"BUT WE STILL LOVED EACH OTHER": PREADOLESCENTS' AND

ADOLESCENTS' INDIVIDUATION AND CONNECTEDNESS

IN THE NARRATIVES ABOUT CONFLICTS

WITH PARENTS AND FRIENDS

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examined preadolescents' and adolescents' narratives about their interpersonal conflicts with parents and friends as a window into the processes of the youths' individuation and connectedness in these close relationships. One hundred eight participants, 18 males and 18 females in each of three age groups (ages 10, 14, and 17), provided three narrative accounts relating to a time when they disagreed with their mother, their father, and their best friend. It was found that the youths' conceptions of their individuation and connectedness increased in complexity with age. Relationship context differences were also found for both individuation and connectedness: Allusions to individuated desires were more common in the child-parent than the friendship narratives, and allusions to connectedness were more common in the friendship than in the child-parent narratives. Additionally, girls referred to disturbances in their connectedness to others more frequently than boys. The findings contribute to our understanding of the facilitative role of conflicts for individuation and connectedness processes across development as well as the ways in which different relationships provide somewhat different, but to an extent overlapping, contexts for these developmental processes.

…well we [my dad and I] were deciding like what school is best, and I thought one school and he thought the other…. We were both getting a little frustrated and stuff but we still loved each other...

Fourteen-year-old adolescent girl

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INTRODUCTION

As nicely formulated by Shantz and Hobart (1989), "social development may be conceptualized as involving two primary life-long goals: becoming individuated from others, a distinct and unique self; while, simultaneously, becoming connected to others, an accepted and valued group member" (p. 86). Accumulating theoretical and research work (Killen & Nucci, 1995; Shantz & Hobart, 1989; Smetana, 2005) suggests that these two chief developmental tasks – that of individuation and connectedness – are achieved through children's and adolescents' social interactions, and in particular conflict interactions, with significant others. The present study examined preadolescents' and adolescents' narratives about conflicts as a window into the process of their psychological individuation from, and simultaneous maintenance of connectedness to, their closest others – namely their parents and best friends.

Individuation Development and the Role of Conflict

Individuation as an important developmental process was originally conceptualized by Mahler and colleagues (Mahler, 1974; Mahler & McDevitt, 1989; Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1994), who proposed that the young child's acquisition of a sense of self involves two complimentary developmental processes – that of individuation, or a growing awareness of one's distinct and unique characteristics an capacities, and that of separation, or overcoming an intrapsychic enmeshment with

parental figures. Although once past infancy, a child understands him/herself as a separate physical being and causal agent, he or she may still have difficulty in separating personal goals, desires, and beliefs from those of the parent. This more complex process, coined by Blos (1967) as a "second individuation," takes precedence throughout adolescence, and is related to the adolescent's newly emergent emotional, cognitive, and physical capacities.

More current empirical research, subsumed under the umbrella of "autonomy development,"[1] supports Blos' theoretical propositions. In this research, adolescents and their parents are asked to list the issues that adolescents make independent decisions about or to describe how they perceive their parents (Beyers, Goossens, Vansant, & Moors, 2003; Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986; Youniss & Smollar, 1985; for review chapters, also see Goossens, 2006; Holmbeck, 1996; McElhaney, Allen, Stephenson, & Hare, 2009; Silverberg & Gondoli, 1996; Steinberg, 1990; Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins, 2003). The data from these studies converge in the finding that adolescents' individuation, including their sense of self-reliance and control over their lives, gradually increases, and their enmeshment, including dependence on and idealizing of parental figures, gradually decreases from late childhood to late adolescence.

Some researchers have been trying to identify more specific mechanisms underlying separation-individuation processes, and many agree that conflicts, which increase in frequency and intensity during adolescence, may play an important facilitative role (Adams & Laursen, 2007; Collins & Laursen, 2000; Comstock, 1994; Cooper, 1988;

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[1] It should be noted that whereas "individuation" and "autonomy development" are often used interchangeably in this paper, autonomy is usually conceived of as a broader concept, which includes, but is not limited to, the individuation processes.

Killen & Nucci, 1995; Laursen, 1993b). The idea of a conflict as an important vehicle of development was first emphasized by Piaget in his theory of cognitive development (Piaget, 1985). According to Piaget, conflict creates a sense of disequilibrium in a child's mind, which prompts the child to seek a solution to the problem at hand, eventually gaining a new level of understanding of the problem. Interpersonal conflicts, which involve parties openly disagreeing with each other and bringing to bear their clashing perspectives, create disequilibrium in both cognitive and social harmony senses. As an individual tries to resolve this disequilibrium, he/she gains a better understanding of his/her own perspective as well as those of others.

Some evidence about the facilitative role of conflict in the area of adolescent autonomy development comes from studies by Smetana and colleagues, in which both adolescents and their parents were interviewed about their conflicts (for reviews, see Smetana, 1995, 2005). Smetana contends that whereas parents recognize their children's need to exercise autonomy over what are called "personal" choices – choices that supposedly should not be regulated by authority figures or societal standards (e.g., what haircut to wear, whom to befriend, etc.) – the gap between what children and parents consider belonging within a child's personal jurisdiction widens in adolescence. Whereas adolescents demand more and more choices to be under their personal jurisdiction, parents worry about the conventional and prudential implications of these choices. For instance, an adolescent's demands to be able to choose his/her circle of friends may be viewed by a parent as an issue that may potentially threaten the child's safety. Continuous negotiation, which frequently happens in the context of conflict, about these sorts of issues helps to realign roles in the family context, with adolescents gradually

acquiring adult-like roles. This eventual broadening of an adolescent's personal domain "appears to be crucial for the formation of personal identity and sense of agency" (Killen & Nucci, 1995, p.54).

It has been argued that the two chief tasks of adolescence – autonomy development and identity development – are highly interrelated (Erikson, 1968; Weeks & Pasupathi, 2010). For example, identity development, which involves an adolescent figuring out who he/she is, cannot be achieved without the adolescent becoming an independent and self-governing individual. Studies of adolescent identity have also shown that conflicts may be conducive to identity development processes. In one study, for instance, researchers observed adolescent-parent interactions during a task that required them to plan a family vacation together (Grotevant & Cooper, 1985). It was found that adolescents' engagement in open disagreements, as long as they happened in the context of a positive relationship with parents, was linked to the adolescents' identity moratorium – an identity status that reflects the individual's active exploration of possible identity choices and which constitutes a necessary step for the establishment of a stable identity. By contrast, adolescents' avoidance of conflicts with parents has been linked to the less progressive identity status of foreclosure (Peterson, 1987).

Importantly, the studies reviewed above, as well as the majority of other studies of autonomy development, have for the most part utilized observational and self-report (i.e., interviews, behavioral checklists, etc.) methodologies. Yet, as suggested by Blos as well as in more recent psychological accounts (Steinberg, 1990), some individuation processes may be internal, or to use Mahler's and Blos' terminology "intrapsychic," and thus might not be easily captured via observational methods. Also, while studies of

adolescents' self-reports tell us about adolescents' internal awareness of themselves as independent, self-governing individuals, these data almost exclusively rely on adolescents' explicit and desirable self-conceptions, and also tell us only about the categories of information (e.g., domains of decision-making) that the researchers directly ask about. However, besides increased awareness of one's ability to exercise unique choices and make independent decisions, individuation also presumably involves one's ability to separate one's unique viewpoint on the events from other people's viewpoints. Such conceptualization of individuation as an ability to establish and elaborate on one's unique, distinct perspective is suggested in both Blos' account of the second individuation process as well as in more recent work on children's and adolescents' self-concepts and understandings of their personal sphere of actions, which shows that self is defined in terms of its uniqueness and distinctiveness throughout development (Damon & Hart, 1988; Nucci & Lee, 1993; Smetana, 1995).

In the present study, instead of directly asking preadolescents and adolescents about their conceptions of autonomy, I used their narratives about conflicts with others as a window into their individuation processes. Although narratives are not completely immune to the narrator's self-representational biases, such biases are less likely to systematically revolve around the theme of individuation, as they are when the youth are asked to talk about their individuation directly. When an individual is asked to provide a narrative about his/her past experience, he/she tends to focus on the features of the experience that are the most significant and meaningful to him/her. The specific features that individuals choose to focus on in their narratives have been shown to meaningfully tie to different aspects of their socio-cognitive, emotional, moral, and identity

development processes (Fivush, Bohanek, & Marin, 2010; Fivush, Reese, & Haden, 2006; McLean, Breen, & Fournier, 2010; McLean, Pasupathi, & Pals, 2007; Pasupathi & Wainryb, 2010a; Wainryb, Brehl, & Matwin, 2005; Wainryb, Komolova, & Florsheim, 2010). Narrative methodology has been especially fruitful in the research on self and identity development, as narratives are believed to be reflective of the narrator's established sense of self as well as a vehicle for self-understanding (Fivush et al., 2010; McAdams, 1996; McLean et al., 2010, 2007; Reese, Yan, Jack, & Hayne, 2010). As Reese and colleagues (2010) put it, "a subjective perspective on events is an essential part of the self-concept. Clarifying one's perspective on an event is a means of establishing a self" (p. 29). Conflict narratives, which involve at least two competing perspectives, provide the means for tapping into the youth's developing sense of distinctive self, and examine the specific ways in which this self is experienced throughout development.

Importantly for the purposes of the present study, previous research suggests that one's sense of distinctiveness goes through qualitative changes throughout childhood and adolescence. There is general consensus in the literature on children's developing self-conceptions that younger children tend to define themselves in terms of their own observable characteristics – behaviors or physical features – adolescents define themselves increasingly in terms of internal, psychological characteristics (Damon & Hart, 1988; Harter, 2006). The distinctions between the behavioral, or what Bruner (1986) calls "landscapes of action," and mental/psychological, or what Bruner calls the "landscapes of consciousness," aspects of individuals' experiences have been also drawn in work based on narrative methodology. In parallel to the work by Harter and colleagues

on children's developing self-descriptions, the inclusion of mental-states language in children's and adolescents' accounts of their real-life experiences have been also shown to increase with age (Pasupathi & Wainryb, 2010b; Wainryb et al., 2005).

The narrator's "landscapes of consciousness" can be further broken down into those mental states that are related to the narrator's desires and those that are related to the narrator's beliefs. This distinction has been emphasized by theory-of-mind researchers, who have shown that young children understand that their own desires and preferences are distinct from others' desires and preferences before they understand that their own beliefs or knowledge are distinct from those of others (Astington, 1993; Wellman, 1991). Astington (1993) argues that this is because one's desires and preferences are somewhat more personal in nature, and spoken about in more subjective terms than beliefs. The nature of beliefs is such that children (and to an extent adults as well) tend to take them as the truth about reality rather than as a subjective representation of reality (Astington, 1993).

Although theory-of-mind literature mostly concerns the development of young children, there are reasons to suppose that beliefs remain to be more cognitively complex than desires, especially in the context of conflict, throughout development. First, the research on the reasoning of children and adolescents about such choices as hairstyles (i.e., choices that in the social domain theory are characterized as "personal," not amenable to the regulation by others), young adolescents explain that "to be an individual means to be yourself, to be not like everyone else" (Nucci & Lee, 1993, p. 131). Although the importance of self-distinctiveness in such conceptions is evident, such sense of distinctiveness is somewhat superficial and is reflective of young adolescents' attempts

to define themselves in opposition to others. By contrast, late adolescents are less preoccupied with a superficial level of comparison between themselves and others, and instead come to understand what constitutes their "self" on a deeper level. At this point, self-distinctiveness derives from the individual's subjective understandings and interpretations, which are accrued through their active self-exploration and social experiences. So, in response to the question of hairstyles as a personal choice, older adolescents provide such rationales as, "you should be able to be a whole person and have your outside look like your inside, and people can't determine what your inside looks like" (Nucci & Lee, 1993, p. 132). The idea that an ability to substantiate one's unique perspective with one's beliefs may require considerable cognitive capacities and social experience is also in line with the literature on identity development, which indicates that individuals' active exploration of their worldviews is a chief developmental task of the adolescent period (Erikson, 1968; Kroger, 2003). In addition, the distinctiveness of one's goals and desires may be easy to grasp in the context of conflict, which is defined as a "goal incompatibility occurring between two or more individuals or groups" (Emery, 1992, p. 271), even for children who have not truly started actively individuating from others. Even for preadolescents, clashes between conflicting parties' goals may be implied by the presence of conflict itself.

Taken together, the existing literature indicates that individuation is one of the chief tasks of adolescence and that adolescents' conflicts with significant others may be particularly facilitative of their individuation process. Although one of the definitions of individuation involves a person's ability to internally separate his/her own perspective from another person's perspective, such intrapsychic individuation processes, especially

in the context of conflict, have not been systematically examined before. Narrative

methodology provides a unique way to tap into the youth's spontaneous attempts to assert

and explain their separate-from-others perspective on the conflict events, or in other

words their intrapsychic individuation within such contexts. **The first aim** of the present

study was to examine whether and how the distinctiveness of the narrator's perspective

on the conflict event changes as a function of development. Because conflicts usually

include at least two competing perspectives and because past the age of 2 children have

an established sense of self, I expected that most narratives would include at least one

reference to the narrator's distinct perspective. However, the narrator's distinct

perspective was expected to increase in its depth and complexity. More specifically,

based on the autonomy and self-conceptions development literatures reviewed above, I

expected age increases in narrator's references to their unique beliefs and justifications of

these beliefs. In parallel, I expected older participants' narratives to include more

multifaceted descriptions of the narrator's distinct perspective, comprised namely of

actions, desires, and beliefs facets, than younger participants' narratives.

<center>Individuation in Different Relationship Contexts</center>

It is known that conflicts with significant, rather than more distant, others may be

especially facilitative of separation-individuation processes. On one hand, this is because

individuals feel comfortable asserting themselves with close others who take their

perspectives seriously and who can accept them despite the differences in perspectives

(Shantz & Hobart, 1989). Indeed, research demonstrates that children's conflicts are more

common within close relationships than in more distant relationships and that children

engage in more frequent conflicts as their relationships deepen and progress (Hartup, 1992; Hartup, French, Laursen, & Johnston, 1993; Hartup & Laursen, 1991; Shantz, 1993). On the other hand, a child's psychological enmeshment with close others creates a natural obstacle to his/her becoming a separate and independent person, and overcoming this psychological obstacle may take a turbulent form (Mahler, 1972).

However, as noted by Piaget (1932) and later by others (Collins & Laursen, 1992; Hartup & Laursen, 1991), there are important differences between relationships, which may have significant implications for separation-individuation processes. One of the important distinctions drawn by researchers is that between horizontal and vertical relationships. Vertical relationships, of which the child-parent relationships are a prototypical example, are characterized by clear power differentials, with one person (i.e., the parent) having authority over the other person (i.e., the child). By contrast, horizontal relationships, such as relationships between same-aged peers, are characterized by equal power between relationship partners.

Due to the distinct nature of child-parent and friendship relationships, it is not surprising that conflicts between parents and their children revolve around very different sets of issues than conflicts between friends. In particular, disagreements related to children's school and household responsibilities or their ability to exercise personal choices take precedence in the child-parent contexts, and disagreements related to violations of trust and intimacy or other relationship-maintenance concerns take precedence in the friendship context (Adams & Laursen, 2001; Laursen, 1995). Moreover, it has been found that disagreements with parents more commonly end with win-lose outcomes than disagreements with friends, which frequently, especially during

adolescence, end with withdrawals and standoff solutions (Adams & Laursen, 2001; Sandy & Cochran, 2000). Similar patterns in the general themes and outcomes of the youth's disagreements were expected to appear in the present study.

Less is known, however, about how individuation concerns play out in child-parent versus in friendship relationships. Separation-individuation processes have been studied predominantly in child-parent relationship contexts because it is believed that pushing against parental restrictions serves as an important mechanism for defining and asserting one's individual goals (Smetana, 1995, 2005). As friends do not have authority to restrict each other's behaviors and choices, it has been suggested that individuation is less relevant in the context of friendship relationships (Collins, Gleason, & Sesma, 1997; Collins, Laursen, Mortensen, Luebker, & Ferreira, 1997; Eccles, Early, Frasier, Belansky, & McCarthy, 1997).

Yet, it is possible that individuating from friends may be also a necessary developmental achievement. Even though friends do not have real authority to limit each other's choices, the nature of a friendship relationship creates unique pressures on a person to identify with, but also eventually differentiate from, close friends' perspectives. The nature of a friendship relationship changes in middle school, when friends start spending increasingly more time with each other, and become increasingly more emotionally attached to each other (Berndt, 2004; Savin-Williams & Berndt, 1990; Sharabany, Gershoni, & Hofman, 1981). With this newly emerging nature of friendship relationships comes preadolescents' preoccupation with peer acceptance and maintaining positive peer relationships (Gottman & Mettetal, 1986; Sandy & Cochran, 2000; Stafford, 2004). This, in turn, results in a preadolescents' tendency to go along with their friends'

agenda at the cost of pursuing their own agenda. For instance, when in one study children were asked to reason about hypothetical scenarios in which the protagonist's and the friend's legitimate personal preferences (e.g., whether to go to a movie or stay home) were pitted against each other, the majority of 10-year-old children prioritized the friend's over the protagonist's preferences (Komolova & Wainryb, 2011). This identification with peers may persist, and even increase, in early adolescence, when individuals' dependence on their parents is temporarily replaced with their reliance on and conformity to same-aged peers (Berndt, 1979; Hill, 1987; Holmbeck, 1996; McElhaney et al., 2009). By late adolescence, however, youth come to an understanding that friends should accept each other despite their differences (Sandy & Cochran, 2000), and that one cannot please a friend at the cost of compromising one's own needs (Komolova & Wainryb, 2011). Thus, autonomy development and friendship development literatures conjointly seem to suggest that early and middle adolescents have to first individuate from parents, with whom adolescents have had a long-standing, close relationships and who have authority to constrain adolescents' choices in very concrete ways, and only after this process is well underway, by late adolescence, can youth start differentiate themselves from their friends as well.

As there is no study to date that systematically compares individuation processes within vertical and horizontal relationships**, the second aim** of the present study was to establish whether and how preadolescents' and adolescents' developing sense of individuation varies across child-mother, child-father, and friendship contexts. Based on the literature reviewed above, I predicted that whereas the allusions to the narrator's individuated perspective would be more commonly present in the child-parent than in the

friendship narratives among younger participants, late adolescents' narratives would include comparable descriptions of their individuated perspective across relationship contexts. I also expected that due to young adolescents' strong identification with their close friends, their friendship narratives would include more references to the perspectives shared with their friends than either preadolescents' or older adolescents' friendship narratives.

Differences between child-mother and child-father relationship contexts were also predicted. Previous research suggests that children's, especially daughters', relationships with mothers are characterized by more intimacy and closeness than are their relationships with fathers (Collins & Russell, 1991; Youniss & Ketterlinus, 1987), which means that one's need to individuate may be more troublesome, and hence more complex, in the context of a child-mother rather than child-father relationship. In line with these findings, I expected that participants', especially girls', depictions of their distinct perspective within conflict narratives would be more multifaceted in the child-mother than in the child-father context.

Connectedness Across Development and Relationship Contexts

Although conflicts, which involve at least two clashing perspectives, are evidently facilitative of individuation processes, it has been suggested that conflicts also promote one's sense of connectedness to others. As mentioned above, conflicts disturb both cognitive and social harmony equilibriums, and thus one of the important aspects of conflicts involves restoration of a relationship quality maintained prior to the conflict. While finding a conflict resolution that ensures the continuation of relationship despite

the occurred antagonism, children and adolescents learn important relationship maintenance skills, such as those of negotiation, cooperation, and forgiveness (Berkowitz & Gibbs, 1985; Killen & Nucci, 1995; Sandy & Cochran, 2000). Conflicts with close friends may be particularly important for practicing such skills because children and adolescents need to work harder on resolving conflicts in amicable ways within voluntary relationships, which hinge upon the youths' abilities to attain such resolutions, than within non-voluntary relationships, the continuation of which, with an exception of psychopathological cases, does not depend on such resolutions (Collins & Laursen, 1992; Dunn, Slomkowski, Donelan, & Herrera, 1995; Hartup & Laursen, 1991; Hartup, Laursen, Stewart, & Eastenson, 1988; Laursen, 1993a).

Conflicts with parents, however, also may involve concerns with maintaining connectedness, as accumulating research suggests that individuation from parents by severing affectionate bonds from them is often indicative of psychopathology, and even of individuation failure. The idea was initially proposed by Blos (1967), who states that adolescents who express their separateness by the extreme behavior of running away from home actually mask their inability to overcome psychological dependence on parental figures. The importance of maintaining connectedness to parents has been empirically demonstrated in studies of young children (Crockenberg & Litman, 1990) as well as adolescents (Allen, Hauser, Bell, & O'Connor, 1994). Whereas complete defiance and disregard for parental authority has been linked to negative outcomes for children and adolescents, self-assertiveness coupled with the preservation of warm positive relationships with parents has been linked to children's and adolescents' higher social competence.

Research on child-parent interactions and family dynamics provides additional evidence that warm and supportive relationships actually enable autonomy and identity development, and there is no evidence that the warmth of a relationship can result in over-enmeshment (Cooper, Grotevant, & Condon, 1983; Grotevant & Cooper, 1998; Hauser, 1984; Steinberg, 1990). When feeling loved, validated, and cared for, even in the context of conflict, adolescents feel confident to explore and assert their unique preferences and choices. Adolescents who grow up in families characterized by an authoritative parenting style, in which warmth and give-and-take interactions are combined with parents defining clear expectations and boundaries, tend to become more successfully individuated, as well as responsive to parental advice, than adolescents who grow up in families characterized by less positive parenting styles (Mackey, Arnold, & Pratt, 2001; Steinberg, 2001).

There are important limitations to the previous research on connectedness, however. First, as in the case with individuation, an adolescent's sense of connectedness is measured via self-report or observational methods. This research does not tell us whether adolescents spontaneously think of connectedness when reflecting on their conflicts with others, and thus do not tell us about the specific ways in which conflicts provide affordances for the youth's working out their relationship concerns. Also, the previous research on connectedness almost exclusively focuses on relationship warmth. Yet, conflicts may provide youth with opportunity to think not only of maintaining warm, affectionate relationships with others, but also of more negative aspects of these relationships. During conflict interactions, opponents may express hostility, criticism, and aggression towards each other (interactions that are subsumed under the "antagonism"

category in this paper) and hurt each other's feelings, which in turn may threaten the harmony of their relationship. Or conflicts may result in temporary withdrawal or even permanent disconnection between partners (interactions that are subsumed under the "distance" category in this paper), and thus may also threaten connectedness. In addition, conflicts may promote other positive aspects of connectedness – for instance, parties may achieve a sense of sense of understanding and agreement (which are not quite the same as warmth and affection) in the course of conflict.

The third aim of the present study was to examine the specific aspects of connectedness that preadolescents and adolescents would keep in mind when reflecting on their conflicts with parents and friends, and the ways in which the youth's sense of connectedness would vary by age and relationship context. Given the distinctions between child-parent and friendship relationships described above, I expected that participants would more frequently express concerns with maintaining connectedness — by referring both to disturbances in the relationship (i.e., interactions indicating antagonism and distance in the dyad) and efforts to maintain a close, accepting relationship (i.e., interactions indicating understanding and warmth in the dyad) — when recalling conflicts with their close friends than when recalling conflicts with their parents. Furthermore, as children and adolescents are known to have more intimate and, as a consequence, more turbulent relationships with their mothers than with their fathers (Collins & Russell, 1991; Holmbeck & Hill, 1991; Wierson, Armistead, Forehand, & Thomas, 1990), I predicted that both negative and positive dimensions of connectedness would be more commonly present in the child-mother than in the child-father relationship contexts.

Developmental differences were also predicted. The work on the youth's developing self-conceptions suggests that adolescents increasingly think in terms of how their behaviors and personality implicate their relationships with others, and thus express increasing concerns with such social virtues as being friendly, cooperative, and kind (Damon and Harter, 1988; Harter, 2006). Autonomy development literature also suggests that a youth's sense of relatedness to others deepens and expands throughout adolescence (Grotevant & Cooper, 1998; McElhaney et al., 2009; Raeff, 2004; 2006). With social experience, adolescents gain a more mature understanding of successful relationships as being able to withstand and even become stronger as a result of conflicts (Hartup & Laursen, 1993; Newcomb & Bagwell, 1996). Accordingly, I expected that references to connectedness would be more common and more multifaceted in the narratives of older than in the narratives of younger participants.

Gender

Although gender was not the main focus of the present study, gender is a somewhat contentious issue in the research of autonomy, and thus it was important to consider gender. Whereas some researchers suggest that boys are more autonomous in their relationships than girls (Chung & Asher, 1996; Hartup & Laursen, 1993), comprehensive literature reviews suggest that both genders are concerned to a similar extent with maintaining personal jurisdiction within relationships (Nucci, Killen, & Smetana, 1996; Smetana, 2005, 2006; Smetana et al., 2009). Therefore, no gender differences in regard to the participants' individuation were hypothesized in the present study.

Gender differences, however, could possibly emerge in regard to the youths' sense of connectedness. Girls are known to be more concerned with and better skilled at maintaining relationship closeness and harmony than boys (Hunter & Youniss, 1982; Miller, Danaher, & Forbes, 1986; Rose & Asher, 1999; Smetana, Yau, & Hanson, 1991; Sharabany et al., 1981). On the other hand, research on relational aggression suggests that girls are more likely than boys to engage in interactions that may potentially threaten relationships and may use each other's strivings for connectedness in somewhat manipulative ways (Crick, Ostrov, & Kawabata, 2007; Crothers, Field, & Kolbert, 2005). Therefore, I expected that references to both positive and negatives types of connectedness would be more prevalent in the narratives of girls than in the narratives of boys.

<div align="center">Relationship Quality</div>

Previous literature suggests that autonomy development processes may take quite distinct forms within relationships of different qualities. For instance, whereas individuation does not seem to require severing affectionate bonds from parents in the families characterized by parental warmth, empathy, and acceptance, emotional disconnection from parents is possible in less optimal family environments (Allen, Aber, & Leadbeater, 1990; Allen et al., 1994). Thus, it was important to include the measure of the participants' self-reported relationship quality in the present study.

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 108 10-year-olds (mean age = 9-11, range 9-0 – 11-2), 14-year-olds (mean age = 14-4, range 13-4 – 14-11), and 17-year-olds (mean age = 17-4, range 16-5 – 18-0); each age group included 18 males and 18 females. The sample size was determined by using power analysis with a medium size effect; the power was at least 80% to detect main effects and interactions (Cohen, 1977; Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007). Participants were recruited from schools and after-school programs in a mid-size western U.S. city. Participants were primarily middle-class and Caucasian (75%; 7% Hispanic/Latino, 6% Asian, 6% African American, and 6% other). Parental consent and participant assent were obtained for all participants.

Design and Procedure

The participants were asked to provide three narrative accounts, each relating to a time when they disagreed with their mother, their father, and their best friend ("Tell me about a time when you had a disagreement with your mother/father/best friend about something that was significant for both of you. Tell me everything that you remember about that time."). The "disagreement" rather than "conflict" language was chosen for the elicitation of narratives because of the negative connotation that the word "conflict"

revealed in pilot interviews, especially with younger participants. Although gender of the friend was not matched to the gender of the participant, most participants chose to narrate disagreements about friends of their own gender. When the participant appeared to have come to the end of his/her narrative, the interviewer asked, "Is there anything else you remember about that time?" This procedure, used by researchers of children's narrative development (Peterson & McCabe, 1983), ensures that the interviewer provides no cues for either the content or the structure of the child's narrative. The order of the elicited narratives was counterbalanced within age and gender groups using a Latin-square design.

The reported relationship quality of the participants with their mother, father, and the friend discussed in the narrative was assessed with the Network of Relationships Inventory (adapted from Furman & Buhrmester, 1985). Participants filled out the questionnaire after the interview part of the procedure was completed. The scale consisted of 51 questions, with a few questions pertaining to each of 15 different subscales. Examples of scale items include: "How much do you talk about everything with this person?"(Intimacy subscale); "How satisfied are you with your relationship with this person?" (Satisfaction subscale); and "How much does this person point out your faults or put you down?" (Criticism subscale). Questions pertaining to different subscales were arranged in a random order; all participants completed the same version of the questionnaire. Participants were asked to answer each question on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = "almost never" to 5 = "almost always." Relationship quality scores were calculated by averaging scores across examined subscales for each relationship

context, with negative aspects of relationships (e.g., conflict, criticism, etc.) reverse scored.

Participants were interviewed individually at their school or after-school program facility. The entire procedure, including the narrative elicitation and questionnaire parts, lasted approximately 30 minutes. The narratives were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for the analysis.

Coding and Reliability

Disagreement themes. Narratives were first coded for the general disagreement themes – what the disagreements were about. It should be noted that although in the past research (e.g., Laursen, 1995; Smetana et al., 1991) disagreement topics have often been coded in terms of their specific content (e.g., homework, household chores, etc.), in the present study I used a higher-order, conceptual coding to capture possible pressures for individuation in the examined relationship contexts. Narratives were coded into one of the following disagreement themes: 1) Blocked Goals and Desires – when one or both of the parties had been prevented, either by the other's prohibition or the other's conflicting goal, from obtaining a desired material possession or pursuing a desired activity (e.g. "My dad didn't want to buy this new Lego game"; "I wanted to play soccer, but my friend wanted to play basketball"); 2) Intrusion on Personal Realm – when one party attempted to regulate another's choices that should presumably (according to the socio-cognitive domain theory) have been up to the individual's discretion, including body hygiene, preferences of friends or romantic partners, or decisions about future profession (e.g. "My dad yelled at me because I didn't brush my teeth well"; "I didn't think that her

boyfriend was good for her"); 3) Failure to Meet Obligations and Responsibilities – when the narrator did not perform well or completely failed to perform tasks pertaining to household, school, and other responsibilities (e.g., "I didn't have time to do the dishes"; "She was upset about my grades"); 4) Differences in Beliefs and Opinions – when parties disagreed about factual information or prescriptive courses of actions (e.g., "We disagreed about the rules of this game"; "We disagreed about the answer on a math problem"); 5) Interpersonal Harm – when one or both parties hurt another's feelings, for example by betraying another's trust, or by being mean or insensitive (e.g., "She told my secret to everybody"); 6) Possessiveness – when one party made claims on another's time and attention (e.g., "I became friends with someone else, and she got jealous"); 7) Other – when the topic of a disagreement was unclear or did not fit into one of the categories listed above (e.g., "I don't remember what it was about, but he sent me to my room"). The categories were mutually exclusive.

Disagreement outcomes. To further capture distinct dynamics of conflicts within child-parent and friendship relationships, narratives were also scored for disagreement outcomes, which reflected the degree of the conflict solution equality (adapted from Adams & Laursen, 2001). Narratives were characterized as describing one of the following disagreement outcomes: 1) Win – when the narrator gets what he/she wants or wins an argument (e.g., "In the end, my mom allowed me to go to the mall with my friends"); 2) Lose – when the narrator does not get what he/she wants, forced to do what he/she does not want to do, or loses an argument (e.g., "My dad forced me to go to grandpa with him"); 3) Going along – when the narrator willingly complies with another's goal or is convinced by another's argument (e.g., "It turned out that my dad had

the correct answer to the math problem"); 4) Compromise – when both parties attain similar levels of the original conflict goals (e.g., "We decided to go to the roller coaster that day and to go to the beach the next day"); 5) No outcome – when no clear solution is mentioned or when the conflict ends with a standoff solution (e.g., "We stopped playing, and went to our homes"). The categories were mutually exclusive.

Individuation. Individuated references included a narrator's actions and mental states that reflected the narrator's sense of uniqueness and separateness from a parent or a friend. References were coded in the context of an entire narrative: thus, if a narrator mentioned that he/she did or thought something that did not contrast with another person's perspective at any point of a narrated incident ("I went to the movies, and then we had a fight" or "Eventually I agreed with her"), such references were not characterized as individuated.

The narrator's individuated actions were the behaviors that were pursued despite the other's imagined disapproval or an explicitly stated objection as well as verbal assertions of the narrator's unique perspective (e.g., "My mom doesn't like my friends, but *I ended up going to the party with them*[2]"; "*I told him* that I did not want to hang out with his friends"). The narrator's individuated desires were intentions, goals, needs, wants, likes, dislikes, and preferences that were at odds with the other's intentions, goals, desires, needs, likes, dislikes, or preferences (e.g., "My mom wanted me to stay home but *I wanted to go out to the mall with my friends*"). The narrator's individuated beliefs were the understandings, opinions, realizations, knowledge, and prescriptive beliefs that were different from the other's understandings, opinions, realizations, knowledge, and

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[2] Utterances in italics represent the part of a reference that was coded into the specific category described.

prescriptive beliefs; reasons justifying narrator's unique perspective were also included in this category (e.g., "My mom thought that I should be a lawyer, but *I thought that I should be an ecologist*"; "I didn't like how my friend treats his parents *because they are very nice people*").

Shared references were references to actions, desires, and beliefs that were shared by a narrator and a parent/friend and that conveyed a sense of agreement and togetherness rather than opposition between the narrator and the other. Examples of shared references include: "We ended up not going to the party" (action); "We didn't want to upset each other" (desire); "We realized that we were both wrong" (belief).

Narratives were scored for the absence/presence (0 = reference is absent within a narrative; 1 = at least one reference is present within a narrative) of individuated and shared actions, desires, and beliefs. The complexity of individuation scores were also created; the scores were calculated by summing up the presence of individuated actions, desires, and beliefs facets within each narrative, and ranged from 0 = no individuation facets are present to 3 = all three individuated facets (action, desire, and belief) are present.

Connectedness. Connectedness scoring included references that reflected a particular type of relationship between the narrator and his/her parent or friend, either expressed as descriptions of specific interactions with the other that occurred during a described disagreement (e.g., "We didn't talk to each other for the rest of the evening") or as more general statements about the overall quality of a relationship (e.g., "I don't have good communication with my dad"). Connectedness categories included: 1) Understanding – references to understanding, accepting, or agreeing with each other's

perspective (e.g., "I realized that she was right"; "She is very understanding"); 2) Warmth – references to warmth, closeness, intimacy, or attempts to maintain harmony in a relationship (e.g., "We became closer after this conversation"; "My dad is really nice"); 3) Antagonism – references to hostility, criticism, blame, control, aggression, or other types of "engaged" negative interactions between a narrator and the other (e.g., "He is very controlling"; "We ganged up on her"); 4) Distance – references to temporary or permanent withdrawal, disengagement, lack of closeness, or other types of "disengaged" interactions between a narrator and the other (e.g., "I went to my room"; "We haven't talked to each other since then").

Narratives were scored for the absence/presence (0 = absent; 1 = present) of references to understanding, warmth, antagonism, and distance. The complexity of connectedness scores were also created; the scores were calculated by summing up the presence of understanding, warmth, antagonism, and distance facets within each narrative, and ranged from 0 = no connectedness facets are present to 4 = all connectedness facets are present.

Scoring reliability was assessed through an independent recoding of 20% of the protocols by a second judge. Interrater reliability for the examined coding schemes ranged from 75.9% (Cohen's κ = .697) to 86.67% (Cohen's κ = .837).

<u>Analytic Strategy</u>

Individuation (individuated/shared actions, desires, and beliefs), connectedness (understanding, warmth, antagonism, and distance), and relationship quality scores as well as the order in which narratives were elicited and narrative length were examined

with repeated-measures ANOVAs, with age and gender as between-subject factors, and relationship context as a repeated measure. Disagreement themes and outcomes were analyzed with two repeated-measures MANOVAs, with age and gender as between-subject factors and relationship context as a repeated measure, and followed up by ANOVAs. For all analyses, post hoc comparisons using Bonferroni t-tests were performed to test for significant within- and between-subject effects.

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

Preliminary analyses by the order in which narratives were elicited yielded less than 5% of effects involving order; order was thus dropped from all subsequent analyses. Preliminary analyses were also conducted for the narrative length, as measured by the mean word count. ANOVA analysis of mean word counts yielded a significant effect of age, $F(2, 102) = 19.26$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .274$. Pairwise comparisons showed that, consistent with previous research (McCabe & Peterson, 1991; Wainryb et al., 2005), the length of participants' narratives in the current study steadily increased with age, with 10-year-olds providing the shortest narratives, and 17-year-olds the longest (mean word counts were $Ms = 116.12$, 241.94, and 316.02; $SDs = 53.91$, 149.18, and 176.67, for 10-, 14-, and 17-year-olds, respectively).

Disagreement Themes

In agreement with previous research, the MANOVA yielded a significant effect of relationship context ($p < .001$) as well as a relationship context x gender interaction ($p = .019$). Table 1 displays the percentages of disagreement themes, by gender and relationship context, along with ANOVA results for relationship context effects. As shown in this table, the ANOVA revealed effects of relationship context for all scored

disagreement themes, except for the "other" category, which was not included in the nalysis. Specifically, participants talked about their blocked goals when describing a conflict with their mother more frequently than when describing a conflict with a friend. Not surprisingly, whereas disagreements with parents frequently involved the participant's failure to fulfill their obligations and responsibilities or the parent's intrusion into the participant's personal realm, such disagreements never (as in the case with obligations) or almost never (as in the case with the intrusion on personal realm) occurred between friends.

In contrast, participants were much more likely to report disagreements about interpersonal harm in the friendship than in the child-parent relationship context. As expected, disagreements about possessiveness were more common in the friendship context, but as indicated by a relationship context x gender interaction, $F(2, 204) = 6.440$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .059$, this was only true for girls, who frequently (21%) reported disagreements in which friends made possessive claims on one another, but never reported such disagreements in the context of their relationship with parents (only 5% of boys talked about such disagreements in all three relationship contexts). Finally, the relationship context effect for the disagreements about beliefs and opinions was also qualified by a relationship context x gender interaction, $F(2, 204) = 9.95$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .089$, with 50% of boys disagreeing with their friends about matters involving differences in beliefs or opinions, and only 10% disagreeing with their parents; girls disagreed about such matters with about the same frequency with their parents and friends (19-26%).

Disagreement Outcomes

For disagreement outcomes, the MANOVA indicated effects of relationship context ($p < .001$), age ($p = .004$), and gender ($p = .015$) as well as an age x gender interaction ($p = .044$). Table 2 displays the percentages of disagreement outcomes, as varied by relationship context, along with ANOVA results for relationship context effects. As shown in this table, participants were more likely to report losing an argument in the child-parent than in the friendship context. In contrast, participants were more likely to report disagreements that had no clear outcome in the friendship than in the child-parent contexts. Importantly, participants rarely (6-7%) mentioned willingly going along or finding a compromise solution with a conflicting side in all three relationship contexts.

In addition to relationship context effects, for the "lose" outcome, the ANOVA yielded effects of age, $F(2, 102) = 10.506$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .171$, and gender, $F(1, 102) = 5.218$, $p = .024$, $\eta_p^2 = .049$, qualified by an age x gender interaction $F(2, 102) = 6.332$, $p = .003$, $\eta_p^2 = .110$. Whereas 10-year-old boys ($M = .46$, $SD = .28$) referred to losing an argument significantly more frequently than 14- and 17-year-old boys ($Ms = .11$, .15; $SDs = .16$, .21, respectively), there were no age differences for this outcome for girls ($Ms = .19$, .19, .07; $SD = .23$, .21, .14, for 10-, 14-, and 17-year-olds respectively). In addition, girls ($M = .66$, $SD = .28$) were more likely to describe a disagreement that did not have a specific outcome than boys, ($M = .47$, $SD = .31$), $F(2, 102) = 11.45$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .101$.

Individuation

Table 3 displays the proportions of narratives that contained at least one reference to individuated and shared actions, desires, and beliefs, as varied by age, along with ANOVA results for age effects. As shown in this table, the presence of individuated actions and desires did not vary by age. As expected, however, individuated beliefs were more commonly present in the narratives of the 17-year-olds than in the narratives of 10-year-olds; 14-year-olds fell in the middle and did not significantly differ from the other age groups. In addition, 14-year-olds referred to shared actions more frequently than either 10- or 17-year-olds.

The ANOVA of the complexity of individuation scores revealed effects of age, $F(2, 102) = 7.322, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .126$, and gender, $F(1, 102) = 3.831, p = 0.53, \eta_p^2 = .036$. As predicted, 17-year-olds' narratives included more multifaceted descriptions of the narrator's individuated perspective ($M = 2.19, SD = .45$) than 10-year-olds' narratives ($M = 1.71, SD = .58$); 14-year-olds fell in the middle ($M = 1.97, SD = .55$), and did not differ significantly from other age groups. Girls ($M = 2.06, SD = .56$) depicted their individuated perspective in more multifaceted ways than boys ($M = 1.86, SD = .55$).

Table 4 displays the proportions of narratives that contained at least one reference to individuated and shared actions, desires, and beliefs, as varied by relationship context, along with ANOVA results for relationship context effects. As shown in this table, the presence of individuated actions and beliefs was equally distributed in the narratives across the examined relationship contexts. However, the ANOVA yielded a significant relationship context effect for individuated desires; pairwise comparisons indicated that individuated desires were most commonly present in child-mother, followed by child-

father, and finally by the friendship context. Participants also alluded to shared desires

more frequently in the friendship than in the child-parent contexts. In addition, the

narrator's distinct perspective was described in more multifaceted ways in the child-

mother ($M = 2.19$, $SD = .79$) than in the child-father and friendship contexts ($Ms = 1.93$,

1.76; $SD = .87$, .93, respectively), $F(2, 204) = 7.85$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .071$.

<div align="center">Connectedness</div>

The proportions of narratives that contained at least one reference to

understanding, warmth, antagonism, and distance, as varied by age, along with ANOVA

results for age effects, are displayed in Table 5. As predicted, older participants more

frequently mentioned understanding, warmth, and distance than 10-year-olds. Seventeen-

year-olds also mentioned antagonism more frequently than 10-year-olds; 14-year-olds

fell in the middle and did not significantly differ from the other age groups.

The ANOVA of the complexity of connectedness scores also revealed effects of

age, $F(2, 102) = 18.91$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .27$, and gender, $F(1, 102) = 5.964$, $p = .016$, $\eta_p^2 =$

.055. As expected, older participants ($Ms = 1.41$, 1.80; $SDs = .69$, .84, for 14- and 17-

year-olds, respectively) depicted their connectedness to parents and friends in more

multifaceted ways than 10-year-olds ($M = .78$, $SD = .64$). Also as expected, girls'

depictions of their connectedness were more complex ($M = 1.49$, $SD = .79$) than boys'

depictions ($M = 1.16$, $SD = .86$).

The proportions of narratives that contained at least one reference to

understanding, warmth, antagonism, and distance, as varied by relationship context,

along with ANOVA results for relationship context effects, are displayed in Table 6. In

line with the hypotheses, participants were more likely to refer to warmth, antagonism, and distance in the friendship context than in either of the child-parent contexts. However, references to understanding did not significantly vary by relationship context.

The analyses of the complexity of the connectedness scores revealed that connectedness was represented in more multifaceted ways in the friendship ($M = 1.72$, $SD = 1.03$) than in the child-parent contexts ($Ms = 1.10$-1.16; $SDs = 1.13$-1.19), $F(2, 204) = 15.61$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .133$.

Relationship Quality

The ANOVA yielded no significant age effects for the relationship quality measure, with participants of all ages reporting relationship quality better than average ($Ms = 3.86, 3.78, 3.73$; $SDs = .56, .97, .79$, for 10-, 14-, and 17-year-olds, respectively). Participants of all ages reported better relationship qualities with their parents ($Ms = 3.85$-3.95, and $SDs = 0.58$-0.60) than with their friends ($M = 3.57$, $SD = .81$), $F(2, 202) = 11.598$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .103$. Finally, an effect of gender was found, $F(1, 102) = 5.949$, $p = .016$, $\eta_p^2 = .056$, with boys reporting better relationship qualities ($M = 3.90$, $SD = .61$) than girls ($M = 3.68$, $SD = .71$) in all three relationship contexts.

Table 1

Disagreement Themes, by Relationship Context and Gender (Proportions), and ANOVA

Results for Relationship Context Effects

	Means and Standard Deviations						F	η_p^2
	Mother		Father		Friend			
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls		
Blocked Goals	.30	.26	.24	.13	.19	.07	3.65*	.04
(SD)	.46	.44	.43	.34	.39	.26		
Intruded Personal	.22	.17	.17	.24	.00	.09	7.08**	.07
(SD)	.42	.38	.38	.43	.00	.29		
Obligations	.26	.24	.30	.19	.00	.00	18.76***	.16
(SD)	.44	.43	.46	.39	.00	.00		
Beliefs/Opinions	.11	.19	.09	.26	.50	.20	8.09***	.07
(SD)	.32	.39	.29	.44	.50	.41		
Interpersonal Harm	.02	.13	.07	.11	.24	.41	21.26***	.17
(SD)	.14	.34	.26	.32	.43	.50		
Possessiveness	.04	.00	.06	.00	.06	.21	7.72**	.07
(SD)	.19	.00	.23	.00	.23	.41		
Other	.06	.02	.07	.07	.02	.02		
(SD)	.23	.14	.26	.26	.14	.14		

[a] dfs = 2, 204.
[b] *p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001.
[c] Mean proportions may not add up to 1.00 due to rounding.

Table 2

Disagreement Outcomes (Proportions), and ANOVA Results, by Relationship Context

	Means and Standard Deviations			F	η_p^2
	Mother	Father	Friend		
Win	.11	.14	.09	.614	.01
(SD)	(.32)	(.35)	(.29)		
Lose	.30$_a$	.25$_a$	.04$_b$	16.32***	.14
(SD)	(.46)	(.44)	(.19)		
Going along	.08	.06	.03	1.61	.02
(SD)	(.28)	(.23)	(.17)		
Compromise	.06	.07	.08	.346	.003
(SD)	(.23)	(.26)	(.28)		
No outcome	.45$_a$	.48$_a$	.76$_b$	15.23***	.13
(SD)	(.56)	(.56)	(.43)		

[a]dfs = 2, 204.
[b]*** $p < .001$.
[c]Means in the same raw that do not share subscripts differ at $p < .05$ in tests of simple effects (with Bonferroni adjustment).
[d]Proportions may not add up to 1.00 due to rounding.

Table 3

Proportion of Narratives in Which Individuated and Shared Actions, Desires, and Beliefs

Were Present, and ANOVA Results, by Age

	Means and Standard Deviations			F	η_p^2
	10-year-olds	14-year-olds	17-year-olds		
Actions					
Individuated	.65	.70	.74	.95	.02
(SD)	(.33)	(.26)	(.27)		
Shared	.35	.43	.47	1.34	.03
(SD)	(.06)	(.31)	(.31)		
Desires					
Individuated	.51	.57	.64	1.99	.04
(SD)	(.30)	(.29)	(.23)		
Shared	.08$_a$	.22$_b$	.07$_a$	6.53**	.11
(SD)	(.17)	(.25)	(.14)		
Beliefs					
Individuated	.56$_a$	.69	.81$_b$	6.23**	.11
(SD)	(.32)	(.33)	(.24)		
Shared	.08	.19	.17	2.31	.043
(SD)	(.15)	(.27)	(.20)		

[a]dfs = 2, 102.
[b]**$p < .01$.
[c]Means in the same raw that do not share subscripts differ at $p < .05$ in tests of simple effects (with Bonferroni adjustment).

Table 4

Proportions of Narratives in Which Individuated and Shared Actions, Desires, and

Beliefs Were Present, and ANOVA Results, by Relationship Context

	Means and Standard Deviations			F	η_p^2
	Mother	Father	Friend		
Actions					
Individuated	.74	.64	.71	1.52	.02
(SD)	(.44)	(.48)	(.45)		
Shared	.32$_a$	.36$_a$	.56$_b$	8.93***	.08
(SD)	(.47)	(.48)	(.50)		
Desires					
Individuated	.74$_a$	.58$_b$	.40$_c$	14.59***	.13
(SD)	(.44)	(.50)	(.49)		
Shared	.08$_a$	.09$_a$	.20$_b$	4.73*	.04
(SD)	(.28)	(.29)	(.40)		
Beliefs					
Individuated	.70	.70	.65	.62	.01
(SD)	(.46)	(.46)	(.48)		
Shared	.15	.09	.19	2.34	.02
(SD)	(.36)	(.29)	(.40)		

[a] dfs = 2, 204.
[b] * $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$.
[c] Means in the same raw that do not share subscripts differ at $p < .05$ in tests of simple effects (with Bonferroni adjustment).

Table 5

Proportion of Narratives in Which Understanding, Warmth, Antagonism, and Distance

Were Present, and ANOVA Results, by Age

	Means and Standard Deviations			F	η_p^2
	10-year-olds	14-year-olds	17-year-olds		
Understanding	.05$_a$	.20$_b$	.27$_b$	10.01***	.16
(SD)	*(.12)*	*(.27)*	*(.23)*		
Warmth	.24$_a$	.44$_b$	.49$_b$	8.05**	.14
(SD)	*(.23)*	*(.26)*	*(.32)*		
Antagonism	.27$_a$	.39	.56$_b$	6.45**	.11
(SD)	*(.34)*	*(.33)*	*(.34)*		
Distance	.20$_a$	.38$_b$	.48$_b$	7.91**	.13
(SD)	*(.28)*	*(.33)*	*(.34)*		

[a]*df*s = 2, 102.

[b]** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

[c]Means in the same raw that do not share subscripts differ at $p < .05$ in tests of simple effects (with Bonferroni adjustment).

Table 6

Proportion of Narratives in Which Understanding, Warmth, Antagonism, and Distance

Were Present, and ANOVA Results, by Relationship Context

	Means and Standard Deviations			F	η_p^2
	Mother	Father	Friend		
Understanding	.21	.19	.12	1.85	.02
(SD)	(.41)	(.39)	(.33)		
Warmth	.32a	.31a	.53b	7.12***	.07
(SD)	(.46)	(.47)	(.50)		
Antagonism	.37a	.32a	.53b	7.33**	.07
(SD)	(.49)	(.47)	(.50)		
Distance	.25a	.28a	.55b	17.90***	.15
(SD)	(.44)	(.45)	(.50)		

[a]dfs = 2, 204.

[b]** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

[c]Means in the same raw that do not share subscripts differ at $p < .05$ in tests of simple effects (with Bonferroni adjustment).

DISCUSSION

The narrative accounts of the participants in the present study provided an interesting picture of how preadolescents' and adolescents' individuation and connectedness concerns unfold in their reflections about their conflicts with parents and friends. The findings indicate that in the context of reflecting on their conflict interactions with others, youth clearly asserted their distinct perspective in their narratives throughout development. With age, however, participants tended to think of their individuated perspective in more sophisticated and multifaceted ways. As expected, there were also age-related increases in the participants' propensity to talk about their disagreements with parents and friends in terms their relationship implications. Relationship context differences were also found, with allusions to individuated desires more commonly emerging in the child-parent contexts, and allusions to connectedness in the friendship context. These findings provide further evidence that individuation and connectedness concerns emerging in the context of conflict become more sophisticated and complex with development, and that different relationships provide distinct, though somewhat overlapping, contexts for individuation and connectedness processes.

Individuation Across Development

Consistent with previous research, which indicates that children's narrative accounts become more lengthy and elaborated with age (McCabe & Peterson, 1991; Wainryb et al., 2005), the longest and most detailed narrative accounts were provided by the 17-year-old participants, and the shortest by the 10-year-old participants. More importantly for the purposes of the present paper, the findings suggest that youth's intrapsychic experience of their individuation becomes more sophisticated and multifaceted with age. First, whereas only 19% of 17-year-olds references did not include at least one reference to the adolescents' distinct beliefs and justifications of their unique perspectives, almost 50% of 10-year-olds's narratives lacked such references. In parallel, 17-year-olds' narratives tended to include more various facets of the adolescents' individuation – their distinct actions, desires, and beliefs/justifications – than 10-year-olds' narratives. However, there were no age differences for the youth's allusions to individuated actions and desires.

On one hand, these findings suggest that although individuation may be an important task of adolescence (Goossens, 2006; Holmbeck, 1996; McElhaney et al., 2009; Silverberg & Gondoli, 1996; Steinberg, 1990; Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins, 2003), the context of conflict is conducive to bringing even preadolescents' unique, separate– from-others, perspectives to the fore. Thus, whereas 10-year-olds did not provide very detailed accounts of their conflicts, the distinctiveness of their perspective in these accounts was as apparent as in the more elaborated accounts of their older peers. However, individuation – perhaps as well as many other developmental achievements – is experienced in more sophisticated ways with development, as adolescents become

increasingly focused on their unique beliefs and opinions as well as on providing the

explanations that underlie those beliefs and opinions. These developmental differences

can be easily seen in the following narratives provided by two boys in the present study:

> I was watching this new show on Cartoon Network called "Adventure Time," but it was past my bedtime. And my mom told me to come upstairs, and I'm like, "mom, please, can I just watch this?" and she just like, "no, no." So eventually I had to come upstairs to go to bed. That really sucked. And I was kind of crying a little bit, and swearing in my mind.
> (10-year-old boy)

> We went out to dinner at Blue Plate Diner and…it was about college and…I'm enrolled in AP Art here and so…like my, my teacher, like I guess, umm knows that I have potential to go on to Art School. And like, he – we had parent-teacher conference last night – and he was telling my mom that I like have the skill to get there, I just need to work harder. And we got… It was embarrassing because we got in a huge argument, like in a public restaurant. And just like how I have to pay attention to all my other schoolwork. Because I don't know, I think that's just as important, but like I love art… and I'm not so sure that I want to go to art school. But she was like trying to tell me that I should really look into it, and I was just like, I've thought about it a lot. And then I think she just like thinks that in order to be a good artist you have to go to an art school, but I just want to go to a regular college, just like to open up my… Because I'm really into music, I'm really into art and like, I just want to give those both a fair chance. And I was like telling her that even if I do want to pursue art, I can still go to art school later in life. She's just really upset that I don't want to go next year, and I'm just like, "I don't think it's like really your decision to decide like where I want to go to school," and…she just got really upset. And like we got in a big argument, and I was calling her like ignorant and just… I don't know. It was really embarrassing but like after the argument because everybody was looking at us and I was just like uhh… and then we left and paid but... yeah we got in a huge one about that. And it's just… I don't think she should like be the one… She could give input, like she thinks it'd be good for me to go, she thinks I'm a good artist, but when it comes down to it she needs to let me choose where I want to go to school.
> (17-year-old boy)

Notice that each account clearly represents the boys' unique, distinct-from-the-

mothers', perspective, and each boy openly expresses his goals and desires to his mother

– the 10-year-old asks his mother if he can stay up, and the 17-year-old asserts that the

choice of college education should be his own, not his mother's, decision. Both boys are

clearly quite upset at their mothers. But what is different about 17-year-old's story is that, along with mentioning his distinct goals and assertive behaviors, he also substantiates his unique perspective with carefully thought through beliefs and interpretations about the world. Whereas the 10-year-old boy does not explain what is so special about the cartoon he wanted to watch, or why "it sucked" not to be able to watch it, the 17-year-old extensively elaborates on his viewpoint: He explains that it is important to give both of his avocations – music and art – a fair chance, that he can still pursue art later in life, and that it should be his own rather than his mother's decision.

It is possible that what develops with age is not one's awareness of one's uniqueness and distinctiveness – the awareness that every normally developing child has past the age of 2, and which becomes quite salient in the context of conflict – but the ability to reason about and explain one's beliefs and the interpretations that underlie one's unique perspective. In late adolescence, clarifying one's beliefs and opinions about a narrated event becomes to an extent even more prevalent than clarifying one's distinct goals and behaviorally asserting oneself: in the present study, 81% of 17-year-olds referred to their individuated beliefs, 74% to their individuated actions, and 64% to their individuated desires. Less frequent references to individuated desires do not necessarily suggest that thinking about such desires becomes less important in late adolescence, but rather may reflect late adolescents' assumption that the nature of the described conflicts makes the incompatibility of their own and others' goals and desires quite obvious and clear. For instance, an adolescent may not focus on the fact that he/she did not want to do his/her homework, which is already clear in the description of the conflict as resulting from the adolescent's failure to perform well at school, but rather on explaining *why*

something other than school was important for him/her. The findings are not only consistent with the literature on the self-conceptions (Damon & Hart, 1988; Harter, 2006; Nucci & Lee, 1993) and identity development (Erikson, 1968; Kroger, 2003), but are also in agreement with the narrative work by McLean and colleagues (McLean et al., 2010; McLean & Thorne, 2003), which suggests that late adolescents and young adults display an increasing propensity to gain insights, in particular in relation to their improved self-understanding, through reflecting on their autobiographical experiences, especially those involving conflicts.

Not only do the findings of the present study make sense in light of the previous literature, but they also extend our understanding of individuation development. As mentioned in the introduction, the bulk of the previous autonomy development literature focuses on adolescents' growing awareness of their individuation and separation from parental figures as well as their tendency to exercise their unique choices vis-à-vis parental restrictions (Beyers et al., 2003; Nucci, 1994; Smetana 1995, 2005; Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986). This work shows that with age, individuals become less compliant and insistent on exercising their unique choices and preferences. Indeed, in the present study, younger participants (at least boys) were more likely to succumb to the parental demands than older participants. However, the findings of the present study, which focused on intrapsychic rather than behavioral or self-representational aspects of individuation, revealed that in the context of conflict even young children are internally aware of their distinct perspective, notwithstanding of how the conflict was eventually solved. The findings have also important implications for the cross-cultural work on autonomy-related processes, as they demonstrate that even if strong environmental (family and

societal) factors may prevent individuals from pursuing their own agenda, they do not necessarily prevent them from maintaining their sense of distinctiveness intrapsychically. Of course, as proposed by some autonomy researchers elsewhere, inability to exercise certain personal choices due to external pressures may be psychologically harmful (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Helwig, 2006; Nucci & Turiel, 2000); however, this discussion is outside of the scope of the present paper and should be further explored in the future research.

<div align="center">Individuation Across Relationship Contexts</div>

The present study aimed to explore not only how individuation processes unfold across development, but also across different relationship contexts. Although no such systematic comparisons have been previously made, it has been suggested that as child-parent conflicts often involve the impingement on the child's personal sphere of action and the child's blocked goals, and peer conflicts revolve around relational themes, individuation concerns should be more salient in the former context, and connectedness concerns in the latter context (Collins et al., 1997; Eccles et al., 1997). The findings of the present study only partially confirm these assertions.

In agreement with the previous research, participants talked about somewhat different universes of conflicts occurring in the child-parent and friendship relationship contexts. More specifically, participants described conflicts with their parents as pertaining to the issues of the participants' blocked goals and desires, parents' intrusion on the participants' personal sphere of action, and participants' failure to fulfill their school- and household-related responsibilities. Conversely, participants depicted conflicts

with their best friends as pertaining to the friends' differing beliefs and opinions, and even to a greater extent to one of the friend's hurting another friend's feelings or damaging their relationship. Also, consistent with the previous research (Adams & Laursen, 2001), whereas reported child-parent disagreements frequently ended with the child succumbing to the parental demands, the majority of the described disagreements with friends had no clear outcomes. Together, these findings concur with the idea that parents have more authority than friends to control the youth's choices and restrict their autonomy by not allowing them to do what they want to do or by forcing them to do what they do not want to do.

Nevertheless, the individuation findings in the present study also suggest that the unique psychological pressures posed by friendships may restrict individuals' autonomy in alternative ways, and also provide an important context for the youth's individuation. Thus, in the present study, no relationship context effects were found for the participants' references to their distinct actions and beliefs. Of course this may be partly because friends often disagree about their beliefs and opinions – for example, about how to do a school project correctly or how to treat other people. However, even the highly relational conflicts so frequently taking place in the friendship context seemed to be quite conducive to the youths' behavioral assertions and expression of their unique beliefs. Indeed, although only 20% of girls' disagreements (as opposed to 50% of boys' disagreements) were about their differences in beliefs and opinions, boys' and girls' narratives did not differ on any of the examined individuation markers. Consider, for example, the following narrative account of a 17-year-old girl:

> Well, it's kind of a classic best friend story. She got a boyfriend. And, well she…
> There were two boyfriends. One of them was really mean to her and I told her to

break up with him. Because he was, he was a real jerk. But, she was like, "well there's nothing wrong." And so eventually she did because he just was really mean, and she finally realized it. But then, but the whole time during that she kind of ignored me and didn't talk to me. So then for maybe a period of three months she didn't have a boyfriend, and she started dating this other guy, who…He was, he's really nice to her and she's still dating him, but she ignored me again, even though I thought she learned from last time that I, I would help her out more than some boy would. Because I helped her even when she kind of wouldn't talk to me for a while. So, I talked to her and I got kind of… I've never really gotten in an argument with her. That was the only time that we came near an argument. Because I didn't know what to do, and she got really mad because she didn't understand why I couldn't be happy for her. And…I tried to explain that "I'm not, it's not that I'm not happy for you, but you're not talking to your family and you spend all your time in your room or with him. So it's like being happy for someone who's addicted to heroin." You know, I just, I don't know. So she still doesn't talk to me that much but we've, we've been best friends since we were about 9-years-old. And it kind of fell apart recently.

In this "classic best friend story," the narrator clearly distinguishes her own perspective from her friend's perspective – she has her distinct opinion about the friend's boyfriends and about her discontent with how the friend treats her, and she is very vocal and assertive with her opinion. As in the case with narratives about child-parent conflicts cited above, the girl not only states her opinion, but also extensively elaborates on it – she advises her friend to break up with her boyfriend because he was mean and "a jerk," she is surprised with her friend's ignoring behavior despite their past history, and she explains that she cannot be happy with her friend's spending excessive time with her current boyfriend because "it's like being happy for someone who's addicted to heroin." The fact that the theme of the conflict is relational – the narrator is obviously upset at her friend's treatment of her and their relationship in general – does not in any way cloud the clarity of the narrator's distinct perspective.

However, relationship context differences were found in the participants' references to their individuated desires, which were most common in the narratives about

conflicts with mothers, less common in the narratives about conflicts with fathers, and least common in the narratives about conflicts with friends. To some extent, this finding can be explained by the nature of the conflicts within these relationship contexts. Indeed, conflicts with parents, especially with mothers, often relate to children's hindered goals and desires, which naturally bring the distinctiveness of these goals and desires into focus. Although conflicts with friends also often involve clashes between their goals and preferences – for instance, when youth disagree about recreational activity choices (Komolova & Wainryb, 2011) – in the present study such conflicts constituted a minor part (13%) of the participants' friendship disagreements. This suggests that although disagreements about differing preferences may be quite common in children's and adolescents' lives, such experiences are not as psychologically significant, and hence memorable, as disagreements that involve betrayals, insensitivities, or other hurt feelings situations. The latter types of conflicts, so prevalent in the present participants' friendship narratives, may not be conducive to the children's emphasis of their unique preferences to the same extent.

The findings flesh out the previously proposed idea that conflicts within vertical and horizontal relationships provide contexts for working out somewhat different aspects of one's individuation and identity development. For instance, in the chapter by Weeks and Pasupathi (2010), which examined adolescents' conversations with their parents and friends about self-relevant experiences (i.e., important decision, self-typical, and self-atypical events), the authors indicate that adolescents talk about different aspects of the same event when discussing the event with a parent versus with a friend. For instance, in her discussion of a recent "drinking and driving" incident, one participating girl focused

on the prudential consequences of the event with her mother, whereas she focused on restoring her sense of self as a moral exemplar to others with her friend. Thus, the authors state, "we can view the mother and the friend as complementary audiences for exploring distinct identity-relevant features of the event in question" (p. 81). Similarly, in a study in which adolescents were interviewed about seeking advice from parents and friends about various choices, it was found that adolescents tended to use their friends as a guide in the judgments that pertained to the adolescents' fitting in with the smaller group (e.g., choice of clothes) and with their parents about the judgments that pertained to the adolescents' being a part of an adult society as a whole (e.g., choices of part-time jobs) (Brittain, 1963). In the present study, which systematically compared individuation processes in the child-parent and friendship relationship contexts, it is clear that children and adolescents work out their distinct perspectives pertaining to their choices and preferences and ability to pursue these preferences vis-à-vis parental regulations, and that they work out their distinct perspectives pertaining to their more abstract worldviews (especially boys) or what it means to be a good relationship partner (especially girls) with their friends.

Friendship relationships also seem to provide an important ground for fostering one's sense of togetherness with another person – a sense that may be an important aspect of the youth's future romantic relationships. In the present study, participants frequently mentioned desires and actions shared with their friends, but not parents. I will return to these findings in the next section on connectedness.

Connectedness Across Development and Relationship Contexts

As expected, participants tended to represent their connectedness to parents and friends in more multifaceted ways across development. More specifically, allusions to relationship understanding, warmth, and distance were more commonly present in the narratives of older participants than in the narratives of 10-year-olds; allusions to relationship antagonism were also more commonly present in the narratives of 17-, but not 14-year-olds, than in the narratives of 10-year-olds. These findings, especially those on relationship warmth, further contribute to the idea that adolescents' individuation does not involve severing emotional bonds from others, but rather one's sense of connectedness expands and deepens, along with their sense of individuation, throughout development (Grotevant & Cooper, 1998; McElhaney et al., 2009; Raeff, 2004; 2006).

Also in line with expectations, references to connectedness were more common in the friendship than in the child-parent narratives: Whereas only 15% of participants did not refer to any forms of connectedness when reflecting on their disagreements with friends, about 40% of participants did not refer to connectedness when reflecting on their disagreements with parents. More specifically, over 50% of participants referred to warmth, hostility, and distance in the friendship context, but only about 30% in the child-parent context. Given that connectedness is more at stake in voluntary relationships, it makes sense that youth express more concerns with possible threats to relationship continuation posed by antagonism expressed during a conflict as well as by temporary, but sometimes even permanent, disconnection from a relationship partner when reflecting on their disagreements with friends than on those with parents. It also makes sense that narratives about conflicts with friends reflect the youth's more active attempts to restore

the affectionate bond established and maintained before the conflict than their narratives

about conflicts with parents. Importantly, these findings cannot be explained by the

overall differences in relationship quality in these types of relationships, as in the present

sample preadolescents and adolescents reported better relationship with their parents than

with their friends. Thus, the present results speak more of the different nature of child-

parent and friendship relationships, which provide somewhat distinct contexts for

working out different sets of developmental issues.

The somewhat distinct nature of the youth's ways of thinking about conflicts with

parents and friends, in particular with respect to connectedness, is demonstrated in the

two narratives provided by a 14-year-old girl:

> Well, I do a lot of extra curricular activities like I play violin, I practice drums, I
> do homework and so she, my mom is really ah… She doesn't want me to practice,
> she doesn't want me to play violin because she thinks that I'm doing too much. So
> a few days ago I think, I wanted to practice my violin and she said, "no you have
> to go do your homework," and I didn't want to. I wanted to keep practicing my
> violin.
>
> One of my friends, she's kind of moody and stubborn. So one day I was hanging
> out with her and her big sister, and we were at Hires I think, the hamburger place
> downtown, and after that day I went home and I texted her. I said, "Hey, what's
> up?" And she said like, "I loath you with a passion and I never want to talk to you
> again." And I didn't know what I was doing that was wrong. So I kept asking her,
> and she kept replying, "you know what you did, you didn't like… like I don't…
> I'm not your friend anymore." And I was really confused and came to the school
> the next day, and she still didn't tell me what I did, and she was really mean to
> me, and then eventually she just kind of stopped being mean to me and said,
> "sorry, I want to be friends again." And I was really confused, and we're still
> friends today but not as, I guess not as close as we used to be. But it was still just
> really weird how she was so moody and mean to me, and I didn't know what I
> did. I probably said something like a joke and she took it the wrong way, but I
> don't know what it was.

In the first narrative, which describes a typical adolescent-parent conflict related

to the adolescent's homework responsibilities, there are no references that tell us about

the nature of the adolescent and her mother's relationship before or after the conflict. It is quite possible that the narrator's and her mother's relationship did not change as a result of the conflict at all. By contrast, references to the nature of the relationship between the narrator and her friend are plentiful: The relationship is clearly threatened by the friend's hostile and distancing behavior and, despite the friend's attempts to restore the relationship, the girls are "not as close as [they] used to be."

Importantly, however, preadolescents' and adolescents' attempts to restore relationship quality does not equate to giving in to friends' demands or even finding a compromise solution that would satisfy both conflict parties. Indeed, friendship conflicts frequently reported by the participants in the present study were not conducive to win-lose or compromise outcomes. As suggested by Smetana and colleagues (1991), certain types of disagreements – for example those related to individuals' rights and obligations – are not as easily resolved as other types of disagreements – for example those related to regulating adolescents' specific behaviors such as completing their homework. Similarly, in the present study, friendship conflicts, which often evoked the issues of friendship obligations as well as abstract differences in opinions, may not provide an appropriate opportunity to find a solution with a clear win-lose or compromise outcome. For instance, in the example of a friend betraying another friend's trust by going out with the friend's girlfriend, a clear power-related outcome is hard to conceive of even hypothetically. However, participants' frequent references to friendship warmth suggest that what is often important for friends is not who wins an argument or even not getting what they want (which may be more relevant in their conflicts with parents), but how to recover the initial quality of the relationship despite the occurred disagreement. Again, one may be

able to hold one's ground in the conflict situation, but nevertheless end the conflict in an amicable way – for example, by forgiving the friend – that helps to mend the relationship.

Although there were no significant age-by-relationship context interaction effects, the findings of the present study seem to point to developmental differences in conceptions of friendship relationships. First, the aforementioned references to shared desires and actions were particularly common in the friendship narratives of 14-year-olds, who were as likely to refer at least once to shared-with-friends actions (61%) and desires (33%) as to their individuated actions (69%) and desires (31%) (see Appendix A). Again, this is noteworthy, given that conflict presumably emphasizes the distinctiveness rather than sameness of the parties' perspectives. Such prevalence of references to the young adolescents' perspective shared with their friends is not surprising, however, given that early adolescence is a period at which friendships become particularly intimate and affectionate, and that young adolescents often strongly identify with and conform to their friends (Berndt, 1979; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Hill, 1987; Holmbeck, 1996; Savin-Williams & Berndt, 1990; Sharabany et al., 1981).

Although as suggested by the individuation findings described above, most of the 14-year-olds do assert their individuated perspective in their conflicts with friends, it is possible that maintaining the sense of togetherness with friends may be at times even more important to young adolescents than their self-assertion. Consider, for example, the following friendship narrative of a 14-year-old boy:

> Mostly I go there [hometown] only in the summer, and so we try to spend as much time as possible together. And we always can't decide where to go because we don't live in that big of a city. But, umm, like there's a lot of things to do, we can go to the park, to the beach, anywhere, some new amusement parks and roller coasters, a lot of things like that. And so we couldn't decide on what to do. I wanted to go… It was actually very hot that day… I wanted to go to the beach,

and he wanted to go to the new roller coaster that came out because if you go there, like, you, you still won't feel that hot anyway because it's fast and goes up in the air. And, umm, uh, we kind, like, the, the argument wasn't really that big, a few minutes, we talked it out. We asked other people also, from like our friends because we weren't just going by ourselves, other people were going with us. And so we just asked them what they would like to do, like umm, which one, either the amusement park or the beach. In the end though, we all like agreed to go to the roller coaster that day because umm… well, it just came out so it's not going to be that many people on the first day. And so we went there that day and the next day we just went to the beach.

It is evident that the "we" thinking is quite prevalent in the narrative above: The narrator makes numerous references to making (and struggling with) the choice of recreational activity together with his friend, working hard on finding a compromise solution that would satisfy both friends, and finally finding such a solution. The boy mentions his own desire to go to the beach in passing, but what seems to matter to the boy the most is "working things out" with the friend and preserving their relationship despite the disagreement.

Although, overall, 10-year-olds referred to connectedness less frequently than adolescents, many of 10-year-olds did refer to warmth (42%), antagonism (36%), and distance (44%) at least once in their friendship narratives. This suggests that preadolescent children are quite aware of possible threats that conflicts impose on their friendship relationships; perhaps that is why children at this age are preoccupied with losing their friendships and, at least in response to hypothetical scenarios, make choices that favor their friend's rather their own agenda (Komolova & Wainryb, 2011). Importantly, however, preadolescents in the present study rarely referred to perspectives shared with their friends (only 11% referred to shared desires and beliefs) and almost never explicitly referred to understanding between themselves and their friends. This suggests that although preadolescents are worried about losing their friends, their

friendship relationships are still not as deep and intimate as those of adolescents.

While 17-year-olds also frequently referred to connectedness in the friendship context, they referred to perspective shared with their friends less frequently than 14-year-olds (see Appendix A). This, however, does not mean that 17-year-olds' friendships are of comparable nature to those of 10-year-olds. First, such "regression" would be at odds with everything we know about the development of friendships, which increase rather than decrease in depth throughout adolescence (McElhaney et al., 2009; Sandy & Cochran, 2000; Sharabany et al., 1981). Also, although overall infrequent, references to achieving understanding with friends were somewhat more common in the narratives of 17-year-olds (17%) than in the narratives of 10- (8%) or 14-year-olds (11%). Instead, the findings suggest that 17-year-olds, who feel more confident than their younger peers that good friendships are capable of surviving conflicts (Hartup & Laursen, 1993; Komolova & Wainryb, 2011; Newcomb & Bagwell, 1996), may not feel the same need to restore and emphasize the sense of togetherness in the context of conflict, the sense that probably remains to be an important aspect of the late adolescents' nonconflict experiences with friends.

Even though connectedness was evidently a more salient issue in the friendship as opposed to child-parent relationship contexts, it would be a mistake to suggest that adolescents do not care about maintaining connectedness to their parents. In fact, as in the example that serves as an epigraph to the paper, in which a 14-year-old girl states that she and her father "still loved each other" despite the disagreement, over 30% of early adolescents and over 40% of late adolescents spontaneously referred to warmth in their relationship with a parent in the midst of their reflection about the conflict with the

parent.

Perhaps even more intriguingly, both younger and older adolescents referred to understanding and acceptance in their relationship with their parents; although there were no significant interaction effects, examination of Appendix B suggests that "understanding" references were somewhat more common in child-parent contexts than in the friendship context. This is reminiscent of Youniss and colleagues' findings (Youniss & Ketterlinus, 1987; Youniss & Smollar, 1985), which indicate that, contrary to common stereotypes of adolescents as defiant rejecters of parental authority, the majority of adolescents continue to derive their sense of validation and acceptance through evaluating their parents' views of themselves. Youniss and Ketterlinus (1987) further explain that "adolescents care what their parents think about them to a high degree because they want their parents to acknowledge that they are no longer children and they want parents to approve of the individuals they have become" (p.271). Perhaps thinking of understanding and acceptance in their relationships with parents is also indicative of adolescents' desire to be perceived as fellow grown-ups "who understand each other" and thus become a part of the adult world.

Interestingly, although conflicts with parents have been shown to peak in their frequency and intensity in early adolescence (for a meta-analytic review, see Laursen, Coy, & Collins, 1998), 14-year-olds in the present study seemed to be less comfortable than 17-year-olds in talking about antagonism in their relationship with their parents. Thus, although young adolescents may engage in heated fights with their parents and may not openly acknowledge their psychological vulnerability and the value they place on their relationship with their parents, their narratives suggest that they are somewhat

threatened by the consequences of the antagonism expressed in the conflicts with their parents. (After one interview, as if apologizing for the stories just told, a 14-year-old boy said to me, "but I really want you to know that I love my parents.")

By late adolescence, however, youth seem to feel more comfortable with talking about antagonism expressed in their conflicts with their parents because, as in the case with friendships, they have had substantial experience to know that antagonism does not permanently damage their relationship with parents. This, however, does not prevent them from keeping in mind other, more positive, aspects of their relationships with their parents. Consider, for example, a narrative account of a 17-year-old boy, who places the description of his conflict with his father into a highly relational context, by alluding to yelling and storming off (i.e., antagonism) and leaving the scene of conflict (i.e., distancing), but also to the arrival at a mutual understanding and the restoration of the initial relationship quality:

> Two years ago during the summer I used to play baseball, and we went down to the school, a school that's right behind my house. And he was throwing batting practice me, so throwing pitches, and I'd hit them. And he kept trying to change my swing around, but I'd felt pretty good about the swing I had been using, and I had been hitting the ball. And I got mad that he was just constantly trying to change it. And he got mad at me for not taking his advice. And so we just yelled at each other, and I ended up not finishing the practice, went back home. And… But then after that it was fine. He learned he shouldn't critique my swing so much, but I also learned he knows a lot more about baseball than I do, so his advice would be helpful. I was… I actually ended up storming off, and walking home before he did, so I ended it. Yeah, then after that we went and talked about it at home. Uh, there later after we'd both calmed down, we resolved it.

In contrast to the adolescents, the 10-year-olds in this study tended to focus on the distinctiveness of their own and others' perspectives, but rarely talked about the implications of these differences for their relationships, especially their relationships with their parents. Importantly, preadolescents' failure to consider connectedness in their

narratives about conflicts cannot be accounted by poorer relationship quality, as the participants' self-reported relationship quality did not improve with age. Instead, the ability to think of connectedness in the face of conflict seems to be developmental in nature.

Although 10-year-olds rarely referred to connectedness when narrating their disagreements with parents, they more frequently referred to antagonism (22-25%) and warmth (14-17%) than to distance (8-11%) or understanding (0-6%. Thus, whereas 10-year-olds may not necessarily take pleasure in talking about antagonistic interactions with others and about conflicts in general (the elicitation of conflict narratives from 10-year-olds often required extensive probing), such behavioral expressions in the child-parent relationship context are more common than distancing expressions. Slamming doors and leaving the scene of a conflict appear to be more characteristic of the adolescent behavioral repertoire. Actions that increase physical distance may mirror adolescents' active attempts to psychologically differentiate themselves from parents. Also, 10-year-olds' limitations in their cognitive abilities probably do not allow them to reconcile such seemingly contradictory aspects of an experience as clashing goals and understanding. Although preadolescents' perspective taking skills have been shown to be significantly better than those of their younger peers, at this age children still have difficulty focusing on their own and other's perspective simultaneously, and hence tend to espouse either the correctness of their own view or that of another person (Sandy & Cochran, 2000). Thus, it is not surprising that thinking of understanding in the context of conflict may be particularly challenging for 10-year-olds. Maintaining or repairing relationship warmth may be less cognitively challenging because, as I mentioned above, individuals may

attempt to make amends and restore harmony even if they do not give in to the other's agenda or continue disagreeing with the other's point of view.

In summary, the findings further contribute to our understanding of the facilitative role of conflict for social development. Whereas the previous body of work has been almost exclusively focused on the warmth dimension of connectedness, the present findings suggest that with age both negative and positive aspects the youth's sense of connectedness expand and deepen. As in the case of individuation, the findings on connectedness also seem to suggest that vertical and horizontal relationship contexts provide children with somewhat distinct developmental lessons. With friends, preadolescents and adolescents work out the ways in which they can prevent a relationship from dissipation, and with parents the youth learn to arrive to the mutual understanding in the face of conflict. Importantly, the findings of connectedness were quite distinct from the findings on the participants' self-reported relationship quality, which suggests that the narrative methodology provides a unique data on the topic.

<u>Gender</u>

Contrary to the previously made assertions that boys are more concerned with maintaining their autonomy in relationships than girls (Chung & Asher, 1996; Hartup & Laursen, 1993), both genders in the present study were equally likely to refer to their individuated actions, desires, and beliefs across relationship contexts. In fact, girls represented their individuation in somewhat more multifaceted ways than boys, which suggests that girls think about their conflict experiences in more complex ways, both in terms of their implications for individuation and connectedness (see below). These

findings add to an accumulating body of literature on the importance of autonomy for both genders (Nucci et al., 1996; Smetana, 2005, 2006; Smetana et al., 2009).

In line with the predictions, girls more frequently referred to dyadic antagonism and distancing and alluded to a higher number of connectedness facets than boys. Unexpectedly, however, no gender differences were found in participants' references to understanding and warmth. These findings are perhaps not surprising though, given that girls reported poorer quality relationships than boys.

In the friendship context, it is also apparent that gender differences in references to antagonism and distance may relate to the types of disagreements that boys and girls have with their friends. While girls' disagreements often resulted from one of the friends making possessive claims on the other, boys' disagreements were almost never about such issues. By contrast, half of the boys' conflicts with their friends were disagreements about specific courses of action (e.g., "We disagreed about how to arrange stuff in a stock room") or about more abstract or general beliefs and opinions (e.g., "We disagreed about where hard rock ends and normal rock begins"). It makes sense that the latter types of conflicts do not pose the same threat to the continuation of a relationship as do possessiveness conflicts, which often involve one of the friends feeling betrayed, rejected, or excluded. Also, perhaps such types of conflicts pull for more complex, multifaceted experience of individuation and connectedness.

The findings on gender differences in negative aspects of connectedness are also consistent with research on relational aggression, which is a more prevalent form of aggression among girls than boys (for a review, see Crick et al., 2007). It has been suggested that girls are more preoccupied with their close relationships than boys, and

use each other's "strong desire for connectedness as leverage against each other" (Crothers et al., 2005, p. 349). In fact, relational aggression is defined as "behaviors that employ damage to relationships, or the threat of damage to relationship, as the vehicle of harm" (Crick et al., 2007, p.245). The distinction between antagonistic and distancing expressions examined in the present study maps roughly on the distinction made by Crick and colleagues between indirect and direct relationally aggressive acts, with the former including withdrawals and silent treatments, and the latter including open attempts to control a peer's behaviors and verbal attacks on the peer. As in the example of narrative cited above, in which the 14-year-old girl receives hostile messages and is ignored by her best friend for no apparent reason, allusions to both direct and indirect forms of relational aggression were abundant in the girls' narratives of their conflicts. Although the concept of relational aggression, which is characterized by one's intentional attempts to hurt another person, is not quite applicable to the child-parent relationships, the findings of the present study suggest that girls' relationships with their parents are also characterized by more perturbations than are boys' relationships with their parents.

It should be noted that, overall, the findings of this study did not indicate major differences between child-mother and child-father relationship contexts. The findings are perhaps reflective of the contemporary times, in which both mothers and fathers, at least in middle-class, dual-income families, closely participate in the children's upbringing (Gottfried, Gottfried, & Bathurst, 2002). There were a few notable exceptions, however. As compared to their disagreements with fathers, preadolescents' and adolescents' disagreements with their mothers more frequently related to the youths' goals and desires being blocked by the parent. In parallel, youth more frequently talked about their

individuated desires in the child-mother than in the child-father relationship context.

Moreover, the narratives of disagreements with mothers included more complex

depictions of participants' individuation than their narratives of disagreements with

fathers. Together, these findings add to existing evidence that mothers are more

restrictive of their children's choices than fathers are, and thus the need to individuate

and to push against these restrictions may be more salient in the child-mother than in the

child-father context (McElhaney et al., 2009; Wierson et al., 1990). Also, perhaps

because children have more intimate and close, but also more turbulent, relationships

with their mothers than with their fathers (Collins & Russell, 1991; McElhaney et al.,

2009; Youniss & Ketterlinus, 1987), individuation may be experienced more complexly

in the former than in the latter relationship context.

Limitations and Future Directions

In the present study, I interpreted many results in terms of how threatening

conflict experiences and their implications for relationships felt to children and

adolescents of different ages. Yet, participants' perceptions of the narrated conflict

experiences – for instance, how threatening the conflicts felt – were not directly

examined. Although all participants were asked to narrate disagreements that were

important to them, the participants' narratives clearly varied in the levels of intensity and

significance, partially because of the variation in emotionality infused in the narratives.

Such variations are apparent even in the few narrative examples cited in this paper. For

example, the story about a girl whose mother insisted that she do her homework instead

of practicing her violin does not strike me as particularly significant to the girl – she does

not refer to any emotions or other psychological implications of the disagreement. By contrast, the story about the boy's argument with his mother about a career choice is full of references to anger and frustration, and thus conveys the sense of urgency and significance. It is possible that the level of conflict intensity or its perceived implications for a relationship may moderate some of the links between age and individuation or connectedness processes. For instance, younger children may be less likely than adolescents to focus on their individuated perspective when reflecting on a particularly intense disagreement. In future research, it would be interesting to examine the relationship of the specific conflict characteristics (i.e., perceived intensity, significance, threat to a relationship, etc.) and the youth's narrative references to individuation and connectedness.

Another potentially interesting direction for future research lies in examining the ways in which individuation and connectedness processes unfold in conflict as compared to in less antagonistic contexts. Although conflicts serve as important training grounds for the development of individuation and connectedness, conflicts constitute only a part, perhaps even a minor part, of children's and adolescents' everyday experiences. It would be useful to know how frequently preadolescents and adolescents become aware of their distinctiveness when reflecting on experiences other than conflict – for example, when asked to think about the times when they got along with a parent or a friend, or when presented with even more open-ended probes such as thinking about *any* significant experience with a parent or a friend. It is possible that such research would reveal more distinct age differences in the youth's conceptions of both individuation and connectedness. For instance, when presented with a more open-ended probe it is likely

that preadolescents would rarely choose to talk about conflict and consequently about their distinct views on the narrated events. Indeed, in the previously mentioned study by McLean and Thorne (2003), late adolescents' self-defining memories relating to experiences with parents contained more themes of separation and conflict than their memories relating to experiences with friends, which contained more themes of closeness. This research would also more directly examine whether the sense of "sharedness" becomes more salient in conflict situations, or, to the contrary, in nonconflict situations, and perhaps how this sense of "sharedness" within these distinct situations is experienced by children and adolescents of different ages. It is also possible that such research would yield different gender-related patterns, with girls talking more than boys about warmth and understanding when reflecting on their nonconflict experiences, for example. Also, although previous research strongly suggests that the twin goals of social development – that of individuation and connectedness – are highly interdependent, it is important for individuals to maintain double-focus or balance these sets of concerns (Aubé, 2008; Helgeson, 1994; Helgeson, & Fritz, 1999; Hodgins, Koestner, & Duncan, 1996; Guisinger & Blatt, 1994; Raeff, 2004; 2006), it is not clear what the "balance" or integration of these concerns looks like and how it is experienced. In the present study, preadolescents and adolescents rarely made spontaneous attempts to integrate their individuation and connectedness concerns. Perhaps directly asking youth to integrate individuation and connectedness aspects of their social experience would be a more fruitful strategy for the purposes. It is also possible that attempts to reconcile individuation and connectedness may become prevalent only past adolescence. Labouvie-Vief (1990) suggests that late adolescent and young adult thinking is still characterized

by a number of dichotomies – that between cognition and emotion, or between individuality and communality. According to Labouvie-Vief, many, but not all, mature adults are able to transcend these rigid dualisms. Future research should examine individuals' abilities to reconcile individuation and connectedness concerns in different relationship contexts across the entire life span.

Finally, it should be noted that quality of the relationships of the preadolescents and adolescents in the present sample, which was predominantly European American and middle-class, were quite high. Thus, the findings of the study cannot be generalized to preadolescents' and adolescents' individuation processes occurring in families characterized by poorer parenting practices and poorer child-parent relationship quality. It is possible that emotional detachment and defiance may occur more frequently in less optimal relationship contexts (Allen et al., 1990, 1994), and that adolescents may emphasize the hostile or distant nature of their relationships and minimize warmth or understanding within such contexts. Future research should examine possible variations in the development of individuation and connectedness across cultural, socio-economic, and mental health context.