THE EFFECT OF FAMILY STRUCTURE ON PARENT-ADOLESCENT CONFLICT:

INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES OF PARENTS IN SINGLE

AND DUAL-PARENT HOUSEHOLDS

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Abstract

This study examined differences in parent-adolescent conflict in single-parent and dual-parent households from the perspective of parents with adolescent-age children. Previous research has shown differences in family communication and interpersonal conflict as a result of the family structure (i.e., whether there are one or two parents in the home). Single and partnered parents were recruited via students at local middle and high schools, parent-centered organizations, and via snowball sampling. Participants completed demographic information as well as the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict MODE Instrument. Single parents completed the measure as individuals; parents from dual-parent households completed the survey together. Results showed no differences in reported frequency of conflict between the two family structures. Single parents reported the use of compromising more than the other conflict styles, and more than dual parents. Single parents reported using collaborating significantly less than dual parents. Implications, limitations and future directions are discussed.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Family communication has considerable impact on quality of life (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006; Segrin & Flora, 2005). Furthermore, the skills children learn through daily interactions with family members teach them how to relate to future friends, romantic partners, colleagues, and others they come in contact with in their adult lives (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Koerner & Fitzpatrick; Miller, Perlman, & Brehm, 2007). For example, children learn how to address interpersonal conflict with others via interpersonal conflict with their families of origin (Koerner & Fitzpatrick; Segrin & Flora). Due to the potential longitudinal impact early experiences of interpersonal conflict can have on one's future ability to manage interpersonal conflict as well as quality of life for family members, researchers have endeavored to better understand conflict management in the context of the family (Laursen, 2005; Recchia, Ross, & Vickar, 2010; Rinaldi & Howe, 2003; Smetana, Yau, Restrepo, & Braeges, 1991; Van Doorn, Branje, VanderValk, De Goede, & Meeus, 2011; Xiong, Rettig, & Tuicomepee, 2006).

In addition to potential longitudinal effects of interpersonal conflict management in the family, more immediate outcomes can be seen as well. Anderson, Umberson, and Elliot (2004) found child abuse is most likely to occur during times of interpersonal conflict. In addition, an increased frequency in interpersonal conflict between parents and adolescents has been positively associated with increases in adolescent delinquent behaviors and depression (Xiong et al., 2006). On the opposite end of the spectrum, families that are better able to manage interpersonal conflict have children who have stronger friendships with peers, perform better in school, and parents who are more satisfied (Sillars, Canary, & Tafoya, 2004). To the extent that these two outcomes are related to, and may be a function of familial conflict, the study of how interpersonal conflicts are managed in the family setting is of great importance.

One of the most important contributors to family dynamics is the structure of the family itself. The family structure refers to the number of people living in the house and their relation to each other. One defining factor in family structure is whether there are

one or two parents in the household. In the past forty years, the number of single-parent homes in the United States has more than doubled (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011), sparking an interest in how family structure impacts parents and children alike (Florsheim, Tolan, & Gorman-Smith, 1998; Laursen, 2005; Sanik & Mauldin, 1986; Walker & Henning, 1997; Weinraub & Wolf, 1983; Zeiders, Roosa, & Tein, 2011). Findings show distinct differences in family communication that may be attributed to the differences in family structure, for instance, how a family spends its time (Sanik & Mauldin), psychological and behavioral outcomes such as risks for delinquent behavior and depression for both parent and child (Zeiders et al., 2011), and the number of interpersonal conflicts parents have with their adolescents (Laursen; Smetana et al., 1991). Findings detailing differences in single and dual-parent households, in combination with the potential impact of interpersonal conflict in the family setting, are the catalyst for this study.

In the present study, parent-adolescent conflict was studied to discern whether differences exist between parents in dual-parent and single-parent households; specifically, whether there is a systematic difference in interpersonal conflict management styles of parents in single as compared to dual-parent households. First, definitions of interpersonal conflict and conflict management styles will be reviewed, followed by an overview of previous findings in family communication research and interpersonal conflict in the family setting. Next, general differences in single and dual-parent homes will be discussed, leading to an examination of differences in interpersonal conflict in the two settings. This will be followed by an explication of a research question derived from an exploration of possible reasons interpersonal conflict may differ in single as compared to dual-parent households. This is followed by the methodology used and results, as well as a discussion of these results and potential implications. Finally, limitations and future directions will be discussed.

Interpersonal Conflict Defined

The present study examined interpersonal conflict between parents and children, therefore, a definition of what is being referred to as interpersonal conflict is warranted. Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2006) articulated two general categories of definitions:

psychological (e.g., perceptions of incompatible goals) and behavioral (i.e., disagreements, arguments), and indicated the majority of scholars use behavioral definitions when researching interpersonal conflict in the family setting. They argued that psychological definitions are problematic because those definitions do not necessitate articulation of a conflict by either party, meaning one of the two parties involved may not be cognizant of the conflict.

Some definitions aim to include both behavioral and psychological aspects. For example, Wilmot and Hocker (2005) define interpersonal conflict as "an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their goal" (p. 41). It is psychological because of the perceptions involved, and behavioral because the problem ("struggle") must be articulated by at least one of the people involved.

In reviewing research to determine a definition of interpersonal conflict for the present study, finding one specific definition was problematic. This was in part because different researchers in this area used different definitions (e.g., Smetana et al., 1991; Xiong et al., 2006), and because the definition used by a researcher was not always made explicit leaving the reader (and in some cases participants of the study) to infer the definition of interpersonal conflict for themselves (e.g., Burns & Dunlop, 2003; Van Doorn et al., 2011; Zeiders et al., 2011). In studies in which the definition of interpersonal conflict was explicitly stated, it was in more general terms such as an argument (Smetana et al.) or a disagreement (Xiong et al.).

In cases where the definition was not explicitly stated a review of the instruments used to measure interpersonal conflict aided in inferring a definition. For instance, Zeiders et al. (2011) did not give a definition for interpersonal conflict, however, in reviewing their methodology it could be inferred that they defined interpersonal conflict as a verbal argument between two or more people. This is because the instrument used to measure interpersonal conflict, the Parent-Adolescent Conflict Scale (PACS), includes questions such as "you and your mother/father yelled or raised your voices at each other" (Zeiders et al., p. 82) which indicates an argument of some kind.

When the focus of a study was specific interpersonal conflict management behaviors, such as compromising and avoiding, researchers may not have explicitly defined interpersonal conflict and focused instead on the outcomes of interpersonal conflict and the behaviors used to achieve those results. For instance, Burns and Dunlop (2003) did not explicitly define interpersonal conflict, and instead focused on how married and divorcing spouses resolved their conflicts. This can be seen in the questions used on the measure designed for the study (the Conflict Resolution Scale) such as "A row [argument] seems to clear the air and we feel closer to each other afterwards; when we disagree we never seem to solve the problem, it keeps coming back," (Burns & Dunlop, p. 52). In this case, the reader and participant are left to infer the definition of interpersonal conflict (which could be a verbal disagreement or argument).

Similarly, Van Doorn et al. (2011) did not explicitly define interpersonal conflict but instead focused on specific interpersonal conflict resolution styles that included positive problem solving (which was equated to compromising), and withdrawal (which was equated to avoiding). In reviewing the instrument used to measure interpersonal conflict (Kurdek's Conflict Resolution Style Inventory) it may be inferred the definition of interpersonal conflict is a behavioral one: a verbal disagreement. This can be seen in the questions on the instrument, for example, "negotiating and trying to find a solution that is mutually acceptable" (Van Doorn et al., p. 158) and "getting furious and losing my temper" (Van Doorn et al, p. 158).

Whether explicit or implicit, behavioral definitions of interpersonal conflict appear to be invoked more frequently than psychological ones. In addition, research that has examined specific interpersonal conflict styles or behaviors in the family setting have used implicit definitions that equate to a verbal disagreement or argument. A verbal disagreement implies a psychological aspect in the sense that there cannot be an argument or disagreement if the perception of incompatibility does not exist between the two or more parties involved. Thomas and Kilmann (1974) define interpersonal conflict as "situations in which the concerns of two people appear incompatible" (p. 9). Consequently, the definition of interpersonal conflict for the present study is: a situation

involving two or more parties in which perceptions of incompatibility have led to a verbal disagreement or argument.

Conflict Management Styles

In addition to defining interpersonal conflict it is important to conceptualize the way interpersonal conflict is managed. Conflict styles are defined as "patterned responses" one uses when engaging in interpersonal conflict, whether conscious of them or not (Wilmot & Hocker, 2005, p. 130). The five-style scheme articulated by Kilmann and Thomas (1977) categorize five interpersonal conflict management styles: competition, collaboration, avoidance, accommodation, and compromise. These categories are based on two different dimensions over which interpersonal conflict styles may vary: assertiveness (i.e., attempting to satisfy/achieve one's own concerns/goals) and cooperativeness (i.e., attempting to satisfy/achieve the other's concerns/goals). People who are high in both assertiveness and cooperativeness have high concern for their own as well as their interpersonal conflict partners' goals and are categorized as collaborators. People who are low in both assertiveness and cooperativeness have little concern for their own and their interpersonal conflict partners' goals and tend to avoid interpersonal conflict. Those who are assertive about interpersonal conflict and are unwilling to cooperate work to achieve their own goals; they have no regard for their conflict partners' goals, and are categorized as competitive. When the reverse is true (i.e., low concern for achieving their own goals and high concern for achieving the others' goals), accommodation is the preferred strategy. Finally, when people are moderate on both assertiveness and cooperativeness, they tend to compromise during interpersonal conflict. As the scope and definition of interpersonal conflict have been defined, a review of current research in family communication is presented.

Previous Findings

Family Communication

Interpersonal conflict in the family setting can be seen as a subset of the larger area of research in family communication, therefore, a review of research in family communication is warranted. Research in family communication has linked time spent

together to several positive and negative outcomes for family members (Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001; Jencius & Rotter, 1998; Markson & Fiese, 2000; Segrin & Flora, 2005). For example, the amount of time families spend sharing a meal has been linked to behavioral problems in children; specifically, children in families who spend greater amounts of time sharing a meal have fewer behavioral problems than children whose families spend less time sharing a meal (Hofferth & Sandberg). Children's mental health has been linked to participation in family rituals such as birthday celebrations, weddings, baptisms, and graduations (Segrin & Flora). Children who regularly participated in meaningful family rituals reported lower anxiety levels (Markson & Fiese). Finally, family routines such as regular bedtimes and bedtime rituals have been linked to levels of sleep disturbance in children, with more regular routines associated with fewer disturbances in sleep, such as trouble falling asleep and difficulty sleeping through the night (Jencius & Rotter).

Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2006) outlined three reasons family communication is an important area of study: (a) overall quality of life is partially dependent on the quality of one's interpersonal relationships, and familial relationships are by nature interpersonal; (b) communication skills (including interpersonal conflict management skills) are learned through experience with one's family of origin, and the skills acquired during childhood and adolescence impact the quality of interpersonal relationships in the future; and (c) children are unable to chose who their family members are, and if they have abusive family members, they may be vulnerable to possible abuse by those family members. This final reason is important because children are generally not able to distance themselves from potentially abusive family members, and as was stated earlier, child abuse is most likely to occur during times of interpersonal conflict (Anderson et al., 2004). For these reasons they concluded the study of family communication, especially conflict in the family setting, is of great importance.

Interpersonal Conflict in the Family Setting

Research on interpersonal conflict in the context of family has shown children develop interpersonal conflict management styles that mirror their parents' conflict styles

(Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002; Reese-Weber, 2000). For instance, if a parent uses a compromising style during interpersonal conflict with their adolescent, the adolescent is more likely to use a compromising conflict style during interpersonal conflict with others (Reese-Weber). In addition, a parent's perception of how families should communicate and handle interpersonal conflict is mirrored in his or her children (Rinaldi & Howe, 2003). Observations of interpersonal conflict management behaviors among adolescents show adolescents use interpersonal conflict management behaviors learned from parents in conflict with others, such as peers and siblings (Van Doorn et al., 2011). This "spillover" effect is not reversed; adolescents usually do not exhibit interpersonal conflict management behaviors of their peers when in conflict with their parents (Van Doorn et al.). Research examining the way parents manage interpersonal conflicts with their adolescent children has been limited in number (Reese-Weber), and as the research outlined above shows, the majority of studies have focused on correlations between parents' and adolescents' interpersonal conflict management behaviors. Additionally, few studies have focused on the impact differences in the family structure (i.e., single-parent vs. dual-parent households) may make in interpersonal conflict management behaviors of parents.

Considering the manner in which family communication during childhood and adolescence, specifically interpersonal conflict behaviors and management, affects children in the home and later in life, understanding how families manage interpersonal conflict is important. As is evident in the research above, it is the parents who greatly influence the adolescents' interpersonal conflict behavior. Consequently, the focus of this study will be on familial conflict from the parents' perspective. More specifically, how different family structures (i.e., single and dual-parent homes) affect the family itself.

Differences by Family Structure

One of the most significant contributors to family structure is the number of parents in the household. For instance, Sanik and Mauldin (1986) claimed single parents use time differently from parents in dual-parent households, and that single parents are, in essence, committed to two full-time jobs. In comparing employed single mothers,

employed married mothers, and their non-employed counterparts, they found employed single mothers spend less time doing household tasks (such as preparing meals, washing dishes, and cleaning) and recreational activities than married mothers, regardless of whether the married mother was employed (Sanik & Mauldin). Harvey and Mukhopadhyav (2007) elaborate on the differences in use of time by single and dual parents, indicating single parents have less time available to allocate amongst tasks, especially if they are employed.

Other differences have been found regarding the way single-parent families use time as compared to dual-parent families. For example, single parents tend to be more socially isolated, work more hours (Harvey & Mukhopadhyav, 2007) , and experience less emotional support (Weinraub & Wolf, 1983). In addition, children in single-parent homes have been found to be at higher risk for adverse behaviors such as school misconduct, conduct disorder, and major depressive disorder (Zeiders et al., 2011). Single mothers are at a higher risk for maternal depression, and single-parent families tend to experience higher levels of family stress (Zeiders). Single parents are also more likely to be economically disadvantaged (Florsheim et al., 1998; Zeiders).

Other research examining differences related to family structure focused on the interactions between parents and their offspring. For instance, single parents tend to exhibit greater nurturance in the form of care and support toward their children than parents in dual-parent households (Walker & Henning, 1997). The same study also found single parents more likely to share their thoughts, opinions and feelings with their children (Walker & Henning). Given the variety of differences that can be found between single and dual parent families, might these differences generalize to interpersonal conflict as well? There is some evidence to suggest this is so.

Interpersonal Conflict Differences by Family Structure

Previous research in family conflict that examined differences in single and dual-parent households, and the implications of those differences, has resulted in inconsistent findings in areas such as frequency and intensity of interpersonal conflict. These

inconsistent findings may be due in part to the recent and increasing growth of single-parent homes.

Greater frequency of interpersonal conflict between parents and children has been found in married as compared to divorced family settings (Smetana et al., 1991), and the adolescents involved in interpersonal conflicts in married settings viewed them as more serious than the adolescents in divorced households. Conversely, other findings show increased frequency of interpersonal conflict in single-parent homes (Hetherington et al., 1992; Walker & Henning, 1997). Finally, Laursen (2005) found no difference in frequency of interpersonal conflict between dual and single-parent homes. Frequency of interpersonal conflict between parents and adolescents has been linked to the ability of adolescents to properly adjust over the lifespan, with moderate levels of frequency leading to better adjustment then either high frequency or zero frequency of interpersonal conflict (Adams & Laursen, 2001).

Research that has included measures of intensity has offered various explanations for why the intensity levels differ based both on household composition as well as context. One study noted the intensity of interpersonal conflict was greater between single mothers and adolescents as compared to married parents and adolescents (Laursen, 2005). Other findings showed a difference in intensity based on type of interpersonal conflict, with a higher intensity level being associated with major as opposed to minor every-day conflicts (Xiong, Rettig, & Tuicomepee, 2006).

Results of research examining family conflict and single versus dual-parent families might be expected to be somewhat unreliable given the changing nature of family structures over the past 30 years. Single-parent homes used to be considered "abnormal" as compared to the number of dual-parent homes (Laursen, 2005). In 1968, the U.S. Census Bureau reported approximately 85% of children lived in a dual-parent household, 12% of children lived with only one parent, and the remaining 3% lived with a different relative or a non-family member (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Twenty years later, in 1988, a rise in single-parent households can be seen: 73% in dual-parent homes and 24% in single-parent homes (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). This increase has

continued and as of 2010, only 69% of children lived in a dual-parent home while 27% lived with only one parent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). This means that in 42 years, the number of single-parent homes has more than doubled. As the ratio of single to dual-parent families has changed, so has society's attitude toward single parent families (Thornton, A. 2009). With the abnormality of being a single parent (whether by circumstance or choice) diminishing, it would follow that the stigma associated with being a single parent has also diminished in kind. With the reduction of this stigma, single parents and their adolescents may not experience the external stressor of being stigmatized, and this reduction in stress may impact the way single parents and their adolescents interact. In addition, with the diminishing stigma and stress, single parents and their adolescents may be more willing to share their thoughts and feelings with their friendship networks which could give them access to more coping strategies from their social networks. No doubt these changes have had some influence on family dynamics and consequently conflict in single-parent family homes. These social changes may be reflected in the results of family research collected throughout this span of time. Consequently, an exploration of the ways in which the changing structure of the family unit, as well as the changing attitudes toward and expectations of diverse family units, might contribute to family dynamics in general, and family conflict in particular is presented.

Anticipated Interpersonal Conflict Differences by Family Structure

Parents in single and dual-parent households face different constraints as a result of the family structure which can impact the way parents manage interpersonal conflict with their adolescents. One of the biggest constraints is the amount of time available in each family setting (Harvey & Mukhopadhyav, 2007; Sanik & Mauldin, 1986). Recall that single parents use time differently from parents in dual-parent households (Sanik & Mauldin). Consequently, single and dual-parent families are afforded assets and liabilities as a result of the family structure that may lead to different approaches to interpersonal conflict management in each setting. Parents in single-parent and dual-parent households could develop distinctly different patterned responses (i.e.,

interpersonal conflict management styles) in dealing with interpersonal conflict as a function of those assets and liabilities. Some possible differences could be a result of: constraints on time, energy, and resources; availability of emotional support; intimacy levels; and strategizing ways to handle interpersonal conflict.

First of all, parents in dual-parent households have the option to divide household responsibilities such as chores, doctor appointments, transportation to and from sporting events, making meals, etc. It is possible that because the parents are able to divide the responsibilities between themselves, they have more time and energy to devote to interpersonal conflicts. Single parents are typically responsible for all household duties and therefore may have less time (Harvey & Mukhopadhyav, 2007; Sanik & Mauldin, 1986) and energy to spend on interpersonal conflicts. Single parents tend to work longer hours (Weinraub & Wolf, 1983), and are less likely to ask their adolescents for explanations when curfew is broken, as compared to parents in dual-parent households (Flanagan, 1987). Consequently, single parents may opt for more expedient interpersonal conflict management styles as compared to parents in dual-parent households. For instance, single parents may be more likely to adopt an accommodating (e.g., "whatever!") or competitive (e.g., "because I said so") interpersonal conflict management style in order to end the conflict quickly, whereas parents in dual-parent households may be more likely to adopt an interpersonal conflict management styles that take more time to enact, such as collaborating or compromising.

On the other hand, single parents have been found to be more willing to share their thoughts and feelings with their adolescents (Walker & Henning, 1997). Perhaps single parents are more willing to talk through an interpersonal conflict with their adolescents, which could lead to the tendency to adopt a more compromising or collaborative conflict management style as compared to their counterparts in dual-parent households. If parents in the dual-parent household are less likely to talk things through, they could be more likely to adopt a competitive conflict management style.

The presence of one as compared to two parents in the home could change the dynamic between the parents and the children. For instance, parents in a dual-parent

household can give each other emotional support that is not usually readily available to the single parent (Weinraub & Wolf, 1983). They have the option of acting as a united front when addressing interpersonal conflict with their adolescent, thereby reinforcing the power derived from parental status with the weight of numbers. The single parent typically does not have a second parent immediately available for consultation or support in interpersonal conflict settings, and usually has to rely on parental status alone in a "one on one" situation.

The differences in time availability (Harvey & Mukhopadhyav, 2007; Sanik & Mauldin, 1986; Weinraub & Wolf, 1983) may also impact the amount of time parents spend deciding how to manage interpersonal conflict with their adolescents. In a dual-parent household, parents could have more time to discuss how to address interpersonal conflict with their adolescents. They may have the opportunity to brainstorm and bounce ideas off of each other, and have the propensity to come up with more possible strategies together as opposed to the single parent acting alone. The single parent has less opportunity and time (Harvey & Mukhopadhyav; Sanik & Mauldin) to plan and strategize communication options with another parent. This may lead to more variety in the conflict management styles of parents in the dual-parent household as compared to the single parent.

In summary, parents have different affordances available in managing interpersonal conflict depending on whether they are living in a single-parent or dual-parent household. The constraints, assets, and liabilities associated with the family structure could lead to differences in the way parents manage parent-adolescent conflict. The question is, do these differences systematically impact the way parents conflict with their adolescents? Therefore, the following research question is posed:

RQ: Do parents' interpersonal conflict management differ between single-parent and dual-parent households?

Chapter 2: Method

Participants

Participants (n = 52) were recruited via students from middle and high schools, parent teacher associations, and parent-oriented organizations in Hawaii. In addition, the researcher conducted snowball sampling via an online social networking site. Participants responded to one of two versions of an online survey housed on SurveyMonkey.com.

To be eligible to participate, parents were required to have at least one adolescent-age child. Conflict involving children under the age of 13 generally consists of compliance gaining tactics by parents; in addition, conflict declines in late childhood (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006). Previous research has shown the incidences of conflict peak in early to mid-adolescence (Cicognani & Zani, 2010; Furman & Burmester, 1992; Hetherington et al., 1992), consequently, parents of adolescent children between the ages of 13 to 18 were included in this study; parents whose children are all under 13 or over 18 years of age were excluded.

The version given to each participant was determined by the household structure (i.e., single versus dual-parent households). Dual-parent households were defined as homes where at least one adolescent child lives with two parents, either two biological parents, or one biological parent and a step-parent/partner. Because more similarities than differences exist between biological and re-married parents (Hetherington et al., 1992), both types were included. Single-parent households were defined as homes where at least one adolescent child lives with one biological parent; the single parent has not remarried and is not cohabiting with a romantic partner.

Single parent participants. Thirteen participants responded to the single-parent household version of the survey. One participant was excluded because they did not meet the criteria (i.e., the participant was living with a romantic partner). The final participant sample for the single parents included twelve participants (n = 12; ages 33 - 56, Mean age = 42.75, SD = 8.13). Participants reported themselves as Hispanic (n = 6, 50%), Native/ Part Hawaiian (n = 3, 25%), Mixed (n = 2, 16.67%), and American-Indian (n = 1, 8.33%). Three of the single participants listed their marital status as single (n = 3, 25%), three

were married (*n* = 3, 25%), five were divorced (*n* = 5, 41.67%), and one was separated (n = 1, 8.33%); length of current marital status ranged from 0 - 324 months (Mean length=124.83, *SD* = 99.84). All single parent participants (female = 12, 100%) identified themselves as the adolescents' mothers (*n* = 12, 100%). Their adolescent children ranged in age from 14 - 18 (Mean age = 15.42, SD = 1.38; males = 6, 50%); all participants (*n* = 12, 100%) indicated their adolescents lived with them full-time (i.e., seven days per week). In addition to the participant and their adolescent, single parent participants reported anywhere from 0 - 3 (*M* = 1.25, *SD* = 1.01) other household members.

Dual parent participants. Twenty couples (*n* = 40, ages 33 - 61, Mean age = 46.05, *SD* = 6.99) responded to the dual-parent household version of the survey. Participants described themselves as Hispanic (*n* = 28, 70%), Native/Part Hawaiian (n = 3, 7.5%), Japanese (*n* = 2, 5%), Chinese (*n* = 1, 2.5%), Filipino (n = 1, 2.5%), Caucasian (*n* = 1, 2.5%), Tongan (*n* = 1, 2.5%), African-American (n = 1, 2.5%), Mixed (n = 1, 2.5%), and Other (*n*=1, 2.5%). Thirty seven participants listed their marital status as married (*n* = 37, 92.5%), and three participants were remarried (*n* = 3, 7.5%); length of current marital status ranged from 26 - 320 months (Mean length = 217.25, *SD* = 81.91). Dual-parent participants identified themselves as the adolescents' mothers (*n* = 19, 47.5%), fathers (*n* = 18, 45%), stepmother (*n* = 1, 2.5%), or stepfather (*n* = 2, 5%). Their adolescent children ranged in age from 13 - 18 (Mean age = 15.80, *SD* = 1.47; males = 7, 35%); all participants (*n* = 40, 100%) indicated their adolescents lived with them full-time (i.e., seven days per week). In addition to the participant and their adolescent, dual parent participants reported anywhere from 0 - 3 (*M* = 1.20, *SD* = 1.01) other household members.

Research Design

Parents of adolescent children were asked to complete an online survey housed on the online server, SurveyMonkey.com, which took approximately 15 minutes to complete. Separate surveys were designed for parents in single-parent (Appendix A) and dual-parent (Appendix B) homes. Parents in a dual-parent household were asked to complete the survey in collaboration with their partner. If more than one adolescent in

the target age range of 13 - 18 lived in the home, participants were instructed to fill out

the information based on the eldest target-age child. Participants were given the

following instructions and definition of conflict at the beginning of the survey

[parenthetical statements were included on the dual-parent version only]:

> The purpose of this study is to examine the way parents address conflict with their
> adolescent children. If you have more than one child between the ages of 13-18,
> the questions will be focusing on your oldest adolescent in that age range who is
> living at home (i.e., has not gone off to college). [You and your partner (i.e.,
> husband/wife, boyfriend/girlfriend, etc.) should complete this survey
> together.] When answering questions on this survey, please keep the following
> definition of conflict in mind:
>> A situation involving two or more people in which perceptions of
>> incompatibility have led to a verbal disagreement or argument

Measures

    Conflict management styles. Conflict management styles were assessed using

the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict MODE Instrument (TKI) (Kilmann & Thomas, 1977)

modified to be relevant to parent-adolescent conflict. This inventory consists of 30

forced-choice questions regarding interpersonal conflict. Participants were given the

following instructions [parenthetical statements were included on the dual-parent version

only]:

> [The goal of this study is to learn more about how the two of you as parents
> address conflict with your adolescent.] Consider situations in which you find your
> wishes differing from those of your oldest adolescent child. Think about how [the
> two of] you usually respond to such situations.
> Below are several pairs of statements describing possible behavioral responses.
> For each pair, please select the "A" or "B" statement which is most characteristic
> of your own behavior [as parents]. In many cases, neither the "A" nor the "B"
> statement may be very typical of your behavior, but please select the response
> which you [and your partner] would be more likely to use.

Sample statements are "A. I try to find a compromise situation. B. I attempt to deal with

all my adolescent's and my concerns." Each of the statements corresponds to a specific

conflict management style. To calculate the results, one point is assigned for each

statement selected in the appropriate conflict management style. The categories are

totaled and the individual's scores across the five styles compared to see which of the

styles is reported most likely to be used. Scores for each style range from 0 - 12. The MODE instrument has been successfully used in previous research on interpersonal communication (e.g., Greef & de Bruyne, 2000). The test-retest coefficient for each of the five categories (Accommodating, Avoiding, Collaborating, Competing, Compromise) ranges from .61 - .64 (Holt & DeVore, 2005).

Frequency of conflict. To determine the frequency of conflict in the parent-adolescent relationship, participants responded to the question "During an average week, how many conflicts do you have with your adolescent [individually and together]?" The wording in parentheses was included on the dual-parent version of the survey only.

Demographic information. Demographic information included: age, gender, marital status, and ethnicity of participants. Participants were also asked the age of their oldest adolescent between 13 - 18 years of age, each participants' relationship to the adolescent, and whether the adolescent lived with them full or part-time. If the adolescent did not live with the parent full-time, participants were asked who else the adolescent resided with. Additional items were used to develop a more complete picture of the household make up: number and ages of boys and girls under 18 living in the house, number and ages of adults other than the parent(s) living in the house.

Dual-parent collaboration. Parents living with a romantic partner were asked to discuss and answer questions on the survey together. To assess whether participants did indeed collaborate, and whether they agreed on their answers, two seven-point Likert-type questions were included: "How much did you and your partner collaborate on the answers to the survey," and "How much did you and your partner agree on the answers to this survey." Items were anchored by *"not at all"* and *"completely."*

Chapter 3: Results

Characteristics of Conflict

   Frequency of conflict. To assess the frequency of conflicts parents were having with their adolescents, participants were asked "During an average week, how many conflicts do you have with your adolescent?" Single parents reported anywhere from 1 - 9 conflicts per week ($M = 3.08$, SD 2.02), and dual parents reported between 1 - 30 conflicts per week ($M = 4.85$, SD 7.42). To see whether the two groups differed in the average number of conflicts per week, a t-test was run. Levene's test of homogeneity of variance was not met, consequently, the t-test was run with equal variances not assumed. There was not a significant difference between the two groups in reported average number of conflicts per week, $t(23.37) = 0.37$, n.s.

   Dual-parent collaboration. To measure the extent to which dual parent participants collaborated with each other when responding to the survey, participants were asked to rate the amount of collaboration they had on a seven-point Likert-type scale anchored by *"not at all"* and *"completely,"* with higher scores indicated more collaboration. Responses ranged from 0 - 6 with a mean score of 4.85 ($SD = 1.84$). Half of the couples ($n = 10$, 50%) indicated they collaborated completely with each other, and 16 couples (80%) rated their collaboration at 5 or higher. These frequencies indicate the majority of dual parent participants reported they highly collaborated on their responses.

   Dual-parent agreement. To measure the extent to which dual parents agreed on their answers participants were asked to rate their level of agreement on a seven-point Likert-type scale anchored by *"not at all"* and *"completely,"* with higher scores indicating higher levels of agreement. Responses ranged from 0 - 6 with a mean score of 4.55 ($SD = 1.40$). Four couples (20%) reported completely agreeing with each other, and 13 couples (65%) rated their agreement at 5 or higher. These frequencies indicate the majority of parents reported they highly agreed on their responses.

Research Question

The research question asked: Do parents' interpersonal conflict management differ between single-parent and dual-parent households? To answer this question, a series of paired sample *t*-tests was used to test for differences between reported use of each conflict style independently *within* single parents and dual. In addition, several univariate analyses of variance were conducted to assess differences *between* single and dual-parent respondents in each of the five conflict styles (for means and standard deviations, see Table 1).

Table 1. Conflict Styles: Means and Standard Deviations

	Single Parents		Dual Parents	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Accommodating	4.75	2.18	5.00	1.92
Avoiding	6.08	1.78	6.2	2.02
Collaborating	5.33	2.64	6.7	1.84
Competing	5.08	2.64	4.95	2.76
Compromise	8.5	2.24	6.95	2.28

Single parents. To determine whether single parents reported using one or more conflict styles more frequently than others, paired sample *t*-tests compared reports of use for each conflict style (see Table 2). Results showed the use of compromising was reported more frequently than avoiding, $t = -2.76$; collaborating, $t = -4.18$; competing, $t = -2.62$; and accommodating, $t = -4.81$. No significant differences were found when comparing single parents reported use of the remaining four styles. It would appear that single parents report using compromising significantly more than the other four conflict styles.

Table 2. Conflict Styles Comparison: Single Parents

Conflict Style Pairing	t	Significance (2-tailed)
Compromising & Avoiding	2.76	0.02
Compromising & Collaborating	4.18	0.002
Compromising & Competing	2.62	0.02
Compromising & Accommodating	4.81	0.001
Avoiding & Collaborating	1.03	0.37
Avoiding & Competing	1.03	0.34
Avoiding & Accommodating	1.41	0.19
Collaborating & Competing	0.34	0.74
Collaborating & Accommodating	0.79	0.45
Competing & Accommodating	0.26	0.80

Pairings in bold indicate significant differences, p < .05

Dual parents. To determine whether dual parents reported using conflict styles differentially, a series of paired sample *t*-tests compared reports of use for each conflict style. Results showed that compromising was again reported to be used more frequently than accommodating, $t = -3.03$. In addition, collaborating was reported to be used more than either accommodating, $t = -2.60$, or competing, $t = -2.59$. Finally differences between compromising and competing, $t = -1.98$, and avoiding and accommodating, $t = -1.80$, were approaching significance. Given the limited number of respondents in the present student and the resulting underpowered tests, the latter results are reported in the interests of not contributing to a Type II error (Levine, Weber, Park, & Hullett, 2008).

Table 3. Conflict Styles Comparison: Dual Parents

Conflict Style Pairing	t	Significance (2-tailed)
Compromising & Collaborating	0.43	0.74
Compromising & Avoiding	1.08	0.29
Compromising & Accommodating	3.03	0.01
Compromising & Competing	1.98	0.06
Collaborating & Avoiding	0.65	0.52
Collaborating & Accommodating	2.60	0.02
Collaborating & Competing	2.59	0.02
Avoiding & Accommodating	1.80	0.09
Avoiding & Competing	1.39	0.18
Accommodating & Competing	0.06	0.96

Pairings in bold indicate significant differences, p < .05

Between group comparison. To determine whether single and dual parents reported using each of the five conflict styles differently, several univariate analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted comparing each of the styles between the two groups. There was not a significant difference in the reported use of accommodating by single parents ($M = 4.75$, $SD = 2.18$) and dual parents ($M = 5.00$, $SD = 1.92$); $F(1, 30) = .12$, n.s., $\eta^2 = 0.004$. There was also not a significant difference in the reported use of avoiding by single parents ($M = 6.08$, $SD = 1.78$) and dual parents ($M = 6.2$, $SD = 2.02$); $F(1, 30) = 0.03$, n.s., $\eta^2 = 0.001$. Similarly, there was no significant difference in single parents ($M = 5.08$, $SD = 2.64$) and dual parents ($M = 4.95$, $SD = 2.76$); $F(1, 32) = 0.02$, n.s., $\eta^2 = 0.001$, reports of competing. On the other hand, the use of collaborating was reported significantly less by single parents ($M = 5.33$, $SD = 1.07$) relative to dual parents ($M = 6.7$, $SD = 1.84$); $F(1, 30) = 5.47$, $p < .03$, $\eta^2 = 0.15$. The reports of the use of the

final conflict style, compromising, did not differ significantly between single parents (M = 8.5, SD = 2.24) and dual parents (M = 6.95, SD = 2.28); $F(1, 32)$ = 3.51, n.s, η^2 = 0.11. It should be noted, however, that although the difference was not significant between the two groups, the effect size indicated an actual difference may exist, but the current study was underpowered and failed to meet that standards of traditional significance testing, and in fact, not taking the effect size in to consideration when interpreting these results could lead to a Type II error (Levine et al., 2008). Overall, single parents are less likely to collaborate with their adolescents than dual parents.

In summary, single parents reported the use of compromising significantly more than the other four conflict styles. Dual parents reported the use of compromising significantly more than accommodating, and reported the use of collaborating more than accommodating and competing. In addition, single parents reported collaborating significantly less than dual parents.

Chapter 4: Discussion

The goal of this study was to discern whether single parents and dual parents enact distinctly different conflict management styles with their adolescent children. To assess these potential differences, an online survey was created that included a measure of conflict frequency, as well as conflict management styles parents use.

In assessing the preferred conflict management styles of single parents, results showed single parents say they are most likely to use compromising when conflicting with their adolescent. Further, there was no significant difference in single parents' reports of the use of the other four conflict styles. Parents in dual parent households reported the use of compromising and collaborating significantly more than accommodating, and also reported the use of collaborating significantly more than competing.

Compromising involves communication between two (or more) parties to find a "middle ground" solution. Conversely, collaborating involves finding a solution which <u>fully</u> satisfies both parties' needs (i.e., there is a high concern for both the self and the other party involved in the conflict) without either party having to give up any part of what they want to achieve. Consequently, it could be argued that of the five conflict styles, collaborating takes the most time and energy as compared to the other four styles. Compromising is usually more expedient than collaborating, and it could be argued that compromising is the most expedient of the styles that involves active parenting in so far that it requires the parent and adolescent to have a conversation regarding the issue at hand. In contrast, competing may not allow for as in-depth of a conversation, and would most likely result in a "*because I said so*" type of response from the parent. That being said, it appears that single parents report choosing the most expedient conflict management style that still allows for conversation with their adolescent. This is in line with previous research detailing the differences in ways single and dual parents spend their time. Recall that single parents work longer hours (Harvey & Mukhopadhyav, 2007; Weinraub & Wolf, 1983) than dual parents. The reported use of the more expedient conflict management style of compromising (as compared to collaborating) is consistent

with this research and could be a result of single parents trying to balance expediency with active and involved parenting practices.

In addition to being consistent with the research regarding use of time, single parents' reported use of compromise is also in line with previous research by Walker and Henning (1997) which indicates single parents are more likely to share their thoughts and feelings with their adolescents. Using a compromising style requires parents to communicate with their adolescent to find a middle ground both are able to accept. Most likely they are doing this by addressing their own as well as the adolescents' concerns.

Interestingly, this finding by Walker and Henning (1997) is in some ways counter-intuitive to the findings that single parents work longer hours (Harvey & Mukhopadhyav, 2007; Weinraub & Wolf, 1983) than dual parents. If single parents are spending more time at work than dual parents, it would make sense single parents have less time to allocate to conflict. The finding that single parents report they are most likely to compromise has to then be attributed to other reasons. Perhaps single parents are attempting to compensate for the lack of a second parent by taking the time to sit down and discuss conflict with their adolescents, yet they do not have the time to collaborate. Dual parents have a second parent, therefore, dual parents may not feel the need to "make up" for a missing parent. This could be why dual parents report they compromise less, and share their thoughts and feelings less with adolescents, than single parents.

The findings when comparing the two groups across the five conflict styles is also in line with the research regarding parents' use of time: dual parents report the use of collaborating significantly more as compared to single parents. Considering collaborating usually takes more time than the other conflict styles, it appears that dual parents may indeed be allocating more of their time to conflict management as compared to single parents.

The finding that dual parents report using collaborating significantly more than single parents might be interpreted in other ways. For example, maybe dual parents need to collaborate more simply due to the fact that there are more people involved in the conflict itself. Perhaps the presence of three people places constraints on members of the

dual-parent household that require them to have further conversation between the three parties involved. In addition, maybe dual parents place constraints on each other that alter the way conflict is carried out. Perhaps the desire to act as a united front and present a unified parenting unit naturally causes dual parents to collaborate more than is necessary for a single parent. This would again be consistent with the argument that single and dual parents use time differently, with dual parents spending more time collaborating simply due to the presence of more people in the conflict.

Alternately, perhaps these findings are influenced by social desirability. Parents may have answered questions in what they view as a socially appropriate way to address conflict with their adolescent. The reported use of collaboration and compromise could be due to parents wanting to report prosocial behaviors in regard to their parenting behaviors.

Limitations to this study are related both to the sample size as well as the methodology used. First, the size of the overall sample, especially the single parent sample, was very small. This could be the reason why some of the findings were not significant; the entire study was under powered. Second, all single parent respondents were female and the adolescents' mothers, therefore, the results may not be generalizable to other types of single parent families (i.e., single fathers). Third, all participants indicated their adolescents live with them full-time. Parenting practices of these parents may differ from those who share physical custody with another parent. Finally, very few step-parents were included in the dual parent sample, so the results may not be generalizable to step families. This could be a direction for future research to explore.

Regarding the methodology of the study, the first limitation involves the survey itself. The survey did not ask about other siblings who have already left the home, and the experience of dealing with conflict with an older sibling may have influenced how parents address conflict with their current adolescent-age child. Second, the instrument used to measure conflict styles was general in nature, not specific to a certain conflict, and asked parents to answer questions based on their memory. Third, the TKI does not differentiate between varying intensity/severity of conflict episodes. It could be argued

that the manner in which parents address conflict depends on the topic or context regardless of the parents' preferred style. Finally, the TKI was not originally designed for use by a dyad, and asking the dual parents to collaborate and answer survey items together may have altered the way the parents answered the questions, for instance, it could have biased dual parents toward thinking about conflicts when they have been more collaborative with each other or their adolescent. Future studies may want to employ similar methods, and also ask the dual parents to complete the survey independently. This would allow for comparison between individual and dyadic responses of dual parents.

Despite these limitations, the current study shows promising results in distinguishing differences between the way single and dual parents address conflict with their adolescent children. In addition, the current findings are consistent with previous research detailing differences in single and dual-parent families. Future studies should include a larger sample, as well as single fathers and step-parents. In addition, asking parents to recall a specific conflict may aid parents in answering questions more accurately. Finally, employing a diary-type methodology allowing parents to record conflict behaviors in real-life and real-time could aid in gaining a more complete picture of the way conflict styles are used in a family setting.

One area not examined in the present study that may impact parent-adolescent conflict and availability of time is the division of household labor. An assumption in this study is that dual parents have the option to divide household tasks between themselves. However, the manner in which the dual parents divide household tasks and the degree to which those tasks are divided could significantly alter the family dynamic. If household tasks are distributed asymmetrically and one of the parents is unhappy with the arrangement, this could exacerbate conflict in the household. Future research should attempt to discern the symmetry (or lack thereof) in the division of household tasks to see whether there is an impact on parent-adolescent conflict.

In summary, the present findings indicate there are reported differences in the ways single and dual parents manage conflict with their adolescent children. These

differences may be attributed the differences in family structure, specifically the number of parents present in the household. Hopefully, future research will be able to further investigate the impact of family structure on conflict management as well as other areas of family communication.

Appendix A

Survey for Single-Parent Participants

Consent for Participation

Consent to Participate in Research

Thank you for your interest in this study. My name is Meredith Trockman and I am conducting this research project to fulfill a Master's degree requirement in the Department of Communicology at the University of Hawaii at Manoa; I am an advisee of Dr. R. Kelly Aune. Participation in this study will involve responding to an anonymous online (Internet) survey. You are invited to participate in this project because you are at least 18 years old and are the parent of an adolescent child between the ages of 13-18.

Project Description – Activities and Time Commitment:
If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to complete an online survey which will take approximately 15-20 minutes. Survey items will include standard demographic characteristics (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity) as well as perceptions about conflict management.

Benefits and Risks:
The researcher anticipates there will be no risks associated with participation in this study. There will be no direct benefit to you for participating in this survey. The results of this project may contribute to a better understanding of parent-adolescent conflict.

Confidentiality and Privacy:
This survey is anonymous. You will not be asked to provide any personal information that could be used to identify you. Likewise, please do not include any personal information, such as your name, in your survey responses.

Voluntary Participation:
Participation in this project is voluntary. You can freely choose to participate or to not participate in this survey, and there will be no penalty or loss of benefits for either decision. If you agree to participate, you can stop at any time without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled by clicking the "Exit this survey" button in the upper right-hand corner of the page.

Questions:
If you have any questions about this study, you can contact the researcher by email at trockman@hawaii.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you can contact the UH Committee on Human Studies by phone at (808) 956-5007 or by email at uhirb@hawaii.edu.

To Access the Survey:
Clicking the next button below is representative of your consent to participate in this study.

You may print a copy of this page for your reference.

Instructions & Information

The purpose of this study is to examine the way parents address conflict with their adolescent children. If you have more than one child between the ages of 13 - 18, the questions will be focusing on your *oldest* adolescent in that age range who is living at home (i.e., has not gone off to college).

When answering questions on this survey, please keep the following definition of conflict in mind:

A situation involving two or more people in which perceptions of incompatibility have led to a **verbal disagreement or argument.**

INSTRUCTIONS:

Consider situations in which you find your wishes differing from those of your _oldest_ adolescent child. Think about how you usually respond to such situations.

Below are several pairs of statements describing possible behavioral responses. For each pair, please select the "A" or "B" statement which is most characteristic of your own behavior.

In many cases, neither the "A" nor the "B" statement may be very typical of your behavior, but please select the response which you would be _more likely to use._

1. Statement Set 1

◯ A. There are times when I let my adolescent take responsibility for solving the problem.

◯ B. Rather than negotiate the things on which we disagree, I try to stress the things upon which we both agree.

2. Statement Set 2

◯ A. I try to find a compromise situation.

◯ B. I attempt to deal with all of my adolescent and my concerns

3. Statement Set 3

◯ A. I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.

◯ B. I might try to soothe my adolescent's feelings and preserve our relationship.

4. Statement Set 4

◯ A. I try to find a compromise solution.

◯ B. I sometimes sacrifice my own wishes for the wishes of my adolescent.

5. Statement Set 5

◯ A. I consistently seek my adolescent's help in working out a solution.

◯ B. I try to do what is necessary to avoid useless tensions.

6. Statement Set 6

◯ A. I try to avoid creating unpleasantness for myself.

◯ B. I try to win my position.

7. Statement Set 7

( ) A. I try to postpone the issue until I have had some time to think it over.

( ) B. I give up some points in exchange for others.

8. Statement Set 8

( ) A. I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.

( ) B. I attempt to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.

9. Statement Set 9

( ) A. I feel that differences are not always worth worrying about.

( ) B. I make some effort to get my way.

10. Statement Set 10

( ) A. I am firm in pursuing my goals.

( ) B. I try to find a compromise solution.

11. Statement Set 11

○ A. I attempt to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.

○ B. I might try to soothe my adolescent's feelings and preserve our relationship.

12. Statement Set 12

○ A. I sometimes avoid taking positions which would create controversy.

○ B. I will let my adolescent have some of his/her positions if he/she lets me have some of mine.

13. Statement Set 13

○ A. I propose a middle ground.

○ B. I press to get my points made.

14. Statement Set 14

○ A. I tell him/her my ideas and ask my adolescent for his/hers.

○ B. I try to show him/her the logic and benefits of my position.

15. Statement Set 15

○ A. I might try to soothe my adolescent's feelings and preserve our relationship.

○ B. I try to do what is necessary to avoid tensions.

16. Statement Set 16

○ A. I try not to hurt my adolescent's feelings.

○ B. I try to convince my adolescent of the merits of my position.

17. Statement Set 17

○ A. I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.

○ B. I will let him/her have some of his/her positions if he/she lets me have some of mine.

18. Statement Set 18

○ A. If it makes my adolescent happy, I might let him/her maintain his/her views.

○ B. I will let my adolescent have some of his/her positions if he/she lets me have some of mine.

19. Statement Set 19

○ A. I attempt to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.

○ B. I try to postpone the issue until I have had some time to think it over.

20. Statement Set 20

○ A. I attempt to immediately work through our differences.

○ B. I try to find a fair combination of gains and losses for everyone.

21. Statement Set 21

◯ A. In approaching negotiations, I try to be considerate of my adolescent's wishes.

◯ B. I always lean toward a direct discussion of the problem.

22. Statement Set 22

◯ A. I try to find a position that is intermediate between his/hers and mine.

◯ B. I assert my wishes.

23. Statement Set 23

◯ A. I am very often concerned with satisfying all our wishes.

◯ B. There are times when I let my adolescent take responsibility for solving the problem.

24. Statement Set 24

◯ A. If my adolescent's position seems very important to him/her, I would try to meet his/her wishes.

◯ B. I try to get him/her to settle for a compromise.

25. Statement Set 25

◯ A. I try to show him/her the logic and benefits of my position.

◯ B. In approaching negotiations, I try to be considerate of my adolescent's wishes.

26. Statement Set 26

◯ A. I propose a middle ground.

◯ B. I am nearly always concerned with satisfying all our wishes

27. Statement Set 27

◯ A. I sometimes avoid taking positions that would create controversy.

◯ B. If it makes my adolescent happy, I might let him/her maintain his/her views.

28. Statement Set 28

◯ A. I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.

◯ B. I usually seek my adolescent's help in working out a solution.

29. Statement Set 29

◯ A. I propose a middle ground.

◯ B. I feel that differences are not always worth worrying about.

30. Statement Set 30

○ A. I try not to hurt my adolescent's feelings.

○ B. I always share the problem with my adolescent so that we can work it out.

Demographic Information

The following questions are basic demographic questions. Fill in the information as requested.

31. Your Age

[   ]

32. Your Gender

◯ Male

◯ Female

33. Your Ethnicity

◯ Chinese	◯ Other Asian	◯ Other Pacific Islander
◯ Fillipino	◯ Mixed Asian	◯ Mixed Pacific Islander
◯ Japanese	◯ Guamanian or Chamorro	◯ African-American
◯ Korean	◯ Native Hawaiian/Part Hawaiian	◯ American-Indian
◯ Laotian	◯ Micronesian	◯ Caucasian
◯ Thai	◯ Samoan	◯ Hispanic
◯ Vietnamese	◯ Tongan	◯ Mixed

◯ Other (please specify)

[   ]

34. Your marital status

◯ Single

◯ Married

◯ Civil Union

◯ Remarried

◯ Unmarried and living with partner

◯ Divorced

◯ Widow/Widower

◯ Other (please specify)

[   ]

35. Length of your current marital status

Years   [   ]

Months   [   ]

36. Age of oldest adolescent between 13-18

[   ]

37. Gender of oldest adolescent between 13-18

◯ Male

◯ Female

38. Your relationship with oldest adolescent between 13-18

◯ Mother   ◯ Step-Mother

◯ Father   ◯ Step-Father

◯ Other (please specify)

[   ]

39. If your adolescent does not live with your full time, how many days per week does he/she live with you?

◯ 1

◯ 2

◯ 3

◯ 4

◯ 5

◯ 6

◯ My adolescent lives with me full-time

40. If your adolescent does not live with you full time, who does he/she live with when not at your home?

◯ Biological Father

◯ Biological Mother

◯ My adolescent lives with me full time

◯ Other (please specify)

[   ]

41. Other than you and your adolescent, list the number of children under the age of 18 who live in your home. If no one else lives in your home, enter 0.

Number of boys (not including your adolescent child listed above)   [   ]

Number of girls (not including your adolescent child listed above)   [   ]

42. What are the ages of the children listed in question #41 (separate ages with a comma)? If no other children live in your home, enter 0.

Ages of boys (not including your adolescent listed above)

Ages of girls (not including your adolescent listed above)

43. Other than you and your adolescent, list the number of adults over the age of 18 who live in your home. If no one else lives in your home, enter 0.

Number of men (DO NOT include yourself)

Number of women (DO NOT include yourself)

44. What are the ages of the adults listed in question #43 (separate ages with a comma)? If no other children live in your home, enter 0.

Ages of men (DO NOT include yourself)

Ages of women (DO NOT include yourself)

Final Page

This is the end of the survey. Thank you for your participation! Please click the "Done" button at the bottom of the page. If you would like further information about the study, please email the researcher at trockman@hawaii.edu.

Mahalo nui loa!!

Appendix B

Survey for Dual-Parent Participants

Consent to Participate in Research

Thank you for your interest in this study. My name is Meredith Trockman and I am conducting this research project to fulfill a Master's degree requirement in the Department of Communicology at the University of Hawaii at Manoa; I am an advisee of Dr. R. Kelly Aune. Participation in this study will involve responding to an anonymous online (Internet) survey. You and your partner (i.e., husband/wife, boyfriend/girlfriend, etc.) are invited to participate in this project because you are both at least 18 years old and are the parents of an adolescent child between the ages of 13-18.

Project Description – Activities and Time Commitment:

If you agree to participate in this study you and your partner will be asked to complete an online survey which will take approximately 15-30 minutes. Survey items will include standard demographic characteristics (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity) as well as perceptions about conflict management.

Benefits and Risks:

The researcher anticipates there will be no risks associated with participation in this study. There will be no direct benefit to you or your partner for participating in this survey. The results of this project may contribute to a better understanding of parent-adolescent conflict.

Confidentiality and Privacy:

This survey is anonymous. You and your partner will not be asked to provide any personal information that could be used to identify you. Likewise, please do not include any personal information, such as your names, in your survey responses.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this project is voluntary. You and your partner can freely choose to participate or to not participate in this survey, and there will be no penalty or loss of benefits for either decision. If you and your partner agree to participate, you can stop at any time without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled by clicking the "Exit this survey" button in the upper right-hand corner of the page.

Questions:

If either of you have any questions about this study, you can contact the researcher by email at trockman@hawaii.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you can contact the UH Committee on Human Studies by phone at (808) 956-5007 or by email at uhirb@hawaii.edu.

To Access the Survey:

Clicking the next button below is representative of you and your partner's consent to participate in this study.

You may print a copy of this page for your reference.

Instructions & Information

The purpose of this study is to examine the way parents address conflict with their adolescent children. If you have more than one child between the ages of 13 - 18, the questions will be focusing on your *oldest* adolescent in that age range who is living at home (i.e., has not gone off to college).

You and your partner (i.e., husband/wife, boyfriend/girlfriend, etc.) should complete this survey **together.** When answering questions on this survey, please keep the following definition of conflict in mind:

A situation involving two or more people in which perceptions of incompatibility have led to a **verbal disagreement or argument.**

INSTRUCTIONS:

The goal of this study is to learn more about how the *two of you* as parents address conflict with your adolescent. Consider situations in which the two of you find your wishes differing from those of your *oldest* adolescent child. Think about how the two of you usually respond to such situations.

Below are several pairs of statements describing possible behavioral responses. For each pair, please discuss whether the "A" or "B" statement is most characteristic of your behaviors. Then select the answer that would be very typical of your behavior as parents. In other words, come up with *one single response* for each pair of statements.

In many cases, neither the "A" nor the "B" statement may be very typical of your behavior, but please select the response which you and your partner would be *more likely to use.*

1. Statement Set 1

◯ A. There are times when we let our adolescent take responsibility for solving the problem.

◯ B. Rather than negotiate the things on which we disagree, we try to stress the things upon which we all agree.

2. Statement Set 2

◯ A. We try to find a compromise situation.

◯ B. We attempt to deal with all of our adolescent's and our concerns

3. Statement Set 3

◯ A. We are usually firm in pursuing our goals.

◯ B. We might try to soothe our adolescent's feelings and preserve our relationship with our adolescent.

4. Statement Set 4

◯ A. We try to find a compromise solution.

◯ B. We sometimes sacrifice our own wishes for the wishes of our adolescent.

5. Statement Set 5

◯ A. We consistently seek our adolescent's help in working out a solution.

◯ B. We try to do what is necessary to avoid useless tensions.

6. Statement Set 6

A. We try to avoid creating unpleasantness for ourselves.

B. We try to win our position.

7. Statement Set 7

A. We try to postpone the issue until we have had some time to think it over.

B. We give up some points in exchange for others.

8. Statement Set 8

A. We are usually firm in pursuing our goals.

B. We attempt to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.

9. Statement Set 9

A. We feel that differences are not always worth worrying about.

B. We make some effort to get our way.

10. Statement Set 10

A. We are firm in pursuing our goals.

B. We try to find a compromise solution.

11. Statement Set 11

◯ A. We attempt to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.

◯ B. We might try to soothe our adolescent's feelings and preserve our relationship with our adolescent.

12. Statement Set 12

◯ A. We sometimes avoid taking positions which would create controversy.

◯ B. We will let our adolescent have some of his/her positions if he/she lets us have some of ours.

13. Statement Set 13

◯ A. We propose a middle ground.

◯ B. We press to get our points made.

14. Statement Set 14

◯ A. We tell our adolescent our ideas and ask our adolescent for his/hers.

◯ B. We try to show our adolescent the logic and benefits of our position.

15. Statement Set 15

◯ A. We might try to soothe our adolescent's feelings and preserve our relationship.

◯ B. We try to do what is necessary to avoid tensions.

16. Statement Set 16

◯ A. We try not to hurt our adolescent's feelings.

◯ B. We try to convince our adolescent of the merits of our position.

17. Statement Set 17

◯ A. We are usually firm in pursuing our goals.

◯ B. We will let our adolescent have some of his/her positions if he/she lets us have some of ours.

18. Statement Set 18

◯ A. If it makes our adolescent happy, we might let him/her maintain his/her views.

◯ B. We will let our adolescent have some of his/her positions if he/she lets us have some of ours.

19. Statement Set 19

◯ A. We attempt to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.

◯ B. We try to postpone the issue until we have had some time to think it over.

20. Statement Set 20

◯ A. We attempt to immediately work through our differences with our adolescent.

◯ B. We try to find a fair combination of gains and losses for everyone.

21. Statement Set 21

○ A. In approaching negotiations, we try to be considerate of our adolescent's wishes.

○ B. We always lean toward a direct discussion of the problem.

22. Statement Set 22

○ A. We try to find a position that is intermediate between our adolescent's and ours.

○ B. We assert our wishes.

23. Statement Set 23

○ A. We are very often concerned with satisfying all our wishes.

○ B. There are times when we let our adolescent take responsibility for solving the problem.

24. Statement Set 24

○ A. If our adolescent's position seems very important to him/her, we would try to meet his/her wishes.

○ B. We try to get him/her to settle for a compromise.

25. Statement Set 25

○ A. We try to show him/her the logic and benefits of our position.

○ B. In approaching negotiations, we try to be considerate of our adolescent's wishes.

26. Statement Set 26

○ A. We propose a middle ground.

○ B. We are nearly always concerned with satisfying all our wishes

27. Statement Set 27

○ A. We sometimes avoid taking positions that would create controversy.

○ B. If it makes our adolescent happy, we might let him/her maintain his/her views.

28. Statement Set 28

○ A. We are usually firm in pursuing our goals.

○ B. We usually seek our adolescent's help in working out a solution.

29. Statement Set 29

○ A. We propose a middle ground.

○ B. We feel that differences are not always worth worrying about.

30. Statement Set 30

◯ A. We try not to hurt our adolescent's feelings.

◯ B. We always share the problem with our adolescent so that we can work it out.

31. Rate the statements below.

	Not at all						Completely
How much did you and your partner collaborate on the answers to this survey?	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
How much did you and your partner agree on the answers to this survey?	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Demographic Information

The following questions are basic demographic questions. Fill in the information as requested for both partners. Partner A should be the oldest member of your couple, and Partner B should be the youngest member of your couple.

32. Partner A's Age

Age: [   ]

33. Partner B's Age

Age: [   ]

34. Partner A's Gender

( ) Male

( ) Female

35. Partner B's Gender

( ) Male

( ) Female

36. Partner A's Ethnicity

( ) Chinese	( ) Other Asian	( ) Other Pacific Islander
( ) Fillipino	( ) Mixed Asian	( ) Mixed Pacific Islander
( ) Japanese	( ) Guamanian or Chamorro	( ) African-American
( ) Korean	( ) Native Hawaiian/Part Hawaiian	( ) American-Indian
( ) Laotian	( ) Micronesian	( ) Caucasian
( ) Thai	( ) Samoan	( ) Hispanic
( ) Vietnamese	( ) Tongan	( ) Mixed

( ) Other (please specify)

[   ]

37. Partner B's Ethnicity

◯ Chinese	◯ Other Asian	◯ Other Pacific Islander
◯ Fillipino	◯ Mixed Asian	◯ Mixed Pacific Islander
◯ Japanese	◯ Guamanian or Chamorro	◯ African-American
◯ Korean	◯ Native Hawaiian/Part Hawaiian	◯ American-Indian
◯ Laotian	◯ Micronesian	◯ Caucasian
◯ Thai	◯ Samoan	◯ Hispanic
◯ Vietnamese	◯ Tongan	◯ Mixed

◯ Other (please specify)

38. Partner A's marital status

◯ Single

◯ Married

◯ Civil Union

◯ Remarried

◯ Unmarried and living with partner

◯ Divorced

◯ Widow/Widower

◯ Other (please specify)

39. Partner B's marital status

◯ Single

◯ Married

◯ Civil Union

◯ Remarried

◯ Unmarried and living with partner

◯ Divorced

◯ Widow/Widower

◯ Other (please specify)

40. Length of your current marital status

Years

Months

41. Age of oldest adolescent between 13-18

42. Gender of oldest adolescent between 13-18

◯ Male

◯ Female

43. Partner A's relationship with oldest adolescent between 13-18 (mother, father, stepmother, stepfather, etc.)

◯ Mother   ◯ Stepmother

◯ Father   ◯ Stepfather

◯ Other (please specify)

44. Partner B's relationship with oldest adolescent between 13-18 (mother, father, stepmother, stepfather, etc.)

◯ Mother   ◯ Stepmother

◯ Father   ◯ Stepfather

◯ Other (please specify)

45. If your adolescent does not live with your full time, how many days per week does he/she live with you?

◯ 1

◯ 2

◯ 3

◯ 4

◯ 5

◯ 6

◯ My adolescent lives with me full-time

46. If your adolescent does not live with you full time, who does he/she live with when not at your home?

◯ Biological Father

◯ Biological Mother

◯ My adolescent lives with me full time

◯ Other (please specify)

[   ]

47. Other than the two of you and your adolescent, list the number of children under the age of 18 who live in your home. If no one else lives in your home, enter 0.

Number of boys (not including your adolescent child listed above)

[   ]

Number of girls (not including your adolescent child listed above)

[   ]

48. What are the ages of the children listed in question #46 (separate ages with a comma)? If no other children live in your home, enter 0.

Ages of boys (not including your adolescent listed above)

[   ]

Ages of girls (not including your adolescent listed above)

[   ]

49. Other than the two of you and your adolescent, list the number of adults over the age of 18 who live in your home. If no one else lives in your home, enter 0.

Number of men (DO NOT include yourself or your partner)

[   ]

Number of women (DO NOT include yourself or your partner)

[   ]

50. What are the ages of the adults listed in question #48 (separate ages with a comma)? If no other children live in your home, enter 0.

Ages of men (DO NOT include yourself or your partner)

[   ]

Ages of women (DO NOT include yourself or your partner)

[   ]

Final Page

This is the end of the survey. Thank you for your participation! Please click the "Done" button at the bottom of the page. If you would like further information about the study, please email the researcher at trockman@hawaii.edu.

Mahalo nui loa!!

Appendix C

Recruitment Flyer

Aloha! My name is Meredith Trockman and I am a graduate student at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. I am hoping you will be willing to participate in a research project I am conducting in order to complete my master's thesis. Please read the information below that describes the study and how to participate. Thank you and have a lovely day!

Who can participate:
>   Any parent who has a child between the ages of 13-18 living in their home.

What is required:
>   You will be asked to complete an online survey that should take about 15-30 minutes. The survey is online, so you can easily complete the it from the comfort of your own home.

How do I sign up?
>   If you are interested in participating all you need to do is send me an email letting me know and I will respond to you with a link to the survey. My email address is trockman@hawaii.edu. Please keep in mind your name and email address will not be linked to your survey responses, so all answers are completely <u>anonymous.</u>

What if I want more information before signing up?
>   No problem! Send me an email and I will be happy to answer any questions. Participation is completely voluntary and you can withdraw from the study at any time.

Why should I participate?
>   The purpose of my study is to explore parent-adolescent conflict. Once the results are in, I will be happy to share them with you!

<div align="center">

For more information or to sign up contact:
Meredith Trockman
trockman@hawaii.edu
Department of Communicology
University of Hawaii at Manoa
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Honolulu, Hawaii 96822

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