Terese Glatz is a researcher in developmental psychology at the Center for Developmental Research at Örebro University. She earned her master’s degree in Psychology at Örebro University in 2006. Her main area of research concerns the parenting of adolescents. Specifically, she is interested in how parents interpret and react to problematic behaviors in their adolescents.

A common opinion is that parents should act in ways that create well-adjusted children and adolescents. When adolescents behave badly, parents are often the first ones to be blamed. In such situations, it is taken for granted that parents should act in ways that will reduce the bad behavior. In contrast to this common opinion, research has shown that parents react in the opposite way. Parents tend to decrease in behaviors (e.g. support and consistent discipline) that normally would be seen as encouraging positive behaviors in their adolescents and increase in strategies (e.g. hostility and psychological control) that are probably negative for adolescents’ adjustment.

Why do parents react in this way? In this dissertation, I have presented explanations for these reactions. The results showed that adolescents’ problematic behaviors influenced not only their parents’ behaviors, but also their parents’ cognitions. More specifically, parents changed their thoughts about their adolescents’ behaviors and their own role as parents when they faced problematic behaviors. These changes in cognitions, in turn, explained their subsequent behaviors. Generally, these parental reactions might be interpreted as parents’ attempts to overcome cognitive disagreements between how they expect their adolescents to behave and their adolescents’ actual behaviors. When parents are faced with these disagreements, they seem to lower their expectations about acceptable behaviors in their adolescents. Taken together, the findings of this dissertation suggest that parents do not solely react to their adolescents’ problematic behaviors, but that their cognitive processes are of great importance for explaining why they react as they do. Finally, until we have a better understanding about why parents react as they do to problematic behaviors in their adolescents, it is not reasonable to give parents advice about how they might better deal with problems in their parenting. This dissertation takes an important step in that direction.