

EMOTION AS ENERGISER IN PARENT-ADOLESCENT PROJECTS DURING THE  
TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

by

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## **Abstract**

Research on emotion in parent and child relationship has been largely limited to quantitative studies that do not capture the experience of emotion. This qualitative study sought to answer the question, “How does emotion serve to establish, maintain, disrupt and/or repair interaction between parent and adolescent in their interactions about the transition to adulthood?”

Transcripts and video recordings of four parent-adolescent dyads from a larger transition-to-adulthood study were used. This secondary analysis, using the case study method, was guided by the contextual action theory framework in order to describe the role of emotion in parent-adolescent interactions and projects relating to the transition-to-adulthood. Eight identified emotion categories were used in coding the transcripts, based on indicators according to Gottman’s “Specific Affect Coding System”. The identified emotions in the moment-to-moment interactions between parents and adolescents and their self-confrontation interviews were organised by their function and process level. That is, whether the emotion was a manifest behaviour; an appraisal or steering process; or at the level of meaning in the joint or individual goal(s) of parents and adolescents. The role of emotion was demonstrated by how it served and/or contributed to different outcomes depending on how the emotion was experienced. The findings illustrated that emotion was an important factor in the co-construction of the parent-adolescent relationship as parents and adolescents are engaged in the transition-to-adulthood process. For example, even though less desirable emotions such as anger disrupted parent-adolescent interaction at the level of behaviour, emotion still functioned to energise their projects. At different levels, emotion energised the joint action between parents and adolescents, their steering processes and goals, to establish, maintain, disrupt and/or repair their interactions and projects differently. This study lends support to the need for the use of a qualitative

framework to understand the complex phenomenon of emotion. From the counselling psychology perspective, the findings of this study provide insight to practitioners on the experience of emotion from the individual perspectives of parents and adolescents and emotion as a joint experience.

## **Preface**

This research has been approved by the University of British Columbia, Office of Research Services, Behavioural Research Ethics Board, minimal risk, H09-0263 (Appendix A).

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Parents play an important role in the lives of adolescents, motivated by and engaged in tasks and relational issues. In the transition to adulthood, parents and adolescents work jointly to negotiate issues of transition (Young et al., 2008), which often involve varying degrees of conflict and closeness. The role of emotion in communication between parent and child has been found to be one of the most important characteristics of this relationship (e.g., Cole, Martin & Dennis, 2004), as well as being “vital to effective parenting” (Dix, 1991, p. 3). However, most studies of emotion have been conducted in the context of marital satisfaction (e.g., Gottman, 1993), and studies of parent-child relationship focused either on the parental influence on child (e.g., Stattin & Kerr, 2000) or social-emotional development in children (e.g., Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1996) with only a few studies conducted with parents and their adolescent-child on how emotion serves to facilitate or hinder their relationship particularly during the transition to adulthood. This study addresses the role of emotion in parent-adolescent relationship as parent and adolescent jointly work on their transition-to-adulthood issues.

Adolescence is a “major transitional period where important qualitative changes occur in development” (Montemayor, 1983, p. 84). According to Rosiman, Masten, Coatsworth and Tellegen (2004) as adolescents enter adulthood, in a Western cultural context, there are two main tasks of developing competence in work and romantic relationship amidst other roles and responsibilities. During the transition to adulthood, parents continue to play an important role in supporting their child’s needs (Bryant, Zvonkovic, & Reynolds, 2006) and relationship is key. This relationship also serves as a protective factor for example, when a “positive” relationship is shared between parents and adolescent, disclosure of information is higher and adolescents are found to be less likely to engage in problem behaviour (Fletcher, Steinberg, & Williams-



Wheeler, 2004). While it is not the goal of this study to evaluate if the relationship is a positive or negative one, the interest is certainly that of how emotion motivates the actions of parent and adolescent as they jointly negotiate the transition to adulthood.

Even though there has been wide range of research on parent-adolescent relationships, research has focused on behaviours, with little attention paid to participants' emotional experience of the relationship. Where there have been studies on the role of emotion in the parent-child relationship, the focus was whether parents and their child(ren) experienced similar emotional states. However, these studies found no difference in terms of socio-economic status and across cultures (e.g., Larson & Richards, 1994) or emotion during conflict (e.g., Montemayor, 1983). Emotion is an important factor found in all parent-adolescent relationship that requires a deeper understanding.

There are several perspectives of emotions, the biological, cognitive, structural-developmental, functionalist and social-cultural (Mascolo & Griffin, 1998) that occur within the complex and dynamic nature of individuals and particularly the parent-child relationship. This suggests that emotion is closely connected in every aspect of an individual, "our needs, plans, goals and purposes...an energiser and motivator of action" (Young & Valach, 2000, p. 191). In a review of measurement tools of emotions, Zeman, Klimes-Dougan, Cassano and Adrian (2007) suggested that the study of emotion, a "phenomena [sic] of central significance to human beings" (p. 377), warrants a multimethod approach and multi-level analysis. In the research on parent-child relationships, there has been a shift in looking at this relationship from a unidirectional to even beyond bi-directionality (Kuczynski, 2003), a co-constructed model (Kuczynski, Lollis & Koguchi, 2003). That is, parent and child influence and are influenced by each other mutually. Parents and children share an interdependent, on-going relationship that is unique and complex,

extending across diverse context (Harach & Kuczynski, 2005). In adolescence, the parent-child relationship can be conceptualised as a co-constructed *project* that involves “a series of goal-directed actions over time that focuses explicitly on the quality and nature of the parent-adolescent interactions” (Young et al., 2006, p. 3). The interdependency between both parents and adolescents throughout adolescence establishes a foundation for healthy development (Diamond & Liddle, 1999). Children whose families are warm and supportive, with positive parent-child relationships are less likely to engage in problem behaviour in adolescence (Fletcher et al., 2004). Correlations have been found for positive emotions and optimal family functioning, particularly with positive communication in the family (Vandeleur, Perrez, & Schoebi, 2007). For children to perceive positive familial dynamics, Vandeleur and colleagues (2007) suggested that empathy and self-esteem may have significant roles.

Even though emotion is an important area underlying the parent-adolescent relationship, there has been little research in this area. A frequently cited reason is the elusive definition of emotion and a lack of a conceptual framework (e.g., Cole et al., 2004; Frijda, 2008; Langlois, 2004; Solomon, 2008). Emotion is not simply “intrapersonal processes and mechanisms” (Frijda, 2008, p. 69). It is a complex phenomenon with a “constructive role” in the human experience (Cacioppo & Gardner, 1999, p. 194). This study defines emotion at two levels: 1) “a psychological construct” (Scherer, 1984, p. 294) and 2) a relational and contextual construct (e.g., Frijda, 1986; Greenberg & Goldman, 2008). There are several aspects that constitute the psychological construct, which will be considered in this study: a) cognitive appraisal of situation, b) motivational component, and c) subjective feeling state. From the relational and contextual view, emotion is “the process of registering the significance of a physical or mental event, as the individual construes that significance” (Campos, Frankel & Camras, 2004, p. 379),

activated at the intra- and interpersonal levels (Safyer & Hauser, 1994), beyond the self “inclinations toward and reactions to interpersonal relationships” (Leary, 2007, p. 333).

Emotion is intertwined with cognition as internal processes that energise and motivate action, at the level of meaning, strategies and self-regulation (Lazarus, 1993; Young, Paseluikho & Valach, 1997), “emotion and emotional regulation are conjoined” (Campos et al., 2004, p. 379). The study of emotion is also “recognised as an essential aspect of any study of humankind” (Lewis, Haviland-Jones & Barrett, 2008, p. xi), as it “promote[s] coherence, continuity, and stability of the self and motivate the initiation, maintenance, and termination of relationship” (Benson, 2006, p. 73). The implication of research on emotions particularly in the area of family counselling is the understanding that “individual’s emotions may enhance and consolidate processes shared by family members” (Vandeleur et al., 2007, p. 5), in line with the phenomenological view that each member of the family co-constructs the familial experience (Larson & Richards, 1994). The development of empathy between adolescent and parent is also “a classic and powerful therapeutic strategy” (Diamond & Liddle, 1999, p. 7). Emotions in the family experienced by each member are dynamic, influence and are influenced by one another.

The parent assumes multiple roles – nurturer, authority figure, provider of security and intimacy, interactions with their child, which can be conflicting at times, characterises the variety of their interactions. This shapes a close interdependence in behaviour, emotions, needs and goals shared between parent and child. The parent-child relationship also provides a model for future relationship as well as understanding issues of trust and attachment (Diamond & Liddle, 1999). Understanding the process of emotions that underlie this relationship could provide us with important clues on how people interact, what facilitates relationship building, whether the expression of different emotions is teachable or innate and to what extent. Studies on emotion

have been focused on the development of an individual and the role of emotion in conflict (e.g., Montemayor, 1983). Few research studies have focused on the process of the parent-child relationship in a more naturalistic setting (e.g., parent-adolescent having a conversation around issues important to them, Young et al., 2006; 2008) as well as the opportunity to understand the internal process such as their thoughts, feelings and motivations, of parent and adolescent during their interaction.

The literature on parent-child (including parent and their adolescent-child) relationship and emotion focuses largely on parental influences on behaviour such as developing children's self-esteem, emotional regulation and peer interaction. Emotion is often a factor in the findings but there is little in-depth research on its role in establishing, maintaining or disrupting interactions between parents and their children. A closely related area of research is that of attachment, the focus on parental responsiveness to their child's needs (Bryant et al., 2006).

From the counselling psychology point of view, it is important to consider emotion from a functionalist perspective (Barrett & Campos, 1987), such as how emotion maintains or disrupts the interaction between parent and child. For example, Diamond and Liddle (1999) suggested that developing empathy between adolescent and parent is a powerful therapeutic strategy in family counselling. Fletcher and colleagues (2004) asserted that parental monitoring and knowledge is important in managing adolescent's behaviour and parental "warmth is not enough" (p. 795). By understanding how emotion is part of the engagement between parent and child might help us to learn about underlying issues as well as targeting useful intervention rather than staying at simply the behavioural level. With the recent interest in positive psychology and the strength-based perspective, research has found factors that encourage adolescents to thrive in adversity such as "strong parent-child bonding" (Smith, 2006). The

protective factor of bonds between parent and adolescent reflects Bowlby's theory of secure attachment as predictive of social relations and personality development (Kerns & Stevens, 1996). Emotion is also seen as strongly associated with attachment as part of relationship development (Cassidy, 1999).

“Emotional processing is one of the key concepts in everyday language” (Valach, Young & Lynam, 2002, p. 27). In this study, emotion is considered from an action theoretical perspective (Valach et al., 2002), which addresses emotion at the level of steering, meaning and self-regulation. This conceptualisation addresses the issue of context which helps make sense of emotion in the parent-adolescent projects as it provides a language to describe how people live their lives. Emotion is part of the internal process that drives behaviour and is intertwined with cognition (Young et al., 1997), feelings drive behaviour.

The purpose of this study is to understand the role of emotion as energiser in parent-adolescent relationships during the transition to adulthood through the use of four case studies using the action theoretical approach (Valach et al., 2002). This perspective provides an in-depth study of how emotion motivates behaviour, provides meaning, and is a means of self-regulation in parent-adolescent conversation.

This study also expands on past research conducted by Young and colleagues (1997) that described the role of emotion in understanding the context and meaning that parents and adolescents uncover and discover in their joint conversation. Conceptualising and studying emotions in parent-adolescent conversation from a constructivist perspective contrasts attempts to “measure” emotions by means of checklists and questionnaires which are “inadequate for the purpose of providing accurate and full descriptions of the flow of emotions that have been experienced or displayed” (Lazarus, 2003, p. 96). Based on conversations around issues of

transition-to-adulthood between parent and adolescent, this study aims to answer this question, “How does emotion serve to establish, maintain, disrupt and/or repair interaction between parent and adolescent in their interactions about the transition to adulthood?”

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The parent-child relationship across the life span has been widely studied in various fields of the social sciences. Studies of emotion in parent-child relationships have focused on the influence of parents on children's development of emotion with few on the role of emotion in their interactions. Similarly, emotion has been studied from different perspectives, which leads to a range of definitions and theoretical perspectives. To begin this review of the literature, the research on the importance and nature of parent-child relationship particularly during adolescence and transition-to-adulthood is explored. The conversations between parents and adolescents provide a context in which the role of emotion is discussed. Following, the literature that informs the diversity of the concept of emotion is reviewed from the perspective of emotion as construct as well as the function of emotion. It must be noted that there were several challenges in teasing apart emotion as a construct and the function of emotion, as there were several overlaps. The delineation of sections, while arbitrary, is necessary to provide a coherent structure to understand this essential and complex phenomenon. To conclude this chapter, a review of methodology in the study of emotion is provided and the rationale for using Contextual Action Theory (Valach et al., 2002) and action project method is described.

### **Transition to Adulthood**

Arnett (2000) described emerging adulthood as "a distinct period...a prolonged period of independent role exploration during the late teens and twenties" (p. 469) in industrialised societies in the recent years. This period of adjustment, emerging adulthood, is more aptly described as the *transition-to-adulthood* for both adolescents and their parents. They are engaged in joint actions and projects (Young et al., 2008) as they navigate and negotiate the challenges of this period (Arnett, 1999; Steinberg & Morris, 2001).

Young and colleagues (2008) illustrated that “the transition to adulthood is meaningful for individuals and their family members” (p. 297) and meaning is co-constructed between parents and adolescents, reflecting the importance of their relationship. Part of the communication between parents and adolescents involves emotion energising their exchange, and provides meaning (Greenberg & Goldman, 2008). The findings of Young and colleagues (2008) focused on three themes in the transition-to-adulthood projects that emerged, *governance transfer, career promotion and parent-youth relational processes*. Interwoven in the projects is the complexity of the parent-adolescent relationship, how it influences their interaction and projects. Emotion is “the most crucial part of an interactive relationship” (Greenberg & Goldman, 2008, p. 19) and must not be overlooked particularly in the parent-adolescent relationship as their interactions play a critical role in the transition-to-adulthood process. The emotional experience of parents and adolescents was not mentioned explicitly in the transition-to-adulthood study by Young and colleagues (2008) but is an area worth exploring.

### **Parent-Adolescent Project**

The phase *parent-adolescent project* is a more accurate term than *parent-adolescent relationship* to describe what goes on between parents and adolescents. As parents and adolescents are engaged in other issues of transition, their relationship is sometimes also being negotiated, as a project. Their dialogue is what Baxter (2004) termed, an “on-going flux” (p. 18), a constant construction and reconstruction done jointly. As parents and adolescents work together in this process of transition, they and the relationship influence and are influenced by the outcomes. Young and colleagues (2008) found in their study of 20 parent-adolescent dyads that the, “parent-youth relationship was a goal, a functional step, and a resource in these projects” (p. 301).



## **The Nature of Parent-Adolescent Relationship**

The parent-child relationship context is one where both parent and child, are “powerful and vulnerable with regard to each other” (Kuczynski & Hildebrandt, 1997, p. 236). Reis, Collins and Berscheid (2000) found that the relationship context is an important factor in development and a “potent causal factor” (p. 863) of behaviour. Parent-adolescent relationship fits their definition of a close relationship “in which partners have exhibited strong mutual influence on each other’s behavior for an extended period of time” (p. 845) and are concerned not only with how they act now but with the anticipation of future interactions (Hinde, 1979). The parent-adolescent relationship refers to parents and adolescents as engaged in intentional, goal-directed actions often embedded within relational goals and projects (Young et al., 1997; 2006; 2008), influencing and are influenced by their interaction with each other. Research in the early 1990s focused on the role of children as internalising unquestioningly social norms and roles while parents were agents of socialization (Maccoby, 1992). Barnes, Farrell and White (1990) further suggested that the asymmetrical parent-child relationship shapes the child’s personality and social behaviour through the power and impact of parents. A recent study by Young and colleagues (2008) demonstrated that the relational process in the parent-adolescent dynamic was important on several levels, as it “represented a goal, a functional step, and a resource for other projects” (p. 301). Both parent and child have long-term obligations, which include shared goals weaved within time and culture.

The parent-adolescent relationship assumes bi-directional causality, equal agency, the context of interaction within the relationship, and the interdependent asymmetry of power (Kuczynski, 2003; Russell, Mize & Bissaker, 2002). Bidirectional causality refers to the cyclical fashion of interaction that is balanced between parent and child, evidenced by the individual

growth of parent and child through their interaction, co-constructing their relationship (Kuczynski, Marshall & Schnell, 1997). The bidirectionality of the parent-adolescent relationship goes beyond the context of “connectedness” between parent-child and the parental obligation as both parent and child act jointly, that is, through mutual processes co-construct their relationship (Kuczynski et al., 2003). Parents are a “relational resource” for the child (Kuczynski, 2003), but their relationship requires a deeper understanding of the “mutuality of parent-child emotional expression” (Clark & Ladd, 2000, p. 485).

Frequently, the study of parent-child relationship has focused on parenting as a socialization process, such as teaching children values acceptable to society and to facilitate their social and emotional development (Grusec & Ungerer, 2003). Nonetheless, this teaching occurs within the parent-adolescent dynamic, a relational one in which they are continually transformed as they interact (Kuczynski, 2003). This was also observed by Maccoby (2003) who in the epilogue of the *Handbook of Dynamics in Parent-Child Relations* wrote “when they engage in reciprocal interaction with children, are themselves changed” (p. 450) suggesting that in spite of an individual’s motivation and intention, it is more often than not, a joint action with another.

Researchers have characterised adolescence as a time of difficult parent-child relationships; Freud considered it to be an inevitable part of the maturational process (Laursen, Coy, & Collins, 1998). Arnett (1999), however, asserted that not all adolescents experience “storm and stress” although “adolescence is the period when storm and stress is more likely to occur” (p. 371) as they tend to “experience more extremes of mood and more swings of mood from one extreme to the other” (p. 319). In a review of studies of adolescent development, Steinberg and Morris (2001) noted, “problems experienced by adolescents are relatively transitory in nature and are resolved by the beginning of adulthood” (p. 86). At the same time,

successful negotiation and conflict management “promotes successful transition to adult roles and responsibilities” (Hall, cited in Laursen, et al., 1998, p. 817). The adolescent’s negotiation of independence and autonomy is often subsumed within other developmental tasks and projects, which may cause disruptions to the parent-child harmony, upsetting the normal, stable feelings of closeness (Dix & Branca, 2003). During this period of transition, reactions and expectations of parents and adolescents are informed by their “previous history of interaction and to anticipations that their relationship will continue into the future” (Kuczynski, et al., 1997, p. 236).

In adolescence, the parent-child relationship is renegotiated and transformed to reflect greater mutuality (Aquilino, 1997). Individuation and identity formation are relational, that is, created through acting jointly with another, frequently in this context of transition to adulthood (e.g., Young et al., 2006; 2008), and are framed in the context of parent-child relationship (e.g., Bryant et al., 2006). In this process, the adolescent may develop “new behaviours” such as “becoming more assertive...question existing family norms and practices” (Aquilino, 1997, p. 673). Not only is transition to adulthood a challenging time for the adolescent, it also affects parents and their parenting.

Although there is little literature about parents’ experience during this period, studies of parents during the transition from childhood to adolescence (e.g., Shearer, Crouter, McHale, 2005) revealed the challenges of parenting during such phases of development. Further, Steinberg (2001) suggested that “parents are more bothered...hold on to the affect after a negative interaction with their teenagers” (p. 5) than are the adolescents themselves. Studies during this period of transition have shown that as parent and adolescent are jointly engaged in projects, parenting projects also occurs (e.g., Young et al., 2000; 2008). Further, research has

“continued to find consistent gender differences in several different emotional processes across several types of data” (Brody & Hall, 2008, p. 405). Mothers tend to appear to be more involved in projects pertaining to transition to adulthood (Bryant et al., 2006) as well as reported as being “significantly higher on emotion coaching than were fathers” (Stocker, Richmond, Rhoades & Kiang, 2007, p. 320). Dix (1991) asserts that “parenting is an emotional experience” (p. 3), and “emotion is activated because the outcomes of these interactions matter to parents” (p. 6), parents act in intentional ways even though not always rational.

Positive relationships play a significant role in an individual’s overall well-being and satisfaction (Reis & Gable, 2003) as interaction with significant others provides an individual with the emotional stimulation and support necessary for mental health (Roberts, Brown, Johnson & Reinke, 2005). Also, “parents’ emotion socialization practices may be particularly salient... [with] implications for adolescents’ psychological adjustment” (Stocker et al., 2007, p. 311). The influence of parents’ emotion on adolescents’ adjustment suggests a functional view of emotion and illustrates that emotion is embedded within relationships. This strengthens the case for the need to develop positive relationships with supportive adults as a “protective factor for psychosocial resilience in children and youth” (Masten & Reed, 2005, p. 83), impacting children’s self-esteem development and relationships with others even later on in life (Roisman, Madsen, Henninghausen, Sroufe & Collins, 2001; Dawber & Kuczynski, 1999; Weiss, 1986).

### **The Concept of Emotion**

Since William James’ title of his essay “What is an emotion?” in 1884, philosophers and psychologists have attempted to adequately define *emotion* but to no avail (Solomon, 2008). The challenge of defining emotion, was also mentioned in almost every chapter in the *Handbook of Emotions* (2008), as Fehr and Russell (1984) astutely observed “everyone knows what an

emotion is, until asked to give a definition” (p. 464). The lack of studies focused on the process of emotion has been attributed to the lack of a coherent definition. For example, in a study of parent-child “socialization” through dinner conversations, Pontecorvo and colleagues (2001) observed that “construction of meaning, mutual understanding, and other social and cognitive phenomena are jointly achieved by participants in and through talk-in-interaction” (p. 346). What was not salient in the study even though present was the process of emotion that “energised”, that is, to provide meaning and motivate (Frijda, 1986) the conversational exchange. Cole and colleagues (2004) found it fitting to highlight that “any psychological account of child development is incomplete without understanding the importance of emotions as motivators” (p. 318).

Even though the process of emotion in joint action has not been given much attention, the study of emotions from various paradigms and contexts has been expanding, as evidenced by three editions of the *Handbook of Emotions*, “recent research on emotions is almost as vast and diverse as emotional life itself” (Cacioppo & Gardner, 1999, p. 191) and to add to the growing list of journals focused on the study of emotions, is a new journal that recently launched its inaugural issue in 2009, the *Emotion Review*. Of interest in the context of this study is also the special issue of *Child Development* (2004) that was devoted to the publication of studies of emotion in parent-child relationship (e.g., Campos et al., 2004; Cole et al., 2004). However, it is also noted that these studies have been largely limited to “infancy through middle childhood and we know little about these processes [of emotion] in adolescence” (Stocker et al., 2007).

While there is no simple answer to the definition of emotion, Holodynski and Friedlmeier (2006) proposed four paradigms: 1) structuralist, 2) functionalist, 3) dynamic-systems, 4) sociocultural that they suggest when integrated, helps to conceptualise the “nature of emotion”

more fully, parallel to Mascolo and Griffin's (1998) perspectives of biological, cognitive, structural-developmental, functionalist and social-cultural. While these categories are helpful, a more fluid and encompassing means of studying emotion that occurs within the complex and dynamic nature of individuals and particularly the parent-adolescent relationship, is needed.

“Emotions are not good or bad, in and of themselves, except when context makes them so” (Campos et al., 2004, p. 392). To this end, emotion in this study is defined as a psychological construct, that is, it involves the cognitive appraisal of a situation, motivates/energises action, and is a subjective feeling state. Emotion is also a relational and contextual construct, which is the individual's process of the event, reaction and action towards the environment and co-construction of relationships. Emotion is the “relational action readiness, either in the form of tendencies to establish, maintain, or disrupt a relationship with the environment or in the form of mode of relational readiness” (Frijda, 1986, p. 71).

**Emotion as psychological construct.** *Emotion processes* is probably a more accurate term to capture the essence of what emotion is. “Psychologists have long known that people's self-thoughts are strongly linked to their emotions” (Leary, 2007, p. 318), “emotion and cognition operate together, not in opposition of each other” (Fischer & Ridell, 2006, p. 370). Our emotions are intertwined with cognition (Dix, 1991; Frijda, 1986; Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000), as a process of cognitive appraisal, that is the construal of “meaning or significance” of the encounter (Lazarus, 1984, p. 251). It also involves “relational meaning” (Cacioppo & Gardner, 1999, p. 197), that is, the interaction of the present condition with the individual's goals, beliefs and resources. However, cognition does not equate with rationality (Lazarus, 1984), nonetheless, “cognitive appraisals that shape our emotional reactions can distort reality as well as reflect it

realistically” (p. 253). Perhaps then, emotion “serves to resolve discrepancies between what people do or feel and the events surrounding them” (Frijda, 2008, p. 69).

Emotion as a “subjective feeling state” (Scherer, 1984, p. 294), is what most people often think of when referring to emotion (Plutchik, 1984), such as angry, sad, afraid. At the same time, this subjective feeling state also encompasses “specific configuration of expressive, bodily, and experiential indicators” (Holodynski & Friedlmeier, 2006, p. 15) as “feeling is not the cause or defining attribute of the emotion” (Campos et al., 2004, p. 378). In the study of emotional intelligence, Mayer and Caruso (2008) suggested that emotion plays a functional role, acting as communication signals (i.e., expression of emotion) that are understood and mediated by cultural context.

As emotion is involved in “all problem solving endeavours...emotions act as energy sources that maintain the impulse (commitment) to solve the problem” (Plutchik, 1984, p. 214). Emotions also serve to establish, maintain or disrupt a relationship (Frijda, 1986; Scherer, 1984; Young et al., 1997).

**Emotion as relational and contextual construct.** In the review of trends in the study of emotions, Cacioppo and Gardner (1999) found that “determinants of emotion are relative” (p. 196). Hence, it is necessary that “emotions must be understood in context” (Cole et al., 2004, p. 320), for example, even though emotions and cognitions are intertwined, as a means of coping with stress, “aimed at regulating feelings can create a dissociation between thoughts and feelings” (Lazarus, 1984, p. 248). Nonetheless, research so far has demonstrated that this field has moved from the understanding of emotion as a linear trajectory (e.g., psychoevolutionary perspective of fight or flight) to a more dynamic construct “not readily amenable to operational definition” (Campos et al., 2004, p. 378), as “any eliciting event can produce a multiplicity of

emotions” (p. 378). This does not mean that emotion cannot be identified. Emotion can and must be identified according to its contextual significance. How does this affect parent-adolescent conversations during the transition to adulthood period? This calls for the need to understand “equipotentiality” of emotion (Campos et al., 2004), that is, a response is chosen to meet an individual’s goals as well as in monitoring the efficacy of that choice. This is particularly interesting in light of parent-adolescent interactions as they have a history of interaction and a future to be concerned with in maintaining their relationship (Kuczynski et al., 1997).

In a study of narratives with parents and children, Oppenheim (2006) suggested that in conversations and interactions of everyday life, “interpersonal affective meaning-making influences intrapersonal processes” (p. 773) and vice versa. The interaction between parent and child illustrates that the self is constructed based on a “relation between self and other” (Baxter, 2004, p. 3). Similarly, in the study of “Family emotional processes and adolescents’ adjustment” (Stocker et al., 2007) the authors suggested that development of children’s emotion is embedded in their relationships, particularly through emotional communication and coaching. These activities are a constructive process that shapes how we see others and ourselves, with “powerful implications for our emotional well-being” (p. 772). In looking at the self in relation to others, Leary (2007) noted, “motives and emotions...facilitate people’s social interactions and relationships” (p. 317).

Lazarus (1993) asserted, “emotions are always a response to relational meaning” (p. 13) and in Leary’s (2007) review on current research adds to that, “majority of reactions involving self-motives and self-conscious emotions are not fundamentally about the psychological self but rather are inclinations toward and reactions to interpersonal relationships.” (p. 333). Emotion in being a relational construct, also is a function. It serves to understand the intra- and interpersonal



dynamics, as such emotion can be seen as an energizer of an identity project, which is jointly constructed between the self and another. In light of parent-adolescent projects, emotion serves to regulate their interaction for example, “self-conscious emotions are involved in the self-regulation of interpersonal behavior” (Leary, 2007, p. 330).

It is fitting that in the *Handbook of Emotions* (2008), the first chapter in the section on “Social perspectives” is “Gender and emotion in context”. Gender difference is a context in which expression, perception and experience of emotion can be different (in addition to individual differences). This is worth mentioning as part of the contextual construct as gender stereotypes “powerfully shape the reality of gender differences” (Brody & Hall, 2008, p. 396) such as self-fulfilling prophecies in the interaction. “Display rules” fitting for each gender if misused may “have negative consequences, such as social rejection and discrimination” (Brody & Hall, 2008, p. 396). Again, this illustrates the dyadic nature in which emotion can operate in both the intra- and interpersonal levels.

### **Function of Emotion**

Early theories of emotion such as the *central theory* proposed by Wundt, that emotional experience has a “causal role with respect to a response” (Frijda, 1986, p. 177), is an incomplete understanding of this phenomenon. “Emotions are regulated even as they are regulating” (Cole et al., 2004, p. 320), contributing to “shaping personality and influence the patterns of interpersonal dynamics” (Benson, 2006, p. 73). Benson (2006) argued that parents influence emotional understanding and processes in children. Several other studies (e.g., Cole et al., 2004; Oppenheim, 2006; Stocker et al., 2007) have found that in parent-child interactions, parent and child are observed to be “systematically influencing” (Cole et al., 2004, p. 323) the other’s emotions and behaviour.

A major aspect of the function of emotion is emotion regulation. It “infuse[s] experience with meaning” (Cole et al., 2004, p. 318). Emotion regulation may be simply defined in hedonistic terms, “motivated to avoid pain and seek pleasure” (Gross, 2008, p. 500) but is more accurately reflected as “the modification of any process in the system that generates emotion or its manifestation in behaviour” (Campos et al., 2004, p. 380). Campos and colleagues (2004) asserted that “emotion and emotion regulation cannot be dissociated from one another” (p. 378), emotions construct and carry meaning across experience. Even in the definition of emotion, the element of “cognitive appraisal” is part of emotional regulation, illustrating the inter-connectedness of emotion and emotional regulation.

In “[t]he role of emotion in the construction of career,” Young and colleagues (1997) found emotion as an important component in parent-adolescent conversation around career exploration and decision making. Emotion was seen as an identifier of “where to focus joint attention”, pointing to what is “personally important to the adolescent (motivation) and what the adolescent believes about him or herself (cognition)” (p. 43). Emotion is constructive (Cacioppo & Gardner, 1999), it is motivating and regulatory (Campos et al., 2004).

“Social signals” is a component of emotion as a regulatory process, as this is “one of the primary means by which the person is embedded in a dyadic, family, ethnic, and cultural contexts” (Campos et al., 2004, p. 383). The signals impact the experience and expression of emotion in different situations. These signals may constitute specific interpersonal meanings and may be contextual (Campos et al., 2004). Culture like gender, is contextual as well as functional, an important consideration in the study of emotion.

## **Definition of Emotion**

Emotion is a complex construct. Youngstrom and Izard (2008) suggest that the study of emotion ought to focus on its function, the adaptiveness and the role of emotion in motivating action. In a study (Izard, in press) of 34 scientists who are engaged in “significant research on emotion,” based on their answers to a series of questions about the nature and definition of emotion, did not reveal consensus in their responses. However, there was “moderate to high agreement on the structures and functions of emotion.” The different definitions that have been postulated are not without merit and encouraged by Izard’s (in press) “clarion call for researchers who continue to use the term to provide their own operational definition or at least specify what they mean by the term”.

This study defines emotion as “a complex set of interactions among subjective and objective factors... lead to behaviour that is often, but not always, expressive, goal-directed and adaptive” (Kleinginna & Kleinginna, 1981, p. 355). Emotion is rooted in the evolutionary tradition (e.g., Plutchik, 1981; Youngstrom & Izard, 2008) with “fundamental biological processes that shape action and thought” (Fischer & Ridell, 2006, p. 370) at the same time, a cultural phenomenon (Wiezerbicka, 1999) “communicated at every level of language” (p. 29) as a “fundamental resource...a meaning system that informs people of the significance of events to their well-being” (Greenberg, 2008, p. 49). Emotion is socially constructed to “fulfill a social purpose and regulate interactions between individuals” (Valdés et al., 2010, p. 136) being socially constructed in and through relationships (Frijda, 1986; Fischer & Ridell, 2006).

Contextual Action Theory postulates that emotion energises action, “modes of relational action readiness, either in the form of tendencies to establish, maintain, or disrupt” (Frijda, 1986, p. 71) projects, careers and goals, emotion, as it relates to actions is “parallel and integrated

interweaving...not a linear sequence” (Valach, et al., 2002, p. 23). Emotions are “proactive as well as reactive in relation to cognition and behavior” (Izard, 2007, p. 272). Greenberg (2007) suggests that emotion creates meaning and energises both individual and joint behaviours.

### **Methods of Investigating Emotion**

Quantitative methods are used with surprising frequency in the study of emotions (e.g., Larson & Richards, 1994; Vandeleur et al., 2007) and parental influence leaving gaps in the research such as not accounting for “vast individual differences regarding emotion” (Zerman et al., 2007, p. 379). Using quantitative methodology, the type of data collected, the analyses (e.g., correlational, factor analyses, regression) only show the strength of relationship between variables; interpretations and inferences made may be strengthened by additional open-ended questions. While researchers need to be prudent in their data collection (i.e., use of measurement scales are more straightforward and less time intensive for researchers as compared with interviews or analyses of responses to open-ended questions), a combination of methods allows participants to express differences outside of the alternatives provided in questionnaires that may impact future research and practice.

Frequently, quantitative methodology (e.g., Larson & Richards, 1994; Vandeleur et al., 2007) has been used to understand emotion and the dynamics that occur between parent and adolescent through correlational studies of familial dynamics and participants’ responses on scales of measurement. However, this is of limited use as “coherence in emotion measures may be a holy grail not to be found” (Campos et al., 2004, p. 389). Instead, Campos and colleagues (2004) called for a more qualitative approach such as using narratives, which will enable the study of “patterns of behavior and behavior interpreted in context” (p. 398). With the lack of the use of qualitative methodology, Oppenheim (2006) suggested that “coconstructions of

narratives...have received less attention” (p. 781) as compared with empirical findings of studies focused on the individual.

### **Contextual Action Theory**

This section illustrates how contextual action theory provides a comprehensive framework. The action project method is grounded in a social constructivist approach (Young et al., 2008; Young & Collin, 2004). The contextual action theoretical perspective provides a framework to access human action, more specifically, that “human behaviour is considered as goal-directed action” (Valach et al., 2002, p. 5) and “is composed of processes [social meaning, cognitive/emotional manifest, behavioral] and functions [social control, cognitive steering, self-regulation]” (p. 6). This framework acknowledges that humans do not exist in a vacuum, not only acting and reacting with the environment and those around them but jointly (Young & Valach, 2000). Contextual action theory understands the dynamics of human interaction as “how people understand and make sense of human behaviour looks to the goal of action and other processes” (Young & Valach, 2008, p. 646), and can be “understood as intentionality” (p. 647).

An often overlooked aspect in the study of interactions and relationships is the internal processes (i.e., cognition and emotion) that steers or guides action. Contextual action theory acknowledges that “emotional processing plays an important role in energising action, cognitive steering, self-regulation” (Valach, et al., 2002, p. 27). In a study by Young and colleagues (1997), emotions were found to influence the action on different levels such as the goal level, which assisted how the participant attributed meaning to the situation as well as at the level of strategy for another in their relational experience. This framework’s consideration for not only the content but also the process, including what is not often observable, that is the internal process, makes it an integral model to guide a study of the role of emotion.

**Actions, projects, career.** Actions, projects and careers are not individual components but related constructs in understanding the human phenomena. “Actions are a system” (Valach & Young, 2002, p. 98), identified by goals, embedded in social meaning and influenced by our internal processes, that is, our cognitions and emotions. In action theory, *project* refers to a series of actions that have common goals, of a mid-term duration and are socially embedded, a “goal-directed mid-term process comprising individual and group actions” (Valach, et al., 2002, p. 35). In this study, parents and adolescents are engaged in “medium- and long-term joint actions of parents and youth by which they construct and organize present and future education, employment, relationship choices, and opportunities as youth leave high school” (Young et al., 2008, p. 298). Individuals are often “engaged in several parallel projects” (p. 39) and projects that parent and adolescent dyads are engaged in, in this study will need to be considered at both the individual and dyadic level (termed, *joint projects*).

*Career* is defined as having a “significant place in one’s life” (Young & Valach, 2008, p. 646), “a construct that people use to organise their behaviour over the long term” (Young & Valach, 2000, p. 188), pushing beyond reference to occupational work. Action theory (e.g., Valach et al., 2002; Young, et al., 2008; Young & Valach, 2008) proposes that “long-term, life-sustaining goals can and are found in other areas of life” (Young & Valach, 2008, p. 646). Career is constructed through a series of “intentional, goal-directed actions”, “embedded in superordinate goal structure, represented at one level by project” (Young & Valach, 2000, p. 189).

Further, action theory shares Bronfenbrenner’s systems theory “notion of joint action by identifying action as a characteristic of the microsystem” (Young & Valach, 2000, p. 188). This posits that joint action, project and career are socially embedded and co-constructed.

**Defining action.** Although not always rational, *action* is conceptualised as intentional and goal directed (Young et al., 1997; Young & Valach, 2000). Contextual action theory provides a conceptualisation that can address the organisation of action, “social meaning, manifest behaviour and subjective processes of individuals and groups” (Valach, et al., 2002, p. 5) as interrelated levels. The study of action within this framework acknowledges the unfolding of action over time and “that encompasses intentional behavior, internal cognitive and affective processing, and social constructions of the meaning of behavior” (Young et al., 2008, p. 298). Actions are steered by internal, communicative processes, thoughts and feelings, as well as being socially influenced (Young & Valach, 2008). Engaging in conversations and taking part in the research study can be seen as an action in the parents’ and adolescents’ transition to adulthood project.

**Levels of action.** Action theory considers actions from a hierarchical perspective (Valach et al., 2002), guided by goals that are either longer term or more immediate, the functional steps that provide the ‘how’ and at the most basic level, the elements of an action. *Elements* are observable, providing defining features of an action, and can be measured systematically and accurately. At a more intermediate level, the analysis of an action or *functional steps* of ‘why’ a particular element occurred. This is also known as the *appraisal* or *steering process* that serves in the attainment of some goal. The *goal* represents the meaning component of action processes (Young & Valach, 2004) and can either be a process or defined end (Young et al., 2005).

**Perspectives of action: Meaning, internal processes, manifest behaviour.** Three interrelated and hierarchical perspectives (Valach, et al., 2002; Young, Valach, & Domene, 2005): from the highest, 1) social meaning, to 2) internal processes, and to the lowest 3) manifest

behaviour, provide insight to the way in which individuals act as intentional agents in long-term career, mid-term projects and short-term actions.

In this study, the role of emotion in energising the parent-adolescent interaction and projects is understood from these three perspectives (Young, et al., 1997). Emotion serves to influence meaning at the goal level, the function of this process is rooted in social construction (Valach, et al., 2002). At the level of appraisal or steering process, “to influence the conduct of the action” (Young et al., 1997, p. 36), and at the level of manifest behaviour or self-regulation, it includes both verbal and non-verbal actions. The units of analysis in this study are based on the interview transcripts and video-taped recordings. Action theory provides an integrative framework for examining action at all levels, in a contextual way (Valach, et al., 2002).

**Emotion in action theory.** Emotion may facilitate or hinder the attainment of goal, as part of a “feedback and feed-forward” (Young & Valach, 2000, p. 188) process that allows individuals to make connection between behaviour, strategies and appraisal as well as meaning. Emotion is embedded within action, as well as over the course of mid-term, project and long-term, career. The experience of emotion may be viewed as a steering process from action towards goal, a regulation process that influences strategy and action, or as top-down steering on their own, as a goal of actions.

Emotion is an “important dimension of needs, plans, goals and purposes” (Young, et al., 1997, p. 36), “as relational action tendencies, emotions can be seen as serving to establish, maintain or disrupt a relationship” (p. 37) and other projects that a person is involved in at the individual or joint level. Given the complex and dynamic nature of emotion, in this study, the role of emotion is studied from all three perspectives on action, that is 1) manifest behaviour, 2) internal processes, and 3) social meaning, based on all three levels of action organisation of



elements, functional steps and goal. It is also important to acknowledge that emotion is inextricably linked to the relational aspects of action. Emotion is embedded, constructed and regulated within relationships (Young et al., 1997). This rigorous method promotes insight to interpretations and understanding of the role of emotion as energiser in parent-adolescent projects which otherwise would seem overly speculative.

## **Conclusion**

The focus of literature on parent-adolescent relationship has frequently been on the “what” and less on the process of “how” they are working together (i.e., the jointness and co-constructive nature of parent-adolescent relationships). The current literature on parent-adolescent relationships and emotion suggests that despite of being informed by a vast number of research paradigms and methods, a more in-depth study of the role of emotion in interaction is necessary. What also needs to be articulated is how in the jointness of their actions, parent and adolescent create their identity and how emotion as both an interpersonal and intrapersonal process energises this project as well. In “Emotion”, Cacioppo and Gardner (1999), suggested that more experimental methods are needed to study emotion, which is necessary but not sufficient, in understanding this as a human phenomenon that they acknowledge encompasses “experiential, behavioural, socio-developmental, and biological phenomena” (p. 194). In line with Campos and colleagues’ (2004) review and recommendations for studying emotion, they suggested “methods that do justice to the meanings, goal relevant and otherwise, that produce, reside in, and guide emotional behaviour” (pp. 391-392).

Emotion energises the parent-adolescent relationship at different levels and in different ways. Emotion is a joint process that influences and is influenced by their interactions and projects. To this end, this study sought to answer the research question, “How does emotion

serve to establish, maintain or disrupt, and/or repair interaction between parent and adolescent in their joint conversations about the transition to adulthood?” using the action project method.

### **Chapter 3: Method**

This study was a secondary analysis of data collected by Young and colleagues (2008), using the instrumental case study method of inquiry (Stake, 1995). The qualitative action-project method (Young et al., 2001; Young, Valach & Domene, 2005) was used to guide the collection and analysis of the data, focusing on parent-adolescent transition to adulthood projects. The original study consisted of 20 parent-adolescent dyads, of which four were selected based on gender for this study. In this study, emotion was considered from an action theoretical perspective (Valach et al., 2002; Young & Valach, 2008), which addressed emotion at the level of meaning, steering, and self-regulation to answer the following research question:

“How does emotion serve to establish, maintain, disrupt and/or repair the interaction between parent and adolescent in their joint conversations about the transition to adulthood?”

#### **Rationale for Research Method**

Currently, the field of research of emotion identified a lack of clarity for the classification of emotion (Zeman et al., 2007). Perhaps some limits of defining emotions can be overcome by moving from using psychometric means to a phenomenological view of interaction between persons, for example, how each member of the family co-constructs their experience (Larson & Richards, 1994). This study sought to understand how emotion as process energised parent-adolescent conversation. The focus was on the individual’s experience of the conversation and informed by the “self-confrontation interview”. To this end, understanding emotion as process (and content) in parent-adolescent interaction is found to be best showcased using multiple case study illustrations guided by the action theoretical framework (Valach et al., 2002).

## **Case Study Method**

“The case study method has proven to be in complete harmony with the three key words that characterize any qualitative method: describing, understanding and explaining” (Hamel et al., 1993, p. 39). The use of case study method provided greater depth to understanding the role of emotion in parent-adolescent relationships. The information gathered from this data was “based on meanings assigned by the actors to their social realities... their direct experiences” (Hamel et al., 1993, p. 33) and the principle of particularity in case study method, keeping in mind the context of the conversation paying “attention to the local situation, not in how it represents other cases in general” (Stake, 2006, p. 8). Also, in using multicase research, the aim is to “study what is similar and different about the cases” (Stake, 2006, p. 6) to understand the phenomenon better.

In this study, the cases were circumscribed by gender, that is, parent-adolescent dyads of mother-daughter, mother-son, father-daughter, father-son are chosen. The cases were “intentionally selected to provide a better understanding of the characteristic traits” (Hamel, 1993, p. 7) that may be found in parent-adolescent dyads that may differ or coincide between the gender of parents and adolescents. To some extent, this is an illustration of how researcher’s subjectivity is involved in the research. However, this is objectified by the explanation of the selection criteria of cases and how emotion is defined, by providing “conceptual and operative terms resulting from methodological tactics and concepts recommended for defining the object” (Hamel et al., 1993, p. 43). The analysis also incorporated studying what emerged across cases, “to examine how the program or phenomenon performs in different environments” (Stake, 2006, p. 23), not only what is common but also what is unique.

The “lack of representativeness” and “lack of rigor...linked to the problem of bias” (Hamel, Dufour & Fortin, 1993, p. 23) has often been used to weaken the interpretation of findings from studies using the case study method. Indeed, when a case is chosen, researchers have chosen to study “experiencing the activity of the case as it occurs in its contexts and in its particular situation” (Stake, 2006, p. 3), which helps deepen the understanding of the phenomenon without transferability or claiming generalisability. In this study, the “lack of rigour” of the case study method was less of an issue as the analysis of the cases were guided by the action project method, which provides a framework and language for analysis of the cases. By using the case study method, we “can learn much that is general from single cases” (Stake, 1995, p. 85), this will strengthen our “naturalistic generalization”, based on our personal experiences of the role of emotions in our relationships and interactions.

### **Action Project Method**

The action project method is a complement to the case study method, as it provides a language in describing the cases. A characteristic of the epistemology of the case study method is how “description presents this theoretical construction in action, and thus provides a grasp of the elements and procedures that are primarily defined in the language” (Hamel et al., 1993, p. 47). The action project method on the other hand, promotes using “common sense, social meaning, and everyday language in categorizing the processes we are studying” (Valach et al., 2002, p. 54). Particularly important for this research study was action project method’s acknowledgment of the importance of emotion (and means to access this), at three levels, 1) goal level to influence meaning, 2) level of strategies to influence the action, 3) level of elements for self-regulation (Young, et al., 1997).

Action theory takes a social constructivist approach (Young & Collin, 2004), where “meaning is constructed in a social, historical and cultural context, through action and discourse in which we form relationships and community” (p. 378). The in-depth study of the conversation between parent and adolescent provided an avenue to understand how they co-construct a reality for themselves as well as how they too shape and are shaped by their conversations.

The action theoretical lens (Valach et al., 2002) provides an integrative framework to access human action in a systematic way in both process and outcome (Young & Valach, 2008). Human action is viewed as intentional and goal-directed, “organized in a system of interrelated levels” (p. 5) and “projects and careers are constructed in the context of roles, norms, laws and expectations of larger and more complex social groups... Action relates an individual to his or her culture” (Young & Valach, 2008, p. 647). This method also allows the opportunity to access the internal processes, that is, emotion and cognition that steer and motivate action (Young et al., 1997) by means of the “self-confrontation” interview where participants are asked about their thoughts and feelings that occurred during the joint action.

**Participants.** For the original study (Young et al., 2008), 20 parent-adolescent dyads were recruited from the Greater Vancouver area, Canada through an article and advertisements in local newspapers and posters at campuses of local colleges. An initial telephone screening was done to determine that all participants identified with being involved in transition to adulthood. The 20 dyads composed of 10 mother-daughter, eight mother-son, one father-daughter and one father-son pairs. The parents’ mean age was 48.6 years ( $SD=5.52$ ) and adolescents’ mean age was 18.4 ( $SD=1.04$ ). On average, parents had completed 15.1 years ( $SD=2.17$ ) of education and adolescents, 12.2 years ( $SD=0.71$ ) and both were currently engaged in various employment and

education situations. The modal household income per year reported was >\$75,000. Each dyad, considered a “case”, was paid a honorarium of \$100 for their participation.

The four cases in this study were selected by gender, that is, the father-daughter and father-son pairs as well as random selection of mother-daughter and mother-son dyads by using an online random number generator ([www.random.org](http://www.random.org)). All four dyads were of European Canadian descent. The mean age of parents in this group was 50.5 years ( $SD=5.80$ ) and adolescents’ mean age was 18.25 ( $SD=1.50$ ). On average, parents had completed 15.5 years ( $SD=0.71$ ) of education and adolescents, 12.25 years ( $SD=1.50$ ).

**Procedure.** In the original study (Young et al., 2008), data collection and analysis occurred in seven distinct stages which are described in Appendix B – 1) Initial conversation, 2) Analysis of initial conversation, 3) Narrative feedback and project identification, 4) Final conversation and interview, 5) Monitoring procedures, 6) Final individual case data analysis, and 7) Cross-case analysis. All the interviews during the initial-conversation and final-conversation were video- and audio-recorded and transcribed. These interviews were conducted at the University of British Columbia and research team members were randomly assigned in pairs to conduct the interviews. Initial analyses of the conversations were then conducted by the pair of researchers who collected the data for respective dyads before being reviewed by the entire research team.

**Initial conversation.** The initial conversation began with the dyad and the two researchers who engaged in an unstructured introductory interview to identify issues of transition to adulthood that were important to them. Participants were invited to share what adulthood meant to them and what they were currently doing together to promote the adolescent’s transition to adulthood. Then, researchers invited the participants to have a conversation about

those important issues without the researchers present. Immediately after this approximately 15-minute conversation, parent and adolescents separately, participated in the “self-confrontation” interview, that is, to view a playback of the conversation with a researcher. This interview is semi-structured, where the participant was asked to report on the thoughts and feelings of the parent-adolescent conversation, at approximately 1-minute intervals. Participants were also invited to pause the video playback at any time they had something to share. The conversations were transcribed by a professional transcriber.

*Analysis of initial conversation.* The videotapes and transcripts of the initial conversation was the basis of analysis for the development of two narratives of the joint action, one from the parent, one from the adolescents, and a joint narrative summary and tentative transition to adulthood project were identified.

The action project method guided the analysis which involved in-depth engagement with the data to identify individual and joint goals, functional steps, and elements. The pair of researchers reviewed the joint conversation minute-by-minute to interpret participants’ actions by identifying their goals, functional steps and coding elements. The introductory and self-confrontation portions of the interview provided contextual information about participants’ goals. A combination of broad and detailed analysis enabled the understanding of the joint action of the parent-adolescent dyad.

Based on the analysis, a preliminary statement and explanation of the tentative transition to adulthood project was identified and written for each participant, framed as goals and their motivation for the project. This was a representation of the joint goals of the parent and adolescent that emerged in the initial conversation. It was expected that this tentatively identified



project would serve as the basis for identifying their joint project in the transition to adulthood for each dyad in the study.

***Narrative feedback and project identification.*** The individual and joint narratives were presented to participants 6-8 weeks after the initial conversation for feedback and identification of a project, that was mutually acceptable between them, for monitoring.

***Monitoring period.*** Participants were monitored over 6 months, through fortnightly telephone interviews. During this conversation, researchers would ask the participants several questions regarding the transition to adulthood project. These responses were then reported on a form and entered in the dyad's data file. Throughout the 6 months, participants were also asked to complete separately, a form every time they engaged in a conversation or activity that they considered part of the transition to adulthood project.

***Final conversation and interview.*** At the end of the monitoring period, the dyad participated in a brief interview to address progress and process in their project. This is the last stage of data collection and followed similar steps with the initial interview with the addition of asking the participants several questions about their participant in the study at the end.

***Final individual case data analysis.*** At this stage, researchers completed an analysis, similar to that of the initial analysis, of the entire data set for each dyad to describe the transition to adulthood project over the 6-month period. The entire data set included transcripts and recording from every part of the initial and final conversations together with the data gathered through telephone monitoring and participants' logs. Any changes to the project either identified by participants or researchers were noted.

A narrative description of the dyad's project was generated and discussed with the research team in a two-fold process. The first focus a discussion and identification of the overall

process, functional steps and outcomes of the parent-adolescent project. Then, the discussion would lead to the consideration of each family's critical issues in the transition to adulthood project as well as other transition-related projects.

*Cross-case analysis.* The cases were randomly grouped and reviewed in sets of four. Members of the research team individually reviewed the data in each set of four then discussed their individual analyses in the team meeting to reach consensus. This was done until all cases had been analysed. This round of analysis involved organising previous analyses, paying particular attention to the common themes that emerged across all dyads.

### **Secondary Analysis**

As acknowledged, this was a reanalysis of data collected previously by Young and colleagues (2008). The purpose of this analysis was to study at greater depth, the role of emotion in parent-adolescent conversation around the transition to adulthood. Although this was not “distinct from that of the original work” (Heaton, 1998), per se, it was a different focus from that of the original research questions. Four key issues with regards to secondary analysis outlined by Heaton (1998) were considered to ensure the integrity of the secondary analysis that was conducted.

First, consideration of the “compatibility of the data with the secondary analysis: are the data amendable to secondary analysis”. The contextual action theory methodology provides a strong framework for the study of the dynamics between parent and adolescent. The breadth and depth of data available was highly apt for the purpose of examining the experience of emotion in parent-adolescent interaction in the transition to adulthood project. Secondly, the “position of the secondary analyst: was the analyst part of the original research team.” There may be concern about the lack of “intersubjective relationship between the researcher and the researched”

(Heaton, 1998) as I was not directly involved in the data collection, which may appear contrary to the phenomenological paradigm. However, Heaton (1998) asserts that “in qualitative studies, there may be more than one researcher involved...within the research team the data still has to be contextualised and interpreted by those who were not present.” I was part of the research team during the process of the original analysis and have incorporated the knowledge generated through discussions, analyses and insights of the research team. Thirdly, concerns the “reporting of original and secondary data analysis,” which are addressed in this chapter, “that the study design, methods and issues involved are reported in full.” Finally, “ethical issues: how was consent obtained in the original study,” steps were taken to ensure that this secondary analysis was carried out responsibly.

**Development of the coding scheme.** Studying the role of emotion requires definition and identification of a list of emotions to be studied (Izard, in press), “to increase semantic precision in the emotion literature is to adopt a discrete emotions approach (as many now do) and identify each discrete emotion under consideration and provide for each a statement of the meaning assumed by the author (as many do not)”. According to Izard (2009), *discrete emotion* is defined as innate, “cannot be created, taught or learned via cognitive processes” (p. 5). This definition of discrete emotion does not take into consideration, emotion that is socially constructed. It was important to create a comprehensive list to capture the experience of emotion between parent and adolescent in a systematic way to prevent “looking at everything... and be overwhelmed by [my] their data” (Bakeman & Gottman, 1997, p. 13).

In this study, emotion was defined as being innate and adaptive as well as being relational, that is, emotion is shaped through social construction and interactions. Similarly to the lack of consensus in the definition of emotion, it was challenging to create a list of emotion to

ensure consistency in the coding. Thoughts of developing a code list based on basic emotions were discouraged by Shweder's (1994) declaration "do not trust anyone who says they really know" (p. 43) if there are indeed basic emotions. Nonetheless, he did suggest basic emotion as "that small set of 'generic' emotions out of which all other emotions can be taxonomized as subordinates" (p. 35). To this end, *emotion categories* used in this study were derived based on Izard's definition of *basic emotion* and *emotion schema*. Basic emotion is defined as being rooted in evolutionary and neurobiological processes, with "an evolved feeling component and capacity for expressive and other behavioral actions" (Izard, 2007, p. 261) and emotion schema as having evolved from basic emotion with "properties that differ across individuals and cultures," (p. 261) "defined in terms of the dynamic interaction of emotion and cognition" (p. 265).

In consultation with the literature, (e.g., Coan & Gottman, 2007, Greenberg & Goldman, 2008; Izard, 2007; Plutchik, 1984; Saarni, Campos, Camras & Witherington, 2006; Shweder, 1994), a list of emotions and descriptions were developed. Plutchik's (1984) "A multidimensional model of the emotions" (Appendix C) considers emotion from an evolutionary perspective, inline with Izard's (2007; 2009) discrete emotions. Plutchik presented a spectrum of emotion in a circumplex way, that is comprehensive and visually appealing through the use of a colour spectrum, one for each of eight primary emotions: 1) Ecstasy, 2) Adoration, 3) Terror, 4) Amazement, 5) Grief, 6) Loathing, 7) Rage, and 8) Vigilance. Further, each primary emotion was also further classified by their intensity, and at the lower intensities, Plutchik asserts that "the emotions become less distinguishable" (p. 203). He also suggests the blends of two basic emotion or as Frijda (1986) terms, "complex emotion" (p. 72). Plutchik's model was helpful in providing the first level of coding in identifying emotions in parent-adolescent conversations as

well as their self-confrontation reflections. However, the challenge with using Plutchik's model for the purpose of this study is the lack of parsimonious definition for each emotion category and lack of consideration for the interaction between cognition and emotion.

In the continued development of the coding scheme, I took into consideration, Youngstrom and Izard's (2008) suggestion that it is more important to study the role and function of emotion than the relationship between the different emotions within a circumplex model. Greenberg and Goldman's (2008) six "most basic emotions central in intimate relationships" was consulted as their definition of emotion resonates with this study's "basic emotional responses involve perceptual, mostly automatic, appraisal and experiential processes... that allow for the continuation, restoration, or establishment of a desirable connection" (p. 25). They identified and defined six basic emotions: 1) sadness, 2) happiness, 3) anger, 4) fear, 5) shame, 6) liking. This provided confirmation for the categories in Plutchik's model but still lacked a specific coding scheme to ensure consistency of identification for each discrete emotion.

Gottman and Levenson have made use of video-recall procedures in their studies (e.g., Gottman & Levenson, 1985; Levenson & Gottman, 1983), gathering information about participants' emotion as part of their research. "In 1989, Gottman and Krokoff introduced the Specific Affect Coding System (SPAFF) ...Although initially developed for the study of emotional communication among romantic couples..." (Coan & Gottman, 2007, p. 267) is now used in coding interactions across other relationships. The ideas underlying SPAFF is inline with this research, "emotions are expressed in a wide variety of ways and that this variety should be respected", and the researcher and participants in this research have "a personal history of interpersonal and affective communication" (p. 268). The sixteen emotion codes of the SPAFF

were distilled to eight by focusing on emotion categories that were common to Plutchik (1984), Saarni and colleagues (2006) and Greenberg and Goldman (2008). The eight emotion categories identified are, four *positive* emotions: 1) *Affection*, 2) *Enthusiasm*, 3) *Interest*, 4) *Humour* and, four *negative* emotions: 1) *Anger*, 2) *Disgust*, 3) *Fear/tension*, 4) *Sadness*. *Neutral* was also included in the code list to clarify what is not coded for emotion. The terms “positive” and “negative” emotions are “arbitrary” (Izard, 2007, p. 268) and used for the sake of organising the categories by their generally associated function or result of these categories, with “positive” referring to the emotion categories that are associated with “to facilitate exploration and learning, as well as affiliative and attachment behavior” (p. 264) and “negative” as necessary for “recruiting protective nurturance” (p. 264). The valance of the emotions was not critical in this study but the function and experience of emotion was.

I also acknowledge that potentially, “translation from experiential language to formal language diminishes and distorts some of the meaning” (Stake, 1995, p. 86) in the parent-adolescent conversations. However, validity of the data is kept in check through the use of several data sources. The triangulation of data, previous analyses and the current analyses makes it possible to begin formulating assertions of “naturalistic generalization”, to “gauge the accuracy, completeness, and bias of reports” (p. 87) on the role of emotion as energised in parent-adolescent relationship. Emotion is relational (Frijda, 1986). The study and understanding of emotion was well-served through the engagement with the data and the case illustrations provided, “rich ingredients for a vicarious experience... Emphasizing time, place, and person” (Stake, 1995, p. 87). The coding of emotion was also checked by a colleague who is knowledgeable about the action theory project method.

**Organising the secondary data analysis.** The data set in this secondary analysis comprised of transcribed parent-adolescent conversations (initial and final) and the accompanying parents' and adolescents' self-confrontations. The self-confrontation interviews provided information about "participants' subjective understanding of their interactions, behaviors, or experiences...feedback about their meanings and/or emotional experiences during the original conversations" (Welsh & Dickson, 2005, p. 62). Analysis completed by the original research team around the identified joint project(s) that parent and adolescent engaged in was also used to inform the analyses for this current research.

Analysis for each dyad began with matching the segments of joint conversation and self-confrontation transcript, separately for parent and adolescent. This is particularly important as emotion is contextual, mere identification and categorization (e.g., frequency) is less meaningful and of limited use in understanding the process of emotion. The transcripts of the parent-adolescent conversations as well as the self-confrontation interviews were coded using the identified categories and definitions of eight emotions, based on Gottman's "Specific Affect Coding System" (SPAFF) (Coan & Gottman, 2007). The table below shows the definition of each emotion category as well as the indicators.

Table 1.  
*Emotion Categories and Indicators*

Positive Emotion	
Emotion	Indicators
Affection	<p>Expresses genuine caring and concern and offers comfort.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Reminiscing – shares warm memories of something they enjoyed together</li> <li>❖ Caring statements – direct statements of affection or concern (e.g., “I love you”, “I care about you”, “I worry about you”)</li> <li>❖ Compliments – statements that communicate pride in or admiration of one’s partner (e.g., “you are so smart! Or “you did such a great job with the...”)</li> <li>❖ Empathy – mirror the affect of the other; more than simply validate thoughts and feelings</li> <li>❖ “Common cause” – engage in virtually any affective behaviour together as a form of building trust, closeness, consensus, or bonding (e.g., a shared anger, shared fear)</li> </ul>
Enthusiasm	<p>Infectious and often sudden, loud, boisterous, and energetic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Anticipation – hopeful, future-oriented, and often childlike</li> <li>❖ Positive surprise – emphatically happy reaction to some unanticipated event or remark</li> <li>❖ Positive excitement – expressions of joy and anticipation at high levels of intensity</li> <li>❖ Joy – high levels of often suddenly felt happiness</li> <li>❖ Expansiveness – feel creative, motivated and inspired and convey an effervescent and elated affect</li> </ul>
Interest	<p>Emphasises information gathering about the partner as opposed to minor or trivial factual information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Elaboration and clarification seeking – ask specific questions (also paraphrasing questions) in order to gather more information, accompanied by nonverbal behaviours that reflect positive affect</li> <li>❖ Open-ended questions – questions that does not require a “yes” or “no” response and that allows the other to express him- or herself in greater detail</li> <li>❖ Nonverbal attention with positive affect – leaning forward in their chairs, warm tone of voice and steady eye contact.</li> </ul>



Emotion	Indicators
Humour	<p>Moment of shared amusement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Good-natured teasing – when individual teases, he/she highlights qualities or behaviours in the other that both agree are somewhat ridiculous, cute or funny</li> <li>❖ Wit and silliness – wit is expressed as an apt or clever observation that is considered by both individuals to be humorous. May manifest as a funny observation or the straightforward telling of a joke</li> <li>❖ Private jokes – can include moments of shared laughter and obvious amusement</li> <li>❖ Fun and exaggeration – very playful form of humour; active, animated and exaggerated play or imitation behaviour. High energy and a deeper form of laughter often accompanies this indicator</li> <li>❖ Nervous giggling – chuckle with each other for no apparent reason, affect underlying the giggling should be obviously positive and shared, unlike a similar form of giggling associated with fear/tension code</li> </ul>

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#### Neutral emotion

Emotion	Indicators
Neutral	<p>Relatively nonaffective and is associated with exchange of unvalenced information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Information exchanges that are not about a “loaded” issue (i.e., an issue that has emotional relevance to either party in the conversation)</li> <li>❖ Relief – sudden decrease in energy as a result of diffusion of a tension or an escape from responsibility</li> </ul>

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#### Negative emotion

Emotion	Indicators
Anger	<p>“Affective underlining” of displeasure and complaint, indicating a personal boundary has been transgressed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Frustration – low intensity form of anger</li> <li>❖ Angry statements– verbal statements that express personal feelings (e.g., “I am so angry!”, “I am so frustrated right now”)</li> <li>❖ Angry questions – questions asked with angry affect and usually with sharp exhalations (e.g., “Why?!”)</li> <li>❖ Commands – strong, affectively intense attempts to stop a recent or ongoing violation of speaker’s autonomy or dignity, frequently accompanied by sharp exhalations and strong angry affect (e.g., “Stop!”, “Don’t speak to me like I’m a child!”)</li> </ul>

Emotion	Indicators
Disgust	<p>Relatively involuntary verbal or nonverbal reaction to a stimulus that is perceived to be noxious.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Involuntary revulsion – object of disgust is some obvious image of, or reference to, an aversive, noxious stimulus (e.g., descriptions of a gruesome physical injury)</li> <li>❖ Moral objection – object of disgust is an action or idea that is repulsive for moral or other symbolic reasons (e.g., undesirable sexual practices or political positions)</li> </ul>
Fear/tension	<p>Communicates usually involuntarily, fear, worry, anxiety, nervous anticipation, or dread.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Speech disturbances – incomplete or unfinished statements, stuttering, or frequent and rapid “uhs” and “ahs”</li> <li>❖ Shifts in fundamental frequency – from chest register (lower frequency) to head register (higher frequency)</li> <li>❖ Fidgeting</li> <li>❖ Nervous laughter – unshared laughter or giggling that does not appear to fit in the conversation and likely is a response to nervous tension</li> <li>❖ Nervous gestures – certain gestures of the arm and face can indicate fear/tension (e.g., arms folded across the chest, hands frequently touching face)</li> </ul>
Sadness	<p>Communicates loss, resignation, helplessness, pessimism, hopelessness, or a plaintive or poignant quiescence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Sighing – especially deep sighs</li> <li>❖ Pouting/sulking – appear to withdraw from the conversation</li> <li>❖ Resignation – hopeless, very low energy, slouching, long pauses between words</li> <li>❖ Crying</li> <li>❖ Hurt feelings – in response to moments of high negativity (e.g., belligerence, contempt, anger), individuals will sometimes report or appear to have hurt feelings</li> </ul>

Tone of voice and verbal content formed part of the analysis. Body language and facial expressions were taken into account only to the degree the playback of the video recording allowed as it was not set up for facial coding according to the SPAFF protocol. Once this coding was complete, a colleague who was part of the original research team checked the coding for

accuracy and consistency. Based on her feedback and our dialogue, changes to the coding of the transcripts were made, when necessary. Across all four cases, we reached consensus on the categorisation of emotion, the levels and functions of emotion more than 95% of the time.

Emotion for parent and adolescent was coded separately and by minute segments. In the original study, the conversations were also analysed in minute segments, providing the goal, functional steps and matching self-confrontation interviews that will provide a context for the emotions that were identified. In this study, emotions were analysed based on the level of *action*, 1) Elements (observed in their interaction at the very time of the conversation), 2) Appraisal (steering process, how they try to attain their goal), and 3) Meaning (what they are trying to achieve) within the context of the minute's goal, the parent-adolescent relationship and their projects. The final templates used for the analyses were a refinement from an earlier version, to provide a synthesis of the conversation or self-confrontation interview snippets which reflected emotion. Information from the first and final conversations were organised by parents and adolescents individually based on the level of actions and the function of the emotions (Appendix D). Then the information from both the initial and final conversations was collated by emotion (Appendix E). Even though the tables provided an efficient way of organising the data, it was necessary to constantly check back with the actual transcripts of their conversation and self-confrontation interviews to understand the role of emotion from moment-to moment in their interaction.

Following the coding analysis, a case-by-case narrative addressed the question "How does emotion serve to establish, maintain, disrupt and/or repair the interaction and project between parent and adolescent in the transition to adulthood?" The narratives were written based on both conversations and guided by the information organised in the tables. The narrative is

written in two parts to answer the research question, on the function of emotion: 1) establish and maintain, 2) disrupt and repair. A cross-case analysis was also completed to provide an overview on what emerged as the salient process of emotion that was observed based on these four dyads.

To ensure consistency of coding and interpretation, checks between and within the conversations was made by a colleague who is acquainted with the data set and action theory method. Not to be overlooked is the final analysis of the cases that was carried out in the main study. This lends context to the emotion that arise in the process of analysis to provide a better understanding of the role of emotion in conversations between parent and adolescent.

### **Ethical Issues**

Ethical issues were addressed by the main study conducted by Young and colleagues (2008). Informed consent from both parent and adolescents were sought prior to their participation in the study. There was little or no known risk to participation in this research study as participants determined the depth and content of their conversations. However, referrals for counselling resources were made when sought by participants. Care was also taken to ensure that information that may make the participants identifiable was removed and participants' particulars kept separate from the data sets. Participants were also provided with information about counselling services and other resources as the need arose.

Part of ethical research calls for research that is meaningful and beneficial to the participants. Through the participants' involvement in the study, many reported this as an opportunity for them to discuss issues important to them and the self-confrontation procedure was an opportunity for introspection about their relationship, tasks and process of engaging in conversation with each other.

My thesis committee and I discussed the ethical implications of this secondary analysis of data and my participation in the original research team. In the consent form signed by participants at the beginning of the study, they were informed about access to data (video and audio tapes, transcripts and logs) by all members of the research team. To ensure that this was ethically acceptable, an application to the Behavioural Research Ethics Board for a “minimal risk assessment” was submitted and approval was obtained.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

Four cases were chosen from a larger study of 20 parent-adolescent dyads who self-identified as being in the process of transition to adulthood. As mentioned above in *Participants*, these cases were chosen based on gender, to help us understand emotion as a process in different gender dyads. At the same time, dyads were not from the same family, as this study is not taking a family systems approach *per se*, rather a broader perspective as illustrative of the role of emotion in parent-adolescent projects to provide depth in understanding the process of emotion in their “everyday” experiences.

The focus of this research was on the process of emotion. Hence the valance of emotion, that is, the evaluation of emotion as positive or negative was less important as compared with the role of emotion when parent and adolescent are engaged in joint action.

### **Rigour of Method**

The data collected included manifest behaviour, internal processes and personal and social meaning allowing access to different levels of the phenomenon of joint projects between parents and adolescents. In addition, in the course of the main study, the participants had an opportunity to review different aspects of the data on several occasions and were directly

involved in formulating their own transition to adulthood project. The data set was repeatedly scrutinised, coded, and discussed by the research team.

Triangulation of the data collected (Huberman & Miles, 2002) is evidenced by the rich data set (transcripts of the conversation, self-confrontation, project summaries, different level of analyses), which lends support to this study's focus. The data was also collected over several points (including participants' feedback), which helps understand the dyad's expression better and the opportunity to chart any changes. Data analysis in the coding and analysis of emotion was based on a tight back-and-forth comparison between the conversation and accompanying self-confrontation interview as "Emotions are rarely conveyed in conversation by a single, unambiguous behavioral measure" (Sayfer & Hauser, 1994, p. 52). The coding of emotion was checked by a colleague who was part of the research team of the original study for accuracy and consistency of the coding. After the narratives were complete, her feedback was again sought to ensure that the assertions and interpretations are grounded in the participants' experience. Having participated in the analysis of the data, I have some familiarity with the dyads. Data from the original study assisted in a better understanding of the dyad and the context of their conversation.

### **Role of the Researcher**

I have a close relationship with my parents and having moved away from home, there have been changes in our conversation, in my perception. Perhaps it is the combination of the lack of physical presence, which made me more cognisant of our conversational process together with being more aware of interaction dynamics that I learn through my classes in the counselling psychology program. I am more reflexive about my interactions and noticed that my emotional

reaction during the conversation impacts my response and consequently the whole conversation. I am curious about the role of emotion in energizing the conversation.

My role as a beginning counsellor also influences my perception on emotion as well as the interpersonal gap in communication. Having a preference for the person-centered approach to counselling, I believe that our emotions not only provide information as “ways of knowing”, emotion is part of the process of how we think and act. The awareness and understanding of our emotion also serves to guide our actions.

I am also influenced by the positive psychology lens in which parents are seen as a resource to help guide adolescent’s development and that research has found emotion to be an integral part of effective parenting. It is my hope that this study contributes to the understanding of how emotion plays an important role in the parent-adolescent relationship. I am aware that my perception and preconceived notion of the role of emotion energises and motivates the way in which I may interpret the data.

## Chapter 4: Findings

This research study sought to answer the question, “How does emotion serve to establish, maintain, disrupt and/or repair interaction and projects between parent and adolescent in their joint conversations about the transition to adulthood?” It is important to note that although the emotion categories are classified as either *positive* or *negative* according to Gottman’s SPAFF, this study focuses on the function of emotion in parent-adolescent interaction and their transition to adulthood project(s) and not the valance of emotions. Even though all parent-adolescent dyads are involved in the transition to adulthood, the issues raised are unique to each pair. Relationship was the context in which other projects pertaining to the transition to adulthood took place for all four dyads and at times, the relationship itself, was one of their projects.

### Summary of Analysis Procedures

This study used the instrumental case study method, informed by contextual action theory. Each case was studied independently, the “emphasis is on uniqueness, and that implies knowledge of others that the case is different from, but the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself” (Stake, 1995, p. 8). Transcripts and video-taped recordings were coded according to the eight emotion categories (*Positive* emotions: affection, enthusiasm, interest and humour; *Negative* emotions: anger, disgust, fear/tension and sadness) based on SPAFF indicators and counter-indicators (Coan & Gottman, 2007). Emotion were analysed from the levels of action: 1) elements, parent-adolescent interaction; 2) appraisal (steering process), the functional steps and at times, strategies they used; and 3) meaning, how the goal is influenced, then by how emotion functions: 1) establish, create something new; 2) maintain, continue; 3) disrupt, stall or prevent from happening; and 4) repair.



## Summary of Key Findings

The role of emotion is dynamic, serving to establish, maintain, disrupt or repair at the levels of elements that is, the interaction between parent and adolescent, at the level of appraisal or steering process and motivation as well as meaning at the goal level. Positive emotions are desirable emotions, such as affection, enthusiasm, interest and humour served to maintain the interaction between parent and adolescent even through issues that were challenging to navigate particularly in the transition to adulthood. At the level of appraisal and meaning, both positive and negative emotions steer their motivation of their project towards their goal. However, negative emotions, that are less desirable than positive ones, at times disrupted their interaction and hindered their project when was manifest in their interaction. Parents and adolescents tend to avoid expressing negative emotions towards each other. Positive emotions such as humour and affection served to repair their relationship and negative emotions such as fear and sadness at the level of appraisal motivated their reconciliation.

The first section of this chapter provides case summaries for each of the four dyads. Each summary begins with a description of the parent-adolescent dyad's transition-to-adulthood project as well as their goals. The case summary was then organised by the function of emotion in the parents' and adolescents' interaction and project, whether it "established and maintained" or "disrupted and repaired". *Assertions* for each case were made "on the basis of observations and other data" (Stake, 1995, p. 9), "invoking the privilege and responsibility of interpretation" (p. 12) as a qualitative researcher. The second section of this chapter is entitled cross case analysis. Commonalities between cases were considered from the perspective of the role of emotion, guided by the action theoretical perspective. Quotes from their joint conversations are denoted by *JC* and *SC* for their self-confrontation interviews.

## Case Summaries

### **Dyad 1.**

#### *Context.*

A father ( $P_1$ ) and his 17-year-old son ( $A_1$ ) were engaged in conversations, openly negotiating and communicating about similarities and differences in their perspectives about the son's choices as he transitions to adulthood. They discussed the son's current group of friends and possibilities of other friendships in the future, whether to take a year off school to travel Europe after first-year university, the father's role as a parent and his parenting approaches, the son's choices in the past and the son's concerns about juggling university studies, with work and having a social life.

The father provided suggestions and guidance, and the son expressed his thoughts and kept the father informed as to what is going on in his life. Their joint project was to work together to deal with the changes that are and will be happening in the son's life. The father's goal was to influence the son's decisions through short discussions when the son was open to hearing ideas, and occasionally using incentives to motivate himself. The father also desired that the son make the "right" decisions and implement changes in his life. The father also has a parenting project in "how to parent" as his son transitions to adulthood. The son's goals were to engage in conversation with his father, respond to his father's concerns and views of parenting, and explain his perspective regarding issues that were raised.

#### *Role of emotion.*

*Establish and maintain.* Humour, indicated by their shared laughter was used as relationship maintenance and at times to avoid disruption of their engagement when a difficult topic arises. This also facilitated their interaction by creating a less threatening atmosphere. The

son was able to express his thoughts and the father to express interest in his son's perception and choices in a non-threatening manner by laughter in their interaction,

**A<sub>1</sub>JC:** I understand that you don't like my friends, but I don't like them either. (pause)  
(laughs)

**P<sub>1</sub>JC :** (both laugh) Well, well, I don't understand that, what do you mean, you don't like them?

In addition to creating a less threatening atmosphere, warmth created by laughs in their interaction served to create a sense of security in their relationship to discuss challenging topics. The shared laughter between them allows the father to express his frustration and thoughts around his son's choices.

**P<sub>1</sub>JC:** That's what happens. What do you do with C., take your dishes there or something?

**A<sub>1</sub>JC:** Oh, he got, he's been promoted. He's a short-order cook. I think he gets, ah, (both laugh)

**P<sub>1</sub>JC:** (laughs) Wow. That's, I guess that's what's so frustrating for me, when they're in the room, I mean, sometimes you agree with me. You know, you don't do anything about it. I mean, you agree about these friends, and you agree about these other things, but. I don't get any satisfaction from [incomprehensible]. I don't like being right.

Affection was evident in this dyad at all three levels of action. At the level of meaning, the father was genuinely concerned for the son's success in the transition to adulthood. At the level of elements, both father and son demonstrated affection throughout their interaction by their words. The emotion of affection steered their relationship maintenance and their joint project of negotiating their different perspectives. The son affirmed his father's parenting by paying the father a compliment when he had doubts about his parenting strategy. In his self-confrontation interview, the son reflected, "I just kinda felt I had to reassure him that, you're not doing anything wrong" (A<sub>1</sub>SC).

**P<sub>1</sub>JC:** ...how I'm supposed to guide you, and, who, and I'm not the one being. Or maybe I am. Like there's the big question, whether, what's the better way to do it. How would you deal with you?

**A<sub>1</sub>JC:** I don't think there is a better way, I don't have any criticism for you.

**P<sub>1</sub>JC:** Hm.

**A<sub>1</sub>JC:** It's all good.

The father encouraged his son by demonstrating affection, for example through sharing his thoughts about a nice thing his son did for him and that he had shared with his colleagues about.

**P<sub>1</sub>JC:** Anybody. But that's, you know, the automatic response. So I just kinda, keep that um...ah, keep that at bay. And uh...well that's about it, I mean, I think that you've done um, in the last year, done real well, [unclear]. You know, you're doing a job you like, you, going UBC, I mean. I was talking with somebody about it today. And they said um, yeah, I said, I drove A. to work this morning, he bought me a coffee. And, and he said, oh, that's because he wants something, I said, no. He didn't want anything, he just bought me a coffee. [unclear] an eighteen year old that buys you something, with no ulterior motive.

**A<sub>1</sub>JC:** (laughs)

**P<sub>1</sub>JC:** I said, yeah [incomprehensible], that's, that was nice. So yeah, I mean, that was, just that little [incomprehensible], just that little thing, means a lot to a parent, you know.

Affection perceived by the son served to help him understand his father's perspective and creating a common goal between them making the son feel supported by his father,

**A<sub>1</sub>SC:** Well, again he's concerned about, my life really, like, he's concerned that I'm, being taken advantage of somewhat by my employers, and. You know, he's giving me, pretty good advice to, you know, don't let people do that to you, you know. Like, it's not right.

The son also felt encouraged by the father's affirmation, compliments and the realisation that the father thought about him frequently, "Well it's nice to hear that. I mean....I haven't really thought much about what I've done over the last few months, I mean...Well, I don't know, it's nice to hear compliments like that." (A<sub>1</sub>SC).

Enthusiasm served to maintain their involvement in their joint project. The son reflected on the interaction with his father, "I enjoyed it, and I learnt a lot about my father but, it was, not

overwhelming, but just kind of dizzying and um, dreamlike.” (A<sub>1</sub>SC). For the father, enthusiasm energised their engagement, towards the goal of providing his son with guidance in their joint project, “But he said, which surprised me, is that, he didn’t know, ‘cause I always thought I was being really subtle about it, you know, and. He said he didn’t know I felt that strongly...” (P<sub>1</sub>SC), “Well I was surprisi-, I’m always surprised that I have that effect on him, I just, always surprises me if you tell your kids something, and they actually.” (P<sub>1</sub>SC).

Enthusiasm for their joint project was motivated by the surprises of what they learnt about each other through the course of their conversations. In the son’s self-confrontation interview, he reflected, “It was a little, little surprising, I mean, it makes sense, that something as little as that means, you know, a lot to a parent, but, I really thought nothing of it. He stopped the car and I went in and bought a coffee for him.” (A<sub>1</sub>SC) and the father reflected similar emotion, “Yeah, that he’ll, he’ll actually err on my side, he was saying, well, you know, you feel so strongly about it, I guess I should do that. That’s, what I’m surprised about, ‘cause I thought, [incomprehensible] but that’s, you know. It’s nice if it’s true...” (P<sub>1</sub>SC). To maintain their project, the father openly shares his pleasant realisation with his son, “Ok, well, I’m surprised, so you did it, that’s, being proactive, so you did it, you, before you used to say you were gonna do stuff like this, but.” (P<sub>1</sub>JC).

Similarly, the emotion of interest was a steering process to keep the son engaged in conversations particularly around his father’s frustration and concerns.

**A<sub>1</sub>SC:** I’m still just listening. He still has a lot to say.

**Interviewer (I):** So you’re feeling good about, the way the conversation is going, and.

**A<sub>1</sub>SC:** Hm-mm.

In a different situation, interest created an opportunity for the son to develop a closer relationship with his father, as it motivates a potential conversation he intends to have with his father, he

reflected, “And, from hearing from, what he was saying, there, a lot more tense and, not so relaxed as I have with him, so. You know, maybe I will ask him about that.” (A<sub>1</sub>SC)

At the level of meaning, interest also functioned to motivate the son to learn more about his father and to appreciate his father’s input in their joint project.

**A<sub>1</sub>SC:** I got really interested, like that was....you know, I learned a lot about my dad then, when he said, I never, I’ve n-, I never speak to you about anything spontaneously, I always think about things a week in advance. And to think about that, it really fits his character, he sits and worries about things, or thinks about things and plans stuff out.

The son’s enthusiasm on his short-story project also served as motivation to reassure his father that he was actively engaging and pursuing his interest, “...I was kind of glad too, to tell him about that, I’m pretty sure I’ve never told him before.” (A<sub>1</sub>SC). This served to establish new grounds for the father’s understanding of actions the son had taken and his plans as they work on this transition-to-adulthood project together.

The father did not express enthusiasm like the son. Rather, he attempted to maintain their interaction by questioning his role as a father. The fear/tension kept the father engaged in conversation with his son as he sought answers to his parenting project as well as their joint project, as his provided guidance for his son in this transition-to-adulthood. He shared his uncertainty in this self-confrontation interview,

**P<sub>1</sub>SC:** Oh, I said, we’re, I just, what I was feeling at the moment is that we’re psychoanalyzing and criticizing him, and I said, well maybe it’s me that’s, you know, ...um, I don’t know what, if what I’m doing is right. Maybe, you know, and I was trying to ask him...what, what kind of [cut off]

**I:** What his perspective [cut off]

**P<sub>1</sub>SC:** Dad would be the best to...to guide him through this, and his response was, well, you’re OK. I don’t have any complaints, so. Yeah.

**I:** Yeah, and it is hard to know as a parent.

**P<sub>1</sub>SC:** Yeah, I have no idea if what I’m doing is, it’s just really difficult to know.

Fear/tension was functional in propelling their project forward. At the level of meaning, the tension was a reflection of somewhat contradictory goals that the father had: 1) allowing the son to make mistakes to learn from experience, and 2) trying to encourage the son to be proactive, and make the right decisions about his life and future (including, work, schooling, finances, and substance use). On one hand, the father expressed, “I don’t care what he does, so long as he’s, happy” (P<sub>1</sub>SC), on the other, the father appeared to be frustrated whenever the son had a different perspective or chose a different course of action than he would. Perhaps underlying the conflicting goals was the father’s lack of confidence in his parenting abilities, which may also be a source of tension and frustration. Father and son maintained their engagement, steered by the father’s worry for the son, “(sighs) I don’t know what his problem is... so I don’t know... what’s gonna happen to him” (P<sub>1</sub>SC). Nonetheless, their relationship was maintained by the son’s positive perception and appreciation of his father’s concern for him,

**A<sub>1</sub>SC:** Well, um, it’s a fortunate thing to have parents who, you know, think about you that much and care about me. And it’s interesting that he like, puts, so much thought into it, and as he said, he, he isn’t strict with me at all, he doesn’t order me around, or.

**I:** Yeah.

**A<sub>1</sub>SC:** Like, try to make me, live out my life how, he would, like me to do it. He just kind of lets me do what I do. [incomprehensible]

**I:** Yeah, yeah. And, and, what do you think about, about that, about his approach, and?

**A<sub>1</sub>SC:** I think it’s an excellent approach.

Fear/tension served as a motivator of the father’s involvement in the joint project in service of his goal, to “plant seeds”, provided relevant ideas and information for the son’s consideration so that the son would make good decisions and sensible choices,

**P<sub>1</sub>SC:** Yeah. So it’s a little scary, I mean, because...you know, you always hear like the, it’s a nasty world out there, I mean people will take advantage of you. You know, he’s gonna get taken advantage of.

**I:** Yeah.

**P<sub>1</sub>SC:** You know, I guess that’s what, for me that’s the whole key to um, going into adulthood, [incomprehensible] you gotta learn to set your boundaries, of what

you'll accept, from other people. And if they cross that boundary, then you gotta be able to stand up for your, situation, and he doesn't..."

The father expressed frustration and tension in his self-confrontation interview as he perceived that his goal of working with his son in the transition to adulthood was stalled, "I guess what's bothering me about this whole thing is, you know, like, your study is taking him from... it's this final step of pushing him into adulthood, he just seems like a total idiot" (P<sub>1</sub>SC). At the level of strategy, the father avoids expressing anger in their interaction as he is cognisant about his son as an individual, "No, it's his personality, I don't think, I, can't be frustrated about it, because that's who he is, I mean... All that means is that, he'll probably always need to be pushed, you know..." (P<sub>1</sub>SC). This served to maintain their relationship and their engagement in the joint project amidst some tension.

The father's frustration was steered by concern for his son's future, which motivated his actions towards providing guidance "So, what I'm thinking, that I don't say, is that, all you need to do is, just evaluate your entire, everything, and see where the problem is, I mean, what's causing the tiredness" (P<sub>1</sub>JC) even though the father reflected in the self-confrontation interview that he was very upset "... I mean, you couldn't see it but my eyes are going up as, like, is it drinking, you know, drinking while you're... just felt like yelling it out, you know, so." (P<sub>1</sub>SC). The anger of emotion was not expressed by the father and certainly not perceived by the son who reported in the self-confrontation of the same segment that he enjoyed their conversation and learnt a lot about his father.

*Disrupt and repair.* Frustration, low-grade anger, disrupted the negotiation of their differences. At the level of meaning, the father was frustrated by the conflict between the son's potential for success as well as barriers that the son appeared to create, "That's what he's like, so I can see him succeeding, and I don't understand why he's not doing it" (P<sub>1</sub>SC). At the level of



steering, their project was disrupted as the father was at a loss about what to do given that even though they shared the same perception of the situation around the son's friendships, his son made a different decision than he would have, "... I mean, like, he's, he's says he doesn't, the frustrating, he doesn't he says, I don't like my friends either, I need new friends..." (P<sub>1</sub>SC).

Expression of tension and disgust disrupted their relationship. The father explicitly expressed 'disgust' of his son's friends, "Well, I can't tell 'em apart, that's how much I don't like 'em." (P<sub>1</sub>JC) In the self-confrontation reflection, the father expressed his perception of his son's friends and frustration that even though his son did share the same thoughts, he continues their friendship, "...they're not worth getting to know as far as I'm concerned... They're just... nothing... well it's frustrating, because he agrees." (P<sub>1</sub>SC) The son on the other hand reflects that "I just don't feel comfortable, like, I don't know, belittling my friends like that." (A<sub>1</sub>SC) The son attempts to repair the tension between them by his expression of nervous laughter and inviting the father to share his perception, "Like what?" (A<sub>1</sub>JC) or when disagreeing with his father "Well, for me, like, friends aren't people that I learn skills from to learn to succeed in business (laughs)." (A<sub>1</sub>JC)

Even though tension was disruptive to their relationship at the level of elements, that is their conversation, it was functional in creating the space for them to dialogue about their beliefs about different issues. The father's worry and concern for his son, steered their conversation,

**P<sub>1</sub>JC:** ...And it's really disturbing for me, that you hang, that you hang out with these guys that don't really have, um....aren't really a challenge to you, I mean, you can relax, they're sort of like your, social lounge, relaxing friends. But you don't have any...friends that are your....intellectual equal or better, or, do anything better than you do, none of them.

**A<sub>1</sub>JC:** No, I feel exactly the same way.

**P<sub>1</sub>JC:** So, that's always been like a...a concern, I guess it's been a concern of mine because, (looks up/away from son) I, I can only go by my experience when I was in high school, and first year college....I kind of left them behind.

**A<sub>1</sub>JC:** Well, it's just 'cause I haven't developed any strong friends at school up here...

At times, frustration disrupted their relationship but was a steering process in the father's goal attainment. For example, in his self-confrontation interview, the father reflected on his choice of action following a decision his son made,

**P<sub>1</sub>SC:** He was being a little a-hole, he was; you know, I actually yelled at him, and it wasn't open for negotiation, ... what he does is he's, he's had a couple of bikes, he loses them. So he borrows his brother's bike, even though he's not supposed to, ... he left it up at the station, and someone stole the seat. And his, he starts r-reasoning with me, "I don't have to replace that seat, because Z. hardly ever rides his bike" ... I think it's always a shock for him when I yell at him, 'cause I don't do that. But I mean, I mean I was just, layin' into him, just told him to shut up and, I was takin' him to the store right then, and he was buying a seat, and he had no choice.

The father's fear created a barrier in communicating well with his son, "Yeah. I'm surprised, I look really impressive, but it's not... it's ...I'm really panicking in what to, how to express this..." (P<sub>1</sub>SC). It was also disruptive to their joint project, as fear/tension limited the father's perception of his ability in providing guidance to his son, "... I'm just not equipped to deal with this, because I'm not that personality." (P<sub>1</sub>SC), "And as, the worried part is that, well, am I not going to hear that, if I'm not, no, he said, no you'll hear it. It's true. After that, I listened to it and, um, I heard these things in here." (P<sub>1</sub>SC). Their relationship was not disrupted as the son acknowledged his father's perspective, even though he did not fully agree with him.

The father's frustration disrupted their interaction by ignoring the son's attempt to reassure him, "I was talking to him about, um, what was really on my mind, I mean, what's really on my mind is... It's like, ridiculous, it was, I knew he wouldn't do it long, I mean, while he was doing it, it was causing me great stress for his safety" (P<sub>1</sub>SC). The father's steering process was to express his concerns even though it conveys some tension at the level of elements, the son does not perceive it to be so, "I'm still just listening. He still has a lot to say." (A<sub>1</sub>SC).

Sadness disrupted the father's goal of engaging with his son as there were times when the father appeared to be resigned to the fact that he may not always understand his son's decisions, "I don't know. I just don't understand. I mean, he doesn't, um (pause). Well, how do you say it, um... he doesn't have a close relationship with anybody." (P<sub>1</sub>SC). The tension created a sense of disruption to his goal of succeeding in his parenting project and his perception of the situation with his son, "kids think they're invincible, and they don't... they don't understand that. So, it's difficult." (P<sub>1</sub>SC).

*Assertions.*

Humour and affection at the level of elements maintained and to some extent strengthened their relationship. Interest motivated their engagement and expressed at the level of elements, increased their understanding of each other's perception. When tension (e.g., worry, concern) or frustration is experienced at the level of appraisal, it motivated them to maintain their joint action towards the goal. However, tension or frustration at the level of meaning may cause disruption and discouragement towards moving forward in their interaction. Negative emotions can create barriers to their interaction at the same time, be functional in steering their project. Not reacting to emotions expressed at the level of elements serves to maintain or to repair the

## **Dyad 2.**

### ***Context.***

A mother (P<sub>2</sub>) and her 19 year-old son (A<sub>2</sub>) engaged in conversations around providing and receiving support, to help the son develop as a well-rounded and multi-faceted individual, which they identified as their transition-to-adulthood project. Both of them appeared to connect well with and had fun interacting with each other. The mother's goal was to engage in conversations with her son, supporting his ideas about his immediate future and to explore them with him. The son's goal was to engage with his mother and to seek her advice. Their conversations focused on son's educational and career interests, the logistics involved in pursuing an occupational career path either in law or medicine.

### ***Role of emotion.***

*Establish and maintain.* Affection was demonstrated in at the level of elements between mother and son as well as at the level of functional step. They both expressed appreciation for each other's thoughtfulness and used humour in their interaction. The emotion of affection served a steering function and in maintaining their relationship, to keep focus on the project of the son's occupational career exploration. The mother engaged with the son, reminiscing and expressing her perception of their close relationship. She also offered compliments and affirmed him of his abilities "You're very well versed in that. So...you know, I mean...and also, don't forget, you are one heck of a cook." (P<sub>2</sub>JC). She acknowledged the role he takes on at home, and confidence in the son's skills, that he is able to take care of chores that are necessary for him to live independently when he chooses move out, "Actually you do a lot at home. And...you know, I mean, you're getting really good at that laundry, you know the stain remover and everything... You know, you've got it down pat, all the" (P<sub>2</sub>JC). The mother expressed

confidence in her son's abilities and reflects her feelings about the kind of person her son was during the self-confrontation interview, "I'm really proud of him because, just in general that's the type of guy he is, he's very compassionate." (P<sub>2</sub>SC)

Affection was also conveyed by the mother's use of caring statements at the level of elements, to show support and encouragement as they explored the son's occupational career interests. She expresses understanding in their interaction of the challenges he faces "Mm hmm. I understand totally." (P<sub>2</sub>JC) and in the self-confrontation interview, she reflects that "I feel such empathy for him, because it is a hard decision and it is hard to know and...and I don't blame him for..." (P<sub>2</sub>SC). Her affection for her son motivated her to support her son in this transition project.

Further, affection was also a steering process towards the mother's goal of encouraging her son in his occupational career exploration. Mother expressed support of her son's current decision to pursue law by highlighting qualities he possesses that makes him a suitable candidate for the field of law,

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** Very true. Convincing arguments based on facts.

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** Yes.

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** You are very persuasive.

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** And I remember conversations like, back, like way back when you said, if I did this, I'd be able to go do that.

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** Yes you have an excellent memory, that's true—I can attest to that. So...so we realize that those are skills that would be very important if you went into law.

The emotion of enthusiasm served to maintain their relationship and energise their project. The mother's action is motivated by the perception of her role as a parent and the concern she has for her son, she reflected, "...from a parental point of view, aside from it being interesting and so forth...I'm thinking it might be helpful for him, in helping him to realise

whether this is... the direction he wants to go in..." (P<sub>2</sub>SC). She expressed her enthusiasm in the possibilities that the son envisions and joins him in his anticipation,

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** What do you think it will be like working at that job this summer?

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** Um, I think that it'll be interesting, you know, I'm not sure what I'm gonna be doing but I'm fine, that stuff's interesting to begin with, so it'll be cool. With my luck I'll probably just end up delivering coffee and mail.

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** Yeah. (laughs)

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** Yeah. (laughs) Um [cut off]

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** You know, even if you do that though you're gonna come in contact with all these scientists, and [cut off]

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** Hm-mm.

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** Researchers and... you can probably strike up conversation and learn some interesting things [cut off]

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** Yeah, I think so. Like, I remember when I went to the [incomprehensible] thing, um, at school, I went to that thing at St. Paul's.

In the self-confrontation interview she reflected that her motivation in exploring different occupations with her son was "hoping that if he gets the job, that he does in fact enjoy the exposure to it" (P<sub>2</sub>SC). Mother was surprised at her son's consideration of a number of factors in making his occupational career decision, she reflected both anticipation and concern for her son in this decision making task "...he's now mentioning location, which I hadn't thought of... he's on the right track and everything, but, you know, it's still gonna take awhile" (P<sub>2</sub>SC).

The son's enthusiasm energised his transition-to-adulthood project and conversations with his mother. Particularly around his excitement with potential occupational career, "Um, I think that it'll be interesting, you know, I'm not sure what I'm gonna be doing but I'm fine, that stuff's interesting to begin with, so it'll be cool..." (A<sub>2</sub>JC) Enthusiasm energised the engagement between him and his mother. He sought her advice, his mother provided the advice that he sought and actively finding out more information to enable the son to make an informed decision. At the level of meaning, enthusiasm steered his perseverance in spite of the difficulty he faced in making a decision with regards to his occupational career plans.

The interaction between mother and son conveyed a sense of enthusiasm for the son's plans, for example, in planting a garden, the son reflected, "I'm a little bit excited, because I think it'd be fun, because I've never really grown anything before" (A<sub>2</sub>SC). The mother shared in this excitement, which served to maintain their relationship,

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** And the yard work. And you're gonna take up gardening this summer, remember.

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** Yeah, I'll plant some potatoes.

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** Right. And all of the other stuff.

The emotion of interest energised their conversation at the different levels. At the level of meaning, the mother was enthusiastic about supporting her son in looking for a summer job where he would be able to exercise his full potential and one that he would enjoy,

**P<sub>2</sub>SC:** I want this for my child, because it would be so much nicer for him... oh I'd be so happy for him to get a job, that he will enjoy, that he won't have to do this hard manual labour, and that he'll get mental stimulation and it'll help him in his career whether he goes in that, or to figure out what he wants to do.

In their interaction, that is, at the level of elements, the mother's interest was conveyed through her use of open-ended questions and empathy for her son as he makes decisions they see as pertinent to his transition to adulthood. She created a climate for discussion on the topic of her son's occupational decision making, steering the conversation and guided his process of decision making. To begin their conversations, her strategy was usually "sort of testing the waters, seeing if he has any clearer idea of what direction he might want to go in, or is he still fluctuating." (P<sub>2</sub>SC), creating a space to begin their conversation around his career exploration. Interest was conveyed in her maintenance of a curious-stance about his interests and perceptions as she provided suggestions and gathered information to inform herself about the various occupational options, mindful that she wanted to tailor to her son's needs. The mother showed interest in her son's decision making process as well as the possibilities he has in mind by inviting and eliciting his thoughts throughout their conversation, for example, "What do you think it will be like

working at that job this summer?” (P<sub>2</sub>JC), “Let’s talk about your future, what, what do you see in the future, work-wise, and school-wise, and living arrangements and, being with your friends?” (P<sub>2</sub>JC). Interest was also a functional step and an appraisal to establish an understanding of where they were at in this transition project, “Right. But where do your interests lay? Like can you picture yourself in medicine [pauses]...” (P<sub>2</sub>JC). The mother reflected in the self-confrontation interview that she had “intentionally asked him, can you picture yourself in medicine and then I paused for awhile” (P<sub>2</sub>SC).

Both mother and son expressed joy by conveying their sense of contentment in living under the same roof. This created a sense of closeness and an affirmation of their roles in each other’s life,

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** Um. Yeah, so living-wise I’m happy at home. Ah....do the laundry.

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** Yeah, you help out a lot [cut off]

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** Yeah, so I know what doing laundry’s like, I also do some cleaning.

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** That’s right.

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** Which is good. Um.

Both mother and son reflected a level of contentment with their current living arrangement. At the level of meaning, they shared a common understanding and joy served to maintain their relationship and project, listing the things the son did to help around the house. In the self-confrontation, the mother reported, “I’m really thrilled that he enjoys living at home and that he’s...comfortable living at home, um...you know, like, we love having A. around...” (P<sub>2</sub>SC) and “...I’m really happy, I’m pleased, and I’m proud, of him and for him. And I, I think it’s wonderful because um...you know I don’t have any, any worries or fears” (P<sub>2</sub>SC). Similarly, the son expressed joy and pride in his ability to accomplish household chores, agreeing with his mother. This served to maintain their relationship as well as their project in this transition to adulthood as the son viewed himself as being capable of doing things not all his peers are able to



“kind of a little proud of myself that I was able to do all that, like.” (A<sub>2</sub>SC), “...little bit a sense of accomplishment there.” (A<sub>2</sub>SC).

The use of humour demonstrated their level of comfort with each other and as a means to redirect their conversation when tension was sensed. Mother and son were in-tuned with each other’s sense of humour, laughing and teasing one another. In their interaction, they are observed to join each other in humorous exchange, for example, when describing the plan for his summer garden, the mother offers an observation,

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** Tomatoes, potatoes, tomatoes.

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** (laughs) Sounds like a rhyme.

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** Yeah, I’m a poet and didn’t even know it [cut off] (laughs)

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** Potatoes, tomatoes. (laughs)

The son also used humour to disrupt tension, as a steering process to maintain the relationship with his mother.

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** So, did you have something in mind?

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** No.

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** (laughs) You said you did.

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** I said we’d find something.

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** Okay, well—[cut off]

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** Let’s say hi to the cameras.

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** Hi. (laughs)

He used good natured teasing when his mother shared about an incident that happened in her Psychology class.

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** Did you start it?

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** No I didn’t. (laughs)

Similarly, when talking about the son’s suitability for a career in law, she teased him in his ability to argue his point, especially at home,

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** ... I have reasons. Just joking. I like to joke. Um, I like collecting research and then laying it out in a good solid argument, and I do that in anything I do, like in an English essay or whatever.

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** At home. (laughs)

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** At home yes. When I say, “I want to do this” and then I’ll find background supporting evidence for why I should be able to and...

At the level of steering, the son used self-depreciating humour to maintain a positive perspective and to minimise the anxiety of finding work experience for the summer,

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** Um, I think that it’ll be interesting, you know, I’m not sure what I’m gonna be doing but I’m fine, that stuff’s interesting to begin with, so it’ll be cool. With my luck I’ll probably just end up delivering coffee and mail.

At times, the son attempted to maintain their conversation even though he was disinterested by using minimal responses. On the other hand, when the son appeared to be less enthusiastic, the mother maintained their conversation through attempts to capture the son’s interest and reflecting her awareness of his boredom in their interaction.

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** You’re bored.

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** What else is on. Staring out the window.

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** Well you know, well first of all, you’re gonna be working also this summer too, and you wanna start gardening.

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** Yeah.

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** But there’s something that you’re forgetting.

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** What?

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** Well, that, like, you really wanted to start going to the gym on a regular basis.

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** Oh yeah.

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** Yeah, anyway. (laughs)

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** Sure.

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** So that’s gonna take time, too, and um, and, when you get together with your friends you’ll be able to see them a lot more because you won’t have to be studying, and doing homework. And we’re gonna have a lovely holiday too, which will be nice.

The emotion of fear/tension functioned at different levels and energised their action in different ways. At the level of elements, tension was not expressed by either mother or son in their interaction. They avoided direct confrontation to prevent disruption to their relationship. This was evident towards the end of a conversation when the son disrupted their interaction by conveying his disinterest through responding minimally and through non-verbal actions such as checking his watch frequently. His mother offered her observation and attempted to reduce

tension by laughing and asking him about what was going on for him "...why do you keep looking at your watch? (laughs)" (P<sub>2</sub>JC).

At the level of steering, fear/tension in having to make an occupational career decision within a short time frame motivated their interaction. "Um....feeling indifferent, maybe a little confused as to what I should take, 'cause there's so many choices... That's usually when I ask mom for advice." (A<sub>2</sub>SC). The mother experienced tension between her desire to help her son "make the right choice for him, like that he's going to be happy with" (P<sub>2</sub>SC) and knowing that "it's such an individual subjective, personal decision" (P<sub>2</sub>SC), steered how she chooses to work with him in making this decision,

**P<sub>2</sub>SC:** I'm trying to stay neutral because I want him to...I don't want him—I don't want him to be influenced by me but on the other hand, I want to try to help him—I have to ask him questions so that he'll be thinking about things, so how do you ask questions without influencing the person, you have to be careful what types of questions you ask.

Both mother and son avoided disruption to their relationship through maintenance or establishing new connections by including laughter in their response or changing topics to one that they anticipate the other party would feel more positive about. Being cognizant of her role as providing guidance to her son in his immediate and future plans, the mother directed their focus "So let's stay on topic (laughs)." (P<sub>2</sub>JC) In moments of tension in their conversation, at the level of elements, the mother is observed to use laughter as a means to maintain their relationship, to lighten the tone of her suggestions or questions and to cause a disruption disallowing the conversation to become perceived negatively.

Even though fear/tension is viewed as a negative emotion, the functionality of the tension due to nervous anticipation for her son's future, steered the mother to provide him with the information she thought would be beneficial in helping him come to a decision "...I wasn't sure if I was deviating, so, you know, because it was the possibility...of him doing something

that, thought he might find of interest. And that might give him more information into going into the field of medicine.” (P<sub>2</sub>SC).

The mother’s worry for her son’s occupational career decision-making was reflected at the level of meaning, in her perspective of her role as parent “...I just want him to have the best experience and really enjoy being in university and have fun” (P<sub>2</sub>SC), “sort of vicariously I guess I’m sort of in the dilemma with him, thinking, yeah, what should he do, you know?” (P<sub>2</sub>SC).

The son experienced fear/tension in a different way. He expressed fear and discouragement in his reflection, “I don’t think I’ll ever figure it out. I’ll end up flipping a coin one day...” (A<sub>2</sub>SC). However, the function of fear/tension, similarly with his mother, served as a motivation for him to actively engage with his mother as she supported him in determining a suitable career choice. They were both aware of and openly shared about the son’s frustration in not being able to make and maintain a decision with regards to his occupational career choice,

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** ...what I’ve noticed is that...like, you’ve, you were like okay, medicine and law and then you were like, mmm, law, medicine, and then you were like, no, medicine and law, but now it seems to me like you’re kind of fluctuating so much—what would you say?

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** Um, well this week. (both laugh) No, um, I’d say that law, I’m leaning more towards it right now, that could change because it has in the past, um...

They both laughed, using humour as steering to relief tension as they work jointly in their project, towards their common goal in spite of challenges.

*Disrupt and repair.* The emotion of tension served to energise their interaction and motivated their actions towards their sometimes, conflicting goals. For example, mother and son had differing expectations with regards to the son’s flexibility in spending time with his friends caused some tension. The mother reflected in the self-confrontation interview feeling “awkward” (P<sub>2</sub>SC) and the son reported his perception of his mother’s action “...really babies me a lot... And I’m like, c’mon, mom, I’m almost twenty, let me go... I was feeling a little annoyed about

that” (A<sub>2</sub>SC). Tension disrupted their joint project at the level of steering. However, at the level of elements, neither of them openly expressed their annoyance or frustration, maintaining their interaction. For the son, frustration motivated him to express his needs in a different way, such as describing to his mother in a hypothetical way how he would like more flexibility of time to spend with his friends and how he will inform her. On the other hand, the mother’s minimal response and laughter appears to be a strategy to prevent a disruption to their relationship.

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** I’d like to spend more time with my friends.

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** Yeah.

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** So have a little more freedom to do that.

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** (nods) Makes sense.

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** Yeah, just kind of get up and go when I feel like it. You know, like [incomprehensible] stuff, but um. You know, not have to plan out as much [cut off]

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** Yeah.

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** Ahead of time. You know, like, I’m like, oh, OK, it’s Friday, I’m gonna go out tonight, mom. That kind of, that kind of stuff. Um, what else [incomprehensible], um.

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** (laughs)

The son then initiated repair of their relationship, using affection as his functional step. He apologised, expressed appreciation for living at home and lets his mother know that she is welcomed in his life.

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** Sorry. Living-wise, I like living at home. I don’t have any plans to move out anytime soon. I guess if I want more privacy, I can always move to the basement. It’s finished but, I really don’t have any privacy issues to begin with. I’m pretty open. You guys respect my privacy, so um...yeah, whatever, bedroom door’s always open.

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** Aw, thanks.

The mother steered by tension from the previous moments, revisited the topic of her son’s desire to spend more time with his friends by offering reasons of her perception on why he was not spending as much time with his friends at the moment. Neutral topics such as activities the son has planned for the summer was used to repair their relationship at the level of steering. At the level of elements, the son responded minimally, disengaging from the conversation with his mother.

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** And so...you just get together with your friends whenever it works out and whenever you want. I mean, right now, you can't get together as often as you like 'cause you're, like, studying for your midterms and your finals.

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** Yeah. Yeah. No, I [cut off]

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** But once you're finished [cut off]

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** I'll be happy when school's over, but at the same time, it'll kind of be sad because I like the whole social aspect with my friends.

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** Yeah.

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** Just meeting new people, 'cause like often when I'm at home, like when I'm not doing anything, it's like TV.

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** You're bored.

At the level of meaning, the son reflected frustration that the conversation with his mother was not helpful in him coming to a decision,

**A<sub>2</sub>SC:** ...she usually knows me pretty well, so I'm used to it. Um, it just, you know, didn't make things any clearer for me. She's just of reiterating whatever I thought to myself before, so it didn't have any profound impact.

Annoyance at the level of elements was demonstrated by the son's "unenthusiastic responses" (A<sub>2</sub>SC) that disrupted their conversation. The mother on the other hand, used laughs to maintain their interaction.

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** Well you know, well first of all, you're gonna be working also this summer too, and you wanna start gardening.

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** Yeah.

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** But there's something that you're forgetting.

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** What?

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** Well, that, like, you really wanted to start going to the gym on a regular basis.

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** Oh yeah.

**P<sub>2</sub>JC:** Yeah, anyway. (laughs)

**A<sub>2</sub>JC:** Sure.

The son did not openly disagree with his mother's plans but at the level of appraisal, reflected his thoughts of the moment, "I knew it, you should have just listened to me, you spent all this money, we could have already bought a treadmill or something like that" (A<sub>2</sub>SC), "Yeah, so it's just like, you should have listened to me to begin with, mom." (A<sub>2</sub>SC).

In a self-confrontation interview, the son reflected feeling "...nothing, really. A little blah" (A<sub>2</sub>SC) and sees himself as being "usually pretty neutral on things" (A<sub>2</sub>SC), as he appears to be focused on the issues of his occupational career decision. Even though the son may not have reported emotion explicitly, their project was energised by the tension he felt in the lack of certainty and clarity in making his occupational career decision, as it served to both maintain and disrupt their interaction and project at different points.

*Assertions.*

Positive emotions (affection, enthusiasm, interest, humour) reinforced the parent-adolescent relationship. The relationship was the context in which parent and adolescent engaged in discussions of issues pertinent to transition to adulthood. Their relationship provided a buffer in maintaining their interaction even though tension and frustration at the level of appraisal was present. Negative emotions (anger, fear/tension, sadness) at the level of appraisal and meaning sometimes served to maintain their engagement in the project. At other times, negative emotions hindered their project goals whether or not it was expressed at the level of elements, in their interaction. However, when both parent and adolescent experienced emotions that were congruent with each other, it served to maintain their motivation of the project. Humour also characterised their interaction and was a steering process in their relationship maintenance. Repair to their interaction was established through the use of humour and affection at the level of elements.

### **Dyad 3.**

#### ***Context.***

A father (P<sub>3</sub>) and his 18-year-old daughter (A<sub>3</sub>) were engaged in conversations as they jointly negotiated the daughter's increased independence and responsibilities in the transition to adulthood. Their interactions were characterised by the father's questioning, offering explanations and actively listening, the daughter answering by providing information and clarification, and sharing of concerns. The joint project between father and daughter appeared to be to continue to engage in discussions of a broad range of issues that pertain to the transition-to-adulthood, including ones that increased the daughter's independence while still living in the family home. The issues raised included: 1) the daughter's desire to move to the family basement and her parents' concern for her safety in such a living arrangement; 2) daughter's romantic relationship with her 34-year-old manager at work, her parents' concern and consequences of pursuing this relationship.

#### ***Role of emotion.***

*Establish and maintain.* The emotion of affection was expressed at the level of elements, through the father's use of caring statements, that was motivated by fear/tension, being concerned and disappointed with his daughter's choices. He stated his concerns openly with his daughter "...we're concerned that... that...well... It doesn't seem to be a very mature thing to do" (P<sub>3</sub>JC), establishing his openness to communicating about issues. In the self-confrontation interview, he reported his sympathy for his daughter, "... I can sympathise with her on that one" (P<sub>3</sub>SC).

At the level of elements, affection maintained their relationship, the father expressed his appreciation of his daughter's sharing, "well its good to hear your... Reactions... I guess we'll



have to talk it over with mom” (P<sub>3</sub>JC), he affirmed and encouraged his daughter, interspersed by his perception of the situation,

**P<sub>3</sub>JC:** there’s the question of maturity and I know that you’re... I know that you’re... Showing your maturity... from time to time but this time...

**P<sub>3</sub>JC:** so yeah – we are – we would .... Think it’d be more, appropriate to go out with a person closer to your age ...”

The emotion of interest served to maintain their engagement in the project, at the level of elements. The father sought his daughter’s perspective, asked her open-ended questions to get re-acquainted with her arguments and to understand the issues from her perspective. He reflected in the self-confrontation interview “... It’s kind of good in a way to talk it over, cuz then, you know, here are her concerns so... it’s kind of refreshing in a way to... to go through this.” (P<sub>3</sub>SC).

At other times, interest at the level of elements also serves as a steering process in their conversation and minimises disruption to their interaction. For example, after a long pause, the father initiates a switch of topic to the daughter’s plans about balancing work and school.

**P<sub>3</sub>JC:** hm.... But he could still lose his job though

**A<sub>3</sub>JC:** he could

**P<sub>3</sub>JC:** yeah (long pause)....so that’s it – or you’re you’re not going to – are you still going to work at down at at ... the restaurant when you start school?

**A<sub>3</sub>JC:** yeah – I was planning on doing one shift there and one shift

At the level of appraisal, the father’s interest was motivated by his concerns about balancing his daughter’s desire and the needs of other members of the family. At the level of meaning, he was engaged in their project by how he saw his role as a parent providing guidance to his daughter in making good choices.

Both father and daughter did not react their emotions at the level of elements, which allowed them to maintain engagement in their interaction and focus on their goals. For example, even though the daughter disagreed with her father's concern, she did not react to the tension,

**I:** how you feel about that? Kinda he shouldn't concern or ....

**A<sub>3</sub>SC:** well I think when we first started about it, they felt they had concerns ....

Because it sounds a little bit strange I guess but ..... like if he talks to me about it I don't think he'll have concerns – if I tell them that .... You know ... I - I have good judgment about it and ...I've known him for a while and .... like the only thing to be concerned about is he's my manager and he could lose his job – like I don't know .....

**I:** Yeah, yeah, so you kind of felt like this will take a bit of convincing – there's no good reason to be concerned about your having the relationship

**A<sub>3</sub>SC:** yeah

The daughter reacted to the tension she experienced at the level of goal and meaning without expressing negative emotion in the interaction with her father. Tension energised their conversation by steering the daughter's focus to the issue at hand without becoming emotional, to convince the father of her perspective,

**A<sub>3</sub>SC:** I was thinking about trying to – trying to get my dad on my side of the whole thing so he would want to – he'll support me – rather than like my mom ... at first she was okay with it ...but then now she's not okay with it – she was thinking about it by herself for a while then decided it wouldn't be a good idea – so I wanted my dad to .... I don't know, try and see that it's okay (laughing).

She maintained their relationship through a directive way of interaction, providing statements of fact without politeness. The daughter reflected in her self-confrontation interview,

**A<sub>3</sub>SC:** Well, we...that's mostly all our conversations is negotiating about stuff.

**I:** Okay.

**A<sub>3</sub>SC:** We don't really talk just about the weather or something.

**I:** Okay.

**A<sub>3</sub>SC:** [incomprehensible] When I do talk to him, it's cuz we wanna...it's cuz I want more privileges or something.

**I:** Mm hmm.

**A<sub>3</sub>SC:** And usually if I have something really good to say then he'll realize [incomprehensible] I don't know. I try and make the counterargument for everything he says but he usually gets frustrated and [incomprehensible].

On the other hand, tension at the father's goal level, did not disrupt their interaction as it served to motivate his engagement, trying to understand more fully his daughter's rationale,

**P<sub>3</sub>SC:** yeah but you know still confused – I should have tried to ...still confused as to ... why that – how that rationalizing it right – sort of – I sort of understand it but not completely – I'm still confused about the rationale

Humour served to maintain their relationship in moments of tension and disagreement, for example in their dialogue of the daughter's cellphone use,

**P<sub>3</sub>JC:** no – so but she does insist that there's no harm in doing it and that she'll do it when she's driving on her own (laughs)

**A<sub>3</sub>JC:** (laughs) I was just upset I want ... you know, it's not illegal.

Shared laughter appeared to create warmth and prevented potential disruption to their relationship when their perspectives differ.

**A<sub>3</sub>JC:** well I wanted to talk with you too – I wanted to get you on my side because mom's not on my side anymore (laughs)

**P<sub>3</sub>JC:** (laughs) I see – you want my side – well that's going to be difficult because I-I-I – no....

Tension was sometimes expressed through nervous laughter by the father. He used this as a strategy to avoid sounding harsh or to soften disagreements and the message he tried to convey,

**A<sub>3</sub>JC:** Well are you going to let me live there then? Now that I have you alone, mom can't interfere with you.

**P<sub>3</sub>JC:** (Laughs) It requires some, some ongoing, well first of all it needs to be finished.

**A<sub>3</sub>JC:** Well I think we should decide before it's finished

**P<sub>3</sub>JC:** Decide before it's finished? Wow.

**A<sub>3</sub>JC:** Yeah, he said, "Oh, wow have two rooms upstairs? Wow."

**P<sub>3</sub>JC:** (Laughs) Well, you probably talked him into it somehow...

**A<sub>3</sub>JC:** No.

**P<sub>3</sub>JC:** I see, I see. So this is, do you think this is, this is, will it help you on your "transition to adulthood" (laughs)?

The father included laughter with statements that may be perceived as judgmental of his daughter's action, "it was you .... Pursuing him (laughs) ..." (P<sub>3</sub>JC).

The father did not express tension in a negative way in their joint action, at the level of elements and their relationship was maintained through use of laughs and expression of warmth, "well that that that... well that he's quite a bit older than you so there's like – there's you know... You're just a mere (laughs) baby... in our eyes..." (P<sub>3</sub>JC).

In another example, the tension about the daughter's driving habit did not disrupt their interaction even though it was a big concern. The father again used the strategy of laughs to soften his way of informing her, as a means to attain his goal of reminding his daughter of safety habits when driving. He used nervous laughter emphasising the discomforting fact of the reason why people get into traffic accidents, "well I guess that's what all the other people that crash into each other (laughs) – they think they know." (P<sub>3</sub>JC)

He also used laughter as a way to establish or create a new topic of conversation that could potentially be uncomfortable for both of them,

**A<sub>3</sub>JC:** All right

**P<sub>3</sub>JC:** Yeah (laughs)

**A<sub>3</sub>JC:** Well, what do you want to know? What do you .....

**P<sub>3</sub>JC:** Okay well the issue is (laughs) that L works in a restaurant and ... which we're not going to name .... And her manager is .... A man of 34 years

The daughter also used laughter as a means to create a positive atmosphere in their interaction and to minimise tension.

**P<sub>3</sub>JC:** No, she has a reason doesn't she?

**A<sub>3</sub>JC:** Oh, I don't know (laughs).

**P<sub>3</sub>JC:** I think she feels that, that, you're a bit less safe down there, because, you know, if we're upstairs, and you're downstairs, then, uh, you know it's uh, you know it's a bit, might be a bit of a safety issue there.

At the level of meaning as both father and daughter had conflicting goals but the tension did not disrupt their project of negotiation. The father expressed his worries and concerns while the daughter was driven by interest and enthusiasm to get what she wants. The father continued being engaged in the conversation despite the tension as he reflected, “every time you give more privileges and uh... you know, there’s concerns about how she’s going to use those and how it’s going to affect her, yeah for sure.” (P<sub>3</sub>SC). This was also inline with the father’s parenting project, “to make sure she makes good choices” (P<sub>3</sub>SC).

*Disrupt and repair.* Anger disrupted their project at the level of meaning, as it hindered their engagement towards attainment of their goal. They did not express the frustration or annoyance they felt towards each other in their interaction, at the level of elements even though they both reflected in their self-confrontation interviews as having experienced irritation, annoyance or frustration. The father did not express his frustration in their joint conversation but reflected on his concerns and strategy, for example his need to involve other members of the family in the decision making process, stalling the resolution of the issue, “Yeah, you know he agreed that that was okay, but I’m not sure—he’s, he’s...we need to talk about it with I and obviously we’re gonna talk about it with mom so, I hate making unilateral decisions.” (P<sub>3</sub>SC)

Frustration steered the daughter to speak to her father one-to-one as she reflects in her self-confrontation interview,

**I:** So almost catching him off guard?

**A<sub>3</sub>SC:** Yeah, I guess (laughs).

**I:** (laughs) The element of surprise? (A also laughs) How are you feeling in that segment?

**A<sub>3</sub>SC:** Uhh, yeah I guess frustrated.

**I:** Still frustrated.

**A<sub>3</sub>SC:** I didn’t know what to do, what to say...

**I:** Okay. And am I right to think that your goal in this conversation is to maybe get permission to move down to the basement?

**A<sub>3</sub>SC:** Yeah.

**I:** And how do you think you're achieving steps toward that goal in this conversation—do you think you're accomplishing?

**A<sub>3</sub>SC:** I think a little bit cuz my mom wasn't here.

At the level of appraisal, the daughter reflects that she was frustrated by her parents, as their plans disrupted her goal. However, frustration at the level of appraisal and as steering process served to maintain her continued engagement in conversation with her father to achieve her goal,

**A<sub>3</sub>SC:** yeah – I don't like talking about things a lot ...

**I:** uh hm

**A<sub>3</sub>SC:** I - I just want to say and okay (inaudible) you know, you can go (laughs) (inaudible) I don't want to keep talking about it

**I:** sometimes it's frustrating that you keep going

**A<sub>3</sub>SC:** yeah and keep going on and on and on .... My parents want to talk about everything forever ....

The daughter was 'disappointed' by her parents' lack of support for the relationship with her manager. The disappointment disrupted the daughter's goal of gaining her parents' approval. However, this energised their negotiating project as the daughter shared her perspective with her father.

**A<sub>3</sub>JC:** I don't – I don't understand why mom was ... like she just .... Exploded about it ... why – I wanted to talk to her about it

**P<sub>3</sub>JC:** Well

**A<sub>3</sub>JC:** But I'm too nervous

The father on the other hand reports feeling “felt kind of afraid...” (P<sub>3</sub>SC). His fear and concerns about the romantic relationship between his daughter and her manager steered his goal of discouraging her from the relationship. He was aware that he needed to be strategic in how they interacted to maintain the channel of communication. At the level of elements, he used minimal responses, being supportive of his daughter without agreeing with her choices, “I know the hazard here .... The big hazard here for parents is that if you do show disapproval like that, that can actually cement the relationship right (laughs) so that's a big hazard” (P<sub>3</sub>SC).

Fear further disrupted the father's parenting project as he perceived that he was unable to speak freely and therefore did not provide the guidance his daughter needed to make good decisions. Fear was the motivation for his behaviour, afraid his daughter may make a decision out of spite. In his reflection, the father expresses resignation about the extent he has control over his daughter, "I guess all we can do is ... Is express our concerns ... She ...She chooses the right path..." (P<sub>3</sub>SC).

In a different discussion with a similar situation of conflicting goals, tension caused a disruption in their discussion,

**P<sub>3</sub>JC:** No, she has a reason doesn't she?

**A<sub>3</sub>JC:** Oh, I don't know (laughs).

**P<sub>3</sub>JC:** I think she feels that, that, you're a bit less safe down there, because, you know, if we're upstairs, and you're downstairs, then, uh, you know it's uh, you know it's a bit, might be a bit of a safety issue there.

**A<sub>3</sub>JC:** I don't think so.

**P<sub>3</sub>JC:** She, she kind of likes to keep everybody on the same floor, so that we know where you are, and uh,

**A<sub>3</sub>JC:** So she can wake me up when she gets up?

**P<sub>3</sub>JC:** And, uh, you know, but if you're down in the basement and you know, suddenly you disappear in the middle of the night, we wouldn't have a clue where you are. So we're kind, I don't know, kind of a, it's that kind of issue I guess.

**A<sub>3</sub>JC:** Well, I don't what to say.

The daughter responded minimally, with "Oh, I don't know" (A<sub>3</sub>JC), she reflected in her self-confrontation, "I didn't want to admit that it could be a safety problem...I couldn't really think of anything" (A<sub>3</sub>SC).

### ***Assertions.***

Emotion, both positive (affection, interest, humour) and negative (anger, fear/tension, sadness) served to maintain the relationship between father and daughter. Tension was not expressed at the level of elements but at the level of appraisal as a steering process in their interaction and project. Sadness and fear impelled the father's engagement in the conversations,

and the concern for his daughter motivates his continued engagement. For the daughter, tension underlay the interaction with her father, steered by interest and enthusiasm to get what she wants. At the level of meaning, tension served to maintain their relationship project, which was about negotiation. The emotion of tension was functional in energising their attempts at understanding the other person's point of view, which prevented disruption to their project and relationship. Positive emotion (e.g., humour) steered their interaction, preventing disruption and maintained their engagement. The use of humour and nervous laughter were sometimes used to soften potential areas of conflict.



#### **Dyad 4.**

##### ***Context.***

A mother (P<sub>4</sub>) and her 19 year-old daughter (A<sub>4</sub>) were engaged in the joint project of working towards a level of independence for the daughter. Between the initial and final conversations, the daughter moved out on her own after intense fights between her and her mother. Their interaction pattern appeared to be characterised by tension, the mother directs, daughter resists, both arguing and actively negotiating their differences of opinion and personalities. The goal of the mother was to engage her daughter in a discussion about the daughter's view of becoming an adult, providing emotional support and a sounding board for her daughter. A parenting project was to determine how best to encourage the daughter to be responsible for herself in this process of letting go while maintaining nurturance and validation. The daughter's goal was to assert her independence and individuality, to clarify her needs and wishes, and address the way she and her mother relate to each other. Issues in their conversations revolved around the daughter's plans for working in the summer, school path and developing independence. After the daughter moved out on her own, their conversation issues were similar such as choices for school courses with new focus on tasks such as financial planning, plans for Christmas and hopes for the future with her fiancé.

##### ***Role of emotion.***

*Establish and maintain.* The mother's 'fear', her worry and concern at the level of meaning, impelled her to engage in interaction with her daughter. Their project was maintained by the push-and-pull between mother and daughter as the mother places herself in a position to be indispensable to the daughter, to stay close and to maintain control, "no, thank god for her that

I'm grounded because her whole life it's been like—and I haven't done it alone. We've had specialists along the way, you know, just bringing her down and keeping her on track.” (P<sub>4</sub>SC)

The tension between mother and daughter served to meet their relational needs as they negotiated the development of independence that was part of their transition to adulthood project. The daughter reflected on the normalcy of ‘arguing’ in their interaction during the self-confrontation interview, “Yeah, that’s one thing. We all seem to have very strong points of view and we argue our points of view.” (A<sub>4</sub>SC)

The daughter also reflected in her self-confrontation interview that that tension does not disrupt but serves to maintain their interaction, as this was a typical exchange that goes on at home,

**A<sub>4</sub>SC:** Uh, the name calling and the ‘help’. That’s all routine in our house. All of us do it. All of us actually.

**I:** Okay. So that’s your way of kind of going, I’ve had enough.

**A<sub>4</sub>SC:** Well, no, not even. It’s just our way of playing around with it.

Similarly, the mother did not react negatively to the daughter’s defiance and was not bothered by the tension, perceiving it as something fun between them, “Just one of these little things that we get into. Who’s wiser, who’s smarter, who’s this, who’s that, you know... just having fun.”

(P<sub>4</sub>SC). In the self-confrontation interview, the mother described their family relationships as being close to one another despite the way they interact.

**P<sub>4</sub>SC:** Well, I find her funny, this oppositional kind of defiant—of course, I know what I’m doing, I know how it’s done. You must be stupid to be asking me that or implying something else.

**I:** Would you say that’s pretty typical of your interactions with S? The way you guys normally interact?

**P<sub>4</sub>SC:** Oh yeah.

**I:** Yeah. So lots of laughing and lots of kind of jabs back and forth.

**P<sub>4</sub>SC:** Yeah. I think actually we have a pretty good relationship, you know. I think that we are two different people like you observed, and that she—my role has always been to bring her down and she’s certainly brought a lot of life and energy and ideas into the family and I’ve learned lots from her really. And um...yeah. I think there’s always a,

very—even when we argue or I get hysterical cuz her snake is eating one of our towels—I think there’s always a respect for each other and an understanding that we both bring different things into the house and the relationship and um, you know, we have—we’re actually quite a close family, the 4 of us.

Conflict appeared to be their primary means of communication and was functional to maintenance of their project. For the daughter, tension was a means to get her mother’s attention, to be heard and have her concerns addressed,

**A<sub>4</sub>SC:** Conflict doesn’t bother me. It actually amuses me most of the time.

**I:** Sounds like you guys are pretty comfortable communicating that way.

**A<sub>4</sub>SC:** Oh yeah, it’s fine. Like, sometimes I throw things at her just to get her all riled up.

**I:** You like to push her buttons,

**A<sub>4</sub>SC:** Oh yeah. She also says I’m very draining, like I suck the life force right out of the room.

**I:** Oh, she tells you that? What’s it like for you to hear that?

**A<sub>4</sub>SC:** I don’t care.

**I:** Okay. So do you agree with her?

**A<sub>4</sub>SC:** Yeah, I probably do. When she says that, it’s like, oh good, I’ll probably get your inheritance faster. We operate on a love-hate relationship.

At the level of steering, from the mother’s perspective, tension served to maintain and attain the goal of their project in the transition to adulthood, “I think she is just throwing these things out to create some distance. And I, you know I trust her and... that’s why I laugh at her because it’s so ridiculous” (P<sub>4</sub>SC), “Yeah. It’s pretty typical. This oppositional stuff and ....I generally just don’t react.” (P<sub>4</sub>SC). The positive perspective on tension, served as a steering process in her parenting project of promoting her daughter’s independence.

**P<sub>4</sub>SC:** So it’s not really frustration. Not that she can’t be frustrating. But I think it’s more anxiety—what does she need and where’s my role? How much do I get involved, how much do I step back? And she’s just very fragile and so it’s kind of this, um...finding the right, the right place to be to be of benefit to her. Does that make sense?

The emotion of tension did not disrupt their relationship as both of them did not engage in a tenuous exchange for long and have developed different strategies in their interaction with each other. The daughter reflected that she provides “answers based on what I expect she expects

me to hear” (A<sub>4</sub>SC) and the mother chooses to ignore some of her daughter’s oppositions, “it’s like, not even worth going there, so, you know...” (P<sub>4</sub>SC).

Fear/tension due to issues such as an upcoming exam helped maintain their joint project. For example, at the level of meaning, the mother’s functional step was to act inline with her goal of being responsible for supporting her daughter and to help her manage her level of anxiety, allowed her daughter to vent and normalised the experience of test anxiety for her. At the level of steering, the mother recognised that her daughter was ultimately responsible for her own action and attempts to relinquish control over the situation, disallowing her fears and frustration to disrupt their relationship,

**P<sub>4</sub>SC:** Well there was a lot of frustration and a lot of worry – a lot of concern ... but again I have to ..... recognize that she’s an adult – she’s making this decision – there’s no sense in ... you know .... Creating a big ruckus about it ....

The mother’s anger with her daughter’s boss motivated her in maintaining her role as advocate for her daughter, “I’m very angry with her boss because I can see why S. couldn’t work for him ..... and as far as S. goes she seems to .... Be dealing with it well so that’s – that’s good” (P<sub>4</sub>SC). At the level of elements, the tension in this situation was functional in allowing the mother to learn about her daughter’s ability to deal with such issues through their interaction.

Humour was used to transition between potentially tense discussions, to maintain their relationship. In one instance, they were arguing about which one of them was wiser,

**A<sub>4</sub>JC:** Yeah, well, I was smarter than you, even then.

**P<sub>4</sub>JC:** I’m wiser than you.

**A<sub>4</sub>JC:** No you’re not.

**P<sub>4</sub>JC:** You may be smarter but I’m wiser.

**A<sub>4</sub>JC:** You’re not wiser than me. You’re older.

**P<sub>4</sub>JC:** That makes me wiser.

**A<sub>4</sub>JC:** Not always. Look at grampy. He’s not wise.

**P<sub>4</sub>JC:** Well in some ways he is.

**A<sub>4</sub>JC:** No he’s not. He knows how to balance a bank book, yeah.

**P<sub>4</sub>JC:** Well that’s important.

**A<sub>4</sub>JC:** That's not wisdom, that's intelligence. [incomprehensible]

**P<sub>4</sub>JC:** I'll tell him you said that.

**A<sub>4</sub>JC:** No. Don't. (both laugh)

The tension in the argument disrupted their interaction to some extent, but was functional for the daughter at the level of project as she demonstrated her independence from her mother's perspective. In the self-confrontation interview, she reflected on her perception,

**I:** So an interesting discussion here on the distinction between intelligence and wisdom and your mom says she's wiser but you're disagreeing.

**A<sub>4</sub>SC:** No. She acts very mature at times, but I—because of my age I act all sweet [incomprehensible] but I do, like I people watch all the time so I can pinpoint things out. I can catch things before she does usually, so...that's not just me being stubborn. That's actually true and I've been told that by my psychologist.

**I:** You've been told what by your psychologist?

**A<sub>4</sub>SC:** That I'm wiser than her.

**I:** Oh really? Oh, okay.

**A<sub>4</sub>SC:** So it's not just me being stubborn, belligerent, rebellious teenager—it's just an actual fact.

Overall, to maintain their relationship and avoid tension, the daughter reported that her strategy was to "... go with the flow. Whatever she does, I do. I just mimic her." (A<sub>4</sub>SC), at the level of elements, she avoids tension by "keeping my voice calm, cuz the second I raise my voice a bit, she will freak out and we'll start arguing. So I've learned just to keep a monotone, cuz then she won't attack me" (A<sub>4</sub>SC).

The mother, on the other hand, uses 'laughs' to avoid disruption in their interaction, for example, even when she was criticised by her daughter,

**A<sub>4</sub>JC:** You aren't doing anything. You just come home, yell at me for not picking up my coat.

**P<sub>4</sub>JC:** Well that's true.

**A<sub>4</sub>JC:** And then bitch about your messy house and the fact that we have a giant snake living in the basement.

**P<sub>4</sub>JC:** (laughs) Okay, well that's what I do. What are you doing?

At the level of goal, tension appeared to be disruptive. However, at the level of elements, their interaction was maintained through the use of nervous laughter and the mother's attempt at humour.

**A<sub>4</sub>JC:** We have to talk for 10 minutes.

**P<sub>4</sub>JC:** I think we've talked for 10 minutes.

**A<sub>4</sub>JC:** I don't think we have. I think we've talked for like 4.

**P<sub>4</sub>JC:** No, I think it's been 20. (laughs)

**A<sub>4</sub>JC:** Four.

**P<sub>4</sub>JC:** Help! (laughs) Well if there's nothing else to say, then 4 minutes or 20 minutes.

The emotion of interest was used both to establish and maintain their focus on their project of developing the daughter's independence. Interest served as the steering process in the mother's role as "facilitator with her—like, at this point, I have to facilitate things and set some boundaries and keep some supports in place, but I really don't want to know everything she's doing..." (P<sub>4</sub>SC). The mother used open-ended questions, for example, "what do you see for the next five years?" (P<sub>4</sub>JC) to invite her daughter's participation. This was also used at times to refocus their conversation after some tension in their exchange.

At the goal level, the mother experienced frustration and worry, as she perceived that their transition project for the daughter to become more independent was hindered by the daughter herself, even though the daughter tried to establish her independence by moving out of the house. The mother reflected in the self-confrontation interview, "it's frustrating when she does that because it... it's a waste of her energy and effort and she has the ability... to problem solve." (P<sub>4</sub>SC). However, the mother was compelled by her worry for the daughter, "But... she still is coming to... us... And that's a bit... (laughs)... worrisome or just.. you know I just don't like it" (P<sub>4</sub>SC), to maintain her involvement with her daughter's life at the level of steering.

The mother reflected joy, at the level of meaning as she was able to provide her daughter with some guidance in this transition to adulthood process, "I was feeling—I 'm glad that she –

I'm happy... I'm glad that maybe I can you know giver her something that would help her..." (P<sub>4</sub>SC).

*Disrupt and repair.* Frustration, disrupted their relationship at the level of steering. Even though the daughter participated in the conversations with her mother, she reported "...she talks and I answer based on what I expect she expects me to hear...I can't engage with her in a conversation. We are so different" (A<sub>4</sub>SC). The daughter she reported frustration with her mother, as the mother tried to provide her with some guidance around time management,

**A<sub>4</sub>SC:** She's stating the obvious. Which is what she does a lot.

**I:** You seemed a little irritated with the conversation there, is that right?

**A<sub>4</sub>SC:** Well, she's like, oh, check to see if you're in nursing. Have they heard from you, have they heard from you, have they heard from you? It's continuous with the nursing and the registration cuz I mean, she's obsessed with it, so. We're kind of like, like, I know what I'm gonna do and she always states the obvious. You're telling me things I already know, so. It just gets a little redundant.

**I:** Okay. And what were you feeling about that?

**A<sub>4</sub>SC:** [incomprehensible] she's being redundant again.

**I:** Okay. So is it a bit frustrating, or?

**A<sub>4</sub>SC:** Oh yeah, it's frustrating.

Similarly, tension disrupted their joint project at the level of meaning and steering. Just as the daughter was tired of hearing her mother point out the obvious, the mother was "tired of doing this. I want her to do it..." (P<sub>4</sub>SC). The underlying frustration disrupted their joint project as the mother was tired of helping her daughter and the daughter's perception that the mother was putting undue pressure on her,

**A<sub>4</sub>SC:** Like, uh, here she goes again. Blaming me for her problems. She's the one who's freaking out, but in order to make herself feel better, she's trying to push it on me. She's trying to pawn it off on me—what she's trying to do there is to get me to freak out so that she could gain control of the situation, cuz she was feeling uneasy about it. So what she wanted to do was she wanted to push the situation on me, say something that'll make me freak out, so that, um, she can come in and calm everything out and be in control of it because she's not in control of it.

At the level of elements, tension was sometimes disruptive their interaction. The daughter responds with sarcasm,

**A<sub>4</sub>JC:** Well, duh? I don't work—[cut off]

**P<sub>4</sub>JC:** (laughs) What do you mean duh?

**A<sub>4</sub>JC:** No. I'm gonna go to school and not study.

**P<sub>4</sub>JC:** A house. And in the meantime, we'll just kind of get on with it and make the best of it, right?

**A<sub>4</sub>JC:** Well no. You're so bland and boring. I mean, geez, yay, life.

**P<sub>4</sub>JC:** Okay, well what do you see for the next 5 years?

At the level of steering, tension served as a strategy for the daughter to demonstrate to her mother that she was different from her, "I'm more chaotic and she's more structured, grounded" (A<sub>4</sub>SC), "I find that at times, she does try to push her organisational skills on me, and so I'm, I'm kind of like, no." (A<sub>4</sub>SC), it served the daughter's goal of expressing disagreement with her mother and to assert her independence.

Tension was created by the daughter as a strategy to minimise the conversation with her mother and to annoy her.

**A<sub>4</sub>SC:** ... she's saying everything I already know. Like, I know what I was thinking. That whole time I was thinking, oh god, here we are. Give her what she wants to hear and throw some things at her to get her annoyed, blah blah blah. Like, it's all stuff I've heard before, you know. She's just reciting what I'm doing. I hate that. Like, I hate it when she's like, well this is what I'm doing. Like I don't know what I'm doing. And she's like—I don't know. I think it's her trying to still be wise and like the mother, yada yada. It's her trying to assume that role still and guide me in the right direction when she has to realize that I've already got the direction planned out. So really all she's doing is repeating what I already know.

A unique situation for this dyad was the daughter's move out of the house between the initial and final conversation as the fights between mother and daughter intensified. Tension shifted towards neutral after the move and their conversation was more task-focused. The daughter reflects,



**A4SC:** Well we've got more to talk about cuz we're not always at each other's throats and as we're away from each other, things kind of build up so we actually have more to talk about. And um, because we don't see each other that much, we get more done and we don't yell at each other. So we tend to be more civil with each other now.

### ***Assertions.***

At the level of elements, negative emotion (anger, fear/tension), disrupted their interaction. However, even though tension disrupted their interaction at the level of elements, it was sometimes functional as at the level of appraisal or as steering process, in their project towards goal attainment. Humour maintained their interaction and at times was a bridge or as a means of repair when there had been a disruption in their interaction. Positive emotions were observed mostly at the level of appraisal and meaning but less explicitly observed at the level of interaction, which were characterised by tension and anger. Nonetheless, positive emotions (affection, interest) served to maintain their project at all three levels, of elements, appraisal and meaning. Emotionality was decreased when their interaction was focused on tasks and information gathering or provision.

### **Cross Case Analysis**

The cross case analysis process allows for the integration of the wealth of information offered in each parent-adolescent dyad about the role of emotion in their interactions and projects. The case study method, "aggregating measures across cases" (Stake, 1995, p. 36), while providing an "emphasis on uniqueness, and that implies knowledge of others that the case is different from..." (p. 8) is complementary with Domene and Young's (2005) action-project method's emphasis on protection of important information about each case in comparative analysis, "ignoring the details and context of the individual cases would be a violation of one of the central tenets of action theory" (p. 70). In this section, how emotion served to "establish and maintain" and "disrupt and repair" is discussed between the four parent-adolescent dyads.

**Emotion establishes and maintains.** In parent-adolescent interactions, there was little demonstration of the role of emotion to establish at the levels of elements, appraisal or meaning as they already have a shared history and their projects are already on-going. On the other hand, emotion served to maintain their engagement in the relationship and projects at the different levels. Positive emotions of affection, enthusiasm, interest and humour were found to consistently maintain parent-adolescent interactions and projects in all four dyads. Particularly when these emotions were expressed at the level of elements, they served to buffer dyads from disruption of their interaction, maintaining their relationship and engagement in the projects.

In some dyads, positive emotion motivates their engagement during stressful situations. For example, in the mother-son dyad (Dyad 2), the sense of urgency in making a decision with regards to the son's occupational career decision was stressful. The stressful situation was buffered by the mother's affection and concern for her son as they had established a sense of trust. At the level of steering, the son saw the mother as a person he could discuss his concerns with and maintained their connection in their joint project. This was similar in the father-daughter dyad (Dyad 3) where affection at the level of elements maintained their interaction and at the level of steering motivated their project, even though there was tension at the level of goal. However, they (Dyad 3) appeared to be more focused on tasks at the level of elements with less expression of emotionality.

Similarly, the emotion of interest and enthusiasm motivated the projects for the parent-adolescent dyads. Interest at the level of elements invited the participation of the other, which maintained their relationship and engagement in the projects. In all four dyads, parents expressed interest at the level of elements and steering, inviting their adolescent to share their perception or plans. However, in the father-son dyad (Dyad 1), interest at the level of appraisal appeared to be

more mutual, strengthening their relationship and motivated their project as the father provides guidance to his son and the son actively listening. Even though the son did not agree with some of his father's perceptions, in his self-confrontation interview, he reflected on his appreciation for his father's sharing and "I enjoyed it, and I actually learned a lot about my father but, it was, not overwhelming, but, just kind of dizzying and um, dreamlike" (A<sub>1</sub>SC), which energised their project. On the other hand, in the mother-son dyad (Dyad 2), even though there was tension at the goal level, enthusiasm from both mother and son in anticipation of his occupational career prospects energised their continued engagement in the project.

The emotion of humour was observed in all four dyads. In the mother-daughter (Dyad 4) and mother-son (Dyad 2) dyads, both mothers and adolescents reported in the self-confrontation interviews that the use of humour was to have fun and was typical of their interaction. Humour was used as a strategy at the level of elements to maintain their engagement and sometimes to steer the direction of their interaction. In the father-son (Dyad 1), father-daughter dyad (Dyad 3), the emotion of "humour" served to maintain their interaction particularly when there was tension at the level of meaning or appraisal.

Negative emotions such as anger, disgust, fear/tension at the level of appraisal or meaning served to maintain their interaction and motivated their project as long as negative emotions were only minimally expressed or not at all, at the level of interaction with the exception of one case. In the mother-son dyad (Dyad 2), negative emotions were not expressed at the level of elements. However, at the level of appraisal, the negative emotions motivated their interaction to find alternatives and compromises, steering their transition project. Similarly in the father-daughter dyad (Dyad 3), neither of them expressed negative emotion such as frustration but was steered by the tension to be curious and interested in the other's perception.

In contrast, the mother-daughter dyad's (Dyad 4) interaction was characterised by tension and frustration. The negative emotions were observed at the level of elements but served to energise their project of developing the daughter's independence. At times, both mother and daughter chose to ignore the tension that the other presents at the level of elements, steered by their goal of the project. Tension at all three levels mirrored their project that involves "push-and-pull" in this transition to adulthood phase, maintaining their engagement at the level of steering and goal. At the level of steering, the daughter was impelled by her frustration to converse with her mother, to show her mother that she has her own points of view and will stick by them, their interaction was not disrupted as the mother did not respond to the negative emotion. A unique situation in this dyad was the daughter moving out on her own between the initial and final conversations. Parent and adolescent reported that the tension that was manifest in their interaction escalated to the point where the daughter needed to live separately from her mother. At the level of interaction, their relationship was disrupted. However, the tension steered the daughter towards independence, establishing new roles and expectations between them and at the level of meaning, maintaining their transition to adulthood project. Both mother and daughter also reported that their relationship seemed to have improved since they started living apart and did not have the opportunity to engage in conflict on a daily basis.

Fear (e.g., worry, concern) of their child's well-being was reflected in the self-confrontation interview of all four parents'. The emotion of fear at times motivated them to seek answers and information, as observed particularly in the mother-daughter, father-daughter and father-son dyads. Three parents (Dyad 1, 3, 4) had questions about "how to parent" in this transition to adulthood phase. All four parents had some level of fear or concern about their child's future. At the level of appraisal and meaning, was fear and concern, at different points,

this emotion served to facilitate and at other times hinder their project. Fear can be functional, for example if at the level of elements, interest and enthusiasm were manifest.

**Emotion disrupts and repair.** Negative emotions such as anger, disgust, fear/tension, sadness particularly when manifest at the level of elements reflects a conflict situation with disruption to parent-adolescent interaction. At the level of meaning, fear/tension may hinder their goal attainment as they were discouraged from moving forward and are no longer engaged in negotiating. For example, in the father-son dyad (Dyad 1), the father's fear disrupted their joint project as the father was uncertain about his role and ability in parenting. The lack of confidence steered his discount of the affirmation that his son provided him. The emotion of sadness at the level of appraisal motivated the engagement with his son even though at times, he felt lost and resigned about how this transition to adulthood project would turn out for them. This was similarly found in the father-daughter dyad (Dyad 3). Fear disrupted the father's parenting project, and steered him in being cautious about what he says to his daughter to prevent the possibility of her making a decision out of spite.

In the mother-daughter dyad (Dyad 4), anger and frustration steered the daughter to respond in ways that she reported maintained the relationship but lacks authenticity. Even though their interaction was maintained for that moment, it perhaps contributed to an erosion of their relationship overall. This was evidenced by the conflict between mother and daughter escalating to the point where the daughter moved out on her own. In contrast, for the mother-son dyad (Dyad 2), frustration at the level of appraisal motivated the son to provide minimal responses, disengaging from their interaction, maintaining their relationship.

The emotion of disgust was manifest only in the father-son dyad (Dyad 1). At the level of steering, this served their project of negotiating differences in their perception. The son was

uncomfortable with the father's criticism of his friends but did not disrupt the father's sharing as he agreed with his father's perspective to some extent. This emotion, disgust reflects something undesirable was perceived, disrupting the father's goal but was a means, providing the son with the opportunity to understand the situation from his father's perspective.

Laughter was observed in all four dyads. However, laughter signalled different emotions, for example, shared laughter was a manifest behaviour of humour and nervous laughter, a manifest behaviour of tension. At the level of steering, laughter was used to soften potential statements or questions that may be perceived negatively.

## **Conclusion**

The key assertions based on the cross-case analysis do not seek to oversimplify or reduce the richness in the experience and role of emotion but to offer an overview based on four parent-adolescent dyads. The study of emotion is complex and as has been demonstrated so far, functions at multiple "layers", that is at the level of elements, appraisal and meaning. At the different levels, emotion energises interaction, appraisal and goals, to establish, maintain, disrupt or repair interactions and projects differently.

*Key assertion 1.* Positive emotions served to maintain parent-adolescent interaction and project at the levels of elements, appraisal and meaning. Positive emotions also energised the establishment of new joint actions and projects.

*Key assertion 2.* Negative emotions at the level of appraisal and meaning maintained their interaction and energised their interaction as long as the negative emotion was not or was only minimally expressed at the level of elements.

*Key assertion 3.* Parent and adolescent were intentional in not expressing negative emotions in their interaction, at the level of elements. The use of laughter often accompanied statements or questions that they think may be perceived as negative. Expressing negative emotions at the level of elements in their interaction disrupted their relationship. However, lack of response to negative emotions at the level of elements may also disrupt their interaction through disengagement.

*Key assertion 4.* Repair of their interaction or project was sometimes motivated by negative emotions such as fear/tension, to maintain their project and achieve their, sometimes conflicting goals. Repair was demonstrated by positive emotions such as affection, interest and humour at the level of elements.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

Using the contextual action theoretical framework, this study investigated the role of emotion as energiser, how it served to establish, maintain, disrupt and/or repair parent-adolescent dyads' joint actions and projects during the transition to adulthood. This chapter addresses the implications of the study's findings on the role of emotion in parent-adolescent relationship, particularly in the transition to adulthood period. To begin, the chapter links the findings of this study to current literature on parent-child (including the adolescent-child) relationship and research on emotion, followed by a discussion of some methodological comments. The chapter then presents this study's implications on research and the study of emotion, from the counselling psychology perspective.

### **Revisiting the Research Question**

The study of emotion is challenged by the lack of a consistent definition (Fehr & Russell, 1984; Solomon, 2008) as well as the lack of a research framework (Zerman et al., 2007) in which researchers can systematically study this complex phenomenon. This study defined emotion as the energiser of action, part of the biological basis of behaviour (e.g., Gross, 2008; Plutchik, 1984) and as socially constructed (e.g., Pontecorvo et al., 2001; Wiezerbicka, 1999). This study expanded the original research by Young and colleagues (2008) with a more in-depth focus on the role of emotion in parent-adolescent in their joint actions and projects during the transition to adulthood. The focus of the role of emotion as energiser as they engaged in conversations and projects, provided a more complete (Cole et al., 2004) understanding of the parent-adolescent relationship and their roles in each other's lives. The findings of this study illustrate how parents and adolescents seek to maintain their relationship through the expression of emotions that promote their engagement, minimising the expression of tension and anger that may disrupt their



action at the level of elements or project. The findings also suggest that their relationship, whether as context or project, is more important than the tasks in the transition process.

### **Response to the Research Question**

These findings add to the literature about the role of emotion in parent-adolescent relationships. Emotion operates at the level of elements, appraisal and goal, influencing meaning (Greenberg & Goldman, 2008) and serves to establish, maintain or disrupt (Frijda, 1986; Scherer, 1984) and this study has added “and/or repair” the joint actions and projects between parents and adolescents. The experience of emotion is dynamic, influencing both parents’ and adolescents’ action and cognition (e.g., Fisher & Ridell, 2006) at the different levels. The findings illustrate that emotion expressed at the level of elements need not be the same emotion at the level of appraisal used to motivate their conversation. The experience of emotion that influences and is influenced by their interaction supports Baxter’s (2004) notion that conversations are fluid, influenced by the on-goings from moment-to-moment. That is, even when parents and adolescents experienced different emotions, they were motivated by the difference in their emotional intensity and emotion that served to maintain and energise their action towards the common goal. The knowledge of emotions at the level of appraisal and goal were informed by the participants’ reflection in the self-confrontation interview, which provided a confirmation for the emotions observed in their conversation, at the level of elements.

The findings of this study illustrate that emotions energise parents’ and adolescents’ engagement in joint actions and projects. The focus on the role of emotion in this study complements and expands the findings of the original study (Young et al., 2008) where parents and adolescents “acted jointly and explicitly relative to their mutually constructed transition-to-adulthood projects” (p. 305). In this study, analyses were carried out by considering how

emotion energises actions and projects at different levels: 1) goal, 2) appraisal and, 3) elements, in light of the main projects that emerged in the original study, that is, governance transfer, career promotion, and parent-adolescent relational processes (Young et al., 2008)

Governance transfer was defined as “domains previously under parental control were jointly negotiated and expected to fall under the youth’s control in the future” (Young et al., 2008, p. 301), identified through their functional steps such as negotiation and arguing, sharing of knowledge and skills. In some dyads, the process of negotiation was characterised by “tension” at the level of elements, disrupting their conversation. The findings of this study illustrated that their projects were maintained when emotions such as concern steered the action and tension at the level of goal was minimally expressed. That is, at the level of elements, what parents and adolescents express openly to each other was motivated by their common goal, without expressing less desirable emotion to avoid disruption to their relationship. In other dyads, parents and adolescents tended to express desirable emotions such as the use of humour or to express interest to redirect their conversation and the functional steps of sharing or teaching knowledge and skills when tension was present at the level of appraisal. Emotion serves as a bridge to resolve the difference between the realities of the situation with their choice of behaviour (Frijda, 2008) as thoughts that are not necessarily realistic steer their action (Lazarus, 1984). The push-pull between parents and adolescents created some tension at the level of appraisal, and at the level of meaning, tension motivated them towards maintaining their interaction and project. Further, the process of how emotion steered their action, particularly in governance transfer is in line with the perspective of several researchers (e.g., Kuczynski, 2003; Russell et al., 2002) on the co-construction and interdependent nature of parent-adolescent relationship.

Emotion in career promotion served to energise the parent-adolescent interactions and project in several ways. At the level of goal, the project was meaningful for parents and adolescents concerned about making the best choice. Career promotion at the level of goal, was observed by the pursuit “of contiguous and linked goals over time in the service of promoting the youth’s educational and occupational career” (Young et al., 2008, p. 303). In this study, the emotion of interest was manifest in parents’ questions to the adolescent and steered the adolescent to find out or provide more information about future plans. Enthusiasm, at the level of elements energised their exchange. For example, it was observed that both parents and adolescents expressed some degree of enthusiasm about the future, motivating their project. This emotion, which energised their projects also served to buffer moments of tension that arose at the level of elements, in their conversation. Findings of this study illustrate that emotions do not only influence the particular moment, but also impact future interaction, providing another perspective that lends support to Hinde’s (1979) assertion that relationships are motivated by the potential of continued joint action.

The relational processes between parent and adolescent refer to “the quality and nature of parent-youth communication and interactions over time” (Young et al., 2008, p. 302). The focus on the relational process varied from dyad to dyad, sometimes serving as a resource for other projects and other times, is the project. From the perspective of emotionality, the findings of this study complements substantial research that suggests emotion steers action towards relationship building (Leary, 2007). Parents and adolescents strived to maintain their interaction at the level of elements, even in the face of other conflicting goals. This finding seems to contrast Dix and Branca’s (2003) suggestion that the tasks and challenges pertinent to this period of transition-to-adulthood negatively impact the parent-child relationship. On the other hand, the findings are in

agreement with Cole and colleagues' (2004) assertion of the importance of emotion in parent-child communication as the findings of this study has illustrated that emotion was intertwined within their relationship. Emotion played a role in their co-construction of meaning and energised their action. At the level of appraisal, even though there was anger or tension this was usually minimally expressed. Instead at the level of elements, parents and adolescents often tried to maintain their relationship, expressing affection, humour, interest, and enthusiasm. The relationship can create a sense of emotional security (Oppenheim, 2006) as both parent and adolescent make sense of their identity during this period of transition. When a disruption occurs, either parent or adolescent repairs the relationship using similar desirable emotional expression. The findings in this study illustrate the co-construction and bidirectional (Kuczynski, 2003) nature of parents and adolescents influencing each other's action and reaction, extending Barnes and colleagues' (1990) suggestion of the unidirectional and asymmetrical power of parents over their children.

The findings of this study complement Kuczynski and colleagues' (2003) assertion on the co-construction of meaning and mutuality in the study of parent-child relationship. Parents and adolescents have a bidirectional influence on each other and are co-constructors of agency (Lollis & Kuczynski, 1997), acting and reacting with each other, at times expressing their emotion (Clark & Ladd, 2000) and at others, motivated by their emotions towards their goals. Findings illustrated in the four cases found that emotional engagement is a joint action between parents and adolescents, extending Dix's (1991) study of affect in parenting that focused only on parental emotions and the role of parental emotions influencing child's behaviour with little consideration of how the child contributes to the dynamic of emotion in their relationship. This study illustrates how emotions influence parenting but emotions are not limited only to the

parental experience. Rather, the relational context demands that both parent and adolescent's emotional experience be taken into consideration as they mutually influence the interaction and their motivation of the projects.

Further, the research method allowed access to the role of emotion as process and motivation, which Dix (1991) suggested is missing in the study of affect in parenting. He asserted that the measures of parental emotions have been largely limited to two broad ways of data collection: 1) using scales, and 2) summarising positive and negative emotions expressed by parents. Such measures limit the study of emotion as they are unable to capture the complexity of the process of emotion (Dix, 1991). Indeed, there are many factors that influence parents' and adolescents' emotion that are extraneous to their interaction but nonetheless affects the maintenance or disruption of their relationship and project. On the other hand, the action project method guided the analysis of the role of emotion from a dynamic perspective, accessing the emotion experience and influence from different levels in their moment-to-moment interaction.

This research contributes to the study of emotion, suggesting that the dichotomy of *positive* and *negative* emotions can be helpful but insufficient. Contrary to the belief that negative emotions "do not drive much of behaviour" (Izard, 2007, p. 264), the findings in this study have shown that negative emotions such as anger, fear/tension can steer action to positive outcomes. Emotion is contextual and the experience of emotion as pleasant or unpleasant depends on the situation and interaction from moment to moment. Parents' frustration and tension were sometimes driven by "protective nurturance" (Izard, 2007, p. 262) and less so an instantaneous reaction to a dissatisfying interaction with the adolescent. Across the parent-adolescent dyads in this study, at times, even though they may have experienced sadness or frustration at the level of appraisal, their conversations were maintained by the expression of

emotions such as affection and humour. Thus, the findings agree with Izard's proposal that emotions "are regulatory, motivational, and functional" (p. 266).

The emotions of anger, disgust, fear/tension, and sadness are usually classified as negative valence based on the association with less pleasant cognition, outcomes, and experiences. In contrast, the findings in this study suggest that those emotions can motivate action for desirable outcomes. For example, the emotion of tension may be desirable in the push-pull negotiation for independence in the transition to adulthood. In the parent-adolescent dyads, tension energised their action in maintaining their engagement in the project or to motivate the repair of a disruption. It is important to note that parents and adolescents refrained from expressing such negative emotions, preferring to maintain the relationship through disengaging or redirecting the conversation. Findings of this study suggest that even though parents and adolescents may experience different emotions, the functionality of the emotions steer their actions towards their common goal, which maintains their project.

Consistent with other research on emotion using the dichotomous categories of positive and negative, "positive emotions typically bring positive benefit" (Izard, 2002, p. 799). Affection, enthusiasm, interest and humour, served to maintain the relationship between parent and adolescent as well as their projects at the different levels. Emotion is a relational construct (Greenberg & Goldman, 2008), it is constructed in relationship and steers interaction within the relationship. These emotions maintain their engagement in the process of negotiating for their sometimes different goals within the project. The role of emotion in energising the parent-adolescent interaction and projects are intertwined within their individual experiences.

The findings indicate that the role of emotion is an important one, as energiser in interactions (e.g., Frijda, 1986; Plutchik, 1984; Scherer, 1984) with far reaching implications for

parents and adolescents that extends beyond their relationship, impacting the choices and behaviour of both parents and adolescents. Fletcher and colleagues (2004) suggested that parental monitoring and knowledge are necessary factors whereas parental warmth is insufficient in influencing adolescent behaviour. This overlooks the importance of the role of emotion in the parent-adolescent relationship that shapes their interaction and the projects that they engage in. The findings of this study on the other hand have shown that the role of emotion is critical in the parent-adolescent relationship. For example, the emotion of interest motivates and sustains (Izard, 2007) parental involvement together with the adolescents who act and react to attain their goals. Warmth may not be sufficient however; it may be a necessary condition for parent and adolescent as they engage in joint actions and projects. The jointness between parents and adolescents are critical, as illustrated in the findings, that is, in their conversations emotion steered and guided the appraisal (Campos et al., 2004) of parents' and adolescents' action, meaning was co-constructed and built a stronger relationship between them (e.g., Potecorvo et al., 2001).

Even though the dyads chosen for this study were circumscribed by gender, there were no distinct differences in their emotional expressiveness or at the level of steering or meaning. This is in contrast with studies that have found differences in mothers' and fathers' level of involvement in the projects (e.g., Bryant et al., 2006; Stocker et al., 2007). However, the findings of this study are similar to previous research by Russell and Saebel (1997) based on the meta-analysis of studies of mother-daughter, mother-son, father-daughter and father-son dyads. The findings of their study (Russell & Saebel, 1997) concluded that each relationship was distinct with little to no difference that was strictly attributed to gender. The lack of distinct difference

between mothers, fathers, sons and daughters also ties in with the understanding of emotion as a biological process innate in humans, and socially constructed through contexts and relationship.

This study extended the contextual action theoretical framework of studying relationships and projects. The contextual action theoretical lens does take into consideration the emotional processes within relationships. However, there has not yet been a specific focus on the role and experience of emotion from moment-to-moment. This study expanded the role of emotion as energiser of action (e.g., Young at al., 1997), focusing the analysis of data on emotion at the levels of element, appraisal and meaning to a greater depth (e.g., Coan & Gottman, 2007) than in previous studies using the action project method. The findings suggest that for projects to exist, there must be functionality of emotion and the emotions has to be communicated between parent and adolescent.

### **Methodological Comments**

This investigation used a multiple case study approach to study the experience of emotion, guided by the contextual action theoretical framework. By using the multiple case study method, I was able to understand each parent-adolescent dyad from an in-depth perspective then conduct a cross-case analysis across the four chosen dyads. The use of data based on more than one conversation was necessary to understand the phenomenon of emotion in the parent-adolescent relationship and how it served to establish, maintain, disrupt and/or repair their relationship or project over a period of time.

The use of contextual action theory provided a framework to systematically and consistently explore the emotional experience of the parent and adolescent individually as well as jointly. Conceptualising emotion as energiser of their interaction and project at the levels of elements, appraisal or steering and meaning was a useful one to fully explore the experience of



emotions. These levels are not compartments in which emotions function. Rather, they provide a way to tease apart the dynamics of emotional experience from moment-to-moment. The use of the self-confrontation interviews as part of the action theory method served to confirm or clarify the emotions observed in their interaction. Further, the opportunity for participants reflect on their thoughts and feelings allowed access to the experience of emotion that is otherwise not accessed by mere observation of their interaction.

Valuable insight was gained in understanding emotionality at the levels of meaning and functionality through the participants' reflections in the self-confrontation interview. A benefit of watching their interaction with each other through the video-recording was the opportunity for "reflecting on emotion to create meaning" (Greenberg, 2008, p. 53), which was the goal of their intentional actions.

It was a tedious process matching segments of the parent-adolescent conversations with the self-confrontation interviews. However, this was an important step as the experience of the emotion is contextual and each segment needed to be matched so that the function of emotion in regards to the goal and functional step is as accurately coded as possible. The systematic coding using indicators and counter-indicators based on the SPAFF was helpful in identifying the different emotions, which would otherwise have been overwhelming. Unfortunately, the video recordings of the parent-adolescent conversations were not set up for coding of facial expressions to the extent of those used by other researchers to identify emotion for example, Ekman's (2003) use of *micro-expressions* and the use of *major action units* in SPAFF (Coan & Gottman, 2007).

Contextual action theory also provided a consistent language to describe the experience of emotion. This extended beyond the definition of emotion as well as the emotion categories to

include a description of the role of emotion in a parsimonious way that reflects the depth and breadth of emotion experience for the individual, an important aspect in the research of emotion that is increasingly recognised as necessary to understanding the phenomenon of emotion (e.g., Izard, 2007, 2009; Lazarus, 2003). The action project method also provides a language to describe the joint and dynamic nature of emotion as it serves to establish, maintain, disrupt and/or repair the interaction and project at a joint level between parents and adolescents. This research framework provided a good balance between the prominence of the interpretive role of the qualitative researcher (Stake, 1995) and validity of the analysis.

### **Implications for Research and Practice**

This study has begun a new way of studying the role of emotion, from the contextual action theory perspective, by taking into consideration how emotion functions at the levels of elements, appraisal and motivations as well as the goal of the individual and dyad. The information from this study illustrates that emotion functions at different levels in any given moment of interaction between parents and adolescents and emotions steer their conversation and their project. The findings extend Aquilino's (1997) assertion that "learned patterns of interaction continue to influence parents' interactions with grown children even as they move into adult roles" (p. 682), in addition influence on parents, adolescents are influenced and changed in this process as they discuss and negotiate with each other.

The findings of this study agree with Izard's (2007) proposal for a new paradigm, where "the dimensional and discrete emotions framework can be used as complementary research tools" (p. 269). At the same time, contextual action theory takes the motivational concepts of approach-avoidance further, grounding it in the context of relationship between individuals engaged in joint action over a period of time. The conversations extend beyond the bidirectional

exchange between parents and adolescents, taking into consideration the context in which their conversations and joint projects occur.

Through the action theoretical lens, the key findings demonstrate that goals are not only motivation for action and emotion a mere reaction. Actions are intentional, where “goals are considered key cognition” (Young & Valach, 2002, p. 100) within meaningful units of behaviour intertwined with emotion that serves to energise action. The use of action project method is a fitting response to what Izard (2009) identified as neglect in the research on emotion. Action theory encourages a dynamic language for studying relationship “beyond unidirectional or bidirectional relational influence models to models of joint action and shared meaning” (Young, et al., 2008, p. 218). It allows for access to behaviour at the level of elements, of appraisal process, and of meaning from moment-to-moment, allowing for the complexity in the “study [of] emotion-cognition interactions and integration/mingling and consequent behavior change” (p. 16).

From a counselling psychology perspective, this study lends support to the importance of understanding the role of emotion in parent-adolescent interaction. The use of therapeutic interventions involving the family is in line with the research on “strength-based counselling model” (Smith, 2006). The strength-based perspective highlighted the family as a protective factor and in another study (Sheridian, Warnes, Cowan, Schemm, & Clarke, 2004), the researchers acknowledged the family as context for the development of competencies and capacities. As “parents and adolescents act jointly” in intentional, goal-direction action (Young, Marshall, Valach, Logan, Zaidman-Zait, & Graham, 2007), to mention or give focus only to the content of their interaction misses their “unique emotional and relational experiences” (Young, et al. 1997, p. 36).

Emotion focused therapy (EFT) (Greenberg, 2007) “appears to work by enhancing the type of emotional processing that involves helping people experience and accept their emotions and make sense of them” (p. 56). However, emotionality that is considered to be “maladaptive” in EFT may be functional in serving the project that parent and adolescent may be engaged in. Indeed, “categorization is a simplification or reification of a dynamic process” (Greenbreg & Goldman, 2008), simply identifying emotion is insufficient, ordering of emotionality in a client’s narrative by its function may provide greater insight into their experience. The consideration of how “emotions can be seen as serving to establish, maintain or disrupt a relationship” (Young et al., 1997, p. 37) adds a new lens or focus in family therapy. The dynamics of emotion at the different levels also impels practitioners to understand and appreciate the multi-layers of emotionality that motivates action both from the parent and adolescent perspectives.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The analysis of this study focused on the initial and final conversations between parents and adolescents as it captured the moment-to-moment emotional expression in their interaction as well as their reflection in the self-confrontation interview. In future studies, however, researchers may perhaps consider the use of information provided in the telephone and individual logs kept by the participants as well, this will provide a monitor to their emotional trajectory since parent-adolescent relationship is not limited to the video-taped conversations.

Another limitation is the lack of diversity in the ethnicity of the participant dyads. Emotion “includes both a reference to feelings and a reference to thoughts (as well as reference to the body), and culture often shapes both ways of thinking and ways of feeling” (Wierzbicka, 1999, p. 5). Even though this study included parents and adolescents of different gender and

combination, future research on emotion may benefit from considering different ethnic background and the use of emotion.

A potential limitation that may be a general weakness of qualitative methodology, not unique to this study, is the potential that the data analysis yields what is being sought. For example in this study, how emotion energises the action. Even though I coded the data on my own, I had a colleague check my coding. However, for future research, perhaps it would be more beneficial for at least two researchers to code and obtain consensus on the coding simultaneously.

The use of the case study method “tries to establish an empathic understanding for the reader” (Stake, 1995, p. 39) through the in-depth study of the role of emotion in parent-adolescent interaction and projects of the cases. However, it has to be acknowledged that a qualitative method requires some subjectivity and the assertions that have emerged while informative and meaningful, need to be understood in context and not as generalisations. Perhaps by increasing the number of cases from four to at least 20 would generate more information, increasing one’s confidence of the assertions.

### **Personal Learning**

“Everyone knows what an emotion is until, asked to give a definition” (Fehr & Russell, 1984, p. 464) conveys one of the major challenges of the study of emotion. Through the process of data analysis, I have learnt that the challenge of studying the role of emotion is a worthwhile one. Emotions are beyond simply expression of feelings but are part of meaning-making of life’s experiences. Understanding how emotion function from the action theoretical perspective captures the essence of the complexity and dynamic nature of emotion, which is the authentic experience in our daily interaction.

As I began coding the transcripts of the conversations and self-confrontation interviews, I found an expansion of vocabulary in empathic reflection of my clients' experiences during counselling sessions. I also became more cognizant in the complexity of emotional experience that my clients may experience from moment-to-moment. The process of working on this study has provided me with an increase in language and empathy, to understand the experience of emotion more fully. The self-confrontation interviews were helpful in providing confirmation for the emotions identified based on their interaction as well as providing additional information to what may have motivated their particular action or if there were contrary emotions. The use of the self-confrontation questions of "What were you thinking?" and "What were you feeling?" is sometimes adapted and used in counselling sessions, "What were you feeling as you shared this / when you heard me say this?", as it allows me to access their appraisal and cognition that may otherwise be overlooked. At times, this has been useful in helping a client move forward as he/she gains clarity of the conflicting emotions or meanings that arise.

It was refreshing to learn that emotions frequently associated with undesirable outcomes can be functional in generating desirable outcomes. This is an encouraging finding that lends support with encouraging clients to be authentic with their emotional experience while not allowing the emotion to disrupt their goal. The dichotomy of positive and negative emotion is helpful in organising information but this dichotomy is limiting and not complete as it may mislead our understanding of emotion. I am beginning to grasp how parents and adolescents are able to maintain their relationship through the challenges of the transition to adulthood where there are major decisions to be made and changes ahead. Emotions play an important role in influencing their cognition and steering their action. The emotional experience is dynamic and most salient in the pull-and-push for independence that creates a healthy tension between them.

Some tension can be healthy, just as a low level of stress can motivate us to perform better, low level of tension energises us towards our goals.

## **Conclusion**

This study has attempted to address the gap in the study of the role of emotion in parent-adolescent interaction and the use of qualitative method for research in emotion. Parents and adolescents have a long history between them in their relationship and an anticipated future together. In the transition to adulthood, both parent and adolescent are engaged in future-oriented planning with immediate and future goals, energised by their emotional experience. Emotion energises and motivates their interaction and projects. Parents and adolescents choose to express emotion that maintains their relationship, avoid disruption to their relationship and when a disruption does occur to initiate repair. The findings of this study offer a new perspective on the study of emotion, that is, the experience of emotion in from moment-to-moment between parents and adolescents from an action theoretical perspective. Emotion energises the interaction between parents and adolescents, steering their action towards their joint and individual goals. It is with great hope that from this study, future research of emotion will seek to understand and appreciate the dynamic experience of emotion beyond emotions in positive and negative categories.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board Certificate of Approval



*The University of British Columbia*  
*Office of Research Services*  
**Behavioural Research Ethics Board**  
*Suite 102, 6190 Agronomy Road, Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z3*

### CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL - MINIMAL RISK

<b>PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:</b> Richard A. Young	<b>INSTITUTION / DEPARTMENT:</b> UBC/Education/Educational & Counselling Psychology, and Special Education	<b>UBC BREB NUMBER:</b> H09-02630
<b>INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT:</b>		
<small>Institution</small>	<small>Site</small>	
N/A Other locations where the research will be conducted: N/A		N/A
<b>CO-INVESTIGATOR(S):</b> N/A		
<b>SPONSORING AGENCIES:</b> N/A		
<b>PROJECT TITLE:</b> Emotion as Energiser in Parent-Adolescent Projects During the Transition to Adulthood		

**CERTIFICATE EXPIRY DATE:** October 28, 2010

<b>DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN THIS APPROVAL:</b>	<b>DATE APPROVED:</b> October 28, 2009
<small>Document Name</small>	<small>Version</small> <small>Date</small>

The application for ethical review and the document(s) listed above have been reviewed and the procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

**Approval is issued on behalf of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board  
and signed electronically by one of the following:**

- Dr. M. Judith Lynam, Chair
- Dr. Ken Craig, Chair
- Dr. Jim Rupert, Associate Chair
- Dr. Laurie Ford, Associate Chair
- Dr. Anita Ho, Associate Chair

## Appendix B: Data Collection Procedure

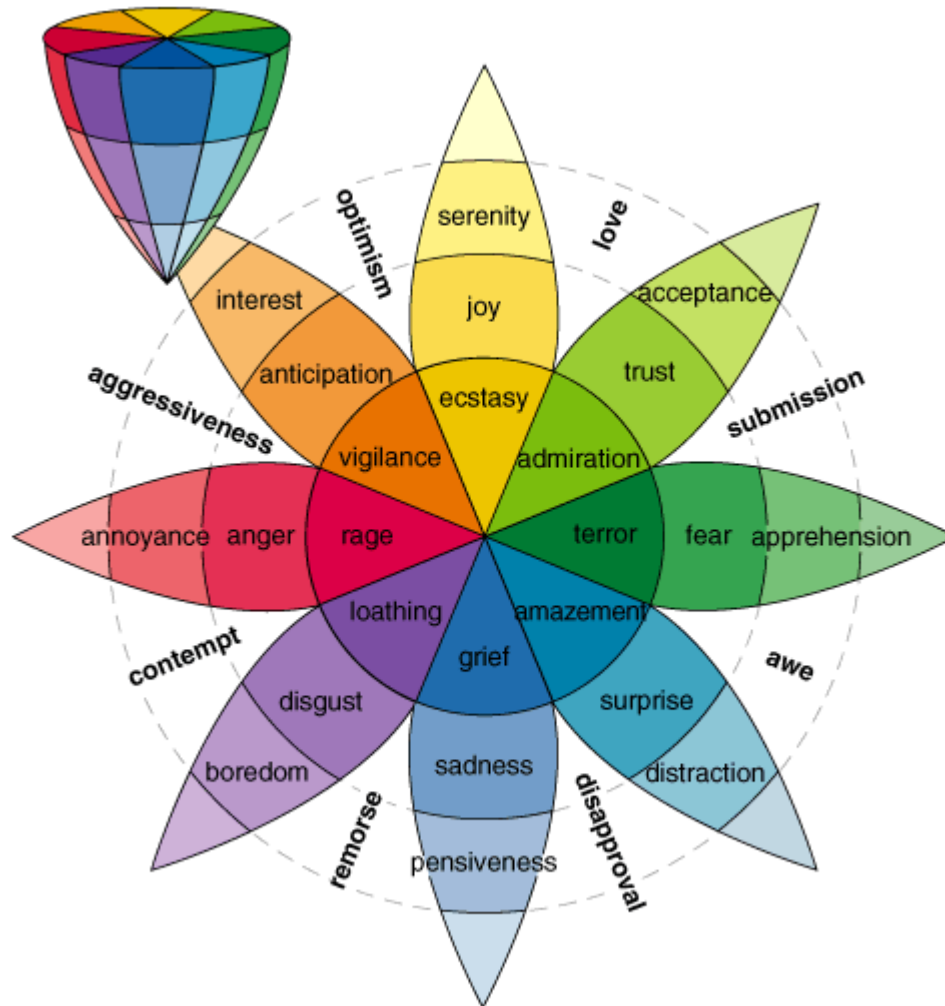
Data collection in the original study occurred in four distinct stages as described (Young et al., 2008, p. 299).

Purpose and duration/number of research procedures				
Procedure	Purpose	Duration/number <sup>a</sup>		
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Introductory interview	Initiate a discussion on salient topics	25.16	9.37	19
Parent-adolescent conversation	Record a conversation	12.85	3.86	20
Parent self-confrontation	Collect data on internal processes accompanying action	36.45	10.44	20
Adolescent self-confrontation	Collect data on internal processes accompanying action	32.75	10.28	20
Joint narrative feedback and initial identification of family career development project	Negotiate identification of family career development project	20.45	8.59	20
Parent monitoring telephone interviews	Monitor projects, actions and internal processes	7.8 <sup>b</sup>	1.7	20
Adolescent monitoring telephone interviews	Monitor projects, actions and internal processes	7.65 <sup>b</sup>	1.72	20
Parent journal entries	Monitor projects, actions and internal processes	5.55 <sup>b</sup>	6.42	20
Adolescent journal entries	Monitor projects, actions and internal processes	4.25 <sup>b</sup>	5.4	20
Final introductory interview	Evaluate project	7.68	3.53	19
Parent-adolescent conversation	Record final parent-adolescent conversation	13.63	4.99	19
Final parent self-confrontation and debriefing	Collect data on internal processes accompanying action and debrief	37.3	10.15	20
Final adolescent self-confrontation and debriefing	Collect data on internal processes accompanying action and debrief	32.9	8.88	20

<sup>a</sup> In minutes, except as noted.

<sup>b</sup> Number of telephone monitoring forms or journal entries completed.

**Appendix C: A Multidimensional Model of the Emotions (Plutchik, 1984)**



Source: <http://www.fractal.org/Bewustzijns-Besturings-Model/Nature-of-emotions.htm>

## Appendix D: An Example of Analysis Table, by Minute

Minute 11

Goal: to engage with son about school and types of courses, engage son in conversation (continued effort)

Functional Step: tells story, and expresses thoughts, asks questions and provides continued discussion topics, wants to elaborate (deeper examination of topics)

Emotion	Level	Establish	Maintain	Disrupt	Repair
Affection	Elements		“You were so tired” (IJC P92) [caring statement]		
	Appraisal (Steering process)				
	Meaning				
Humour	Elements		Laughs, responds to son’s joke (IJC P99)		
	Appraisal (Steering process)				
	Meaning				
Fear/tension	Elements			Laughed when son pointed out time (IJC P107) [nervous laughter]	
	Appraisal (Steering process)			“That would be good. Is he gonna work full-time, why do you keep looking at your watch? (laughs)” (IJC P104) [nervous laughter]	
	Meaning				

## Appendix E: An Example of Analysis Table, by Emotion

### Enthusiasm (2, 4, 6, 8)

Minute	Level	Establish	Maintain	Disrupt	Repair
2	Elements	<p>“Um, I think that it’ll be interesting, you know, I’m not sure what I’m gonna be doing but I’m fine, that stuff’s interesting to begin with, so it’ll be cool...” (IJC A14) [anticipation]</p>			
	Appraisal (Steering process)				
	Meaning	<p>I thought it’d be interesting, I’d like to do it again. (ISC A12) [interest and willingness to try again]</p> <p>“Um...Maybe a little excited about that part...” (ISC A14) [possibility of a career in medicine]</p>			
4	Elements				
	Appraisal (Steering process)				
	Meaning		<p>“kind of a little proud of myself that I was able to do all that, like.” (ISC A47) “little proud of myself, little bit a sense of accomplishment there.” (ISC A49)</p>		

Minute	Level	Establish	Maintain	Disrupt	Repair
6	Elements				
	Appraisal (Steering process)	<p>“I’m feeling, you know...confident that I’d be able to like, be able to like plant a garden.” (ISC A66) [expansiveness]</p> <p>“I’m a little bit excited, because I think it’d be fun, because I’ve never really grown anything before.” (IASC A67) [expansiveness]</p> <p>“Um, it’d be fun, you know, I wish, the summer could come a little faster kind of thing.” (IASC A72) [anticipation]</p>			
	Meaning				
8	Elements				
	Appraisal (Steering process)				
	Meaning	<p>“And I thought that, that might be fun because I, I like it, I like to be creative.” (IASC A86) [Anticipation]</p>	<p>“I’m happy, yeah” (IASC A108) [Happy, satisfied with current living arrangement]</p>		