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Mothers' conflict resolution strategies: Cognitive and contextual aspects

Scott, Bonnie Lee, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1991

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MOTHERS' CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES: COGNITIVE AND CONTEXTUAL ASPECTS

by

BONNIE L. SCOTT

A Dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1991

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

MOTHERS' CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES:
COGNITIVE AND CONTEXTUAL ASPECTS
by
Bonnie L. Scott

Advisor: Professor Mary Parlee

This study was an investigation of 17 mothers' communication strategies for resolving conflicts with their pre-school-aged children and their reasons for choosing those strategies. Mothers were presented 8 hypothetical vignettes during a home interview and their strategies were coded, using Irving Sigel et al.'s coding scheme for communication strategies. A significant relationship was found between certain strategies and situation type, children's age and children's gender. In addition, mothers' reports of distancing strategies was significantly related to their belief that children learn through explanation and instruction. This analysis led to a clarification of certain problems in the literature on child-rearing and

belief systems; in particular, the relative neglect of children's active participation in constructing interactions and the ambiguity of coding schemes regarding beliefs about learning. The various methods used in this study and the kinds of data that were obtainable from each method (quantitative and qualitative) were also examined. This included an evaluation of a new method which involved mothers viewing a videotape of themselves and their child engaged in a minor conflict, followed by a series of questions about the particular episode viewed on tape. This method provided an opportunity to see how mothers and children resolve conflicts in real-life, and how their strategies on tape compared with those mentioned in response to a similar hypothetical vignette. It was also an attempt to gain a clearer understanding of these mothers' folk psychology, the context they brought to bear on their actions, and how they felt about the interaction on videotape. The interview is discussed as a situated activity, exploring how interview questions shape subsequent discourse as well as how assumptions about context are embedded in both the construction of the interview and the resulting empirical data.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The biggest surprise during graduate school is that it takes a lot longer to finish than any of those brochures tell us when we begin considering the prospect. I continued on though, primarily because I met lots of people who truely love the work they do. I felt encouraged by their involvement and interest in issues that I think are important.

Everyone in graduate school either chooses or is assigned an advisor. It's part of the deal. But not everyone finds a mentor. I was very lucky. Mary Parlee has been not only my advisor, but a mentor in the finest sense of the word. She took on the task of helping me find my own direction and she has done so in a very caring and respectful way. She has always treated my ideas seriously and with interest, which has helped me to do the same. In almost every conversation I have ever had with Mary, she has been able to extend those ideas in some way that I would not have seen otherwise. Her politically grounded perspective and creative thinking have been invaluable to the shaping of this dissertation and more importantly, to the development of my own thinking. I will always cherish her friendship and guidance and insight.

In those first two years of classes, Sylvia Scribner set a foundation that I am continually re-discovering. She

has always pushed us to avoid rhetoric, think clearly and be specific. She sets a great example. Jean Lave said once that we rarely realize what we have learned until long, long after we have begun learning it. So many times while writing this disseration, some thought seems to just "be there", until I realize that in some way, it often leads back to Sylvia. I have learned more than I know from her, not only from her classes and her writing and her work, but from my involvement with her. She is strong, generous, and inspiring.

When I think of Roger Hart, the image is of continual motion. He is constantly on the go, doing something new--always excited or exhausted or both. He has shown me that it IS possible to have a million dreams and make most of them work. Roger's implicit refusal to maintain "professional distance" from his students created the opportunity for us to really work as a team. He allowed his projects to be OUR projects, which gave us the rare freedom, as students, to contribute in really important ways.

My friends at the Graduate Center--if we weren't commiserating, we were probably making too much noise laughing. It was the best in bonding experiences. Without the long talks in the coffee shop on 43rd, the office banter, the ranting in the xerox room, the camping trips, the movies and the dancing, graduate school would not have mattered as much. When I think back on our time together, a

hint of rose has already been added to the hue, in spite of what I KNOW to be a very difficult time in our lives.

Having spent the last two years literally across the country, making a new place for myself with Randy, taking a peculiar comfort in surrounding myself with videotapes and interview transcripts, I am maybe prematurely sentimental. Different from leaving home at 17, I have a clearer awareness now that I can never go back, and that there will be times when I will wish I could. Unsure of the possibilities ahead, I will miss that sense of belonging that I took for granted.

Randy, of course, has spent the last two years seeing me through this process as an absentee student. Humor and support always seem to come easily from him, but I know better. He has helped me plow through the endless frustrations of writing a dissertation in much better humor than I could have done alone. Best of all, he knows the value of taking time off. Playing is a great way to regain perspective. It's his turn now. I hope I can do as much for him.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Theoretical Perspectives and Empirical Results in Parent-Child Interaction Research

Investigations of the relationship between parent and child have traditionally been carried out within two major theoretical frameworks; social learning theory and psychodynamic theory (Stayton et al. (1971). Attachment theory, which evolved from ethological and psychodynamic perspectives, has been one pathway for investigating mother-child relations. Another has been social learning theory. The attachment theorists have looked at parenting in terms of the parent's sensitivity to the child, while social learning theorists have looked at these interactions in terms of contingencies between the actions of parent and the child (E. A. Skinner, 1985). Neither of these perspectives have incorporated a cognitive-developmental perspective (Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

Parenting strategies is one area of investigation in which the kinds of questions that have generally been overlooked can be highlighted. The consequences of particular child-rearing strategies for children's development has received much more empirical and theoretical

attention than has the question of why parents parent the way they do (Belsky, 1984). Despite this relative neglect however, there is considerable empirical data on correlates of parenting strategies: father's occupation, parental attitudes, mother's social network, parental age, marital status of mother, child temperament, quality of marital relationship, parental identification, outside employment of mother, depression, mother's ratings of child temperament, divorce, stress, self-esteem, life-style, cohort, race, social economic status, history of child abuse, personality, mother's satisfaction, history of alcoholism, birth defects, pre versus full term infants, problem-solving styles, parental sensitivity, kinship, and unemployment. The bulk of this research unfortunately remains unintegrated by any conceptual model (Belsky, 1984).

To begin to resolve this problem, Belsky proposes a model of the determinants of parenting which divides them into three categories: 1) parent personality 2) child characteristics and 3) social context within which the parent-child relationship is embedded. He concludes that parenting is multiply determined, that these three influences are not equal in influencing parent functioning, and that developmental history and personality shape parenting indirectly by influencing the broader context in which the parent-child relationship exists.

A problem with this framework as well as with social learning theory and attachment theory, is that the theories do not address the purposeful nature of interactions nor the cultural/historical organization of human activity. Regardless of what factors are found to be associated with parenting strategies, the explanation of that association must include the context within which the actions are occurring (E. A. Skinner, 1985). This context necessarily includes actions of the child, the parent's interpretation of the child's actions and intentions, the parent's own goals and intentions in using the chosen strategy, and the meaning and value of that action. Furthermore, any particular action may have many different meanings and functions, depending on the particular context within which it is found (E. A. Skinner, 1985). Cognitive processes in context therefore, will have to be an important focus of investigations of parent-child relationships.

Meanings, goals, and situational context are important aspects of interaction and communication in general. Miller and Sperry (1987) address the issue of how children acquire the rules for appropriate communication and interpretation of feelings, giving very rich examples of assumptions guiding parents' interactions with their children. They discuss the socialization of emotion, arguing that the caregivers' actions depend on 1) life experiences which have determined the meaning of particular

emotions for them, 2) their beliefs and goals with respect to that emotion and 3) the behavioral and situational contexts in which the emotion is expressed.

Observations of interactions between parent and child have contributed much to the body of research on child-rearing practices but meanings, goals, and situational context of the interactions have largely been ignored. Rather, investigators have focused primarily on behavioral contingencies between parent and child and on social correlates of parental behavior, such as those cited above. Furthermore, the direction of influence has usually been conceptualized as one-way; in this case, from parent to child. Maccoby & Martin (1983) have noted a trend away from this kind of research and the need for sequential data of family interactions, trends they suggest have already occurred in the field of sociology.

In describing theoretical differences between the social control theorists and the attachment theorists, E. A. Skinner has also argued that studying the degree of contingency of caregiver responses to the child does not provide us with the whole picture. Contingent response, as operationalized in the research, refers to response parameters, not content. The <u>appropriateness</u> of the caregiver's response to the child is also important, regardless of whether the response is contingent upon a child's behavior. The parent's ability to perceive and

interpret the child's signals and intentions makes responses appropriate (E. A. Skinner, 1985). Skinner notes that Ainsworth has defined sensitivity of response to include both contingency and appropriateness. However parents' goals, values, intentions, and ideas about parenting are increasingly regarded as important for understanding parents' choice of strategies as well. Goodnow (1988) cites many investigators who have stressed that focusing only on overt behaviors is to ignore the fact that people interpret events, interpretations which may influence their actions and feelings. Bruner (1990) makes a similar point when he argues for the importance of investigating "folk psychology"--narratives about how and why people act and how they deal with trouble. He believes that our ideas and actions are guided by our folk psychology and so it is important to investigate folk psychology's role in everyday life.

Bell and Chapman (1986) argue that some of the most significant socialization occurs during periods of destabilization in which children or their parents may not be meeting each others' expectations and demands. Reasons for these destabilzation periods vary in gravity from broad developmental changes in the child to more immediate consequences of interpersonal interactions. According to this view, conflicts between children and their parents would be important to investigate. Furthermore, the ways in

which conflicts are handled by the parent and child may affect the child's relationship with others as well as with the parent. The particular forms of negotiation the child comes to understand as possible and successful may be influenced by this changing relationship with the caregiver.

A conflict episode has been operationally defined by Eisenberg and Garvey (1981) as an "expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties, who perceive incompatible goals, scarce rewards, and interference from the other party in achieving their goals." Most directly relevant to the discussion of conflicts between parents and their children is the observational data of parents managing their children under various circumstances. This body of research addresses two major questions: 1) What factors influence parents' use of strategies in managing their child? 2) What is the relationship between the particular parenting strategy used and the degree of compliance by the child? Although this research does not directly discuss the cognitive aspects of interaction; that is, the meanings, values and goals of the participants involved, it is important to understand how parent-child interactions and parents' management of children have been conceptualized and what has been found.

Minton et al. (1971) observed mothers and their 27-month-old children in the home and in a laboratory, recording children's responses to their mothers' commands,

mothers' anticipations of their child's next action, as well as mothers' responses to requests and violations by the children of their mothers' commands. Mothers' behavior did not correlate well with their child's obedience, but a relationship was found between the education of the mother and egalitarian versus authoritarian behaviors directed at the child. Minton et al. conclude in part that a mother's education is likely to be related both to her goals and to the implicit theories of child-rearing on which she bases her actions, but that this does not necessarily result in the child's behaving as the mother expects. They conclude, however, that their study can neither support nor refute social learning theory because although more frequent punishment did not necessarily lead to more obedient children, assessment of the consistency of reinforcing obedient behavior was not complete enough in this study.

Minton et al. support Baldwin's view that mothers have fairly cohesive attitudes about child-rearing which differ on a behavioral dimension of authoritarian versus egalitarian child-rearing practices. Grusec & Kuczynski (1980), however, found that the type of disciplinary control mothers used had more to do with the type of misdeed than with any consistent child-rearing strategy of the mother's. Mothers of 4 to 8-year-old children were asked to respond to twelve tape-recorded hypothetical disciplinary situations where the child disobeyed the mother, as if she were dealing

with her own child. Although this differs from Minton et al.'s study in the use of hypothetical rather than actual events, Grusec and Kuczynski are fairly confident that, because of the large number of hypothesized power assertions reported by the mothers, they were not simply responding in a socially desirable manner. However, this assumption that power assertions are necessarily seen by mothers as socially undesirable is an empirical question.

Another difference between these two studies is the seriousness of the consequences of the child's action. Minton et al. (1971) note that most of the misbehaviors of children in their study were "trivial", while Grusec and Kuczynski used a wide range of scenarios, including swinging on a stair rail, ignoring calls to dinner, stealing a dollar from the mother's purse, and hitting another child with a bat. It does not seem surprising that these investigators would find large variations in a mother's response to these situations, given the wide range of seriousness represented. Grusec and Kuczynski's point however is that parents are more flexible in child-rearing approaches than some studies would suggest. Their results support their hypothesis that the form of discipline mothers say they would use is substantially determined by the type of misdeed and do not support the existence of a cross-situational disciplinary style. Age of child was not found to be a significant variable in the overall analysis.

It is evident that the definition of "disciplinary techniques" or "control techniques" differs across research studies, although definitions are rarely made explicit. "Compliance" also is operationalized in different ways. For example, Stayton et al. (1971) used two compliance criteria: The child responds either "promptly" after a maternal command or "after some delay". Holden (1983) used only one criterion but it was more precise: The child responds within twenty seconds following a maternal response. Such differences in definitions can seriously jeopardize comparability between studies which claim to be observing the same phenomenon.

Schaffer & Crook (1979) define control techniques as "all those behaviors employed by one person to change the ongoing course of another's activity. They are techniques designed to have an immediate effect ... and do not extend to the evaluation of more long-term socialization policies. (Their) function ... (is) to channel behavior in certain directions, inhibiting some tendencies and enhancing others".

Holden (1983) used this definition in his study of maternal control techniques in the supermarket. He observed 24 mothers with their 2 1/2-year-old children while they were shopping for groceries. Holden argues for the relative novelty of this kind of research because few studies have documented management techniques in public settings. He

distinguished between reactive and proactive attempts by the mother to control the child, finding that the mothers' use of proactive controls, which requires anticipation of an event and action in advance to prevent it, was negatively correlated with the frequency of power-relation bouts between mother and child. A power-relation bout is defined by Holden as an instance where the child does not comply with the mother's request, but instead responds with the same or another action. Thus, Holden emphasizes that although there is certainly mutual influence between the mother and the child, mothers have the advantage of being able to anticipate their child's actions and structure the social interaction so as to preempt the child's undesired behavior.

Holden evokes Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development, arguing that the child can profit from these proactive strategies by learning what is acceptable behavior in the supermarket without mothers' resorting to frequent power bouts with their children. This may in turn serve to maintain the mother's positive sense of her own parenting skills and create a more harmonious, less testing-oriented relationship between mother and child.

Environmental contexts also affect the parent-child interaction. Howes & Olenick (1986) note that stability of both parental control strategies and children's compliance in the laboratory increased with age for children between 18

months and 36 months, but that developmental increases in compliance were not found in natural environments. They note however that parents and teachers had greater opportunities to adjust situations to their child's level in the home and daycare settings. In laboratory settings, an experimenter required certain tasks to be completed and placed certain demands on the child, whereas in natural settings, the caretakers had more control over what battles to fight and when to fight them. This selection process may differ depending on the presence or absence of observers and must always be acknowledged, if not actually investigated, when doing naturalistic research.

Parents' involvement in other activities while they are watching their children is another contextual factor affecting parents' choice of strategies. Zussman (1980) observed 20 mothers and 20 fathers, each with two of their own children in a laboratory. Parents' interactions with their children were observed in the laboratory when the parent was busy with an anagram task and again when they were not involved in any specific task. Parents in the task situation were described as resorting to "minimal parenting"; negative behaviors may often increase because parents see this as a method for obtaining rapid compliance. Responsiveness, support, and stimulation toward pre-schoolers decreased during the task phase, while interference, criticism and punishment increased toward

toddlers. Parents were slower to respond to their children, interacted for shorter periods of time, and shifted their attention rapidly from task to children, during the task phase. Zussman concludes that if these findings were applied to naturalistic settings, they may help to explain some of the demographic studies on parenting which compare parenting strategies of larger families with those of smaller families. Child-rearing in larger families tend to involve less affection, more punitiveness and more sex differentiation. Raising a large family can be seen as a kind of parent overload, similar to task competition, which could result in similar parenting behaviors.

Theoretical Perspectives and Empirical Results in Research on Parents' Ideas About Child Management

Valsiner argues that it is no longer sufficient simply to observe parents' behavior with their children in different contexts; we must look at how parents reason about their ways of interacting with their children (Valsiner, 1988). Nor is it productive, Holden and Ritchie argue, to look at parenting in terms of traits (Holden & Ritchie, 1988). We must recognize that a parent's actions are multiply determined and therefore try to understand how parents' thinking and actions are related to one another. Parents' strategies are constantly changing and they are implemented within contexts. Parents' choices of strategies are intelligible to the extent that the strategies are

appropriate to the situation, the child, and the larger cultural context, are implemented in a suitable fashion, and are a function of differential weighing of the factors involved (Holden & Ritchie, 1988). Descriptions of personality traits can not capture this quality, nor can descriptions of interactions within different contexts alone make this clear. It is necessary to explore parents' reasoning and understanding of their own actions in order to gain a deeper understanding of the processes at work between parent and child.

Investigators have used a variety of methods and combinations of methods to study parents' ideas about different aspects of child-rearing, including questionnaires, interviews, Q-Sorts, and hypothetical vignettes introduced in a variety of ways (Block, 1965; Dix et al., 1986; Holden, 1988; Lambert, 1979; McGillicuddy-DeLisi, 1982; Reid & Valsiner, 1986; Sigel, 1986; E. A. Skinner, 1985; Sutherland, 1983). Two studies that specifically investigated the relationship between parents' beliefs about child-rearing and their parenting strategies were published by E. A. Skinner (1985) and Sigel and McGillicuddy-DeLisi (Sigel, 1986).

Sigel and McGillicuddy-DeLisi (Sigel, 1986) studied parents' use of distancing strategies and their beliefs about children's development. Distancing strategies, Sigel

claims, are hypothesized to foster the development of representational thinking by children:

> Distancing strategies...place cognitive demands on the child to reconstruct the past...employ his or her imagination, plan and anticipate future actions...wherein the parent engages the child to be an active participant in an interaction (pg. 38).

They used a sample of 120 families with children between the ages of 3 1/2 and 5 years of age. Parents were interviewed, using open-ended questions, about their responses to twelve hypothetical vignettes relevant to parental child-rearing practices. They were then asked about their own child's developmental level and capabilities. Parents were also observed in the laboratory, where they performed a paper-folding task and a story-telling task with their child. The investigators found associations between parents' beliefs and their use of distancing strategies, but they stress that the relationship was not simple since it varied by sex of parent and by task. Fathers' beliefs were found to be related to their use of distancing strategies, and this correlated with their child's performance level. Mothers' beliefs, on the other hand, were not found to be related to their use of distancing strategies or to their amount of experience in raising children, but instead were related to their education or their age (McGillicuddy-DeLisi, 1982).

E. A. Skinner (1985) also investigated the role of parents' beliefs about child-rearing, but conceptualized them as determinants of mothers' "sensitive" and "contingent-responsive" behavior. She discusses sensitivity in terms of Ainsworth's definition: "(sensitivity) implies that signals are perceived and correctly interpreted and that the response is prompt and appropriate" (Ainsworth, 1967, p. 198). Skinner used the same sample that Sigel and McGillicuddy-DiLisi used for their study. Mothers read each of twelve hypothetical incidents involving a parent and a preschool child and then ranked four options for handling each situation. The first part of the interview was designed to assess mothers' sensitivity in situations involving conflict. They were asked to give rationales for their choices and these were coded for sensitivity in terms of child-rearing goals, child-rearing orientation and situational constraints. The second part of the interview assessed sensitivity in learning situations and was coded in terms of the extent to which the mother viewed the child as an active participant in his or her development. Parents were then observed doing a paper folding task with their child in a laboratory containing a toy telephone which served as a potential distraction to the child. The mothers' actions were coded in terms of degree of directiveness, orientation, and responsiveness.

E. A. Skinner (1985) found that mothers who reported that they attend carefully to the child during conflicts and who expressed the belief that children learn through their own initiative, allowed more options for the child both when the child was on task and when off task in a laboratory situation. These mothers showed high directiveness, however, when explaining the task to the child. Skinner argues that definitions of sensitivity and contingency-responsive behaviors have theoretical advantages over categories like warmth and support, because they allow specification of the function of behaviors in process theories, inclusion of relevant child behaviors and amenability to precise operationalization. However, more work is needed, she adds, to discover precisely what beliefs are related to what behaviors. She further recommends that actions of the child should be recorded in detail in order to understand the functional relationship between the parent, the child, and the parent's belief system.

Sutherland (1983) has criticized the use of the notion of "control" in child development research, since it focusses solely on the unequal aspects of the relationship between parent and child. She suggests that to better understand the socialization process between parents and children, we need to understand parents' beliefs about the nature of learning and knowledge, not their beliefs about control. Sigel (1986) and McGillicuddy-DeLisi (1980) have

been developing research in this same direction, investigating links between parents' communication strategies and parents' understanding of how children learn.

Goodnow (1988) reviews the literature on parents' ideas about parenting, noting the various terms which have been used to refer to these cognitions: expectations, perceptions, stereotypes, beliefs, knowledge, naive theory, everyday concepts. Usually these different words convey differences in meaning, which may or may not be acknowledged.

She suggests the use of the term "ideas" in research on parents' cognitions about parenting, because it avoids the connotation of conviction by the speaker that the widely used term "beliefs" denotes. She concentrates on three main issues regarding parents' ideas: 1) Sources of parents' ideas and the circumstances under which ideas change. 2) Effects of parents' ideas on children. 3) Links between parents' ideas and parents' actions.

Goodnow (1988) notes that most research on parents' ideas about parenting has been conceptualized within a cognitive-developmental framework, with some impact from experimental social psychology and from anthropological/sociological studies. Of those investigators interested in the sources of ideas, developmentalists tend to view ideas as self-constructed, while others view ideas as "received knowledge". In her

review of research addressing the link between ideas, actions, and feelings, Goodnow (1988) points to some of the problems within this research area and offers suggestions for future research. She argues that group comparisons may not be effective in illuminating the effects of individual experience on parenting strategies, and, furthermore, that we may not have yet identified the specific experiences that alter specific ideas.

For those investigating the relationship between ideas and actions, Goodnow urges caution, warning that as long as parents feel no need to create consistency between their ideas and actions, there will probably be little relationship found. Parents may often state their ideas in socially desirable terms, which may have little relationship to their actual parenting strategies. She suggests that parents' ideas about parenting should be studied in their own right and not primarily for their direct links with action.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

In her review, Goodnow (1988) offers suggestions for modifying the way the relationship between parents' ideas and actions has been traditionally conceptualized. Agreement between ideas and actions may vary according to:

1) the social location of people investigated (whether male or female, middle or low income)
2) the conditions in which actions occur (whether public or private),
3) the particular actions studied (whether on task or off task, broad versus narrow range of behaviors)
4) whether actions are a function of one versus many ideas,
5) whether the ideas follow the actions or the actions follow the ideas

Goodnow also suggests some specific modifications of research design and practices that would enable investigators to gain a clearer understanding of the relationships between ideas and actions.
These suggestions are:
1) Match the content of the ideas and the content of the actions in terms of the degree of generality. Asking

parents about their ideas regarding children in general but looking at actions with a particular child in a particular situation, does not provide a very good match and will not be likely to show a relationship between ideas and actions.

2) Ask about specific actions, using vignettes when possible, to discuss why parents act the way they do and what actions might be influenced by having an observer present.

3) Intentionally violate implicit rules held by parents in order to make parents' rules explicit as they talk with the investigator.

4) Increase parents' awareness of their ideas before a task as a way of pushing for a closer relationship between their ideas and actions.

5) Use experimental situations to produce actions rather than using only hypothetical vignettes.

6) Allow parents to define their own dimensions and connections between ideas, actions and feelings rather than choosing the dimensions for them. Allow the interviews to be open-ended and exploratory.

Upon reflection of his study with McGillicuddy-DeLisi, Sigel (1986) also offered several suggestions for future research investigating parents' beliefs as predictors of their parenting practices. He suggests that three methods be used simultaneously:

1) Introduce pre-defined vignettes as a basis for an interview to explore parents' predictions of their own actions (concrete beliefs), their constructions underlying these actions (abstract beliefs) and the sources of these beliefs (contextual factors)
2) Videotape observations of parents in situations similar to those being studied in the interview, possibly with an additional interview where the parent can view their own actions on video and explain them to the interviewer. This can then be used as a second set of beliefs which are contexted in action
3) A second set of observations done in the home so the interactions can be observed in a different context

The present study attempted to implement some of these suggestions about methodologies and the changes in conceptualizations they entail. In overview, this involved presenting mothers with several hypothetical vignettes and interviewing them about the strategies they would use in each situation and their reasons for choosing each strategy. It also involved videotaping mothers and children in their home, dealing with a conflict as it naturally occurred. Each mother was shown the videotaped conflict of herself and her child, and she was then interviewed about her ideas and reactions with regard to the episode on tape.

Hypothetical vignettes were used as the basis for the interview, in which the focus was on specific strategy choices mentioned by each mother and her reasons for choosing each strategy. This focus helped to keep the discussion about actions and ideas very specific. All of the questions were open-ended to allow each mother to make her own connections between actions and ideas.

The reasons mothers give for their strategy choice may be either long term or short term. Kuczynski (1984) has investigated the relationship between long-term and short-term goals on parenting strategies aimed at gaining compliance. Facilitation of learning by the child, for example, can be thought of as a potential long-term goal influencing many parents in their choice of communication strategies. This is important to investigate, but conflicts appear to have a more immediate sense to them as well, which is also in need of investigation. To paraphrase a comment made by John Dore, "parents have to maintain a relationship with their child and take care of business at the same time". This "taking care of business" can be considered a more immediate goal. How parents provide a balance between these more immediate pressures and others is an empirical question. A content analysis of mothers' reasons for strategy choices helped to show how these short-term and long-term goals balanced out.

In addition to the presentation of hypothetical vignettes, mothers in the present study were given the opportunity to view a videotape of themselves and their child in conflict in a real-life situation, and to make their intentions, feelings, perceptions, satisfaction and reasons for their actions explicit. Sigel suggests this method but it has not yet been used in the research areas of child-rearing practices or parental belief systems. This was done by allowing each mother to reflect on the selected video segment in a stepwise manner, and to describe each interaction in terms of her ideas about her and her child's intentions and feelings at the time. Mothers were later asked to talk about why they used the particular strategies they did and how they felt this connected with their intentions and the particular pressures they may have been experiencing. It was anticipated that asking mothers to provide a link between their strategies, reasons, feelings and intentions, when allowed to actually see themselves in a real conflict, would provide a richer account than responses to hypothetical vignettes alone would provide.

The videotape of each mother and her child in conflict also created an opportunity for both the mother and the investigator to compare hypothetical actions with real life actions. Mothers were first presented with a hypothetical vignette similar to the videotaped episode and asked about their strategies. Then each mother was shown the videotape

of the similar videotaped episode and asked to discuss any differences between her hypothetical responses and her real-life strategies.

To begin to answer the question of whether mothers think they change their strategies in dealing with conflicts between themselves and their child as their child grows older, mothers were asked if they would have handled each of the conflicts described in the vignettes differently if their child had been a year younger or a year older and if so, how and why. Additional questions were asked specifically about whether or not each mother uses explanations with her child, discusses consequences with her child, or solicits her child's help in verbally solving certain kinds of problems ("distancing"). The data were analyzed to determine the age for which mothers reported attempting to use these three strategies, in what kinds of situations, and when they believe these strategies appear to become useful for the child.

Certainly children's age, in itself, does not explain possible changes in parenting strategies, but it may be used by parents as an index of reasons for change in their strategies. A child does eventually develop sophisticated means of communicating his or her needs. Furthermore, the child does come to understand other peoples' perspectives, which appears to be related to this sophistication. Bearison and Cassell (1975) found associations between

children's ability to accommodate communication to the listener's perspective and their families' use of more person-oriented (versus position-oriented) appeals. Haslett (1983) studied children two to five years of age, and discusses their increasing ability to persuade their peers to comply with their wishes. This kind of research on children's developing cognitive and communicative abilities led this investigator to believe that parents may accommodate their strategies in dealing with conflicts to the child's level of understanding, with more or less success, in a similar way to Wertsch's descriptions of scaffolding within the zone of proximal development (Wertsch, 1984). For comparability in exploring the potential relationship between children's ages and parents' strategies, only those incidents which could be applied to children of all the ages in this sample were used as hypothetical vignettes. Each mother was asked to respond to each vignette as if it involved her own child. Children's communication strategies were also explored, both from their mothers' perspectives in response to the hypothetical vignettes and from observations of interactions between their mothers and themselves on videotape.

The presentation of vignettes is a successful way of helping parents talk about how they would handle certain situations and why (Sigel, 1986; McGillicuddy-DeLisi, 1982; E. A. Skinner, 1986), enabling investigators to make

connections between self-reported parenting strategies and parents' reasons for taking particular actions. The use of vignettes in other studies on parenting strategies varies in method of delivery, purpose, and content. Vignettes have been presented orally, enacted and presented by audiotape, written down, and drawn. Some investigators use open-ended formats while others use a forced choice. Some probe for alternate strategies, while others do not. In the past, vignettes have been chosen to explore a wide range of situations. The content of vignettes in studies sometimes involve primarily moral issues, while others involve damage to objects, danger to other people, or danger to the child in question. Some refer to possible psychological damage to others, while some refer only to physical harm to others. In addition, some investigators use the vignettes to probe for disciplinary techniques, while others use them to probe for a broader spectrum of responses. Some use them to look for patterns of strategy across situations while others look for strategies that are situation-specific. Grusec and Kuczynski (1980), for example, used situations that vary widely in terms of severity, expressly to see if parents are more flexible in their use of disciplinary strategies than the child-rearing literature had previously suggested.

To see whether mothers' strategies vary by type of situation, four types of situations were described in the hypothetical vignettes in this study; irritation, moral,

safety, and interpersonal situations. Strategies could then be compared across these different types of situations. Four of the vignettes in this study were taken directly from the conflicts found on the videotapes. Previous viewings have shown that most of the taped conflicts were concerned with either safety issues or mild irritations to the mother. All arose in the context of the mother having another task at hand; that is, answering questions posed by an interviewer. These four vignettes were chosen from videotapes of these families in order to address some of the more relevant day-to-day issues that parents are involved with in managing their children. Irritation to the caretaker involves actions by the child which annoy or disturb others, but are not safety or moral issues. Irritation is a common occurrence in families, but it has not been addressed in the child-rearing literature as a special type of activity requiring child management. The same is true for safety issues. Because child safety and parent irritation are common and important areas of concern for parents, they were identified, for this study, as distinct types of situations, which were thought to be differentially related to the types of strategies used by mothers when confronted with each. The other four vignettes chosen for this study reflect two types of issues often addressed by researchers using vignettes to study parenting strategies; conventional conceptualizations of moral issues

(stealing, hitting) and interpersonal interactions (quarreling, ignoring).

Comparisons were made of each mother's strategies in a videotaped conflict between themselves and their child, with strategies she mentioned in response to a similar hypothetical situation. This was done in order to see the extent to which mothers' choices of strategies regarding hypothetical situations are the same as strategies they used in a similar real-life situation. Although hypothetical vignettes have been widely used in investigations of child-rearing strategies, the relationship between responses to hypothetical situations and responses in actual situations has not been investigated in this particular area of research. Analyses were done to compare these differences in strategies overall and in terms of the type of situation (irritation or safety) to which mothers were asked to respond. It was predicted that mothers's responses to the vignettes might more closely correspond to those used in real life when the conflict involved safety rather than irritation, either because safety issues may be more publicly acknowledged as problematic than irritation issues, or because mothers may rely more heavily on culturally acceptable ways of handling conflicts when it involves the safety of their child.

Another relationship which was explored was between the parents' choice of communications strategies and their ideas

about how children learn. The interview questions and coding schemes developed by Sigel et al. (1986) and McGillicuddy-DiLisi et al. (1980) were used to inquire into the relationship between mothers' understanding of children's learning and mothers' communication strategies in conflict situations. Mothers were asked about their choice of strategies in handling the videotaped incident and how their choice of strategy may facilitate their child's learning about particular concepts related to that situation. From these data, parents' strategies and their ideas about how their child learns were compared to see if a significant relationship between them exists. Examples of mothers' ideas about what their child may have learned during the videotaped episode, were used to emphasize the breadth and complexity of concepts these mothers saw operating in these brief interactions.

In an effort to investigate more general strategies in this sample of families, separate from the particular situation at hand, mothers were asked about their general way of dealing with conflicts between themselves and their child. Comparisons were then made between a rank order of strategies for specific situations and a rank order of general strategies, to see if there is any difference between the two.

Specific Aims

To summarize, the specific aims of the study were:

1) to identify the pressures, intentions, goals, satisfaction, and feelings of mothers in dealing with conflicts between themselves and their pre-school-age children, from analysis of mothers' responses after viewing a videotape of themselves and their child in a natural setting.

2) to describe mothers' interpretations of their child's motives and goals after they viewed a videotape of themselves and their child.

3) to identify what aspects surrounding the videotaped episode mothers thought affected their choice of strategies.

4) to describe mothers' reasons used to justify their choices of strategies.

5) to describe what mothers think their child learned from the interaction in the videotaped episodes and how they think children learn these concepts in general.

6) to determine if there is a relationship between mothers' strategies when asked about child-rearing in general and the strategies they choose regarding specific situations.

7) to determine the extent to which the choice of strategies in response to a hypothetical vignette is related to the choice of strategies used in a real-life situation similar to the hypothetical vignette.

8) to determine whether the extent of this relationship is associated with the type of situation (safety or irritation) presented as a hypothetical vignette.

9) to explore the range of children's communication strategies and to see whether these strategies vary by age, gender or situation type.

10) to determine if any of the strategies mothers choose are related to their ideas about how children learn.

11) to determine whether mothers' ideas about learning vary by age or gender of their child, or by the type of situation viewed on videotape.

12) to determine whether mothers' choice of strategies varies by the type of situation.

13) to determine whether mothers' choices of strategies varies with the age or gender of their child.

14) to determine whether mothers' choice of strategies varies by vignette and age of their child.

15) to determine whether mothers' choice of strategies varies by vignette and gender of their child.

16) to determine at what age and in what situations mothers begin the use of explanation, distancing or discussing. consequences with their child and when they think this is helpful to their child.

17) to describe how mothers believe their strategies change over time.

18) to determine whether mothers' perceptions of change in strategies vary by age or gender of their child.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Participants

Seventeen mothers with children between the ages of 2 and 4-and-a-half years were interviewed in their home. All mothers had previously participated in a study about child safety (Hart et al., 1988). In this study, one of three investigators (one of whom was the author) interviewed the mothers in their home once every two months for 45 minutes to two hours, seven times over the course of a year. The child who was the focus of the safety study was not required to be at home during these interviews. They usually were, however, and were usually on camera for some if not most of the interview. Camera people were instructed to keep the mother and child in focus whenever possible. All mothers had completed the original safety study at the time of this investigation.

Recruiting for the original safety study was done by advertisements in free neighborhood papers, leaflets in pre-schools, laundromats, and apartment buildings, and through a New York City pediatrician. Participants were chosen to provide a wide range of educational and environmental backgrounds. Five of the women were 25-30 years of age, eight were 30-35 years of age and five were 35-41 years of

age. All but one woman was married or living with her child's father. Four women worked at least part-time outside the home, 2 were attending school and 11 were full-time mothers. Those who worked outside the home required daycare or babysitters at least part-time for their children. All women had completed highschool, 3 had completed only highschool, 2 more had some further education, 7 more had received a college degree and 5 other women had at least some further professional education. Seven women had only one child, eight women had 2 children and two women had 3 children. Only four women had any children older than 6 years of age. All lived within the New York City area; primarily in Queens, Brooklyn and Manhattan. When asked to describe their ethnicity, 6 described themselves as Jewish, 3 as Italian, 3 as White, 2 as Irish, 1 as Black, 1 as German and 1 as Hispanic. Social-economic status was not stringently assessed, but 10 of these families, based on parents' education and occupation, were considered to be in the low to middle range, while 7 families were considered to be in the middle to high-middle range. All participants in the original study were informally asked and agreed to participate in a second study on child-rearing practices, which would require one extra audiotaped visit by this investigator for the proposed project.

Overview of Methods

A conflict episode between each mother and child was identified from the videotape before the interview. During the interview, mothers were verbally presented with seven or eight hypothetical vignettes (two irritation, two moral, two safety, and two interpersonal) and asked a series of questions about what they would say or do in each situation, and whether they thought their strategies might differ if their child were younger or older. After this, each mother was verbally presented with a hypothetical vignette which was similar to the conflict episode identified on videotape before the interview. The same questions were asked as those for each of the hypothetical vignettes. The conflict episode on videotape was then shown to the mother and she was asked to describe the episode from moment to moment. This was followed by a series of questions about the actual conflict. Mothers were then asked a series of questions about their general strategies for dealing with conflicts with their child. Then they were asked a series of questions about how their child learns particular concepts and how their strategies in the videotaped incident may have

1. For those four mothers whose conflict episode was used as one of the eight vignettes chosen for this sample, only seven vignettes were presented for a response in this section of the interview. Presenting the eighth vignette to these mothers would have resulted in a duplication of the last vignette presented in the first section of the interview.

helped him or her learn these concepts. Finally, a series of questions was asked about the mothers' use of explanations, discussion of consequences, and distancing with their child when dealing with a conflict.

Procedure

1) Identification of Conflict Episode

For each family, a conflict episode between mother and child was identified by the investigator, from a videotape made during the safety interviews. Previous reviews of the videotapes from the safety study suggested that in most family interviews, if the child was present, several short conflict episodes occurred at every visit. While longer episodes involving several turns between mother and child were much rarer, they were usually evident at some time over the course of seven visits with each family. These longer episodes were chosen whenever possible. What follows is a brief description of the incidents which resulted in some degree of conflict between the mother and child:

1) Child playing with the phone
2) Child crawling on the windowsill
3) Child turning on the radio and raising the volume
4) Child refusing to get dressed
5) Child jumping on the bed
6) Child wanting to play in kitchen sink
7) Child wanting to play in bathroom sink
8) Child playing with Mom's face
9) Child throwing pillows off the couch
10) Child wanting sister's toy
11) Child wanting mom to play with her
12) Child repeatedly screaming through the kitchen
13) Child wanting to take brother's toy outside
14) Child wanting to watch TV during interview

15) Child playing with electric fan
16) Child playing with contents of bathroom wastebasket
17) Child wanting to stand on top of toilet

2) Interview Setting and Instructions to the Participant

The interview was held in the living room of each mother's home, two months to twelve months after the target conflict episode identified on the videotape occurred. The visit was no more than two hours long and was audiotaped rather than videotaped. As in the safety study, the children were usually also present. Mothers were told the purpose of the study, which was to understand her ideas about how to manage children when they are doing or wanting something that she did not agree with at the time. It was stressed in the beginning that the interview was not about safety management but about child-rearing practices in general.

3) Presentation of Hypothetical Vignettes

The investigator read each of eight or nine vignettes involving conflicts between a mother and a child, four of which were taken from videos of other families in the safety project. The other four vignettes reflect the kinds of issues found in the literature investigating parents' strategies. The vignettes were presented in random order to each mother. Each vignette was presented as follows:

Vignette #1:
X has just turned on the radio very loudly while you are trying to talk with someone in the same room.

Vignette #2:
It's late morning. X does not want to get dressed but you've decided that she/he has to at this point.

Vignette #3:
You and X have been out shopping and when you get home you find that she/he had picked up some little thing off one of the counters without you noticing.

Vignette #4:
Your cat has just had kittens a few days ago and you see X goes over to them and hit one of the kittens on the head.

Vignette #5:
You see X climbing on the windowsill. The window is open but there is a windowguard.

Vignette #6:
You and X are together in the living room and you notice that while X is playing with his/her toys, s/he keeps pulling on the unplugged lamp cord.

Vignette #7:
You come home after an hour of shopping. X sees you come in but will not come to you when you call.

Vignette #8:
X has a friend over for the afternoon. X and his/her friend start fighting over a toy.

Following the presentation of each vignette, the investigator then asked the mother a series of questions drawn from Sigel et al.'s (1986) and McGillicuddy-DeLisi et al.'s (1980) interview for describing parental communication strategies, as follows:

1) What would you do or say?
WHY do you think you would handle it this way?
HOW do you think X would respond?

2) If that didn't work, what would you try next
WHY do you think you'd do that
HOW would X respond to that?

3) And if that didn't work, what would you try next?
WHY do you think you'd do that?
HOW would X respond to that?

4) Do you think you would handle this differently a year FROM NOW?
(If yes) HOW? WHY?
(If no), WHY NOT?
(If no)Do you think you will EVER change your strategy for dealing with this kind of situation? (If yes) WHEN? HOW? WHY (or why not)?

5) Do you think you would have handled this differently a year AGO?
(If yes), HOW? WHY?

6) What do you think is the BEST way for a parent to handle this situation? WHY?

4) Presentation of Real-life Vignette

The last vignette read to the mother was a verbal description of the selected conflict which that mother and child actually engaged in at some time during the safety interviews. This "vignette" was presented in the same manner as the other hypothetical vignettes and the same questions were asked.

5) Viewing of Videotape

After responding to these vignettes, each mother was asked to review the selected videotape episode of her and her child during a conflict. The videotape was shown on her

television set, using her VCR equipment. The way in which this section of the interview was introduced is as follows:

> Now I'm going to show you a piece of videotape from one of our visits here. What's interesting to me here is NOT the interview you and (the interviewer) were trying to do, but what was going on between you and X. It's from a time when you and X were dealing with a similar kind of issue as the last vignette we talked about. You may not have handled this situation the same way you just said you would, and I think that may be interesting, but not surprising. First though, I just want you to know that we know everybody has issues to deal with, with their kids. All of our families did at some time while we were visiting. I didn't pick this piece of tape because it was particularly unusual or anything--it's just one example of how you and X tried to deal with an issue.

The mother was first shown the episode on videotape once through without stopping it and was told she could watch it a second time if she wished, although only one mother requested to see the tape a second time.

Following Schwartzman's (1988) approach to this procedure, each mother was then told that the investigator would stop the tape every time either the mother or child does or says something. The mother was asked to describe what was going on at that moment in as much detail as she could. She was asked to describe each piece of the interaction as if the investigator did not understand anything about it. This was done as a way to promote a

slower, closer mode of analysis by each mother, so that she could take more time to think about the activities she was observing.

As a way of trying to gain a clearer understanding of this incident, each mother was then asked the following set of questions:

1) Do you remember this particular time?

2) Did you remember this time when I FIRST asked you about this situation?

3) Can you describe for me what you just saw?

4) Has this been an issue BEFORE or SINCE?
How OFTEN has this been an issue between you and X?

5) Do you think this is how you USUALLY have dealt with this situation?
In what ways (is it the same or different)?

6) What do you think was going on for X here?

7) What do you think was going on for YOU here?

8) WHY do you think you handled this the way you did?

9) Can you tell or do you remember how you FELT at the time?

10) How does this fit with how you SAID you would handle this situation earlier?
(If different) WHY do you think you handled it differently here?

11) What do you think about the way you and X handled this situation?

12) In hindsight, do you think this was the BEST way for you to handle this? WHY?
(If no) What would you do differently?

13) What different PRESSURES do you think you felt at the time?

14) Do you think these pressures affected how you DEALT with this situation?
WHY or WHY NOT?

15) What OTHER FACTORS do you think influenced how you dealt with this issue?

16) Sometimes issues arise for other reasons that what seems obvious at the time...Can you think of any reasons why this might have been more of a problem at the time than it needed to be?

17) Would you handle this any differently with X now that s/he is OLDER?
(If yes) HOW? Why?
(If no) WHY NOT?

18) Would this scene look different if you were ALONE with X?
(If yes) HOW?
(If no) WHY NOT?

19) Would you handle this situation differently if you had plenty of TIME to deal with this?
(If yes) HOW?

20) What impact do you think WE had in being there when this scene happened?

21) Do you think your being busy/having company had anything to do with why this issue came up in the FIRST PLACE?

6) Questions About How Children Learn

After this, questions drawn from Sigel et al.'s (1986) interview for analysis of parental belief constructions and parental communication strategies were given. These questions are as follows:

1) Does your strategy here help X LEARN anything in particular?
(If yes), WHAT?
(if yes) Knowing how X learns, HOW do you think this strategy helps X learn this?
(If no) What MIGHT you want X to learn here?
(If no) What would you do or say if you really wanted X to learn this?

2) How do you think MOST kids eventually learn this?

7) Questions About General Strategies

The investigator then asked the mother a series of questions taken from Sigel et al.'s (1986) interview about how she deals with conflicts between her and her child in general. These questions were a revised version of the set of questions asked for each of the previous vignettes:

1) What is a TYPICAL way that you deal with a conflict between the two of you? What do you usually do or say?

2) WHY do you think you do it that way?

3) How would X respond to you

4) If that fails, what would you do next?
Why?

5) How would X respond to this?

6) What do you think is the BEST way to handle conflicts with X
WHY?

8) Questions About Mother's Use of Explanations, Discussion of Consequences and Distancing

Each mother was asked a set of questions concerning 3 particular strategies; explanations, discussion of consequences and her use of distancing strategies. The questions are presented below:

1) Do you ever EXPLAIN your reasons to X?
(If no) Do you think you will later on?

2) WHEN do you feel you can/did start to explain your reasons to your child.
WHY then?

3) When do you think a child can begin to UNDERSTAND your reasons?

4) What kinds of SITUATIONS do you find yourself explaining reasons to him or at least WANTING to? WHY then?

5) Do you ever make X THINK OR TALK about the consequences of his/her own actions?
(If yes) Can you give me an EXAMPLE?
(If no) Do you think you will later on?

6) WHEN do you feel you can/did start to do this with your child?
WHY then?

7) When do you think a child can begin to UNDERSTAND the consequences of his or her actions??

8) What kinds of SITUATIONS do you find yourself explaining the consequences to him/her or at least WANTING to? WHY then?

9) Do you ever make X think or talk in order to help him or her solve certain problems BY H--SELF?
(if yes) Can you give me an EXAMPLE?
(If no) Do you think you will later on?

10) WHEN do you feel you can/did start to do this with your child.
WHY then?

11) When do you think a child can begin to UNDERSTAND HOW to solve certain problems by h---self?

12) What kinds of SITUATIONS do you find yourself trying to get h--to solve certain problems on h-- own ...or WANTING to? WHY then?

CHAPTER IV

CODING SCHEMES

Both the videotape segments shown to each mother and the audiotaped interviews were transcribed by the investigator. These transcripts were used as the material on which all analyses were performed. Eight different coding schemes were used in these analyses.

I. Coding Scheme for Communication Strategies (Sigel et al., 1986)

Episodes from the videotapes and from mothers' responses to questions about communication strategies (Sections A and C of Interview Questions Protocol, Appendix I) were coded using a modified version of Sigel et al.'s coding scheme for analysis of parental communication strategies. Questions about communication strategies were asked in the interview sections concerning the hypothetical vignettes, each mother's real-life vignette, and each mother's general strategies. In addition, this coding scheme was used to analyze mothers' reports about how their strategies may change over time.

Sigel et al.'s original coding scheme consists of 14 strategies parents may use in dealing with their child, either in a conflict situation or a learning situation. They are:

1) Distancing: parent demands that the child think or verbalize about the problem at hand

2) Rational Authoritative; parent provides explanations or gives reasons with commands or information

3) Direct Authoritative; parent gives a direct order, statement of fact, or rule

4) Positive Emotional Support; parent praises, encourages or supports

5) Negative Emotional Support; parent shames, sneers, or is sarcastic

6) Positive Reinforcement; parent bribes or gives privilege

7) Negative Reinforcement; parent punishes or deprives

8) Positive Physical; parent hugs, kisses, or gives child a helping hand 9) Negative Physical; parent hits or retrains child

10) Joint Participation; parent and child do something together

11) Demonstration; parent shows child how to do something, taking over the task as the child watches

12) Manipulating the Environment; parent sets up the parameters of the learning experience within which the child will operate

13) Diversion; parent redirects the child's attention

14) Parent chooses not to get involved or deal with the situation

In cases where two or more strategies were said to be used simultaneously, McGillicuddy DeLisi et al.'s (1982) rules for which strategy takes precedence, were followed. These rules are:

1) If Distancing occurs with Rational Authoritative, Direct Authoritative, or Demonstration, code as Distancing.
2) If Rational Authoritative occurs with Direct Authoritative, code as Rational Authoritative.
3) If Demonstration occurs with Rational Authoritative or Direct Authoritative, code as Demonstration.
4) Authoritarian strategies (Negative Reinforcement, Threats, Negative Physical, Physical, Isolate, Manipulate Environment, Negative Manipulation of Environment) subsume all strategies except Disengagement.
5) Diversion subsumes all strategies except Disengagement or authoritarian strategies.
6) Negative Emotion or Positive Emotion subsumes Rational Authoritative and Direct Authoritative.
7) Disengagement subsumes all strategies.

For example, a mother may say she would take the child away from the window (Physical), tell the child why they were not allowed to climb on the windowsill (Rational Authoritative) and then spank him (Negative Physical). Since there is no opportunity for the child to try to get

back up on the windowsill, these strategies are considered to happen "all at once". According to the above set of rules, the most authoritarian strategy takes precedence, so in this case, the strategy would be coded as Negative Physical.

II. Modified Coding Scheme, Based on Sigel et al.'s Original Coding Scheme for Communication Strategies

Several changes were made in Sigel et al.'s coding scheme for the analyses used in this study. After the data were coded using Sigel's coding scheme, they were recoded using a modified scheme which more closely reflected the ways in which these strategies were discussed by these mothers:

1) Sigel et al.'s category of Negative Reinforcement strategies were divided into two separate categories. Sigel's scheme includes threats in this category, but since mothers in this sample often mentioned threats as a separate strategy which seemed to offer the child an opportunity to continue the negotiation, threats were a type of strategy that was differentiated from strategies involving immediate punishment or deprivation.

2) A third "Physical" strategy was added to Sigel et al.'s scheme, one which appeared to be a more neutral form of physical manipulation of the child than hugs (Positive Physical) or spankings (Negative Physical). Any physical removal of the child from a situation was coded as

"Physical". Physical restraint, usually by holding the child in one's lap, was coded as "Physical", unless there was some indication that the strategy was used as a way of giving the child attention or affection.

3) Sigel et al.'s Joint Participation and Demonstration strategies were combined. Given the particular scenarios used in this study, these strategies were not often used and seemed indistinguishable from one another in terms of the mothers' goals and the consequences for the child.

4) Sigel's category of Manipulating Environment seemed to be a catch-all for several different strategies, which involved "changing the physical or emotional environment". Based on our observations in the safety study, there appeared to be a distinction between whether the parents tried to manipulate the physical environment to protect the child, thus making it impossible, through the use of gates, locks, etc., for the child to explore certain areas, or whether they dealt directly with the child, through the use of rules, Time Out, etc. Additionally, what constituted "changing the emotional environment" was unclear and very general. For these reasons, and again because parents discussed these different strategies separately, Sigel's code, Manipulating Environment, was divided into three different strategies:

1) Isolating the child or "Time Out"

2) Manipulating the Physical Environment, neutral manipulation of the physical environment

3) Negative Manipulation of the Environment, which involved negative overtones.

To illustrate the distinction between these last two strategies, consider an example in which the mother says, "First I would turn the radio down and if he didn't stop, I would turn the radio off". The first strategy was coded as simply manipulating the environment, but turning the radio off is coded as Negative Manipulation of the Environment, because her strategy has negative overtones; she is depriving the child of a privilege--being able to listen to the radio. Negative Reinforcement was not used here because it seemed important to distinguish between taking away a privilege which is directly related to the conflict at hand (turning off the radio) and taking away a privilege which is not directly related (not allowing the child to go outside and play).

All statements which included the use of strategies were recoded by the investigator, using the modified coding scheme. Any strategy mentioned more than once by a mother was only counted once in these analyses.

Reliability

A second observer coded 20% of the mothers' communication strategies mentioned in response to the hypothetical vignettes. The data were selected by first grouping the mothers' strategies by vignette for even selection across the vignettes, and then choosing 20% of the strategies within each vignette, using random number lists. All strategies were represented (though not in equal proportion) in the data coded by the second observer, with the exception of Negative Emotion. This code occurred only once in the analysis of the entire data set however, and was understood by the second observer before coding. Reliability was determined by dividing the number of inter-rater agreements of strategy codes by the total number of strategies coded for the reliability test. Comparisons of coding between the two observers resulted in 86% agreement for the coding of communication strategies.

III. Analysis of Rationales for Communication Strategies

An analysis was done for mothers' reasons for the communication strategies they discuss, as a way of investigating the variety of dimensions that these mothers utilize in explaining their actions (Sections A and C of Interview Questions Protocol, Appendix I). Mothers' reasons for their choice of strategies in response to the hypothetical vignettes and the real-life vignette were

arranged by strategy in an attempt to facilitate this investigation.

IV. Coding Scheme for Children's Communication Strategies

A coding scheme was developed to analyze the children's strategies as portrayed in the mothers' responses to questions about how they think their child would respond to particular ways of handling conflicts, as well as children's strategies exhibited on videotape (Sections A, B and C of Interview Questions Protocol, Appendix I). Because more than one type of communication strategy can occur during hypothetical or real episodes, all were included and categorized, therefore more than one response or strategy may occur for each child. Codes include:

1) Child complies and/or understands
2) Child defies or ignores mother
3) Child apologizes or makes promises
4) Child cries or is upset or angry
5) Child verbally protests
6) Child asks why
7) Child pushes for compromise or argues

Codes 1 and 2 were grouped together in subsequent analyses as "non-negotiating strategies". Code 3 was also in this category, though with some concern about the

appropriateness of describing apologies as not involving negotiation. Codes 4 and 5 were combined in subsequent analyses as "minimal negotiating", because here the child is objecting to whatever has been presented by the mother, whether it is an order, a request, or some physical action on the mother's part. Codes 6 and 7 were grouped together as "negotiating strategies", because the child clearly communicates a position and additionally, challenges the mother in a more sophisticated way.

V. Coding Scheme for Perception of Change in Strategy

Mothers' perceptions about changes in their strategies over a year's time were coded both for whether or not mothers expect to change their choices of strategies in the next year with regard to each vignette, and whether they believe they have changed their strategy choice in the last year (Section A of Interview Questions Protocol, Appendix I). Mothers were coded as changing their strategies over a year's time if they reported dropping or adding certain strategies over time, if they reported allowing the child more or less time to comply, or if they initially reported no change, but then went on to include different strategies than had been originally coded with regard to a particular vignette. The ways in which strategies may change were coded using the modified version of Sigel et al.'s (1986) coding scheme for analysis of parental communication

strategies. Those strategies which were reportedly added or deleted by the mother over time were coded in order to provide a description of how strategy choice may change over time.

VI. Analysis of Mothers' Responses to Videotape

Mothers' responses to questions asked after the viewing of the videotaped conflict were analyzed by grouping similar responses together to show the range of responses to each question, as well as the degree of agreement among mothers (Section B and C of Interview Questions Protocol). These questions refer to:

1) the kinds of pressures the mother thinks were influencing her at the time

2) whether the mother is satisfied with how the situation was handled

3) whether she thinks her strategies change over time

4) the reasons she gives for any discrepancies between the videotape and her response to the similar vignette

5) her intentions and goals

6) her perceptions of the child's intentions and goals

7) her feelings at the time

8) the contextual factors she thinks would alter the way the conflict was handled

9) whether the mother seems troubled by any discrepancies between her action on videotape and her response to the similar vignette

VII. Coding Scheme for Parents' Beliefs About Learning

Mothers' responses to questions about how they think their strategies will help their child learn particular concepts (Section B of Interview Questions Protocol) were coded using Sigel et al.'s (1986) coding scheme for parent belief constructions about how children learn. These categories are not mutually exclusive; several rationales may be provided by the parent for each incident. The coding scheme consists of ten categories:

1) Direct Instruction; child learns from instructions, explanations, advice or guidance
2) Exposure; child learns by observing different types of people in different situations
3) Accumulation; Child learns through building on knowledge from previous experience
4) Experimentation; Child, as an active agent, learns by trying alternative solutions to a problem
5) Cognitive Processes; Child learns through using his/her own imagination and figuring things out on his/her own
6) Positive Feedback; Child learns through receiving affirmation of or approval for certain behavior

7) Negative Feedback; child learns through receiving punishment for or adverse reaction to certain behavior
8) Manipulate Environment; child learns when adults purposefully structure the learning situation, enabling the child to reach the desired conclusion
9) Self-regulation; child learns when motivation to solve problems comes from within the child--emphasis is on internal governing
10) Activity; child learns through hands-on experience

Coding of the data resulted in the use of only five of the above categories:

1) Direct Instruction, including explanations and "talking to" the child
2) Exposure, meaning observation of others who set examples and the child then modelling them
3) Accumulation, which tended to mean repetition and reinforcement by the parent, rather than some activity "internal" to the child--perhaps this would be more appropriately coded as #8--Manipulating Environment
9) Self-regulation, which was discussed more specifically in terms of cognitive and emotional maturation
10) Activity, which was discussed more specifically in terms of the child learning by getting hurt through some activity he or she is involved in

VIII. Presentation of Mothers' Ideas About What the Child Learned From the Episode

Paraphrases of mothers' ideas about what their child may have learned during the videotaped episode, were used as illustrations of the range of concepts mothers saw operating during these interactions.

IX. Coding Scheme for Use of Explanations, Discussion of Consequences and Distancing Strategies

Questions regarding the use of explanations, consequences and distancing strategies were asked in the final section of the interview (Section E of Interview Questions Protocol). The questions were intended to determine:

1) Whether the mother uses each of the above communication strategies

2) The age at which she thinks she would try each of these strategies

3) The age at which she thinks these strategies could be useful to the child

4) The types of situations in which she uses them

CHAPTER V

RESULTS

Strategies chosen by mothers were summed across all 8 vignettes to determine how many mothers mentioned the hypothetical use of particular strategies at some point during the interview. Each strategy mentioned by each mother was counted only once, regardless of how often she may have chosen this strategy as she discussed the vignettes. Table 1 shows the results of this procedure. Most, if not all mothers mentioned trying Direct Authoritative and Rational Authoritative strategies, Negative or Neutral Manipulation of the Environment, Disengagement, Threats, Diversion, and Demonstration. Fewer mothers mention strategies such as Isolation, Positive or Negative Reinforcement or Distancing. Even fewer mention Positive or Negative Physical Handling, or Positive or Negative Emotional strategies.

Table 1

Number of Mothers Mentioning Particular Strategies During Interview

Strategy Choice	Mentioned	Did Not Mention
Direct Authoritative	17	0
Disengagement	14	3
Demonstration	12	5
Distancing	8	9
Diversion	13	4
Negative Emotional	1	16
Positive Emotional	4	13
Isolation	10	7
Manipulating Environment	12	5
Negative Manipulation of Environment	17	0
Physical Handling	16	1
Negative Physical Handling	4	13
Positive Physical Handling	5	12
Rational Authoritative	16	1
Negative Reinforcement	8	9
Positive Reinforcement	8	9
Threats	13	4

Table 2 shows the total number of mothers mentioning a particular strategy with respect to each hypothetical vignette, given that each strategy could be counted only once per vignette, per mother. The vignettes are abbreviated in the table. They are as follows:

1) child does not want to get dressed
2) child has turned the radio volume up loudly
3) child has taken something from a store without paying for it
4) child is hitting a kitten
5) child is playing with a lamp plug
6) child is climbing on a windowsill
7) child is not sharing--fighting over a toy with another child
8) child ignores mother's calls when she comes home

Looking at the total number of times a strategy was mentioned across all vignettes, we can see that the strategy most often reported was rational authoritative, followed by negative manipulation of the environment, direct authoritative, physical handling, threats, diversion, and manipulating environment. Less frequently mentioned strategies were disengaging, distancing, isolating, negative reinforcement and demonstration. Strategies even less often mentioned were negative physical handling, positive

reinforcement, positive physical handling, positive emotions and negative emotions.

Table 2

Number of Mothers Mentioning Each Strategy by Vignette

Strategy Choice	Vignettes								
	DRESSING	RADIO	STEALING	HITTING	PLUGS	WINDOW	SHARING	IGNORING	TOTAL
Direct Authoritative	2	6	2	1	4	7	14	1	37
Disengagement	5	2	3	0	0	0	4	5	19
Demonstration	0	0	5	7	2	0	0	0	14
Distancing	0	0	3	2	1	1	1	9	17
Diversion	3	3	0	1	5	2	6	4	24
Negative Emotional	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Positive Emotional	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
Isolation	0	3	0	6	0	3	3	0	15
Manipulating Environment	0	10	0	0	10	3	0	0	23
Negative Manipulating Env.	0	9	9	5	0	0	15	0	38
Physical Handling	1	2	0	3	5	14	0	1	36
Negative Physical Handling	2	1	1	1	2	2	0	0	9
Positive Physical Handling	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5
Rational Authoritative	11	8	5	9	7	7	5	0	52
Negative Reinforcement	3	3	2	4	3	0	0	0	15
Positive Reinforcement	6	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	9
Threats	5	2	2	3	5	3	5	1	26

I. Mothers' Strategies and Situation Type in Hypothetical Vignettes

A Cochran Q Test was performed on the data to see if the strategies mothers mentioned differed significantly by type of situation depicted in the hypothetical vignette. A Binomial Distribution was then calculated. Table 3 shows the number of mothers mentioning each strategy by situation type and the levels at which these associations are significant.

The 8 vignettes were divided into 4 types of situations: Irritation, Moral, Safety, and Interpersonal. It should be noted that in counting occurrences, if a strategy was reported for either one or both vignettes pertaining to a particular situation type, the strategy was coded as existing for that situation type. Only if a strategy was not mentioned for either vignette was it coded as non-existent.

Analyses revealed that 10 of the 17 mentioned strategies significantly differed across these four situation types at the .01 level, and three of the strategies significantly differed across the four situation types at the .05 level. Four strategies did not significantly differ at either probability level. A binomial distribution shows that, of 17 non-significant tests at .05 probability level, there is 0.00% probability that 13 of these tests would appear significant simply by chance. There is also 0.00% probability that 10 of these tests would appear significant at the .01 probability level simply by chance.

Rational authoritative strategies were more often reported with irritation situations than the other types of situations; strategies involving demonstration, isolation or negative reinforcement were more often reported with moral situations; strategies involving physical handling or threats were more often reported with safety situations; strategies involving direct authoritative statements, disengagement, distancing, diversion, positive emotion, negative manipulation of the environment or positive physical handling were more often reported with interpersonal situations (See Table 3).

Strategies involving demonstration or distancing were least often reported with irritation issues; strategies involving just direct authoritative statements, diversion, or positive reinforcement were least often reported with moral issues; strategies involving disengagement or negative manipulation of the environment were least often reported with safety issues; strategies involving neutral physical handling or negative reinforcement were least often reported with interpersonal issues (See Table 3).

Table 3

Number of Mothers Mentioning Strategies Across Situation Types in Hypothetical Vignettes

	Situation Type			
Strategies	Irritation	Moral	Safety	Interpersonal
Direct Authoritative **	8	3	8	14
Disengaging **	6	3	0	9
Demonstration **	0	11	2	0
Distancing **	0	4	2	10
Diversion *	5	1	7	9
Negative Emotional	1	0	0	0
Positive Emotional **	0	0	0	4
Isolation	3	6	3	3
Manipulating Environment **	10	0	10	0
Negative Manipulating Environment **	9	12	0	15
Physical Handling **	13	3	15	1
Negative Physical Handling	2	1	3	0
Positive Physical Handling **	0	0	0	5
Rational Authoritative **	15	10	10	5
Negative Reinforcement *	4	6	3	0
Positive Reinforcement *	6	0	1	2
Threats	6	5	8	5

Note: * refers to significance at $p < .05$
** refers to significance at $p < .01$

II. How Mothers' Strategies Mentioned in Hypothetical Vignettes Relate to Their Child's Age or Gender

Children of these mothers were divided into groups by age at the time of the interview, forming one group of children above the mean age and one group below the mean age. This resulted in one group of 6 children, ranging in age from 25 months to 28 months, and a second group of 11 children, ranging in age from 37 months to 51 months. Although this division results in groups of unequal size, it was thought that the results were more likely to be skewed if the two groups were evenly divided, considering the 9-month gap that now exists between the two age groups.

Table 4 shows the number of mothers mentioning each strategy across all 8 vignettes, as it varied by age group and gender of child. Fisher Exact tests were then performed. Three strategies mentioned by mothers in response to the various hypothetical vignettes were found to differ significantly with age of the mother's child at the time of the interview. These were the potential use of threats, distancing, and positive physical handling. Threats were more likely to be mentioned by mothers of older children than by mothers of younger children: $p = .006$. Distancing was more likely to be mentioned by mothers of older children than by mothers of younger children: $p = .007$. On the other hand, positive physical handling was more likely to be mentioned by mothers of younger children than by mothers of older children: $p = 028$. A binomial distribution shows that, of 17 non-

significant tests at .05 probability level, there is only a 4% probability that 3 of these tests would appear significant simply by chance. There is only a 1% chance that 2 of these tests would appear significant at the .01 probability level simply by chance. No significant differences in strategy choice by gender of the child were found.

Table 4

Number of Mothers Mentioning Each Strategy by Age Group and Gender of Child

	Age Group				Gender			
	old		yng		female		male	
Strategy Choice	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no
Direct Authoritative	11	0	6	0	7	0	10	0
Disengagement	9	2	5	1	5	2	9	1
Demonstration	7	4	5	1	4	3	8	2
Distancing	8	3	0	6 **	2	5	6	4
Diversion	7	4	6	0	6	1	7	3
Negative Emotional	1	10	0	6	0	7	1	9
Positive Emotional	2	9	2	4	2	5	2	8
Isolation	7	4	3	3	3	4	7	3
Manipulating Environment	7	4	5	1	4	3	8	2
Negative Manipulating Environment	11	0	6	0	7	0	10	0
Physical Handling	10	1	6	0	7	0	9	1
Negative Physical Handling	3	8	1	5	1	6	3	7
Positive Physical Handling	1	10	4	2 *	3	4	2	8
Rational Authoritative	11	0	5	1	7	0	9	1
Negative Reinforcement	7	4	1	5	2	5	6	4
Positive Reinforcement	5	6	3	3	3	4	5	5
Threats	11	0	2	4 **	4	3	9	1

Note: * refers to significance at $p < .05$
** refers to significance at $p < .01$

Strategies were then analyzed by vignette. Table 5 shows how many mothers mentioned each strategy within each vignette, analyzed by age group of the children. Fisher Exact tests were performed on each of the 17 strategies within each of the 8 vignettes, followed by a binomial distribution for each set of tests within a vignette. Significant differences in the reported use of certain strategies by children's age were found for five of the eight vignettes.

Table 5

Number of Mothers Mentioning Each Strategy by Vignette and Age Group of the Child

Strategies	Vignettes							
	Dressing		Radio		Stealing		Hitting	
	Age Groups							
	old	yng	old	yng	old	yng	old	yng
Direct Authoritative	1	1	4	2	0	2	1	0
Disengaging	3	2	2	0	0	3 *	0	0
Demonstration	0	0	0	0	5	0	2	5 *
Distancing	0	0	0	0	3	0	2	0
Diversion	0	3 *	1	2	0	0	1	0
Negative Emotion	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Positive Emotion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Isolation	0	0	2	1	0	0	4	2
Manipulating Environment	0	0	5	5	0	0	0	0
Negative Manipulating Environment	0	0	6	3	7	2	3	2
Physical Handling	8	3	1	1	0	0	1	2
Negative Physical Handling	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0
Positive Physical Handling	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rational Authoritative	7	4	5	3	3	2	6	3
Negative Reinforcement	3	0	3	0	2	0	3	1
Positive Reinforcement	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Threats	3	2	2	0	2	0	3	0

Note: * refers to significance at $p < .05$ level.
Note: older group N = 11; younger group N = 6

Table 5 (continued)

Number of Mothers Mentioning Each Strategy by Vignette and Age Group of the Child

Strategies	Vignettes							
	Plugs		Windows		Sharing		Ignoring	
	Age Groups							
	old	yng	old	yng	old	yng	old	yng
Direct Authoritative	2	2	5	2	10	4	1	0
Disengaging	0	0	0	0	4	0	2	3
Demonstration	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Distancing	1	0	1	0	1	0	3	6 **
Diversion	3	2	1	1	6	0 *	2	2
Negative Emotion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Positive Emotion	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Isolation	0	0	2	1	1	2	0	0
Manipulating Environment	5	5	2	1	0	0	0	0
Negative Manipulating Environment	0	0	0	0	10	5	0	0
Physical Handling	3	2	8	6	0	0	0	1
Negative Physical Handling	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Positive Physical Handling	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4 *
Rational Authoritative	6	1	5	2	3	2	0	0
Negative Reinforcement	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Positive Reinforcement	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
Threats	4	1	3	0	4	1	0	1

Note: * refers to significance at $p < .05$
** refers to significance at $p < .01$
Note: older group N = 11; younger group N = 6

To summarize the above results:

1) Diversion tactics to get their child dressed were more likely to be mentioned by mothers of younger children than mothers of older children: $p = .029$. A binomial distribution shows that, of 17 non-significant tests at this probability level, there is a 31% probability that 1 of these tests would appear significant simply by chance.

2) Disengaging from the issue if their child took something from a store was more likely to be mentioned by mothers of younger children than mothers of older children: $p = .029$. A binomial distribution shows that, of 17 non-significant tests at this probability level, there is a 31% probability that 1 of these tests would appear significant simply by chance.

3) Demonstrating how to pet the kitten if the child was hitting a kitten, was more likely to be mentioned by mothers of younger children than mothers of older children: $p = .018$. A binomial distribution shows that, of 17 non-significant tests at this probability level, there is a 23% probability that 1 of these tests would appear significant simply by chance.

4) Diversion tactics if their child was fighting over a toy with another child, were more likely to be mentioned by mothers of older children than mothers of younger children:

p = .037. A binomial distribution shows that, of 17 non-significant tests at this probability level, there is a 34% probability that 1 of these tests would appear significant simply by chance.

5) Distancing and positive physical handling were more likely to be mentioned by mothers of younger children than mothers of older children if their child was ignoring them: distancing; p = .007, positive physical handling; p = .028. A binomial distribution shows that, of 17 non-significant tests at a .028 probability level, there is a 7% probability that 2 of these tests would appear significant simply by chance.

III. Mothers' Strategies and Children's Gender in Each Hypothetical Vignette

Fisher Exact tests of strategies mentioned across all 8 vignettes did not reveal any significant difference by gender of the child. When the strategies were analyzed by vignette however, one significant difference was found. Table 6 shows these findings. Mothers of boys were more likely to mention the use of threats if their child was fighting with another child over a toy, than mothers of girls: p = .041. A binomial distribution shows that, of 17 non-significant tests per vignette at this probability level, there is a 36% probability that 1 of these tests would appear significant simply by chance.

Table 6

Number of Mothers Mentioning Each Strategy by Vignette and Gender of Child

Strategies	Vignettes							
	Dressing		Radio		Stealing		Hitting	
	Gender							
	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	m
Direct Authoritative	0	2	2	4	1	1	1	0
Disengaging	3	2	1	1	1	2	0	0
Demonstration	0	0	0	0	1	4	3	4
Distancing	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	1
Diversion	3	0	1	2	0	0	0	1
Negative Emotion	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Positive Emotion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Isolation	0	0	1	2	0	0	3	3
Manipulating Environment	0	0	4	6	0	0	0	0
Negative Manipulating Environment	0	0	4	5	2	7	2	3
Physical Handling	4	7	1	1	0	0	2	1
Negative Physical Handling	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	1
Positive Physical Handling	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rational Authoritative	6	5	4	4	4	1	4	5
Negative Reinforcement	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	3
Positive Reinforcement	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Threats	2	3	1	1	0	2	1	2

Note: Female N = 7; Male N = 10

Table 6 (continued)

Number of Mothers Mentioning Each Strategy by Vignette and Gender of Child

Strategies	Vignettes							
	Plugs		Windows		Sharing		Ignoring	
	Gender							
	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	m
Direct Authoritative	2	2	4	3	6	8	1	0
Disengaging	0	0	0	0	1	3	3	2
Demonstration	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Distancing	1	0	0	1	0	1	4	5
Diversion	2	3	1	1	1	5	1	3
Negative Emotion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Positive Emotion	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Isolation	0	0	1	2	1	2	0	0
Manipulating Environment	4	6	1	2	0	0	0	0
Negative Manipulating Environment	0	0	0	0	6	9	0	0
Physical Handling	3	2	5	9	0	0	0	1
Negative Physical Handling	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0
Positive Physical Handling	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2
Rational Authoritative	3	4	3	4	4	1	0	0
Negative Reinforcement	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Positive Reinforcement	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
Threats	2	3	2	1	0	5 *	0	1

Note: * refers to significance at $p < .05$
Note: Female N = 7; Male N = 10

IV. Mothers' Strategies and Children's Age or Gender in Vignette Depicting a Situation from Real-Life

Fisher Exact tests revealed no significant differences in mentioned strategies for the real-life vignette by age of the child at the time of interview or by gender of the child, at the .05 level.

V. Situation Type and the Similarity Between Strategies Mentioned in Vignettes Depicting a Situation from Real-Life and Those Used in Real-Life Videotaped Episode

In the videotaped episodes, mothers were involved in one of two types of situations in which they were in conflict with their child; safety or irritation issues. The strategies that each mother mentioned in the real-life vignette, which was designed to be as similar as possible to the videotaped episode, were compared with the strategies each mother used in the similar videotaped episode. The percentage of strategies used in both cases was then calculated for each mother. Fisher Exact tests of the strategies mentioned in the real-life vignette versus the strategies used during the videotaped episode were analyzed by age of the child, gender of the child and type of situation in which each mother and child were involved. On average, most mothers mentioned about 30% of the strategies they used in the videotaped conflict episode. Whereas all 10 mothers involved in an irritation episode mentioned at least 17% of the strategies they used, only 4 of the 7 mothers involved in a safety episode did so, however this was not a significant difference at the .05 probability

level: $p = .052$. No significant associations were found when making this comparison by age or gender of the child.

The number of strategies observed in the videotaped episode averaged 4.8 strategies per mother. The number of strategies mothers discussed in response to the vignette depicting a similar situation from real-life, averaged 2.5 strategies per mother. Fisher tests were used to analyze this difference between strategy use and mentioning of strategies, resulting in significant differences for 6 of the strategies. Mothers used Direct Authoritative ($p = .0009$), Disengagement ($p = .041$), Distancing ($p = .022$), Diversion ($p = .016$), Physical Handling ($p = .016$) and Positive Physical Handling ($p = .004$) significantly more often than they discussed these same strategies in response to the real-life hypothetical vignette.

While most strategies were both discussed and observed, strategies involving distancing, positive handling of the child, or either positive or negative emotional statements were observed, but not discussed with regard to the real life vignette. Negative Physical Handling was neither observed nor discussed. Table 7 shows how this comparison breaks down by strategy.

A binomial distribution shows that, of 17 non-significant tests at .05 probability level, there is a 0.00% probability that 6 of these tests would appear significant simply by chance. There is also a 0.00% probability that 2 of these

tests would appear significant at the .004 probability level simply by chance.

Table 7

Number of Mothers Using Each Strategy in Videotaped Episode Compared With Number of Mothers Mentioning Each Strategy in Real-Life Vignette

Strategies	Strategies Used		Strategies Discussed	
	yes	no	yes	no
Direct Authoritative	15	2	5	12 **
Disengaging	10	7	4	13 *
Demonstration	0	17	1	16
Distancing	5	12	0	17 *
Diversion	12	5	5	12 *
Negative Emotion	1	16	0	17
Positive Emotion	2	15	0	17
Isolation	1	16	1	16
Manipulating Environment	4	13	3	14
Negative Manipulating Environment	2	15	3	14
Physical Handling	10	7	3	14 *
Negative Physical Handling	0	0	0	0
Positive Physical Handling	7	10	0	17 **
Rational Authoritative	7	10	9	8
Negative Reinforcement	1	16	2	15
Positive Reinforcement	2	15	1	16
Threats	3	14	5	12

Note: * refers to significance at $p < .05$
** refers to significance at $p < .01$

VII. Mothers' Strategies and Children's Age or Gender in Videotaped Episode

Mothers were divided into two groups based on their child's age at the time of the videotaped incident. The two groups consisted of the same subjects as in the earlier division by age at time of the interview, with the younger group ranging in age from 14 to 23 months and the older group ranging in age from 26 to 45 months. Fisher Exact tests revealed a significant difference in the use of positive physical handling by age of the child at the time of the incident. Positive physical handling was more likely to be used by mothers of younger children than mothers of older children, regardless of the type of situation involved: $p = .018$. A binomial distribution shows that, of 17 non-significant tests at this probability level, there is a 23% probability that 1 of these tests would appear significant simply by chance. Table 8 shows the number of mothers who used each strategy, as this use relates to their child's age and gender. There was no significant difference found in use of strategy by gender of the child (See Table 8).

Table 8

Number of Mothers Using Strategies Across Age and Gender of Child

	Age Group				Gender of Child			
	Old		Young		Female		Male	
Strategies	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no
Direct Authoritative	9	2	6	0	7	0	8	2
Disengaging	8	3	2	4	4	3	6	4
Demonstration	0	11	0	6	0	7	0	10
Distancing	3	8	2	4	2	5	3	7
Diversion	6	5	6	0	6	1	6	4
Negative Emotion	1	10	0	6	1	6	0	10
Positive Emotion	0	11	2	4	1	6	1	9
Isolation	1	10	0	6	0	7	1	9
Manipulating Environment	1	10	3	3	3	4	1	9
Negative Manipulating Environment	0	11	2	4	1	6	1	9
Physical Handling	6	5	4	2	6	1	4	6
Negative Physical Handling	0	11	0	6	0	7	0	10
Positive Physical Handling	2	9	5	1 *	4	3	3	7
Rational Authoritative	5	6	2	4	2	5	5	5
Negative Reinforcement	1	10	0	6	0	7	1	9
Positive Reinforcement	1	10	1	5	1	6	1	9
Threats	2	9	1	5	1	6	2	8

Note: * refers to significance at $p < .05$

IX. Mothers' Strategies and Situation Type in Videotaped Episodes

The videotaped incidents were divided into two types of situations: Ten incidents were considered to be primarily safety-related, while seven incidents were considered to be primarily an irritation to the mother. Table 9 shows how many mothers used each strategy, depending on whether they were involved with an irritation issue or a safety issue in relation to their child. Fisher Exact tests revealed no significant difference in use of any strategies, according to the type of situation involved.

Table 9

Use of Strategies as Related to Situation Type of Videotaped Episodes

Strategies	Types of Situations			
	Irritation		Safety	
	yes	no	yes	no
Direct Authoritative	9	8	6	11
Disengaging	8	9	2	15
Demonstration	0	17	0	17
Distancing	4	13	1	16
Diversion	7	10	5	12
Negative Emotion	0	17	1	16
Positive Emotion	2	15	0	17
Isolation	1	16	0	17
Manipulating Environment	1	16	3	14
Negative Manipulating Environment	1	16	1	16
Physical Handling	5	12	5	12
Negative Physical Handling	0	17	0	17
Positive Physical Handling	4	13	3	14
Rational Authoritative	4	13	3	14
Negative Reinforcement	1	16	0	17
Positive Reinforcement	2	15	0	17
Threats	3	14	0	17

X. Comparison of Specific With General Strategies

A comparison was made between the rank order of 11 strategies mentioned by mothers in answer to the hypothetical vignettes and the rank order of these same strategies when mentioned by mothers with regard to what "general" strategies they use. Six of the strategies described in response to the hypothetical vignettes were not mentioned in response to questions about general strategies and so these were excluded from the analysis. A Spearman rank correlation was performed on the data, correcting for ties within each rank order. Table 10 shows the comparisons between these two rank orders. A highly significant correlation was found ($N = 11$) = .89, $p<.01$, indicating that, of those strategies discussed in response to both types of questions, mothers consistently discussed similar strategies, regardless of whether they were discussing strategies specific to hypothetical vignettes or in response to questions about general strategies. Direct authoritative strategies were discussed most often for both specific situations and in general, followed by rational authoritative strategies, disengaging, diversion, isolation, threats, distancing, negative reinforcement, positive reinforcement, negative physical handling, and negative emotion.

Table 10

Comparisons of Rank Orders of Strategies

Strategies	Hypothetical Vignettes	General
Direct Authoritative	11.0	10.5
Disengaging	9.0	9.0
Demonstration	----	----
Distancing	4.0	4.5
Diversion	7.5	8.0
Negative Emotion	1.0	2.5
Positive Emotion	----	----
Isolation	6.0	4.5
Manipulating Environment	----	----
Negative Manipulating Environment	----	----
Physical Handling	----	----
Negative Physical Handling	2.0	2.5
Positive Physical Handling	----	----
Rational Authoritative	10.0	10.5
Negative Reinforcement	4.0	4.5
Positive Reinforcement	4.0	1.0
Threats	7.5	4.5

XI. Children's Communication Strategies

Fisher Exact tests of children's communication strategies on videotape revealed a significant association between gender of the child and whether or not they cried or showed signs of upset or anger. Crying or expressions of anger were more likely to occur with girls than with boys: $p = .006$. A binomial distribution shows that, of 7 non-significant tests at this probability level, there is a 4% probability that 1 of these tests would appear significant simply by chance. Table 11 shows how children's strategies break down by age and gender of the child, and by the type of situation (irritation or safety) in which they were involved. Of the various actions which mothers mentioned in discussing their child's strategies, 13 of the mothers indicated that their children would eventually comply. Observations of the videotaped episodes found only 8 of the children eventually complied. No significant associations were found between children's communication strategies and their age at the time of the episode or the type of situation.

Table 11

Children's Strategies in Episode by Age, Gender and Type of Situation

	Age Group				Gender				Situation Type			
Strategies	old		yng		f		m		Safety		Irritation	
	y	n	y	n	y	n	y	n	y	n	y	n
Comply	7	4	1	5	3	4	5	5	5	5	3	4
Protest	7	4	3	3	4	3	6	4	7	3	3	4
Defy/Ignore	6	5	5	1	4	3	7	3	7	3	4	3
Question	1	10	0	6	0	7	1	9	1	9	0	7
Cry/Show anger	6	5	4	2	7	0	3	7 *	5	5	5	2
Apologize	0	11	0	6	0	7	0	10	0	10	0	7
Argues/Compromise	1	10	0	6	0	7	1	9	1	9	0	7

Note: * refers to significance at $p < .01$

These strategies were then recoded: 1) defy/ignore and apologize were combined to form the category of "no negotiation" 2) cry/show anger and protest were combined to form the category of "minor negotiation" 3) question and argue/compromise were combined to form the category of "negotiation". Table 12 lists the number and percentages of children's strategies as they were observed on videotape and discussed by mothers at various points during the interview (in response to hypothetical vignettes, real-life vignettes and questions about general strategies).

Table 12

Children's Communication Strategies

Strategies	Sections of the Interview			
	Hyp. Vign	Real-life Vign	Observed	General
No Negotiation	48	7	11	3
	32%	47%	33%	22%
Minor Negotiation	91	8	20	9
	59%	53%	61%	64%
Negotiation	13	0	2	2
	9%	0%	6%	14%

XII. Mothers' Perceptions of Change in Strategies

Mothers' responses to the hypothetical vignettes were coded as to whether they reported changing their strategies in the last year, and whether or not they expected to change their strategies in the subsequent year. Fisher Exact tests were used to assess whether or not the number of mothers reporting changes in their strategies since a year ago, significantly differed by ages of their children. Table 13 shows the number of mothers reporting change in the choice of any strategies over the past year. A strategy change in the stealing vignette since a year ago was more likely to be reported by mothers of older children (37 to 51 months) than by mothers of younger children (25 to 28 months): $p = .006$. A binomial distribution shows that, of 8 non-significant tests at this probability level, there is a 5% probability that 1 of these tests would appear significant simply by chance.

A strategy change in the dressing vignette since a year ago was more likely to reported by mothers of girls than by mothers of boys: $p = .036$ (See Table 13). A binomial distribution shows that, of 8 non-significant tests at this probability level, there is a 22% probability that 1 of these tests would appear significant simply by chance.

Table 13

Mothers' Reports of Change in Strategy by Age and Gender of Their Child Since One Year Ago

	Age Group						Gender			
	old		yng			f		m		
Vignettes	yes	no	yes	no		yes	no	yes	no	
RADIO	5	6	5	1		6	1	4	6	
DRESSING	4	7	5	1		6	1	3	7	*
STEALING	11	0	2	4	**	4	3	9	1	
HITTING	6	5	3	3		3	4	6	4	
WINDOWS	8	3	4	2		5	2	7	3	
PLUGS	9	2	4	2		6	1	7	3	
IGNORING	6	5	3	3		4	3	5	5	
SHARING	6	5	5	1		5	2	6	4	

Note: * refers to significance at $p < .05$
Note: ** refers to significance at $p < .01$

Mothers' reports about strategy changes expected a year from now were also analyzed. Table 14 shows the number of mothers expecting change in the choice of any strategies in the subsequent year. No significant differences by age groups or gender was found.

Table 14

Mothers' Reports of Expected Change in Strategy by Age and Gender of Their Child One Year From Now

	Age Group				Gender			
	old		yng		f		m	
Vignettes	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no
RADIO	7	4	4	2	5	2	6	4
DRESSING	7	4	2	4	4	3	5	5
STEALING	5	6	4	2	5	2	4	6
HITTING	5	6	2	4	2	5	5	5
WINDOWS	8	3	2	4	2	5	8	2
PLUGS	4	7	5	1	4	3	5	5
IGNORING	5	6	5	1	5	2	5	5
SHARING	9	2	4	2	5	2	8	2

Mothers were asked whether they think they have changed or would change their choice of strategies for each vignette over a year's time. If they answered yes to either of these questions, they were asked to explain what strategies they would use instead. A very high degree of agreement among the mothers who discussed changing their strategies was found, although this was not analyzed statistically because of the low response rate. Table 15 shows the number of mothers who mentioned particular strategies as a replacement of strategies they use now. When comparing strategies used more a year from now and those used less a year ago, against those strategies used less a year from now and more a year ago (columns 1 and 4 against columns 2 and 3), one can see trends among these mothers about how they see their choice of strategies change over time.

The trend among mothers who mentioned changes, is that within a year's time, there is an increase in direct authoritative strategies, distancing, isolation, demonstration, rational authoritative strategies, negative reinforcement and threats. There is also a decrease in diversion, manipulating the environment (with or without negative overtones), physical handling of the child and positive physical handling of the child.

Table 15

Number of Mothers Reporting Changes in Their Use of Each Strategy

Strategies	Year From Now		Year Ago	
	Use More	Use Less	Use More	Use Less
Direct Authoritative	5	0	2	5
Disengaging	2	0	4	0
Demonstration	3	1	0	3
Distancing	6	1	0	4
Diversion	1	2	6	2
Negative Emotion	0	0	0	0
Positive Emotion	0	0	0	0
Isolation	2	0	0	3
Manipulating Environment	0	3	4	0
Negative Manipulating Environment	0	2	2	0
Physical Handling	0	4	5	0
Negative Physical Handling	1	0	1	1
Positive Physical Handling	0	0	3	0
Rational Authoritative	13	5	1	11
Negative Reinforcement	4	2	0	5
Positive Reinforcement	2	1	1	1
Threats	4	0	0	2

XIII. Mothers' Beliefs About How Children Learn

After watching the videotaped episode, mothers were asked what, if anything, they thought their child learned from the experience and how they thought most children eventually learn these particular concepts. Mothers' discussions of how these concepts are learned were divided into five major categories as follows:

Belief 1--explanation or instruction
(N = 5)

Belief 2--being exposed to particular models or being in particular surroundings
(N = 5)

Belief 3--"consistency", "repetition" or "reinforcement"
(N = 8)

Belief 4--maturation--either cognitive or emotional
(N = 4)

Belief 5--child's own activity or involvement.
(N = 3)

There was one association between mothers' beliefs about how their child learns certain concepts and the strategies they mentioned across all the vignettes. Mothers who believed children learn by explanation or direct instruction were more likely to mention the use of distancing than mothers who did not mention this belief: $p = .009$. A binomial distribution shows that, of 17 non-significant tests at this probability level, there is a 13% probability that 1 of these tests would appear significant simply by chance. Table 16 shows these findings. There were no significant

associations between mothers' beliefs about learning and the strategies they used in the videotaped episode. Fisher Exact tests also revealed no significant associations between mothers' beliefs about learning and the age or gender of their child, or the type of situation (irritation or safety) in which the mother and child were involved.

Table 16

Mothers' Reported Strategies as They Relate to Their Beliefs About Learning by Explanation or Instruction

	Explanation/Instruction			
	Not Mentioned		Mentioned	
Strategies	yes	no	yes	no
Direct Authoritative	12	0	5	0
Disengaging	10	2	4	1
Demonstration	8	4	4	1
Distancing	3	9	5	0 **
Diversion	11	1	2	3
Negative Emotion	0	12	1	4
Positive Emotion	3	9	1	4
Isolation	7	5	3	2
Manipulating Environment	9	3	3	2
Negative Manipulating Environment	12	0	5	0
Physical Handling	12	0	4	1
Negative Physical Handling	3	9	1	4
Positive Physical Handling	4	8	1	4
Rational Authoritative	11	1	5	0
Negative Reinforcement	5	7	3	2
Positive Reinforcement	6	6	2	3
Threats	8	4	5	0

Note: ** refers to significance at $p < .01$

XIV. Analyses of Reported Use of Three Particular Strategies

"Distancing" was described to mothers and they were then asked whether or not they have ever used this strategy with their children. Two significant differences in the reported use of distancing were found. Not surprisingly, distancing was more often reported by mothers of older children than by mothers of younger children: $p = .018$.

Most, but not all, mothers reported trying to give explanations, discuss consequences or use distancing strategies before they felt their child could really understand what was being asked of them. Distancing was attempted considerably later than the first two strategies; usually not until the child was two to three years old. Table 17 shows the mean age at which mothers thought 1) they began trying to use each of the three communication strategies and 2) when they thought their child could understand or make use of each of these strategies.

Table 17

Mean Age at Which Mothers Report Attempted Use of and Child Understanding of Various Strategies

	Strategies		
	Giving Explanations	Discussing Consequences	Distancing
Mothers report use of strategy	1.6	1.5	3.0
Mothers report child begins to understand	2.2	2.4	3.5

What follows is a summary of mothers' responses to the last set of questions regarding their ideas about issues for which to 1) make use of explanation, 2) make their children reflect on consequences of their actions, and 3) make use of "distancing" strategies:

All mothers reported using explanations at some time or another with their child. Table 18 shows the kinds of issues for which they mentioned using explanations with their children.

Table 18

Mothers' Reports About Issues for Which They Try to Use Explanations

Issues	Number of Mothers
safety	6
time frames	6
questions about death	3
events of the day	3
daily routines	2
norms	2
questions about nature	2
eating	1
compliance	1
questions about physiology	1
ownership	1
relationships	1
how things work	1

All but one mother reported talking about consequences with their children. Table 19 shows the kinds of issues mothers discussed in reference to using this strategy.

Table 19

Mothers' Reports About Issues for Which They Try to Discuss Consequences

Issues	Number of Mothers
safety issues	13
problems with sharing or fighting	3
time frames	3
hurting people	1
new situations	1
punishment	1
motivating them	1
norms	1
trying to make them more comfortable	1

Distancing was reportedly used by 10 of the mothers. Table 20 shows the kinds of issues for which mothers reported trying to use distancing strategies.

Table 20

Mothers' Reports About Issues for Which They Try to Use Distancing

Situations	Number of Mothers
conflicts between the mother and child	2
interactions between child and peers	2
safety issues	2
hurting someone	1
calendar dates	1
common situations	1
making a choice	1
staying away from strangers	1
how to spend the day	1

XV. Analyses of Responses From Viewing Videotape

Only three of the 17 mothers reported that they recalled the specific incident shown on videotape, as they were discussing the "real-life" hypothetical vignette. As they watched the videotape however, 7 more of the mothers reported that they then remembered the episode.

In response to the question, "Do you think this is how you usually have dealt with this situation?", 10 of the mothers reported that yes, their actions were fairly typical for them. In response to a question about why they handled the situation the way they did, some referred to their own philosophies of child-rearing, while many referred to aspects of the particular context involved--that they were being observed or possibly judged, or that they felt the need to continue the interview and either 1) ignore the issue at hand or 2) deal with it as quickly as possible. Of the ten mothers who felt they handled the situation somewhat differently than usual, some attributed this difference to the setting or having observers, while some referred to some aspect of the child or themselves at the time--for example, "Sally was in a bad mood that day". Table 21 shows how mothers responded to this question.

Table 21

Mothers' References as to Their Response to the Situation

Why do you think you handled this the way you did?

References	Number of Mothers
Reference to a philosophical stance on the issue	6
Reference to feeling the need to continue the interview	5
Reference to being observed	3
Reference to feeling judged	3

Why do you think you handled it differently here?

Reference to setting or having observers	6
Reference to some aspect of the child at the time	5
Did not know	2
Reference to some aspect of the self at the time	1

When mothers were asked what they thought was going on with their child during the videotaped episode, 7 of the 17 mothers suggested their child's actions were attention-getting tactics because her attention was being split between the child and the interviewer. When asked what they thought was going on for themselves during the episode as a result of the conflict, some mothers mentioned embarrassment or anger, while a few mentioned being pulled in two different directions or wanting to ignore their child. Table 22 shows how mothers responded to this question.

Table 22

Mothers' References as to Their Reactions During the Episode

What do you think was going on for you here?

References	Number of Mothers
Feeling embarrassed	6
Feeling pulled in two directions	3
Wanting to ignore the situation	2
Feeling angry with the child	1

Mothers were asked to talk about what they appeared to be feeling at the time of the episode. The range of feelings expressed were from acceptance of the situation to exasperation or anger. Most mothers reported feeling some degree of frustration and irritation at the time. Table 23 shows how mothers responded to this question.

Table 23

Mothers' Reports About Their Feelings During the Episode

Can you tell or do you remember how you felt at the time?

Feelings	Number of Mothers
Embarrassed	6
Negative	3
Can not remember or did not tell	3
Impatient	2
Annoyed	2
Sorry for the child	2
Pressured	1
Resentful	1
Harassed	1
Accepting	1
Exasperated	1
Apprehensive	1
Anxious	1
Sorry for the interviewer	1
Frustrated	1
Angry	1

Twelve of the mothers reported feeling relatively satisfied with how they dealt with the issue, but 5 mothers felt somewhat badly about how they handled it. Nine of the mothers felt they had handled the situation in the best possible way, while 6 mothers felt there were better ways to have handled the issue. Table 24 shows how mothers responded to this question.

Table 24

Mothers' References as to How Well the Situation was Handled

What do you think about the way you handled this situation?

References	Number of Mothers
Good	2
OK	10
Not satisfied	3
Uneasy	2

In hindsight, do you think this was the best way for you to handle this?

Yes	9
No	6
Unsure	2

When asked what kinds of pressures they may have been feeling, many mothers mentioned being observed. Fourteen of the mothers believed these pressures affected how they dealt with the situation. Further probing for additional factors revealed no mention of pressures other than those previously mentioned, all of which address the immediate situation. Table 25 shows how mothers responded to this question. Each mother may have answered this question in more than one way.

Table 25

Mothers' References to Pressures Felt During the Episode

What different pressures do you think you felt at the time?

References	Number of Mothers
Being on tape	7
Attention being split	7
Child's personality at the time	6
Being observed	4
Child's (lower) developmental level at the time	1
Pressure from the interviewer	1
Pressure to talk	1
No reference to pressures	1

Do you think these pressures affected how you dealt with the situation?

Yes	14
No	2
Unsure	1

When asked how they think children eventually learn concepts involved in the videotaped incident, eight different concepts emerged Table 26 shows how mothers responded to this question. Mothers could answer this question in more than one way.

Table 26

Mothers' Ideas About Learning

How do you think most kids eventually learn (concept from episode)?

References	Number of Mothers
Examples set by others	5
Repetition of rules	5
Observation of consistent cause and effect	4
Growth and development	3
Hearing explanations	3
Having an accident	3
Child's desire to please	1
Positive reinforcement	1

When asked why this might have been more of a problem at the time than it needed to be, 6 mothers said this was not the case. Of those mothers who did feel it was more of a problem, 7 felt it was because their child felt the need for attention, precisely because the mother's attention was being split. Table 27 shows how mothers responded to this question.

Table 27

Mothers' Ideas About What Made the Episode More of a Problem

References	Number of Mothers
because the child wanted attention	7
because of the mother's initial reaction to the incident.	2
because the mother felt she was being scrutinized	1

Mothers were asked about the significance of various factors in affecting how they would handle the situation differently. Table 28 shows how they responded to these various questions. Twelve mothers felt that they would have handled the situation differently if their child had been older or if they had been alone with the child, or if they had more time to deal with the child. Thirteen mothers reported that they would have been more involved in dealing with their child had they been alone with him or her at the time. When asked what impact mothers thought the interviewer had on the videotaped scene, 10 mothers felt it primarily affected their child's actions, rather than their own.

Table 28

Mother's Ideas About Factors Affecting Their Actions

Would this scene look different if you were alone with your child?

References	Number of Mothers
Yes	13
No	4

How would the scene look different?

would be more engaged with the child	7
would explain more	2
would take quicker action than with the interviewer there	4

Would you handle the situation differently if you had plenty of time to deal with this?

Yes	12
No	5

Table 28 (continued)

What impact do you think we had in being there when this scene happened?

it affected their child's actions	10
it affected their feelings or thoughts at the time	6
it changed the mothers' own actions	3

Do you think your being busy/having company had anything to do with why this issue came up in the first place?

Yes	10
No	6
Do no know	1

XVI. Mothers' Rationales for Choosing Strategies

Mothers' reasons for choosing certain strategies were varied, rich with ideology, and insightful. What follows is a sampling of some of these reasons, which pertain to specific strategies.

Distancing:

"If he had negative feelings, he would eventually verbalize them."

"To put him in the position of someone else--to see how they would feel."

"Because saying no is just gonna lead to a temper tantrum."

"Putting it on her really helps her relate."

Explaining:

"Because you want her to know what to do when you're not there to watch her."

"Because he might be so excited, he doesn't realize what he's doing."

"So he'd understand the consequences."

"Because he craves it."

"Because they understand a hell of a lot--it's the most effective way."

Direct Orders:

"They need to hear clear messages."

"Give them the opportunity to do what's asked before you get more aggressive with them."

Disengaging:

"Because we're so busy, we don't have time to make an issue out of everything."

"Because I would be shocked."

"Because it may have just been a mistake."

"If you make it an issue, they'll do it just to jerk you around."

"It wouldn't be worth fighting about."

"Because I'm tired and I don't wanna repeat myself and I know he's not gonna listen to me anyway."

"Because I don't wanna be yelling at him so much."

"Because it's such an odd thing for him to do."

Distracting:

"So you don't get into a test of wills."

"To give him the attention he needs in a positive way rather than a negative way."

"Because saying no would enhance his curiosity."

"It's the least aggressive way."

"To make it easier on myself."

"To prevent some issue from becoming more important than it should be."

"It solves the problem painlessly and easily and quickly."

Isolating:

"Because she may be exhausted, so it sets her back on track."

"So he'll think about why he has to listen to me."

"Because hitting them really doesn't get their attention sometimes."

"To get his adrenaline to lower a little, and so he can think more rationally."

Negative Reinforcement:

"If you let them do it anytime they want your attention, they'll demand more and more of your time and they won't let you do anything."

"Because spanking they get used to and it becomes easy to take."

"It's important to teach him respect or some consequence will occur."

"Because hitting works better when they're younger."

"Because if he's been told once, the second time is deliberate."

"Because I have no choice."

"Because it's serious and it should be handled seriously."

Threatening:

"It gets the best results with the least amount of fuss."

"If she doesn't understand it, then it has to be reinforced."

"It's the only thing that works."

Physically removing or changing the environment:

"It's not fair to leave it as a temptation."

"Because it's very difficult for me to tolerate."

"Because it's better for them to let them forget about it than to keep having fights."

"It's the only logical answer--get rid of what's bothering the child."

"Because kids don't understand explanations."

"Danger is not something you negotiate about."

"To protect him."

"Because kids are bound to be curious and experimental."

As these mothers talked, they would sometimes put forth a crystallized piece of ideology, somewhat separate from the incident being discussed. Because these seem so interesting, a few are mentioned below.

"Sharp reactions are misunderstood by a child."

"It's not good to emotionally tie into every little thing that goes on."

"Try to give him more control because the issue is really about independence."

"Intervene without making them feel they did something wrong."

"You really should follow through on your promises."

"It's good to have them try and work it out themselves because the parent isn't always gonna be there."

"Don't punish if he can't understand the consequences."

"I wasn't so direct before because I didn't want to scare her."

"Better to make a straight rule now because it's hard to get more serious later."

"You shouldn't put too much of your emotions into it because to them, it's no big deal."

"I like to connect the threat with the action if at all possible."

"Don't drag something silly into a long battle."

"Just get him in the habit of doing things a certain way."

"You try the most mature thing first, but the bottom line is parental supremacy."

"Kids have to know they can't have everything they want."

"You have to draw lines, but you can't expect them to be kept."

"They need to know that whatever they've done is not unrecoverable."

"It's important to let them know that feelings of anger are OK."

"Sickly kids are more spoiled, so watch that you don't give them too much attention--all kids should be treated equally."

"You have to be flexible because nothing's gonna work consistently at this age."

"I wouldn't want to make him feel guilty for hurting my feelings."

"Don't do what they want just to keep them from crying, or they'll cry more."

"Try not to react right away; think about how you want to react."

XVII. Mothers' Ideas About What the Child Learned From the Episode

Mothers were asked about what concepts they think their child was learning during the episode viewed on videotape. The concepts these mothers discussed turned out to be far more rich than this investigator expected. What follows are brief paraphrases from this discussion:

learning that something is dangerous

learning that she can get angry about something and it doesn't necessarily mean that I will get angry with her

learning that sometimes mommy's attention is going to be divided

learning that she can't have everything she wants immediately when she wants it

learning that if you don't do X, there will be a consequence

learning that if she cooperates, things will be easier for her

learning that a compromise is possible, but there is a boundary

learning that I mean what I say

learning that you can't take somebody's toy and break it

learning that he can be included in what's going on, but there are limits

learning not to be so selfish

Chapter VI

DISCUSSION

A primary goal of this study was to investigate, through the use of hypothetical vignettes, the relationship between communication strategies mothers say they would use with their young children and a variety of factors which might be related to these strategies, such as: type of situation, age of child, gender of child, mothers' beliefs about learning, strategies the mothers actually used in the videotaped episode, and what mothers say about their general child-rearing strategies. The study also explored mothers' reasons for choosing the strategies they did, their perceptions of change in strategies over time and the strategies children used in response to their mothers. A second goal of the study was to clarify certain problems in the literature on child-rearing and belief systems; in particular, the relative neglect of children's participation in constructing interactions and the ambiguity of coding schemes regarding parents' beliefs about learning. A third goal was to evaluate various methods used in this study and in research in this area (presentation of hypothetical vignettes, videotape observation, open-ended interview), and the kinds of data that were obtainable from each method

(quantitative and qualitative). In particular, consideration centers around the interview as a situated activity--how interview questions shape subsequent discourse, as well as how context is embedded in both the construction of the interview and the resulting empirical data. What follows is a discussion of these three levels of inquiry in relation to this particular study.

The interviews were taped and then transcribed so that the material could be handled more efficiently. Although working with transcripts made analysis much easier than working directly with the tapes, the creation of a transcript clearly has bearing on the subsequent analysis. Ochs (1979) argues that the content and format of transcripts will influence and constrain what generalizations emerge and what analyses are possible. To be sure, some of the "tone" of the discussion was lost by transcribing these interviews, but for the purposes of this research, it is necessary to assume that the meanings conveyed remain fairly intact.

Mothers' Strategies and Situation Type

Analysis of mothers' responses to the hypothetical vignettes showed that their choice of strategies in most cases varied significantly by type of situation, whether safety, irritation, moral or interpersonal. (The only exceptions were strategies involving isolation, negative physical handling, threats and negative emotions. Mentioned

use of negative emotions as a strategy choice did not vary by situation type because this strategy was mentioned only once during the entire study.) Part of the explanation for this difference in distribution of strategy choices seems fairly straightforward--certain strategies lend themselves more appropriately to certain situations than others. For example, using a disengaging strategy with regard to a safety issue may seem inappropriate to mothers because it could further endanger the child, compared to using such a strategy with regard to an irritation issue, in which it may seem more effective to just drop the issue for awhile. Diverting a child's attention may sometimes appear more appropriate with regard to an interpersonal conflict than it does with regard to certain moral issues which may require direct, immediate attention. Positive reinforcement may be regarded by mothers as an efficient way to temporarily dispense with an irritation issue, compared with a moral issue, in which there may be more concern about the long-term effects of such a strategy. This data and this interpretation support Grusec and Kuczynski's (1980) hypothesis that the type of situation in which one is involved is important to the choice of strategy use.

However, explanation of the fairly strong association found in this study between mentioned strategy choice and type of situation may have more to do with differences between strategy choices across ALL the incidents, rather than just between the four situation types which are

constituted by these eight incidents. The range of appropriate or possible actions that can be taken during a given incident vary considerably by incident, as well as by situation type. For example, physical handling was found to vary significantly by situation type, with irritation and safety situations showing far more instances of physical handling than moral and interpersonal situations. Yet, while 11 mothers mentioned using physical handling in the dressing vignette, only 2 mothers mentioned using physical handling in the radio vignette, both of which are categorized as irritation situations. Although there may be some strategies that are more common for situations as categorized above, in this investigator's opinion, a sharp distinction has not been found. It is more likely that the significant difference in strategy choice by situation reflects differences in the specific context embedded in each particular incident. Thus, it appears more useful to refer to specific situations rather than "types" of situations for explaining strategy choice.

This difference in strategy choice by situation is not taken as evidence however, against the possible existence of broader, more global approaches to child-rearing which do not vary by situation; e.g. general modes of action, or "parenting styles" which may reflect cohesive ideas and values of how children should be raised, and may differ rather distinctly between parents, but not between situations. Parents may vary on such dimensions as

authoritarian versus egalitarian child-rearing styles, as Minton (1971) suggests. By choosing to analyze each strategy across contexts, we obscure the extent to which different patterns of individual strategy-choice exist, which may reflect certain parenting styles. To investigate this, one would need to do an analysis of the patterns of strategies each parent chooses across contexts, as well as an analysis of strategies each parent chooses never to use.

Mothers' Strategies and Children's Age

Analysis of mothers' reports of strategies for dealing with potential conflicts indicates that mothers of younger children (up to 28 months) are more likely than mothers of older children to attend to their child in a more physically affectionate manner and, in particular situations, divert the child's attention away from certain activities, avoid discussion of or attention to certain issues, demonstrate and guide their child's actions, and press their child to tell them what is wrong if they are ignoring their mother. Mothers of older children (37 to 51 months), by contrast, were more likely than mothers of younger children to use threats, press their child to give explanations or talk about what they are thinking (distancing) and in particular situations, divert their child's attention away from certain activities.

Analysis of the videotaped episodes, which varied considerably in terms of the types of issues involved and

the intensity of the interaction, revealed only one difference in the use of certain strategies by age of the child. Mothers of younger children were more likely to hold or hug their child during the conflict, than mothers of older children. This finding is consistent with the results found from analyzing mothers' reports of strategy use. No other differences in strategy use by age of the child were found, however. Although this differential physical expression of affection could be due in part to the types of issues mothers and children of particular ages involved themselves in, no significant difference in the distribution of the types of incidents involved (safety or irritation) was found by age groups of children.

When asked directly about their use of distancing, explanation, and discussion of consequences, mothers mentioned different ages at which they began each strategy. On average, explanations and discussions of consequences were reportedly begun around 30 months, while distancing strategies were not attempted until around 36 months. Usually mothers reported a 6-12 month time lag between the time when they attempted these strategies and when they felt the child began to show signs of understanding.

These mothers commonly expressed the view that their strategies would change as their child develops. Consistent with this is the finding that mothers of older children were more likely to report the use of strategies involving threats or distancing across all the vignettes presented,

and less likely to report the use of positive physical handling than mothers of younger children. When asked specifically about distancing as a strategy, mothers of older children were more likely to report that they use this strategy with their child now, than mothers of younger children. Since one of the major developmental accomplishments of children in these age groups is an increasing competence in understanding language and expressing themselves through language, the increase in mothers' use of threats and distancing, as verbal strategies, was expected, along with a decrease in nonverbal strategies. The reported decrease in use of positive physical handling, usually described in terms of restraining the child from particular activities as well as giving the child attention, was also expected. In summary, mothers believed that their strategies change with their child's age, and analysis across age groups revealed that use of some strategies differed by age group. However, a longitudinal study would be necessary to verify that within-subject strategy change does occur.

Mothers' Strategies and Children's Gender

Although associations between mothers' strategy choice and the gender of their children were not found to hold across all vignettes, one significant association was found with regard to particular vignettes. Mothers of boys were more likely to use threats if their child was fighting over a toy than mothers of girls. One could conclude that this

is a reflection of the mothers' use of a less combative style of persuasion with girls than with boys, at least with regard to sharing. However this is speculative, since no other significant differences in strategy use (combative or otherwise) by gender of the child were found.

With regard to perceptions of change over time, mothers of girls were more likely to report a change in strategy over the past year in getting their daughters dressed. This might be explained as an area of everyday life in which girls may be more likely to take an interest in battling for control, so mothers then find it necessary to look for better ways to handle the problem. Conversely, it could be argued that mothers are more sensitive to girls' protests around the issue of dressing than mothers of boys and therefore seek to find an alternative way to handle the matter.

Mothers' Strategies and Their Beliefs About How Children Learn

In response to open-ended questions about why they chose a particular strategy, mothers often referred to aspects of learning, for example, their child's level of understanding or that a certain strategy works because the child understands the consequences. However, when directly asked their ideas about how children learn, only one association was found between these beliefs and mothers' strategy choices, with regard to either the videotaped

incident or the hypothetical vignettes. Mothers who believed children learn by instruction/explanation were more likely to mention the use of distancing in response to the hypothetical vignettes. However, distancing was not found by Sigel (1986) to be associated with these particular beliefs about learning. Sigel had found that distancing strategies were linked, rather, to mothers' beliefs that children develop cognitively through the child's "accumulation" of knowledge, (which is distinguished in his coding scheme from direct instruction/explanation). The association between distancing strategies and instruction/explanation found in the present study may be a reflection of a more general relationship between mothers' choice of verbal forms of communication strategies and a belief that their children learn primarily from this type of verbal exchange.

Mothers' Strategies in Hypothetical Vignettes of Videotaped Episodes

There was not a particularly high degree of similarity between the strategies mothers talked about in response to the "real-life" episodes presented as hypothetical vignettes and the strategies they were observed to use on videotapes of these same episodes. Only about 30% of the strategies mothers mentioned in the "real-life" hypothetical vignette were actually used in the videotaped episode. But the number of strategies observed on tape was considerably

greater than the number of strategies each mother discussed. On average, mothers mentioned about 2 or 3 strategies per vignette, and the number of observed strategies on tape averaged about 5 strategies per mother.

All ten mothers whose "real-life" vignette and similar videotaped episode were concerned with irritation issues, mentioned at least 17% of the strategies they used on tape, whereas only four of the seven mothers whose episode concerned safety issues did so. The type of situation in which these mothers and children were involved however, was not significantly related to the degree of similarity between mothers' strategies on the videotape and their strategies mentioned in response to the real-life vignette. Contrary to an earlier hypothesis, strategies regarding safety issues do not appear significantly easier to predict than irritation issues, nor was the reverse found to be true.

Children's Communication Strategies

The most common strategies children employed in response to their mothers' requests or admonitions were to either comply or to do one of three things: protest or complain, defy or ignore, or cry or show anger.
Only once was a child observed to negotiate by questioning the mother or by pushing for some kind of compromise. While 13 of the 17 mothers expected that their child would eventually comply with their request in a given situation

(the real-life vignette), only 8 children were observed to eventually comply in the similar videotaped episode. Of those 8 children who did comply, 6 put up considerable resistance before actually complying.

Although most mothers answered the hypothetical vignettes as though their child would eventually comply, in real-life, the child did not comply nearly as often as mothers suggested. Rather, compliance was "forced", meaning that the child was either forced to leave the room (4), successfully distracted (1) or physically restrained (1). On 3 occasions, mothers "gave in" and let their child do what they wanted.

Mothers' Rationales

Mothers were asked why they chose each strategy in responding to the hypothetical vignettes. The rationales that mothers gave for their strategies were very different from what was expected. Instead of giving clearly articulated reasons for their preferences of one strategy over another, ideologies regarding child-rearing came through in bits and pieces, covering a much broader range than this investigator ever imagined. A few mothers were clearly confused by the question and resorted to giving the same answers for each hypothetical situation--"because it works" or "because then she'll do what I say". But for the most part, this particular question prompted answers that were some of the most interesting data of the study. It is

not necessarily the answers to the specific questions, but rather where the emphasis was placed as each mother talked, that is the most revealing. Their attempts to answer this question for each hypothetical situation revealed patterns of emphasis which may have differed more from mother to mother, than from incident to incident, pointing to something about the ways in which each mother views her child, her responsibilities as a parent and her expectations of the kind of relationship she hopes for with her child, as well as pointing to some of the values she finds important in her life and the constraints she feels bound by. Her rationales and her stories provided a way in which one can make better sense of her actions; better than if only her actions had been analyzed.

The most striking difference in emphasis that mothers brought to the discussion was between mothers who spoke primarily in terms of giving the child a choice--a sense of control--and recognizing their child's perspective, versus those who spoke more in terms of accomplishing the goal and using their own perspective to justify their strategies. Some examples of the first perspective were:

"Give them the opportunity to do what's asked before you get more aggressive with them"
"She may be exhausted, so it sets her back on track"
"It's not fair to leave it as a temptation"
"Because it may have just been a mistake"
"Putting it on her really helps her relate"

Examples of the second perspective were:

"If you make it an issue, they'll do it just to jerk you around"

"Because I don't wanna be yelling at him so much"
"It's important to teach him respect or some consequence will occur"
"It gets the best results with the least amount of fuss"
"So he'll think about why he has to listen to me"

It is not yet clear whether it makes sense to think of this distinction as reflecting stylistic differences between child-centered versus adult-centered values that are specific to individual mothers. Some mothers seemed to talk in both ways. Nor is it clear that these differences in talking have any connection to their patterns of strategy choice. Teasing apart these issues could be an interesting follow-up to this study.

COMMENTS ON THE LITERATURE

In addition to the findings regarding mothers' strategy choices, the data from the present study provide some basis for a critical consideration of the literatures on child-rearing and on parents' belief systems. In particular, the issues of concern are how children's participation in interactions is typically envisioned in the literature and how parents' beliefs about children's learning have been conceptualized in the literature.

Conceptions of the Child in the Child-Rearing Literature

Much of the research in the literature on child-rearing reflects an individualist, stimulus-response model of interaction in which contingent behavior is the focus. The

studies typically ignore or distort the cultural embeddedness of the activities in which the parent and child are engaged and the purpose of their activities. They often ignore the role the child plays as creative participant in the interaction. Lastly, they portray interactions in terms of stimuli and responses of individuals, rather than constructed, dynamic relations between people.

When children's participation is discussed in the literature on child rearing, their actions are often described only as outcome variables; whether or not children obey or comply with some parental demand (Holden, 1983; Howes & Olenick, 1986; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Minton et al., 1971; Stayton et al., 1971;). Generally, investigators place an arbitrary time limit on observations of the child after a command is given. The child's actions are then recorded as either compliance or non-compliance within the designated time period. Degrees of compliance are also sometimes coded, since compliance may occur only after a long sequence of events (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). But this way of looking at children's actions is problematic for several reasons, least of which is that the time limit varies across studies, and so "compliance" ends up having several different meanings in the literature. The term "compliance" refers to a static, frozen moment culminated from an on-going interaction. This may be an appropriate unit of analysis for certain questions, but the ongoing stream of activity has been lost.

While looking for communication strategies between mothers and their children on videotape, it became clear that what gets lost by ignoring this ongoing stream of activity is the content of the interaction in which the parent and child are engaged. The goal of the activity may be eventually accomplished, but more importantly, throughout the activity, a series of negotiations are taking place between the mother and child. While trying to dress her daughter for example, one mother was seen to back off on several occasions, divert the child's attention in many ways, reason with the child, try to understand the child's complaints, force the clothes on despite the child's protests, etc. The child, on the other hand, intermittently allowed the mother to dress her, sometimes complained, sometimes threw her body away from her mother, changed the subject as if to divert her mother's attention, tried to express her wanting to dress herself, tried in fact, to dress herself, and successfully undressed herself again on several occasions. This was a serious negotiation in which both parties were earnestly involved. It is within these complex constructions that the child is understanding and creating values and meanings in everyday life. Whether the child either complied from second-to-second or complied eventually, seemed irrelevant and uninteresting in light of the sophistication with which this two-year-old was insisting on participating and being acknowledged.

The literature on child-rearing has done little to illuminate the participation of the negotiating child. Linking children's compliance with mothers' "control behaviors", as is typical in the literature, ignores both the child's active participation in creating the interaction as well as the stream of activity in which the participants are involved. Future investigations in this field could benefit from a more detailed analysis of children's contributions to these negotiations, and the functions they serve.

Conceptions of Learning in the Belief Systems Literature

Although beliefs about how children learn is certainly a plausible foundation on which strategy choices may be made, it appears to this investigator to be a difficult concept for both parents and investigators to delineate. Sigel (1986) distinguishes between parents' communication strategies which require the child to be an active participant, thus facilitating reorganization of mental operations, versus those which require the child to be a fairly passive recipient of knowledge. He describes the relationship found between the use of distancing strategies and parents' belief that children learn by Accumulation, as "consistent with Distancing Theory, which holds that children construct their own reality through interaction with other people".

However, Sigel et al.'s (1986) distinctions among the various beliefs about learning seem conceptually confusing in light of this investigator's experience with applying the coding scheme to the data. One dimension on which these coding categories of beliefs about learning differ, is whether parents perceive the child as doing cognitive work versus somehow being "fed" information from the external environment, which is not actively "processed" by the child. "Accumulation" in Sigel et al.'s (1986) codebook is defined as "Child learns through building on knowledge from previous experience". This definition sounds consistent with a theory of "active construction". Yet, some of the examples given for this coding category are: "Knowledge is like barnacles. It just keeps growing"; "children learn from additive experiences from many sources (no synthesis implied)"; "Kids' minds are like buckets into which experiences are tossed, which then accumulate in an additive manner". Although the codebook definition could be construed as "active cognitive construction" which Sigel clearly accepts, there is nothing in the examples that support the implication of cognitive reorganization.

Furthermore, although some of the coding categories (and mothers' responses) describe external "forces" that press in on the child, (such as direct instruction, exposure, positive or negative feedback, manipulate environment), this is not necessarily an indication that the parent believes the child does NOT cognitively restructure

this information. Many of Sigel et al.'s examples under these categories can be construed as active construction even though the definition of the category does not imply this. We can not infer how "constructive" the child's cognitive development is perceived to be, from statements that simply allude to these external forces. What these parents really mean when they give examples like this requires careful attention, as Sigel strongly encourages, but the coding categories themselves could benefit from more elaboration as well.

When mothers in this study were asked how their child learns particular concepts, even when related to specific activities, the question seemed to this investigator to be somewhat vague and abstract. Mothers' answers to this question reflected this. They invariably relied on terms like explanation or observation or reinforcement, which may have a very different meaning to each of these parents than this investigator's definitions.

Due to the lack of clarity about the relationships found in the literature between strategies and beliefs about learning, it may be more helpful to continue to leave open the question of what types of beliefs are related to strategy choice, rather than limiting the focus to beliefs about learning. Asking parents about their reasons for choosing particular strategies and soliciting narratives from them by asking them to give examples, may still provide

important clues to the relationship between strategy choice and specific kinds of beliefs.

In future research, a closer, more interpretive analysis of the relationship between parent's choice of strategy and their rationales for choosing could be interesting. Highlighting the difference among individual parents in their emphasis of various ideas and values, could be a way to explore the relationship between these ideas and parents' choice of strategies. I agree with Sutherland (1983) that exploring parents' notions of "control" are insufficient if we want to understand the processes through which children develop, but evidence from this study has not led me to believe that this process is more fully illuminated by exploring parents' notions about learning, either. If we are to assume that parents' concerns in specific situations are a good indicator of what is important in their choice of strategies, which is an empirical question, then we should be looking not directly at their stated reasons for their choices, but at the values they emphasize as they talk about those reasons. It is important to recognize that it is precisely because certain ideas are assumed to be shared, that they may not be directly discussed, so one needs to go beyond the text in some way.

Goodnow (1988) is correct to point out the importance of focussing parents' ideas about child-rearing around specific situations. The patterns of emphasis should not be

gathered from general reports by parents of their beliefs about "child-rearing", but rather, by looking at how they talk about a wide range of very specific situations. The purpose would be to explore the range of beliefs that seem related to strategy choice and begin to form hypotheses about in what ways they are important to each other.

COMMENTS ON METHOD

When mothers were asked about the general strategies they might use, they mentioned as a group, 6 fewer types of strategies than when they were presented earlier with several different types of situations and asked to talk about the strategies they might use. Mothers never mentioned Demonstration, Positive Emotion, Manipulating Environment, Manipulating Environment with Negative Overtones, Physical Handling, or Positive Physical when discussing general strategies. Yet Manipulating Environment was repeatedly mentioned in hypothetical conflicts involving safety issues and irritation issues, and Demonstration was a heavily used strategy in the vignette involving the child hitting the cat. This difference points to the importance of referring to specific situations if we want to investigate what may happen in real life. These mothers tailored their strategies to the particular situation they were presented, both with the hypothetical vignettes and in real life. But when asked about strategies generally, they apparently spoke in general terms; terms which obscure the

importance of specific situations for organizing and shaping their activity. Cole and Scribner (1975) discuss the need for researchers to stay close to the data in this way, so that broad, undefinable generalizations are not relied upon.

However, in spite of the effort to construct the hypothetical vignette as closely as possible to the videotaped episode, only about 30% of the strategies mothers mentioned in the "real-life" hypothetical vignette were actually used in the videotaped episode. Before we conclude that mothers are poor predictors of their actions in real-life, we might reconsider the plausibility of the expectation implicit in the literature, that responses to hypothetical situations can and should be similar to those in real-life. Although the presentation of hypothetical vignettes was a very useful way to get mothers talking about their strategies and their reasons for choosing strategies, there are some assumptions embedded in this method which need to be acknowledged and perhaps re-evaluated.

Evaluation of the Use of Hypothetical Vignettes

The selection of a hypothetical "conflict" by the investigator carries an implicit assumption that this vignette is an issue of concern and that it should be dealt with. Mothers typically accepted this assumption and answered accordingly. Therefore, as an example, mothers probably did not feel it was appropriate to discuss ignoring the child in response to a hypothetical "conflict", even

though in fact, this occurred with at least 7 of the mothers at various times during the real-life videotaped episode. The discussion following the real-life episode highlighted the importance of providing some way to make explicit some of these implicit differences in assumption. For example, after viewing the videotaped episode, mothers were asked why they thought their strategies on videotape differed from the strategies they discussed in response to the hypothetical vignette. A few mothers commented that they did not see a conflict arising from the hypothetical vignette, either because they would allow their child to do a particular activity now that they did not allow several months before (when the videotape was made), or because their understanding was that in this particular vignette, they were home alone with their child and could devote their attention to the problem at hand. Rather than simply interpreting these mothers' comments as mere rationalizations for not doing what one said one would do, they should be considered to be informed critiques of our ability as investigators to successfully construct situations in which the meaning of the situation for the "subject" will be the same as that of the investigator's.

Furthermore, the hypothetical vignettes carried an assumption that mothers should not only view the incident as conflictual, but as unavoidable. What is not systematically captured because of this assumption is mothers' use of proactive strategies; mothers' anticipation of an action in

advance and then acting upon this in order to prevent some occurrence (Holden, 1983). Mothers often mentioned in response to the hypothetical vignettes, that before it became an issue, they would give the child a choice of two options, or distract the (usually younger) child, or move some object out of their reach, or resort to explanation earlier than they ordinarily might, as a way to head off ensuing battles which they felt they could often foresee. This strategy was most often mentioned with regard to removing possible dangers in the home, but it also arose with regard to potentially escalating interactions in which mothers anticipated that their child would become increasingly agitated if the situation was not dealt with quickly.

The ways in which the investigator and these mothers implicitly qualified the hypothetical reflect the inevitable differences in assumptions about what is taken for granted when addressing the hypothetical vignette. Although a serious attempt was made to describe the real-life vignette so that it conformed as closely as possible to the real-life situation on the videotape, this attempt proved to be impossible. Hypothetical vignettes simply can not reflect or carry all of the assumptions about all of the ways in which a particular situation has been constructed. For example, since some of these original conflict episodes arose during a room-by-room portion of the interview, mothers sometimes settled conflicts simply by closing the

door to that particular room, or quickly finishing up the questions regarding that room, so that everyone could then leave that area. The investigator could not be expected to lay out the exact circumstances under which this strategy was used, nor could the mother be expected to consider this particular aspect of the situation, given the very general circumstances presented to her as a hypothetical vignette.

Evaluation of New Method: Pursuing Mothers' Analyses of Themselves on Videotape

One reason for having mothers view the videotape episode and then discuss the incident was that it was thought that mothers could elucidate the connections between their reasons, motivations, and actions more clearly when actually viewing a tape of themselves, than when they were talking about hypothetical vignettes. Here they could see the incident for themselves; incidents in which they were actually involved. One issue that came up for all of these mothers was centered around the ways in which the presence of observers and the demands of the interview may have shaped mothers' interactions with their child, both in terms of the frequency of conflict and the types of strategies used by the mothers and their child.

Surprisingly few conflicts were witnessed when reviewing the videotapes for this study, but this is a subjective judgement on the part of the investigator. This judgement is consistent with Howes and Olenick's (1986)

suggestion that parents may be able to reduce the incidence of conflict in their natural surroundings because they have greater opportunities to adjust situations in their own home than is possible in a public or laboratory setting. One way of reducing incidences of conflict, for example, is through the use of proactive strategies (Holden, 1983). Many mothers in this study felt that the reason the videotaped conflict came up in the first place was precisely because they could not give the same amount of attention to their child as usual, and so their child was attempting to find ways to get that attention. Placing the results from this study in context, mothers' reports suggest that the incidence of conflicts between these mothers and their children was higher than would have been the case had they not been required to divide their attention for the interview.

Mothers reported feeling constrained by the demands of the interview, which may have resulted in different strategy choices, due to the decrease in attention they felt able to give to their child. As Zussman (1980) suggests, mothers did allude to a "minimal parenting" mode during the interview which most mothers said they would not resort to, had they been alone or had more time to deal with the given situation. Although only 7 mothers explicitly mentioned feeling pulled in two directions or pressured to continue the interview, almost all expressed some degree of frustration, embarrassment, or irritation in dealing with

the issue while trying to continue the interview. Most mothers felt fairly satisfied with the way they handled their child on tape, but most also reported that they would have handled the same situation somewhat differently if the interview had not been taking up their time and attention, or if they had felt able to stop it from time to time. They said they would have been more engaged with their child; they would have given their child more attention, been more patient or suggested better alternatives. Some would have tried to explain more, or would have taken quicker action, if the situation had been different. These reports indicate that these mothers felt their actions were more negative than they preferred, even though most felt they handled the situation the best they could under the circumstances. In light of this, it seems they would agree that they were resorting to more "minimal parenting" strategies in the ways Zussman (1980) describes, as a result of being interviewed.

It is important however, to recognize that the answers these mothers gave to these questions are not in any way "objective", any more than the investigator's analysis can be. Having mothers view themselves on videotape seemed to have a powerful effect on their answers to certain questions following the viewing. After the videotaped episode had been shown to each mother, they were asked why they handled the situation the way they did. The kind of answers this investigator expected, and which were often brought up at other points during the interview, were broad

generalizations found daily in the media; the frustrations of "Supermom"--lack of time, lack of help, wanting to do everything just right but feeling tired and impatient. Not one of these issues was raised by anyone at this particular point in the interview. Instead, 11 of the 17 mothers referred to some aspect of the interview experience. When asked what kinds of pressures they may have been under at the time, 13 mothers again mentioned some aspect of the interview experience.

If one takes their comments at face value, one can surmise that the presence of observers does indeed have a strong impact on people's actions and feelings, as many investigators have suspected all along. What also seems true however, is that the viewing of the videotape may have served as a means to obscure less immediately obvious pressures and reasons for acting in a particular way. Watching themselves on tape may have heightened their awareness of being observed in this situation, and so the only salient issue for them during this portion of the interview, was that during the episode on videotape, they were being observed and interviewed. Mothers do experience other kinds of pressures and think about other kinds of reasons for taking particular actions; issues which were often discussed tangentially throughout the interview.

Two possible benefits of this method stand out, depending on the investigators' purpose. After viewing the tape, mothers were asked questions about their feelings at

the time of the incident and now. It seemed easy for them to talk about these feelings, which may have proven more difficult had they been asked to discuss their feelings regarding purely hypothetical situations. More importantly, some of the mothers commented that watching the videotape was a help to them. It gave them a chance to step back and look at an interaction with their child from a distance, and evaluate their own actions. Although most mothers felt "OK" about their actions on tape, a few mentioned that in spite of this, seeing the tape was enough of an influence that they would hope to act somewhat differently with their children under certain circumstances in the future. This kind of response indicates that this method may be useful as a tool for intervention in clinical settings. To what extent self-observation could be a catalyst for change and for what kinds of problems, remains an empirical question.

Combining Observational and Interview Methods

One thing that seemed clear was that the investigator and the interviewees do not always delineate strategies to the same degree of specificity during an interview. Although mothers were able to talk about some of the strategies they used, the range of strategies they used on videotape was not reflected well from the "real-life" hypothetical vignette alone. Mothers were observed to have a much larger repertoire of strategies than they discussed, not only because they are probably not aware of the range,

or they do not feel compelled to discuss each strategy, but also because they may not define and categorize strategies in exactly the same way the investigator does. First, somewhat similar actions, or actions seen to accomplish the same goal, may not be mutually agreed upon between the investigator and subject as different strategies. Second, mothers may not discuss all of the subtle nuances of a strategy in a way that can be distinguished by the investigator. For example, depending on how a mother describes a certain strategy--"What's gonna happen to you if you touch that lamp?"--she may appear to be threatening the child with a punishment (threat) or demanding that the child explain what the consequences will be if they do not obey (distancing). Third, there may be actions that mothers take, that they do not acknowledge as "strategies"; for example, hugging their child or ignoring their child. Fourth, there may be more convenient ways of talking about certain kinds of strategies than others; in other words, mothers may have appeared to rely more heavily on certain strategies as they talked about the vignettes, because these strategies were easy to talk about.

Additionally, the demands of the videotaped interview discussed earlier and the mothers' awareness of observers may have served to constrain the choices of certain strategies in real life; for example, more mothers discussed the use of explanations and threats than actually used them on videotape. All of these issues are important to

investigate in determining what interview and observational methods can each contribute to our understanding of strategy choice and its function in everyday life.

Cole and Scribner's (1975) important article has stressed the necessity of combining research methods when investigating any phenomenon. By combining two particular methods in this study, it was possible to show a striking difference in the sheer number of strategies coded. Direct observations showed mothers using a much wider variety of strategies than they indicated in response to the hypothetical vignettes. Secondly, the videotapes show mothers using certain strategies repeatedly, but the extent to which mothers repeat their strategies or try variations on the same strategy was not encouraged within the interview, since the focus of the questions was directed at DIFFERENT strategies.

It was when mothers were asked WHY they chose the strategies they did, that the value of the hypothetical vignettes seemed to appear. The hypothetical question of why they would choose a particular strategy in a particular situation gave rise to much more varied and concise reasons for doing so than when they were asked about their actions after viewing the videotape. This difference was perhaps due to the absence of being observed as one aspect of the episode on which mothers could focus their attention. But the clarity and richness in which these reasons were portrayed also may be a function of the emergence of stories

or narratives which arose as these mothers talked. Mishler (1986) quotes Bruner, who emphasizes the distinctive role of narrative modes of thought in illuminating how cognitive understanding is arrived at. He later quotes Victor Turner with regard to this same issue: narrative is "the supreme instrument for binding the values and goals...which motivate human conduct into situational structures of 'meaning' " (pp. 151). What mothers thought was important in their decision-making and why, was revealed most cohesively when they told stories about a certain incident. Looking at the way these mothers place emphasis on certain aspects of the situation can tell us something about the rules and values they live by, which are both expressed and changed in their everyday experience. If the purpose of a study is to explore these kinds of issues, it would be perhaps more productive to use an interview protocol primarily as a tool to solicit such narratives.

The importance of observation seemed to be for understanding the complexity of how these mothers and their children went about the business of negotiating a particular issue. The importance of the hypothetical vignettes seemed to be for analyzing the goals and values embedded in each mother's reasons about why she chose the particular strategies she did. In hindsight, the systematic solicitation of narratives of real events as opposed to hypothetical constructions might have been more likely to provide a better complement to the observational analysis.

Narratives seem to be a vehicle in which the finer details of an interaction could be brought out more distinctly, both in terms of the strategies mothers used and their reasons for using them. Because hypothetical situations are so severely decontextualized, which forces mothers to construct their actions on the basis of speculation and vague conditions rather than (reconstructed) remembered experience, much of the sense of their actions is bound to be lost.

Analysis: The Interview as a Constructed Discourse

In his book on research interviewing, Mishler (1986) raises serious questions about the assumptions underlying our analyses of interview data. His critique is an attempt to reformulate our conception of the nature of the interview process. He argues that the interview is a constructed discourse among the participants, rather than a fixed tool of the researcher's to which interviewees respond. Throughout the interview, both the researcher and the interviewee work together to construct meanings that both can understand, which in turn, shape new meanings as they emerge. In light of this, no interview protocol will be interpreted in exactly the same way by two different interviewees, even if the wording and order of the questions are exactly the same. Serious attention should be paid to how each participant interprets the other, when shifts in understanding become evident, and when contradictions

emerge. As Mishler suggests, all questions in this study were open-ended so that mothers could more fully elaborate their answers.

An example may be helpful for illustrating one way in which the interview is "constructed" by its participants. Given the very high correlation between the rank orders of strategies mentioned in answer to specific situations and those mentioned in answer to general situations, at least two explanations are possible. One explanation is that each mother was answering both sets of questions from a general set of strategies she uses, most likely informed by a framework, theory, or philosophy regarding how best to raise children. She would then apply this general framework to the specific situations, resulting in a high correlation of responses between these two groups of questions.

Alternatively, as Mishler (1986) emphasizes, the interview can be seen as a constructive discourse. In this study, the initial discussion about specific, hypothetical situations surely had some bearing on the subsequent answers mothers gave regarding their "general" strategies, thus resulting in very similar responses to the two sets of questions. The previously presented scenarios and the discussions that evolved, were a context for answering the more general question of strategy choice; a context which must be acknowledged. It seems likely that the types of incidents mothers referred to and the kinds of strategies they thought of with regard to general strategies, were

heavily influenced by what had been discussed earlier in the interview. In other words, throughout the interview, a framework had been set up from which the mother could draw conclusions about her "general" strategies.

This is not to say that situation-specific choices of strategies can not be consistent with a broader, more general set of choices, but that is not the point. The point is that these questions are being asked in a particular context, within a particular framework which has a purpose, presented in a particular order by an investigator with a particular relationship to the interviewee. What gets expressed is going to be in part, a function of that context. Glick (1981) refers to a distinction between cognition and expression when he discusses different theoretical accounts of intellectual functioning:

> ...cognitive processes, rather than captivating or controlling...the mind, are processes that are deployed, and selected from a set of alternatives, both by a subject of psychological studies and by the formulation of the studies themselves. The basic idea is that rather than constituting rationality, certain operational cognitive processes are deployed as instruments of rationality on...occasions seen as conducive to their application. (page 220-221)

His use of the term "deployment" acknowledges the importance of history, culture, and certainly the

experimental situation for whether or not certain ideas or abilities are even expressed in a specific situation. It is this acknowledgement that is missing when one adopts a position which assumes that the conditions of an experiment or interview are irrelevant to peoples' expression of ideas or abilities.

Suggestions for Future Research

Two areas for future investigation have emerged as possible extensions of this research, both of which would involve interpretive methods. One would involve the study of children's participation in the construction and negotiation of conflicts, both with peers and adults. Packer & Scott (in press) have investigated how children's concerns are displayed and changed in their daily interactions with peers on the playground, using interpretive analysis. A closer analysis of the strategies children use in negotiations in particular could inform a theory of how these skills develop and what functions they serve.

The other extension of this research would involve further analysis of the narratives concerning mothers' reasons for choosing the strategies they did, what they thought their children learned from using these strategies and, perhaps, how this relates to the kinds of concerns they show in handling situations on videotape. By systematically looking for patterns of emphasis by these mothers within and

across contexts, which was only just begun in this study, it might be possible to articulate a fuller description of their "folk psychology". If Bruner (1991) is correct, this kind of investigation may help us to understand how folk psychology is important to our constructions of our daily lives.

APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS PROTOCOL

A. Presentation of hypothetical vignettes

1) What would you do or say?

WHY do you think you would handle it this way?

HOW do you think X would respond?

2) If that didn't work, what would you try next

WHY do you think you'd do that

HOW would X respond to that?

3) And if that didn't work, what would you try next?

WHY do you think you'd do that?

HOW would X respond to that?

4) Do you think you would handle this differently a year FROM NOW?

(If yes) HOW? WHY?

(If no), WHY NOT?

(If no)Do you think you will EVER change your strategy for dealing with this kind of situation? (If yes) WHEN? HOW? WHY (or why not)?

5) Do you think you would have handled this differently a year AGO?

(If yes), HOW? WHY?

6) What do you think is the BEST way for a parent to handle this situation? WHY?

B. Viewing of videotape

Now I'm going to show you a piece of videotape from one of our visits here. What's interesting to me here is NOT the interview you and (the interviewer) were trying to do, but what was going on between you and X. It's from a time when you and X were dealing with a similar kind of issue as the last vignette we talked about. You may not have handled this situation the same way you just said you would, and I think that may be interesting, but not surprising. First though, I just want you to know that we know everybody has issues to deal with, with their kids. All of our families did at some time while we were visiting. I didn't pick this piece of tape because it was particularly unusual or anything--it's just one example of how you and X tried to deal with an issue.

(Show the tape once through).

After the viewing:

OK, now what we're going to do is this: Every time either one of you does or says something, I'm going to stop the tape and just tell me what you think either you or X was thinking or feeling at the time. OK?

1) What were you thinking or feeling?

2) What was X thinking or feeling?

(After the run-through)

1) Do you remember this particular time?

2) Did you remember this time when I FIRST asked you about this situation?

3) Can you describe for me what you just saw?

4) Has this been an issue BEFORE or SINCE?

How OFTEN has this been an issue between you and X?

5) Do you think this is how you USUALLY have dealt with this situation?

In what ways (is it the same or different)?

6) What do you think was going on for X here?

7) What do you think was going on for YOU here?

8) WHY do you think you handled this the way you did?

9) Can you tell or do you remember how you FELT at the time?

10) How does this fit with how you SAID you would handle this situation earlier?
(If different) WHY do you think you handled it differently here?

11) What do you think about the way you and X handled this situation?

12) In hindsight, do you think this was the BEST way for you to handle this? WHY?
(If no) What would you do differently?

13) What different PRESSURES do you think you felt at the time?

14) Do you think these pressures affected how you DEALT with this situation?
WHY or WHY NOT?

15) What OTHER FACTORS do you think influenced how you dealt with this issue?

16) Does your strategy here help X LEARN anything in particular?

(If yes), WHAT?

(if yes) Knowing how X learns, HOW do you think this strategy helps X learn this?

(If no) What MIGHT you want X to learn here?

(If no) What would you do or say if you really wanted X to learn this?

17) How do you think MOST kids eventually learn this?

Exploratory questions:

1) Sometimes issues arise for other reasons that what seems obvious at the time...Can you think of any reasons why this might have been more of a problem at the time than it needed to be?

2) Would you handle this any differently with X now that s/he is OLDER?

(If yes) HOW? Why?

(If no) WHY NOT?

3) Would this scene look different if you were ALONE with X?

(If yes) HOW?

(If no) WHY NOT?

4) Would you handle this situation differently if you had plenty of TIME to deal with this?
(If yes) HOW?

5) What impact do you think WE had in being there when this scene happened?

6) Do you think your being busy/having company had anything to do with why this issue came up in the FIRST PLACE?

C. Questions about general strategies

1) What is a TYPICAL way that you deal with a conflict between the two of you? What do you usually do or say?
2) WHY do you think you do it that way?
3) How would X respond to you

1) If that fails, what would you do next?
2) Why?
3) How would X respond to this?

4) What do you think is the BEST way to handle conflicts with X
WHY?

D. Questions about mother's use of explanations and distancing

1) Do you ever EXPLAIN your reasons to X?
(If no) Do you think you will later on?

2) WHEN do you feel you can/did start to explain your reasons to your child.
WHY then?

3) When do you think a child can begin to UNDERSTAND your reasons?

4) What kinds of SITUATIONS do you find yourself explaining reasons to him or at least WANTING to? WHY then?

1) Do you ever make X THINK OR TALK about the consequences of his/her own actions?
(If yes) Can you give me an EXAMPLE?
(If no) Do you think you will later on?

2) WHEN do you feel you can/did start to do this with your child?
WHY then?

3) When do you think a child can begin to UNDERSTAND the consequences of his or her actions??

4) What kinds of SITUATIONS do you find yourself explaining the consequences to him/her or at least WANTING to? WHY then?

1) Do you ever make X think or talk in order to help him or her solve certain problems BY H--SELF?
(if yes) Can you give me an EXAMPLE?
(If no) Do you think you will later on?

2) WHEN do you feel you can/did start to do this with your child.
WHY then?

3) When do you think a child can begin to UNDERSTAND HOW to solve certain problems by h---self?

4) What kinds of SITUATIONS do you find yourself trying to get h--to solve certain problems on h-- own ...or WANTING to? WHY then?

APPENDIX II

VIGNETTES

Vignette #1:

X has just turned on the radio very loudly while you are trying to talk with someone in the same room.

Vignette #2:

It's late morning. X does not want to get dressed but you've decided that she/he has to at this point.

Vignette #3:

You and X have been out shopping and when you get home you find that she/he had picked up some little thing off one of the counters without you noticing.

Vignette #4:

Your cat has just had kittens a few days ago and you see X go over to them and hit one of the kittens on the head.

Vignette #5:

You see X climbing on the windowsill. The window is open but there is a windowguard.

Vignette #6:

You and X are together in the living room and you notice that while X is playing with his/her toys, s/he keeps pulling on the unplugged lamp cord.

Vignette #7:

You come home after an hour of shopping. X sees you come in but will not come to you when you call.

Vignette #8:

X has a friend over for the afternoon. X and his/her friend start fighting over a toy.

Vignette #9:

Do you think you would have handled this differently X months ago?

(If yes) HOW? WHY?

APPENDIX III

VIDEOTAPED CONFLICT EPISODES

1-year-olds:

Playing with phone and cord (safety)

Climbing on windowsill (safety)

Turning on radio (irritation)

Not wanting to put shirt on--(irritation)

Wanting to play with bathroom wastebasket contents (safety)

Wanting to stand on top of toilet (safety)

2-year-olds:

Jumping on bed (safety)

Playing with couch pillows (irritation)

Wanting to play in bathroom sink (safety)

Playing with Mom's nose (irritation)

Trying to play with buttons on rotary fan (safety)

Fighting over a toy (irritation)

3-year-olds:

Wanting Mom to play (irritation)

Wanting to play in kitchen sink (irritation)

Screaming through kitchen (irritation)

Wanting to take brother's toy outside (irritation)

Wanting TV on (irritation)

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