CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES IN YOUNG CHILDREN:

DO THEY DO WHAT THEY SAY?

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This study examined the consistency between verbal responses to hypothetical conflict scenarios and the actual conflict resolutions techniques children apply in everyday play. Twenty-one children were interviewed and observed in order to determine their conflict resolution strategies. During the interview process, each child was asked to finish 6 hypothetical conflict scenarios. During the observation portion, each child was observed in 2 conflict scenarios. Significant \((p < .05)\) differences were found with regards to verbal responses for 3 scenarios, verbal and behavioral responses of females (females exhibited more socially acceptable conflict resolution strategies in their verbal responses, yet less socially acceptable conflict resolution strategies in their behavioral responses), and socially acceptable responses to conflict in verbal strategies. Results were discussed in light of previous research comparing gender differences and peer relationships to conflict resolution strategies.
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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Conflict Resolution Strategies

Peer conflicts are a type of social interaction that provide opportunities for social relationships to develop (Thornberg, 2006). When engaging in peer conflicts, children learn how to interact appropriately with others. By observing and assessing peer conflicts, teachers and parents can learn more about the nature of social relationships, early childhood conflict, and conflict resolution. Researchers in the field of child development will be better able to create and implement conflict resolution training programs in preschools with further study of early childhood conflict resolution strategies. With new and more effective conflict resolution training programs in place, preschool children will be more successful in learning appropriate conflict resolution strategies. By starting training programs at a young age, children could be more likely to continue their positive conflict resolution skills as they grow older.

Few studies have researched both verbal (i.e., what children say) and actual (i.e., what children do) conflict resolution strategies (e.g., Mize & Ladd, 1988). Children's actions are valuable for determining how children constantly resolve conflict (Zahn-Waxler, Friedman, Cole, Mizuta, & Hiruma, 1996). However, it is also important to learn of the verbal responses to conflict as well in order to determine how consistent verbal responses are to behavioral responses. For example, children might give what they think is a socially acceptable response to an adult during an interview, yet give a different behavioral response during play. Therefore, research looking at both young children's verbal responses and their actual responses to conflict is needed for the benefit of educators, adults, and most importantly, preschool children.
Numerous studies have focused on elementary or high school-aged childrens' conflict resolution strategies or on the implementation of conflict resolution training programs in classroom settings (e.g., Johnson, Johnson, Dudley, & Magnuson, 1995; Johnson, Johnson, Dudley, Mitchell, & Fredrickson, 1997; Johnson, Johnson, Dudley, & Acikgoz, 1994; Stevahn, Johnson, Johnson, Green, & Laginski, 1997; Dudley, Johnson, & Johnson, 1996). A comparably smaller amount of research has been conducted which focused on preschool children and how they experience conflict (see Krasnor & Rubin, 1983; Kyritzis & Guo, 2001; Rose & Asher, 1999; Sackin & Thelen, 1984; Sandy & Boardman, 2000; Zahn-Waxler, Cole, Richardson, Friedman, Michel, & Belouad, 1994). This body of research has tended to assess verbal conflict resolution strategies and behavioral conflict resolution strategies separately. Few studies have actually examined the similarities and differences between children's verbal conflict resolution strategies and their behavioral conflict resolution strategies (e.g., Mize & Ladd, 1988).

Often, the verbal conflict responses children describe in hypothetical conflict scenarios differ from responses observed in children's real real-life peer relationships and conflict situations. Hypothetical dilemmas exclude many factors relevant to real-life situations such as emotions, influence of other peers, social status, personal risk, and the presence of real people experiencing real situations. Further research needs to include observations of conflict management in real social situations in addition to hypothetical responses (Thornberg, 2006).

Gender differences in conflict resolution strategies have also been explored showing that in addition to approaching social scenarios differently, they also solve conflict using different strategies (Walker, Irving, & Berthelson, 2002). Typically, boys tend to 1) exert more dominance, 2) experience more taunting, 3) participate in more fighting (Vespo & Pederson, 1995), 4) use more overt physical and verbal aggression (Ostrov & Keating, 2004), and 5) give
retaliatory responses (Walker et al.). Overall boys tend to be more direct with their conflict strategies (Leaper as cited in Burford, Foley, Rollins, & Rosario, 1996). Girls tend to exhibit more relational aggression such as insults and gossiping (Ostrov & Keating), prosocial or positive strategies, mitigation (Walker et al.) and are generally more polite and cooperative (Leaper as cited in Burford et al.). It is important to evaluate differences in conflict resolution strategies in order to determine how to tailor conflict resolution training programs. When teachers are better able to identify the most common conflict resolution strategies in the classroom, they will be able to prepare appropriate conflict intervention and assistance. Furthermore, by exploring gender differences, teachers will be further able to delineate appropriate conflict intervention strategies for each gender (because past research has shown that boys and girls resolve conflict differently). For example, instead of focusing training efforts on only physical and verbal aggression, teachers will know also to focus on more relational aspects of aggression in order to meet the needs of girls.

The present research focused on gender differences in both types of conflict responses to determine if how each gender solves conflict is consistent with past research. Overall, this research sought to include observations of conflict behaviors in addition to verbal conflict responses from hypothetical interviews in order to determine the consistency between verbal conflict resolution strategies and behavioral conflict resolution strategies.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Conflict

Conflict has been defined as an essential force that is a basis for development and developmental change within individuals (Jensen-Campbell, Gleason, Adams, & Malcolm, 2003). Generally, conflict results from incompatible goals between groups or individuals, possible disagreements over one person’s statements or actions, and/or being ill-treated by another individual (Longaretti & Wilson, 2006; Landry, Rachal, Rachal, & Rosenthal, 2005). Conflict can involve different motives, and it can produce strong feelings that can possibly influence an individual's reaction to a given conflict scenario (Bell & Song, 2005). Past research has identified three important themes that underlie interpersonal conflict: (1) negative emotions, (2) disagreement, and (3) interference (Barki & Hartwick, 2004). In addition to these themes, three types of conflict have also been found: (1) values-based conflict, personal philosophies difficult to change; (2) rights-based conflict, differences in interpretations and/or policies; and (3) interest-based conflict, emotional and personal motivations (Gerardi & Morrison, 2005).

While normally a conflict causes a negative connotation, some benefits of conflict have been found. Within the workplace, conflict can serve as a positive force that encourages employees to increase career comprehension as well as work performance and contributions to the workplace. In addition, conflict offers feedback about given situations (Bacal, 2004).

Creating a sense of community has been an important aspect of resolving conflict constructively. An important factor in resolving conflict involves following a process that begins with assessing the conflict scenario. During the assessment process, individuals can determine what needs are not being met and what symptoms are present (Gerardi & Morrison, 2005).
Theoretical Perspective

Piaget believed children actively construct knowledge and interpret the knowledge and information learned from various environments (Miller, 2002). Play is an important aspect in how children construct knowledge. During play, children are able to assimilate the reality of the world into what they already know (Pulaski, 1971). Through play, children explore their environments (Miller) and they develop the ability to take the perspective of others (Lindsey & Colwell, 2003). In addition, during peer interactions, children learn about social feelings, values, moral feelings, and social competence (Piaget, 1997).

Egocentrism plays an important role in children's understanding of conflict and conflict resolution. Egocentrism affects the consciousness of thought, which, in turn, affects moral reasoning. Younger children have much less sense of their ego (Piaget, 1997), and the absolute nature of children's judgment makes it difficult for them to experience two points of views (Piaget, 1951). Children frequently have a habit of believing they are understood by others (Piaget, 1951) when in reality, they are not. Also, their views of right and wrong are often based on perceptions that are distorted (Pulaski, 1971). It is possible a child is aggressive when another child hurts him/her simply because he/she thinks the other child should be punished. He/she might not realize that it would hurt (physically or verbally) the other child as much as the pain he/she is experiencing. Therefore, it would be difficult for children to resolve conflict prosocially (which would focus on a positive resolution for both children involved), when children are only focused on their own points of view and cannot understand another's. When children focus only on themselves and what they need, they often use more conflict resolution strategies that meet their own needs, rather than the needs of all individuals involved.
Children often do as other children and adults say without knowing why. Young children, in an attempt to be good, conform to the rules established by adults. Children tend to receive these moral messages from adults who encourage obedience (Johansson, 2002). Conforming to the rules is good, when moral realism is viewed as heteronomous (during early childhood); not conforming to the rules is bad. Young children also see rules as unchangeable and sacred (Turiel & Smetana, 1998; Pulaski, 1971). As children grow, moral realism becomes less about the letter of the law and more about objective responsibility (Piaget, 1997). The first phase of moral reasoning, heteronomy, occurs during early childhood. Often, when children are young, there are high demands from parents, teachers, and other authority figures to simply obey the rules and authority (Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, & Thoma, 1999). Children make unconscious decisions which are automatically applied without introspection (Piaget, 1951).

During heteronomy, immediate decisions based on reactions might be seen (e.g., if a child is hit, a reflexive response might be to simply hit back for retribution). This might result from little thought going into the conflict resolution process. Therefore, children could exhibit behaviors which might have been encouraged from an adult (i.e. a father encouraging his son to react in order to defend himself) as opposed to thinking through all possible conflict resolution strategies that could be used. In opposition to boys possibly being told to fight back, girls might often be taught to be social and polite when resolving conflict. Those responses might be ingrained if parents have taught their heteronomous children to believe those ideas. Therefore, children experiencing heteronomy might tend to obey their parents, which might include direction from the parents in how to resolve conflict.

For the second stage of moral reasoning (i.e., autonomy), the difficulty of a problem increases and, therefore, children begin reflecting more on their reasoning, use control of
judgment, and experience a certain direction of thought (Piaget, 1951). This second phase occurs when children think independently and make decisions on more difficult issues such as right and wrong (Kamii, 1991). Conflict helps children perceive the perspectives of others and provide opportunities for growth (Johansson, 2002). Negotiation with peers after the conflict also becomes an important part of autonomy because peer interaction is an important factor in helping children coordinate intentions, which in turn, gives children the opportunity to negotiate and change rules as well as establish shared standards and values (Doise, 1989). During autonomy, children acquire introspection which assists them in reflecting upon all of their reasoning (Piaget, 1951).

When children exact similar punishment on another (e.g., hitting the child who first hit them), they are simply showing exact reciprocity. Children typically like to impose on another, what they have received. Piaget found most children who do not hit back are often the ones who rely on the help of an adult for protection. Children who respond aggressively (with immediate action) tend to be concerned with equality and justice rather than with revenge (Piaget, 1997). A young child's sense of justice is simply exacting a similar act originally inflicted on him/her. Further, with regards to the concept of justice, the most severe punishment is the fairest punishment, an idea known as retributive punishment (Pulaski, 1971). This might explain why children often turn to an adult for intervention in hopes he/she can exact punishment the children cannot exact themselves. When children simply walk away, there is no retribution for any action taken as there might when children turn to an adult. However, those children taught to not exact their own justice and vengeance on others might be content using an avoidant or submissive conflict resolution strategy. In addition, this might also explain why children treated with
aggression might react with aggression in order to respond in a similar way to the actions imposed on them.

Peer Relationships

Previous researchers interested in conflict between children have examined issues such as peer relationships, social competence, emotional understanding and competence (Lindsey & Colwell, 2003); psychological understanding (Cassidy, Werner, Rourke, Zubernis, & Balaraman, 2003); conflict intensity and role (David, Murphy, Naylor, & Stonecipher, 2004); and sibling conflict (Howe, Rinaldi, Jennings, & Petrakos, 2002). Prosocial acts in peer relationships have also been observed with results showing that children were involved in an average of 15 prosocial acts, with the most common prosocial acts being sharing, helping, and cooperating (Cassidy et al.). A child's age and language ability have been found to be strongly linked to psychological understanding and social competence. Emotional competence is an important factor in what children want and can accomplish in conflict scenarios. Emotional competence, understanding and regulation can assist children in understanding what they and others feel or want and can help with controlling emotional outbursts during conflict situations. In regard to emotional competence and understanding, past research has examined skills for emotional regulation and emotional understanding, as well as observing the connection between pretend and physical play between children. Both emotional understanding and emotional regulation were found to add to emotional competence with other children, and both boys and girls were more likely to understand emotions by engaging in greater levels of pretend play (Lindsey & Colwell). With regard to intensity of conflict and conflict role (i.e., the role a child takes in conflict, such as the initiator), initiators of conflict were more likely to view the conflict positively rather than responding with opposition. When children experienced high-intensity
conflicts, they often expected a greater escalation in the conflict. During low-intensity conflicts, responders rather than the initiators reported a greater expectation of conflict escalation. Children who were the responders of the conflict were more likely to expect the initiator to provoke them again during later interactions. Regardless of conflict role, after high-intensity conflicts, children anticipated being provoked by a peer frequently during subsequent interactions. Overall, the responder of the conflict situation was more likely to expect conflict escalation and to expect the initiator to provoke him/her again during the day (David et al.). Regarding sibling conflict, Howe et al. found firstborn siblings were more likely to offer passive resolutions to procedural conflicts, whereas younger siblings tended to acquire third-party assistance in resolving sibling conflict.

Conflict Between Children

As has been noted here, numerous researchers have studied many aspects of peer relationships and conflict in the past. However, few researchers have taken conflict and conflict resolution out of the context of peer relationships and social competence in order to examine only the nature of conflict and conflict resolution strategies children use. Therefore, a closer look at the definition of conflict, the meaning of conflict, and conflict resolution strategies will be examined in order to better understand the structure of early childhood conflict resolution strategies.

For young children, conflict has been defined as one child protesting, retaliating against, or objecting to the behaviors and/or actions of another child (Vespo & Pederson, 1995). Conflict has also been defined as one’s actions that block, interfere, or prevent another child’s ability to reach and accomplish his/her own goals or wants (Stevahn, 2004; Johnson & Johnson, 2004) or contrary goals between between children (Thornberg, 2006). Johnson and Johnson (1995)
defined conflict as shared problems that need to be solved in ways that benefit everyone involved. Dunn and Herrera (1997) defined conflict as beginning with the first statement given as opposition to another’s remark or behavior, and Shantz (1987) takes it one step further by defining conflict as one child still attempting to achieve a goal after some resistance by another child. The definition of conflict as one child blocking another child’s goal will be used as the definition of conflict in this current research because Shantz reviewed a large amount of conflict literature and this definition served as the foundation for many other researchers.

In daily interactions between children, conflict about things such as who gets to be a given role or what game to play while outside is frequently seen. Conflict commonly occurs over issues such as possession of an item, what roles are played, and over the actions/lack of actions by other children. Conflicts such as these are inevitable due to the close relationships between children (Vespo & Pederson, 1995). Peer conflicts in early childhood are a form of social interaction and allow children the opportunity to develop social relationships (Thornberg, 2006). Most conflicts between children last on average 31 seconds, with 5 to 8 conflicts occurring per hour (Shantz, 1987). Low-investment conflicts are brief (30 seconds to one minute) and involve little expenditure of energy and no negotiation. This type of conflict can involve an issue as simple as giving up a picture that can easily be drawn again. High-investment conflicts can last for several days at a time, and they affect children on a more emotional level. In a review of current conflict research, Boulter, Von Bergen, Miller and Wells (2001) found conflict involves both competitive and joint interests in which there are techniques, tactics, and strategies individuals use for dealing with conflict. Some of those techniques and strategies include integrative negotiation and mediation which occur as conflict resolution strategies (Johnson & Johnson, 1996).
Conflict Resolution Between Older Children

Most conflict resolution research has focused on either school-age conflict resolution strategies or conflict resolution training programs implemented in the high school or elementary school curriculum. For example, Johnson and Johnson (1996) found that before learning a conflict resolution training program, children in 1st to 9th grade experienced conflicts related to teasing, put-downs, playground disputes, physical aggression, academic work conflicts, fights, turn taking, and possession of or access to items. Most of those children tended to resolve conflict by: (1) turning to the teacher for help, and (2) using destructive strategies which usually escalated the conflict rather than diminished it. Some students lacked basic negotiation knowledge or skills. Children of these ages seemed to lack positive conflict resolution strategies, and they tended to use destructive and ineffective strategies rather than positive ones (Johnson & Johnson, 1996; Johnson, Johnson, Dudley, & Acikgoz, 1994). Johnson et al. found physical force seemed to be the procedure used to resolve conflict with some children, whereas others used verbal attacks, getting even, giving in, or the “cold shoulder” approach (i.e., ignoring) when attempting to end a conflict situation.

Conflict Resolution Strategies Between Young Children

The management of conflict involves perspective-taking, peer group entry, formation of friendships, maintenance of friendships, and social understanding. Children's conflict strategies vary across different contexts and situations (Thornberg, 2006). When children are young, their affect and actions play a significant role in problem-solving strategies because their verbal skills are still developing. Therefore, children's actions are important to assess in order to determine how children solve conflict (Zahn-Waxler, Friedman, Cole, Mizuta, & Hiruma, 1996).
Due to the exploration and development of autonomy during early childhood, play gives children many opportunities to practice conflict management and constructive social skills. Conflict management can be defined as handling conflict in such a way that all parties involved agree and follow through on a mutually acceptable goal (Sandy & Boardman, 2000). Managing conflict in a successful way is an important aspect of learning socially appropriate ways to interact with others; consequently, the successful management of conflict plays a vital role in determining whether positive or negative relationships are formed with peers (Walker, 2004).

Conflict resolution strategies can basically be divided into two categories; prosocial strategies and antisocial strategies (Thornberg, 2006). Within those two categories, there are many different ways children might solve conflict such as (1) threatening, (2) persisting, (3) failing to resolve the argument, or (4) showing sensitivity to other's needs (Herrera & Dunn, 1997). Other strategies also include aggression, assertion, prosocial behaviors, and intervention. Various conflict resolution strategies which have been examined will be discussed in the following section.

Verbal Responses to Hypothetical Conflict Scenarios (What Children Say)

Past conflict resolution research conducted with preschoolers has focused on presenting hypothetical conflict vignettes to children in order to determine their responses to various conflict situations. The conduct of disruptive actions and the development of interpersonal problems were investigated by Zahn-Waxler et al. (1994). The sample included 89 children ages 4 and 5 years from an urban community. Emotional response (i.e., how the child would feel after each hypothetical scenario, such as getting hit) and behavioral response (i.e., what the child would do, such as prosocial behaviors, aggressive behaviors, being manipulative, or avoiding the situation) were determined by the Challenging Situations Task (CST; Kowalski, 1990). From the
four emotions and the four behavioral responses, 8 scores were available for examination. The 8 behavior response patterns were prosocial (e.g., makes an effort to ease distress or fix something), reparation (e.g., a prosocial action done by an aggressor to repair the relationship), affiliation (e.g., sharing encouraging emotions with no distress), compliance (e.g., complying with a command or request from a parent or other authority figure), avoidance and exclusion (e.g., separating from another and excluding him/her from the activities), angry enactments (e.g., gestural anger or threats that do not lead to aggressive acts), aggression (e.g., hitting, pushing, or pretending to kill), and noncompliance (e.g., intentionally disobeying or ignoring a person of authority). The 8 verbal response patterns were prosocial, reparative, affiliative, compliant, avoidant, use of angry language, aggressive, and noncompliant.

Results showed children chose prosocial solutions more frequently than any other type of problem solving solution. Nevertheless, at-risk children were less likely to choose prosocial solutions than low-risk children, as predicted by the researchers. Children with behavioral problems used more prosocial actions than the children in the low-risk group. Fear was the most common emotion high-risk girls would endorse. Gender differences were found with regard to behavioral and verbal responses. The behavioral responses girls more frequently exhibited were prosocial, reparative, affiliative, angry, and compliant. The verbal resolutions girls more frequently gave were prosocial, reparative, and affiliative. With regard to distress dilemmas, it was more common for girls to display prosocial and affiliative patterns of response than boys. Moderate- and high-risk children were unable to provide as many verbal reparative responses as low-risk children. In both conflict and distress dilemmas, it was found girls talked more than boys, especially within the group of high-risk children. Boys tended to enact more verbal avoidant responses, aggression, and aggressive behaviors. Children frequently displayed
diversity with both positive and negative themes for coping with conflict. Children also exhibited social cohesion and concern for the wellbeing of others as well as oppositional and hostile behaviors. Girls were more likely to express more relationship-oriented solutions, whereas boys were more likely to express aggression and avoidance (Zahn-Waxler et al., 1994).

A similar study using the same methods was conducted by Zahn-Waxler, Friedman, Cole, Mizuta, and Hiruma (1996) to study the differences in U.S. and Japanese children's responses to hypothetical conflict dilemmas. Responses to hypothetical conflict scenarios were also obtained using the Challenging Situations Task (Kowalski, 1990). The 6 behavioral solutions were: (1) prosocial, (2) reparation, (3) affiliation, (4) avoidance and exclusion, (5) angry enactments, and (6) physical aggression. The 6 verbal solutions were: (1) prosocial, (2) reparative, (3) affiliative, (4) avoidant, (5) angry language (i.e., "I hate you"), and (6) aggressive. Child-rearing attitudes, goals, values, and beliefs were examined using the Child Rearing Practice Report. Results showed U.S. children (in comparison to Japanese children) were more likely to exhibit more anger, aggression (in both behavior and language), and underregulation of feelings. U.S. children were also more ready to solve problems by using force, access to aggressive resolutions, and the ability to produce complex scripts for dealing with conflict (Zahn-Waxler et al.).

The effects of an early childhood conflict resolution program (CRE- Conflict Resolution Education) were examined by Sandy and Boardman (2000) in New York. Participants included staff members, preschool children (between the ages of 2.5 and 6 years) and their parents. Most of the children came from Latino or African American descent. During the 2 years in which this study was conducted, only 36 children participated each year in the parent and staff conditions. The Playful Solutions Task (PST) which was created from the Challenging Situations Task (CST; Zahn-Waxler et al., 1994) was used to identify emotional responses and behavioral
responses. The four behavioral responses included: (1) assertive (e.g., telling the other person to stop), (2) aggression (e.g., throwing items), (3) avoidance (e.g., leaving the area and moving on to something else), and (4) recruiting the help of an adult (e.g., seeking the assistance of a teacher). The Parenting Scale (Arnold, O’Leary, Wolff, & Acker as cited by Sandy & Boardman, 2000) was used to measure the discipline practices used by the parents of the preschool children. The Pediatric Symptom Checklist (PSC; Little, Murphy, Jellinek, Bishop, & Arnett as cited by Sandy & Boardman) was also completed by the parents in order to assess the emotional and behavioral problems of preschoolers. The Social Skills Rating System (SSRS; Gresham & Elliott as cited by Sandy & Boardman) was completed by both parents and day care staff to assess social skills and problem behaviors experienced by children. Facilitators in the experimental conditions assisted in 15 classroom activity sessions held once-a-week during circle time, which helped children analyze behaviors and various situations, recognize causes of actions and the possible consequences, and relate problem-solving skills to actual conflict situations.

For each of the 6 hypothetical conflict situations (e.g., a kitty spills paint on a puppy's painting), there were four possible responses children could exhibit. Those responses were aggressive with a score of 1, avoidant with a score of 2, seeking the help of someone else with a score of 3, and assertively working on solving the problem himself/herself with a score of 4. Constructive management of conflict, such as assertively working out the problem, had an overall score that was higher than less constructive ways to handle conflict. Results showed children in the parent group experienced significant gains in three areas after the training, and problem behaviors significantly decreased for those children as well. Children in the parent condition also experienced higher levels of assertiveness, cooperation, and self-control. Children in the staff condition scored lower on externalizing behaviors than those in the control condition,
and children in the parent condition scored lower than the children in both the staff and control conditions on externalizing behaviors. Within the parent condition, children also scored lower on internalizing behaviors than those in the staff condition. The control condition that received no training showed declines in positive conflict resolution strategies.

The effects of gender on the problem-solving strategies of young children were investigated by Walker, Irving, and Berthelsen (2002) in Australia. The sample was composed of 179 children with a mean age of 62.4 months. The researchers examined problem-solving strategies by using hypothetical problematic interactions to which children were asked to respond. The children's responses were coded into 3 mutually exclusive categories: (1) provocation responses (e.g., prosocial, clarification requests, simple directives, appeals to authority, retaliation, situation focused response, verbal and physical aggression, referring to negative emotions, unsure of what to do, or withdrawing), (2) peer group entry responses (e.g., waiting, making a simple request, manipulation, withdrawing, appeals to authority, verbal and physical aggression, group-centered entry, disruptive entry, referring to negative emotions, and unsure of what to do), and (3) social-expectation responses (e.g., waiting, making a simple request, verbal and physical aggression, referring to negative emotions, manipulation, appeals to authority, and unsure of what to do). Responses were coded on a 6-point scale with the highest score representing the most competent and prosocial response (0 = very incompetent, 2 = incompetent, 4 = somewhat incompetent, 6 = somewhat competent, 8 = competent, 10 = very competent).

Results showed gender differences were apparent in responses to hypothetical conflict scenarios. For provocation situations, the most frequent conflict responses were appeals to authority and simple directives. For peer-group entry situations, the most frequent response was
"don't know" for both boys and girls. If the peer-group entry response was unsuccessful, (per the researchers asking what else he/she could do), boys were more unwilling or incapable of providing another strategy than girls. It was also found that girls were more likely to use prosocial responses and boys were more likely to use retaliation or aggression (Walker et al.).

Conflict resolution strategies and the use of those strategies over varied situations were examined by Thornberg (2006) in Sweden. The sample was composed of 201 children between the ages of 60-72 months. Puppet interviews were conducted to assess the responses to hypothetical conflict scenarios. Responses were coded into 7 main groups: (1) aggressive assertion (i.e., physical or verbal aggression), (2) simple assertion (i.e., insisting or ignoring), (3) discursive assertion (i.e., giving reason, justification, or referring to rules), (4) discursive cooperation (i.e., considering both sides, suggesting a compromise without being assertive), (5) compliance (i.e., submission or obedience), (6) withdrawal (i.e., ending the interaction and leaving the scenario), and (7) turning to a teacher. The 7 categories were then collapsed into 4 dichotomous variables: (1) assertive or non-assertive strategies, (2) aggressive or non-aggressive strategies, (3) complex or simple strategies, and (4) reciprocal or non-reciprocal strategies.

Results showed children used different conflict resolution strategies in different peer conflict situations and they tailored their strategies to the response of their opponent. Children tended to use similar responses to whatever response their opponents were giving, reinforcing the findings that conflict resolution strategies tended to be dependent on the resolution strategy of the opponent. For example, aggressive strategies were infrequent when the opponent's resolution strategy was non-aggressive. The most frequent conflict resolution strategy was found to be simple assertion. Children also gave more complex resolution strategies and justification for opposition was given more often than acting aggressively or just insisting.
Behavioral Responses to Actual Conflict Scenarios (What Children Do)

Much of the past research has focused on presenting hypothetical conflict situations to children in order to assess their conflict resolution understanding and skills. Hypothetical conflict situations can predict how social conflict resolution goals are actually practiced during social exchanges, yet as Zahn-Waxler et al. (1994) realized, there is a possibility responses to hypothetical conflict scenarios might not have reflected the actual social problem-solving strategies children experience. Therefore, research assessing actual observations of children solving conflict is needed to determine if conflict resolution strategies are consistent over verbal and behavioral responses.

Naturalistic observations were conducted to assess the naturally occurring social problem solving behaviors young children exhibit and to identify the significance of the 4 determinants in anticipating the outcomes of social problem solving skills. The 4 determinants were as follows: (1) the strategy, because one type of strategy could potentially foretell success more than another type, (2) the goal, because specific outcomes can be expected for various goals (i.e., some outcomes predict failure while others consistently predict success), (3) the identity of the target, because some children tend to be more compliant regardless of the other individual, the goal or the strategy involved, and (4) the problem-solver’s identity, because a more intelligent or successful individual can be more triumphant in achieving problem-solving goals. The sample consisted of 15 children with a mean age of 48.5 months. During the coding of the narrated transcripts, attempts to partake in social problem solving were identified and the 4 determinants (e.g., strategy, target, goal and outcome) were coded as well.

Codes for strategies children used while engaging in social problem solving were: (1) suggestions, (2) directives, (3) play noises, (4) orienting, (5) affiliative, (6) object agnostic (i.e.,
takes an object), (7) person agnostic (i.e., hits other child), (8) claims, (9) descriptions and (10) callings. Categories for goals were created and were as follows: (1) stop-action (i.e., preventing an action of another), (2) self-action, (3) acquisition of an object, (4) attention (i.e., directing attention to a specific place), (5) affection, (6) information, (7) initiation that was nonspecific (i.e., engaging in interaction after 10 seconds of non-interaction) and (8) other-action. The outcomes were coded as either having success, partial success, or failure.

Results showed social problem solving was a main part of social interaction with preschoolers and goals, strategies, and outcomes were observable during the naturalistic observations. Most attempts at social problem solving were directed towards either nonspecific initiations, which were sociable and less directive attempts, or other-actions, which involved gaining assistance or redirecting play. Throughout social situations, it was found most social problem-solving occurred within same-sex peer groups. Most children used questions, directives, orienting acts, and descriptions to solve a social problem. Just over half of social problem-solving efforts were considered successful. In addition, 50% of the children who originally failed reattempted to solve a problem but with low probability of success. Social problem solving attempts using orienting acts, descriptions, and actions that were object-agnostic and affiliative were the most effective attempts at social problem-solving experienced (Krasnor & Rubin, 1983).

Another study was conducted to assess preschool children's conflict resolution habits. Twenty preschool children were observed twice a day over 12 weeks and for 7 weeks during the summer. Each observation lasted 5 hours, and all occurrences of conflict were recorded. The three types of conflict which were identified as criteria for recording conflict situations were object disputes, physical aggression and territorial disputes. When conflict occurred, the conflict
was rated by how it was resolved: ending in subordination, conciliating (i.e., apologies and/or cooperation), intervention, or other. Through observing the differences in how conflict was terminated, a main pattern of conflict resolution was observed. The main pattern of conflict resolution was for one child to submit another, followed by the pair’s separation sometime after, whereas the lesser common pattern was for both children to continue to play together directly after the conflict had occurred. The use of a peace-making gesture offered by one child and accepted another served as a vital function for transition into a more peaceful relationship. Gestures that were conciliatory were almost always made during peaceful affiliations and were more frequently offered to children of the same sex. Submissive behaviors were just as likely to be exhibited in mixed-sex and same-sex peers (Sackin & Thelen, 1984).

A study that included 50 second born children, their mothers and older siblings was conducted to identify conflict resolution strategies with young children when conflict was experienced with a playmate, a sibling, and a parent. Two observations were conducted during Time 1. Various assessments of IQ, emotional understanding and Mean Length of Utterance (MLU) were conducted at Time 2. At Time 3, another 1 hour observation was conducted as well as an observation that lasted for 45 minutes between the child and a friend. Mindreading abilities were also assessed during Time 3. Moral orientation and emotional understanding were tested during Time 4. Similar observations of Time 3 between the child and his/her friend were conducted also at Time 5. Through these numerous observations, researchers found two types of successful conflict resolution and one type of unsuccessful conflict resolution between children. The two types of successful conflict resolution were compromises and submission. Compromises occurred when both disputants conceded a little in order to agree to a position that was between the positions of the children involved. Submission happened when one child yielded to the
wishes of another. The unsuccessful conflict resolution strategy was identified as an unresolved conflict, wherein the conflict was dropped with no apparent resolution. Children also used different conflict resolution strategies during conflicts within the family and with close friends. Most children behaved differently in different situations. Within the mother-child relationship, children tended to solve conflict by negotiating and compromising. In regards to sibling relationships, children would solve conflict by protesting with no explanation and not acknowledging the sibling’s point of view. As an opposing discovery, other children would often take a similar position with a friend but not with their mothers or siblings (Dunn & Herrera, 1997).

In order to compare American and Chinese boys' and girls' conflict resolution strategies, a study of same-sex and mixed-sex peer groups was conducted. For the study completed with American children, there was a same-sex peer group consisting of 3 boys and a same-sex peer group consisting of 3 girls. Almost every child was 4 years of age at the time of the study and the ethnic mix consisted of Asian Americans, Native Americans, and European Americans. Naturalistic observations were conducted and the friendship groups were videotaped throughout the school year. For the study completed with the Chinese children, 3 boys and 3 girls (all 5 years of age) were grouped into mixed-sex triads and same-sex triads. The observations with the Chinese children were from interaction that was arranged (by providing a Play-Doh machine), and the observations with the American children were based on naturally occurring interactions in the classroom. Throughout the observations, the linguistic approaches children used to communicate about conflict and to negotiate conflict were examined. Conflict, as defined by the researchers, consisted of occurrences where one child disagreed with another child’s wants or proposal for something. Various verbal strategies from past research were considered as ways
children might negotiate conflict. Two verbal strategies used by children in conflict situations were identified from past research. The first verbal strategy was an indirect or mitigated strategy which involved rewording proposals, postponement, reasoned arguments, and conceding with a “yes, but” attitude. Direct or aggravated strategies were the second type of verbal strategies and included insults, criticisms (i.e., name calling), commands (i.e., telling another child what to do), threats (i.e., threatening to tell a teacher or take something away), explicit opposition and rhetorical questions.

Results showed within the all-girl American group, girls were hesitant to state any opposition and often did not use polarity markers (i.e., "No!"), physical force, or threats. These girls were also more likely to exhibit mollifying behavior (where what a participant was getting was emphasized more than what she was not getting), frame shifting, and the use of "and" instead of "no," which would hide a potential oppositional stance. Within the all-girl Chinese group, the girls used threats, censure, direct commands, and physical force. Within the all-boy American group, one boy used direct commands, implied threats, and polarity markers during conflict negotiation. For the all-boy Chinese group, the boys used mollifying statements, mitigated techniques, direct commands, and justification in negotiating conflict. Within the mixed-sex American group, girls participating in courtship-like scenarios were more likely to have a higher position in the play group and, therefore, more direct negotiation strategies were used. Throughout the mixed-sex Chinese group, girls often expressed assertive strategies, yet they sometimes gave control to the boy in the group (Kyratzis & Guo, 2001).

Vespo and Pedersen (1995) conducted a study to observe conflict behaviors between peer groups and sibling dyads. Children were randomly assigned into 36 pairs (mixed-gender and same-gender). The children were split into 2 age groups (by the median), with the younger group
averaging 2 years of age and the older group averaging 4.5 years of age. Each child was observed playing with a peer during 2 10-minute sessions. Thirty-two pairs of children were observed for the same amount of time, yet they were observed playing with a sibling rather than a peer.

Results showed conflict occurred more frequently in same-gender pairs. The researchers found a lack of aggression in preschooler's interactions and the effects of gender were minimal. Both the young and old groups of peers entered into conflict just as often with one another. However, the older preschoolers tended to be more communicative during conflict, meaning they tried to explain their feelings and actions.

Verbal and Behavioral Responses to Conflict Scenarios (What Children Say and Do)

In order to identify the usual style of interaction among peers, a study was conducted which compared children’s responses to hypothetical social dilemmas to their enactive and verbal abilities. The consistency of the style of responses across the theoretical situations was also examined. Thirty-nine 4- and 5-year-olds from a day care in Indiana were selected for the study. Observations, interviews and teacher ratings were all conducted during a 5-week time frame before and during the strategy interviews. Each observation was done during 30-minute free play times. The purpose of asking children to verbally respond was to better assist children to be able to tap into the ability to consciously choose a strategy based on what they know about social norms, reflections or insight into what the interviewer might want them to say, or a best guess about what could be done. Children were asked to respond to hypothetical-verbal and hypothetical-enactive interviews which were audiotaped. One-half of the children participated in the verbal interviews first, while the other half participated in the enactive interview first. For each interview, 6 social scenarios were presented dealing with various experiences likely to be
experienced in a preschool classroom (i.e., pushing a playmate away, wanting to leave a playmate to play in another area, knocking down a child's building, teasing and crying as a result, not allowing another child to play with unused toys, and observing other children playing with unused toys nearby). Through the use of puppets and various story enactments, the children were asked to give a response that represented their strategies. In regards to the hypothetical-verbal interviews, the same procedure was used except drawn pictures were used to portray the story and the children were asked to identify with a person in each picture. Strategy idea units were composed after transcription of the strategy responses was complete. The definition of a strategy idea unit was a statement or action that a child completed that explained a single event or response. Friendliness in the strategies was rated on a 5-point scale (high- prosocial with probable positive outcomes, low- hostile with probable negative outcomes). Also rated on a 5-point scale was assertiveness (high- active in asserting his/her rights, low- passive or withdrawn). For each story, children received both a friendliness and assertiveness score. In addition to the interviews, children were also observed using a scan sampling process, where 72 observations per child were observed. Each observation involved briefly focusing on the given subject and recording his/her behavior as one of the following: physical aggression (kicking, hitting, pushing), verbal aggression (threatening, teasing, yelling), social conversations (positive or neutral face-to-face contact), cooperative play (joint activity with no face-to-face talking), solitary play (playing alone and away from others), unoccupied (off-task while being alone), onlooking (watching the activities of others from a distance), teacher-oriented (clinging, talking to or being near a teacher), and other. The sum scans coded in the four categories applicable to this study (physical aggression, verbal aggression, cooperative play, and social conversation) were calculated to create the observed-prosocial score and the observed-aggression score (Mize
& Ladd, 1988). Teacher ratings and peer acceptance (through a procedure created by Asher, Singleton, Tinsley, and Hymel as cited by Mize & Ladd, 1988) were also examined.

The researchers found friendliness ratings were positively correlated with group acceptance and prosocial behaviors and negatively correlated with aggression. Little relation was found between sociometric and behavioral criteria and the assertiveness composite and was, therefore, excluded from analyses. The friendliness ratings from the enactive responses were more likely than verbal ratings to predict behavior. No relationship was found between children's status and behavior and assertiveness ratings. Strategy information gained from the enactive situations rather than the verbal situations were more predictive of behavior in actual situations with other children (Mize & Ladd, 1988).

Gender and Age Differences in Conflict Resolution Strategies

Past research has found boys and girls tend to perceive and approach social scenarios differently (Walker et al., 2002). Usually, girls exhibited more prosocial, positive, or mitigation strategies when resolving conflict and were generally less likely to exhibit an angry response in conflict situations (Walker et al.). Girls were also more likely to have more prosocial goals and use less antisocial strategies than boys (Rose & Asher, 1999). Even though it was rare for girls to use aggressive strategies, when there was aggression, girls tended to instigate relational aggression, where they gossiped or spread rumors to indirectly hurt another child (Ostrov & Keating, 2004). Whereas girls used little aggression, boys tended to use more aggressive (Zahn-Waxler et al.; Walker et al.) and retaliatory responses to conflict situations (Walker et al.). Aggressive responses tended to be more overt, with higher incidences of verbal and physical aggression (Ostrov & Keating). That aggression led to more dominance, taunting, and fighting in
social situations (Vespo & Pederson, 1995). Avoidance was also a common conflict resolution strategy for boys (Zahn-Waxler et al.).

Gender differences also tend to exist within same-gender and mixed-gender groups because conflict resolution strategies tend to be influenced by gender (Walker et al.). When girls interacted with girls, they were more likely to negotiate (Burford, Foley, Rollins, & Rosario, 1996), whereas when girls interacted with boys, the girls were more likely to use more heavy-handed (aggressive) behaviors (Miller, Danaher, & Forbes, 1986). Overall, when girls entered into an all-male peer group, they tended to exhibit less competent conflict resolution strategies (Walker et al.). When boys interacted with boys, they experienced more coercive and demanding strategies, whereas when boys interacted with girls, the boys used more assertive and disruptive strategies than they had with boys (Burford et al; Walker et al., 2002). When interacting with a same-gender peer group, boys were much less likely to cooperate and negotiate (Burford et al.) yet more likely to use more heavy-handed (aggressive) behaviors (Miller et al.). Gender differences within same-gender and mixed-gender peer groups primarily occurred because both genders participated in stereotyped gender behaviors (Burford et al.).

With regards to age differences, no differences were found with regards to the frequency of occurrences of conflict. Both young and old peers tended to enter into conflict similarly. However, young children were more likely to protest the behavior of the other child involved in the conflict (Vespo & Pederson, 1995).

Rationale for the Present Study

Managing conflict in a successful way is important to social functioning and interaction by young children. By evaluating and observing children's conflict resolution strategies, researchers will have a more solid foundation for creating and implementing conflict resolution
training programs in preschool settings. Most research has focused on either determining how children might resolve conflict through hypothetical conflict scenarios (e.g., Zahn-Waxler et al., 1994) or how children do resolve conflict during unstructured observations (e.g., Sackin & Thelen, 1984). Little research has been conducted assessing both verbal conflict resolution strategies (what children say) and actual conflict resolution strategies (what children do). It is of value to study both verbal responses and actual responses to conflict because as Zahn-Waxler et al. (1994) stated, conflict resolution strategies expressed during puppet vignettes might not accurately measure the actual social problem-solving strategies children experience. Therefore, it is vital current research explores both young children's verbal responses and their actual responses to conflict. By comparing both verbal and actual conflict responses, consistency or inconsistency in conflict resolution skills can be examined. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to examine the consistency between verbal responses to hypothetical conflict scenarios and the actual conflict resolution techniques children apply in everyday play. Based on this rationale, the following were hypothesized:

1a) In verbal responses (i.e., what children say), children will express significantly \((p < .05)\) more prosocial, verbal aggression, and physical aggression conflict resolution strategies than subordination, avoidance, and intervention.

1b) When verbal and physical aggression are collapsed, children will verbally express significantly \((p < .05)\) more prosocial conflict resolution strategies than aggression.

2) In behavior (i.e., what children do), children will demonstrate significantly \((p < .05)\) more verbal aggression and physical aggression conflict resolution strategies than prosocial, subordination, avoidance, and intervention.
3) Findings comparing verbal responses (i.e., what children say) and behavior (i.e., what children do) using the 6 conflict resolution strategies will indicate:
   a. Children will use significantly \( (p < .05) \) MORE subordination in behavior than in verbal conflict resolution strategies.
   b. Children will use significantly \( (p < .05) \) MORE physical aggression in behavior than in verbal conflict resolution strategies.
   c. Children will use significantly \( (p < .05) \) MORE verbal aggression in behavior than in verbal conflict resolution strategies.
   d. Children will use significantly \( (p < .05) \) LESS prosocial conflict resolution strategies in their behavior than in their verbal responses.
   e. Children will use significantly \( (p < .05) \) LESS avoidant conflict resolution strategies in their behavior than in their verbal responses.
   f. Children will use significantly \( (p < .05) \) MORE intervention in behavior than in verbal conflict resolution strategies.

4) Females will use:
   a. significantly \( (p < .05) \) more prosocial conflict resolution strategies in verbal responses than males.
   b. significantly \( (p < .05) \) more prosocial conflict resolution strategies in behavior responses than males.
   c. significantly \( (p < .05) \) more intervention conflict resolution strategies in verbal responses than males.
   d. significantly \( (p < .05) \) more intervention conflict resolution strategies in behavior responses than males.
5) Males will use:
   
e. significantly ($p < .05$) more physical aggression conflict resolution strategies in behavior responses than females.
   
f. significantly ($p < .05$) more verbal aggression conflict resolution strategies in behavior responses than females.

6) There will be no significant ($p > .05$) differences in conflict resolution strategies between children who are younger and those who are older (based on the mean age of the group).
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Subjects

Participants for this study consisted of 26 children enrolled in a child development laboratory in a major metropolitan university located in North Central Texas. The child development laboratory primarily serves children whose parents are employed as faculty or staff at the university. The philosophy of the child development laboratory involves children learning through play, teacher guidance, and the development of self-control (created by modeling, redirecting, positive guidance, and setting clear limits). Competition is not emphasized; negotiation and cooperation are encouraged.

The sample consisted of 12 females and 9 males; 7 children were 4 years of age and 14 children were 5 years of age. At the time of data collection, these children had been in the same class together for over 7 months. From the total of 26 children, 5 children either engaged in no conflict during observation times or engaged in conflict only once. Therefore, these 5 children were eliminated from the study, resulting in a final sample size of 21.

Measures

Each child participated in two processes: (1) an individual interview, and (2) two observations of conflict behavior. I individually interviewed each child concerning 6 hypothetical conflict situations in order to identify the verbal conflict resolution patterns he/she employed. Each interview was recorded on videotape. The interview portion of this study was conducted in a small, private office in the lab school. A small table was set up in the middle of the office with the necessary props sitting near the researcher's chair. The 6 hypothetical vignettes presented to each child were adopted from Mize and Ladd (1988; see Appendix A) and
Zahn-Waxler et al. (1994; see Appendix A). For the observation portion of this study, I observed all children during both indoor free play in the classroom and outside play on the playground and sandbox. An observation began when a conflict arose between two children and ended when the conflict was resolved. Observations were conducted in a discreet way so the children were unaware they were being observed. While in the classroom, I observed from a hidden observation booth in the center of the lab school. While outside, the children were observed from benches lining the outer perimeter of the play area. In addition, I did not intrude on any of the children's play.

Procedure

Hypothetical Conflict Interviews (What Children Say)

Interviews were administered individually and occurred over a day and a half. Each interview was approximately 5-7 minutes in length. Either the lead teacher or the assistant teacher brought each child into the private office to complete the interview. Before I began each session, child assent was obtained. I pointed out the video camera to the child and asked if the child wanted to make a silly face or wave to the camera. Once the child was comfortable with the camera, it was explained to the child what he/she would be doing during the interview session and asked if he/she would like to continue. Within each interview session, 6 hypothetical conflict scenarios were presented. The themes of the conflict scenarios (i.e., one child taking an item away from another child, getting pushed or hit, having a building knocked over, and not being allowed to play with other children) were consistent with those in Mize and Ladd (1988; see Appendix A) and Zahn-Waxler et al. (1994; see Appendix A) and were scenarios that reflected common preschool encounters. During the interview session, I gave the child a puppet "to pretend to be you today." One or two other puppets, in addition to relevant small toys, were used.
to act out each scenario with the child. As I described each scenario, both the child and I worked together to act out the complete story. For example, during the building scenario ("the subject is building a tall tower with blocks"), the child would build a tower with his/her puppet. Then I, who identified my puppet as another child in the lab school class, would act out the conflict behavior (i.e., knocking over the tower of blocks). One practice scenario was presented during an introduction so the child would have the opportunity to practice verbally stating a response and acting out a response with a puppet (see Appendix B). All scenarios were verbally presented as well as acted out between the child and myself. The response the child gave after each scenario was recorded as his/her conflict resolution strategy and the corresponding strategy was recorded on a Verbal Conflict Responses Checklist prepared by the researcher (see Appendix C). If no natural response was given, I asked the child, "What would you do next?" (following Mize & Ladd, 1988), and if the child continued to not respond, the child was asked to act out his/her response with the puppets. The child's entire strategy was repeated verbatim and all of the child's actions with the puppets (nonverbal strategies) were recorded on videotape. Verbally repeating the conflict strategy allowed me to check for accuracy by confirming the strategy with the child. Conflict resolution strategies for the hypothetical conflict interviews were coded as 1 = subordination (i.e., submitting to the desires of another child without incident; Sackin & Thelen, 1984), 2 = physical aggression (i.e., pushing, kicking, hitting, force; Mize & Ladd, 1988), 3 = verbal aggression (i.e., name-calling, insults, threats, manipulations; Mize & Ladd), 4 = prosocial (i.e., positive words, working out an agreement, negotiation; Zahn-Waxler et al., 1994), 5 = avoidant (i.e., walking away; Sandy & Boardman, 2000; Zahn-Waxler et al.), 6 = intervention (i.e., recruiting an adult to intervene; Sackin & Thelen; Sandy & Boardman), and 7 = other (Sackin & Thelen). After analyzing the responses, another conflict resolution strategy code
became apparent throughout the interview process. An 8th code, 8 = assertive but not aggressive, was created and included behaviors such as taking the ball back when another child took it first, or saying "No!" and committing no other action towards the other child.

Behavioral Conflict Observations (What Children Do)

Only those children for whom parental consent was received were observed in group interactions. Observations occurred over 4 days during indoor free play and outside play. As a conflict arose between a group of 2 or 3 children, I selected one of the children involved and observed how that specific child resolved the conflict situation with the other child(ren). Each child was observed a total of 2 times (Time 1 and Time 2). In that scanning the entire group of children for incidences of conflict did not result in every child being observed (i.e., not every child was identified participating in conflict), attention was then focused on the children whom had yet to be observed in conflict. At the end of the observation period, the children who did not engage in any visible conflict were coded as children who experienced no conflict during play. Three children engaged in no visible conflict, and one child engaged in conflict only once, eliminating these 5 children from this study. During conflict situations, I identified the following on a checklist specific to each child: (1) what the conflict was about, and (2) how the conflict was resolved. The conflict resolution strategies were coded identically to the options available during the interview strategies (i.e., subordination, physical aggression, verbal aggression, prosocial, avoidant, intervention, other, and assertive but not aggressive). Each child's conflict resolution strategy was recorded on the Conflict Observations Checklist (see Appendix D).
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

After both the interviews and the observations were concluded, I compared the verbal responses given during the interview session from the interview checklist (Appendix C) to the actual behavioral responses observed (Appendix D) in order to determine the level of consistency between verbal strategies and behavioral strategies of conflict resolution.

Originally, 8 codes were given to possible conflict resolution strategies the children exhibited. Those 8 codes were 1 = subordination (i.e., submitting to the desires of another child without incident; Sackin & Thelen, 1984), 2 = physical aggression (i.e., pushing, kicking, hitting, force; Mize & Ladd, 1988), 3 = verbal aggression (i.e., name-calling, insults, threats, manipulations; Mize & Ladd), 4 = prosocial (i.e., positive words, working out an agreement, negotiation; Zahn-Waxler et al., 1994), 5 = avoidant (i.e., walking away; Sandy & Boardman, 2000; Zahn-Waxler et al.), 6 = intervention (i.e., recruiting an adult to intervene; Sackin & Thelen; Sandy & Boardman), 7 = other (Sackin & Thelen), and 8 = assertive but not aggressive. Due to a small sample size, however, it became necessary to collapse and recode the data for meaningful analyses. Consequently, the 8 original codes were reorganized into 4 as follows: 1 = aggressive -- physical and verbal aggression were collapsed in that both actions consisted of aggressive behaviors; 2 = avoidant -- previously subordination and avoidant, these were collapsed because both actions resulted in the child avoiding any possible conflict; 3 = intervention; and 4 = prosocial, created from the prosocial and assertive but non aggressive codes in that both actions led to a socially acceptable and/or positive way of resolving conflict. In that all responses provided by the children could be categorized within one of the new categories (aggression, avoidant, intervention, prosocial), the code "other" was no longer needed. Using
these codes, a Likert-type scale was generated, creating a more continuous measure of response. The lowest value, 1, was assigned to the responses considered to be the least socially acceptable (e.g., aggression), while the highest value, 4, was assigned to the responses considered to be the most socially acceptable (e.g., prosocial) so that 1 = aggressive, 2 = avoidant, 3 = intervention, and 4 = prosocial.

Hypotheses

Due to the recoding of the data, the original hypotheses were revised. However, despite these revisions, the same relationships initially hypothesized between verbal and behavioral responses for conflict resolution were examined. All hypotheses were tested using either chi-square or t-test analyses.

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1a and 1b were revised as follows: In verbal responses (i.e., what children say), children will express significantly ($p < .05$) more prosocial and aggressive conflict resolution strategies than either avoidance or intervention. Chi-square analysis revealed significant differences in children's responses to Scenario 1, Scenario 2, and Scenario 3. With regard to Scenario 1, all children used either avoidant or prosocial responses. The number of participants who used avoidant strategies was significantly higher than the numbers who used prosocial strategies, $\chi^2(1, n = 21) = 3.86, p = .05$. With regard to Scenario 2, the number of participants who used intervention strategies was significantly higher than the numbers who used the other three strategies, $\chi^2(3, n = 21) = 11.95, p < .01$. With regard to Scenario 3, the number of participants who used prosocial strategies was significantly higher than the numbers who used the other three strategies, $\chi^2(3, n = 21) = 16.91, p < .001$. No significant ($p > .05$) differences in use of conflict strategies were noted with Scenarios 4, 5, and 6, yet analysis regarding responses
to Scenario 4 approached significance (see Table 1). Overall, there was mixed support for
Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 was revised as follows: In behavioral responses (i.e., what children do),
children will demonstrate significantly \( p < .05 \) more aggressive conflict resolution strategies
than prosocial, avoidant, or intervention strategies. Chi-square analyses revealed no significant \( p > .05 \)
differences in children's use of the conflict resolution strategies in either behavioral
observation. However, analysis of Conflict Behavior 1 approached significance, indicating the
number of participants who used avoidant strategies was significantly higher than the number of
children who used the other three strategies, \( \chi^2(3, n = 21) = 7.76, p = .051 \). Results are presented
in Table 2. Overall, there was little support for Hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3

Hypotheses 3 (a-f) were revised as follows: When comparing verbal responses (i.e., what
children say) and behavioral responses (i.e., what children do) using the 4 conflict resolution
strategies, children will exhibit significantly \( p < .05 \) more socially acceptable strategies in their
verbal responses than in their behavioral responses.

The Likert-type scale coding was utilized in testing this hypothesis to create a more
continuous variable. \( T \)-test analyses revealed significant \( t(2.27), p < .05 \) differences between
childrens' verbal responses \( (M = 2.78, \text{s.d.} = .46) \) and behavioral responses \( (M = 2.38, \text{s.d.} = .71) \),
indicating children used slightly more socially acceptable responses in their verbal strategies than
in their behavioral strategies (see Table 3). Consequently, Hypothesis 3 was supported.

Hypotheses 4 and 5

Hypotheses 4 (a-d) and 5 (e-f) were revised into three hypotheses as follows:
Hypothesis 4a: Females will use significantly \((p < .05)\) more socially acceptable conflict resolution strategies in verbal responses than males. Analyses indicated females had a slightly higher mean \((M = 2.86)\) with regards to verbal responses, indicating they used more socially acceptable verbal conflict resolution strategies than males \((M = 2.67)\); however, the results were not significant \((p > .05)\). Consequently, Hypothesis 4a was not supported (see Table 4).

Hypothesis 4b: Males will use significantly \((p < .05)\) less socially acceptable conflict resolution strategies in behavior responses than females. Analyses indicated males had a slightly higher mean \((M = 2.44)\) with regards to behavioral responses, indicating they used more socially acceptable behavioral conflict resolution strategies than females \((M = 2.33)\); however, the results were not significant \((p > .05)\). Consequently, Hypothesis 4b was not supported (see Table 4).

Hypothesis 4c: There will be no significant \((p > .05)\) differences between verbal and behavioral conflict resolution strategies of males or females. \(T\)-test analyses indicated females used significantly \((t(2.28), p < .05)\) more socially acceptable conflict resolution strategies in their verbal responses than in their behavioral responses. However, \(t\)-tests indicated no significant \((p > .05)\) differences in the verbal and behavioral conflict resolution strategies of males. Consequently, there was mixed support for Hypothesis 4c (see Table 4).

Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis 5 predicted no significant \((p > .05)\) differences in conflict resolution strategies between children who were younger and those who were older. The children were divided into two groups based on chronological age: 1) 4-year-olds, and 2) 5-year-olds rather than by the mean age for the group. \(T\)-test analyses revealed no significant \((p > .05)\) differences between the two age groups in either verbal or behavioral responses. Results are presented in Table 5. Overall, Hypothesis 5 was supported.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the consistency between verbal responses to hypothetical conflict scenarios and the actual conflict resolutions techniques young children apply in everyday play. Previous literature has found responses received by enacting conflict scenarios (i.e., acting the strategy out) were more predictive of actual behavior than were responses received from verbal (i.e., just stating the strategy) situations (Mize & Ladd, 1988). This study found slight differences in how children say they will resolve conflict and how they actually do so.

Differences in Verbal and Behavioral Responses

It was hypothesized children would use more prosocial and aggressive conflict resolution strategies in verbal responses and more aggressive strategies in behavioral responses. For 3 of the verbal scenario responses (Scenarios 1, 2, and 3), specific strategies (avoidant, intervention, and prosocial) were used more frequently. Also, there was a trend approaching significance ($p = .085$) for Scenario 4. For Scenario 1, children overwhelmingly opted for avoidant strategies in hypothetical situations when confronted with a peer who pushed them and told them the peer wanted to play with them now. Avoidant and prosocial were the only 2 types of strategies given by all children in the group. A possible reason for these responses may be when children are physically provoked, they might feel threatened or experience "fight or flight" symptoms. Therefore, likely responses would be to either hurt the child or leave and avoid the situation. In that this research found aggression was not a dominant strategy, avoiding the situation might reflect a flight response in these children. The type of school environment might have influenced the occurrence of prosocial responses for this scenario. In that the sample consisted of children in
an accredited child development laboratory, it is possible these children had been taught how to use words and other prosocial acts to resolve conflict. For Scenario 2, significantly more children used intervention in response to the hypothetical situation of being hit while playing in the sandbox. All 4 strategies were given as responses by the group. Once again, in that this was a lab-school setting, the children might have been taught hitting back was not an acceptable behavioral response. Therefore, more of these children might have looked towards a teacher for help in resolving the conflict. For Scenario 3, significantly more children chose prosocial strategies in the hypothetical situation where children had the soccer ball taken away by other children during active play. These children might have responded by simply taking the ball back because they knew by being assertive, the conflict might end. When children originally start out with an object, they consider the objects to be their property. When their property is taken away, children often feel they have the right to take back what is theirs which is why assertive responses were assumed to be dominant for this scenario. Previous literature supports that the use of directives (i.e., saying, "Don't knock that over") is a common way to resolve conflict (Walker et al., 2002).

The 3 remaining scenarios included issues such as having a tower of blocks knocked over (Scenario 4), being rejected when asking to join an activity (Scenario 5), and getting pushed off a jungle gym (Scenario 6; Appendix A). For Scenario 4, the lack of significant differences might have been due to the amount of blocks present for the children to use. While the soccer ball scenario involved only one object, there were numerous blocks for building. The children might easily rebuild their original buildings. Also, teachers might try to encourage rebuilding when a block structure is knocked down either accidentally or purposely. Therefore, children might have the idea of rebuilding already ingrained into their play. Scenario 5 was a fairly passive conflict
situation where no action was provoked initially. It was only after the children tried to play that they were rejected. Therefore, children might see the experience as rejection rather than conflict and as a result, they were unsure how to proceed. It was surprising that Scenario 6 did not generate more physical aggression and intervention responses. When children are pushed off a piece of playground equipment, they might be injured and might tell a teacher what happened, and then hurt the other child afterwards. However, the lack of significant differences might be due to the absence of jungle gym equipment on the playground at this lab school and, therefore, a lack of opportunities for direct observations of a similar scenario (i.e., getting pushed off the jungle gym). These children may not have had a specific encounter of getting pushed off a jungle gym by a friend at school, the scenario they were asked to imagine. In that young children have a difficult time generalizing and transferring concepts, they might not have been able to apply a hypothetical scenario to real life if they had not experienced it.

The differences in responses in regard to the different conflict scenarios is supported by Thornberg (2006) who found children use different conflict resolution strategies in different conflict situations. If educators are aware children respond differently to various situations, teachers might be able to incorporate a variety of conflict situations in conflict resolution training programs. In that young children are unable to generalize concepts during the preschool years, specific examples of peer conflict for them to role play might significantly increase their understanding of how to resolve conflict.

For the behavioral responses, no significant differences were found in how these children resolved conflict. Even though these analyses revealed no significant differences, there was a trend approaching significance ($p = .051$), indicating these children tended to use slightly more avoidant conflict resolution strategies than the other three types of strategies. One reason for this
trend only approaching significance might be that these children were aware their classroom had multiple toys and areas for play. In that it was a lab-school, there was an abundance of materials and duplicate toys. Therefore, instead of risking physical or emotional suffering, they might have thought it better to explore other aspects of the room and avoid conflict. Zahn-Waxler et al. (1994) found boys typically used more avoidance whereas submission (which was collapsed into the avoidant code in this study) was a common resolution strategy for both boys and girls (Dunn & Herrera, 1997; Sackin & Thelen, 1984). Therefore, the trend of avoidant strategies was supported by past research.

This study also hypothesized children would use more socially acceptable verbal responses than behavioral responses. Significant differences in the verbal and behavioral responses of these children were found, and Cohen's $d$ indicated the effect size of this finding to be medium (Cohen's $d = .67$). Differences were assumed because it was thought children would respond in a manner adults might expect (e.g., saying they would ask a teacher for help rather than hit the other child), but behave differently when faced with actual conflict. Findings here indicated that at least for these children, this appeared to be the case. In that minimal research has been done comparing verbal strategies to behavioral strategies, further research is necessary in order to fully understand consistency between young children's verbal and behavioral conflict resolution strategies.

**Implications for Future Research**

Future research needs to focus on better matching the content of conflict in hypothetical scenarios to that found in actual behavioral responses. By comparing the same conflict content, there might be fewer confounding variables, such as an unequal amount of hypothetical scenarios to real-life scenarios. Also, with the same hypothetical and real-life scenarios, more consistent
findings might be found across scenarios. In addition, more than 2 behavioral conflict observations are needed in order to better understand and evaluate those additional utilized by children in their behavior.

Gender Differences

Although past research (Zahn-Waxler et al., 1994; Walker et al., 2002; Kyritzis & Guo, 2001; Walker, 2004) has frequently identified gender differences between conflict resolution strategies, this study did not yield significant findings related to gender differences in overall conflict resolution strategies. A reason for the lack of gender differences might rest in the size of the sample. With only 21 children and 4 possible conflict resolution strategies, the number of responses was almost evenly dispersed across the strategies. For instance, on scenario 5, the number of children in each response category varied from 4 to 7 children (aggressive = 4, avoidant = 4, intervention = 7, prosocial = 6). The lack of significant differences might have occurred due to little differences in the number of responses for each strategy. Also, with a more evenly dispersed male to female ratio, more definitive results might also be found.

These findings regarding gender differences are not consistent with past research. Previous research has found verbally, females tend to use more prosocial conflict resolution strategies (Zahn-Waxler et al., 1994; Walker et al., 2002). Even though this study found females verbally used more socially acceptable conflict resolution strategies than males, the results were not significant.

One reason girls exhibited more prosocial strategies than boys may have been that girls were participating in what has been referred to as gender-stereotyped behaviors (Burford et al. 1996). Gender-stereotyping involves girls acting politely and appropriately whereas boys use
aggression and force. Once again, this research found no differences in gender responses primarily due to the small sample size.

Males used slightly more socially acceptable conflict resolution strategies in their behavioral responses (although results were not significant), even though it was hypothesized males would use less socially acceptable conflict resolution strategies than females. Previous research has found males use more aggression (Zahn-Waxler et al.; Walker et al.), with tendencies for more overt aggression (Ostrov & Keating, 2004). Even though past research has shown boys usually use more aggression (physical and verbal) than girls (Walker, 2004), this study did not support males resolving conflict in a more aggressive way than females. Once again, the findings of the present study are limited due to the small sample size and the lack of more observations.

For males and females, this study hypothesized no significant differences between verbal and behavioral conflict resolution strategies. While no significant differences were found with regards to males, there was a significant difference in how females responded verbally and behaviorally, indicating the behavioral responses of female children were different from their verbal responses. When comparing females' verbal and behavioral responses, Cohen's $d$ (1.03) reveals meaningful differences existed between the two types of responses even with the small sample size. These findings can serve as a possible contribution to future research that explores differences in young females' verbal and behavioral responses to conflict because this study indicated that even with a small sample size, significant differences were found. Therefore, with a larger sample size, significant differences that can further contribute to the field might be found.
Age Differences

Regarding age as a factor in resolving conflict, no significant differences were found between the younger and older groups of children. This finding is partially supported by Vespo and Pederson (1995) who found both younger and older children entered into conflict in similar ways. Perhaps an increased sample size would provide a wider age range sufficient for significant age differences within the 4- to 5-year age range. It may also be possible that age difference might not even exist. By including more children, such as 3-year-olds turning 4, the extremes on the age range (i.e., young 48-month-olds versus young 59-month-olds) might affect the results.

Limitations of the Study

Few significant findings exploring children's use of conflict resolution strategies were yielded by this data. A reason for the lack of significant findings may be a direct result of the small sample size ($n = 21$) used in this study. The eight conflict resolution strategies were combined in order to accommodate for the small sample size. With a larger sample size, research analysis could employ the use of more specific categories of conflict resolution. For instance, this study collapsed assertive responses and prosocial responses into a common group for analysis. However, assertive and prosocial responses can differ greatly. An assertive response of "No!" is different than a prosocial response which might involve more positive interaction to achieve some sort of resolution. It is valuable to look at both types of responses because findings might show young children are still unaware and unprepared to verbally work through conflict. If that is the case, conflict resolution training programs need to include teaching children how to verbally work through conflict in appropriate ways. Utilization of the 6 original codes (excluding
other) as well as a code for assertive behavior in future studies with a larger sample size might yield vastly different findings.

One last limitation of this study was that it was conducted in a child development laboratory setting that served as a teaching environment for teachers and students at a university. Therefore, in addition to the two teachers present in the classroom, there were numerous undergraduate students ($n = 2-4$) in the room at any given time, providing less opportunity for children to resolve conflict independently and unobserved. With more teachers and adults in the room, there might have been increased opportunities for them to intervene before the children could work through conflict themselves. Even though it is important for teachers to intervene when needed, it is valuable for children to have the opportunity to make an attempt to resolve a conflict in order to gain new social and problem-solving skills. Future research would greatly benefit from working with teachers in order to teach them how to assist in social relationships and peer conflicts in order to help young children appropriately work through conflict.

In addition to having several adults in the classroom at a given time, the children in the class had also been together over 7 months. These children might, therefore, have already formed rules and consistent ways for dealing with conflict within their classroom environment. Future research would benefit from assessing conflict resolution strategies multiple times a year in order to determine if/how strategies change over time. It was assumed many of these children also came from families where at least one parent had completed a college education. Therefore, it is also assumed that those parents might already know how to teach their children how to appropriately resolve conflict. Future research would also benefit from looking at different types of schools, such as HeadStart programs, daycares, and other childcare settings. Different
variables, such as education, available resources, and number of family members living with the children, might greatly influence how children resolve conflict.

Benefits and Contributions

Even though this study lacked numerous significant findings, this research can serve as a foundation for work dealing with conflict in early childhood and for establishing early childhood conflict resolution programs. The lack of significant findings indicates more research with larger sample sizes needs to be conducted in order to better understand how consistently young children utilize conflict resolution strategies. This study also identified a significant difference between what young girls say and how they were observed to behave. This finding might serve as a foundation for future research focusing on gender differences in covert and overt behaviors, specifically how girls tend to use more covert behaviors and actions than boys. Furthermore, this study indicated young children have very distinct ways of solving conflict. By studying children's conflict resolution strategies while the children are young, it might be possible to predict their future conflict behaviors. Longitudinal studies recording the consistency of conflict resolution strategies over time (early childhood to adolescence) might reveal interesting findings related to what is taught in school regarding social interaction and conflict. Those findings might support the idea of creating appropriate conflict resolution training programs for young children by starting in preschool.
Table 1

Results of Chi-Square Analyses Regarding Verbal Responses to 6 Hypothetical Conflict Scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenarios</th>
<th>$n$</th>
<th>Agg</th>
<th>AV</th>
<th>Inter</th>
<th>Pro</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Scenario 1</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>.05</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.95</td>
<td>.01</td>
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<td>Scenario 3</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.91</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 4</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>.09</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>.73</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>.31</td>
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*Note. Agg (Aggressive), AV (Avoidant), Inter (Intervention), Pro (Prosocial).*
Table 2

*Results of Chi-Square Analyses Regarding Behavioral Responses to 2 Behavioral Conflict Observations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Agg</th>
<th>AV</th>
<th>Inter</th>
<th>Pro</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>p</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>.051</td>
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<td>Behavior 2</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>.17</td>
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</table>

*Note.* Agg (Aggressive), AV (Avoidant), Inter (Intervention), Pro (Prosocial).
Table 3

Results of t-test Analyses Regarding Differences in Children's Verbal Conflict Resolution Strategies and Behavioral Conflict Resolution Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Cohen's d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Verbal Responses</td>
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<td>Behavioral Responses</td>
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### Tables 4

*Results of t-test Analyses Regarding Gender Differences in Verbal Responses and Behavioral Responses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>n</th>
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<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Cohen's d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>-.98</td>
<td>.34</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4b) Behavioral</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>2.44</td>
<td>.92</td>
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<td>.54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4c) Male</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Behavioral</td>
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<td>2.44</td>
<td>.92</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4c) Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
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<td>2.28</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>1.03</td>
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<td>Behavioral</td>
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<td>2.33</td>
<td>.54</td>
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Table 5

Results of t-test Analyses Regarding Age Differences in Verbal Responses and Behavioral Responses

<table>
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<th>Age</th>
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<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4-year-olds</td>
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<td>2.74</td>
<td>.58</td>
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<td>5-year-olds</td>
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<td>2.80</td>
<td>.41</td>
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<tr>
<td>Behavioral</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-year-olds</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>.57</td>
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<td>.64</td>
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<tr>
<td>5-year-olds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Story number</td>
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<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>You and another child are playing with farm animals. You only have two farm animals to play with. Another child comes over, pushes one child and says to you &quot;Hey, child's name, I want to play with you now!&quot; What would you do next (Mize &amp; Ladd, 1988)?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>You are having a good time playing in the sandbox when another child comes over and hits you. What would you do next (Zahn-Waxler, Cole, Richardson, Friedman, Michel, &amp; Belouad, 1994)?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>You are kicking a soccer ball and Susie comes and takes the soccer ball away. What would you do next (Zahn-Waxler et al.)?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>You are building a very tall tower with blocks. While you are building, another child comes over and knocks the building down. What would you do next (Mize &amp; Ladd)?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>You are walking around the room one day and you see two children playing with farm animals and it looks like they are having fun. You go up close to those children because you would like to play too. When you walk up to the other children, one of them says, &quot;You can't play, cause we only have two farm animals.&quot; What would you do next (Mize &amp; Ladd)?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mary/Bobby is playing on the jungle gym and you start to climb up. Mary/Bobby pushes you off, saying &quot;I'm playing on this.&quot; What would you do next (Zahn-Waxler et al.)?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

CONFLICT SCENARIOS SCRIPT
Take the child to a table on which there is an array of puppets representing both sexes and different races, hair color, etc. Ask the child to select a puppet he/she would like to use and "pretend to be you today". The Interviewer will select two puppets of the same sex. Take the child to another table where the props are available. The interviewer will present Stories 1 through 6 after a brief introduction. If the child does not respond spontaneously in the stories, the Interviewer will ask, "What would you do next? Tell me and show me with your puppet what you would do." After each story, toys not needed for the next story are put out of sight and toys needed for the next story are taken out (Mize & Ladd, 1988).

Introduction

"We are going to act out some stories about some kids your age with our puppets. Is it ok with you that we play a little bit together today (obtain assent)? I want to find out what you would do in school, so you can show me with your puppet what you would really do. Before we start, I want to show you that we have a camera that is going to record us playing. I would like you to play with me in these stories. Let's practice playing together with the puppets. If the child has not already chosen a puppet, ask him/her to pick the puppet that he/she is going to pretend to be. Then say to the child, "Let's say one day you and these other kids are playing with the blocks. Show me with your puppet how you would do that." Engage the child in enacting with his/her puppet and your puppets a scene of playing with the blocks. For instance, "Here, subject's name, you put this block on; our building is so tall," etc. Continue play acting with the puppets until the child joins in. Then say, "then you hear your teacher say, 'O.K. girls/boys, it's time to clean up now!' Now I'm gonna show you what this kid does (hold up one puppet for emphasis), then I'm gonna show you what this other kid does (hold up another puppet), then after that it will be your turn to show me what you would do in school when the teacher says it's time to clean up. This kid says I'm gonna clean!" (demonstrate first puppet picking up blocks, i.e., cleaning up). As yourself, say, "Let's see what this other boy/girl would do when it's time to clean up." Have the second puppet move quickly off to the side of the scene while saying, "I'm not going to clean up, I'm leaving." Speaking as yourself, say to the child, "Now it's your turn to show me what you would do when the teacher says it's time to clean up. You can show me with your puppet and tell me." Repeat the child's strategy verbatim and describe actions. Show the child how you will be writing during his/her statement. After the story ask the child, "Is that something that might really happen in school?" to emphasize your desire for a response that represents a typical action rather than a fantasy answer. If the child gives a fantasy answer, gently remind him/her that you want to see/hear what would really happen at school. After the practice story is over say, "Ok, now we are ready for our stories" (Mize & Ladd).

Story 1: Other kids want to play (Mize & Ladd)

Props: Two puppets for the Interviewer, puppet for child, small blocks, small vehicle, two small farm animals; one for the Interviewer's puppet who is "playing" with the subject and one for the child's puppet. The blocks and vehicle are lying to the side.
Say, "One day, you and this other kid (indicate one of your puppets; the other puppet is off to the side or in your lap) are having fun playing with farm animals." (If the child does not being playing right away, say, "Show me with your puppet how you play with the farm animals with the other kid," and engage your puppet and the child's puppet in play with the farm animals. Have your puppet say, "We only have two farm animals to play with." Then have the other puppet that has been off to the side, approach your playing puppet and gently shove your puppet and say to the child's puppet, "Hey, child's name, I want to play with you now!" Then ask the child, "What would you do next?"

**Story 2: Sandbox** (Zahn-Waxler, Cole, Richardson, Friedman, Michel, & Belouad, 1994)

*Props: Puppet for child, puppet for Interviewer, small animal toys.*

Say, "One day, you and another kid (indicate one of your puppets) are having fun playing in the sandbox." Engage child briefly in role playing with the puppets playing with animals in the sandbox (Mize and Ladd). "As you are playing, Bobby comes over and hits you. Then ask the child, "What would you do next?"

**Story 3: Soccer ball** (Zahn-Waxler et al.)

*Props: Puppet for child, puppet for Interviewer, small soccer ball.*

Say, "One day, you are having a good time kicking a soccer ball." Engage child briefly in kicking a ball around with the puppet. "As you are kicking the ball around, Suzie comes and takes the soccer ball." Then ask the child, "What would you do next?"

**Story 4: Knocks over blocks** (Mize & Ladd)

*Props: Puppet for child, puppet for Interviewer, small blocks.*

Say, "Now on this day in school, you are building a tall tower with blocks. Show me how you do that." Allow the child to construct a tower about 4-5 blocks tall using his/her puppet. Then have your puppet (which is in your lap) approach the tower and push it over, saying at the same time, "Hey, child's name, I was playing with those before and you can't play with them now." Then ask the child, "What would you do next?"

**Story 5: You can't play** (Mize & Ladd)

*Props: Puppet for child, two puppets for Interviewer, two farm animals for Interviewer's puppets, blocks, vehicle, and a small doll nearby but unused.*

Say, "One day you don't have anything to do, so you are just walking around the room. Show me with your puppet how you would just walk around." You may have to indicate an area of the table away from the toys. Have your two puppets begin to play with the two farm animals, making animal noises, etc. "Then you see these two kids playing with the two farm animals, and it looks like they are having fun. So you walk up close beside them because you would like to
play too." If the child does not do this with the puppet, you may have to encourage the child to show me with the puppet how you would walk up close to the other kids. When the child's puppet approaches your puppets, have one of your puppets say to him/her, "You can't play, cause we only have two farm animals." Then ask the child, "What would you do next?"

**Story 6: Jungle gym** (Zahn-Waxler et al.)

*Props: Climbing structure made out of blocks, puppet for Interviewer, and puppet for child.*

Say, "One day, you see Mary/Bobby playing on a jungle gym outside." Use your puppet as the other child to act out playing on the jungle gym (block structure). You climb up (have the child act it out) but Mary/Bobby pushes you off, saying, "I'm playing on this." Then ask the child, "What would you do next?"
APPENDIX C

VERBAL CONFLICT RESPONSES CHECKLIST (INTERVIEW)
<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Subordination</th>
<th>Physical Aggression</th>
<th>Verbal Aggression</th>
<th>Prosocial</th>
<th>Avoidant</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
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APPENDIX D

CONFLICT OBSERVATIONS CHECKLIST (OBSERVATIONS)
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<tr>
<th>Child (code)</th>
<th>Age (in days)</th>
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<th>Location 2</th>
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What the conflict is over (Time 1):

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______________________________________________________________________________
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What the conflict is over (Time 2):

______________________________________________________________________________
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APPENDIX E

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD MATERIALS
February 8, 2007

Dear Parents,

One of the many benefits of the Child Development Laboratory, in addition to a great preschool education, is the opportunity for undergraduate and graduate students at UNT to learn more about child development through observations and interactions at the CDL. As a master's student in Development and Family Studies here at UNT, I am interested in learning more about how young children respond to conflict (i.e., problems between children). In that the CDL is a learning center on campus, I would like to partake in the opportunity to work with your child in order to better understand problem solving behaviors among young children. I would like to invite your child to participate in two aspects of this study:

1) An interview, in which I will ask your child to solve 6 pretend problem situations. I will read your child a short story and ask your child to act the story as well as the solution out with me (i.e., you are building a tower out of blocks and another child comes over and knocks it down… what would you do next?). The interview will last approximately 30 minutes and will be conducted during your child's free play time. The interview will be videotaped, and each videotape and response will be kept confidential. No one other than me will have access to all forms and videotapes. The interviews will be conducted from Tuesday, April 3, 2007 to Thursday, April 5, 2007.

2) I will observe your child discreetly (he/she will be unaware that he/she is being observed) as he/she participates in conflict. I will observe your child participating in 2 conflict situations with other children. I will be recording what the problem is about and how your child solved the problem. No child will ever be encouraged or prompted to engage in conflict. The observations will be conducted from Friday, April 6, 2007 to Wednesday, April 11, 2007.

Attached to this letter is a consent form. As your child's parent or legal guardian, I am required to receive consent from you before I can interview or observe your child. Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and if you do not want your child to participate in this study, please do not return the consent form. If I receive no consent form for your child, I will not conduct an interview or any observations that include your child. Please return the signed consent form to Brenda Ettredge in the front office of the CDL by March 19, 2007 if you would like for your child to participate.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact me either by phone at ***-***-**** or by email at *******************, and I will be happy to discuss this with you further.

Sincerely,
Julie Leventhal, B.S.
University of North Texas Institutional Review Board

Informed Consent Form

Before agreeing to your child’s participation in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the purpose and benefits of the study and how it will be conducted.

Title of Study:  Conflict resolution strategies in young children: Do they do what they say?

Principal Investigator:  Julie Leventhal, B.S., a graduate student at the University of North Texas (UNT)

Department of Technology and Cognition, College of Education

Purpose of the Study: You are being asked to allow your child to participate in a research study being conducted at UNT by Julie Leventhal, a graduate student in Development and Family Studies in the Department of Technology and Cognition. The study involves comparing how children say they solve problems with other children to how they really do solve problems during play.

Study Procedures: This study consists of 2 sections: (1) an interview and (2) observations. Both the interview and the observations will be conducted at the Child Development Lab. During an interview session, your child will be asked to act out 6 hypothetical conflict scenarios. For example, using puppets, the researcher and your child will act out a similar scene: You are building a tower out of blocks and another child comes over and knocks it down. Your child will be asked what he/she would do next. The interview session will take place between Tuesday, April 3, 2007 and Thursday, April 5, 2007 and will take no more than 30 minutes of your child’s time. Your child will also be observed discreetly during free play (he/she will be unaware that he/she is being observed). When a conflict arises in which your child is involved, I will observe to see how he/she solves the problem. Your child will be observed on two occasions between Friday, April 6, 2007 and Wednesday, April 11, 2007. No child will ever be encouraged or prompted to engage in conflict.

Foreseeable Risks: No foreseeable risks are involved in this study.

Benefits to the Subjects or Others: This study might benefit the abilities of teachers of young children to help children better deal with conflict situations.

Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality of Research Records: Consent forms, interview logs, observation logs, and videotapes will not have your child's name on them. Each child will be assigned a subject code and only the researcher will have access to the master list that identifies each child to his/her own code. All forms and videotapes will be kept in a locked container in a private room and no one other than the researcher will have access to the documents or the videotapes. Only I and my faculty advisor, Dr. Rebecca Glover, will watch the videotapes, and upon completion of the study, the videotapes will be cut up and destroyed no
later than December 31, 2007. The confidentiality of your child’s individual information will be maintained in any publications or presentations regarding this study.

**Questions about the Study:** If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Julie Leventhal at ******* or by email at ****************, or my faculty advisor, Dr. Rebecca Glover, UNT Department of Technology and Cognition, at (940) 565-4876.

**Review for the Protection of Participants:** This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UNT IRB can be contacted at (940) 565-3940 with any questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

**Research Participants’ Rights:** Your signature below indicates that you have read or have had read to you all of the above and that you confirm all of the following:

- Julie Leventhal has explained the study to you and answered all of your questions. You have been told the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study.
- You understand that you do not have to allow your child to take part in this study, and your refusal to allow your child to participate or your decision to withdraw him/her from the study will involve no penalty or loss of rights or benefits. The study personnel may choose to stop your child’s participation at any time.
- You understand why the study is being conducted and how it will be performed.
- You understand your rights as the parent/guardian of a research participant and you voluntarily consent to your child’s participation in this study.
- You have been told you will receive a copy of this form.

If you are willing for your child to participate in this study, please sign and return this to Brenda Ettredge in the CDL front office by March 19, 2007.

________________________________                                ______________
Signature of Parent or Guardian                                  Date

**For the Principal Investigator or Designee:** I certify that I have reviewed the contents of this form with the parent or guardian signing above. I have explained the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study. It is my opinion that the parent or guardian understood the explanation.
Signature of Principal Investigator or Designee

Date
REFERENCES


