Published in final edited form as:

Parent Sci Pract. 2005 ; 5(4): 347–370. doi:10.1207/s15327922par0504_3.

Conflict Between Mothers and Adolescents in Single-Mother, Blended, and Two-Biological-Parent Families

Brett Laursen

Brett Laursen, *Department of Psychology, Florida Atlantic University, 2912 College Avenue, Fort Lauderdale FL 33314. E-mail: Laursen@Fau.edu*

SYNOPSIS

Objective—This investigation was designed to shed light on household structure differences in mother – adolescent conflict.

Design—A total of 453 early, mid, and late adolescents from 3 ethnic groups completed questionnaires describing the rate and affective intensity of daily conflicts with mothers and fathers in single-mother (divorced or never married), 2-biological-parent, and blended (remarried) families.

Results—Compared to sons, daughters reported more disagreements with mothers and more negative affect in disagreements with mothers and fathers. Adolescents reported more total disagreements and more angry disagreements with single mothers than with mothers in 2-biological-parent families; adolescents in blended families fell in between. Reports of conflict with fathers did not differ across 2-biological-parent families and blended families. There were no household structure differences in conflict with parents (mothers and residential fathers combined), indicating that levels of conflict with single mothers are elevated by approximately the same number of disagreements that otherwise fall to fathers in 2-parent households. Potential moderators (adolescent age, ethnicity, and gender, maternal employment, prior marital status of single-mothers, socioeconomic status, and levels of social interaction) did not alter the results.

Conclusions—For adolescents, single parenthood restricts the number of partners available for disagreement but has little bearing on the number or affective tenor of daily disagreements with mothers. In contrast, single parenthood is associated with elevated levels of family discord for mothers.

INTRODUCTION

It is estimated that over half of all children born in the United States today will spend time in a single-parent household (Weinraub, Horvath, & Gringlas, 2002). One consequence of this rising tide of single parenthood appears to be an altered incidence of conflict during the adolescent years. Several studies report that mothers and adolescents in divorced single-mother households experience more negativity and conflict than those in two-biological-parent households (Baer, 1999; Demo & Acock, 1996; Hagan, Hollier, O'Connor, & Eisenberg, 1992; Henderson & Taylor, 1999; Hetherington, 1972; Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1985; Walker & Hennig, 1997; Wallerstein & Kelley, 1980), but the nature of these differences has yet to be specified. One obvious conclusion is that single parenthood exacerbates conflict between mothers and adolescent children, but this overlooks the possibility that rates of mother – adolescent conflict may be traced to variables that are confounded with household structure. In this investigation, early, mid, and late adolescents from single-mother (divorced or never married), blended (remarried), and two-biological-parent families described the rate and

affective intensity of daily disagreements with mothers and fathers to determine whether household structure differences in mother – adolescent conflict were moderated by demographic characteristics, rates of social interaction with mothers, and rates of conflict with fathers.

The corrosive effects of excessive interpersonal conflict are well documented. Prospective and concurrent research findings indicate that relationship bonds deteriorate as contentiousness increases; frequent and intense conflict has an adverse impact on the well-being of both parents and adolescents (Collins & Laursen, 2004). Chronic discord is a marker for maladjustment, and elevated levels of angry disagreements are a common complaint of clinically referred families (Smetana, 1996). It is critical, therefore, to ascertain whether single-mother families are at risk for severe conflict. Several reasons have been offered as to why single parenthood may be a risk factor for heightened dissent. One explanation holds that elevated levels of family stress exacerbate conflict between single mothers and adolescent children (Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Commonly cited sources of stress include economic difficulties and the challenges of balancing work and family. Another explanation invokes variations in family roles and responsibilities (Laursen & Collins, 1994). The content and quantity of social interactions with mothers may reflect the degree to which parenting responsibilities are shared with another adult. Finally, demographic factors such as adolescent age, gender, or ethnicity may contribute to patterns of conflict because family dynamics are sensitive to characteristics of participants (Holmbeck, 1996). Because few studies have explored potential moderators of household structure differences in mother – adolescent conflict, it is impossible to determine whether heightened mother – adolescent conflict is a consequence of single parenthood or an artifact of conditions that accompany it.

Maternal employment and socioeconomic status (SES) are frequently mentioned as variables that may account for associations between household structure and mother – adolescent conflict. Because single mothers are more likely to be employed full-time than mothers from two-biological-parent households, single-mother families may experience more conflict in areas where work and family compete. Single-mother families often have fewer social and economic resources than two-parent families, and the challenge of coping with scarce resources may further heighten conflict, especially for those living in poverty (Hoff, Laursen, & Tardif, 2002). Early studies found that maternal employment was linked to more frequent and severe conflict between mothers and adolescents (Montemayor, 1984; Propper, 1972), but recent studies with more inclusive samples failed to replicate these associations (Almeida & Wethington, 1996; Laursen, 1995). Evidence for SES-related differences in family conflict is similarly mixed. Laboratory observations of two-parent families revealed an inverse association between SES and parent – child conflict, but participant reports of disagreements in two-parent and single-mother families did not (Baer, 1999; Henggeler & Tavormina, 1980).

Other moderators advanced to account for household structure differences in mother – adolescent conflict emphasize distinctions in roles and responsibilities. The first concerns rates of social interaction with mothers. Evidence suggests that single mothers are less available for social interaction than mothers from two-parent households, in part because they are more apt to be employed (Montemayor, 1984; Sessa & Steinberg, 1991) and in part because they are less controlling and involved (Dornbusch et al., 1985). Because conversation is a necessary precondition for conflict, one might suspect the two would be positively related, but no association has been found between levels of social interaction and the rate of parent – adolescent conflict (Almeida & Galambos, 1991; Larson, Richards, Moneta, Holmbeck, & Duckett, 1996). The second potential moderator concerns conflict with fathers. Mother – child conflict may be greater in single-parent households because single mothers assume conflicts that would otherwise fall to fathers in two-biological-parent families. This suggests that, despite

differences in conflict with mothers, overall levels of parent – child conflict may not differ for single-mother and two-biological-parent families. There is evidence that father – adolescent conflict attenuates differences between single-mother and two-parent households in rates of mother – adolescent conflict, but these findings are difficult to interpret because remarried two-parent families were combined with two-biological-parent families (Laursen, 1995). Thus, conclusions about fathers as a potential moderator await a study that contrasts mother – adolescent conflict, father – adolescent conflict, and parent – adolescent conflict in single-mother, two-biological-parent, and remarried households.

Demographic variables, particularly adolescent age, gender, and ethnicity, may also moderate household structure differences in adolescents' conflict with mothers. The assertion that mother – daughter conflict is elevated in single-mother households lacks consistent support as does the proposition that mother – child conflict is heightened during the early adolescent period when family conflict is at a peak (Hagan et al., 1992; Laursen, Coy, & Collins, 1998; Smetana, Yau, Restrepo, & Braeges, 1991). Cultural differences have been proposed in expressions of parent – child conflict that reflect differing views of family authority and communality, but research has not identified a systematic pattern of ethnic group differences (Baer, 1999; Barber, 1994; Fuligni, 1998; Henggeler & Tavormina, 1980; Molina & Chassin, 1996), and studies have yet to examine the interplay of household structure and ethnicity. The limited evidence that is available points to the need for a study that includes all of these demographic variables as potential moderators.

One final explanation has yet to receive empirical scrutiny. Household structure differences in mean levels of conflict may be attributed to a small number of distressed mother – adolescent dyads. Some have argued that single parenthood poses a special risk for adolescents in dysfunctional relationships (Barber & Eccles, 1992). Although most families successfully cope with family transitions, divorce and remarriage sometimes trigger heightened discord in a few troubled parent – child relationships (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 2002). It follows that household structure differences in mother – adolescent conflict may reflect serious strife in a few single-mother households rather than elevated tension in all single-mother households.

To summarize, mother – adolescent conflict has been found to differ as a function of household structure such that greater conflict is reported in single-mother households than in two-biological-parent households. Before concluding that single parenthood promotes elevated conflict between mothers and adolescent children, we must consider the possibility that differences between single-mother and two-biological-parent households are a product of variables that are confounded with household structure. This study sheds light on this issue by addressing three research goals. The first goal was to determine whether adolescent reports of daily conflict with mothers reliably differed across single-mother, two-biological-parent, and blended families. Consistent with earlier studies, mother – adolescent conflict was predicted to be more frequent, but not necessarily more heated, in single-mother households than in two-biological-parent and blended households. The second goal was to determine whether household structure differences in mother – adolescent conflict and parent – adolescent conflict were moderated by maternal employment, SES, rates of mother – adolescent social interaction, or demographic variables. Results from previous studies give rise to the prediction that household structure differences are unrelated to demographic variables and rates of social interaction but that conflict with fathers moderates household structure differences in conflict with mothers such that overall levels of conflict between parents and children do not differ across single-mother, two-biological-parent, and blended households. The third goal was to determine whether household structure differences in mother – adolescent conflict reflect differences in the distribution of highly contentious families. Prior studies indicating that family transitions provoke discord in those with troubled relationships lead to the prediction that differences between households with two biological parents and households with single

mothers or step parents will be limited to those with the highest levels of mother – adolescent conflict.

METHODS

Participants

A total of 453 adolescents (232 girls and 221 boys) were recruited from two large public school districts in the greater Miami and Fort Lauderdale, FL, metropolitan area. Of this total, there were 151 African Americans, 151 European Americans, and 151 Cuban Americans. Each gender and ethnic group contained 23 to 28 adolescents in the 6th, 9th, and 12th grades. Early adolescents ranged from 11 to 12 years old ($M = 11.6$, $SD = 0.6$), mid-adolescents ranged from 14 to 15 years old ($M = 14.7$, $SD = 0.6$), and late adolescents ranged from 17 to 18 years old ($M = 17.5$, $SD = 0.6$). Parent reports indicated that 230 adolescents (50.8%) resided in two-biological-parent households (biological mother and biological father), 83 adolescents (18.3%) resided in blended households (biological mother and step-father), and 140 adolescents (30.9%) resided in single-mother households (never married, $n = 30$, or divorced, $n = 110$, biological mother). Chi-square analyses failed to reveal statistically significant differences in household structure as a function of adolescent age group, gender, or ethnicity.

Participants were selected on the basis of responses to a parent demographic survey that was attached to the consent form. This survey provided information on the child's birthplace, ethnic background, household structure, SES, and primary language spoken at home. No information was available on the length of time since parent divorce or remarriage for adolescents in blended and single-mother (divorced) households. All adolescents were born in the United States and fluent in English. To enhance homogeneity within categories, participation was restricted to the three largest ethnic groups in the metropolitan area: (1) non-Hispanic European Americans; (2) non-Hispanic and non-Caribbean African Americans; and (3) Hispanic Americans of Cuban ancestry. English was the primary language spoken in all African American and European American homes; Spanish was the primary language of all Cuban American households. Of those who returned parent consent forms, 19.7% were not selected because they were not born in the United States or because they did not belong to one (and only one) of the target ethnic groups.

Parents provided information about maternal employment and SES. In terms of maternal employment, 344 mothers (75.9%) reported working full-time (30 hr or more per week), 47 mothers (10.4%) reported working part-time (less than 30 hr per week), 36 mothers (7.9%) reported not being employed, and 26 mothers (5.7%) did not provide employment information. Chi-square analyses failed to reveal statistically significant differences in maternal employment as a function of adolescent age group, gender, ethnicity, or household structure. SES was assessed with the Hollingshead (1975) Four-Factor Index of Social Status in which the potential range of scores is 8 to 66. SES scores in this study ranged from 19 to 56 ($M = 38.53$, $SD = 8.4$). A 2 (gender) $\times$ 3 (age) $\times$ 3 (ethnicity) $\times$ 3 (household structure) ANOVA revealed a main effect for ethnicity on SES, $F(2, 427) = 3.72$, $p < .05$. There were no main effects or two-way interactions involving age group, gender, or household structure. Follow-up Tukey's HSD contrasts indicated that mean SES was higher for European Americans ($M = 40.55$, $SD = 7.9$, range = 21 to 56) than for African Americans ($M = 37.18$, $SD = 7.9$, range = 19 to 55) and Cuban Americans ($M = 37.86$, $SD = 9.1$, range = 21 to 53). On the basis of SES scores, three SES groups were identified for moderator analyses: Lower (19–29), Middle (30–39), and Upper (40–56).

Instruments

Participants completed two instruments in English. The first, the Interpersonal Conflict Questionnaire (Laursen, 1993), assesses daily conflict with parents. Conflict was defined in terms of opposition and disagreement (Shantz, 1987): “You and someone else had a difference of opinion; you objected to something someone else said or did or someone objected to something you said or did; or you and someone had a quarrel or an argument.” Participants were instructed to describe only real events that involved themselves and at least one other person. Participants reviewed a list of 34 conflict issues adapted from the Issues Checklist (Prinz, Foster, Kent, & O’Leary, 1979; Robin & Foster, 1984). For each issue, participants indicated whether and how often the topic was the source of a disagreement the previous weekday. For each disagreement identified, participants completed a separate worksheet identifying the participants and describing characteristics of the conflict. One item on this follow-up worksheet addressed affective intensity: “Rate how you felt during this disagreement” on a scale ranging from *very friendly* (1) to *neutral* (3) to *very angry* (5).

Three conflict variables are the focus of this investigation. The *total number of conflicts* represents the sum of all disagreements arising the previous weekday within a relationship. The *affective intensity of conflicts* represents the mean emotional tenor of all disagreements within a relationship. The *total number of angry conflicts* represents the sum of all disagreements within a relationship with an affective intensity rating of 4 or 5. Analyses were restricted to reports of conflict with primary residential parents. For each variable, separate scores were calculated for mother – child, father – child, and parent – child relationships. In two-parent households, parent – child conflict represented the sum of conflicts with biological mothers and residential fathers. In single-mother households, parent – child conflict and mother – child conflict were identical.

The second instrument, the Relationship Closeness Inventory (Berscheid, Snyder, & Omoto, 1989), describes characteristics of interdependence with parents. This investigation focuses on a single subscale from the instrument. *Interaction frequency* provides a daily estimate of the number of minutes participants in a relationship spend alone together in social interaction during the morning, afternoon, and evening of a typical weekday. These three scores were summed to provide an overall index of interaction frequency, calculated separately for mother – child, father – child, and parent – child (mother – child and father – child combined) relationships. In two-parent households, parent – child interaction frequency represented the sum of interaction frequency with biological mothers and residential fathers. In single-mother households, parent – child interaction frequency and mother – child interaction frequency were identical. Median splits, conducted for each relationship, divided adolescents into low and high interaction frequency groups for moderator analyses.

The Interpersonal Conflict Questionnaire, designed for use with adolescents, has considerable test–retest stability (Adams & Laursen, 2001; Laursen & Koplas, 1995), and measures of conflict derived from this questionnaire are associated with adolescent self-esteem, school grades, behavior problems, and perceptions of relationship quality (Burk & Laursen, 2005; Collins, Laursen, Mortensen, Luebker, & Ferreira, 1997; Shulman & Laursen, 2002). The Relationship Closeness Inventory, designed for use with college students (Berscheid et al., 1989), retained its original high internal reliability and adequate parent – child inter-rater reliability in a form modified for use with adolescents (Laursen, Wilder, Noack, & Williams, 2000). Both inventories address a brief reference period (i.e., a single week-day). Although this short reference period may be a source of error associated with variability in behaviors from one day to the next, it is an important means of controlling for systematic variability produced by response biases. Participants in self-report surveys tend to infer meaning from the reference period; short time periods imply frequent, mundane experiences, whereas long time periods imply rare, affectively laden experiences (Winkielman, Knäuper, & Schwarz, 1998).

Biases linked to relationship perceptions increase as the period of conflict recall increases such that longer time frames are more apt to reflect individual differences in relationship representations than shorter time frames (Feeney & Cassidy, 2003). In this study, a brief reference period (i.e., the previous weekday) was selected to avoid problems that arise when conflict rate is confounded with conflict affective intensity (Laursen et al., 1998).

Procedure

Participants were recruited from classes selected by school personnel as representative of the entire school population. One Hispanic American research assistant fluent in English and Spanish described the project to students from Cuban American neighborhoods. A team consisting of one African American and one European American research assistant described the project to students in other schools. Parents consented to their child's participation and returned a demographic survey attached to the letter of invitation (both were available in Spanish and English). Adolescents assented to participation at the time of data collection. Participation rates within schools ranged from approximately 45% to 75%, with the lowest rates among late adolescent African American males. Participants completed the surveys in small groups during 1-hour sessions in school. Research assistants (at least one of whom belonged to the same ethnic group as the participants) read the instructions aloud and supervised the completion of the surveys.

Plan of Analysis

Two sets of analyses were conducted. First, ANOVAs addressed the first two goals of the study: (1) identify household structure differences in the affective intensity of conflicts, the total number of conflicts, the total number of angry conflicts, and interaction frequency, and (2) examine whether household structure differences were moderated by several potential confounding variables. Second, chi-square analyses addressed the third goal of the study: determine whether the distribution of conflict varied across household structure groups.

Multivariate analyses could not be performed because the number of participants varied across relationships and conflict variables, so separate ANOVAs identified mean level differences in conflict rates, affective intensity, and interaction frequency. Limited power prohibited the inclusion of all independent variables in a single ANOVA, so preliminary analyses explored all possible three- and four-way interactions. None was found, so (for ease of presentation) a series of two-way ANOVAs was conducted. Each included household structure and one additional independent variable: age group (early, middle, and late adolescence), gender, ethnicity (African American, European American, and Hispanic American), maternal employment (full-time, part-time, and not employed), prior marital status of single mother (never married and divorced), interaction frequency, and SES (lower, middle, and upper). Analyses concerning mother – child and parent – child¹ relationships included three levels of household structure (two-biological-parent, blended, and single mother); analyses of father – child relationships included two levels of household structure (two-biological-parent and blended). Each of these two-way ANOVAs included one of four sets of dependent variables: The affective intensity of conflicts with mothers, fathers, and parents; the total number of conflicts with mothers, fathers, and parents; the total number of angry conflicts with mothers, fathers, and parents; and interaction frequency with mothers, fathers, and parents.

Chi-square analyses identified household structure differences in the distribution of conflict scores. Because rates of total conflict and angry conflict were positively skewed, before and after the application of conventional transformation procedures, these analyses also determined

¹Parent – child ANOVAs and chi-squares were also conducted with two levels of household structure (two-biological-parent and blended) so as to parallel analyses of father – child relationships.

the extent to which extreme groups may have influenced some of the ANOVA findings. Participants were divided into three level of total conflict groups for each relationship: no conflict, moderate conflict (1 conflict to 1 *SD* above the relationship mean), and high conflict (more than 1 *SD* above the relationship mean). Similar procedures divided participants into three level of angry conflict groups for each relationship. Level of conflict means and standard deviations were calculated separately for each relationship, so cut-off scores differed across relationships. Those who reported conflicts were divided into three level of conflict affect groups for each relationship: friendly conflict ($M = 2.0$ or less), neutral conflict (M greater than 2.0 and less than 4.0), and angry conflict ($M = 4.0$ or more). These divisions correspond to anchor labels for the affective intensity items. Two-way chi-square analyses were conducted that included level of conflict groups and one of eight independent variables: age group, gender, ethnicity, household structure, maternal employment, prior marital status of single mother, interaction frequency, and SES. Mother – child and parent – child analyses included three household structure categories (single mother, blended, and two-biological-parent); father – child analyses included two household structure categories (blended and two-biological-parent).

Statistically significant chi-square analyses were followed with approximate z tests on proportions. First, separate proportion scores were calculated for each level of conflict group within each household structure group. For instance, the number of adolescents in each total conflict group was divided by the number of adolescents with two biological parents. Thus, of the 230 adolescents in two-biological-parent households, 91 (39.6%) reported no conflict with mothers, 124 (53.9%) reported moderate conflict with mothers, and 15 (6.5%) reported high conflict with mothers. Approximate z tests compared proportion scores across household structure groups. Thus, the proportion of adolescents from two-biological-parent households (6.5%) reporting high conflict with mothers was contrasted with the proportion from blended households (12.0%) reporting high conflict with mothers and with the proportion from single-mother households (17.1%) reporting high conflict with mothers.

RESULTS

Intercorrelations Among Variables

Table 1 describes intercorrelations among continuous variables. Interaction frequencies were positively correlated across relationships, as were scores for affective intensity, total conflict, and angry conflict. Mother interaction frequency and parent interaction frequency were negatively linked to mother conflict affective intensity but not to any other conflict variable. Within and across relationships, conflict affective intensity was unrelated to the total number of conflicts; both variables were positively associated with the total number of angry conflicts.

Household Structure Differences in Mean Levels of Conflict and Interaction Frequency

Two-way ANOVAs indicated main effects for household structure on the total number of conflicts and the total number of angry conflicts with mothers; main effects for household structure on interaction frequency with parents; main effects for child gender on the affective intensity of conflicts with mothers, fathers, and parents; and main effects for child gender on the total number of conflicts and the total number of angry conflicts with mothers and parents.

² These findings are described in the following and presented in Table 2. Analyses of covariance with interaction frequency and SES as covariates revealed the same pattern of

²When single-mother households were omitted from ANOVAs of conflict with parents, the same pattern of statistically significant findings emerged for the affective intensity of conflicts, the total number of conflicts, and interaction frequency, but not for the total number of angry conflicts. In these analyses, mean level differences between blended households and two-biological-parent households in the total number of angry conflicts reached conventional levels of statistical significance ($p < .05$).

statistically significant results. Additional ANOVAS indicated no statistically significant main effects or interactions involving child age group, ethnicity, maternal employment, prior marital status of parent, interaction frequency, and SES on conflict variables and no statistically significant interactions between demographic variables and household structure on interaction frequency. Analyses including the conflicts that 25 adolescents in blended and single-mother households reported with nonresidential fathers produced the same pattern of statistically significant results.

Affective intensity of conflicts—Main effects for child gender emerged for mothers, $F(1, 281) = 8.35, p < .01$; fathers, $F(1, 124) = 5.19, p < .05$; and parents, $F(1, 293) = 6.97, p < .01$. In each case, daughters reported more anger in conflicts than did sons. There were no statistically significant main effects or two-way interactions involving household structure for mother, father, or parent conflict affective intensity.

Total number of conflicts—For mother – adolescent conflict, there were main effects for household structure, $F(2, 447) = 4.34, p < .05$; and child gender, $F(1, 447) = 6.80, p < .01$. Follow-up Tukey's HSD contrasts indicated greater conflict with mothers in single-mother households than in two-biological-parent households. Daughters reported more conflicts with mothers than did sons. For father – adolescent conflict, there were no statistically significant main effects or two-way interactions involving household structure or child gender. For parent – adolescent conflict, there was a main effect for child gender, $F(1, 447) = 6.71, p < .01$. Daughters reported more conflicts with parents than did sons. There were no statistically significant main effects or two-way interactions involving household structure for total number of conflicts with parents.

Total number of angry conflicts—For mother – adolescent conflict, there were main effects for household structure, $F(2, 447) = 4.10, p < .05$; and child gender, $F(1, 447) = 18.35, p < .01$. Follow-up Tukey's HSD contrasts indicated that there were more angry conflicts with mothers in single-mother households than in two-biological-parent households. Daughters reported more angry conflicts with mothers than did sons. For father – adolescent conflict, there were no statistically significant main effects or two-way interactions involving household structure or child gender. For parent – adolescent conflict, there was a main effect for child gender, $F(1, 447) = 18.23, p < .01$. Daughters reported more angry conflicts with parents than did sons. There were no statistically significant main effects or two-way interactions involving household structure for total number of angry conflicts with parents.

Interaction frequency—Main effects for household structure emerged for interaction frequency with parents, $F(2, 447) = 15.56, p < .01$. Follow-up Tukey's HSD contrasts indicated that interaction frequency with parents was greater in two-biological-parent households ($M = 498.89$ min, $SD = 403.7$) and in blended households ($M = 403.80$ min, $SD = 322.3$) than in single-mother households ($M = 289.90$ min, $SD = 229.7$). There were no statistically significant main effects or two-way interactions involving household structure for interaction frequency with mothers or interaction frequency with fathers.

Household Structure Differences in the Distribution of Conflict

Separate two-way chi-square analyses identified household structure differences in total conflict and angry conflicts with mothers, and gender differences in angry and total conflict with mothers and parents and angry conflict with fathers.³ These findings are described in the following and presented in Tables 3 and 4. Additional chi-squares indicated no statistically

³When single-mother households were omitted from chi-squares of conflict with parents, the same pattern of statistically significant findings emerged.

significant differences in the distribution of the affective intensity of conflicts, total conflict, and angry conflict as a function of child age, ethnicity, maternal employment, prior marital status of parent, interaction frequency, and SES. Analyses including the conflicts that 25 adolescents in blended and single-mother households reported with nonresidential fathers produced the same pattern of statistically significant results.

Affective intensity of conflicts—There were no gender or household structure differences in the distribution of conflict affective intensity with mothers, fathers, and parents.

Total number of conflicts—Household structure differences emerged in the distribution of total conflicts with mothers, $\chi^2(4, N = 453) = 11.37, p < .05$. Follow-up approximate z tests ($p < .05$) indicated that the proportion of adolescents reporting high conflict with mothers was greater in single-mother households than in two-biological-parent households. Additional chi-square analyses failed to reveal statistically significant household structure differences in the distribution of total conflicts with fathers and parents. Child gender differences emerged in the distribution of total conflicts with mothers, $\chi^2(2, N = 453) = 15.03, p < .01$; and parents, $\chi^2(2, N = 453) = 12.48, p < .01$. Follow-up approximate z tests ($p < .05$) revealed that the proportion of adolescents reporting high conflict with mothers and parents and moderate conflict with parents was greater for daughters than sons, whereas the proportion of adolescents reporting no conflict with mothers and parents was greater for sons than daughters. Additional chi-square analyses failed to reveal statistically significant child gender differences in the distribution of total conflicts with fathers.

Total number of angry conflicts—Household structure differences emerged in the distribution of angry conflicts with mothers, $\chi^2(4, N = 453) = 15.44, p < .01$. Follow-up approximate z tests ($p < .05$) indicated that the proportion of adolescents reporting moderate conflict with mothers was greater in two-biological-parent households and blended households than in single-mother households, and the proportion of adolescents reporting high conflict with mothers was greater in single-mother households than in two-biological-parent households and blended households. Additional chi-square analyses failed to reveal statistically significant household structure differences in the distribution of angry conflicts with fathers and parents. Child gender differences emerged in the distribution of angry conflicts with mothers, $\chi^2(2, N = 453) = 22.99, p < .01$; fathers, $\chi^2(2, N = 313) = 8.11, p < .05$; and parents, $\chi^2(2, N = 453) = 20.51, p < .01$. Follow-up approximate z tests ($p < .05$) revealed that the proportion of adolescents reporting high conflict with mothers and parents, and moderate conflict with mothers, fathers, and parents was greater for daughters than sons, whereas the proportion of adolescents reporting no conflict with mothers, fathers, and parents was greater for sons than daughters.

DISCUSSION

Results from this study clarify depictions of mother – adolescent conflict in single-mother, two-biological-parent, and blended families. Family structure differences in conflict varied according to how conflict was assessed and whether the contribution of fathers was considered. When conflict was assessed in terms of frequency, household structure differences emerged for conflict with mothers; when conflict was assessed in terms of average affective intensity, household structure differences were not found. Replicating findings from several previous studies (Baer, 1999; Demo & Acock, 1996; Hagan et al., 1992; Henderson & Taylor, 1999; Hetherington, 1972; Hetherington et al., 1985; Walker & Hennig, 1997; Wallerstein & Kelley, 1980), adolescents reported more total disagreements and more angry disagreements with single mothers than with mothers in two-biological-parent families; blended families were somewhere in between. Household structure differences vanished, however, when reports concerning mothers and fathers were combined to consider parents as a single unit. Youth from

two-parent homes reported more social interaction with parents than those from single-mother homes, but this was simply a reflection of the number of available social interaction partners; there were no household structure differences in mother – child or father – child interaction frequency. New to this report is evidence that differences between single-mother and two-biological-parent families are especially pronounced among those reporting the highest levels of mother – adolescent conflict. The inclusion of maternal employment, SES, rates of social interaction, and demographic variables in analyses as moderators and/or covariates did not change any of the results.

The findings are consistent with assertions that a typical family has a set point of three or four daily disagreements between parents and adolescent children, of which one or two may be heated and unpleasant (Laursen & Collins, 1994). Household structure differences in mother – adolescent conflict are a reflection of how this fixed number of disagreements is distributed between mothers and fathers. Single mothers are typically the lone adult agent of socialization in the home, so to them fall all conflicts arising from this responsibility. Fathers share parenting duties in two-biological-parent households, which inevitably means sharing disagreements as well. Step-fathers in blended families tend to be more disengaged than fathers in two-biological parent families (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 2002), leaving more (but not all) childrearing obligations and concomitant disagreements to mothers.

This simple finding implies that family relationships in most single-mother and blended households are no more contentious than those in two-biological-parent households, which raises an important question about the role conflict may play in the adjustment of adolescents from single-mother households. Do adolescent difficulties have origins in household structure differences in parent – child conflict? Some have suggested that prior reports linking maladaptive adolescent outcomes to household structure may have been cohort specific. When single parenting was relatively rare, dysfunctional families, poorly adjusted children, and contentious relationships may have been overrepresented among households headed by single mothers, but as the prevalence of single parenting increased to encompass more well-adjusted individuals and less contentious relationships, fewer adverse consequences have been found for youth (Amato & Keith, 1991). This suggests that risks associated with household structure differences in mother – adolescent conflict may be limited to adolescents in troubled relationships where single parenting may exacerbate pre-existing difficulties (Barber & Eccles, 1992). The finding that relationships with single mothers were more apt to be highly contentious than relationships with mothers in two-parent households is consistent with the premise that risks associated with single parenthood may be limited to a subset of families.

The findings should not be interpreted as evidence that single parenthood is a benign force in the lives of mothers or adolescents. Even among well-adjusted families, arduous interchanges are inevitable given the stress that characterizes many single-parent households. Youth may perceive a lack of support from single mothers as a consequence of elevated conflict; when fathers are not readily available, adolescents may turn elsewhere for assistance. This could pose an acute challenge to single mothers. Most parents describe adolescence as one of the most difficult periods in their child's development, but the distress associated with parenting is greatest for single mothers, who inevitably find themselves to be the central adversary in family disputes (Silverberg & Steinberg, 1987). Adolescents tend to view conflict with parents in relatively impersonal terms, as an expression of individual autonomy, whereas parents often interpret the same conflict as a rejection of closely held personal values (Smetana, 1996). This feeling of rejection may be aggravated by the circumstances accompanying single parenthood.

Confidence in the results concerning household structure should be bolstered by findings that replicate well-established gender differences in parent – adolescent conflict. This study is consistent with several prior studies in finding maternal conflict to be more frequent and more

affectively heated with daughters than with sons (Collins & Laursen, 2004). This study is novel in that it delineates the distribution of these daily disagreements. Differences emerged in the proportion of sons and daughters reporting conflict with mothers and in the number of disagreements reported by those involved in conflict. Approximately 70% of daughters reported conflict with mothers and 50% of daughters reported angry conflict with mothers. For sons, these figures were 57% and 32%, respectively. High levels of mother – child conflict were also more prevalent with daughters than with sons: Approximately 16% of daughters reported seven or more daily disagreements with mothers, of which at least four were angry, compared to 6% for sons. Taken together, the findings suggest not only that mother – daughter conflict is more common and more apt to involve negative affect than is mother – son conflict, but that mothers and daughters are more likely to be plagued by angry, contentious relationships than are mothers and sons.

No ethnic group differences were found in levels of mother – adolescent, father – adolescent, and parent – adolescent conflict or in the affective intensity of conflict in these relationships. Neither was ethnicity found to interact with household structure in reports of conflict. Ethnicity has not emerged as a reliable moderator of parent – adolescent conflict in previous research; although some studies indicate that ethnic minority youth have higher rates of conflict with parents than ethnic majority youth (e.g., Henggeler & Tavormina, 1980), other studies report no differences between ethnic majority and ethnic minority groups (e.g., Fuglini, 1998), and still other studies suggest that differences are limited to mother – son relationships (Molina & Chassin, 1996). South Florida contains a relatively higher proportion of youth with Cuban and Central and South American backgrounds and a relatively lower proportion of youth with Mexican and Puerto Rican backgrounds, which sets the community apart from others in the United States. Because divergent research findings may be a product of differences in samples and differences in conflict assessments, this investigation will not serve as the final word on the topic. Replication is essential before we conclude that ethnicity does not play a role in household structure differences in mother – adolescent conflict.

It is important to note that this was not a study of divorce and remarriage; no data were available on when marital transitions occurred, and, as a consequence, no conclusions should be drawn about the effects these profound events may have on parents or children. Evidence from other studies indicates that warmth declines and conflict increases immediately after a divorce or remarriage, but as mothers and adolescents adapt to new lifestyles, relations gradually improve to the point that blended families resemble two-biological-parent families on many dimensions (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 2002). In terms of this study, systematic variation across household structure groups in the degree to which those in the midst of marital transitions are represented cannot be discounted, but if the recently divorced and remarried were underrepresented because of a disinclination to return consent forms or report on turbulent parent – child relationships, then the same should be true of two-biological-parent families on the verge of disintegration. Two additional limitations should be noted. First, this study relied on adolescent accounts of conflict during a single day. Observer and participant perceptions of conflict are frequently at odds; reports from adolescents and observers are modestly correlated, but neither has much in common with parent reports of the same events (Gonzales, Cauce, & Mason, 1996). Second, the investigation included few participants from the socioeconomic extremes. Conclusions about the failure of SES to moderate household structure differences should be made with caution because such predictions assume that the lowest income groups are the most vulnerable to heightened conflict (Holmbeck, 1996).

In closing, adolescents report that they quarrel more with mothers in single-mother families than in two-biological-parent families, but the difference amounts to the number of disagreements that involve fathers in two-parent households. Several potential moderators were considered, but none altered this pattern of results. These findings support the conclusion

that reports of mother – adolescent conflict reflect family roles and responsibilities. For adolescents, single parenthood restricts the number of partners available for disagreement but has little bearing on the number or affective tenor of daily disagreements experienced with parents. For mothers, single parenthood is associated with elevated levels of family disagreement. Although most single-parent families cannot be distinguished from their two-parent counterparts, the finding that single-mother households are overrepresented among those experiencing the highest levels of mother – child discord suggests that some of these families may have difficulty maintaining supportive relationships, a prospect that deserves prompt empirical attention.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Ryan Adams, Bill Burk, Stephanie Feldman, Margaret Ferreira, Nicole Mortensen, and Vickie Williams for assistance with this project, and to Erika Hoff for thoughtful comments on a previous draft. The cooperation of the students, parents, teachers, and administrators in the Broward and Miami-Dade County Public Schools is greatly appreciated. Support for this research was provided by grants from the US National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (HD33006), the US National Institute of Mental Health (MH 58116), and the Johann Jacobs Foundation.

References

- Adams R, Laursen B. The organization and dynamics of adolescent conflict with parents and friends. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 2001;63:97–110.
- Almeida DM, Galambos NL. Examining father involvement and the quality of father–adolescent relations. *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 1991;1:155–172.
- Almeida, D.; Wethington, E. Daily spillover between marital and parent–child tensions. In: Larson, R.; Richards, M., editors. *Inside the black box: The daily workings of adolescents' families*; Paper presented at the meeting of the Society for Research on Adolescence; Boston. 1996.
- Amato PR, Keith B. Parental divorce and the well-being of children: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin* 1991;110:26–46. [PubMed: 1832495]
- Baer J. The effects of family structure and SES on family processes in early adolescence. *Journal of Adolescence* 1999;22:341–354. [PubMed: 10462425]
- Barber BK. Cultural, family, and personal contexts of parent–adolescent conflict. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 1994;56:375–386.
- Barber BL, Eccles JS. Long-term influence of divorce and single-parenting on adolescent family- and work-related values, behaviors, and aspirations. *Psychological Bulletin* 1992;111:108–126. [PubMed: 1539085]
- Berscheid E, Snyder M, Omoto AM. The Relationship Closeness Inventory: Assessing the closeness of interpersonal relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 1989;57:792–807.
- Burk WJ, Laursen B. Adolescent perceptions of friendship and their associations with individual adjustment. *International Journal of Behavioral Development* 2005;29:156–164. [PubMed: 18509518]
- Collins, WA.; Laursen, B. Parent–adolescent relationships and influences. In: Lerner, RM.; Steinberg, L., editors. *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology*. Vol. 2. New York: Wiley; 2004. p. 331–361.
- Collins WA, Laursen B, Mortensen N, Luebker C, Ferreira M. Conflict processes and transitions in parent and peer relationships: Implications for autonomy and regulation. *Journal of Adolescent Research* 1997;12:178–198.
- Demo DH, Acock AC. Family structure, family process, and adolescent well-being. *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 1996;6:457–488.
- Dornbusch SM, Carlsmith JM, Bushwall SJ, Ritter PL, Leiderman H, Hastorf AH, et al. Single parents, extended households, and the control of adolescents. *Child Development* 1985;56:326–341. [PubMed: 3987411]
- Feeney BC, Cassidy J. Reconstructive memory related to adolescent-parent conflict interactions: The influence of attachment-related representations on immediate perceptions and changes in perceptions over time. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 2003;85:945–955. [PubMed: 14599256]

- Fuligni AJ. Authority, autonomy, and parent–adolescent conflict and cohesion: A study of adolescents from Mexican, Chinese, Filipino, and European backgrounds. *Developmental Psychology* 1998;34:782–792. [PubMed: 9681270]
- Gonzales NA, Cauce AM, Mason CA. Interobserver agreement in the assessment of parental behavior and parent–adolescent conflict: African American mothers, daughters, and independent observers. *Child Development* 1996;67:1483–1498. [PubMed: 8890496]
- Hagan, MS.; Hollier, EA.; O'Connor, TG.; Eisenberg, M. Parent–child relationships in nondivorced, divorced, single-mother, and remarried families. In: Hetherington, EM.; Clingempeel, WG., editors. *Coping with marital transitions: A family systems perspective*. Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development. Vol. 57. 1992. Serial No. 227
- Henderson, SH.; Taylor, LC. Parent–adolescent relationships in nonstep-, simple step-, and complex stepfamilies. In: Hetherington, EM.; Henderson, SH.; Reiss, D., editors. *Adolescent siblings in stepfamilies: Family functioning and adolescent adjustment*. Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development. Vol. 57. 1999. Serial No. 259
- Henggeler SW, Tavormina JB. Social class difference in family interaction: Pathological, normative, or confounding methodological factors. *Journal of Genetic Psychology* 1980;137:311–222.
- Hetherington EM. Effects of father absence on personality development. *Developmental Psychology* 1972;7:313–326.
- Hetherington EM, Cox M, Cox R. Long-term effects of divorce and remarriage on the adjustment of children. *Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry* 1985;24:518–530. [PubMed: 4045050]
- Hetherington, EM.; Stanley-Hagan, M. Parenting in divorced and remarried families. In: Bornstein, MH., editor. *Handbook of parenting: Vol. 3. Being and becoming a parent*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc; 2002. p. 287-315.
- Hoff, E.; Laursen, B.; Tardif, T. Socioeconomic status and parenting. In: Bornstein, MH., editor. *Handbook of parenting: Vol. 2. Biology and ecology of parenting*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc; 2002. p. 231-252.
- Hollingshead, AB. Four factor index of social status, Unpublished manuscript. Department of Sociology; Yale University: 1975.
- Holmbeck, GN. A model of family relational transformations during the transition to adolescence: Parent–adolescent conflict and adaptation. In: Graber, JA.; Brooks-Gunn, J.; Petersen, AC., editors. *Transitions through adolescence: Interpersonal domains and context*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc; 1996. p. 167-199.
- Larson RW, Richards MH, Moneta G, Holmbeck G, Duckett E. Changes in adolescents' daily interactions with their families from ages 10 to 18: Disengagement and transformation. *Developmental Psychology* 1996;32:744–754.
- Laursen B. The perceived impact of conflict on adolescent relationships. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly* 1993;39:535–550.
- Laursen B. Variations in adolescent conflict and social interaction associated with maternal employment and family structure. *International Journal of Behavioral Development* 1995;18:151–164.
- Laursen B, Collins WA. Interpersonal conflict during adolescence. *Psychological Bulletin* 1994;115:197–209. [PubMed: 8165270]
- Laursen B, Coy KC, Collins WA. Reconsidering changes in parent–child conflict across adolescence: A meta-analysis. *Child Development* 1998;69:817–832. [PubMed: 9680687]
- Laursen B, Koplas AC. What's important about important conflicts? Adolescents' perceptions of daily disagreements. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly* 1995;41:536–553.
- Laursen B, Wilder D, Noack P, Williams V. Adolescent perceptions of reciprocity, authority, and closeness in relationships with mothers, fathers, and friends. *International Journal of Behavioral Development* 2000;24:464–471.
- Molina BSG, Chassin L. The parent–adolescent relationship at puberty: Hispanic ethnicity and parent alcoholism as moderators. *Developmental Psychology* 1996;32:675–686.
- Montemayor R. Maternal employment and adolescents' relations with parents, siblings, and peers. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 1984;13:543–557.

- Prinz RJ, Foster SL, Kent RN, O'Leary KD. Multivariate assessment of conflict in distressed and nondistressed mother–adolescent dyads. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis* 1979;12:691–700. [PubMed: 541311]
- Propper AM. The relationship of maternal employment to adolescent roles, activities, and parental relationships. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 1972;34:417–421.
- Robin, AL.; Foster, SL. Problem-solving communication training: A behavioral family systems approach to parent–adolescent conflict. In: Karoly, P.; Steffen, JJ., editors. *Adolescent behavior disorders: Foundations and contemporary concerns*. Lexington, MA: Heath; 1984. p. 195-240.
- Sessa FM, Steinberg L. Family structure and the development of autonomy during adolescence. *Journal of Early Adolescence* 1991;11:38–55.
- Shantz CU. Conflict between children. *Child Development* 1987;58:283–305.
- Shulman S, Laursen B. Adolescent perceptions of conflict in interdependent and disengaged friendships. *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 2002;12:353–372.
- Silverberg S, Steinberg L. Adolescent autonomy, parent–adolescent conflict, and parental well-being. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 1987;16:293–312.
- Smetana, JG. Adolescent-parent conflict: Implications for adaptive and maladaptive development. In: Cicchetti, D.; Toth, SL., editors. *Rochester Symposium on Developmental Psychopathology: Vol. 7. Adolescence: Opportunities and challenges*. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press; 1996. p. 1-46.
- Smetana JG, Yau J, Restrepo A, Braeges JL. Adolescent-parent conflict in married and divorced families. *Developmental Psychology* 1991;27:1000–1010.
- Steinberg, L.; Silk, JS. Parenting adolescents. In: Bornstein, MH., editor. *Handbook of parenting: Vol. 1. Parenting children and older people*. Vol. 2. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc; 2002. p. 103-134.
- Walker LJ, Hennig KH. Parent/child relationships in single-parent families. *Canadian Journal of Behavioral Science* 1997;29:63–75.
- Wallerstein, JS.; Kelley, JB. *Surviving the breakup*. New York: Basic Books; 1980.
- Weinraub, M.; Horvath, DL.; Gringlas, MB. Single parenthood. In: Bornstein, MH., editor. *Handbook of parenting: Vol. 3. Being and becoming a parent*. Vol. 2. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc; 2002. p. 109-140.
- Winkielman P, Knäuper B, Schwarz N. Looking back at anger: Reference periods change the interpretation of emotion frequency questions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 1998;75:719–728. [PubMed: 9781408]

TABLE 1
Intercorrelations Among Conflict, Interaction Frequency, and SES Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Affective intensity mother	—												
2. Affective intensity father	.58**	—											
3. Affective intensity parents	.96**	.91**	—										
4. Total conflict mother	.04	.00	.03	—									
5. Total conflict father	.02	.04	.05	.30**	—								
6. Total conflict parents	.04	.02	.05	.90**	.72**	—							
7. Angry conflict mother	.55**	.25**	.50**	.69**	.22**	.61**	—						
8. Angry conflict father	.20**	.54**	.35**	.16**	.72**	.48**	.20**	—					
9. Angry conflict parents	.55**	.51**	.57**	.63**	.54**	.70**	.90**	.67**	—				
10. Interaction frequency mother	-.11*	-.05	-.07	.05	.07	.06	.00	.01	.00	—			
11. Interaction frequency father	-.07	.00	-.04	-.03	.09	.04	-.07	.07	.00	.43**	—		
12. Interaction frequency parents	-.13*	-.03	-.09	.02	.09	.07	-.04	.05	.00	.86**	.83**	—	
13. SES	-.04	-.07	-.04	.02	-.05	.01	.01	-.07	-.02	-.02	-.09	-.05	—

Note. Conflict affective intensity n ranged from 116 to 299. All other n ranged from 304 to 453. SES = socioeconomic status.

*
 $p < .05$.

**
 $p < .01$

TABLE 2

Household Structure				Child Gender											
Two-Biological				Blended		Single-Mother		Girls		Boys		Total			
Conflict Variable	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	n
Affective intensity of conflicts															
Mothers	3.10	0.9	138	3.20	0.9	57	3.20	1.0	92	3.33 ^b	1.0	125	3.00 ^a	0.9	162
Fathers	3.26	1.0	95	3.40	1.1	33	—	—	—	3.47 ^b	1.0	72	3.07 ^a	0.9	56
Parents	3.18	0.9	148	3.31	0.9	59	3.20	1.0	92	3.35 ^b	1.0	128	3.01 ^a	0.8	171
Total number of conflicts															
Mothers	2.10 ^a	2.8	230	2.70 ^{a,b}	3.0	83	3.20 ^b	3.5	140	3.00 ^b	3.5	232	2.10 ^a	2.9	221
Fathers	1.07	1.8	230	1.24	2.4	83	—	—	—	1.29	2.2	151	1.00	1.8	162
Parents	3.21	3.9	230	3.98	4.1	83	3.20	3.5	140	3.79 ^b	4.0	232	2.88 ^a	3.6	221
Total number of angry conflicts															
Mothers	0.80 ^a	1.4	230	1.30 ^{a,b}	2.2	83	1.47 ^b	2.3	140	1.50 ^b	2.3	232	0.70 ^a	1.4	221
Fathers	0.46	1.0	230	0.63	1.4	83	—	—	—	0.63	1.2	151	0.39	1.1	162
Parents	1.30	1.9	230	1.90	2.8	83	1.47	2.3	140	1.91 ^b	2.5	232	1.00 ^a	1.8	221

Note. Two-Biological = Two-Biological-Parent. Within household structure and gender columns, means in the same row with different subscripts differ at $p < .05$. Affective intensity ranged from very friendly (1) to neutral (3) to very angry (5).

TABLE 3

Total Number of Conflicts with Mothers, Fathers, and Parents by Household Structure and Child Gender

Laursen

Level of Conflict	Household Structure						Child Gender					
	Two-Biological			Blended			Single-Mother			Females		
	N	%		N	%		N	%		N	%	Total
Mothers												
None	91	39.6		26	31.3		48	34.3		70	30.2 ^a	165
Moderate	124	53.9		47	56.6		68	48.6		126	54.3	239
High	15	6.5 ^a		10	12.0 ^{ab}		24	17.1 ^b		36	15.5 ^b	49
Total	230	100.0		83	100.0		140	100.0		232	100.0	453
Fathers												
None	135	58.7		50	60.2		—	—		79	52.3	185
Moderate	74	32.2		26	31.3		—	—		56	37.1	100
High	21	9.1		7	8.4		—	—		16	10.6	28
Total	230	100.0		83	100.0		—	—		151	100.0	313
Parents												
None	81	35.2		24	28.9		48	34.3		61	26.3 ^a	153
Moderate	117	50.9		44	53.0		77	55.0		133	57.3 ^b	238
High	32	13.9		15	18.1		15	10.7		38	16.4 ^b	62
Total	230	100.0		83	100.0		140	100.0		232	100.0	453

Note. Two-Biological = Two-Biological-Parent. Within household structure and gender columns, proportions in the same row with different superscripts differ at $p < .05$. Moderate = 1–6 conflicts with mothers, 1–3 conflicts with fathers, and 1–7 conflicts with parents. High = 7 or more conflicts with mothers, 4 or more conflicts with fathers, and 8 or more conflicts with parents.

TABLE 4

Total Number of Angry Conflicts with Mothers, Fathers, and Parents by Household Structure and Child Gender

Level of Conflict	Household Structure						Child Gender					
	Two-Biological			Blended			Single-Mother			Girls		
	N	%		N	%		N	%		N	%	Total
Mothers												
None	139	60.4		45	54.2		82	58.6		115	49.6 ^a	266
Moderate	76	33.0 ^b		31	37.3 ^b		33	23.6 ^a		80	34.5 ^b	140
High	15	6.5 ^a		7	8.4 ^a		25	17.9 ^b		37	15.9 ^b	47
Total	230	100.0		83	100.0		140	100.0		266	100.0	453
Fathers												
None	170	73.9		62	74.7		—	—		101	66.9 ^a	232
Moderate	49	21.3		13	15.7		—	—		39	25.8 ^b	62
High	11	4.8		8	9.6		—	—		11	7.3	19
Total	230	100.0		83	100.0		—	—		151	100.0	313
Parents												
None	117	50.9		39	47.0		82	58.6		99	42.7 ^a	238
Moderate	95	41.3		31	37.3		44	31.4		101	43.5 ^b	170
High	18	7.8		13	15.7		14	10.0		32	13.8 ^b	45
Total	230	100.0		83	100.0		140	100.0		232	100.0	453

Note. Two-Biological = Two-Biological-Parent. Within household structure and gender columns, proportions in the same row with different superscripts differ at $p < .05$. Moderate = 1–3 conflicts with mothers, 1–2 conflicts with fathers, and 1–4 conflicts with parents. High = 4 or more conflicts with mothers, 3 or more conflicts with fathers, and 5 or more conflicts with parents.