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Parental Gentle Guidance and Children's Compliance Within the Family: A Replication Study

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Abstract

This study examined the link between young children's compliance and parental gentle guidance from a within-family perspective. Observational data from 57 families (mothers, fathers, and two siblings) participating in a family clean-up session were used to replicate earlier findings reported by Volling, Blandon, and Gorvine (2006). Several of the results were replicated with our older sample. Older siblings used more committed compliance and less passive noncompliance than their younger siblings. Mothers used more gentle guidance than fathers, but no differences were found in their parenting across siblings. Maternal and paternal gentle guidance interacted to explain younger siblings' committed compliance to the father and older siblings' situational compliance. For older siblings' committed compliance and both siblings' passive noncompliance, it was the direct effect of parental gentle guidance that was important. Differential parental gentle guidance appears to negatively impact older siblings' compliance. Results underscore the need to explore within-family processes in order to understand children's early compliance and internalization.

Keywords

children's compliance and passive noncompliance; internalization; parenting; within-family processes

Young children's ability to follow socially constrained rules of conduct is an important developmental task during the toddler and preschool years (Kopp, 1982). Underlying this developmental achievement is the increasing capacity for self-regulation and the internalization of parental socialization goals (Kochanska & Aksan, 2006; Kopp, 1982). Children's internalization reflects the transition from the external, parental control of behavior to the adoption of societal norms and standards as intrinsic regulators of behavior and is considered an important precursor for later conscience and moral development (Grusec, 2006; Kochanska, Coy, & Murray, 2001). Children's committed compliance to parental directives has been identified as an early indicator of internalization because it reflects children's active and enthusiastic involvement in the task directed by the parent and is often characterized by self-initiated behavior (Kochanska & Aksan, 1995; Feldman & Klein, 2003). Indeed, committed compliance increases across the toddler and preschool years. In contrast, situational compliance, in which children comply but are less enthusiastic and need

frequent parental prompts, and passive noncompliance, characterized by children's not following parental directives without exhibiting overt refusal or defiance, decrease as children mature (Kochanska, Aksan, & Koenig, 1995; Kuczynski & Kochanska, 1990).

Mothers' parenting behavior has been identified as an important determinant in the emergence of young children's internalization and their use of committed compliance (Kochanska & Aksan, 2006; Kochanska et al., 1995). The investigation of fathers' parenting behaviors and other family processes, such as coparenting between the mother and father and the differential treatment of siblings, has been limited. In an earlier study, which was the first to explore children's committed compliance from a family systems perspective, we examined the link between family-level processes and children's compliance with 16-month-old toddlers and their older siblings (Volling, Blandon, & Gorvine, 2006). However, children's capacity for self-regulation increases rapidly during the toddler and preschool years and research indicates that parents are sensitive to the developmental needs of their children and adjust their parenting strategies accordingly (Grolnick, Kurowski, McMenemy, Rivkin, & Bridges, 1998). Therefore, how mothers and fathers interact to parent their children may change across this developmental period as their children mature. The current study seeks to replicate the results of Volling et al. (2006), with 2-year-old children and their 5-year-old siblings to further explore the within-family processes that are associated with the development of children's committed compliance across the toddler and preschool years. In addition, the current study explored children's situational compliance and passive noncompliance to provide a more detailed picture of the association between parental gentle guidance and children's compliance during whole-family interaction.

One of the first aims of this research was to examine developmental differences across older and younger siblings in the family with respect to children's compliance. Volling et al., (2006) found that during a family clean-up task older siblings used more committed compliance and less passive noncompliance than did their younger siblings. Older and younger siblings did not differ in their use of situational compliance, despite previous research using mother-child dyadic interaction clean-up tasks, which have shown that situational compliance decreases from the toddler to preschool years. This suggests that children's compliance behavior may differ during whole-family interaction.

The quality of parental control practices, one aspect of parental socialization, assessed during dyadic tasks has been linked to children's compliance and noncompliance to maternal directives and subsequent moral development (Hoffman, 1975; Campbell, 2002). For instance, when mothers gently direct their children's behavior in a non-power assertive manner (e.g., gentle guidance), toddler and preschool children are more likely to engage in committed compliance (Braungart-Rieker, Garwood & Stifter, 1997; Kochanska et al, 1995). Similar results have recently been found in dyadic interaction tasks with fathers (Feldman & Klein, 2003), although some research indicates that fathers are more likely to use directive imperatives and less bargaining, affection, and justification than mothers (Power, McGrath, Hughes, & Manire, 1994). Increasing noncompliant behavior across the toddler and preschool period has often been linked with controlling and harsh parenting (Crockenberg & Litman, 1990; Kuczynski et al., 1987; Smith, Calkins, Keane, Anastopoulos, & Shelton, 2004). Other research suggests, however, that higher levels of bargaining and distraction, which parents often use to gently guide their children to complete a task, is associated with more passive noncompliance (Kuczynski et al., 1987). Indeed some experimental research comparing mothers use of reprimands with their use of distraction, found that reprimands were more effective in stopping young children's noncompliant behavior and preventing future transgressions (Reid, O'Leary, & Wolff, 1994; Piffner & O'Leary, 1989). Overall, this suggests that the types of strategies parents use when their children are noncompliant have important implications for their later compliance behavior. It may be the case that a consistent pattern of sensitive parenting

characterized by gentle guidance supports the children's developmental transition from the use of passive noncompliance to predominately engaging in committed compliance. Alternatively, it may be that gentle guidance is not always an effective strategy for getting children to comply.

Children's differential responses to maternal and paternal requests have also been noted, with children being more likely to comply with directives given by their fathers than by their mothers (Feldman & Klein, 2003; Power et al., 1994). Volling et al. (2006) found that mothers used more gentle guidance than fathers and both parents used more gentle guidance with the older siblings than the younger siblings. Thus, the second aim of this research was to examine differences in mothers' and fathers' gentle guidance with older and younger siblings and to see if children complied differently to mothers and fathers.

Family systems theory proposes that family socialization effects are more than the sum of the dyadic interactions within the family and that family-level processes emerge and only are observable when all members of the family are present (Minuchin, 1985; Volling, Kolak, & Blandon, in press). Coparenting between mothers and fathers, a family-level process, can only be observed when both parents are together interacting with their children. Research suggests that the quality of parents' coparenting has important implications for children's behavior. For instance, coercive coparenting has been related to children's problem behavior (McHale, Kuersten-Hogan, Lauretti, & Rasmussen, 2000; Schoppe, Mangelsdorf, & Frosch, 2001); but, coparenting has received little attention in the research on young children's compliance and emerging internalization. In the current study we were particularly interested in the way that parents manage their interactions during situations where they are trying to get their two children to complete a specific task.

The third aim of the current study was to explore whether one parent's gentle guidance moderated the effect of the other parent's gentle guidance on children's compliance controlling for the effect of individual parenting behavior. Volling et al. (2006) found that both the older and younger siblings' committed compliance were predicted by the statistical interaction between mothers' and fathers' gentle guidance during the clean-up task. Specifically for older siblings, there was a positive association between mothers' gentle guidance and the older siblings' committed compliance to the mother, but only if the fathers' gentle guidance with the older siblings was also high. For the younger siblings' committed compliance, it was only when mothers' gentle guidance was low that fathers' gentle guidance was associated with younger siblings' greater committed compliance to the father. In the current study, we expected differences in the way parents worked together to manage whole-family interaction, given that the older siblings were 5-years-old and should need less parental direction to complete the cleanup task. In this case, we might expect that parents will work together more frequently in getting the younger sibling to clean-up.

Developmental outcomes for two or more siblings in the family have been linked to experiences and environmental factors not shared by siblings growing up in the same family (i.e., nonshared family environment; Boyle et al., 2004). Differential parenting (i.e., how a parent treats one sibling in relation to the other) has been identified as an important aspect of the nonshared family environment that uniquely predicts children's behavioral outcomes even when controlling for direct parenting behavior (McGuire, Dunn, & Plomin, 1995; Volling et al., 2006). It is often the case that parents do not treat older and younger siblings' similarly because of the age difference between them, particularly with respect to discipline (Volling, 1997; Volling & Elins, 1998). Differential parenting behavior has also been associated with children's committed compliance (Volling et al., 2006). Thus, the fourth aim was to examine whether differential gentle guidance contributes to the prediction of children's compliance behaviors. In addition, Feinberg & Hetherington (2001) have proposed that to test whether parental differential treatment is a within-family process, the statistical interaction between direct

parenting by differential parenting needs to be included in the model. Following this suggestion, Volling et al., (2006) found that mothers' differential gentle guidance interacted with their direct gentle guidance to predict older siblings' committed compliance such that older siblings whose mothers used low levels of gentle guidance with them were still more likely to use committed compliance if their mothers were using more gentle guidance with them in comparison to their younger sibling. Thus, the final aim was to examine the interaction of direct gentle guidance and differential gentle guidance in predicting older and younger siblings' compliance behaviors.

Our earlier results emphasized the need to further explore the link between family-level socialization factors and early compliance. Thus, the aims of the current study were: (a) to examine developmental differences in children's compliance behaviors and parents' gentle guidance across siblings; (b) to examine mean differences in mothers' and fathers' use of gentle guidance; (c) to examine the moderating role of mothers' and fathers' gentle guidance on children's compliance behaviors as an indicator of coparenting; (d) to explore whether differential gentle guidance contributes uniquely to the prediction of children's compliance behaviors; and (e) to examine the interaction of direct gentle guidance and differential gentle guidance in predicting children's compliance behaviors.

Method

Participants

Two year-old toddlers, their older siblings, their mothers, and their fathers ($n = 58$) participated in a study examining marital relationship quality and its relations with parenting and children's social and emotional development. Families were recruited from a subject database at a large Midwestern university, local birth announcements, and hospital birth records in addition to flyers left at community daycares, preschools, and churches. Families were contacted and invited to participate if they fit the study's criteria: maritally-intact with both parents living at home, a 2-year-old child, and an older sibling in preschool or early-elementary school.

Mothers and fathers were predominately European American ($n = 54$) and ($n = 56$) respectively, with two Asian American fathers and one Latino father, and one Asian American mother and one Latino mother. Most families were middle or upper-middle class, with 43% of the families as single-earners. Fathers' modal income was \$70,000 to \$80,000 (*Range* = less than \$10,000 to above \$150,000) and mothers' modal income: \$10,000 or less (*Range* = less than \$10,000 to \$100,000 - \$150,000). Parents were married for an average of 8.7 years ($SD = 3.4$ years). Mothers were, on average, 35 years old ($SD = 4.5$ years) and all mothers had completed some college. Fathers were, on average, 37 years old ($SD = 4.6$ years) and all had at least some college level education. The mean age of the younger sibling was 27 months ($SD = 3$ months; range 19 – 33 months; 85% 2nd born, 10% 3rd born, 5% 4th or later). The older sibling closest in age ($M = 58$ months, $SD = 12$ months; range 3 - 7 years) to the younger sibling participated in the study. Sibling dyads in the sample included 16 girl/girl dyads, 14 boy/boy dyads, 11 boy/girl (older/younger), dyads and 17 girl/boy (older/younger) dyads.

Procedure

Families participated in two laboratory visits, each lasting 3 hours that occurred approximately 1 month apart. Visits were conducted in a “living room” setting that included a couch, loveseat, chairs, tables, and several toys (e.g., kitchen, tool bench, blocks, Legos, castle). In the first visit, couples participated in videotaped marital communication tasks and both spouses received a packet of questionnaires that assessed marital and individual characteristics. The second visit included all family members (mother, father, 2 children) and assessed parenting, coparenting and sibling relationship characteristics during several interaction tasks: (a) 15-min

family freeplay warm-up session, (b) 20-min family video watching to assess empathic responding, (c) 30-second distress simulation, (d) 15-min sibling cooperation task, (e) 19-min triadic interaction with first parent to assess jealousy, (f) 19-min triadic interaction with second parent, (g) 5-min family cleanup, (h) 1-min helping simulation, (i) 10-min sibling sharing game, (j) 20-min storybook task with the younger sibling and (k) an interview with the older sibling. Families received \$50 for participating and each sibling received a small gift.

Data for the current study were drawn from observations during the 5-minute family clean-up session. Parents were instructed to get their two children to clean up as many toys as possible in the room with no further instructions as to how this was to be accomplished. The task ended when the family indicated they were finished cleaning up or at 5 minutes ($M = 4.26$ minutes, $SD = 4.73$ minutes). Data from the clean-up task were available for 57 families (one family terminated prior to the 2nd visit). Parent and child behaviors were coded in 15-second intervals with a system adapted from one used by Kochanska and Aksan (1995) to code mother-child clean-up sessions. Two coders independently rated the four dyads for each family, with one coder rating the mother-younger sibling and father-older sibling dyads, and the other coder rating the mother-older sibling and father-younger sibling dyads. Coders were trained on a subsample of tapes until interobserver agreement was 80% or higher. Interobserver agreement (reported below) for parent and child codes was calculated on 23% of the clean-up episodes.

Parent codes—Both mothers' and fathers' behaviors toward the younger and older siblings were coded including: no involvement, social exchange, gentle guidance, negative control and time out (for more information about the coding system see Volling et al., 2006). Only gentle guidance was used in the current study in an effort to replicate the earlier findings. Parental gentle guidance was coded separately for each parent-child dyad (e.g., mother-older sibling, father-younger sibling). *Guidance and gentle control* captured parental strategies designed to control the child's behavior in a positive rather than power assertive manner. This included, giving a directive in a positive tone of voice, making comments or suggestions (e.g., maybe we should put the blocks in the dump truck), or distracting the child back to the clean-up task (e.g., look at the castle. Let's put the cannon balls back in the castle). This included prohibitions that were not given in a negative tone or manner. Interrater agreement was 90% ($\kappa = .83$). Composites of mothers' and fathers' gentle guidance with both the older and younger sibling were created reflecting the percentage of intervals in which the behavior was coded.

Child codes—The predominant child behavior that occurred in each parent-child dyad was coded separately during each interval (e.g., mother-older sibling, father-younger sibling) *Committed compliance* was coded when the child was fully engaged in the task directed by the parent and did not need parental intervention to maintain task orientation. In these instances, the child fully endorsed the parental agenda, stayed on task willingly, and embraced the task wholeheartedly and in some instances, they even set their own goals for the task (e.g., spontaneously moving to another pile of toys upon completion of the first pile). *Situational compliance* reflected instances when the child generally cooperated and responded to parental directives, but were less enthusiastic and seemed somewhat reluctant and needed parental prompting to comply. *Passive noncompliance* was coded when the child ignored the parental instructions and would not complete the task as instructed even with continued parental prompts. The level of refusal and defiance were also coded, but occurred too infrequently and were dropped from further consideration. Interrater agreement was 88% ($\kappa = .80$). Composite scores reflected the percentage of intervals in which each behavior occurred for each parent-child dyad.

Results

Children's committed compliance and passive noncompliance showed evidence of moderate positive skewness and were square root transformed. All analyses were conducted with the transformed variables. Descriptive statistics and the bivariate correlations are presented in Tables 1 and 2 respectively. Maternal gentle guidance with the older sibling was positively associated with committed compliance and passive noncompliance to the mother by the older sibling. Mothers' gentle guidance with the younger siblings was positively correlated with younger siblings' situational compliance and passive noncompliance, and marginally positively correlated with their committed compliance. Fathers' gentle guidance with the older sibling was positively correlated with older siblings' committed and situational compliance to the father. Fathers' gentle guidance with the younger sibling was positively correlated with the younger siblings' committed and situational compliance and passive noncompliance with the father. Cross-child correlations indicate that mothers' and fathers' gentle guidance toward the older siblings were not significantly associated with their gentle guidance with the younger siblings.

Differences in Child and Parent Behaviors as a Function of Sibling and Parent

To establish whether there were developmental differences in compliance between siblings (i.e., committed, situational, passive noncompliance) and differences in gentle guidance for mothers and fathers within the family, a series of 2 (parent: mother, father) \times 2 (sibling: older, younger) repeated measures ANOVAs were conducted with compliance/noncompliance as the dependent variables. In the case of gentle guidance, there was a significant main effect for parent (averaged across older and younger siblings), $F(1, 54) = 10.92, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .17$, with mothers ($M = .43$) using more gentle guidance than fathers ($M = .35$). There was no significant main effect for sibling or any parent by sibling interactions.

There were significant sibling main effects for committed compliance, $F(1,54) = 6.93, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .11$, and passive noncompliance, $F(1,54) = 7.52, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .12$. Older siblings ($M = .29$, averaged across parents) exhibited more frequent committed compliance than younger siblings ($M = .22$), whereas younger siblings ($M = .30$) used more passive noncompliance than older siblings ($M = .22$). There were no significant main effects or interactions for situational compliance. To examine whether the sibling differences were due to age differences, we reran the analyses with the older sibling's age as a covariate. When controlling for older sibling's age, there were no differences between older and younger siblings' committed compliance and passive noncompliance suggesting the sibling effects were due to developmental differences in children's compliance behaviors and parents' gentle guidance across siblings due to age differences between siblings.

Maternal and Paternal Gentle Guidance Predicting Children's Compliance Behaviors

Hierarchical regression models (HRMs) were conducted to examine the unique contribution of mothers' and fathers' gentle guidance in predicting children's committed compliance, situational compliance, and passive noncompliance. Further, we examined the maternal by paternal gentle guidance interaction in these analyses to assess whether one parents' behavior may moderate the effect of the other parents' behavior in line with our expectation that mothers and fathers are coparenting their children during the family clean-up. In all analyses, continuous variables were centered. Significant interactions were plotted using high and low values of the variables (± 1 SD) and simple slopes analyses were conducted to determine whether the slope of each plotted simple regression line was significantly different from zero (see Aiken and West, 1991). Six models were tested for each sibling, predicting compliance (i.e., committed, situational, and passive noncompliance) to the mother and the father. The variables were entered in the following order: (Step 1) the sibling's age, (Step 2) maternal and paternal gentle

guidance, (Step 3) maternal by paternal gentle guidance interaction. The final model reflects the unique effects of mothers' or fathers' gentle guidance controlling for the other parents' gentle guidance and the interaction between mothers' and fathers' gentle guidance.

Younger sibling—Table 3 summarizes the findings. The model predicting committed compliance to the mother did not account for a significant proportion of the variance and neither mothers' nor fathers' gentle guidance was a significant predictor of the younger siblings' committed compliance to the mother. A significant 28% of the variance in younger siblings' committed compliance to the father was accounted for by the overall model. Paternal gentle guidance was positively associated with younger siblings' committed compliance. There was a significant maternal by paternal gentle guidance interaction indicating that the association between paternal gentle guidance and younger siblings' committed compliance differed based on the level of maternal gentle guidance. Figure 1 presents the results from the simple slopes analyses; the line representing high maternal gentle guidance was significantly different from zero ($b = .37, p < .000$), whereas the line representing low maternal gentle guidance was not significantly different from zero ($b = .10, p = .29$). These findings indicate that for the specific values of maternal gentle guidance tested, there was a positive association between fathers' use of gentle guidance and the younger siblings' committed compliance, but only when maternal gentle guidance was high.

For younger siblings' situational compliance to the mother, the model accounted for a significant 57% of the variance (Table 4). Both maternal and paternal gentle guidance were positively associated with the younger siblings' situational compliance. For younger siblings' situational compliance to the father, the model accounted for a significant 46% of the variance (Table 4). Only paternal gentle guidance was positively associated with the younger siblings' situational compliance.

For younger siblings' passive noncompliance with the mother, the model accounted for a significant 25% of the variance (Table 5). Maternal gentle guidance was positively associated with passive noncompliance by the younger sibling. For younger siblings' passive noncompliance to the father, the model accounted for a significant 38% of the variance. Paternal gentle guidance was positively associated with younger siblings' passive noncompliance.

Older sibling—Table 3 summarizes the results. The model accounted for a significant 9% of the variance in the older siblings' committed compliance to the mother. Maternal gentle guidance was positively associated with committed compliance by the older sibling. The model predicting committed compliance to the father accounted for a significant 17% of the variance. Paternal gentle guidance was positively associated with older siblings' committed compliance.

For older siblings' situational compliance to the mother, the model accounted for a significant 51% of the variance (Table 4). Maternal gentle guidance was not directly associated with the older siblings' situational compliance to the mother, but paternal gentle guidance was positively associated with the older siblings' use of situational compliance with the mother. There was also a significant maternal by paternal gentle guidance interaction (Figure 2a). Simple slopes analyses revealed that the line representing high paternal gentle guidance was significantly different from zero ($b = .23, p < .05$), whereas the line representing low paternal gentle guidance was not significantly different from zero ($b = -.07, ns$). This finding indicates that for the specific values of paternal gentle guidance examined, there was a positive association between maternal gentle guidance and older siblings' situational compliance, but only when paternal gentle guidance was high.

A significant 54% of the variance was accounted for in the model predicting the older siblings' situational compliance to the father (Table 4). Paternal gentle guidance was positively

associated with the older siblings' situational compliance with the father. There was also a significant maternal by paternal gentle guidance interaction (Figure 2b). Simple slopes analyses revealed that the lines representing high maternal gentle guidance ($b = .54, p < .001$) and low maternal gentle guidance ($b = .23, p < .01$) were significantly different than zero. This finding suggests that although there is a positive association between paternal gentle guidance and the older siblings' situational compliance, this association was stronger when maternal gentle guidance was high versus when it was low.

For older siblings' passive noncompliance to the mother, the model accounted for a significant 13% of the variance (Table 5). Maternal gentle guidance was positively associated with passive noncompliance by the older sibling. A significant 14% of the variance was accounted for in the model predicting older siblings' passive noncompliance with the father (Table 5). Paternal gentle guidance was associated with the older siblings' use of passive noncompliance with the father.

Differential Parenting Predicting Children's Compliance

HRM models (one for each parent-child dyad for each compliance behavior) were tested to examine whether differential gentle guidance contributed to the prediction of children's compliance behaviors after controlling for the effect of direct parenting behavior. The variables were entered in the following order: (Step 1) sibling's age, (Step 2) one parent's gentle guidance score, (Step 3) standardized differential gentle guidance score (older sibling parenting minus toddler sibling parenting), (Step 4) direct gentle guidance \times differential gentle guidance interaction term. Six models were tested for each sibling predicting compliance/noncompliance to the mother and father.

For the older sibling, fathers' greater use of gentle guidance with older siblings relative to their use of gentle guidance with the younger sibling was associated with lower levels of committed compliance by the older sibling ($\beta = -.47, p < .05, \Delta R^2 = .09, F(1, 52) = 6.70, p < .05$). Specifically, fathers' greater use of gentle guidance with the older sibling relative to the younger sibling was associated with older siblings' engaging in more passive noncompliance ($\beta = .40, p < .05, \Delta R^2 = .07, F(1, 52) = 4.58, p < .05$).

For the models predicting younger siblings' compliance, there was a significant paternal gentle guidance \times paternal differential gentle guidance interaction predicting the younger siblings' committed compliance to the father ($\beta = .25, p < .05, \Delta R^2 = .06, F(1, 51) = 4.50, p < .05$). Simple slopes analyses revealed that the lines representing high paternal gentle guidance ($b = .04, ns$) and low paternal gentle guidance ($b = -.04, ns$) were not significantly different from zero although the significant interaction indicates that simple regression lines for high and low paternal gentle guidance were significantly different from each other. Specifically, there was a positive association between fathers' differential gentle guidance and the younger siblings' committed compliance when direct gentle guidance was high, and a negative association when direct gentle guidance was low. In addition, mothers' greater use of gentle guidance with the older sibling relative to the younger sibling was associated with younger siblings engaging in more situational compliance ($\beta = .34, p < .05, \Delta R^2 = .04, F(1, 52) = 5.02, p < .05$).

No other significant effects of differential gentle guidance or the differential gentle guidance \times direct gentle guidance interactions were found for older and younger siblings' compliance behavior.

Discussion

The current investigation was an attempt to replicate, with an older sample, the findings from our earlier study which focused on the family-level socialization processes that are seldom

explored as factors in the development of children's compliance (Volling et al., 2006). Given the rapid development that occurs across early childhood in self-regulation (Calkins & Fox, 2002) and the significant developmental changes in children's compliance behaviors from 14 to 40 months (Kochanska et al., 2001; Kochanska & Aksan, 1995) we expected that parents' interactions with their children may change across this developmental period. Further, we extended our examination beyond children's committed compliance to include situational compliance and passive noncompliance. This approach allowed us to determine if the within-family processes of coparenting and differential parenting identified in the earlier work might be relevant in predicting other child outcomes.

Within-Family Differences in Parental Gentle Guidance and Children's Compliance

Overall, the results from the current study directly replicated the earlier findings. The age differences that emerged in committed and passive noncompliance are consistent not only with our earlier findings examining within-family, sibling differences, but also with research using mother-child dyads in which older children in preschool and early elementary school engaged in more committed compliance than toddlers (Kochanska & Aksan, 1995; Kochanska et al., 2001). Consistent with Volling et al., (2006), there were no differences between the younger and older siblings' use of situational compliance. In dyadic interaction clean-up tasks, however, situational compliance has been found to decrease as children grow older (Kochanska et al., 1995). Therefore, we would expect older siblings to exhibit less situational compliance than their younger siblings. Yet, it may be the case that older children have difficulty focusing on the goal of cleaning up the toys during the family clean-up task when there are competing demands for their attention. One such distraction may be how parents are interacting with the other sibling.

Interactions between Mothers' and Fathers' Gentle Guidance and Children's Compliance

In addition to independent parent-child dyadic exchanges, children's socialization in the family often occurs during interactions in which both parents and also siblings are present. To explore the family socialization context, we examined the unique contribution of mothers' and fathers' behaviors to the prediction of children's compliance. Further, we examined the moderating role of mothers' and fathers' behaviors in the prediction of children's compliance in an effort to explore the coparental relationship. Overall, we found that the correlates of committed compliance differed for older and younger siblings. Specifically, there was a positive association between fathers' gentle guidance and the younger siblings' committed compliance with the father, but only when mothers' gentle guidance was also high. Maternal gentle guidance appears to enhance the effect of fathers' gentle guidance with the younger child even though mothers' gentle guidance was not directly associated with the younger child's committed compliance when fathers' parenting behavior was included in the model. These findings provide evidence that when both parents are engaged in consistent coparenting during the clean-up task, the younger, 2-year-old siblings performed more committed compliance with fathers. Given that these findings are identical to the results for the *older* siblings in the Volling et al., (2006) this suggests that it is important for parents to utilize consistent coparenting strategies during family interactions when children are 2 to 4 years of age.

The earlier study also found that when mothers' gentle guidance was low there was a positive association between fathers' gentle guidance and younger siblings' committed compliance to fathers. We did not find such an interaction in the current study for either sibling. We proposed in our earlier work that when the young children did not comply with the fathers' requests initially, mothers may use a form of maternal gatekeeping in which they intervened and took over the situation, thereby limiting the fathers' continued involvement. This difference across studies is likely due to the age differences in the siblings across the two studies. Mothers are primarily responsible for caregiving in the family, especially during infancy (Fagan & Barnett,

2003; Yeung, Sandberg, Davis-Kean, & Hofferth, 2001) and may feel more responsible for assisting fathers when the child is young. Because fathers spend more time with their children as they mature (Yeung et al., 2001), mothers may be less inclined to intervene as children became more self-sufficient and compliant to the fathers' requests. It is important to note, that in neither study did maternal gentle guidance have a unique effect on the younger siblings' committed compliance after controlling for the fathers' gentle guidance and the mother by father gentle guidance interaction. Instead, our results underscore processes within the family context that may account for children's developmental outcomes and deserve further scrutiny.

In our previous study we found that older siblings used more committed compliance when both mothers' and fathers' gentle guidance was high. In the current study, only the direct effects of parental gentle guidance were associated with older siblings' committed compliance. This may reflect a developmental change that occurs during the transition from preschool to kindergarten reflected in the age differences across the two studies (average age of older siblings was 4 years in the prior study vs. 5 years of age in the current study). As children mature, they should be using more committed compliance and require less parental prompting. As we might expect if this was the case, parents in the current study relative to our previous study, spent less time using gentle guidance with the older sibling. By age 5 children may not need both parents' support to comply with the task, and therefore, only one parent's request may be sufficient. Alternatively, parents may spend less time using cooperative coparenting when they know their child is capable and more likely to attend to the task. This may be an advantageous strategy, particularly in situations where parents need siblings to complete a task within a certain time limit; whereby parents would be allowed to devote the increased necessary attention their younger child needs in order to complete the task.

In general, when parents used more gentle guidance both children in the family engaged in more situational compliance. This is not surprising given that situational compliance is characterized by the need for more parental prompting *because* children are not actively engaged in the task. Interestingly, the mother by father gentle guidance interactions contributed uniquely to the prediction of the older siblings' situational compliance to the mother and father. Specifically, mothers' gentle guidance was positively associated with older siblings' situational compliance to the mother, but only when fathers' gentle guidance was high. Fathers' gentle guidance was more strongly associated with older siblings' situational compliance with the father, but only when mothers' gentle guidance was also high. Even though mothers utilized gentle guidance to a greater extent in their interactions with their children than did fathers, children were more likely to respond with situational compliance when both parents were high in gentle guidance. It appears that when older siblings' are reluctant to comply in situations where parents expect them to, that parents will work together to get the older sibling involved in the task knowing that once they can get them engaged and interested in doing what was directed they have the ability to finish the task more independently.

Interestingly, only the direct effect of mothering and fathering was associated with younger and older siblings' passive noncompliance. Overall, it seems that parents were using gentle guidance as a general parenting strategy when they were directing their children during the clean-up task. When children ignore their parents' request instead of outright refusing or defying the parent, parents may continue to use gentle guidance as a means to try to get their child excited and engaged in the task. Some research suggests, however, that the use of parental gentle guidance is not always effective and, in fact, may positively reinforce and thereby increase children's noncompliance (Reid et al., 1994; Pfiffner & O'Leary, 1989). Given that we found parental gentle guidance was also associated with committed and situational compliance, it may be that parents' consistent use of guiding strategies, while ineffective in the short-term, may be more adaptive in the long-term. In so doing, parents may build on the child's abilities, as opposed to getting frustrated with developmentally appropriate noncompliant

behavior and reverting to strict controlling parenting strategies which have been linked to the persistence of high levels of noncompliance and increased externalizing behaviors over time (Campbell, 2002).

Family systems are complex. It is possible that the differences that emerged across the two studies reflect differences in family structure and processes, as well as child age differences. Minuchin's (1974) structural family therapy specifies several family configurations based on how families structure their relationships within the family. For instance, in cohesive families, all members are judged to be close to one another but with proper boundaries, whereas in triangulated families, one parent establishes a close relationship, or coalition, with one child, often excluding the other parent. In cohesive families, parents may be more likely to coparent and work together in an effort to get their children to clean-up. In triangulated families, one parent may take control of the task and exclude the other parent. Still, in other family configurations, one parent may work with one child while the other parent works with the sibling. These differences in family structure have been linked with children's behavioral outcomes (Kerig, 1995; Jacobvitz, Hazen, Curran, & Hitchens, 2004). For instance, preschoolers exhibit fewer externalizing behavior problems in cohesive families versus families in which alliances are formed (Schoppe, Mangelsdorf, & Frosch, 2001). More research is needed that examines the multiple configurations of family structure during whole-family interactions and how these configurations are related to parental management strategies and children's outcomes.

Differential Gentle Guidance and Children's Compliance

Parents often do not treat older and younger siblings the same because of the age difference between them, particularly with respect to discipline (Volling, 1997; Volling & Elins, 1998). Indeed, we found that parents use of gentle guidance with the older and younger siblings were not significantly correlated, highlighting that they use different parenting strategies with older and younger siblings. This differential parenting has been identified as an important within-family process that predicts children's outcomes (Feinberg & Hetherington, 2001; McGuire, Dunn, & Plomin, 1995; Volling et al., 2006). We found that when fathers' used more gentle guidance with the older sibling, relative to the younger sibling, the older sibling engaged in less committed compliance and more passive noncompliance with the father. Generally, in families where parents treat their children differently, the sibling with the more adaptive outcomes receives more warmth and affection from their parent, and less negative control in relation to their siblings (Stocker, 1995). Other research suggests that when children perceive differential treatment as unfair or unnecessary they experience poorer outcomes, even if they are the child receiving the preferential treatment (Kowal, Krull, & Kramer, 2006). One possible explanation, then, for our current findings is that older siblings are sensitive to differences in the parenting they receive relative to their younger sibling, which has detrimental effects on their compliance behavior because they are more likely to engage in passive noncompliance and less likely to use committed compliance when fathers parent their two children differently. Because of the correlational nature of the data and the fact that differential parenting was assessed in the same task as children's compliance it is difficult to discern cause and effect. Quite possibly the lower levels of committed compliance and greater use of passive noncompliance by older siblings may lead fathers to use more guidance with them during the clean-up so that they complete the task.

For younger siblings, when fathers engaged in more gentle guidance with the older siblings, the younger siblings used more committed compliance when the direct gentle guidance they received was high and used less committed compliance when the direct gentle guidance they received was low. It appears that differential fathering may be beneficial to the younger siblings as long as fathers are also spending a substantial amount of time with the younger sibling as

well. In addition, mothers' differential treatment was not significantly associated with the older siblings' compliance behavior. Mothers did engage in more gentle guidance than fathers, which again suggests that differential treatment may not negatively influence children's outcomes if the direct gentle guidance to each child is fairly high. Overall, our results indicate that future research on parents' preferential treatment of siblings needs to consider in greater depth whether the absolute levels of parenting behaviors are important.

Although the current research makes an important contribution to the literature regarding family socialization processes and children's compliance, certain limitations need to be acknowledged. First, the sample size was relatively small, limiting our ability to detect small effects (Cohen, 1992) and finding significant interactions. The sample was predominantly white and middle-class which limited the generalizability of the findings. Also, both parent and child behaviors were assessed during the same clean-up session so it will be important to explore the associations between parent and child behaviors in different settings and with larger samples. In addition, the clean-up task was only 5-minutes, which is a short sampling period. The length of the session was dictated, in part, by the time required for four family members to clean-up the laboratory playroom. The limited time frame may be one of the reasons that child refusal and defiance occurred so infrequently. It needs to be noted that the same coder rated both the parent and child within each dyad (although each dyad within the family was rated by independent coders) and it is possible that the associations found could be due to shared informant variance. Lastly, because of the cross-sectional research design, causal relations between family processes and children's compliance could not be determined. Indeed, these dynamics are likely transactional in nature, where parents and child behavior reciprocally influence each other over time (Sameroff, 1987).

In summary, this study was one of the first to examine the within-family socialization processes as correlates of individual differences in children's emerging internalization. The results, which extended our earlier work (Volling et al., 2006), provide further evidence that coparenting and differential parenting of siblings are important correlates of children's compliance and noncompliance across the toddler and preschool years. One of parents' most common concerns in early childhood is children's noncompliance (Campbell, 2002). The current results suggest that the use of cooperative coparenting in which both parents behavior is focused on gently guiding the child by getting them engaged in the task, rather than focusing on strict control, is important for the developmental transition whereby children engage in more committed compliance and less passive noncompliance. Notably, the correlates of children's compliance behavior are not necessarily similar for two children in the same family. It is clear that family systems are complex and accurately depicting these systemic processes in research is essential so that we can better understand children's developing abilities for compliance across the toddler and preschool years.

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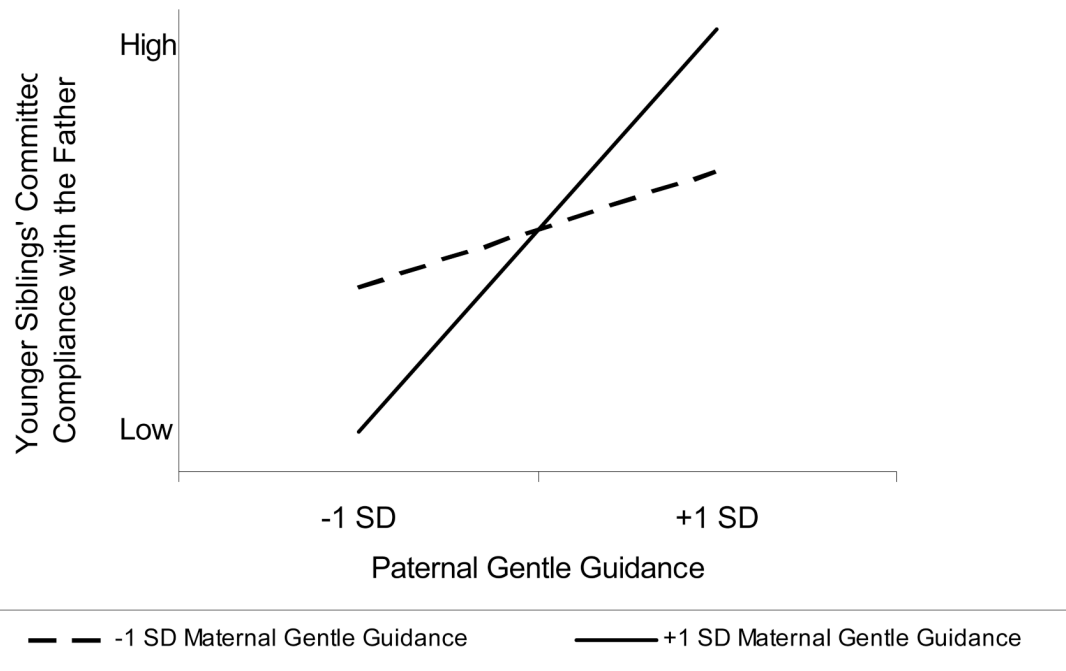


Figure 1. The interaction between mothers' and fathers' gentle guidance with the younger sibling predicting the younger siblings' committed compliance with the father.

Figure 2a

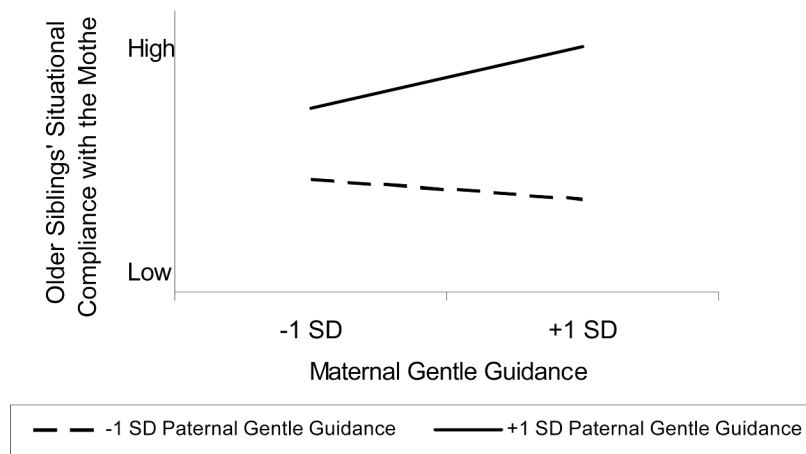


Figure 2b

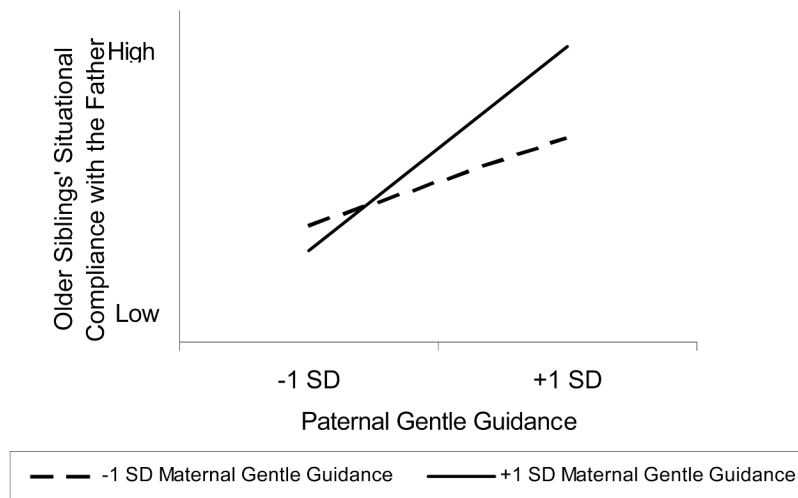
**Figure 2.**

Figure 2a. The interaction between mothers' and fathers' gentle guidance with the older sibling predicting the older siblings' situational compliance with the mother.

Figure 2b. The interaction between mothers' and fathers' gentle guidance with the older sibling predicting the older siblings' situational compliance with the father.

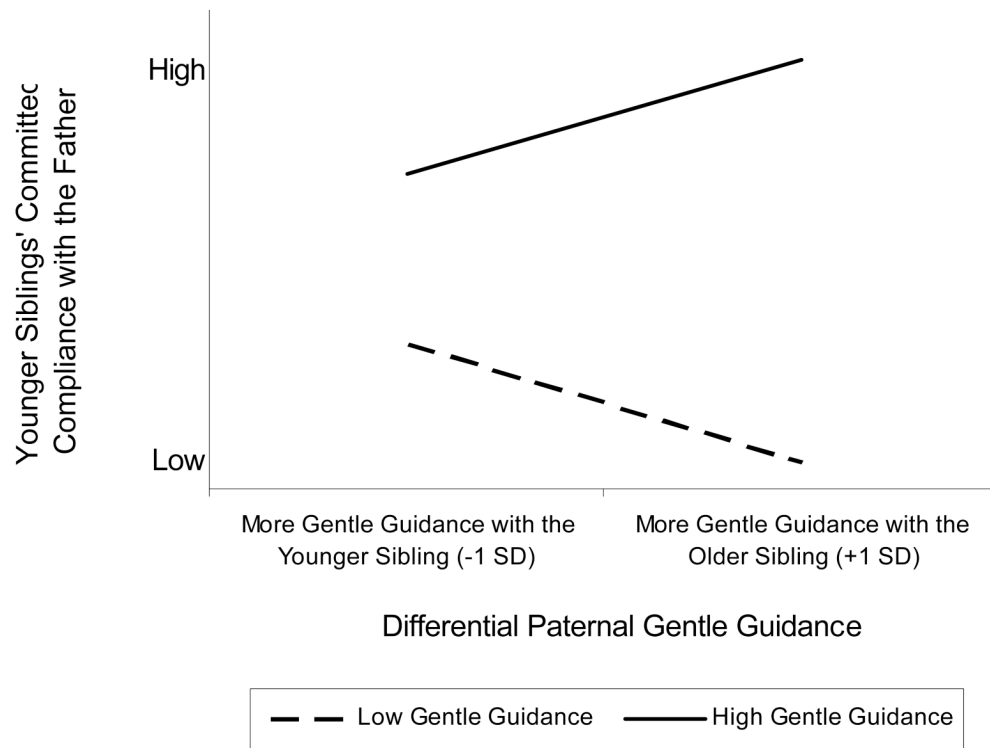


Figure 3. The interaction between fathers' direct and differential gentle guidance with the younger sibling predicting the younger siblings' committed compliance with the father.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for Child Compliance Behaviors and Parental Gentle Guidance (n = 55)

Measure	Mother		Father	
	M	SD	M	SD
<u>Toddler</u>				
Compliance				
Committed Compliance ^a	.24	.21	.19	.19
Situational Compliance	.18	.14	.15	.13
Passive Noncompliance ^a	.31	.21	.28	.19
Parental gentle guidance	.46	.22	.34	.21
<u>Older Sibling</u>				
Compliance				
Committed Compliance ^a	.30	.23	.29	.23
Situational Compliance	.13	.11	.14	.12
Passive Noncompliance ^a	.24	.19	.20	.21
Parental gentle guidance	.40	.19	.37	.23
Differential Gentle Guidance ^b	-.06	.31	.03	.31

^a Descriptive statistics are for the square root transformed variable.

^b Differential gentle guidance was calculated as the gentle guidance toward older sibling minus gentle guidance toward the younger sibling. Positive scores indicate greater gentle guidance with the older sibling. Negative scores indicate greater gentle guidance with the younger sibling. Zero indicates equal treatment.

Table 2
Intercorrelations for Parental Gentle Guidance and Siblings' Compliance Behaviors.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. M Gentle Guidance	.11							
2. F Gentle Guidance	-.05	-.23[†]						
3. Committed Compliance to M	.23[†]	-.20	.04					
4. Situational Compliance to M	.65 ^{***}	.29*	-.02	.09				
5. Passive Noncompliance to M	.54 ^{***}	-.03 ^{***}	-.17	.24 [†]	.23[†]			
6. Committed Compliance to F	.00	.48 ^{***}	.20	.13	-.04	.09		
7. Situational Compliance to F	.06	.69 ^{***}	-.11	.41 ^{***}	-.10	.16	-.01	
8. Passive Noncompliance to F	-.14	.62 ^{***}	-.28	.11	.21	.19	.08	.01

Note. M = Mother, F = Father. Correlations above the diagonal are for the older sibling. Correlations below the diagonal are for the younger sibling. Correlations (bolded) on the diagonal are the cross-child correlations.

[†] $p < .10$.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

Table 3
Hierarchical Multiple Regression Results Examining Parental Gentle Guidance Predicting Children's Committed Compliance.

Predictors	Younger Sibling						Older Sibling					
	Committed Compliance to Mother			Committed Compliance to Father			Committed Compliance to Mother			Committed Compliance to Father		
	β	r	ΔR^2	β	r	ΔR^2	β	r	ΔR^2	β	r	ΔR^2
Step 1												
Sibling Age	.18	.18	.04	.22 [†]	.24	.00	-.02	.02	.02	.01	.01	.01
$\Delta F(1, 54)$			2.29			.02			.94			.03
Step 2												
M Gentle Guidance	.20	.21	.07	.00	.00	.25	.36*	.33	.02	.02	.02	.02
F Gentle Guidance	-.15	.26	1.98	.53***	.53	8.64***	-.12	.12	.14	.48***	.47	.23
$\Delta F(2, 52)$									4.18*			7.66***
Step 3												
M × F Gentle Guidance	.13	.13	.02	.29*	.33	.08	.08	.08	.01	.06	.07	.00
$\Delta F(1, 51)$.88			6.04*			.33			.22
Adjusted R ²	.06			.28			.09			.17		
F(4, 55)	1.80			6.26***			2.41 [†]			3.84		

Note: M = mother, F = father. β 's presented are from the final step of the model in which all variables were entered. Effect sizes, r , for each regression coefficient were calculated according to recommendations by McCartney & Rosenthal (2000).

[†] $p < .10$.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

Table 4 Hierarchical Multiple Regression Results Examining Parental Gentle Guidance Predicting Children's Situational Compliance.

Predictors	Younger Sibling						Older Sibling					
	Situational Compliance to Mother			Situational Compliance to Father			Situational Compliance to Mother			Situational Compliance to Father		
	β	r	ΔR^2	β	r	ΔR^2	β	r	ΔR^2	β	r	ΔR^2
Step 1												
Sibling Age		.30	.07	-.09	.12	.06	-.16	.21	.02	-.12	.17	.01
$\Delta F(1, 54)$			3.87 [†]			3.23			1.20			.71
Step 2												
M Gentle Guidance	.68***	.73	.52	.10	.13	.44	.14***	.18	.48	.17***	.23	.50
F Gentle Guidance	.28***	.39	32.64***	.68***	.68	22.62***	.71***	.71	24.62***	.74***	.74	27.00***
$\Delta F(2, 52)$												
Step 3												
M × F Gentle Guidance	.14	.21	.02	-.04	.06	.00	.21*	.29	.04	.25*	.34	.06
$\Delta F(1, 51)$			2.44			.18			4.82*			6.81*
Adjusted R ²	.57			.46			.51			.54		
F(4, 55)	19.53***			12.61***			15.03***			17.07***		

Note: M = mother, F = father. β 's presented are from the final step of the model in which all variables were entered. Effect sizes, r , for each regression coefficient were calculated according to recommendations by McCartney & Rosenthal (2000).

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

Table 5
 Hierarchical Multiple Regression Results Examining Parental Gentle Guidance Predicting Children's Passive Noncompliance.

Predictors	Younger Sibling						Older Sibling					
	Passive Noncompliance to Mother			Passive Noncompliance to Father			Passive Noncompliance to Mother			Passive Noncompliance to Father		
	β	r	ΔR^2	β	r	ΔR^2	β	r	ΔR^2	β	r	ΔR^2
Step 1												
Sibling Age		.03	.00		-.08	.03		.10	.05		.01	.00
$\Delta F(1, 54)$.06			1.89			2.69			.06
Step 2												
M Gentle Guidance	.55***			-.10	.12		.39**	.36		-.07	.07	
F Gentle Guidance	-.01	.01	.30	.59***	.60	.36	.10	.11	.14	.40**	.40	.17
$\Delta F(2, 52)$			10.88***			15.40***			4.37*			53.33**
Step 3												
M \times F Gentle Guidance	-.07	.08	.01	-.19 [†]	.24	.03	-.07	.07	.01	-.18	.25	.03
$\Delta F(1, 51)$.36			3.02 [†]			.28			2.07
Adjusted R ²	.25**			.38***			.13*			.14*		
F(4, 55)	5.49			9.50			2.97*			3.25*		

Note: M = mother, F = father. β 's presented are from the final step of the model in which all variables were entered. Effect sizes, r , for each regression coefficient were calculated according to recommendations by McCartney & Rosenthal (2000).

[†] $p < .10$.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.