Parental Caregiving Goals and the Subjective Experience of Caregiving

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Abstract

The current investigation identified the goals that motivate parents to provide care to their children and how these goals relate to parents’ subjective experiences of caregiving. In two pilot studies and Study 1, a total of 1,137 parents were surveyed to develop the Parental Caregiving Goals Scale (PCGS), which captures four unique goals: child love and security, child growth and development, parent self-consciousness, and child acceptance. In Study 2, a cross-sectional study of 701 parents, the four-factor structure of the PCGS was confirmed and each goal was found to be related in unique ways to individual differences in parenting beliefs, concern for others, and self-focused concerns. The pursuit of child love and security goals was associated with greater emotional well-being, parent-child relationship quality, and responsiveness to a child’s needs, whereas parent self-consciousness and child growth and development goals were both associated with lower emotional well-being, parent-child relationship quality, and responsiveness to a child’s needs. Child acceptance goals predicted greater positive emotions only. In Study 3, a 10-day experience sampling study of 118 parents, the daily pursuit of child love and security goals and child acceptance goals predicted more positive caregiving experiences, whereas daily pursuit of parent self-consciousness goals and child growth and development goals predicted more negative caregiving experiences. Parents’ daily pursuit of each goal was also uniquely predictive of the caregiving behaviors in which they engaged.
Lastly, while parental caregiving goal pursuit varied at the mean level based on parents’ own and their child’s demographics, these demographic characteristics largely did not change how caregiving goals predicted the subjective caregiving experience. Collectively, the current findings shed light on the goals that motivate parents to care for their children, provide insight into why parenting is both joyful and frustrating, and identify when parents feel most responsive to their children’s needs.
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Chapter 1
General Introduction

Perhaps no other life experiences bring people greater joy or meaning than those involving children. At the same time, it is incredibly apparent—to parents and nonparents alike—that caring for children can be difficult and emotionally demanding (see review by Nelson, Kushlev, & Lyubomirsky, 2014; Senior, 2014). On the one hand, research has indicated that both mothers and fathers derive great joy in caring for their children compared to engaging in other daily activities (Nelson, Kushlev, English, Dunn, & Lyubomirsky, 2013). Additionally, nationwide polls in the United States have indicated that parents report caregiving to be less stressful than engaging in other common activities, such as housework and paid work, and that parents feel greater happiness during child care relative to their experiences with paid work (Wang, 2013).

While some research has indicated that parents derive more joy from caring for their children relative to the happiness they experience when engaging in other activities, research has also indicated that caring for children is not always pleasurable and can sometimes be quite negative. For instance, in a sample of working mothers who recalled their emotional experience for 16 activities from a previous day, giving care to their children ranked as one of the least enjoyable activities, being the second most negative and 12th most positive (Kahneman, Krueger, Schkade, Schawarz, & Stone, 2004). In line with these findings, nationwide polls in the U.S. have indicated that parents find caring for children to be more exhausting relative to how tiring they find housework and paid work-related activities (Wang, 2013).

Taken together, existing research on parental caregiving has documented mixed findings in regards to whether parenting contributes to or detracts from parental well-being. It is important to
point out, however, that existing research has often taken a comparative approach to examining parental well-being during caregiving by contrasting parents’ levels of well-being when they are caring for their children to their well-being when they engage in other tasks of daily living (see Nelson et al., 2014). Less research has sought to identify when parents are relatively more or less happy in the very instances in which they provide care to their children. In the current studies, I propose that the reasons why parents provide care to their children are related to parental well-being in meaningful ways. Specifically, I posit that the outcomes parents strive to achieve when caring for their children—or the goals that motivate their care—can help us understand when parenting is relatively more rewarding versus costly for parents. Because parenting is such a ubiquitous experience, with a Gallup poll indicating that 90% of adults in the U.S. are currently, or intend to become, parents (Newport & Wilke, 2013), coupled with the fact that caregiving is such an essential and expected task for parents, researchers may have neglected to examine why parents are motivated to give care to their children in the form of different goals across the range of caregiving activities in which they engage in daily life.

Parents may be motivated to pursue a variety of goals when providing care to their children. For example, a father may enthusiastically cheer for his daughter from the sidelines of her soccer game with the goal of boosting his daughter’s confidence, or alternatively, he may cheer for her to try to quell his own insecurities that her performance will reflect poorly on him. A mother may give her son advice on how to deal with bullies at school with the goal of showing him she cares about his feelings and is concerned about his problem, or she could give him advice with the goal of helping him grow and develop from the experience. In the current studies, I take an interpersonal goals perspective (Crocker & Canevello, 2008; Dix & Branca, 2003; Feeney & Collins, 2003; Hastings & Grusec, 1998; Impett, Gable, & Peplau, 2005) to propose that the different goals parents pursue
during experiences such as these will be linked with their emotional well-being, the quality of their relationship with their children, and their responsiveness to their children’s needs when they are providing care to their children—what I collectively term parents’ subjective caregiving experience. Specifically, I aim to address four central questions in the current studies: (1) why do parents care for their children in the form of different caregiving goals? (2) who is most likely to pursue particular caregiving goals? (3) how do parental caregiving goals predict parents’ subjective experiences of caregiving and caregiving behaviors, and (4) do the links between caregiving goal pursuit and the subjective caregiving experience vary based on key parent and child demographic characteristics?

1 Goals in Close Relationships

I draw on research from adult close relationships that makes a distinction between two broad classes of goals: other-oriented goals, in which people are motivated to care for and benefit the well-being of others, and self-oriented goals in which people are more focused on pursuing benefits and avoiding costs for the self (Crocker & Canevello, 2008; Feeney & Collins, 2003). For instance, research on the development and maintenance of college friendships has shown that people pursue other-oriented compassionate goals, which emphasize supporting and promoting the well-being of others, and self-oriented image goals, which emphasize maintaining positive personal and public impressions of the self (Canevello & Crocker, 2010; Crocker & Canevello, 2008). Likewise, research on caregiving motivations in romantic relationships has identified goals that are self- and other-oriented in nature. Specifically, romantic partners have been found to pursue other-oriented goals, such as showing love and concern for a partner, as well as self-oriented goals predicated on self-benefit and avoiding feelings of obligation (Feeney & Collins, 2003).

The pursuit of self- and other-oriented goals has been shown to differentially shape well-being, relationship quality, and responsiveness of both partners in adult close relationships. For
example, people who pursue compassionate goals feel closer, more connected, and more supported in their friendships, whereas those who pursue self-image goals experience more loneliness and conflict with their friends (Canevello & Crocker 2010). Additionally, people who pursue compassionate goals in their friendships promote both their own and their friend’s responsiveness, whereas those who pursue self-image goals have relationships marked by lower responsiveness by both partners (Canevello & Crocker 2010). In line with these findings, people motivated by feelings of love and concern for their romantic partner experience greater satisfaction in their relationships and are more responsive to their partner’s needs, as reported both by themselves and their partner (Feeney & Collins, 2003). In contrast, people motivated by self-benefit and obligation report greater depression, lower satisfaction, more conflict, and less responsiveness to their romantic partner’s needs, although their partners do not perceive differences in responsiveness (Feeney & Collins, 2003). Taken together, these studies indicate that the pursuit of other-oriented goals is associated with greater well-being, relationship quality, and responsiveness, whereas the pursuit of self-oriented goals detracts from well-being, relationship quality, and responsiveness to others’ needs.

Theory on goals in parent-child relationships suggests that the distinction between self- and other-oriented goals may also be important in the domain of parental caregiving. However, as of yet, virtually all research concerning parental goals has focused on parents’ child-rearing values, or the values parents strive to instill in their children (Dix & Branca, 2003). Despite this emphasis on child-rearing goals, it has been theorized that parental goals can also be child-oriented and self-oriented in nature—a distinction that has by and large been neglected in research (Dix, 1992; Dix & Branca, 2003). It has also been theorized that when parents pursue goals in which they show empathic concern for their child’s needs, the goals of a parent and their child might be well aligned and, in turn, facilitate the experience of positive emotions and a parent’s responsiveness to their child’s
needs. In contrast, when parents pursue self-oriented goals, their goals for their child are likely to conflict with their child’s own goals, in turn leading to more negative emotions and less responsiveness to their child’s needs (Dix, 1992; Dix & Branca, 2003; Dix, Gershoff, Meunier, & Miller, 2004).

Although child- and self-oriented goals in the domain of parenting have largely been overlooked, a couple of investigations indicate that the focus of parents’ goals may be important in predicting parent and child outcomes. Indeed, one study examining parental motivations has indicated that maternal motivation, emotions, and supportiveness are linked (Dix et al., 2004). In this study, mothers were asked to interact with their infant child in the lab for 20 minutes. One or two days later, mothers watched a video of their interaction with their child during which they rated their positive and negative emotions on a rating dial and explained why they felt each emotion. Parents’ descriptions of their emotions were then transcribed so that outside observers could code their emotions and motivations as either child-oriented (i.e., “I was pleased I finally found something he liked” and “I was worried because I thought he might fall”) or self-oriented (i.e., “I was irritated because I asked him to put the toy down” and “I was pleased because I didn’t want to walk all the way over there”). Results indicated that mothers who were more child-oriented in their concerns and emotions—or focused on their child’s immediate interests and well-being—were more sensitive to and supportive of their children; this was particularly true among mothers who were low in depression; high in both joy and worry; and low in anger, sadness, and guilt.

While the study by Dix et al. (2004) focused on parental concerns and emotions that are child- and self-oriented, another study more explicitly examined child- and self-oriented goals, specifically within the context of parent-child disagreement. In this study, the researchers theorized that parents pursue four different goals during disagreements with their children that encompass a
child- and self-orientation (Hastings & Grusec, 1998). The child-oriented goals included empathic goals, which emphasize concern for a child’s feelings and well-being, and socialization goals, which emphasize teaching children valuable skills and lessons. In contrast, self-oriented goals emphasize parents’ desire to get their children to behave as they wish. Lastly, parents pursue relationship goals that emphasize fostering close or harmonious bonds among family members. While the focus of this research was to understand how parental goals relate to specific parental behaviors during disagreement, the results also indicated that parents who pursued self-oriented goals reported experiencing more negative emotions than parents who pursued empathic and relationship goals during disagreements with their children (Hastings & Grusec, 1998).

Building upon these studies, I sought to examine parental goals more broadly, extending previous research in four ways by identifying parental goals within the caregiving context, examining caregiving goals with methods that directly tap parents’ cognitions, examining both mothers’ and fathers’ caregiving goals, and sampling parents caring for children who range in age from infancy to young adulthood. First, I sought to examine parental goals beyond the context of parent-child disagreement and extend it to the context of caregiving more generally given that relationship processes may unfold differently within positive versus negative relationship contexts (Feeney & Collins, 2014; Maisel & Gable, 2009; Reis & Gable, 2003). Second, I sought to develop a validated measure of parental caregiving goals that allows parents to report on their caregiving goals as they personally experience them. Previous research has assessed parental motivation by using outside observer ratings (Dix et al., 2004), hypothetical vignettes (Hastings & Grusec, 1998), and structured telephone interviews (Hastings & Grusec, 1998), methods that may not have captured the specific goals parents consciously pursued while interacting with their children. By surveying parents directly, I hope to rectify this limitation by capturing parental caregiving goals as they
personally experience them. Third, many studies on parenting focus on maternal interactions and responses to their children, and I wanted to include both mothers and fathers in the current analysis. Specifically, mothers and fathers contribute heavily to child-rearing, with the roles of mothers and fathers converging over time, with fathers increasingly spending more time with their children, sharing in household chores, and taking on the role as the stay-at-home parent (Parker, 2015). Thus I found it important to examine the goals that motivate both mothers and fathers to care for their children. Finally, in the last few decades, parents report spending more time on childcare than parents did in preceding decades (Ramey & Ramey, 2010), with child rearing in today’s North American society often continuing for many years beyond infancy and into early adulthood (Senior, 2014). Thus, I sought to examine the caregiving goals of parents of children of a broader age range than previous studies on parental goals, including parents with children ranging in age from infancy to early adulthood (18 years old).

2 Identifying Parental Caregiving Goals and Which Parents Pursue Them

2.1 Parental Individual Differences

In the current investigation, I drew on research and theory on interpersonal goals across close relationships to propose that, when providing care to their children, parents will pursue goals that are child-oriented and self-oriented in nature. Specifically, I expected that parents would pursue child-oriented caregiving goals, predicated on promoting their children’s well-being, and self-oriented goals, predicated on pursuing desired outcomes and avoiding undesired outcomes for the self. I expected that the child-oriented goals that parents pursue during caregiving would encompass parents’ desires to show their children compassion, love, and concern, and to promote their children’s socialization and growth. In contrast, I expected that the self-oriented goals parents pursue
during caregiving would include pursuit of care due to concerns about their own self-image, feelings of obligation, and to get their children to comply with their wishes. Given that there may be a number of goals that are self- and child-oriented in nature, as has been found in previous research (Feeney & Collins, 2003; Hastings & Grusec, 1998), I tested the possibility that multiple caregiving goals might arise within the self- and child-oriented domains.

I propose that while child- and self-oriented caregiving goals are likely malleable and dynamic, they are also pursued differentially based on individual differences in parental beliefs, general concern for others, and self-focused concerns. As such, I expected that each caregiving goal would show unique patterns of associations with these individual difference factors. Specifically, given their focus on promoting their children’s well-being, the parental beliefs of those who pursue child-oriented goals are likely to emphasize high communal strength (Mills, Clark, Ford, & Johnson, 2004), as indicated by a high concern for their children and willingness to invest in and respond to their children’s needs (Le & Impett, 2015). In addition, these parents likely endorse a high degree of child-centrism (Ashton-James, Kushlev, & Dunn, 2013; Liss, Schiffrin, Mackintosh, Miles-McLean, & Erchull, 2013) by emphasizing the central role of their children in their lives. In addition to placing a high importance on meeting their children’s needs and placing their children at the center stage of their lives, parents who pursue child-oriented goals are also likely to idealize parenthood by endorsing beliefs that a truly happy and fulfilling life cannot be attained unless one is a parent (Eibach & Mock, 2011). Furthermore, parents who pursue child-oriented caregiving goals are likely to be sympathetic and concerned for others more generally (Davis, 1983) in addition to being agreeable, cooperative, and trusting in nature (John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008). Lastly, parents who pursue child-oriented goals are likely to be no more or less self-conscious about others’ perceptions of the self (Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975), nor are they more or less likely to hold narcissistic
perceptions of self-importance, uniqueness, and superiority (Raskin & Terry, 1988), given that a high prosocial orientation, in this case for one’s children, may not necessarily preclude being self-focused in nature (Gebauer, Sedikides, Verplanken, & Maio, 2012). Altogether, I expected that parents who are motivated by child-oriented goals will hold parenting beliefs that emphasize a high concern for and centrality of their children in their lives and a highly positive view of parenting; I further expected that they would be higher in general concern for others but be no different in self-focused concerns relative to parents who are less motivated by child-oriented goals.

Parents who pursue self-oriented caregiving goals are likely different from parents who pursue child-oriented caregiving goals in a number of ways. Given their focus on their own wishes and desires, I expected that parents who pursue self-oriented caregiving goals will have parenting beliefs that endorse a highly positive image of parenting rather than beliefs about the importance of meeting their children’s needs. In particular, parents who pursue self-oriented goals likely idealize parenthood (Eibach & Mock, 2011), but will be low in their concern for their children, including their communal strength to invest in and respond to their children’s needs (Le & Impett, 2015; Mills et al., 2004) and child-centric nature (Ashton-James et al., 2013; Liss et al., 2013), relative to parents who are less likely to pursue these goals. Parents who are highly motivated by self-oriented caregiving goals, relative to those less motivated by self-oriented caregiving goals, are also likely to be no more or less likely to be empathetic (Davis, 1983) and agreeable (John et al., 2008), given that a concern for the self may not always preclude concerns for others (Gebauer et al., 2012). Lastly, I expected that parents who pursue self-oriented goals would be more sensitive to concerns regarding their own self-image, such as by being more self-conscious (Fenigstein et al., 1975), in addition to being more narcissistic regarding their self-importance, uniqueness, and superiority (Raskin & Terry, 1988). Altogether, I expected that parents who are motivated by self-oriented goals would hold
beliefs about parenting that emphasize the positivity of their roles as parents rather than concern for the needs of their children; I further expected that they would be more self-focused, but no different in general concern for others relative to parents who are less motivated by self-oriented goals.

3 Caregiving Goal Pursuit and Links with Parental Behaviors and Their Subjective Caregiving Experiences

While individual difference factors may relate to the types of goals that parents pursue when caring for their children, I also expected that the pursuit of caregiving goals will wax and wane dynamically within parents’ daily lives, relating in meaningful ways to the caregiving behaviors in which they engage, given that previous research has documented a link between interpersonal goals and behavior (Feeney & Collins, 2003; Hastings & Grusec, 1998). Past research has found that during parent-child disagreement, parents who pursue child-oriented goals use more reasoning, less coercion, and less power assertion, whereas parents who pursue self-oriented goals use more power assertion and coercion (Hastings & Grusec, 1998). Based on this research, I expected that parents who pursue caregiving goals that are more child-oriented in nature would engage in supportive behaviors, such as providing their children with emotional support, as well as growth opportunities such as engaging in extracurricular activities or hobbies. In contrast, I expected that parents who pursued self-oriented caregiving goals would be more likely to engage in disciplinary and coercive behaviors to get their children to comply with their wishes.

In addition to identifying how the particular types of caregiving goals parents pursue relate to the behaviors in which they engage, I also sought to examine how chronic and daily pursuit of each caregiving goal is linked with parents’ subjective experiences of caregiving. Given that other-oriented relationship goals promote greater personal well-being, relationship quality, and responsiveness within adult close relationships (Canevello & Crocker, 2010; Crocker & Canevello,
2008; Feeney & Collins, 2003) and have been theorized to promote responsive parenting and more positive parent-child relationships (Dix & Branca, 2003), I hypothesized that the pursuit of child-oriented caregiving goals would be associated with greater emotional well-being, parent-child relationship quality, and responsiveness to a child’s needs. Additionally, given that self-oriented relationship goals are associated with lower personal well-being, lower relationship quality, and lower responsiveness in adult close relationships (Canevello & Crocker, 2010; Crocker & Canevello, 2008; Feeney & Collins, 2003) and have been theorized to be related to less effective parenting and lower quality relationships between parents and children (Dix & Branca, 2003), I hypothesized that the pursuit of self-oriented caregiving goals would be associated with poorer emotional well-being, parent-child relationship quality, and responsiveness to a child’s needs. I tested these hypotheses both comparatively across parents—using a between-persons approach—as well as within parents’ daily lives—using a within-person approach—given that goal pursuit has been shown to vary at both the person and daily levels (Crocker & Canevello, 2008; Impett et al., 2005).

3.1 The Role of Parental Individual Differences, Contextual Factors, and Parent and Child Demographics

In addition to testing how goals predict parents’ subjective caregiving experiences, I sought to provide evidence that these links are independent from the influence of stable individual differences in parenting beliefs, concern for others, and self-focused concerns. Specifically, given that individual differences in parental communal strength (Le & Impett, 2015; Mills et al., 2004), child-centrism (Ashton-James et al., 2013; Liss et al., 2013), and idealization of parenthood (Eibach & Mock, 2013) predict differences in parental well-being when caring for children, it is important to establish that the link between goals and the subjective caregiving experience is not accounted for by these individual differences in parenting beliefs. Furthermore, given that other-oriented concerns
have been shown to predict greater personal and relationship well-being in close relationships (Canevello & Crocker, 2010; Crocker & Canevello, 2008; Le, Impett, Kogan, Webster, & Cheng, 2013) while self-focused concerns predict poorer personal and relationship well-being (Canevello & Crocker, 2010; Crocker & Canevello, 2008), it was important to establish the link between parental caregiving goals above and beyond individual differences in general concern for others (e.g., empathy and agreeableness) and self-focused concerns (e.g., public self-consciousness and narcissism). Lastly, given that the Big Five personality traits are related to well-being in important ways, with extraversion being linked with greater well-being (see meta-analyses by DeNeve, & Cooper, 1998 and Lucas & Fujita, 2000) and neuroticism being linked with lower well-being (DeNeve, & Cooper, 1998), I also tested whether the links between parental caregiving goals and the subjective caregiving experience were robust above and beyond the Big Five personality traits.

In addition to testing the robustness of the links between caregiving goals and the subjective caregiving experience above and beyond individual differences in parenting beliefs, general concern for others, and self-focused concerns, I also sought to show that these links were not driven by the extent to which parents find caring for their child to be challenging, given that parents are likely to experience poorer well-being when they feel that parenting is challenging or difficult. Specifically, research has indicated that children’s low positive and high negative emotionality have been linked with lower maternal self-esteem and greater depression (Laukkanen, Ojansuu, Tolvanen, Alatupa, & Aunola, 2014). Further, mothers of infants with more difficult temperaments, relative to mothers of infants with easier temperaments, experience greater post-partum depression (Cutrona & Troutman, 1986). Thus, I sought to test whether the associations between parental caregiving goals and the subjective caregiving experience were independent of the extent to which parents found caregiving
challenging, which was assessed in the current studies via parents’ reports of how difficult they found care to provide and their perceptions of their child’s mood during caregiving.

Finally, I sought to examine whether the associations between caregiving goal pursuit and the subjective caregiving experience were unique to key parent and child demographic groups. Research has indicated that parental well-being can vary based on parent demographics, indicating that fathers, older parents, married parents, and parents of higher socioeconomic statuses experience greater well-being relative to mothers, younger parents, unmarried parents, and parents of lower socioeconomic statuses, respectively (see review by Nelson et al., 2014). Further, parents have been shown to experience lower well-being based on their children’s demographic characteristics, such as with younger, as opposed to older, children (Twenge, Campbell, & Foster, 2003). Although parents experience differences in well-being based on their own and their child’s demographic characteristics, research has not examined how these group differences might impact the link between goals and well-being. Thus, I tested how the links between caregiving goals and the subjective caregiving experience might vary as a function of specific parent and child demographic factors in an exploratory and descriptive fashion to examine the extent to which the links between parental caregiving goal pursuit and well-being are generalizable and consistent across parents.

4 Overview of Current Studies

In the current investigation on parental caregiving goals, I sought to accomplish four objectives. First, I sought to show why parents are motivated to care for their children in the form of unique caregiving goals by developing the Parental Caregiving Goals Scale (PCGS) (Pilot Studies 1a and 1b; Study 1), which I used in my subsequent studies. Second, I tested my hypotheses regarding who pursues particular caregiving goals by testing how individual differences in parenting beliefs, concern for others, and self-focused concerns are associated with caregiving goal pursuit (Study 2).
Third, I sought to understand how the pursuit of unique caregiving goals is associated with parents’ subjective caregiving experiences both comparatively between parents (Study 2) and across a 10-day period in parents’ daily lives (Study 3). Lastly, I sought to examine how the links between caregiving goal pursuit and the subjective caregiving experience vary based on the specific caregiving behaviors in which parents engage (Study 3), as well as based on demographic characteristics of parents and their child (combined samples from Studies 1 and 2). To this end, I conducted single, high-powered studies of parents to test multiple research questions whenever possible (Schimmack, 2012).
Chapter 2
PCGS Item Generation

In Pilot Studies 1a and 1b, I first sought to identify different goals parents pursue when caring for their children by generating an initial list of goal items to be included in the Parental Caregiving Goals Scale.

1 Pilot Study 1a Method

In Pilot Study 1a, I took a two-pronged, deductive and inductive approach to generating and selecting items for my scale (Hinkin, 1998). First, I used a deductive, theory-driven approach by adapting items from existing theories and measures of interpersonal goals, including parental goals during disagreements with their children (Hastings & Grusec, 1998), compassionate and self-image goals in friendships (Crocker & Canevello, 2008), and caregiving goals (Feeney & Collins, 1993) and sacrifice goals (Impett et al., 2005) in romantic relationships. Second, I used an inductive, data-driven approach by sampling parents to identify caregiving goals unique to the context of parental caregiving that my adapted items from previous research might not have captured.

1.1 Participants and Procedure

I surveyed 131 parents from the United States who were cohabiting or married to their romantic partner and had at least one child 18 years old or younger (Ashton-James et al., 2013; Nelson et al., 2013). Parents were recruited via Amazon’s Mechanical Turk. Sample characteristics for this study, as well as all other studies, are shown in Table 1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Initial N</th>
<th>Final N</th>
<th>% Female</th>
<th>% Caucasian</th>
<th>% Partnered or Married</th>
<th>Parent Age (Years)</th>
<th>Child</th>
<th>Child Age (Years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean  SD  Range</td>
<td>% Female</td>
<td>Mean  SD  Range</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot Study 1a</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>33  8  19 - 58</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>5  5  newborn - 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot Study 1b</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>32  8  18 - 59</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>6  5  newborn - 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study 1</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>32  9  18 - 60</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>6  5  newborn - 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study 2</td>
<td>792</td>
<td>701</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>33  8  19 - 65</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>7  5  newborn - 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study 3</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>42  5  29 - 53</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>7  3  3 - 12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The initial $N$ indicates the total number of participants recruited for the study. The final $N$ indicates participants who were retained for final analyses, including those who passed all attention check questions (all studies), answered on topic for the free response questions (all studies), and completed at least one diary entry (Study 3).
Parents responded to open-ended questions regarding why they provided care for their child in three different instances of caregiving, and were instructed to answer all questions about one particular child of their choice if they had more than one child. Specifically, parents were asked to describe three instances of caregiving, including their most recent caregiving experience, an experience they considered to be “easy,” and an experience they considered to be “difficult.” I asked about multiple caregiving experiences to minimize the likelihood that parents would selectively report on the most memorable or socially desirable instances of caregiving that they could recall and to maximize my ability to identify goals across a range of caregiving contexts. After describing each of these experiences, parents provided responses to an open-ended question regarding “all the reasons why” they provided care to their children in each of these situations. Measures used in Study 1a are shown in Appendix A.

2 Pilot Study 1a Results

I generated an initial list of 33 caregiving goal items, shown in Appendix B. This initial list included items I adapted from other measures and theory on interpersonal goals as well as parental responses to open-ended questions that I identified to be unique from items I adapted from previous research. Items were selected from previous research based on whether I, in collaboration with my adviser, believed they would arise in the parent-child caregiving context. These items included self- and other-oriented themes. In addition, I assessed all parental caregiving free responses against this list to examine the unique responses parents generated that were not present in my thematic review of previous research. In doing so, I found that parent survey responses largely corroborated the item list I generated from previous theory and findings, although there were a few unique items. The unique responses parents provided during caregiving reflected parents’ desires to prevent their children from having the same weaknesses
as them, desires to show their child that they are a dependable caregiver, and concerns for their
spouse or romantic partner during caregiving. Given that the goal of the current research was to
identify parental goals specific to their child, the parent responses regarding concerns for a
romantic partner were not included as specific items for the official scale validation.

3 Pilot Study 1b Method

After generating these initial 33 caregiving goal items, I conducted Pilot Study 1b to
determine the initial factor structure of the PCGS given that I was not sure how many total goals
I would identify within the overarching self- and child-oriented themes, and whether I would
have a sufficient number of acceptable (i.e., highly loading) items to measure each potential
factor.

3.1 Participants and Procedure

I recruited 463 parents from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk with the same recruitment
criteria as Pilot Study 1a. Parents first completed a free response question concerning a recent
experience of caregiving: “People care for their children in both good and bad times. Sometimes
this care is easy and enjoyable to give whereas other times it's difficult and frustrating. Please
describe one of the most recent times you gave care to your child. Describe what your child was
going through and what you did for your child.” Parents then rated the importance of each of the
33 caregiving goals in motivating their care in their recalled caregiving experience (1 = not at all
important to 7 = extremely important).

4 Pilot Study 1b Results

To determine the initial factor structure of the PCGS, I conducted analyses with Mplus v.
7.0 (Múthen & Múthen, 2008-2012). I expected parental caregiving goals to broadly encompass
child-oriented and self-oriented goals, although I tested, based on previous research (Feeney & Collins, 2003; Hastings & Grusec, 1998), whether multiple goals might arise in each of these domains. In this exploratory phase, I assessed a scree plot of the data (Costello & Osbourne, 2005), shown in Figure 1, which suggested that there were four unique factors.

*Figure 1. Scree Plot of Parental Caregiving Goals Scale Items (Study 1b)*

![Scree Plot (Pilot Study 1b)](image)

Based on these scree plot results, I conducted an exploratory factor analysis specifying four factors using geomin (oblique) rotation to allow the factors to correlate (Costello & Osbourne, 2005), given that I expected that parents might report being motivated by multiple goals in any one caregiving experience. Results for this exploratory factor analysis are shown in Appendix C. To identify the general themes of each subscale, I used a liberal cut-off point of .40 to assess what each of the factors was capturing thematically. I found, consistent with my
expectations, that two of the four factors were conceptually child-oriented in nature. The first child-oriented factor I identified as *child love and security goals*, which included items such as, “So that my child knows that (s)he can depend and rely on me” and “So that my child feels loved.” The second child-oriented factor I identified as *child growth and development goals*, which included items such as, “To allow my child to have meaningful life experiences” and “To prevent my child from wasting their potential.” A third factor that emerged was conceptually self-oriented in nature, which I identified as *parent self-consciousness goals*, and included items such as, “To prevent my child from making me look bad” and “So that I looked like a good parent in front of other people.” The fourth factor was less conceptually clear than the first three factors. Specifically, this factor tapped desires for child acceptance as well as avoidance of negative outcomes during caregiving. After closely examining the specific items loading onto this factor, I decided that the items in this factor largely tapped the construct of desire for child acceptance, as indicated by items such as, “So my child would think I’m a good parent,” “To gain my child’s love,” and “To avoid upsetting my child.” I decided that this factor was capturing child acceptance given that the avoidance items in this subscale included the theme of child acceptance, but otherwise did not consistently capture avoidance of a specific phenomenon, and thereby may have loaded onto this same factor due to similarity of wording within the items (i.e., inclusion of the phrase “to avoid”).

Given that the fourth factor was less conceptually clear than the first three factors, I conducted a second exploratory factor analysis, described in Study 1, to clarify the theme of this fourth goal as well as more definitively identify whether it was a distinct and meaningful factor alongside the other child- and self-oriented goals identified. In addition, I sought to finalize the scale items across all factors and ensure I had sufficient numbers of highly loading items per factor. Thus, before conducting the official scale validation studies, I aimed to draw from a pool
of the six highest loading items from each factor in Pilot Study 1b (all loadings were greater than .40) so that I could eventually retain at least three highly loading items per subscale. In deciding which six items to retain, I excluded any items that were too similar to other items within their own subscale (to avoid redundancy in item wording), as well as items that were not thematically consistent within their factor (i.e., had low face validity), as noted in Appendix C. Of these retained items, I modified items to ensure that they were all clearly worded (i.e., not double barreled or too extreme in their wording) and added new items (Simms & Watson, 2007) to the factors that had less than six items (i.e., child love and security and child acceptance) to ensure that I had a pool of six items for each factor from which to draw in the official scale validation. This yielded 24 items for my final PCGS validation studies.

5 Brief Discussion of Studies 1a and 1b

In two pilot studies, I generated an initial list of goals that parents pursue while caring for their children by adapting items from existing measures and theories of interpersonal goals and by asking a sample of parents what goals they pursue when caring for their children (Pilot Study 1a). I then administered these 33 items to a new sample of parents to identify the initial factor structure of the PCGS and to ensure I had a sufficient number of clearly-worded, representative items from which to draw to reliably capture each caregiving goal factor (Pilot Study 1b). The results of Pilot Studies 1a and 1b resulted in the generation of 24 items from which to draw for the final PCGS scale validation studies.
Chapter 3
PCGS Development

In Study 1, I sought to identify the final factors and items of the PCGS using items generated from Pilot Studies 1a and 1b. Based on theory, findings from previous research, and my two pilot studies, I expected that parents would report providing care for their children as motivated by four unique caregiving goals, including the child-oriented caregiving goals of child love and security and child growth and development, and the self-oriented caregiving goals of parent self-consciousness and child acceptance.

1 Study 1 Method

1.1 Participants and Procedure

I recruited a sample of 543 parents from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk using the same recruitment criteria as Pilot Studies 1a and 1b. After providing responses to an open-ended question about a recent caregiving experience (identical to the one used in Pilot Study 1b), parents then rated the importance of 24 caregiving goal items in motivating their care during this experience (1 = not at all important to 5 = extremely important).

2 Study 1 Results

I conducted analyses using R (R Core Team, 2013). Replicating the results of Pilot Study 1b, a scree plot of the 24 caregiving goal items indicated that the PCGS had four unique factors (see Figure 2).
Based on the scree plot and pilot study results, I conducted an exploratory factor analysis on the 24 items specifying four expected factors, and using promax (oblique) rotation to allow the factors to correlate (Costello & Osborne, 2005), given that I expected parents pursue the caregiving goals non-independently. I retained all items with factor loadings greater than or equal to .60 with the exception of one item that was not face valid within its factor (“So I don't feel bad about not giving care to my child” loading on the child acceptance factor). The final scale included 17 items with four unique and reliable factors. The items, factor loadings, cross loadings, means, and standard deviations for all items retained for the final PCGS are shown in Table 2.
Table 2. Parental Caregiving Goals Scale Items and Descriptives (Study 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parental Caregiving Goals Items</th>
<th>Factor Loadings</th>
<th>Item-Total Correlations</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Child Love and Security</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So my child knew that (s)he is important in my life</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To provide my child comfort when (s)he needed it</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So that my child felt loved</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So that my child knew that (s)he could depend and rely on me</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because I wanted my child to be happy</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Child Growth and Development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To ensure my child develops into a good person</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To allow my child to have meaningful life experiences</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To prevent my child from wasting his/her potential</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To prevent my child from having problems later in life</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To prevent my child from being a failure</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Parent Self-Consciousness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To prevent the possibly of my child making me look bad</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To avoid the possibility of getting embarrassed by my child</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because it could help me look like a good parent in front of other people</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Child Acceptance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So my child would think I'm a good parent</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To avoid my child becoming upset with me</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To gain my child's love</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So that my child wouldn't resent me</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Bolded factor loadings indicate items retained in each subscale, unbolded items indicate cross-loadings with other factors. All item-total correlations were significant at $p \leq .001$. Items were answered on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all important, 2 = a little important, 3 = somewhat important, 4 = very important, 5 = extremely important).
The first factor, *child love and security goals* (5 items; $\alpha = .86$; $M = 4.41$, $SD = 0.76$; eigenvalue = 5.63; 17.1% variance explained), emphasizes showing love, promoting a child’s well-being, and ensuring that a child realizes their parent values them and is a reliable and dependable caregiver. The second factor, *child growth and development goals* (5 items; $\alpha = .82$; $M = 3.30$, $SD = 1.17$; eigenvalue = 3.38; 16.3% variance explained), emphasizes providing a child with new and meaningful experiences, promoting positive personal development, and preventing a child from developing negative qualities or having negative experiences. The third factor, *parent self-consciousness goals* (3 items; $\alpha = .86$; $M = 1.59$, $SD = 0.93$; eigenvalue 1.77; 13.1% variance explained), emphasizes the desire for others to positively evaluate the self as a parent and avoidance of embarrassment by one’s child. Lastly, the fourth factor of *child acceptance goals* (4 items; $\alpha = .83$; $M = 2.60$, $SD = 1.14$; eigenvalue = 0.93; 12.5% variance explained) did indeed emerge as a meaningful factor in this study; this goal emphasizes a parent’s desire to prevent negative evaluations or reactions from their child as well as attempts to gain love and positive regard from their child.

I found that all of the caregiving goals were significantly correlated with each other, suggesting that parents may be motivated by more than one goal in a given caregiving experience. Specifically, parents who pursued child love and security goals were also more likely to pursue child growth and development goals ($r = 0.30$ [0.23, 0.38], $p < .001$) and child acceptance goals ($r = 0.30$ [0.22, 0.37], $p < .001$) when providing care for their children, but were less likely to pursue parent self-consciousness goals ($r = -0.11$ [-0.19, -0.02], $p = .01$) during caregiving. Parents who pursued self-consciousness goals were also likely to pursue child growth and development goals ($r = 0.32$ [0.25, 0.40], $p < .001$) and child acceptance goals ($r = 0.51$ [0.44, 0.57], $p < .001$). Lastly, parents who pursued child growth and development goals were also more likely to pursue child acceptance goals ($r = 0.48$ [0.41, 0.54], $p < .001$).
3 Brief Discussion of Study 1

In Study 1, I finalized the PCGS using the 24 items generated from the pilot studies. The final scale included 17 items with subscales measuring four unique caregiving goals: child love and security goals, child growth and development goals, parent self-consciousness goals, and child acceptance goals. Furthermore, each of the four goals was positively correlated with one another besides child love and security goals and parent self-consciousness goals which were negatively correlated. These results indicate that parents often pursued multiple caregiving goals in a singular caregiving experience, with the exception of the child love and security and parent self-consciousness goals which parents were most likely to pursue in different caregiving instances.
Chapter 4
PCGS Confirmation and Establishment of Links between Caregiving Goals, Individual Differences, and the Subjective Caregiving Experience

My first goal in Study 2 was to confirm the four-factor structure of the PCGS in an independent sample. I sought to confirm the four-factor structure generally as well as across parent and child groups who might vary in the types of goals they pursue. To do so, and given that the same factor structure of the PCGS was identified in both Studies 1 and 2, I combined the two samples ($N_{combined} = 1244$) to create a single, high-powered sample (Schimmack, 2012) for the specific purpose of assessing whether the same PCGS factors emerged across mothers ($N = 803$) and fathers ($N = 349$), for parents who reported caring for boys ($N = 593$) and girls ($N = 647$), and for parents who reported caring for children of different ages, including parents who had children in early childhood ($N = 550$; newborn to 5 years old), middle childhood ($N = 441$, 6 to 11 years old), and adolescence ($N = 251$; 12 to 18 years old).

I also sought to identify how the pursuit of different caregiving goals relates to individual differences in parenting beliefs, concern for others, and self-focused concerns to establish the convergent and discriminant validity of the PCGS. To do so, I examined associations between each PCGS subscale with measures of parental beliefs, including parental communal strength (Le & Impett, 2015; Mills et al., 2004), child-centrism (Ashton-James et al., 2013; Liss et al., 2013), and idealization of parenthood (Eibach & Mock, 2011). I also examined how parental caregiving goal pursuit was related to general concern for others, as measured by individual differences in agreeableness (John et al., 2008) and empathy (Davis, 1983). Lastly, I examined how parental caregiving goal pursuit was related to parents’ self-focused concerns as captured by
their public self-consciousness (Fenigstein et al., 1975) and narcissism (Raskin & Terry, 1988). Although I did not have specific hypotheses concerning how caregiving goals would be related to other facets of the Big Five personality, I included these measures in my results given the importance of establishing convergent and discriminant validity with the central measures of personality in psychology; however, I do not discuss these results in detail.

I expected that each of the four caregiving goals would demonstrate a unique overall pattern of associations with parental beliefs, concern for others, and self-focused concerns. Specifically, I expected that pursuit of child love and security goals and parent self-consciousness goals would be associated with the convergent and discriminant measures in the ways I originally hypothesized, given that these goals were most closely aligned with other-oriented (i.e., compassionate, empathic, loving, and concerned) and self-oriented (i.e., self-image and self-benefiting) goals identified in past research (Crocker & Canavello, 2008; Feeney & Collins, 2003). However, given my identification of multiple child- and self-oriented goals, I expected that child growth and development goals and child acceptance goals would show unique patterns of association with the individual difference measures in ways that diverged from my original hypotheses concerning child- and self-oriented goals. Specifically, I expected that child growth and development goals would display a similar pattern of associations with parental beliefs and self-focused concerns as child love and security goals; however, I expected that parents who pursue child growth and development goals would be no different from parents less likely to pursue these goals in their general concern for others given their focus on aspects of caregiving that are more enriching and educational, rather than compassionate and empathic. I expected that parents who pursue child acceptance goals would be similar to parents high in self-consciousness goal pursuit regarding high self-focused concerns, high idealization of parenthood, and less concern for their child’s needs; however I expected that parents who pursue child...
acceptance goals would be no different in their general concern for others relative to parents less likely to pursue these goals given that I expect that they desire acceptance from their children in particular, but perhaps not from others more generally.

The third goal of Study 2 was to test my key hypotheses that the specific goals that parents pursue during caregiving will be differentially associated with parents’ emotional well-being, relationship quality, and responsiveness to their child’s needs. I conceptualized well-being and relationship quality with positive and negative indicators of each construct. Specifically, I assessed emotional well-being with measures of positive and negative emotions (Schimmack, 2008; Schimmack & Crites, 2005), and assessed relationship quality with measures of relationship satisfaction, closeness, and conflict with a child (Impett et al., 2005) during caregiving. I expected that child love and security goals would be associated with greater emotional well-being, parent-child relationship quality, and responsiveness to a child’s needs whereas parent self-consciousness goals would be associated with lower emotional well-being, parent-child relationship quality, and responsiveness to a child’s needs, consistent with my original hypotheses. Given that there is relatively little empirical work on which to draw regarding how child growth and development goals and child acceptance goals would be linked to well-being, relationship quality, and responsiveness in close relationships, I did not advance specific hypotheses about whether these goals would be associated with a more positive or negative subjective caregiving experience.

1 Study 2 Method

1.1 Participants and Procedure

I recruited a sample of 701 parents from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk using the same criteria as in Pilot Study 1b and Study 1. Parents completed an online survey that included
measures of caregiving goals, the subjective caregiving experience, parenting beliefs, concern for others, and self-focused concerns.

1.2 Measures

1.2.1 Caregiving Measures

Parents described a recent caregiving experience in free response format using the same prompt as described in Study 1 and rated their caregiving goals for this recalled experience with the 17-item PCGS. Each parental caregiving goal was computed as the average of their respective PCGS subscale items as shown in Table 2: child love and security (5 items, $\alpha = .86$; $M = 4.46$, $SD = 0.76$), child growth and development (5 items, $\alpha = .88$; $M = 3.32$, $SD = 1.21$), parent self-consciousness (3 items, $\alpha = .87$; $M = 1.51$, $SD = 0.86$), and child acceptance (4 items, $\alpha = .83$; $M = 2.55$, $SD = 1.15$). After recalling a recent caregiving experience, parents answered questions regarding how they felt when providing care, all on 7-point scales. Participants rated the extent to which they experienced four positive emotions ($\alpha = .88$; $M = 5.60$, $SD = 1.41$; “happy, pleased, joyful;” “affectionate, loving, caring;” “grateful, appreciative, thankful;” and “cared about, loved, connected”) and four negative emotions ($\alpha = .84$; $M = 1.53$, $SD = 0.98$; “sad, depressed, down;” “resentful toward my child;” “lonely, isolated;” and “angry, irritable, frustrated”) after giving care to their child (1 = not at all to 7 = a lot; Impett et al., 2012; Srivastava et al., 2009). Parents also reported on their relationship satisfaction with the item “How satisfied did you feel with your relationship with your child after giving this care?” ($M = 6.35$, $SD = 1.08$; 1 = not at all satisfied to 7 = extremely satisfied), an item adapted from Rusbult, Martz, and Agnew (1998) for the parent-child context; how close they felt to their child ($M = 5.40$, $SD = 1.60$) with the Inclusion of Other in Self Scale by choosing one of six increasingly overlapping Venn diagrams representing the self and child (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992); and
how much conflict they experienced with the item “How much conflict did you have with your child as a result of giving care in this situation?” ($M = 2.20, SD = 1.63; 1 = no conflict at all to 7 = a lot of conflict$), an item adapted from Impett et al. (2005) for the parent-child context. In addition, parents reported their feelings of responsiveness to their child’s needs with the item “To what extent do you think you met your child’s needs in this situation?” ($M = 6.40, SD = 0.97; 1 = not at all to 7 = very much so$), a face-valid item written for this study. Lastly, parents rated two face-valid items created for this study concerning the extent to which they perceived care to be challenging. Parents rated care difficulty with the item “How easy versus difficult was it to care for your child in this situation” ($1 = very easy to 7 = very difficult; M = 2.65, SD = 1.83$) and their child’s mood with the item “What was your child’s mood while you gave care to him/her care in this situation?” ($1 = very good to 7 = very bad; M = 4.02, SD = 1.85$). Zero-order correlations between these study variables can be seen in Appendix D.

1.2.2 Individual Difference Measures

All individual difference measures were assessed on 7-point scales. For all measures, I created composite scores for each parent by averaging all items from their respective scales.

1.2.2.1 Parenting Beliefs

*Parental communal strength* (Le & Impett, 2015; Mills et al., 2004) assessed the degree of responsibility parents feel for their child’s welfare and their willingness to incur costs to meet their child’s needs (e.g., “How large a cost would you incur to meet a need of your child?” 6 items; $\alpha = .80; M = 6.46, SD = 0.71$). *Child-centrism* (Ashton-James et al., 2013) measured the degree to which parents place their children at the center of their lives and prioritize their children’s needs over their own (e.g., “My children are the center of my life,” 7 items; $\alpha = .84; M = 5.83, SD = 0.97$). *Idealization of parenthood* (Eibach & Mock, 2011) captured the degree to
which people believe that a truly fulfilling and happy life is achieved through having children (e.g., “There is nothing more rewarding in this life than raising a child,” 8 items, $\alpha = .78; M = 3.83, SD = 1.07$).

1.2.2.2 **General Concern for Others**

*Agreeableness* (John et al., 2008) captured the extent to which participants report that they are cooperative, kind, and trusting in nature (e.g., “I see myself as someone who is helpful and unselfish with others,” 9 items; $\alpha = .83; M = 5.46, SD = 0.96$). *Empathic concern* (Davis, 1983) captured parents’ feelings of compassion, concern, and sympathy for others (e.g., “I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person,” 7 items; $\alpha = .86; M = 5.53, SD = 1.11$).

1.2.2.3 **Self-focused Concerns**

*Public self-consciousness* (Fenigstein et al., 1975) was assessed with the public self-consciousness subscale of the general self-consciousness measure. This scale captured the tendency to direct attention outwardly for public self-assessment (e.g., “I’m concerned about what other people think of me,” 7 items; $\alpha = 0.78; M = 4.17, SD = 1.20$). *Narcissism* (Raskin & Terry, 1988) captured the extent to which people see the self as more important, unique, and superior than others, as measured by the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; e.g., “I am an extraordinary person,” 40 items; $\alpha = .94; M = 3.71, SD = 0.97$).

1.2.2.4 **Big Five Inventory**

In addition to agreeableness, I assessed all other facets of the Big Five (John et al., 2008), including *extraversion* (e.g., “I am see myself as someone who is outgoing and sociable,” 8 items; $\alpha = 0.86; M = 4.33, SD = 1.22$), *conscientiousness* (e.g., “I see myself as someone who does a thorough job,” 9 items; $\alpha = 0.85; M = 5.33, SD = 0.98$), *openness* (e.g., “I am someone
who is curious about many different things,” 10 items; $\alpha = 0.82$; $M = 5.00$, $SD = 0.98$), and 
neuroticism (e.g., “I see myself as someone who is depressed, blue,” 8 items; $\alpha = 0.87$; $M = 3.45$, $SD = 1.23$).

2 Study 2 Results

2.1 Confirming the Four-Factor Structure of the PCGS

To confirm the four-factor structure of the PCGS, I conducted confirmatory factor analysis using the lavaan package (Rosseel, 2012) in R. I specified a four-factor model and allowed all four factors to correlate. I evaluated model fit using a number of standard fit criteria, with acceptable fit indicated by a Comparative Fit Index (CFI) greater than or equal to .90 and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) less than or equal to .08 (Kline, 2005). I deemphasized the $\chi^2$ statistic given its sensitivity to variations in sample size (i.e., biased towards detecting differences in large samples; Kline, 2005), but report these tests for a complete assessment of model fit evaluation criteria.

As shown in Figure 3, the confirmatory model for the PCGS had acceptable fit ($\chi^2(113) = 571.88$, $p < .001$, CFI = .93, RMSEA = .08 [.07, .08]), with all items loading highly onto their respective factors (standardized loadings ranged from .67 to .89). The pattern of correlations among the caregiving goals replicated those in Study 1 in both direction and magnitude. Additionally, the four-factor model fit the data significantly better than models that specified one, two, and three factors (all $\Delta \chi^2$ with $ps < .001$), with each of these models having poor fit (all $\chi^2$s with $ps < .001$, CFIs $\leq .88$, and RMSEAs $\geq .10$), providing further support for inclusion of the fourth child acceptance factor. Lastly, I sought to assess whether the same PCGS factors emerged across key parenting groups. I found, after specifying the same four-factor model with identical indicators loading onto each factor for each of the comparison groups, that the same
factor structure emerged for mothers and fathers ($\chi^2(226) = 886.26, p < .001, \text{CFI} = .93, \text{RMSEA} = .07 [.07, .08]$), for parents who reported caring for boys and girls ($\chi^2(226) = 964.25, p < .001, \text{CFI} = .93, \text{RMSEA} = .07 [.07, .08]$), and for parents caring for children in early childhood, middle childhood, and adolescence ($\chi^2(339) = 11171.52, p < .001, \text{CFI} = .92, \text{RMSEA} = .08 [.07, .08]$).

2.2 Caregiving Goal Pursuit and Associations with Parenting Beliefs, Concern for Others, Self-Focused Concerns

To provide evidence for the convergent and discriminant validity of the PCGS, I next sought to examine how each of the four different caregiving goals is associated with individual differences in parenting beliefs, concern for others, and self-focused concerns. Given that the four goals are correlated, I estimated partial correlations of each goal with each of the individual difference measures. Specifically, I report results of the correlation between each goal, after partialling out the effects of the other three goals, with measures of parenting beliefs, concern for others, and self-focused concerns. Estimates are reported with 95% confidence intervals (Funder et al., 2014) and were generated from 5,000 bootstrapped resamples to account for non-normality within the data. Results are shown in Table 3.
Figure 3. Parental Caregiving Goals Scale Confirmatory Model

Note. † p ≤ .10, * p ≤ .05, ** p ≤ .01, *** p ≤ .001. Item numbers correspond with scale items (as ordered) in Table 2. All factor loadings represent standardized estimates and were significant at p ≤ .001.
Table 3. Parental Caregiving Goals Correlations with Parenting Beliefs, Concern for Others, and Self-Oriented Concerns (Study 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Differences</th>
<th>Love and Security</th>
<th>Growth and Development</th>
<th>Parent Self-Consciousness</th>
<th>Child Acceptance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partial $r$</td>
<td>Partial $r$</td>
<td>Partial $r$</td>
<td>Partial $r$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting Beliefs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental communal strength</td>
<td>0.30*** [0.19, 0.39]</td>
<td>0.08* [0.01, 0.15]</td>
<td>-0.24*** [-0.32, -0.17]</td>
<td>-0.01 [-0.08, 0.06]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child-centrism</td>
<td>0.28*** [0.19, 0.37]</td>
<td>0.05 [-0.02, 0.13]</td>
<td>-0.18*** [-0.27, -0.09]</td>
<td>0.003 [-0.06, 0.07]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealization of parenthood</td>
<td>0.09* [0.02, 0.16]</td>
<td>0.01 [-0.07, 0.09]</td>
<td>-0.02 [-0.09, 0.06]</td>
<td>0.16*** [0.08, 0.24]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern for Others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeableness</td>
<td>0.19*** [0.11, 0.27]</td>
<td>0.01 [-0.07, 0.09]</td>
<td>-0.17*** [-0.24, -0.10]</td>
<td>0.05 [-0.03, 0.12]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>0.15*** [0.05, 0.24]</td>
<td>0.06 [-0.02, 0.14]</td>
<td>-0.15*** [-0.23, -0.08]</td>
<td>0.03 [-0.06, 0.11]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Focused Concerns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public self-consciousness</td>
<td>-0.001 [-0.08, 0.08]</td>
<td>-0.07† [-0.15, 0.01]</td>
<td>0.07† [-0.01, 0.15]</td>
<td>0.15*** [0.06, 0.24]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narcissism</td>
<td>0.05 [-0.03, 0.13]</td>
<td>0.04 [-0.05, 0.12]</td>
<td>0.12** [0.03, 0.20]</td>
<td>0.12** [0.04, 0.21]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Facets of the Big Five</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>0.09* [0.01, 0.17]</td>
<td>0.07† [-0.01, 0.15]</td>
<td>-0.02 [-0.09, 0.05]</td>
<td>-0.01 [-0.10, 0.07]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td>0.16*** [0.08, 0.24]</td>
<td>0.08* [-0.002, 0.16]</td>
<td>-0.17*** [-0.24, -0.09]</td>
<td>-0.03 [-0.10, 0.05]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>0.07 [-0.01, 0.15]</td>
<td>0.08* [-0.04, 0.16]</td>
<td>-0.10* [-0.17, -0.03]</td>
<td>0.003 [-0.08, 0.08]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuroticism</td>
<td>-0.09* [-0.18, -0.01]</td>
<td>-0.05 [-0.13, 0.03]</td>
<td>0.11** [0.03, 0.18]</td>
<td>0.04 [-0.05, 0.12]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. † $p \leq .10$, * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$. All values are partial correlations and their corresponding 95% confidence intervals. Values in each column represent the correlation between a given goal, partialling out the effects of the other three goals, with each individual difference measure.
I found that child love and security goals were positively associated with all measures of parenting beliefs, including measures of concern for a child, tapped by parental communal strength and child-centrism, in addition to idealization of parenthood. Child love and security goals were also positively associated with agreeableness and empathy, the two measures of concern for others. Lastly, child love and security goals were not significantly associated either with public self-consciousness or narcissism, the two measures of self-focused concerns. Thus, consistent with hypotheses, relative to parents who are less likely to pursue child love and security goals, parents who pursue goals to show their child love and provide them with security tended to be higher in concern for their child and others generally and to have a highly positive view about the role of parenthood in their lives, but were no more or less self-focused in their concerns.¹

I found that child growth and development goals were positively associated with parental communal strength, but were not significantly associated with either child-centrism or idealization of parenthood. In addition, child growth and development goals were not associated with empathy and agreeableness, nor were they significantly associated with public self-consciousness or narcissism. Taken together, and generally consistent with hypotheses, parents who pursue child growth and development goals tended to be highly concerned with their child’s needs; however, they were no different from parents less likely to pursue these goals in the extent to which they view parenthood in a positive light, nor in their self- or other-focused concerns at a broader level.

¹ Although I do not discuss the Big Five results in detail, correlations between facets of the BFI and child love and security goals are consistent with meta-analytic results of BFI associations with parental warmth (Prinzie, Stams, Deković, Reijntjes, & Belsky, 2009).
In contrast to parents who pursued the two child-oriented goals, parents who pursued parent self-consciousness goals were less other-focused and more self-focused in nature. Specifically, parent self-consciousness goals were negatively associated with parental communal strength and child-centrism, but were not significantly associated with idealization of parenthood. Additionally, parent self-consciousness goals were negatively associated with both empathy and agreeableness, and were positively associated with narcissism and public self-consciousness, although this latter effect was marginally significant. Thus, and as was generally consistent with hypotheses, parents who pursued parent self-consciousness goals were more self-focused in their concerns as well as lower in their concerns for their children and others generally relative to parents less likely to pursue these goals.

Finally, I found that child acceptance goals were positively associated with idealization of parenthood, but not with other measures of parenting beliefs, including parental communal strength and child-centrism. Additionally, child acceptance goals were not significantly associated with empathy or agreeableness, but were positively associated with public self-consciousness and narcissism. Thus, I found, as was generally consistent with hypotheses, that parents who pursued child acceptance goals had a highly positive view of parenting and were self-focused in their concerns; however, these parents were no more or less likely to be concerned with their child’s needs, nor for others at a broader level, relative to parents less likely to pursue these goals.

2.3 Caregiving Goal Pursuit and the Subjective Caregiving Experience

My final objective in Study 2 was to test my hypotheses about how the pursuit of caregiving goals shapes the subjective caregiving experience. I conducted multivariate multiple regression analyses (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2007) using the car package (Fox & Weisberg, 2011) in
R. In this analysis, I simultaneously entered all four goals as predictors in the model, given that the four goals are correlated, to examine their unique associations with each indicator of the subjective caregiving experience, which were estimated as simultaneous outcomes. This analysis accounted for the non-independence of the criteria measures (rs ranging from |0.27| to |0.62|) and therefore decreased the incidence of Type 1 errors by allowing me to conduct only one as opposed to multiple tests. For all results, I report an omnibus test assessing the overall significance of the goals in predicting the subjective caregiving experience outcomes collectively. I also report specific estimates of the associations between each goal and each indicator of the subjective caregiving experience.

As expected and shown in Table 4, results indicated that parents who pursued child love and security goals had a more positive subjective caregiving experience on the whole relative to parents who were less likely to pursue child love and security goals ($F(6, 671) = 41.49, p < .001$). Specifically, child love and security goals were associated with greater positive emotions, relationship satisfaction, closeness, and responsiveness to a child’s needs, as well as lower negative emotions and conflict during caregiving. Also consistent with hypotheses, I found that parents who pursued self-consciousness goals had an overall more negative caregiving experience relative to parents who were less likely to pursue these goals ($F(6, 671) = 9.13, p < .001$). Parent self-consciousness goals were associated with more negative emotions, less relationship satisfaction, more conflict, and less responsiveness to a child’s needs. However, the pursuit of parent self-consciousness goals was not associated with positive emotions or with closeness.
Table 4. Main Effects of Parental Caregiving Goals Predicting Indicators of the Subjective Caregiving Experience (Study 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Love and Security $\beta$</th>
<th>Growth and Development $\beta$</th>
<th>Parent Self-Consciousness $\beta$</th>
<th>Child Acceptance $\beta$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Emotions</td>
<td>0.50*** [0.43, 0.57]</td>
<td>0.07* [0.0004, 0.15]</td>
<td>-0.02 [-0.10, 0.06]</td>
<td>0.11* [0.02, 0.19]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Emotions</td>
<td>-0.23*** [-0.31, -0.16]</td>
<td>0.08* [0.01, 0.16]</td>
<td>0.29*** [0.20, 0.37]</td>
<td>-0.01 [-0.10, 0.08]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.44*** [0.36, 0.52]</td>
<td>-0.05 [-0.13, 0.03]</td>
<td>-0.14** [-0.22, -0.05]</td>
<td>-0.003 [-0.09, 0.09]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness</td>
<td>0.37*** [0.29, 0.45]</td>
<td>-0.12** [-0.19, -0.03]</td>
<td>0.03 [-0.06, 0.12]</td>
<td>0.02 [-0.07, 0.12]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>-0.31*** [-0.39, -0.23]</td>
<td>0.19*** [0.11, 0.27]</td>
<td>0.14** [0.05, 0.22]</td>
<td>0.01 [-0.09, 0.10]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>0.37*** [0.30, 0.45]</td>
<td>-0.10* [-0.17, -0.02]</td>
<td>-0.11* [-0.20, -0.03]</td>
<td>0.04 [-0.06, 0.13]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. † $p \leq .10$, * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$. Results represent standardized $\beta$ coefficients and their corresponding 95% confidence intervals estimated from a multivariate regression model in which all four goals simultaneously predicted all six subjective caregiving experience criteria.
Due to the limited amount of research on child growth and development and child acceptance goals, I did not advance specific hypotheses regarding the possible links between these two types of goals and the subjective caregiving experience. However, and as shown in Table 4, I found that pursuit of these goals was indeed predictive of indicators of the subjective caregiving experience. Parents who pursued child growth and development goals had a comparatively more negative caregiving experience on the whole relative to parents who were less likely to pursue these goals ($F(6, 671) = 7.32, p < .001$). Specifically, while child growth and development goals were associated with more positive emotions during caregiving, they were also associated with more negative emotions, less closeness, more conflict, and less responsiveness to a child’s needs during caregiving. Additionally, the pursuit of these goals was not associated with relationship satisfaction. Lastly, I found that parents who pursued child acceptance goals did not differ in their overall subjective caregiving experience relative to parents who were less likely to pursue child acceptance goals ($F(6, 671) = 1.48, p = .18$). The only difference I found when examining individual indicators of the subjective experience is that parents who pursued child acceptance goals experienced more positive emotions relative to those who pursued these goals to a lesser degree.

2.3.1 Ruling Out Alternative Explanations: The Role of Individual Differences and Caregiving Context

I next sought to rule out the possibility that the associations between parental caregiving goals and the subjective caregiving experience could be accounted for by broader individual differences, which as described above and reported in Table 3, were correlated in meaningful ways with goal pursuit. In addition, I sought to determine if the extent to which parents found caregiving to be challenging—as assessed by parents perceptions of care difficulty and child mood, two factors which covaried with both parental caregiving goal pursuit ($rs$ between $|0.02|$
to |0.20|) and the subjective caregiving experience (rs between |0.20| to |0.51|)—might explain the previously reported associations between parental caregiving goals and the subjective caregiving experience.

To address these possibilities, I tested a multivariate regression model in which I simultaneously entered all four goals to predict all of the indicators of the subjective caregiving experience as I conducted for the key hypothesis tests; however, in this new model, I added 13 simultaneous control variables, including all individual differences in parenting beliefs, concern for others, self-focused concerns, and Big Five personality traits, as well as perceived care difficulty and child mood. After accounting for all of these factors, all four goals were associated with differences in the subjective caregiving experience on the whole (all Fs(6, 557) ≥ 2.79 and ps ≥ .01). Specifically, 11 of the 14 previously significant effects remained significant, with all standardized beta estimates ranging in absolute value from 0.11 to 0.41, with all 95% confidence intervals excluding zero, and all ps ≤ .01. Two of the previously significant effects dropped to marginal significance, including the effects of child growth and development goals predicting greater positive emotions (β = 0.07 [-0.01, 0.14], p = .07) and more negative emotions (β = 0.07 [-0.01, 0.14], p = .08). Additionally, the effect of parent self-consciousness goals predicting lower responsiveness dropped to non-significance (β = -0.05 [-0.14, 0.04], p = .31). Lastly, in these new analyses, child acceptance goals were significantly associated with greater responsiveness to a child’s needs (β = 0.10 [0.005, 0.19], p = .04). Thus, with only a few exceptions, the pursuit of distinct caregiving goals was generally related to parents’ subjective caregiving experiences independent of individual differences in parenting beliefs, general concern for others, self-focused concerns, Big Five personality, and the extent to which parents found caregiving to be challenging to provide.
3 Brief Discussion of Study 2

In Study 2, I confirmed the four-factor structure of the PCGS and showed that it was superior to models with one, two, and three factors. I also showed that the same four goals were pursued by mothers and fathers, as well as by parents caring for children of different genders and ages. Additionally, I established convergent and discriminant validity of the PCGS by showing that the pursuit of each caregiving goal was uniquely associated with measures of parenting beliefs, concern for others, and self-focused concerns. I also established that parents who pursue different caregiving goals have unique subjective caregiving experiences. Finally, in an incredibly stringent control analysis, I showed that the associations between caregiving goal pursuit and parents’ subjective experiences of caregiving were robust and largely not attributable to stable individual differences in parenting beliefs, concern for others, self-focused concerns, Big Five personality, nor to parents’ perceptions of care difficulty or child mood.
Chapter 5
Parental Caregiving Goals in Daily Life

In addition to examining between parent differences in goal pursuit and how goals are linked with differential outcomes for parents during caregiving, I examined parental caregiving goal pursuit and the subjective caregiving experience in a more naturalistic context by asking parents about their caregiving experiences over the course of ten days. This design allowed me to extend my examination of caregiving goal pursuit in three ways. First, parents reported on up to 10 daily experiences of caregiving which allowed me to capture multiple caregiving experiences that are highly representative of the kinds of experiences parents encounter in their daily lives. This experience sampling design also allowed me to assess parental goals and subjective experiences with greater reliability and minimized retrospective biases (Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli, 2003).

The second extension I made in the current study was to identify the specific types of behaviors in which parents engage when providing care for their children in daily life. To do so, I employed a qualitative method to identify central and recurring themes that emerged from parents’ own descriptions of their daily caregiving behaviors. I expected that when parents pursue child love and security goals, they would be more likely to engage in supportive behaviors, whereas when parents pursue self-consciousness goals they would be more likely to engage in controlling or negative caregiving behaviors. I further expected that when parents pursue child growth and development goals they would be more likely to engage in behaviors pertaining to their child’s personal and experiential enrichment, and that when parents pursue child acceptance goals they would be more likely to engage in positive caregiving behaviors, such as spending time with their children. I additionally sought to test, in an exploratory fashion,
whether the link between caregiving goals and the subjective caregiving experience was
generalizable across (i.e., not moderated by) the behaviors in which parents engage.

The third extension of this study is that my repeated measures design enabled me to
capture within-parent variation in goal pursuit and how it relates to parents’ daily subjective
caregiving experiences. To do so, I examined if daily changes in a parent’s pursuit of a particular
caregiving goal over the course of 10 days—relative to their own average pursuit of that
caregiving goal over the 10-day period—was associated with corresponding changes in their
subjective caregiving experiences. This within-parent analysis is important given that, while
parents differ from other parents in their goal pursuit and thus have more or less positive
experiences relative to other parents, as I showed in Study 2, I also expected that goal pursuit
will wax and wane within a parent’s own daily life, thus relating to more or less positive
experiences for parents in some caregiving instances relative to others. As such, understanding
how changes in goal pursuit are related to changes in parents’ subjective caregiving experiences
would provide evidence that there is variability in parental caregiving goal pursuit within
parents’ day-to-day caregiving experiences, and that it might ultimately be possible to change or
modify parents’ goals and their corresponding experiences. Based on theory and results from
Study 2, I expected that whereas the daily pursuit of child love and security and child acceptance
goals would be associated with corresponding increases in well-being, relationship quality, and
responsiveness, the daily pursuit of parent self-consciousness and child growth and development
goals would be associated with decreases in these indicators of the subjective caregiving
experience. As in Study 2, I sought to provide evidence that the pursuit of caregiving goals
would be linked with parents’ subjective caregiving experiences above and beyond the extent to
which parents found caregiving to be challenging.
1 Study 3 Method

1.1 Participants and Procedure

As part of a larger, multi-lab study, I recruited 118 parents from the Greater Toronto Area who had previously brought their child to the university for a study of child development. One strength of this recruitment method is that parents in the current study responded to questions about a child who was previously selected based on their age, enabling me to avoid the response biases of parents choosing to report on a particular child, such as a favored child (Suitor et al., 2008). Relatively equal numbers of parents reported on caregiving experiences with sons versus daughters and with children who were 4-, 8-, or 12-years old. Parents completed a background survey followed by daily diary surveys each day for 10 consecutive days. After completing the background survey, which included demographic questions and individual difference measures, parents were sent email reminders to complete diaries each day if they had not completed the survey by 8 PM each night. On average, parents completed six out of 10 possible diaries ($SD = 2.5$) yielding a total of 726 diaries. Compliance was acceptable, with 52% of parents completing seven or more diaries, 20% of parents completing four to six diaries, and 18% of parents completing three or fewer diaries. All parents who participated were compensated with $40 and were entered in a raffle for a family pass to the Ontario Science Center.

1.2 Daily Measures

1.2.1 Caregiving Measures

All of the measures used in the current study were identical to those in Study 2 except that they were adapted for the daily context. Specifically, each day parents reported on a daily caregiving experience in free response format. Then, parents reported the extent to which they pursued each of the four caregiving goals in the experience they described by completing the 17-
item PCGS, answered on a 5-point scale. I created composites of subscale items for each of the four caregiving goals using their respective subscale items: *child love and security goals* \((\alpha = .84; M = 3.77, SD = 1.06\); intraclass correlation \((ICC) = 0.60\)), *child growth and development goals* \((\alpha = .77; M = 2.74, SD = 1.09; ICC = 0.67\)), *parent self-consciousness goals* \((\alpha = .82; M = 1.53, SD = 0.85; ICC = 0.75\)), and *child acceptance goals* \((\alpha = .76; M = 2.28, SD = 1.05; ICC = 0.79\)). Parents also responded to indicators of their subjective caregiving experience, all on 7-point scales. They reported on their *positive emotions* \((4 \text{ items}; \alpha = .90; M = 4.79, SD = 1.71; ICC = 0.27\)), *negative emotions* \((4 \text{ items}; \alpha = .79; M = 1.60, SD = 0.98; ICC = 0.24\)), and *responsiveness* to their child’s needs during the caregiving experience \((1 \text{ item}; M = 6.19, SD = 1.19; ICC = 0.14\)). In addition, they reported on their *relationship satisfaction* \((1 \text{ item}; M = 5.96, SD = 1.14; ICC = 0.24\)), *closeness* \((1 \text{ item}; M = 4.76, SD = 1.72; ICC = 0.64\)), and *conflict* \((1 \text{ item}; M = 2.55, SD = 1.49; ICC = 0.20\)) with their child generally for the day. Lastly, parents rated their perceived *care difficulty* \((1 \text{ item}; M = 2.64, SD = 1.81; ICC = 0.15\)) and perceptions of *child mood* during care \((1 \text{ item}; M = 3.19, SD = 1.91; ICC = 0.12\)). Zero-order correlations between these study variables can be seen in Appendix E.

1.2.2 Coding Daily Caregiving Behaviors

When data collection was complete, I qualitatively identified caregiving themes that represented common behaviors in which parents reported engaging across the diary. Using these themes, I then completed quantitative coding of each diary response. Specifically, my adviser and I, along with one research assistant, identified unique caregiving behaviors through thematic analysis and came to consensus on the primary themes that emerged (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Next, two independent raters coded all daily caregiving experiences for the single, focal behavior in which parents engaged. Behaviors were coded (i.e., the parent did or did not engage in the behavior that day) based on the four themes identified in the thematic analysis: *routine and basic*
needs ($k = 0.72; ICC = 0.19$); enrichment and recreational activities ($k = 0.68; ICC = 0.11$); advice, comfort, and encouragement ($k = 0.58; ICC = 0.15$); control and discipline ($k = 0.72; ICC = 0.07$); and an other category ($k = 0.80$) which comprised only 5% of responses. Once initial kappas were in an acceptable range, I resolved remaining discrepancies between the two coders. All identification of themes and coding of caregiving experiences were completed prior to hypothesis testing. Frequencies and sample responses of parental behaviors are shown in Table 5.

2 Study 3 Results

I conducted multilevel modeling analyses in Mplus v. 7.0 (Múthen & Múthen, 2008-2012) given the nested structure of the data, with diaries (level-1) nested within person (level-2). In all multilevel analyses, I estimated models with random intercepts and report estimates with robust standard errors (used to calculate 95% confidence intervals for all estimates) to account for non-normality within the data. Given that the four goals were correlated, I simultaneously entered all four caregiving goals as predictors to estimate their unique associations with the subjective caregiving experience. To avoid confounding within- and between-person effects, each of the four goals were partitioned into their within-person variance components and between-person variance components, with the latter being an aggregate of the former. All level-1 variables were person-mean centered and all aggregate level-2 variables were grand-mean centered. Thus, the level-1 variables represent deviations from a parent’s own 10-day average across the study and the level-2 variables represent each parent’s deviation from the average of all parents in the sample.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caregiving Behavior Theme</th>
<th>Sample Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Routine and Basic Needs</td>
<td>“I gave my child a bath”; “Shopping for school clothes and shoes. She was happy to be there and excited about a few new outfits.”</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrichment and Recreational Activities</td>
<td>“Today Lindsay and I read a book together that she picked out from the library. She wanted some time to read together even though she can read on her own quite well”; “Today, I spent 20 minutes teaching my child French.”</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice, Comfort, and Encouragement</td>
<td>“Discussed relationship with her friends, specifically being able to say no to a friend who wants you to do something that you don't want to do”; “My child was unhappy that she wasn't invited to her brother's birthday party because it was an all boy party. I had to explain why she wasn't included.”</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control and Discipline</td>
<td>“My daughter took her sister’s iPod to school without permission. I was upset with her and lectured her and she apologized”; “Had to discipline my child for slamming the front door during a fit of anger. She had been told she could not go out to play but had to get ready for bed.”</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Percent represents parents who listed at least one behavior in each category.
The first set of analyses concerned the association between daily caregiving goals and daily caregiving behaviors. For these analyses, I tested four models, one for each of the four caregiving behaviors as separate criteria, given that each caregiving experience was coded for the single focal behavior in which parents engaged. The second set of analyses concerned the association between caregiving goals and indicators of parents’ daily subjective caregiving experience. For these analyses, I tested a single model in which all measures of parents’ subjective caregiving experience were included as simultaneous criteria whose errors were correlated to account for non-independence among the criteria (and thereby decreasing the incidence of Type 1 errors by testing a single model rather than conducting multiple tests).

For my main analyses concerning parents’ subjective experience, I report both within- and between-person effects, given that intraclass correlations of all variables indicate that there is meaningful variance at both levels of analysis; however, I focus my discussion on within-person effects given that I examined between-person effects in a highly powered sample in Study 2 and my key interest in conducting a daily experience study was to test my hypotheses concerning daily, within-person changes in goal pursuit and their corresponding changes with parents’ subjective caregiving experience.

2.1 Daily Caregiving Goals and Parental Caregiving Behaviors

I first sought to examine how pursuit of each caregiving goal was associated with the particular daily caregiving behaviors in which parents engaged. I found, as shown in Table 6 and consistent with my hypotheses, that the pursuit of each caregiving goal was related to caregiving behaviors in unique and expected ways. Beginning with the child-oriented goals, I found that on days when parents pursued child love and security goals more than their own average across the 10-day study, the more likely they were to provide advice, encouragement, and support to their
children, and the less likely they were to engage in disciplinary and controlling behaviors. Additionally, on days when parents pursued child growth and development goals more than their own average across the 10-day study, the more likely they were to engage in enrichment and recreational activities with their children and the less likely they were to engage in routine and basic care for their children.

The results concerning the links between self-oriented goals and parental caregiving behaviors were also consistent with my hypotheses. On days when parents pursued self-consciousness goals more than their own average across the 10-day study, the more likely they were to engage in disciplinary and controlling behaviors and the less likely they were to engage in enrichment and recreational activities with their children. Lastly, daily pursuit of child acceptance goals was not associated with engagement in any particular caregiving behavior themes identified in this study.
Table 6. Main Effects of Parental Caregiving Goals Predicting Caregiving Behaviors in Daily Life (Study 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caregiving Behavior Outcomes</th>
<th>Love and Security</th>
<th>Growth and Development</th>
<th>Parent Self-Consciousness</th>
<th>Child Acceptance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routine and Basic Needs</td>
<td>0.05 [-0.19, 0.30]</td>
<td>-0.68*** [-0.98, -0.37]</td>
<td>-0.32† [-0.70, 0.06]</td>
<td>-0.12 [-0.42, 0.19]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrichment and Recreational Activities</td>
<td>0.23 [-0.07, 0.52]</td>
<td>0.39* [0.05, 0.72]</td>
<td>-0.39* [-0.77, -0.02]</td>
<td>0.28 [-0.11, 0.66]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice, Comfort, and Encouragement</td>
<td>0.63*** [0.32, 0.94]</td>
<td>0.33† [-0.04, 0.70]</td>
<td>0.11 [-0.31, 0.53]</td>
<td>0.16 [-0.31, 0.64]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control and Discipline</td>
<td>-1.11*** [-1.60, -0.63]</td>
<td>0.30 [-0.07, 0.65]</td>
<td>1.04*** [0.49, 1.58]</td>
<td>-0.12 [-0.61, 0.38]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. † p ≤ .10, * p ≤ .05, ** p ≤ .01, *** p ≤ .001. All four caregiving goals were entered as simultaneous predictors of each of the four caregiving behaviors, with separate models run for each caregiving behavior as its own outcome. All values are unstandardized multilevel coefficients and their corresponding 95% confidence intervals.
2.2 Daily Caregiving Goal Pursuit and the Subjective Caregiving Experience

As shown in Table 7, the within-person effects of caregiving goal pursuit were consistent with my hypotheses. I found that on days when parents pursued child love and security goals more than their own average across the 10-day study, the more positive their caregiving experiences were across all measures. Specifically, the more parents pursued child love and security goals, the more they experienced positive emotions, relationship satisfaction, closeness to their children, and the more responsive they felt to their child’s needs, in addition to feeling less negative emotions and conflict with their children in daily life. In contrast, on days when parents pursued self-consciousness goals more than their own average across the 10-day study, the more negative their daily caregiving experiences were across five of the six indicators of the subjective caregiving experience. Specifically, the more parents pursued self-consciousness goals, the more conflict they experienced with their child in addition to feeling less positive emotions and less satisfaction with their relationship with their child. Self-consciousness goals were also marginally associated with experiencing more negative emotions and lower levels of closeness to one’s child, but they were not significantly associated with responsiveness to a child’s needs.
Table 7. Main Effects of Parental Caregiving Goals Predicting Parents’ Subjective Caregiving Experience in Daily Life (Study 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daily Outcomes</th>
<th>Love and Security $b$</th>
<th>Growth and Development $b$</th>
<th>Parent Self-Consciousness $b$</th>
<th>Child Acceptance $b$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Within-Parent Effects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Emotions</td>
<td>0.79*** [0.58, 1.00]</td>
<td>-0.09 [-0.25, 0.06]</td>
<td>-0.49*** [-0.73, -0.24]</td>
<td>0.53*** [0.28, 0.79]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Emotions</td>
<td>-0.27*** [-0.41, -0.13]</td>
<td>0.11* [0.01, 0.21]</td>
<td>0.20† [-0.02, 0.42]</td>
<td>-0.09 [-0.23, 0.05]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.29** [0.11, 0.46]</td>
<td>0.11 [-0.02, 0.24]</td>
<td>-0.22* [-0.43, -0.001]</td>
<td>0.10 [-0.07, 0.26]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness</td>
<td>0.27*** [0.11, 0.43]</td>
<td>0.003 [-0.12, 0.12]</td>
<td>-0.20† [-0.41, 0.01]</td>
<td>-0.07 [-0.27, 0.12]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>-0.35*** [-0.56, -0.14]</td>
<td>-0.003 [-0.16, 0.16]</td>
<td>0.36* [0.04, 0.68]</td>
<td>-0.04 [-0.32, 0.24]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>0.51*** [0.32, 0.71]</td>
<td>0.05 [-0.11, 0.20]</td>
<td>-0.13 [-0.31, 0.05]</td>
<td>0.03 [-0.15, 0.20]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Between-Parent Effects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Emotions</td>
<td>0.71*** [0.50, 0.92]</td>
<td>-0.26** [-0.46, -0.06]</td>
<td>-0.33† [-0.69, 0.02]</td>
<td>0.64*** [0.36, 0.93]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Emotions</td>
<td>-0.05 [-0.17, 0.07]</td>
<td>0.13* [0.02, 0.24]</td>
<td>0.32* [0.03, 0.61]</td>
<td>-0.07 [-0.21, 0.08]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.23** [0.05, 0.41]</td>
<td>-0.11 [-0.32, 0.10]</td>
<td>-0.23† [-0.50, 0.05]</td>
<td>0.23* [0.04, 0.42]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness</td>
<td>0.18 [-0.13, 0.49]</td>
<td>0.11 [-0.20, 0.42]</td>
<td>-0.57* [-1.11, -0.03]</td>
<td>0.52** [0.12, 0.92]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>-0.10 [-0.32, 0.12]</td>
<td>0.30** [0.06, 0.54]</td>
<td>0.38* [0.06, 0.70]</td>
<td>-0.34** [-0.57, -0.12]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>0.19* [0.01, 0.36]</td>
<td>-0.15† [-0.32, 0.02]</td>
<td>-0.20† [-0.41, 0.02]</td>
<td>0.26*** [0.10, 0.42]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* † $p \leq .10$, * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$. All four caregiving goals were entered as simultaneous predictors of all six criteria, whose errors were allowed to correlate. All values are unstandardized multilevel coefficients and their corresponding 95% confidence intervals.
The results also indicated that on days when parents pursued child growth and development goals more than their own average across the 10-day study, the more negative caregiving experiences they reported. Specifically, the more parents pursued child growth and development goals, the more negative emotions they experienced when caring for their children in daily life, although the pursuit of these goals was not associated with daily positive emotions, relationship satisfaction, closeness, or responsiveness to a child’s needs. Lastly, on days when parents pursued child acceptance goals more than their own average across the 10-day study, the more positive emotions they experienced during caregiving, although pursuing these goals was not associated with daily negative emotions, relationship quality, or responsiveness.

2.2.1 Ruling Out Alternative Explanations

2.2.1.1 The Role of Caregiving Behaviors

Additionally, I sought to test whether the association between parental caregiving goal pursuits in daily life consistently shaped the subjective caregiving experience across the different caregiving behaviors in which parents engaged. Specifically, I conducted analyses in which one contrast coded caregiving behavior (1 = engaged in behavior, -1 = did not engage in behavior) moderated each of the four caregiving goals (whose slopes were allowed to vary) at both the within- and between-person levels, repeating this for each parental behavior in separate models, to simultaneously predict all six of the indicators of the subjective caregiving experience. Results of these multilevel modeling analyses indicated that only five of 96 within-person level interactions between each of the four caregiving goals with each of the four caregiving behaviors were significant; furthermore, of these six significant moderations, none of them were consistently linked to a particular caregiving goal or behavior in modifying how caregiving goals shaped the subjective caregiving experience (see Appendix F for results of the six significant moderations). Thus, these results indicate that the associations between daily caregiving goal
pursuit with daily emotional well-being, relationship quality, and responsiveness to a child’s needs were generally consistent across the different types of caregiving behaviors in which parents engaged, pointing to the consistency with which caregiving goals predict the subjective caregiving experience.

2.2.1.2 The Role of Caregiving Context

Lastly, I sought to test whether these within-person effects of caregiving goal pursuit on the subjective caregiving experience could be attributed to the extent to which parents found caregiving to be challenging. To do so, I conducted an additional analysis in which I tested a model with all four goals simultaneously predicting all six indicators of the subjective caregiving experience (and allowing for correlated errors among the criteria) while also simultaneously controlling for parents’ daily perceptions of care difficulty and their child’s mood. With only several exceptions, these analyses indicated that, above and beyond any influence of the extent to which parents found care to be challenging, each of the four goals largely predicted the indicators of the subjective caregiving experience (with estimates ranging in absolute value from 0.09 to 0.54 with all confidence intervals excluding zero and all $p$s ≤ .04). More specifically, child love and security goals still significantly predicted greater positive emotions, closeness, and responsiveness; however, the links between these goals with decreased negative emotions ($b = -0.10 [-0.20, 0.01], p = .08$), relationship satisfaction ($b = 0.14 [-0.02, 0.30], p = .08$), and conflict ($b = -0.15 [-0.33, 0.02], p = .08$) were weakened to marginal significance. In addition, self-consciousness goals were still significantly associated with less positive emotions when providing care for a child, although they no longer predicted negative emotions or the indicators of relationship quality (estimates ranging in absolute value from 0.09 to 0.18 with 95% confidence including zero and $p$s ≥ .23). Thus, when examining caregiving goals and the subjective caregiving experience in daily life, the challenging nature of caregiving did explain
meaningful variance in tandem with each of the four caregiving goals, but the pursuit of caregiving goals was still uniquely predictive of the subjective caregiving experience when accounting for the challenging nature of care, albeit with several exceptions.

2.3 Assessing Directionality of Effects

While establishing definitive causal links between caregiving goals and the subjective caregiving experience was beyond the scope of the current studies, lagged-day analyses are often used in daily experience designs to provide evidence for the directionality of effects. However, the design of the daily experience study was not as ideal for these analyses relative to the typical study designs that utilize this analytical technique. Given that I measured caregiving goals, emotional well-being, and responsiveness to a child’s needs for a particular caregiving experience rather than in general for each day, I had limited inferential ability to assess the possibility that caregiving goals on one day predict well-being, relationship quality, and responsiveness on a subsequent day since it is unlikely that goals in one specific experience would affect parents’ well-being, relationship quality, and responsiveness in a completely different caregiving experience the next day. However, given this caveat, I note that results of lagged-day analyses on these data do not support evidence for directionality of effects in either my hypothesized direction, in which two of 24 tested lagged effects were significant, nor in the reverse direction, in which three of 24 tested lagged effects were significant (see Appendix G for results of significant lagged day effects).

3 Brief Discussion of Study 3

In Study 3, I examined how the pursuit of caregiving goals was associated with parental behaviors and parents’ subjective caregiving experience in a 10-day daily experience study. Results indicated that on days when parents pursued child love and security goals, they had more
positive subjective caregiving experiences and engaged in more supportive and fewer controlling behaviors. In contrast, on days when parents pursued self-consciousness goals, they had more negative subjective caregiving experiences and engaged in more controlling and fewer enrichment-focused behaviors. Furthermore, on days when parents pursued child growth and development goals, they experienced more negative emotions and were more likely to engage in behaviors centered on enrichment rather than routine and basic needs. Finally, on days when parents pursued child acceptance goals, they experienced more positive emotions only. The links between goals and the subjective caregiving experience were consistent across different caregiving behaviors. Further, with the exception of parent self-consciousness goals, the pursuit of each caregiving goal was largely predictive of differential caregiving experiences beyond the influence of perceived difficulty of care and child mood.
Chapter 6

The Role of Parent and Child Demographics in Caregiving Goal Pursuit and the Subjective Caregiving Experience

The final questions I sought to examine concerned how parent and child demographic factors differentially predict caregiving goal pursuit, as well as if these factors might modify the link between caregiving goal pursuit and the subjective caregiving experience. To examine these questions, I focused on parent and child demographics that have been shown in existing empirical research to differentially predict goal pursuit and well-being. Specifically, I focused on parental gender, age, relationship status, and socioeconomic status. In regards to child demographics, I focused on child gender, age, and relation (i.e., biological versus non-biological) to their parent. To ensure I had sufficient power to test these questions, I used the combined sample from Studies 1 and 2 \( N_{\text{combined}} = 1244 \) to address these questions.

1 Parent Demographics and Goal Pursuit

1.1 Parent Gender

Parent gender has been shown to differentially predict empathic and nurturant attitudes towards children. For example, mothers have been found to be higher in the degree to which they

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Although I had hoped to examine parental marital status, I was underpowered to do so. Specifically, the majority of parents was married or in relationships in the new combined sample (only 33 parents reported that they were single/divorced/widowed) given that I recruited a sample of married and cohabiting parents. Thus, I do not discuss parent relationship status further. However, previous research has indicated that single parents tend to experience lower levels of well-being relative to married parents (Cunningham & Knoester, 2007; Demo & Acock, 1996; Evenson & Simon, 2005; Lansford, Ceballo, Abbey, & Stewart, 2001) due to differences in the overall burden they experience from caregiving, including having fewer economic resources and less emotional and instrumental support (Cunningham & Knoester, 2007; Nelson et al., 2013). However, although single parents experience lower well-being, they have not been found to differ in substantive ways from parents in other family structures in their well-being or relationships with their children (Lansford et al., 2001). Given this, I did not expect any differences in goal pursuit based on parental relationship status, although this will have to be examined in future investigations.
pursue child-centered, empathic goals in the context of conflict relative to fathers (Hastings & Grusec, 1998). Furthermore, in a nationally representative sample of over 1,000 parents and children from the U.S., mothers, relative to fathers, were reported to be more nurturant in their behaviors. Specifically, adolescent children rated their mothers, relative to their fathers, to be more affectionate, loving and interested, appreciative, trusting, encouraging, and reinforcing of positive behaviors (i.e., through kissing/hugging, buying something special/giving money, taking them out) to the degree that they wanted (Starrels, 1994). Mothers, relative to fathers, have also been found to be significantly higher in their mean level of communal strength for their children, or in their motivation to incur costs to meet their child’s needs (Le & Impett, 2015). Based on these findings, I expected that mothers would be more likely to pursue child-oriented caregiving goals relative to fathers.

1.2 Parent Age

Research has indicated that parental age can have an important role in predicting differences in parenting behaviors and well-being. For instance, research has indicated that older, relative to younger, parents are more positive in their parenting behaviors and tend to experience greater well-being. Specifically, older, relatively to younger, parents report less emotional distress and engage in parenting that is more positive (i.e., give more frequent hugs, kisses, praise, and supportive statements) and less negative (i.e., less likely to engage in derogatory statements, threats, slapping, pushing, and grabbing) behaviors (Conger, McCarty, Yang, Lahey, & Kropp, 1984). Furthermore, older, relative to younger, parents experience greater increases in well-being upon having a child (Luhmann, Hofmann, Eid, & Lucas, 2012). Given that parents who are older have been found to engage in more positive parenting behaviors and experience greater well-being, I also expected that older, relative to younger, parents would be more positive
in their caregiving goal pursuit through pursuing child-oriented love and security and growth and development goals to a greater extent and pursuing self-oriented self-consciousness and child acceptance goals to a lesser extent.

1.3 Parent Socioeconomic Status

Parental socioeconomic status, operationalized as including both parent income and education, has been found to relate to parental well-being. This research has indicated that parents higher, versus those lower, in socioeconomic status find less meaning in parenting (Kushlev, Dunn, & Ashton-James, 2012). It is believed that parents higher in socioeconomic status, relative to those lower in socioeconomic status, derive less meaning from parenthood because they experience conflict between multiple domains of life from which they derive meaning, such as between agentic (e.g., career) and communal (e.g., relational) goals (Kushlev et al., 2012). Beyond the domain of parenting, higher socioeconomic status has also been found to relate to general levels of compassion and prosociality (Piff, Kraus, Côté, Cheng, & Keltner, 2010). Specifically, individuals lower, relative to those higher, in socioeconomic status have been found to be more generous towards strangers in the lab and in attitudes toward charity donation, more trusting in a lab allocation game with a stranger, and more helpful to a stranger in the lab. In line with these findings, within the context of parental caregiving, I expected that parents higher, relative to those lower, in socioeconomic status would be less likely to pursue child-oriented love and security goals. In addition, I expected parents higher in socioeconomic status to be less concerned with the relational nature of caregiving, being less likely to pursue child acceptance goals, relative to parents lower in socioeconomic status.
2 Child Demographics and Goal Pursuit Differences

2.1 Child Gender

In regards to parental caregiving based on child gender, research has indicated that, with the exception of promoting engagement in gender-specific activities, parents largely do not socialize boys and girls differently. A meta-analytic review of 172 studies indicated that childrearing differences of North American parents of boys and girls were found in only one of 19 different domains, with these domains including areas such as the amount of interaction parents have with their children; achievement and encouragement; warmth, nurturance, responsiveness, and praise; disciplinary strictness; and restrictiveness of independence (Lytton & Romney, 1991). Specifically and as mentioned, the only domain in which parents varied in their socialization regarded the extent to which they encouraged their children to engage in gender-specific activities (i.e., providing girls, but not boys, with dolls). Given that parents did not differ in the vast majority of domains of child socialization, I expected that parents are unlikely to differentially pursue caregiving goals based on their child’s gender.

2.2 Child Age

Child’s age has been shown to differentially predict parental behaviors and well-being. Specifically, for younger children, parents have been found to focus on the general protection and welfare of their child in addition to bonding with their child; however, with older, adolescent children, parents are more likely to emphasize sensitivity towards their child in addition to educational activities (Mowder, Harvey, Moy, & Pedro, 1995). Parents also experience lower well-being with younger, relative to older, children. For instance, with younger children, parents experience greater fatigue and sleep disruption (Gay, Lee, & Lee, 2004; Lee, Zaffke, McEnany, 2000), in addition to lower marital satisfaction (Twenge et al., 2003). Given the demanding
nature of the early caregiving years and the necessity of prioritizing a child’s health and well-being over educational or enrichment activities, I expected that parents would be more likely to pursue child love and security goals with younger, relative to older children, but would be more likely to pursue growth and development goals with older, relative to younger, children.

2.3 Child Relation

Research has identified some evidence that relationships between non-biologically related parents and children (i.e., step- and adoptive children) are relatively more strained than those between biologically related parents and children. Polls have indicated that approximately 15% of children in the U.S. live with parents who are in a remarriage, indicating that step-parent and step-child relationships are somewhat common (Livingston, 2014). Further, research has indicated that families without two biological parents are marked by more negativity (Bray & Berger, 1993), and that while differences in relationships exist between biological and non-biological parents and children, the differences in higher quality relationships between those of biological children relative to those of step- and adoptive children with their parents are relatively limited in scope, such as in the particular domain of time spent together (Lansford et al., 2001). Given that the differences between biological and non-biological parents and children are relatively small, I expected that parents would not significantly differ in their caregiving goal pursuit based on their child’s relation.

3 The Moderating Role of Parent and Child Demographics

In addition to testing mean differences in caregiving goal pursuit based on parent and child demographics, I sought to examine whether the association between caregiving goal pursuit and the subjective caregiving experience was robust across parents based on demographic group membership of parents and their children. Research has indicated that parent demographics
including gender, age, marital status, and income are uniquely relate to well-being (see review by Nelson et al., 2014). In addition to parent demographics, child demographics, such as age (Twenge et al., 2003) and child relation (Bray and Berger, 1993; Lansford et al., 2001), play a role in shaping parental well-being. Despite this, no research that I am aware of has examined how these group differences might impact the link between parental goals and the subjective caregiving experience. Thus, I tested how the link between goals and the subjective caregiving experience might vary as a function of specific parent and child demographic characteristics in an exploratory and descriptive fashion to determine the extent to which this association is generalizable across parents or whether it might be particularly pronounced (or attenuated) for specific groups of parents.

4 Method

4.1 Participants and Procedure

To test my demographic questions, I combined participants from Studies 1 and 2 to ensure that I had a sample of parents that was sufficiently powered across each demographic group to conduct comparisons between parents. Combining parents from these studies yielded a sample of 1,244 parents.

4.2 Measures

4.2.1 Caregiving Measures

As described in Studies 1 and 2, parents reported their caregiving goals using the 17-item PCGS. Additionally, parents reported their positive and negative emotions, relationship satisfaction with their child, closeness with their child, and conflict with their child in a recent caregiving experience as described in Studies 1 and 2.
4.2.2 Demographics

Along with reporting their own and their child’s age and gender (shown in Table 1), parents reported their socioeconomic status, as assessed with measures of income and education. In this combined sample, parents reported the following household income: under $15,000 (7.0%); between $15,001 - $25,000 (12.0%); between $25,001 - $35,000 (13.1%); between $35,001 - $50,000 (19.6%); between $50,001 - $75,000 (20.6%); between $75,001 - $100,000 (12.1%); over $100,000 (7.5%); and 8.1% did not state a household income. In this combined sample, parents also reported their highest level of education: completed less than high school (0.8%), completed a high school degree (39.7%), had a college degree (39.8%), had a graduate degree (12.8%), and 6.9% did not state their educational level. Finally, parents reported their child’s relation: biological (93.6%), step-child (3.8%), adoptive child (2.3%), and 0.3% did not state their child’s relation. Zero-order correlations between all demographic variables and parental caregiving goals are shown in Appendix H.

5 Results

5.1 Parental Goal Pursuit Variation across Parent Demographics

To test how parental goal pursuit varies across parent and child demographics, I conducted a single, multivariate multiple regression analysis on the large, combined sample using the car package (Fox & Weisberg, 2011) in R. Specifically, I simultaneously entered all parent and child demographic characteristics as predictors in the model, given that these demographics tend to covary (i.e., older parents tend to have older children, higher incomes, and higher education levels), to examine their unique associations with the four caregiving goals (estimated as simultaneous criteria). For all results, I report an omnibus test assessing the significance of each parent and child demographic in predicting overall differences in caregiving
goal pursuit. Additionally, marginal means for all key comparison groups are reported in Table 8 using the “zeroing in on the intercept” method (Page-Gould & Miller, 2013). For this analysis, the following variables were contrast coded: parent and child gender (1 = male, -1 = female), parent education (1 = college or graduate degree, -1 = high school or less than high school), and child relation (1 = biologically related, -1 = non-biologically related). Parent and child age were standardized around their averages (\(M_{age\ parents} = 33\) years old; \(M_{age\ children} = 7\) years old) with one-unit changes reflecting changes in one standard deviation in age (\(SD_{age\ parents} = 9\) years; \(SD_{age\ children} = 5\) years). Further, parent income was standardized around the average income (\(M_{income} = $35,001 – $50,000\), with one standard deviation (1.7, rounded to 2.00, in the original scale) below the average representing household incomes of $15,001 to $25,000 and one standard deviation above the average representing household incomes of $75,001 to $100,000. Lastly, all four caregiving goals were untransformed.

5.1.1 Parental Gender Main Effects

First, parent gender significantly predicted overall caregiving goal pursuit (\(F(4, 1103) = 10.45, p < .001\)). Specifically, mothers and fathers differed in the degree to which they pursued child love and security goals (\(b = -0.11 [-0.16, -0.06], p = .001\), parent self-consciousness goals (\(b = 0.12 [0.06, 0.18], p < .001\), and child acceptance goals (\(b = 0.08 [0.01, 0.15], p = .03\). However, they did not differ in the degree to which they pursued child growth and development goals (\(b = -0.02 [-0.10, 0.06], p = .61\). As shown in Table 8, mothers pursued child love and security goals more relative to fathers (\(b = 0.22 [0.13, 0.32], p = .001\), as expected. In addition, and contrary to expectations, father pursued parent self-consciousness goals (\(b = 0.24 [0.13, 0.35], p < .001\) and child acceptance goals (\(b = 0.16 [0.02, 0.30], p = .03\) more than mothers. While these findings were unexpected, they may reflect the fact that fathers are less likely than
mothers to be the primary caregiver for their child, and thus may be concerned about their self-image and their child’s image of them when it comes to caregiving.

5.1.2 Parental Age Main Effects

Parental age had an overall effect on caregiving goal pursuit ($F(4, 1103) = 7.99, p < .001$). Specifically, parent age predicted differences in the degree to which parents pursued parent self-consciousness goals ($b = -0.15 \ [-0.21, -0.08], p < .001$) and child acceptance goals ($b = -0.20 \ [-0.29, -0.12], p < .001$), but not in the degree to which they pursued child love and security goals ($b = 0.01 \ [-0.05, 0.07], p = .77$) or child growth and development goals ($b = -0.04 \ [-0.13, 0.06], p = .44$). Specifically, the older parents were, the less they pursued self-consciousness goals ($b = -0.15 \ [-0.21, -0.08], p < .001$) and child acceptance goals ($b = -0.20 \ [-0.29, -0.12], p < .001$). As shown in Table 8, 42-year-old parents (i.e., parents one standard deviation above the mean in age) pursued self-consciousness and child acceptance goals to a lesser degree than 33-year-old parents (i.e., parents at the mean in age), who in turn pursued self-consciousness and child acceptance goals to a lesser degree than 25-year-old parents (i.e., parents one standard deviation below the mean in age). Thus, these results were contrary to my expectations that older parents would pursue child-oriented caregiving goals to a greater degree than younger parents. However, they indicate a complementary finding to what I originally hypothesized: while older parents do not pursue child-oriented caregiving goals more than younger parents, they pursue self-oriented caregiving goals less than younger parents.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Characteristic</th>
<th>Love and Security</th>
<th>Growth and Development</th>
<th>Parent Self-Consciousness</th>
<th>Child Acceptance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>4.48&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt; [4.38, 4.57]</td>
<td>3.33 [3.18, 3.49]</td>
<td>1.46&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt; [1.35, 1.57]</td>
<td>2.45&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt; [2.31, 2.60]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>4.25&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt; [4.14, 4.37]</td>
<td>3.29 [3.11, 3.47]</td>
<td>1.70&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt; [1.57, 1.83]</td>
<td>2.61&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt; [2.44, 2.78]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 years old</td>
<td>4.36 [4.25, 4.47]</td>
<td>3.35 [3.18, 3.52]</td>
<td>1.73&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt; [1.60, 1.85]</td>
<td>2.73&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt; [2.57, 2.90]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 years old</td>
<td>4.36 [4.29, 4.46]</td>
<td>3.31 [3.16, 3.46]</td>
<td>1.58&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt; [1.47, 1.69]</td>
<td>2.53&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt; [2.39, 2.67]</td>
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<tr>
<td>42 years old</td>
<td>4.37 [4.26, 4.49]</td>
<td>3.28 [3.10, 3.46]</td>
<td>1.43&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt; [1.30, 1.57]</td>
<td>2.33&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt; [2.16, 2.50]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Household Income</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,001 - $100,000</td>
<td>4.35 [4.24, 4.46]</td>
<td>3.22 [3.05, 3.40]</td>
<td>1.54 [1.41, 1.67]</td>
<td>2.43&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt; [2.27, 2.59]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No College</td>
<td>4.39 [4.28, 4.50]</td>
<td>3.28 [3.11, 3.46]</td>
<td>1.48&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt; [1.35, 1.61]</td>
<td>2.51 [2.34, 2.67]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>4.34 [4.23, 4.43]</td>
<td>3.34 [3.18, 3.50]</td>
<td>1.68&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt; [1.56, 1.79]</td>
<td>2.56 [2.41, 2.71]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Values represent means and their 95% confidence intervals. Means that are significantly different within a particular goal and demographic group are marked with superscripts, with larger means corresponding to letters earlier in the alphabet.
5.1.3 Parental Socioeconomic Status Main Effects

In regards to parent socioeconomic status, parent income did not predict overall differences across parental caregiving goals \( F(4, 1103) = 1.59, p = .17 \). Specifically, and in contrast to expectations, parental income did not predict differential pursuit of child love and security goals \( (b = -0.01 [-0.04, 0.02], p = .61) \), child growth and development goals \( (b = -0.04 [-0.09, 0.001], p = .06) \), or parent self-consciousness goals \( (b = -0.02 [-0.05, 0.01], p = .27) \).

However, parental income did predict differences in child acceptance goal pursuit \( (b = -0.05 [-0.09, 0.01], p = .02) \). Specifically, as shown in Table 8, parents with higher incomes were less likely to pursue child acceptance goals than those with lower incomes \( (b = -0.05 [-0.09, -0.01], p = .02) \). Parents with a household income between $15K and $25K (i.e., parents with a household income at one standard deviation below the mean in income) were more likely to pursue child acceptance goals than parents with household incomes between $35K and $50K (i.e., parents at the mean household income), who in turn were more likely to pursue child acceptance goals than parents with household incomes between $75K and $100K (i.e., parents with incomes at one standard deviation above the mean in income). Thus, consistent with expectations, parents with higher incomes were less likely to pursue child acceptance goals relative to parents with lower incomes.

Finally, parental education predicted overall differences in caregiving goal pursuit \( F(4, 1103) = 3.16, p = .01 \). Specifically, parental education did not predict differences in child love and security goals \( (b = -0.02 [-0.08, 0.02], p = .25) \), child growth and development goals \( (b = 0.03 [-0.05, 0.10], p = .48) \), and child acceptance goals \( (b = 0.02 [-0.05, 0.10], p = .50) \).

However, parental education did predict differences in self-consciousness goal pursuit \( (b = 0.10 [0.04, 0.15], p < .001) \). As shown in Table 8, and in contrast to expectations, parents with higher educations were more likely to pursue parent self-consciousness goals \( (b = 0.19 [0.08, 0.30], p < \)
Specifically, parents with college educations and beyond, relative to parents with no college education, were more likely to pursue self-consciousness goals \((b = 0.19 \ [0.08, 0.30], p < .001)\). While this effect was unexpected, it could be that highly educated parents have higher expectations for their children to reflect well upon themselves, perhaps related to the high standards they set for themselves.

5.2 Parental Goal Pursuit Variation across Child Demographics

5.2.1 Child Gender Main Effects

Results indicated that child gender had an overall effect on caregiving goal pursuit \((F(4, 1103) = 2.89, p = .02)\). Specifically, while parents did not differ in their pursuit of child growth and development goals \((b = 0.004 \ [-0.07, 0.07], p = .90)\), parent self-consciousness goals \((b = 0.03 \ [-0.02, 0.08], p = .25)\), or child acceptance goals \((b = 0.02 \ [-0.04, 0.09], p = .51)\) based on their child’s gender, parents did differ in their pursuit of child love and security goals \((b = -0.07 \ [-0.11, -0.02], p = .003)\) based on their child’s gender. Lastly, and as shown in Table 9, parents were more likely to pursue child love and security goals when providing care for daughters relative to sons \((b = 0.13 \ [0.04, 0.22], p = .004)\).

5.2.2 Child Age Main Effects

Results indicated that and child age \((F(4, 1103) = 8.84 p < .001)\) had a significant overall effect on caregiving goal pursuit. Specifically, and as expected, parents differed in the degree to which they pursued child growth and development goals \((b = 0.19 \ [0.10, 0.27], p < .001)\) based on their child’s age. However, and in contrast to expectations, parents did not differ in the degree to which they pursued child love and security goals \((b = -0.02 \ [-0.07, 0.04], p = .60)\), parent self-consciousness goals \((b = 0.02 \ [-0.04, 0.09], p = .51)\), and child acceptance goals \((b = -0.06 \ [-0.15, 0.02], p = .13)\) based on their child’s age. Specifically, parents were more likely to pursue
child growth and development goals with older, relative to younger, children \((b = 0.19 [0.10, 0.27], p < .001)\). As shown in Table 9, parents caring for older, relative to younger, children were significantly more likely to pursue child growth and development goals \((b = 0.24 [0.13, 0.36], p < .001)\). Parents of 12-year-old children (i.e., parents of children one standard deviation in age above the mean child age) were more likely to pursue child growth and development goals than parents of 7-year-old children (i.e., children at the mean age of the sample), who in turn were more likely to pursue child growth and development goals than parents of 2-year-olds (i.e., parents of children one standard deviation in age below the mean child age).

### 5.2.3 Child Relation Main Effects

Finally, and consistent with hypotheses, parents did not differ in their overall caregiving goal pursuit based on their child’s relation \((F(6, 1103) = 0.89, p = 0.47)\). That is, and as shown in Table 9, parents were no more or less likely to pursue child love and security goals \((b = 0.05 [-0.04, 0.14], p = .31)\), child growth and development goals \((b = -0.03 [-0.21, 0.15], p = .66)\), parent self-consciousness goals \((b = -0.003 [-0.11, 0.10], p = .96)\), or child acceptance goals \((b = 0.08 [-0.06, 0.22], p = .26)\) based on whether their child was biologically related versus non-biologically related.
Table 9. Parental Goal Pursuit Based on Child Demographics Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Characteristic</th>
<th>Love and Security</th>
<th>Growth and Development</th>
<th>Parent Self-Consciousness</th>
<th>Child Acceptance</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Mean</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 years old</td>
<td>4.38 [4.26, 4.49]</td>
<td>3.13(^c) [2.95, 3.31]</td>
<td>1.56 [1.42, 1.69]</td>
<td>2.60 [2.43, 2.77]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 years old</td>
<td>4.35 [4.24, 4.46]</td>
<td>3.50(^a) [3.33, 3.67]</td>
<td>1.60 [1.48, 1.73]</td>
<td>2.47 [2.31, 2.62]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Relation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Values represent means and their 95% confidence intervals. Means that are significantly different within a particular goal and demographic group are marked with superscripts, with larger means corresponding to letters earlier in the alphabet.
5.3 The Moderating Role of Parent Demographics

Finally, I sought to test whether the associations between parental caregiving goals and the subjective caregiving experience generalized across parents and children of varying demographics. To do so, I tested a multivariate regression model in which I entered the main effects of each of the four goals as well as their interactive effects with each parent and child demographic factor to simultaneously predict emotional well-being, relationship quality, and responsiveness. Thus, interactions reflect the unique moderating effect of each demographic variable on the association between caregiving goals and the subjective caregiving experience, holding constant the interactive effect of all other demographic factors and their moderating effect on each goal. All variables were coded as stated previously. In interpreting whether each demographic characteristic had a consistent moderating role on the links between caregiving goals and the subjective caregiving experience, I focused on demographic characteristics that had a significant, overall (omnibus) effect on the subjective caregiving experience. All other significant interactive effects are listed in Appendix I.

5.3.1 Parent Gender Moderations

Parent gender interacted with love and security goals to have an overall effect on the subjective caregiving experience \(F(6, 1043) = 4.92, p < .001\). Specifically, parent gender interacted with child love and security goals to predict negative emotions \(b = -0.10 [-0.17, -0.04], p = .003\), relationship satisfaction \(b = 0.08 [0.02, 0.15], p = .01\), and responsiveness to a child’s needs \(b = 0.12 [0.05, 0.18], p < .001\). Simple effects tests indicated that when pursuing child love and security goals, fathers experienced no changes in negative emotions \(b = -0.08 [-0.20, 0.04], p = .17\) while mothers experienced less negative emotions \(b = -0.29 [-0.43, -0.14], p < .001\); bothers fathers \(b = 0.42 [0.30, 0.53], p < .001\) and mothers \(b = 0.58 [0.47,
0.72], \ p < .001) experienced greater relationship satisfaction, with this association being stronger for mothers; and both fathers (b = 0.34 [0.30, 0.60], \ p < .001) and mothers (b = 0.57 [0.43, 0.71], \ p < .001) felt more responsive to their child’s needs, with this association being stronger for mothers. While parent gender had an overall interactive effect with love and security goals to predict the subjective caregiving experience, parent gender did not interact with any of the other three goals in predicting the overall subjective caregiving experience (Fs(6, 1043) ≤ 1.18, ps ≥ .31). Thus, while both mothers and fathers experienced caregiving as more positive when pursuing child love and security goals, this association was stronger for mothers across three indicators of the subjective caregiving experience.

5.3.2 Parent Age Moderations

Parental age had a significant overall effect on how pursuit of child love and security goals predicted the overall subjective caregiving experience (F(6, 1043) = 3.18, \ p = .004). Specifically, parental age moderated the link between pursuit of child love and security goals and negative emotions (b = 0.16 [0.07, 0.25], \ p < .001) indicating that while 25 year-old parents, relative to 33 year-old parents, experienced less negative emotions when pursuing child love and security goals (b = -0.35 [-0.49, -0.20], \ p < .001), 42 year-old parents, relative to 33 year-old parents, experienced no relative differences in negative emotions when pursuing child love and security goals (b = -0.02 [-0.16, 0.12], \ p = .77). Parental age also had a significant overall effect on how pursuit of parent self-consciousness goals predicted the subjective caregiving experience (F(6, 1043) = 2.36, \ p = .03). Specifically, parental age moderated the association between pursuit of parent self-consciousness goals and negative emotions (b = 0.12 [0.03, 0.21], \ p = .01), indicating that while 25, relative to 33 year-old, parents experienced more negative emotions when pursuing parent self-consciousness goals (b = 0.29 [0.13, 0.44], \ p < .001), 42 year-old
parents, relative to 33-year-old parents, experienced negative emotions to an even greater degree when pursuing parent self-consciousness goals ($b = 0.52 \ [0.35, 0.70], p < .001$). Finally, while there was an omnibus effect of parental age interacting with love and security and parent self-consciousness goals in predicting the subjective caregiving experience, parental age did not have an overall moderating effect on the link between child growth and development goals ($F(6, 1043) = 0.64, p = .70$) and child acceptance goals ($F(6, 1043) = 1.33, p = .24$) in predicting the subjective caregiving experience. Overall, parental age did not consistently moderate the link between any particular caregiving goal and the subjective caregiving experience.

5.3.3 Parent Socioeconomic Status Moderations

Parent income did not have an overall effect on the association between caregiving goal pursuit and the subjective caregiving experience ($F$s(6, 1043) $\leq 1.65, ps > .13$). Thus, the links between each of the four caregiving goals in predicting each indicator of the subjective caregiving experience did not change based on parents’ incomes.

Parent education had an effect on the overall association between pursuit of child love and security goals and the subjective caregiving experience ($F(6, 1043) = 3.90, p < .001$). Specifically, parent education moderated the association between pursuit of child love and security goals and positive emotions ($b = 0.07 \ [0.01, 0.13], p = .03$), negative emotions ($b = -0.13 \ [-0.20, -0.06], p < .001$), relationship satisfaction ($b = 0.10 \ [0.04, 0.17], p = .002$), and responsiveness to a child’s needs ($b = 0.13 \ [0.07, 0.20], p < .001$). Specifically, parents who completed a college or graduate degree experienced more positive emotions ($b = 0.45 \ [0.32, 0.58], p < .001$), more relationship satisfaction ($b = 0.39 \ [0.26, 0.53], p < .001$), more responsiveness to their child’s needs ($b = 0.32 \ [0.19, 0.46], p < .001$), and no changes in negative emotions ($b = -0.05 \ [-0.19, 0.08], p = .47$) when pursuing child love and security goals.
Specifically, while highly educated parents reaped benefits during caregiving when pursing child love and security goals, parents with relatively less education experienced more positive emotions ($b = 0.58 \ [0.47, 0.70], p < .001$), more relationship satisfaction ($b = 0.61 \ [0.49, 0.72], p < .001$), more responsiveness to their child’s needs ($b = 0.59 \ [0.47, 0.71], p < .001$), and less negative emotions ($b = -0.32 \ [-0.44, -0.19], p < .001$) to an even greater degree than parents of higher education levels when pursuing child love and security goals. These results indicate that while parents of all education levels experience caregiving to be more rewarding when pursuing child love and security goals, parents with relatively lower education levels experience these benefits to a greater degree. Finally, parent education did not moderate the associations between any of the other three goals and the overall subjective caregiving experience ($F(6, 1043) \leq 1.53, ps > .16$).

5.4 The Moderating Role of Child Demographics

5.4.1 Child Gender Moderations

Child gender did not interact with any of the four caregiving goals to predict the overall subjective caregiving experience ($F(6, 1043) = 1.23, p > .29$). Thus, child gender did not have an important moderating effect on the link between any of the four caregiving goals and the subjective caregiving experience.

5.4.2 Child Age Moderations

Child age interacted with child love and security goals to have an overall effect on the subjective caregiving experience ($F(6, 1043) = 3.58, p = .002$). Specifically, child age interacted with child love and security goals to predict negative emotions ($b = -0.15 \ [-0.23, -0.06], p < .001$) and closeness ($b = -0.09 \ [-0.18, -0.0003], p = .05$). Simple effects test indicated that when parents of 2-year-old children pursued child love and security goals, they felt no changes in
negative emotions \( (b = -0.04 [-0.18, -0.11], p = .62) \) while parents of 12-year-old children experienced less negative emotions \( (b = -0.33 [-0.46, -0.19], p < .001) \). Further, when both parents of 2-year-old children \( (b = 0.43 [0.28, 0.59], p < .001) \) and parents of 12-year-old children \( (b = 0.25 [0.11, 0.39], p < .001) \) pursued child love and security goals, they experienced more closeness with their children, although this association was stronger for parents of 2-year-olds.

Finally, while child age had an overall moderating effect on the association between child love and security goals and the subjective caregiving experience, child age did not interact with any of the other three goals in predicting the overall subjective caregiving experience \( (Fs(6, 1043) \leq 1.52, p \geq .17) \). Thus, overall, child age did not seem to consistently moderate the link between caregiving goal pursuit and the subjective caregiving experience.

5.5 Child Relation Moderations

Child relation moderated the association between child love and security goals and the subjective caregiving experience \( (F(6, 1043) = 2.17, p = .04) \). Child relation moderated the association between child love and security goals and negative emotions \( (b = -0.12 [-0.23, -0.01], p = .04) \) and responsiveness \( (b = -0.12 [-0.22, -0.01], p = .03) \). Specifically, parents experienced less negative emotions when pursuing child love and security goals with non-biological children \( (b = -0.30 [-0.37, -0.23], p < .001) \) but not with biological children \( (b = -0.06 [-0.28, 0.14], p = .53) \). Further, while they felt greater responsiveness towards children of both relationships, this was especially true for biological children \( (b = 0.57 [0.37, 0.78], p < .001) \) relative to non-biological children \( (b = 0.34 [0.27, 0.41], p < .001) \). Child relation also had an overall moderating effect on the association between parent self-consciousness goals and the subjective caregiving experience \( (F(6, 1043) = 3.26, p = .003) \). Child relation also moderated the association between parent self-consciousness goals and closeness \( (b = 0.31 [0.16, 0.46], p < \)
.001), with parents feeling less close with biological children ($b = -0.61 [-0.90, -0.33], p < .001$), but not with non-biological children ($b = 0.01 [-0.07, 0.09], p = .79$), when pursuing these goals. Finally, while child relation had an overall moderating effect on child love and security and parent self-consciousness goals in predicting the subjective caregiving experience, child relation did not moderate the association between child growth and development goals and child acceptance goals in predicting the subjective caregiving experience ($F$s(6, 1043) $\leq$ 2.00, $ps \geq .06$). Overall, although there were a number of significant effects, child relation did not seem to consistently moderate the link between caregiving goal pursuit and the subjective caregiving experience.

6 Brief Discussion of Parent and Child Demographics

In examining the role of parent and child demographics and their relation to caregiving goal pursuit, a number of group differences emerged. Mothers, older parents, parents with relatively lower incomes, and parents with relatively lower education levels were more child- and less self-oriented in their caregiving goal pursuit relative to fathers, younger parents, parents with relatively higher incomes, and parents with relatively higher educations. In addition, while parents of both genders and all education levels found caregiving to be a positive experience when pursuing child love and security goals, this link was stronger for mothers and parents with relatively lower levels of education. Besides the role of parent gender and education in moderating the association between child love and security goals and the subjective caregiving experience, the other links between goals and parental caregiving experiences were largely consistent across parent and child demographic groups.
Chapter 7
General Discussion

In the current studies, I took an interpersonal goals perspective on parental caregiving to address four questions. In Pilot Studies 1a, 1b, and Studies 1 and 2, I identified why parents are motivated to provide care for their children by developing and validating the Parental Caregiving Goals Scale (PCGS), which measures two child-oriented caregiving goals including child love and security goals and child growth and development goals, as well as two self-oriented goals, including parent self-consciousness goals and child acceptance goals. In Study 2, I identified who is most likely to pursue particular caregiving goals by showing that parents high in pursuit of each caregiving goal show a unique individual difference profile of parenting beliefs, general concern for others, and self-focused concerns. In Studies 2 and 3, I identified how caregiving goal pursuit is differentially related to caregiving behaviors in daily life as well as parents’ subjective caregiving experiences both at the between- and within-person levels. Finally, in a large, combined sample from Studies 1 and 2, I identified how caregiving goal pursuit varies based on parent and child demographics.

1 Child-Oriented Parental Caregiving Goals

One child-oriented caregiving goal I identified was the goal of showing a child love and providing them with a sense of security that they can rely on their parent. Parents who pursued child love and security goals tended to show high concern for their children and others at a broader level in addition to seeing parenthood as a key to happiness. When parents pursued child love and security goals in daily life, they were more likely to engage in behaviors of providing their child with advice, comfort, and encouragement and they were less likely to engage in
behaviors involving control and discipline, indicating that pursuit of child love and security goals tends to co-occur with supportive, rather than controlling or punishing, caregiving behaviors.

In regards to parents’ subjective caregiving experience, parents who pursued child love and security goals experienced greater emotional well-being, relationship quality, and responsiveness to their child’s needs, both relative to parents who were less likely to pursue these goals as well as relative to their own chronic levels of child love and security goal pursuit over a 10-day period in daily life. Child love and security goals were linked with the subjective caregiving experience above and beyond individual differences in parenting beliefs, core personality traits, and the extent to which parents perceived care to be challenging, indicating that the pursuit of child love and security goals is robustly predictive of positive and rewarding caregiving experiences for parents. Child love and security goals were also most strongly predictive of positive caregiving experiences comparatively between parents relative to within parents’ own daily lives, as I found that the challenging nature of care dampened the link between child love and security goals and some indicators of the subjective caregiving experience in daily life. Collectively, these results indicate that when parents seek to show their child love and provide them with a sense of security, they also experience benefits for the self, dovetailing with research indicating that showing concern and care for others can be personally rewarding (Aknin et al., 2013; Crocker & Canevello, 2008; Ashton-James et al., 2013; Dunn, Aknin, & Norton, 2008, 2014; Feeney & Collins, 2003; Impett, Gable, & Peplau, 2005; Kogan et al., 2010; Le & Impett, 2015; Le et al., 2013).

Another child-oriented goal I identified was the goal of providing a child with new and meaningful experiences and ensuring their growth as a person. I found that parents who pursued child growth and development goals were particularly concerned about meeting their child’s needs, but did not tend to differ from parents less likely to pursue these goals in their self- and
other-focused concerns. I also found that in daily life, greater pursuit of child growth and development goals co-occurred with engaging in more enrichment and recreational caregiving activities and less care for a child’s basic needs, indicating that the pursuit of child growth and development goals is centered upon providing opportunities for meaningful experiences rather than a focus on the more mundane and necessary tasks of parenting.

In regards to parents’ subjective caregiving experience, I found that parents who pursued child growth and development goals generally experienced negative outcomes during caregiving. These effects were wider ranging (i.e., across more indicators) comparatively between parents, where the pursuit of growth and development goals was associated with poorer outcomes in regards to emotional well-being, relationship quality, and responsiveness, relative to how growth and development goals were linked with the subjective caregiving experience within parents’ own daily lives, where only emotional well-being was compromised. Lastly, and for the most part, pursuit of child growth and development goals was associated with having a more negative caregiving experience even after accounting for other individual differences in personality and the challenging nature of care, both comparatively between parents as well as within their own daily lives.

Although I did not have particular hypotheses for how the pursuit of growth and development goals would shape parents’ subjective caregiving experience, my findings align with theory suggesting that pursuit of socialization goals may contribute to poorer parent-child outcomes given that these goals may pit parents’ and children’s goals against one another (Dix & Branca, 2003). For instance, a parent might attempt to teach their child to share their favorite toy, but doing so might conflict with their child’s desire to play with this toy on their own; such an incongruence between desired outcomes for a parent and child may cause negativity or conflict, thereby resulting in a more negative caregiving experience for parents (and possibly their
children too). Conflicts between parent and child goals during caregiving experiences like these may explain why the pursuit of growth and development goals was associated with negative outcomes for parents, although I was unable to test this possibility in my current studies.

In addition to understanding more about when and why the pursuit of growth and development goals might be costly for parents, future research may benefit from examining the conditions under which the pursuit of these goals might actually enhance well-being for both parents and children. Extending my point above concerning congruence between parent and child goals, it is possible that parents and children may experience positive outcomes when their goals are aligned. For instance, a child may desire to join a sports team or to enroll in dance lessons while their parent may simultaneously want to provide their child with these opportunities to enable them to learn new skills. In instances such as these, both parents and children may experience greater well-being given that the alignment of their goals may facilitate pursuit of both parents’ and children’s intrinsic goals (Ryan, Huta, & Deci, 2008).

Finally, it will be important for future research to examine the particular types of enrichment activities parents engage in when pursuing growth and development goals with their children, given that different behaviors may differentially explain when growth and development goals are related to positive, versus negative, experiences for parents. For instance, pursuing growth and development goals can entail engaging in behaviors such as driving a child to piano lessons or explaining to them the importance of eating and sleeping well, behaviors that may, at times, be negative, especially if a child is not motivated to engage in the behaviors parents are encouraging or to resist and retaliate a parents’ caregiving efforts altogether. However, pursuing growth and development goals can also entail engaging in behaviors such as supporting a child at their piano recital or in engaging in healthy habits that they have internalized based on their parents’ encouragement; in these instances, pursuit of growth and development goals may no
longer be associated with negative caregiving experiences, or might even predict greater well-being and higher quality relationships between parents and children. Thus, an important avenue for future research will be to elucidate how and whether engaging in particular behaviors focused on a child’s growth and development may differentially predict parental caregiving experiences.

2 Self-Oriented Parental Caregiving Goals

One self-oriented parental caregiving goal I identified in the current studies was the self-consciousness goal of avoiding embarrassment by one’s child and attempting to maintain a positive image as a parent in the eyes of others. I found that parents who pursued self-consciousness goals were highly concerned about their self-image and had enhanced perceptions of the self, while at the same time, were low in their concern for both their children and others generally. I also found that the pursuit of self-consciousness goals in daily life corresponded with more negative caregiving behaviors, including greater disciplinary and controlling behaviors with a child. In regards to the subjective caregiving experience, I found that parents who pursued self-consciousness goals had more negative caregiving experiences both when compared to other parents who pursued these goals to a lesser degree, as well as relative to their own pursuit of self-consciousness goals in their daily lives. The link between pursuit of self-consciousness goals and an impoverished caregiving experience was most robust comparatively between parents, where individual differences in parenting, personality, and the challenging nature of care could not account for the link between pursuit of self-consciousness goals and a negative subjective caregiving experience for all but one indicator (e.g., responsiveness).

However, I found that the extent to which parents perceived caregiving to be challenging played an important role in whether or not the pursuit of self-consciousness goals was associated with poorer outcomes in parents’ daily lives. Specifically, the pursuit of self-consciousness
goals, while still predictive of less positive emotions in daily life, was no longer associated with negative emotions or poorer relationship quality after accounting for perceived difficulty of care and child mood during daily caregiving experiences. Taken together, the between- and within-person results suggest that while the chronic pursuit of self-consciousness goals is associated with worse outcomes for parents, the occasional pursuit of self-consciousness goals in daily life may not be as costly, a point to which I return to when discussing future directions of this work. The costs associated with pursuing parent self-consciousness goals are consistent with past research that has indicated the pitfalls of pursuing self-oriented goals in adult close relationships (Crocker & Canevello, 2008; Feeney & Crocker, 2003); however, my work suggests that there might be a boundary condition for the costs of self-oriented goal pursuit in parent-child relationships, and specifically in daily life. It could be that children provide more reasons for parents to be self-conscious, given they have low self-regulatory abilities relative to partners in adult close relationships, and thus give parents more legitimate reasons to pursue self-consciousness goals in ways that buffer them from lowered personal and relationship well-being.

Another self-oriented caregiving goal I identified was the goal of trying to gain acceptance from one’s child by eliciting their love and positive regard. Parents who pursued child acceptance goals tended to have a highly positive view of parenthood, be highly concerned about their public image, and have overly positive self-perceptions. Although I had no specific hypotheses concerning how pursuit of child acceptance goals would shape the subjective caregiving experience, I found that both comparatively between parents and within parents’ daily lives, the pursuit of these goals was associated with more positive emotions. These effects held above and beyond differences in parenting and personality and the extent to which parents found caregiving to be challenging. Although these findings were not expected, it is possible that pursuing child acceptance goals prompts parents to feel happier when caring for their children.
insofar as they are successful at implementing these goals. For instance, a parent pursuing child acceptance goals may aim to please their child during caregiving, such as by giving in to their child’s request to buy candy in the grocery store, in an effort to attain their child’s affection or to prevent their child from becoming upset. It is possible that when parents are successful in gaining their child’s acceptance in such instances, they may experience positive emotions as a result. Thus, an important avenue for future research is to examine parents’ success at implementing goals such as child acceptance and whether successful versus unsuccessful goal pursuit shapes the subjective caregiving experience when pursuing child acceptance goals as well as other types of goals.

3 Parental Caregiving Goals and Parent-Child Demographics

In addition to identifying how parental caregiving goals are uniquely related to individual differences among parents, I also found that parent and child demographic factors played an important role in shaping caregiving goal pursuit, in addition to moderating the link between caregiving goal pursuit and the subjective caregiving experience. With regards to parent gender, I found, consistent with past research (Hastings & Grusec, 1998; Le & Impett, 2015; Starrels, 1994), that mothers pursue child love and security goals more than fathers. In addition, mothers tended to reap the rewards of pursuing child love and security goals to a greater degree than fathers, although both mothers and fathers found caregiving to be more rewarding when pursuing these goals. While mothers tend to be relatively more child-oriented in their caregiving goal pursuit, fathers tended to be more self-oriented. Specifically, I found that fathers pursue self-consciousness and child acceptance goals more than mothers when providing care to their children. The fact that fathers are more concerned with their caregiving in the eyes of others, including their own child, may be intertwined with social norms that often leave fathers with
fewer resources than mothers in helping them navigate their roles as parents (Bennett, 2014), and perhaps, giving them legitimate reason to be concerned about their parenting.

In regard to parental age, older parents were less self-oriented in their pursuit of self-consciousness and child acceptance goals relative to younger parents. This finding may reflect the fact that older parents are more secure and experienced in their roles as parents, and are therefore less concerned with their image in the eyes of others and their children. Furthermore, these findings dovetail with research that has indicated that older parents tend to experience greater well-being relative to younger parents (Luhmann et al., 2012). The fact that older, relative to younger, parents pursue self-consciousness goals, which are consistently related to lower levels of well-being and parent-child relationship quality, to a lesser degree provides an additional explanation as to why older parents tend to experience parenting to be more positive relative to younger parents.

In regards to parent socioeconomic status, I found, consistent with research indicating that high socioeconomic status individuals tend to be less relationally oriented (Kushlev et al., 2012; Piff et al., 2010), that parents with higher household incomes are less likely to pursue child acceptance goals relative to parents with lower household incomes. These findings align with theories that parents of higher socioeconomic status may find meaning in areas of life other than parenting (Kushlev et al., 2012). Specifically, it could be that parents with high incomes find meaning and acceptance in multiple domains of their lives, such as in their work, hobbies, or other relationships, and thus, place less emphasis on pursuing acceptance from their children in particular relative to parents in lower income households. In addition to examining parental income as an indicator of parents’ socioeconomic status, I also examined parental education, finding that parents with higher levels of education were more likely to pursue self-consciousness goals when caring for their children relative to parents with lower levels of
education. The finding that highly educated parents are more likely to pursue self-consciousness goals relative to parents with lower levels of education may reflect the fact that highly educated parents may have high expectations or achievement motivations regarding their children, and particularly in relation to how their children reflect on them. Furthermore, parents with lower levels of education reaped more rewards when caring for their children when pursuing child love and security goals relative to parents with higher levels of education. The finding that parents of lower education levels were likelier to find caregiving to be more rewarding relative to parents with higher levels of education when pursuing child love and security goals is consistent with the idea that parents of higher socioeconomic statuses reap fewer rewards from caring for their children relative to parents lower in socioeconomic status (Kushlev et al., 2012).

In regards to child demographic characteristics, parents were found to pursue goals differentially based on their child’s gender and age, although child demographics did not consistently moderate the association between pursuit of caregiving goals and the subjective caregiving experience. Specifically parents tended to pursue child love and security goals more with girls, relative to boys. This finding is surprising, given that meta-analytic findings have indicated that parents are highly similar in their socialization of sons and daughters (Lytton & Romney, 1991). It is possible, in regards to caregiving goals in particular, that child love and security goals tend to be emphasized more highly among females generally, both in regards to maternal pursuit of the goal, and pursuit of the goal with daughters, perhaps given that love and security goals align with patterns of caregiving that are more normative among women relative to men in the context of parenting (Hastings & Grusec, 1998; Le & Impett, 2015; Starrels, 1994), although it will be important for future investigations to follow up on this finding.

In regards to child age, parents tended to pursue child growth and development goals with older, relative to younger children. This finding is consistent with research showing that
parents tend to shift their focus on basic needs and protection in early childhood to more of an educational focus in adolescence (Mowder et al., 1995). The current results indicate that parents align their pursuit of growth and development goals with child developmental trajectories, in which with age, children increase in their abilities to engage in hobbies, enrichment activities, and discussions about values and morality, the very types of topics and activities in which parents are likely to engage when pursuing growth and development goals.

Finally, I found that child relation did not play an important role in predicting differences in mean parental caregiving goal pursuit, nor did it consistently moderate the link between caregiving goal pursuit and the subjective caregiving experience. These findings dovetail with research indicating that diverse family structures are often more similar than different (Lansford et al., 2001). Furthermore, these findings, suggest that in mixed family structures, parents are similarly motivated in the ways that they care for their step- and adoptive children to families in which parents and their children are biologically related.

4 Empirical Identification of Parental Caregiving Goals and Contribution to the Broader Literature on Interpersonal Goals

The PCGS is the first validated scale, to my knowledge, that assesses the goals that motivate parents to care for their children. In developing this scale, I hope to provide researchers with a new tool to better understand how parental caregiving goals predict parent and child outcomes. The current findings contribute to research on parenting goals, which has focused primarily on understanding parents’ child-rearing goals (Dix & Branca, 2003) and goals during parent-child disagreement (Hastings & Grusec, 1998). By examining parenting in the prosocial context of caregiving, I think the current work provides a more holistic understanding of parental
goals and well-being, given that it is important to understand positive relationship events, processes, and outcomes in addition to more negative relationship processes (Maisel & Gable, 2009; Reis & Gable, 2003).

The current results indicate that the goals parents pursue conceptually encompass both child- and self-oriented goals, as developmental researchers have theorized exist within the parent-child relationship (Dix, 1992; Dix et al., 2004; Dix & Branca, 2003) and have been found in adult friendships (Crocker & Canevello, 2008) and romantic relationships (Feeney & Collins, 2003). The current results converge with theory on parenting goals and empirical findings in other close relationships by showing that when parents are child-oriented and motivated to provide their children with love and security, they have a more positive caregiving experience and are more responsive to their child’s needs, but when parents are self-oriented and motivated by their own self-consciousness concerns, they have a more negative caregiving experience and are less responsive to their child’s needs.

The results of these studies, however, also point to some potential distinctions between goal pursuit in parent-child relationships and in other types of adult close relationships. In the current studies, the pursuit of child-oriented growth and development goals was associated with a more negative experience for parents and the pursuit of the self-oriented goal of seeking to gain their child’s acceptance was associated with more positive emotions. Thus, this work on parenting shows that the pursuit of other-oriented goals is not uniformly linked with positive outcomes, nor is the pursuit of self-oriented goals always linked with negative outcomes for parents, a point to which I return when discussing potential factors that might modulate the link between goals and parents’ subjective experiences of caregiving.
5 Implications for Parental Well-Being and Responsive Parenting

The findings from the current studies contribute to a growing body of research seeking to understand when, why, and how parenting is both painful and pleasurable (Nelson et al., 2014; Senior, 2014). The current findings indicate that the pursuit of particular caregiving goals, both chronically and in parents’ daily lives, is linked with well-being in unique ways. Of particular importance, I found that goal pursuit varies within parents’ daily lives, indicating that parents’ goals can shift from experience to experience and that it may be possible to change parents’ goals in ways that may be more or less adaptive for both parents and children. Additionally, I found that the pursuit of particular caregiving goals was also related to parents’ feelings of responsiveness to their child’s needs, underscoring how a parent’s own goals may not only be linked to their own well-being, but also with the extent to which they may be able to provide for their children’s well-being (Crocker & Canevello, 2010; Feeney & Collins, 2003; Dix & Branca, 2003). Finally, I identified that while parents can vary in important ways in their pursuit of particular caregiving goals, with only a few exceptions, parents generally reaped rewards when pursuing child-oriented goals and experienced more costs when pursuing self-oriented goals, regardless of the demographic groups to which they and their children belong, in addition to across the caregiving behaviors in which they engaged on a daily basis.

6 Limitations and Future Directions

There were several limitations to the current research that give rise to important directions for future research on parental caregiving. One limitation is that parents were sampled exclusively from North America. It is quite possible that other parenting goals may emerge in other cultures around the world, or that, parents might differentially pursue goals based on the
cultural context. Additionally, the goals identified in this study have been identified during a particular social historical period in which parents place high priority on spending time with their children (Ramey & Ramey, 2010) and providing them with enrichment opportunities, in contrast to previous generations that emphasized the economic contributions children could provide to the family (Senior, 2014). Thus, parents could very likely shift their caregiving goals based on cultural and societal demands, for instance, perhaps by pursuing caregiving goals that foster contribution to the family and relational goals over a child’s growth and development. Thus, future investigations would benefit from examining whether the same four caregiving goals emerge in varying cultural contexts and whether these goals are stable or dynamically change over time.

Another limitation of the current studies is that the data are correlational in nature, preventing me from conclusively determining whether the pursuit of particular caregiving goals causes changes in the subjective caregiving experience or vice versa. However, existing research using both experimental (Hastings & Grusic, 1998) and longitudinal methods (Canevello & Crocker, 2010; Impett et al., 2005) has shown that the goals that people pursue in parent-child relationships, friendship, and romantic relationships influence emotional well-being, relationship quality, and responsiveness. It is likely that this is true in the parent-child context of caregiving as well, however, it will be important for future research to test the direction of the links between caregiving goal pursuit and the subjective caregiving experience such as by experimentally manipulating parents’ caregiving goals or by following parents and their children over longer periods of time.

Examining caregiving goal pursuit and outcomes of parents and children over time is important for future research not only to examine the directionality of effects, but also to examine whether the pursuit of each caregiving goal in the moment versus over longer periods of
time results in different outcomes for both parents and their children. For example, pursuing parent self-consciousness goals over the long-term may be more harmful to the parent-child relationship than the occasional pursuit of self-consciousness goals in particular situations, given that a more chronic or habitual focus on a parent’s own needs at the expense of a child’s needs might compromise the well-being of parents and children alike. Likewise, the pursuit of growth and development goals may lead to more chronic negativity and conflict in the long-term if parents and children are consistently encountering instances in which their goals conflict. It is possible that occasional instances of conflict between parents and children, as prompted by parents’ pursuit of growth and development goals, might be adaptive, perhaps because parents might be able to teach their children to assert their own needs, regulate their emotions, or to accommodate the needs of others (Dix & Branca, 2003). Consistent with these ideas, in the current studies I documented a broader range of negative effects for the pursuit of parent self-consciousness goals and child growth and development goals when assessing individual differences rather than daily pursuit of these goals, suggesting that chronic or long-term pursuit of these goals might be particularly costly for parents.

Since a primary goal of this research was to contribute to the literature on parental well-being, my studies were conducted from the perspective of parents themselves. An important future direction will be to examine if and how the pursuit of particular caregiving goals translates into a child’s experiences of receiving care. I was limited in collecting reports from children in my current studies given that many of the children in my samples were relatively young. However, future research with samples of older children should examine the impact of parental caregiving goal pursuit on a child’s well-being, relationship quality with their parents, and felt responsiveness from their parents. Additionally, and in the case of families with two parents, future research would benefit from investigating whether congruence, or similarity, between
parents’ caregiving goals impacts marital quality between two parents and relationship quality between parents and their children. It is possible that greater parental goal congruence will be important for promoting successful goal pursuit between partners (Fitzsimons & Finkel, 2010) and additionally in promoting greater marital quality and lower conflict between parents, as has been found to occur when goals align among romantic partners (Gere et al., 2011; Gere & Schimmack, 2013). Lastly, caregiving goal congruence between parents may facilitate more responsive parenting since parents see eye-to eye-on the care they hope to provide, facilitating a more harmonious and positive environment for the family as a whole.

7 Conclusion

In conclusion, parents pursue four unique caregiving goals that are differentially related to their emotional well-being, the quality of their bonds with their children, and the extent to which they feel they can responsively meet their child’s needs. The four caregiving goals are captured by the PCGS, which measures parental pursuit of child love and security goals, child growth and development goals, parent self-consciousness goals, and child acceptance goals. I found that these goals were conceptually child- and self-oriented in nature, were differentially pursued by parents who varied in stable individual differences in parenting, personality, and demographics, and were uniquely predictive of parents’ subjective caregiving experiences and caregiving behaviors. The results of the current studies extend the scope of research on interpersonal goals in close relationships by examining parental goals in the pro-relational context of caregiving, and in doing so, contribute to a burgeoning area of research seeking to understand when parenting is maximally rewarding.
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Angeles, CA: Muthén & Muthén.


Appendix A: Measures (Pilot Study 1a)

Instructions: Please answer the following questions about your child. If you have more than one child, please choose one child and answer the following questions about this child in particular.

1a. Describe the most recent time you helped or did something to take care of your child.

1b. Please describe all of the reasons why you helped your child in this situation.

2a. Describe a particular time when it was personally difficult for you to help or do something to take care your child.

2b. Please describe all of the reasons why you helped your child in this situation.

3a. Describe a particular time when you quite willingly and easily helped or did something to take care of your child.

3b. Please describe all of the reasons why you helped your child in this situation.

Note: All questions were answered in free response format
Appendix B: Initial Items Generated for the PCGS (Pilot Study 1a)

There are many reasons for why people care for their children, some reasons being of little importance and some being of great importance. Please answer the following questions based on the most important and unimportant reasons for why you gave care to your child in the situation you just wrote about.

“In this particular situation, the reason I cared for my child was…”

(1 = Not at all important to 7 = Extremely important)

1. To prevent my child from having the same weaknesses that I have*
2. To avoid neglecting my child
3. To gain my child's love
4. To avoid showing my weaknesses to my child
5. To prevent my child from being hurt or harmed
6. To prevent my child from being a failure
7. So my child didn’t reflect negatively on me
8. So that I looked like a good parent in in front of other people
9. To avoid being selfish or self-centered with my child
10. To ensure my child develops into a good person
11. Because I'm expected to, it's my job
12. To avoid upsetting my child
13. To make up for past mistakes with my child
14. So I don't feel bad about not giving care to my child
15. To get my child to repay me later
16. So that my child feels acknowledged and understood
17. So my child would think I'm a good parent
18. So that my child feels loved
19. To avoid my child hating me
20. To avoid missing an opportunity to show my child love
21. So that my child knows that (s)he can depend and rely on me*
22. To prevent my child from having problems later in life
23. To avoid making mistakes in raising my child
24. To avoid feeling guilty over not caring for my child
25. To prevent my child from making me look bad
26. To allow my child to have meaningful life experiences
27. So my child knew that I am the authority in our relationship
28. Because I wanted my child to be happy
29. To avoid disappointing my child
30. To promote my child's growth as an person
31. To prevent my child from wasting their potential
32. To gain praise for being a good parent
33. To avoid getting embarrassed by my child

* Indicates items added based on parental survey responses
### Appendix C: Exploratory Factor Analysis Results (Pilot Study 1b)

**Parental Caregiving Goals Items**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Factor Loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child Love and Security Subscale</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 So that my child knows that (s)he can depend and rely on me</td>
<td>0.58 -0.04 -0.11 0.32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Because I wanted my child to be happy</td>
<td>0.56 -0.03 0.00 0.27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 So that my child feels acknowledged and understood</td>
<td>0.55 0.20 -0.02 0.14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 So that my child feels loved</td>
<td>0.51 -0.05 -0.05 0.32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child Growth and Development Subscale</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 To prevent my child from wasting their potential</td>
<td>-0.05 <strong>0.84</strong> -0.02 0.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 To prevent my child from being a failure</td>
<td>0.00 <strong>0.73</strong> 0.04 0.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 To prevent my child from having problems later in life</td>
<td>0.20 <strong>0.66</strong> -0.12 0.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 To allow my child to have meaningful life experiences</td>
<td>0.36 <strong>0.64</strong> 0.01 -0.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 To ensure my child develops into a good person</td>
<td>0.47 <strong>0.60</strong> 0.04 -0.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 To promote my child's growth as a person</td>
<td>0.48 <strong>0.60</strong> 0.03 -0.05</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 To prevent my child from having the same weaknesses that I have</td>
<td>-0.05 <strong>0.59</strong> 0.11 0.10</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 So my child knew that I am the authority in our relationship</td>
<td>-0.18 <strong>0.46</strong> 0.16 0.22</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parent Self-Consciousness Subscale</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 To prevent my child from making me look bad</td>
<td>0.05 -0.01 <strong>0.91</strong> -0.07</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 To avoid getting embarrassed by my child</td>
<td>0.04 -0.01 <strong>0.88</strong> -0.04</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 So that I looked like a good parent in in front of other people</td>
<td>0.00 -0.07 <strong>0.76</strong> 0.13</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 To get my child to repay me later</td>
<td>-0.03 0.03 <strong>0.76</strong> -0.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>17 To gain praise for being a good parent</td>
<td>-0.05 0.10 <strong>0.59</strong> 0.21</td>
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<tr>
<td>18 To make up for past mistakes with my child</td>
<td>-0.02 0.14 <strong>0.58</strong> 0.11</td>
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<tr>
<td>19 So my child didn’t reflect negatively on me</td>
<td>-0.01 0.08 <strong>0.48</strong> 0.32</td>
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<td>20 To avoid showing my weaknesses to my child</td>
<td>-0.13 0.21 <strong>0.47</strong> 0.16</td>
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<td><strong>Child Acceptance Subscale</strong></td>
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<td>21 To avoid feeling guilty over not caring for my child</td>
<td>-0.16 -0.05 0.18 <strong>0.64</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>22 So I don't feel bad about not giving care to my child</td>
<td>-0.15 -0.05 0.15 <strong>0.63</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>23 So my child would think I'm a good parent</td>
<td>0.04 0.04 0.21 <strong>0.61</strong></td>
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<td>24 To avoid neglecting my child</td>
<td>0.06 0.07 -0.19 <strong>0.59</strong></td>
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<td>25 To avoid disappointing my child</td>
<td>0.16 0.19 0.05 <strong>0.53</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>26 To gain my child's love</td>
<td>0.14 0.16 0.13 <strong>0.52</strong></td>
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<td>27 To avoid making mistakes in raising my child</td>
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<td>28 To avoid upsetting my child</td>
<td>0.14 -0.04 0.16 <strong>0.51</strong></td>
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<td>29 Because I'm expected to—it’s my job</td>
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<td>30 To avoid my child hating me</td>
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<td>31 To avoid being selfish or self-centered with my child</td>
<td>0.03 0.22 0.05 <strong>0.47</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>32 To avoid missing an opportunity to show my child love</td>
<td>0.33 0.13 -0.05 <strong>0.42</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>33 To prevent my child from being hurt or harmed</td>
<td>0.17 -0.05 -0.11 <strong>0.31</strong></td>
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</table>

*Note.* Bolded factor loadings indicate items loading onto their respective subscales. Italicized items reflect items dropped due to redundancy, underlined items were dropped due to low face validity, and items that were both underlined and italicized reflect items that were not included because they were not among the top 6 highest loading items.
## Appendix D: Zero-Order Variable Correlations (Study 2)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
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<td>0.49***</td>
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<td>0.10**</td>
<td>-0.34***</td>
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<td>0.55***</td>
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<td>Care Difficulty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child mood</td>
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*Note. † p ≤ .10, * p ≤ .05, ** p ≤ .01, *** p ≤ .001.*
Appendix E: Zero-Order Variable Correlations (Study 3)

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<td>2. Growth and Development</td>
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<td>-0.02</td>
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<td>6. Negative Emotions</td>
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<td>7. Relationship Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.25***</td>
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<td>0.62***</td>
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<td>8. Closeness</td>
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<td>0.16***</td>
<td>0.32***</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Care Difficulty</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<td>12. Child Mood</td>
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<td>0.37***</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note. † p ≤ .10, * p ≤ .05, ** p ≤ .01, *** p ≤ .001. Correlations represent associations among between-person (aggregate) variables.
Appendix F: Caregiving Goal and Behavior Moderations (Study 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interacting Variables</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Interaction Effect</th>
<th>Simple Effects</th>
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<td>Engaged in Behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caregiving Goal</td>
<td>Caregiving Behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>Love and Security</td>
<td>Advice, Comfort, and Encouragement</td>
<td>Positive Emotions</td>
<td>-0.38** [-0.63, -0.12]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Growth and Development</td>
<td>Advice, Comfort, and Encouragement</td>
<td>Negative Emotions</td>
<td>-0.17* [-0.31, -0.02]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth and Development</td>
<td>Routine and Basic Needs</td>
<td>Relationship Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.17* [0.03, 0.31]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Consciousness</td>
<td>Routine and Basic Needs</td>
<td>Relationship Satisfaction</td>
<td>-0.23 [-0.43, -0.03]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Consciousness</td>
<td>Control and discipline</td>
<td>Relationship Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.32* [0.06, 0.57]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. † $p \leq .10$, * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$. Estimates represent unstandardized multilevel coefficients and their corresponding 95% confidence intervals.
### Appendix G: Lagged Analysis Results (Study 3)

<table>
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<th>$b$</th>
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<td><strong>Lagged effects in hypothesized direction</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yesterday's growth and development (controlling for yesterday's responsiveness) predicting today's responsiveness</td>
<td>0.15* [0.003, 0.29]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yesterday's parent self-consciousness goals (controlling for yesterday's responsiveness) predicting today's responsiveness</td>
<td>-0.20* [-0.39, -0.01]</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Lagged effects in reversed direction</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yesterday's closeness (controlling for yesterday's love and security) predicting today's love and security</td>
<td>0.08** [0.02, 0.15]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yesterday's responsiveness (controlling for yesterday's love and security) predicting today's love and security</td>
<td>0.07* [0.01, 0.13]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yesterday's negative emotions (controlling for yesterday's self-consciousness) predicting today's self-consciousness</td>
<td>0.09** [0.03, 0.15]</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note.† $p \leq .10$, * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$. Values represent unstandardized multilevel coefficients and their corresponding 95% confidence intervals for within-person estimates (controlling for between-person estimates). Results from the hypothesized model indicate the two significant results of a single model in which all of yesterday’s caregiving goals, controlling for all of yesterday’s subjective caregiving experience indicators, simultaneously predicting all of today’s subjective caregiving experience indicators. Results from the reversed model indicate the three significant results of a single model in which all of yesterday’s subjective caregiving experience indicators, controlling for all of yesterday’s caregiving goals, simultaneously predicted all of today’s caregiving goals.*
## Appendix H: Zero-Order Correlations between Parental Caregiving Goals and Demographic Factors

<table>
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<tr>
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<td>4. Child Acceptance</td>
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</table>

*Note.* † *p* ≤ .10, *p* ≤ .05, ** *p* ≤ .01, *** *p* ≤ .001. Parent and child gender (-1 = female, 1 = male) and child relation (-1 = non-biological, 1 = biological) were contrast coded.
Appendix I: Demographic Moderations of the Caregiving Goals and Subjective Experience Link

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interacting Variables</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Interaction Effect</th>
<th>- 1 SD on Demographic Variable</th>
<th>+ 1 SD on Demographic Variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographic</td>
<td>Caregiving Goal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Gender</td>
<td>Self-Consciousness</td>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>-0.09* [-0.16, -0.02]</td>
<td>-0.18† [0.28, 0.01]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.031 [-0.47, -0.15]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Income</td>
<td>Love and Security</td>
<td>Relationship Satisfaction</td>
<td>-0.04* [-0.003, -0.08]</td>
<td>0.59*** [0.45, 0.72]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.42*** [0.28, 0.55]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Gender</td>
<td>Growth and Development</td>
<td>Relationship Satisfaction</td>
<td>-0.57* [0.01, 0.13]</td>
<td>-0.04 [-0.20, 0.11]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.17* [-0.33, -0.02]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Gender</td>
<td>Child Acceptance</td>
<td>Relationship Satisfaction</td>
<td>-0.08* [-0.15, -0.01]</td>
<td>0.01 [-0.16, 0.18]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.16† [-0.01, 0.33]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Age</td>
<td>Self-Consciousness</td>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>-0.09* [0.001, 0.18]</td>
<td>0.27** [0.09, 0.46]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.09 [-0.06, 0.25]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Age</td>
<td>Child Acceptance</td>
<td>Closeness</td>
<td>0.08* [0.002, 0.19]</td>
<td>0.03 [-0.16, 0.22]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.23* [0.04, 0.42]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Relation</td>
<td>Growth and Development</td>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>-0.20** [-0.35, -0.05]</td>
<td>-0.30* [-0.57, -0.02]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.05 [-0.12, 0.02]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: For categorical variables (gender, income, and child relation), -1 SD and +1 SD reflect the contrast codes described in the study description.*