

Parent-Adolescent Interactions That Promote  
Adolescent Success in Family, School, and Community

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if adolescents who self-identified as socially cooperative and academically successful spend more time with parents than adolescents who self-identified as less socially cooperative and less academically successful. In addition, this study questioned the type of activities parents and adolescents engaged in during time together. The 107 participants from grades 7, 8, and 9 students from 3 rural schools in Nova Scotia completed a questionnaire at home and returned it to school. The study concluded that adolescents who spent more time with parents showed increased social cooperation and academic success and decreased substance use. Adolescents appeared to achieve better academically and were more socially cooperative when parents had some post secondary education. The most common types of activities spent with parents included television viewing, chatting, playing with pets, baking-cooking, going to restaurants, sports, board games, and cards games. Board games and card games were associated with greater academic success.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	2
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	3
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	4
LIST OF TABLES .....	6
CHAPTER ONE .....	7
INTRODUCTION .....	7
Statement of Purpose.....	10
Significance of the Study .....	10
CHAPTER TWO .....	14
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	14
Parenting Styles.....	14
Strom et al. (2003) Study .....	15
Dubas and Gerris (2002) Study.....	20
Parker and Benson (2004) Study .....	23
Comparison of the Three Studies.....	26
Research Questions .....	27
CHAPTER THREE .....	29
METHOD .....	29
Participants.....	29
Instrument.. .....	29
Procedure.....	32
Data Analysis .....	33
Issues of Validity and Reliability.....	33
CHAPTER FOUR.....	34
RESULTS .....	34
Analysis of Research Questions.....	37
Research Question 1.....	37
Research Question 2.....	41
Research Question 3.....	42
Research Question 4.....	44
Research Question 5.....	48
Research Question 6.....	49
Research Question 7.....	54
Research Question 8.....	62
CHAPTER FIVE .....	64
DISCUSSION .....	64
Demographic Information.....	64
Discussion of Research Questions .....	65
Social Cooperation and Academic Success .....	65
Time Spent With Parents .....	66
Parental Education and Social Cooperation and Academic Success .....	67
Grade Level and Social Cooperation and Academic Success.....	68
Parenting Style .....	68
Parent-Adolescent Activities.....	70
TV Viewing with Chatting and Snacks.....	71

Alcohol, Cigarettes, and Illegal Drugs.....	72
Conclusion .....	73
REFERENCES .....	76
APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE.....	81
APPENDIX B: LETTER TO ADMINISTRATOR.....	86
APPENDIX C: LETTER TO PARENT(S) OR GUARDIAN(S) AND STUDENTS .....	88
APPENDIX D: CHI SQUARE ANALYSES.....	90

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Demographic Information.....	35
2. Socially Cooperative Adolescents.....	39
3. Academically Successful Adolescents.....	40
4. Time Spent with Parent (hours per week).....	43
5. Mother's Education.....	45
6. Father's Education.....	46
7. Grade Level.....	47
8. Parenting Style: Socially Cooperative.....	50
9. Parenting Style: Less Socially Cooperative.....	51
10. Parenting Style: Academically Successful.....	52
11. Parenting Style: Less Academically Successful.....	53
12. Activities: More or Less Socially Cooperative Females.....	55
13. Activities: More or Less Academically Successful Females.....	56
14. Activities: More or Less Socially Cooperative Males.....	57
15. Activities: More or Less Academically Successful Males.....	58
16. Chatting While Watching Television .....	60
17. Eating Snacks While Watching Television.....	61

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

I began teaching in 1976 and have been working with adolescents all my adult life. I also raised five children as a single parent, with the youngest now in university. Much of my time and energy as an adult has focused on the success or lack of success adolescents experience in the school setting. I am concerned with their apathy in academic endeavours, feelings of self-pity, refusal to cooperate with authority figures, and lack of concern for others.

In examining research on this topic, I found a number of articles that cite a positive relationship with parents as a key to a well-adjusted adolescent experiencing success in school and with peers (Elliott et al., 2006; Maccoby, 1992; Raja et al., 1991). What I found lacking is substantive suggestions regarding what type of parenting behaviour promotes a positive relationship with the adolescent. It may be sitting at a table sharing meals, attending sports events, watching television, or engaging in any other activity that requires the parent to be present as part of the larger group. On the other hand, it may possibly require activities similar to dating situations where the parent takes the adolescent on a one-on-one outing that is conducive to conversation. It may be some other behaviour.

As a teacher, I have found it frustrating and painful to watch students fail to succeed academically and to be in constant conflict with family, school, and community rules. My school typically starts with approximately 80 students in grade seven and graduates around 40 from grade twelve. My school is not alone in these grim statistics.

Add to that the chronic discipline issues which tend to result in the dreaded suspensions which are not helping the adolescent but merely giving everyone a chance to regroup

before the problem continues. We also have administrators devoting far too much time to discipline which reduces the time spent on curriculum, school morale, and other issues. Socially uncooperative and academically unsuccessful adolescents are a serious issue in our schools (Kelly et al., 2007; Quinn, 2003).

I have worked with many parents who are at a loss, not knowing what to do to help their child. They are crying out for direction and this direction would need to be specific regarding type and nature of activity and it would need to be reader friendly. It would be useful to examine successful relationships to see if any patterns emerge. Parents may be reaching out for a recipe to solve the problem and even though there is no recipe that will apply to all families, a list of interactions that successful and cooperative adolescents engage in with their parents would be a starting point for parents of adolescents who are less successful and less cooperative. Interactions chosen by parents would have to suit the personalities, culture, and socioeconomic status of each family.

The issue of parent-adolescent relations has become a well-researched topic from the 1980s until the present. Earlier research by Bane (1983) addressed the impact of mothers working outside the home on parent-child relationships. Bane claimed that the quality and quantity of mother-child interaction had not changed much even with the change in the mother's employment status. A quarter of a century later, it is commonplace for mothers to work outside the home. However, Bianchi et al. (2006) reported considerable variation in child care time use within family types such as two parent and single parent families. Another change is the increase in father's childcare time in both the U.S. and other countries since 1975. Fathers are playing a more active role with their children. Despite these changes, Bianchi et al. (2006) noted that parents perceive they are spending an inadequate amount of time with their adolescents even



though mothers are actually spending at least as much time in activities with their adolescents as mothers did 40 years ago.

The issue of parenting style has also received attention. An authoritative style of parenting continues to be heralded as the style of choice in helping adolescents succeed in all aspects of their lives (Baumrind, 1991; Hines & Paulson, 2006; Sartor & Youniss, 2002; Steinberg, 2001). Sharp et al. (2006) recommended a balance among parents' knowledge of their adolescents' activities, facilitation, and control which reflects the authoritative approach. More specifically, Strom et al. (2003) concluded that mothers who spend 10 or more hours per week talking to and doing things with their adolescents are viewed more positively on the Parent Success Indicator questionnaire than mothers who spend less time with their adolescents. Dubas and Gerris (2002) pointed out increased television viewing as a factor present in families with low conflict. Parker and Benson (2004) examined data that show a correlation between parental support and an increase in self-esteem and a decrease in problem behaviour. All three studies reached conclusions that lead to further questions. The issue that arises is the lack of detail concerning the 10 or more hours, the nature of interactions during television viewing, and the definition of parental support. Parents are not given any guidance for filling the 10 or more hours, interacting effectively during television viewing, and being a supportive parent.

Another question that arises is why substantive guidance is not being provided for parents. One reason might be that developmental theorists recognize that the psychosocial needs of children and adolescents are relative to age, gender, history, ethnicity, and culture (Kagan, 1983). More recently, Clark (2006) noted that family relationships are

dynamic and changing. This characteristic makes it difficult to pin point specific activities that work in every situation.

Suggestions, ideas, and guidelines, however, are different from prescriptions. We cannot be satisfied with research telling parents their relationship with their adolescents is the key and then not providing a range of concrete suggestions or ideas for what this relationship might look like in their daily lives. This sentiment was also expressed by Tucker (2007) who recommended that families be helped to identify age-appropriate leisure activities that satisfy both parents and their children. We need to consider the adolescent problem of lack of social cooperation and academic success an emergency and search until we find answers and solutions.

#### Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine if students who self-identified as socially cooperative and academically successful spend more time interacting with one or both parents or guardians than peers who self-identified as less socially cooperative and less academically successful. In addition, specific activities that were the most common were identified. Both the time spent interacting with parents or guardians and the types of activities most common were compared according to gender, parental education, parental employment, and grade level. Also examined were television viewing and the relationships between time spent with parents, grade level, and substance use. Students taking part were from grades 7, 8, and 9 in 3 schools in a rural school board for a total of 827 students.

#### Significance of the Study

It is important that parents and adolescents are given the vital information regarding the type of parent-adolescent interactions that would increase bonding and

encourage a positive relationship which would then result in the adolescent being more socially cooperative within the family, the school, and the community and more academically successful (Raja et al., 1991). It might have a major impact on the adolescent's life in the home, at school, and in the community (Morrissey & Werner-Wilson, 2005). Far too much time, money, and energy are being spent dealing with the results of the less socially cooperative and less academically successful adolescents. This situation affects parents, siblings, and extended families, resulting in raised levels of stress and frustration (Kan et al., 2008). Family life has the potential to offer a peaceful refuge for each family member, which allows them to face the world with optimum strength and energy (Bucx et al., 2008). A troubled adolescent not only affects the adolescent's life; the stress of dealing with a troubled adolescent can make it difficult for all family members (Whiteman & Buchanan, 2002). The situation also leaves siblings with stressed parents who are less able to be present for the other children. The negative impact on careers and the marriage is also a concern. Parents who feel overwhelmed with an uncooperative adolescent have little energy left over to give to their careers or to enjoy their partners (O'Brien & Peyton, 2002). The building of a healthy parent-adolescent bond is essential to the whole family (Greenfield & Marks, 2006).

Parents of cooperative, successful adolescents would be rewarded with the knowledge that the hours they have devoted to parent-adolescent interactions have been worthwhile. Parents of less socially cooperative and less academically successful adolescents would be given guidance for the future of the parent-adolescent relationship. Rather than dwelling on their despair and frustration, the parents would be given specific guidelines to improve the situation. The list of activities shared by socially cooperative and academically successful adolescents and their parents would be a starting point for

less socially cooperative and less academically successful adolescents and their parents (Maccoby, 1992). The suggested activities may serve as a concrete starting point by some parents and merely a general direction for others. Parents can take from the research what is needed for their family at that particular moment in time.

Every minute teachers and administrators spend dealing with less cooperative adolescents is time not being spent on curriculum and morale within the school. Time spent on discipline issues is time not spent on the cooperative students or on new initiatives. Schools need to be peaceful in order to establish an atmosphere for learning (Moos, 1978). If there is discord present, administrators must make dealing with it a top priority. However, if a large portion of the discord diminishes as parent-adolescent interactions develop, administrators will have time and energy for other endeavours. The development of curriculum is one area that would benefit all students. Introducing new programs and activities that build school morale would also be possible benefits if administrators were freed from dealing with even a portion of the present discipline issues (Kelly et al., 2007; Quinn, 2003).

Communities would emphasize activities that focus on parents and adolescents participating in activities together, realizing this would have the greatest impact on adolescent behaviour and their attitude within the community (Durlak et al., 2007; Morrissey & Werner-Wilson, 2005). In the past, communities offered separate adult and adolescent programs but they would now see the benefit of offering programs that encourage parents and adolescents to work and play together.

The police force would also benefit from having to deal with fewer troubled adolescents, freeing up time for other areas of need. It takes substantial time to deal with situations involving adolescents, to carry out the follow up and paperwork, and to work

through the court systems (Simons et al., 2008). If any portion of adolescent crime was decreased due to increased parent-adolescent interactions, the RCMP workload would be altered to allow for the inclusion of other areas of concern that presently do not get priority (Elliott et al., 2006).

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In this literature review, parenting styles will be examined briefly. Many of the studies on parent-adolescent relationships are based on these theoretical notions of parenting styles. Strom et al. (2003), Dubas and Gerris (2002), and Parker and Benson (2004) will also be examined in greater detail as studies representative of current research in the field of parent-adolescent relationships. They will then be compared for common themes and differences. The three studies were used to develop questions that arose from their findings and pointed to the need for further research.

#### Parenting Styles

There are four basic classifications of parenting style: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and rejecting-neglecting. Parenting style may differ somewhat depending on the social context and the adolescent's developmental stage, but the 4 styles consistently display certain essential features. Authoritative parents demand clear standards for their adolescent's behaviour but impose supportive discipline rather than punitive discipline. They encourage their adolescents to be self-regulated as well as cooperative, assertive and socially responsible. Authoritarian parents demand obedience and give orders without explanation. They maintain control of the adolescent's environment and behaviour without allowing for growth of independent decision making. Permissive parents are lenient and do not insist on socially acceptable behaviour. They avoid rules, demands, and confrontation. Rejecting-neglecting parents do not offer structure or guidelines. They also do not respond to the adolescent's behaviour. They simply withdraw from all responsibility in regard to parenting the adolescent. Adolescents from authoritative homes have been found to be more socially cooperative than adolescents

from authoritarian, permissive, and rejecting-neglecting homes (Baumrind, 1991; Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Steinberg, 2001; Steinberg et al., 2006).

In addition to a specific parenting style, there is evidence that relationships are an important factor in an adolescent's successful development (Clark, 2006). The level of family income, the location of the home, and all the other possible factors in a child's life do little to help a child feel connected. A child needs to feel the parent-child bond. Clark (2006) stressed the qualities of an authoritative style of parenting and also stressed spending time with the adolescent as the necessary ingredient for socially cooperative adolescents.

#### Strom et al. (2003) Study

Adolescents have become the focus of study since the 1980s with the interest in parenting style steadily increasing. Strom et al. (2003) explored the perspectives of both the adolescent and the mother in analyzing the quality of parenting as performed by the mother. The purpose of the study carried out by Strom et al. (2003) was to look at 6 aspects of the mother-adolescent relationship from both the adolescent's and the mother's perspective: communication, time, teaching, frustration, satisfaction, and information. Communication includes discussing topics, listening to the child, fair discipline, and two-way criticism. Use of time focuses on television viewing, the parent being energetic during time together, and the quantity of time spent together. Teaching looks at giving advice on topics such as right and wrong, handling money, and working hard to succeed. Frustration deals with conflict over daily activities in the running of the home. Satisfaction refers to the level of satisfaction with the parent-adolescent relationship and the child's academics, relationships, and attitudes. Finally, need for information covers approachability and the ability to help with situations such as bullying, drugs, and dating.

The participants were American Caucasian from middle-income families in an urban area. The 391 mothers were not related to the 352 adolescents so a total of 743 families were surveyed. It was thought that the mothers may influence their adolescents if the parents were aware of the questions before the adolescents were surveyed. The mothers were mostly married (86%), with higher education (70%), some college degrees (44%), employed (83%), and with an adult at home after school (81%). Strom et al. (2003) used the Parent Success Indicator that identifies parent strengths and weaknesses from the perspective of both the mother and the adolescent. Parent and adolescents have the same 60 items worded in a positive format. For instance, for the mother, it states: "I am good at listening to my child" and for the adolescent, it states: "My parent is good at listening to me."

The younger adolescents gave more favourable reports for the mothers than did the older subjects. Both mothers and adolescents from higher income, higher education, and 'adult at home' families reported a more positive view of the parenting skills. The overwhelming result, however, was the relationship between mothers who spent 10 or more hours per week talking to and doing things with the adolescent and a positive view by the adolescent of the mother's parenting skills. Mothers with this quality scored higher for 58/60 items than did mothers who spent less time with their adolescent. Adolescents with this factor scored higher on 59/60 items on the Parent Success Indicator than did adolescents who spent less than 10 hours with the mother. This was by far the most noticeable trend.

Strom et al. (2003) concluded the need for parenting courses for the adolescent age group tailored to the cultural and economic environments. The researchers promoted



mothers improving time management and being encouraged to spend more than 10 hours per week talking to and doing things with their adolescents.

One strength of this article was that Strom et al. (2003) accepted the importance of the parent in the adolescent life and did not see the need to establish what has been studied extensively. The article does not elaborate on authoritative parenting or the possible influence of peers. A high level of attachment and of interaction between parents and adolescents (Dubas & Gerris, 2002; Parker & Benson, 2004; Simons et al., 2001) is the main factor that results in increased self-esteem, improved behaviour, and better relationships. Parental warmth and control encourages academic success (Baumrind, 1991; Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001; Midgett et al., 2002; Steinberg et al., 2006). The level of usage of alcohol and drugs declines with the increased level of authoritative parenting, which combines warmth with control (Chung & Steinberg, 2006; Fletcher et al., 2004; Kelly et al., 2002; Steinberg, 2001). Strom et al. (2003) accepted what has been established through earlier research and proceeded to go a step further to look at the specifics of the parent-adolescent relationship. A brief referral to established research, though, would clarify the connection for the reader

There are several strengths of the Strom et al. (2003) study worth mentioning. The questionnaire seemed to be a good choice. The 6 topics cover the relationship in-depth: communication, use of time, teaching, frustration, satisfaction, and need for information. Keeping the questions the same for mothers and adolescents makes a more meaningful comparison between the responses of the mothers and the adolescents. Using adolescents and mothers from different homes to avoid parental influence on adolescent answers results in a more honest response from the adolescents. The study did not focus on the gender of the adolescent which follows from earlier studies that gender difference is not a

significant factor in adolescent response to a high level of parental attachment and interactions (Baumrind, 1991; Sartor & Youniss, 2002). Overall, the research seems to be credible.

The conclusion is useful to both parents and researchers and is presented in a very practical format. Parents would be able to take the results, more than 10 hours of time talking to and doing things with the adolescent per week, and apply them immediately to their lives. There would be no need for expensive or complicated programs to get results.

There are a few weaknesses worth noting. Strom et al. (2003) involved mothers and adolescents when other studies have established that the important view is that of the adolescent (Parker & Benson, 2004; Sim, 2000; Strom et al., 2004). If we are concerned with the adolescent's behaviour, academic success, self-esteem, relationships, level of depression, and involvement with drugs and alcohol, then it is the adolescent's perspectives of the situation that is important. The reality of the parent-adolescent relationship and the parent's view do not impact the situation. The adolescent's viewpoint is the reality to the adolescent.

It is also noted that this study did not include fathers, even though 86% of the homes had 2 parents. Does the more than 10 hours have to be time with the mother or could it be time with either parent or guardian? If the 10 hours with the mother was joined to time spent with the father or guardian, would the results be increased improvement in the life of the adolescent? Is any time over and above the 10 hours not showing any significant improvement in the adolescent's outlook on life?

It is also a concern that the mothers were mostly married, employed, educated and from middle-income homes. Mothers from backgrounds other than these may have responded differently to the questionnaire. However, the results do not stray from

previous studies of subjects from other cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds with parent-adolescent attachment and interactions being the key factor in adolescent autonomy and overall success in their life (Caprara et al., 2005; Chung & Steinberg, 2006; Sartor & Youniss, 2002; Steinberg, 2001). Roberts and Bengtson (1996) even go so far as to state the positive impact of a healthy relationship with the parent can be traced through to success in adulthood.

This study does fail to explain if the high rating given to the mothers results in significant differences in behaviours in the adolescent. Are Strom et al. (2003) predicting academic achievement; cooperative behaviour at home, at school, or in the community; high self-esteem; or low involvement in alcohol, drugs, and dating? Or, do Strom et al. (2003) merely state adolescents will be happy with the mother? To be of real interest to parents and teachers, a strong relationship would have to be evident with the approach the adolescent takes towards life a result of giving a positive rating to the mother.

The main challenge in this study is the lack of concrete suggestions for activities included in the more than 10 hours of contact. Would talking over meals count? Would doing chores together be as effective as bonding activities such as bowling, mini-golf, or camping? Does watching television, movies, and computer games count as much as interacting over board games and cards? Is helping with homework or driving to hockey practice considered part of the 10 hours? Strom et al. (2003) reach a conclusion that leads to further questions that need to be examined. If parents are being instructed to spend more than 10 hours per week talking to and doing things with the adolescent, they would benefit from guidelines for the types of activities that qualify and they need to know if the father's time is of equal importance to the mother's time.

### Dubas and Gerris (2002) Study

In a second research paper, Dubas and Gerris (2002) examined a number of factors in the adolescent-parent relationship and the effect these have on the relationship in a follow-up study 5 years later. The factors include parent gender, child gender, adolescent pubertal status, family conflict, adult and adolescent work, adult and adolescent volunteer hours, adult work stress, and adolescent computer use. The study also looked at a possible correlation between changes in conflict with changes in shared time. The parent-adolescent relationship is categorized by the level of 4 activities: going somewhere together, doing something together, watching television together, and eating together.

The first study, completed in 1990, was followed by a second study in 1995. Dubas and Gerris (2002) choose to focus on the 301 adolescents (141 male, 160 female), 301 mothers, and 255 fathers who completed both the 1990 and the 1995 questionnaires. The sample was economically diverse and representative of rural and urban areas. Adults were mainly married (92%) and employed (fathers 92%, mothers 47%). The parents were mostly educated: some education above high school (fathers 51%, mothers 63%), vocational (fathers 24%, mothers 24%), and university degrees (fathers 25%, mothers 13%). The adolescents were aged 9-17 years in study one and 14-21 years in study two. The families were interviewed and completed questionnaires in their own home. The paper being reviewed dealt only with the responses to the questionnaires.

The parents were asked to estimate the number of minutes per day doing three activities with their adolescents: doing something together, eating together, or watching television. Parents were questioned about the number of minutes they were involved in paid or volunteer work and the perceived level of work stress. Adolescents were asked

about the number of minutes they were involved in paid or volunteer work and in computer use. Both parents and adolescents were questioned about family conflict. The adolescent's information concerning height and presence or absence of menstrual cycles determined the pubertal status of the adolescent.

The results showed an increase of about 10 minutes per day from study one to study two of parents doing something with the adolescent. For fathers, gender and age did not result in any difference whereas mothers spent more time with the younger adolescents. Parents also reported an increase of about 8 minutes per day of eating together between the two studies. On the other hand, the time spent going somewhere together dropped by about 14 minutes per day from the earlier to the later study. The most significant change was in television viewing, with a 26 minute increase in the time parents spent viewing television per week with the adolescent over the 5 years. It was noted that fathers' time increased more steadily with sons and mothers' time increased more steadily with daughter.

The results are not surprising. A young adolescent would be playing childhood games, would be more likely to run off to play than linger over fine dining and dinner conversation, would be watching television programs geared for children, and would be in bed before adult programs were being aired. The older adolescent would be more likely to engage in adult hobbies, would enjoy an elaborate meal and dinner conversation, and would be finished homework and interested in relaxing over a television program later in the evening. The time spent going somewhere together would be expected to drop when the adolescent has a driver's licence and no longer depends upon a parent for transportation to activities.

Dubas and Gerris (2002) then examined the relationship between conflict and gender and age. It is interesting to note that conflict reported by daughters decreased time spent with both parents while conflict reported by sons did not. Fathers, especially, decreased time with daughters when fathers reported conflict and also when fathers' work stress, work time, and volunteer activities increased. These factors did not affect time spent with sons. The more time male and female adolescents spent on work and volunteer activities, the less time was spent with the father, but not the mother. When the mother's time increased for work or volunteer activities, television viewing was the most significant activity engaged in and it was most often with the daughter.

These findings would be of great interest to parents. Being aware of the tendency to react in a certain way, opens up the possibility for change. Daughters, more than sons, withdraw from parents after conflict which would show a need for application of conflict resolution techniques to minimize the effect. Parents should also be aware of the pattern of decreased time with opposite gender adolescents as the demands outside the home increase. It may require more energy from the tired parent to engage in opposite gender activities. It is also interesting to note that as the older adolescent gets busier outside the home, time spent with the mother remains stable while time with the father decreases. The awareness of these findings would, by far, have the greatest impact on parenting style for improved family relationships.

There are several areas Dubas and Gerris (2002) suggest for further research. It would be useful to analyse dialogue between parents and adolescents during and after television viewing and during commercials. This is especially important as television viewing increased with the age of the adolescent and decreased with the amount of family conflict. Is the only factor quiet time in front of the television or is active conversation a

factor? Is television viewing accompanied by eating and does this affect the overall atmosphere of television viewing? Dubas and Gerris (2002) also note that while achieving psychological autonomy is important, adolescents also need to maintain connectedness with the parents. They have shown television viewing to be one activity that enhances the bond but what other activities could parents and adolescents engage in within the home or community that would have similar results? This leads to the need for further research in pinpointing activities which might result in deepening the parent-adolescent bond. Dubas and Gerris (2002) stressed that increased shared time in early adolescence leads to better relations in later adolescence. Clarification on a range of activities in addition to television viewing is needed.

A final issue worth considering is the impact prior knowledge of the questionnaire had on the parent and adolescent behaviour during the five years between the studies and on the results of the second study. Both parents and adolescents would be aware of the topics: conflict, television viewing, eating together, going somewhere together, and doing things together. Both parents and adolescents were aware these same issues would be the subject of the second study. It would seem reasonable to expect the subjects to want to improve in these areas. One possibility to avoid influencing the results of study 2 would be to have two groups of subjects, one for each study so families would only be interviewed and given questionnaires in study 1 or study 2, but not both.

#### Parker and Benson (2004) Study

A third research paper also started with the premise that parents play a vital role in the lives of their adolescents. The interesting twist that Parker and Benson (2004) put on the topic was that the adolescent perception of the parent-adolescent bond has more

impact on adolescent behaviour than the parent perception of the relationship. They go on to look specifically at adolescent self-esteem, substance abuse, and delinquency.

The study examined data on 16,749 grade ten adolescents drawn from the National Educational Longitudinal Study from 1992 and 1994. The students were randomly selected from rural and urban regions and public and private schools. The study also included minority students. The subjects were grade ten students with 8,320 males and 8,429 females and a race composition of American Indian 1.0%, Asian 6.7%, Black 9.6%, Hispanic 12.3%, and White 70.3%.

Parker and Benson (2004) focused on two aspects of parenting, parental support and parental monitoring. Parental support entailed the adolescent's perception of parental fairness, understanding, trust, and pride. Parental monitoring assessed the adolescent's perception of parental knowledge about friends and how time and money are spent by the adolescent. These are then looked at in relation to adolescent self-esteem, peer pressure, substance abuse, delinquency, and misconduct. Parental support is associated most strongly with higher self-esteem, lower drug use, lower delinquency, and lower misconduct. Adolescents in families with low parental support have opposite results. Parental monitoring also has a positive impact but to a lesser degree.

Parker and Benson (2004) concluded that the parent-adolescent bond is important through to adulthood and has an important bearing on future relationships. Adolescents develop their view of relationships based on the parent-adolescent relationship. Parker and Benson (2004) went on to state that parental support promotes successful environmental experiences, and that these successes result in positive self-esteem. They recommended future longitudinal research to further explore the relationship between parental support and adolescent self-esteem.



Parental support also appears to encourage a safe exploration of the environment versus risky behaviour even though this relationship is less significant than the link to self-esteem. From another slant, Parker and Benson (2004) stated that low parental support is related to a greater importance of peer pressure which leads to increased substance abuse and misconduct. Adolescents need support and if it is not forthcoming from the parent, the adolescent will find the support elsewhere. If the adolescent perceives, due to low support and monitoring, the parent does not truly care, the adolescent will meet emotional needs in possibly less healthy relationships. Parker and Benson (2004) went so far as to say that parents would be well advised to be supportive of their adolescents. Once again, the need to define parental support is being pointed out by current researchers.

Parents reading this study would possibly be impacted by its serious tone. However, being told that parental support entails the adolescent's perception of fairness, understanding, trust, and pride is not enough guidance for improving the parent-adolescent relationship on a daily basis. Again, parents need ideas about the types of conversations, activities, and rituals that would foster the adolescent's perception of parental support. From a broad list, parents and adolescents would be able to choose activities that would suit their family or would be inspired by the list to try other activities that appeal to them. Once given guidance supported by research, parents and adolescents would be able to use their own creativity with confidence.

Parker and Benson (2004) wrote a clear and concise report that is amazingly easy to follow. It is based on a large number of adolescents with a mix of gender, race, and socioeconomic status. It is reader friendly and has a firm conclusion. It does, however, point to the need for further study to break down parental support into specific

suggestions for the parents before the advice to improve parental support can be carried out.

### Comparison of the Three Studies

There is a common theme in all three articles. Adolescents may be growing in autonomy, may have adult bodies, and may be handling increasing responsibilities but they still need their parents. Parent-adolescent interactions that the adolescent perceives as parental support are essential to the adolescent. An atmosphere is created where the adolescent feels loved and safe. This results in an adolescent with a raised self-esteem and one who is influenced to be cooperative at home, at school, and in the community. Furthermore, with parental support, the adolescent is more influenced by parental values that lead to mature choices than by peer values which lead to risk taking. The parent-adolescent relationship is being presented as being as essential as air, food, water, and shelter for the optimum success on the journey from adolescence to adulthood.

The problem with all three studies is the lack of a range of concrete suggestions for activities that may foster the parent-adolescent relationship. Researchers may be pleased to show a correlation between parent-adolescent bonding and an improved outlook for the adolescent. For the parent, however, this is just the beginning of the discussion. Many parents would be stabbing in the dark at this point, hoping to hit the right combination of activities to produce the optimum result. Many parents feel alienated in their struggle with parenting adolescents and they need encouragement and support. They need to know where to start. Further study is needed to give concrete suggestions for activities parents and adolescents should engage in to foster the strongest parent-adolescent relationship possible. Parents and adolescents would then be able to choose what best suits their relationship or they would be inspired to develop their own plan,

confident that research supports this approach. The results might be felt in the home, at school, and in the community.

A recent study by Sharp et al. (2006) explores the relationship between adolescent boredom and the increased involvement with alcohol and illegal drug use. Positive use of leisure time contributes to the development of identity, motivation, and initiative. For sustained engagement, activities need to be interesting and meaningful. Adolescence is a stage when individuals gain more autonomy and have increased opportunity to direct their own experiences, but Sharp et al. (2006) are finding adolescents are becoming less motivated, less engaged, and less interested in their free time activities. This study did not look at parents' direct involvement in adolescents' free time but noted a balance of parental knowledge, facilitation, and control was vital. Parents were encouraged to note the importance of autonomy-supporting behaviour and at the same time recognizing the negative effects of parents being perceived as too controlling.

#### Research Questions

The following 8 research questions will guide this inquiry:

1. What percentage of students self-identified as more or less socially cooperative and more or less academically successful? How do these categories of students compare on demographic characteristics?
2. Do students who self-identify as socially cooperative and academically successful spend more time with their parents or guardians compared to students who self-identify as less socially cooperative and less academically successful?
3. Does the level of social cooperation and academic success differ according to parental education?
4. Are social cooperation and academic success influenced by grade level?

5. Does parenting style affect social cooperation and academic success? Is parenting style influenced by gender?
6. Do the types of activities engaged in with parents or guardians by adolescents who self-identified as socially cooperative and academically successful differ from the activities engaged in with parents by adolescents who self-identified as less socially cooperative and less academically successful?
7. Do adolescents and parents chat and eat snacks while watching television?
8. Is there any relationship between the amount of time spent with the parents and the use of alcohol, cigarettes, and illegal drugs? Does grade level play a role?

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHOD

#### Participants

The participants were 827 students in grades 7, 8, and 9 in 3 schools in a rural school board. Two were town schools and one served a rural area. It was expected that there would be a fairly equal split of male and female students.

#### Instrument

The focus of the research was the adolescents, with each issue being examined from the adolescents' perspective. It does not matter if the adults involved, the parents, teachers, administrators, and RCMP, have a different perspective from the views given by the adolescents. Current literature points to the adolescents' perspective as the force that influences the adolescents' attitude and behaviour (Parker & Benson, 2004; Sim, 2000; Strom et al., 2004).

The proposed study consisted of a questionnaire (Appendix A) designed by the researcher. The first section consisted of 8 questions that gathered demographic information such as gender, age, parent education, and parent employment.

Next there were 8 questions determining the adolescent's level of social cooperation. Adolescents were asked how the teacher, school administration, and RCMP would rate the adolescent's level of cooperation. In addition, the adolescent was asked how friends and family would see the adolescent's level of cooperation and the adolescent's view of how life was going overall. An adolescent who self-identified as totally cooperative in all 8 areas in question would score 0 out of a possible 16. Being totally cooperative on half of the questions and somewhat cooperative on the other half

would increase the score to 4 out of 16. This score was used as the cut off for socially cooperative and any score of 5 or more was considered less socially cooperative.

There were also 8 questions concerning academic success. Subjects such as math, science, English, and physical education were rated by the adolescent with the choices of struggling, doing okay, or being successful. There was also a general question of how the adolescent found school work. A score of 0 indicated the adolescent self-identified as successful in all subject areas. Self-identifying as doing okay in half of the subjects and being successful in the other half would increase the score to 4. This score was used as the cut off for being academically successful so a score of 5 or more was considered less academically successful.

The questionnaire presented questions regarding specific activities the adolescent may engage in with the mother, father, or guardian. There were 14 questions for time spent with the mother, covering activities such as television viewing, board games, card games, camping, sports, and eating in a restaurant. These questions were repeated for time spent with the father. An additional question was open-ended and encouraged the adolescent to list any other activities in which the adolescent and parent participated. Strom et al. (2003) suggested parents spend >10 hours per week with adolescents but that study did not specify what activities might fill that time. These 28 questions were designed to give parents concrete suggestions of how to fill the time spent together. The number of hours involved in these activities was used to create the category of total time with mother and total time with father. As well, the frequency of each activity was noted.

Three questions asked about the adolescent's involvement with cigarettes, alcohol, and illegal drugs with the choices of never used, experimented, or used regularly.

Chung and Steinberg (2006) found substance use declined with the increased level of an authoritative style of parenting.

This study examined if students who self-identified as socially cooperative and academically successful spent more time interacting with one or both parents or guardian and what specific activities were the most common.

Television viewing was noted by Dubas and Gerris (2002) as being important in the adolescent-parent relationship. This study examined television viewing to see if including eating snacks and chatting increased social cooperation and academic success. Questions were included asking about chatting and eating snacks while viewing television with the mother and then the questions were repeated for the father.

As the importance of parenting style was stressed by many of the studies on parent-adolescent relationships, a question was included for each parent to determine if the adolescent viewed the parent as authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, or rejecting-neglecting. Steinberg et al. (2006) found adolescents from authoritative homes to be more socially cooperative than adolescents experiencing authoritarian, permissive, or rejecting-neglecting styles of parenting.

The remaining 10 questions covered time the adolescent spent doing activities such as talking on the telephone, working, volunteering, and involvement in community organizations. The low number of responses to these questions warranted them not being included in the results and discussion.

I wanted the questionnaire to be seen as a serious research tool by the adolescents and yet to be reader friendly enough to cause students to answer the questions with the confidence that results when they fully understand what is being asked. It would be

expected to require 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire so the student was more likely to stay focused and interested.

### Procedure

The school board was approached to request permission to work in 3 of the junior high schools, trying for diversity of locale, rural and town schools. My place of employment was excluded to avoid undue influence over student responses. Although permission was not given to conduct the survey during instructional time, questionnaires were distributed to students by their teacher to be completed at home and returned to the school for collection. Specific principals were asked to approve the research. An introductory letter and a permission form for the parents and the adolescents to sign were sent home with the questionnaire.

Each student was presented with the same written introduction and instructions. Students were assured that completing the questionnaire was voluntary and that they may choose to omit any question they did not wish to answer. They were also informed that they had the option of stopping the questionnaire at any time. They were assured the questionnaire was not related to their school work in any way. They were reminded they were assisting in educational research to benefit adolescents in the future. They were told their help was greatly appreciated.

The questionnaires and permission forms were stored separately and kept in secure locations. The data were password protected on the computer. All questionnaires and permission forms were shredded once the data was analyzed. All information and identities were kept confidential.



### Data Analysis

The Statistics Package for the Social Sciences was used to analyze the data aggregated from the administration of the questionnaire. A frequency distribution looked at responses to each type of interaction, especially comparing male and female responses. The mean was calculated for each interaction with a parent for the adolescents who viewed themselves as socially cooperative and academically successful and for those who viewed themselves as less cooperative and less successful. The mean of the total number of hours of interaction was also calculated. The variability of the length of interactions lead to *t* tests for comparing male and female results as well as to compare grade levels (7-8, 7-9, 8-9). Analysis of Variance was used and with a significant difference indicated, a Tukey post-hoc test was applied. Finally, a regression was used in an effort to explain why students scored differently on their view of their level of success.

### Issues of Validity and Reliability

The instrument was reviewed by the supervisor which established a level of validity. Consistency of results further points to its reliability. Size of sample is a measure of validity. In the case of a small sample size, consistency of findings with those of current research helps boost confidence in the study. In a reliability test for this study, Cronbach alpha coefficient was 0.71 which showed a good internal consistency.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

A total of 827 questionnaires was handed out to Grade 7-9 students in three schools within a rural school board to be completed at home and returned to the school. A total of 107 questionnaires were returned which represented a return rate of 12.9 %. This modest return rate reflects the data collection procedure of sending the questionnaires home. However, the total number of returns was sizable enough to support the study.

#### Demographic Information

Students were asked to identify their gender and age by months. From the age given, a grade level was assigned based on the October 1 cut off of age 5 for entering grade primary. Due to the current policy of continuous progress in the public school system, grade level based on age would be reasonably accurate. They were also asked about their parents' education level, parents' employment status and who they were referring to in the role of mother and father. The demographics are summarized in Table 1. Of the 107 questionnaires returned, 48 were completed by males and 59 by females. Grade 7 students made up the majority of the respondents (40.2%) compared to Grade 8 (29.9%), and Grade 9 (29.9%) with equal numbers. However, the distribution of returns across grade levels was reasonably balanced. Fathers and mothers were employed fulltime (fathers 78.5%, mothers 57%) or part time (fathers 9.3%, mothers 25.2%) and had some post secondary education (fathers 50.4%, mothers 72%) or some high school education (fathers 44.9%, mothers 28%).

Students referred to their biological father (80.3%) and biological mother (97.2%) in the role of active parent. These data might suggest that the traditional nuclear family

was the predominant family structure among participants. Five respondents recorded no male in the role of father. These demographics are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

## Demographic Information

Item	<i>n</i>	<i>P</i>
Gender		
Male	48	44.9
Female	59	55.1
Grade Level		
Grade 7	43	40.2
Grade 8	32	29.9
Grade 9	32	29.9
Father's Employment		
Employed full time	84	78.5
Employed part time	10	9.3
Unemployed	8	7.5
No response	5	4.7
Mother's Employment		
Employed full time	61	57.0
Employed part time	27	25.2
Unemployed	19	17.8
Father's Education		
Some post secondary	54	50.4
Some high school	48	44.9
No response	5	4.7
Mother's Education		
Some post secondary	77	72
Some high school	30	28

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Person referred to as father		
Biological father	86	80.3
Stepfather	13	12.1
Adoptive father	2	1.9
No male in the role of father	5	4.7
Non-relative	1	1.0
Person referred to as mother		
Biological mother	104	97.2
Stepmother	1	1.0
Adoptive mother	1	1.0
Non-relative	1	1.0

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## Analysis of Research Questions

Eight research questions were generated to guide this study. In the sections to follow, a quantitative analysis of these research questions is presented.

### Research Question 1

What percentage of students are self-identified as more or less socially cooperative and more or less academically successful? How do these categories of students compare on demographic characteristics?

To address Research Question 1, it was necessary to categorize respondents as more or less socially cooperative and academically successful. The eight questions used to rate social cooperation were how teachers rated the student, the frequency of office referrals for discipline, the family's view of the adolescent's level of socially cooperative behaviour, the level of social cooperation from the perspective of friends, involvement with the RCMP, the quality of friends, the number of friends, and an overall rating of how life is going. The range of the total score was 0-16 with the highest score being 0 and the lowest score being 16. Based on an examination of frequency distribution and how scores were clustered, a score of 0-5 was used to signify socially cooperative behaviour while a score of 6-16 represented less socially cooperative behaviour.

The eight questions used to rate academic success were overall success with school work and success in individual subject areas: science, math, French, English, physical education, social studies, and family studies/industrial arts. The range of the total score was 0-16 with the highest score being 0 and the lowest score being 16. Based on an examination of the frequency and distribution and how scores clustered, a score of 0-5 was used to signify academic success while a score of 6-16 represented less academic

success. Once categorized, the groups were compared according to demographic characteristics. See Tables 2 and 3.

Of the 98 adolescents (91.6%) who self-identified as socially cooperative, 41.8% were male and 58.2% were female and they were in Grades 7 (40.2%), 8 (28.6%), and 9 (31.2%). Their parents' education was some high school (fathers 45.7%, mothers 26.5%) or some post secondary (fathers 54.3%, mothers 73.5%) while their parents' employment status was employed fulltime (fathers 84.0%, mothers 58.2%).

Of the 9 adolescents (8.4%) who self-identified as less socially cooperative, 77.8% were male and 22.2% were female and they were in grades 7 (44.4%), 8 (33.3%), and 9 (22.2%). Considerably more males than females self-identified as less socially cooperative. Their parents' education was some high school (fathers 62.5%, mothers 44.4%) or some post secondary (fathers 37.5%, mothers 55.6%) while parents' employment status was employed fulltime (fathers 62.5%, mothers 44.4%).

Of the 77 adolescents (71.9%) who self-identified as academically successful, 44.2% were male and 55.8% were female and they were in grades 7 (40.3%), 8 (28.6%) and 9 (31.2%). Compared to those in Grades 8 and 9, a slightly higher percentage in Grade 7 self-identified as academically successful. Although differences were modest, slightly more females than males self-identified as academically successful. Their parents' education was some high school (fathers 46.6%, mothers 24.7%) or some post secondary (fathers 53.4%, mothers 75.3%) while parents' employment status was employed fulltime (fathers 86.3%, mothers 54.5%).

Table 2

## Socially Cooperative Adolescents

Item	Socially Cooperative		Less Socially Cooperative	
	<i>n</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>P</i>
Gender				
Male	41	41.8	7	77.8
Female	57	58.2	2	22.2
Grade Level				
Grade 7	39	40.2	4	44.4
Grade 8	29	28.6	3	33.3
Grade 9	30	31.2	2	22.2
Parent Education (F/M)				
Some high school	43/26	45.7/26.5	5/4	62.5/44.4
Some post secondary	51/72	54.3/73.5	3/5	37.5/55.6
Parent Employment Status (F/M)				
Fulltime	79/57	84.0/58.2	5/4	62.5/44.4
Part time	8/24	8.5/24.5	2/3	25.0/33.3
Unemployed	7/17	7.4/17.3	1/2	12.5/22.2

Table 3

## Academically Successful Adolescents

Item	Academically Successful		Less Academically Successful	
	<i>n</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>P</i>
Gender				
Male	34	44.2	14	46.7
Female	43	55.8	16	53.3
Grade Level				
Grade 7	31	40.3	12	40.0
Grade 8	22	28.6	10	33.3
Grade 9	24	31.2	8	26.7
Parent Education (F/M)				
Some high school	34/19	46.6/24.7	14/11	48.3/36.7
Some post secondary	39/58	53.4/75.3	15/19	51.7/63.3
Parent Employment Status (F/M)				
Fulltime	63/42	86.3/54.5	21/19	72.4/63.3
Part time	7/22	9.6/28.6	3/5	10.3/16.7
Unemployed	3/13	4.1/16.9	5/6	17.2/20.0



Of the 30 adolescents (28.0%) who self-identified as less academically successful, 46.7% were male and 53.3% were female and they were in grades 7 (40.0%), 8 (33.3%), and 9 (26.7%). Their parents' education was some high school (fathers 48.3%, mothers 36.7%) or some post secondary (fathers 51.7%, mothers 63.3%) while parents' employment status was employed fulltime (fathers 72.4%, mothers 63.3%). Slightly more females than males also self-identified as less academically successful. See Tables 2 and 3 for further detail.

### Research Question 2

Do students who self-identify as socially cooperative and academically successful spend more time with their parents or guardians compared to students who self-identify as less socially cooperative and less academically successful?

The number of hours students spent with the mother per week was calculated by totalling questions 23, 29, 31, 33, 35, 37, 39, 41, 43, 45, 47, 49, and 51. The number of hours spent with the father per week was calculated by totalling questions 24, 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 44, 46, 48, 50, and 52. Adolescents were asked to record the number of hours per week typically spent with the parent watching television, playing board games, playing cards, cooking or baking, bowling, exercising, playing sports, playing musical instruments, going to a restaurant, playing with a pet, chatting, or playing video games and the number of nights per year typically spent camping. The adolescent was then given the opportunity to list additional activities that the adolescent may participate in with a parent.

Adolescents completing the questionnaire who self-identified as socially cooperative (91.6%) spent a mean of 37.8 hours per week with the mother and 32.5 hours with the father. Adolescents who self-identified as less socially cooperative (8.4%) spent

a mean of 12.0 hours per week with the mother and 10.1 hours per week with the father. Adolescents who self-identified as academically successful (72.0%) spent a mean of 37.4 hours per week with the mother and 32.3 hours per week with the father. Adolescents who self-identified as less academically successful (28.0%) spent a mean of 31.1 hours per week with the mother and 26.8 hours with the father. See Table 4 for further detail.

It is noted that adolescents spent more time with the mothers than with the fathers in all four categories. In addition, the amount of time socially cooperative adolescents spent with both mothers and fathers was far greater than that of less socially cooperative adolescents. Even though academically successful adolescents spent more time with parents than less academically successful adolescents, the difference was not as pronounced.

### Research Question 3

Does the level of social cooperation and academic success differ according to parental education?

Parental education was addressed in two questions, the mother's education in question 5 and the father's education in question 6. The questionnaire offered four choices: some high school, high school, some post secondary, and university. These responses were later combined so some high school and high school were grouped as some high school. Some post secondary and university were grouped as some post secondary. Tables 5 and 6 summarize the data.

Parents of socially cooperative adolescents have a higher percentage of some post secondary education than parents of less socially cooperative adolescents. The same pattern holds for parents of academically successful adolescents but to a lesser degree.

Table 4

Time Spent with Parent (hours per week)

Item	Father		Mother	
	<i>n</i>	Hours	<i>n</i>	Hours
Socially Cooperative	98	32.5	98	37.8
Less Socially Cooperative	9	10.1	9	12.0
Academically Successful	77	32.3	77	37.4
Less Academically Successful	30	26.8	30	31.1

The higher percentage of post secondary education was more pronounced with mothers than with fathers.

The relationship between parent education and adolescent academic success and social cooperation was investigated using Pearson correlation coefficient. There was a positive relationship between both the mother's education with the adolescent's academic success ( $r = .23, p < .015$ ) and social cooperation ( $r = .20, p < .038$ ) and the father's education with the adolescent's academic success ( $r = .23, p < .021$ ) and social cooperation ( $r = .24, p < .017$ ). That is, higher education for both mother and father was associated with a greater tendency for adolescents to self-identify as socially cooperative and academically successful.

#### Research Question 4

Are social cooperation and academic success influenced by grade level?

Table 7 summarizes the data. Adolescents who self-identified as socially cooperative were in Grade 7 (39.8%), Grade 8 (29.6%), and Grade 9 (30.6%). Adolescents who self-identified as academically successful were in Grade 7 (40.3%), Grade 8 (28.6%), and Grade 9 (31.2%). Participants who were less socially cooperative were in Grade 7 (44.4%), Grade 8 (33.3%), and Grade 9 (22.2%). Participants who were less academically successful were in Grade 7 (40.0%), Grade 8 (33.3%), and Grade 9 (26.7%).

A one-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of grade level on academic success and social cooperation. This analysis was based on original scores rather than categorical data. The effect of grade level did not reach statistical significance for academic success  $f(2,104) = .08, p = .92$  or social

cooperation  $f(2,104) = .10, p = .90$ . Post-hoc comparisons using Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for Grade 7 ( $M = 2.16, SD = 2.20$ ) was not significantly

Table 5

Frequencies and Percentages of Socially Cooperative and Academically Successful Students in According to Mother's Education

Item	Some High School		Some Post Secondary	
	<i>n</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>P</i>
Socially Cooperative	26	26.5	72	73.5
Less Socially Cooperative	4	44.4	5	55.6
Academically Successful	19	24.7	58	75.3
Less Academically Successful	11	36.7	19	63.3

Table 6

Frequencies and Percentages of Socially Cooperative and Academically Successful Students According to Father's Education

Item	Some High School		Some Post Secondary	
	<i>n</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>P</i>
Socially Cooperative	43	45.7	51	54.3
Less Socially Cooperative	5	62.5	3	37.5
Academically Successful	34	46.6	39	53.4
Less Academically Successful	14	48.3	15	51.7

Table 7

Frequencies and Percentages of Socially Cooperative and Academically Successful Students According to Grade Level

Item	Grade 7		Grade 8		Grade 9	
	<i>n</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>P</i>
Socially Cooperative	39	39.8	29	29.6	30	30.6
Less Socially Cooperative	4	44.4	3	33.3	2	22.2
Academically Successful	31	40.3	22	28.6	24	31.2
Less Academically Successful	12	40.0	10	33.3	8	26.7

different from Grades 8 ( $M = 2.31$ ,  $SD = 2.43$ ) and 9 ( $M = 2.06$ ,  $SD = 2.05$ ) for social cooperation. Likewise, there was no significant difference for academic success with a mean score for Grade 7 ( $M = 3.26$ ,  $SD = 2.76$ ), Grade 8 ( $M = 3.50$ ,  $SD = 3.41$ ), and Grade 9 ( $M = 3.50$ ,  $SD = 3.10$ ).

#### Research Question 5

Does parenting style affect social cooperation and academic success? Is parenting style influenced by gender?

Adolescents were asked if their mothers and fathers were strict but reasonable which is a description of an authoritative style of parenting, extremely strict and never bend which is indicative of an authoritarian style of parenting, give in to demands which points to a permissive style of parenting, or show no interest in the student's life which is reflective of a rejecting-neglecting style of parenting. Tables 8 to 11 summarize the data.

Male participants who self-identified as socially cooperative labelled mothers as authoritative (90.2%), permissive (4.9%), or rejecting/neglecting (4.9%) while female participants labelled mothers as authoritative (89.5%), authoritarian (5.3%), or permissive (5.3%). Fathers were labelled as authoritative (92.7%) or rejecting-neglecting (4.9%) by males and authoritative (90.6%), authoritarian (3.8%), or permissive (3.8%) by females. Males who self-identified as less socially cooperative labelled mothers as authoritative (71.4%), permissive (14.3%), or rejecting/neglecting (14.3%) and fathers as authoritative (83.3%) or rejecting-neglecting (16.7%). One male participant did not respond to the question for father parenting style. Females who self-identified as less socially cooperative labelled mothers as authoritative (100%) and fathers as authoritative (50%)



or permissive (50%). Again the reader is cautioned that there were only 2 female participants who self-identified as less socially cooperative.

Males who self-identified as academically successful labelled mothers as authoritative (85.3%), permissive (5.9%), and rejecting-neglecting (8.8%) and fathers as authoritative (91.1%) and rejecting-neglecting (8.8%). Females who self-identified as academically successful labelled mothers as authoritative (95.3%) or authoritarian (4.7%) and fathers as authoritative (79.1%), authoritarian (9.3%), permissive (4.7%), or rejecting-neglecting (7.0%). Males who self-identified as less academically successful labelled mothers as authoritative (92.9%) or permissive (7.1%) and fathers as authoritative (92.9%) or authoritarian (7.1%). Females who self-identified as less academically successful labelled mothers as authoritative (75%), authoritarian (6.3%), or permissive (18.8%) and fathers as authoritative (50%), authoritarian (12.6%), permissive (31.3%), or rejecting-neglecting (6.3%).

#### Research Question 6

Do the activities engaged in with parents by adolescents who self-identified as socially cooperative and academically successful differ from the activities engaged in with parents by adolescents who self-identified as less socially cooperative and less academically successful?

Tables 12-15 summarize the data. The activities listed in questions 23, 29, 31, 33, 35, 37, 39, 41, 43, 45, 47, 49, 51 and 53 reflect activities engaged in by the adolescent with the mother. The activities listed in questions 24, 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 44, 46, 48, 50, 52, and 54 reflect activities engaged in by the adolescent with the father. The ten activities most frequently engaged in were television viewing, chatting, playing with pets, eating in a restaurant, cooking-baking, exercising, camping, playing sports, board games,

and card games. The amount of time spent with each parent was examined by gender, more or less socially cooperative, and more or less academically successful. The percentage represents the

Table 8

## Parenting Style: Socially Cooperative

Item	Male ( $n = 41$ )		Female ( $n = 57$ )	
	$n$	$P$	$n$	$P$
Authoritative	37/38	90.2/92.7	51/48	89.5/90.6
Authoritarian	0/1	0/2.5	3/2	5.3/3.8
Permissive	2/0	4.9/0	3/2	5.3/3.8
Rejecting-Neglecting	2/2	4.9/4.9	0/1	0/1.9

*Note.* Numbers separated by hash mark represent mother/father proportions, respectively.

Table 9

## Parenting Style: Less Socially Cooperative

Item	Male ( $n = 7$ )		Female ( $n = 2$ )	
	$n$	$P$	$n$	$P$
Authoritative	5/5	71.4/71.4	2/1	100/50
Authoritarian	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
Permissive	1/0	14.3/0	0/1	0/50
Rejecting-Neglecting	1/1	14.3/16.7	0/0	0/0

*Note.* Numbers separated by hash mark represent mother/father proportions, respectively.

Table 10

## Parenting Style: Academically Successful

Item	Male ( <i>n</i> = 34)		Female ( <i>n</i> = 43)	
	<i>n</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>P</i>
Authoritative	29/31	85.3/91.1	41/34	95.3/79.1
Authoritarian	0/0	0/0	2/4	4.7/9.3
Permissive	2/0	5.9/0	0/2	0/4.7
Rejecting-Neglecting	3/3	8.8/8.8	0/3	0/7.0

*Note.* Numbers separated by hash mark represent mother/father proportions, respectively.

Table 11

## Parenting Style: Less Academically Successfully

Item	Male ( $n = 14$ )		Female ( $n = 16$ )	
	$n$	$P$	$n$	$P$
Authoritative	13/13	92.9/92.9	12/8	75/50
Authoritarian	0/1	0/7.1	1/2	6.3/12.6
Permissive	1/0	7.1/0	3/5	18.8/31.3
Rejecting-Neglecting	0/0	0/0	0/1	0/6.3

*Note.* Numbers separated by hash mark represent mother/father proportions, respectively.

frequency or the number of adolescents who engage in that activity with the mother or father, but does not take into account the quantity or the number of hours per week for each activity.

When asked for a list of other activities shared with parents, outdoor activities such as hunting and fishing headed the list (24% female, 38% males), followed by home activities such as crafts and reading (32% female, 23% male), shopping (39 % female, 15% male), and sports such as curling, swimming, biking, shooting baskets, and golf (24% female, 19% male). Additional activities such as horseplay, going for drives, watching sports, community activities, and bowling were listed less frequently. Owing to the small number of females in the less socially cooperative category, caution is urged in interpreting these results.

It is evident that socially cooperative males spend more time in all activities with their parents than do less socially cooperative males. With only 2 females responding as less socially cooperative, the results are either 50% or 100%, which should be used with caution. Less academically successful females play fewer board games, card games, and sports with their parents than do academically successful females. Less academically successful males exercise and camp with parents more than academically successful males but they participate less in television viewing, chatting, playing with pets, eating in restaurants, cooking, sports, board games, and card games with parents.

#### Research Question 7

Do adolescents and parents chat and eat snacks while watching television?

Tables 16 and 17 summarize the data. Adolescents were asked how many hours per week they watch television with the mother in question 23 and with the father in question 24. Questions 25 and 26 asked if

Table 12

## Activities: More or Less Socially Cooperative Females

Activity	Socially Cooperative		Less Socially Cooperative	
	Female ( $n = 57$ )		Female ( $n = 2$ )	
	$n$	$P$	$n$	$P$
TV viewing	54/51	95/89	2/2	100/100
Chatting	55/46	96/81	2/2	100/100
Pets	48/38	84/67	1/1	50/50
Restaurant	41/34	72/60	2/2	100/100
Cooking	41/18	72/32	2/2	100/100
Exercise	35/24	61/42	1/1	50/50
Camping	32/34	56/60	2/2	100/100
Sports	12/22	21/39	1/1	50/50
Board games	23/19	40/33	1/1	50/50
Card games	15/14	26/25	2/2	100/100

*Note.* Numbers separated by hash mark represent mother/father proportions, respectively.

Table 13

Activities: More or Less Academically Successful Females

Activity	Academically Successful		Less Academically Successful	
	Female ( $n = 43$ )		Female ( $n = 16$ )	
	$n$	$P$	$n$	$P$
TV viewing	41/36	95/84	15/14	94/88
Chatting	41/36	95/84	16/11	100/69
Pets	35/29	81/67	12/10	75/63
Restaurant	31/27	72/63	12/9	75/56
Cooking	34/12	79/28	9/8	56/50
Exercise	28/19	65/44	8/5	50/31
Camping	25/28	58/65	9/8	56/50
Sports	13/21	30/49	1/2	6/13
Board games	19/17	44/40	4/4	25/25
Card games	16/15	37/35	1/1	6/6

*Note.* Numbers separated by hash mark represent mother/father proportions, respectively.



Table 14

Activities: More or Less Socially Cooperative Males

Activity	Socially Cooperative		Less Socially Cooperative	
	Males ( $n = 41$ )		Males ( $n = 7$ )	
	$n$	$P$	$n$	$P$
TV viewing	39/35	95/85	4/4	57/57
Chatting	38/34	93/83	4/3	57/43
Pets	32/28	78/68	3/2	43/29
Restaurant	16/22	39/54	3/2	43/29
Cooking	16/8	39/20	1/2	14/29
Exercise	16/20	39/49	2/1	29/14
Camping	19/20	46/49	1/2	14/29
Sports	14/23	34/56	0/1	0/14
Board games	16/9	39/22	1/1	14/14
Card games	17/9	42/22	0/0	0/0

*Note.* Numbers separated by hash mark represent mother/father proportions, respectively.

Table 15

Activities: More or Less Academically Successful Males

Activity	Academically Successful		Less Academically Successful	
	Males ( $n = 34$ )		Males ( $n = 14$ )	
	$n$	$P$	$n$	$P$
TV viewing	31/28	91/82	12/10	86/71
Chatting	32/27	94/79	11/9	79/64
Pets	28/21	82/62	7/9	50/64
Restaurant	23/18	68/53	7/6	50/43
Cooking	14/7	41/21	3/3	21/21
Exercise	8/4	24/12	6/5	43/36
Camping	13/14	38/41	5/7	36/50
Sports	10/20	29/59	2/4	14/29
Board games	16/9	47/26	1/1	7/7
Card games	9/8	26/24	3/1	21/7

*Note.* Numbers separated by hash mark represent mother/father proportions, respectively.

television viewing includes chatting with the mother (25) or with the father (26).

Adolescents had three choices: do not chat at all, chat a bit, or chat a lot. Questions 27 and 28 asked if television viewing includes eating snacks with the mother (27) or with the father (28). Adolescents had three choices: never have snacks, occasionally have snacks, or frequently have snacks. The responses examined adolescents who self-identified as socially cooperative or less socially cooperative and those who self-identified as academically successful or less academically successful.

This study confirms that television viewing is evident as a parent-adolescent activity in families where the adolescent self-identified as socially cooperative (89%) and academically successful (88%). Television viewing is also evident with adolescents who self-identified as less socially cooperative (100%) and less academically successful (85%). The number of adolescents who self-identified as less socially cooperative is small so caution should be exercised when interpreting these results. Otherwise, the percentages are consistent for chatting and snacking during television watching between more or less socially cooperative and more or less academically successful adolescents.

The relationship between chatting and snacking during television viewing and academic success and social cooperation was investigated using Pearson correlation coefficient. There was a positive correlation ( $r = .33, p = .002$ ) between chatting with the father during television viewing and social cooperation. Chatting with the mother, however, showed no statistical significance ( $r = .06, p = .58$ ). Chatting with the father ( $r = .04, p = .72$ ) or the mother ( $r = .07, p = .49$ ) showed no correlation with academic success. Likewise, sharing snacks with the parents showed no correlation with social cooperation or academic success.

Table 16

Chatting While Watching TV

Item	Mother		Father	
	<i>n</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>P</i>
Socially Cooperative				
Do not chat at all	0	1.5	3	0
Chat a bit	64	65.2	64	75.0
Chat a lot	32	33.3	19	25.0
Less Socially Cooperative				
Do not chat at all	0	0	2	28.6
Chat a bit	7	100	5	71.4
Chat a lot	0	0	0	0
Academically Successful				
Do not chat at all	0	0	3	4.6
Chat a bit	50	69.4	49	75.4
Chat a lot	22	30.6	13	20
Less Academically Successful				
Do not chat at all	0	0	1	4.3
Chat a bit	16	61.5	18	78.3
Chat a lot	10	38.5	4	17.4

Table 17

## Eating Snacks While Watching TV

Item	Mother		Father	
	<i>n</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>P</i>
<b>Socially Cooperative</b>				
Never have snacks	5	9.3	8	9.5
Occasionally have snacks	63	67.0	49	58.3
Frequently have snacks	26	27.7	27	32.1
<b>Less Socially Cooperative</b>				
Never have snacks	1	14.3	1	14.3
Occasionally have snacks	5	71.4	6	85.7
Frequently have snacks	1	14.3	0	0
<b>Academically Successful</b>				
Never have snacks	5	6.9	6	9.0
Occasionally have snacks	46	63.9	42	62.7
Frequently have snacks	21	29.2	19	28.4
<b>Less Academically Successful</b>				
Never have snacks	42	4.0	2	9.1
Occasionally have snacks	18	72.0	11	50.0
Frequently have snacks	6	24.0	9	40.9

### Research Question 8

Is there a relationship between the amount of time spent with the parents and the adolescent's use of alcohol, cigarettes, and illegal drugs? Does grade level play a role?

Adolescents were asked in question 17 if they smoked cigarettes regularly, experimented with cigarettes, or never smoked cigarettes. Question 18 asked if the adolescent drank alcohol regularly, experimented with alcohol, or did not drink alcohol. In question 19, the adolescents were asked if they used street drugs regularly, experimented with street drugs, or did not use street drugs at all. The total range for the three questions was 0-6, with 0 being never smoke, never drink, and never use drugs. Six would represent smoke regularly, drink regularly, and use drugs regularly. The responses to these questions were then examined for the number of hours the adolescent spent involved in activities with the mother or father.

Overall, adolescents spent  $\geq 10$  hours per week with mothers (90.7%) and fathers (85.3%),  $\geq 20$  hours with mothers (77.6%) and fathers (62.7%), or even  $\geq 30$  hours with mothers (53.3%) and fathers (43.1%), with a mean of 37.6 hours with mothers and 32.4 hours with fathers. An independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the score for substance (alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs) use and total time spent with mothers and fathers. There was a decrease in substance use when total time spent with the mother or the father totalled  $\geq 10$  or  $\geq 20$  hours per week. The relationship between time spent with the adolescent and substance use stayed significant for  $\geq 10$  hour for mothers ( $M = 0.57$ ,  $SD = 0.50$ ) with  $t(107) = -2.88$ ,  $p = .005$  and for fathers ( $M = 0.55$ ,  $SD = 0.50$ ) with  $t(107) = -4.14$ ,  $p = .000$ . The statistical significance remained when the total hours increased to  $\geq 20$  hours, for mothers ( $M = 0.22$ ,  $SD = 0.50$ ) with  $t(107) = -2.89$ ,

$p = .005$  and for fathers ( $M = 0.17, SD = 0.49$ ) with  $t(107) = -2.59, p = .01$ . The significance diminished for  $\geq 30$  hours ( $M = 0.22, SD = 0.50$ ) for mothers with  $t(107) = -1.43, p = .16$  and for fathers ( $M = 0.18, SD = 0.54$ ) with  $t(107) = -1.58, p = .12$ .

A two-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of grade level on levels of substance (cigarettes, alcohol, and drugs) use. An increase in substance use was most significant when comparing Grades 7 and 9 with the mean scores for Grade 7 ( $M = 0.09, SD = 0.37$ ) and Grade 9 ( $M = 0.59, SD = 0.95$ ),  $F(2,104) = 5.17, p = .007$ . In other words, as grade level increased, substance use also increased.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

A total of 827 students in Grades 7-9 in three schools within a rural school board were asked to complete a questionnaire at home and return it to school. The purpose of the questionnaire was to examine responses of adolescents who self-identified as socially cooperative and academically successful compared to adolescents who self-identified as less socially cooperative and less academically successful. The main area of interest was the amount of time spent with parents and the types of activities engaged in by parents and adolescents. Other areas of interest were examining parental education, parental employment, and parenting style in relation to social cooperation and academic success. Adolescent alcohol, cigarette, and illegal drug use was also examined in relation to time spent with parents and to grade level.

#### Demographic Information

There was an equal response from males and females with considerably more responses from grade 7 than grade 8 or 9. Grade 7 students completed forms given to them by their teachers, possibly wanting to please the teacher or feeling the need to cooperate with an authority figure.

Most of the adolescents identified their biological mother and biological father in the parenting roles. Stepfathers were evident in 12.1% of the families and there were only 4.7% of adolescents with no male in the role of father. These results could reflect the rural setting. It would be interesting to compare these responses to those of adolescents living in an urban area.

It was interesting to note that the adolescents reported mothers with more post secondary education than fathers. In the rural communities of this study, fishing is still a



common occupation for the males and many enter this profession without pursuing post secondary education. There is little need for further education if the boys are joining their fathers in the fishing industry. Females, on the other hand, are more likely to pursue some form of education at the post secondary level. The mothers in the rural setting would be more like mothers in urban centers where increased education would be necessary for many employment opportunities.

Adolescents reported a high rate of having stay-at-home mothers or mothers only working part time. It would be interesting to compare this data to urban families. With the high rate of adolescents self-identifying as socially cooperative, a question that might be raised is whether the presence of the mother at home full time or part time is a factor associated with the high rate of adolescents self-identifying as socially cooperative.

A portion of the fathers (9.3%) reported working part time but the questionnaire did not request information concerning the type of part time employment. In the rural setting, many fishermen work seasonally but still generate an annual income comparable to full time employment at a job other than one in the fishing industry.

#### Discussion of Research Questions

In the section to follow, the key findings in response to the research questions of this study will be summarized.

#### Social Cooperation and Academic Success

A higher percentage of males self-identified as less socially cooperative which is even more salient considering fewer males completed the questionnaire. They were spread across the grade levels at similar percentages to the socially cooperative group so grade level does not seem to be a factor. This category encompassed life at school, in the

home, in the community, and among friends. This raises the question of why males are less socially cooperative than females and if this trend is evident in any other age group.

A second factor that is noted is the parents' education and employment status. In this study, socially cooperative adolescents were more likely to have parents with post secondary education and full time employment. Possibly the parents who are more secure in their employment status are more able to reach out emotionally to their adolescents.

On the other hand, more females than males self-identified as less academically successful, again with grade level not being a factor. It is not known if the females actually have a problem with academics or if it is a case of the females having higher standards and therefore being less pleased with their progress. A study would have to be done at the school level to compare the actual performance of males and females.

There was less of a difference in parental education between the academically successful and less academically successful than there was between the more or less socially cooperative. There was, however, more unemployment with the parents of adolescents who self-identified as less academically successful. Possibly the unemployed parent finds it difficult to help the adolescent with school work or to shoulder the cost of tutoring if it is needed.

#### Time Spent With Parents

In this study, the number of hours socially cooperative students spent with both the mother and the father was vastly greater than that of the less socially cooperative adolescents. There was only a slight difference between academically successful and less academically successful students although the number of hours the academically successful adolescent spent with parents was still greater for both mothers and fathers. There seems to be a perception in society that parents are not spending adequate time

with adolescents but this study confirms that many parents, especially mothers, are finding time in their busy schedules to interact and bond with their adolescents. This finding corroborates the research by Bianchi et al. (2006) that parents now spend less time on leisure and housework to allocate more time with their children. This study also confirms that fathers are spending considerable time with their adolescents.

The questionnaires were completed in a rural district and that may be a factor in the high number of hours parents are spending with their adolescents. Also, teen issues have been in the forefront of the media for several years so perhaps parents are consciously putting more hours into relationships with adolescents. It would be interesting to examine time spent with adolescents in urban schools to see if the time spent is comparable.

This study supports the research literature (Strom et al., 2003) that points to >10 hours per week spent with the mother associated with a higher incidence of socially cooperative adolescents. The adolescents who completed this study spent in excess of the >10 hours per week with both parents and were predominantly self-identifying as academically successful and socially cooperative (Baumrind, 1991; Clark, 2006; Elliott, et al., 2006; Steinberg, 2001; Steinberg et al., 2006). Further study is needed that includes a greater number of students who self-identify as less socially cooperative (8.4%) and less academically successful (28.0%) to acquire more data on time spent with parents by these adolescents.

#### Parental Education and Social Cooperation and Academic Success

Adolescents self-identify as doing better academically and being more socially cooperative when parents have some post secondary education. This finding could be associated with a variety of reasons. Parents may be better able to assist with home study

and homework assignments. Having a higher education may increase the parent's comfort level in visiting the school and taking an active role with the educators. The parents may be less intimidated by the education of the teachers. There may also be a raised standard with the expectation that the adolescent will also achieve a post secondary education.

The range in parental education is wider with more or less social cooperation than with more or less academic success and with mothers more than fathers. This trend may possibly reflect the traditional rural values with the mother taking the dominant role in parenting (Bianchi et al., 2006). It is noted that 43% of the mothers either did not work outside the home or only worked part time. This situation would allow the mother time for a more active role in parenting the adolescent and her education would more likely have an impact on parental expectations of social cooperation and academic success.

#### Grade Level and Social Cooperation/Academic Success

Academic success and social cooperation did not change significantly through grades 7, 8, and 9. It is possible that values established in the younger years remain stable throughout junior high. If parents are using an authoritative style of parenting and are spending 30 hours per week watching television, chatting, playing with pets, eating and exercising with their adolescent in grade 7, they are not likely to stray dramatically from this established pattern during grades 8 and 9. Therefore, the adolescent would maintain some level of consistency in academic success and social cooperation through the junior high years (Clark, 2006; Elliott et al., 2006; Parker & Benson, 2002; Strom et al., 2003).

#### Parenting Style

This study confirms the research that points to an authoritative parenting style as encouraging socially cooperative behaviour (Baumrind, 1991; Clark, 2006; Darling &

Steinberg, 2001; Steinberg et al., 2006). This parenting style strikes a balance among parents' knowledge of their adolescent's activities, facilitation, and control (Sharp et al., 2006). This study raises the possibility of a permissive, authoritarian, or rejecting-neglecting parenting style negatively affecting the level of social cooperation and academic success (Clark, 2006; Elliott et al., 2006; Strom et al., 2003). Further study may be needed in this area. The permissive parent typically avoids rules and demands, not insisting on socially cooperative behaviour. The authoritarian parent typically gives orders without explanation, not allowing for growth of independent decision making. Neither style of parenting would encourage social cooperation or academic success. Rejecting- neglecting parents seem to be encouraging anger and lack of cooperation with family, school, and community (Clark, 2006).

With females who self-identified as socially cooperative and academically successful reporting authoritarian and permissive fathers at higher levels than males, the relationship between parenting style and gender may need further study. Do parents treat males differently from females and if they do, how does this impact on the females? Less academically successful males and females reported authoritarian and permissive parents. With an authoritarian parenting style, adolescents are likely to rebel against authority and not cooperate in the school setting. A permissive style would not encourage the adolescent to strive to do their best. A permissive parenting style stands out with the less socially cooperative males. Lack of rules and consequences seems to open up the possibility of lack of cooperation with rules at home, at school, and in the community. If the parent does not set standards and enforce them with consequences consistently as in an authoritative style of parenting, the adolescent seems to be less socially cooperative and less academically successful.

### Parent-Adolescent Activities

The number of females ( $n = 2$ ) who self-identified as less socially cooperative was too small to be of benefit for this study but it is notable that the males who self-identified as less socially cooperative participated in substantially fewer activities than the males who self-identified as socially cooperative. The numbers were especially low for board games, card games, and sports, all of which would encourage social interaction and cooperation. Watching television, chatting, exercising, and camping were also engaged in by parents with socially cooperative adolescents more frequently than by those who self-identified as less socially cooperative. These activities may not require cooperative skills to the same degree as the other activities but they still allow interaction for bonding. Few of these activities would bring into play family rules, chores, or school work that may possibly lead to conflict. These parent-adolescent activities open the possibility of spending time together that is positive and fun (Tucker, 2007).

With academic success, the numbers for females were substantial enough to consider the responses. Both adolescents who self-identified as academically successful and less academically successful joined parents to watch television, chat, eat in restaurants, and spend time with pets. The difference was noted in sports, board games, and card games. Adolescents with less academic success did not participate as much in sports, board games, and card games. This information is certainly important information for parents and for future studies. Could the skills needed to play sports, board games, and card games help the adolescent in academics? Would adding numbers in card games carry over into math class? Would reading the cards in board games improve the reading level of the adolescent? This direction is worth pursuing.

It is interesting to note the types of activities adolescents and parents engage in, with watching television and chatting being the most popular. This list is a good starting point for parents who wish to increase time spent with their adolescent. The activities do not require huge budgets or special training but rather are basic family activities that involve typical daily routines of chatting, eating, pet care, exercise, board games, and card games. Traditional camping, hunting, and fishing also appeared in this survey as common activities, possibly due to the rural setting. The results of this questionnaire should give parents the confidence to choose from the most basic of interactions with youth to achieve positive results in social cooperation and academic success (Clark, 2006; Parker & Benson, 2004; Strom et al., 2003).

#### TV Viewing with Chatting and Snacks

This study looked at television viewing to determine if chatting and eating snacks during viewing time increased social cooperation or academic success. While it is evident that sitting together to watch television is a popular activity for parents and adolescents (Parker & Benson, 2004), having conversation and sharing food while watching television does not increase the positive impact of the time spent together. Chatting was the second most popular activity between parent and adolescent but television viewing need not be accompanied with chatting or eating snacks. The important factor seems to be spending time together doing the same activity. Chatting, eating, and cooking-baking were all forms of activities that increase social cooperation and academic success. However, in this study, doubling up activities such as viewing television and eating did not increase the impact on social cooperation and academic success.

### Alcohol, Cigarettes, and Illegal Drugs

Substance use decreased among adolescents when the parent increased the time spent in social activities with the adolescent. Spending more time with the adolescent seems to keep them from turning to alcohol, cigarette, and illegal drugs. Similar to the literature, it seemed the bonding that occurs with the time parents spend with the adolescent did result in the adolescent making positive choices when outside of the home (Clark, 2006; Elliott et al., 2006; Parker & Benson, 2004).

The use of alcohol, cigarettes, and illegal drugs increased for grade 7 to grade 9. It should be brought to the attention of parents that engaging in social activities with the adolescent should not diminish as the adolescent reaches the higher grades. Playing is seen in our society as an activity for young children. This study seems to point to the need for parents to continue to interact with adolescents into the higher grades to try to counterbalance the trend to increase substance use.

Earlier studies (Dubas & Gerris, 2002; Parker & Benson, 2004; Simons et al., 2001; Strom et al., 2004) concluded that adolescents were more socially cooperative when mothers spent 10 hours per week with adolescents. This study now concludes that mothers and fathers both have a positive effect on decreasing cigarette, alcohol, and drug use when they spend 10-20 hours per week with their adolescent. The impact does not increase when the hours per week are increased to 30 hours. This finding may be related to that of Sharp et al. (2006) which noted the positive influence of parental support but the negative influence of too much parental control. There seems to be a line when increasing the time spent with the adolescent is not increasing the positive impact. Substance use increased from grades 7 to 9 so parent time would be increasingly important as the adolescent goes through these years.



## Conclusion

In this study, more males than females self-identified as less socially cooperative. More females self-identified as less academically successful. When parents spend a large portion of their free time with their adolescents, the adolescents self-identify as more socially cooperative. There is evidence to a lesser degree that parental time also positively affects academic success. Gender and grade level do not seem to be contributing factors. There is a positive relationship, though, between parental education and employment and a student's social cooperation and academic success with the greater impact on social cooperation.

The type of activities students engage in with their parents is standard across gender, social cooperation and academic success. Typical activities include television viewing, chatting, playing with pets, meals at restaurants, cooking-baking, exercising, camping, sports, board games, card games, hunting, fishing, home activities, and shopping. These activities are easily available to families regardless of adolescent gender, grade, or socioeconomic background. Adolescents who self-identify as less socially cooperative and less academically successful are less likely to engage in board games, card games, and sports with parents.

Adolescents who self-identify as socially cooperative and academically successful are more likely to view their parents as authoritative in parenting style. Adolescents who self-identify as less socially cooperative and less academically successful have a higher rate of viewing their parents as permissive, authoritarian, or rejecting-neglecting with permissive being more prevalent.

Television viewing is the most common activity engaged in by parents and adolescents. Overall, it appears that chatting and sharing snacks during this time does not further increase the positive impact of this activity.

Spending 10 to 20 hours per week with the adolescent seems to decrease the use of alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs. Increasing the time to 30 hours per week does not further decrease substance use.

The results of parents spending time with their adolescent is far reaching. Increased social cooperation improves the environment in the home, school, and community (Clark, 2006; Elliott et al., 2006; Moos, 1978; Quinn, 2003).

#### Limitations of Study

A limitation of the study was the small sample size. Care is urged in interpreting the results of the study. Despite the small sample size though, the results did corroborate findings from the literature. As questionnaires were sent home to be completed, students motivated to return the questionnaires were more likely to be academically successful and socially cooperative. Future studies would need to be completed at school to ensure that the results include a higher number of less academically successful and less socially cooperative adolescents.

Also, the 3 schools that participated in the study were either rural schools or schools situated in small towns. A future study might include an urban area to see if the results were consistent.

#### Recommendations

The amount of time parent and adolescents spend together could be as high as 30 hours per week but should be at least 10 hours per week. In this study, the numbers of hours per week was higher than in the established literature but it is also noted that there

was a high rate of socially cooperative and academically successful adolescents in this study.

It is recommended that parents spend time engaged in common home activities with their adolescent (Dubas & Gerris, 2002; Parker & Benson, 2004; Strom et al., 2003). This includes television viewing, chatting, caring for pets, eating in restaurants, cooking-baking, exercising, camping, sports, board games, and card games. Board games and card games are especially important as they were the activity most notably absent from the activities listed by the less socially cooperative and less academically successful. Parents would use this list as a starting point and would change the activities to reflect the developmental changes in the adolescent.

This pattern of behaviour should continue past the early teen years to ensure continued social cooperation and academic success and to decrease use of alcohol, cigarettes, and illegal drugs. The adolescents seem to be at an increasing risk of experimenting with substances at the grade 9 level.

Further study is recommended to include urban adolescents and should be completed at school to ensure a high rate of return of the questionnaires. This would increase the likelihood that more adolescents who self-identified as less socially cooperative and less academically successful would be reporting their perspectives. This study encompassed a rural area and adolescents from a range of socioeconomic groups and ethnic groups may have a different perspective and should be included in a future study.

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## APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

You have been invited to take this 5 page questionnaire home and spend approximately 20 minutes completing it to help in a very important study. Your answers will be anonymous which means no one will know which questionnaire you filled out. All the information will be put together to determine overall trends in answers. I am very interested in knowing your true answers, even if you think a different answer would be more popular. The results will be used by educators and parents to improve the situation for adolescents in the future.

Please choose an answer that best completes the statement for your life and your family. If there is any question you do not want to answer, leave it blank. It is okay if at any point you decide you do not want to complete the questionnaire. This questionnaire has absolutely nothing to do with your school work. It is part of a study to help adolescents in the future.

Questions 5-8 and questions 21-54 are asking you about your mother and father. Questions 3 and 4 are asking you to decide who you are referring to as mother and father for this questionnaire. If there is no female in the role of mother in your life, skip the questions referring to your mother. If there is no male in the role of father in your life, skip the questions referring to father. Whatever you decide is fine.

I thank you in advance for taking this activity seriously.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> I am male.<br><input type="checkbox"/> I am female.  | 2. My birthdate is <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> (month, e.g. 01)<br><input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> (year).   |
| 3. When I answer the mother questions, I will either be referring to<br><input type="checkbox"/> my biological mother.<br><input type="checkbox"/> my adoptive mother.<br><input type="checkbox"/> my stepmother.<br><input type="checkbox"/> another female relative.<br><input type="checkbox"/> a female nonrelative.<br>or <input type="checkbox"/> There is no female in the role of parent, so questions referring to mother will be left blank. | 4. When I answer the father questions, I will either be referring to<br><input type="checkbox"/> my biological father.<br><input type="checkbox"/> my adoptive father.<br><input type="checkbox"/> my stepfather.<br><input type="checkbox"/> another male relative.<br><input type="checkbox"/> a male nonrelative.<br>or <input type="checkbox"/> There is no male in the role of parent, so questions referring to father will be left blank. |
| 5. The highest education my mother or guardian completed is<br><input type="checkbox"/> some high school.<br><input type="checkbox"/> high school.<br><input type="checkbox"/> some post secondary.<br><input type="checkbox"/> university.  | 6. The highest education my father or guardian completed is<br><input type="checkbox"/> some high school.<br><input type="checkbox"/> high school.<br><input type="checkbox"/> some post secondary.<br><input type="checkbox"/> university.  |

7. My mother or guardian is  
 not employed.  
 employed part time.  
 employed full time.
8. My father or guardian is  
 not employed.  
 employed part time.  
 employed full time.
9. My teacher would label me as  
 disruptive in class.  
 somewhat cooperative.  
 cooperative in class.
10. I have been sent to the office for discipline  
 frequently.  
 occasionally.  
 not at all.
11. My family would say I am  
 difficult to live with.  
 somewhat cooperative.  
 cooperative.
12. My friends would describe me as  
 not easy to get along with.  
 somewhat easy going.  
 easy to get along with.
13. The local RCMP have  
 frequently dealt with me.  
 occasionally dealt with me.  
 never dealt with me.
14. I have  
 casual friends.  
 good friends.  
 great friends.
15. Overall, my life is  
 not doing so good.  
 okay some of the time.  
 going great.
16. I have  
 no friends.  
 some casual friends.  
 great friends.
17. I have  
 smoked cigarettes regularly.  
 experimented with cigarettes.  
 never smoked a cigarette.
18. I  
 drink alcohol regularly.  
 have experimented with alcohol.  
 never drink alcohol.
19. I have  
 used street drugs regularly.  
 experimented with street drugs.  
 never used street drugs.
20. I feel  
 negative about my family.  
 neutral about my family.  
 happy about my family.
21. My mother or guardian  
 shows no interest in my life.  
 gives in to my demands.  
 is extremely strict and never bends.  
 is strict but reasonable.
22. My father or guardian  
 shows no interest in my life.  
 gives in to my demands.  
 is extremely strict and never bends.  
 is strict but reasonable.

For questions 23 to 64, if you do not engage in any of these activities, put 0 hrs.

23. I watch television with my mother  
 or guardian  
 \_\_\_\_\_ hrs per week.
24. I watch television with my father  
 or guardian  
 \_\_\_\_\_ hrs per week.

If you answered 0 hrs for question 23, skip questions 25 and 27. If you answered 0 hrs for question 24, skip questions 26 and 28.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 25. During television viewing, my mother or guardian and I<br>___ do not chat at all.<br>___ chat a bit.<br>___ chat a lot.                          | 26. During television viewing, my father or guardian and I<br>___ do not chat at all.<br>___ chat a bit.<br>___ chat a lot.                          |
| 27. During television viewing, my mother or guardian and I<br>___ never have snacks.<br>___ occasionally have snacks.<br>___ frequently have snacks. | 28. During television viewing, my father or guardian and I<br>___ never have snacks.<br>___ occasionally have snacks.<br>___ frequently have snacks. |
| 29. I play board games with my mother or guardian<br>_____ hrs per week.   | 30. I play board games with my father or guardian<br>_____ hrs per week.   |
| 31. I play cards with my mother or guardian<br>_____ hrs per week.   | 32. I play cards with my father or guardian<br>_____ hrs per week.   |
| 33. I cook-bake with my mother or guardian<br>_____ hrs per week.  | 34. I cook-bake with my father or guardian<br>_____ hrs per week.  |
| 35. I go bowling with my mother or guardian<br>_____ hrs per week.   | 36. I go bowling with my father or guardian<br>_____ hrs per week.   |
| 37. I go camping with my mother or guardian<br>_____ nights per season   | 38. I go camping with my father or guardian<br>_____ nights per season.  |
| 39. I exercise or walk with my mother or guardian<br>_____ hrs per week.   | 40. I exercise or walk with my father or guardian<br>_____ hrs per week.   |
| 41. I play sports with my mother or guardian<br>_____ hrs per week.  | 42. I play sports with my father or guardian<br>_____ hrs per week.  |
| 43. I play musical instruments with my mother or guardian<br>_____ hrs per week.   | 44. I play musical instruments with my father or guardian<br>_____ hrs per week.   |

45. I go to a restaurant with my mother or guardian  
\_\_\_\_\_ times per week.
46. I go to a restaurant with my father or guardian  
\_\_\_\_\_ times per week.
47. My mother or guardian and I spend time with a pet  
\_\_\_\_\_ times per week.
48. My father or guardian and I spend time with a pet  
\_\_\_\_\_ times per week.
49. I sit around and chat with my mother or guardian  
\_\_\_\_\_ hrs per week.
50. I sit around and chat with my father or guardian  
\_\_\_\_\_ hrs per week.
51. I play video games with my mother or guardian  
\_\_\_\_\_ hrs per week.
52. I play video games with my father or guardian  
\_\_\_\_\_ hrs per week.
53. Other activities I do with my mother or guardian are  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
54. Other activities I do with my father or guardian are  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
55. The amount of time I spend on chores is  
\_\_\_\_\_ hrs per week.
56. The amount of time I spend on homework is  
\_\_\_\_\_ hrs per week.
57. The amount of time I spend at paid work is  
\_\_\_\_\_ hrs per week.
58. The amount of time I spend volunteering is  
\_\_\_\_\_ hrs per week.
59. The amount of time I play video games by myself is  
\_\_\_\_\_ hrs per week.
60. The amount of time I spend on the computer by myself is  
\_\_\_\_\_ hrs per week.
61. The amount of time I spend listening to music is  
\_\_\_\_\_ hrs per week.
62. The amount of time I spend talking on the telephone is  
\_\_\_\_\_ hrs per week.
63. The amount of time I am involved in community organizations, such as cadets, scouts/guides, or youth groups, is  
\_\_\_\_\_ hrs per week.
64. The amount of time I spend in organized sports is  
\_\_\_\_\_ hrs per week.

65. With my school work, I am  
\_\_\_\_ struggling.  
\_\_\_\_ doing okay.  
\_\_\_\_ successful.

67. In Math class, I am  
\_\_\_\_ struggling.  
\_\_\_\_ doing okay.  
\_\_\_\_ successful.

69. In English class, I am  
\_\_\_\_ struggling.  
\_\_\_\_ doing okay.  
\_\_\_\_ successful.

71. In Social Studies class, I am  
\_\_\_\_ struggling.  
\_\_\_\_ doing okay.  
\_\_\_\_ successful.

66. In Science class, I am  
\_\_\_\_ struggling.  
\_\_\_\_ doing okay.  
\_\_\_\_ successful.

68. In French class, I am  
\_\_\_\_ struggling.  
\_\_\_\_ doing okay.  
\_\_\_\_ successful.

70. In Physical Education class, I am  
\_\_\_\_ struggling.  
\_\_\_\_ doing okay.  
\_\_\_\_ successful.

72. In Family Studies/ Industrial Arts, I  
am  
\_\_\_\_ struggling.  
\_\_\_\_ doing okay.  
\_\_\_\_ successful.

Thank you  
for your participation!

## APPENDIX B: LETTER TO ADMINISTRATOR

85 Basinview Drive  
Bedford, N.S. B4A 4K7  
June 15, 2007.

Dear Administrator:

I am presently enrolled in a Masters of Arts in Educational Psychology program at Mount Saint Vincent University and I am working on my thesis. My topic of research is the type of activities adolescents who self-identify as socially cooperative and academically successful engage in with their parents or guardians compared with students who self-identify as less socially cooperative and less academically successful. I would like to send a 5 page questionnaire home with your grades 7-9 students to be completed and returned to your school. I will arrange for the completed questionnaires to be picked up.

I have letters of introduction and consent for the parent and student to sign. The research has been approved by the University Research Ethics Board and by our school board. This research is a result of a sabbatical leave granted by our board and is under the supervision of Dr. Anne MacCleave of MSVU.

All questionnaires and permission forms will be stored securely in a locked filing cabinet or an access controlled computer file and used only by the researcher and her supervisor. All permission forms and questionnaires will be shredded upon completion of the research. The results of the research will be made available upon publication of the thesis and will hopefully be of assistance to students and parents.

I greatly appreciate your cooperation. If you have any questions regarding this research or the survey, please contact me at [REDACTED] or my thesis supervisor at [anne.maccleave@msvu.ca](mailto:anne.maccleave@msvu.ca) or 902 457 6182. Additionally, if you have any questions about how this study is being conducted, you may contact the Chair of the University

Research Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research and International Office, who is not directly involved in the study, at [research@msvu.ca](mailto:research@msvu.ca) or 902 457 6350.

Respectfully yours,

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Heather Taylor  
Graduate student, MAEd, MSVU

---

Dr. Anne MacCleave  
Education Dept., MSVU

## APPENDIX C: LETTER TO PARENT(S) OR GUARDIAN(S) AND STUDENTS

85 Basinview Drive  
Bedford, NS B4A 4K7  
June 15, 2007

Dear Parent(s) or Guardian(s) and Student:

I am presently enrolled in a Masters of Educational Psychology program at Mount Saint Vincent University while on a study leave granted by our school board. I presently teach grade 7 at a local high school. Part of my program involves doing research and writing a report in the form of a thesis. I would like the students in grades 7, 8, and 9 in your school to complete a 5 page questionnaire to help with my research.

The topic being researched is the types of activities students who self-identify as socially cooperative and academically successful engage in with their parents compared to students who self-identify as less socially cooperative and less academically successful. It is hoped this information will be of benefit to all parents and adolescents in the future. The questionnaires are anonymous, will be stored in a secure location in a locked filing cabinet or an access controlled computer file, and will be shredded upon completion of the research. The thesis will not contain information that could identify the student in any way.

This project has been approved by the University Research Ethics Board at Mount Saint Vincent University, our school board, and your school principal. It is under the supervision of my thesis supervisor, Dr. Anne MacCleave. A student will only participate if both parent(s) and student have given signed consent.

If you have any questions, you may contact me at [REDACTED] or my thesis supervisor at [anne.maccleave@mcvu.ca](mailto:anne.maccleave@mcvu.ca) or 902 457 6182. Additionally, if you have any questions about how this study is being conducted, you may contact the Chair of the



University Research Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research and International Office, who is not directly involved in the study, at [research@msvu.ca](mailto:research@msvu.ca) or 902 457 6350.

Thank you for considering this request. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Respectfully yours,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Heather Taylor  
Graduate Student, MAEd, MSVU

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Anne MacCleave  
Education Dept., MSVU

-----Detach here-----

Please sign and return to school.

I have read the information letter and I give permission for my child to participate in this study.

Signature of parent/guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I have read the information letter and I agree to participate in this study by completing a questionnaire and returning it to school.

Signature of student: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### APPENDIX D: CHI SQUARE ANALYSES

A limited number of chi square tests were computed using frequency data to discern whether or not relationships among selected variables were significant. Only chi square analyses with values in all the cells could be computed. A chi square was run to compare the number of socially cooperative and less socially cooperative adolescents and the level of mother's education (some high school, some postsecondary). The chi square value was 1.311 which supported the null hypothesis.

A chi square was also computed to compare the number of socially cooperative and less socially cooperative adolescents and the level of father's education (some high school, some postsecondary). The chi square was significant with a value of 0.831 with 1 degree of freedom and a significance level of 0.01. A significantly greater number of socially cooperative adolescents had fathers with postsecondary education compared to their socially cooperative counterparts who had fathers with some high school education. Significantly fewer less socially cooperative adolescents had fathers with some postsecondary education compared to less socially cooperative adolescents who had fathers with some high school.

A chi square was computed to compare the number of academically successful and less academically successful adolescents and the level of mother's education (some high school, some postsecondary). The chi square was 1.538 and not significant. A chi square was also run to compare the number of academically successful and less academically successful adolescents and the level of the father's education (some high school, some postsecondary). The chi square was 0.024 and not significant.