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## “It’s not Fair!” Adolescents’ Constructions of Appropriateness of Parental Reactions

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**ABSTRACT:** Research suggests that perceived appropriateness of parental discipline plays a role in whether adolescents accept or reject parental messages, but little is known about how adolescents conceptualize or construct their ideas of appropriateness. One hundred twenty-two adolescents (M age = 16.87) answered questions about past situations (both antisocial and prosocial), how parents responded to these situations, the adolescent’s perceived appropriateness of the parent’s reaction, how the parent’s reaction made the adolescent feel, and what the adolescent thought the parent’s intentions were. Appropriateness ratings were related to the type of parental discipline used, with yelling associated with lower ratings of appropriateness and talking associated with higher ratings. Ratings were also related to adolescents’ emotions, with negative emotions associated with lower ratings of appropriateness and positive emotions associated with higher ratings. Lastly, ratings were related to adolescents’ perceptions of parental intent, with inhibiting and controlling intentions associated with lower ratings of appropriateness and caring and helping intentions associated with higher ratings.

**KEY WORDS:** internalization; adolescent perceptions; appropriateness.

How children formulate their own system of values is a complicated process and has been a topic of interest to developmental psychologists for decades. Research has identified a number of parental discipline strategies that encourage prosocial behavior and values internalization in children, and scholars continue to determine which strategies are most effective and why. In addition to more traditional notions of parenting styles and practices, recent reconceptualizations suggest that researchers should examine characteristics of the situation and the child when studying the internalization of values (Grusec and Goodnow, 1994). One avenue that Grusec and Goodnow highlight as important in predicting whether children will adopt parental socialization messages is how appropriately children perceive their parents’ reactions. In addition, although a number of researchers acknowledge the impact parental strategies have on adolescents’ behaviors in prosocial contexts (Carlo and

Randall, 2001; Eisenberg and Fabes, 1998; Staub, 1979; Wyatt and Carlo, 2002), the majority of research in the area of values internalization focuses on the impact parental strategies have on adolescents’ behaviors in antisocial or transgressive contexts. However, a recent study by Wyatt and Carlo (2002) suggested that parental reactions in prosocial contexts may be equally, if not more important in fostering adolescents’ prosocial behaviors and discouraging antisocial behaviors than parental reactions in antisocial contexts. In light of research suggesting the importance of perceived appropriateness, and the knowledge that both antisocial and prosocial contexts are important when studying the internalization of values, the current study examined how adolescents’ reports of parental reaction, adolescent emotion, and parental intent were related to adolescents’ perceived appropriateness of parental reactions in both antisocial and prosocial situations.

In general, research examining the impact of parental discipline strategies on adolescents' behaviors suggests that parenting strategies are most effective when they allow the child to attend to the semantic content of the message and give the child a feeling of autonomy and choice (Eisenberg and Fabes, 1998; Hoffman, 1970). Eisenberg and Fabes (1998) also stress the importance of the amount of control used by the parent, and claim that whether control is perceived as arbitrary or reasonable has an impact on values internalization. In addition to the impact of parental discipline, factors such as emotional climate and adolescents' perceptions of parental intentions also influence how children formulate their own value system (Carlo et al., 1999; Eisenberg et al., 1991b; Grusec and Goodnow, 1994).

### Parental Discipline Strategies

Hoffman's (1970, 1983, 2000) theory of values internalization focuses on induction's role in moral development and suggests that induction is unique from other discipline strategies in 2 ways: (1) it calls attention to the feelings of the victim and (2) a child's processing of inductions under optimal conditions leads to feelings of empathic distress and guilt, which are both essential to the internalization process. If the parent exerts too much pressure when using inductive strategies, the child's attention is oriented towards the verbal content of the message instead of the semantics of the message, and internal motivation is jeopardized because compliance is perceived as being forced. Research supports a relation between compliance and other-oriented inductions (Hoffman, 1970, 1983), particularly when the parent provides explanations that include affective moralizing (Zahn-Waxler et al., 1979). Research also supports the relation between parents' use of induction and children's prosocial behaviors, which suggests utility in considering parental use of induction when examining values internalization (Krevans and Gibbs, 1996).

In contrast to inductive parenting strategies, power assertive or punitive discipline strategies are related negatively to children's prosocial development (Bar-Tal et al., 1980; see Eisenberg and Fabes, 1998). Research suggests that when compliance is encouraged by power-assertive techniques, children attribute their compliance to external motives such as fear of punishment, rather than internal motivation provided by use of inductions (Hoffman, 1970).

Preaching is another parental strategy that research has explored, although findings are not consistent. Preaching differs from induction in that it is not necessarily an attempt to reason with the child or justify good

behavior, but is merely instruction given by the parent about how the child should act, and is often perceived by the child as lecturing. However, other-oriented preaching that places emphasis on the benefits of prosocial behaviors on the feelings of others, which closely mirrors the concept of induction, is effective at encouraging prosocial behaviors (see Eisenberg and Fabes, 1998).

In regards to parental practices that predict positive behaviors in prosocial contexts, early researchers note the importance of verbal praise and positive reinforcement and suggest that praise and other forms of positive interactions increase sharing behaviors in children (Staub, 1979). Although external rewards sometimes produce short-term compliance in children, they might have the opposite effect over time, suggesting that praise is the preferred method of positive reinforcement for long-term compliance (Eisenberg and Fabes, 1998). However, age of the child and type of praise have important impacts on effectiveness, with older children being more able to generalize praise to multiple contexts than younger children, and praise focusing on the child's positive disposition being more effective than praise about the act itself (Grusec and Redler, 1980). Overall, a parent's use of praise helps the child to create a prosocial self-image, which may result in increased prosocial behaviors.

### Emotional Climate

The emotional climate of the parent-child relationship is also important in fostering prosocial behavior and encouraging the internalization of values. Children's prosocial behaviors are positively related to high degrees of positive emotions (Eisenberg et al., 1991a), and low sympathetic concern is positively related to high degrees of negative emotions (e.g., anger) (Eisenberg et al., 1992). Scholars stress the importance of positive emotions as reinforcers of prosocial behavior that result from behaving well in tempting situations (Eisenberg, 1986; Staub, 1979). Furthermore, a child's temperament might influence the internalization of values via feelings of guilt associated with wrongdoing, especially feelings of empathic guilt (Hoffman, 1983, 2000). Young children who experience more affective discomfort in response to wrongdoing, for example, fear or anxiety, are also more likely to comply with parental wishes (Kochanska, 1993, 1995). Although some degree of anxiety is necessary for induction to be effective, internally motivated prosocial behavior is undermined when children who are not able to self-regulate or who are exposed to continuous anger become overstimulated and in turn experience unfavorable, self-ori-

ented responses (Eisenberg et al., 1994). If parent-child inductive interactions are coupled with a great deal of anger from the parent and anxiety from the child, these practices may produce lower levels of prosocial behavior than inductive techniques coupled with positive emotion or mild anxiety on the part of the child (Denham et al., 1994). For this reason, it is important to not only explore the role of parental discipline in the process of values internalization, but also the role of valence and intensity of emotions.

### Perceptions of Parental Intentions

In addition to parental discipline strategy and the emotional climate of the interaction, Grusec and Goodnow (1994) suggest that children's perceptions of parental intentions are important to the process of values internalization. If children perceive their parents' actions as ill intended, or not in their own (the child's) best interest, they are less likely to make the effort to attend to the message. Socialization research also suggests that children's perceptions of how their parents behave is more important than how parents actually behave (Acock and Bengtson, 1980; Bugental and Goodnow, 1998), suggesting that how children interpret their parents' intentions may be more important than parents' actual intentions. Thus, when examining the process of values internalization it is also important to explore children's perceptions of their parents' intentions.

### Gender

The gender of both the child and the parent are important factors of the parent-child relationship that have been found to impact the quality of parent-child interactions (Fagot, 1995). Parent-child interactions are shaped differently, in part, because of gender stereotypes that are present from birth (Rubin et al., 1974). These gender stereotypes manifest themselves in many ways, one of which may be higher levels of reported emotions from girls than boys (with the exception of anger), as it is more socially acceptable for girls to express emotions (Fagot, 1995). As children grow older, parents tend to respond and relate differently to children and hold different expectations for them based on gender (Hastings and Coplan, 1999; Lamb et al., 1999). For example, parents tend to be more protective of daughters than sons (Maccoby, 1995). Research has also found that mothers and fathers adopt different parental roles and treat their adolescent children differently. For example, mothers continue to spend more time in care taking and routine activities, while fathers are

more inclined to engage in recreational activities (Lamb et al., 1999). Overall, mothers tend to have closer relationships with their children than fathers do (Hosley and Montemayor, 1997), and mother-daughter relationships show higher levels of shared activity than father-son relationships (Larson and Richards, 1994). The amount of shared activity between parents and children naturally diminishes during adolescence, but this seems to be most true for fathers and daughters (Lamb et al., 1999). It is clear that the impact gender has on the quality of the parent-child relationship is complex, but gender should be taken into account when examining the impact of the quality of the parent-child relationship on adolescents' internalization of values.

### Reconceptualizing Values Internalization

Some of the inconsistencies found in socialization research, as well as the ripples caused by dissenters, have prompted reconceptualizations of the process of values internalization that examine additional aspects of the parent-child relationship (Darling and Steinberg, 1993; Grusec and Goodnow, 1994). Grusec and Goodnow (1994) proposed a model that considered a number of variables hypothesized to influence the process of values internalization, including discipline strategy, level of emotion, and temperamental characteristics of the child. They emphasized the active role of the child and extended the existing literature by identifying a number of individual characteristics related to values acquisition. Grusec and Goodnow suggested that two things must take place before values are acquired: the child must accurately perceive the parental message, and the child must accept the parental message. The child's acceptance of a parental message is partly determined by whether or not the child perceives the parental reaction to be appropriate, which includes how well the parental reaction fits the misdeed, if the action is consistent with the child's expectations, if the action is deemed as well-intentioned, and if the action fits the child's temperament, mood, and developmental status.

Little research has been conducted to empirically validate their model, but a recent study by Wyatt and Carlo (2002) examined how expected parental reactions were related to adolescents' prosocial and antisocial behaviors. These researchers found that the effects of adolescents' views of parental appropriateness were more strongly related to parental responses to prosocial acts than to antisocial acts. In other words, adolescents were more likely to behave prosocially and less likely to behave antisocially if they perceived their parents' reactions to prosocial behaviors as appropriate.

These findings support the model suggested by Grusec and Goodnow (1994) by establishing significant relations between adolescents' expectations of parental appropriateness and adolescents' behaviors. However, Wyatt and Carlo's (2002) study did not examine what appropriateness means to adolescents. That is, do adolescents perceive specific parental practices to be more or less appropriate than others, and what variables determine adolescents' perceptions of appropriateness?

### Current Study

Because of our limited knowledge of what appropriateness means to adolescents, we remain unable to ascertain precisely how adolescents' constructions of appropriateness affect behavior, and how these constructions vary as a function of the parental reaction. Although we know quite a bit about how emotions impact the internalization process, we are less familiar with the emotions elicited by specific parental reactions and the impact these emotions might have on adolescents' views of appropriateness. We also know little about how adolescents' perceptions of parental intentions impact adolescents' views of appropriateness. It might be that parental discipline strategies deemed more effective at fostering internalization are also those strategies that are perceived by adolescents as more appropriate, that elicit relatively high levels of positive adolescent emotions, and that are perceived as well-intentioned. Indeed, Staub (1979) stated that positive reactions of children are in large part due to the positive emotions elicited by parental behaviors, suggesting that adolescents who report experiencing positive emotions in response to parental behavior might also report higher levels of appropriateness.

From the above research regarding parental discipline strategies, it follows that adolescents should view inductive discipline techniques and verbal praise as more appropriate parental responses than power-assertive and controlling techniques. This, in turn, should have an impact on the emotions felt by adolescents in discipline situations, their perceptions of parental intentions, and whether the adolescents adopt parental standards. This study was a first step toward gaining a better understanding of the emotions felt by adolescents in antisocial and prosocial contexts, how these emotions are associated with adolescents' views of appropriateness, and how feelings of appropriateness vary as a function of the parents' reaction. Specifically, we explored adolescents' views of appropriateness including what adolescents perceived as appropriate or inappropriate parental reactions and why, how adolescents reported feeling when

posed with parental reactions they perceived as appropriate or inappropriate, and what adolescents thought their parents' intentions were in response to appropriate or inappropriate parental reactions. According to Grusec and Goodnow (1994), constructions of appropriateness are hypothesized to influence appropriateness judgments, adolescents' acceptance of the parent's message and, ultimately, the internalization of values.

On primarily the basis of theory (Eisenberg and Fabes, 1998; Hoffman, 1970, 2000; Staub, 1979), we hypothesized that, (1) adolescents' reports of power-assertive or punitive parental reactions would be related to lower ratings of parental appropriateness and adolescents' reports of inductive parental reactions would be related to higher ratings of parental appropriateness, (2) adolescents' negative emotions in response to parental reactions would be related to lower ratings of parental appropriateness, and adolescents' positive emotions in response to parental reactions would be related to higher ratings of parental appropriateness, and (3) adolescents' reports of controlling parental intentions would be related to lower ratings of parental appropriateness, and adolescents' reports of loving or caring parental intentions would be related to higher ratings of parental appropriateness. Furthermore, we expected no gender differences in appropriateness ratings. However, because the gender of both the parent and the child have been linked to differential quality of parent-child interactions (Fagot, 1995), we expected that adolescents' reports might differ on the basis of the gender of the child and the gender of the parent. More specifically, we expected that girls would report higher levels of emotion than boys and that parents would react differently to situations depending on the gender of their child (e.g., parents may be more protective of their daughters; Maccoby, 1995). Finally, because temperament has been linked to values internalization (Grusec and Goodnow, 1994; Hoffman, 2000), and because anger specifically is related negatively to prosocial outcomes and related positively to antisocial outcomes (Carlo et al., 1998; see also Dodge and Crick, 1990; Eisenberg and Fabes, 1992, 1998), we examined whether the hypothesized relations existed over and above the contributions of adolescents' temperamental anger.

## METHOD

### Participants

One hundred twenty-two adolescents ( $M$  age = 16.87,  $SD$  = 0.80) from a public high school in a mid-sized community in the Midwest region of the United States



participated in this study. Most of the adolescents (92%) were European American, and there were slightly more males ( $n = 64$ ) than females ( $n = 58$ ). Most of the adolescents lived with both of their parents (78%), 37% reported being first-born children and 38% reported being second-born. Over half (55%) of mothers and fathers (57%) had a 4-year college degree or above. Mean combined parental income was between \$30,000 and \$49,000 per year, ranging from under \$10,000 to \$100,000 and above.

### Procedure

Sixty-four teachers in a local high school were given letters requesting that they allow their students to participate in the study. Of the 35 teachers who agreed to allow their classes to participate, 7 classrooms were randomly selected to complete the study. After parents provided informed consent, researchers administered questionnaires to the students during class and collected them at the end of class. Half of the students were asked to complete the questionnaire regarding their father's past reactions and the other half were asked to complete the questionnaire regarding their mother's past reactions. Because of the open-ended nature of the questionnaire, half way through the procedure adolescents answered a number of demographic questions to allow for a break. At the end of the questionnaire, adolescents completed a temperament measure. A total of 130 students handed in questionnaires, but because of incomplete or missing answers, 122 of the questionnaires were used for final analyses.

### Materials

Adolescents completed a number of demographic questions, including questions about age, gender, race, parental income and education, religious attendance, scholastic achievement, and extracurricular activities. They then completed an open-ended questionnaire devised for this study, as described below.

#### *Appropriateness of Parental Reaction*

We created a new questionnaire for this study in order to assess adolescents' feelings of appropriateness in response to previous parental reactions regarding both antisocial and prosocial situations. The questionnaire consisted of 8 vignettes, each asking the adolescent to read a hypothetical situation and then report on a similar real-life interaction they had in the past 6 months with their parent. Four of the vignettes were in regards to antisocial situations and four were in regards to prosocial situations. For example, one of the vignettes regarding past

parental reactions to an antisocial situation asked adolescents to, "Think of an instance in the past six months when you have been caught lying to your parent. If you can not think of an example, try to think of a time when you have been caught lying to someone else (e.g., coach, teacher, friend) and your parent found out." One of the prosocial vignettes asked adolescents to, "Think of an instance in the past six months when you have helped out a friend who was in trouble and could not help themselves (e.g., if you have a friend who was being picked on or talked about behind their back and you stood up for them, or if you went out of your way to help your friend in some way that was inconvenient to you) and your parent found out.

Each vignette consisted of 4 open-ended questions: (1) What was your parent's reaction? (2) How did you feel when your parent reacted this way? (3) Why did you feel this way? and (4) What do you think your parent's intentions were? After reporting on their parent's reaction, adolescents were asked to rate the appropriateness of their parent's reaction to the past real-life event on a 5-point scale, with values ranging from 1 (very inappropriate) to 5 (very appropriate). During final coding, 1 prosocial vignette was excluded from analyses because the majority of participants misinterpreted the prosocial act (admitting the truth even when there might be negative consequences) and responses from this vignette were not related to responses to other prosocial vignettes. Thus final analyses were performed on 4 antisocial vignettes and 3 prosocial vignettes.

### Coding

We identified common codes based on frequency of response. Forty questionnaires were coded exhaustively. Coded categories that were present over 25% of the time in these 40 questionnaires acted as the final codes for the remainder of the questionnaires. Each open-ended question was then coded on a scale of, 1: not present, 2: vague, and 3: clearly present; for the theme corresponding to that given question. A naïve coder scored 20 questionnaires in order to assess interrater reliability. Kappa values ranged from 0.72 to 1.00. This resulted in a mean kappa of 0.93 across the final 11 coding categories for all 7 vignettes (77 total codes). Kappa values below 0.90 were discussed, specific coding guidelines were reviewed, and coding was modified in accordance with the guidelines (see Table I for final coding categories).

#### *Parental Reaction*

We coded parental reaction, or discipline strategy, to antisocial and prosocial acts. Antisocial codes for paren-

**Table 1.** Final Coding Categories for Parental Reaction, Adolescent Emotion, and Parental Intent in Antisocial and Prosocial Situations

<i>Parental reaction</i>	
Antisocial codes and sample responses	
Yell:	"He freaked out and yelled at me!"
Talk:	"She sat me down and talked to me about what I had done and how to fix it."
Punishment:	"He grounded me and took away my car for a week."
No action:	"He didn't care, they didn't do anything."
Prosocial codes and sample responses	
Verbal praise:	"She congratulated me and gave me a hug."
Yell/talk:	"She told me I should be worrying about my problems and not other peoples'."
External reward:	"He gave me money."
No action:	"She didn't even notice, just went on like nothing had happened."
<i>Adolescent emotion</i>	
Antisocial codes and sample responses	
Happy:	"I felt happy that she wasn't as mad as I thought she would be!"
Angry:	"I was pissed off. He just doesn't understand my point of view."
Guilty:	"I felt awful for making them worry and was mad at myself."
Neutral:	"I didn't care. I felt fine."
Prosocial codes and sample responses	
Happy:	"It made me feel good, I was happy to have helped out."
Angry:	"I was mad that they notice when I do something bad but not something good."
Proud:	"I was proud of myself. I'd never done that before."
Neutral:	"I didn't really care, it is expected of me."
<i>Parental intent</i>	
Antisocial codes and sample responses	
Teach:	"She was trying to teach me a lesson."
Stop behavior:	"He just didn't want me to do it again."
Help/motivate:	"He was trying to help me improve and do better next time."
Prosocial codes and sample responses	
Teach:	"He wanted to teach me how to do it right, or his way."
Reinforce behavior:	"She was trying to get me to do it again or to repeat the behavior."
Show they care:	"He just wanted to show me that he cared about me and was thankful."

tal reaction included yelling, talking, punishment, and no action. Punishment primarily took the form of grounding or taking away privileges, and no action was when parents did not take any action against the offense. Prosocial codes for parental reaction included verbal praise, talk/yelling, external reward, and no action. Talk/yelling in prosocial situations primarily took the form of parents explaining how to do things more effectively or providing suggestions for the future. External rewards primarily took the form of monetary incentives or gifts.

#### *Adolescent Emotion*

We coded responses to parental reactions for adolescents' emotions. Antisocial codes for adolescents' emotions included happy, angry, guilty, and neutral. Adoles-

cents' reports of happiness in antisocial situations were usually accompanied by an explanation of relief due to the fact that the adolescent did not get in as much trouble as they thought they would, and neutral emotions primarily took the form of indifference. Prosocial codes for adolescents' emotions included happy, angry, proud, and neutral. Adolescents' reports of anger in prosocial situations were usually accompanied by a desire for more recognition from parents for positive behaviors.

#### *Parental Intent*

We coded adolescents' views of parental intent for perceived parental purpose. Antisocial codes for parental intent included teaching, stopping behavior, and helping/ motivating. Prosocial codes for parental intent included teaching, reinforcing behavior, and showing they care.

#### **Temperament Measure**

Adolescents completed a 5-item temperamental anger scale (Buss and Plomin, 1984; Cronbach's alpha in the present study was 0.72) and were asked to rate each statement on a 5-point scale from 1 (not characteristic of myself) to 5 (very characteristic of myself). A sample item was, "I am known as hot-blooded and quick tempered."

## **RESULTS**

**Descriptive Statistics and Tests of Gender Differences** Table II presents the mean percent frequencies of each coded variable, combined across the 4 antisocial and 3 prosocial vignettes. These numbers represent the variables as proportions, or the number of times a variable was present out of the total number of times it could have occurred, and responses were tabulated only if they were coded as "clearly present." For example, there were 4 antisocial vignettes, so a parental reaction of yelling could have been coded a maximum of 4 times. In our sample, adolescents reported a parental reaction of yelling in response to antisocial situations 33% of the time. In a few cases, adolescents reported more than 1 parental reaction or emotion, and in some cases adolescents reported an action that was not included in final coding, so frequencies do not necessarily equal 100%.

There were no significant mean differences of appropriateness based on the gender of the adolescent in either antisocial or prosocial situations, and there were no mean differences of appropriateness based on the gen-

**Table II.** Percent Frequency, Means, and Standard Deviations for Parental Reaction, Adolescent Emotion, and Parental Intent in Antisocial and Prosocial Situations

	% frequency	Boys		Girls	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<i>Antisocial situations</i>					
Parental reaction					
Yell	33	1.14	1.13	1.51	1.23
Talk	27	0.94	1.07	1.25	1.12
Punish	20	0.78	0.83	0.86	1.01
No action	17	0.86	0.99	0.53*	0.87
Adolescent emotion					
Happy	10	0.36	0.57	0.42	0.57
Angry	29	1.02	1.03	1.37	1.11
Guilty	20	0.73	1.01	0.93	0.96
Neutral	15	0.80	1.14	0.37**	0.67
Parental intent					
Teach	14	0.41	0.64	0.77**	0.91
Stop behavior	28	1.61	1.19	1.39	1.03
Help/motivate	14	0.42	0.59	0.68*	0.81
<i>Prosocial situations</i>					
Parental reaction					
Verbal praise	59	1.66	1.06	1.93	1.03
Talk	7	0.17	0.49	0.28	0.65
External reward	5	0.14	0.43	0.18	0.43
No action	25	0.80	0.99	0.68	0.95
Adolescent emotion					
Happy	53	1.48	1.05	1.72	1.03
Angry	12	0.33	0.59	0.40	0.70
Proud	11	0.23	0.50	0.44*	0.66
Neutral	13	0.53	0.78	0.26*	0.44
Parental intent					
Teach	7	0.20	0.48	0.23	0.46
Reinforce behavior	36	1.23	1.00	0.93	0.96
Show they care	24	0.53	0.78	0.91*	0.91

Note. Variables were coded 1: not present; 2: vague; 3: clearly present. Percent frequencies are representative of those coded as “clearly present.” Asterisks represent significant univariate ANOVAs of gender differences. \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ .

der of the parent on which the child was reporting in either antisocial or prosocial situations. We conducted a series of 1-way ANOVAs to determine if there were any differences in frequency of adolescents’ responses to parental reactions as a function of gender of the adolescent (see Table II). In response to antisocial situations, boys were more likely to report parental reaction of no action than girls ( $F(1,119) = 3.83, p < 0.05$ ). Boys were also more likely to report neutral feelings than girls ( $F(1,119) = 6.12, p < 0.02$ ). Girls were more likely to report parental intent of teaching than boys ( $F(1,119) = 6.71, p < 0.01$ ), and girls were more likely to report parental intent of helping/motivating than boys ( $F(1,119) = 4.26, p < 0.04$ ). In response to prosocial situations, girls were more likely to report feeling proud of their behavior than boys ( $F(1,119) = 3.79, p < 0.05$ ), and boys were more likely to report feeling neutral than girls ( $F(1,119)$

$= 5.26, p < 0.02$ ). Girls were also more likely than boys to report parental intent of caring ( $F(1,119) = 6.16, p < 0.01$ ).

We conducted a series of 1-way ANOVAs to determine if there were any differences in frequency of adolescents’ responses to parental reactions as a function of the gender of the parent. In response to antisocial situations, adolescents reported that fathers ( $M = 1.02, SD = 0.95$ ) were more likely to punish than mothers ( $M = 0.63, SD = 0.81$ ) ( $F(1,119) = 3.45, p < 0.04$ ), and fathers ( $M = 1.91, SD = 1.17$ ) were more often perceived to have intentions of stopping the child’s antisocial behavior than mothers ( $M = 1.17, SD = 0.95$ ) ( $F(1,119) = 7.33, p < 0.001$ ). In response to prosocial situations, fathers ( $M = 0.27, SD = 0.53$ ) were reported to more frequently give external rewards in response to prosocial situations than mothers ( $M = 0.06, SD = 0.30$ ) ( $F(1,119) = 3.88, p < 0.02$ ), and fathers ( $M = 1.15, SD = 1.08$ ) were more likely to respond with no action than mothers ( $M = 0.36, SD = 0.70$ ) ( $F(1,119) = 10.43, p < 0.001$ ). Lastly, adolescents reported feeling angry with their fathers ( $M = 0.53, SD = 0.74$ ) more than with their mothers ( $M = 0.23, SD = 0.53$ ) ( $F(1,119) = 3.51, p < 0.03$ ).

**Relations Between Parental Reaction, Adolescent Emotion, Parental Intent, and Perceived Appropriateness in Response to Antisocial and Prosocial Situations**

*Descriptive Statistics*

Mean appropriateness ratings were 3.84,  $SD = 1.06$ , for antisocial situations, and 3.98,  $SD = 0.86$ , for prosocial situations (with a maximum possible score of 5.0). Higher scores of appropriateness in response to antisocial situations were positively related to higher scores of appropriateness in response to prosocial situations,  $r(122) = 0.52, p < 0.001$ . To reduce the likelihood of Type I errors and to interpret more meaningful effect sizes, a Bonferroni correction was used and correlations were only considered statistically significant with an alpha level  $< 0.01$ . Furthermore, although the current study examined a number of correlations between variables, the magnitude of effects ranged mostly from medium to large sized effects (Cohen and Cohen, 1975), as can be seen in Tables III and IV.

*Appropriateness Correlations*

Table III presents partial correlations between mean appropriateness ratings, parental reactions, adolescent emotions, and parental intent, controlling for tempera-



**Table III.** Partial Correlations Between Parental Reaction, Adolescent Emotion, Parental Intent, and Perceived Appropriateness in Antisocial and Prosocial Situations

	Antisocial appropriateness	Prosocial appropriateness
<b>Antisocial parental reaction</b>		
1. Yell	-0.25*	-0.35**
2. Talk	0.22	0.34**
3. Punish	-0.14	-0.06
4. No action	0.02	-0.11
<b>Antisocial adolescent emotion</b>		
5. Happy	0.16	0.16
6. Angry	-0.31**	-0.34**
7. Guilty	0.30*	0.36**
8. Neutral	-0.04	-0.06
<b>Antisocial parental intent</b>		
9. Teach	0.09	-0.01
10. Stop behavior	-0.06	0.02
11. Help/motivate	0.01	0.05
<b>Prosocial parental reaction</b>		
12. Verbal praise	0.28*	0.49**
13. Talk/yell	-0.33**	-0.45**
14. External reward	0.03	0.01
15. No action	-0.09	-0.22
<b>Prosocial adolescent emotion</b>		
16. Happy	0.34**	0.64**
17. Angry	-0.29*	-0.52**
18. Proud	0.04	0.13
19. Neutral	-0.10	-0.12
<b>Prosocial parental Intent</b>		
20. Teach	-0.15	-0.37**
21. Reinforce behavior	0.01	0.27*
22. Show they care	0.33**	0.33**

Note. Partial correlations were examined after controlling for temperamental anger.

\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\* $p < 0.001$ .

mental anger. Results showed that parents' yelling in antisocial situations was negatively related to ratings of appropriateness in both antisocial and prosocial situations, and parents' verbal praise in prosocial situations was positively related to appropriateness in both antisocial and prosocial situations. In addition, adolescents' anger in both antisocial and prosocial situations was negatively related to ratings of appropriateness in both antisocial and prosocial situations. Feelings of guilt in antisocial situations were positively related to ratings of appropriateness in both antisocial and prosocial situations, and feelings of happiness in prosocial situations were positively related to appropriateness in both antisocial and prosocial situations. And lastly, perceived parental caring in response to prosocial situations was positively related to ratings of appropriateness in both antisocial and prosocial situations.

## Relations Between Parental Reaction, Adolescent Emotion, and Parental Intent in Response to Antisocial and Prosocial Situations

### Parental Reaction

Table IV presents the partial correlations between the antisocial and prosocial categories of perceived parental reaction. Out of the 120 correlations in this matrix, 36 were found statistically significant, even after controlling for temperamental anger. Within the correlation matrix, it should be especially noted that parents' talking in response to antisocial situations was positively related to parents' verbal praise in response to prosocial situations. In addition, parents' punishment in response to antisocial situations was positively related to parents' external reward in response to prosocial situations. And lastly, parents' reaction of no action in antisocial situations was positively related to parents' reaction of no action in prosocial situations.

### Adolescent Emotion

Table IV presents correlations among adolescent emotions in antisocial and prosocial situations. In general, anger in antisocial situations was positively related to anger in prosocial situations. Similarly, neutral or indifferent emotions in antisocial situations were positively related to neutral or indifferent emotions in prosocial situations. Guilt in antisocial situations was positively related to pride in prosocial situations.

### Adolescent Emotions Related to Specific Parental Reactions

Table IV also presents partial correlations (controlling for temperamental anger) between parental reactions and adolescent emotions. Adolescents' anger in antisocial situations was positively related to parents' use of yelling and punishment in antisocial situations, and adolescents' anger in prosocial situations was positively related to parents' yelling and no action in prosocial situations. Adolescents' happiness in prosocial situations was positively related to parents' talking in antisocial situations and parents' use of verbal praise in prosocial situations. Adolescents' neutral feelings in both antisocial and prosocial situations were positively related to parents' use of no action in both antisocial and prosocial situations. Finally, adolescents' guilt in antisocial situations was positively related to parents' talking in antisocial situations and verbal praise and external reward in prosocial situations.

Table IV. Partial Correlations Between Parental Reaction and Adolescent Emotion in Antisocial and Prosocial Situations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
<b>Antisocial parental reaction</b>															
1. Yell															
2. Talk	-0.39 <sup>††</sup>														
3. Punish	0.12	-0.15													
4. No action	-0.29 <sup>†</sup>	-0.33 <sup>††</sup>	-0.23												
<b>Prosocial parental reaction</b>															
5. Verbal praise	-0.04	0.36 <sup>†††</sup>	0.05	-0.38 <sup>†††</sup>											
6. Yell/talk	0.11	-0.03	0.05	-0.04	-0.27 <sup>†</sup>										
7. External reward	0.02	0.08	0.35 <sup>†††</sup>	-0.11	0.04	-0.04									
8. No action	0.00	-0.18	-0.03	0.46 <sup>†††</sup>	-0.66 <sup>†††</sup>	-0.12	-0.12								
<b>Antisocial adolescent emotion</b>															
9. Happy	-0.04	0.15	0.01	-0.07	0.16	0.12	-0.01	-0.18							
10. Angry	0.40 <sup>†††</sup>	-0.16	0.30 <sup>†</sup>	-0.12	-0.20	0.18	-0.04	0.11	-0.14						
11. Guilty	-0.09	0.26 <sup>†</sup>	0.04	-0.15	0.36 <sup>†††</sup>	-0.18	0.28 <sup>†</sup>	-0.27 <sup>†</sup>	-0.01	-0.26 <sup>†</sup>					
12. Neutral	-0.24 <sup>†</sup>	0.04	-0.09	0.40 <sup>†††</sup>	-0.21	-0.15	0.02	0.34 <sup>†††</sup>	-0.25 <sup>†</sup>	-0.26 <sup>†</sup>	-0.24 <sup>†</sup>				
<b>Prosocial adolescent emotion</b>															
13. Happy	-0.18	0.28 <sup>†</sup>	0.02	-0.05	0.37 <sup>†††</sup>	-0.26 <sup>†</sup>	0.17	-0.18	0.16	-0.14	0.14	-0.05			
14. Angry	0.22	-0.21	0.12	0.01	-0.39 <sup>†††</sup>	0.48 <sup>†††</sup>	-0.12	0.27 <sup>†</sup>	0.07	0.29 <sup>†</sup>	-0.18	-0.12	-0.51 <sup>†††</sup>		
15. Proud	0.06	0.05	0.09	-0.06	0.16	-0.07	0.43 <sup>†††</sup>	-0.23 <sup>†</sup>	0.14	-0.03	0.35 <sup>††</sup>	-0.10	0.05	-0.19	
16. Neutral	-0.08	-0.02	-0.14	0.28 <sup>†</sup>	-0.14	-0.13	-0.02	0.23 <sup>†</sup>	-0.18	-0.06	-0.03	0.37 <sup>††</sup>	-0.39 <sup>††</sup>	-0.03	-0.02

Note. Partial correlations were examined after controlling for temperamental anger.

<sup>†</sup>  $p < 0.01$ ; <sup>††</sup>  $p < 0.001$ .

### Parental Intent

Parents' intentions to teach in antisocial situations were negatively related to parents' intentions to stop behavior in antisocial situations (partial  $r(122) = -0.36, p < 0.01$ ). Parents' intentions to stop behavior in antisocial situations were positively related to parents' intentions to reinforce behavior in prosocial situations (partial  $r(122) = 0.29, p < 0.01$ ). Parents' intentions to reinforce behavior in prosocial situations were negatively related to parents' intentions to show they care in prosocial situations (partial  $r(122) = -0.29, p < 0.01$ ).

### DISCUSSION

The goal of the current study was to gain a better understanding of how adolescents construct their judgments of the appropriateness of their parents' reactions to antisocial and prosocial situations. Overall, parental reactions, adolescent emotions, and perceived parental intent were associated with appropriateness ratings in both antisocial and prosocial situations. All of the hypothesized relations existed after controlling for adolescents' temperamental anger. These findings advance our understanding of values internalization processes by providing direct supportive evidence on the importance of perceived appropriateness for socialization theories (Grusec and Goodnow, 1994; Hoffman, 2000).

First, we hypothesized that power-assertive parental reactions would be related to lower ratings of parental appropriateness and that inductive parental reactions would be related to higher ratings of parental appropriateness. Consistent with this hypothesis, yelling in response to antisocial situations was related to lower appropriateness ratings across antisocial and prosocial situations. The same was true of yelling or lecturing in response to prosocial situations. These findings suggest that adolescents view yelling and lecturing as inappropriate parental reactions regardless of context, which might help to explain why power-assertive parenting strategies are ineffective and sometimes deleterious (Bar-Tal et al., 1980; Eisenberg and Fabes, 1998; Hoffman, 1970).

Consistent with Hoffman's (1970, 1983, 2000) research on induction, adolescents' ratings of appropriateness were higher when parents used inductive techniques (e.g., talking, reasoning) in response to antisocial actions. Parents' use of induction in antisocial situations was related to appropriateness in both antisocial and prosocial situations. Although authoritative parenting with high use of induction has long been the gold standard of parental behavior for middle-class European

American families, it is not all together clear why these parental reactions foster the child's good or bad behavior. It is possible that how appropriate the child views the parental inductions has an impact on how effective the discipline strategy is for the parent.

In addition, parents' use of verbal praise in response to prosocial situations was associated with higher ratings of appropriateness across both antisocial and prosocial situations. Definitions of induction have typically been limited to parental strategies within the discipline situation, but verbal praise in response to prosocial situations certainly shares characteristics with inductive techniques in response to antisocial situations, and both strategies fall under the rubric of authoritative parenting. Although verbal praise was associated with higher ratings of appropriateness, parents' use of external reward was not related to appropriateness, which lends support to prior research demonstrating the superior impact of verbal praise over material reward as a means of positive reinforcement for prosocial behavior, especially in adolescence (Eisenberg and Fabes, 1998). These latter findings, and similar findings by Wyatt and Carlo (2002), suggest that parental responses to prosocial situations are important to consider when examining adolescents' values internalization.

Second, we hypothesized that adolescents' strong negative emotions would be related to lower ratings of parental appropriateness, and adolescents' positive emotions would be related to higher ratings of parental appropriateness. Consistent with this hypothesis, adolescents' reports of anger were related to lower ratings of parental appropriateness across both antisocial and prosocial situations. In contrast, adolescents' reports of positive emotions, such as happiness and pride, were related to higher ratings of appropriateness. However, positive emotions in response to antisocial situations were not related to appropriateness ratings, possibly because positive emotions in antisocial situations were usually feelings of happiness or relief that punishment was not as harsh as expected.

Guilt was also associated with adolescents' ratings of parental appropriateness. Guilt in response to antisocial situations was related to higher ratings of appropriateness in both antisocial and prosocial situations. Consistent with Hoffman's (1970, 1986, 2000) claims that parental use of induction activates empathic guilt in children, parents' use of induction was also related to adolescents' reports of guilt. This finding also suggests that effectiveness of inductive techniques as a result of empathic guilt might be explained, at least in part, by adolescents' perceptions of appropriateness.

Third, we hypothesized that controlling parental intentions would be related to lower ratings of parental appropriateness, and caring parental intentions would be related to higher ratings of parental appropriateness. Grusec and Goodnow (1994) suggest that if parental intentions are perceived as positive, they will also be seen as more appropriate. Overall, the present findings supported this claim, but the findings also isolated specific parental intentions that were related to appropriateness. Interestingly, parental intentions in response to antisocial situations were not related significantly to appropriateness, but parental intentions in response to prosocial situations were related significantly to appropriateness. More specifically, parental intent of teaching in prosocial situations was related to lower ratings of appropriateness, perhaps because parental teaching may have been viewed as parental preaching. Although results concerning the impact of parental preaching on prosocial behavior have been mixed, some researchers claim that other-oriented preaching may be effective if the child feels they have the choice in performing the prosocial act (Eisenberg and Fabes, 1998). It is possible that the adolescents in this sample viewed parental attempts to teach as parental preaching, thus enhancing the power differential between parent and child and creating feelings of forced behavior on the part of the adolescent.

Parental intentions of showing they care in response to prosocial situations, but not in response to antisocial situations, were related to higher ratings of appropriateness for both antisocial and prosocial situations. Consistent with this finding, Hoffman (1970) suggested that parental nurturance fosters compliance because the child is more willing to obey. The current findings extend our knowledge of the importance of the perception of a caring parent-child relationship by suggesting that adolescents' views of appropriateness may be part of what is motivating the child to obey in close, supportive relationships.

We also hypothesized that there might be differences in adolescents' reports based on gender of both the parent and the child. Although there were no significant mean differences of appropriateness as a function of gender, adolescents' reports varied predictably by gender of the adolescent and the parent. More specifically, consistent with literature suggesting that parents are more protective of girls than they are of boys (Maccoby, 1995), adolescent boys were more likely than girls to report no action by their parents in response to antisocial situations. This suggests that parents were less likely to take action against boys than girls in antisocial situations. Moreover, consistent with literature suggest-

ing that girls are more emotionally expressive than boys (Fagot, 1995), boys were more likely to report neutral feelings in both antisocial and prosocial situations. It is possible that boys were equally likely to feel multiple emotions as girls, but were more likely to report neutral emotions due to gender stereotypes (Rubin et al., 1974).

Consistent with research suggesting that mothers and fathers adopt different parental roles and treat their children differently (Lamb et al., 1999), fathers were more likely than mothers to punish their children in response to antisocial situations, were more likely to give their children external rewards (such as money) in response to prosocial situations, and were more likely to respond to prosocial situations with no action. Adolescents were also more likely to report feeling angry with their fathers than with their mothers. Further research on the impact that fathers' and mothers' reactions have on the internalization of values is needed.

Of additional interest were a number of associations between adolescents' emotions and parental discipline strategy. There is a fair amount of research suggesting that significant relations exist between children's emotions and their behaviors, and between parental discipline strategies and children's behaviors (Eisenberg et al., 1991a,b; Hoffman, 1983; Staub, 1979). However, little research directly targets the relations between adolescents' emotions and parents' discipline strategy. We found significant relations between positive emotions and parents' use of induction and verbal praise in prosocial situations. In addition, a significant positive relation was found between adolescents' feelings of guilt and parents' use of induction in antisocial situations. These parenting practices are characteristic of an authoritative parenting style suggesting that the effectiveness of this parenting style may be attributed, at least in part, to positive adolescent emotions.

The present findings revealed a number of significant relations between adolescents' reports of negative emotion and parental reactions. For example, adolescents' anger in antisocial situations was related to parents' yelling and punishment in antisocial situations, and adolescents' anger in prosocial situations was related to parents' yelling and no action in prosocial situations. The latter findings support the notion that yelling is seen by adolescents as unacceptable in any context, and provide further explanation of the ineffectiveness of power-assertive parenting strategies.

There were a number of limitations to this study. First, the direction of effects in the current study cannot be confidently determined. Second, it is possible that parental reactions, adolescents' emotions, and perceptions



of parental intent are merely reflections of the overall quality of the parent-child relationship. However, a recent study found that appropriateness was only modestly related to parenting style (Carlo and Wyatt, 2003), making this an unlikely explanation. Third, the current study was based solely on adolescents' perceptions. The current findings need to be confirmed with observational measures or multiple reporters. And fourth, because some studies suggest that parenting might have a differential impact on low SES and minority families (Brody and Flor, 1998; Lamborn et al., 1996), adolescents' constructions of appropriateness need to be examined within a larger and more diverse population.

Despite the limitations, this study adds to our understanding of socialization processes in adolescence in several ways. Grusec and Goodnow (1994) proposed that appropriateness is determined by how well the parental action fits the misdeed, if the action is consistent with the child's expectations, if the action is deemed as well-intentioned, and if the action fits the child's temperament, mood, and developmental status. In general, the present findings supported their claims by showing that parental reaction, adolescent emotion, and parental intent were related to adolescents' ratings of appropriateness. Thus, findings provided direct empirical evidence on the personal and contextual characteristics associated with perceived appropriateness of parental reactions—a key component of acceptance that is theoretically linked to the internalization of values. Although prior studies exist on perceived appropriateness, the present study examined this issue in both prosocial and antisocial behavioral contexts. Moreover, present findings provide further demonstration of prosocial behavior situations as important contexts for socialization.

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