

7 * Maternal Representations of Parenting in Adolescence and Psychosocial Functioning of Mothers and Adolescents

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Abstract

The notion of caregiving representations was applied to assess parenting representations of mothers of adolescent sons. The association between these representations and the mothers' state of mind with respect to attachment was examined. In addition, mothers' parenting representations were examined as predictive of the coping of the sons with the developmental tasks of leaving home and individuation. Eighty-two mothers of male adolescents from middle-class intact families were administered the Parenting Representations Interview-Adolescence (PRI-A) approximately a year prior to the son's conscription to mandatory military service. The coping and adaptation to the basic training period as well as levels of individuation three years later were assessed. Mothers' parenting representations were moderately associated with their own AAI categorizations. Mothers' parenting representations were further predictive of the psychosocial developmental accomplishments of their sons. These findings attest to the significance of the mothers' parenting representations in affecting the sons' experiences as part of their developmental trajectory.

Within the paradigm of attachment theory, the interest in parents' caregiving system, namely their motivational system to give care and protection, started to rise a decade ago (George & Solomon, 1989, 1996; Bretherton et al., 1989). This interest was reflected in the study of parents' internal world, their beliefs, emotions and affects, that is, their parenting representations. Several researchers in different laboratories have suggested various ways of assessing parenting representations. They have mostly employed semi-structured interviews modeled after the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI: Main & Goldwyn, 1998), and have developed various different ways of analyzing those interviews (e.g., Aber et al., 1999; Benoit et al., 1997; Bretherton et al.,

1989; George & Solomon, 1989; see a review in Mayselless, this volume). Unlike the AAI, which mostly probes the parents' relationships with their own parents, and which serves to assess a person's general state of mind with respect to attachment, these different interviews asked about relationships with a specific child. Generally, they were analyzed in a variety of ways, some parallel to but some different from the coding scheme of the AAI. Thus, in line with AAI coding, most coding schemes of parenting interviews looked at information processing evident in the interview. In addition, they examined specific parenting aspects such as the provision of a secure base (e.g., George & Solomon, 1989), or specific emotions such as guilt and worry (e.g., Aber et al., 1999).

Through these different interview methods researchers demonstrated that mothers' conceptions and representations of their parenting and their representations of their relationships with their child are associated with their own and their child's behavior (Aber et al., 1999; Benoit et al., 1997; George & Solomon, 1989; Pianta et al., 1996; Slade et al., 1999). For example, significant associations between these representations and the child's attachment security as assessed in the Strange Situation and in other methods (such as the six-year-old reunion) were demonstrated (e.g., Bretherton et al., 1989; Huth-Bocks, Levendosky, Bogat, & von Eye, 2004; George & Solomon, 1989; Solomon & George, 1999). Similarly, significant associations were found between mothers' parenting representations and their state of mind with respect to attachment as assessed by the AAI (Slade et al., 1999; George & Solomon, 1989).

The studies that examined maternal representations of their parenting mostly investigated mothers of infants and young children (Pianta et al., 1996; Slade et al., 1999) or mothers of six-year-olds (George & Solomon, 1989). This chapter describes an attempt to assess representations of parents of adolescents, and to examine their association with psychosocial functioning of mothers and of their adolescent sons. To this end, we developed an interview which builds on interviews developed and employed by other researchers to examine parental representations of mothers of younger children. The *Parenting Representations Interview-Adolescence (PRI-A)* (Scharf & Mayselless, 1997/2000) takes into account age-related aspects that are more salient in adolescence, such as mutuality, autonomy promotion, and monitoring, as well as boundary disturbances. In the first research project conducted in 1997, we administered this interview to mothers and fathers of adolescent sons ($N = 88$). The second study conducted three years later included only adolescent daughters ($N = 120$) and their parents. In this chapter we present the results

with the PRI-A of the mothers from the first project (Mayseless, Scharf, Kivenson-Baron, & Schnarch, 2005). All other PRI-As from the two research projects are currently being analyzed.

Specifically, here we examine the association between mothers' parenting representations and their attachment representations. We also examine the association between mothers' parenting representations and how their emerging adult sons coped with the developmental tasks of separation (as part of the leaving home transition) and individuation.

Current Assessment Methods of Parenting Representations With Infants and Young Children

As reviewed in Mayseless (this volume), most current assessment methods of parenting representations rely on 1 hour to 1.5 hour-long structured interviews modeled after the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI). These include specific questions relating to the child, the relationship, and the mothers' various positive and negative feelings. In some interviews a detailed description of pregnancy and infancy is elicited (e.g., WMCI; Zeanah & Benoit, 1995). Interviews differ somewhat in the extent to which they focus on the child (e.g., asking the parent to provide five adjectives describing the child) or on the relationship (e.g., asking the parent to provide five adjectives describing the relationship with the child). Similarly, some interviews probe more intensely than others the mother's feelings and attitudes. In still other interviews, similarities and differences between the child and the mother or the child and the father are explored; in some cases mothers are asked about their future projection of the relationship or of the child's future. The questions are followed by requests for elaboration and concrete examples. In most cases interviews are audiotaped and transcribed, and the coding is based on the transcripts.

In terms of coding schemes, several different approaches are taken. In some cases, coding is geared eventually to classify parent's representation into three or four categories of caregiving representations corresponding to the three or four attachment categories (e.g., balanced, disengaged, and distorted categories suggested by Zeanah et al., 1994). In other cases, continuous scales are employed to capture major dimensions of the representations using the impression from the interview as a whole. Some researchers have used very few scales (e.g., the sensitivity/coherence scale of Bretherton et al., 1989). However, other researchers have spread a wider net and explored the utilization of a large number of scales focused on the mother's representations of herself (e.g., her perceived competence), of the child (e.g., infant

difficulty, richness of the child's description), and of their relationship (e.g., parental acceptance). In addition, several unique scales assessing specific emotions and their modulation have been suggested (e.g., joy, guilt, anger, anxiety). Finally, scales assessing thought processes evident in the narrative (e.g., coherence) were included. In most studies this large array of scales was subjected to different forms of data reduction, resulting in a much smaller number of composite scales. However, most coding schemes retained the separate scales and suggest using them in any new coding (Zeanah et al., 1994; Aber et al., 1999).

As noted, most of these studies looked at mothers of infants or toddlers, and in only a few cases (e.g., George & Solomon, 1989), as far as is known, were older children (six-year-olds) examined (see also Scher et al., this volume). The current examination leaps to a much older age – adolescence – in an attempt to investigate the parenting representations of mothers of children at that age. To highlight the specific adjustments we made in the interview and its coding, and to underscore the outcomes that we explored, we present a brief overview of the unique characteristics of parenting adolescents.

Parenting Adolescents

The time of adolescence involves a "dramatic change in the child's physical, cognitive, emotional, and social competencies and concerns" (Steinberg & Silk, 2002; p. 103). The onset of puberty marks major hormonal changes expressed in physical change, rapid growth, and the development and maturation of sexual and emotional characteristics, mood swings, and an increase in negative affect. These changes are accompanied by alterations in the adolescents' self-image and the way they interact with others. At the cognitive level adolescents develop a more formal and efficient way of thinking, and they become more capable of thinking abstractly and viewing things in a relativistic way. They thereby become more critical of themselves and of others, including their parents.

Another major transition concerns changes in the social realm. Adolescents spend far less time with their parents and more with their peers; this developmental transition is accompanied by emotional changes as well. Adolescents, at least during puberty changes, seem to distance themselves from parents, demand more privacy, and invest more in their peers emotionally and socially. The relationships with peers become an important arena in which to seek companionship and intimacy. In relationships with parents, changes toward greater autonomy, less supervision, and more mutuality are evident.

Some researchers have argued that the main developmental task of parents of adolescents is to learn how to let go while keeping the channels open for communication and reliance in times of need (Allen & Land, 1999). The capacity to strike a balance between connectedness and individuality seems to be a major challenge of this period (Hill & Holmbeck, 1986; Allen, Moore, & Kuperminc, 1997; Kobak & Cole, 1994), and negotiations regarding changes in relative power, redefining closeness, and decreasing supervision while maintaining monitoring pervade the relationships.

In addition, as the adolescents themselves invest in self-definition and in their future goals and developmental trajectory, parents too invest in envisioning the child and their relationships in the future. In sum, adolescent-specific aspects of parenting seem to encompass autonomy promotion, monitoring, mutuality, and letting go, aspects that we specifically included in the PRI-A. This was incorporated when we devised the interview questions (e.g., asking about letting go) and when we formulated specific rating scales that capture these qualities in the parenting representations.

The Parenting Representations Interview - Adolescence (PRI-A) (Scharf & Mayseless, 1997/2000)

The PRI-A is a semi-structured interview designed to arouse memories and emotions regarding parenting experiences with adolescent children. In this version (1997) as well as the revised (2000), parents were requested to give a general description of their relationships with their children and to support this description with specific incidents from childhood and adolescence. The interview elicited experiences and interactions involving closeness, pain/difficulty, guilt, anger, worry, discipline, children's increasing autonomy, and the way the parents dealt with these situations. Parents were also asked to describe how they saw their child in the future and to describe their imagined future relationship with him or her. Besides these questions, which are mostly used in interviews with parents of young children, the PRI-A asked about specific experiences of parents of adolescents, regarding conflicts, monitoring, mutuality, the centrality of parenthood in parent's life, similarities and differences between the parent and the adolescent, and developmental changes in the relationship. Interviews were audiotaped and then transcribed verbatim.

Coding. The construction of the interview, in particular the coding of the PRI-A (Scharf, Mayseless, & Kivenson-Baron, 1997/2000), benefited from several sources: the seminal breakthrough of the development of the AAI (Main & Goldwyn, 1998) and works on parenting representations of young children's parents, in particular those by (alphabetically ordered) Aber-

Benoit, Bretherton, George and Solomon, Marvin, Pianta, Slade, Zeanah, and their colleagues. We also had recourse to Westen and colleagues (1990) and to Fonagy and colleagues (1997) with regard to self-reflection and reflection about the child. The general theoretical framework of Steinberg and Holmbeck and their colleagues with regard to the characteristics of adolescence also guided our construction of the coding scheme (Steinberg, 2001; Holmbeck, Paikoff, & Brooks-Gunn, 1995).

Based on the transcripts, several scales were coded, relating to four basic domains: (1) representations of the parent, (2) representations of the adolescent, (3) representations of the relationships (e.g., monitoring, warmth and affection) and different emotions and feelings such as pain and guilt, and (4) the cognitive and emotional process evident in the narrative. Based on the global profile of representations evident in the transcripts and in particular based on the cognitive and emotional process scales, interviewees were assigned a best-fit classification: adequate/balanced, flooded, restricted, and confused. These corresponded to the autonomous, preoccupied, dismissing, and unresolved state of mind assessed by the AAI. Insights from use of the interview in the first sample with adolescent males led to several revisions and adjustments. In particular, several scales were added, which obviously were not included in the analyses of the first research project; these are marked with an asterisk. All the scales presented range from 1 (low end of the scale) to 5 (high end of the scale).

Coding Scales of the PRI-A

(1) Parent's Representations of Self. *Competence* measures the parent's realistic confidence in his/her capacity to handle effectively various parenting situations, including general difficulties and daily demands and activities. Claims to competence without adequate evidence in the transcript do not qualify for high scores.

Self-understanding measures how logical, accurate, complex, and reflective are parent's attributions of the causes of self-actions, thoughts, and feelings.

* *Sense of Sacrifice* measures the extent to which the parent feels that he or she has made a great sacrifice and has forfeited personal pleasures and self-actualization in order to care for the child.

(2) Parent's Representations of the Adolescent. *Trust/confidence in child's capacities* measures the parent's realistic confidence in the child's coping capabilities in different contexts.

Child's understanding measures how logical, accurate, complex, and reflective are the parent's attributions of the causes of the child's actions, thoughts, and feelings.

* *Elaborate perception of the child* assesses the richness and elaboration of the description of the child in the transcript. High scores are awarded for a detailed description of the child that reflects thorough knowledge of him or her.

Elaborate perception of the child in the future assesses the richness and elaboration of the description of the child in the future.

(3) Parent's Representations of the Parent-Child Relationship. * *Secure base/safe haven* assesses the extent that the parent is emotionally available, comforts, and helps the child when in distress. The parent allows the child freely to express emotions, needs and difficulties, reacts in a sensitive manner, and succeeds in reducing the child's distress.

* *Provision of instrumental help and pampering* assesses the extent to which the parent performs instrumental activities with and for the child and pampers and indulges the child. The parent gives the child a lift, goes with the child to buy things, cooks special food, buys special things to make the child happy.

Warmth and affection assesses the extent to which the parent describes his/her relationship with the child as positive, involving acceptance, joy, pleasure, pride, warmth, and affection. (Exaggerated description and a tendency to idealize receive non-optimal scores.)

Partnership and Mutuality assesses reciprocity in the relationship, as well as flexibility and openness, willingness to negotiate, adequate partnership in responsibility and decisions, and open communication and sharing between the child and the parent.

Emphasizing/stressing achievement assesses how much the parent refers to and stresses the child's achievements - grades, investment in academic/artistic/sports activities - when describing his relationships with the child.

Autonomy granting assesses how much the parent facilitates autonomous decision making and behavior, balanced with adequate scaffolding suited to the situation and the child's developmental stage. The scale reflects tolerance for different opinions, perceptions, and behaviors, as well as the child's privacy and encouraging independent activities and reasoning by the child.

Monitoring assesses how much the parent knows about where the child spends free time, who his/her friends are, and his/her functioning at school

and in other settings; also how much behavioral control of the child the parent exercises when necessary.

The nature of the future relationship with the child assesses how positive is the parent's perception of the future relationship (high score); or how pervasively pessimistic, uncertain and filled with anxiety this perception is; if a positive picture is portrayed without adequate backing in the transcript, a low score is assigned.

Inappropriate/inadequate boundaries assesses the how far the boundaries between the child and the parent are inappropriate and exhibit lack of differentiation. The parent may try strenuously to behave like the child's friend, or his or her involvement in the child's life is exaggerated and intrusive and entails over-identification, whereby the child's life and feelings are the parent's. In the first version (Scharf et al., 1997), this scale also included the occurrence of role reversal, for which a separate scale was devised in the second version (Scharf et al., 2000).

* *Role reversal* assesses how far the roles between parent and child are reversed. The child is expected to take care of the parent in a parental role and/or the child is expected to play a spousal role vis-à-vis the parent.

Pain and/or difficulty assesses how much the parent describes his/her relationship with the child as painful, sad, or difficult. A high score denotes a sense of extreme difficulty in taking care of the child.

Anger assesses how much the parent describes his/her relationship with the child as one of anger, rage, and irritation.

Worry/fear assesses how much the parent describes his/her relationship with the child as characterized by worry, fear, and anxiety. High scores reflect worries regarding the child's health and security, affecting behavior toward the child, without the parent being able to contain and regulate these feelings.

Guilt assesses how much the parent describes his/her relationship with the child as involving guilt feelings on his or her part. High scores denote uncontained pervasive guilt.

* *Non-involvement/indifference* assesses how far the relationship with the child is characterized by indifference and lack of interest. The parent appears uninvolved.

* *Idealization* assesses the discrepancy between the general highly positive descriptions of the child as "perfect," "just great," and the relationship as "very loving" and the factual and more believable descriptions of the child and the relationship.

Conflicts and power struggles assesses how far the parent describes disagreements, conflicts, and struggles in the relationship with the child.

(4) **Narrative Style (Process Scales).** *Adequate/Balanced* description assesses the logic, consistency, lucidity, and cogency of the parent's presentation and evaluation of himself/herself and the child, without any need for extensive inferences and interpretations. The parent offers evidence and supports his/her assertions, and the information given is relevant and complete.

Flooded description assesses the parent's inability to contain his/her feeling or thoughts regarding the child, herself/himself, or the relationship. Although an extensive investment is made in the relationship, there is an obvious incapacity to focus and to explore it objectively.

Restricted description assesses the parent's avoidance of answering the questions or resisting them by not giving information ("That's all," "It depends," "I don't know"). The use of general or neutral language in description of the self or the child is pervasive and the parent seems somewhat uninvolved.

Confused description assesses the parent's vagueness and confusion, inability to focus responses, losing track of the questions, or making clearly erroneous or bizarre attributions.

Twenty interviews were coded by two coders. Inter-judge reliability of the scales (intra-class correlations) was high, from 0.78 to 0.96 and there was full agreement on classification of parenting representations. The classification resulted in 49 *adequate/balanced* mothers, 16 *flooded*, and 17 *restricted*. The general profile of parenting representations in each category was subjected to a MANOVA ($F(40, 118) = 15.59, p < 0.001$; see Table 7.1). As shown in Table 7.1, each category had a unique profile of characteristics in the three domains of the representations (mother, child, relationship).

Specifically, *adequate/balanced* mothers evinced the highest competence and confidence in the child, the highest warmth and affection, partnership and mutuality, monitoring, and promotion of autonomy, the soundest attributions for self-understanding and child's understanding, as well as elaborate perception of the child and the relationship in the future. They exhibited moderate levels of guilt, anger, and worry, and along with *flooded* mothers the highest level of conflicts and pain. *Flooded* mothers were conspicuous in their highest level of inappropriate/inadequate boundaries and focus on achievement and highest levels of all negative emotions, conflicts, pain, worry, guilt, and anger. *Restricted* mothers showed the least sound attributions for self-understanding and child's understanding, the lowest levels of all negative emotions, the lowest level of monitoring, and intermediate levels of autonomy promotion.

Thus, *flooded* mothers appeared to adopt a caregiving strategy of high engagement and strong emotional involvement, high levels of negative

Table 7.1. Caregiving Characteristics of Mothers in Adequate/Balanced, Flooded, and Restricted Categories of Parenting Representations

Parenting Representations' Scales	F (2, 79)	Adequate/Balanced		Flooded		Restricted	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Representations of the self							
Competence	45.42**	3.58a	2.25c	2.25c	2.62b	2.62b	1.88c
Self-understanding	34.09**	3.22a	2.47b	2.47b	1.88c	1.88c	
Representations of the adolescent							
Trust/confidence in the child's capacities	23.72**	3.68a	30.31b	30.31b	29.41b	29.41b	
Child's understanding	53.81**	3.30a	2.44b	2.44b	1.91c	1.91c	
Elaborate perception of the child in the future	9.65*	2.70a	2.06b	2.06b	1.91b	1.91b	
Representations of the parent-adolescent relationships							
Warmth and affection	12.93*	3.99a	3.47b	3.47b	3.32b	3.32b	
Partnership and mutuality	43.66**	3.45a	2.19b	2.19b	2.32b	2.32b	
Emphasizing/stressing achievement	5.44*	1.90b	2.66a	2.66a	2.00b	2.00b	
Autonomy granting	10.90*	3.49a	2.81c	2.81c	3.18b	3.18b	
Monitoring	30.80**	3.43a	2.75b	2.75b	2.32c	2.32c	
The nature of future relationships with the child	27.70**	3.64a	2.50b	2.50b	2.53b	2.53b	
Inappropriate/inadequate boundaries	35.88**	1.49b	3.04a	3.04a	1.21b	1.21b	
Pain and/or difficulty	17.46*	2.85a	3.21a	3.21a	1.85b	1.85b	
Anger	28.57**	2.76b	3.50a	3.50a	1.74c	1.74c	
Worry/fear	27.92**	3.36b	3.97a	3.97a	2.50c	2.50c	
Guilt	13.14*	2.33b	3.03a	3.03a	1.38c	1.38c	
Conflicts and power struggles	29.17**	2.70a	3.03a	3.03a	1.59b	1.59b	
Narrative style (process scales)							
Adequate/balanced description	161.88***	3.72a	2.31b	2.31b	1.85c	1.85c	
Flooded description	78.34**	1.52b	3.72a	3.72a	1.24b	1.24b	
Restricted description	147.40***	1.44b	1.47b	1.47b	4.03a	4.03a	

* $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.001$; means in a row which do not share a letter are significantly different (Duncan post hoc $p < 0.05$)

emotionality, and low differentiation between themselves and the child; *restricted* mothers seemed less involved in monitoring the child or in being emotionally and psychologically engaged. Their low level of engagement or involvement was apparent at the behavioral level (low monitoring), at the cognitive, mental level (low levels of reflectivity on self and the child), and at the emotional level (low levels of negative emotions). Interestingly, regarding positive emotions and positive interactions, *restricted* and *flooded* mothers evinced the same low levels of these qualities as compared with *adequate/balanced* mothers. It is noteworthy that *adequate/balanced* mothers

exhibited moderate levels of negative emotions in the context of high levels of positive ones, reflecting the claim that "good mothering" does not mean an all-positive idealistic relationship but a balanced emotional makeup. This combination might be especially characteristic of adolescence, when high levels of negative emotionality and felt difficulty in parenting are probably inevitable, and part and parcel of normative parent-adolescent relationships (Steinberg & Steinberg, 1994).

Issues of Data Reduction. The suggested coding scheme of the PRI-A includes a large number of scales (21 for the first version, and 26 for the second). These scales were sometimes quite highly correlated (e.g., maternal competence, and partnership and mutuality). In general, such a situation calls for data reduction and the construction of aggregate scales. However, in this presentation we have opted to retain the separate scales, for several reasons. First, this is the first study, as far as we know, in which parenting representations of mothers of adolescents were examined. Therefore, it could qualify as research into as yet uncharted or barely charted territory. Accordingly, casting a wide net is recommended. Second, the "wide net" we utilized does not reflect an inflation of identical constructs; rather, each of the constructs assessed has been underscored by numerous researchers as significant and important and as reflecting a unique aspect or facet of parents' representations. For example, maternal competence, though highly correlated with partnership and mutuality, reflects a quite different construct in the conceptualizations regarding parenting and parent-child relationships (De Wolff & van IJzendoorn, 1997; Bornstein et al., 1998).

Third, though in many mothers these facets are positively correlated, this may not always be the case in other mothers or in other samples. For example, though in most cases a mother who serves as a secure base also shows warmth and affection, this may not always be the case (Goldberg, Grusec, & Jenkins, 1999). Fourth, and related to the foregoing point, though the different facets or aspects are correlated, each may exert a distinct influence on the child and may be uniquely predictive of diverse outcomes. This diversity or specificity of prediction may be especially true in the examination of varied samples (e.g., risk and non-risk) and different cultures, or when using different methods of assessment (e.g., self-report, observations). To collapse all the positive markers together at this early stage of the inquiry may obscure such possible unique paths of prediction. Fifth, similar diversity may apply in a probe of the antecedents of these parenting representations. Though correlated, each may be linked to a somewhat different set of antecedents and may be related to

different parts of the parents' personality and experience. In sum, we decided to retain the large number of intercorrelated scales but to use other statistical precautions. In particular, to avoid capitalizing on chance and interpreting spurious results, we used an overall alpha level rather than a separate alpha level for each specific statistical examination, using MANOVAs and Bonferroni adjustments when applicable.

Developmental Tasks of Late Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood

Our study examined adolescents at the end of this period, namely during late adolescence and emerging adulthood. At this period, several specific developmental tasks have been described: (1) leaving home and coping effectively with this transition and (2) developing mature psychosocial functioning (Arnett, 2001; Gray & Steinberg, 1999).

Although these developmental achievements start evolving before late adolescence (Collins & Stroufe, 1999; Furman, Brown, & Feiring, 1999; Sullivan, 1953), in that period and in emerging adulthood these tasks are deemed more central and salient (Allen & Land, 1999; Arnett, 2001; Gray & Steinberg, 1999). First, in most Western cultures young men and women are expected to leave their parents' home (Goldscheider & Davanzo, 1986; Moore, 1987) and cope effectively with being apart from them and with the demands of the new environment. In North America, this has most often been studied in the context of the home-to-college transition (Kenny & Donaldson, 1991; Lapsley, Rice, & FitzGerald, 1990; Schultheiss & Blustein, 1994).

Second, the process of developing mature psychosocial functioning, which includes a sense of differentiation from immature dependencies and the achievement of some degree of self-definition (individuation), has also been described as an age-normative change (Blos, 1979; Hill & Holmbeck, 1986; Rice & Mulkeen, 1995). Young adults are expected to develop higher levels of individuation and differentiation of the self, evinced in the capacity to rely on oneself rather than excessively on parents and others for support and guidance, and the capacity to make independent decisions and follow them through (Arnett, 2001; Bowlby, 1973; Blos, 1967; Greenberger & Sorensen, 1974; Gray & Steinberg, 1999).

In the study described here, these processes were examined in the Israeli context. In it, the great majority of the 18-year-old cohort of Jewish men (85%) leave their parents' home for a period of three years' mandatory service in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

Hypotheses

1. *Associations of parenting representations with mothers' state of mind.* In general, we expected mothers' parenting representations to be associated with their state of mind with respect to attachment. Autonomous/secure state of mind of the mother was expected to be associated with positive markers of parenting representations in four domains: (a) the relationship (e.g., warmth and affection, monitoring, autonomy granting and partnership, and mutuality); (b) the child (e.g., as capable and trustworthy); (c) the mother in her parental capacity (e.g., parental competence); and (d) positive markers of thought processes (e.g., flexibility, reflectivity). In contrast, non-autonomous states of mind of mother were expected to be associated with lower levels of these positive markers of parenting representations and with negative markers of parenting representations. Negative markers included difficulties in letting go, appearing more generally as boundary disturbances, and hyperactivation, that is, heightened anxiety and guilt, or deactivation, that is, detachment and little investment in the parental role.
2. *Parenting representations and coping with separation and individuation.* We expected maternal representations of parenting to be related to their son's coping with the developmental tasks of leaving home and developing individuation. Specifically, positive markers of parenting representations in the four domains (relationship; child; mother; thought processes) were expected to be associated with success in separation and individuation. In contrast, negative markers of parenting representations such as boundary disturbances and hyperactivation – heightened anxiety and guilt – or deactivation – detachment and little investment in the parental role – were expected to be associated with lower levels of attainment of these developmental tasks.

The Study of Parenting Representations of Mothers of Adolescent Sons

Sample

The study reported here is part of a longitudinal project examining parent-adolescent son relationships in Israel during late adolescence and young adulthood (see detailed information about the sample in Scharf et al., 2004). Participants in the study were identified and recruited from published lists of high-school seniors in metropolitan middle class neighborhoods in the

northern part of Israel. We limited our choice of subjects to intact families, and families who had not immigrated recently to Israel (i.e., families for whom life had been fairly stable), so as to avoid diverse sources of variation. This constraint did not result in a highly skewed sample because divorce rates in Israel are much lower than in the United States (8.5%, according to the *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, 1996) and because in these neighborhoods new immigrants comprise only 5% of the population (*Statistical Abstract of Israel*, 1996).

The final sample included 88 families, which reflected consent by 41% of eligible families. In Israel, parental level of education, density of living quarters, and neighborhoods are considered better indices of SES than income (Dar & Resh, 1991). In addition, families of Western origin (Europe or North America) are more prevalent at high SES levels. In line with the prevailing characteristics of the middle-class neighborhoods from which they were sampled, the families in our sample were primarily well-educated (80% percent of the fathers and 74% of the mothers had at least a college education), 70% of the families were of Western origin, and their living quarters were of moderately low density.

At the time of the first assessment, adolescents' ages ranged from 17 to 18 years. Mean number of children in the families was 2.93 ($SD = 0.74$), with 37% first-born. None of the background variables was associated with the variables assessed in this study. In terms of military service, 59% of the adolescents were assigned to combat units and 41% to non-combat units. Thirty percent served as officers and 70% as rank-and-file soldiers.

Procedure

Parents were administered the *Parenting Representations Interview – Adolescence* (PRI–A) and the AAI when their sons were high-school seniors, approximately a year prior to their son's conscription (Time 1 – late adolescence assessment). Halfway through the basic training period (approximately five weeks after conscription) during a weekend furlough, 84 of the adolescents filled out questionnaires regarding their coping with this transition (Time 2 – basic training assessment). In addition, they were asked to provide the names of two peers (friends from their basic training unit who knew them well). These peers were contacted by the research team, and rated the respondents' coping and adjustment by means of a phone interview. Logistic problems prevented us from gathering peers' data for more than a sub-sample of the adolescents ($n = 64$). This sub-sample did not differ from the rest, for whom peers' reports were not available, on any of the background variables or the measures employed in this study.

Finally, at the end of the adolescents' three-year mandatory military service (Time 3 – emerging adulthood assessment), 74 adolescents were able to complete questionnaires. No difference existed between participants who completed the Time 3 assessment and the others on any of the background variables or the measures employed in this study.

In this report, only mothers' parenting representations are examined. Because of technical problems, several interviews with the mothers were not available for coding. Thus, this report is based on 82 mother–son dyads.

Measures

Time 1 – Late Adolescence Assessment. At this assessment time the PRI–A (described in previous sections) and the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) were administered to the mothers.

The AAI (Main & Goldwyn, 1998) is a structured interview designed to arouse memories and emotions regarding attachment experiences. Participants were requested to give a general description of their relationships with their parents and to support these descriptions with specific biographical incidents. The interviewees were asked to give explanations for their parents' behavior, to describe the nature of their current relationship with their parents, and to assess the influence of childhood experiences on their development and personality. Scores were assigned to inferred childhood experiences of love, rejection, involvement, inattentiveness (neglect), and pressure to achieve exerted by each parent, and to respondent's state of mind with regard to idealization, anger, derogation, insistence on inability to recall childhood, passivity, and coherence. The coding of the AAI is based on the participant's reflections and evaluations, and assigns transcripts to the following state-of-mind groups: *secure-autonomous* (F), *insecure-dismissing* (DS), *insecure-preoccupied* (E), and *unresolved trauma or loss* (U) (Main & Goldwyn, 1998). The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. Ruth Schnarch, a reliable coder of the AAI, analyzed the mothers' AAI transcripts, identified by number only. Ten transcripts were analyzed by Miri Scharf, and inter-rater reliability was 90% ($kappa = 0.83$). Disagreements between coders were resolved by consensus.

Time 2 – Basic Training Assessment. Level of distress, coping strategies, and functioning were examined as indicators of coping with the normative Israeli leaving-home transition.

Adolescent's Report. Level of distress was assessed by nine items from the *Mental Health Inventory* (MHI; Veit & Ware, 1983; e.g., feeling depressed,

lonely, nervous, anxious, or in control). Adolescents were asked to answer each item using a 1 (never) to 6 (all the time) scale, in reference to their feelings in military service during the previous two weeks (Cronbach's $\alpha = .76$). The measure has shown high internal reliability and good test–retest reliability, as well as construct and discriminant validity (e.g., Florian & Drory, 1990).

Perceived success in functioning in the military context was assessed by six items from the *Secondary appraisal scale* developed by Folkman & Lazarus (1985). Adolescents were asked to indicate on a 1 (not at all) to 5 (to a very large extent) scale how successfully they believed they had coped with basic training and its demands, and how challenged and threatened they felt by their experiences in basic training (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.77$). The questionnaire has shown good internal reliabilities and construct validity (e.g., Mikulincer & Florian, 1995).

Ways of Coping (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980) measures cognitive and behavioral strategies people use in coping with stressful situations. Participants were asked to indicate on a 1 (not at all) to 5 (to a very large extent) scale how much they employed each of these strategies during their basic training. We included *Problem-Focused Coping* (six items, e.g., "I concentrated only on what should be done immediately") and *Emotion-Focused Coping* (eight items, e.g., "I wished that I could change what was happening or how I felt"). Cronbach's α s were 0.53 and 0.75, respectively. The problem-focused coping scale of this version (community version) has typically low internal reliabilities (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985), probably because the items reflect different coping efforts, which may be somewhat mutually exclusive. (For a similar point, see Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989.)

Peers' Report. The *Peers' appraisal of adjustment questionnaire* was designed to assess adjustment and coping by different observers (Catz & Orbach, 1990). The questionnaire included dimensions that tapped the peers' evaluations of the recruit's adjustment. Two peers from basic training were asked to answer these questions using a 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much) Likert scale. The mean of their answers on two scales was computed: *Distress*, how stressed the focal adolescent was (three items, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.86$); and *Instrumental and social functioning*, the extent to which he successfully coped with the basic training demands, including instrumental, social, and discipline aspects (six items, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.82$).

Time 3 – Emerging Adulthood Assessment. Two measures assessing various facets of individuation (differentiation of the self-system and

individuation) were included. The *Differentiation of Self Scale* (Haber, 1990; 1993) is a 24-item uni-dimensional scale that measures intellectual and emotional differentiation of the self-system based on Bowen's conceptualization (e.g., "I will change my opinion more on the basis of new knowledge than on the basis of the opinions of others"; "My life is guided by a clear set of goals that I have established for myself"). The scale has demonstrated internal reliability and content and construct validity (Garbarino, Gaa, & Gratch, 1995; Haber, 1990). Emerging adults and each parent filled out the questionnaire pertaining to the emerging adult's differentiation. Cronbach's α s were 0.87, 0.89, and 0.85 for the emerging adults', mothers', and fathers' reports, respectively.

The *Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence - SITA* (Levine, Green, & Millon, 1986) is a self-report measure that includes several scales assessing psychological separation and individuation from a psychoanalytic perspective based on Mahler's conceptualizations. In the present report, four scales are included: separation anxiety, engulfment anxiety, dependency denial, and healthy separation (Cronbach's α s were 0.69, 0.79, 0.72, and 0.63, respectively). All but the last one denote different problems in the process of separation and individuation during adolescence. The scale has been employed in several studies in the United States (Levine & Saintonge, 1993) and in Israel (Mazor, Alfa, & Gampel, 1993), and has good psychometric properties and construct validity.

Results

The Association Between Mothers' State of Mind and Parenting Representations

The analyses of mothers' AAI resulted in 37 Autonomous mothers, 29 Dismissing, nine Preoccupied, and 10 Unresolved. Assignment of Unresolved mothers to the underlying category resulted in 41 Autonomous, 32 Dismissing, and 12 Preoccupied mothers. As can be seen in Table 7.2, there was a significant association in the three-way cross-tabulation of mothers' AAI and parenting categories ($\chi^2(4) = 10.86, p < 0.03; kappa = 0.21, p < .05$), with 52% correspondence. When the four-category classification for the AAI was used, the association was again significant ($\chi^2(6) = 14.77, p < 0.02$). Three of the 10 Unresolved mothers were categorized as having adequate/balanced parenting representations, five as having flooded, and two as having restricted representations. Finally, the two-way cross-tabulation was also significant ($\chi^2(1) = 3.71, p < 0.05; \kappa = 0.21, p < 0.05$) with 60% correspondence.

Table 7.2. Cross-Tabulation of Mothers' Attachment and Parenting Representations

Mothers' Parenting Representations	Mothers' State of Mind with Respect to Attachment			Total
	Autonomous	Preoccupied	Dismissing	
Adequate/balanced classification	26	5	16	47
Flooded classification	7	6	3	16
Restricted classification	6	1	9	16
Total	39	12	28	79

A MANOVA conducted to examine the association between mothers' state of mind with respect to attachment (three-way categorization) and the continuous scales of their parenting representations was significant ($F(40, 112) = 1.63, p < 0.05$) and followed by univariate ANOVAs and post-hoc Duncan tests. As can be seen in Table 7.3, autonomous mothers showed more positive qualities of the relationships (i.e., higher competence and partnership and mutuality) than preoccupied mothers, with dismissing mothers occupying an intermediate position. In addition, as expected Preoccupied mothers

Table 7.3. Parenting Representations as a Function of Mothers' Three Categories AAI

Parenting Representations' Scales	F (2, 79)	Autonomous		Preoccupied		Dismissing	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Representations of the self							
Parental competence	5.28*	3.32a		2.50b		3.09a	
Representations of the parent-adolescent relationships							
Partnership and mutuality	3.10*	3.16b		2.54a		2.84ab	
Autonomy granting	2.91*	3.46b		3.08a		3.18ab	
Inappropriate/inadequate boundaries	7.56**	1.67a		2.70b		1.52a	
Pain and/or difficulty	4.27*	2.88ab		3.13b		2.39a	
Anger	7.86**	2.84a		3.33a		2.29b	
Worry/fear	11.55***	3.41b		3.92a		2.88c	
Guilt	6.12*	2.46a		2.83a		1.77b	
Conflicts and power struggles	3.60*	2.65ab		2.27b		2.92a	
Narrative style (process scales)							
Adequate/balanced description	1.51	3.24		2.75		2.96	
Flooded description	7.84**	1.88b		1.54b		2.96a	
Restricted description	4.13*	1.75b		2.88a		1.58b	

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$; means in a row which do not share a letter are significantly different (Duncan post hoc $p < 0.05$)

showed the highest level of uncontained negative emotions and inappropriate/inadequate boundaries, and Dismissing mothers showed the lowest. Finally, Dismissing mothers showed the highest level of restricted narrative, and Preoccupied mothers showed the highest level of flooded narrative of all.

Contrary to expectations, Autonomous mothers did not show higher reflectivity regarding themselves and the child, more elaborate future perception of the child or the relationship, or higher levels of adequate/balanced narrative. When analyses were conducted with the four-way categorization of mothers' AAI (including the Unresolved category), the MANOVA was again significant ($F(60, 164) = 1.51, p < 0.05$), reflecting the same profile of results obtained with the AAI three-category partition; the Unresolved category received the lowest score of the positive qualities of the relationships, the highest score on flooded transcripts along with the preoccupied group, and intermediate scores on inappropriate/inadequate boundaries and negative emotions (see Table 7.4).

Altogether, these analyses reveal a significant association between mothers' state of mind with respect to attachment and their parenting representations with preoccupied state of mind (in the case of the three-way classification) or unresolved state of mind (in the case of the four-way classification) demonstrating the most negative parenting representations.

The Association Between Parenting Representations and Son's Coping With Separation During the Leaving Home Transition

The MANOVA conducted with parenting representation classifications as the independent variable and self-reported adjustment and coping scales as dependent variables was significant ($F(8, 144) = 2.25, p < 0.01$). Follow-up ANOVAs indicated that sons of flooded mothers felt the highest levels of distress ($M = 2.49$). Next came sons of adequate/balanced mothers ($M = 2.24$), with sons of restricted mothers showing the lowest distress ($M = 1.96, F(2, 78) = 3.42, p < 0.05$). The MANOVA with peers' reports of the adolescents' adjustment was not significant. Pearson correlations between mothers' parenting representations and self and peers' reports of adjustment indicated several significant associations. As can be seen in Table 7.5, mothers' confidence in their child and their warmth and affection were positively associated with markers of better adjustment, that is, less distress – peers' report; more problem-focused coping, and better functioning – self and peers' report. In contrast, aspects of the representations which reflect flooded mothers (inappropriate/inadequate boundaries, stressing achievements, flooded transcript, and high levels of negative emotions) were related to lower levels of

Table 7.4. Parenting Representations as a Function of Mothers' Four Categories AAI

Parenting Representations' Scales	Mothers AAI Categories			
	F (3, 78)	Autonomous	Dismissing	Preoccupied
Representations of the self	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
Parental Competence	3.72*	3.38a	3.08ab	2.61b
Self-understanding	2.67*	3.09a	2.62ab	2.78ab
Representations of the adolescent				
Trust/confidence in the child's capacities	4.01**	3.56a	3.46a	3.22ab
Representations of the parent-adolescent relationships				
Warmth and affection	3.66*	3.85a	3.84a	3.50ab
Partnership and mutuality	4.38**	3.26a	2.86ab	2.67ab
Monitoring	3.56**	3.29a	2.92ab	3.11a
The nature of future relationships with the child	2.78*	3.44a	3.00ab	3.11ab
Inappropriate/inadequate boundaries	4.83**	1.65bc	1.44c	2.61a
Pain and/or difficulty	2.65*	2.88ab	2.38b	3.17a
Anger	4.04**	2.85ab	2.28b	3.27a
Worry/fear	6.38***	3.46a	2.84b	3.83a
Guilt	3.71*	2.47ab	1.74b	2.83a
Narrative style (process scales)				
Adequate/balanced description	2.29	3.32a	3.02ab	2.78ab
Flooded description	5.39**	1.78b	1.50b	2.72a
Restricted description	2.40	1.68	2.44	1.67
Mean	3.72*	3.38a	3.08ab	2.61b
Parental Competence	2.67*	3.09a	2.62ab	2.78ab
Self-understanding	2.67*	3.09a	2.62ab	2.78ab
Representations of the adolescent				
Trust/confidence in the child's capacities	4.01**	3.56a	3.46a	3.22ab
Representations of the parent-adolescent relationships				
Warmth and affection	3.66*	3.85a	3.84a	3.50ab
Partnership and mutuality	4.38**	3.26a	2.86ab	2.67ab
Monitoring	3.56**	3.29a	2.92ab	3.11a
The nature of future relationships with the child	2.78*	3.44a	3.00ab	3.11ab
Inappropriate/inadequate boundaries	4.83**	1.65bc	1.44c	2.61a
Pain and/or difficulty	2.65*	2.88ab	2.38b	3.17a
Anger	4.04**	2.85ab	2.28b	3.27a
Worry/fear	6.38***	3.46a	2.84b	3.83a
Guilt	3.71*	2.47ab	1.74b	2.83a
Narrative style (process scales)				
Adequate/balanced description	2.29	3.32a	3.02ab	2.78ab
Flooded description	5.39**	1.78b	1.50b	2.72a
Restricted description	2.40	1.68	2.44	1.67

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; means in a row which do not share a letter are significantly different (Duncan post hoc $p < 0.05$)

Table 7.6. Individuation of Sons as a Function of Their Mothers' Parenting Representations Categories

Markers of Individuation	Mothers' Parenting Representations' Categories			F (2, 72)
	Adequate/Balanced	Flooded	Restricted	
Differentiation of Self Scale	3.85	3.63	3.68	2.05
SITA				
Dependency denial	1.78b	2.14a	1.77b	3.87*
Healthy Separation	3.87	3.72	3.83	0.36
Separation Anxiety	2.01b	2.43a	1.71c	9.06***
Engulfment Anxiety	2.30b	2.98a	2.11b	6.91**

$p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; means in a row which do not share a letter are significantly different (Duncan post hoc $p < 0.05$)

adjustment (i.e., higher distress, lower functioning) as reflected in self and peers' reports.

When a Bonferroni adjustment was incorporated, the significant associations retained were those between warmth and affection and functioning – peers' report, and the associations between distress – self and peers' report and negative feelings, flooded descriptions, and inappropriate/inadequate boundaries. In general, it appears that parenting representations that include over-involvement and inadequate boundaries are related to lower levels of the son's coping with the leaving home transition into military service.

The Association Between Parenting Representations and the Son's Psychosocial Functioning: Time 3 Assessment

The MANOVA conducted with the parenting representation groups as the independent variable and individuation indicators assessed at the third point in time as dependent variables was significant ($F(14, 110) = 2.70, p < 0.01$). Follow-up ANOVAs indicated that sons of flooded mothers evinced the lowest levels of individuation, as reflected in their highest scores in separation anxiety, engulfment anxiety, and dependency denial (see Table 7.6). A similar profile of results was revealed when the continuous scales of mothers' parenting representations were used in computing Pearson correlations with these developmental outcomes. Specifically, as can be seen in Table 7.7, separation anxiety and engulfment anxiety were positively associated with indicators characteristic of flooded mothers – high levels of inappropriate/inadequate boundaries, negative emotions, and focusing on achievement. A sense of individuation was positively associated with markers characteristic of

Table 7.5. The Association between Mothers' Parenting Representations and Their Sons' Coping with Military Service – Time 2

Adolescents' Report (N = 80)	Parenting Representations Scales				# d
	Problem Focused Coping	Emotion Focused Coping	Functioning	Distress	
Representations of the adolescent	0.28*	-0.17	0.22#	-0.08	$d > 0.10, * d > 0.05, ** d > 0.01, *** d > 0.001$
Trust/confidence in the child's capacities	-0.17	-0.17	0.22#	-0.08	
Relationships	0.25*	-0.08	0.27*	-0.12	
Warmth and affection	0.25*	-0.08	0.23*	-0.04	
Stress achievement	-0.08	-0.08	-0.15	0.25*	
The nature of future relationships with the child	-0.19#	-0.15	0.24*	-0.02	
Inappropriate/inadequate boundaries	0.25*	0.13	-0.27*	0.36**	
Pain and/or difficulty	0.08	0.20#	-0.22*	0.36***	
Anger	0.01	0.28*	-0.26*	0.37***	
Worry/fear	0.32**	0.02	-0.15	0.31**	
Guilt	0.28*	0.21#	-0.20#	0.23*	
Conflicts	0.36**	-0.01	-0.22*	0.33**	
Narrative style (process scales)	0.30*	-0.01	-0.22*	0.33**	
Adequate/balanced description	-0.25*	0.21#	0.14	0.04	
Flooded description	0.21	-0.07	-0.30**	0.24**	
Restricted description	-0.21	0.34**	0.03	-0.25*	

Table 7.7. The Association between Mothers' Parenting Representations and Their Sons' Individuation - Time 3

Parenting Representations' Scales	Differentiation of Self Scale	SITA		
		Dependency Denial	Separation Anxiety	Engulfment Anxiety
Representations of the self				
Parental Competence	0.29**	-0.11	-0.06	-0.22*
Self-understanding	0.25*	-0.02	0.03	0.07
Representations of the adolescent				
Trust/confidence in the child's capacities	0.40***	-0.25*	-0.05	-0.22*
Child's understanding	0.35**	-0.06	0.04	0.04
Elaborate perception of the child in the future	0.05	0.01	0.19	-0.06
Representations of the parent-adolescent relationships				
Warmth and affection	0.24*	-0.17	-0.09	-0.14
Partnership and mutuality	0.28*	-0.16	-0.04	-0.07
Emphasizing/stressing achievement	-0.25*	0.21#	0.32**	0.33**
Autonomy granting	0.27*	-0.25*	-0.15	-0.16
Monitoring	0.29*	-0.10	-0.06	-0.05
The nature of future relationships with the child	0.30**	-0.16	-0.08	-0.11
Inappropriate/inadequate boundaries	-0.07	0.26*	0.26*	0.52***
Pain and/or difficulty	-0.17	0.15	0.30**	0.35**
Anger	-0.10	0.28**	0.34**	0.40***
Worry/fear	0.01	0.15	0.24*	0.32**
Guilt	0.10	0.16	0.21#	0.33**
Conflicts and power struggles	-0.07	0.21#	0.30**	0.31**
Narrative style (process scales)				
Adequate/balanced description	0.25*	-0.16	0.06	-0.15
Flooded description	-0.11	0.25*	0.30**	0.43***
Restricted description	-0.07	-0.12	-0.29*	-0.25*

$p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; $N = 74$

adequate/balanced mothers (e.g., mothers' competence, partnership and mutuality, and warmth and affection) and was negatively associated with some of the indicators of restricted mothers' parenting representations (e.g., low monitoring, and low reflectivity - self-understanding).

Discussion

This study, which examined parenting representations of mothers of adolescent sons, found these representations to be meaningfully associated with the mothers' own attachment representations as well as with a number of indicators of the sons' psychosocial functioning. Specifically, mothers' parenting representations were associated with the sons' functioning and coping during the leaving home transition into military service about a year later, and with their levels of individuation almost four years later still.

Specifically, mothers' warmth and affection was positively and strongly associated with markers of better functioning in basic training, and aspects of the representations which reflect flooded mothers (inappropriate/inadequate boundaries, high levels of negative emotions) were strongly related to higher distress and to problems in individuation. This prediction is impressive given the time interval (eight months to one year), the different context, and the different methods and informants employed to assess the constructs. The association between maternal representations and the peers' reports of the sons' adaptation is especially compelling because these peers were not part of the mother-son dyad.

On the whole, these findings attest to the significance of mothers' parenting representations in predicting their adolescent sons' functioning in various domains. These associations are especially noteworthy in light of the diverse areas of functioning assessed, the longitudinal predictions, and the multi-source, multi-method design.

These results accord with previous studies examining parenting representations of mothers of younger children, mostly infants, toddlers, and preschoolers (e.g., Pianta et al., 1996; Slade et al., 1999). Adolescence, however, is marked by several unique characteristics which highlight the importance of our findings. First, as discussed by George and Solomon (1996; 1999) and Allen et al. (2003), caregiving or parenting representations are expected to be conceptually and developmentally linked with attachment representations and affected by their quality. Yet other sources of influence, in particular the history of the mother's relationship with her child and the quality of her current relationship with the child, may strongly affect these representations. This is especially true when parents and children have had a long history together, as in the case of parenting representations of parents of adolescents.

The fact that we found a significant association between mothers' attachment and parenting representations attests to the importance of the mothers' state of mind with regard to attachment for their parenting even in adolescence.

Specifically, autonomous mothers were conspicuous in their positive parenting representations (i.e., higher competence and partnership and mutuality) and moderate levels of negative emotions. Preoccupied mothers showed the highest level of uncontained negative emotions and inappropriate/inadequate boundaries, whereas dismissing mothers showed the highest level of restricted narrative and lowest level of negative emotions. Yet some of the central facets of parenting representations such as reflectivity did not differentiate among the state-of-mind groups.

Thus, it is important to note that despite the similarity in method and coding scheme (i.e., in-depth structured interview, utilization of both content and information processing coding scales), the associations between mothers' AAI and parenting representations were not so strong as to suggest that the two assess the same construct. These findings are significant because they underscore the unique place of parenting representations in mothers' caregiving vis-a-vis mothers' state of mind with respect to attachment.

A distinct issue related to parents of adolescents is the importance of focusing on parents' feelings and perceptions during this period. Despite findings showing that most adolescents navigate this developmental period successfully, several recent conceptualizations suggest that for parents this period can be a very challenging and difficult experience. For parents the daily conflicts, the emotional ups and downs, the questioning of their authority, and the need to let go while continue to serve as a secure base and safe haven prove quite taxing (Steinberg, 2001). Our findings demonstrated that mothers who at this challenging developmental period are able to contain but not repress their negative emotions, and to maintain differentiated boundaries between themselves and the adolescent while providing warmth and affection, have sons who successfully cope with salient developmental tasks of late adolescence: leaving home and individuation.

In this report, we opted to retain a large number of separate yet interrelated scales to be able to examine the possibility of their distinctive predictions. Our results seem to support the choice of this strategy. Different aspects in the parenting representations of the mothers seem to play different roles with regards to various developmental outcomes. For example, in the current dataset positive feelings towards the child were strongly related to his functioning, especially during basic training as reported by peers. In contrast, maternal reflectivity, which was also seen as a positive marker of parenting representations, was not associated with coping in the military context. From the negative markers, inadequate/inappropriate boundaries proved a good predictor of distress as reported by both peers and adolescents in basic training; in addition they predicted lower levels of individuation.

In general, characteristics of flooded mothers (e.g., high levels of inappropriate/inadequate boundaries and negative emotions) were associated with the lowest levels of individuation and highest difficulty at the time of separating from the family and adjusting to the new environment. Characteristics of adequate/balanced mothers (e.g., mothers' competence, partnership and mutuality, and warmth and affection) were positively associated with coping with separation, and with individuation. In contrast, characteristics of restricted mothers (e.g., low monitoring, low reflectivity) were not associated with these outcomes. This distinct profile of association needs to be explored in future research but seems to suggest the importance of retaining, at least at this preliminary stage of research, a diversity of scales.

In this study we looked only at mothers' representations. However, the role of fathers as caregivers and their contribution to adolescent coping in general, and to coping during military service in particular, cannot be overstated. We are currently analyzing fathers' parenting representation as reflected in the PRI-A and hope to be able to explore this aspect as well. Similarly, this study examined only adolescent boys. The way girls negotiate the developmental tasks of separation and individuation might reflect a different profile of developmental processes. In addition, the role of fathers and mothers in these processes might be different for girls and boys. As the PRI-A from the girls' study are currently being analyzed, we hope to be able to shed light on gender differences in these domains in the near future.

In addition, in this study we explored the associations between mothers' parenting representations and the functioning of their adolescents during late adolescence. The experiences and feelings of parents of adolescents at other periods in adolescence (e.g., preadolescence, before and after puberty) may be somewhat different, and these periods may pose distinct challenges for the parents (Graber, Brooks-Gunn, & Petersen, 1996). Similarly, the effects of parents' representations on the adolescents may be somewhat different, depending on the period of adolescence studied. It would be the task for future research to examine these avenues.

Our study longitudinally examined developmental trajectories of male adolescents regarding two developmental tasks, across a four-year time span and during an especially malleable period. Thus, the association found between mothers' parenting representations and psychosocial developmental accomplishments of their sons is quite impressive, and attests to the significance of the mothers' parenting representations in affecting the sons' experiences as part of their developmental trajectory.

The ability to assess parenting representations has practical and clinical implications as well. Adolescence is a particularly tumultuous period in the

life cycle of the family. Shedding light on the implications of various parenting representations for parents' and adolescents' psychosocial well-being could help practitioners to identify at-risk families for whom this life period is expected to be difficult and stormy for both parties. Learning about the way successful and competent parents negotiate this period, as well as learning about the deficiencies of less efficient parents may eventually help parents cope adaptively with this challenging period, and make it a less taxing and more pleasurable experience for both parties. Finally, most previous research on parents-adolescents' relationships has focused on parents' influence on their children. However, the impact of adolescents on their parents has been less explored and reflects the general focus on the child as the center of interest. This lacuna calls for systematic research and deeper understanding. The "parenting career" is demanding and lifelong, and as such it deserves more attention in itself, not only as an independent variable predicting children's functioning.

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8 Like Fathers, Like Sons? Fathers' Attitudes to Childrearing in Light of Their Perceived Relationships with Own Parents, and Their Attachment Concerns

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Abstract

How does the way parents perceive and remember their relationships with their own parents during childhood relate to their parental attitudes toward their own preschool children? A sample of 62 fathers, aged 22-40, drawn from a longitudinal study of parenthood (Scher, 1991) was used to answer this question. Four factors served to assess the fathers' childrearing attitudes with their 3.5-year-old children: control and authoritative/ness; repression; encouragement of verbal and emotional expression; and promotion of autonomy (Block, 1981). The fathers' relationships with their own parents in childhood (acceptance, and encouragement of independence; Epstein, 1983) and fathers' attachment concerns (fear of abandonment and fear of dependency; Mayseless, 1995) were examined by self-reports. Perceived acceptance by fathers' own father was positively associated with rearing attitude of control and repression and negatively with autonomy promotion. A controlling rearing attitude was associated with less behavior problems. Results were discussed as supporting a "model of reference" whereby the paternal role includes reference to experiences with mother and father during childhood that indicates similarity as well as compensation and change.

Studies have documented the intergenerational transmission of risk and vulnerability between parents and their children via both mothers and fathers (e.g., Kendler, 1996). In extreme cases, instances of risk factors have been found, namely a very high likelihood that problems of mothers are transmitted to their children (Bifulco et al., 2002). Similarly, transmission of increased risk was found due to problems with the father's own father. Findings from a sample of 164 fathers from the Concordia Longitudinal Risk Project indicate inter-generational continuity, particularly for aggression (Cooperman, 2000).