

POWER ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN INTERPARENTAL, PARENT-CHILD
AND CHILD-PEER RELATIONSHIPS

By

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Abstract

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Structural and process dimensions of power dynamics in interparental, parent-child, and child-peer relationships were measured to test whether power dynamics in family relationships are associated with power dynamics in children's relationships with their peers. Mothers from participating families were recruited through their children's enrolment in early childhood education programs in Pullman, WA, and were predominantly white, middle class, married, and educated with at least a GED or high school diploma ($N = 42$). Mother reports on the Conflict Tactic Scale and Final Say questionnaires were compared with self-reports of parental power assertion and with observed frequencies of children's prosocial and coercive behaviors and dominance ranks in semi-structured playgroup activities. Findings suggest that the use of negotiation conflict tactics in interparental relationships is associated with parental physical control and with less child-peer coercion, a link that is not mediated through the parent-child relationship. Parenting behaviors were not found to be significantly associated either with power structure in interparental relationships or with children's social outcomes, suggesting that expectations of associations in power dynamics between asymmetrical parent-child relationships and horizontal child-peer relationships may not be reasonable. Findings are discussed in terms of their potential implications for therapy, family programs, social policy, and future research on children's development of social competence and dominance among peers.

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To all those who have traveled with me on this personal and academic journey

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Children's social competence in peer interactions is related to numerous indicators of healthy development and overall adjustment (Berndt, 1996; Bukowski, Newcomb, & Hartup, 1996; Parker & Asher, 1987), and has been studied in terms of children's displays of social dominance (i.e., resource-control status) during peer interactions (Hawley, 2002; Roseth, Pellegrini, Bohn, Van Ryzin, & Vance, 2007). Research on interparental relationship power and triadic family functioning suggests a potential link between family processes and children's interactions with peers. Examining the connections between family and peer interactions can increase understanding of contextual influences on the development of social competence, and can inform therapy, intervention and prevention practices, social policy decisions, and future research. This study examines associations between power in interparental and parent-child relationships and children's social behaviors and dominance with peers in order to better understand how children's peer experiences may be associated with dimensions of structure and process in the family system.

Family Systems Theory provides a useful framework for conceptualizing and making hypotheses about family influences that are not specific to one family member or one relationship within a family system. Although far from comprehensive, Family Systems Theory emphasizes the importance of reciprocity in influence and interaction within the family system which adds substantially to our understanding of the whole family. Application of Family Systems Theory to research allows for the assessment and analysis of holistic measurements of structure and process dimensions within a family. Power structure is one holistic feature of family systems and relationship subsystems that describes the manner in which members interact

(Coleman & Straus, 1986; Kolb & Straus, 1974; Ronfeldt, Kimberling, & Arias, 1998). Social power can be described either as a hierarchical structure or as a relational style of exerting influence or control on the behaviors of others (Pollard & Mitchell, 1972). Several links may explain associations between interparental relationship processes and child adjustment, including (1) *modeling*, or a child's observation, interpretation, and replication of observed behaviors (Bandura, 1969; Mischel, 1973); (2) *coparenting*, or parents' interaction style with each other when parenting a child jointly (Gable, Crnic, & Belsky, 1995; S. Minuchin, 1974); and (3) *spillover*, or the transfer of behaviors and emotions from one setting to another (Erel & Burman, 1995; Katz & Gottman, 1996; Lindahl & Malik, 1999). These processes help to explain how interparental power may shape children's interaction styles with their peers.

Increasing knowledge about the specific and collective associations between family relationships and child outcomes allows for speculation on how power dynamics may be similar or different across family and child-peer relationship contexts. Information relating to this topic is useful for informing future research on the specific mechanisms through which family contexts may influence children's development of social competence and social dominance during interactions with their peers.

The purpose of the current study is to examine whether power dynamics in family relationships are associated with power dynamics in children's relationships with their peers. Associations between interparental, parent-child, and child-peer power dynamics are explored using correlations and regression analyses, and the direction and strength of these associations are used to investigate whether family relationship subsystems are independently or collaboratively related to children's social interactions with their peers. Family Systems Theory is used as a framework to (1) review literature on relationship power and interparental, parent-

child and triadic family functioning as they relate to child outcomes and, specifically, to inform research questions and hypotheses; (2) describe the methodological approaches used in this study; (3) present research findings; and (4) discuss implications for therapy, intervention and prevention practices, social policy decisions, and future research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Family Influences and Child Adjustment

Social competence, or the ability to simultaneously maintain positive relationships and achieve personal goals in social situations (Rubin & Rose-Krasnor, 1992), has been demonstrated as important for children's overall adjustment and development (Berndt, 1996; Bukowski et al., 1996; Parker & Asher, 1987). Social competence has been found to be correlated with outcomes such as school adjustment, social engagement, self-awareness, and self-esteem (Bukowski et al., 1996). One dimension of peer relationships that has been studied in relation to social competence is dominance. *Social dominance*, defined as resource-control status in relation to other group members (de Waal, 1982), or a social ordering of toughness (Pellegrini, 2003), has been studied in the context of research on children's social competence in peer relationships. Social dominance is related to social competence in that dominant individuals are often perceived by others as leaders (Roseth et al., 2007) or as socially competent (i.e., popular) even when using coercive along with prosocial means to achieve their own goals (Hawley, 2002). Although these two constructs are related, the extent to which social dominance is directly comparable to social competence is somewhat uncertain. Aggression, a coercive tactic for achieving social dominance (Dodge, 1991), has traditionally been assumed to be evidence of poor social competence, but recent discoveries of covariance between rates of aggressive and prosocial behaviors in children have provided support for the hypothesis that aggression may be strategically employed along with prosocial tactics by socially competent children (Hawley, 2002; Roseth et al., 2007).

Social power, or the exertion of influence or control from one person to another (Wentzel

& Feldman, 1996), is relevant to social competence as a means to both achieve personal goals and maintain positive relationships with others. Social power can be used to establish social dominance, but can also be described as bidirectional or reciprocal between both dominant and submissive individuals (Cromwell & Olson, 1975). Social power is a fundamental property of family and relationship structure. The organization of power within a family provides the foundation for the interactions between family members (Steinglass, 1987). Information about the way power dynamics are consistent or vary across relationships is useful for understanding family influences on children's adjustment, including children's development of social competence and the exertion of social dominance when among peers.

Children's social competence has been predicted by parenting practices, including warm and responsive parenting (Harrist, Pettit, Dodge, & Bates, 1994; McFadyen-Ketchum, Bates, Dodge, & Pettit, 1996; Mize & Pettit, 1997) and maternal coaching (Finnie & Russell, 1988; Pettit, Brown, Mize & Lindsey, 1998; Russell & Finnie, 1990), suggesting that children's social interactions with their peers may shape, or be shaped by, parenting efforts. In addition to research on the link between parent-child relationships and children's social competence, several other links are hypothesized to explain the associations between interparental relationship quality and child adjustment. Children's observation and imitation of interparental conflict patterns may explain the link between interparental conflict and children's externalizing behaviors according to the *social learning model* (Emery, 1982; Erel & Burman, 1995). Research on joint parenting, or *coparenting*, has demonstrated that parenting as a team is associated with child adjustment (Belsky, Putnam, & Crnic, 1996; Katz & Low, 2004; McHale, Kuersten & Lawretti, 1996; McHale, Johnson & Sinclair, 1999; Westerman & Schonholtz, 1993). Finally, the *spillover hypothesis* suggests that interparental conflict influences child outcomes indirectly through

decreases in the quality of parent-child relationships and coparenting processes (for a review, see Erel & Burman, 1995).

The suggested pathways of parenting, modeling, coparenting, and spillover are not mutually exclusive; two or three of them may operate simultaneously within a family system and are likely to interact with each other. Due to the complex nature of these multiple interactive processes, Family Systems Theory provides a more comprehensive framework that allows us to integrate these lines of family research in order to hypothetically explain larger amounts of variance in family outcomes, including child behaviors and child adjustment.

Family Systems Theory

Family Systems Theory is an outgrowth of general systems theory that has been applied to family sciences in order to explain the organizational and reciprocal nature of the family system (Jackson, 1965; P. Minuchin, 1985). Family Systems Theory can be used to conceptualize the effect of family processes and structures on relationship subsystems and on individual adjustment (P. Minuchin, 1985; Olson, Sprenkle, & Russell, 1979). This theoretical perspective posits that relationship subsystems are interdependent and organized within the entire family system (P. Minuchin, 1985), and that stability and change in that system occur through reciprocal interactions between the subsystems (S. Minuchin, 1974).

A Family Systems perspective on power allows us to consider how power dynamics within one relationship may influence other relationships or individuals within the family. For example, Wentzel and Feldman (1996) compared the global ratings of family cohesion and family power structure to adolescent outcomes, and found that adolescents who rated their parents as equalitarian (i.e., egalitarian) were most likely to report low levels of depression and high levels of social self-concept and self-restraint. Laboratory observations of dyadic and triadic

discussions have also suggested that marital power is related to measures of whole-family functioning, such as cohesion (Lindahl, Malik, Kaczynski, & Simons, 2004), to parents' emotional support of their children when interacting as a triad (Lindahl & Malik, 1999; McHale, 1995), and to children's internalizing and externalizing behaviors (Lindahl, 2004). An understanding of Family Systems Theory and its compatibility with structural and process dimensions of power in family relationship subsystems has provided the basis for the current research questions and hypotheses of positive associations in power dynamics between interparental, parent-child, and child-peer relationship subsystems.

Dyadic Family Functioning

Applying Family Systems Theory to family studies employs the measurement of family functioning and reciprocal influences between individual members and the group. While assessment of entire families and extended family or kinship networks is not always feasible, relationship subsystems are often targeted in terms of dyadic (e.g., marital) or triadic (e.g., coparental) relationship functioning. Information about the way relationships and individuals influence each other adds more to our understanding of family systems than we could obtain through acquiring information about individuals in isolation.

Social power has been a target of theoretical speculation and empirical testing in almost all social science fields, and its measurement remains elusive in spite of its apparent ubiquity (Dahl, 1957; Cromwell & Olson, 1975). Within the social sciences, operationalizations of social power have been broken down into relationship power, based on direct influence or coercion between individuals, and more broad societal influences, such as cultural and political forces (Pollard & Mitchel, 1972). More pertinent to research on family interactions, relationship power can be differentiated according to four main areas of focus: attributes (i.e., personal

characteristics affording someone potential influence), context (i.e., cultural legitimization of authority), outcomes (i.e., final say in decisions), and processes (i.e., reciprocal patterns of influence). Theoretical and methodological strengths as well as weaknesses are associated with each of these conceptualizations of relationship power when applying them to the measurement of relationships and family functioning. A review of research on social power in interparental, parent-child, and child-peer dyads is paramount to the current study of social power associations across multiple dyadic relationship contexts.

Power in Intimate Partner Relationships

Social power in marital or partner relationships has been studied in relation to conflict (Coleman & Straus, 1986), problem solving ability (Kolb & Straus, 1974), marital commitment (Stets & Hammons, 2002), sexual behaviors (Pulerwitz, Gortmaker, & Dejong, 2000), relationship satisfaction (Bean, Curtis, & Marcum, 1977; Rogers, Bidwell, & Wilson, 2005; Ronfeldt et al., 1998), and marital happiness (Kolb & Straus, 1974). Much of this research conceptualizes relationship power along dimensions of decision-making outcomes (Coleman & Straus, 1986; Pulerwitz et al., 2000; Ronfeldt et al., 1998) or bidirectional processes of influence (Kolb & Straus, 1974; Stets, 1993; Stets & Hammons, 2002). Both of these approaches to the study of power stem from different operationalizations of the construct and have unique contributions to our understanding of power dynamics as they exist in partner relationships.

Power in outcomes. Conceptualizations of relationship power from an outcomes perspective equate power with controlling the ultimate outcome of a joint or group decision. Application of the outcome perspective of power to marital relationship structures generally uses decision-making outcomes to infer power structures or hierarchies within partnerships. Defining power by decision-making outcomes makes this construct directly observable from an outside

source and easily adaptable to quantitative measurements, arguably leaving less room for subjectivity or error. Measurements of who has the “final say” in family decisions (such as employment, childrearing, and purchase decisions) have been collected through self-report questionnaires (Blood & Wolfe, 1960) for the purpose of assessing marital power distribution in comparison with other relationship dimensions, such as conflict and satisfaction (Coleman & Straus, 1986). For example, Coleman and Straus (1986) found that partners in egalitarian relationships were least likely to report high levels of marital conflict, regardless of the level of consensus on how the power dynamic *should* be.

Herbst (1952, 1954) suggested that marital power structures can be categorized according to general patterns of dominance in regular activities. He suggested that marriages with power discrepancies (i.e., nonegalitarian) can be *husband-dominant* or *wife-dominant* when one partner more frequently makes decisions, and *autocratic* when one partner makes all decisions. Interestingly, Herbst also provided two categories for marriages that are equally divided in power. *Syncratic* patterns are apparent in marriages where partners approach decisions in a predominantly cooperative fashion. By contrast, *autonomic* patterns are evident in marriages where partners divide authority over various decisions and make many of them autonomously, as might be seen in a breadwinner-homemaker relationship model. In these types of relationships, power discrepancies may exist within each specific domain, favoring one partner’s influence over the other’s, but may even out when considering all domains collectively. Herbst’s (1952, 1954) method of categorization of marital power structures is helpful because it allows us to delineate egalitarian relationships into more cohesive (i.e., syncratic) and more independent (i.e. autonomic) partnerships, which may have different influences on family systems and specific members.

Measuring power arrangements through assessment of final say in decision outcomes provides many benefits to the study of dominance and power in partner relationships. Unfortunately, the reductionistic nature of this operationalization does not allow us to see reciprocal ways in which partners may influence each other in coming to a joint decision, or take into account how a more dominant partner may allocate decision-making power to a submissive person without losing his or her place within the hierarchy. The complexity of this puzzle can be illustrated by asking whether more power resides within the person who makes a decision or within the person who decides who makes the decision (Olson & Cromwell, 1975). Low to moderate levels of agreement between partners' self-reports of relationship power are common (Booth & Welsch, 1978; Feldman, Wentzel, & Gehring, 1989; Green & Kolevzon, 1986; Olson & Rabunsky, 1972), and research comparing observational and self-report measures of power structures has demonstrated low levels of concordance between these two types of measurement (Feldman et al., 1989), giving rise to questions of construct validity in outcome measurements of power dynamics in relationships.

Power in process. Conceptualizations of power from a processes perspective focus on the specific interactions that occur during a decision-making process. By analyzing the reciprocal and cumulative nature of these interpersonal processes we may gain a fuller picture of how power dynamics develop and how they affect relationship members and the family system as a whole. In applying general systems theory to family therapy, authors have drawn attention to the causal interrelatedness of behaviors in an interaction sequence (Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967) and to the potential for implicit family rules to govern who has input, who makes decisions and who decides who makes decisions (Jackson, 1965).

S. Minuchin's (1974) approach to family therapy emphasized that family members

interact according to an invisible structure that operates through their patterns of interaction. He suggested that many of these transactional patterns are developed or reorganized during transitional periods (e.g., marriage or childbearing), after which they tend to stabilize as implicit rules for conduct. The subsequent rigidity of these family rules is related to the adaptability of relationships and of the family system. Marital partners may be virtually unaware that they operate from within a structure of interactional patterns because they are not routinely renegotiated and may never have been explicitly addressed. Broderick (1975) suggested that many rules (e.g., common courtesy) influence people through implicit contracts that exist between affected individuals, and that this form of family governance is evidence of an achieved style of interaction, rather than a net force that is transmitted from dominant to submissive members. When looking at a relationship systemically, selective compliance (i.e., picking one's battles) can also be viewed as a strategy to influence another person (Olson & Cromwell, 1975).

Empirical evidence supports the notion that people are not accustomed to thinking about their interactions in terms of power (Olson & Cromwell, 1975). A multimethod study by Kenkel (1963) demonstrated considerable differences between couples' descriptions and researchers' observations of decision-making roles in a laboratory session. These results not only suggested that husbands and wives were unable to accurately predict how much they would talk, how many ideas and suggestions they would offer, and who would "keep things moving smoothly," but also that their post-session reports of these roles showed little improvement in accuracy over pre-session reports, despite being collected immediately following the lab session. Similarly, Hill (1965) found significant differences in marital power arrangements (categorized as husband-centered, wife-centered, and equalitarian) when comparing interview data with self-report questionnaire responses on couples' decision-making. Compared to the self-reports from the

questionnaire, the interview measure revealed significantly lower rates of equalitarianism in the amount of talking, amount of influence, and who had the final say in family decisions. These studies suggest the possibility that partners are relatively unaware of the decision making processes they experience, or that partners' conceptualizations of them differ significantly from what objective measures can capture. However, low concordance between observer and self-report measures may be taken as evidence of the importance of partner's perceptions in the development and impact of interparental power arrangements on individual partners and on the family system as a whole.

Power in perception. In addition to process- and outcome-based constructs, power dynamics have also been studied in relation to the legitimization afforded by others. Partners' belief that power arrangements are "as they should be" can be as important as, if not more important than, the "fairness" of the power distribution. Research on dating violence and intimate partner violence suggests that individuals are more likely to employ violent control tactics against a romantic partner when they are unsatisfied with their perceived level of power (Rogers et al., 2005; Ronfeldt et al., 1998) or feel their control in the relationship has been threatened (Stets, 1993). Coleman and Straus (1996) extended Blood and Wolfe's (1960) "final say" questionnaire to include measures of who *should* have the final say, and found that mutual agreement on the legitimacy of male-dominance was associated with low levels of conflict, irrespective of the self-reported hierarchy. The results of these studies suggest that a person's satisfaction with their power in a relationship may be even more closely related to their behaviors than their perception of their place within a dominance hierarchy.

In studying Japanese-American marriages in a sample of Hawaiian residents, Johnson (1995) described how the legitimization of authority, in this case through acknowledgment of a

culturally predominant dominance hierarchy, can influence perceptions of power distribution even when personal resources and role definitions suggest an alternative arrangement of power. Her qualitative data described how many women regarded their husbands as holding a superior position in the family even when the women assumed a dominant role in making most family-based decisions. This suggests the intriguing possibility that a discrepancy between outcome measures of power distribution and perceived hierarchy may exist in some relationships.

In considering the unique contributions of relationship perception and satisfaction to the accurate prediction of partner behaviors, it seems likely that these elements play a crucial role in shaping both romantic relationships and possibly other aspects of the family system. In addition, it is reasonable to expect the substantial impact of interparental satisfaction on family structure or on other family relationships to be actualized through the behaviors exhibited by satisfied and unsatisfied partners. For this reason, interparental power was operationalized and measured along dimensions of both process and outcomes in the current study. Mothers' reported frequencies of negotiation and psychologically controlling conflict tactics used by both partners served as a measure of power assertion processes between them, and the division of authority in family decisions, or the extent to which interparental relationships are autonomic or syncretic, was measured through self-reports of final say in various decisions.

Power in Parent-Child Relationships

Parent-child interactions are an obvious way that families influence children's behaviors and adjustment. Children's dependence on parents and their relative lack of skills and resources lead to parent-child relationships that are, for the most part, asymmetrical, with distributions of power in favor of parents (Kuczynski, 2003). Parents tend to be stronger physically, more informed, and more able to plan ahead and problem-solve, all examples of resources that give

them an advantage when interacting with young children (Kuczynski, 2003). Because parenting behaviors have routinely been found to predict children's outcomes of social competence, it seems likely that parental behaviors would also be linked to children's development of social dominance in peer relationships.

Parental power assertion. When measured explicitly, parental power assertion has been conceptualized both broadly, as an attempt to change a child's behavior (Werner, Senich, & Przepyszny, 2006); and narrowly, including commands, reprimands, and physical enforcement (Kuczynski & Kochanska, 1990); intrusiveness (e.g., interrupting; Ladd & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 1998); or harsh criticism and punishment (Lytton, 1977). In both broad and narrow operationalizations of parental power assertion, the emphasis on ensuring or eliciting change in children's behavior makes it very similar to the construct of parental control. Parental control, most loosely defined as involvement in children's lives (Grolnick, 2003), is also similar to parental power assertion in that it has been defined and operationalized diversely, including both mild provisions of environmental structure as well as harsh parental demands for unquestioning obedience (Grolnick, 2003).

Variation in the definitions of parental control has been examined to explain inconsistent findings on its benefits and detriments for children (Grolnick, 2003). Grolnick (2003) argued that parental control in the form of structure and involvement is healthy for children and associated with the development of autonomy and competence. By contrast, psychologically controlling parenting in the form of love withdrawal has been argued as detrimental to children's development, undermining their autonomy and leading to internalizing problems (Grolnick, 2003). Barber (1996) also differentiated parental control into psychological control, or emotionally or psychologically intrusive control attempts, and parental behavioral control, or

unintrusive attempts to change children's behaviors, and has suggested that only psychological control is associated with internalizing problems, such as depression.

Similar to the inconsistencies in child outcomes associated with parental control, the operationalization of parental power assertion is likely to account for varied findings in the outcomes associated with this construct. When power assertion is operationalized as coercive and harsh, it has been found to predict negative outcomes such as noncompliance (Lytton, 1977), internalizing and externalizing behaviors (Deater-Deckard, Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 1998; Kuczynski & Kochanska, 1990), and less mature moral reasoning (Kochanska, Aksan, & Nichols, 2003; Walker, Hennig, & Krettenauer, 2000; Walker & Taylor, 1991). When operationalized as parental guidance or removal of privileges, however, parental power assertion has been found to correlate with *lower* levels of behavior problems, such as aggression (Werner et al., 2006), and with higher levels of marital satisfaction and family problem-solving ability (Kolb & Straus, 1974). A more careful delineation of this construct in future research may improve the consistency of research findings as well as the construct validity of parental power assertion, but such a task is beyond the scope of this paper.

Other areas of research on parenting practices are relevant to the study of family influences on children's development of social competence as well. Low levels of maternal coercion, for example, as well as warm and responsive mothering have been found to predict lower levels of aggression and higher levels of social competence between children and their peers (Harrist et al., 1994; MacKinnon-Lewis et al., 1994; McFadyen-Ketchum et al., 1996; Mize & Pettit, 1997). Maternal coaching has also been found to correlate with children's successful group entry (Russell & Finnie, 1990), social status, (i.e., desirability as a playmate; Finnie & Russell, 1988), and general social competence (Pettit et al., 1998). *Maternal coaching*

is a form of guidance, advice, or instruction that mothers provide their children (Russell & Finnie, 1990), perhaps similar to mild power assertion in its application of influence. Mother-child synchrony, including mutual engagement and connectedness between the mother and child, has also been found to be associated with children's social competence through the measurement of internalizing and externalizing behaviors (Harrist et al., 1994). This literature points to the importance of studying child-peer relationships within a context of parent-child relationship quality, and maternal influence in particular. In the current study, both mild and harsh dimensions of parental power assertion were assessed. Parents' self-reports of consequence delivery, prohibition, or behavior-directing responses to hypothetical vignettes of misbehavior were used to measure relatively mild power assertive strategies. Parents' self-reported frequencies of harsh discipline and psychologically controlling behaviors were used to assess more severe forms of parental power assertion.

Reciprocity in parent-child power dynamics. While parent-child relationships are recognized for their asymmetrical power distribution (e.g., Kuczynski, 2003), children's ability to influence parents through behaviors such as whining or negotiation illustrates that these relationships are far from unilateral, and that children retain some level of power in them. In assessing structural dimensions of theoretically horizontal relationships, those in which one person does not have automatic authority over another, power structure can be measured within the dyad by looking at one person's level of control relative to the other's. In asymmetrical relationships however, relative power distribution is much more difficult to quantify. Emerson (1962) suggested that individuals' power over others is equal to and based on others' level of dependence on them. Based on this framework, parental requests for compliance or good behavior in children may, even inadvertently, afford children some power in the parent-child

relationship. In addition, parental concern for the well-being of their children renders them responsive to children's actions and reactions, another source of child-to-parent influence.

There is some debate about the legitimacy of children's power over parents, as it can also be argued that parental sufferance is evidence of a more powerful position held by the parent (Blau, 1964) or that selective compliance with another's wishes may serve to increase the effectiveness of power assertion when a person chooses to employ it (Olson & Cromwell, 1975). Still, understanding the reciprocal nature of parent-child power dynamics challenges our assumptions of parenting and socialization as a unilateral transference of influence. Knowing that children have a direct impact on their parents through the parent-child relationship gives rise to questions of how children's peer relationships may exert influence on, as well as be influenced by, parent-child relationships. These questions regarding reciprocal influences between parent-child and child-peer relationships are in keeping with Family Systems Theory, which suggests that reciprocal interactions between family members and relationship subsystems are central elements of a family system. Attention to Family Systems Theory also sheds light on the possibility that whole-family characteristics, derived in part from these interactions, may also influence individual members or relationship subsystems that are connected to the family system. It could be that similarities between parent-child and child-peer relationships are due to parent and child exposure to the same family context.

Power in Child-Peer Relationships

Children's power dynamics with peers are relevant to family studies due to associations between child-peer and child-parent interactions (Kuczynski & Kochanska, 1990) and, by extension, the likelihood that children's experiences in each of these social contexts shape their behaviors in the other. A general understanding of the development of social dominance during

childhood is beneficial for framing research on the way children's exertion of power in peer relationships may be related to family contexts.

In a review article, Hawley (1999) found that the most successful social dominance behaviors during early childhood, namely overtly coercive strategies, cease to be effective after kindergarten. Instead, behaviors such as cooperation, alliance formation, and more covert manipulation emerge as the most effective strategies for social dominance. Aside from gradual developmental changes in dominance tactics, some studies have demonstrated that children's aggressive behaviors tend to decline after social dominance has been established (Pellegrini, 2003; Roseth et al., 2007). Hawley's (1999) and Roseth et al.'s (2007) works suggest that the development of social dominance is dependent on individuals' adaptation of their behavioral strategies to maintain or vie for power in relationships and argue for the importance of environmental and experiential influences in its emergence and continuation. Increased understanding of the specific environmental and experiential influences on children's development of social dominance as well as their execution of prosocial and coercive strategies to establish and maintain it may add to our understanding of the development of social competence and its relation to children's overall adjustment. Of specific relevance to the field of family studies, associations between interparental, parent-child, and child-peer power arrangements stand to inform future research on the ways in which families may shape children's development of social competence and expression of various strategies of influence with peers.

Several additional dimensions of child behavior tendencies are relevant, though not identical, to the study of social dominance in peer relationships. The prevalence of internalizing behaviors, including social withdrawal, anxiety, and depression, as well as externalizing behaviors, including aggression and delinquency (Achenbach, 1991), are two common

measurements of social competence in child adjustment. Because aggressive or coercive attempts to control others provide a means of establishing social dominance, and because anxiety and depression tend to be accompanied by social withdrawal (Achenbach, 1991), externalizing and internalizing behaviors are both relevant to the development of social competence and dominance hierarchies among children and their peers.

Bullying and victimization are two other behavioral outcomes that have been studied in relation to social competence. Peer victimization has been found to be associated with loneliness (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996), rejection (Crick, Casas, & Ku, 1999), school adjustment (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996), and internalizing behaviors (Crick et al., 1999), and is predicted by parental rejection and overprotectiveness (Finnegan, Hodges, & Perry, 1998) low parental responsiveness (Ladd & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 1998), corporal punishment and verbal hostility (Hart et al., 2000), and high parental control in the form of demandingness and intrusiveness (e.g., interrupting and placing behavioral demands; Ladd & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 1998). Peer bullying, or the use of aggressive tactics for acquiring objects or achieving peer group dominance (Dodge, 1991), has been found to be associated with maladjustment and problems in adulthood (Renken, Egeland, Marvinney, Mangelsdorf, & Sroufe, 1989), and is predicted by lack of parental responsiveness (Hart, Nelson, Robinson, Olson, & McNeilly-Choque, 1998), nonreasoning coercion (MacKinnon-Lewis et al., 1994), corporal punishment and verbal hostility (Hart et al., 2000), and exposure to interadult aggression and conflict (Schwartz, Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 1997).

Finally, aggressive victimization, or the tendency to retaliate aggressively when victimized, has been found to be associated with negative outcomes such as peer rejection and social and behavioral maladjustment (Schwartz et al., 1997), as well as punitive and hostile

family treatment and parental displays of physical aggression in interadult and parent-child interaction (Schwartz et al., 1997, Schwartz, Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 2000). It is possible to achieve social dominance without resorting to aggression, but the coercive nature of bullying behaviors makes the study of victims and perpetrators relevant to the study of social competence and social dominance among peers.

When considering the overlap between constructs of social dominance, internalizing and externalizing, and bullying and victimization, it becomes clear that child-peer power assertion in the form of coercion is often associated with negative outcomes, both for the coercive and the coerced. Earlier discussion of the operational flexibility of this construct alerts us to the possibility that some forms of power assertion may also be beneficial. Some research has looked at the way child-peer power assertion is associated with social status (Hawley, 1999; Ostrov, Pilat, & Crick, 2006) and social competence (Roseth et al., 2007). Interestingly, some children who employ both aggressive and affiliative behaviors with their peers have been found to be rated by teachers as leaders (Roseth et al., 2007) and by their peers as sociometrically popular (Hawley, 1999; Ostrov et al., 2006). At the very least, this pattern suggests that the use of power assertion in peer relationships is not necessary and sufficient for the identification of social incompetence.

The central role of power dynamics in interparental, parent-child, and child-peer relationships gives rise to questions regarding the consistencies or inconsistencies among these relationship contexts when considering the many other associations that have been demonstrated between parenting practices and children's social behaviors. Reciprocal processes of influence likely occur between interparental, parent-child, and child-peer relationship subsystems that impact, and are impacted by, properties of the family system. This possibility gives rise to the

study of family interactions in triadic and whole family contexts.

Triadic Family Functioning

Measurements of triadic family functioning (including a target child and both of his or her parents) are useful for framing research questions that pertain to the association between marital or interparental relationship subsystems and child adjustment. From a family systems perspective, the qualities of a triadic system can be measured along two basic dimensions: family structure and family process. *Family structure* from this perspective is conceptualized as the organizational architecture of the family system (rather than the legal and genetic ties between family members). *Family process* is described as the dynamic, or style of interaction, that emerges within and between subsystems (S. Minuchin, 1974; Schoppe, Mangelsdorf, & Frosch, 2001).

Steinglass (1987) offered an illustrative analogy for differentiating these two constructs by comparing them to a theatrical production. He described family structure as analogous to the relative placement of actors on a stage, and described family process as analogous to the dialogue between them (Steinglass, 1987). Thus, family structure can be thought of as “setting the stage” for relational discourse. Specifically related to measurement of power in families, power structure, or hierarchical organization of members in a family system can be thought of as setting the stage for power-assertive behaviors between those members. The mechanisms through which interparental relationships are thought to influence child adjustment (modeling, coparenting, and spillover) are types of processes that function within the boundaries of a family structure. In the following sections I will review some research to demonstrate the importance of both process and structure dimensions of a family system for relationship subsystems and for individual adjustment.

Triadic Family Processes

Family affective processes, or interaction behaviors, consist of the typical behaviors and responses that occur between and within family subsystems (Schoppe et al., 2001; Steinglass, 1987). Family processes include measurements of dynamic qualities, such as cooperation (McHale et al., 1996; Schoppe-Sullivan, Mangelsdorf, Frosch, & McHale, 2004), enjoyment (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2004), warmth (McHale et al., 1999; McHale et al., 1996; McHale & Rasmussen, 1998; Schoppe et al., 2001), sensitivity (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2004), affect (Belsky et al., 1996; Katz & Gottman, 1996; McHale et al., 1996, Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2004), conflict (Erel & Burman, 1995; Krishnakumar & Buehler, 2000; Schoppe et al., 2001), conflict resolution (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2004), competition (McHale et al., 1999; McHale & Rasmussen, 1998), hostility (Katz & Gottman, 1996; Katz & Low, 2004; Schoppe et al., 2001), and “family harmony” (McHale et al., 1996). Measurement of these dimensions allows us to ascertain specific pathways through which styles of interaction may influence relationship subsystems and individual adjustment. Of particular interest in this study, interparental power dynamics may impact children’s social competence and exertion of social dominance through several links, including *modeling, coparenting, and spillover*.

Modeling. Children’s modeling, or behavioral imitation can be construed as one triadic family process to explain associations between interparental and child-peer interactions. In his development of *Social Learning Theory*, Bandura described all behavior as originating through the process of imitation (1977), which can be further delineated into mechanisms of observation, cognition, and replication of observed behaviors (Bandura, 1969; Mischel, 1973). In applying Social Learning Theory to a model of the interparental relationship influence on children’s social behaviors, one would expect that styles of interaction modeled between parents would later be

imitated by children when interacting with their peers. Furthermore, because preschool-aged children are especially likely to imitate same sex parents (for a review see Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974), girls would be expected to imitate mothers' power-assertive and submissive behaviors more than fathers', and boys would be expected to imitate fathers' power-assertive and submissive behaviors more than mothers'.

Examination of the modeling hypothesis has generally revealed that children do not identically duplicate the behaviors witnessed between angry adults (Cummings, Zahn-Waxler, & Radke-Yarrow, 1981; Cummings, Iannotti, & Zahn-Waxler, 1985). However, exposure to discord may contribute to the process Bandura described as a child's construction of general strategies for interaction, or social "scripts" (1973, 1986) through a process of abstract modeling (1977). Abstract modeling, or the formation of generalized rules of conduct, allows children to generate innovative behaviors beyond the scope of what they have directly observed (Bandura, 1977). The process of abstract modeling may explain the link that has been found between children's exposure to interparental conflict and their overall adjustment (Emery, 1982; Grych & Fincham, 1990; Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1982), including aggression (Jacobson, 1978; Johnston, Gonzales & Campbell, 1987; Marcus, Lindahl, & Malik, 2001), internalizing and externalizing behaviors (Crockenberg & Langrock, 2001; Davies, Sturge-Apple, Cicchetti, & Cummings, 2007), and low social competence (Emery & O'Leary, 1984; Long, Forehand, Fauber & Brody, 1987).

Although conflict is an example of a context in which power assertion takes place, it is important to note that the assertion of power and the establishment of dominance are not necessarily conflictual. Power structures can be arranged within the context of a loving relationship and without the use of hostile conflict, so evidence of interparental conflict tactics

may not be sufficient to infer relationship power dynamics. Still, literature that directly links interparental power dynamics to child outcomes is not well-established and associations between interparental conflict and children's social adjustment provide reason to question whether children's exposure to interparental power dynamics will likewise be associated with their peer interaction styles. It may be that children's observations of interparental relationships that emphasize general social dominance or domain-specific dominance (i.e., acknowledged authority in making certain types of family decisions) may contribute to their tendencies to exert dominance or resort to submission when interacting with peers. It is also possible that children's observations of parental power assertion in parent-child relationships could be modeled abstractly in children's leadership or dominance with their peers.

Methodological approaches to exploration of the modeling hypothesis require a measure of what children observe as well as measures of children's subsequent behaviors. Because temporal precedence is one of the requirements for demonstrating a causal relationship (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002), this research would optimally be conducted longitudinally to establish that children's exposure to power dynamics occurs before the direct or abstract replication of power-assertive behaviors toward peers. A few studies have used parental reports of children's presence during interparental conflict or aggression (Kerig, 1995; Porter & O'Leary, 1980), but this method assumes that children's observation, perception, and awareness of interparental conflict is roughly equivalent to exposure, and that parents can accurately report such exposure. Despite methodological limitations in empirical testing of a modeling link, one would expect that children's exposure to power discrepancies in interparental and parent-child relationships would be associated with power and dominance differences during interactions with peers. Children's membership in family systems that emphasize more rigid power dynamics in multiple

relationship subsystems would be expected to provide them with a variety of observable behaviors to integrate into an abstract modeling system. This would be expected to influence the likelihood that these children would exert social dominance or resort to submissive behaviors when interacting with their peers, perhaps regardless of whether their same-sex parent is dominant or submissive in the interparental relationship.

Coparenting. *Coparenting*, or how partners support or undermine one another and share family leadership in parenting (Gable et al., 1995; S. Minuchin, 1974), is also associated with structure and process in the family (Belsky et al., 1996; Katz & Low, 2004; McHale, 1995; 1997; McHale et al., 1999; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2004; Westerman & Schonholtz, 1993). More specifically, coparenting behaviors have been found to correlate with marital quality (Katz & Low, 2004; McHale, 1995, 1997; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2004; Westerman & Schonholtz, 1993), parenting behaviors (McHale, 1997), and children's outcomes (Belsky et al., 1995; Katz & Low, 2004; McHale et al., 1999; Westerman & Schonholtz, 1993).

It is not entirely clear whether coparenting dynamics influence or are influenced by marital and parent-child dynamics, but because coparenting behaviors are related to children's aggressive (McHale et al., 1999), as well as internalizing and externalizing behaviors (Westerman & Schonholtz, 1993), it seems possible that the extent to which parents support or undermine each other while parenting as a team serves to strengthen or weaken their power in the family relative to the target child. This would allow coparenting in triadic activities to serve as a link between interparental and parent-child power dynamics, functioning as a meeting place for both interparental and parent-child relationships. Behaviors between parents and children during triadic family processes involve power dynamics that exist in interparental relationships as well as both parent-child relationships. Therefore, coparenting processes can be considered a

somewhat holistic window into the power dynamics of a family system by demonstrating the incorporation of three different relationship power dynamics into one triadic context. One would expect that triads involving parents with more severe power differentials in the interparental relationship would also emphasize hierarchy and power assertion during triadic family processes. This triadic theme of hierarchical emphasis could manifest itself in multiple relationship subsystems. The dominant partner in the interparental relationship might be expected to exert more dominance over the child as well as his or her partner, due to personal styles of interaction with others. The submissive partner might be expected to either refrain from power assertion in the parent-child relationship, or to compensate for lack of power in the interparental relationship by also exerting dominance over the child.

In considering the potential spillover of hierarchical emphasis between triadic and dyadic contexts, it is possible that coparenting may be a specific mechanism through which the quality of the interparental relationship spills over into triadic family functioning. In an observational study comparing dyadic and triadic behaviors displayed during laboratory sessions, McHale (1995) found that marital conflict, assessed observationally during dyadic laboratory tasks, was associated with coparental functioning during triadic family play sessions, namely with different levels of parental involvement when interacting with girls, and with “hostile-competitive” parenting during interactions with boys (i.e., high levels of both child-centeredness and conflict). Lindsey and Mize (2001) found interparental agreement and similarity in the use of parental control were both associated with children’s development of social competence. These studies suggest that parents’ similarity in their views of parenting as well as the way they parent relative to each other may influence children’s social development.

It is also possible that coparenting is a unique mechanism through which triadic family

functioning influences the quality of the interparental relationship. In a longitudinal study of laboratory observations, Schoppe-Sullivan and colleagues (2004) found supportive and undermining coparenting behaviors with infants to be predictive of later marital behaviors, although early marital behavior was not predictive of later coparenting behavior. These results suggest that the processes within the triadic family system may be more stable or more influential than those within the marital, or interparental, subsystem.

Coparenting has been associated with reports of adaptive child behaviors, including lower rates of internalizing and externalizing problems (Belsky et al., 1995; Katz & Low, 2004; McHale et al., 1996, 1999; Westerman & Schonholtz, 1993). Hostile-competitive coparenting has been found to mediate the relationship between self-reported marital violence and mothers reports of children's anxiety and depression (Katz & Low, 2004). Belsky and colleagues (1996) found that the association between children's temperaments at age one and their inhibition at age three was moderated by observational evidence of supportive coparenting among mother-father-child triads in their homes. The apparent buffering or amplifying effect of supportive coparenting on the probability that more inhibited infants will continue to be inhibited two years later suggests that coparenting functioning may shape children's adjustment, although it is likely that children's temperament and behavior also exert influence on parenting and coparenting behaviors. The prediction of children's internalizing and externalizing behaviors by coparenting processes (Katz & Low, 2004; McHale et al., 1996, 1999; Westerman & Schonholtz, 1993) suggests that the triadic family subsystem may influence children's overall adjustment as well as children's development of social competence (McHale et al., 1999). Because coparenting is thought to either strengthen or undermine each partner's parenting efforts, coparenting may serve as a link between interparental and parent-child power dynamics, thus influencing the strength of

associations between parenting practices and children's social outcomes.

Methodological approaches to the study of coparenting influences frequently involve observations of triadic interaction either in a laboratory setting (e.g., Katz & Low, 2004) or in the home (e.g., Belsky, 1995). Inferences of power arrangements from observational measures often rest on assumptions of universal motives during interactions (i.e., desire to control) and do not take into account the possibility that granting power over a particular decision or in a specific circumstance can also be interpreted by family members as evidence of a superior, albeit benevolent, position (Blau, 1964). In addition, self-reports on power arrangements from multiple family members tend to result in low concordance between family members and with researcher observations (Kenkel, 1963; Hill, 1965). Despite these methodological obstacles in measuring triads, research on coparenting processes and its relevance to child outcomes provides us with useful information on how dyadic relationship subsystems may function within the context of a larger subsystem, or within the family system as a whole. This background is useful for guiding hypotheses of associations between multiple family subsystems within a family system.

Spillover. A third pathway through which marital and interparental relationships have been thought to influence child outcomes is coined the *spillover hypothesis* (Almeida, Wethington, & Chandler, 1999; Erel & Burman, 1995; Katz & Gottman, 1996; Krishnakumar & Buehler, 2000). The term *spillover*, or the transfer of behaviors and emotions from one setting to another, was originally proposed as an explanation for the association between work and home stress (Repetti, 1987), but has also been used to predict positive correlations between measures of interparental and parent-child relationship quality (Erel & Burman, 1995; Katz & Gottman, 1996; Lindahl & Malik, 1999).

Within the broad field of research on interparental discord and child adjustment, a

substantial amount of research has addressed the effects of specific aspects of marital conflict, including frequency, intensity, content, and modes of expression (Cummings & Davies, 1994; Grych & Fincham, 1990). The Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS; Straus, 1979) contains several types of approaches to dealing with conflict, including negotiation-focused, psychologically aggressive, physically abusive, and injurious tactics. This questionnaire allows for the comparison of frequency of various conflict tactics with other outcomes, including marital satisfaction (Rogers et al., 2005) and child adjustment (El-Sheikh, Buckhalt, Mize, & Acebo, 2006). Associations between interparental conflict and child behavior problems, including internalizing and externalizing behaviors, have been found to be especially predictive when the topic of conflict is taken into consideration (Emery, 1982; Grych & Fincham, 1993; Jouriles, Murphy, Farris, Smith, Richters, & Walters, 1991). Interparental conflict regarding issues of childrearing is more closely linked to conduct problems and emotional disturbances than frequency of exposure to other forms of conflict (Grych & Fincham, 1993) or global measures of marital adjustment (Jouriles et al., 1991; Snyder, Klein, Gdowski, Faulstich, & LaCombe, 1988).

Spillover of marital hostility and tension to parent-child relationships has been tested using both observational and self-report measures (Almeida et al., 1999; Katz & Gottman, 1996; Kerig, Cowan & Cowan, 1993; Lindahl & Malik, 1999). The presence of marital hostility and withdrawal during observations of a dyadic task has been found to predict competitive coparenting and negative parenting behaviors during triadic tasks, such as unresponsiveness, intrusiveness, and rejection toward the child (Katz & Gottman, 1996), many of which are also associated with secure attachment in infants (for a review see de Wolff & IJzendoorn, 1997). This association may be evidence of the spillover of marital hostility into triadic and parenting subsystems, as revealed by competition and negativity. In turn, mothers' rejection has been

found to predict teacher ratings of children's internalizing behaviors, and fathers' intrusiveness has been found to predict teacher-reported as well as audio taped measures of children's externalizing behaviors when playing with peers.

In another observational study, Lindahl and Malik (1999) compared data from videos of parents discussing a marital problem with videos of children and their parents discussing a conflict involving all three family members. Moderation effects revealed that destructive conflict in the interparental discussion was correlated with withdrawal in the triadic discussion, but only among mothers of European American families, and among fathers who reported marital distress. The authors speculated that complex links exist between the quality of the marital subsystem and family system functioning (Lindahl & Malik, 1999).

Self-report measures have also been used to assess spillover of dyadic tension. A longitudinal self-report technique spanning 42 weeks revealed that marital tension was a predictor of tense parent-child interactions on the following day for both mothers and fathers, and that work-related stress doubled the likelihood of spillover among fathers (Almeida et al., 1999). Comparisons of observational and self-report measures of marital and parent-child relationship quality also reveal support for the spillover hypothesis. Kerig, Cowan, and Cowan (1993) videotaped and analyzed conversations between mothers, fathers, and preschool-aged children. In comparing these observed behaviors to self-reports of marital satisfaction, the authors found that less satisfied fathers were more negative toward their daughters, and that less satisfied mothers were more likely to reciprocate negative affect from their sons and to negate gender atypical behavior from their daughters. These results suggest that marital satisfaction may be related to the way that parents interact with their children.

Two meta-analyses provide additional insight into the validity of the spillover hypothesis.

Erel and Burman's (1995) analysis of 68 studies on the association between marital functioning and parent-child relationship quality demonstrated a strong association between the qualities of these two relationships and failed to find significant moderators of the association. Due to the apparent stability of this link, the authors speculated that it may not be easy for parents to protect their children from marital discord through maintaining positive parent-child relationships. A more recent meta-analysis (Krishnakumar & Buehler, 2000) found that the parenting behaviors most impacted by interparental discord were harsh discipline and parental acceptance. Both of these meta-analyses provide support for the spillover hypothesis as one mechanism that links qualities of one relationship to others within a family.

Collectively, research on the spillover hypothesis demonstrates that interparental relationship processes are related to interactions among parent-child relationships and to measures of children's adjustment, including social competence (Katz & Gottman, 1996). It may be that power dynamics in interparental relationships spill over into the power dynamics in parent-child relationships, and subsequently into child-peer relationships. In families where parents sanction a general hierarchy or domain-specific dominance in their relationship with each other, parents may also emphasize hierarchy or dominance in their relationships with their children. In turn, children's exposure to power assertion or hierarchy in parent-child relationships may transfer over to relationships with peers, resulting in displays of social dominance or submission. If this is the case, parent-child power assertion may be found to mediate the association between power dynamics in interparental and child-peer relationships (see Figure 1).

The acknowledgment of bidirectional or reciprocal influences within a family system is a crucial asset of Family Systems Theory. When conceptualizing relationship influences from a systems perspective, it is conceivable that children's power dynamics with their peers could spill

over into parent-child relationships and interparental relationships as well. In the current study, associations between relationship subsystems cannot reveal causation or causal direction, but can provide evidence of consistencies across relationship subsystems, implying within family influences or external influences that materialize similarly in multiple subsystems.

Tests of the spillover hypothesis require measurements of both the source and destination of the variable in question. Traditionally, spillover has focused on stress or conflict, but an examination of the spilling over of power dynamics from interparental to parent-child and to child-peer relationships would require measurements of power dynamics in all three of those relationship subsystems. Optimally this research would be conducted longitudinally, to explore direction of causation by demonstrating temporal precedence of the power dynamic or power-assertive behaviors in the interparental and parent-child relationships before predicting power differences in the child-peer relationship. However, cross-sectional studies that cannot determine temporal precedence would still be useful in demonstrating the covariation in power dynamics between interparental, parent-child and child-peer relationships.

The spillover of power dynamics from interparental relationships to parent-child relationships may differ as a function of the distribution of interparental power. In other words the parent with *more* power in the interparental relationship may respond to the child in an increasingly power assertive way when compared to the parent with *less* power in the interparental relationship. Alternatively, the parent with less power may compensate for the interparental relationship dynamic by being more domineering in the parent-child relationship. It also seems likely that parental gender could play a role in the spillover of power dynamics, with less powerful mothers responding differently to children than less powerful fathers. In families where childrearing responsibilities rest primarily within the mother's domain, mothers who are

less powerful than their partners might be expected to be less power assertive with their children than mothers from egalitarian partnerships, allocating the disciplinary role to fathers. By contrast, mothers who are more powerful than their partners might be expected to be more power assertive with their children than mothers from egalitarian partnerships, as maternal dominance in the interparental relationship spills over into the mother-child relationship. There may be even more intricate variations based on the temperament of both parents and of the child.

Alternatively, it may be the case that families emphasizing power hierarchies in one relationship are also more likely to emphasize power hierarchies in other relationships, due to an ideology of hierarchical dominance that is evident throughout the entire family system. Partners from families that emphasize domain-specific or general power hierarchies in the interparental relationship may be more likely to exert power on their children, regardless of who has more interparental power. In the current study, greater power discrepancies in interparental relationships were expected to correlate with higher levels of power assertion in parent-child relationships. Theoretically speaking, the rigidity of the power hierarchy in the interparental relationship was expected to spill over into the parent-child relationship, leading to a positive association between interparental power discrepancies and levels of parent-to-child power assertion. In addition, levels of power assertion in parent-child relationships were hypothesized to spill over into children's displays of social dominance in peer settings. Children who are dominant in semi-structured playgroup activities were expected to have parents who report higher levels of power assertion during parent-child interactions.

Triadic family processes and child outcomes. The three processes described above (modeling, coparenting, and spillover) are examples of the pathways through which the interparental relationship may exert influence on child adjustment. Of additional interest to this

research is the ways in which global aspects of interparental and triadic family functioning may be linked to children's interactions with their peers. For example, positive affect in the triadic family subsystem has been found to moderate the relationship between coparenting behaviors and children's externalizing behaviors (Schoppe et al., 2001), by either buffering or amplifying the strength of the association between supportive coparenting and low levels of childhood externalizing. Whole-family affect has also been shown to be related to toddlers' social behaviors (McHale et al., 1999). In McHale and colleagues' study (1999), toddlers from families who were observed to be more "harmonious" during whole-family activities (i.e., low in measures of coldness and high in measures of warmth and happiness) expressed more warmth and happiness in completing tasks with an experimenter than children whose families were less harmonious. This association held true even after controlling for dimensions of warmth and happiness specific to the mother-child relationship. McHale and colleagues also found children's enactments of family aggression in doll (1996) activities were correlated with rates of externalizing behavior as observed during naturalistic peer observations. These results suggest that children's perceptions of interparental (McHale et al., 1999) and whole-family (McHale et al., 1996) processes are associated with their affect in individual laboratory tasks and with their prosocial and externalizing behaviors with peers (McHale et al., 1996; 1999).

Collectively, literature on the specific links between relationship subsystems as well as global measures of family processes demonstrates associations between children's exposure to interparental and triadic family processes and their displays of internalizing and externalizing behaviors. It may be that children's exposure to family power dynamics and power structures may also be linked to their social and emotional development. In the current study, children who come from families where power arrangements are more differentiated were expected to

demonstrate social dominance when interacting with peers. Interparental power discrepancies were hypothesized to be positively associated with children's displays of social dominance, prosocial, and coercive behaviors when interacting with their peers.

Reciprocity in process. While a large body of work demonstrates the processes through which interparental relationship subsystems may influence children's social competence, a smaller body of work demonstrates how children may influence interparental relationship subsystems. The presence of children has been found to be associated with changes in the way parents interact with each other (Deal, Haga, Bass, Hetherington, & Clingempeel, 1999). Children have also been found to be more openly expressive with both positive and negative feedback toward mothers who report lower marital satisfaction, perhaps contributing to the family climate by reciprocating and perpetuating negativity in parent-child interactions (Kerig et al., 1993). Empirical evidence of the potential influence that children have on parental and interparental subsystems adds to our understanding of the reciprocal nature of processes between and within family subsystems, and acknowledgement of this reciprocity is in keeping with the premises of family systems theory (P. Minuchin, 1985). It is plausible that children's behaviors with their parents during parent-child and triadic family interaction influence triadic family processes as well as the nature of a dominance hierarchy within the family system.

Triadic Family Structure

Family structure, or organization, consists of the architectural properties of family systems and subsystems that "set the stage" for family processes (Steinglass, 1987) and govern the interactions between family members (S. Minuchin, 1974). Steinglass (1987) described family structure as the constraints within which family processes can operate. Because the structural characteristics of a family system dictate the ways in which members are permitted to

interact with one another, it is a critical part of the family system and can be expected to influence both the behaviors and adjustment of those members.

Structural properties of the family system have been delineated into several dimensions, the most popular of which is family *cohesion* (Cooper, Holman, & Braithwaite, 1983; Kerig, 1995; Lindahl et al., 2004; Lindahl & Malik, 1999; McHale et al., 1999). Cohesion can be defined as an overall level of closeness or mutual dependency between individuals (Emerson, 1962). Other dimensions of family structure include adaptability (Johnson, Cowan & Cowan, 1999), organization (Johnson et al., 1999; S. Minuchin, 1974), boundary formation (Lindahl et al., 2004; Lindahl & Malik, 1999; S. Minuchin, 1974), triangulation (Kerig, 1995; Lindahl et al., 2004), leadership (McHale, 1995), power distribution (Wentzel & Feldman, 1996), and hierarchy (Shaw, Criss, Schonberg, & Beck, 2004).

These structural dimensions have been found to account for variance in child outcomes over and above that accounted for by family processes (Johnson et al., 1999; McHale & Rasmussen, 1998; Schoppe et al., 2001). For example, McHale and Rasmussen (1998) demonstrated that ratings of coparenting processes and marital structure each accounted for some of the variance in teachers' ratings of aggressive behaviors in preschoolers. Schoppe and colleagues (2001) found coparenting was only predictive of children's externalizing behaviors among less (structurally) adaptive families. Thus, structural factors appear to contribute unique insight into the functionality of the family system.

Due to the intangible nature of family structure, its influence on relationship subsystems or on individual members cannot be directly measured. Instead previous research has inferred structural properties from observations of interactions (i.e., processes) or from self-report data. The inferential nature of structural research limits our ability to demonstrate whether a direct link

exists between family structure and individual adjustment. It is possible that family structure exerts influence on family members only indirectly by setting the stage for more influential family processes. Because Family Systems Theory posits that the family system is worth more than a sum of individual parts, subtracting out the variance accounted for by individual relationship subsystems or processes and labeling the difference as structural influence may be overly reductionistic and most likely does not account for all of the influences that emerge in interactions between relationship subsystems. Because a holistic measurement of all processes within a family system is virtually impossible to capture, studies that estimate structural influence by controlling for and portioning out the influence of a collection of family processes may actually be mislabeling the amount of variance that can be accounted for by error variance and other unmeasured processes. However, even if structural properties of the whole family system do not exert direct influence on subsystems and individual family members, these studies provide evidence to suggest that family structure is, at the very least, associated with processes in parent-child relationship subsystems and with children's social and emotional well-being. Its relevance to family processes alone justifies continued research on the structural properties of family systems.

In the current study, dominance hierarchy (i.e., power structure) in child-peer relationships is described as a structural dimension of the child-peer relationship subsystem that was differentiated from specific behaviors (i.e., processes) that occurred between children in semi-structured playgroup activities. These dominance ratings provided a global or structural measure of social dominance that was then related to measurements of other relationship power dynamics. Likewise, power structure in interparental relationships was differentiated from interparental interactions or processes that occur between parents and was measured as the extent

of power discrepancies in parents' reports of decision-making outcomes.

Summary of Triadic Family Functioning

The above literature on structural and process dimensions of the family system has demonstrated that interparental, coparental, and triadic family functioning are associated with child outcomes, including self-esteem, self-blame, and prosocial, internalizing, and externalizing behaviors. Studies that have measured both process and structure dimensions of the family system have found that each dimension contributes to variance in child outcomes (Johnson et al., 1999; McHale & Rasmussen, 1998; Schoppe et al., 2001). By continuing to pursue research questions that address the associations between family processes and family structures, we can learn more about the nature of these associations, and the manner in which structural dimensions either exert a direct influence on family members or interact with family processes to collaboratively exert influence on individual and relationship development. By studying dimensions of family functioning within and between subsystems, we can begin to identify pathways through which the family system influences and is influenced by individuals and by relationship subsystems.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study examined several research questions relating to interparental relationship dynamics and dominance in children's interactions with their peers. The first research question asked whether parental reports of interparental power dynamics, specifically process dimensions, would correlate with parental reports of parent-to-child power assertion. It was hypothesized that mothers' reports of interparental psychological control, an example of power assertion in interparental relationships, would be positively associated with reports of harsh parenting and psychological control in parent-child relationships, and that mothers' reports of negotiation in

interparental relationships would be positively associated with reports of rule violation, or gentler power assertion, including behavior directing and consequence delivery.

The second research question asked whether interparental power dynamics would correlate with child-peer relationship outcomes. It was hypothesized that both the structural and process dimensions of interparental relationships would be associated with child outcome measures. Autonomic extent, or the extent to which family decisions are made by one partner more than the other, was expected to be positively correlated with children's displays of both prosocial and coercive behavior and social dominance, regardless of which parent was dominant in the interparental relationship. Theoretically speaking, emphasis on domain-specific or general hierarchy in the interparental relationship was expected to correlate with children's positions of dominance among peers and their utilization of both prosocial and coercive tactics to achieve that position. Interparental processes, namely the use of psychological control and negotiation, were hypothesized to both correlate with children's social dominance. Because interparental negotiation and psychological control are both strategies for influencing others, both were expected to associate positively with children's level of dominance, or dominance rank, relative to their peers. Interparental psychological control was hypothesized to correlate with children's display of coercive behaviors, and interparental negotiation was hypothesized to correlate positively with children's display of prosocial behaviors. Essentially, the supportive or coercive style of conflict resolution in the interparental relationship was expected to be paralleled by the supportive or coercive style of interaction children displayed during playgroup activities.

The third research question asked whether parent reports of parent-child power assertion would correlate with children's child-peer relationship outcomes. It was hypothesized that mothers' reports of mild power assertion would be positively associated with children's displays

of prosocial behavior and that harsh discipline and psychologically controlling parenting would be positively associated with children's displays of coercive behavior with their peers. Similar to the rationale for associations between interparental and child-peer relations, supportive or coercive styles of parenting were expected to be paralleled by supportive or coercive styles of interaction that children displayed during playgroup activities. Because mild and harsh power assertive parenting are understood as strategies for influencing children, all measures of parent-child power were expected to be positively correlated with children's displays of social dominance during peer interactions.

Following the establishment of correlations between power dynamics in interparental, parent-child, and child-peer relationships, it was hypothesized that parent-child power assertion measures would mediate the relationship between interparental power dynamics and child-peer power dynamics. Statistical evidence for this mediational model would be consistent with the spillover hypothesis, suggesting that an emphasis on hierarchy in the interparental relationship may spill over into parent-child relationships and subsequently into child-peer relationships, that hierarchy emphasis in parent-child relationships may spill over into both interparental and child-peer relationships, or that hierarchy emphasis in child-peer relationships may spill over into parent-child and subsequently into interparental relationships.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Participants

Participants in this study included forty-two children between the ages of three and six years old (M age = 4.43 years, SD = .59; 21 boys; 21 girls) and their mothers, between the ages of 19 and 45 (M age = 32.9 years, SD = 5.31). Their participation in this study part of a larger research investigation of parenting and early childhood social development (Preschoolers and Pals Project) conducted by researchers in the Department of Human Development at Washington State University. Of the 42 participating children, 1 (2.4%) was three years old, 22 (51.4%) were four years old, 16 (38.1%) were five years old, and 1 (2.4%) was six years old. All participating families were enrolled in early childhood education programs in Pullman, Washington. Of the 42 children in this sample, 34 were described by their parents as White (81.0%), 3 as Asian or Asian American (7.1%) and 5 were reported as having membership in other ethnic groups (11.9%). Similarly, of the 42 participating mothers, 33 described themselves as white (78.6%), 4 described themselves as Asian or Asian American (9.5%), 1 as Black or African American (2.4%), 1 as White or Middle-Eastern (2.4%) and 3 reported membership in other ethnic groups (7.1%). The majority of mothers (37; 88.1%) were married. Of those who were not married, 1 parent (2.4%) was divorced or separated, 2 parents (4.8%) were single, living with a partner, and 2 parents (4.8%) were single, living alone. Participants reported having spent between 1 year, 7 months and 19 years with their current partners (M = 9 years, 2.45 months; SD = 4 years, 1.94 months). The parents reported their annual household incomes to be between \$10,000 and more than \$90,000 per year. The median income bracket selected was between \$60,001 and \$70,000. In self-reports of educational achievement, 14 (33.3%) of the parents reported completing a GED or

high school degree, 4 (9.5%) reported an Associates Degree, 13 (31.0%) reported a Bachelor's degree, 11 (26.1%) reported completing a graduate or professional degree. Due to missing data from parents, age information is unavailable for two children and two parents; length of current partner-relationship is unavailable for two parents; and household income information is unavailable for one participating family.

Procedures

Overview

The data to be used in this study comes from the Preschoolers and Pals Project conducted by faculty members and students in the Department of Human Development at Washington State University. The larger study sample of preschool children was collected from 14 classrooms in six early childhood education centers in Pullman, Washington. In the first phase of the project, parents were asked to consent to naturalistic observations of their children and to teacher-ratings of children's behavior. Between the six centers, parental consent was received for 185 preschool children to participate in the first phase of the study.

The second phase of the study occurred approximately 6 months after the first. Parents who gave consent for participation in the first phase were invited to fill out some surveys on interparental and parent-child relations, to participate with their child in a parent-child interview laboratory assessment, and to allow their child to participate in a semi-structured, videotaped playgroup activity (see Appendix A). Consenting parents were mailed packets of questionnaires and asked to return them either by mail or in person when they arrived for the laboratory assessment. When parents were not married to the child's father, they were asked to complete questionnaires referring to interparental relationships in order to reflect their interactions with either the child's father or their current partners, depending on who had more contact with the

child. Scheduling conflicts and other complications such as vacations and moving prevented 20 families from participating in the laboratory assessment and completing all the surveys. Forty-two parents completed all three parts of the second phase, and information from this final sample of participating families constitutes the data for the current study. During the laboratory assessment, parents were given the opportunity to finish filling out incomplete questionnaires and offered several additional ones. Parents who completed surveys by mail and did not complete the laboratory assessment were not given the opportunity to complete these additional questionnaires. This left a subsample of only 28 families that completed all measures relevant to the current study, but due to statistical power limitations, available data from all 42 families were retained. Laboratory assessments lasted about 1 to 1.5 hours, after which parents were compensated with a \$50 honorarium and parking reimbursement for their participation. Observational data from laboratory assessments will not be used in these analyses, but the questionnaire measures of interest to this study are described in more detail below.

The semi-structured playgroup activities occurred within the children's early childhood education centers. Children whose parents had consented to their participation were placed in groups of three or four other children from the same classroom who also had parental consent and asked for assent to play a game. Playgroup activities took place in a separate room from the rest of the classmates, so as to minimize interference. Children were seated along one side of a table, facing the video camera. They were told they would be making a movie about a trip to the zoo and that during the first part of the activity they would have five minutes to color in the background pages for the zoo scene. The video camera was pointed out as necessary for filming the movie. A five-minute sand-timer was provided along with some coloring pages and a limited number of crayons. The number of crayons was equivalent to the number of children

participating in each activity, but one crayon was always white, meaning it would not work on the white coloring pages provided. During this first part of the activity, researchers remained out of view but within earshot of the children in case serious conflict would ensue, but did not interact with them or respond to questions. During the second part of the activity, the sand timer was reset and the background pages were removed. Children were given pictures of animals to color, a new set of limited crayons, and two pairs of scissors. They were told to color and cut out the animals for five minutes. Researchers again remained out of view but within earshot of the children and refrained from interaction. During the third and final part of the activity, the background pages were hung on a simple stage and children were given some toys, including a picnic table and some people figurines. They were encouraged to make a story about a trip to the zoo. Trained students and faculty devised a specific coding system to categorize behaviors exhibited during the playgroup activities. The measurement scheme that was used to code videos of all three activity segments is described in more detail below (see Appendix F).

Measures

Mothers' completion of a basic family information form provided demographic characteristics of the families involved. This questionnaire included information on gender, age, race, level of completed education, marital status and duration, and household income (see Table 1). Of primary interest in this study, specific measurements of three relationship subsystems were integrated into statistical analyses to pursue the research hypotheses outlined in the previous chapter. The measurements of interparental, parent-child, and child-peer relationships are outlined below.

Interparental Power

Power dynamics in interparental relationships were measured along dimensions of

process and structure through two questionnaires. The first questionnaire contains mothers' reports of their own and their partners' frequencies of psychologically controlling and prosocial conflict tactics, as measured through an adaptation of the Conflict Tactic Scale (CTS; Straus, 1979; see Appendix B). The CTS is a widely used measure of conflict tactics and relationship violence and has been found to be reliable and valid (Arias & Beach, 1987; Straus, 1979). In the current study, measures of physical and sexual violence and injury were omitted from the questionnaire, leaving 16 paired items to measure psychological aggression (e.g., "I insulted or swore at my partner."/ "My partner insulted or swore at me.") and 12 items to measure negotiation tactics (e.g., "I suggested a compromise to a disagreement."/ "My partner suggested a compromise."). Cronbach's alpha for psychological control tactics was .88, and for negotiation was .94. Rating options for the frequency of use for each tactic included *never* happening, *happening* previous to the past year, or happening *rarely*, *sometimes*, *often*, or *very often* during the past year. For each item, mothers also could choose to mark a box indicating they did not wish to answer that question. Items marked as *never* occurring were coded as a 1, and items marked as occurring *very often* were coded as a 6. No participants indicated not wanting to answer any of the items on this version of the CTS.

Mothers' reports of their own and their partners' frequencies of psychologically controlling conflict tactics were significantly correlated ($.79, p < .001$), as were their reports of their own and their partners' frequencies of negotiation tactics ($.91, p < .001$). The high correlations suggest that mothers' responses are likely to reflect only their own self-reports, so averages were calculated from both partners' frequencies, creating a single value of interparental psychological control and a single value of interparental negotiation tactics for each family, as reported by the mother. These variables were conceptualized as mothers' perceptions of

interparental styles of asserting power in the interparental relationship, or as process dimensions of interparental power dynamics, and were not used to infer power structure or hierarchy within interparental relationships.

Power structure in interparental relationships was measured through mothers' reports of outcome control in various decision-making domains. A survey designed by Blood and Wolfe (1960) allows participants to report who has the "final say" in a variety of decisions, including buying a car, having children, taking a house or apartment, taking or quitting a job, and food budgeting decisions (see Appendix C). For the current study, the questionnaire response options were adapted by changing the words "husband" and "wife" to "partner" and "me." This modification allowed mothers to report a final decision being made by their partner only, their partner more than them, both partners the same, them more than their partner, or only the respondent for each decision prompt in the survey. Blood and Wolfe's (1960) survey of final say as a measurement of relative measurement power has been criticized as potentially weak along dimensions of external validity and reliability (Gillespie, 1971; Cromwell & Olson, 1975), but most criticisms of reliability and validity have not held up empirically. For example, Allen (1984) and Straus (Allen & Straus, 1984) found the measure to be both reliable and cross-culturally valid in their studies of marital power comparing samples in both India and the US.

Final Say questionnaire responses were used to calculate the total number of family decisions that mothers reported making more or completely by themselves, the number of decisions made more or completely by their partners, and the number of decisions made jointly. Because the Final Say questionnaire was not mailed to participants in the original packet of surveys, only a subsample of parents who completed the laboratory session completed them ($N = 28$). Responses to the final say questionnaire were used to calculate the total number of family

decisions that were made more by responding mothers, more by their partners, and, when summed, the collective number of decisions that were made predominantly by either partner (i.e., the autonomic extent).

Parent-Child Power

Parenting questionnaires were used to assess parental power assertion in both mild and severe forms. Parents responded to open-ended questions about how they would hypothetically respond to children's physically and relationally aggressive behaviors, as described in several short vignettes (e.g., "*Your child is waiting in line with some other kids to go down the slide on the playground. All of a sudden, one of the kids cuts in line in front of your child. Your child pushes the child out of line and goes down the slide.*"). After reading the vignettes, parents were asked to answer, "What would you do or say, if anything, if you witnessed this situation happen several times in a row?" These open-ended responses were collected as part of the Parent Responses to Preschoolers' Behaviors Questionnaire (PRPB; Werner et al., 2006; see Appendix D), and were coded according to their level of appeal to social convention, or "rule violation." Responses coded low in rule violation, scored at 1, were those that essentially did not communicate to the child that his or her actions were inappropriate, responses medium in rule violation, scored at 2, included simple or general reprimands or demands for apology without explanation, and responses coded high in rule violation, scored at 3, were associated with punishments or demands for apology, coupled with an explanation of why the behavior was inappropriate (see Appendix G). Four of the vignettes referred to relationally aggressive child behaviors, and four of them referred to physically aggressive behaviors. Cronbach's alpha for parental ratings between relationally and physically aggressive vignettes was only .31, but Cohen's Kappa for rule violation codes is .82 across the eight hypothetical behavior scenarios.

Scores of mothers' responses to vignettes of relationally aggressive behaviors and physically aggressive behaviors were summed separately, and then averaged together to create a total score of rule violation.

Parental power assertion was also measured using the Parenting Styles and Practices (PSP) questionnaire, adapted from Robinson, Mandleco, Olsen and Hart's (1995) parenting measure (see Appendix E). Parents rated the frequency of various parenting behaviors in the last 6 months as *never* (coded as 1), *rarely (once or twice)*, *sometimes (once or twice per month)*, *often (once or twice per week)*, or *always (every day; coded as 5)*. Subscales of this measure were derived from a factor analysis with varimax rotation that produced a five-item subscale of physical punishment (e.g., "*I use physical punishment as a way of disciplining my child*") with a Cronbach's alpha of .85, and a ten-item subscale of parental psychological control (e.g., "*I tell my child that he/she is not as good as other children*") with a Cronbach's alpha of .86. Subscale items were averaged to create scores of physical punishment and psychological control in parent-child relationships for each family. Parent-child power structure, or hierarchy, was not measured in the current study.

Child-Peer Power

Children's social interactions with their peers were measured through coding the videotaped semi-structured playgroup activities described above. Global measures of social dominance hierarchies were assigned to children for all three segments of the activities by two coders, with dominant children receiving a rank of 1 and less dominant children receiving ranks of 2, 3, and sometimes 4, depending on the number of children participating in the activity. The intraclass correlation coefficient for interrater reliability on the dominance rankings was .69. All behaviors, including verbal communications, nonverbal gestures, and resource control attempts

by children during the first two segments were also coded by two trained coders. Frequencies of behavior codes were then collapsed into categories, including *prosocial control* (including *equitable resource control, facilitation of others' efforts, teaching, and group advocacy*), *coercive control* (including *verbal, material, physical and relational control, self aggrandizing, and general dominance*), *submissiveness*, and *withdrawal* (see Appendix F). Due to the relative infrequency of submissive and withdrawal behaviors, only frequencies of coercive and prosocial control were used in central analyses. The intraclass correlation coefficient for interrater reliability of coercive behavior frequency was .84, $p < .001$ and the alpha for prosocial behavior frequency was .61, $p < .05$. Frequencies of prosocial and coercive behaviors were used as measures of process in child-peer power dynamics, and social dominance ranking was used as a measure of power structure.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive analyses are summarized in Tables 1 and 2. Mothers' self reports of psychologically controlling parenting, as well as the total number of family decisions made exclusively or predominantly by their partners, and observed frequencies of children's coercive behaviors during playgroup activities violated assumptions of normally distributed data as indicated by skewness greater than 1. Log_{10} transformations were performed on these variables to normalize their distributions.

Preliminary correlation analyses revealed that some of the demographics were significantly associated with the main variables of interest (see Table 3). Mothers' self-reports of frequency of using physical punishment was negatively associated with their age ($-0.36, p < .05$) and also their child's gender, $t(38) = -3.14, p < .01$, indicating that older mothers and mothers of girls were less likely to report using physical punishment. Analyses of variance (ANOVA's) were conducted to determine whether groups of children with and without ethnic minority status were differently associated with variables of interest. ANOVA's revealed no significant group differences between participants according to child gender or mothers' marital or non-marital relationship status. Because not all parents completed both surveys, an ANOVA was performed to test for group differences between those who did and did not complete the Final Say questionnaire. There were no significant differences between these groups along any demographic measures, although trends were found for child age and household income, indicating that parents who completed the Final Say questionnaire had younger children $F(1, 39) = 3.05, p < .10$, and higher household incomes $F(1, 40) = 3.19, p < .10$.

ANOVA's did, however, suggest that mothers of ethnic minority children reported higher frequencies of interparental psychological control $F(1, 41) = 4.47, p < .05$. Subsamples of specific ethnicities were too small to perform more detailed group comparisons, but in the regression analyses, children's ethnic minority status was controlled for due to the significance of minority status indicated by the ANOVA, and mothers' age and children's gender were controlled for due to significant associations found in bivariate correlational analyses.

Tests of associations between dyadic relationships were conducted using bivariate correlational analyses. Although not specifically addressed in research questions and hypotheses, meaningful interpretation of associations between interparental, parent-child, and child-peer relationships will benefit from brief descriptions of findings *within* each relationship subsystem, so within-dyad correlational analyses will be discussed prior to between-dyad coefficients. Interpretation of results from subsequent regression analyses will follow.

Within-Dyad Associations

Interparental Relationships

Interparental power dynamics were measured along dimensions of both structure and process. In looking at the Final Say measure of interparental structure (see Table 4), mothers' reports of the number of family decisions made autonomously (i.e., predominantly or exclusively by one partner) in the interparental relationship were significantly and positively associated with the number of decisions they reported being made by their partners ($r = .69, p < .001$), and also with the number of decisions being made by themselves ($r = .61, p = .001$). Interestingly, the number of decisions reported as being made predominantly by mothers was *not* significantly correlated with the number of decisions reported as being made predominantly by their partners, demonstrating that, in this sample, mothers' reports of the number of family decisions in which

they have the final say are not related in either direction with their reports of the number of decisions in which their partners have the final say. A look at subscales of the CTS measurement of interparental process (see Table 5) reveals that mothers' reports of interparental negotiation tactics are unrelated with their reports of interparental psychological control tactics. Correlational analyses of the Final Say and CTS variables also revealed no significant findings.

Parent-Child Relationships

Correlations between maternal reports of parenting practices are summarized in Table 6. A significant correlation between mothers' reported frequencies of both physical punishment and psychologically controlling parenting ($.39, p < .05$) demonstrates that in this sample, mothers who use more physical punishment in their parenting also tend to use more psychological control with their children. Mothers' scores were fairly low for both physical punishment ($M = 1.66, SD = .55$) and psychological control ($M = 1.38, SD = .46$), and every mother's score was less than four on a five-point scale.

In comparing the two parenting questionnaires, rule violation scores from the PRPB were found to be unrelated to both scales of harsh parenting from the PSP. The descriptive statistics of this measure ($M = 7.17, SD = 1.54$) and range of responses (1.5 – 11.25) suggest a fairly normal distribution of mild power assertion among parents in this sample (see Table 2). No association was found between the mild and harsh measures of parental power assertion in this study, demonstrating that, in this study, mothers' use of physical punishment and psychological control was unrelated to their reports of appeal to social convention in hypothetical situations.

Child-Peer Relationships

As shown in Table 4, children's social dominance rankings were found to be marginally associated with their frequencies of prosocial behavior among peers ($.29, p < .10$). More socially

dominant preschoolers in this sample displayed marginally higher numbers of prosocial behaviors throughout the playgroup activities. Children from this sample who exhibited social dominance showed a trend for being more likely to control others through prosocial, rather than coercive, means. Descriptive statistics (see Table 2) show that the children in this sample displayed more prosocial behaviors ($M = 35.30$, $SD = 16.52$) than coercive ($M = 20.78$, $SD = 13.10$), but no correlation was found between children's frequencies of prosocial and coercive behavior during playgroup activities.

Interparental and Parent-Child Associations

Associations between power dynamics in interparental and parent-child relationships were tested using bivariate correlation analyses to explore the first research question (see Table 5). Interparental frequencies of negotiation conflict tactics were expected to correlate positively with parental appeals to social convention (rule violation), and interparental frequencies of psychologically controlling conflict tactics were expected to correlate positively with harsh power assertion in parenting, including physical punishment and psychological control. Associations between parental and interparental process revealed that mothers' reported frequencies of negotiation tactics in interparental relationships, as measured by the CTS, were negatively correlated with their self-reported frequencies of using physical punishment in the parent-child relationship ($-.32$, $p < .05$). Mothers who reported using negotiation tactics to solve conflicts with their partners were less likely to report the use of physical punishment when interacting with their children. In addition, interparental negotiation was marginally associated with mothers' appeals to social convention (rule violation) in their responses to hypothetical vignettes of their children's misbehaviors on the PRPB ($-.30$, $p < .10$), although in the opposite direction than was expected. No significant correlations were found between measures of

interparental structure and mild or harsh parenting processes.

To summarize correlational findings regarding the first research question, there was no direct support for the hypothesis that interparental psychological control would be associated with harsh parental power assertion, and the hypothesis that interparental negotiation would be associated with mild parental power assertion was marginally refuted. However, the significant association between interparental negotiation and physical punishment is in keeping with the general expectation that interparental conflict tactics would be associated with power assertion measures of parent-child relationships.

Interparental and Child-Peer Associations

Testing the second research question, whether power dynamics in interparental relationships are associated with those in child-peer relationships, revealed only partial support for the hypotheses. The degree of autonomous decision making, as measured by the Final Say questionnaire, was expected to be positively correlated with children's social outcome measures, but bivariate correlations revealed that maternal ratings on the Final Say questionnaire were not significantly associated with children's displays of dominance or social behaviors when interacting with peers (see Table 4). A trend was found between the number of decisions mothers reported having final say in and their children's frequencies of displaying coercive behaviors (.35, $p < .10$) but was only at a marginal significance level

Also related to the second research question, interparental frequency of negotiation tactics, measured through the CTS, was expected to correlate positively with children's prosocial behaviors during playgroup activities, and interparental frequency of psychological control was expected to correlate positively with children's coercive behaviors. Correlational analyses of the associations between interparental conflict tactics and child outcomes revealed one statistical

trend but no significant findings (see Table 7). The frequency of negotiation tactics in interparental relationships was marginally associated with the frequency of coercive behaviors observed in child-peer interactions ($-.29, p < .10$), demonstrating that in this sample, children from families with more interparental negotiation were marginally less coercive when interacting with their peers. Interestingly, mothers' reports of psychologically controlling tactics in the interparental relationship were not associated with children's dominance rank or their frequencies of coercive or prosocial behavior displays during playgroup activities. In summary, the hypothesis that interparental process would be associated with child-peer process and structure was not generally supported.

Parent-Child and Child-Peer Associations

In addressing the third research question of whether parent-child and child-peer power dynamics would be associated, mild power assertion (i.e., codes of rule violation in maternal responses to hypothetical misbehavior vignettes on the PRPB) was expected to correlate positively with observed frequencies of children's prosocial behavior, and harsh power assertion (i.e., maternal frequency reports of physical punishment and psychological control on the PSP) was expected to correlate positively with observed frequencies of children's coercive behavior during playgroup activities. Both mild and harsh parental power assertion were expected to correlate positively with children's displays of social dominance in playgroups. Statistical comparisons of parent-child and child-peer power dynamics did not reveal significant associations between these two relationship subsystems (see Table 6). Neither mild nor harsh power assertion in parent-child relationships was found to be significantly associated with children's dominance or their frequencies of prosocial or coercive behavior during playgroup activities, so hypotheses that process dimensions of these two dyadic contexts would be

associated with one another was not supported.

Linear Regression Analyses

A general absence of significant associations between interparental, parent-child, and child-peer measures of power dynamics precludes investigation of a mediation model (Baron & Kenny, 1986). However, regressions provide an alternative way to look for comparisons of dependent and independent variables, and allow for the consideration of each independent variable within a context of the others. In the current study, linear regression analyses were used to examine whether combinations of interparental and parent-child power dynamics might be associated with children's prosocial and coercive behavior outcomes as well as displays of social dominance.

All regression analyses controlled for the demographic variables of child gender, child ethnicity, and maternal age by entering them into the first step of the regression equation. Due to the sample size limitations associated with the subsample of parents who completed the Final Say questionnaire, second steps of regression analyses included either interparental structure variables from the Final Say questionnaire *or* interparental process variables from the CTS, resulting in two regression analyses for each outcome variable, or six analyses total. Third steps of all regression analyses included the parenting variables of rule violation, physical punishment, and psychological controlling parenting. Beta scores and significance indicators were used to determine which family relationship variables were most strongly associated with each dependent variable of interest.

As may have been predicted by the lack of bivariate correlations in previous analyses, most independent variables were not associated sufficiently with dependent variables to emerge as significant in the results of the regressions. Regression analyses predicting dominance and

prosocial behavior frequencies as dependent variables revealed no significantly or marginally significant predictors of those outcomes, and neither did the regression analysis using interparental structure and parental process variables. The linear regression analysis that incorporated interparental process measures from the CTS with measures of parental power assertion to predict children's frequencies of coercive behaviors revealed a trend for child minority status to be associated positively with coercion in the first step only ($p < .10$), and a significant negative association in the third step for mothers' reports of negotiation conflict tactics ($p < .05$). Table 8 summarizes findings from the linear regression analyses relating to children's coercive behavior frequencies. It appears that children from families where mothers report more interparental negotiation conflict tactics are less frequently coercive with their peers, even when this association is viewed through numerous other variables. This beta coefficient was in the hypothesized direction of association between interparental and child-peer processes, and the fact that it remains evident in regression analyses provides more support for this link as being valid in the current sample.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This study explored consistencies in power dynamics across interparental, parent-child, and child-peer relationships to search of potential associations between family functioning and child-peer behaviors. Some associations were found, although not as many as were expected. Theoretical and methodological explanations can be made for why many of the hypotheses were not supported. In any case, thorough discussion of the meaning and implications of both significant and nonsignificant findings is important for utilization of the knowledge gained from this research.

Within-dyad Associations

Interparental Measures

Bivariate correlations of variables from the Final Say questionnaire demonstrated that autonomic extent was associated with the number of decisions made predominantly by each partner individually, but that the reported frequencies of mothers' and their partners' final say were not related to each other. Consideration of this result suggests that, in this sample, it is not the case that mothers' descriptions of their own decision-making dominance were related to their partners' submission, or vice versa, which would indicate a large number of interparental relationships in which one partner has dominance. It also does not seem to be the case that when mothers' report having final say in more family decisions, their partners do as well, which would suggest that the interparental relationships in this sample were largely autonomic. A look at the descriptive statistics in Table 2 shows that most mothers reported very few decisions as being made autonomously ($M = 1.86$, $SD = 1.46$), either by themselves ($M = 1.12$, $SD = 1.07$) or by their partners ($M = .75$, $SD = 1.17$), and instead rated most family decisions as being made

jointly. The lack of variability in these Final Say reports may have prevented some associations between interparental structure and other variables from being expressed, and reveals that the families in this sample are largely syncratic.

Mothers' reports of interparental psychological control and negotiation tactics were not correlated with one another, suggesting that parents' use of one style of conflict resolution does not influence their tendency to use the other. Looking at the descriptive statistics in Table 2 however, it is noteworthy that mothers reported negotiation tactics being used relatively frequently ($M = 5.05$, $SD = .72$) and psychological control being used relatively rarely ($M = 1.71$, $SD = .52$) in their interparental relationships. Small standard deviations reveal that most mothers reported their interparental relationships as consisting of more negotiation than psychologically controlling conflict tactics. Similar to the response tendencies in the Final Say measure, the lack of variability in these CTS reports may have prevented some associations between interparental power dynamics and other relationship subsystem variables from emerging.

Lack of variability in both the Final Say and CTS responses may also explain the absence of association between measures of structure and process in interparental power dynamics. Lack of statistical power, due to a small, relatively homogeneous sample may also have contributed to this nonsignificant finding. Alternatively, the independence of variables from these two questionnaires may be evidence of the importance of distinguishing between structural and process dimensions of interparental relationships, as they may be uniquely related to other aspects of the family system or individual outcomes. It is possible that hostile or negotiating conflict resolutions take place within a variety of interparental power structures, and are therefore unrelated to partners' relative dominance.

Parent-Child Relationships

A significant correlation between mothers' reported frequencies of both physical punishment and psychologically controlling parenting provides evidence of the reliability among these two subscales of harsh punishment derived from the PSP. At least in this sample, mothers who use psychological control tactics with their children are also likely to use physical punishment with them. Mothers' use of harsh punishment, however, was not associated with their use of rule violation, or appeals to social convention. Because the alpha for rule violation was very low, the amount of variability that remains available for association with other variables is relatively small. This limitation makes it difficult to detect significance in bivariate correlations that include this variable. But statistical limitations aside, it is also possible that mothers' use of rule violation can occur in parent-child relationships regardless of the frequency of psychological control or physical punishment displayed by parents. Parental use of rule violation may, for example, depend largely on other situational factors, such as the child's specific misbehavior.

Child-Peer Relationships

No significant correlations were found between children's frequencies of coercive and prosocial behaviors. In this sample, children who engage in a lot of prosocial behaviors with their peers are neither more nor less likely to engage in coercive behaviors with them. The absence of association between prosocial and coercive behavior frequencies can neither support nor refute previous research that has found tendencies in aggressive children to also display frequent prosocial behaviors when interacting with their peers (Hawley, 2002; Roseth et al., 2007). Children's dominance rank was found to be marginally associated with prosocial behaviors, meaning that the children who were most frequently prosocial with their peers were

the most likely to be leaders in the playgroup activities. Although only marginally significant, this evidence can be taken to suggest that the dominant children in this sample were prosocial, rather than domineering, leaders, and perhaps more socially competent. It does not, however, support other findings that suggest social dominance may be related with higher levels of both prosocial and coercive behaviors (Hawley, 1999; Ostrov et al., 2006; Roseth et al., 2007)

Interparental and Parent-Child Associations

Bivariate correlational analyses demonstrated some significant associations between interparental and parent-child processes, providing marginal support for the general assertion that the power dynamics of these two relationship subsystems are likely to be associated with one another. Mothers who perceive their partner relationships as frequently involving negotiation during instances of conflict appear to be significantly less likely to use physical punishment when interacting with their children. This could be due to maternal expectations for the effectiveness of supportive tactics in both relationship contexts, or by a family ideology that endorses supportive rather than coercive means to resolve conflicts. It could also be influenced by mothers' *partners'* tendencies toward non-coercive conflict tactics, although the high correlations between self-reports and partner reports suggests that reports on partners are not as valid as mothers' self-reports on the CTS.

Significant associations were not found between mothers' reports of interparental psychological control and harsh parenting measures, perhaps due in part to the generally low incidence of psychological control in interparental and parenting relationships within the current sample. It is also possible, however, that interparental use of psychological control is due to different types of expectations mothers may have for their partners and their children. Mothers may expect children to obey more readily and may expect partners to be more hesitant to

concede. This could influence associations between interparental and parent-child relationships in at least two ways. First, parental assertion of physical punishment and psychological control in the parent-child relationship may be more effective and more frequently reinforced than parental use of psychological control in the interparental relationship, where maternal dominance is not as readily legitimized. Second, when mothers' expectations are met with a child's refusal to concede, she may react with more harsh parenting strategies than she would when met with a partner's refusal to concede. Both of these possibilities suggest the importance of differentiating the legitimacy of mothers' power in asymmetrical parent-child relationships and horizontal interparental relationships.

Although the association between interparental process and mild parental power assertion (i.e., rule violation) was marginally significant, it was in the opposite direction from what was expected. It appears that the more mothers report their partnerships as involving negotiation conflict tactics, the less likely they are to impose even mild power assertion on their children. Because high ratings of rule violation include administration of punishment and demands for apology, perhaps even these behaviors are inconsistent with the interaction styles of mothers who endorse high levels of negotiation with their partners. While rule violation is a form of power assertion that is mild when compared to physical or psychological control, it may still be harsh enough to render itself incomparable to more prosocial negotiation tactics that occur between romantic partners. It may be that a supportive style of interaction employed by mothers with their spouses would be positively associated with a supportive style of interaction employed with their sons and daughters due to mothers' personal tendencies to engage others' in a particular manner (i.e., guidance and encouragement), but not with mothers' appeals to social convention. This could explain a negative association between interparental negotiation and parent-child assertion

of rule violation strategies. Replication of this study with other measures of relationship power might find greater variability in measures of interparental and parent-child power assertions, and recruitment of a larger, more heterogeneous sample could afford greater variability as well as increased statistical power to detect significant correlations. Stronger associations between these variables would provide an even more convincing illustration of how the spillover hypothesis can be applied to power dynamics within a family.

Interparental and Child-Peer Associations

In testing the association between interparental and child-peer relationships, measurements used in the current study allowed for comparisons along both structural and process dimensions of power dynamics in these relationship subsystems. In looking at structural dimensions of interparental and child-peer power dynamics, no association was found between interparental power arrangements, as measured through the Final Say questionnaire, and children's dominance rank in relation to their peers. The absence of this association may be due largely to the fact that most parents reported the majority of their family decisions to be made jointly and equally by both members of the interparental relationship. Again, low variability in these measures makes it difficult to find relationships among them. In addition, only a small subsample of participants completed the final say measure ($N = 28$), which significantly increases the likelihood that associations between Final Say responses and other measures could be found by chance (i.e., Type I error), making it difficult to establish statistical significance in bivariate correlations. When ignoring significance values, 9 percent of the variance in children's social dominance was found to covary with ratings of the number of family decisions in which mothers had the final say, and 4.8 percent of the variance in dominance was found to covary with autonomic extent in the interparental relationship. If these values were statistically significant,

they would suggest that children who come from families where more decisions are made independently and by mothers are more likely to be submissive when interacting with their peers. To achieve what Cohen (1988) suggests is the minimum amount of statistical power recommended to detect significant correlations (.8), a sample size of 84 families would be necessary to demonstrate significance in a correlation coefficient of .3. It is possible that replication of this finding with a larger sample would provide sufficient statistical power to establish significance in these associations.

Aside from methodological limitations, it is also quite possible that interparental power structures are not associated with child-peer power structures. Preschool children may approach peer relationships in an assertive or inhibited fashion due to their temperament or the characteristics and behaviors of the peers they encounter in the preschool environment. Because power structures require the collaboration of at least two parties' input, children cannot take sole responsibility for the nature of the power dynamics they share with their peers. They may be more likely to vie for social dominance depending on their experiences in the home, but the success of those attempts may rely, at least in part, on the legitimization of their dominance by peers. If this is the case, it may be expected that children's power assertive *processes* are more parallel with interparental structure than dominance hierarchies observed in children's peer groups.

Associations between interparental power structures and children's social processes revealed a statistical trend between the number of decisions mothers reported having final say in and children's frequencies of exhibiting coercive behaviors during participation in playgroup activities. In this group of families, the extent to which mothers have authority over decisions in the home may be associated with the frequency of their preschool children's attempts to exert

coercive control over peers, although this association would need replication and better statistical substantiation to support this assertion. Theoretically speaking, it may be that families in which mothers have more say are more likely to endorse assertiveness, individuality, and self-direction in all members, including their children. By contrast, families that value unity and joint decision-making may display similar processes in interparental as well as parent-child and triadic family contexts. This ideology could become evident through children's interactions with their peers. If this is the case, measurements of shared family values may be important to uncovering the link between interparental power structures and child-peer behaviors. Future research questions might address whether family endorsement of values, such as unity or autonomy, are differentially associated with the types of power assertion that are evident in both interparental and child-peer relationships.

In looking for links between interparental process and children's social outcomes, one significant association was found between mothers' ratings on the CTS and children's social outcomes. Bivariate correlational analyses revealed a trend between interparental negotiation and children's frequencies of peer coercion, and this trend remained in the regression analysis when controlling for other potential influences. Children who are exposed to families using more negotiation tactics may be less likely to be coercive when interacting with their peers. Perhaps children who witness predominantly supportive conflict tactics between their parents are less well-versed in coercive tactics to influence their peers. Assertion of the modeling hypothesis to explain associations between interparental and child-peer interactions however, begs the question of why interparental psychological control is unrelated to child behaviors, and why children's prosocial control with peers is unrelated to both psychologically controlling and negotiation conflict tactic subscales. Although children's social dominance over peers might be expected to

be subject to other contextual variables in the preschool environment (e.g., peers' submission or acknowledgment), it is hard to imagine why the link between children's exposure to interparental processes and their own processes with their peers would not extend to either interparental psychological control or child-peer displays of prosocial behaviors. Perhaps children's inclinations to resort to coercive strategies are mediated or moderated by the amount of supportive behaviors they witness between their parents through triadic coparenting experiences. Perhaps the presence of positive negotiation tactics in interparental relationships provides enough of a repertoire of prosocial behaviors that children can choose to avoid using combative or coercive tactics regardless of whether parents also engage in psychologically controlling behaviors with one another and regardless of whether children are frequently outgoing and prosocial with their peers.

Alternatively, it may be that interparental negotiation is evidence of a family context that emphasizes family-wide collaboration and negotiation, rather than autonomy and individuality. Exposure to more syncretic interparental relationships may also be linked to exposure to more collaborative negotiations in other relationship subsystems as well, leading to a family culture of more constructive problem-solving. Children from families such as these may be more confident that things will work out for everyone without any necessity for coercive tactics. Because interparental psychological control was not related to parenting measures in this study and negotiation was, it may be the case that interparental negotiation is more closely related to parent-child or family-wide styles of interaction, whereas the use of psychological control may be more likely to be isolated in the interparental relationship. Perhaps parents are more open about negotiation tactics and more private about the psychologically and coercively controlling tactics they use in their partnerships. If this is the case, the association between interparental

negotiation and child outcomes may hold true regardless of whether parents use psychological control in interparental relationships. Replication of these findings with a larger sample is necessary to identify links between interparental and child-peer processes of power assertion and the implications of child temperament and peer settings on these associations.

Parent-Child and Child-Peer Associations

Investigation of associations between parent-child and child-peer power dynamics revealed no significant correlations between any measures of parental process and children's social outcomes. In this sample, mothers' self-reported parenting behaviors are not associated with children's displays of social dominance or their frequencies of prosocial or coercive behaviors when interacting with their peers. This may be due to methodological limitations, such as the small, relatively homogenous sample and consistently low levels of harsh parental power assertion.

Methodology aside, however, this is a surprising finding, due to the large amount of literature on parenting and its influence on children's social competence. Perhaps mothers' active attempts to socialize their children through either mild or harsh power assertion are less influential on children's peer interactions than the behaviors mothers model when interacting with their partners. Due to the inherent differences in comparing parent-child power arrangements to child-peer power arrangements, namely the obvious asymmetry entailed in parental authority, it may be futile to compare the extent of parent-child power discrepancy to the power dynamics among children and peers who are their relative equals. Children may be submissive to the wishes of their parents but compartmentalize their knowledge about parent-child relationships separately from knowledge about peer relationships in which they have more legitimate control. This would explain why parenting indicators of power assertion would be

unrelated to children's frequencies of prosocial and coercive behaviors with their peers. It is also possible that characteristics of the family system, such as an emphasis on respect for maternal or parental authority, influence parenting processes in a different manner than they influence children's perceptions of their relationships with peers. More research is necessary to determine whether power dynamics in parent-child relationships are indeed unassociated with those in child-peer relationships or whether family ideologies or other family system characteristics may account for differences between parent-child and child-peer relationships.

Reciprocity of Influence

So far, this discussion has been organized around the ways in which family relationships may exert influence on children's social outcomes. For the full benefits of Family Systems Theory to be actualized, children's influences on parent-child relationships and interparental relationships should be not only acknowledged, but also emphasized. Children's ability to actively interact with their environments and to choose environments that fit with their preferred styles of interaction (Scarr & McCartney, 1983) are just two examples of how children retain influence over their own development. Children's interactions with peers, and especially siblings, provide parents with opportunities to give feedback on social behaviors, and frame the context in which that feedback is given. Children's ability to selectively comply with parents' wishes gives them the ability to mind one parent over the other, a pattern that may shift cohesion and power arrangements throughout the entire family system. The understanding of power as a dynamic and complex characteristic inherent in all social interactions (Olsen & Cromwell, 1975) makes it easy to see why assumptions of unilateral influence within family systems or relationship subsystems are overly reductionistic. This realization draws our attention to the challenges inherent in studying social power but also provides us with a more holistic framework

from which to approach the study of human relationships.

Strengths and Limitations

There are many methodological strengths that have enhanced this study. The incorporation of measures of three different relationship subsystems provides a relatively diverse account of some of the key relationships that relate to each child in the current sample.

Conducting observations of children's social behaviors in a semi-structured playgroup activity allowed children to interact with one another from within their own childhood education centers and among peers with whom they were well-acquainted. Although these activities were staged and structured to an extent, this style of observational data collection is in some ways largely naturalistic. Collecting data on parents' and children's social behaviors from different sources also suggests that associations found between them are not due to consistencies in reporter bias, as they might have been if all collected from a single source.

Although the CTS was not originally designed as a measure of interparental power processes, conflict occurs within a context in which involved parties are attempting to influence one another or avoid influence, making this measure a potentially valid contribution to the measurement of interparental power dynamics. In addition, the CTS has been fairly widely used and endorsed as a valid and reliable measure (Arias & Beach, 1987; Straus, 1979), as has the Final Say questionnaire (Allen, 1984; Allen & Straus, 1984). The relatively high Cronbach's alphas for mothers' reports of physical punishment and psychological control (PRPB; Werner et al., 2006) suggest that these scales are also reliable measurements of those specific styles of parenting.

There are also methodological limitations associated with this study. The sample size was small and largely homogeneous, and without replication the findings should not be generalized

beyond predominantly well-educated, married, white, middle-class families with preschool children attending early childcare education centers. Within the limited sample of 42 participating families, only 28 mothers completed the Final Say questionnaire, so bivariate correlations between this measure of interparental structure with dimensions of parent-child processes are even more limited in statistical power than analyses using other measures.

While collecting child outcome data from a separate source was a strength of this study, measurements of interparental and parent-child relationships were both collected from mother reports. It is possible that social desirability or other biases could have influenced mothers to report on interparental and parent-child relationships similarly. In fact, mothers' reports of their own and their partners' use of psychologically controlling and negotiating conflict tactics were very highly correlated. Future research including assessment of interparental relationships in conjunction with child-peer outcomes can be improved by collecting measures from both members of the parenting relationship, or by using interview or observational methods of data collection.

Regarding the use of playgroup activities for measurement of children's social behaviors, it is important to note that children were randomly assigned into playgroups, and only children who had permission from their parents to participate in playgroup activities had the opportunity to do so. Because of this, children may have been organized into playgroup settings that do not reflect their natural choice of peers to interact with. If social group structures, including dominance hierarchies, are considered as evolving over time, it may not be surprising that interparental and parent-child power dynamics were not significantly associated with global dominance ranks exhibited during these playgroup activities. In addition, children's position of high or low dominance likely varies depending on who they are interacting with, and children's

aggressive behavior tends to diminish after hierarchy has been established (Pellegrini, 2003; Roseth et al., 2007). It is possible that children's exposure to interparental and parent-child power dynamics may be reflected more apparently in dominance hierarchies of social groups they are more familiar with and have spent more time in.

Finally, the cross-sectional design of this study precludes inferences of causal direction (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). Because measurements of interparental, parent-child, and child-peer relationships were collected at about the same time, we cannot suggest that family characteristics exert any influence on children's social behaviors, or that children's relationships with their peers influence the power dynamics in their families. In considering the reciprocal nature of influence emphasized by utilization of Family Systems Theory, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) may have been a more appropriate statistical approach to studying the interrelatedness of structural and process dimensions of these three relationship subsystems. The limited sample size, however, did not allow for SEM, so linear regression analyses were used. Linear regressions can test for associations between numerous variables, a feature that was essential for its compatibility with this study, but cannot reveal more complex interrelations between them. Instead, it compares all independent variables to a single dependent variable, which is an inherently reductionistic approach not optimal for assessment of dynamic systems. Fortunately, many of the impeding methodological limitations of this study can be avoided in the future studies by using larger, more diverse samples. Future research could further benefit this line of study by including fathers in self-report measurements and by acquiring participants who vary more by income, education, ethnicity, and geographical location.

Implications

Having considered the many limitations of this exploratory study, it is apparent that

conclusions cannot be definitively drawn and should not be generalized beyond a very specific population. The utility of these findings in application to social policy, family therapy, and intervention or prevention program development is entirely speculative. However, consideration of the association between interparental negotiation and child peer coercion suggests potential for informing therapy and family programs that targets childhood aggression and social competence. An absence of significant findings between measures of parenting and either interparental or child-peer relationships may suggest the importance of whole-family, or at least partner inclusion in family therapy and programs, rather than specifically targeting children and their primary caregivers. More research on the way family functioning on a systemic level relates to interactions in relationship subsystems and individual adjustment could provide much assistance to a variety of social service professions.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This study provided a unique opportunity to test whether relationship subsystems might exert influence on other relationship subsystems that they do not interact with directly. It is beneficial to the field of family studies primarily as exploratory research that can frame future questions relating to consistencies in structural and process dimensions of relationships as well as social power arrangements within and between family systems and other social networks.

While conclusions cannot readily be drawn from this exploratory research, the findings from this study suggest that the use of negotiation conflict tactics in interparental relationships is associated with less coercion in children's interactions with their peers, and that this association is not mediated by parenting reports of the parent-child relationship. Parental physical punishment was found to correlate with interparental processes in the form of negotiation conflict tactics, but was not found to be significantly associated with power structures in interparental relationships or with children's social outcomes, suggesting that expectations of associations in power dynamics between asymmetrical parent-child relationships and horizontal child-peer relationships may not be reasonable.

An understanding of the interrelatedness of structure and process within the family system, specifically in their relation to power dynamics, stands to benefit the field of family studies by providing information about a central dimension of family functioning and group dynamics. This preliminary work on power dynamics in interparental, parent-child, and child-peer relationships suggests that associations of power may be found in a parallel fashion between dyads where both members are inherently equal in legitimate authority. Further exploration on the mechanisms through which these power dynamics are transferred is necessary to determine

whether these associations are due to transference of influence from one relationship subsystem to another, or due to common influence from characteristics of the family system.

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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Demographic Variables (N = 42)

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range
Child Gender 0 = Boy, 1 = Girl	.50	–	0 – 1
Child Age (years)	4.43	.59	3 – 6
Ethnic Minority 0 = White, 1 = Other	0.00 ¹	–	0 – 1
Mother Age (years)	32.82	5.36	19 – 45
Mother Ethnicity 0 = White, 1 = Other	0.00 ¹	–	0 – 1
Mother Education Completed 1 = 6 th grade 2 = 9 th grade 3 = 11 th grade 4 = GED/12 th grade 5 = AA degree 6 = BA degree 7 = MA degree 8 = PhD/Professional degree	6.00 ¹	1.33	4 – 8
Household Income (in US dollars) 0 = 0 to 10,000 1 = 10,001 – 20,000 2 = 20,001 – 30,000 3 = 30,001 – 40,000 4 = 40,001 – 50,000 5 = 50,001 – 60,000 6 = 60,001 – 70,000	6.00 ¹	2.74	1 – 9
Marital Status 1 = Married, 0 = Other	1.00 ¹	–	0 – 1
Years with Current Partner	9.20	4.16	1.58 – 19

Note. ¹ indicates a median value is presented when values are nominal or ordinal.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Power Dynamic Variables for Interparental, Parent-Child and Child-Peer Relationships (N = 42)

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	α
Interparental Variables				
Negotiation	5.05	.72	2.5 – 6	.94
Psychological Control	1.71	.52	1 – 3.19	.88
Mother's Final Say	1.12	1.07	0 - 4	–
Partner's Final Say	.75	1.17	0 - 5	–
Autonomic Extent	1.86	1.46	0 – 6	–
Parenting Variables				
Rule Violation	7.17	1.54	1.5 – 11.25	.82 ¹
Physical Punishment	1.66	.55	1 – 3.40	.85
Psychological Control	1.38	.46	1 – 3.70	.86
Child-Peer Variables				
Social Dominance	1.92	.67	1 – 3	.69 ¹
Frequency of Prosocial Control	35.30	16.52	0 – 71	.91 ¹
Frequency of Coercive Control	20.78	13.10	0 – 69	.94 ¹

Note: ¹indicates interrater coefficient, rather than Cronbach's alpha.

Table 3.

Correlations between Demographic and Family Power Dynamic Variables (N's vary due to missing data)

Variables	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.
Child Gender	.08	.07	.10	-.09	.00	.01	-.45**	-.15	-.04	.01	-.19
Child Age	-.21	.11	.12	-.13	-.02	.00	.24	.01	.20	.09	-.03
Child Ethnicity 0 = White, 1 = Other	-.05	.35*	.36	-.34	-.01	.10	.15	.14	-.23	.23	-.00
Parent Age	-.01	-.15	.03	.41*	.37	.16	-.32	-.15	.03	.15	-.21
Parent Education	-.07	.19	-.08	-.17	-.19	.09	-.16	-.02	-.19	.02	.04
Household Income	.03	-.10	.09	.22	.24	.04	-.40*	-.11	-.07	.03	.05
Marital Status	.35*	-.26	-.35	.13	-.15	-.18	-.33*	.13	.03	-.19	-.05
Time with Partner (years)	.07	-.28	.01	.31	.25	.14	-.24	.02	-.08	-.22	.00

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. 1. Interparental Negotiation ($N = 42$), 2. Interparental Psychological Control ($N = 42$), 3.

Mothers' Final Say ($N = 28$), 4. Partners' Final Say ($N = 28$), 5. Autonomic Say ($N = 28$), 6. Rule Violation ($N = 42$), 7.

Physical Punishment ($N = 42$), 8. Parental Psychological Control ($N = 42$), 9. Child's Prosocial Behavior ($N = 42$), 10.

Coercive Behavior ($N = 42$), 11. Dominance Rank ($N = 42$).

Table 4

Correlations between Interparental Structure and Child Outcome (N = 28)

Variables	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. Mothers' Final Say (# Decisions Made predominantly by mother)	–					
2. Partners' Final Say (# Decisions Made predominantly by partner)	-.16	–				
3. Autonomic Extent (# Decisions Made predominantly by 1 partner)	.61***	.69***	–			
4. Children's Prosocial Behaviors	-.15	.31	.08	–		
5. Children's Coercive Behaviors	.35†	-.17	.19	.07	–	
6. Children's Social Dominance	.30	-.07	.22	.29†	.39*	–

† $p < .10$ * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 5

Correlations between Interparental Process and Parenting Variables (N = 42)

Variables	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Negotiation Conflict Tactics	–				
2. Psychological Conflict Tactics	-.15	–			
3. Rule Violation	-.30†	-.04	–		
4. Physical Punishment	-.32*	-.05	.22	–	
5. Psychologically Controlling Parenting	.09	-.13	.10	.39*	–

† $p < .10$ * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 6

Correlations between Parental Power Assertion and Child Outcomes (N =42)

Variables	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. Rule Violation	–					
2. Physical Punishment	.22	–				
3. Psychologically Controlling Parenting	.10	.39*	–			
4. Children's Prosocial Behaviors	.19	.05	-.03	–		
5. Children's Coercive Behaviors	-.04	-.08	-.06	.07	–	
6. Children's Social Dominance	-.20	.24	.15	-.29†	-.26	–

94 † $p < .10$ * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Table 7

Correlations between Interparental Power Assertion and Child Outcome Variables (N = 42)

Variables	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Negotiation Conflict Tactics	–				
2. Psychological Conflict Tactics	-.15	–			
3. Children’s Prosocial Behaviors	-.12	-.09	–		
4. Children’s Coercive Behaviors	-.29†	.23	.07	–	
5. Children’s Social Dominance	.20	-.03	-.29†	-.26	–

† $p < .10$ * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

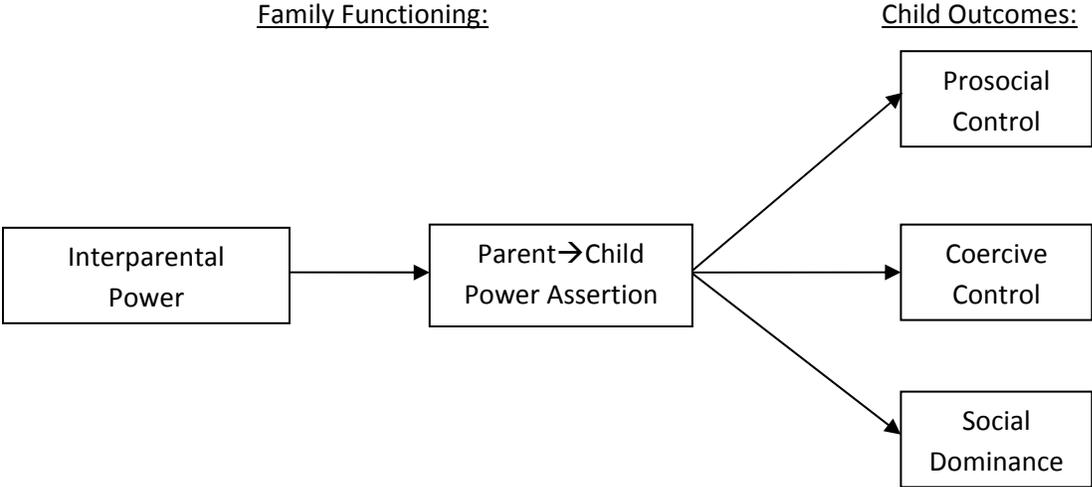
Table 8

Linear Regression of Frequency of Coercive Behaviors in Preschooler Interactions (N = 34)

Variable	1	2	3	r ²	Δr ²
Intercept	.96	1.21	1.77		
Control Variables					
Gender 0 = Boy, 1 = Girl	.43†	.04	0.07		
Ethnic Minority Status 0 = White, 1 = Other	.20*	.14	0.17		
Parent Age	.01	.01	0.01	.11	
Interparental Process					
Negotiation Tactics		.09	.15*		
Psychological Control		.09	.07	.22	.08
Parent-Child Process					
Rule Violation			.02		
Physical Punishment			.10		
Psychological Control			.17	.33	.12

† $p < .10$ * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure 1. Mediation Model



APPENDIX A
CONSENT FORM

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
PARENT CONSENT FORM
Family and Peer Interaction Study (FPIS)

Jared A. Lisonbee, Ph. D.
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We are writing to you to invite you and your child to participate in a research project we are doing to study the development of children's social relationships with other children. This study is called the Family and Peer Interaction Study (FPIS). The purpose of this letter is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether to be in the study or not. Please read the letter carefully. You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what we would ask you and your child to do, the possible risks and benefits, your child's rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this letter that is not clear. When we have answered all your questions, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called 'informed consent.' We will give you a copy of this letter for your records.

PURPOSE AND BENEFITS

The Family and Peer Interaction Study involves 4 and 5 year old children, their preschool teachers, and their mothers (We hope to study fathers in the future, but this study focuses on mothers and children only.). Our goal is to learn about how young children get along with their peers in the preschool setting, and how mothers help children learn important social interaction skills.

In this study, we are also learning about how biological processes (specifically, physiological reactivity) relate to children's behavior with peers. One part of this study involves observing children interacting with classmates in an out-of-class playgroup activity to study how collaboration and competition with peers relates to children's social behaviors and physiological processes. The information we collect in this study will help us (and others) design social skills programs for children.

PROCEDURES

The first part of the study involves collecting information from your child's teacher. We would like your permission to collect information from your child's teacher about his/her social behavior in the classroom. Teachers will be paid to complete questionnaires about each participating child. For each completed questionnaire we will contribute \$2 toward the purchase of materials and supplies for your child's classroom.

In the next portion of the study, your child will play with a few other children from his/her classroom in a short (approximately ½ hour) playgroup activity at his or her preschool. For the playgroup activity, children will work together to create a story about a “trip to the zoo.” The children will color a zoo background and zoo animal pictures and use these materials to create the story together. Before and after the playgroup activity, your child will be asked to provide saliva samples which will be used to test for hormone levels typically associated with stress and activity level in children. Hand sanitizer and other precautions will be used following the saliva collection to reduce the risk of children passing germs to one another as part of the playgroup activity. In previous studies examining hormone levels in preschool children, we have found that some children’s hormone levels change when they are interacting with their teachers and we are interested in seeing how different children’s hormone levels may change while they interact with classmates. We will videotape the children interacting in the playgroup to later code the interactions for patterns of behaviors that may relate to children’s classroom behavior as reported by the teacher and the child’s physiological activity.

The final phase of the study involves mothers more directly. Mothers and children are invited to come to the Family Observation Room on the WSU campus to complete some questionnaires and to take part in some interactive activities. For example, we will watch mothers and children play with some toys, complete a puzzle task, and talk together about common situations that arise with peers. These interactions will be videotaped. Videotaping is necessary so that, at a later date, we can transcribe the conversations and analyze the interactions. We will also conduct a brief interview with your child while you are completing the questionnaire packet in order to assess your child’s beliefs about peer interactions. We expect that the activities on the WSU campus will take between 1 and 1 ½ hours to complete, and we will compensate families \$50 for their participation in this portion of the study.

If you choose to participate in this study, you have the right to withdraw your child from the study at any time. You may also choose not to answer any questionnaire items or participate in any of the activities, or allow your child to participate in any of the research activities that make you or your child feel uncomfortable.

RISKS, STRESS, OR DISCOMFORT

We will take precautions to reduce the possible risks to you and your child while participating in this study. Some children may feel uncomfortable with the disruptions to regular schedules (i.e., the playgroup) or with new activities. If any child appears distressed by any of the activities, we will allow the child to stop the activity. In past research, most children have enjoyed participating in the out-of-class activity. We will work with the children to ease any concerns the children may have.

In the family interaction phase of the study, we do not expect you or your child to experience any discomfort, because you will be asked to interact with your child

in ways most parents do on a regular basis such as playing with toys and putting together puzzles. Nonetheless, should you or your child feel uncomfortable with any questions on the surveys, or with the activities you will be asked to do, you can stop the session at any time for no penalty.

OTHER INFORMATION

We will do what we can to protect the confidentiality of the information that we collect from you and your child as part of this study. Children's information will be entered into a computer data base which will contain no names or other identifying information. Videotapes of your child in the playgroup and of your family in the observation laboratory will be stored in a locked cabinet at the university. Your child's saliva sample will be stored in locked freezer before being shipped to a laboratory for analysis where the sample will only be identified by a bar-coded tracking label. At the conclusion of the study, all saliva samples will be destroyed and videotapes will be erased.

This project has been reviewed and approved for human participation by the WSU IRB.

If you have general questions about the study, please call Dr. Jared Lisonbee or Dr. Nicole Werner at the Department of Human Development, Washington State University, 509-335-8439.

If you have questions about your child's rights as a study participant, please call the Institutional Review Board of Washington State University at 509-335-3668.

Jared A. Lisonbee, Ph. D.
Assistant Professor

Nicole Werner Ph. D
Assistant Professor

**WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
PARENT AND CHILD CONSENT FORM
Family and Peer Interaction Study (FPIS)**

Please Complete:

Child's Full Name	Birth Date	School / Teacher Name
YOUR relationship to child:		

GENERAL CONSENT STATEMENT:

This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to agree to take part in the research and/or to allow my child to participate in the components of the research project as described on the following page. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have general questions about the research, I can ask Dr. Jared Lisonbee (e-mail: jlisonbee@wsu.edu; phone: [509] 335-2896) or Dr. Nicole Werner (e-mail: nwerner@mail.wsu.edu; phone: [509] 335-8659). If I have questions regarding my rights as a participant, I can call the WSU Institutional Review Board at (509)335-3668. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

GO TO THE NEXT PAGE

**WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
PARENT AND CHILD CONSENT FORM
Family and Peer Interaction Study (FPIS)**

NOW PLEASE READ AND SIGN THE APPROPRIATE SECTION(S) BELOW!

(A) My child can participate in the playgroup session at my child's preschool/childcare center.

Parent / Guardian Full Name (Print)	Date	Parent / Guardian Signature

(B) I agree to take part in the laboratory assessment with my child at the Family Observation Room on the Washington State University campus. I understand that I will be compensated \$50 for participating in this portion of the study.

Parent / Guardian Full Name (Print)	Date	Parent / Guardian Signature

(C) I do not wish to participate or to allow my child to participate in this project. (sign below)

Parent / Guardian Full Name (Print)	Date	Parent / Guardian Signature

**CONTACT INFORMATION
(please complete regardless of where you signed above)**

We will begin calling families soon to schedule family interviews. We would also like to have contact information should we need to contact any participating family in the future. To help us do this, please complete the following information:

Phone Number _____

Phone Number – alternative _____

Email address _____

Best time(s) to call _____

Who should I ask for? _____

**PLEASE TEAR OFF THIS LAST PAGE AND RETURN BY MAIL IN
THE ENCLOSED STAMPED ENVELOPE BY**

APPENDIX B
CONFLICT TACTICS SCALE

Lastly, please tell us about your current partner...

1. My current partner is my:

- Marital spouse
- Live-in partner
- Dating partner (separate residence)
- Other

2. Please mark your gender:

	Male	Female
My gender	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My partner's gender	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. How long have you been with your current partner?

I have been with my partner for _____ years, _____ months

APPENDIX C
DOMAINS OF FINAL SAY QUESTIONNAIRE

Family Decisions

Please indicate who has the final say in making decisions about the following issues.

1. Buying a car:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My partner only	My partner more than me	Partner and me exactly the same	Me more than my partner	Me only

2. Having children:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My partner only	My partner more than me	Partner and me exactly the same	Me more than my partner	Me only

3. What house or apartment to take:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My partner only	My partner more than me	Partner and me exactly the same	Me more than my partner	Me only

4. What job either partner should take:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My partner only	My partner more than me	Partner and me exactly the same	Me more than my partner	Me only

5. Whether a partner should go to work or quit work:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My partner only	My partner more than me	Partner and me exactly the same	Me more than my partner	Me only

6. How much money to spend each week on food:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My partner only	My partner more than me	Partner and me exactly the same	Me more than my partner	Me only

APPENDIX D
RESPONSES TO PRESCHOOLERS' BEHAVIOR QUESTIONNAIRE

Parents' Responses to Preschoolers' Behavior

Instructions: Please read the following descriptions of children's behavior. As you read them, try to imagine vividly that the things in the story have just happened. Then answer the questions below. Some questions ask for your opinion by circling the single best number on the scale after the question. Other questions require that you write out your response. Please provide as much detail as you can on these questions. Your answers are important to us! Remember, all of the questions refer to your child's behavior.

Two kids are playing on a swing. Your child walks up to one of the children and says, "I want that swing." Your child grabs the swing from the child, and the child falls on the ground.

1. Why do you think your child behaved in this way? (please describe)

2. In general, how typical or common is your child's behavior among children of this age?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all common						Extremely common

3. Do you think your child is acting badly or improperly?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Definitely NO						Definitely YES

4. Does your child think (or know) that he/she is acting badly or improperly?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Definitely NO						Definitely YES

5. How likely is it that your child was trying to harm the peer in the situation?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all; this was an accident						Very likely; my child acted intentionally and hurtfully

6. At what age do most children understand that this type of behavior might be hurtful to others?
Please write in the age _____

7. How likely is it that your child would behave in a similar way in this kind of situation in the future?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all likely; this is definitely a temporary stage						Extremely likely that my child will act in this way in the future

8. How would you feel if you saw your child act this way several times in a row? (please describe)

9. How important is it for you to respond to this behavior?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all important						Extremely important

10. What would you do or say, if anything, if you witnessed this situation happen several times in a row? (please describe)

11. What would you hope to accomplish by handling the situation in this way? (please describe)

Two kids are playing in the dramatic play corner at preschool. Your child approaches them and asks if he/she can join. The kids say no, explaining that there are only two chairs at the table where they are sitting. Your child says, "If you don't let me play, you can't come to my birthday party."

12. Why do you think your child behaved in this way? (please describe)

13. In general, how typical or common is your child's behavior among children of this age?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all common						Extremely common

14. Do you think your child is acting badly or improperly?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Definitely NO						Definitely YES

15. Does your child think (or know) that he/she is acting badly or improperly?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Definitely NO						Definitely YES

16. How likely is it that your child was trying to harm the peer in the situation?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all; this was an accident						Very likely; my child acted intentionally and hurtfully

17. At what age do most children understand that this type of behavior might be hurtful to others?
Please write in the age _____

18. How likely is it that your child would behave in a similar way in this kind of situation in the future?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all likely; this is definitely a temporary stage						Extremely likely that my child will act in this way in the future

19. How likely you feel if you saw your child act this way several times in a row? (please describe)

20. How important is it for you to respond to this behavior?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all important						Extremely important

21. What would you do or say, if anything, if you witnessed this situation happen several times in a row? (please describe)

22. What would you hope to accomplish by handling the situation in this way? (please describe)

It's lunchtime and your child finds an empty chair next to some classmates. When he/she tries to sit down, one of the kids at the table says, "You can't sit here." The next thing you know, your child has punched the other child in the arm.

23. Why do you think your child behaved in this way? (please describe)

24. In general, how typical or common is your child's behavior among children of this age?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all common						Extremely common

25. Do you think your child is acting badly or improperly?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Definitely NO						Definitely YES

26. Does your child think (or know) that he/she is acting badly or improperly?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Definitely NO						Definitely YES

27. How likely is it that your child was trying to harm the peer in the situation?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all; this was an accident						Very likely; my child acted intentionally and hurtfully

28. At what age do most children understand that this type of behavior might be hurtful to others?
Please write in the age _____

29. How likely is it that your child would behave in a similar way in this kind of situation in the future?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all likely; this is definitely a temporary stage						Extremely likely that my child will act in this way in the future

30. How would you feel if you saw your child act this way several times in a row? (please describe)

31. How important is it for you to respond to this behavior?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all important						Extremely important

32. What would you do or say, if anything, if you witnessed this situation happen several times in a row? (please describe)

33. What would you hope to accomplish by handling the situation in this way? (please describe)

Your child is playing with a classmate on the playground. Another child from the class approaches them and asks to join their play. Your child says, “Let’s not let him/her play,” and both children turn away from the peer.

34. Why do you think your child behaved in this way? (please describe)

35. In general, how typical or common is your child’s behavior among children of this age?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all common						Extremely common

36. Do you think your child is acting badly or improperly?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Definitely NO						Definitely YES

37. Does your child think (or know) that he/she is acting badly or improperly?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Definitely NO						Definitely YES

38. How likely is it that your child was trying to harm the peer in the situation?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all; this was an accident						Very likely; my child acted intentionally and hurtfully

39. At what age do most children understand that this type of behavior might be hurtful to others?
Please write in the age _____

40. How likely is it that your child would behave in a similar way in this kind of situation in the future?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all likely; this is definitely a temporary stage						Extremely likely that my child will act in this way in the future

41. How would you feel if you saw your child act this way several times in a row? (please describe)

42. How important is it for you to respond to this behavior?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all important						Extremely important

43. What would you do or say, if anything, if you witnessed this situation happen several times in a row? (please describe)

44. What would you hope to accomplish by handling the situation in this way? (please describe)

It is lunchtime. Your child sees that a classmate is sitting next to his/her best friend. Your child pushes the classmate out of the seat.

45. Why do you think your child behaved in this way? (please describe)

46. In general, how typical or common is your child's behavior among children of this age?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all common						Extremely common

47. Do you think your child is acting badly or improperly?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Definitely NO						Definitely YES

48. Does your child think (or know) that he/she is acting badly or improperly?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Definitely NO						Definitely YES

49. How likely is it that your child was trying to harm the peer in the situation?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all; this was an accident						Very likely; my child acted intentionally and hurtfully

50. At what age do most children understand that this type of behavior might be hurtful to others?
Please write in the age _____

51. How likely is it that your child would behave in a similar way in this kind of situation in the future?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all likely; this is definitely a temporary stage						Extremely likely that my child will act in this way in the future

52. How would you feel if you saw your child act this way several times in a row? (please describe)

53. How important is it for you to respond to this behavior?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all important						Extremely important

54. What would you do or say, if anything, if you witnessed this situation happen several times in a row? (please describe)

55. What would you hope to accomplish by handling the situation in this way? (please describe)

Your child and another child in the classroom are playing with blocks together. The child knocks down your child's tower. Your child says, "I'm not your friend anymore."

56. Why do you think your child behaved in this way? (please describe)

57. In general, how typical or common is your child's behavior among children of this age?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all common						Extremely common

58. Do you think your child is acting badly or improperly?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Definitely NO						Definitely YES

59. Does your child think (or know) that he/she is acting badly or improperly?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Definitely NO						Definitely YES

60. How likely is it that your child was trying to harm the peer in the situation?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all; this was an accident						Very likely; my child acted intentionally and hurtfully

61. At what age do most children understand that this type of behavior might be hurtful to others?
Please write in the age _____

62. How likely is it that your child would behave in a similar way in this kind of situation in the future?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all likely; this is definitely a temporary stage						Extremely likely that my child will act in this way in the future

63. How would you feel if you saw your child act this way several times in a row? (please describe)

64. How important is it for you to respond to this behavior?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all important						Extremely important

65. What would you do or say, if anything, if you witnessed this situation happen several times in a row? (please describe)

66. What would you hope to accomplish by handling the situation in this way? (please describe)

Your child is waiting in line with some other kids to go down the slide on the playground. All of a sudden, one of the kids cuts in line in front of your child. Your child pushes the child out of line and goes down the slide.

67. Why do you think your child behaved in this way? (please describe)

68. In general, how typical or common is your child's behavior among children of this age?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all common						Extremely common

69. Do you think your child is acting badly or improperly?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Definitely NO						Definitely YES

70. Does your child think (or know) that he/she is acting badly or improperly?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Definitely NO						Definitely YES

71. How likely is it that your child was trying to harm the peer in the situation?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all; this was an accident						Very likely; my child acted intentionally and hurtfully

72. At what age do most children understand that this type of behavior might be hurtful to others?
Please write in the age _____

73. How likely is it that your child would behave in a similar way in this kind of situation in the future?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all likely; this is definitely a temporary stage						Extremely likely that my child will act in this way in the future

74. How would you feel if you saw your child act this way several times in a row? (please describe)

75. How important is it for you to respond to this behavior?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all important						Extremely important

76. What would you do or say, if anything, if you witnessed this situation happen several times in a row? (please describe)

77. What would you hope to accomplish by handling the situation in this way? (please describe)

The children are working on art projects. Your child says to the child sitting next to him/her, “If you don’t give me the red paint, I won’t be your best friend.”

78. Why do you think your child behaved in this way? (please describe)

79. In general, how typical or common is your child’s behavior among children of this age?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all common						Extremely common

80. Do you think your child is acting badly or improperly?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Definitely NO						Definitely YES

81. Does your child think (or know) that he/she is acting badly or improperly?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Definitely NO						Definitely YES

82. How likely is it that your child was trying to harm the peer in the situation?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all; this was an accident						Very likely; my child acted intentionally and hurtfully

83. At what age do most children understand that this type of behavior might be hurtful to others?
Please write in the age _____

84. How likely is it that your child would behave in a similar way in this kind of situation in the future?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all likely; this is definitely a temporary stage						Extremely likely that my child will act in this way in the future

85. How would you feel if you saw your child act this way several times in a row? (please describe)

86. How important is it for you to respond to this behavior?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all important						Extremely important

87. What would you do or say, if anything, if you witnessed this situation happen several times in a row? (please describe)

88. What would you hope to accomplish by handling the situation in this way? (please describe)

APPENDIX E
PARENTING STYLES AND PRACTICES QUESTIONNAIRE

The Way I Raise My Child

Parents interact with their children in many different ways. Below are some common parenting situations that may or may not happen in your own home. Please rate how often you acted this way with the child participating in this study in the last 6 months. To make the question easier to understand, you may insert your child's name at each point where my child appears in the sentence. Use the following scale to answer the questions, and circle the appropriate number for each item:

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	
(never in the last 6 months)	(once or twice in the last 6 months)	(once or twice every month)	(once or twice every week)	(every day)	
1	2	3	4	5	
1. I show patience with <u>my child</u> .	1	2	3	4	5
2. I use physical punishment as a way of disciplining <u>my child</u> .	1	2	3	4	5
3. I make <u>my child</u> feel guilty when he/she does not meet my expectations.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I give into <u>my child</u> when she causes a commotion about something.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I tell <u>my child</u> that he/she is not as good as other children.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I express affection by hugging, kissing, and holding <u>my child</u> .	1	2	3	4	5
7. If <u>my child</u> hurts my feelings, I stop talking to <u>my child</u> until he/she pleases me again	1	2	3	4	5
8. I tell <u>my child</u> that I love <u>him/her</u> .	1	2	3	4	5
9. I let <u>my child</u> know how disappointed I am when he/she misbehaves.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I explode in anger towards <u>my child</u> .	1	2	3	4	5
11. I joke and play with <u>my child</u> .	1	2	3	4	5
12. I tell <u>my child</u> that he/she should be ashamed when he/she misbehaves.	1	2	3	4	5

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	
(never in the last 6 months)	(once or twice in the last 6 months)	(once or twice every month)	(once or twice every week)	(every day)	
1	2	3	4	5	
13. I give comfort and understanding when <u>my child</u> is upset.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I act disappointed when <u>my child</u> misbehaves.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I am easy going and relaxed with <u>my child</u> .	1	2	3	4	5
16. I say to <u>my child</u> , "If you really care for me, you would not do things that cause me to worry."	1	2	3	4	5
17. I give <u>my child</u> reasons why rules should be obeyed.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I tell <u>my child</u> that I get embarrassed when he/she does not meet my expectations.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I guide <u>my child</u> by physical punishment more than by reason.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I argue with <u>my child</u> .	1	2	3	4	5
21. I bring up past mistakes when criticizing <u>my child</u>	1	2	3	4	5
22. I tell <u>my child</u> that I appreciate what <u>he/she</u> tries or accomplishes.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I go back and forth between being warm and critical toward <u>my child</u> .	1	2	3	4	5
24. I am responsive to <u>my child's</u> feelings or needs.	1	2	3	4	5
25. I don't pay attention when <u>my child</u> is speaking to me.	1	2	3	4	5
26. I explain to <u>my child</u> how I feel about <u>his/her</u> good and bad behavior.	1	2	3	4	5

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	
(never in the last 6 months)	(once or twice in the last 6 months)	(once or twice every month)	(once or twice every week)	(every day)	
1	2	3	4	5	
27. Often interrupt <u>my child</u>	1	2	3	4	5
28. I explain to <u>my child</u> the consequences of <u>his/her</u> behavior.	1	2	3	4	5
29. I ignore <u>my child</u> when he or she tries to get attention.	1	2	3	4	5
30. I emphasize for <u>my child</u> the reasons for rules.	1	2	3	4	5
31. I spank <u>my child</u> when <u>he/she</u> is disobedient.	1	2	3	4	5
32. Blame <u>my child</u> for other family members' problems	1	2	3	4	5
33. I help <u>my child</u> understand the impact of <u>his/her</u> behavior by encouraging <u>him/her</u> to talk about the consequences of <u>his/her</u> own actions.	1	2	3	4	5
34. I give praise when <u>my child</u> is good.	1	2	3	4	5
35. I tell <u>my child</u> that his or her behavior was dumb or stupid	1	2	3	4	5
36. I yell or shout when <u>my child</u> misbehaves.	1	2	3	4	5
37. I find it difficult to discipline <u>my child</u> .	1	2	3	4	5
38. I am less friendly with <u>my child</u> if he/she do not see things my way	1	2	3	4	5
39. I threaten <u>my child</u> with punishment more often than actually giving it.	1	2	3	4	5
40. I change the subject whenever <u>my child</u> has something to say	1	2	3	4	5

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	
(never in the last 6 months)	(once or twice in the last 6 months)	(once or twice every month)	(once or twice every week)	(every day)	
1	2	3	4	5	
41. I encourage <u>my child</u> to talk about <u>his/her</u> troubles.	1	2	3	4	5
42. Am always trying to change how <u>my child</u> feels or thinks about things	1	2	3	4	5
43. I show respect for <u>my child's</u> opinions by encouraging <u>him/her</u> to express them.	1	2	3	4	5
44. I state punishments to <u>my child</u> but don't actually do them.	1	2	3	4	5
45. I avoid looking at <u>my child</u> when I he/she has disappointed me	1	2	3	4	5
46. I spoil <u>my child</u> .	1	2	3	4	5
47. I show sympathy when <u>my child</u> is hurt or frustrated.	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX F
CODING SCHEME FOR PLAYGROUP ACTIVITIES

Preschoolers and Pals Playgroup Coding Themes

The following codes are behavioral themes and categories to be coded by observers watching the playgroup activities. Each child will be coded individually using an event triggered coding system. If the child exhibits any of the following behaviors, the coder will indicate what behavior was displayed and the time (on the video) when the behavior occurred as well as which other child(ren) was/were involved in the dominant or submissive behavior.

Success: Only use this code if behaviors result in a child receiving desired resources or if a child successfully prevents a peer from taking his/her toys or materials.

Target Child: Only use this code if it is apparent who child is targeting through his/her words, actions, or body positioning. Leave blank if behaviors are “shared” with the entire group and not specifically targeted toward other children. Code the numbers of all other children if child addresses them all.

<u>Prosocial Control</u>	
Group Facilitation (leadership):	
Behavior that is used to promote group functioning, inclusion, and involvement as well as completing the task at hand. These behaviors still contribute to the establishment or maintenance of dominance hierarchies. Behaviors include Collaboration, Teaching, Helping, Support, Guidance, Reciprocity, Alliance Building (<i>inclusion</i> not exclusion).	
<u>Code:</u>	
PROC	Prosocial Control
PROC1	Giving (helpful) directions.
PROC2	Facilitating (e.g., let me hold the paper still for you while you cut) -Offering to help -Offering resources when not specifically asked for them (e.g., “Here, you can have my scissors.”)
PROC3	Teaching others (e.g., “Bears can be white.”) -Expression of (helpful) knowledge. -Updates on time status
PROC4	Advocating for the group, self or other group members (e.g., “Hey, we need another crayon, the white one doesn’t work!”) -Advocating for a peer to adults (e.g., “She needs scissors.”) -Advocating for self in the context of assisting the group.
PROC5	Drawing attention to oneself (<i>not</i> the same as submissive seeking attention) -Using (positive) humor to get attention -Making jokes that do not demean others -Drawing attention elsewhere (e.g., “Hey, look outside!”) - <u>Task-focused</u> commentary (e.g., to “update” the other children or alert/appraise the other children about what the child is doing)
PROC6	Encouraging Verbal Response (eliciting positive verbal communication from others-asking questions to involve others; e.g., “What do you think you should use to color the trees?”)

PROC7	Offering a positive response or supportive approval. -Agreeing with or supporting claims or statements of others -Saying “thank you” -Offering supportive approval to others who seek it (replies to SB3).
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ERC	Equitable Resource Control
ERC1	Facilitating resource availability with others in the group -“We need to all take turns. Let [other child] use the green crayon now.” -“Here, let’s break this crayon in half. That way we can both use it.” -Asking another child for resources (e.g., “Can I use the blue one now?”) -Expressing a need (e.g. “I need the scissors.”) -Giving other child resources when asked for them (not at own expense)
GP	General Prosocial —Use this code for any behaviors that are clearly “Prosocial Control” but do not clearly fit into any of the other Prosocial Control codes.

Coercive Control
 Dominance that is used to facilitate one’s own goals, activity and/or status at the expense of the other. (Elevates self/denigrates others). Control, exclusion, domination, suppression.

VC	Verbal Control
VC1	Interrupting/constraining verbal expression. (e.g., “Shhh!”)
VC2	Making demands of others (e.g., “Give me the blue!”) <i>Includes coercive complaints (e.g., “You’re hogging all the crayons!”)</i>
VC3	Tattling or threatening to tattle on another child (e.g., for not sharing)
VC4	Leading questions to elicit a controlled response -“We’re almost out of time, right Scott?”

MC	Material Control
MC1	Controlling or dominating resources. Preventing another child from using materials <i>without touching the child</i> . -Moving materials out of a child’s reach -Grabbing resources from table center -Covering materials with a hand <i>to control access to materials</i> as another child attempts to grab them -Crouching over materials/holding them in towards chest -Turning away to protect materials. -telling another child to wait their turn for resources.
MC2	Taking (or attempting to take) materials or toys away from another child <i>without touching the child</i> (e.g., pulling the toy out of their hands).
MC3	Coloring or cutting another child’s materials for the other child (without invitation).

PC	Physical Control/Constraint
PC1	Physical-Direct: Pushing, physically moving the other person, constraining, or guiding the other person’s hand/arm to control child’s action.

PC2	Physical-Indirect: <i>Physically</i> blocking or otherwise impeding another child’s desired behavior or position. -blocking a child from passing by -blocking a child’s arm from reaching an object.
PC3	Non-Verbal Coercion -Dominant Posturing (e.g., Standing up to appear “bigger.” Extending personal space/encroaching on other children’s space) -Intimidation (e.g., sticking out tongue; “Death Stare”)
PC4	Physical threats to harm or physically control (e.g., spitting, hitting, etc.)
RC	Relational Control
	Controlling and establishing dominance through inclusion and exclusion
RC1	<i>Implicit</i> coalition building that excludes, creating an “us and them” situation. -whispering with other children in a way that the others cannot hear.
RC2	<i>Explicit</i> coalition building that excludes -Designating friendship boundaries (e.g., “You can’t play with us.”) -“Cindy, you can work on this picture with me, but Sally can’t.”
RC3	Threatening damage to relationship if another child does not comply -“I won’t play with you unless you let me be the animals.”
SA	Self Aggrandizing
SA1	Taking on the role of authority or rule enforcement -“Let me tell you what you need to do next.” -Enforcing rules (e.g., “You can’t color on the table—the teacher said so!”)
SA2	Withholding approval, withholding information, and ignoring questions. -E.G., covering the timer so others cannot see.
SA3	Boasting. Bragging about self to elevate or maintain one’s position in the group -“My picture turned out best.” -Boastful comparisons (e.g., “My picture looks better than your picture.”) <i>Does not include “put-downs” directed at the group.</i>
SA4	Calling dibs on toys or materials. (In present or past tense) -“I’m going to be the animals!” -“Hey, I was going to be the animals.”
SA5	Defending self against lowering attempts from others -E.g., “Nuh uh, you can too make Giraffes yellow!” (in response to another child’s statement such as in OL1)
OL	Other Lowering
OL1	Negating claims or statements of others e.g., “No, giraffes are orange, not yellow.”) Dismissing or demeaning the ideas or suggestions of others. -Also includes <i>refusing help attempts provided by others.</i>
OL2	Name-calling, put-downs, criticisms, and negative comparisons -“your coloring isn’t as good as mine.” -“you’re cutting it out wrong.”

GD	General Dominance
	Use this code for behaviors that are clearly coercive and dominant in nature but do NOT fit into any of the other coding categories.
<u>Submissiveness</u>	
SB	Submissive Behavior
SB1	Submissive posture: Lowering head when interacting with others. -Making self appear “smaller.” -Taking up less space to yield to others.
SB2	Giving in to the requests or demands of others at the expense of accomplishing one’s own task.
SB3	Seeking approval of others (e.g., “Did I do a good job on my picture?”)
SB4	Looking to others to see what to do (in order to copy behavior)
SB5	Self deprecating (e.g., “My pictures not very good” or, “ I can’t do it.”)
GS	General Submissiveness
	Use this code for submissive behavior that does NOT fit into any of the other “submissive” categories.
<u>Withdrawal</u>	
WD1	Not engaging in interactions with the other group members—negative affect. -Sitting apart from others in a group with negative affect. -Pouting.
WD2	<i>Contentedly</i> working on one’s own.

APPENDIX G
CODING SCHEME FOR PARENTAL USE OF RULE VIOLATION

RULE VIOLATION

Definition: the extent to which parent communicates clearly to child through words or actions that his/her behavior violated a social or moral convention.

High	3	<p>The parent communicates clearly and specifically (through discussion or behavioral interventions) that the child’s actions violated a social or moral convention. Responses should be coded as “high” when one or more of the following conditions is met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent explicitly states that the child’s behavior was hurtful and/or inappropriate by using a specific reprimand or prohibition, <u>coupled with</u> either an explanation of <u>why</u> the behavior was wrong (e.g., “when you say xxx, that makes your friend feel sad”) <u>or</u> a demand for apology • Parent assigns a punishment or negative consequence (e.g., “I’d remove my child from the swing and not let him swing for the rest of the afternoon”) (removal, not distraction) <u>coupled with</u> a specific reprimand (see above) <u>or</u> demand for apology. Punishments are likely to be removal of privileges or time out. • Parent assigns a punishment or negative consequence (e.g., “I’d remove my child from the swing and not let him swing for the rest of the afternoon”) (removal, not distraction) <u>coupled with</u> an explanation of why the punishment was given.
Medium	2	<p>Responses that include simple or general reprimands (“That’s not nice”) without explanations, demands for apology, or punishment, should score “2” on this dimension. Parents who indicate that the target child’s behavior “was not a good choice” would also score “2” unless other indicators of high rule violation are present. When a parent asks a child to make reparations (e.g., ask her to assist with pick up”), in the absence of other indications of high rule violation, a score of “2” should be assigned.</p> <p>Interventions that implicitly, but not explicitly, suggest that the child’s behavior was inappropriate are rated as medium on this dimension. The parent might suggest a different course of action (e.g., problem-solving or direct involvement) or appeal to the feelings of the peer in the conflict, yet does not state in unambiguous terms that the child’s behavior was unacceptable.</p>
Low	1	<p>The parent does not communicate that the child’s actions were inappropriate. The parent might ignore the child’s negative actions, attempt to distract him/her from the conflict, comfort or reassure the target child, or focus exclusively on the peer’s negative behavior in the situation (i.e., reprimand peer for provoking target child).</p>