Conflict promoting conflict: Using Family Communication Patterns Theory and Baumrind’s parenting styles to explain adolescent perceptions of parents and tension in Northern Ireland

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Abstract

This study asks the question: Are there differences among how adolescents perceive discussions about the civil conflict of Northern Ireland with their families depending on their parents’ behaviors and communication styles? Using parent behavior measures and participant perceptions of conversations regarding the social conflict of Northern Ireland, the current study aims to bridge the relationship between Baumrind’s parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive) and the Family Communication Patterns Theory discussion styles. Collected through convenience sampling methods from various universities and churches in Northern Ireland, 103 individuals (27 male and 76 female) between the ages of 15 and 25 ($M = 19.61$, $SD = 1.68$) participated. Based on reported behaviors as they relate to descriptions from the development and communication theories, each participant was placed into an associated parenting practice category. Responses to the researcher-created Perception of Political/Social Conflict Questionnaire were analyzed in relation to each parenting practice category. Results specific to mother-adolescent outcomes show that 59% fell within the authoritative parenting practice category, followed by “other” (23%), authoritarian (11%), and permissive (7%). Discussions about civil conflict did change slightly as a function of the parenting practice category. Suggestions for future theory development within family dynamics are discussed.
Review of Literature

In a world where social, religious, and political conflict are so prevalent, it is important to understand how young people are affected by civil conflict; it is important to determine if tensions from civil conflicts are being carried over into the home via communication, both verbal and nonverbal, between parents and young people. This research aims to contribute to psychology’s understanding of how families are affected by conflict from social influences and between parents and adolescents, specifically in relation to the cultural climate of Northern Ireland (NI).

Social, Religious, and Political History of Northern Ireland

The current environment in NI can be considered one of protracted political conflict due to its contested history of political and religious division. Protracted political conflict is characterized by the prolonged and often violent struggle within communities for basic needs such as security, acceptance, and fair access to political institutions and economic participation (Oliver, 2005). Protracted political conflict is illustrated in the current government of NI such that it has not been able to reach secure legislative compromises to decrease disputes over the inequalities of resources like those just mentioned. In addition, the police force has struggled to deal with the violence and sectarian intensity exhibited in parades and protests and even day-to-day life, not only over the 30 years of intense civil conflict in the country, but even in some areas today (Council on Foreign Relations, 2014). To handle the issues, peace walls have risen in areas with much division between Protestant and Catholic neighborhoods, such as those in West Belfast. Peace walls separate communities and require citizens to make an increased effort to communicate with the other side. Furthermore, natural geographic structures keep communities divided, such as the River Foyle in Derry/Londonderry which separates the predominantly Catholic side of town (Derry) from the predominantly Protestant side of town (Londonderry). These barriers are examples of the continued influence of a historical conflict on a society – their impacts can be seen even today.
According to the 2011 NI census data, Protestants make up 48 percent while Catholics comprise 45 percent of the country's population of 1.8 million (Devenport, 2012). These percentage values are decreasing as increasingly more people cite no religious affiliation. The changing religious affiliation is important for the future of the nation: if more young people feel the need to distance themselves from a specific religious culture, then the identity of Northern Ireland may transform. Sociological theorist Talcott Parsons argued that the structure and the identity of a country is made up of functional parts and as those parts interact effectively, the country thrives (Parsons, 1959). One of those parts is the internal, perpetuated culture of the citizens. If citizens do not have a strong identity or self-concept in relation to the culture of NI, which is developed through communication with others and most especially within families, then the nation may suffer. There is a constant reciprocal relationship between all aspects of a community, as is explained by Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Model (1977).

An Ecological Approach

Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological System of Development was devised by Urie Bronfenbrenner to explain the reciprocal relationship between the environment and the individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). It argues that, when looking at an individual in the present, one must also take into account the entirety of the system in which the individual lives: the *microsystem*, which is made up of the immediate setting that the person is in (e.g., family, school, peers, religious institution); the *mesosystem*, which consists of the interrelations among the primary setting an individual is in at a particular point in his or her life (e.g., interactions between family, school, church, peer group); the *exosystem*, which acts as an extension of the mesosystem and includes specific social structures such as the major institutions of the society (e.g., government, mass media, informal social networks); and the *macrosystem*, which refers to the institutional patterns of the culture or subculture (e.g., economic, social, educational, legal, and political systems). The current research
will take a closer look at the reciprocal relationship between the individual and a component of the microsystem, specifically communication patterns between each parent and the adolescent, but it is important to remember that all other systems are informing this dyad.

To explain the model more plainly, the political and social climate primarily uses public policy to influence the schools, media, and community programming bodies of a nation. These institutions supply parents with information on what to believe, how to raise children properly, and what social values and norms to instill in young people. The adolescent then perceives and responds to the attitudes of the parents and extended community; then, as the adolescent develops, he or she responds to the environment in congruence with his or her own formed values. However, the process of socialization can differ depending on the communication orientation of the parents: Tims (1986) suggests that communication styles of the parents is related to the personal values of the parents and how they perceive societal values, which in turn influences the political communication environment in the home.

Illustrating the connection between communication and Bronfenbrenner’s model even further, the values of institutions within the exosystem (government, media, professional opinion, etc.) contribute to the overall cultural climate of a nation and how the people of the nation respond to incidences related to civil strife – if there is a culture of acceptance, silence, or hostility then the community will respond in a corresponding way; then, given Bronfenbrenner’s model, such a culture is also continued at the individual level. For example, Boxer and colleagues’ (2013) recent research found that negative outcomes for individuals are likely in areas experiencing intense conflict, such as Israel-Palestine. In a cohort-sequential study of 1,951 adolescents, Boxer et al. (2013) found that exposure to ethno-political violence intensifies adolescent aggression over time, and microsystem violence affects aggression especially if experienced at a young age. Research
specific to NI shows that political conflict and the associated incidences of violence in communities is highly related to family functioning – the family environment often suffers because of higher levels of conflict between family members and children’s reduced feelings of environmental security in areas where civil unrest is highest (Cummings et al., 2010).

In discussing NI further, McEvoy (2000) used focus groups to interpret how young people understand peace and community in the areas in which they live. A key finding of McEvoy’s research was that the more familiar an individual was with the conflict in their own community, the more likely he or she was to be involved in peace-building. Relating this to the current study, parents’ discussions about social conflict with the young person may lead an adolescent to feel closer to the conflict, thereby providing him or her with a feeling of higher self-concept and social engagement; on the other hand, lack of discussion about conflict may promote indifference or complacency. Still, while research has been done in NI to understand how young people interpret the conflict that their community has faced, only limited research, like that described in the next section, has been done to understand how these interpretations are expressed in parent-adolescent relationships.

The Intergenerational Legacy of the Troubles

Epidemiological research has been conducted in NI to account for the prevalence of post-traumatic disorder among citizens of NI. Muldoon and Downes (2007) found that among the 3000 respondents to their phone survey of adults in NI and the nearby Republic of Ireland border, 1269 (42%) reported experiencing a distressing event as a result of the Troubles. Of the 1269, 10% of respondents had symptoms severe enough to warrant a diagnosis of PTSD. Ferry et al. (2014) specifically looked at exposure to 29 individual traumatic event types, particularly those characteristic of the NI Troubles, and the associated conditional prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among the NI adult population. Ferry et al. (2014) stated that overall, nearly two-
thirds of all respondents reported experiencing at least one trauma during their lifetime. Among specific individual event types, the most prevalent was unexpected death of a loved one, followed by civilian in a region of terror, and witnessed death/dead body or saw someone seriously hurt. War events were ranked as the third most prevalent broad category of trauma event experienced (26.1%) just behind network events (a traumatic event involving loved ones or others) and death of a loved one. All of the event types with the highest prevalence, accounting for almost 40% of the traumatic events experienced, were consistent with daily life experiences for many communities in NI during the more than 30 years of civil conflict.

Many parents who are currently raising children in NI were adolescents or young parents during the periods of most intense conflict, particularly in the years 1968 - 1998. According to Healey (2004), during the time of the Troubles, a culture of silence filled communities throughout the nation and permeated the media and news, community, family, and professional circles. The culture of silence manifested in minimal discussions of topics related to the social conflict so as not to encourage hostility among the groups involved. In one example, Healey (2004) shared that stories of post-Belfast Agreement terror activities of paramilitary groups are retold as “anti-social behavior” of young people and the stories promote the same silence as the first 30 years of the conflict had done – the media presented the incidences briefly with “some condemnation … but it was quickly over and the usual silence continued.” Trauma continued day by day and for many parents, talking about the realities of the Troubles as an event of both the past and present was incredibly difficult, as Healey (2004) again recounts:

Consider the experience of seeing one’s home destroyed because of one’s religious orientation. How do you explain this to your children without instilling fear or hatred for the other community? It is very difficult and distressing for parents who begin to hear their
children hating the other community. Many of these children experience great difficulty as a result of such experiences. (p. 177)

It was not until the more hopeful times of the Belfast Agreement in 1998 that government and public systems started to focus on the implications of trauma from the Troubles and encouraged movement toward an open-discussion environment both in the nation at-large and within therapeutic settings, but progress was slow and many organizations continue to help families and individuals recover from the past.

To continue to explain the role of the Troubles in parent-child relationships, a study from Downes, Harrison, Curran, and Kavanagh (2012) consisted of interviews with four mothers in psychotherapy for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) sourced by the Troubles. In the study, the researchers aimed to find patterns in how the trauma of the past influences subsequent generations. They reported that some mothers cope with their own trauma and pass it to their children by minimizing discussion about the past and avoiding discussion of the truth about events that influenced them and the extended family during the Troubles. In using these coping mechanisms, the mothers often worried if withholding of such information was advantageous to their children or not. It was also found that some of the mothers had a tendency to exhibit over-protective behavior in response to their children’s requests to socialize, often due to their own fear of repetitions of past sectarian violence against the family. Looking at a different behavioral theme, one mother felt that her own passive behavior, which she felt developed as a result of her trauma as a child, was being passed to her children. The patterns described above contribute to the continuation of multigenerational trauma. The current study will look closer at an alternative perspective of these patterns in the relationship and focus on the children of parents in the general population of NI.
Despite communicative and behavioral practices that seemed to promote negative consequences, a positive theme emerged in the interviews when mothers’ attempted to break the cycle of trauma by promoting non-sectarian values among their children and by establishing, through discussion with their children, their role as a responsible parent (Downes et al., 2012). In all, Downes et al.’s study, the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder and reactions explained by Healey (2004) each informs a broad understanding of the mechanisms by which history in a community and family impacts future generations. These mechanisms can be explained and examined more completely by turning to developmental psychology and communication theories. While it is essential to understand the broad impact present in the ecological model, the current study aims to look closer at the how the more fine-tuned family dynamics of behavior and communication are used to influence adolescent perceptions of social conflict within the home. Each theory described below uniquely contributes to the current study by outlining specific, individual functions and outcomes that form adolescent development within the social context.

**Baumrind’s Parenting Styles**

Baumrind (1971) emphasized an empirically-based typology of parenting styles made up of a combination of behavioral and communication interactions that parents engage in with their children. The three distinct parenting styles initially described by Baumrind are authoritarian,
authoritative, and indulgent/permissive. A fourth parenting style, uninvolved/neglectful, was later identified by Maccoby and Martin (1983). Each parenting style is characterized by varying levels of two intersecting dimensions as seen in Figure 1: responsiveness and demandingness (Baumrind, 1967).

The authoritarian-style parent attempts to shape, control, and evaluate behavior and attitudes of the child, while also valuing obedience and punitive action. For example, an authoritarian parent is more likely to set high standards and carry out psychologically controlling and behaviorally controlling punishment if the standards are not respected. Authoritarian parenting styles are most related to an adolescents’ socially incompetent behavior and feelings of restricted autonomy (Baumrind, 1966).

The authoritative parent directs activities in a rational, issue-oriented manner and encourages verbal give and take while sharing reasons behind parenting policies. The authoritative parent also exerts behavioral control when parent-adolescent ideals do not match, but does not restrict the adolescents’ interests and response, ultimately letting the adolescent develop his or her own emotions surrounding a situation (Darling, 2012). Children of authoritative parents tend to be socially responsible and self-reliant.

Indulgent/permissive parenting is characterized by its non-punitive nature in conjunction with acceptance and affirmation of the adolescents’ choices. The permissive parent presents his or herself as a resource, but not a role model or authority figure and attempts to use reason and manipulation (not overt power) to accomplish goals within parenting, but ultimately allows the adolescent to regulate his or her activities. Indulgent parenting is often associated with adolescents who are socially irresponsible and lacking in self-discipline (Baumrind, 1966).
Finally, neglectful parenting styles are characterized by no or limited interaction between parents and the adolescent, and there is little effort to build any sort of supportive relationship, control, or monitoring. Adolescent children of neglectful parents tend to be socially incompetent and lack self-control (Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

**Family Communication Pattern Theory**

Not unlike the parenting styles developed by Baumrind, typologies developed within communications research contributes to the overall understanding of parent-child relationships. The Family Communication Pattern Theory (FCPT), theoretically-derived by Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2004), proposes that in order for families to function effectively, they need a shared reality which is created through a two-dimensional process, conversation orientation and conformity orientation.

The FCPT was developed to explain how families and their children process external information; it claims that there are stable and predictable ways in which families process and then communicate messages from society, and such behaviors are “based on how families create and share social reality and represent an observable manifestation of these cognitive processes” (Keorner & Schrod, 2014, p. 2). Family communication patterns evolve as family members contribute to the family interactions and a share social reality (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2004). Conversation orientation consists of communication behaviors that entail open, involved, and
lengthy family discussions that explore the meaning behind a set of ideas, whereas conformity orientation consists of communication patterns that entail discouraging open discussion and divergent opinions, therefore encouraging children in families to conform to the views of adults and prioritize family relationships (Koerner & Schrodt, 2014). It is important to note that families use these orientations with relative frequencies depending on the nature of the topic being discussed. The two orthogonal dimensions of the theory, conversation orientation and conformity orientation, interact to create a four-part typology of family communication patterns: consensual, pluralistic, protective, and laissez-faire (Figure 2). To best understand the four typologies and their use of the two dimensions, it is helpful to look at how they each perceive conflict.

Consensual families (high conversation and high conformity) are very interested in incorporating the voices of both children and parents into the conversation, but parents in consensual families believe that they should make decisions for the unit and explain their reasoning, beliefs, and values behind a decision to their children. Consensual families perceive conflict to be threatening, so to preserve unity and expectations to share a single viewpoint, they resolve conflicts constructively with an open and shared conversational style; however, because of their high emphasis on conformity, only one perspective – the parents’ – is accepted (Koerner & Schrodt, 2014).

In pluralistic families (high conversation and low conformity) conversations between parents and children are unconstrained and equal, and discussion and decision making usually includes contributions from both parent and child. Oftentimes in the conversations of pluralistic families, opinions are evaluated based on merit of the supporting argument rather than by the authority of the adult figure. These families deal with conflict directly and seek to resolve disputes
in a productive and mutually beneficial manner; they report the highest rates of conflict resolution among the four FCPT types (Koerner & Schrod, 2014).

Protective families (low conversation and high conformity) value the cultivation of a shared viewpoint among family members and leave little room for conversation. Parents in these families enforce parent-child power differences and create little opportunity for discussion about social issues influencing the family, and may also believe that children are better off “seen and not heard.” Protective families avoid conflict because they may lack the skills to effectively resolve disputes, due to lack of practice in open exchange of ideas (Koerner & Schrod, 2014).

Laissez-faire families (low conversation and low conformity) do not value conversation or interaction, and if communication does ensue, the topics of conversation are limited. Parents in these families have little interest in their children’s decisions. These families rarely are involved in conflict because of their independence from one another, but when conflict ensues they avoid it or become strongly invested in the debate with hopes to “win” rather than mutually benefit (Koerner & Schrod, 2014).

The Current Study: Linking Parenting Styles and FCPT

Based on the descriptions above, it is easy to recognize that the conceptual models of Baumrind’s Parenting Styles and the FCPT overlap. Four typologies emerge in each theory as a result of the relationship dynamics and practices between parents and their children. The argument made by Isaacs and Koerner (2008) also directly applies to the current study, “…to the extent that conversation orientation is similar to responsiveness and conformity orientation is similar with demandingness, these similarities suggest that parenting styles and family communication patterns are intrinsically linked with one another.” Research done by Isaacs and Koerner (2008) used correlation and regression analysis of the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire and the
Revised Family Communication Patterns survey to investigate the association between parenting styles and family communication patterns; a familial satisfaction survey was also used to investigate how each variable (parenting styles and family communication patterns) associates with another related variable.

Specifically, they hypothesized that authoritative parenting styles would most associate with consensual families, authoritarian would most overlap with protective, permissive parenting would most associate with pluralistic families, and both theories would sufficiently predict child satisfaction. From a sample of 263 adults between the ages of 18 and 36, it was found that each authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles were correlated with the hypothesized associated dimensions of conversation orientation and conformity orientation. Results showed that parents’ who scored high in conformity orientation and conversation orientation also tended to score high in regulative parenting, which is a key component of the subscale of authoritative parenting; therefore the hypothesis that authoritative and consensual typologies are associated is partially supported. Furthermore, punitive parenting and hostility, both subscales of authoritarian parenting, were positively correlated with conformity orientation and were negatively associated with conversation orientation; therefore the hypothesis that authoritarian parenting and protective families are associated is partially supported (Isaacs & Koerner, 2008).

Results did not show a significant correlation between permissive parenting and pluralistic families; however, there was a small association between conversation orientation and permissive parenting for fathers, and it was also found that families who were identified as consensual or laissez-faire were more closely linked to permissive parenting styles, meaning that families who are either high or low on each of those dimensions are more likely to practice permissive parenting. In terms of predicting child satisfaction, both theories almost equally predicted satisfaction,
lending more evidence for overall association. For the purpose of the current study, significant results for the associations between descriptions of consensual families and authoritative parenting as well as protective families and authoritarian parenting is used to support an understanding of how the typologies can more fully explain parent-adolescent relationships as perceived by adolescents.

The present study hopes to determine whether consistent patterns of maternal and paternal parenting practices would emerge from a sampling of adolescent-perceived parenting behaviors, particularly among adolescents in NI. To do so, the Parental Harshness, Support, Psychological Control, and Monitoring Report (PHSPCMR; Behnke, Plunkett, Sands, & Bámaca-Colbert, 2011) was used to assess perceived parent behaviors, ultimately bridging the constructs of parenting styles and FCPT orientation types. The following hypotheses will be examined in the current study:

1. Maternal and paternal parenting practices would be categorized reflecting consistent conceptual patterns defined by Baumrind’s parenting styles and FCPT.
2. The ways in which the social climate of NI is reportedly perceived and discussed among families will differ significantly depending upon the parenting practice category participants most closely identify.

Methodology

Procedures

Data for this study was collected in 2014 from individuals belonging to various universities and churches across NI. After IRB approval was obtained from a private liberal arts college in the Midwest, official study recruitment commenced through internet messaging communication (emails) with churches, schools (secondary and university), and organizations throughout the country. Initially, the aim of the study was to have participants between the ages of 14 and 18; however, due to difficulty gaining permission to enter the secondary education system, recruitment
of older adolescents was required. Therefore, eligibility criteria for participation stipulated that individuals must be at least 15 years of age and participate with parent consent (gained upon arrival), and as old as 25. Due to convenience sampling, all individuals invited to participate were given the opportunity to decline.

Upon arrival in NI, the primary researcher distributed consent forms and questionnaire packets to university professors who previously agreed through internet communication to assist with the study. When it was convenient for the course schedule and between the dates of September 22, 2014 and December 1, 2014, lecturers distributed the consent forms and questionnaire packets to their students to complete on their own. Students were instructed to return the packet and consent form back to their teachers. Once all paperwork was collected, professors mailed all completed questionnaires and consent forms to the temporary residence of the primary researcher in the neighboring country. The primary researcher also distributed consent forms and questionnaire packets to adolescents at a participating church and university; participants completed the questionnaires on their own within an allotted time-frame, and afterwards all data was collected by the primary researcher.

**Participants’ Characteristics**

Data from 103 late-adolescent individuals from three universities and one church in NI were used for this study. From this sample, ages ranged from 15 to 25 years ($M = 19.61$, $SD = 1.68$), and 74% were female. Of those who voluntarily reported their religious affiliation, 33 identified as Catholic, 11 as Protestant, 15 as Christian, and 18 gave a response other than the three above-mentioned. Twenty-six participants did not share their religious affiliation when asked.

**Measurements**

Original questionnaire packets contained a set of existing measures and researcher-developed surveys used to satisfy a preliminary research question regarding a relationship between
perceived parental relationships and adolescent self-esteem. For the purposes of the current study, only the PHSPCMR (Behnke et al., 2011) and the researcher-developed survey regarding reactions to the political/social/religious conflict were utilized in analysis (Appendix A).

The PHSPCMR was used to measure adolescent perceptions of each maternal and paternal parenting practices. Specifically, this questionnaire assessed adolescent perceptions of parent behaviors and some language use in areas of support (i.e. parental behaviors that communicate feelings of warmth, affection, and a sense of being valued to the adolescent), monitoring (i.e. the extent to which parents keep track of what adolescents are doing, where they are, and who their friends are), punitiveness (i.e. controlling behaviors of a verbal or coercive nature characterized as strict and harsh), and psychological control (i.e. parental behaviors as predictors of attempts to constrain individual autonomy of the adolescent through love withdrawal and/or guilt). Participants were asked to respond to the items composing the report in terms of a 4-point Likert scale that varied from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Sample items for each of these parental behaviors (adolescents’ perceptions) are as follows: This parent tells me how much he/she loves me (support); This parent keeps track of who I am going to be with when I go out (monitoring); This parent treat me harshly when I don’t do what he/she says (punitive); This parent will not talk to me when I displease him/her (psychological control). Participants responded to each item twice, once for the mother figure and once for the father figure.

The Perception of Political/Social Conflict Questionnaire was created for this study to find out if the participants recognize any tension between themselves and their parents that relates to the conflict in the nation. The major themes of the questions were informed by the literature discussed above; however, participants were not prompted to mandatorily reply in to the questions
or with any certain length response. Open-ended responses were given to questions such as: “Is the political/social/religious conflict of Northern Ireland discussed in your family?” and “How is [the political/social/religious conflict of Northern Ireland] discussed in your family (i.e., is it the cause of tension or is the discussion calm)?” It also acted as an avenue for participants to voluntarily share their religious affiliation.

Consent from parents was collected in the form of passive consent for participants under the age of 18 – parents were asked to return the consent forms if they did not want their underage child to participate in the study. Research by Esbensen, Deschenes, Vogel, West, Arboit and Harris (1996) found that passive consent, compared to active consent, is very informational for the parents and teachers. Passive consent forms allow for a greater participation rate so that a more encompassing sample can be collected. Parents of participants in this study did not request further information after given the passive consent form. Participants who were 18 and older did not need to acquire parental consent.

Results

Qualitative Analyses

Analysis of the data followed several stages. First, qualitative descriptions of Baumrind’s parenting styles and FCPT’s communication patterns were analyzed to consider how each reflected the behaviors measured by the PHSPCMR. Based on information in the review of literature above, each parenting practice was assigned basic qualitative descriptor levels (low, moderate, and high) of the parenting behaviors (support, monitoring, punitive, and psychological control). In this way, using the same categories as Baumrind for ease of understanding, each parenting practice category is reinforced by the behaviors measured in data collection. The theorized basic descriptor levels and how they correspond to each parenting practice category is exhibited below (Table 1).
Table 1

Assigned Qualitative Descriptive Behavior Levels for Parenting Practice Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviors Measured</th>
<th>Authoritarian</th>
<th>Authoritative</th>
<th>Permissive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Moderate-High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Moderate-High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punitive</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low-Moderate</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Control</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low-Moderate</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quantitative Analyses

Following basic qualitative coding, statistical analyses were used to more directly align the parenting practice categories with survey responses collected in NI. Scores from the PHSPCMR were compiled and analyzed, separated by parent gender, for each of the behaviors. Scores were averaged so that they ranged from 1 to 4, indicating low to high endorsement of each behavior, respectively. Scores for each of the behaviors were then distributed in a normal curve so that descriptive statistics could be found for perceived maternal and paternal behaviors. Each distribution was split into three quantile at -1 and +1 standard deviations; based on the different perceptions of adolescents, no two distributions explaining perceived parenting behaviors were alike. Of the 103 participants, 8 did not report perceived father behaviors, so distributions have been adjusted accordingly for paternal behaviors. PHSPCMR distribution data, including mean, standard deviation, and low-high cut scores, are depicted below (Table 2 and Table 3).
Table 2

Mothers’ Behavior Scores Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior Measured in Report</th>
<th>Descriptive Statistics</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>σ</td>
<td>-1σ</td>
<td>+1σ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>4.08*</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>.682</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punitive</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>.626</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>2.796</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Control</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* *4.0 used as “high” cut score.

Table 3

Fathers’ Behavior Scores Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior Measured in Report</th>
<th>Descriptive Statistics</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>σ</td>
<td>-1σ</td>
<td>+1σ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>.6848</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>3.98*</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>.6838</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>3.23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Punitive</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>.6448</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Control</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>.6945</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* *4.0 used as “high” cut score.

After descriptive statistics were calculated, the average scores of each behavior from PHSPCMR were split, using cut scores, into three quantile that would make up the various levels of endorsement of perceived behavior practices: low (1), moderate (2), or high (3). To match the descriptive coding with the newly quantified quantile ranges, each parenting category was assigned a corresponding numerical descriptor level. Given the dynamic nature of parenting practice categories and taking notice of the interaction between measured behaviors and their likelihood of
sequences to yield differing parenting practice category outcomes, the levels included either one or two options for the numerical level allocated, as shown below (Table 4).

Table 4

*Assigned Numerical Descriptive Behavior Levels for Parenting Practice Categories*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviors Measured</th>
<th>Parenting Practice Category</th>
<th>Authoritarian</th>
<th>Authoritative</th>
<th>Permissive*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2 or 3</td>
<td>2 or 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>2 or 3</td>
<td>2 or 3</td>
<td>1 or 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punitive</td>
<td>2 or 3</td>
<td>1 or 2</td>
<td>1 or 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 or 3</td>
<td>1 or 2</td>
<td>1 or 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. *A score of all ‘2’ or ‘3, 2, 2, 2’ would not yield Permissive, but Authoritative; each is relative to the lower numbers in the sequence.*

**Final Parenting Practice Categories**

Participants were then individually recoded so that they identified not as average behavior scores, but as a set of recoded variables indicating the perceived quantile level of support, monitoring, punitive behavior and language, and psychological control. Of the adolescent-mother relationships, 11 mothers were perceived as authoritarian; 61 mothers were perceived as
7 mothers were perceived as permissive; 24 were characterized as “other” – they did not fit any logical sequence created from the theory-based coding (Figure 3).

Among adolescent-father relationships, 10 fathers were perceived as authoritarian; 60 fathers were perceived as authoritative; 5 fathers were perceived as permissive; 20 fathers were characterized as “other” (Figure 4). It is important to note that parenting practice categories were not the same couple to couple, in other words, an authoritarian mother did not always match up with an authoritarian father.

Open-Response Survey Results and Parenting Practice Categories

Given that previous research shows that mothers often drive the conversation in the family regardless of conversation orientation, especially with their adolescent children, only mother-adolescent dyad responses will be reported (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2004). Among the mother-adolescent dyads assigned to the permissive parenting practice category (n=7), 57.1% of respondents reported that they and their families do not discuss the civil conflict. Of those assigned within the authoritarian parenting practice category (n=11), 63.6% of respondents reported no discussion about the civil conflict within their family. Of those that responded affirmatively with
an authoritarian-assigned mother, they described the discussion as generally calm; one respondent shared:

“With extended family it can be contentious, but with my immediate family we don't disagree on the issues.”

Among those assigned to the authoritative parenting practice category among mother-adolescent dyads (n=61), only 34.4% (21) respondents reported no discussion about the civil conflict with family members. The majority of authoritative-assigned mothers responded with “yes” and shared that the discussion took on an array of forms, including calm, informative, and frustrating. For example, respondents shared the following comments regarding their conversation:

“Calm discussions between older members of the family. Also, seen by the younger members involved as educational and a way to learn more about NI's history.”

“Depends on the topic. Similar views discussion is calm. Different views can cause friction.”

“There is no tension at all, everyone is calm and able to express their opinions freely.”

“Cause of tension, conflicting ideas between my parents.”

Of the mother-adolescent dyads that were assigned into the “other” parenting practice category, 37.5% responded that the civil conflict was not discussed in their home. Of those that responded affirmatively, the responses regarding how the civil conflict is discussed in the family were as varied as those for Authoritative mother-adolescent dyads:

“It is talked about in terms of the devastation it had on everyone. It is calm, but emotional conversation.”

“Usually, calm discussion and often starts after seeing something related to conflict (religious/political) on the news -- strong opinions often expressed.”
“Sometimes causes tension when talking about being non-religious.”

In essence, no major pattern was found within reported descriptions of discussion styles for authoritative or “other” categorized dyads – it was discussed in a myriad of ways, depending on the situation and perception of the adolescent. It was, however, discussed. Compared to permissive and authoritarian dyads, likelihood of discussing the conflict was higher among authoritative and “other” dyads. Results are consistent with the conceptual models used in analyzing the dyads, although the high proportion of “other” dyads brings up conceptual and methodological questions.

**Discussion**

The goal of this study was to consider the ways in which parent-adolescent relationships in Northern Ireland exhibited parenting characteristics consistent with Baumrind’s Parenting Style typologies and the Family Communication Pattern Theory typologies. Also, the study aimed to discover if there were differences among how adolescents perceived discussions about the civil conflict of Northern Ireland with their families depending on their assigned parenting practice category. As hypothesized, the majority of mother-adolescent and father-adolescent dyads exhibited behavior and communication practices that were consistent with existing conceptual patterns. The high rate of authoritative assigned parenting practice categories is consistent with previous research that shows the distribution of parenting styles by family structure throughout the UK; the majority of adolescents reported two-parent families (n=95) and among two-parent families in the UK, authoritative parenting is most common (Chan & Koo, 2010). Research has regarded the authoritative parenting style and consensual communication orientation to be ideal, therefore, this implies that even among a small sample of adolescents in Northern Ireland living in a post-conflict environment, adolescents perceive their parents to be using the most highly valued approaches to parenting.
Almost a quarter of participants (23% among mother-adolescent dyads and 21% of father-adolescent dyads) did not fall into the existing categories. This means that the high proportion of assignments to “other” may be a function of the questions asked in the survey – given that they were not specific to parenting styles or FCPT typologies, data may not have aligned with previous theory; or, there may be a new or under-developed parenting style or discussion pattern that is not fully described by research at present; or, the parenting practices that do emerge in the “other” category are specific to a country such as Northern Ireland that has experienced protracted political conflict. More research specific to post-conflict areas would be ideal to more completely understand family dynamics in such nations. As described in the literature review, Baumrind’s typology and the FCPT typology have led to different outcomes within family dynamics (Isaacs & Koerner, 2008). Given this lack of cohesion among existing theories, it is possible that a new theory combining FCPT and parenting styles specific to emerging adulthood could be generated to better explain parent-adolescent relationships. This study aims to begin to fill that gap, but more can be done if a test is created that incorporates each theory’s two-dimensional conceptual model.

When looking at reported discussions about civil conflict, results were congruent to existing theories – among authoritarian assigned mother-adolescent dyads, open discussion was low while among authoritative assigned mother-adolescent dyads open discussion was present among the majority of respondents. Interestingly, the results regarding high discussion among authoritative assigned parents diverges from previous research that suggests a culture of silence and minimal discussion about civil conflict (Healey, 2004; Downes et al., 2013). Rates of discussion were also low among permissive assigned mother-adolescent dyads to a lesser degree than those in the authoritarian parenting practice category. While the second hypothesis is supported in this regard, it is important to note that if truly consistent with FCPT and Baumrind’s
parenting styles, the rate of discussion should have been higher among those in the permissive parenting practice category (Baumrind, 1971; Koerner and Fitzpatrick, 2004). Low sample size and inaccurate measurement tools that were not specific to permissive parenting and pluralistic families may contribute to this deviation from previous research. The lack of discussion about civil conflict may also be due to the adolescent’s independence from their parents – they may not engage in such conversation because it does not suit them in furthering themselves as adults; instead, they may more highly value their own insights rather than those of others.

**Limitations and Future Directions**

Despite support of the hypotheses, there are several limitations that arose in this study. More specific demographic information concerning geographic location of ‘home’ for the participants could be found, resulting in more specificity of where each participant was raised so that regional conclusions could be drawn. Previous research has shown that the area of Northern Ireland in which one lives plays a role in how they and their family were influenced by community conflict (McEvoy, 2000). Other limitations arise concerning measurement and methods of analysis. The PHSPCMR was not specifically designed to measure parenting style or family communication patterns, only their similar components. Behaviors measured may not have accurately represented the conceptual models of either theory. Therefore, in future studies analyzing parent-adolescent relationships in the context of Baumrind’s parenting styles and FCPT, measures that directly assess responsiveness and demandingness, as well as conversation orientation and conformity orientation, should be used (Isaacs & Koerner, 2008). Additionally, in the current study, short answer questions did not encourage distinction between each gender parent in how the discussion takes place; this may have been more helpful in understanding parent-adolescent discussion endorsement among the specific parenting practice categories.
Future research can, in addition to incorporating the suggestions above, continue to discover outcomes of parenting styles and family communication patterns in countries with a history of conflict. Particularly in Northern Ireland, it is important that family dynamics be followed over time as the nation moves chronologically further away from the time of the Troubles. It may be advantageous to look into the possibility of the existence of more parenting approaches beyond those currently widely accepted in developmental literature.
References


Appendix A

Parental Harshness, Support, Psychological Control, and Monitoring Report

Instructions: For each of the following statements, circle how much you agree or disagree with each statement in relation to each parental figure. Try to read and think about each statement as it applies to you and each figure during your years of growing up at home. There are no right or wrong answers, so don’t spend a lot of time on any one item. We are looking for your overall impression regarding each statement. Be sure not to omit any items.

1. Yells at me when I don’t do what he/she says
   - Mother: Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree
   - Father: Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

2. Treats me harshly when I don’t do what he/she says
   - Mother: Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree
   - Father: Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

3. Punishes me when I don’t do what he/she says
   - Mother: Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree
   - Father: Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

4. Does not leave me alone when I don’t do what he/she says
   - Mother: Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree
   - Father: Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

5. Seems to approve of me
   - Mother: Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree
   - Father: Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

6. Tells me how much he/she loves me
   - Mother: Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree
   - Father: Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

7. Says nice things to me
   - Mother: Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree
   - Father: Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

8. Is there if I need him/her
   - Mother: Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree
   - Father: Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

9. Tells me that I will be sorry that I wasn’t better behaved
   - Mother: Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree
   - Father: Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree
10. Tells me that someday I will be punished for my behavior
   **Mother:** Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree
   **Father:** Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

11. Tells me that if I loved him/her, I would do what he/she wants me to do
   **Mother:** Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree
   **Father:** Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

12. Will not talk to me when I disappoint him/her
   **Mother:** Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree
   **Father:** Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

13. Keeps track of what I am doing
   **Mother:** Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree
   **Father:** Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

14. Keeps track of who I am going to be with when I go out
   **Mother:** Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree
   **Father:** Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

15. Keeps track of where I am
   **Mother:** Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree
   **Father:** Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

16. Keeps track of who my friends are
   **Mother:** Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree
   **Father:** Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

**Political/Personal Perspectives Questionnaire**

1. Is the political/social/religious conflict of Northern Ireland discussed in your family?
2. If you answered **yes** to question (1), please answer below. If you answered **no** to question (1), skip to question (3):
   How is it discussed in your family (i.e., is it the cause of tension or is the discussion calm)?
   How does it make you feel when it is discussed?
3. If you answered **no** to question (1):
   If the political/social/religious conflict of Northern Ireland is not discussed in your family, how does it make you feel?
4. If you affiliated with a religion, what would it be?
5. Is how you view yourself influenced by how your parents view you?