The current study has shown that externalizing behaviour continues to be predictive of parenting stress among parents of adolescents with ADHD. It is important to note that ADHD symptoms and externalizing behaviour are highly correlated (inattention: r = .70, p = .000, hyperactivity/impulsivity: r = .65, p = .000). Furthermore, due to the relative independence of adolescents compared to younger children, parents may not be constantly exposed to their sons' and daughters' inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity. Although oppositional behaviours (e.g., swearing at a teacher), conduct problems (e.g., stealing), and aggression are less frequent than inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity, they may have a larger impact on parent stress levels.

Previous research has reported that parents of children with ADHD with higher levels of ADHD symptoms reported more Parent domain stress (Theule, Wiener, Jenkins, Tannock, in press). The current study showed that maternal inattention fully mediated the relationship between adolescent ADHD status and stress reported in the Parent and Adolescent-Parent Relationship domains, suggesting that mothers with higher levels of inattention experience more stress.

Parental ADHD symptoms are positively associated with inconsistent discipline and nonsupportive responses to the negative emotions and behaviours of children (Mokrova, O’Brien, Calkins, & Keane, 2010). In addition, parents with ADHD tend to be inconsistent in enforcing rules and placing limits on their children and this may be due to difficulties with monitoring and following through with consistent consequences (Murray & Johnston, 2008). Thus, when parents are unable to effectively manage their children’s behaviour, this may result in increased problem behaviours and, in turn, increased parenting stress. Given that mothers are primarily responsible for childrearing duties, parenting may become much more difficult when mothers have difficulty sustaining attention and concentration. Lower tolerance for problem behaviours may also result in greater conflict which then leads to a strained adolescent-parent relationship.

The results of this study provide strong support for the need to provide parents of adolescents with ADHD and externalizing behaviour problems and mothers with ADHD and symptoms of inattention with interventions designed to reduce and help them cope with parenting stress.