes, problems with substance use, and violent victimization (Oxford, Gilchrist, Lohr, et al., 2005). However, in recent years studies have shed light on the remarkable variation in young women’s responses to pregnancy and parenthood, as documented both longitudinally (e.g. Borkowski, Bisconti, Willard, Keogh, & Whitman, 2002; Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn, & Morgan, 1987) and qualitatively (e.g. Leadbeater & Way, 2001). While early parenthood may increase risk for negative life outcomes, many young women adapt fairly well and achieve positive long-term outcomes for themselves and their children. Indeed, even among young women with histories of severe conduct problems, motherhood is generally not experienced as entirely negative as it can provide an important opportunity for positive behavioural change (e.g. King, Ross, Bruno, & Erickson, 2009; Leadbeater & Way, 2001; Rolfe, 2008).

In recent years, the field of child and adolescent development has come under increasing criticism for its tendency to focus predominantly on pathology and deficit (Benson, Scales, Hamilton & Sesma, 2006). It has been argued that this preponderance of research on what can go wrong in human development has led to a distorted view of how human beings develop
(Damon, 2004; Damon & Gregory, 2003); and this may be especially true of research on “at-risk” populations, including pregnant and parenting teenagers and young adults. The present research reflects a “positive psychology” approach (e.g. Gable & Haidt, 2005; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005). As described by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), positive psychology is a movement that seeks to “remind our field that psychology is not just the study of pathology, weakness, and damage; it is also the study of strength and virtue. Treatment is not just fixing what is broken; it is nurturing what is best” (p. 7). Clearly, the risks and hardships that constitute the “dark side” of early pregnancy should not be minimized as these risks are real and important. However, it is not enough that we delimit the risks faced by young mothers and their children; helping young mothers to prevent, confront and successfully overcome these risks necessitates developing a better understanding of how potential strengths and opportunities may be cultivated and amplified (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Although recognition of individual differences in response to early motherhood is now relatively common (Borkowski et al., 2002; King et al., 2009; Leadbeater & Way, 2001), remarkably little is known about the psychological processes that contribute to these differences. Previous research suggests that self-identity may be an important factor: among young women with histories of conduct problems, positive adaptation to motherhood has been associated with achievement of a positive, prosocial identity (Anderson, 1990; Hunt et al., 2005; Meadows-Oliver, 2006; Rolfe, 2008). Transitions to parenthood in adolescence and early adulthood occur during the identity stage of the lifespan, when developing a mature psychosocial identity is a critical developmental task (Erikson, 1968). From a narrative perspective on identity development, it is during adolescence and early adulthood that the individual gains the cognitive capacity necessary for reflecting on and evaluating the experiences, values and commitments that define the self and integrating these into coherent self-narratives that serve as guides for
future action (Ferrari & Vuletic, 2010; Habermas & Bluck, 2000; McAdams, 2006; Taylor, 1989). How might these developments relating to self-identity influence outcomes following an early pregnancy? Previous investigations of self-identity in pregnant and parenting young women have focused almost exclusively on young women’s self-conceptions in relation to their adoption of the new social role of “mother” (e.g. Brubaker & Wright, 2006; Raeff, 1994; Rolfe, 2008). Little is known about how other aspects of self-identity, such as conceptions of the values and commitments that define the self, may influence adaptation to motherhood. Nor do we understand the process by which self-identity may be altered by early pregnancy. For example, we know little about whether changes relating to young mothers’ self-conceptions tend to occur as a sudden “conversion experience” or through conscious, reflective processes of self-construction. Most important for this study, we do not yet understand how the process of identity development relates to individual differences in behavioural adaptation following early pregnancy.

The present study began to address these gaps by exploring the relationship between self-identity and positive change in antisocial behaviour in a sample of pregnant and parenting young women. This investigation focused on two related aspects of identity development: (1) individual’s conceptualizations of their own personally salient self-values; and (2) the process of constructing self-narratives that establish coherence between personally salient self-values and the individual’s behaviour in relation to the social world. This dissertation also included an exploration of participants’ narratives that provides further insight into how the experience of becoming a mother in adolescence and early adulthood may influence processes of both identity development and behavioural change.

This research was conducted using a mixed-methods approach. Proponents of mixed method research suggest that incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data allows the researcher to both detect trends and understand the mechanisms that underlie these trends
(Maxwell, 2008), thereby achieving greater depths of understanding than is possible using either qualitative or quantitative approaches alone (Caracelli & Greene, 1993). In this investigation quantitative and qualitative components were unified by an overall narrative approach, which gave priority throughout to the meaning that participants make of their selves and their experiences (Josselson, 2007). As is discussed in further detail in the Method section below, in this study quantitative approaches and statistical analyses were used to explore the constructs of interest and test the specific hypotheses that guided this investigation. However, this study was also characterized by an emphasis on rich interview data and an adapted grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006). Qualitative data provided important context in which to understand the quantitative data and also allowed for the emergence of new ideas and refinement of the hypotheses which guided this investigation.

The results of this study may have both applied and theoretical implications. An improved understanding of the psychological processes that contribute to positive adaptation in pregnant and parenting young women may lead to improvements in intervention programming for young mothers. At the same time, this research may contribute to theoretical knowledge relating to processes of identity development. For example, narrative research on the development of self-identity has focused on the psychological aspects of the creation of self-stories and there remains much to be learned about how these self-stories may shape as well as develop from one’s actions in the social world (Breen & McLean, 2009). By shedding light on the relationship between identity development and behavioural change in pregnant and parenting young women, this research contributes to the development of a more comprehensive understanding of identity development and its “functional” role in relation to behavioural outcomes in adolescence and early adulthood.
Theoretical and Empirical Review

*Early Pregnancy and Motherhood*

*Risks and Opportunity*

The risks associated with early pregnancy are now well known, both within the research community and in broader public perception. For young mothers, early pregnancy has been associated with elevated long-term risk for mental health problems (Deal & Holt, 1998; Horwitz, Bruce, Hoff, Harley, & Jekel, 1996; Schmidt, Wiemann, Rickert, & Smith, 2006; Troutman & Cutrona, 1990), inadequate educational attainment, and entrenchment in poverty (Boden, Fergusson, & Horwood, 2008; Grindstaff, 1988; Hofferth & Reid, 2001; Moore, Myers, Morrison, Nord, Brown, & Edmondston, 1993; Nanchahal, Wellings, et al., 2005; Olausson, Haglund, Weitoft, & Cnattinguis, 2001). For the children of adolescent mothers risks include poor attachment relationships, low IQ scores, language impairments, abuse and neglect, and emotional and behavioural problems (Borkowski, Whitman, & Farris, 2007).

As has been suggested by Leadbeater and Way (2001), risk statistics can give the impression that such negative outcomes are certainties for young mothers and their children. However, a growing body of research suggests that early pregnancy does not necessarily lead to dire outcomes. Several important longitudinal studies have illuminated the remarkable individual variation in developmental outcomes that exist for young women and their children (e.g. Boden et al., 2008; Borkowski, Ramey, & Bristol-Power, 2002; Borkowski, et al, 2007; East & Felice, 1996; Furstenberg et al., 1987; Leadbeater & Way, 2001). A major contribution of these studies has been to shed light on how risk factors that exist prior to pregnancy, such as the mental health and socioeconomic status of young mothers, influence outcomes following early parenthood. For example, Boden and his colleagues (Boden, et al., 2008) recently explored the linkages between early motherhood and later mental health problems using data from their 25-year longitudinal Christchurch Health and Development study. They found that young
mothers who experience mental health problems tend to be at-risk for these problems *prior* to pregnancy. Taking into account socioeconomic status prior to pregnancy, other researchers have suggested that poverty, rather than age, is the critical factor underlying poor outcomes for adolescent mothers and their children (e.g. Borkowski et al., 2007). Such attention to potential confounding factors is beginning to provide a more nuanced perspective on the risks associated with early motherhood.

Qualitative research has also been instrumental in challenging stereotypical notions of adolescent mothers as being “doomed to failure”. Case study research exploring the experiences of young mothers and their children suggests that, in contrast to the overwhelmingly negative stereotypes of young mothers as welfare-dependent, undereducated, and irresponsible, many young women adapt well to early motherhood, creating positive lives for themselves and their children (Arai, 2009; Borkowski, et al., 2007; Furstenberg, 2003; Leadbeater & Way, 2001). For example, Leadbeater and Way (2001) provide case studies of 15 young mothers, who, 6 years after having their children, reported positive physical and mental health, had graduated secondary school and were pursuing ambitious goals in school and/or work. One of these young women was “Marie”, a Puerto Rican woman from the South Bronx who was kicked out of her mother’s house when she had a child at age 17. Despite facing multiple risks to negative life outcomes, including severe physical and sexual abuse by her child’s father, 6 years after having her child she was completing her final year in an electrical engineering degree program, worked two jobs, led her college dance troupe, and was in a positive, deeply committed relationship. Qualitative studies have provided insight into the life experiences, attitudes and actions of highly resilient young mothers such as Marie, as well as those of young women who succumb to the negative risks associated with early motherhood and those whose life trajectories play out between these two extremes. Such research reveals the remarkable variation in how young women respond and adapt to the challenges posed by early pregnancy.
Conduct Problems and Early Pregnancy

Among the factors that contribute to a young woman’s relative success or failure in adapting to the challenges of early motherhood is her particular history of engagement in antisocial behaviour. Women who become pregnant as adolescents often have histories of conduct problems (Borkowski et al., 2007; Wakschlag & Hans, 2000). Mothers with histories of antisocial and/or criminal behaviour are at especially high risk for experiencing negative outcomes following an early pregnancy and these risks have clear consequences for their children (Sieger & Renk, 2007). Research suggests that young mothers with histories of severe conduct problems (including criminal behaviour, substance use, alcohol use etc.) are at significantly heightened risk of unsafe sexual practices, unemployment, health problems, involvement in criminal activity, incarceration, mental health problems, inadequate housing, poor educational outcomes, problems with substance use, and violent victimization (Oxford, et al., 2005).

And yet, recent qualitative research suggests that, even among young women with histories of high-risk behaviour, including antisocial and/or self-harming behaviour, becoming a mother may have a “silver lining” in relation to the young woman’s development: it can offer an opportunity to establish more positive behavioral patterns. According to Leadbeater & Way (2001), early pregnancy can provide new meaning and a sense of purpose that inspires young mothers to make positive changes in their lives. Indeed, this appears to be the case for many young women whose behavioural histories place them at heightened risk for negative life outcomes. For example, in a recent study of pregnant and parenting street-involved young women in Toronto participants reported that pregnancy resulted in important behavioural changes, such as accessing youth programs, going to school, spending less time with street-involved friends, and reduction or cessation in the use of substances (King et al., 2009). Similarly, Hunt and colleagues (2005) found that pregnancy among female gang members led to
reduction in alcohol consumption, reduction of time “on the streets” and with gang friends, and an overall reduction in risk-taking behaviours. These findings are also reflected in Rolfe’s (2008) study of marginalized young women’s accounts of motherhood, which found that pregnancy served as an important motivator for changing problematic behaviours, including drug use and engagement in crime. Given the severity of the potential risks facing young women with histories of conduct problems and their children, it is critical that researchers develop an understanding of what contributes to individual differences in outcomes in this population.

Several researchers have suggested that transitions relating to self-identity—specifically the emergence of a new, “respectable” self that replaces one’s identity as “troubled youth”—underlie the positive behavioural changes that have been observed in high-risk young mothers (Anderson, 1990; Hunt et al., 2005; Meadows-Oliver, 2006; Rolfe, 2008). It has been suggested that becoming pregnant can offer an important opportunity to “reinvent the self” (Meadows-Oliver, 2006). Hunt and colleagues (2005) write of the gang members in their study:

In spite of the strains of motherhood, almost every mother agreed that having children had changed their lives in very positive ways. They found that they had much more stability in their lives, that they had calmed down, and that they were now able to set goals for themselves and look on themselves as the role models for their children, a responsibility that they were willing to assume. Motherhood facilitated their negotiating a new identity as more capable, more confident, and more mature people. They had a new focus and purpose in their lives” (Hunt et al., 2005, p. 369).

However, while there exists a good deal of writing in which positive behavioural change in young mothers is linked to shifts in self-identity, there is a dearth of research investigating psychological processes of identity development in young mothers. Generally, researchers have focused on identity as social role (i.e. “mother” versus “troubled youth”) and not on the
psychological process of identity development. Moreover, because previous studies have
focused on a very specific aspect of self-identity: conceptions of one’s self as a mother (e.g.
Brubaker & Wright, 2006; Raeff, 1994; Rolfe, 2008), remarkably little is known about how
other aspects of self-identity and processes relating to the construction of the self may contribute
to individual differences in outcomes for young mothers. The present study attempted to address
these gaps by exploring the relationship between the development of self-identity and positive
change in antisocial behaviour in pregnant and parenting young women.

The following section outlines the particular theoretical approach taken to exploring self-
identity in adolescence and early adulthood, which focuses specifically on individuals’
conceptions of the values and commitments that define the self and narrative processes by which
individuals advance their personally salient self-values.

Identity Development in Adolescence and Early Adulthood

Psychological development in adolescence results in the emergence of new cognitive
structures that are critical to the development of self-identity, such as those relating to
considering and testing possibilities (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958) and those that allow for the
integration of single abstractions relating to the self into higher order abstractions (Case, 1985;
1998; Fischer, 1980; Fischer & Bidell, 2006). These developments provide the foundation for
elaboration of a theory of one’s self (Harter, 2003; Moshman, 2005), and greater awareness of
the meaning of one’s own behaviour and experience in relation to the developing self (McLean
& Breen, 2009; McLean, Breen, & Fournier, 2010; Selman, 2003).

Much of the research relating to identity development in adolescence has focused on
examining adolescents’ status in relation to the achievement of a mature psychosocial identity
according to Marcia’s (1987) empirical formulation of Erikson’s (1968) theory. The identity
status methodology has led to valuable insights regarding the importance of making carefully
considered identity commitments with respect to psychological and behavioural functioning (e.g. Adams, Munro, Munro, Doherty-Poirer, & Edwards, 2005; Christopherson, Jones, & Sales, 1988; Good, Grand, Newby-Clark, & Adams, 2008; Jones & Hartmann, 1988; Jones, Hartmann, Grouchowski, & Glider, 1989; Kroger, 2007; Marcia, 1987). More recently, research on the development of identity in adolescence and early adulthood has taken a more process-oriented approach, focusing on how the self is developed through the construction of life story narratives (e.g. Bohanek, Marin, & Fivush, 2008; Dumas, Lawford, Tieu, & Pratt, 2009; Habermas & deSilveira, 2008; McLean & Breen, 2009; McLean et al., 2010; McLean, Pasupathi, & Pals, 2007; McLean & Pratt, 2006; McLean & Thorne, 2006).

The Narrative Development of the Self

The narrative approach to personality psychology examines the construction of self-identity in the form of life stories (McAdams, 1993; 1996). Although relatively little research has directly examined the development of self-narratives in the adolescent phase, it is during this stage of the life course that the individual begins to actively make meaning of his or her experiences through the construction of self-narratives (Habermas & Bluck, 2000; McLean & Breen, 2009; McLean et al., 2010). From a narrative perspective, self-stories are both a current “snapshot” of the state of one’s self-identity and a critical processing tool with which self-identity is established (Fivush & Nelson, 2004; Fivush, Reese, & Haden, 2006; McLean et al., 2007; Pasupathi, 2001; Ricoeur, 1984; 1992).

The philosopher Paul Ricoeur describes the specific processes by which experiences and narrative interact in the construction of the self. There exist three “levels” in Ricoeur’s conception of narrative processing. The first of these levels is Mimesis₁, which is described as the felt experience of our lives as we go about living. Included in this first mimetic level are such aspects of our experience as our actions and felt experiences of well-being. At the level of
Mimesis, experience is not organized by language but there does emerge “a demand for narrative” (1984, p. 74): a desire to establish a sense of coherence across one’s disparate felt experiences. As Ricoeur (1984) writes, we are “inclined to see in a given sequence of the episodes of our lives ‘(as yet) untold’ stories, stories that demand to be told, stories that offer anchorage points for narrative…” (p. 74).

The “poetic composition” of one’s experiences in narrative emerges with the second level, Mimesis$_2$. At this level, plots are constructed and events are selected to provide a meaningful and coherent sense of self. According to Ricoeur, there are two temporal dimensions in Mimesis$_2$: one is the chronological and episodic dimension and the other is the dimension of “emplotment”, the configurational dimension through which experiences are organized into a story. It is through emplotment that we are able to make meaning of our diverse, variable, and discontinuous experiences and establish a sense of self-identity that is coherent across time (Ricoeur, 1992). As will be discussed in further detail below, the particular values that are salient to one’s self are important elements in the configuration of explanatory plots from one’s experiences (MacIntyre, 1981; McAdams, 2006; Ricoeur, 1992; Taylor, 1989). That is, the narratives we construct to make sense of our experiences are organized around personally salient values. To a significant extent, both the experience of one’s self as coherent and the communication of this coherence to others are dependent on the degree to which one’s personally salient values are expressed in action (McAdams, 2006).

Ricoeur’s Mimesis$_3$ is “the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the reader” (Ricoeur, 1992, p.71). The meanings we encounter in reading literary and historical texts are important influences in the development of our self-narratives (Ricoeur, 1984; 1992). In Ricoeur’s view, our interactions with our own self-narratives are similar to the process by which we make meaning of the fictional worlds that are presented to us in texts; self-understanding is developed through a process of “reading” our own self-narratives and
integrating the imagined self that exists in our narrative constructions into actual experience (Ricoeur, 1984; 1992). In this way the mimetic cycle is completed and each of the three levels of Ricoeur’s model of Mimesis interacts with and influences the others.

Recently, the relationship between self-narratives and experience has been the subject of growing research interest. Findings suggest that the establishment of a coherent self-narrative is a critical aspect of identity development with important implications for psychological well-being (Main, 1991; Pals, in press). For example, researchers have shown that establishing a coherent life story is important for positive psychological development throughout adolescence and adulthood (e.g., King, 2001; McAdams, Reynolds, Lewis, Patten, & Bowman, 2001; Pals, 2006). Recent findings also suggest that coherent self-stories are an important mechanism for psychological growth in the aftermath of traumatic experience (Hauser, Allen, & Golden, 2006; Pals & McAdams, 2004; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

Narrative coherence may also play a functional role with respect to behaviour (McAdams, 2006; Ricoeur, 1992). Maruna (2001) describes the process by which narrative influences action as follows:

Essentially, people construct stories to account for what they do and why they did it. These narratives impose an order on people’s actions and explain people’s behavior with a sequence of events that connect up to explanatory goals, motivations, and feelings. These self-narratives then act to shape and guide future behavior, as people act in ways that agree with the stories or myths they have created about themselves (p. 40).

Findings from longitudinal research on former adolescent psychiatric patients by Hauser and colleagues (Hauser et al., 2006) and Maruna’s (2001) longitudinal study of adult criminal offenders suggest that the development of a coherent life story narrative is important to both processes of resilience and desistance from criminal offending. Moreover, recent work by
Wainryb and colleagues (Wainryb, Komolova, & Florsheim, 2010) suggests that violent behaviour may be predicted by narratives that lack coherence. Overall, findings from these research efforts have contributed empirical support to Ricoeur’s mimetic trinity by establishing connections between the development of personal narrative and the actions and psychological experiences that constitute felt experience.

What is meant by the term narrative coherence? In a recent article on the topic McAdams (2006) begins by suggesting that the basic requirement for evaluating coherence is that a narrative is a “good” story that can be understood by the listener. In their theoretical discussion of narrative coherence, Habermas and Bluck (2000) identify a number of different forms of narrative coherence that are thought to develop in adolescence. These include: temporal, autobiographical, causal, and thematic coherence. Other researchers have examined other kinds of coherence. For example, Wainryb and her colleagues (Wainryb et al., 2010) have examined psychological and internal coherence in adolescents’ narratives, focusing in particular on references to intentionality and mental states.

As suggested above, for Ricoeur (1992) as others (e.g. MacIntyre, 1981; McAdams, 2006; Taylor, 1989), in order to be coherent a self-story must be organized around identifiable values and commitments. Although they are generally implicit in our narratives (McAdams, 2006), our commitments to specific self-values provide a sense of constancy to our experiences of self (Ricoeur, 1992). McAdams (2006) writes:

A life story is more than a literary production. It is a story told by a living person whose actions affect others. It is a story whose form and contents hold real-world significance. The problem of narrative coherence, therefore, extends to the issue of living action…The stories we live by must be evaluated with respect to their influence on how we live (pp. 120-121).
Life narratives do not encompass all aspects of our lived experience. Rather, they are subjected to processes of “smoothing” and selection, by which events that are deemed to be important to or illustrative of one’s self are included in our self-stories while others are omitted (Ricoeur, 1992; Polkinghorne, 2004). Blasi (2004) describes the selective process of identity work as follows:

All of us have the experience of treating the many, and equally real, aspects of our personality differently with respect to our sense of self. All actions that we perform feel ours. Most, however, are taken for granted and treated as routine occurrences, as simply constituting the background, the texture of our daily living. Some, by contrast, perhaps because of their meaning and their relation to specific goals, are particularly wanted and cherished, appropriated to our sense of who we are; others, finally, are disowned and rejected, perhaps because they do not fit with the image we have of ourselves, or because they contradict the values with which we identify and that we want to pursue in life (p. 13).

The establishment of a sense of one’s self as coherent thus necessarily involves selecting for inclusion in his or her self-narratives those events that contribute to establishing the kind of person he or she wants to become (Ricoeur, 1992; Taylor, 1989). In other words, the process of developing self-identity involves the construction of self-narratives that draw from personally meaningful experiences in order to reflect and/or advance one’s commitment to specific self-values.

Research on the narrative development of the self suggests that during adolescence there is an increasing demand to make meaning of one’s lived experience in narrative (e.g. McLean & Breen, 2009; McLean, Breen, & Fournier, 2010). As with other aspects of identity development, adolescence is a critical time for the development of new capacities and skills necessary for creating life stories. Sarbin (2004) has conceptualized narrative development as the emergence
of an ability to imagine narratives for one’s self and to increasingly interact with, rather than simply mimic, literary and historical narratives. During adolescence and early adulthood, the individual increasingly gains the capacity to engage in Mimesis, to create a coherent overarching life story that brings order to her lived experience (Habermas & Bluck, 2000). Thus, in adolescence, narratives increasingly become one’s own constructions (Lightfoot, 2004) thereby providing an important means for making meaning of and constructing one’s own behaviour.

**Self-Values and Self-Identity**

During adolescence the individual also begins to actively reflect upon and commit to the particular values that define the self (Damon, 1984; Moshman, 2005). According to philosopher Charles Taylor (1989), self-identity is comprised of one’s personal values or “orientations to the good”. These provide a framework of commitments and identifications that determine one’s understanding of what is good and valuable in life. Taylor writes:

My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose. In other words, it is the horizon within which I am capable of taking a stand (p. 27).

Similar ideas are espoused in the philosophical writings of Frankfurt (1988) and Ricoeur (1992), who suggest that in order to understand “who” an individual is, it is necessary to understand the values and commitments that the individual cares most deeply about and that thus provide the compass from which the individual determines the course of his or her actions.

Schwartz (1994) has defined values as “desirable transsituational goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in the life of a person …” (p. 21) and he outlines five characteristics of self-values. They are: (1) concepts or beliefs, (2) that pertain to desirable
end states or behaviours, (3) that transcend specific situations, (4) that guide selection or evaluation of behaviour and events, and (5) are ordered by relative importance (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987). According to this definition, each of us holds a variety of values which convey that which is most important to us in life (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003). A relatively robust body of research suggests that psychological well-being is influenced by the content of one’s values orientation (e.g. Joshanloo & Ghaedi, 2009; Kasser & Ahuvia, 2002; Kasser & Ryan, 1996; Sagiv & Schwartz, 2000; Vansteenkiste, Duriez, Simons, & Soenens, 2006). A particular emphasis of this research has been to demonstrate that an orientation to intrinsic rather than extrinsic values (e.g. affiliation versus material success) is associated with psychological well-being (e.g. Kasser & Ahuvia, 2002; Vansteenkiste, Duriez, Simons, & Soenens, 2006). Of particular significance for the present study, research also suggests that the values to which one is committed are highly motivating in terms of one’s behavioural choices (e.g. Bardi & Schwartz, 2003; Blasi, 1983; Damon, 1984; Schwartz, 2010).

Many studies of self-values have focused predominantly on the role of specifically moral values and beliefs in motivating moral behaviour (e.g. Colby & Damon, 1994; Hart, Yates, Fegley, & Wilson, 1995; Matsuba & Walker, 2004). For example, in a recent study of moral motivation, Hardy (2006) found that prosocial behaviour was predicted by the degree to which the participant endorsed moral values as being central to his or her sense of self. There has also been work suggesting the existence of relations between self-related values and less desirable behaviours in a wide range of populations. For example, recent studies have linked endorsement of values related to openness to change and sexual risk-taking in adult Eastern European populations (Goodwin, Realo, Kwiatkowska, Kozlova, Luu, & Nizharadze, 2002), and endorsement of values related to independence and reduced risk of suicidality in Hong Kong male adolescents (Lam, Stewart, Yip, Leung, Ho, ho, & Lee, 2004). Importantly for the present study, there has also been some work suggesting a connection between adherence to specific
self-related goals, such as control and revenge and antisocial behaviour (Delveaux & Daniels, 2000).

An additional gap that exists in our current understanding of the relationship between self-values and behaviour is how changes in one’s “orientation to the good” might relate to changes in one’s patterns of behaviour. Researchers have emphasized the relative stability of self-values in adulthood (Schwartz, 1997). Indeed, within the broader context of psychological development, one of the critical functions of self-identity is to establish a sense of the self as continuous throughout time (e.g., Chandler, Lalonde, Sokol, & Hallett, 2003; Habermas & Bluck, 2000; McAdams, 1988, 1993; Ricoeur, 1984; 1992). One’s self-defining values and commitments may serve an important unifying function that provides a sense of consistency as the individual undergoes the profound physical, psychological and social changes that inevitably occur across the life course (Ricoeur, 1992).

However, there exists an essential tension in human beings’ experiences of the self: at the same time as we strive to experience our selves as unified and consistent, we continuously engage in processes of self-development through which we modify and/or construct new self-identities in response to new experiences, priorities, and desires (Brandtstädter, 2006; McAdams, 1988, 1993; Polkinghorne, 2004; Ricoeur, 1992). As Polkinghorne (2004), writes:

We do not establish our identity once and then live with it the rest of our lives.

Personal identity is not something discovered once and for all but is a continuous process of creation throughout one’s life. Who we are is not a permanent thing that we are; rather we are a process of becoming (p. 45).

Indeed, the particular values and commitments that form one’s “orientation to the good” may shift in importance or change entirely during the life-long process of self-development. As will be described in further detail below, the adolescent stage, in particular, may be a time of
significant flux in the individual’s values orientation as he or she explores and establishes commitments to particular self-values (Damon, 1984; Erikson, 1968).

The process of self-construction rests, in part, on the human capacity for making “second order” evaluations in relation to our values and commitments (Frankfurt, 1988; Stanovich, 2004; Taylor, 1989); we tend to care about, evaluate and, at least to some extent, select the particular values that define us. However, our ability to engage in such second-order evaluations is somewhat limited. While some of our values and commitments may exist as conscious representations of the self that are readily accessible to reflective thinking and evaluation, other values may exist beyond the reach of our conscious awareness (Frankfurt, 1988; Stanovich, 2004; Taylor, 1989). As Polkinghorne (2004) suggests in his overview of Ricoeur’s (1992) narrative theory, “we do not have conscious access to all the nuances of the various senses of self that have served, out of awareness, to guide and evaluate our actions” (p. 43). Thus, it is possible that the cares and commitments that one believes to be self-defining are not actually the key values that shape his or her will and actions (Frankfurt, 1988).

The extent to which we are able to be aware of and to consciously reflect upon our values and commitments depends, at least in part, on the processes by which we acquire a particular value in the first place (Stanovich, 2004). Some values may be acquired through careful reflection and reasoning while others may be “inherited” somewhat directly from our biology and/or social environment. While one may be aware of some of one’s own values, this is not necessarily the case for those values that are not reflectively acquired (Stanovich, 2004). Interindividual differences also exist—human beings differ from one another in terms of both the capacity and willingness to engage in self-reflective processes. While some individuals may engage in careful examination of their cares and commitments and consider their actions in light of these, others tend not to engage in this sort of self-reflection (Glodis & Blasi, 1993; McLean, in press). As such, the individual’s will and behaviour may be guided by cares and commitments
that she does not realize she holds. Importantly, research suggests that the capacity for awareness of the cares and commitments that define the self is a developmental accomplishment resulting from dramatic cognitive developments that occur in late adolescence and early adulthood; it is during adolescence that the individual typically gains the ability to subject his or her self-values to conscious processes of reflection and evaluation, thus engaging in second order evaluations of one’s own values and commitments (Brandstädter, 2006; Damon, 1984; Ferrari & Vuletic, 2010; Frankfurt, 1988; Selman, 2003).

This emerging capacity for self-awareness is critical to the development of the self in adolescence and beyond (Ferrari & Vuletic, 2010; Selman, 2003). By late adolescence individuals typically gain the ability to reflect upon and evaluate the particular values that one deems to be (or wishes to be) important to the self. At this stage one can reflect upon the kind of person he or she wants to be, evaluate the distance that must be covered in order to become that kind of person, and intentionally engage in activities that move the self closer to being the kind of person one wants to become. In short, in adolescence the individual gains the capacity for intentional self-development (Brandstädter, 2006). Although culture and biology necessarily place limits on the extent to which various aspect of the self can be subjected to conscious awareness and reflection and brought within the purview of intentional processes of self-creation (Brandstädter, 2006; Stanovich, 2004), in adolescence it becomes possible to approach the self as a project and to actively construct much of one’s own self-development (Moshman, 2005). This may be an important consideration in understanding the experiences of pregnant and parenting young women who strive to transform antisocial patterns of behaviour. While becoming pregnant in adolescence and/or early adulthood may bring new risks, this particular developmental period also offers important new opportunities for the construction of the self.

The present study explores pregnant and parenting young women’s conceptions of the values that are most salient to their sense of self, including changes to these over time. Although
the advancement of personally salient self-values through the construction of self-narratives has
been the subject of a good deal of theoretical writing, to my knowledge it has not yet been
explored in empirical research. The present study seeks to address this gap by exploring the
development of “self-action coherence”, which is defined as coherence between personally
salient self-values and one’s stories about her actions and reasoning in the social world. This
construct is investigated with respect to both developmental considerations (i.e. changes in this
aspect of narrative meaning-making across adolescence and early adulthood) and its relations
with behavioural functioning.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Goals

This study explored the relationship between the construction of self-identity and
positive behavioural change in pregnant and parenting young women, focusing in particular on
relations between young women’s conceptions of their own personally salient self-values and
reported patterns of antisocial behaviour. The overarching research question which guided this
investigation was: what is the relationship between pregnant and parenting young women’s
conceptions of their personally salient self-values and behavioural functioning, specifically as it
relates to antisociality and in the context of the transition to motherhood? As will be described
in further detail below, patterns of antisocial behaviour that were of interest in this investigation
included lifetime history of engagement in antisocial acts, recent history of engagement in
antisocial acts (i.e. within the past year), and positive behavioural change, which was indicated
by a reduction in severity of antisocial behaviour when reported recent history was compared to
reported lifetime history of engagement in antisocial behaviour.
There were four primary goals of this research. These were: (1) To explore early motherhood as a specific context for identity development and behavioural change; (2) To investigate the content of young women’s self-values and relations to patterns of antisocial behaviour; (3) To explore the development of self-action coherence in adolescence and early adulthood; and (4) To investigate relations between self-action coherence and patterns of antisocial behaviour. The research questions and hypotheses associated with each of these goals are described in the following section.

*Investigation of Early Motherhood as the Context for Identity Development and Behavioural Change*

This study included an in-depth qualitative investigation of young women’s experiences of behavioural change in order to provide further insight into the experience of early motherhood as a context for both identity development and behavioural change. Consistent with a Grounded Theory approach (Charmaz, 2006), no specific predictions were made with respect to participants’ experiences. Rather, this aspect of the study was framed by the following general guiding question: *how do young mothers understand their own experiences of positive change in relation to their antisocial behaviour?* Rich interview data are presented in order to provide insight into how participants’ experiences of early motherhood relate to the processes of developing self-identity and transforming antisocial patterns of behaviour.

While exploration of motherhood as the context for behavioural change was guided by an open-ended question and was addressed using a primarily qualitative approach, the following three research goals were guided by specific research questions and hypotheses that were tested using statistical approaches.
Content of Self-Identity: Personally Salient Self-Values

Content of Self-Values and Relations to Patterns of Antisocial Behaviour

The next question addressed in this study was: what is the relationship between the content of participants’ self-values (i.e. the particular values endorsed) and behavioural functioning? As is described in detail below, participants were asked to select from a list of 31 pairs of self-defining values those values that they felt were most important to their sense of self at the present time, values that were most salient two years in the past, and values that they predicted would become most salient in the future. Follow-up questions were used to probe participants’ reasoning in relation to their selections. Based on findings from the qualitative analyses, it was expected that endorsement of self-values emphasizing relationship with others (e.g. being kind and caring, responsible and dependable etc.) for the present self would be associated with relatively less severity in terms of recent antisocial behaviour as well as higher levels of positive change in antisocial behaviour.

The Process of Developing Self-Identity: Self-Action Coherence

Of particular interest in this investigation was the narrative process through which the individual establishes coherence between her self-values and her actions, referred to here as self-action coherence. As is described in further detail below, the particular values pairs that participants identified as most salient to the self provided the basis for evaluating self-action coherence. Consistency of reasoning and action in relation to these values was evaluated using the entire participant interview. As described in detail in the Method section, the interview included in-depth probing of participants’ conceptions of their personally salient self-values (adapted from Arnold, 1993 and Schwartz & Boehnke, 2004), as well as high point and turning point narratives (McAdams, 2006), questions relating to participants’ conceptions of their possible future selves (adapted from Oyserman & Markus, 1990), exploration of the personal
meaning of fighting behaviour (adapted from Levitt & Selman, 1993), and participants’ understanding of their past and present behavioural status and the process of positive behavioural change.

*Self-Action Coherence and Age*

Given previous findings demonstrating the emergence of other types of narrative processing in adolescence and early adulthood (e.g. McLean & Breen, 2009; McLean et al., 2010), an important question was: *is self-action coherence related to age?* It was expected that self-action coherence would show a developmental progression from adolescence to early adulthood.

*Relations Between Self-Action Coherence and Patterns of Antisocial Behaviour*

As described above, a key aim of this investigation was to explore the relationship between the *process* of developing self-identity and positive behavioural change in pregnant and parenting young women. The research question associated with this aim was: *what is the relationship between self-action coherence and reported patterns of antisocial behaviour?* It was expected that self-action coherence would be related to both lower severity of recent antisocial behaviour and positive behavioural change. Because of strong associations in the research literature between levels of antisociality and age, suggesting that individuals typically become less antisocial as they mature (e.g. Moffit, 1993; 1997), it was important to control for age in order to test the hypothesis that changes in antisocial patterns of behaviour are indeed related to identity processes and not simply to age-related maturation. Thus, it was expected that self-action coherence would be related to lower levels of recent antisocial behaviour and positive behavioural change, even when controlling for age.
Overall Conceptual Model

The overall conceptual model of this investigation is summarized in Figure 1. While the design of this study did not allow for testing directionality of effects, the hypothesized relationship between conceptions of personally salient self-values (including both content of self-values and the process of developing self-action coherence) and behavioural functioning is bi-directional. As described above, the process of developing self-identity involves an interaction between one’s self-narratives and one’s felt experiences and actions in the social world so that our self-conceptions are continuously constructed and revised in light of our behaviours and their effects at the same time as emerging self-conceptions also give rise to new behaviours (Ricoeur 1984; 1992). In this conceptualization, the content and the process of developing personally salient self-values are both hypothesized to relate to history of antisocial behaviour as well as the process of positive behavioural change. That is, the content of developing personally salient self-values is hypothesized to relate to both history of antisocial behaviour and positive behavioural change; likewise, the process of developing self-identity is also hypothesized to relate to both behavioural history and the process of positive behavioural change. These hypothesized relations occur within the context of early motherhood and, as described above, a key aim of this investigation is to explore how this particular context influences identity development and behavioural change.
Figure 1: Conceptual Model

CONCEPTIONS OF PERSONALLY SALIENT SELF-VALUES

A. Content of personally salient self-values
B. Process of establishing self-values (i.e. the development of self-action coherence in adolescence and early adulthood)

BEHAVIOURAL FUNCTIONING

A. Lifetime and recent history of antisocial behaviour
B. Positive behavioural change

EARLY MOTHERHOOD AS CONTEXT
METHOD

Mixed Method Approach

This study was conceptualized with two methodological goals in mind: First, to test specific hypotheses based on the existing literatures in identity development and early motherhood using a primarily quantitative approach. The second goal is exploratory and draws on rich narrative data to provide context for quantitative findings and to allow for the emergence of new ideas that were not part of the original hypotheses. Qualitative data were also used to corroborate, enhance, illustrate and clarify quantitative findings (Caracelli & Greene, 1993). In the “hypothesis generating” component of this study a Grounded Theory approach was taken (e.g. Charmaz, 2006), whereby participant narratives were read several times in their entirety and coded into categories and themes that emerged from the readings. In the “hypothesis testing” component of the investigation specific coding systems were developed in order to translate narrative data into numbers for the purposes of statistical analyses. The quantitative and qualitative aims of this investigation were unified by an overall narrative approach. While there are a wide range of methods and approaches which researchers refer to as “narrative”, following Josselson (2007), the present study was conceptualized as a narrative investigation because it gave priority throughout to the meaning that individuals make of their experiences.

It has been argued that mixed method approaches are especially fruitful and important for research with populations whose voices have been obscured by traditional social science research, such as adolescents and women (Mertens, 2003; Tolman & Szalacha, 1999). As suggested in the previous section, early quantitative research on pregnant and parenting young women contributed to a stereotypical view of young mothers and their children as being doomed to negative life outcomes (Leadbeater & Way, 2001) by obscuring the experiences of young women who managed to adapt well to the challenges of early motherhood. In this way,
qualitative research has made important contributions to providing a more complete picture of risks and resilience in the context of early motherhood. However, qualitative research also has its limitations; in particular, qualitative approaches are limited in their usefulness for understanding relationships between variables and detecting trends. A primary methodological aim of the present research is to utilize the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative approaches so that insights could be drawn relating both to the trends and factors that contribute to positive behavioural change and to the experiences and mechanisms that underlie such change.

Research Participants

Twenty-nine pregnant and/or parenting young women participated in this study. Two participants were not included in the final analyses due to insufficient interview and behavioural data. The final sample was 27 young women, ranging in age from 16 to 22 years. The mean age was 18. Participants’ self-identified ethnicities included Black (N = 11), White, (N = 6), Mixed-Race (N = 5), Aboriginal (N = 2), Latin American (N = 1), Southeast Asian (N = 1), and “Other” (N = 1); N = 23 (approximately 85%) were born in Canada. The participants were almost equally divided between those who were pregnant with no other children (N = 13) and those who were already mothers (N = 14). Participants’ reported living arrangements at the time of the interview suggest that they likely experienced a range of day-to-day support and assistance in their parenting: Eleven participants (41%) reported that they lived with at least one of their parents. Of the 16 participants who did not live “at home” with at least one parent, 9 participants reportedly lived on their own, 4 participants lived with their boyfriends, 2 participants reported that they lived with friends, and 1 reported living with a relative.

1 All parents were mothers to only one child with the following exceptions: one participant reported a confirmed pregnancy with a second child and one participant reported that she suspected, but had not yet confirmed, that she may be pregnant.
Participants’ Behavioural Profiles

As described in further detail below, antisocial behaviour was measured using Slonim’s (2007) adaptation of Tanner and Wortley’s Toronto Youth Crime and Victimization Survey (2002), which includes questions on antisocial behaviour according to two time frames: (1) lifetime history and (2) the past year. Although behavioural data were also elicited in the interview (as described in detail below), the constructs of antisocial behaviour and behavioural change were both assessed using only the behaviour questionnaire. Participants’ self-reported antisocial behaviour was assessed using a 5 point scale ranging from 0, which suggested no history of antisociality to level 4, which suggested repeated engagement in severely aggressive behaviour. Participants were rated separately for reported lifetime engagement in antisocial behaviour and reported behaviour in the past 12 months.

Four participants (15%) reported no history of engagement in antisocial behaviour. Fourteen participants (52%) scored either a 3 or a 4 for lifetime history of antisocial behaviour, indicating repeated engagement in physically aggressive antisocial behaviour. Five of these participants (19%) scored in the category of “extreme” antisocial behaviour, indicated by engagement in multiple, severely aggressive acts. Participants’ reports of engagement in antisocial behaviour within the past 12 months suggest a near reversal of the numbers for lifetime history: 15 participants (56%) reported no engagement in antisocial behaviour within the past year. According to the questionnaire data, only 4 participants (15%) had engaged in recent physically aggressive antisocial behaviour and just one participant (4%) had a behavioural rating of “extreme” for the past 12 months. Figures 2 and 3 show the distribution of antisocial behaviour scores for lifetime history and the past year. Table 1 shows the number of participants who reported at least one incident of engagement in various types of antisocial behaviour, thus providing information about the types of antisocial behaviours in which participants have been engaged.
Figure 2: Reported Lifetime History of Antisocial Behaviour

Figure 3: Reported Recent History of Antisocial Behaviour (Past Year)
Table 1  
*Reported Lifetime History of Antisocial Behaviour*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Behaviour</th>
<th>Number of Participants Reporting At Least One Incident of Engagement in Behaviour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threatened to use violence against another person</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting that person</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taken part in a fight where a group of friends were against another group</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stolen something worth less than $50</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiated or started a physical fight with someone</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damaged or destroyed on purpose another person’s property</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carried a hidden weapon (e.g. gun or knife) in public</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used a weapon (e.g. gun or knife) to threaten or harm someone</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stole something worth more than $50</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sold illegal drugs (e.g. cocaine, marijuana, heroin)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broke into a home, business or car to steal something</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used physical force to get money or other things</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hit or threatened to hit a parent, teacher, or program worker</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stole or tried to steal a car or motorcycle</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Procedures**

Participants were recruited from youth-serving agencies serving several of Toronto, Ontario’s highest needs communities, including two “storefront” agencies in shopping malls (N = 5), which provide a range of counselling and employment services to youth, a counselling and pre-employment program for youth identified as being gang-involved or at-risk for gang involvement (N = 2), and a school and counselling program for pregnant and parenting young women (N = 20). Letters were first sent to service providers describing the study, and then follow-up calls were made several weeks after the letters were sent to answer questions, to ascertain the service providers’ interest in participating, and, where possible, to arrange a time to meet with youth in their programs. During these initial meetings with youth, recruitment flyers (Appendix A) were handed out and the study was described in detail according to the consent for participation form (Appendix B). Those youth who were interested in participating either
booked a time to meet with the researcher “on the spot” or arrangements were made for the researcher to call them at a later time to arrange a meeting, depending on both the particular youth’s preferences and the constraints of the program with which they were involved.

The consent procedures were described again to all youth at the beginning of each subsequent contact, including phone conversations and data collection sessions. All participants signed the consent form prior to participation. Depending on the particular agency/program, data collection occurred according to two different procedures. For the young women at the counselling and school program for pregnant and parenting young women, questionnaires were completed as a group at the program during a session overseen by the researcher. Individual interviews took place in a private office at the program over a period of several weeks following initial data collection. Participants from other programs completed both the questionnaires and the interviews individually. For the youth in the storefront mall programs, finding private interview space was an issue. One of the participants was interviewed at the researcher’s office at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, 3 participants were interviewed in offices at their program, and one participant was interviewed in a fairly private corner of the food court of a shopping mall. In each case, every effort was made to ensure sufficient privacy for the interview.

Each participant was compensated for her time with a $20.00 gift certificate to a store in her local area. All participants were given a choice of gift certificate, which included a gift card that could be redeemed at any store in a local mall, a grocery store, a large pharmacy, a bookstore, and a clothing store.

Given the relatively “high risk” nature of the participant sample and the potential sensitivity of interview questions focusing on one’s life experiences, extra precautions were taken to minimize the potential risks of participating for the study participants. The interview was carefully tailored to avoid producing any negative experiences or distress: for example,
although participants were asked about their history of antisocial behaviour, questions generally focused on the process of positive change. At the time of the interview, all participants were participating in some form of supportive programming through their referring agency/program. At the end of the interview, participants were given a small card with a list of phone numbers and websites for obtaining further support for themselves, their children and/or someone else they might know to be in need. As well, the researcher has had several years of previous experience working with high-risk youth with histories of violence and was both trained and experienced in recognizing and responding to any distress and/or risks that may have arisen through the interview process. As had been expected, no such problems arose during the course of this study. In fact, although one participant was not interested in participating further, all of the remaining participants reported that they enjoyed and/or learned from the interview process and agreed to be contacted in the future for follow-up research.

Measures

The measures used in this study included both questionnaires and a semi-structured interview. These are described in detail below.

Questionnaires

Participants were given the option of having the researcher read the questions out loud, in order to accommodate those who may have some difficulty with reading. The researcher was also present while participants were completing the questionnaires in order to answer questions regarding any of the questionnaire items and to ensure satisfactory comprehension of the questionnaires. The following questionnaires were the focus of this study:
Demographic Questionnaire

The demographic questionnaire included questions relating to age, country of birth, first language, who the participant lives with, highest level of education for self and parents, and self-identified ethnicity.

Behavioural Questionnaire (adapted from Tanner & Wortley, 2002)

This scale was first adapted by Slonim (2007) from Tanner and Wortley’s Toronto Youth Crime and Victimization Survey (2002) and includes questions on antisocial behaviour. Participants were provided a list of antisocial behaviours and asked how many times in their lifetime and in the past 12 months they have engaged in any of the behaviours listed. Based on the information provided on this questionnaire, participants’ reported antisocial behaviour was rated according to the following 5-point scale:

0 = no engagement in antisocial behaviour
1 = limited engagement in single, isolated incidents
2 = engagement in antisocial behaviours that are not physically aggressive, such as property offenses and drug dealing
3 = repeated engagement in physically aggressive behaviour and/or frequent drug dealing
4 = engagement in multiple, severely aggressive acts

Participants were rated separately for reported lifetime engagement in antisocial behaviour and reported behaviour in the past 12 months. Change in antisocial behaviour was calculated by subtracting participants’ scores for reported recent antisocial behaviour (i.e. incidents reported for the last 12 months) from their scores for reported lifetime engagement in antisocial behaviour.
Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Questionnaires were completed first and these were followed by the interview. All participants were interviewed by the researcher using a semi-structured interview protocol, which took approximately 45 minutes to complete and was audio taped. The interview was designed to elicit participants’ conceptions of their self-values, as well as critical life events (i.e. high point and turning point narratives), conceptions of future selves, and conceptions of the personal meaning of fighting behaviour. As suggested above and described in detail below, the interview was used to explore motherhood as the context for identity development and behavioural change and to investigate participants’ conceptions of their self-values and the level of coherence between these values and participants’ actions in the social world.

The semi-structured approach allowed for a balance of standardized questions with the freedom to further explore participants’ responses. Semi-structured interviews provide a relatively natural format for conversation (as compared to structured interviews) as questions are generally open-ended and both the researcher and participant are able to respond to one another’s statements and questions, thus maximizing participants’ level of comfort with the interview process. The interview protocol is attached in Appendix C. Each of the components of the interview protocol is briefly described below. This is followed by a description of the coding procedures.

Introduction: Imagine Your Life as a Movie

In the first portion of the interview, participants were asked to imagine their life as a movie and to describe the kind of movie it would be (e.g. drama, action, adventure etc.), what their character would be like, and typical activities in which the character would be engaged. This section served as a “warm-up” for the rest of the interview by giving participants an opportunity to begin to think and talk about their lives in a general way. It also was intended to
provide insight into the general tone of the individual’s life story (e.g. life as a tragedy or comedy etc.) and to contribute to a general sense of the participant’s developing self-identity.

*Possible Selves*

Adapted from Oyserman & Markus (1990), the Possible Selves section of the interview was comprised of three questions: Participants were asked to describe: (1) what they hope to be like in the next year or two; (2) what they think is likely to be true of them in the next year or two; and (3) what they fear or worry about being like in the next year or two. These questions provided insight into the participants’ hopes and goals for themselves, their perception of their own developing self-identity, and their fears and worries with respect to the self. The questions were fairly open-ended and participants were free to focus on any aspect of the self, such as self-values or traits (e.g. I want to be a nicer person) or academic and/or career-related goals (e.g. I want to finish high school).

*High Point and Turning Point Narratives*

Participants were asked to provide two narratives: A high point or peak experience in their life story and a turning point experience in which they underwent a change in their understanding of the self. These questions were based on McLean’s adaptation (McLean & Breen, 2010; McLean & Pratt, 2006) of McAdams’ (2006) Guided Autobiography Instructions. After participants described a specific high point or turning point experience, a series of questions were asked to provide context for the event (e.g. when did it happen) and to elicit participants’ conceptions of the meaning and significance of this event to the self. Participants were also asked several questions relating to the telling of this event to others.
**Personally Salient Self-Values**

Participants were presented with a list of 31 pairs of self-values and asked to select the three value pairs that are most salient to the present self. The values that were chosen for inclusion on this list were derived from Arnold’s (1993) work on personal virtues as well as Schwartz and Boehnke’s (2004) work on self-values and included relational values (e.g. kind and caring), self-focused values (e.g. independent and self-reliant), and power-focused values (e.g. powerful and dominant). Once the participant’s “top three” value pairs were selected and ordered according to the first, second and third value pairs most important to the self, participants were asked a series of follow-up questions according to Arnold’s Good-Self Assessment (1993). These follow-up questions focused on the participant’s most salient self-value pair and were designed to elicit various aspects of the participant’s conceptualization of the particular value pair, including her definition of it, her understanding of the importance of the value pair to her self-identity, and both her own and others’ perceptions of the degree to which the value pair is expressed in her everyday actions and interactions.

Once participants’ reasoning in relation to their present personally salient self-values was thoroughly probed, participants were then asked which values they would have endorsed had they been asked to identify and order their three most salient self-value pairs *two years in the past*. Follow-up questions focused on participants’ reasoning in relation to why the values have changed and/or stayed the same. This same procedure was then used to identify and elicit participants’ reasoning about the values they anticipate to be most salient *two years in the future*.

**Personal Meaning of Fighting Behaviour**

This portion of the interview was adapted from Levitt and Selman’s (1993) manual on the personal meaning of risk-taking behaviour. Fighting behaviour was selected as the focus
risk-taking behaviour because, unlike other forms of risk-taking behaviour common in adolescence and early adulthood (e.g. substance use, sexual risk-taking etc.), physical fighting necessarily involves conflict with others and, as such, provides a context for exploring participants’ reasoning about potential conflicts between relationally oriented self-values and their behaviour. The purpose of this interview was to gain an understanding of the participant’s personal experience with physical fighting (her own as well as fighting behaviour in her peers, family and wider community) and the \textit{personal meaning} that fighting holds for the participant. The interview also elicited participants’ reasoning relating to why they do or do not engage in fighting and any changes to their conceptions of physical fighting and their actual fighting behaviour over time. Throughout the \textit{Personal Meaning} interview, the primary aim of questioning was to explore participants’ awareness of the meaning that fighting behaviour holds in relation to one’s self-identity. Thus, this component of the interview yielded data on the explicit connections that are made between the self and behaviour. As such the \textit{Personal Meaning} interview was particularly important for assessing self-action coherence\footnote{Although the personal meaning interview provided some data regarding participants’ engagement in antisocial behaviour, this was not used to assess either behavioural history or behavioural change. As described above, these constructs were assessed using solely the Behaviour Questionnaire.}.

\textit{Conceptions of past and present behavioural status and interview wrap-up}

In this segment of the semi-structured interview participants were asked to assign themselves to one of three groups according to whether they: (1) had ongoing histories of engaging in behaviours that could get themselves or others hurt and in serious trouble with the law, such as fighting, stealing things, dealing drugs, destroying property, threatening and intimidating others; (2) had repeatedly engaged in these kinds of behaviours and actions in the past but have made changes in their lives and have not been involved in these kinds of behaviours for at least one year; or (3) did not have histories of doing things that could get
themselves or others into serious trouble, such as fighting, stealing, destroying property, or threatening and intimidating others. Participants were then asked why they placed themselves in the particular group and a series of questions were asked depending on group membership. For those participants who described themselves as having ongoing conduct problems, questions focused on whether or not they wanted to make changes to their behaviour and their perceptions of obstacles and challenges that might impede the process of change. For those who stated that they had overcome histories of antisocial behaviour, follow-up questions focused on their understanding of their own change process, including what made change possible, motivations for change, social support in the change process, fears and challenges relating to maintaining positive behaviours, and what they have found to be most helpful in maintaining more prosocial behaviour. Participants who stated that they had no history of engaging in antisocial behaviour were asked to describe what had kept them from getting involved in such behaviour.

The final questions of the interview focused on participants’ perceptions of the process of positive behavioural change for other adolescents and young adults. They were asked what advice they would share with other youth who were trying to make changes to their lives and with service providers who were trying to help facilitate these changes. They were also asked what they felt others who were trying to change “need most” in order to successfully alter their behaviours. The interview then closed with the participants being given the opportunity to discuss anything that they felt was not but should have been addressed by the interview and to ask any questions.

Coding and Data Analysis

All interviews were transcribed by the researcher and undergraduate psychology students who provided research assistance for this project. Coding and analyses were completed using the interview transcripts.
Exploratory Qualitative Analyses

The specific approach used in the coding and analyses of qualitative data concerning motherhood as the context for behavioural change was an adapted Grounded Theory approach using comparative analyses (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As stated above, the guiding question which provided the basis for this qualitative exploration was: *how do young mothers understand their own experiences of positive change in relation to their antisocial behaviour?* The purpose of Grounded Theory is to develop a theory inductively from a dataset, rather than to use data in order to test a pre-existing theory (Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). For this study, participant interviews were read several times line by line in their entirety with the guiding question in mind. Specific themes were identified and each interview was re-read in order to make notes and generate labels in relation to each participants’ experiences and conceptions in relation to these themes. Interviews were then compared and the labels were reduced to several overarching “key themes”. These themes and illustrative excerpts from participants’ interviews are reported along with the quantitative analyses in the Results section.

Self-Values

As suggested above, analysis of the qualitative data led to the hypothesis that relational values would be of particular importance in relation to behavioural functioning. Coding of the personally salient self-values component of the interview involved assigning the values pairs endorsed by the participants into three groups, based on participants’ reasoning in relation to these values. These groups were: relationally-focused values, self-focused values, and self-values based in power.\(^3\)

\(^3\) This latter category emerged through analyses of participants’ reasoning in relation to their self-values. Although power-focused values included both relational (e.g. being feared or thought of as dangerous) and self-focused (e.g. having material wealth or being rich) values,
Endorsed values were assigned numerical scores according to the degree of salience to the participant. Primary value pairs (i.e. those that the participant endorsed as being most salient to the sense of self) were given a score of 3. Secondary value pairs were scored as 2 and the value pair that the participant endorsed as being the third most important to the self was scored as 1. Total scores were then tallied for relational, self-focused, and power-focused goals. This was done separately for values endorsed for the present, past, and future self. For example, if the participant exclusively endorsed relational goals as salient to the self then a score of 6 was assigned for relational goals. If a participant endorsed relational goals as third most important to the self and other goals were self-focused, then a score of 1 was assigned for relational goals and a score of 5 was assigned for self-focused goals.

Self-Action Coherence

The self-action coherence coding system was developed for use in this study. The complete manual that was developed and used for the purpose of coding self-action coherence in this study is attached as Appendix D. The purpose of this coding system was to assess participants’ interviews for: (1) the individual’s awareness of her personally salient self-values; and (2) the extent to which these values are reflected in the individual’s stories about her actions and reasoning in relation to the social world. There are 4 levels in this coding system: Level 1 represents a lack of awareness of the values that define the self and motivate one’s behavior; Level 2 represents awareness of one’s personally salient self-values and limited/tentative attempts to act in accordance with these; Level 3 represents awareness and strong (though not perfect) consistency in acting in ways that reflect one’s values orientation; and Level 4 represents awareness of one’s self-values and portrayal of the self as behaving with 100% consistency with the values that are expressed. It should be noted that no person can (or perhaps these were explicitly connected to antisocial behaviours by the participants in their interviews and were thus placed in a separate category.
should) be expected to behave with 100% consistency in relation to her self-values. However, the focus of this coding is on assessing the *story* or *narrative* the participant tells about the self rather than his or her actual behaviour. While we cannot be expected to act with perfect consistency, it is possible to tell a story about the self that suggests flawless coherence. It was expected that level 4 ratings would be quite rare and that a score of 3 would represent a very high level of self-action coherence.

Coding for self-action coherence involved identifying the three pairs of self-values that the participant endorsed as salient to the *present self* and reading the rest of the interview for evidence of the participant’s level of awareness of her personally salient self-values and the degree to which the actions she described cohere with these self-values. All interviews were coded separately by the first author and by an undergraduate psychology student who was blind to the age of the participants and the hypotheses of the investigation. A random sample of 10 interviews (37%) was used for reliability testing. The intraclass correlation coefficient for the mean sum of ratings was $r = .79$. For all interviews, coders discussed any discrepancies in scores and agreement was reached.
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Results and Discussion are combined in two sections. In the first section specific findings are presented with some brief interpretation of their meaning and implications. This is followed by a broader, in-depth discussion of the findings and implications of this study taken together as a whole. The strategy of combining results and discussion sections was adopted in order to provide consistency throughout the predominantly quantitative and predominantly qualitative sections of this dissertation; because presentation of qualitative data includes interpretations of these data, the same approach was used in presenting the quantitative data.

The Results section begins with a qualitative exploration of the process of change. To review, the first question guiding this research was: *how do pregnant and parenting young women understand their own experiences of positive change in relation to their antisocial behaviour?* While some statistical data from the Behaviour Questionnaire are first reported below in order to provide some numerical context for understanding participants’ stories of positive change, this question was primarily addressed using participants’ responses to all sections of the semi-structured interview.

Evidence of Change

To begin, it was important to explore the degree to which participants had experienced positive change in antisocial behaviour. Responses to the Behaviour Questionnaire suggest that the majority of participants who had histories of engaging in antisocial behaviour had indeed made positive changes to their behaviour. Change scores were produced for each participant by subtracting reported recent history of antisocial behaviour (i.e. behaviour reported for the last 12 months) from reported lifetime history of antisocial behaviour. Of the participants who reported a lifetime history of one or more incidents of antisocial behaviour (N = 23), 18 (78%) showed
positive change in antisocial behaviour when reported recent behaviour was compared to reported lifetime history of antisocial behaviour.

Motherhood as a Context for Change

As described above, participants were almost equally divided between those who were pregnant with no other children (N = 13) and those who were already mothers (N = 14). Given that this study investigated motherhood as a context for behavioural change, it was important to explore whether there were any significant group differences in behavioural profiles for pregnant young women versus those who were already mothers. Analyses of covariance were conducted to determine if differences existed in reported history of antisocial behaviour (lifetime and recent history) or behavioural change due to mother status (i.e. pregnant versus mother) controlling for age. There were no significant group differences. Given expectations that pregnancy and motherhood serve as important turning points with respect to improving antisocial patterns of behaviour, it is somewhat surprising that those participants who were already mothers did not report greater behavioural change and less recent antisocial behaviour than their pregnant counterparts, whose transitions to motherhood had begun more recently.

In the following section qualitative data from all sections of the semi-structured interview are used to provide insight into participants’ reported experiences of positive behavioural change in order to gain a better understanding of motherhood as a context for change. In these excerpts “P” is used to denote “Participant” and “I” is used to denote “Interviewer”.
Almost all of the participants (N = 25) spoke of having their children as a positive development in their lives and as an important source of motivation for engaging in and/or sustaining more positive behaviours, such as going to school, securing more stable housing, becoming more focused on future career goals, and/or changing antisocial patterns of behaviour. The remaining two participants (one pregnant and one a mother) did not speak positively of their experiences of motherhood. An important question is, for those young women who do see becoming mothers as important to the process of behavioural change, what is it specifically about the experience of becoming a mother that contributes to this process? One theme that is common among the participants who describe their children as important motivators for change is that pregnancy and motherhood contribute to an understanding that one’s actions have important consequences. An example of this is provided in the following excerpt from the interview with 19-year old Julie who, at the time of the interview, had a seven-month-old daughter. Julie reports having been involved in one or two physical fights in her lifetime, but has not fought in about two years. Although she says she has been in situations where she was tempted to fight, she has chosen to solve things “as a grown individual and just talk…”.

I: What do you think the main reason is that you don’t fight?

P: Well right now I have a lot to lose. I have my apartment, I have my child, and like I have an example to show her, to set to her. Like, I’m not a hooligan. If I want her to have respect for me, I have to show her that I respect myself. So that’s the main, big, if I’m going around fighting people it’s gonna show that like I have no respect for myself, I have no morals, values or principles for myself.

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4 All participant names have been changed to protect confidentiality
And that means she could do whatever she wants because it looks like I’m doing whatever I want, and that’s not a good, I wouldn’t be a good role model to her. I’m trying to be a role model to her.

Fear of the consequences of one’s behaviour for one’s children tends to be a strong motivator for change. Eighteen-year-old Jennifer has a history of fighting and describes herself as someone who used to be “violent”. Now the mother of a four-year-old daughter, Jennifer says that she changed her behaviour when she was six months pregnant. When asked “how did you manage to change your behaviour?” Jennifer responds: “After almost getting arrested and the cops telling me that if I get arrested I’m gonna be having my child in jail, and then my child would have been taken away by the [Children’s Aid Society]”. This experience led to an important realization, which Jennifer describes as follows:

Like everybody says they take life for granted but when you have your child it’s no just your life anymore. It’s yours and your child’s...I’ve changed a lot, changed a lot... like now I realized I have to finish my schooling, I have to get a job, like I just not everything’s about me anymore. It’s more about her than me.

Jennifer changed her antisocial behaviour because she worried about not ”being there” for her daughter. As this excerpt suggest, the consequences of one’s self-harming and other-harming behaviours become profoundly more serious with motherhood. The realization of the potential consequences of one’s behaviour appears to mark an important shift from a focus on the self to an orientation to another. As Jennifer states in the excerpt above, “…not everything’s about me anymore. It’s more about her than me”. For these young women, their actions are no longer seen strictly “their own business” but, rather, they come to understand that what they do really matters for another person.
Most participants spoke of the desire to become a positive role model for their child as an important motivator for change. Eighteen-year-old Tia describes her strong desire to be a role model for her 1-year-old son in the following excerpt:

> But now he makes me looking at him makes me want to do something better and makes me want to go to school. He makes me want to do something to benefit myself and for him. I just want to give him a good life...I want to go out there and be a role model for my son, so when he grows up and he looks at me he will be proud. I hope I will be an inspiration for him because I’m a young mother and I still went back to school. You know a lot of young mothers don’t go back to school because they feel discouraged and they think people are going to judge them. But all that doesn’t even matter to me, it’s just about providing for my son, making sure he has the best and making sure he has everything he needs and wants. But um I’m just really happy to have him, it changed my life a lot.

The desire to be a positive role model is also expressed in the following short excerpt from the interview with 22-year-old Carrie, mother of a 4-year-old son:

> P: ...he is the best thing that’s ever happened to me.

> I: Why?

> P: Because um, because of him. He’s like, I don’t know I look at him and I see myself in him so much. I want to accomplish things more now that I have him there to look up to me and just for me to be that positive role model to him.

These excerpts suggest that positive behavioural change is inspired by concern and care for the welfare and development of one’s child. For the participants in this study, pregnancy and motherhood contribute to a sense that one’s actions have real consequences in the world and that what they do “matters”.

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However, while concern for one’s child is an important motivation, the interview data suggest that it is not only this relational orientation that motivates positive change; rather, participants are also motivated to change for themselves. The interviews suggest that becoming a mother may offer a unique context for behavioural change that may not exist in other relationships. In the above excerpt, Carrie says “I look at him and I see myself in him so much”. The idea that one’s child is connected to one’s self is also expressed by 19-year-old Jasmine when she reflects on a past incident when she left her young infant in the care of two substance-abusing youth while she went out to deal drugs. Jasmine returned home to find her daughter alone on the balcony, cold and crying in a dirty diaper while the babysitters were passed out inside. She describes this incident as a critical turning point that led her to make profound changes to her behaviour, including quitting her work as a drug dealer. Jasmine wonders: “How could I allow this to happen? Like this is my child. Like this is me, this is me, this is me, you know?” As suggested elsewhere (Breen & McLean, 2010) children are likely a unique source of motivation as they may be viewed, not as entirely separable from one’s self, but as an extension of the parent’s self (e.g. Chodorow, 1978; Furman, 1996). As such, perhaps having a child can provide an opportunity to see the self in a new light; because the child—who is seen to be a part of one’s self—is loved and deeply valued, this may contribute to a new sense of the self as worthy of new efforts for self-improvement. This idea that having a child can lead to a new realization that the self is important and valuable is reflected in the following excerpt from the interview with Julie, who was first introduced above:

Before I wasn’t really sure of myself; what I wanted to do with my life, so I never really attended high school or like see it as like an asset at the time. I was young, but I actually [inaudible] realizing that it’s really important and I really need it. Like that something that was really [inaudible] to me, like I really wanted to finish school, not only for others but for myself, to feel better about myself, to
feel like I actually accomplished something. So that was like a big turning point in my life.

As suggested by this excerpt, having her daughter led Julie to begin to actively engage in constructive efforts to improve her self, not only for her daughter’s sake but also for herself. Thus, for some young women, having a child may contribute to an understanding that, not only do one’s actions matter, but the self matters as well.

**Context(s) for Change**

Somewhat surprising given past qualitative studies which have focused on motherhood as the critical experience for positive behavioural change (e.g. King et al., 2009; Rolfe, 2008) is that, while it had an important influence on change for almost of the participants, becoming a mother was not necessarily the instigating or critical turning point on the path to positive change. Other experiences that participants understood as critical turning points included their relationships with their boyfriends (N = 8), deaths of family members or friends (N = 3), and the realization of the consequences of one’s self- or other- harming behaviour that was not inspired or motivated by one’s relationships with others (N = 6). More than half of the participants (N = 16) explained their positive behavioural change as resulting from a series of events. These findings suggest that while pregnancy and motherhood are important motivators for behavioural change and/or sustaining positive changes that have already begun, it is important to consider young women’s conceptions of experiences that came before and after pregnancy in order to fully understand their paths to positive change in antisocial behaviour.

As suggested above, for several participants, relationships with their boyfriends provided the critical motivation to begin to make important changes in their lives. Nineteen-year old Jessica was pregnant at the time of the interview and talked about getting her life “on track” after she met her boyfriend. She describes herself as having been a “stoner” who was kicked out
of school. However, as the following excerpt suggests, this all changed when she met her boyfriend, an experience she describes as the “high point” in her life story:

P: Probably, it was like a year and a half, almost two years ago, I just met like my boyfriend or whatever, but we just like started dating and it was probably, it was like the greatest experiences of my life, ‘cause like I’m very, I’m sort of antisocial, so like I don’t like, I didn’t go to like parties and do that kind of stuff and umm, after I met him we would do like all these random things like driving to Niagara falls, like just one morning for absolutely no reason like, and things like that. It was just like, it wasn’t like anything really like one event; it was the whole kinda thing. It was just like really different from how I was before, and it was just really nice to like be different and to be doing like all these crazy things like, yeah.

I: So what were you thinking and feeling during that high point?

P: Um, probably a lot. I remember being just really like happy to be out of my house and with like people that like wanted like just you know, experience life and not like, I was always like really, really worrisome, so it was like a big change to like not worry about anything and just kind of like go for like whatever you wanted to do kinda thing, so.

I: Who else was involved in this?

P: Um just my boyfriend.

I: Why is this event significant?

P: It changed me a lot, like I was very like, like I said, really antisocial and it just made me a totally different person and to like, kind of like be able to like to do things and not just kind of like sit around at home and like wait for things to happen.
I: How much of an impact would you say it’s had on you?

P: Huge, huge impact. Like totally like changed completely from then.

I: Can you tell me a little bit more about the impact it’s had?

P: Well, I’ve like, well, I’ve done so much more, even like in term of like just regular life like um, I started working more and I, you know, I was out of school at the time but it’s sort of motivated me to get my life back to like where I wanted it, instead of doing like what everyone else wanted me to do and stuff like that. So it was, you know kinda put me back in my place.

A bit later in the interview, Jessica says of this experience that it led her to “kinda get a personality and get like a life”.

For other participants, the initial motivation for behavioural change involves other people, such as friends and family members. For a few participants (N = 3), the process of change began with the deaths of family members and/or friends and the realization that “life is short” and one’s actions matter. Sixteen-year-old Lindsay was pregnant at the time of the interview. She had a history of antisocial behaviour, including multiple incidents of both theft and fighting, In the previous several months she had begun to make important changes to her behaviour and reports only one antisocial incident (involving threatening to hit or hitting a program worker) in the past year. She provides the following description of the important turning point in her life story:

...maybe April, May around those times, I lost a good friend of mine. So that’s when my life kind of got turned around and then after that I found out I was pregnant so my whole life had to change, I had to get serious, start getting all my credits for school, because I’m going to have to take a few months off to have the baby. And after my friend was gone, my life turned around because mostly I lived with her all the time, it was always me and her, so after everything changed.
Losing her friend to cancer led Lindsay to the realization to “change my whole idea about life and stuff, like life is short” and her pregnancy has contributed to an understanding that she needs to take “life” and her own actions more seriously.

While behavioural change tended to be described as a process involving relationships, some participants (N = 6) suggest that this process begins, not with a relational focus, but with a focus on the self and realization that the trajectory of one’s life course needs to change. Julie (introduced above) describes a profound change in her behaviour over the past two years. While her relationships with her child and her boyfriend have both been important to making changes to her self-understanding and her behaviour, her initial turning point occurred earlier when she engaged in a process of self reflection. She describes this in the following interview excerpt:

I: So what’s changed?

P: A lot.

I: Can you tell me about it?

P: I was more angry before, I was more aggressive. Yeah, I was very angry person at that point in time.

I: And so that was before but not now, right?

P: Yeah.

I: So when did that change happen?

P: The change happened when I realized that being angry, it’s not worth it. Being miserable, it’s not worth it. It just made me depressed, and I didn’t like to be depressed anymore, and I didn’t wanna be an evil person.

I: Did you feel like you were an evil person?

P: Not really evil, but felt like I couldn’t care about anybody or anything.

I: So how did that all change?

P: That changed when I hit my rough period in my life.
I: Sorry, which period?

P: When I hit a rough period, I, yeah, like I had to find something to be happy for even if I didn’t feel like I wanted to be happy anymore, yeah.

I: So how did you do that?

P: Umm I try to look at the bright side of things, try to find the bright side. Yeah that’s basically how I did it.

I: So was anyone else involved in this change in your mindset, or was it…?

P: No, just me. Just something on the inside. Finding inner peace

Julie does not describe the details of the “rough period” that led to her self-transformation. However, what we can glean from her description is that these experiences led her to engage in self-reflection and to make fairly profound changes to her “orientation to the good”. This idea is also expressed in the interview with eighteen-year-old Lara, who describes quitting her severe substance abuse prior to becoming pregnant because “I just didn’t like who I was becoming anymore”.

The Process of Behavioural Change

For two of the participants, behavioural change was immediate. Eighteen-year-old Amanda describes herself as having a very serious drug problem until the day she learned that she was pregnant:

Before I found out I was pregnant, I don’t know where I would be now. I was into drugs, I was never home at all. I would maybe come home to sleep for a couple of hours and then I would be out again. It was like from morning to night for a whole year. I never looked at my sister I never looked at my parents, I never talked to them much and then when I found out I was pregnant, I became friends with my sister. Her and I are really close now like it's more there’s not so much
fighting as before. I don’t do drugs anymore. My mom says that my daughter
saved my life.

For Amanda, the impact of her pregnancy was immediate; she stopped using drugs as soon as she discovered her pregnancy. This was also the case for 18-year-old Carla, who stopped abusing substances when she discovered her pregnancy:

I: When did changes occur for you?
P: When I got pregnant.

I: How would you say you made changes, like how did you go about doing it?
P: I just said to myself that it wasn’t worth it anymore and I wasn’t liking the person I was becoming. I didn’t like what I was doing and I decided to make a change. Getting pregnant and my daughter was just the push that I needed to stop.

I: So would you say that it was sudden or was it more of a gradual process?
P: No it was sudden.

I: So just one day, complete change?
P: Pretty much. Like I didn’t have a choice because what I was doing was not healthy for me, so it wouldn’t have been healthy for the baby.

For these participants, continued engagement in behaviours that pose potential health risks to their unborn children was not an option; these excerpts suggest that they felt they essentially had no choice but to stop these behaviours immediately. It is interesting that substance use was the problematic behaviour for both of the participants who described their change process as a sudden transformation. Other behaviours, such as engaging in physical fighting or risking violent victimization by dealing drugs also pose health risks for young women and their developing fetuses; however, none of the participants who engaged in these sorts of behaviours described the cessation of these behaviours as having occurred automatically with the discovery
of a pregnancy. The type of behaviour in which a young woman engages is likely an important consideration in understanding her process of behavioural change. Although analyses of participants’ meaning-making in relation to the particular behaviours in which they engage is beyond the scope of this study, it is worthy of some consideration. Different behaviours likely have different meanings to the individual and perhaps substance use is conceptualized as a more direct “assault” on one’s developing baby than engaging in physical fighting, which carries the possibility that one may emerge from the behaviour unscathed. Moreover, with fighting, physical harm can be seen as coming from another source and thus may carry with it less of a burden of guilt than substance use, which may perhaps be viewed as a direct assault by a young woman on her body and thus her developing baby. A further possibility is that the prevalence of media messages regarding the dangers of substance use during pregnancy have made the potential risks of drug use particularly salient for these participants.

Overall, these interviews suggest that for most participants, change is a process, often involving a combination of life experiences from which one learns. The following participant excerpts illustrate the process of behavioural change for participants who represent two different profiles of behavioural change: The first excerpt is taken from the interview with seventeen-year-old Daria who was 6 months pregnant with twins at the time of the interview. While her behavioural profile indicates continued engagement in antisocial behaviour in the past year (including carrying concealed weapons, threatening others, and one physical fight), she seems to be starting to make important changes to her behaviour. The second excerpts are from the interview with eighteen-year-old Maya, who was also pregnant at the time of the interview. Maya’s behaviour profile suggests complete transformation of antisocial behaviour, which previously included damaging others property, carrying concealed weapons, threatening others, fighting and one incident of using a weapon to harm others.

Daria describes her change process as follows:
P: I mean there’s a lot of things that happened in my life that made me just always wanna change, and change. I mean not really that I wanted to change, it’s just that I saw how to do things more proper and handle things better.
I: So tell me more about this experience that you’ve had since you’ve been pregnant. Like how you umm, how you see yourself differently from how you saw yourself before?

P: Ok, let me see. I donno, honestly when I was lets say like younger, I was thinking I know everything, you know. You ok saw the consequences, but I’m just like I can handle that if it comes through or whatever, whatever. And then now I see like, honestly, the value of everything. Like the value of my parents, the value of my friends, like how important it is to make decisions and how big of an impact if you really screw up something, you know, can happen. And I that I guess changed me because it made me, it’s like what I said, it made me more mature, made me I guess more considerate, ‘cause lets say I see a pregnant lady I’d be like oh whatever, whatever. Event though she’s probably a [inaudible], so I donno, but then yeah I really put myself in other people’s shoes. And it made me more humble I guess, so.

I: Alright, so would you describe this change in your understanding of yourself as something that happened suddenly when you got pregnant or something that’s taken a little bit more time?

P: Oh no, it’s taken a lot of time, definitely. It was since certain things happened in my life, it’s from there, and I just kept learning, and learning, and learning, and then like I guess this pregnancy just, because honestly my life was just so, like every day was something new and it was just something, I was always doing
something or something’s always happening. This kind of put like a break where it actually gave me time to think and that’s probably what I needed.

As the interview continues, Daria describes a series of other incidents that led her to understand that she needed to change her behaviour, including an incident when she almost fought with another girl and realized that fighting would lead her to be expelled from school, and a separate incident involving a pregnant friend was beaten up and ended up having a miscarriage. While Daria has continued to engage in antisocial behaviour in the past year, she sees herself as having learned a great deal, particularly in the past few months, and is beginning to evidence success in changing her antisocial behaviour.

Maya’s change process similarly involved a series of experiences, although these began with one critical turning point at the age of 14:

Um when I was fourteen I was hospitalized ‘cause I tried to commit suicide, and I was in the hospital for three months and when I got out my grandfather was there and he started crying and he told me that I didn’t realize like what I was doing, that I wasn’t just hurting myself I was hurting everybody around me and it was really sad and I just stopped right after that ‘cause I realized that like even if I was unhappy that my life did benefit other people and caused me to kind of grow up and realize that I have to put other people before myself. I was very selfish then and it definitely helped me realize that the world isn’t all about me.

Maya describes this experience with her grandfather as marking the beginning of a process of making important changes to her antisocial behaviour and her drug use. Later experiences, such as meeting her boyfriend, learning from the inspiring transformation of a close friend who survived being shot “for calling some other guys a name”, and becoming pregnant are described as further motivators to continue to establish more prosocial patterns of behaviour. At the time of the interview, Maya had been volunteering with a suicide help line so that she could use her
own experiences to help save others’ lives. She also saw her self as presently a very happy person who was enjoying a stable life, including a positive relationship with her partner whom she married several days before the interview.

Overall, these interviews suggest that while motherhood is an important context for behavioural change, it is not the only experience that participants’ view as being important to the change process. This has important implications for research on motherhood. Without adequately considering the influence of other important life events, researchers run the risk of overstating the importance of the experience of becoming a mother in relation to positive behavioural change. While these data suggest that becoming a mother can provide important motivation for making and sustaining positive behavioural change, there exist other routes to positive behavioural change, including less “risky” routes which may not pose the significant risks that early motherhood does for both the young woman and her child (Oxford et al., 2005).

Given the relative heterogeneity of experiences that contribute to the process of positive change (e.g. pregnancy, relationships with others, self-reflection), an important question is whether there exist commonalities in those “transformative” experiences from which we might glean insight into specific motivations for behavioural change. For many of the participants, behavioural change is primarily motivated by their relationships with others, including their children, their boyfriends and, in a few cases, their relationships with other family members. However, this is not always the case; for a minority of participants (N = 6), behavioural change is primarily motivated by concern relating to the self and is not directly motivated by relationships with others. As suggested above, for the majority of participants change is not due to a single event or experience but rather it results from a combination of experiences. Regardless of the specific motivations for behavioural change however, the experiences that these young women describe as turning points in their behavioural trajectories tend to involve the realization that one’s actions matter, whether primarily for the self or also for others.
The finding that relationships with others were such an important source of motivation for change for the majority of participants led to refinement of one of the original hypotheses that guided the development of the study. Although this study was designed in part to explore the general hypothesis that participants’ conceptions of their self values would be important to the process of behavioural change, the qualitative data presented above led to the specific hypothesis that relational values would be related to relatively low levels of antisociality and to positive behavioural change. This hypothesis is explored in the following section, which focuses on the relationship between participants’ conceptions of their self-values and patterns of behavioural functioning.

The Content of Self-Identity: Personally Salient Self-Values

*Exploratory Qualitative and Quantitative Analyses*

This section begins with exploratory qualitative and quantitative analyses of the content of participants’ self-values and changes to these over time. These descriptive analyses are intended to provide further insight into participants’ conceptions of their self-values and how these values have changed from past to present, as well as how participants anticipate their self-values will continue to change in the future. These exploratory descriptive analyses are followed by statistical analyses which test the hypothesized relations between endorsement of relational of self-focused values as salient to the self and patterns of antisociality, including history of engagement in antisocial behaviour and positive behavioural change.

*Participants’ Values Selections*

When participants’ values selections were examined on a case by case basis, all of the participants but one evidenced change in their personally salient self-values from the past to future self. Shifts in values orientation are also suggested by examining participants’ endorsed values according to general categories of relational, self-focused, and power-focused. For
example, when the primary endorsed value pairs were considered, 16 participants (59%) endorsed relational values as particularly salient to the present-self. In contrast, only ten participants (37%) endorsed relational values as having been of primary importance to the self two years prior to the interview and 9 participants (33%) endorsed relational values as likely to be most salient to the self in the future. These data suggest that participants’ tended to view their personally salient self-values as changing, non-stable aspects of the self.

Inspection of Table 2 below and the interview data suggest further trends relating to primary endorsed self-values: For the past self, participants tended to endorse values that focused on having fun and enjoying one’s self (e.g. being active or energetic, outgoing and friendly). Eight participants (30%) endorsed values associated with power (i.e. being powerful or dominant, an authority or leader to others, or feared or thought of as dangerous) as especially important to the past self, while no participants endorsed power-focused values as the primary values for either the present or future self.
Table 2
*Primary Self-Values:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relational Self-Values</th>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Past</th>
<th>Future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Honest or truthful</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kind or caring</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generous or giving</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outgoing or friendly</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible or dependable</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyal or faithful</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Self-Focused Values</th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent or self-reliant</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardworking or diligent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner peace or feeling at peace with myself</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad-minded or open to different ideas</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual or religious</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active or energetic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventurous or daring</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-directed/acting in accordance with life’s</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>purpose</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoying beauty in nature or the arts</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative or imaginative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Power-Focused Values</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Powerful or dominant</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An authority or leader to others</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having material wealth or being rich</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feared or thought of as dangerous</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Why Do Self-Values Change?**

Given that participants evidenced changes in their self-values, an important question that emerges is *why do participants’ self-values change?* The values endorsed as salient to the past...
self suggest that participants tended to see themselves as relatively free of responsibility and living for themselves two years prior to the interview. An example of this is provided by the interview with 16-year-old Lindsay, who began to change her behaviour when her friend died of cancer. For her present values, Lindsay selected honest/truthful, independent/self-reliant and helpful/friendly as the most salient to her sense of self. These values are quite different from those she selected as most salient to herself 2 years in the past, which she describes in the following interview segment:

I: So now if you can, I’d like you to imagine two years ago, and I showed you this same list of characteristics. Two years ago, which characteristics do you think you would have chosen as being the most important to your sense of you?

P: Funny, humourous; outgoing and friendly; active.

I: So which would have been the most important?

P: Um, probably active I think.

I: Which do you think would have been the second?

P: Outgoing?

I: So what’s changed?

P: I was more into playing sports and stuff and people used to think I was really funny and stuff. But since my life has changed more I’m more independent and tell the truth more and stuff.

I: What do you think has caused those changes in your self-values?

P: Getting older and more mature and the turning point of my life when my friend died.

For Lindsay, changes in her self-values reflect age-related concerns, as well as the insights she gained when she experienced the death of her friend.
When speaking of the present self, participants tended to evidence a turn towards what several described as taking life “more seriously”. Seven participants (26 %) endorsed independent or self-reliant as the most salient value to the present self. The interview data suggest that this reflects an orientation to being able to “stand on one’s own” and take care of one’s self and one’s child. Eighteen-year-old Tia endorsed independent/self-reliant, honest/truthful, and hardworking/diligent as most important to her present self. When asked why these values have changed from those endorsed for her past values (which included honest/truthful, outgoing/friendly, and responsible/dependable) she says:

Well I lived at home then, and now I have a child so it’s a lot different. It’s different cuz I didn’t have a child then, and I wasn’t that motivated to do stuff then. It was just school and that was it. I didn’t have to worry about feeding a child, worry about getting him ready in the morning. I didn’t have to worry about that, it was just me. So I think that is why I’m changed.

For Tia, the realities of having to care for her child have resulted in a shift in her “orientation to the good” to a stronger emphasis on independence.

As suggested above, most participants endorsed relational values as especially salient to the present self. For 19-year-old Jessica (introduced above), the last two years have involved a shift in orientation from self-values that focused on being adventurous/daring, having material wealth/being rich, and being creative/imaginative to relational concerns, including being honest/truthful, sympathetic/compassionate, and responsible/dependable. When asked why she selected these particular values she contrasts her past concerns as being “all things kind of based on, you know, me, like nothing that really would affect anybody else” to a present orientation to relationship. Jessica describes the learning that has occurred for her as follows:

I think I’ve kind of learned that you can’t like live a hundred years and not like have a relationship with anybody. Like, so I think it’s like, you can’t, you’re
gonna be by yourself if you’re living like for yourself and only yourself. Well in
certain ways, like I mean you have to live for yourself, but, but kind of like in a
more like, you know to benefit yourself, not like anyone else. ‘Cause like, you
have to think about the people in your life and you can’t really live life alone, for
a hundred years by yourself, it would make a person go crazy, so like umm I
think you need support and you need love, you need friends. I don’t think
anybody can live by themselves.

While 22 participants (81%) endorsed relational values as among the top three most
salient to the anticipated future self, for the majority of participants (N = 18 or 67%), self-
focused values were endorsed as expected to be most salient to the self in two years. In contrast
to the self-focused values that were endorsed by many participants for the past self (which were
often focused on “having a good time” and living only for one’s self) future self-values tended
to indicate a strong orientation to independence/self-reliance and to succeeding in one’s
academic and/or career goals. Participants tended to see their careers as becoming especially
important to them in the next couple of years and their reasoning in relation to their self-values
suggests that being independent and being able to provide for one’s self and one’s child are self-
goals that they see as particularly important in guiding their behaviour in the relatively near
future. For example, 22-year-old Carrie describes herself as striving to achieve her goal of
completing grade 10 of her secondary studies so that she can pursue an internship in auto body
repairs. She sees being independent/self-reliant, responsible/dependable, and honest/truthful as
becoming most important to her in the near future and provides the following reasoning in
relation to her endorsement of these self-values:

[In] 2 years I would be doing what I want to be doing and would feel more
independent and self-reliant and that’s my goal for how I want to be like that,
because that’s how I want my son to be. He’s already starting to be independent,
but I want him to learn that mommy’s not always going to be there. So I want him to learn how to do things right and how to take care of himself.

For Carrie, the values she selected as likely to be salient to her sense of self in two years reflect her goals for the path she hopes her life will take as well as the values she hopes to instill in her son.

Summary and Implications of Descriptive Exploration of Self-Values

In summary, these descriptive analyses suggest substantial change in participants’ values orientations from past to present and future, with self-values relating to relationships with others and independence emerging as critical concerns for the present and future self. These excerpts suggest that participants’ values orientation changed for a variety of reasons, including age-related maturation and the emergence of new responsibilities, including those relating to motherhood. These excerpts also underscore the emergence of relational concerns as being especially important to the development of new values orientations.

In the following sections, results are presented on the relations between participants’ conceptions of their self-values and their reported patterns of antisocial behaviour. The first series of analyses addressed the following research question: what is the relationship between the content of participants’ self-values (i.e. the particular values endorsed) and behavioural functioning?

Relations Between Personally Salient Self-Values and Patterns of Antisociality

Relations between the content of one’s values orientation and patterns of antisociality were explored using a series of linear regression analyses. As will be described in detail below, regressions were used to test whether reported lifetime history of antisocial behaviour, reported recent history of antisocial behaviour, or behavioural change was predicted by endorsement of
relational or self-focused values as salient to either the present self or the self two years in the past.

Values Orientation and Lifetime History of Antisocial Behaviour

In the first regression analysis, reported lifetime history of antisocial behaviour was the dependent variable and the independent variable was endorsement of relational values as salient to the past self. The results were not significant. In the second regression analysis, reported lifetime history of antisocial behaviour was the dependent variable and endorsement of relational values as salient to the present self was the independent variable. Again, the results were not significant.

Values Orientation and Recent History of Antisocial Behaviour

Linear regression analyses were then conducted to test whether endorsement of relational values predicted reported recent engagement in antisocial behaviour. The first regression analysis tested whether endorsement of relational values as salient to the past self predicted reported recent engagement in antisocial behaviour. The results were not significant. However, in the regression analysis testing whether endorsement of relational values as salient to the present self predicted reported recent engagement in antisocial behaviour a significant negative relationship was found ($\beta = -.41, R^2 = .17, p < .05$). These results suggest that a strong orientation to relationships may serve a protective function in relation to antisocial behaviour. Conceptualized from the opposite perspective, these results also suggest that a strong orientation to the self to the exclusion of relational values was related to higher levels of reported recent antisocial behaviour.
Values Orientation and Behavioural Change

Next, regression analyses were conducted to explore relations between endorsement of relational values as salient to the past and present self and behavioural change, which was defined as a reduction in severity of antisocial behaviour when reported recent engagement in antisociality was compared to reported lifetime history of antisocial behaviour. Behavioural change was not predicted by endorsement of relational values as salient to either the present or past self.

Summary and Implications of Findings for Personally Salient Self-Values and Behaviour

Overall, the results of this exploration of the relationship between the content of pregnant and parenting young women’s self-values and reported patterns of antisocial behaviour suggest that the particular values to which one is oriented may be important to behavioural functioning. In particular, a present orientation to relationship was found to relate to lower levels of reported recent antisocial behaviour. However, the process of positively changing one’s behaviour does not appear to relate to the particular values to which one is oriented. In the following section, the focus shifts from the content of one’s values orientation to the process of developing narrative self-identity and its relationship to patterns of antisociality, including reported history of engagement in antisocial behaviour and the process of behavioural change.

The Process of Developing Self-Identity: Self-Action Coherence

The narrative process of developing self-identity was a key interest in this investigation. The first research question associated with the process of developing self-identity asked whether self-action coherence is associated with age. Given previous findings in the research literature (e.g. McLean & Breen, 2009; McLean et al., 2010), it was expected that self-action coherence would show a developmental progression. The second research question associated with the narrative process of developing self-identity was: what is the relationship between self-action
coherence and patterns of antisocial behaviour? It was expected that this aspect of narrative processing would be related to both relatively low scores for reported recent history of antisocial behaviour and to the process of behavioural change. Findings relating to self-action coherence are reported in the following section, which also includes excerpts from participant interviews in order to illustrate relations between self-action coherence and patterns of antisociality.

Age and Self-Action Coherence

As described above, self-action coherence assessed the degree to which participants’ narratives evidenced awareness of personally salient self-values and behavioural consistency in relation to these values. There were four levels of self-action coherence ranging from (1) a lack of awareness of the values that define the self and motivate one’s behaviour to (4) awareness of one’s self-values and portrayal of the self as acting with 100% consistency with the values that were expressed. The mean level of self-action coherence was 2.48 (SD = .85).

A regression analysis was conducted to test whether self-action coherence was predicted by age. The results were significant (β = .39, R² = .15, p < .05). As predicted, self-action coherence tended to increase with age. Figure 4 shows that the major jump in self-action coherence occurs in mid-to-late adolescence. This is similar to findings relating to the development of narrative meaning-making in adolescence (McLean & Breen, 2009; McLean et al., 2010) and provides further evidence for the importance of the adolescent stage for the development of narrative processing.
Next, regression analyses were conducted to test whether self-action coherence predicted reported history of antisocial behaviour. There were no significant findings relating to either lifetime or recent history of antisocial behaviour.
Self-Action Coherence, Age and Behavioural Change

Linear regression analyses were conducted to test whether behavioural change was predicted by age and/or self-action coherence. Age was not a significant predictor of behavioural change. However, the results for self-action coherence were significant ($\beta = .52, R^2 = .27, p < .01$). Thus, in this sample of pregnant and parenting young women, behavioural change is related to the process of developing self-identity and not simply the result of getting older.

Interview Excerpts Illustrating Self-Action Coherence and Behavioural Change

The following excerpts from the participant interviews serve to illustrate the relationship between self-action coherence and behavioural change.

Twenty-year old Maria provides an example of a participant who evidences both no behavioural change and low-level self-action coherence. At the time of the interview, Maria’s two-year old son was living with her mother. When asked about her hopes for the future she says “that I’ll have my kid back, and that I’ll be a better person, and my head would be on straight”, but she worries that she’ll be “in jail or in a coffin”. Her antisocial behaviour, which has including fighting, carrying concealed weapons and theft, has led to her being incarcerated twice, the most recent time being approximately six months prior to her interview. She says that she learned from this previous experience and she describes this turning point as follows: “I was almost looking up to two years. I’m like wow, two years? I can’t do two years in there, I’m missing out on my life outside and I’m missing out my family’s life, my child’s life, so I changed and I haven’t been back since January”. However, Maria’s responses to the Behaviour Questionnaire suggest that she has not managed to successfully change her behaviour and her interview provides further evidence of the stability of her antisocial behaviour. Although she claims to have learned from her experiences, she describes an altercation with another young
woman that occurred a week prior to the interview when, as she states, “I was this close from grabbing her head and smashing it into the wall” but was stopped from fighting physically because “everybody hold me back ‘cause I was gonna destroy this girl”. In terms of self-action coherence, Maria was scored as a 1, or the lowest possible level of coherence. She describes her most salient present self-value as being kind and caring but she provides no evidence of acting in coherence with these values. When asked whether other people know that being kind and caring is important to her, she provides the following response:

Because the way they see me, they think that I don’t, I’m not kind sometimes, they think I have to have my attitude or if I don’t care for others, it’s just that I don’t know how to show it, I only show it when it’s necessary. If you give me the respect and you show that you care for me, then I’ll show it back. But if you’re gonna sit there and treat me like I’m nothing and look down on me, then I’m just gonna show you nothing, I’m just gonna show you the worst side of me that you wouldn’t wanna see.

While Maria may desire that kind and caring serve as her most salient self-values, her interview suggests that she is, in fact, guided by a very different sort of “orientation to the good”, such as having power over others or being respected. Her being kind to others is dependent on her perceptions of their kindness towards her and it does not serve as a dominant guiding force in her actions. Overall, Maria’s narratives suggest very little awareness of her personally salient self-values and poor coherence of her endorsed values and her actions in the social world.

At the other end of both the behavioural change and self-action coherence spectra is 18-year old Maya, whose process of behavioural change was described above. Maya’s Behaviour Questionnaire and interview converge to suggest complete transformation of her previous antisocial behaviour, which included damaging others’ property, carrying concealed weapons, threatening others, fighting and one incident of using a weapon to harm others. Maya’s
experiences following a suicide attempt four years prior to the interview initiated a process of profound behavioural change. Her experiences also led her to establish new self-values that seem to very clearly shape her will and her actions. Throughout her narrative, Maya gives the impression that she strives to live consistently with her personally salient self-values, which include being honest/truthful, responsible/dependable, and outgoing/friendly. These values are reflected in the stories and experiences she describes in her interview, including her commitment to sharing her own experiences to help prevent others from attempting suicide. Indeed, Maya’s narrative gives the impression of perfect self-action coherence and, as such, she was scored a 4 (the highest level) for this aspect of narrative processing.

Summary and Implications of Findings for Self-Action Coherence

To summarize, findings related to self-action coherence suggest that this aspect of narrative identity processing is developmental and, as such, it may rest on age-related cognitive gains that have been found to underlie other aspects of identity formation (e.g. Habermas & Bluck, 2000; Harter & Monsour, 1992; McLean & Breen, 2009; McLean et al., 2010). While self-action coherence did not predict behavioural status (i.e. lifetime or recent history of antisocial behaviour), it did predict behavioural change, as those participants evidencing higher levels of self-action coherence also tended to show greater change when recent antisocial behaviour was compared to lifetime history of antisocial behaviour. This suggests that making changes to one’s behavioural patterns may involve a process of reflectively adopting personally salient self-values and establishing a self-narrative that consistently demonstrates these values.
General Discussion

The overarching research question which guided this investigation was: what is the relationship between pregnant and parenting young women’s conceptions of their personally salient self-values and behavioural functioning, specifically as it relates to antisociality and in the context of the transition to motherhood? This study had four primary aims: (1) To explore early motherhood as a specific context for identity development and behavioural change; (2) To investigate the content of young women’s self-values and relations to reported patterns of antisocial behaviour; (3) To explore the development of self-action coherence in adolescence and early adulthood; and (4) To investigate relations between self-action coherence and reported patterns of antisocial behaviour.

Motherhood as a Context for Change

Although no differences were found in behavioural functioning or behavioural change according to status as pregnant versus mother, the majority of participants spoke of their children as important sources of motivation for engaging in or sustaining more prosocial behaviour. However, while participants clearly viewed their experiences as mothers as important to establishing positive patterns of behaviour, somewhat surprisingly, more than half of the participants (N = 17) spoke of experiences other than pregnancy and/or motherhood as the initiating events in making positive behavioural change. For these young women, pregnancy and motherhood helped to further and/or to sustain behavioural changes that they had already begun to make. Furthermore, even when pregnancy/motherhood served as the initial source of motivation for change, participants tended to describe the experience of change as an ongoing process of continuing to learn from one’s various life experiences and applying these lessons to one’s self-understanding.
This finding resonates with research on identity transitions in adulthood, which suggests that identity change is related to a coalescence of insights about the self that are gleaned from a variety of disparate life experiences (Anthis & LaVoie, 2006; Baumeister, 1994). Although previous qualitative studies linking pregnancy/motherhood to behavioural change can give the impression that the transition to motherhood led to somewhat automatic change, these data suggest that positive behavioural change is not necessarily a “conversion experience” that occurs automatically with pregnancy, but rather is a process that often involves a series of experiences from which the individual gleans insights about the self and about her behavioural functioning. This underscores the importance of taking a broader approach to understanding the process of positive behavioural change in pregnant and parenting young women; while becoming a mother is clearly an important transition in the life course, it is not the only important transition. As Rutter and Rutter (1993) have suggested, while it is important to acknowledge the importance of the transition to motherhood, it is also critical to understand this experience as connected to the events and experiences that both precede and follow it. This also has important implications for research on pregnancy and motherhood as studies that do not give adequate consideration to other potentially important life events and focus only on motherhood run the risk of overstating the importance of this particular life experience to positive behavioural change.

**Self-Identity and Behavioural Change**

These findings provide support for the hypothesis that, for pregnant and parenting young women, behavioural change is indeed related to processes of identity development. As described above, these data suggest that, in relation to antisocial behaviour, “turning point” experiences tend to be those that inspire engagement in processes of self-reflection. While participants
reported a range of experiences that initiated processes of behavioural change, what these experiences seem to share in common is that they motivate the individual to actively reflect on her behaviour in relation to both her current self-understanding and the self she hopes to become. According to Bruner (1990), the construction of a narrative is most important when a person’s experiences deviate from the “canonical story” or dominant master narrative of his or her social context; we are pressed to develop self-narratives in order to provide explanations for our deviations from the experiences and actions that are expected of us, both by ourselves and by others. Thus, experiences that do not fit with one’s current conception of the self or that lead one to veer off the expected trajectory of life events may motivate engagement in active self-reflection in the service of developing a new life story. To paraphrase Ricoeur (1984), these kinds of felt experiences may create a pressing demand for the creation of self-stories in order to provide a sense of structure and meaning. The kinds of experiences participants reported as turning points in relation to their antisocial behaviour—becoming a mother, falling in love, experiencing the death of a loved one, realizing that the self is heading along an undesirable developmental course—seem to be precisely the sort of experiences that may lead one’s life path in unexpected new directions, thus potentially inspiring engagement in “critical life review” (Flanagan, 1998) and the construction of new self-narratives (Bruner, 1990).

These findings also provide specific support for the proposed model of identity development and behavioural change as involving (1) the establishment of personally salient self-values and (2) the construction of self-narratives that establish coherence between one’s self-values and her actions in the social world. The participants’ turning point experiences resulted not only in changes to behaviour, but in important shifts in understanding of the particular values that are most salient to the sense of self. The interview data suggest that the particular values to which the individual is committed both reflected and motivated participants’
behavioural choices, with those values endorsed as salient to the present and future self serving as guides for the establishment of new behaviours.

The Content of Self-Identity

Findings relating to self-values also provide further evidence that the content of one’s self-values can have important implications for behaviour. While researchers have previously demonstrated connections between one’s particular “orientation to the good” (Taylor, 1989) and his or her behaviour, this investigation further establishes this connection in relation to antisocial behaviour. The interview data suggest that relational concerns tend to be important sources of motivation for establishing and sustaining prosocial behaviours. The importance of relational values is also underscored by the finding that endorsement of relational self-values as important to the present self was associated with lower levels of recent antisocial behaviour. These findings are supported by recent research with adolescent psychiatric patients (Hauser et al., 2006) and adult criminal offenders (Maruna, 2001), which suggest that the most resilient individuals tend to be those who are strongly oriented to relationships with others. While all human beings develop in the context of their personal relationships with others (e.g. Freeman, 2007), relationships may be especially important for identity development in young women (Gilligan, 1982; 1988; Miller, 1976). Moreover, motherhood is relational; at its core, the experience of becoming a mother involves entering into a significant relationship with another human being. As such, it is possible that relational values are especially important for positive behavioural change in this population.

The Process of Identity Development

Findings relating to self-action coherence provide support for the idea that the process of positive change in antisocial behaviour involves establishing a self-understanding that reflects consistency between the self-values that one has selected as salient to the self and one’s actions...
in the social world. While the importance of establishing narrative coherence between one’s self-values and one’s actions has been the subject of a good deal of theoretical and philosophical writing (e.g. McAdams, 2006; Ricoeur, 1992; Taylor, 1989), the present findings lend empirical support to the hypothesis that this particular kind of coherence has important implications for individuals’ functioning in the social world. These data suggest that the process of positive behavioural change is related to the process of establishing coherent self-narratives that reflect consistency between one’s self-values and one’s actions. As such, these findings contribute to theoretical conceptions of narrative identity development by providing further insight into how processes of narrative meaning-making may be important to developing the self in terms of one’s actions in the social world.

As has been suggested in other work relating to identity development in adolescence and early adulthood, these are important periods for the development of the self as cognitive development provides a new capacity to engage in processes of self-reflection (e.g. Harter, 2003; Selman, 2003) and to engage in active processes of self-development (e.g. Ferrari & Vuletic, 2010; Moshman, 2005). The finding that self-action coherence develops across adolescence and early adulthood lends further support to the idea that the development of self-narratives in adolescence is similarly related to the emergence of new cognitive skills (Habermas & Bluck, 2000; McLean & Breen, 2009; McLean et al., 2010). An important direction for future research would be to more directly test these relations.

Overall, this study suggests that, for pregnant and parenting young women, working to change patterns of antisocial behaviour involves actively establishing a guiding “orientation to the good” and striving to close the gap between the current self and the self one wants to be. As suggested above, participants’ reasoning in relation to their self-values suggests that values endorsed as especially salient to the present and future self reflect conscious goals for self-development. Participants tended to select self-values that reflect their desires and hopes relating
to the kind of person they want to be. While more data is certainly needed in order to draw any firm conclusions, these findings may be understood as providing tentative support for the idea that positive behavioural change may involve actively selecting self-values that serve as guides to being the type of person we want to become and then intentionally striving to act in ways that cohere with those values that we perceive to be most salient to our selves. These results suggest that behavioural change is not simply a function of getting older or of becoming a mother, rather it is related to the intentional development of the self.

**Implications for Pregnant and Parenting Young Women**

This research provides further insight into the psychological processes that underlie individual differences in outcomes following early pregnancy. While previous research has suggested a link between self-identity and positive behavioural change in pregnant and parenting young women (Anderson, 1990; Hunt et al., 2005; Meadows-Oliver, 2006; Rolfe, 2008), this is the first study of which I am aware to specifically investigate relations between the psychological process of identity development and positive change in antisocial behaviour. As such, this contributes to a clearer understanding of the mechanisms that underlie positive behavioural change in pregnant and parenting young women. This has important implications for applied work with this population.

As has been suggested by others (e.g. Borkowski et al., 2002; Leadbeater & Way, 2001; Rolfe, 2008), the transition to motherhood can provide an important window of opportunity for redirecting the life course and establishing resilience. Young women in the midst of this transition seem to be especially open to and eager for change and, as suggested by the present research, motivated to engage in an active process of life-review. Programs for pregnant and parenting young women should strive to take full advantage of this opportunity. In particular, alongside efforts to help young women develop practical skills for parenting and to provide
educational and employment opportunities, a critical component of supporting young women in their adaptation to the challenges of motherhood might also be to include opportunities for “identity work”; encouraging young women to reflect on the values that define themselves and the stories they hope to live out in the near and distant future. This may be especially important for helping pregnant and parenting young women to transform antisocial patterns of behaviour. As suggested below, it is important for future research to investigate these potential applications of the present findings. In particular, an important question for future research is whether providing direct support for identity work results in higher levels of self-understanding and more positive behaviour.

Limitations

There are a number of important limitations in this work. First, both the small sample size and the strategy for sampling, which overwhelmingly included young women from one particular program for pregnant and parenting youth, may limit the extent to which these results can be generalized to other populations. Measurement issues also present important limitations. In particular, the measure used to assess antisocial behaviour is a rather “coarse” measure that relies on participants’ memories to recall incidents of antisocial behaviour that may have occurred in the distant past. Although research suggests that self-report measures of antisocial behaviour tend to be more accurate than reports by others such as parents, teachers and program workers (Thornberry & Krohn, 2000), such measures nevertheless remain limited by both the possibilities for inaccuracies in memory and the possibility that participants’ answers were tainted by social desirability bias.

It is important to note that this study was intended to provide insight into adaptation to motherhood only as it relates to positive change in antisocial behaviour and it did not focus on other aspects of parenting. This research does not attempt to measure the degree to which
participants are generally successful as parents or the likelihood that they or their children will
or will not succumb to many of the risks associated with early motherhood. Although positively
changing antisocial patterns of behaviour may be viewed as an essential part of reducing both
one’s own and one’s children’s level of risk for negative outcomes, it is certainly not sufficiently
indicative of adequate mothering. For example, this research does not provide insight into
participants’ skills and/or knowledge relating to parenting practices, their degree of emotional
responsiveness to their children, their success in providing for the physical needs of their
children with respect to clothing, food and shelter, or their establishment of caring and sensitive
approaches to discipline. However, for young women with histories of antisocial behaviour, a
necessary step in becoming an effective mother is desistance from those behaviours that put
one’s self, and by extension, one’s child at especially high risk for negative life outcomes. This
research does contribute to a better understanding of the psychological processes that contribute
to individual differences in this aspect of successful adaptation to motherhood.

Future Research Directions

While this exploratory study serves as an important step in elucidating the relationship
between the development of self-identity and positive change in antisocial behaviour in pregnant
and parenting young women, these findings require replication in a larger sample size before
any final conclusions can be drawn. In particular, longitudinal research would be especially
fruitful as it provides a more accurate means of investigating change over time.

As suggested above, an important direction for future research would be to more directly
explore the hypothesis that narrative developments in adolescence and early adulthood are
related to the emergence of new cognitive skills (Fischer, 1980; Fischer & Bidell, 2006). As
well, given findings from other research suggesting that contextual support can lead to higher
levels of performance on cognitive tasks (Kitchener, Lynch, Fischer, & Wood, 1993) it may be important to consider: (1) whether interviews focusing on self-identity such as that employed in this study provide a form of contextual support that elicits elevated levels of self-understanding, which the participant would not be capable of under circumstances where there is no contextual support; and (2) whether advancements in functional level of self-understanding (i.e. the level at which an individual can function without support) might be encouraged by such tasks. Given the finding that level of self-action coherence is related to behavioural change, it is important for future research to determine whether advancement in self-action coherence might be encouraged through specific interventions.

Similarly, another promising direction for future research would be to investigate relations between Ricoeur’s Mimesis, specifically in terms of the intersection of the world of texts and the meanings made by the reader (Ricoeur, 1992), and the process of behavioural change. It is worth noting that interactions with texts are not always “first hand” experiences. The individual may indirectly encounter textual renderings of experience by engaging with others who have themselves read the particular text. For example, writing about the process of recovery in drug addicts, Taïeb and his colleagues (Taïeb, Révah-Lévy, Moro, & Baubet, 2008) suggest that patients may encounter professional texts through their interactions with drug treatment professionals who enact the treatment narratives contained in the texts that they have read. These authors suggest that addicts’ stories about recovery closely match the structure of the treatment narratives found in the professional literature because individuals fashion their own stories of recovery based on the narrative examples provided by their doctors, counsellors and other professionals. How do the dominant narratives that young mothers encounter in their dealings with various teachers, counsellors and other potential helpers influence the development of their self-narratives? Can positive behavioural change be facilitated by encouraging young mothers and/or those who work with them to engage with certain kinds of
texts, such as those that provide narratives that portray resilience in young mothers? To my knowledge, these questions have not been explored in research and this may be a promising area for future scholarship.

The findings of this study may have important implications for populations other than pregnant and parenting young women. Promising directions for future research include investigating the process of identity development and behavioural change in young fathers. Young mothers have been the primary focus of research on early parenting and comparatively little is known about the experiences of young fathers (Fagot, Pears, Capaldi, Crosby, & Leve, 1998). This is especially true in relation to antisocial behaviour. To date, we know very little about how early parenting might impact on the behavioural trajectories of young fathers or how processes of identity development might contribute to individual differences in young men’s adaptation to fatherhood.

The findings of this research may also provide insight into the relationship between identity development and behavioural change more generally. While experiences of pregnancy and parenthood served as the context for investigating this relationship in the present study, little is known about how identity development relates to processes of behavioural change in broader samples of adolescents and early adults with histories of antisocial behaviour. Thus, an important direction for future research is to explore the hypothesis that the identity processes explored in the present study—the establishment of self-values and the construction of narratives that provide coherence between these and one’s actions—may also underlie behavioural change in other populations.
REFERENCES


Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.


APPENDIX A

Study Flyer

YOUTH PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

What for?

A research study on self-identity and social relations in youth

Who is eligible?

- Youth ages 16-22 who are nominated for inclusion in the study by a service provider (e.g. counsellor, youth worker etc.)
- Youth who are fluent in speaking, reading and writing English

What’s involved?

Participants will meet with a researcher to fill out some questionnaires and answer questions about:

- Who they are, their personal values, and their beliefs
- Their participation in certain activities and behaviours, including any history of breaking the law and risk-taking
- Their relationships with family and friends

The meeting will be held at a public location convenient for the participant (e.g. a recreation centre, public library, University of Toronto etc.) and the meeting will take approximately 2 hours, including a break

Participation is entirely voluntary. Confidentiality and anonymity are assured

Participants who complete the study will receive

- A $20 gift certificate that is redeemable at a store (e.g. Walmart, HMV, Chapters/Indigo) or shopping centre in their community
- A letter confirming the amount of time that the youth spent volunteering for the study

To find out more, contact Andrea Breen at (416) 923-6641 x. 2524 or by email at abreen@oise.utoronto.ca
APPENDIX B

Consent Form for Youth

Title of Study: Being Who I Am: Self-identity and Social Relations in Youth

Investigators:
Andrea Breen, Ed.M. Doctoral Candidate, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

Mary Louise Arnold, Ed.D., Faculty Supervisor, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

Sponsor: The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

We would like to invite you to participate in a research study on self-identity and social relations in youth. We will be interviewing participants, ages 16-22 with different kinds of histories relating to their behaviour.

SOME IMPORTANT POINTS ABOUT PARTICIPATING:

- Participation in this study is strictly voluntary
- You are free to withdraw from the project at any time
- You are free to raise questions or concerns throughout the study
- You are free to skip questions you do not want to answer
- You have the right to refuse audio-taping
- Your responses to all questions will be kept confidential to the full extent permitted by law and other people such as your parents and the agency that referred you will not be told about your answers to any question in this study. However, you should be aware that the law places limits on what kind of information can be kept confidential by researchers and some information (such as information about child abuse) must be reported to the authorities. Please see the section below on Risks for full details.

PROCEDURE
The entire package of questions will take approximately 2 hours to answer, including a break.

Interviews will take place at a public location that is convenient for you and where enough privacy can be provided that you will not have to worry about other people overhearing your answers. Participating in this study will involve answering questions about:

- who you are, your personal values, and your beliefs
- your participation in certain activities and behaviours, including any history of breaking the law and risk-taking
- your relationships with family and friends.

This study also involves the service provider who referred you completing a short questionnaire that describes a bit about your behaviour.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS INVOLVED?

Because we are going to be asking you about your relationships and your social actions it is possible that some participants might feel stress or emotional discomfort when answering these questions. Remember, you are free to skip over any question that you are not comfortable answering. We will also be giving all participants information about community resources that are available to help.
It is important to be aware that the law requires that researchers report situations in which children are being or are in danger of being abused or neglected. If you disclose abuse or neglect in either the interview or on the questionnaires, the researcher will follow up the disclosure with the appropriate authorities (e.g. the police, a Children’s Aid Society)

Disclosures of serious risk to yourself or to others will also be followed up with the appropriate authorities.

Disclosures of any illegal behaviours that do not pose serious risk of harm to yourself or others will be kept confidential to the full extent permitted by law. However, in rare cases the researcher may be required by a subpoena to divulge information that is obtained through this study to a court or other legal body. Remember, you are free to raise questions or concerns and to skip any questions you do not want to answer at any point in the study

WHO WILL HAVE ACCESS TO MY INFORMATION?
Confidentiality and anonymity are assured and strictly protected. All information collected from you will be given a number. Your name will only appear on the consent materials, which will be stored separately from the questionnaires. All materials will be kept in a locked cabinet and only the research team will have access to the information used in the study. The researchers intend to make presentations and publish the findings of this study. In such cases a pseudonym or number will be used instead of your actual name. You may receive a summary sheet of this research by requesting one either at the time that you meet with the researcher or by contacting Andrea Breen at the number or address below.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS
You will be provided with a copy of this consent form for your records. If you have any questions or concerns about this study please feel free to contact the investigators:

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If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant please contact the University of Toronto Ethics Review Office at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273.

As a youth 16 years of age or over, I, ___________________________ give my consent to participating in the Being Who I Am study

________________________________________  __________________________
Signature of youth participant  Date
APPENDIX C

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Warm-up:

Consider that your life story is being made into a movie and each part of your life represents a scene in the script of the movie.

What kind of movie would it be? (e.g. comedy, adventure, drama)

What would your character look like?

What would your character be like as a person? How would he/she act?

What would your character do? What’s a typical activity that an audience would see your character doing?

Possible Selves – Adapted from Oyserman & Markus (1990)

When you think about yourself in the next year or two, what do you hope you’ll be like?

What do you think is most likely to be TRUE of you in the next year or two?

What do you most fear or worry about being in the next year or two?

The self in Narrative – Adapted from McLean’s (McLean & Breen, 2010; McLean & Pratt, 2006) adaptation of McAdams (2006)

I’d like to ask you to tell me about two important events that you have experienced in the past. These events should be chosen from specific events that you have experienced in the past and that are set in a particular time and place,

Event 1: Peak Experience (High Point)

Many people report occasional "peak experiences." These are moments in a person’s life in which he or she feels a sense of great joy, excitement, happiness, or some other highly positive emotional experience. A peak experience may be seen as a "high point" in your life story -- a particular experience that stands out in your memory as something that is extremely positive. Please describe in detail a peak experience that you have experienced sometime in your life. Make sure that this is a particular and specific incident (e.g., happened at a particular time and in a particular place) rather than a general "time" or "period" in your life.

What happened?
When did it happen? How old were you?

Who was involved?

What were you thinking and feeling?

Why is this event significant?

What does this event say about you and your personality?

Have you told anyone about this event?

Why did you choose to tell/not tell?

Did you get the reaction that you were hoping for? Why/why not?

Event 2: Turning Point

In looking back on one’s life, it is often possible to identify certain key "turning points" -- episodes through which a person has a big change. I am especially interested in a turning point in your understanding of yourself. Please identify a particular episode in your life story in which you underwent an important change about how you understand yourself. It is not necessary that you actually saw the event as a turning point when it actually happened. Rather, what is important is that you now see this particular event as a turning point in your life. If you feel that you have experienced no dramatic turning points in your life, then describe a particular episode in your life that comes closer than any other to qualifying as a turning point.

What happened?

When did it happen? How old were you?

Who was involved?

What were you thinking and feeling?

Why is this event significant?

What does this event say about you and your personality?

Have you told anyone about this event?

Why did you choose to tell/not tell?

Did you get the reaction that you were hoping for? Why/why not?
Self-Values Identification –Adapted from Arnold (1993) and Schwartz & Boehnke (2004)

Please look through the list below and determine which characteristic is most important to your sense of who you are, which is second most important, and which is third most important. When you answer these questions, think about how important each of these values is to your understanding of who you are and how much the value influences your goals, aspirations, beliefs and actions. Please be sure to read through all of the values before rating your top three values.

__Creative or imaginative  
__Adventurous or daring  
__Independent or self-reliant  
__Responsible or dependable  
__Enjoying beauty in nature or in the arts  
__An authority or a leader to others  
__Caring for the weak or correcting injustice  
__Considerate or courteous  
__Feared by others or thought of as dangerous  
__Broadminded or open to different ideas  
__Joyful or able to find pleasure in things  
__Powerful or dominant over others  
__Active or energetic  
__Having material wealth or being rich  
__Generous or giving  
__Intellectual or intelligent  
__Sympathetic or compassionate  
__Inner peace or feeling at peace with myself  
__Living an exciting life or experiencing exciting events  
__Caring towards nature or protective of the environment  
__Being respected or having social recognition  
__Self-directed or acting in accordance with my life’s purpose
Probing Values Selection –Adapted from Arnold (1993)

1. **Criteria for value identification:**
   How did you decide which characteristics were most important to your sense of who you are?

2. **Conceptualization of the meaning or interpretation of core values:**
   You’ve chosen _____ as being most important to you. What does it mean to be _______?

3. **Conceptualization of the personal importance or significance of core values:**
   Compared to all these other qualities, why is _____ especially important to you? Why do you care about/want to be this kind of person?
   How do you know that being _____ is important to you? How can you tell?
   Do you think that other people know that being a _______ person is so important to you? How can they tell?
   Imagine if you just woke up one morning and you weren’t _______ any more. What difference would it make?
   Generally speaking, is this quality reflected in the way you live your life and the way you are with other people? Can you think of an example, a situation or experience perhaps, that illustrates the importance of _______ to you?
   Obviously this quality is very important to you personally. In general, is it important for all people to be ______? Why is that?

4. **Changes to personal values over time:**
   Think back to two years ago. Which values from the list would you have chosen as being most important to you then?
   What order would you put those values in? Which is first, second, and third?
   Why have your values changed/stayed the same?
   Now let’s look ahead to 2 year in the future. Which values do you think will be important to you then? Why? What do you think will happen to change your values in the future? Why do you think they’ll stay the same?
Personal Meaning of Fighting – Adaptable from Levitt & Selman (1993)

Introduction:

I’d like to talk to you about physical fighting and, if it’s okay with you, get your thoughts about your personal experiences with physical fighting.

Have you ever gotten into a fight? Why (why not)? How many times?

What’s your view of fighting? Where do you think this comes from?

Fighter’s Version:

Think about a time that stands out in your mind when you fought or had the opportunity to fight. Can you tell me about it?

How did you feel at the time?

How did you feel afterward?

Would anyone else in this situation make the same decision?

How would your parents feel if they knew?

Has the reason you fight changed over time?

Do you think you’ll ever stop fighting? How? What would have to happen for you to stop?

Overview (for both fighting and non-fighting)

How would you explain why you’ve chosen to fight (or not fight)?

What does it say about you?

What does fighting mean to you that it might not mean for other people?

How do you think fighting relates to things like the kinds of friends someone has, her family, the neighbourhood she lives in?

What would you say is the biggest influence on your fighting decisions?
“Reformed” Fighters

How did you make the decision to stop fighting?

A lot of people try to stop fighting but not everyone is successful. Why do you think it is that you were successful in changing your fighting behaviour?

What’s your view of people who fight?

Non-Fighter’s Version:

Have you ever had the opportunity to fight? Can you tell me about a specific incident?

How did you decide not to fight? Why?

How did you feel at the time?

How did you feel after?

What is the main reason that you don’t fight?

What does it say about you that you don’t fight?

How would your family and friends react if you ever did get into a fight?

Can you imagine yourself ever fighting in the future? What would have to happen for you to fight?
Interview wrap-up:

For this study I’m interviewing youth who have had different kinds of experiences. Many of the youth participating in this study have repeatedly done things that could get themselves or others hurt and in serious trouble with the law, such as fighting, stealing things, dealing drugs, destroying property, threatening and intimidating others. Other youth who are participating in this study have repeatedly engaged in these kinds of behaviours and actions in the past but have made changes in their lives and have not been involved in these kinds of behaviours for at least one year. Then the third group of youth participating in this study are people who have not had histories of doing things that could get themselves or others into serious trouble, such as fighting, stealing, destroying property, or threatening and intimidating others.

Which of these three groups do you think you would best fit into?

Why would you place yourself in this group?

*Adolescents without histories of conduct problems:*

What do you think has kept you from getting involved in these kinds of behaviours?

Is there anything else you think is important for me to know that I haven’t asked about?

*Adolescents with ongoing conduct problems:*

Do you ever think about trying to change your behaviour?

If so, what are the biggest obstacles/challenges for you in trying to make these changes?

What do you think would need to happen in order for you to be successful in making these changes?

Is there anything else you think is important for me to know that I haven’t asked about?

*Adolescents who have overcome conduct problems:*

How did you change your behaviour?

When did these changes occur? How old were you?

Why did you change? What motivated these changes?

What made these changes possible?

Were other people involved in this change? Who? How were they involved/how did they help?
Do you ever worry that things will go back to the way they were?
   What is challenging about trying to keep up these changes?

What helps you to keep up/maintain these changes?

If you could share some advice with other youth who are trying to make changes in their lives, what would you tell them?

If you could share advice with adults who want to help youth to make changes, what would you tell them?

What do you think youth who are doing things that could get themselves in serious trouble need most in order to change?

Is there anything else you think is important for me to know that I haven’t asked about?
APPENDIX D

Self-Action Coherence Coding Manual

Instructions for Coding:

Coders should begin with the self-values portion of the interview and note the 3 values that the participant endorses as important to the present self. The purpose of coding is to assess consistency with the values that are salient for the participant at the present time and so consistency with past and future values is not considered in this coding.

Once values are identified, the entire interview is read and codeable segments are identified. These include instances in which the person describes the type of person she is, her behaviour, and her justifications for her actions. Each of the codeable segments is then evaluated in light of the 3 self-values that the participant endorsed as being personally salient at the present time.

An overall code is given for the entire interview in accordance with the system described below.

Note: in some instances participants do not endorse 3 values. In these instances the interview should be coded in light of all of the values endorsed.

Coding System:

There are 4 levels in this coding system, representing development from a lack of awareness of the values that define the self to awareness of one’s self-values and 100% behavioural consistency with the values that are expressed.

LEVEL 1 = No or very limited awareness of personally salient self-values.

At this level, the participant does not seem to be aware of the values that are important to the self. The hallmark of this level is that it is not believable that expressed values are truly important to the participant.

The participant may be unable to identity personally salient self-values or there is a clear lack of consistency in expressed self-values. For example, the reader may get the sense that the endorsed values are not the participants’ own, expressed values may be of very little salience to the participant, or the expressed self-values may change throughout the interview.

BEHAVIOURAL COHERENCE AT LEVEL 1:

- Participant’s behaviour is markedly inconsistent with expressed self-values and the participants’ justifications for/reasoning about the behaviour suggest that the endorsed values are not actually important to her
At this level it is believable that the endorsed values are important to the participant. However, the participant’s behaviour inconsistently coheres with those particular values. There might be the sense that the participant is just beginning to strive to act like the kind of person expressed in the values.

BEHAVIOURAL COHERENCE AT LEVEL 2

• When 3 values are expressed behaviour could be somewhat inconsistent with all 3, in this case the participant is clearly trying, but messing up relatively often (as compared to level 3, when inconsistencies are infrequent and anomalous);
• The participant’s behaviour could be very consistent with 1 value and inconsistent with the other endorsed values (although not so inconsistent as to give the impression that these values aren’t actually important to the participant)

LEVEL 3 = Participant exhibits awareness and consistency of personally salient self-values and evidence of clear attempts to act in accordance

At level three, the participant recognizes a clear set of consistent personally salient self-values and is generally consistent in acting in accordance with these values. There should be good consistency in expressed self-values and the participant should generally act in accordance with these values.

BEHAVIOURAL COHERENCE AT LEVEL 3

• May have very slight “lapses” in consistency with expressed self values, however these lapses would seem anomalous as overall consistency is very high
• Descriptions of behaviour may be very consistent with 2 of the expressed self-values, but there may be some inconsistencies in coherence with 1 of the expressed values. However, the participant may demonstrate awareness of any inconsistency and should be striving to improve coherence
• At this level the primary endorsed value must be clearly salient to the self such that if the value were no longer important to the self than the participant’s self-understanding may be threatened. This is typically suggested in participants’ responses to questioning about what would happen if they woke up one day and the value was no longer important to them. Participants who give answers along the lines of “it would make no difference” should not be scored a 3.

LEVEL 4= Awareness and consistency of values, beliefs and desires; actions appear to completely cohere with these
While it is unrealistic to expect that anyone’s behaviour cohere with their values 100% of the time, it is possible to tell stories about ourselves that give the impression of perfect coherence. Level 4 is reserved for participants whose stories/descriptions of their values and actions are completely consistent.

**BEHAVIOURAL COHERENCE AT LEVEL 4**

- At level four there is no evidence of behavioural inconsistency with the expressed values
- There should be specific examples of coherence with at least 2 of the expressed values and no evidence of inconsistency with any of the 3 expressed values.