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Interparental Conflict, Family Environment and Perceived Interpersonal Conflicts Among Late Adolescents

Harry Durell Johnson

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Interparental Conflict, Family Environment and Perceived Interpersonal Conflicts Among Late Adolescents

A Thesis
Presented to the
Department of Psychology
and the
Faculty of the Graduate College
University of Nebraska
In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Masters of Arts
University of Nebraska at Omaha

by
Harry Durell Johnson

December, 1996
Thesis Acceptance

Acceptance for the faculty of the Graduate College, University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts, University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Thesis Committee

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Abstract

The characteristics of interpersonal conflict within the family system during adolescence may be influenced not only by the attempts of adolescent's to individuate from their parents, but also by the environment in which this individuation process occurs. Family systems that are characterized by decreased family cohesion and increased interparental conflict may inadvertently provide environments that foster increases in conflict among its members. How these environmental factors are associated with the quantitative and qualitative aspects of conflict is an important question which is addressed in this study. The relationship between the family system environment (i.e., family cohesion and interparental conflict), participant's gender, and the characteristics of interpersonal conflict within the family was examined. Regression analyses and analysis of variance were used to determine the association between the independent variables and adolescent's perceived conflict frequency, experienced affect, and resolution strategies used during conflicts between adolescents and their parents and siblings. The analyses revealed that conflict was mediated by decreased family cohesion and
increased interparental conflict. Although a relationship between gender and the characteristics of family conflict was expected, the association was small. These results show how deteriorated family systems may provide environments that perpetuate increases in conflict.
Acknowledgments

This thesis is dedicated to my father, Dr. H. Durell Johnson, who passed away during the middle of the project. I would like to thank him for always being there to talk with me and providing as much support for his son as a father possibly could.

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Chapter I

Interparental Conflict, Family Environment and Perceived Interpersonal Conflicts Among Late Adolescents

Statement of the Problem

Conflicts within adolescent social relationships are viewed as an unavoidable and normative aspect of social development (Laursen, 1993b). Although these conflicts develop across a wide range of interpersonal relations, many conflicts during adolescence take place within the family system (Cummings & Davies, 1994; Johnston, 1993). Because adolescents need to develop a sense of autonomy from their parents, conflict is assumed to occur more frequently within the family system (especially with parents) than within the context of other social interactions (Collins & Laursen, 1992; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Hartup, 1992; Laursen & Collins, 1994). Further, sibling relationships undergo changes similar to those seen in parent-child relations (Cowan, Cowan, & Kerig, 1993; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992). Because adolescents are trying to intrapsychically separate from the family, time spent with siblings, a sub-system within the family, also decreases (Buhrmester & Furman, 1992; Cooper, Grotevant, & Condon, 1983; Vandell & Bailey, 1992). In sum, the conflicts that occur during adolescence within interpersonal family relations seem to serve an useful function in the social development of children.
Although conflicts between/among family members assume a normative role in the development of family system members, the environment in which the conflicts occur modulates the level of perceived conflict that is found within this system (Cummings, Davies, & Simpson, 1994; Emery, 1982; Fincham, Grych, & Osborne, 1994). Breakdowns (e.g., increased parent-parent conflict and decreased family cohesion) in the family environment are likely to result in increased levels of interpersonal conflict between adolescents and their family (Brody, Stoneman, & McCoy, 1994; Grych & Fincham, 1990; Johnson, 1996; Reitman & Gross, 1995). Family satisfaction affects the level of perceived conflict within parent-child and sibling relationships; therefore increases in family breakdown are likely to result in heightened levels of reported conflict (Brody, Stoneman, McCoy, & Forehand, 1992; Katz, Kramner, & Gottman, 1992). The effect that family environment has on the various familial relationships suggests that the context in which interpersonal conflicts occur influences the outcome of conflict situations and the resulting status of the family relationships (Cummings, Simpson, & Wilson, 1993; Johnston, 1993; Katz et al., 1992; Minuchin, 1992).

Given that the adolescent's family environment is assumed to influence their perception of the interpersonal conflicts which occur within this system, the aim of this
study is to examine adolescents' personal beliefs concerning the level of interpersonal conflicts within the family system as a function of gender and perception of the stability of the family environment and relationships.

Review of Relevant Literature

For decades, the role of the family system in the development of children has been a prevailing theme in psychology. Beginning with the work of Anna Freud (e.g., 1958), family socialization has been assigned a major role in the social and personality development of children (Lamb, Ketterlinus, & Fracasso, 1992; Rothbaum & Weisz, 1993; Walker & Taylor, 1991). This process is thought to influence the regulation of children's behavior and personal growth, and the continuation of the social order through the behavior of these new members (i.e., developing children) of society (Shaffer, 1994; Walker & Taylor, 1991; Völling & Belsky, 1992). According to socialization theory, a child's sense of self and emotional stability are a direct product of their continued interactions with family members (Cummings & Davies, 1994; Lamb et al., 1992; Shaffer, 1994; Youniss, 1989). Therefore, individuals have a need to form "lasting, positive, and significant relationships" within the family system in order to develop a sense of well-being and social adjustment (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 497).
Current studies in the field of human development have stressed the importance of experience in these close relationships in order to function in the context of a social world (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Cummings & Davies, 1994; Hartup, 1989, 1992; Hinde, 1988). The family provides the necessary relationships for normative personality and social development in children (Cummings & Davies, 1994; Hartup, 1989; Walker & Taylor, 1991; Youniss, 1983, 1989). Many developmental researchers (e.g., Lamb et al., 1992; Rothbaum & Weisz, 1994; Rosen & Rothbaum, 1993; Walker & Taylor, 1991; Youniss, 1989) have adopted the family system as a frame of reference for using the relationships within this context as a medium for individual change. The family is seen as a set of complex and integrated relationships which are characterized by patterns of interactions among its members that potentially influence the characteristics of these individuals (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Walker & Taylor, 1991; Youniss, 1983, 1989). Furthermore, these interactions are based on a hierarchy that is comprised of organized and interdependent subsystems that have interrelated roles, functions and, behaviors (Hinde, 1988; Lamb et al., 1992; Rothbaum & Weisz, 1994; Rosen & Rothbaum, 1993). These bonds among the members of the family system serve as channels to motivate the family organization, which, in turn, comprises the link between the family and its' interactions with the
social world in which it exists (Cummings & Davies, 1994; Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Lamb et al., 1992; Rosen & Rothbaum; 1993).

The individuals within this family system, as well as the family, are seen as having the characteristics of a living entity (Walker & Taylor, 1991; Walsh, & Scheinkman, 1993; Youniss, 1989). As a result, the family passes through stages of development similar to the individual development processes of the family's individual members (Reiss, Ellen, Oliveri, & Curd, 1983; Walsh, & Scheinkman, 1993). These changes within the family system facilitate the construction and modification of new methods of dealing with issues both internal and external to the family and general and specific in respect to its members (Cooper et al., 1983; Reiss et al., 1983). The pace of this development can vary for many reasons.

One of the more prominent variables influencing the family's progress is the specific characteristic of the family system and its environment in which the system functions. Through the interrelated interactions of the family systems members, the role of individual differences between/among the various family members plays a very important part in the successive development and evolution of the family (Cooper et al., 1983; Reiss et al., 1983; Walsh, & Scheinkman, 1993).
A second and more influential element affecting the family system is the 'stage of development' in which the family is engaged. Much of this 'stage of development' is highly dependent on the developmental progression of the family's children (Hinde, 1988; Reiss et al., 1983; Youniss, 1983, 1989). As the family members age, demands are consistently placed on the family system's balance between stability and flexibility (Walsh, & Scheinkman, 1993). Although there are many different experiences (e.g., childbirth, buying a house, starting a new career) that cause changes in the structure, and place stress on the organization of the family system, one experience that seems to be universal to most families is the period of adolescence (Brown et al., 1993; Walsh, & Scheinkman, 1993; Youniss, 1983).

**Adolescence and Family Relations**

By the time children reach adolescence, many of the characteristics of the family system have been fairly well defined and organized, and the family has established a relatively stable level of functioning (Carlson, Cooper, & Spradling, 1991; Lamb et al., 1992; Silverberg, Tennenbaum, & Jacob, 1992; Steinberg, 1981). Many of the roles established between and among the family members are a result of the individual's position in the family's hierarchy (Cowan et al., 1993; Larson & Richards, 1991; Silverberg, et al., 1992;
Steinberg, 1990). Furthermore, the resources needed to resolve problems facing the family have been constructed and most of the family's operations are conducted in a rather consistent manner (Carlson et al., 1991; Coleman, 1977; Larson & Richards, 1991). However, when children within this system reach adolescence, various characteristics of the family undergo some change. As the children begin to shift to young adulthood, many of the stable functions that were earlier established (e.g., family problem solving) begin to show some disruption in their stability due to personal changes in children's perception of their role in the family (Brown, Mounts, Lamborn, & Steinberg, 1993; Lamb et al., 1992; Larson & Richards, 1991; Papini & Micka, 1991). This breakdown of the family's resources can result in turmoil among its members that may last for some time until new roles are established and accepted by its members (Brown et al., 1993; Papini & Micka, 1991; Silverberg et al., 1992; Steinberg, 1981, 1990).

During the period of adolescence, biological, social, and cognitive changes that occur within the individual have an influential role in the changing of one's self-definition and their interactions with others during this period of development (Brody et al., 1994; Brody et al., 1992; Coleman, 1977; Steinberg, 1987, 1990). Initial studies based on early Freudian perspectives concerning relationships within the
family during adolescence postulated that the parent-child bond began to dissolve, resulting in the subsequent adult development of the child (Freud, 1958). Despite these earlier beliefs of Freudian psychodynamics and earlier empirical findings that family relationships during adolescence are characterized by constant turmoil and frequent arguments (e.g., Peterson & Taylor, 1980), current research has shown that the family relationships are not disregarded as unimportant by adolescents, but do show dramatic changes in roles and structure during this period (Cowan et al., 1993; Paikoff & Brooks-Gunn, 1991; Silverberg et al., 1992; Steinberg, 1987). This restructuring is especially evident in the redefining of parent-child and sibling relationships during adolescence from an unidirectional (one individual holding the authority in the relationship) to more of a bi-directional (authority shared between/among individuals within the relationship) nature (Buhrmester & Furman, 1990; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985, 1992; Paikoff & Brooks-Gunn, 1991; Steinberg, 1987, 1990).

Conflict Within the Family System

Several changes that occur in the structure of the family system and its interpersonal relationships are believed to be a result of disagreements and conflict between and among the family's various members. Although somewhat separated from the larger social world, conflict within the
family system possesses some of the same basic organization as that found in other forms of social conflict (Cummings & Davies, 1994; Emery, 1992; Johnston, 1993; Silverberg et al., 1992). As in most instances of conflict, those within the family are also characterized by the discrepancies between the behavior of one individual and the goals, expectations, or desires of other family members (Collins & Laursen, 1992; Emery, 1992; Shantz, 1987). Although similar to other forms of conflict, those occurring within the family system are different in several ways as well (Emery, 1992). First, conflict experienced within the family system is frequent and difficult to avoid due to the interrelatedness of the interpersonal relationships. Second, because members of the family and their respective relationship within the family system are constantly changing, conflicts occur because of changes in the family's dynamics and structure. Finally, conflict within the family system can influence relationships found in the environment outside of this system. When these conflicts occur, the adolescent's family relationships, social lives, responsibilities, school, values, and morals are usually the central issues (Johnston, 1993; Laursen, 1993; Noble, Adams, & Openshaw, 1989; Smetana, 1989).

Parent-child conflict. Studies have shown that the goal of adolescence is characterized by the need to develop a sense of autonomy (e.g., Coleman, 1977; Lamb et al., 1992;
Steinberg, 1990); therefore, conflicts are believed to be more prevalent in the relationships within the family system, especially with parents (Collins & Laursen, 1992; Emery, 1992; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Hartup, 1992; Laursen & Collins, 1994). Because parent-child relationships are based on the intimacy of the family's members and the respective power possessed by them, conflicts with parents are believed to be based on intimacy and power struggles (Collins & Laursen, 1992; Emery, 1992; Johnston, 1993; Montemayor, 1986; Smetana, 1989). This dynamic is due, in part, to the belief that the bilateral restructuring of parent-child relations allows for the development of an adolescent's personal identity (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Johnston, 1993; Montemayor, 1983, 1986; Steinberg, 1990).

An example of parent-child conflict within the family system can be seen in research conducted by Laursen (1993a, 1993b, 1995). Overall findings showed that adolescents perceive conflict within the family to be dominated by mothers. While reports of conflict given by males and females are similar, further analysis revealed that females report a higher frequency of conflicts with their mothers than males, but similar levels of conflict with their fathers. These findings lend support to the notion that a) girls may be socialized to explore conflict in close relationships, while boys are taught to avoid it, and b)
mothers are perceived as being involved in a larger portion of an adolescent’s life. Laursen (1993a, 1993b) also suggests that these disagreements between adolescents and their parents are characterized by high levels of negative affect (especially in females) and that increased disengagement and decreased compromise are used to resolve these conflicts. Furthermore, due to increased amounts of time spent in the socialization of their respective children, increases in mother-adolescent conflict are due to the possible under reporting of conflict by male participants and opposition by adolescents to the beliefs and goals mothers place on them (Laursen, 1995).

A second example comes from Smetana's (1989) analysis of adolescent's and parent's reasoning about family conflict. Her work involved the descriptions of conflicts within families with children in grades five to twelve. Smetana reported that conflict occurred with increased parental regulation of adolescents' personal lives. Similar to that noted by Laursen (1993a, 1993b, 1995), a larger number of conflicts within mother-adolescent interactions than within interactions with fathers was reported by Smetana. Males in the Smetana study reported lower levels of conflict within the family relations than did females. Further, although increases in the use of compromise between adolescents and their parents in attempting to resolve hypothetical conflicts
occurred, the level of compromise was relatively low across all age groups in actual parent-child conflicts. These results, together with the findings in her previous study (Smetana, 1988), suggest that the conflict within parent-child relationships is a result of the attempts by children to exercise some control over the aspects of their personal lives, which opposes the pre-existing structure within the family system.

Parent-child conflict during adolescence was the focus of a study by LaVoie, Johnson, & Spenceri (1995). Male and female participants (10-, 14-, and 20-years of age) were asked to report on conflicts, affect, and resolution strategies recently experienced with family members (i.e., mother, father, brother(s) and sister(s)), close friends, friends, and individuals engaged in other social contexts. Both male and female 10- and 14-year old participants reported an increase in the level of conflict with parents concerning personal issues and responsibilities. Anger was reported as the predominant affect experienced with parental targets for 10-year old children, but this affect decreased in frequency as the participants increased in age. Also, 14-year old males and females reported greater use of disengagement and submission resolution strategies for conflicts with these target individuals. In addition, 14-year old participants reported an increase in avoiding
conflicts with parents. These findings, although descriptive in nature, suggest conflicts with parents that are more personal in nature increase in frequency as children grow older, and these conflicts are often characterized by feelings of anger although, with increasing age, adolescents attempt to avoid conflicts.

Parent-child conflict has also been the focus of research by Almeida and Galambos (1993) who examined the changes in the father-child relationship among adolescents. A longitudinal design (consisting of four collection periods over a 3 year period) used children from two-parent families in order to examine the quantitative and qualitative changes within this relationship. Almeida and Galambos reported a gradual decrease in the overall level of conflict between fathers and their adolescent children (both males and females). Decrease in amount of conflict was attributed to decreased interaction between fathers and their children. In comparison to mothers, where increased interactions occurred, fathers seemed to disengage from interaction with their children. These changes in the quantity of the interactions between fathers and adolescents may explain the decreased instances of conflict within these relationships.

From the findings reported in the previously mentioned studies, conflict appears to be an inevitable part of the reformation and continuation of parent-child conflicts during
childhood (Collins & Laursen, 1992; Emery, 1992; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Laursen, 1993a). Although conflicts occur between adolescent children and their parents, most children report high levels of closeness and positive regard for their parents (Johnston, 1993; Montemayor, 1983, 1986; Paikoff & Brooks-Gunn, 1991; Steinberg, 1990). While increased levels of negative affect were reported in conflicts with parents by Laursen (1993a), adolescents said that these emotions were of a brief duration. Emery (1992) has shown that many adolescents feel more threatened by parental disapproval than that of their peers, showing a strong influence of regard for parental approval. Finally, frequent conflict arises due to personal attempts by adolescents to restructure the parent-child relationships, but many of these children still try to resolve these conflicts with their family members quickly (Johnston, 1993; Laursen, 1993b). This resolution occurs in part because the conflicts experienced within these parent-child relations contribute to increased individuation in the context of healthy family relations (Paikoff & Brooks-Gunn, 1991; Steinberg, 1989, 1990; Vuchinich, Emery, & Cassidy, 1988). Through the resolution of these conflicts, parents and adolescents begin to develop new means to handle the developing autonomy and changing parent-child relationship, which, in turn makes these relations more positive for family members (Larson &

**Sibling conflict.** During adolescence, the changes in sibling relationships resemble somewhat those found in the parent-child relations (Cowan et al., 1993; Cooper et al., 1983; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992). Because adolescents are attempting to develop a sense of autonomy from the family, they also are trying to spend less time with siblings who are part of the family system (Buhrmester & Furman, 1992; Cooper et al., 1983; Vandell & Bailey, 1992). During adolescence, relations with siblings begin to reflect a more bidirectional nature due to this attempt at separation. However, unlike parent-child relations, sibling relationships show less frequent instances of conflict during these attempts at autonomy (Brody et al., 1994; Brody et al., 1992; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992). Although most sibling relationships are characterized by conflict from early childhood through the grade school years, researchers have found that sibling relations are often supportive and constructive (Brody et al., 1992; Vandell & Bailey, 1992). Much of the research concerning the levels of conflict reported in sibling relationships during adolescence has provided inconclusive and inconsistent results (Laursen & Collins, 1994; Vandell & Bailey, 1992).
A recent study by Furman & Buhrmester (1992) examined sibling relationships of children during adolescence. A questionnaire measuring the characteristics of personal relationships was used to assess the perceived quality of sibling relationships across fourth-, seventh-, tenth-grade, and college participants. The findings revealed that participants in middle adolescence reported less conflict with their siblings than did the other age groups. Females reported less power in their sibling relations than did males, and perceived sibling relationships as more supportive. According to Furman & Buhrmester (1992), their findings suggest that during middle adolescence, children try to become less reliant on sibling relationships, but the interrelatedness of family relations prevents a complete avoidance of conflict. The decreased reliance leads to lower rates of interaction between/among siblings, which may produce decreases in perceived conflict. Further, decreases in amount of power perceived by females within sibling relationships may potentially lead to less frequent instances of conflict engagement with siblings.

In a second study, Buhrmester and Furman (1990), administered a questionnaire measuring the quality of sibling relations to participants from the third-, sixth-, ninth-, and twelfth-grades. They found various changes within sibling relationships as these children aged. First,
participants reported less intimacy, companionship, and affection with siblings across increasing age categories. This decrease in closeness to siblings was assumed to be a result of the same motivation for autonomy that separated children from their parents during adolescence. Because of an increased need for independence during adolescence, children may need to develop symmetrical relations with siblings. As a result, the level of conflict reported between/among siblings decreased with increased age categories. Although the quality of these sibling relations was attributed to personal changes with increases in age (e.g., effective problem solving), this decrease in conflict within the relationship was assumed to be a result of decreases in interactions between/among individuals. While data concerning gender differences associated with changes in sibling relations is lacking, Buhrmester and Furman's findings suggest that as children grow older, their sibling relationships become more egalitarian, uni-directional, and less interpersonally conflictual.

Sibling conflict during adolescence has also been examined by Laursen (1993). High school students were administered two questionnaires in which they were asked to report on the frequency of conflicts with specific target individuals and the outcomes associated with these reports. Responses from these questionnaires were then analyzed.
according to the intensity of affect experienced, the post-conflict interaction, and the impact of conflict on the relationship. Results showed that reported conflicts within sibling relationships were characterized by relatively neutral feelings of emotion. Further, the social interaction following conflict situations consisted of each sibling remaining in close proximity to the other, while engaging in further conversation. Finally, the study showed that the participants did not feel that conflicts with their siblings had lasting negative or positive affect on the relationship. Although no gender differences within sibling relationships were found, these data suggest that conflicts between/among siblings during adolescence are not perceived as being overly traumatic to the relationship or to the individuals involved. The increased interaction between/among siblings after the conflict reported by Laursen (1993) suggests that any negative emotion experienced is fairly short lived.

Although many researchers (e.g., Laursen & Collins, 1994; Vandell & Bailey, 1992) have noted that studies concerning sibling relationships during adolescence produced inconsistent results, some findings show consistency. For example, as children age, sibling relations begin to become fairly independent of parent-child relationships (Buhrmester & Furman, 1992; Cowan et al., 1993; Cooper et al., 1983; Vandell & Bailey, 1992). Relationships with siblings during
adolescence begin to resemble somewhat separate subsystems within the overall family system (Cooper et al., 1983; Teti, 1992). This divergence of relations within the family creates a potential for the differential influence of shared experiences in the parent-child and sibling relations within the family system (Cowan et al., 1993; Teti, 1992; Vandell & Bailey, 1992), which can be seen in the perceived characteristics and results of conflict between/among siblings during adolescence.

While conflict occurs within sibling relationships during adolescence, it is different from that seen in parent-child relations (Buhrmester & Furman, 1992; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992). A frequently occurring finding in the studies previously mentioned is that the overall level of conflict between/among siblings decreases as children approach adolescence (Buhrmester & Furman, 1992; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Vandell & Bailey, 1992). When conflicts do occur within sibling relationships, they are not perceived by adolescents as severe nor highly damaging to the relationship with their brother(s) or sister(s) (Brody et al., 1994; Brody et al., 1992; Cooper et al., 1983; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992). While sibling relationships try to distance themselves from the influence of parent-child relations, adolescents are still attempting to distance themselves from the whole family system (Buhrmester & Furman, 1992; Cooper et
al., 1983; Vandell & Bailey, 1992). Therefore, the decrease in the level and severity of conflict with siblings may be due to the decreased amount of interaction between/among siblings.

Conclusions. The conflict experienced during adolescence seems to serve as a influential factor in the reconstruction of the parent-child and sibling relationships. Although there is a change in the structure of the parent-child and sibling relationships, mother-child relations appear to have greater negative consequences when conflicts with their adolescent children occur (Coleman, 1977; Emery, 1982; Laursen, 1993b, 1994; Steinberg, 1981; 1990). These transformations suggest that the relational changes occurring during puberty serve as the mechanism for the gradual process of adolescent individuation (Paikoff & Brooks-Gunn, 1991; Steinberg, 1981, 1990). The onset of puberty accounts for a relatively small proportion of the variance in explaining family conflicts (Larson & Richards, 1991; Shaffer, 1994; Silverberg, et al., 1992; Steinberg, 1988, 1990). Many of the natural changes that occur in the family system during conflict situations are due to confrontations that occur in the context of a positive family environment and do not place increasing high levels of stress on the existing family bonds (Cowan et al., 1993; Lamb et al., 1992; Steinberg, 1988). Because of the minimal influence of puberty on family
conflict during adolescence, the potential exists for other variables that may contribute to reported increases in conflict situations within families of adolescents.

**Influence of Family Environment on Interpersonal Conflicts within the Family**

*Importance of family environment.* Although exposure to some instances of family conflict may serve as a potential stressor for some adolescents, conflict is not seen as a significant causal factor behind increased levels of interpersonal tension within the family system (Cummings & Davies, 1994; Davies, Myers, & Cummings 1996; Emery, 1982; Fincham et al., 1994). Adolescents who feel they have close and stable relationships with their parents are assumed to be less affected when conflict occurs with other members of their family (Brody et al, 1992; Cummings & Davies, 1994; Emery, 1982; Fincham et al., 1994). This positive family environment allows for more effective appraisals of parent and sibling conflict (Grych & Fincham, 1990; Steinberg, 1988). Adolescents who are part of a family system in which stable family relations are present may experience less distress during conflict due to the perceived cohesiveness among family members (Cummings & Davies, 1994; Cummings, Davies, & Simpson, 1994; Davies et al., 1996; Grych & Fincham, 1990). This family stability is thought to reduce
the stress experienced by children because other family members provide a potential buffer from personal threat during confrontations (Emery, 1982; Brody et al., 1994; Brody et al., 1992; Fincham et al., 1994). The quality of the family environment also may play a vital role in the perceived characteristics of conflict within the family system (Brody et al., 1994; Brody et al., 1992; Cummings & Davies, 1994; Davies et al., 1996; Fincham et al., 1994).

Overall, much of the research concerning marital and family discord (e.g., Easterbrooks, Cummings, & Emde, 1994; Cummings & Davies, 1994; Grych & Fincham, 1990; Perry, Perry, & Kennedy, 1992) has shown a relationship between various family problems and the development of a wide range of behavior problems in children (e.g., depression, social anxiety, and aggression). One of the major causes underlying the development of children's behavior problems is conflict associated with family strife (Easterbrooks et al., 1994; Emery, 1982; Johnston, 1993; Osborne & Fincham, 1996; Rutter, 1994). While some forms of conflict are beneficial to problem-solving in children (e.g., Emery, 1992; Grych & Fincham, 1990), open exposure to frequent conflict between parents increases the likelihood of children perceiving more instances of conflict within the family system (Cummings et al., 1994; Fincham et al., 1994; Osborne & Fincham, 1996; Rutter, 1994). These conflicts, when associated with
increased levels of negative emotion, can cause higher levels of stress in children (Crockenberg & Forgays, 1996; Cummings et al., 1994; Davies et al., 1996; Emery, 1982; Fincham et al., 1994; Perry et al., 1992). Furthermore, the increased perception of interparental conflict and high levels of negative emotion may influence the child's interpretation of other situations within the family as highly conflictual. Finally, poor resolution of conflict among parents can also increase the probability of more stress and tension for individuals within the family system (Cummings, Simpson, & Wilson, 1993; Crockenberg & Forgays, 1996; Davies et al., 1996). Experiencing less functional means of resolving conflict between parents may lead to continued episodes of interpersonal conflict among family members (Davies et al., 1996; Grych & Fincham, 1990; Osborne & Fincham, 1996).

With increases in interparental and family conflict, other factors arise that are assumed to contribute to children's perceptions of conflict (Burman, 1995; Fincham et al., 1994; Kerig et al., 1993). As parental and family disagreement increases, the overall environment within the family system begins to deteriorate (Emery, 1982; Fincham et al., 1994; Grych & Fincham, 1990; Johnston, 1993; Osborne & Fincham, 1996). Consequently, bonds between/among family members begin to deteriorate which increases the emotional distress of family members, and makes functional
responsiveness towards others' needs difficult (Brody et al., 1994; Brody et al., 1992; Kerig et al., 1993; Johnston, 1993). Conflict within the social interactions between/among family members may increase because functional family relations have deteriorated (Burman, 1995; Crockenberg & Forgays, 1996; Emery, 1982; Johnson, 1996; Kerig, Cowan, & Cowan, 1993). As a result, the structural breakdown of the family system increases from the additional family discord and diminished strength of family relations (Grych & Fincham, 1990; Johnston, 1993). Reliance on the environment to determine the characteristics of social interactions, decreased cohesion among family members, and the lack of flexibility in the family system may influence children within these families to interpret an increase in the salience of negative family interactions (Burman, 1995; Fincham et al., 1992; Grych & Fincham, 1990; Kerig et al., 1993). This interpretation of poor family relations can lead to increased levels of perceived conflict between/among family members, as well as a greater likelihood of social and behavioral problems in children (Grych & Fincham, 1990; Johnston, 1993; Osborne & Fincham, 1996; Perry et al., 1992; Reitman & Gross, 1995).

**Family environment and parent-child conflict.** Negative changes in family relations have been shown to affect a number of different aspects of family interactions. One of
the affected areas within the family system is parent-child relations. With this breakdown of family structure, both the quality of marital relations, and the quality of the family environment, lead to increasing differential treatment of children by their parents (Kerig et al., 1993; Minuchin, 1992). Previous research (e.g., Cowan et al., 1993; Grych et al., 1992; Perry et al., 1992) has shown that the quality of marital and family relations greatly influences the relationships mothers and fathers have with their sons and daughters. Father-daughter and mother-son relationships seem to be especially vulnerable to the stress placed on the family from unstable environments (Crockenberg & Forgays, 1996; Davies et al., 1996; Emery, 1982; Fincham et al., 1994; Grych & Fincham, 1990; Johnson, 1996). The added stress on parent-child relationships from this reduced quality may produce increased levels of conflict within these relationships (Davies et al., 1996; Grych & Fincham, 1993; Katz & Gottman, 1993; Katz et al., 1992; Kerig et al., 1993). Conflicts between fathers and their daughters and mothers and their sons are characterized by higher levels of negative affect both during the conflict and during conflict resolution (Cummings et al., 1993; Johnston, 1993; Katz & Gottman, 1993; Katz et al., 1992). The consequences of these interpersonal conflicts, negative affect, and poor conflict resolution can result in further escalating levels of
conflict within the father-daughter and mother-son relationships (Crockenberg, & Forgays, 1996; Cummings et al., 1993; Johnson, 1996; Katz & Gottman, 1993; Minuchin, 1992).

Family environment and sibling conflict. The interrelatedness of relationships within the family system, the affective quality of these relations and the family environment are assumed to influence the status of sibling relationships (Brody et al., 1994; Brody et al., 1992; Rinaldi & Howe, 1995; Vandell & Bailey, 1992; Voling & Belsky, 1992). The interdependency between family emotional climate and sibling relationships suggests that children's responses to aversive family situations may carry over to interactions with their brothers and/or sisters (Brody et al., 1994; Brody et al., 1992; Katz et al., 1992; MacKinnon, 1989; Rinaldi & Howe, 1995; Voling & Belsky, 1992). Children who reported less agreeable relations with their parents (e.g., more conflict) had lower levels of positive interactions with their siblings than individuals who reported more positive parent-child interactions (Dunn & Munn, 1987; Katz et al., 1992; Rinaldi & Howe, 1995; Voling & Belsky, 1992). Increased levels of marital conflict and decreased family cohesiveness also have been found to contribute to heightened levels of interpersonal conflict within sibling relationships (Brody et al., 1992; Dunn & Munn, 1987; MacKinnon, 1989). The conflict that occurs
within these interactions has been described as extremely hostile, negative in emotional climate, and displaying little or no effective conflict resolution (Brody et al., 1994; MacKinnon, 1989; Vandel & Bailey, 1992). The apparent susceptibility to the effects of marital and family problems indicates the importance of familial factors in the development of sibling relationships. When the family environment is perceived as unstable and non-supporting, the ability of parents to serve as mediators for sibling conflict is greatly reduced, which results in increases in conflict between/among siblings (Brody et al., 1994; Katz et al., 1992; Vandel & Bailey, 1992; Volling & Belsky, 1992).

**Gender and conflict in unstable family environments.**

Within unstable family environments (i.e., increased interparental conflict and decreased family cohesion), gender of the adolescent has been found to impact parent-child and sibling relationships (Kerig et al., 1992; Rutter, 1994). According to the opposite-gender spillover hypothesis (Kerig et al., 1992; Osborne & Fincham, 1996), decreases in the quality of the family environment influences parental treatment of the adolescent of the opposite adolescents because of similarity to the husband/wife's spouse. According to some studies (e.g., Emery, 1982; Kerig et al., 1992; Osborne & Fincham, 1996), mothers and fathers who experience lower marital satisfaction are likely to
experience increases in conflict and, therefore, reciprocate negative affect with their sons and daughters. Gender differences in sibling conflict within unstable family environments have also been associated with increased conflict with siblings for males (Vandell & Bailey, 1992). These conflicts between siblings and their brothers have been characterized as containing more direct hostile acts with greater negative emotion. Finally, male adolescents have been found to display more sensitivity to decreased family stability. This sensitivity is associated with males becoming more involved in conflicts with family members as compared to females (Rutter, 1994). The greater involvement by males perpetuates increased use of oppositional behavior (e.g., verbal aggression) when engaged in conflicts with family members.

Given these gender differences which have been documented in the conflict literature, gender of the adolescent is a variable which needs to be examined in the analysis of family conflict.

Conclusions

Although conflicts are considered a normative part of family life during adolescent development, the gender of the adolescent and the environment in which conflicts take place seems to play an influential role in the level of conflict that is experienced within the family system (Crockenberg, &
Forgays, 1996; Davies et al., 1996; Cummings et al., 1994; Emery, 1982; Fin cham et al., 1994; Osborne & Fincham, 1996). Structural breakdown from parental discord and inability of the family to maintain stable relationships is likely to result in increased levels of interpersonal conflict within the family environment (Brody et al., 1994; Grych & Fincham, 1990; Kerig et al., 1993; Johnson, 1996; Reitman & Gross, 1995). Further, differential socialization males and females by their parents is also likely to contribute to differential perceptions of conflict from male and female adolescents. This condition can occur because family satisfaction influences the level of conflict as well as the status of parent-child and sibling relationships (Brody et al., 1992; Cowan et al., 1993; Katz et al., 1992).

Although conflicts seem to contribute to the restructuring of parent-child and sibling relationships during adolescence, conflicts experienced within disruptive family environments play a different role in the reformation of these parental and sibling relations. In families reporting decreased overall satisfaction, mother-son, father-daughter, and, to some degree, sibling relations seem to sustain greater negative consequences when engaged in conflict with their respective family members (Crockenberg & Forgays, 1996; Cummings et al., 1993; Johnston, 1993; Katz et al., 1992; Minuchin, 1992). The described environmental and
gender effects on various familial relationships suggests that the personal characteristics of adolescents and the context in which interpersonal conflicts occur assume an important role in determining how these interactions influence the outcome of conflict situations and the resulting status of the family relationships.

Focus of Study

Given the role that family environment is assumed to have on the frequency of interpersonal conflicts, this study examined the relationship between family environment and perceived interpersonal conflicts.

(1) It was hypothesized that participants who perceived their families to be less cohesive and to have more interparental conflict would report increased levels of overall conflict within their family when compared to families with more supportive/favorable environments.

(2) Higher levels of negative affect and lower levels of positive affect were expected to be associated with increased conflict reported by participants from less stable family environments due to the increase in perceived interpersonal conflicts.

(3) Participants within families characterized by decreased cohesion and increased interparental conflict were expected to report less conflict resolution during disagreements with family members that are less adequate.
The resolution strategies were expected to show increased use of both verbal and physically aggressive actions as well as decreased reports of more adequate resolutions of their conflicts. For the three hypotheses, it was further believed that gender would play a mediating role in reported conflict frequency, reported positive and negative affect, and reported conflict resolution strategies.
Chapter II
Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 104 college undergraduates (60 females, mean age = 19.87 years, Range = 17 to 21 years of age and 44 males, mean age 19.45 years, Range = 17 to 21 years of age) who were recruited from psychology classes through posting sign-up sheets awarding extra credit for participation. The sample was not a random sample. The study group was predominantly white, and from middle-class backgrounds according to the Hollingshead Four-Factor Index (Hollingshead, 1975). Most of the participants were from intact families (n = 82), however other family types were included within the sample (e.g., both parents single, n = 6; mother remarried, n = 2; father remarried, n = 9; and both parents remarried, n = 5). Other living arrangements consisted of living with mother, n = 13, living with father, n = 2, living with father and stepmother, n = 3, and living with mother and stepfather, n = 4.

Materials

Demographic data. Data on the personal characteristics (i.e., age, gender, and grade) and family structure (i.e., parents' marital status, personal living arrangements, and
number of brothers and sisters) was obtained from each participant (See Appendix A).

Perceived Family Environment

Family adaptability and cohesion scale. The cohesion scale of the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scale-III (FACES-III) (Olson, Portner, & LaVee, 1985) is a 10-item subscale that was used to assess the level of cohesion within the family environment. The test items were scored on a five point Likert scale ranging from 1-almost never to 5-almost always. Internal consistency estimates for the scale have been reported at .77, and the test-retest estimates at .80 (Olson et al., 1985; Perosa & Perosa, 1990). The extremely low correlation between the adaptability and cohesion subscales ($r = .03$) facilitates the use of individual scales for research (Olson et al., 1985). The reliability of the cohesion scale for this study was $\alpha = .90$. Validation studies of the FACES-III scale have shown that it is usable with a variety of family structures and the scale is designed for systematic research within a variety of settings (Olson, 1986) (See Appendix B).

Children's perception of interparental conflict sale. The Children's Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale (CPIC) (Grych, Seid, & Fincham, 1992) was used to assess the participant's interpretation and response to conflict between their parents. This measure is a 48-item scale which yields
a total score of perceived interparental conflict and three subscale scores that assess perceived threats to self, self-blame, and destructive parental conflict. The internal consistency of the three scales has been reported as $\alpha = .84$ for threats to self, .83 for self-blame, and .90 for parental conflict, and test-retest reliability estimates are $r = .68$, .76, and .70, respectively. The reliability of the overall scale was $\alpha = .95$ for this study. Scores on the CPIC have been correlated with parental reports of interpersonal conflict, thus supporting the validity of the measure (see Grych et al., 1992). The general score was used in this study because it provided data on the participant's overall level of perceived conflict within the family (See Appendix C).

**Conflict Frequency, Experienced Affect, and Resolution**

Participants were asked to report the total number of disagreements/quarrels engaged in with other family members (i.e., mother, father, brother(s), and sister(s)) over the past six months in order to assess the total number of perceived conflicts with other members of the family. The measure consisted of a 7-point scale that rated the number of conflicts from 0-none to 6-more than twenty (See Appendix D).

Participants were asked to report on the level of emotions (e.g., anger, personal responsibility, apathy,
normal feelings, and frustration) experienced during the reported disagreements/quarrels with family members (i.e., mother, father, brother(s), and sister(s)) (see LaVoie et al., 1995). The level of experienced affect was scored on a 7-point scale from 1-none to 7-very high and had a relatively high level of reliability (α = .87) (See Appendix E).

Conflict tactics scale. The Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) (Straus, 1979) was used to assess the occurrence and frequency of conflict tactics used by the participants in resolving conflicts with family members. The 18-item measure consists of three subscales which assess the use of reasoning, verbal aggression, and physical aggression in responses to perceived conflicts. Participants indicated how frequently they had engaged in the specific behaviors over the past six months on a seven-point scale (0-never to 6-more than 20). The coefficient of reliability (alpha) for the overall scale was .93 and for the three subscales: .83 for reasoning, .79 for verbal aggression, and .82 for physical violence (See Appendix F).

Design

A correlational design was used in this study in order to show associations between family environment and the characteristics of the social interactions adolescents have with their family members. Data collection occurred over
several sessions at the university using a series of questionnaires.

**Independent and Dependent Variables.** The independent variables in this study were the participant's perception of the family environment (i.e., family cohesion and perception of interparental conflict) and gender. The dependent variables were the number of reported conflicts, the level of affect associated with conflict situations, and the characteristics of participant's conflict resolution strategies.

**Procedure**

Data collection occurred in one 30- to 45-minute session. The participants were informed that this study was an attempt to examine how their perceptions of their family environment influence their interpersonal relationships within the family and asked if there are any further questions. Once all questions were answered, each participant was given a conflict questionnaire and was asked to read the directions before beginning. They were asked to answer each question as accurately as possible by circling or entering the response most relevant to their experiences. When the questionnaires were completed and collected from the class, the participants were informed that the study was an attempt to assess the influence perceptions of their family environment had on the characteristics of conflict.
experienced between them and their family members. Once this was completed, the participants were thanked for their participation.

Data Analysis

Due to the influence extensive relationships among independent variables may have on regression equations, a zero-order Pearson product moment coefficient of correlation was used to determine the relationships among family cohesion, perception of interparental conflict, and gender. A subsequent correlation analysis was conducted to examine any linear association between the independent and dependent variables (i.e., number of perceived conflicts, experienced affect, resolution strategies) within the regression equation.

Once the relationships among the independent and dependent variables were determined, a multiple regression procedure was used to assess the extent to which family cohesion, perception of interparental conflict, gender, and the interactions among these three variables predicted participant’s perceptions of interpersonal conflict with family members in social situations. In order to avoid making Type II errors, the maximum model containing the basic predictors (i.e., family cohesion, perception of interparental conflict, and gender), two-way interactions (family cohesion x gender, perception of interparental
conflict x gender, and family cohesion x perception of interparental conflict), and the three-way interaction (family cohesion x perception of interparental conflict x gender) terms was used to examine the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Once the maximum model had been specified, a backwards elimination procedure was employed so that the regression equation for each hypothesis could be determined. In order to determine the predictors that would be included within the equation, partial F-tests for each variable were calculated and compared to a critical value of $p < .10$ (Kleinbaum, Kupper, & Muller, 1988). Those predictors above this critical value were removed and the regression equation was recalculated for the remaining variables until all predictors in the equation had partial F-values below $p < .10$. Further, due to the presence of a dummy variable (i.e., gender) in the linear model, a single multiple regression equation was used to distinguish differences in the comparison groups. Although using separate regression equations for males and females yields the same estimated regression coefficients, according to Kleinbaum et al. (1988) and Pedhazur (1982), one regression equation allows for the precise testing of coincidence between the two lines. Because two tests were needed to test the coincidence of separate regression equations, the overall significance level for the two tests
combined was greater than alpha, which increases the probability of committing Type I errors.

Once the regression equation was determined, median splits were performed on the reports of cohesion and perception of interparental conflict and a 2 (Gender) X 2 (Low and High Cohesion) X 2 (Low and High Perceptions of Interparental Conflict) and an analysis of variance was conducted in order to show differences in reported conflict frequency, reported affect, and conflict resolution strategies with fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters.
Chapter III

Results

Correlations Among Predictors

The Pearson correlation analysis, presented in Table I, revealed a significant negative correlation between perceived family cohesion and perception of interparental conflict. This negative correlation between permitted the use of cohesion and perception of interparental conflict as a predictor in the regression analysis. The correlation analysis did not show any significant correlations between gender and family cohesion or perception of interparental conflict. The minimal relationship between gender and cohesiveness as well as perception of interparental conflict permitted the use of gender as a predictor in the regression analysis.

Conflict Frequency

The hypothesis that participants who perceive their families to be less cohesive and to have more interparental conflict will report increased levels of overall conflict within their family, was evaluated with a regression analysis using a backwards elimination procedure to determine the best fitting regression equation. After the regression equation was determined, median splits were performed on the reports of cohesion ($\text{Mdn} = 34.00$) and perceptions of interparental conflict ($\text{Mdn} = 25.50$) and a 2 (Gender) X 2 (Low and High
Table I

**Correlation Coefficients for Predictor Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Cohesion</th>
<th>Interparental Conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>0.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.494**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** p < .01
Cohesion) X 2 (Low and High Perceptions of Interparental Conflict) analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to assess differences in reported conflict frequency with fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters. The increased level of overall conflict was hypothesized to be reflected in higher levels of reported conflict within families with high levels of interparental conflict and low levels of cohesion when compared to families with more supportive/favorable environments (See Table II).

Conflict with fathers. The correlation coefficients in Table III show no significant relationship between family cohesion and perceptions of interparental conflict with reported frequency of conflicts with fathers. It was hypothesized that increases in parental conflict and decreased family cohesion would predict increased conflict frequency between participants and their fathers. However, the lack of relationship between the predictors and reported conflicts with fathers was further evident in the regression analysis. Backwards elimination failed to reveal any significant predictors ($p < .10$) and the ANOVA also did not show any significant main or interacting effects of gender, cohesion, and perceptions of interparental conflict.

Conflict with mothers. The correlation coefficients for the relationship between conflict frequency with mothers with family cohesion and perception of interparental
Table II

Mean Conflict Frequency Scores for Parents and Siblings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mothers</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brothers</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisters</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table III

Correlation Coefficients Among Predictor Variables and Conflict Frequency with Parents and Siblings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor Variables</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Brothers</th>
<th>Sisters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cohesion</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>-.033</td>
<td>-.380**</td>
<td>-.448*</td>
<td>-.162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>-.166</td>
<td>-.296**</td>
<td>-.229</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interparental Conflict</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.471**</td>
<td>.245</td>
<td>.339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>.117</td>
<td>.216</td>
<td>.271</td>
<td>.072</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05
** p < .01
conflict are shown in Table III. The results of this analysis revealed that cohesion had a significant negative correlation with the frequency of overall conflict experienced with mothers for males and females. Further, perception of interparental conflict had a significant positive correlation with conflict frequency with mothers for male participants.

The backwards elimination procedure revealed that perception of interparental conflict was the only significant predictor of conflict frequency with mothers (See Table IV) and accounted for a significant proportion of the variance ($R^2 = .109$, $F = 12.42$, $p < .001$). This finding was consistent with the part of the first hypothesis: increased parental conflict was expected to predict increases in reports of conflict with mothers. Further, using the median splits on cohesion and perceptions of interparental conflict, the ANOVA found a significant main effect of perceptions of interparental conflict ($F(1,96) = 5.23$, $p < .05$, $\omega^2 = .49$). Participants from families characterized by higher levels of interparental conflict reported significantly more instances of conflict with parents than participants from families with low levels of parental conflict (See Table V).

**Conflict with brothers.** A shown in Table III, a negative correlation between cohesion and conflict frequency
Table IV

Predictors in Regression Equations for Conflict Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>β</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mother</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Perception</td>
<td>0.031</td>
<td>0.329</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Interparental Conflict</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brothers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Gender</td>
<td>1.555</td>
<td>0.412</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>&lt; .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Gender by</td>
<td>-.050</td>
<td>-.621</td>
<td>-2.91</td>
<td>&lt; .005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sisters</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Gender by</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>0.208</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>&lt; .09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interparental</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table V

**Mean Conflict Frequency Scores for Conflicts with Mothers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception of Interparental Conflict</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Frequency</td>
<td>2.71&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3.67&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n = 52)</td>
<td>(n = 52)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Means with different superscripts denote significant difference, $p < .05$. 
with brothers was revealed for male, but not female participants. Perceptions of interparental conflict were not found to be correlated with conflict frequency for either males or females.

The regression equation that best predicted conflict frequency contained gender and the gender by cohesion interaction as the significant predictors (See Table IV) and accounted for a significant proportion of the variance ($R^2 = .157, F = 4.37, p < .01$). Consistent with the hypothesis, family cohesion was found to play a role in the reported frequency of conflicts with brothers. Further, gender played a mediating role in these reports. The ANOVA revealed a significant gender by cohesion interaction ($F (1, 72) = 5.73, p < .025, \omega^2 = .36$). Simple effect analyses showed that males from low cohesive families reported higher instances of conflict frequency than did females ($F (1, 41) = 4.18, p < .05$); however males and females from high cohesive families did not differ in conflict frequency ($F (1, 36) = < 1, p = .54$). Further, simple effect analyses revealed that males from families with low cohesion reported higher levels of conflict frequency than did males from high cohesive families ($F (1, 33) = 4.53, p < .05$). Females from low and high cohesive families did not report significantly different
levels of conflict frequency with brothers ($F(1, 43) = < 1, p = .43$) (See Table VI).

**Conflict with sisters.** Correlational analysis presented in Table III failed to reveal any significant relations between either cohesion or perception of interparental conflict and conflict frequency with sisters for male and female participants.

The backwards elimination approach revealed that the gender by perception of interparental conflict interaction accounted for a non-significant proportion of the variance ($R^2 = .043, F = 3.02, p = .08$) (See Table IV). But the gender by perception of interparental conflict interaction was implied in the hypothesis that gender and perception of interparental conflict would be associated with reports of conflict frequency with sisters which justifies further analyses. The subsequent ANOVA found that the main effect of perceptions of interparental conflict on reports of conflict frequency with sisters approached significance ($F(1, 61) = 3.48, p = .06$). The results show that participants with high perceptions of interparental conflict tended to report more instances of conflict with their sisters (See Appendix H).

**Positive and Negative Affect Associated with Conflict**

Regression analyses were performed on positive and negative affect, using the same backwards elimination
Table VI

Mean Conflict Frequency Scores for Conflicts with Brothers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Family Cohesion</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>2.24&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.47&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 20)</td>
<td>(n = 15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>1.48&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.39&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 22)</td>
<td>(n = 23)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Means with different superscripts denote significant differences, p < .05.
procedure to determine the best fitting regression equation. Median splits on the reports of cohesion (Mdn = 34.00) and perceptions of interparental conflict (Mdn = 25.50) were used in a 2 (Gender) X 2 (Low and High Cohesion) X 2 (Low and High Perceptions of Interparental Conflict) analysis of variance (ANOVA) to examine differences in positive and negative affect associated with conflicts with both parents, fathers, mothers, all siblings, brothers and sisters. It was hypothesized that higher levels of negative affect and lower levels of positive affect are associated with increased conflict reported by participants from less stable family environments.

Reported affect with fathers. The correlational analyses (see Table VII) revealed a significant positive correlation between cohesion and positive affect for both males and females. Correlations between perception of interparental conflict and positive affect were not significant for males. For female participants, however, there was a significant negative correlation between perception of interparental conflict and positive affect.

In Table VIII, the correlation analyses showed a significant negative correlation between cohesion and negative affect for male participants, but not for females. Significant positive correlations were present for
Table VII

Correlation Coefficients Among Predictor Variables and Reported Positive Affect During Conflicts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor Variables</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Brothers</th>
<th>Sisters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cohesion</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>.435**</td>
<td>.178</td>
<td>.323</td>
<td>.042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>.292*</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>.085</td>
<td>.122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interparental Conflict</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>-.182</td>
<td>-.153</td>
<td>-.289</td>
<td>.058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>-.373**</td>
<td>-.169</td>
<td>-.160</td>
<td>-.154</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05

** p < .01
Table VIII

Correlation Coefficients Among Predictor Variables and Reported Negative Affect During Conflicts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor Variables</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Brothers</th>
<th>Sisters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cohesion</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>-.428**</td>
<td>-.073</td>
<td>-.044</td>
<td>-.254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>-.228</td>
<td>-.027</td>
<td>-.342</td>
<td>.123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interparental Conflict</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>.392**</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>.238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>.420**</td>
<td>.235</td>
<td>.295</td>
<td>.235</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$
perceptions of interparental conflict and negative affect for males and females.

Backwards elimination procedures found the cohesion by perceptions of interparental conflict, gender by cohesion, and gender by cohesion by perception of interparental conflict interactions were significant predictors in the regression equation for reports of positive affect (see Table IX) and accounted for a significant proportion of the variance ($R^2 = .185, F = 11.39, p < .0001$). The role of these predictors in estimating reports of positive affect were consistent with the second hypothesis. Cohesion and perception of interparental conflict were expected to be associated with reports of positive affect experienced during conflicts with fathers. Further, the role of gender was also found to play a mediating role in these reports. The subsequent ANOVA revealed a significant gender by cohesion interaction for reports of positive affect ($F (1, 96) = 4.39, p < .05, \omega^2 = .28$). Simple effects analyses revealed that males and females from low cohesive families and males and females from high cohesive families, respectively did not report significantly different levels of positive affect when engaging in conflicts with their fathers ($F (1, 52) = < 1, p = .59$) and ($F (1, 48) = < 1, p = .37$).
Table IX

Predictors in Regression Equations for Reported Positive and Negative Affect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>β</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Positive Affect

Fathers

1. Cohesion by Perception of Interparental Conflict
   Cohesion: .002
   Beta: .619
   t-value: 2.41
   p: < .025

2. Gender by Cohesion
   Gender: .038
   Cohesion: .491
   t-value: 3.67
   p: < .005

3. Gender by Cohesion by Perception of Interparental Conflict
   Gender: .002
   Cohesion: -.929
   t-value: -3.33
   p: < .005

Sisters

1. Cohesion
   Cohesion: .095
   Beta: .481
   t-value: 1.94
   p: < .06

2. Perception of Interparental Conflict
   Perception of Conflict: .073
   Beta: .769
   t-value: 1.72
   p: < .09

3. Cohesion by Perception of Interparental Conflict
   Cohesion: -.002
   Perception of Conflict: -.718
   t-value: -1.86
   p: < .07
Table IX (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>β</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative Affect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fathers**

1. Gender by Cohesion
   -0.076  -0.396  -4.05  < 0.0001

2. Gender by Cohesion by Perception of Interparental Conflict
   0.002  -0.381  3.89  < 0.0001

**Brothers**

1. Gender by Perception of Interparental Conflict
   0.106  0.546  2.12  < 0.05

2. Gender by Cohesion by Perception of Interparental Conflict
   -0.003  -0.466  -1.80  < 0.08

**Sisters**

1. Perception of Interparental Conflict
   -0.543  1.822  2.67  < 0.01
Table IX (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>( \beta )</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>( p )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Gender by Perception of Interparental Conflict</td>
<td>-.323</td>
<td>-1.862</td>
<td>-2.40</td>
<td>&lt; .025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Cohesion by Perception of Interparental Conflict</td>
<td>-.019</td>
<td>-1.892</td>
<td>-2.56</td>
<td>&lt; .01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The simple effect analyses did show that males from low cohesive families reported lower levels of positive affect than did males from high cohesive families \( (F(1, 42) = 6.35, p < .025) \). Further, females from low cohesive families reported lower instances of positive affect than females from high cohesive families when engaged in conflicts with their fathers \( (F(1, 58) = 4.15, p < .05) \) (See Table X).

The same regression procedure showed that the gender by cohesion and the gender by cohesion by perception of interparental conflict interaction were significant predictors of negative affect (See Table IX). Further, the percent of variance accounted for by the three predictors was also significant \( (R^2 = .133, F = 7.97, p < .01) \). The role of the three predictors in estimating reports of negative affect was consistent with the second hypothesis. Cohesion and perception of interparental conflict were expected to be correlated with reports of negative affect experienced during conflicts with fathers. Gender was also found to be involved. The ANOVA revealed a significant gender by cohesion interaction for negative affect \( (F(1, 96) = 6.91, p < .01, \omega^2 = .44) \). Simple effect analyses showed that males and females from low cohesive families and males and females from high cohesive families, respectively, did not report significantly different levels of negative affect when
### Table X

**Mean Level of Positive and Negative Affect Experienced During Conflicts with Fathers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Family Cohesion</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive Affect</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.03&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.33&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 29)</td>
<td>(n = 15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.80&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3.80&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 25)</td>
<td>(n = 35)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negative Affect</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.83&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>14.07&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 29)</td>
<td>(n = 15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.88&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>14.09&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 25)</td>
<td>(n = 35)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Means with different superscripts denote significant differences, p < .05.
engaging in conflicts with their fathers \( (F(1, 52) = < 1, p = .37) \) and \( (F(1, 48) = < 1, p = .99) \). The simple effect analyses did show that males from low cohesive families reported higher levels of negative affect than males from high cohesive families \( (F(1, 42) = 5.48, p < .025) \).

Further, females from low cohesive families reported higher instances of negative affect than did females from high cohesive families when engaged in conflicts with their fathers \( (F(1, 58) = 4.78, p < .05) \) (See Table X).

**Reported affect with mothers.** The correlation analyses did not reveal any significant correlations between cohesion or perception of interparental conflict and positive affect (See Table VII) or negative affect (See Table VIII) for male or female participants.

This lack of relationship between the predictors and reports of positive and negative affect reported during conflicts with mothers was further evident in the regression analysis. Backwards elimination of the regression predictors failed to reveal any significant predictors of reports for positive and negative affect \( (p < .10) \). Although cohesion, perception of interparental conflict, and gender were expected to influence reports of both positive and negative affect experienced during conflicts with mothers, none of the predictors were found to show any significant relationship. Further, the ANOVA did not show any significant main or
interacting effects of gender, cohesion, and perceptions of interparental conflict.

**Reported affect with brothers.** The correlation analyses did not reveal any significant correlations between cohesion or perception of interparental conflict and positive affect (See Table VII) or negative affect (See Table VIII) for both males or females.

The lack of significant correlations between the predictors and reports of positive affect during conflicts with brothers was evident in the regression analysis. None of the independent variables were found to be significant predictors of reported positive affect during conflicts with brothers through the backwards elimination procedures (p < .10). However, the ANOVA indicated that the gender by perception of interparental conflict interaction for reports of positive affect was significant (F (1, 72) = 3.40, p < .05, η² = .31). Simple effect analyses failed to reveal any differences between mean levels of reported positive affect across cohesion or perception of interparental conflict (See Table XI). Although the regression procedure did not find any of the independent variables to be significant predictors of positive affect experienced with brothers, the ANOVA did show that, consistent with the hypothesis, gender, and perception of interparental conflict
### Table XI

**Level of Positive Affect Reported During Conflicts with Brothers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception of Interparental Conflict</th>
<th>Cohesion</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n = 29)</td>
<td>(n = 15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>3.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n = 25)</td>
<td>(n = 35)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
possibly mediate experienced positive affect during conflicts with brothers.

The backwards elimination procedure found that the gender by perception of interparental conflict and the gender by cohesion by perception of interparental conflict were significant predictors in the regression equation for reports of negative affect (See Table IX). The two interaction terms, however, did not account for a significant proportion of the variance for reports of negative affect ($R^2 = .087, F = 2.24, p = .11$). The ANOVA failed to reveal any significant differences in reported levels of negative affect in relation to the median splits on the independent variables.

**Reported affect with sisters.** The correlational analyses did not reveal any significant correlations between cohesion or perception of interparental conflict and positive affect (see Table VII) or negative affect (See Table VIII) for male and female participants.

The backwards elimination procedure for the regression equation found cohesion, perception of interparental conflict and the cohesion by perception of interparental conflict to be significant predictors of positive affect (See Table IX). However, the three predictor terms only accounted for a small proportion of the variance for reports of positive affect ($R^2 = .062, F = 1.44, p = .24$). Although the percent of variance accounted for by the predictor was non-significant,
the role of cohesion and perception of interparental conflict were incorporated in the hypothesis that family cohesion and perception of interparental conflict would be associated with reports of positive affect with sisters. The subsequent ANOVA also did not reveal any significant effects of the predictors for reports of positive affect experienced during conflicts with sisters.

The backwards elimination procedure did find perception of interparental conflict, and the gender by perception of interparental conflict and cohesion by perception of interparental conflict interactions to be significant predictors in the regression equation for reports of negative affect (See Table IX). These three predictors accounted for a significant percent of the variance for reports of negative affect ($R^2 = .156$, $F = 2.91$, $p = .05$), which is consistent with the second hypothesis that these three independent variables are predictors of negative affect experienced during conflicts with sisters. The ANOVA showed that the a significant cohesion by perceptions of interparental conflict interaction ($F (1, 61) = 3.43$, $p < .05$, $\omega^2 = .35$). Simple effects analyses failed to reveal any significant differences across cohesion and perception of interparental conflict for reports of positive affect experienced during conflicts with sisters (See Table XII).
Table XII

Mean Negative Affect Scores Reported for Conflicts with Sisters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception of Interparental Conflict</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion</td>
<td>11.36</td>
<td>12.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>(n = 14)</td>
<td>(n = 27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>12.29</td>
<td>12.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 21)</td>
<td>(n = 6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Means with different superscripts denote significant differences, $p < .05$. 
Conflict Resolution Strategies

Regression analysis were also performed on the predictor variables for conflict resolution strategies using the same backwards elimination procedure in order to determine the best fitting regression equation. Median splits on the reports of cohesion (Mdn = 34.00) and perceptions of interparental conflict (Mdn = 25.50) were used in a 2 (Gender) X 2 (Low and High Cohesion) X 2 (Low and High Perceptions of Interparental Conflict) analysis of variance (ANOVA) to examine differences in conflict tactics scale scores describing conflict resolution strategies used during conflicts with both parents, fathers, mothers, all siblings, brothers and sisters. It was hypothesized that participants within families characterized by decreased cohesion and increased interparental conflict would report less functional conflict resolution (e.g., increased use of both verbal and physically aggressive actions as well as decreased reports of reasoning) during disagreements with family members.

Conflict Resolutions Used with Fathers

Reasoning subscale score. Correlational analyses revealed a significant positive correlation between cohesion and the reasoning subscale score for males, but not females. Correlational analyses did reveal a significant negative correlation between perception of interparental conflict and the reasoning subscale scores. Perception of interparental
conflict was significantly correlated with the score on the reasoning subscale for males, but not for females (See Table XIII).

The backward elimination regression approach revealed that the significant predictors for the reasoning subscale of the conflict tactics scale were perception of interparental conflict and the gender by perception of interparental conflict (See Table XIV). The two predictors accounted for a significant proportion of the variance ($R^2 = .089$, $F = 4.93, p < .01$). Although cohesion was also expected to influence the use of reasoning as a resolution strategy, the finding that gender and perception of interparental conflict are significant predictors fits a portion of the third hypothesis which supports the need for additional analyses. The ANOVA revealed that the main effect of gender for responses to the reasoning subscale approached significance ($F (1, 96) = 3.27, p = .07$). Females tended to use more instances of reasoning than males when engaged in conflicts with their fathers (See Appendix I).

**Verbal aggression subscale scores.** Significant negative correlations were found for cohesion and the verbal aggression subscale of the conflict tactics scale for
Table XIII

Correlation Coefficients Among Predictor Variables and Reasoning Subscale of the Conflict Tactics Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor Variables</th>
<th>Conflict Tactics Reasoning Subscale Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fathers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>.349*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>-.068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interparental Conflict</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>-.221*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>-.219</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05

** p < .01
Table XIV

Predictors in Regression Equations for Conflict Tactic Scale Scores for Fathers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>β</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reasoning Subscale</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Perception of Interparental Conflict</td>
<td>-.065</td>
<td>-.273</td>
<td>-2.73</td>
<td>&lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Gender by Cohesion</td>
<td>-.042</td>
<td>-.230</td>
<td>-2.31</td>
<td>&lt; .025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verbal Aggression Subscale</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Perception of Interparental Conflict</td>
<td>.271</td>
<td>.661</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>&lt; .0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Cohesion by Perception of Interparental Conflict</td>
<td>-.005</td>
<td>-.386</td>
<td>-2.26</td>
<td>&lt; .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Aggression Subscale</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Perception of Interparental Conflict</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>.313</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>&lt; .09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Gender by Perception of Interparental Conflict</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>.527</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>&lt; .10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table XIV (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>( \beta )</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Gender by Cohesion by Perception of Interparental Conflict</td>
<td>-.002</td>
<td>-.649</td>
<td>-2.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
males, but not for females. Further, significant positive correlations were found between perceptions of interparental conflict and the verbal aggression subscale for males and females (See Table XV).

The backwards elimination regression procedure found that perception of interparental conflict and the cohesion by perception of interparental conflict interaction were two significant predictor variables of verbal aggression in the regression equation (See Table XIV). The proportion of variance accounted for by these two predictors was also significant ($R^2 = .155, F = 9.28, p < .001$). Although gender was not found to play a mediating role for scores on the verbal aggression subscale, the predictors were consistent with the hypothesis that cohesion and perception of interparental conflict are predictors of participant's use of verbally aggressive resolution strategies. The ANOVA revealed a significant main effect for perception of interparental conflict for scores on the verbal aggression subscale ($F (1, 96) = 12.61, p < .001, \omega^2 = .42$). Participants who perceived higher levels of interparental conflict reported using significantly more resolution strategies that contained verbal aggression when attempting to resolve conflicts with their fathers (See Table XVI).

Physical aggression subscale scores. Correlational analyses in Table XVII show a significant relationship
Table XV

Correlation Coefficients Among Predictor Variables and Verbal Aggression Subscale of the Conflict Tactics Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor Variables</th>
<th>Fathers</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
<th>Brothers</th>
<th>Sisters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>-.414**</td>
<td>-.538**</td>
<td>-.249</td>
<td>-.270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>-.185</td>
<td>-.337**</td>
<td>-.504**</td>
<td>-.085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interparental Conflict</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>.382*</td>
<td>.538**</td>
<td>.219</td>
<td>.144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>.284*</td>
<td>.484**</td>
<td>.277</td>
<td>.270</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05
** p < .01
Table XVI

Mean Verbal Aggression Subscale Scores for Conflicts with Fathers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception of Interparental Conflict</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Aggression Scores</td>
<td>3.52&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>8.46&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n = 52)</td>
<td>(n = 52)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Means with different superscripts denote significant differences, p < .05.
Table XVII

Correlation Coefficients Among Predictor Variables and Physical Aggression Subscale of the Conflict Tactics Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor Variables</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Brothers</th>
<th>Sisters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>-.320*</td>
<td>-.345*</td>
<td>-.302*</td>
<td>-.358*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>-.295*</td>
<td>-.065</td>
<td>-.398</td>
<td>-.072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interparental</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>.469**</td>
<td>.643**</td>
<td>.336</td>
<td>.453*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>.191</td>
<td>.282*</td>
<td>.295</td>
<td>.176</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$
between cohesion and the physical aggression subscale for the male and females. Significant positive correlations also were found between perception of interparental conflict and the physical aggression subscale for males, but not females.

The regression analysis, using the backwards elimination procedure, revealed that perception of interparental conflict, the gender by perception of interparental conflict interaction, and the gender by cohesion by perception of interparental conflict interactions were predictors accounting for a significant proportion of the variance for physical aggression scores ($R^2 = .186$, $F = 7.62$, $p < .0001$) (See Table XIV). The role of gender, cohesion, and perception of interparental conflict was consistent with the hypothesis that the three predictors would mediate participant's reported use of physically aggressive resolution strategies. The main effect of perception of interparental conflict approached significance in the ANOVA ($F (1, 96) = 3.48$, $p = .06$) (See Appendix J).

Conflict Resolutions Used with Mothers

**Reasoning subscale score.** Overall correlational analyses did not show a significant association between cohesion or perception of interparental conflict and scores on the reasoning subscale for males and females (See Table XIII).
The lack of a significant relationships between the predictors and reports on the reasoning subscale for conflicts with mothers was also evident in the regression analysis. Backwards elimination failed to reveal any significant predictors of reports on the reasoning subscale \((p < .10)\) and, the ANOVA did not show any significant main or interaction effects of gender, cohesion, and perceptions of interparental conflict. These findings are not consistent with the hypothesis that cohesion, perception of interparental conflict, and gender would mediate scores on the reasoning subscale.

**Verbal aggression subscale scores.** Correlational analyses indicated a significant negative correlation between cohesion and a significant positive correlation between perception of interparental conflict and reports of verbal aggression for males and females (See Table XV).

The backwards elimination procedure found that perception of interparental conflict and the cohesion by perception of interparental conflict interaction were two significant predictor variables for verbal aggression in the regression equation (See Table XVIII). The percent of variance accounted for by the two predictors was significant \((R^2 = .321, F = 15.76, p < .0001)\). This finding is
Table XVIII

**Predictors in Regression Equations for Conflict Tactic Scale Scores for Mothers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>β</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verbal Aggression Subscale</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Perception of Interparental Conflict</td>
<td>.384</td>
<td>.906</td>
<td>5.63</td>
<td>&lt; .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Cohesion by Perception of Interparental Conflict</td>
<td>-.011</td>
<td>-.777</td>
<td>-3.10</td>
<td>&lt; .0025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Aggression Subscale</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Gender</td>
<td>13.294</td>
<td>2.111</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>&lt; .005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Cohesion</td>
<td>.661</td>
<td>.193</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Perception of Interparental Conflict</td>
<td>.866</td>
<td>5.041</td>
<td>5.34</td>
<td>&lt; .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Gender by Cohesion</td>
<td>-.344</td>
<td>-2.622</td>
<td>-2.75</td>
<td>&lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Gender by Perception of Interparental Conflict</td>
<td>-.442</td>
<td>-4.592</td>
<td>-3.85</td>
<td>&lt; .00025</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table XVIII (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>β</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Cohesion by Perception of Interparental Conflict</td>
<td>-.021</td>
<td>-3.613</td>
<td>-4.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Gender by Cohesion by Perception of Interparental Conflict</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>3.855</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
consistent with the hypothesis that perception of interparental conflict and family cohesion are significant predictors of aggressive conflict resolution strategies. Although gender did not seem to mediate responses on this measure for conflicts with mothers, cohesion and perception of interparental conflict were strong predictors for these responses. The ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of cohesion ($F (1, 96) = 5.17, p < .05, \omega^2 = .30$) and a significant main effect for perception of interparental conflict ($F (1, 96) = 9.94, p < .025, \omega^2 = .64$) for scores on the verbal aggression subscale. Participants who perceived higher levels of interparental conflict and participants who reported lower levels of family cohesion reported using significantly more resolution strategies containing more verbal aggression when attempting to resolve conflicts with their mothers (See Table XIX).

**Physical aggression subscale scores.** Correlational analyses shown in Table XVI revealed significant negative correlations between cohesion and the physical aggression subscale for males, but not for females. Significant positive correlations were found between perception of interparental conflict and the physical aggression subscale for males and females.

The backwards elimination procedure in the regression analysis indicated that all of the predictors accounted for
Table XIX

Mean Verbal Aggression Subscale Score for Conflict with Mothers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean Overall Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cohesion</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>9.61&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 54)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>5.45&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 50)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interparental Conflict</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5.53&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 52)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>9.71&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 52)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Means with different superscripts denote significant differences, $p < .05$. 
a significant proportion of the variance for scores of physical aggression ($R^2 = .481$, $F = 12.73$, $p < .0001$) (See Table XVIII). All of the predictors accounted for a significant percent of the variance supported the hypothesized effect on reports of physically aggressive resolution strategies. However, given the number of predictors that were found, it was difficult to determine which would be the best indicator of the participant’s use of physically aggressive resolution strategies. The ANOVA revealed a significant gender by perception of interparental conflict interaction ($F (1, 96) = 6.07$, $p < .025$, $\omega^2 = .32$). Simple effects analyses showed that male participants who reported high perceptions of interparental conflict reported more frequent use of physically aggressive resolution strategies when engaged in conflicts with their mothers ($F (1, 42) = 6.03$, $p < .025$). Also, females from who reported high levels of interparental conflict reported greater use of physically aggressive conflict strategies when engaged in conflicts with their mothers ($F (1, 58) = 3.94$, $p < .05$). In addition, males who perceived high levels of interparental conflict reported greater use of physically aggressive resolution strategies than females from families with high levels of interparental conflict ($F (1, 50) = 4.15$, $p = .05$). Males and females from families with low levels of interparental conflict did not
show any significant differences in their reports of physically aggressive resolution strategies ($F (1, 50) = <1, p = .79$) (See Table XX).

**Conflict Resolutions Used with Brothers**

**Reasoning subscale score.** Overall correlational analyses did not show a significant correlation between cohesion or perceptions of interparental conflict on total scores on the reasoning subscale for male or female participants (See Table XIII).

Although correlations between the predictors and scores on the reasoning subscale were not significant, the backwards elimination procedure revealed that cohesion, and the gender by perception of interparental, and gender by cohesion by perception of interparental conflict interactions were significant predictors of reports on the reasoning subscale (See Table XXI). But, these predictors did not account for a significant proportion of the variance ($R^2 = .085, F = < 1, p = .25$). However, the predictors were consistent with the hypothesis that gender, cohesion, and perception of interparental conflict would predict the use of reasoning as a conflict resolution strategy when engaged in conflicts with brothers. The ANOVA revealed a significant gender by perception of interparental conflict interaction ($F (1, 96) = 3.33, p < .05, \omega^2 = .55$). Subsequent, simple effects analyses failed to reveal any significant differences
Table XX

Mean Physical Aggression Subscale Scores for Conflicts with Mothers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception of Interparental Conflict</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>.23&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3.23&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n = 22)</td>
<td>(n = 22)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>.17&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.93&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n = 30)</td>
<td>(n = 30)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Means with different superscripts denote significant differences $p < .05$. 
Table XXI

Predictors in Regression Equations for Conflict Tactic Scale Scores for Brothers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reasoning Subscale</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Cohesion</td>
<td>.314</td>
<td>.580</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>&lt; .06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Gender by Perception of Interparental Conflict</td>
<td>.167</td>
<td>.987</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>&lt; .08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Gender by Cohesion by Perception of Interparental Conflict</td>
<td>-.005</td>
<td>-1.015</td>
<td>-1.95</td>
<td>&lt; .06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verbal Aggression Subscale</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Gender</td>
<td>-7.205</td>
<td>-.455</td>
<td>-3.97</td>
<td>&lt; .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Gender by Cohesion</td>
<td>.178</td>
<td>.737</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>&lt; .0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Aggression Subscale</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Perception of Interparental Conflict</td>
<td>.319</td>
<td>.752</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>&lt; .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Cohesion by Perception of Interparental Conflict</td>
<td>-.009</td>
<td>-.584</td>
<td>-3.44</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
in reported use of reasoning across gender or perception of interparental conflict (See Table XXII).

**Verbal aggression subscale scores.** Correlational analyses revealed a significant negative correlation between cohesion and reports of verbal aggression for females, but not males. Perceptions of interparental conflict and the verbal aggression subscale were not significantly correlated for males or females (See Table XV).

The backwards elimination procedure found that gender and the gender by cohesion interaction were significant predictors in the regression equation (See Table XXI), and accounted for a significant percent of variance ($R^2 = .153$, $F = 4.25$, $p < .025$). Although perception of interparental conflict did not have any significant effects on the use of verbal aggression, the influence of cohesion and gender support the third hypothesis. The ANOVA revealed a significant main effect for cohesion ($F (1, 92) = 7.99$, $p < .01$, $\omega^2 = .43$). Participants who reported lower levels of family cohesion used significantly more resolution strategies that were verbally aggressive when attempting to resolve conflicts with their brothers (See Table XXIII).

**Physical aggression subscale scores.** Table XVII shows significant correlations were present between cohesion, perception of interparental conflict and the physical
Table XXII
Mean Reasoning Subscale Scores for Conflicts with Brothers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception of Interparental Conflict</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>(n = 18)</td>
<td>(n = 17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 25)</td>
<td>(n = 20)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table XXIII

Mean Verbal Aggression Subscale Scores for Conflicts with Brothers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Level of Cohesion</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Aggression Scores</td>
<td>9.40&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt; (n = 43)</td>
<td>3.84&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt; (n = 37)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Means with different superscripts denote significant differences, p < .05.
aggression subscale for male participants, but not for females.

The backwards elimination procedure used in the regression analysis revealed that perception of interparental conflict and the cohesion by perception of interparental conflict interaction were significant predictors of scores on the physical aggression subscale (See Table XXI), and accounted for a significant proportion of the variance ($R^2 = .137, F = 3.74, p < .05$). The two predictors provide some support for the third hypothesis. Although gender was not associated with the use of physically aggressive resolution strategies with brothers, the influence of cohesion and perception of interparental conflict was consistent. However, the ANOVA failed to reveal any significant differences among scores on the physical aggression subscale.

Conflict Resolutions Used with Sisters

Reasoning subscale score. Overall correlational analyses did not show a significant correlation between cohesion or perception of interparental conflict and scores on the reasoning subscale for males and females (See Table XIII).

The lack of a significant relationships between the predictors and scores on the reasoning subscale for conflicts with sisters was also evident in the regression analysis.
Backwards elimination failed to reveal any significant predictors \( (p < .10) \) and, the ANOVA did not show any significant main or interacting effects of gender, cohesion, and perceptions of interparental conflict. These findings were not consistent with the hypothesis that cohesion, perception of interparental conflict, and gender mediate scores on the reasoning subscale.

**Verbal aggression subscale scores.** Correlational analyses failed to reveal any significant correlations between cohesion or perception of interparental conflict and reports of verbal aggression for male and female participants (See Table XV).

The lack of a meaningful relationship between the independent variables and verbal aggression subscale scores was also noted in the regression analysis. The backwards elimination procedure failed to find any significant predictors of verbal aggression subscale scores reported during conflicts with sisters \( (p < .10) \), and the ANOVA failed to reveal any significant differences among overall conflict tactics scale scores. These findings also were not consistent with the hypothesis that cohesion, perception of interparental conflict, and gender would be associated with scores on the reasoning subscale.

**Physical aggression subscale scores.** The correlation analysis revealed significant negative correlations between
cohesion and scores on the physical aggression subscale for male participants, but not for females, as noted in Table XVII. Significant positive correlations were found between perception of interparental conflict and the physical aggression subscale for males, but not females.

In the regression analysis, the backwards elimination procedure showed that perception of interparental conflict and the gender by cohesion and cohesion by perception of interparental conflict interactions were significant predictors of scores on the physical aggression subscale (See Table XXIV). The predictors accounted for a significant proportion of the variance ($R^2 = .128, F = 3.18, p < .05$). Although the role of gender, cohesion, and perception of interparental conflict were not significant predictors for the reasoning and verbal aggression subscales, they did predict scores on the physical aggression subscale and supported the third hypothesis for this measure. The ANOVA revealed a main effect of perception of interparental conflict for scores on the physical aggression subscale ($F(1, 61) = 3.83, p < .05, \omega^2 = .38$). Participants from families high in interparental conflict reported using more physical aggression when resolving conflicts with their sisters (See Table XXV).
Table XXIV

Predictors in Regression Equations for Conflict Tactic Scale Scores for Sisters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Aggression Subscale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Perception of Interparental Conflict</td>
<td>.309</td>
<td>.778</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>&lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Gender by Cohesion</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>.289</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>&lt; .07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Cohesion by Perception of Interparental Conflict</td>
<td>-.007</td>
<td>-.496</td>
<td>-1.92</td>
<td>&lt; .06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table XXV

Mean Physical Aggression Subscale Scores for Conflicts with Sisters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception of Interparental Conflict</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Aggression Scores</td>
<td>1.44&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.79&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n = 36)</td>
<td>(n = 33)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Means with different superscripts denote significant differences, p < .05.
Chapter IV
Discussion

The complexity of the influence that parental relationships and family environment have on parent-child and sibling interactions was evident in the results of the study. The results show that adolescent's perceptions of their family environment are associated with their perceptions of conflict with other family members. Congruent with the literature on marital conflict and family environment, a number of significant interactions involving gender, family cohesiveness and interparental conflict were related to conflict characteristics. The analyses showed that the stability of parental relationships and family cohesion are associated with increased conflict frequency, decreased positive affect, increased negative affect, and decreased use of effective conflict resolution strategies used by adolescents. Although gender was also expected to correlate with these variables, its role in adolescent perceptions of their conflicts with family members was minimal. However, the findings lend support to earlier studies (e.g., Brody et al., 1994; Cummings et al., 1994; Emery, 1982, 1992; Montemayor, 1983) which also showed the influence of family environment on adolescent perceptions of conflicts within the family system.
Conflict With Parents

Conflict frequency. Contrary to predictions, family cohesion and interparental conflict did not explain differences in conflict frequency with fathers. As suggested by Almeida & Galambos (1993), this lack of association may suggest that fathers are not salient targets of conflict for adolescents because fathers have a decreasing role in the family system across the adolescent period. Within stable family systems, interactions between fathers and their children decrease which results in fewer instances of conflict within these relationships (Almeida & Galambos, 1993). One could argue that fathers in families characterized by deteriorated relationships remove themselves from interactions more frequently than under normal conditions due to increased stress. The effect of this stress condition may decrease the opportunities available for interaction and conflict. However, since the results failed to show any significant predictors for conflict frequency for fathers, this area deserves future research.

The finding that interparental conflict was the only significant predictor of conflict frequency with mothers supports the contention that fathers tend to withdraw from the family systems with deteriorated marital relations (Grych & Fincham, 1990; Kerig et al., 1993). Although the role of fathers in the lives of their adolescent children seems to
decrease as they age (e.g., Almeida & Galambos, 1993; Johnston, 1993; Steinberg, 1990), heightened interparental conflict increases the distancing of fathers from the family system. Therefore, interactions between adolescents and their mothers are likely to increase. Further, the amount of time spent in interactions between adolescents and their mothers may result in heightened conflict for the following reasons: First, if adolescents are spending more time with their mothers, the number of opportunities to engage in conflicts increases. Second, previous research (e.g., Burman, 1995; Emery, 1982; Johnson, 1996) has shown that the breakdown in marital relations increases the strain placed on parent-child interactions. Thus, higher levels of perceived conflict reported in the present study could result from heightened strain placed on family members as a result of tension in the family environment and the inability of family members to respond functionally towards others.

**Experienced affect.** The displacement of negative affect to children can be noted in reports of affect experienced when engaging in conflicts with fathers. Participants from low cohesive families reported lower levels of positive affect and higher levels of negative affect when engaging in conflicts with their fathers than the late adolescents from high cohesive families. As shown by Kerig et al. (1993) and Crockenberg & Forgays (1996), father-child relationships are
likely to experience increased stress associated with the dissolution of the parental relationship and the family system (i.e., affective spillover). Further, fathers are more likely to maintain consistent parent-child relations with their sons when marital relations dissolve (Brody et al., 1992; Osborne & Fincham, 1996). Females, on the other hand, may develop a more negative perception of their relationship with their father, which may disrupt existing positive emotions. Although gender was not a significant correlate, decreases in positive affect and increases in negative affect reported by participants may reflect the potentially negative affect of withdrawal behavior on maintaining a positive state of mind when engaged in conflict with fathers.

While the effects of positive and negative affect were significant for fathers, the lack of significant findings for mothers was not expected. Mothers who report being less satisfied with their marital relationship and family environment show more negative behavior towards their daughters and sons (e.g., Kerig et al., 1993). But the reciprocal nature of affective responses was not found in the current study. Kerig et al. (1993) found that mothers from failing marriages were more likely to reciprocate negative emotional expressions from their sons as well as disregard their daughters when the engaged in behavior reflecting
characteristics of the family system (e.g., engaging in conflicts). Given this pattern, it was expected that participants from low cohesion families and/or with high levels of interparental conflict would report decreased positive affect and increased negative affect when engaging in conflicts with their mothers. However, this pattern of effects was not present.

**Conflict resolution.** When examining conflict resolution strategies used with fathers, the independent variables were not significantly correlated with the reports of reasoning strategies. Although both perceptions of interparental conflict and the gender by cohesion interaction were significant predictors, use of reasoning strategies by females was only slightly higher than for males, independent of any family environment or marital satisfaction effects. The increased use of reasoning by females may indicate an attempt to improve the relationship with their fathers. Previous research (e.g., Almeida & Galambos, 1993) has shown that fathers tend to dismiss themselves from their children’s lives around adolescence, yet fathers maintain stronger ties with their sons than with their daughters (Steinberg, 1987). Females may be attempting to improve their relations with their fathers by decreasing the impact conflict would have on their “weakened” relationship by negotiating and compromising outcomes, whereas males do not need to worry about damaging
the father-son relationship because it is much stronger.

Interparental conflict was found to be a contributing factor in the use of verbal and physical aggression when attempting to resolve conflicts with fathers. Participants who reported high levels of interparental conflict responded that they also used more aggressive resolution strategies when engaging in conflict with their fathers. Unsuccessful attempts to resolve their conflicts may present negative models of problem solving which is then applied to the adolescent's conflict resolution with parents. Although adolescents naturally resolve conflicts with their fathers through submission or disengagement (Laursen & Collins, 1994), the environment in which these conflict occur may increase the likelihood that the adolescent's confrontation/conflict with father will be met with aggressive resolution strategies.

Differences in the use of reasoning strategies were not present for conflicts with mothers. Laursen and Collins (1994) showed that as children approach adolescence (within stable family environments), the use of compromise and reasoning begins to decrease. Therefore, it is not surprising that the data in the present study did not show differential use of reasoning resolution strategies by adolescents from stable and unstable family environments. Because the use of reasoning has declined within stable
environments, it is unlikely that adolescents would use these procedures in families where system breakdown has occurred.

The use of verbal and physical aggression by adolescents during conflicts with their mothers was associated with cohesion and interparental conflict, independently, and a gender and interparental conflict interaction, respectively. Two possible explanations can be offered for the verbal aggression findings. First, adolescent participants from family systems lacking in cohesion among its members are likely to meet attempts by their mothers to exercise authority with some hostility. Normative adolescent development is characterized by increasing autonomy from parents, especially the mother, and this individuation is very salient. When the source of authority is uncertain, inconsistent attempts to dictate control may be met with instances of aggression. In this case, it appears that late adolescents are more likely to use verbally aggressive means to resolve conflicts, because the use of physically aggressive resolution is socially unacceptable. However, this pattern appears to apply only to late adolescents from low cohesive families, where legitimacy of authority is in question.

Participants from family systems with high levels of interparental conflict reported using both verbal and physical strategies to resolve disagreements with their
mothers. While there were no significant effects of gender for verbal aggression, males from families with higher levels of interparental conflict reported using more physically aggressive resolution strategies. Second, these findings seem to suggest a relationship between the environment in which conflicts occur and the type of resolution strategy used with conflicts involving mothers. Related research (e.g., Easterbrooks et al., 1994; Grych & Fincham, 1990; Perry et al., 1992) has shown that family strife increases the likelihood of adolescents using less functional means of resolving conflicts with their mothers. The combination of the two factors combined may account for the increased use of verbal aggression employed by the participants when engaging in conflicts with their mothers. The use of physical aggression by males in this study seems to reflect the reciprocal cross-gender spillover from marital disruption. Osborne and Fincham (1996), found that mothers engaged in more negative behaviors with their sons when family and marital relationships were deteriorating. Also, adolescents have a tendency to identify with the same-gender parent when marital and family relations decline in stability. Thus, males in the present study may have internalized the resolution strategies used by their fathers when attempting to resolve conflict with mothers. Further, the likely negative behavior directed at sons by mothers may increase
the likelihood that males incorporate more physically aggressive resolution strategies into their working model of conflict resolution and show increased use when engaging in conflicts with their mothers.

Summary. The data on parent conflict suggest that negative family relations seem to be associated with a number of different aspects of parent-child interactions. With the breakdowns in family structure, both the quality of marital relations, and the quality of the family environment, are related to increased frequency of conflict, decreased positive affect, increased negative affect, and less functional resolution strategies. With decreases in marital and family quality, the father begins to play a less important role within family interactions. Consequently, mothers may assume a larger role in adolescent lives, which can lead to increases in the frequency of conflict as well as the use of less effective means of resolution. In turn, this dynamic may perpetuate more frequent occurrences of mother-child conflict. Although the findings in the present study were not consistent across all the dependent variables for mothers and fathers, the pattern which emerged suggests that the environment in which the family system operates probably is associated influential role in determining how conflicts between parents and children are perceived and resolved.
Conflict With Siblings

Conflict frequency. Consistent with previous research (e.g., Brody et al., 1992) gender and family cohesion were found to be significant predictors of conflict frequency with brothers. This predictive relationship of the cohesiveness of the emotional environment is associated with higher levels of sibling conflict. While this finding fit siblings in general, gender was correlated with reported conflict frequency with brothers. Males from less cohesive families reported higher levels of conflict with their brothers than other participants. Late adolescent boys who perceived parental agreement had relatively stable control in the family, and enjoyed consistent family relations. These boys may not experience as much conflict from decreased inconsistencies within the family system. Late adolescent boys in families where cohesion among its members is incongruous or non-existent may show signs of elevated stress through attempts to interpret the meaning behind situations within the family system. The absence of an authority figure within the family, as well as the deterioration of relations within the family system, could be related to increased conflicts due to uncertainty about the legitimate authority figure within the system.

The only significant predictor for conflict frequency for sisters was the gender by perception of interparental
conflict. However, this interaction did not account for a significant percent of the variance, and did not reveal significant associations with frequency reports. But the interaction is consistent with previous research (e.g., Brody et al., 1992; Brody et al., 1994), which has shown that the role of marital quality and the affective quality of parent's relationships plays an influential role in reported conflicts with.

**Experienced affect.** Contrary to predictions, the regression procedure failed to reveal any significant predictors for reports of positive affect experienced during conflicts with brothers. However, the significant cohesion by perception of interparental conflict interaction reported for the ANOVA may provide some information on the role of cohesion and interparental conflict. The gender by perception of interparental conflict and the gender by cohesion by perception of interparental conflict were the only significant predictors for reports of negative affect experienced during conflicts with brothers. These interactions also did not account for a significant percent of the variance, or reveal any significant effects on frequency reports. But, again the pattern is consistent with previous research concerning the emotional climate of the family system and affect experienced during sibling conflict (e.g., Brody et al., 1994; Davies et al., 1996). These
studies showed that the affective quality of the family system and parent’s relationships were influential in moderating the level of emotions expressed during sibling conflict.

While three significant predictors emerged for reports of positive affect experienced during conflicts with sisters, the predictors did not account for a significant proportion of the variance and did not reveal any significant effects on positive affect reports. However, these predictors are consistent with previous research concerning affect and the emotional climate of the family system (e.g., Davies et al., 1996; Vandell & Bailey, 1992). Similar to the affect experienced during conflict with brothers, these studies showed that the role of marital quality and the affective quality of the parent relationships played an influential role in reported conflicts between males and their sisters.

The cohesion by gender interaction provides insight into the influence that family environment has on negative affect experienced by late adolescents when engaging their sisters in conflict. According to Brody et al. (1992), adolescents from families characterized by harmonious parental relationships and close relationships experience brief negative affect when engaging in conflicts with their siblings. While the cohesion by perception of interparental
Conflict interaction provides some information about the association of cohesion and interparental conflict with degree of negative emotions experienced during conflicts with sisters, the direction of the effect has not been established.

Conflict resolution. Adolescents from families characterized by low cohesion and high instances of interparental conflict reported using less functional means of resolving conflicts with their siblings. The analysis showed that when resolving conflicts with brothers, participants from families with high levels of interparental conflict used less reasoning. Because children are socialized to see their parents as authority figures within the family system (e.g., Cowan et al., 1993), the increase of interparental conflict between parents may become a model for the behavior of children resulting in the decreased use of reasoning by adolescent's in conflict resolutions with brothers. Further, participants who did not see their parents engaged in a stable marital relationship reported using more instances of verbal aggression when resolving conflicts with their brothers. Late adolescents from these families seem more likely to express violence towards their brothers given their perceptions of marital conflict resolution (see Davies et al., 1996). Because decreases in positive environment contribute to less effective means of
conflict appraisal (Grych & Fincham, 1990; Steinberg, 1990), it is likely that participants from these families where marital relations have dissolved employ resolution strategies consistent with those characteristic of unstable family environments.

Regression analyses failed to reveal any significant predictors for the use of reasoning or verbally aggressive conflict resolution strategies for sisters. However, the analyses did show that perception of interparental conflict was a significant predictor of participant's use of physically aggressive resolution strategies. Neither gender nor cohesion were found to mediate the use of physically aggressive resolution strategies, as proposed in the third hypothesis. Participants who perceived high levels of interparental conflict reported using more instances of physically aggressive strategies when attempting to resolve conflicts with their sisters. According to Vandell and Bailey (1992), parents whose relationships are characterized by marital conflict may provide their children with a model of conflict resolution as well as encourage sibling conflict. Therefore, participants in this type of family environment may view the use of physical aggression as an adequate means to resolve interpersonal conflicts with their sisters. Although some studies (e.g., Cummings & Davies, 1994; Davies et al., 1996; Emery, 1982) have found that males are more
likely to exhibit aggressive tendencies towards their sisters as a result of modeling their father's behavior, this pattern was not found in the current study.

**Summary.** The interrelatedness of relationships within the family system and the affective quality of these relations and the family environment were found to be associated with the status of sibling relationships. The results showed that the interdependency between family emotional climate and sibling relationships is associated with the potential to carry over to interactions of siblings with their brothers and/or sisters through reactions to aversive sibling interactions (e.g., conflict). Participants who reported less agreeable relations between their parents (e.g., more conflict) and decreased cohesion within the emotional climate of their family system indicated lower levels of positive interactions with their siblings than individuals who expressed more positive parent-child interactions. This pattern was found in the increased frequency and use of less constructive conflict resolution strategies. Although the results for on experienced affect were not very strong, they were suggestive of the relationship between interparental conflict, family cohesion, gender and how adolescents feel during conflicts with their siblings. The apparent susceptibility to marital and family problems show the importance of familial factors in the
development of sibling relationships. When the family environment was perceived as unstable and non-supporting, the ability of parents to serve as mediators for sibling conflict seemed to be greatly reduced. Therefore, increases in sibling conflict may result from changes in experienced affect and the use of more aggressive conflict strategies when attempting to resolve the disagreements.

Limitations

The findings of this study are limited in two respects. First, it cannot be determined if interparental conflict and family cohesion influence conflict characteristics among family members or if the direction of the effect is reversed. Although other data have supported the reported results, the correlational nature of the current study does not allow cause and effect determination between reported family environment and the late adolescent's perceptions of interpersonal conflict within their family system. Second, while the participants in this study lived at home, age may have influenced the characteristics of their interpersonal conflicts within the families. The participants in this study who were college students process information differently than individuals in earlier stages of adolescence. However, the relevant research indicates that 37% of college students report family relationships as a reason for seeking counseling (Murray, 1996). While
cognitive functioning may be different across developmental periods (ages), this information may not play a determining role in late adolescent's interpretation of family environment or characteristics of family interactions.

**Implications**

Previous research has shown that many different variables influence conflict within social interactions. The contribution made by this study is that it shows family environment (i.e., family cohesion and interparental conflict) and gender are associated with adolescent perceptions of interpersonal conflict. The descriptive assessment of marital conflict and family cohesion influences on the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of disagreements may aid in determining what type of families have a predisposition for increases in interpersonal conflict. This type of identification could assist in specifying the role played by marital conflict and unstable family environment in adolescent's social behavior. The participants in this study were older adolescents (e.g., late adolescents), but the significance of the findings illustrate the importance of examining family system characteristics when examining adolescent behavior.

**Conclusions**

Conflict has been considered a normative, and sometimes necessary, part of family life during adolescent development,
but the environment of the family system in which these conflicts take place seems to play an influential role. Deteriorated family structure (e.g., parental discord and decreased family cohesion) was associated with participants' reports of increased levels of interpersonal conflict within the family environment between parents and children, and between/among siblings. Although conflicts have been found to contribute to the necessary restructuring of parent-child and sibling relationships during adolescence in the process of individuation, those conflicts experienced within disruptive family environments play a different role in the reformation of parental and sibling relations. Participants that reported decreased family cohesion and increased interparental conflict also reported increases in conflict with their parents and siblings, decreased positive affect, increased negative affect, and the use of less functional means (e.g., decreased reasoning and increased aggression) for resolving these disagreements. The described environmental effect on various familial relationships suggests that the context in which interpersonal conflicts occur are related to the interpersonal perceptions of other family member's behaviors by adolescents. Further, despite the minimal association between late adolescent's gender and perceptions of conflict present in this study, it is still possible males and females
may perceive quantitative and qualitative differences in conflict situations. Overall, the data identify an important role for the characteristics of the family context in the dynamics of family interactions, conflict outcomes, and the status of family relationships.
References


Appendix A
Demographics Questionnaire

SUBJECT NUMBER_____

AGE_______ GENDER_______ GRADE_______

GRADE POINT AVERAGE_____

FAMILY STATUS (CHECK ONE):
PARENTS STILL MARRIED____ BOTH PARENTS SINGLE____
MOTHER REMARRIED____ FATHER REMARRIED____
BOTH PARENTS REMARRIED____

LIVING ARRANGEMENT (CHECK ONE):
LIVE WITH BOTH PARENTS____ LIVE WITH MOTHER____
LIVE WITH FATHER____ LIVE ALONE____
LIVE WITH FATHER AND LIVE WITH MOTHER AND
STEPMOTHER____ STEPFATHER____
LIVE WITH SOMEONE LIVE WITH SOMEONE
(Roommate)____ (SIG. OTHER)____

NUMBER OF BROTHERS*_____
NUMBER OF SISTERS*_____

*INCLUDE STEP SIBLINGS IF APPLICABLE
Appendix B

Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ALMOST NEVER</th>
<th>ONCE IN AWHILE</th>
<th>SOMETIMES</th>
<th>FREQUENTLY</th>
<th>ALMOST ALWAYS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Family members ask each other for help.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>In solving problems, the children's suggestions are followed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>We approve of each other's friends.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Children have a say in their discipline.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>We like to do things with just our immediate family.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Different persons act as leaders in our family.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Family members feel closer to other family members than to people outside the family.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Our family changes its way of handling tasks.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Family members like to spend free time with each other.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Parent(s) and children discuss punishment together.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Family members feel very close to each other.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The children make the decisions in our family.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>When our family gets together for activities, everybody is present.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Rules change in our family.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>We can easily think of things to do together as a family.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>We shift household responsibilities from person to person.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Family members consult other family members on their decisions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>It is hard to identify the leader(s) in our family.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Family togetherness is very important.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>It is hard to tell who does which household chores.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

FAMILY SOCIAL SCIENCE, 290 McNeal Hall, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN 55108
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Appendix C

Children's Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale

In every family there are times when parents don't get along. When parents argue or disagree, their children can feel a lot of different ways. We would like to know what kinds of feelings you have when your parents have arguments or disagreements.

If your parents don't live together in the same house with you, think about times that they are together when they don't agree or about times when both of your parents lived in the same house, when you answer these questions.

2-True  1-Sort of True  0-False

1. I never see my parents arguing or disagreeing._____
2. When my parents have an argument, they usually work it out._____
3. My parents often get into arguments about things I do at school._____
4. My parents get really mad when they argue._____
5. When my parents argue, I can do something to make myself feel better._____
6. I get scared when my parents argue._____
7. I feel caught in the middle when my parents argue._____
8. I'm not to blame when my parents have an argument._____
9. They may not think I know it, but my parents argue or disagree a lot._____
10. Even after my parents stop arguing, they stay mad at each other._____
11. My parents have arguments because they are not happy with each other._____
12. When my parents have a disagreement, they discuss it quietly._____
13. I don't know what to do when my parents have arguments._____
14. My parents are often mean to each other even when I'm around._____
15. When my parents argue, I worry about what will happen to me._____
16. It's usually my fault when my parents argue._____

17. I often see my parents arguing.________
18. When my parents disagree about something, they usually come up with a solution.________
19. My parents arguments are usually about something I did.______
20. The reasons my parents argue never change.______
21. When my parents have an argument, they say mean things to each other.______
22. When my parents argue or disagree, I can usually help make things better.______
23. When my parents argue, I'm afraid that something bad will happen to me.______
24. My mom wants me to be on her side when she and my dad argue.______
25. Even if they don't say it, I know I am to blame when my parents argue.______
26. My parents hardly ever argue.______
27. When my parents argue, they usually make up right away.______
28. My parents usually argue or disagree because of things that do.______
29. My parents argue because they really don't love each other.______
30. When my parents have an argument, they yell alot.______
31. When my parents argue, there is nothing I can do to stop them.______
32. When my parents argue, I worry that one of them will get hurt.______
33. I feel like I have to take sides when my parents have a disagreement.______
34. My parents often nag and complain about each other around the house.______
35. My parents hardly ever yell when they have a disagreement.______
2-True  1-Sort of True  0-FALSE

36. My parents often get into arguments when I do something wrong._____

37. My parents have broken or thrown things during an argument._____ 

38. After my parents stop arguing, they are friendly toward one another._____ 

39. When my parents argue, I am afraid they will yell at me too._____ 

40. My parents blame me when they have an argument._____

41. My dad wants me to be on his side when he and my mom argue._____  

42. My parents have pushed or shoved each other during an argument._____  

43. When my parents argue or disagree, there's nothing I can do to make it better._____  

44. When my parents argue, I worry that they might get divorced._____

45. My parents still act mean after they have had an argument._____

46. My parents have arguments because they don't know how to get along._____  

47. Usually it's not my fault when my parents have arguments._____

48. When my parents argue, they don't listen to anything I say._____
Appendix D

Conflict Frequency Scale

Please circle the best fitting response

1. How many conflicts/disagreements have you had with your mother in the past six months?
   0-None
   1-One
   2-Two
   3-Three to Five
   4-Six to Ten
   5-Eleven to Twenty
   6-More than Twenty

2. How many conflicts/disagreements have you had with your father in the past six months?
   0-None
   1-One
   2-Two
   3-Three to Five
   4-Six to Ten
   5-Eleven to Twenty
   6-More than Twenty

3. How many conflicts/disagreements have you had with your brother(s) in the past six months?
   Note: Circle the number for your first brother and place the appropriate number in the spaces for other brothers.
   0-None
   1-One
   2-Two
   3-Three to Five
   4-Six to Ten
   5-Eleven to Twenty
   6-More than Twenty

4. How many conflicts/disagreements have you had with your sister(s) in the past six months?
   Note: Circle the number for your first sister and place the appropriate number in the spaces for other sisters.
   0-None
   1-One
   2-Two
   3-Three to Five
   4-Six to Ten
   5-Eleven to Twenty
   6-More than Twenty
Appendix E

Experienced Affect Scale

During conflicts, a variety of emotions are possibly experienced. According to the scale below, please indicate the level of emotions felt during conflicts with your mother.

Note: You may use the same number more than once.

1-None 2 3 4-Moderate 5 6 7-Great Deal

1. Anger_____
2. Personally Responsible/Bad_____
3. Don't Care/Apathy_____
4. Normal/Good_____
5. Frustrated_____

According to the scale below, please indicate the level of emotions felt during conflicts with your father.

1-None 2 3 4-Moderate 5 6 7-Great Deal

1. Anger_____
2. Personally Responsible/Bad_____
3. Don't Care/Apathy_____
4. Normal/Good_____
5. Frustrated_____


According to the scale below, please indicate the level of emotions felt during conflicts with your brother(s).
Note: Use each space for different brothers.

1-None  2  3  4-Moderate  5  6  7-Great Deal

1. Anger____/_____/_____/_____/
2. Personally Responsible/Bad____/_____/_____/
3. Don't Care/Apathy____/_____/_____/
4. Normal/Good____/_____/_____/
5. Frustrated____/_____/_____/

According to the scale below, please indicate the level of emotions felt during conflicts with your sister(s).
Note: Use each space for different sisters.

1-None  2  3  4-Moderate  5  6  7-Great Deal

1. Anger____/_____/_____/_____/
2. Personally Responsible/Bad____/_____/_____/
3. Don't Care/Apathy____/_____/_____/
4. Normal/Good____/_____/_____/
5. Frustrated____/_____/_____/_____
Appendix F
Conflict Tactics Scale

No matter how well a family gets along, there are many times when they disagree on major decisions, get annoyed about something the other person does, or just have spats or fights because they are in a bad mood or tired for some other reason. They also use many different ways of trying to settle their differences. Below is a list of some things you and your mother might have done when you had a dispute. Please report on how often these have occurred in the past six months according to the scale below.

0 - None 1 - One 2 - Two 3 - Three to Five 4 - Six to Ten
5 - Eleven to Twenty 6 - More than Twenty

1. Discussed the issue calmly
2. Got information to back my point
3. Brought someone in to mediate the conflict
4. Insulted or swore at the other one
5. Sulked or refused to talk about it
6. Stomped out of the room/house
7. Cried
8. Did or said something to spite the other one
9. Threatened to hit or throw something at the other one
10. Threw or smashed or hit or kicked something
11. Threw something at the other one
12. Pushed, grabbed, or shoved the other one
13. Slapped the other one
14. Kicked, bit, or hit with a fist
15. Hit or tried to hit with something
16. Beat up the other one
17. Threatened with a gun or knife
18. Used a gun or knife
Below is a list of some things you and your father might have done when you had a dispute. Please report on how often these have occurred in the past six months according to the scale below.

0 - None  1 - One  2 - Two  3 - Three to Five  4 - Six to Ten
5 - Eleven to Twenty  6 - More than Twenty

1. Discussed the issue calmly _ _ _ _
2. Got information to back my point
3. Brought someone in to mediate the conflict _ _ _ _
4. Insulted or swore at the other one _ _ _ _
5. Sulked or refused to talk about it _ _ _ _
6. Stomped out of the room\house _ _ _ _
7. Cried _ _ _ _
8. Did or said something to spite the other one _ _ _ _
9. Threatened to hit or throw something at the other one _ _ _ _
10. Threw or smashed or hit or kicked something _ _ _ _
11. Threw something at the other one _ _ _ _
12. Pushed, grabbed, or shoved the other one _ _ _ _
13. Slapped the other one _ _ _ _
14. Kicked, bit, or hit with a fist _ _ _ _
15. hit or tried to hit with something _ _ _ _
16. Beat up the other one _ _ _ _
17. Threatened with a gun or knife _ _ _ _
18. Used a gun or knife _ _ _ _
Below is a list of some things you and your brother(s) might have done when you had a dispute. Please report on how often these have occurred in the past six months according to the scale below.

Note: Place a number in each space for each brother.

0-None  1-One  2-Two  3-Three to Five  4-Six to Ten  5-Eleven to Twenty  6-More than Twenty

1. Discussed the issue calmly ______/_____/______/_____/____
2. Got information to back my point ______/______/______/____/
3. Brought someone in to mediate the conflict ______/_____/______/_____/____
4. Insulted or swore at the other one ______/_____/______/_____/____
5. Suited or refused to talk about it ______/_____/______/_____/____
6. Stomped out of the room/house ______/_____/______/_____/____
7. Cried ______/_____/______/_____/____
8. Did or said something to spite the other one ______/_____/______/_____/____
9. Threatened to hit or throw something at the other one ______/_____/______/_____/____
10. Threw or smashed or hit or kicked something ______/_____/______/_____/____
11. Threw something at the other one ______/_____/______/_____/____
12. Pushed, grabbed, or shoved the other one ______/_____/______/_____/____
13. Slapped the other one ______/_____/______/_____/____
14. Kicked, bit, or hit with a fist ______/_____/______/_____/____
15. Hit or tried to hit with something ______/_____/______/_____/____
16. Beat up the other one ______/_____/______/_____/____
17. Threatened with a gun or knife ______/_____/______/_____/____
18. Used a gun or knife ______/_____/______/_____/____
Below is a list of some things you and your sister(s) might have done when you had a dispute. Please report on how often these have occurred in the past six months according to the scale below.

**Note:** Place a number in each space for each sister.

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Three to Five</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Six to Ten</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Eleven to Twenty</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>More than Twenty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Discussed the issue calmly / / / / / /  
2. Got information to back my point / / / / / /  
3. Brought someone in to mediate the conflict / / / / / /  
4. Insulted or swore at the other one / / / / / /  
5. Sulked or refused to talk about it / / / / / /  
6. Stomped out of the room/house / / / / / /  
7. Cried / / / / / /  
8. Did or said something to spite the other one / / / / / /  
9. Threatened to hit or throw something at the other one / / / / / /  
10. Threw or smashed or hit or kicked something / / / / / /  
11. Threw something at the other one / / / / / /  
12. Pushed, grabbed, or shoved the other one / / / / / /  
13. Slapped the other one / / / / / /  
14. Kicked, bit, or hit with a fist / / / / / /  
15. Hit or tried to hit with something / / / / / /  
16. Beat up the other one / / / / / /  
17. Threatened with a gun or knife / / / / / /  
18. Used a gun or knife / / / / / /
### Appendix G

**Mean Conflict Frequency Scores for Conflicts with Sisters**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions of Interparental Conflict</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Frequency</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>2.76</td>
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<tr>
<td>(n = 41)</td>
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<td>(n = 28)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Appendix H**

**Mean Reasoning Subscale Scores for Conflicts with Fathers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reasoning Scores</td>
<td>10.65 (n = 44)</td>
<td>13.28 (n = 60)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix I

Mean Physical Aggression Subscale Scores for Conflicts with Fathers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception of Interparental Conflict</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Aggression Scores</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>4.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n = 52)</td>
<td>(n = 52)</td>
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</table>