INTERPARENTAL CONFLICT AND (PRE)ADOLESCENTS' PEER RELATIONSHIPS

Maria Vairami & Panayiota Vorria

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece

Abstract: The aim of the present study was to investigate associations between interparental conflict and (pre)adolescents' peer relationships. Participants were 254 (pre)adolescents of both genders, aged 11-16 years, living in their own two-parent families. (Pre)adolescents' peer acceptance and best-friendship qualities were assessed with sociometric and self-report measures. Interparental conflict, as perceived by (pre)adolescents, was assessed with the Children's Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale. The results suggest that perceived interparental conflict was negatively related to (pre)adolescents' peer acceptance in the classroom, to their number of friends, and to their best-friendship qualities. (Pre)adolescents' self-blame for interparental conflict was the major predictor of their best-friendship qualities, that is, companionship, help, security, conflict and closeness, as well as peer acceptance in the classroom. Age differences were also found: (pre)adolescents' peer relationships, compared to adolescents', were strongly related to interparental conflict. Finally, gender differences were also present: for boys, perceived threat was the major predictor of the qualities of their best friendship, whereas for girls self-blame negatively predicted the respective qualities.

Key words: Best friendship, Interparental conflict, Peer acceptance.

INTRODUCTION

An extensive research literature documents that, in both intact and divorced families, negative family environment has an adverse effect on children's psychological adjustment (Cummings & Davies, 1994; Grych & Fincham, 1990, 2001; Porter & O'Leary, 1980). Incidents of anger and hostility between spouses affect strongly children's behavior, eliciting, among others, internalizing or externalizing behavioral problems, anger and distress, emotional arousal and increased aggressiveness, anxiety, attachment insecurity and low self-esteem (Cummings, Davies, & Campbell, 2001; Cummings, Ballard, & El-Sheikh, 1991; Cummings & Davies, 1994; Emery, 1999).

Address: Panayiota Vorria, School of Psychology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 541 24 Thessaloniki, Greece. E- mail: vorria@psy.auth.gr

Despite the fact that it has been widely recognized since the late 1970s that family discord and breakdown is an important predictor of child maladjustment (Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1979), it is only recently that the question of whether it is the experience of divorce or the experience of interparental conflict that has the strongest impact on the child's well being has been addressed. Thus, the need for studying family processes rather than just family structure has become evident.

The last fifteen years, research has focused particularly on the impact of interparental conflict on the child's behavior. Interparental conflict, compared to many other aspects of marital relationship, such as marital satisfaction, familial distress or even marital disruption, seems to have a stronger negative impact on children's adjustment in several domains including, among others, parent-child relations (Osborne & Fincham, 1996), children's interpersonal relationships (Hayashi & Strickland, 1998; Long, Forehand, Fauber, & Brody, 1987), their mental health (Nelson, Hughes, Handal, Katz, & Searight, 1993) and their self-concept (Markland & Nelson, 1993). The existence of a relationship between children's adjustment and interparental conflict is consistently supported by recent research findings and several reviews and meta-analyses suggest that intense, continuous and poorly resolved marital conflict is strongly associated with the presence of emotional and behavioral difficulties, and poor academic performance in children (Davies, Harold, Goeke-Morey, & Cummings, 2002; Grych & Fincham, 2001).

Interparental conflict and children's peer relationships

Considerable research evidence suggests that peer relationships contribute strongly to children's and adolescents' psychosocial adjustment (Doyle, Markiewicz, & Hardy, 1994). Research findings have consistently documented that friendships, as well as successful adaptation in the peer group, play an important role in children's social and cognitive development, protect children from feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction, minimize stress deriving from major changes in children's lives and work as "emotional supports" (Dunn, 2004; Parker & Asher, 1993).

Family environment is one of the contexts that have an effect on the development of children's social competence and their ability to form and maintain satisfying and supportive peer relationships. In contrast to earlier studies, in which emphasis was placed on the parent-child dyad – parents' child-

rearing techniques (Ladd, 1992) and the parent-child relationship quality and interaction styles (Putallaz & Heflin, 1990) – and how it is related to the development of social skills in children, recent research has begun to explore the linkage between interparental relationship and children's social competence (Doyle et al., 1994; Kitzmann & Cohen, 2003). Parental relationship and children's peer relationships are both characterized by intimacy and mutuality and children's observation of parental interactions may influence the ways they learn to manage interpersonal dynamics and the strategies they use for interactions in their own relationships (Kitzmann & Cohen, 2003; Meyer, Thompson, McHelaney, & Allen, 2005; Parke & Ladd, 1992).

Nevertheless, despite the growing interest of researchers to examine the impact of parental relationship on children's behavior, only a few studies have focused on the impact of interparental conflict specifically on children's and adolescents' peer relations (Criss, Pettit, Dodge, & Lapp, 2002; Maccoby, 1996). According to Kitzmann and Cohen (2003), in these studies interparental conflict has been associated with several problems in children's peer relations, such as low peer acceptance (Bullock, 1991; Hetherington et al., 1979; Strassberg, Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 1992), lower quality of play (Gottman & Katz, 1989), deficits in social problem-solving skills (Goodman, Barfoot, Frye, & Belli, 1999), and low friendship quality (Doyle et al.,1994; Kitzmann & Cohen, 2003). Additionally, other studies have shown that adolescents experiencing high levels of interparental conflict and family disruption, compared to those who did not, were at an increased risk of facing problems in their relationships (Amato & Booth, 1996; Feng, Giarrusso, Bengston, & Frye 1999; Summers, Forehand, Armistead, & Tannenbaum, 1998), and less intimacy (Cooney & Kurz, 1996; Meyer et al., 2005; Osborne & Fincham, 1996).

Perceptions of interparental conflict

Until recently, children's exposure to conflict was usually assessed via parental reports. However, research evidence suggests that the frequency of interparental conflict, as reported by parents or other independent observers, may not be as important for children's adjustment as their own awareness and interpretation of conflict (Grych, Said, & Fincham, 1992; Jenkins, Smith, & Graham, 1991). For instance, parents are likely to be unaware of the distress children experience due to interparental conflict. It has been reported (Kitzmann & Cohen, 2003) that school-aged children, com-

pared to younger ones, exhibit a high degree of regulation of emotions and behavior. As a result, their parents may not identify easily their distress due to interparental conflict. Adolescents' tendency to separate themselves from the family combined with their need for independence may mislead parents to believe that they do not experience any distress in response to interparental conflict (David & Murphy, 2004). Also, according to Grych et al. (1992), parental reports may not provide accurate estimates of children's awareness of conflict. Children may be aware of conflict to which they are not directly exposed, such as destructive, non overt forms of hostility that often follow unresolved conflicts (Grych et al., 1992). Conclusively, research evidence seems to suggest that children's perceptions and understanding of conflict provides an insight necessary for understanding its impact on them (Grych & Fincham, 1990).

Gender differences in the effects of interparental conflict

Gender differences in children's reactions to marital discord are often reported in relevant reviews of literature (Emery & O' Leary, 1982; Grych & Fincham, 1990, 2001). Empirical evidence suggests that boys, compared to girls, are more sensitive to parental emotionality during marital conflict (Cummings et al., 2004; Cummings et al., 1991) and show greater aggression. Girls, on the other hand, show more distress after repeated exposure to events of anger and hostility between adults (Cummings, Pellegrini, & Notarius, 1989; Kerig, Cowan, & Pape Cowan, 1993) and, especially in adolescence, get more involved in parental conflict than males (Davies & Lindsay, 2004). A study with adolescents examined the influence of interparental conflict on adolescents' aggression with peers and showed that females' rate of aggressive responses decreased as interparental conflict increased, whereas males' rate of aggressive responses increased with increasing interparental conflict (Little, McFarland, Land, Haynes, & Allen, 2005). Michael and Spiegel (2003) investigated whether intimacy in close friendships of males and females was affected by intrafamilial conflict and found that males showed difficulties in their ability to be intimate with a same-sex friend in the presence of such conflict, but no such effects were found in girls. Other studies (e.g., Cummings, Davies, & Simpson, 1994; Grych, Harold, & Miles, 2003; Kerig, 1998) have shown that specific aspects of conflict worked as mediators in boys' and girls' reactions to conflict and reported gender differences in conflict appraisal and subsequent adjustment. In particular, girls'

adjustment was related to self-blame, whereas boys appeared to be more sensitive, and consequently more influenced, by the threat posed by interparental conflict. It should be mentioned that the threat element of interparental conflict refers to perceived threat and coping efficacy concerning the experience of conflict. Perceived threat involves children's worries about what will happen to themselves or their parents due to instances of interparental conflict, whereas coping efficacy refers to the extent to which children feel able to cope with the conflictual situation.

However, other studies by Katz and Gottman (1993) and Moore and Pepler (1996) did not report gender differences in so far as the effect of interparental conflict on children's adjustment is concerned. Davis, Hops, Alpert, and Sheeber (1998) reported similar patterns of reactions for adolescent boys' and girls' responses to interparental conflict. More recently, David and Murphy (2004) examined the extent to which individuals exposed to frequent and intense interparental conflict across childhood and adolescence are sensitized to conflict during late adolescence and found only marginal differences between males and females. Consequently, research findings with respect to gender are up to now inconclusive and therefore further investigation is required in this area.

Age differences in the effects of interparental conflict

A major issue of concern is how children cope with interparental conflict with respect to their age or developmental level. In general, children's and adolescents' coping strategies and emotional responses to interparental hostility have been shown to change with age and differ qualitatively (Chase-Lansdale, Cherlin, & Kiernan, 1995; Cummings et al., 1989; Cummings, Goeke-Morey, & Papp, 2004). Nevertheless, research findings provide evidence that frequent, intense and not effectively resolved conflict between parents affects children of all ages. Laboratory studies have indicated relations between exposure to interadult conflict and child aggression. Cummings, Iannotti, and Zahn-Waxler (1985) found that exposure to angry adult interactions was associated with increased aggression between two-year-old friends. Attempts to intervene and mediate interparental conflict have been evident to the reactions of children as young as five (Cummings, Vogel, Cummings, & El-Sheikh, 1989) and nine years old (Cummings, 1987; Cummings et al., 1989). School aged children are likely to blame themselves for the conflict incidents and possible break-up

of parents (Cummings et al., 2004), and often worry about being aban-
doned when their parents argue (Hodges, 1991). In adolescence, the pres-
sure deriving from interparental conflict can be even more intense, since
it has been observed that adolescents may try to act as providers of sup-
port or mediators in conflict incidents between their parents and feel that
they are caught in the middle (Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbusch, 1991).
Davis et al. (1998) found a sequential relation between adolescent ag-
gressive functionning and marital conflict.

Investigating the effects of interparental conflict especially on adoles-
cents' peer relationships is particularly important, since in this develop-
mental period the vulnerability of the individual is increased (Daniels,
1990; Richardson & McCabe, 2001). Adolescents attempt to become in-
dependant (Daniels, 1990) and make the significant transformation from
depending on their family to relying more on their peers. Even though by
early adolescence, many adolescents perceive same-sex friends to be as
supportive as parents, by mid-adolescence perceive their friends as the
most frequent providers of support (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992). Thus,
in the adolescents' struggle to establish a clear sense of their values, beliefs
and relationships, on the one hand, and a sense of autonomy, on the oth-
er, intrafamilial conflicts may act as stressors that further affect their psy-
chosocial adjustment (Dunlop & Burns, 1995).

Aims and hypotheses

The present study focused on the relations between perceived inter-
parental conflict and (pre)adolescents' peer relationships both in terms of
peer acceptance and close friendship. Effects of interparental conflict on
(pre)adolescents' peer relationships have not been investigated in Greece,
so the present study addresses the issue of interparental conflict and
(pre)adolescents' peer relationships for the first time in a Greek sample.
The aim of the study was to examine the links between interparental con-
flict, as reported by the (pre)adolescents, and (pre)adolescents' partici-
pation in friendship, qualities of best friendship, and (pre)adolescents'
peer acceptance in the classroom. The relationship between interparental
conflict and (pre)adolescents' peer relationships was also examined in
terms of gender and age differences.

In accordance to the above literature review we hypothesized that (a)
interparental conflict will be negatively related to (pre)adolescents' peer

acceptance in the classroom, to number of friends, and to best-friendship qualities; (b) different aspects of interparental conflict will be related to boys' and girls' peer acceptance in the classroom, number of friends, and best- friendship qualities, and (c) peer acceptance in the classroom, number of friends, and best- friendship qualities of preadolescents will be more negatively affected by interparental conflict as compared to adolescents.

METHOD

Participants

Two hundred and fifty four (pre)adolescents from primary and secondary state schools of Thessaloniki participated in the study. The sample consisted of 134 boys and 120 girls, aged 10.09 to 16 years ($M = 13$ years). Of them, 86 (34%)–42 boys and 44 girls–were preadolescents in the 6th grade and 168 (66%)–92 boys and 76 girls–were adolescents in the 9th and 11th grade. Although participating schools were drawn from different areas of Thessaloniki in order to include participants from across the socio-economic spectrum, in most cases social class background, as measured by occupation and educational status of parents, was middle to upper class.

Criteria for inclusion in the study were: parental and child consent, participants being members of two parent families, and language spoken at home to be Greek. In an attempt to avoid potentially confounding factors associated with parental divorce and separation, (pre)adolescents were deemed eligible for participation only if they lived with two parents who had lived together for most of the child's life. Participation rate was 90%.

Measures

All scales used in the study were translated into Greek and back translated into English by two trained bilingual translators and pilot tested.

Number of friends. A descriptive instrument, the Peer Social Network Diagram (Parker & Herrera, 1996), was used in order to identify the participants' social network and its magnitude. Participants were asked to write down in a list the names of up to 20 people under 18 years of age, that they considered to be their friends and then to categorize these people in three groups as closest friends, good friends and other friends.

Best-friendship qualities. The quality of the (pre)adolescents' best friendship was assessed with a 23-item version of the Friendship Qualities Scale (FQS; Bukowski, Hoza, & Boivin, 1994). Participants rated on a 5-point Likert scale the extent to which each statement was 5 (really true) to 1(not true) with respect to their same-sex best friendship. The FQS yields five subscales: Companionship, Help, Closeness, Security, and Conflict. Item scores were averaged to obtain subscale scores with higher scores representing more of the quality. Items belonging to the conflict subscale were reversed.

To assess construct validity of the FQS a principal components analysis (varimax rotation) was performed on the responses of the 254 children for their friendships to the 23 items of the FQS. Catell's criterion (scree test) was employed. The analysis resulted in five factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 that explained 59% of the total variance. The first factor, labeled "Help" (27.3% of total variance), consisted of five items, the second factor, labeled "Conflict" (13.3% of total variance), consisted of four items, the third factor, labeled "Closeness" (7.24% of total variance), consisted of three items, the fourth factor, labeled "Companionship" (5.91% of total variance), consisted of three items and the fifth factor, labeled "Security" (5.29% of total variance), consisted of five items. The factors were in agreement with the subscales of the original instrument (Bukowski et al., 1994). After rotation, an item was included only if it had a factor loading at or above .40 and did not load highly on more than one factor (Cattell & Vogelman, 1977; Comrey & Lee, 1992). Three items were excluded from the analysis because they had a lower than .40 factor loading. These items assessed closeness and companionship. Table 1 shows the factor loadings resulting from principal component analysis after varimax rotation. Table 1 also displays the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the five subscales. The FQS Scale has been shown to be internally consistent in the present sample, Companionship, $\alpha = .70$; Help, $\alpha = .78$; Closeness, $\alpha = .71$; Security, $\alpha = .63$; Conflict, $\alpha = .77$. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were similar to those reported by Bukowski et al. (1994): Companionship, $\alpha = .71/.73$; Help, $\alpha = .73/.80$; Closeness, $\alpha = .77/.86$; Security, $\alpha = .71/.74$; Conflict, $\alpha = .77/.76$.

Peer acceptance. Participants' level of acceptance in the classroom was assessed with a "roster-and-rating" sociometric procedure (Singleton & Asher, 1977). Each participant was provided with rosters of all classmates and was asked to indicate on a 5-point Likert scale, from 5 (I like a lot) to 1 (I don't like), how much they liked to play and engage in school activities with each of their classmates. A participant's level of acceptance was determined

Table 1. Factor structure of the Friendship Qualities Scale

Subscale/Item	Loadings
Help	
If I forgot my lunch or needed a little money my friend would loan it to me	.714
My friend would help me if I needed it	.709
If other kids were bothering me, my friend would help me	.662
My friend helps me when I am having trouble with something	.662
My friend would stick up for me if another kid was causing me trouble	.602
Conflict	
My friend and I disagree about many things	.848
My friend and I can argue a lot	.816
I can get into fights with my friend	.757
My friend can bug me or annoy me even though I ask him not to	.658
Closeness	
I feel happy when I am with my friend	.716
If my friend had to move away I would miss him	.669
I think about my friend even when my friend is not around	.634
Companionship	
My friend and I go to each other's houses after school and on weekends	.784
My friend and I spend a lot of our free time together	.780
My friend and I do things together	.645
Security	
If I have a problem at school or at home I can talk to my friend about it	.665
If there is something bothering me I can tell my friend about it even if it is something I cannot tell to other people	.580
If I said I was sorry after I had a fight with my friend he would still stay mad at me	.531
If my friend or I do something that bothers the other one of us we can make up easily	.482
If my friend and I have a fight or argument we can say "I'm sorry" and everything will be all right	.424

by the average rating received from his or her same-sex classmates, since research findings (Ladd, 1999; Parker & Asher, 1993) indicate that same sex ratings tend to be more valid compared to cross sex ratings in the particular age group.

Interparental conflict. Participants completed the Children's Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale (CPIC; Grych, Seid, & Fincham, 1992) as a measure of (pre)adolescent's perception of conflict characteristics and their subjective response to conflict. The CPIC scale consists of 42 items and yields three subscales: (a) Conflict properties: children's perceptions of frequency, intensity and resolution of parental conflict. (b) Threat: children's feelings of being threatened by interparental conflict and children's coping skills concerning interparental conflict. (c) Self-blame: the extent to which children blame themselves for parents' marital conflict and feel that they are the topic of it. Participants were asked to rate each item using a 3-point scale: 2 (true), 1 (sort of true), 0 (false). High scores on CPIC subscales reflect negative aspects of conflict.

Table 2. Factor structure of the Children's Perceptions of Interparental Conflict Scale

Subscale/Item	Loadings
Conflict Properties	
When my parents have a disagreement they discuss it quietly	.751
When my parents have an argument they usually work it out	.733
When my parents argue they usually make up right away	.724
Even after my parents stop arguing they stay mad at each other	.715
My parents hardly ever argue	.707
When my parents have an argument they yell at each other	.693
When my parents have an argument they say mean things to each other	.675
My parents hardly ever yell when they have a disagreement	.671
When my parents have an argument they usually work it out	.678
My parents are often mean to each other even when I'm around	.661
My parents often nag and complain about each other around the house	.641
I often see my parents arguing	.634
After my parents stop arguing, they are friendly towards each other	.626
My parents still act mean after they have had an argument	.621
My parents have pushed or shoved each other during an argument	.611
My parents have broken or thrown things during an argument	.533
My parents get really mad when they argue	.511
They may not think I know it, but my parents argue or disagree a lot	.502
I never see my parents arguing or disagreeing	.491
Self-blame	
My parents' arguments are usually about me	.805
It's usually my fault when my parents argue	.796
My parents usually argue or disagree because of things that I do	.718
My parents often get into arguments when I do something wrong	.683
Even if they don't say it, I know I'm to blame when my parents argue	.609
My parents often get into arguments about things I do at school	.590
My parents blame me when they have arguments	.485
Usually it's not my fault when my parents have arguments	.473
Threat	
When my parents argue I'm afraid that something bad will happen.	.791
I get scared when my parents argue	.784
When my parents argue I worry about what will happen to me.	.666
When my parents argue I worry that they might get divorced	.622
I don't know what to do when my parents have arguments	.604
When my parents argue I worry that one of them will get hurt	.501
When my parents argue or disagree there's nothing I can do to make myself feel better	.473
When my parents argue there's nothing I can do to stop them	.402
When my parents argue I'm afraid that they will yell at me too	.411

To assess construct validity of the CPIC scale we performed a principal components analysis (varimax rotation) on the responses of the 254 children in the CPIC scale. Catell's criterion (scree test) was employed. The analysis resulted in three factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 that explained 43.7% of the total variance. The first factor that emerged was labeled "Conflict Properties" (24.50% of total variance), consisted of 19 items, the

second factor, labeled "Self-Blame" (9.89% of total variance), consisted of eight items and the third factor, labeled "Threat" (8.78% of total variance), consisted of nine items. The factors extracted were in agreement with the subscales of the original instrument (Grych et al., 1992). After rotation, an item was included only if it had a factor loading at or above .40 and did not load highly on more than one factor (Cattell & Vogelman, 1977; Comrey & Lee, 1992). Six items failed to meet these criteria, and therefore were not a part of the final solution. Four of them weighted less than .40 and two loaded on two factors. Specifically, excluded items assessed self-blame for the inter-parental conflict and conflict properties. Table 2 presents the loadings of the 36 items on the three factors. Table 2 also displays the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients of the three subscales. The three subscales were found to be internally consistent within the present sample, Conflict Properties, $\alpha = .91$; Threat, $\alpha = .79$; Self-blame, $\alpha = .80$. In comparison to those reported by Grych et al. (1992), the alphas were similar: Conflict Properties, $\alpha = .90$; Threat, $\alpha = .83$; Self-Blame, $\alpha = .81$.

Procedure

Participants were met in their schools during the school day in a quiet location and, in groups of five, completed during the meeting a booklet that included (a) the Peer Social Network Diagram, (b) the Friendship Qualities Scale, (c) a "roster-and-rating" sociometric scale, and (d) the Children's Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale. The booklet, administered by the first author, took approximately 40 minutes to complete. At the end of the session, participants were given the opportunity to ask questions or express their concerns. No incentives were given for participation in the study.

Prior to the main study, a pilot study was conducted in a sample of 50 participants aged 12-16 years in order to explore the feasibility of the main study and pretest research instruments.

RESULTS

Relations between perceived interparental conflict and peer relationships

A series of stepwise multiple regression analyses was performed to examine the extent to which interparental conflict predicted (pre)adolescents' peer

Table 3. Correlations, means and standard deviations for all measures

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Interparental conflict										
Conflict properties	--									
Threat	.331**	--								
Self-blame	.219**	.154*	--							
Social Network										
Peer acceptance	-.149*	-.052	-.152*	--						
Number of friends	-.165**	-.015	-.076	.210**	--					
Best-friendship qualities										
Companionship	-.048	-.076	-.189**	.008	.157*	--				
Conflict	-.129*	-.092	-.117	.051	.021		--			
Help	-.012	-.025	-.186**	.072	.165**	.397**		--		
Security	-.015	-.127*	-.240**	.012	.198**	.468**	.219**	.574**	--	
Closeness	-.109	-.059	-.241**	.143*	.252**	.495**	.138	.528**	.565**	--
M	11.86	6.76	3.45	2.96	13.35	2.68	2.74	3.19	3.23	3.26
SD	8.34	4.18	3.07	.61	4.91	.88	.86	.64	.57	.72

Note. All correlation coefficients were significant at $*p < .05$ $**p < .01$.

acceptance in the classroom and best-friendship qualities. Correlational analyses (see Table 3) showed that none of the correlations between predictor variables exceeded .50, suggesting that multicollinearity was not a factor that might affect results.

Prior to the regressions analyses, a two-way MANOVA was performed to assess possible main effects of gender and age on (pre)adolescents' best-friendship qualities, social network and perceptions of interparental conflict. To correct multiple comparisons and avoid Type I error, Bonferroni correction with level of significance $\alpha = .005$ was used. Results indicated a significant main effect of age on the dimension of help on (pre)adolescents' best friendships, $F(1, 252) = 16.76, p = .000$. Adolescents' best friendships ($M = 3.30$) compared to preadolescents' best friendships ($M = 2.97$) were characterized by more help.

The main effect of gender was significant on the dimensions of security, $F(1, 252) = 12.57, p = .000$, and closeness of (pre)adolescents' best friendships, $F(1, 252) = 17.32, p = .000$. Girls reported more security ($M = 3.36$) and closeness ($M = 3.49$) on their best friendships, as compared to boys ($M = 3.12$ for security and $M = 3.06$ for closeness, respectively). There were no significant interactions between gender and age for any of the dependent variables. Means and standard deviations for each age and gender group are presented in Tables 4 and 5.

Eight separate regression analyses were performed, with peer acceptance, number of friends, companionship, help, security, closeness and conflict as dependent variables, while conflict properties, threat, and self-blame for the interparental conflict were the independent variables. As shown in Table 6,

Table 4. Means, standard deviations, and Fs regarding age effects on children's perceptions of interparental conflict, children's social network and best-friendship qualities

	Preadolescents		Adolescents				
	M	SD	M	SD	F	df	p
Interparental conflict							
Conflict properties	11.63	7.08	12.10	8.56	.01	1, 252	.906
Threat	7.12	4.45	6.33	4.02	1.77	1, 252	.185
Self-blame	3.21	3.16	3.68	3.02	1.02	1, 252	.312
Social Network							
Peer acceptance	2.96	.65	2.85	.55	4.04	1, 252	.048*
Number of friends	13.87	4.79	12.93	4.95	1.88	1, 252	.172
Best-friendship qualities							
Companionship	2.53	.89	2.77	.87	4.01	1, 252	.046*
Conflict	2.90	.76	2.66	.89	4.03	1, 252	.046*
Help	2.97	.69	3.30	.58	16.76	1, 252	.000
Security	3.16	.62	3.26	.54	2.31	1, 252	.129
Closeness	3.40	.69	3.19	.73	4.86	1, 252	.028*

Note. * Nonsignificant; Bonferroni correction $\alpha = .005$.

results of the stepwise multiple regression analyses indicated that self-blame for the interparental conflict was a significant predictor of (pre)adolescents' peer acceptance in the classroom, beta = -.219, $p < .001$. Conflict properties were significant predictors of (pre)adolescents' number of friends, beta = -.165, $p < .01$. The relation between (pre)adolescents' peer acceptance and number of friends, on the one hand, and interparental conflict elements, on the other, was negative in every regression analysis.

Table 5. Means, standard deviations, and Fs regarding gender effects on children's perceptions of interparental conflict, children's social network and best-friendship qualities

	Boys		Girls				
	M	SD	M	SD	F	df	p
Interparental conflict							
Conflict properties	11.60	7.07	12.13	9.56	.002	1,252	.961
Threat	6.10	3.70	7.22	4.60	2.03	1,252	.155
Self-blame	3.6	3.22	3.29	2.77	4.56	1,252	.044*
Social Network							
Peer acceptance	2.96	.57	2.97	.64	.014	1,252	.906
Number of friends	13.87	4.79	12.93	4.95	1.88	1,252	.172
Best-friendship qualities							
Companionship	2.64	.86	2.73	.90	.674	1,252	.412
Conflict	2.65	.87	2.84	.84	4.60	1,252	.033*
Help	3.09	.64	3.30	.62	8.57	1,252	.009*
Security	3.12	.59	3.36	.51	12.57	1,252	.000
Closeness	3.06	.73	3.49	.64	17.32	1,252	.000

Note. * Nonsignificant; Bonferroni correction $\alpha = .005$.

Table 6. Stepwise regression analyses of interparental conflict as predictors of preadolescents' peer relationships

Dependent variables	Interparental conflict									F	df	R²
	Conflict properties			Threat			Self-blame					
	beta	T	sig. T	beta	T	sig. T	beta	T	sig. T			
Peer acceptance	--	--	--	--	--	--	-.219	-3.49	.001	12.46***	1, 248	.05
Number of friends	-.165	-2.65	.009	--	--	--	--	--	--	7.01**	1, 252	.03
Companionship	--	--	--	--	--	--	-.189	-3.05	.003	9.31***	1, 251	.04
Conflict	-.128	-2.02	.044	--	--	--	-.165	-2.48	.014	4.79**	2, 249	.06
Help	--	--	--	--	--	--	-.194	-3.12	.002	9.76**	1, 250	.04
Security	--	--	--	--	--	--	-.231	-3.76	.000	14.13***	1, 251	.05
Closeness	--	--	--	--	--	--	-.248	-4.05	.000	16.43***	1, 251	.06

Note. The dashes indicate that this independent variable was not significant predictor. *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$; beta = standardized regression coefficient.

Table 7. Stepwise regression analyses of interparental conflict as predictors of adolescents' peer relationships as a function of gender

Dependent variables	Interparental conflict									F	df	R²
	Conflict properties			Threat			Self-blame					
	beta	T	sig. T	beta	T	sig. T	beta	T	sig. T			
				Girls								
Number of friends	-.195	-2.17	.032	--	--	--	--	--	--	4.71*	1, 119	.04
Companionship	--	--	--	--	--	--	-.288	-3.29	.001	10.79**	1, 119	.08
Conflict	-.175	-2.01	.048	--	--	--	-.297	-3.39	.001	9.23***	2, 116	.14
Help	--	--	--	--	--	--	-.240	-2.70	.008	7.27**	1, 119	.06
Security	--	--	--	--	--	--	-.191	-2.01	.040	4.32*	1, 114	.04
				Boys								
Peer acceptance	--	--	--	--	--	--	-.272	-3.21	.002	10.30**	1, 129	.07
Conflict	--	--	--	-.219	-2.57	.011	--	--	--	6.57*	1, 131	.05
Security	--	--	--	-.263	-3.12	.002	--	--	--	9.71**	1, 131	.07
Closeness	-.213	-2.44	.016	--	--	--	-.202	-2.31	.022	8.21***	2, 129	.11

Note. The dashes indicate that this independent variable was not significant predictor. *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$; beta = standardized regression coefficient.

In so far as (pre)adolescents' best-friendship qualities are concerned, participants' self-blame for the interparental conflict was the major predictor. More specifically, self-blame was negatively related to all best-friendship qualities, i.e., companionship, beta = -.189, p < .05, help, beta = -.194, p < .01, security, beta = -.231, p < .001, closeness, beta =-.248, p < .001, and conflict, beta = -.165, p < .01 (see Table 6). Threat from the intreparental conflict was not found to significantly predict any of best-friendship qualities.

Gender differences. To examine possible gender differences, as far as the effect of interparental conflict on (pre)adolescents' peer relationships was concerned, a series of multiple stepwise regression analyses was conducted separately for boys and girls. In the stepwise multiple regression analyses, peer acceptance, number of friends, companionship, help, security, closeness and conflict were the dependent variables, while conflict properties, threat, and self-blame for the interparental conflict were the independent variables. Table 7 shows the standardized regression coefficients and the total explained variance for each dependent variable, separately for each gender, and indicates which effects are significant.

Results of the multiple regression analyses showed that there were significant gender differences. Interparental conflict predicted negatively both boys' and girls' peer relationships, but the predictors were different for each gender. In girls, the appraisal of self-blame was the major predictor of their best-friendship qualities, i.e., companionship, beta = -.288, p < .01, help, beta = -.240, p < .01, security, beta = -.191, p < .05, conflict, beta = -.297, p < .01. However, in boys, threat predicted best-friendship qualities, i.e., conflict, beta = -.219, p < .05, and security, beta = -.263, p < .01. In both cases, multiple stepwise regression analyses showed that interparental conflict properties, i.e., frequency, intensity and resolution of conflict, were negatively associated to children's friendships. In girls, conflict properties predicted number of friends, beta = -.195, p < .05, and conflict, beta = -.175, p < .05, while in boys they predicted closeness, beta = -.213, p < .05. Also in boys self-blame significantly predicted peer acceptance, beta = -.272, p < .01, and closeness, beta = -.202, p < .05.

Age differences. To examine possible differences between preadolescents and adolescents as regards the effects of interparental conflict on their peer relationships, a series of multiple stepwise regression analyses were conducted separately for each age group, that is, adolescents and preadolescents. Peer acceptance, number of friends, companionship, help, security, closeness and conflict were the dependent variables, while conflict properties, threat, and self-blame for the interparental conflict were the independent variables.

Table 8. Stepwise regression analyses of interparental conflict as predictor of preadolescents' and adolescents' peer relationships

Dependent variables	Interparental conflict									F	df	R^2
	Conflict properties			Threat			Self-blame					
	beta	T	sig. T	beta	T	sig. T	beta	T	sig. T			
Preadolescents												
Peer acceptance	-.260	-2.45	.016	--	--	--	--	--	--	6.02**	1, 83	.07
Number of friends	--	--	--	--	--	--	-.316	-3.07	.003	9.42**	1, 85	.10
Companionship	--	--	--	--	--	--	-.331	-3.23	.002	10.43**	1, 85	.11
Conflict	--	--	--	--	--	--	-.247	-2.34	.022	5.47*	1, 84	.06
Help	--	--	--	-.331	-3.19	.002	-.396	-3.95	.001	15.63***	2, 80	.16
Security	--	--	--	--	--	--	-.381	-3.80	.000	14.41***	1, 85	.15
Closeness	--	--	--	--	--	--	-.372	-3.58	.001	12.81**	1, 80	.14
Adolescents												
Help	--	--	--	.273	2.64	.022	--	--	--	8.51**	1, 165	.12
Security	--	--	--	--	--	--	-.169	-2.20	.029	4.84*	1, 165	.03
Closeness	--	--	--	.152	1.99	.048	-.188	-2.47	.014	4.71*	2, 164	.06

Note. The dashes indicate that this independent variable was not significant predictor. *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001; beta = standardized regression coefficient.

In preadolescents all elements of interparental conflict predicted children's peer acceptance and friendships. More specifically, as shown in Table 8, conflict properties negatively predicted preadolescents' peer acceptance in the class-room, beta = -.260, p < .01, while threat predicted help, beta = -.331, p < .01. The strongest predictive value occurred in the case of self-blame for the inter-parental conflict. Self-blame predicted preadolescents' number of friends, be-ta = -.316, p < .01, and best-friendship qualities, i.e., companionship, beta = -.331, p < .001, conflict, beta = -.247, p < .05, help, beta = -.396, p < .001, se-curity, beta = -.381, p < .001, and closeness, beta = -.372, p < .01.

Among adolescents, fewer dimensions of their peer relationships were pre-dicted by the elements of interparental conflict. Self-blame was a negative pre-dictor of security, beta = -.169, p < .05, and closeness, beta = -.188, p < .05, in adolescents' friendships. Surprisingly, threat worked as a positive predictor for adolescents' best-friendships qualities, that is, help, beta = .273, p < .01, and closeness, beta = .152, p < .05.

DISCUSSION

The aim of the present study was to examine possible links between inter-parental conflict and (pre)adolescents' peer relationships. It was hypothe-sized that adverse family environment, as reflected in high levels of inter-parental conflict, will negatively affect (pre)adolescents' peer acceptance in the classroom, number of friends, and best-friendship qualities.

Consistent with the hypotheses, incidents of interparental conflict, as re-ported by (pre)adolescents, were found to be negatively associated with (pre)adolescents' peer relations. (Pre)adolescents who experienced fre-quent, intense and poorly resolved interparental conflict, felt threatened and blamed themselves for it, had fewer friends and lower peer acceptance in the classroom. Moreover, their best friendships were characterized by more con-flicts and less companionship, help, security and closeness, as compared to peers who did not experience high levels of interparental conflict. Self-blame for the interparental conflict was the major negative predictor of (pre)ado-lescents' peer relationships. This finding is supported by previous research in this field (Grych & Fincham, 1990; Jouriles, Murphy, Farris, Smith, Richters, & Waters, 1991) suggesting that parental disputes that take place in front of the children and refer directly to them increase their feelings of self-blame (Papp, Cummings, & Goeke-Morey, 2002). The above mentioned

results, namely the negative links between interparental conflict and (pre)adolescents' peer relationships, are in accordance with previous research findings, which showed that exposure to interparental conflict affects negatively children's psychosocial adjustment (Doyle et al., 1994; Kitzmann & Cohen, 2003) and aggravates their aggressive behavior. In addition, results of the present study address the negative impact of interparental conflict specifically on close dyadic relationships of children, their best-friendships.

Regarding gender differences, consistent with our hypotheses, results provided evidence that different elements of interparental conflict predicted boys' and girls' best-friendship qualities. In girls, self-blame was the major predictor of their friendships, whereas in boys, best-friendship qualities were predicted by threat. This result is consistent with previous findings that boys, compared to girls, may be more sensitive to the threat posed by marital conflict (e.g., Cummings et al., 1994, 2004). The impact of self-blame as a predictor of girls' friendships compared to boys' friendships possibly reflects the differences in males' and females' socialization practices. To begin with, research has shown that feelings of self-blame and guilt are more often evident as reactions of girls compared to boys (Zahn-Waxler, 2000). In addition, from an early age, the female gender role requires greater self-regulation and care about others and expression of emotions that minimize disagreements, hostility or disapproval, while the male gender role encourages formation and maintenance of individuality (Broody, 1996; Ferguson, Stegge, Miller, & Olsen, 1999). As Zahn-Waxler and Robinson (1995) point out, such processes may lead girls to develop a misplaced sense of responsibility and blame themselves for others' problems. However, further research is needed to delineate precisely the bases for differences between boys' and girls' perceptions of interparental conflict and their adjustment, as far as relationships with peers is concerned.

Another aim of this study was to examine possible age differences in the relations between the impact of perceived interparental conflict and children's peer relationships. It was hypothesized that repeated incidents of intense and poorly resolved interparental conflict would be negatively linked with all aspects of children's social behavior irrespectively of the age of the participant; however, the impact would be greater in preadolescents. Consistent with our expectations, negative family environment seemed particularly salient for preadolescents, compared to adolescents. For preadolescents, peer acceptance in the classroom, as well as all aspects of their friend-

ships, were negatively associated with conflict properties and the appraisal of self-blame, whereas in adolescents self-blame for the interparental conflict predicted only security and closeness in their friendships. The predominance of self-blame in preadolescents is in accordance with findings of previous studies in which children experienced feelings of self-blame and guilt much more often compared to adolescents or adults (Ferguson, Stegge, & Damhuis, 1991).

The findings reported here converge with those of other investigators concerning age differences in the effect of interparental conflict on children's social behavior (Cassidy, Parke, Butkovsky, & Braungart, 1992; Gottman & Katz, 1989). In an attempt to explain why the impact of interparental conflict was stronger for peer relationships of preadolescents it is useful to consider their developmental status. Preadolescents, compared to adolescents, spend more time at home, a fact that gives them the opportunity to observe and experience parental behaviors. According to processes identified by social learning theory, such as imitation and other social learning influences (Davis et al., 1998), if children witness a nonharmonious parental relationship and conflictual behaviors between spouses it is possible to adopt similar conflict management strategies in their relationships (Maccoby, 1996; Parke & Ladd, 1992).

In contrast to our hypotheses that interparental conflict will be negatively associated with participants' peer relationships, in adolescents threat increased the time spent with their friends as well as the dimension of help and closeness in their best-friendship qualities. One possible explanation for this finding is that in adolescence, more than in any other phase of development, children rely on their friends and share with them personal thoughts and emotions. It is possible that adolescents who witness conflict in the parental relationship turn more often to their friends for support and this increases feelings of help and closeness and consequently strengthens their relationships with peers. Moreover, if interparental conflict is long lasting, it is probable that adolescents rely on their friends rather than on family members in order to fulfill basic emotional needs. Another possible explanation would be that in order to escape from the conflictual home environment adolescents spend most of their time with their friends. In this case, it is likely that positive peer relationships work as "protective factors" that, on the one hand, lead adolescents to spending more time away from home and, on the other, act as buffers against the stress resulting from family conflict (Richardson & McCabe, 2001). However, longitudinal research is needed in order to

explore this possibility and to examine more systematically the protective role peers may play as a response to interparental conflict.

While the results of the present study were statistically significant and in the direction predicted, there are a few methodological limitations that should be considered. One potential restriction is that the participant pool from which the sample was drawn was rather homogeneous (similar socioeconomic backgrounds, Greek, middle to upper class, intact families). Socioeconomic status and culture may play a role in the way interparental conflict and children's peer relationships are linked. In so far as family structure is concerned, it is likely that children from intact families, compared to children from divorced families, experience different degrees of conflict. Future research should attempt to examine samples of participants from both intact and divorced families, representative of all levels of the socioeconomic spectrum, so as to allow for greater generalizability. Secondly, as findings are based upon cross-sectional data, effects and patterns of causal relations cannot be determined and results should be regarded as trends that need further investigation. Future research with longitudinal data will allow us to move beyond simply reporting associations between interparental conflict and child outcomes, towards understanding the precise processes that underlie the effects of interparental relations on children's peer relationships.

In conclusion, the findings of the present study, based on children's self-reports for the parental relationship, replicate previous findings, based on parental reports, indicating that exposure to interparental conflict has adverse effects on children's psychosocial adjustment and peer relationships. The results reported here provide some indications for age differences, showing that preadolescents' peer relationships, compared to adolescents', were more strongly and negatively related to interparental conflict. In terms of gender differences, aspects of interparental conflict were found to be associated differently with boys' and girls' close relationships. These findings hold an important message for parents regarding the influence of marital disputes and negative family experiences on children's peer relationships. They also indicate that, especially in adolescence, the presence of close friendships may moderate the impact of interparental conflict on the developing individual.

REFERENCES

Amato, P. R., & Booth, A. (1996). A prospective study of divorce and parent-child relationship. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 58*, 256-365.

Broody, L. R. (1996). Gender, emotional expression and parent-child boundaries. In R. D. Kavanaugh, B. Zimmerberg, & S. Fein (Eds.), *Emotion: Interdisciplinary perspectives* (pp. 139-170). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Buchanan, C. M., Maccoby, E. E., & Dornbusch, S. M. (1991). Caught between parents: Adolescents' experience in divorced homes. *Child Development, 62*, 1008-1029.

Bukowski, W. M., Hoza, B., & Boivin, M. (1994). Measuring friendship quality during pre- and early adolescence: The development and psychometric properties of the Friendship Qualities Scale. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 11*, 471-484.

Bullock, J. (1991). Parental perceptions of the family and children's peer relations. *Journal of Psychology, 125*, 419-426.

Cassidy, J., Parke, R. D., Butkovsky, L., & Braungart, J. M. (1992). Family-peer connections: The roles of emotional expressiveness within the family and children's understanding of emotions. *Child Development, 63*, 603-618.

Cattell, R. B., & Vogelman, S. (1977). A comprehensive trial of the scree and KG criteria for determining the number of factors. *Multivariate Behavioral Research, 12*, 289-325.

Chase-Lansdale, P. L., Cherlin, A. J., & Kiernan, K. E. (1995). The long-term effects of parental divorce on the mental health of young adults: A developmental perspective. *Child Development, 66*, 1614-1634.

Comrey, A. L., & Lee, H. B. (1992). *A first course in factor analysis* (2nd ed.), Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Cooney, T. M., & Kurz, J. (1996). Mental health outcomes following recent parental divorce. *Journal of Family Issues, 17,* 495-513.

Criss, M. M., Pettit, G. S., Dodge, K. A., & Lapp, A. L. (2002). Family adversity, positive peer relationships and children's externalizing behavior: A longitudinal perspective on risk and resilience. *Child Development, 73*, 1220-1237.

Cummings, E. M. (1987). Coping with background anger in early childhood. *Child Development, 58*, 976-984.

Cummings, E. M., Davies, P. T., & Campbell, S. B. (2001, May). Understanding the impact of marital conflict on children. *Brown University Child and Adolescent Behavior Letter, 17*, 6-7.

Cummings, E. M., Ballard, M., & El- Sheikh, M. (1991). Responses of children and adolescents to inter-adult anger as a function of gender, age and mode of expression. *Merrill Palmer Quarterly, 37*, 543-560.

Cummings, E. M., & Davies, D. (1994). *Children and marital conflict: The impact of family dispute and resolution*. New York: Guilford.

Cummings, E. M., Davies, P., & Simpson, K. (1994). Marital conflict, gender, and children's appraisal and coping efficacy as mediators of child adjustment. *Journal of Family Psychology, 8*, 141-149.

Cummings, E. M., Goeke-Morey, M. C., & Papp L. M. (2004). Everyday marital conflict and child aggression. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 32*, 191-202.

Cummings, E. M., Iannotti, R., & Zahn-Waxler, C. (1985). The influence of conflict between

adults on the emotions and aggression of young children. *Developmental Psychology, 21*, 495-507.

Cummings, E. M., Pellegrini, D. S., & Notarius, C. I. (1989). Children's responses to angry adult behavior as a function of marital distress and history of interparental hostility. *Child Development, 60*, 1035-1043.

Daniels, J. A. (1990). Adolescent separation-individuation and family transitions. *Adolescence, 25*, 105-116.

David, K. M., & Murphy, B. C. (2004). Interparental conflict and late adolescents' sensitization to conflict: The moderating effects of emotional functioning and gender. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 33*, 187-200.

Davies, P. T., Harold, G. T., Goeke-Morey, M. C., & Cummings, E. M. (2002). Child emotional security and interparental conflict. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, 67*(3, Serial No. 270).

Davis, B. T., Hops, H., Alpert, A., & Sheeber, L. (1998). Child responses to parental conflict and their effect on adjustment: A study of triadic relations. *Journal of Family Psychology, 12*, 163-177.

Doyle, A. B., Markiewicz, D., & Hardy, C. (1994). Mothers' and children's friendships: Intergenerational associations. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 11*, 363-377.

Dunlop, R., & Burns, A. (1995). The sleeper effect: Myth or reality? *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 57*, 375-386.

Dunn, J. (2004). *Children's friendships*. London: Sage.

Emery, R. E. (1999). *Marriage, divorce, and children's adjustment* (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Emery, R. E., & O'Leary, K. D. (1982). Children's perceptions of marital discord and behavior problems of boys and girls. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 10*, 11-24.

Feng, D., Giarrusso, R., Bengston, V. I., & Frye, N. (1999). Intergenerational transmission of marital quality and marital instability. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 61*, 451-463.

Ferguson, T. J., Stegge, H., & Damhuis, I. (1991). Children's understanding of guilt and shame. *Child Development, 62*, 827-839.

Ferguson, T. J., Stegge, H., Miller, E. R., & Olsen, M. E. (1999). Guilt, shame and symptoms in children. *Developmental Psychology, 35*, 347-357.

Furman, W., & Burhmester, D. (1992). Age and sex differences in perceptions of networks of social relationships. *Child Development, 63*, 103-115.

Goodman, S. H., Barfoot, B., Frye, A. A., & Belli, A. M. (1999). Dimensions of marital conflict and children's social problem-solving skills. *Journal of Family Psychology, 13*, 33-45.

Gottman, J. M., & Katz, L. F. (1989). Effects of marital discord on young children's peer interaction and health. *Developmental Psychology, 25*, 373-381.

Grych, J. H., & Fincham, F. D. (1990). Marital conflict and children's adjustment: A cognitive-contextual framework. *Psychological Bulletin, 108*, 267-290.

Grych, J. H., & Fincham, F. D. (Eds.). (2001). *Interparental conflict and child development: Theory, research, and applications*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Grych, J. H., Seid, M., & Fincham, F. D. (1992). Assessing marital conflict from the child's perspective: The children's perception of inter-parental conflict scale. *Child Development, 63*, 558-572.

Hayashi, G. M., & Strickland, B. R. (1998). Long-term effects of parental divorce on love relationships: Divorce as attachment disruption. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 15*, 23-38.

Hetherington, E., Cox, M., & Cox, R. (1979). Play and social interaction in children following divorce. *Journal of Social Issues, 35*, 26-49.

Hodges, W. F. (1991). *Interventions for children of divorce: Custody, access, and psychotherapy* (2nd ed.). New York: Wiley.

Jenkins, J. M., Smith, M. A., & Graham, P. J. (1989). Coping with parental quarrels. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 28*, 182-189.

Jouriles, E. N., Murphy, C. M., Farris, A. M., Smith, D. A., Richters, J. E., & Waters, E. (1991). Marital adjustment, parental disagreements about child rearing, and behavior problems in boys: Increasing the specificity of the marital assessment. *Child Development, 62*, 1424-1433.

Katz, L. F., & Gottman, J. M. (1993). Patterns of marital conflict predict children's externalizing and internalizing behaviors. *Developmental Psychology, 29*, 940-950.

Kerig, P. K., Cowan, P. A., & Pape Cowan, C. (1993). Marital quality and gender differences in parent-child interaction. *Developmental Psychology, 29*, 931-939.

Kerig, P. K. (1998). Moderators and mediators of the effects of interparental conflict on children's adjustment. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 26*, 199-212.

Kitzmann, K. M., & Cohen, R. (2003). Parents' versus children's perception of interparental conflict as predictors of friendship quality. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 20*, 689-700.

Ladd, G. W. (1992). Themes and theories: Perspectives on processes in family-peer relationships. In R. Parke & G. Ladd (Eds.), *Family-peer relationships: Modes of linkage* (pp. 3-34). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Ladd, G. W. (1999). Peer relationships and social competence during early and middle childhood. *Annual Review of Psychology, 50*, 333-359.

Little, K., McFarland, F. C., Land, D., Haynes, J., & Allen, J. (2005, April). *Interparental conflict predicting gender differences in adolescent aggression*. Poster presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Atlanta, Georgia.

Long, N., Forehand, R., Fauber, R., & Brody, G. H. (1987). Self-perceived and independently observed competence of young adolescents as a function of parental marital conflict and recent divorce. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 15*, 15-27.

Maccoby, E. (1996). Peer conflict and intra-family conflict: Are there conceptual bridges? *Merrill Palmer Quarterly, 42*, 165-176.

Markland, S. R., & Nelson, E. S. (1993). The relationship between familial conflict and the identity of young adults. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage, 20*, 193-209.

Meyer, J. R., Thompson, T. W., McHelaney, K. B., & Allen, J. (2005, April). *Marital satisfaction and the development of autonomy and close friendships in early adolescence*. Poster presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Atlanta, Georgia.

Michael, E., & Spiegel, A. (2003). Parental conflict and intimacy: Do our perceptions influence the formation of personal relationships? *Colgate University Journal of the Sciences, 35*, 147-156.

Moore, T., & Pepler, D. (June, 1996). *Children exposed to family violence: Gender differences*.

Paper presented at the First National Conference on Children Exposed to Violence, Austin, Texas.

Nelson, W. L., Hughes, H. M., Handal, P., Katz, B., & Searight, H. R. (1993). The relationship of family structure and family conflict to adjustment in young adult college students. *Adolescence, 28,* 29-40.

Osborne, L. N., & Fincham, F. D. (1996). Marital conflict, parent-child relationships, and child adjustment: Does gender matter? *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 42,* 48-75.

Papp, L. M., Cummings, E. M., & Goeke-Morey, M. C. (2002). Marital conflicts in the home when children are present versus absent. *Developmental Psychology, 38,* 774-783.

Parke, R., & Ladd, G. (1992). *Family-peer relationships: Modes of linkage.* Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Parker, J. G., & Asher, S. R. (1993). Friendship and friendship quality in middle childhood: Links with peer group acceptance and feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction. *Developmental Psychology, 29,* 611-621.

Parker, J. G., & Herrera, C. (1996). Interpersonal processes in friendship: A comparison of maltreated and non-maltreated children's experiences. *Developmental Psychology, 32,* 1025-1038.

Porter, B., & O'Leary, K. D. (1980). Marital discord and childhood behavioral problems. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 8,* 287-295.

Putallaz, M., & Heflin, A. (1990). Parent-child interaction. In S. R. Asher & J. D. Coie (Eds.), *Peer rejection in childhood* (pp. 60-89). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Richardson, S., & McCabe, M. P. (2001) Parental divorce during adolescence and adjustment in early adulthood. *Adolescence, 36,* 467-489.

Singleton, L. C., & Asher, S. R. (1977). Peer preferences and social interaction among 3rd grade children in an integrated school district. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 69,* 330-336.

Strassberg, Z., Dodge, K. A., Bates, J. E., & Pettit, G. S. (1992). The longitudinal relation between parental conflict strategies and children's sociometric standing in kindergarten. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 38,* 477-493.

Summers, P., Forehand, R., Armistead, L., & Tannenbaum, L. (1998). Parental divorce during early adolescence in Caucasian families: The role of family process variables in predicting the long-term consequences for early adult psychosocial adjustment. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 66,* 327-336.

Zahn-Waxler, C. (2000). The development of empathy, guilt, and internalization of distress: Implications for gender differences in internalizing and externalizing problems. In R. Davidson (Ed.), *Anxiety, depression and emotion* (pp. 222-265). New York: Oxford University Press.

Zahn-Waxler, C., & Robinson, J. (1995). Empathy and guilt: Early origins of feelings of responsibility. In K. Fischer & J. Tangey (Eds.), *Self-conscious emotions: Shame, guilt, embarrassment and pride* (pp. 143-173). New York: Guilford.