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# Managing Sibling Conflict and the Relation between Mothers' Emotion Socialization Beliefs and Children's Coping with Peer Victimization

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Managing Sibling Conflict and the Relation between Mothers' Emotion Socialization Beliefs and Children's Strategies for Coping with Peer Victimization

Managing Sibling Conflict and the Relation between Mothers' Emotion Socialization Beliefs and  
Children's Strategies for Coping with Peer Victimization

A dissertation submitted for the  
partial fulfillment of the degree  
Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology

By

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## Abstract

This study examined the degree to which children's strategies for coping with peer victimization were related to their strategies for coping with sibling victimization. Also examined were the relations among mothers' sibling conflict management strategies, their emotion socialization beliefs, and children's coping with peer and sibling victimization. Data were obtained from 98 4<sup>th</sup> grade children and their mothers. Results indicated that children's peer victimization coping strategies were significantly related to their sibling victimization coping strategies. I found that mothers who value and accept children's negative emotions were more likely to coach their children through sibling conflict. Unexpectedly, I found that strategies that involved mothers taking control of sibling conflict were positively related to children's adaptive coping and negatively related to children's maladaptive coping. The relation between taking control over sibling conflict and children's maladaptive coping was stronger for mothers who were less likely to be dismissing of children's emotions. Implications and directions for future investigation are discussed.

This dissertation is approved for recommendation  
to the Graduate Council.

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## Managing Sibling Conflict and the Relation between Mothers' Emotion Socialization Beliefs and Children's Strategies for Coping with Peer Victimization

Peer victimization has been linked to internalizing and externalizing problems both concurrently (See reviews by Arseneault, Bowes, & Shakoor, 2010; Gazelle & Ladd, 2002; Juvenon & Graham, 2001) and over time (e.g., Arseneault, Bowes, & Shakoor, 2010; Boivin, Petitclerc, Feng, & Barker, 2010; Roth, Coles, & Heimberg 2002; Schwartz, Phares, Tanleff-Dunn, & Thompson, 1999; Storch, Roth, Coles, Heimberg, Bravata, & Moser, 2004; Thompson, 1996). How children cope emotionally with peer victimization appears to predict future victimization, especially when peer groups undergo transition (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1997; Pellegrini & Long, 2002; Schwartz, Dodge, & Coie, 1993; Smith, Talamelli, Cowie, Naylor, & Chauhan, 2004). Children's strategies for coping with emotion-laden peer conflict has also been shown to predict future internalizing and externalizing difficulties (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002; Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004; Visconti & Troop-Gordon, 2010). Given these findings, it is important to understand factors that impede or enhance development of children's capacity to cope with the emotions that arise during peer conflict or victimization. Because children spend more time with siblings than with parents in middle childhood (McHale & Crouter, 1996), and because sibling interactions are often characterized by intense affect (Kendrick & Dunn, 1983) that is conflict-related (Bank, Burraston, & Snyder, 2004), the sibling relationship is a particularly useful context for studying children's conflict coping strategies.

Kramer and Baron (1995) found that most parents, regardless of their own sibling relationship history, want their children to have close, non-conflictual relationships. If true, then an interesting question is how do parents view and respond to sibling conflict? Are sibling conflict and the emotions it generates viewed negatively, as something to be eliminated or at

least minimized? Or, is sibling conflict viewed as potentially beneficial, an opportunity for important learning if managed well (e.g., without violence)? Also worth examining are factors that predict individual differences in parents' approach to sibling conflict. In this study, mothers' specific strategies for managing sibling conflict were examined in light of their beliefs about emotion socialization. Both mothers' emotion socialization beliefs and mothers' responses to sibling conflict were examined in light of children's coping. I first predicted that children's patterns of coping with peer victimization would be similar to their coping with sibling victimization. I further predicted that mothers' beliefs about emotions would be related to their children's pattern of coping with instances of sibling and peer victimization. Mothers' beliefs about emotion socialization were also expected to predict the strategies mothers endorse for managing sibling conflict. mothers' strategies for managing sibling conflict, in turn, were expected to relate systematically to children's patterns of coping emotionally with sibling and peer victimization, with punitive parenting strategies expected to relate directly to children's tendency to use maladaptive coping. Tested here is the hypothesis that mothers' strategies for managing sibling conflict mediate the relation between mothers' beliefs about emotion socialization and children's pattern of coping emotionally with sibling and peer victimization. I also tested whether mothers' beliefs about children's emotion moderate the relation between mothers' endorsement of stopping sibling conflict and children's coping. Specifically, I expected that mothers' endorsement of stopping sibling conflict would be positively related to children's adaptive coping if mothers hold positive beliefs about children's emotions; I expected that mothers' endorsement of stopping sibling conflict would be positively related to children's maladaptive coping if caregivers hold negative beliefs about children's emotions.

## **Correlates of Peer Victimization**

Peer victimization involves repeated exposure to peer interactions that a) convey harmful intent, b) produce harmful effects, and c) are sanctioned (often implicitly) by peer groups in which non-intervention is the norm (Juvonen & Graham, 2001; Olweus, 1993; Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004). Prevalence rates can vary by measure and developmental level (Ladd & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2002; Nicolaidis, Toda, & Smith, 2002), with estimates suggesting 10-38% of children in middle childhood are victims (e.g., Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Graham & Juvonen, 1998; Haynie et al., 2001; Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996; Nansel et al., 2001; Olweus, 1991; Perry, Kusel, & Perry, 1988; Rigby & Smith, 2011; Smith, Shu, & Madsen, 2001) and 10-20% are chronic victims (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996; Olweus, 1991). Childhood peer victimization has been linked to concurrent maladaptive psychosocial functioning, poor academic performance, and impaired social skills (see reviews by Arseneault, Bowes, & Shakoor, 2010; Gazelle & Ladd, 2002; Juvonen & Graham, 2001). Studies have also found links between childhood peer victimization and adulthood anxiety, depression, fear of negative evaluation, loneliness, body dissatisfaction, and eating disturbances (Faith, Storch, Roberti, & Ledley, 2007; Grilo, Wilfley, Brownell, & Rodin, 1994; Isaacs, Hodges, & Salmivalli, 2008; Jackson, Grilo, & Masheb, 2000; Ledley, Storch, Coles, Heimburg, Moser, & Bravata, 2006; Rieves & Cash, 1996; Roth, Coles, & Heimberg 2002; Schwartz, Phares, Tanleff-Dunn, & Thompson, 1999; Storch, Roth, Coles, Heimberg, Bravata, & Moser, 2004; Strawser, Storch, & Roberti 2005; Thompson, 1996; Thompson & Heimberg, 1993). Interestingly, despite poor outcomes associated with peer victimization for some children, most children who experience peer victimization do not suffer ill-effects (Hoover, Oliver, & Hazler, 1992; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Ladd, 2001) Thus, it is incumbent upon researchers to understand factors that may buffer

children from further peer victimization and from harmful effects of peer victimization when it occurs.

### **Coping with Peer Conflict and Victimization: Relations to Peer Victimization**

Children's coping responses to peer victimization are one such factor, as these coping responses are associated with both continuation of existing victimization (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1997; Smith et al., 2004) and the impact of victimization on adjustment (Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002; Singh & Bussey, 2011; Waasdorp & Bradshaw, 2001). Generally, attempts to examine the association between peer victimization and children's coping strategies have focused on five types of coping: internalizing, externalizing, avoidant, problem solving, and support seeking (Andreou, 2001; Bijttebier & Vertommen, 1998; Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1997; Olafsen & Viemero, 2000; Roecker-Phelps, 2001; Salmivalli, Karhunen, & Lagerspetz, 1996).

*Internalizing coping* is characterized by directing coping efforts inward in ways that are considered maladaptive (Causey & Dubow, 1992). Worrying is an example of this form of coping. Internalizing coping strategies are consistently associated with higher rates of concurrent peer victimization (Andreou, 2001; Bijttebier & Vertommen, 1998; Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1997; Olweus, 1978; Roecker-Phelps, 2001; Salmivalli et al., 1996). Moreover, internalizing strategies have been linked with future victimization for preschool children (Patterson, Littman, & Bricker, 1967).

*Externalizing coping* is characterized by directing coping efforts at other people or objects (Causey & Dubow, 1992), again in ways that are thought to be maladaptive (e.g., yelling at others, hitting things). Research is mixed with regard to links between externalizing strategies and peer victimization. For example, Kochenderfer and Ladd (1997) found that kindergarten

children who responded to peer aggression in the fall semester by fighting back were more likely to have a stable victim status through the spring semester. Both Salmivalli et al. (1996) and Terranova, Boxer, and Morris (2010) found that externalizing coping during middle childhood was associated with higher rates of peer victimization. However, other studies find that externalizing coping strategies are unrelated to peer victimization during middle childhood (Andreou, 2001; Bijttebier & Vertommen, 1998; Roecker-Phelps, 2001). Several explanations for these inconsistent findings have been proposed. First, some victims who rely on externalizing strategies to cope with peer victimization might also be children who bully others. These children are frequently referred to as *bully-victims* (see Schwartz, Proctor, & Chien, 2001, for review), and research indicates a tendency for bully-victims to experience difficulty regulating their emotions (Schwartz et al., 2001). Thus, children's manner of regulating their emotions could moderate the relation between externalizing coping strategies and future victimization (Terranova, 2007). Inconsistent findings could also result from the potential moderating role of gender in the relation between externalizing strategies and victimization. Some researchers find that externalizing strategies are associated with high rates of peer victimization, but only for girls (e.g., Snyder, Brooker, Patrick, Snyder, Schrepferman, & Stoolmiller, 2003). These findings could reflect the fact that externalizing behaviors are less normative for girls (Underwood, 2003). For boys, externalizing behaviors appear to reduce victimization experiences in the short-term but predict higher levels of future victimization (Snyder et al., 2003).

*Avoidant coping* involves cognitively, emotionally, and physically distancing oneself from stressful situations (Program for Prevention Research, 1999). Most extant research examining links between avoidant coping strategies and peer victimization have focused on cognitive distancing or distraction. In these studies, findings are mixed. One study found that

victims used more distancing or distraction avoidant coping strategies than bullies or control children (Andreou, 2001) and another study found that chronically bullied children use avoidant coping more often than children who were bullied less often (Hunter & Boyle, 2004). Two other studies found no differences in distancing and distraction avoidant coping strategies among victims, bullies, bully-victims, and control children (Bijttebier & Vertommen, 1998; Roecker-Phelps, 2001). Only one study has examined the relation between behavioral avoidance strategies and peer victimization (Terranova, 2007). That study found peer victimization did not predict emotion coping strategies for most children. However, children who experienced high levels of victimization throughout the school year reported more behavioral avoidance and externalizing coping strategies, suggesting that chronic peer victimization might increase children's reliance on these strategies (Terranova, 2007).

*Problem solving coping* is an approach coping strategy (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002) characterized by an attempt to think actively about or act differently in response to the problem thought to be the source of stress (Causey & Dubow, 1992). Although some studies find problem-solving strategies are unrelated to peer victimization (Andreou, 2001; Bijttebier & Vertommen, 1998), others studies reveal that non-involved youth, compared to victims, bully-victims, and bullies, tend to use more problem-solving coping strategies during peer conflict (Andreou, 2001; Roecker-Phelps, 2001). Andreou (2001) also found that victims used more problem-solving coping strategies than bullies or bully-victims.

*Support seeking coping* is an approach coping strategy (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002) that involves asking for others' help when dealing with stress (Causey & Dubow, 1992). Most studies find that victims, bullies, bully-victims, and control children do not differ in their use of support-seeking coping strategies (e.g., Bijttebier & Vertommen, 1998; Roecker-Phelps,

2001). However, one study found that children who had experienced elevated levels of peer victimization for more than four weeks were less likely to use support seeking when compared to children whose peer victimization experiences persisted for less than four weeks (Hunter & Boyle, 2004). Findings are mixed with regard to the role of gender in the relation between support seeking and victimization. Two studies found that support seeking was related to lower levels of concurrent and future victimization for boys but not for girls (Bijttebier & Vertommen, 1998; Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1997); however, a more recent study found that support seeking strategies were related to lower future victimization for girls and to higher concurrent victimization for boys (Shelley & Craig, 2010).

### **Relations between Coping Strategies and Outcomes of Peer Victimization**

In addition to predicting concurrent and future levels of peer victimization, children's coping strategies also appear related to other psychosocial outcomes. For example, in an oft-cited study, Kochenderfer-Ladd and Skinner (2002) investigated whether coping strategies for peer conflict moderated relations between peer victimization and concurrent loneliness, anxious-depressed symptoms, and social problems. Using a sample of 356 fourth grade children, Kochenderfer-Ladd and Skinner found that coping strategies moderated relations between peer victimization status and children's adjustment, but the outcomes differed for boys and girls. For boys, the approach coping strategy of trying to resolve peer conflict alone was associated with less loneliness and fewer social problems. For non-victimized boys, the approach strategy of seeking social support was associated with greater social preference. Seeking social support was associated with lower levels of social preference for victimized boys. Avoidance strategies were associated with greater anxiety but less peer rejection for victimized boys and with better social outcomes for nonvictimized boys. Victimized girls who sought social support experienced fewer

social problems, whereas nonvictimized girls who sought social support experienced greater social problems. Girls who used the avoidance strategy of ignoring peer conflict experienced more loneliness and social problems than girls who did not use avoidance.

In another key study, Kochenderfer-Ladd (2004) examined relations between children's coping with peer victimization and changes in their level of loneliness, depression, and anxiety over a school year. Kochenderfer-Ladd sampled 145 children in kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade and found that coping strategies were differentially predictive of future victimization and internalizing difficulties. Specifically, seeking revenge was associated with increased victimization over the school year, and advice seeking predicted fewer internalizing difficulties. Problem solving was associated with fewer internalizing problems and decreased victimization. Cognitive distancing predicted increased victimization over the school year.

Visconti and Troop-Gordon (2010) sampled 420 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade children to examine links between how children cope with peer victimization and changes in their loneliness, depression, anxiety, victimization, aggression, and prosocial behavior over the course of a school year. The investigators found that seeking social support when victimized was related to increased loneliness and anxiety over time. Outcomes associated with avoidance coping strategies were moderated by gender, such that girls who endorsed avoidance coping strategies evinced increased aggression and decreased prosocial behavior. Girls who were highly victimized and used avoidance strategies experienced greater levels of victimization over time. Boys who used avoidance coping strategies evinced greater prosocial behavior. Children who used retaliation/externalizing coping strategies tended to experience increased aggression and decreased prosocial behavior over time. Highly victimized children who used retaliation/externalizing strategies experienced decreased anxiety over time.



In sum, it appears that children who use internalizing coping strategies to deal with peer victimization tend to experience higher levels of victimization (Andreou, 2001; Bijttebier & Vertommen, 1998; Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1997; Olweus, 1978; Patterson, Littman, & Bricker, 1967; Roecker-Phelps, 2001; Salmivalli et al., 1996; Shelley & Craig, 2010). Externalizing coping tends to predict higher levels of victimization (e.g., Shelley & Craig, 2010), especially for girls (e.g., Snyder et al., 2003). Externalizing coping strategies are related to increased aggression and decreased prosocial behavior over time (e.g., Visconti & Troop-Gordon, 2007), although externalizing coping strategies may be helpful in decreasing anxiety over time for highly victimized children (e.g., Visconti & Troop-Gordon, 2007). Avoidance strategies tend to predict higher levels of victimization (e.g., Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004; Shelley & Craig, 2010), and tend to be related to later maladjustment, including difficulties with anxiety, aggression, and peer relations (e.g., Ebata & Moos, 1991; Fields & Prinz, 1997; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002). Although problem-solving coping strategies do not appear to predict levels of peer victimization (Andreou, 2001; Bijttebier & Vertommen, 1998), one study did find that problem-solving coping strategies predict less victimization over time (e.g., Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004) and predict fewer internalizing problems (e.g., Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004). With regard to support-seeking coping, several studies have found that the relation between support-seeking coping and peer victimization is moderated by gender (Bijttebier & Vertommen, 1998; Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1997; Shelley & Craig, 2010); however, these studies are inconsistent with regard to the gender for which support-seeking coping predicts lower levels of peer victimization.

## **Sibling Conflict: A Potential Arena in which to Learn Emotion Coping Strategies**

Given potential links between children's coping strategies, levels of peer victimization, and outcomes associated with peer victimization, researchers would be wise to learn more about individual differences in how children cope with peer victimization. For example, why do children differ in their coping strategies? Moreover, how and in what contexts do children learn strategies for coping with peer victimization and the emotions it engenders?

Some scholars posit that children learn strategies for managing peer interactions through lessons learned from repeated interactions with siblings, including interactions that involve conflict (McHale & Crouter, 1996). Sibling conflict is a frequent phenomenon in most families (Bank, Burraston, & Snyder, 2004) and is often characterized by intense negative emotion (Katz, 1992; Volling, Youngblade, & Belsky, 1997). Thus, how children cope with sibling conflict, particularly conflict that is perceived as victimization, could be related to their strategies for coping with peer victimization.

Sibling conflict has been theorized to be an arena in which children can learn emotion-related and social skills (e.g., Dunn & Munn, 1986; Howe & Ross, 1990; Stormshak, Bellanti, & Bierman, 1996; Youngblade & Dunn, 1995); emotion coping strategies may be among skills children learn via sibling conflict. First, the high emotional intensity often involved in sibling conflict (Bedford, Volling, & Avioli, 2000; Katz, 1992) and children's inability to end most sibling relationships (Biglow, Tesson, & Lewko, 1996) provide children opportunities to learn to tolerate negative affect (Bedford et al., 2000). The obligatory nature of sibling relationships also affords children motivation to manage conflicts when they erupt (Bigelow et al., 1996). Given this motivation to manage sibling conflict (Bigelow et al. 1996) and the emotionally charged nature of many sibling conflicts (Bedford et al., 2000; Katz, 1992), children might also be

motivated to learn to cope with their negative emotions during sibling conflict so as to manage sibling conflicts well.

### **Parents' Responses to Sibling Conflict**

If children's strategies for coping with sibling conflict or victimization contribute to their manner of coping with peer victimization, then there is value in exploring the factors and processes that determine how children come to use particular coping strategies when dealing with sibling conflict or victimization. A likely source of influence might be found in parents' responses to sibling conflict. Parents are often drawn into sibling conflicts (Snyder & Stoolmiller, 2002) and difficulties managing sibling conflict are commonly accompanied by their use of harsh discipline (Patterson, Dishion, & Bank, 1984). Despite the potential value of sibling conflict as a context in which children learn emotion coping skills, and despite the possibility that skills learned during sibling interactions could generalize to peer contexts (McHale & Crouter, 1996), there has been relatively little research in this area (Dunn, 2007; Elledge, 2010).

Kramer and Baron (1995) found that most parents, regardless of their own sibling relationship histories, want their children to have close, non-conflictual relationships. Most scholars contend that parents should intervene when sibling conflict is physically aggressive (Vandell & Bailey, 1992). But how should parents respond when sibling conflict is nonviolent? Is parents' desire that children have warm, convivial relationships relatively free of conflict potentially problematic? If parents limit their children's participation in nonviolent sibling conflict, does parental intervention reduce children's opportunities for learning important conflict management and emotion coping skills that could generalize to the peer context?

Only one previous study examined links among parents' strategies for managing sibling conflict, the quality of children's sibling relationships, and children's peer adjustment (Elledge,

2010). Elledge (2010) conducted structured interviews with 69 parents and their children and collected various sociometric data from peers. Elledge found that parents' strategies for managing sibling conflict fell into five categories: give advice (coaching), punish the instigator, punish both children, stop the conflict, or referee (figuring out who started the conflict). Parents' endorsement of stopping conflicts positively predicted child- and parent-rated sibling conflict, whereas parents' endorsement of giving advice to children to resolve conflict on their own predicted children's sibling relationships that were less warm and more conflictual. Punishing the perpetrator in sibling conflict was positively related to child-rated sibling warmth and refereeing conflicts was predictive of less conflict sibling relationships. Elledge found no evidence that parents' endorsement of particular strategies for managing sibling conflict significantly predicted children's peer adjustment. However, the quality of children's sibling relationships did predict peer adjustment in expected directions.

### **Parents' Emotion Socialization Practices and Beliefs**

Parents' beliefs about their role as shapers of how children should manage their emotions could possibly influence parents' approach to managing sibling conflict. *Emotion socialization* refers to efforts by various social agents to shape the development of children's emotional competence (Denham, Bassett, & Wyatt, 2007). Parents' emotion socialization practices are thought to teach children how to label and interpret emotions, when emotion expression is appropriate, and how to manage emotional arousal (Eisenberg, Cumberland, & Spinrad, 1998; Lewis & Michalson, 1983).

Scholars have suggested that parents' emotion socialization efforts are apparent in three ways: (1) by their reactions to children's emotions, (2) by their own expressiveness, and (3) by explicit discussions about emotion with their children (Eisenberg et al., 1998; Wilson,

Havinghurst, & Harley, 2012). Halbestadt (1991) and Parke (1994) provided similar models by which parents influence children's emotion socialization but added a component of parental regulation of exposure to emotionally-charged stimuli (e.g., facilitation of play experiences). Because sibling conflict frequently involves emotionally charged exchanges, parents' responses to sibling conflict could reflect their beliefs about emotions and their understanding of their role as agents of emotion socialization.

Parents' reactions to children's emotions have been found to influence children's emotion regulation and social adjustment. Eisenberg et al. (1998) obtained parents' reports of how they respond to children's negative emotion and categorized the responses as supportive (e.g., those which encourage emotional expression or provide instrumental support) and non-supportive (those which minimize or discourage expression and exploration of emotions). Eisenberg et al. (1998) further subdivided nonsupportive responses into punitive (e.g., avoiding the emotional event by issuing punishment), minimizing (devaluing children's emotional responses), and parental distress (e.g., parents' excessive negative affect in response to children's negative affect). Those investigators found that supportive responses were positively related to children's emotion regulation and social competence, whereas nonsupportive responses were associated with children's emotion dysregulation and behavioral problems (e.g., Eisenberg et al., 1998). Other studies have also indicated that the extent to which parents support children in managing their emotions is related to children's adjustment. For example, Klimes-Dougan et al. (2007) and Stocker, Richmond, Rhoades, and Kiang (2007) found that parents' punishing or neglectful responses to children's emotions are related to children's externalizing difficulties through adolescence. Valiente et al. (2007) found that parents' supportive responses to children's

emotions are related to school-aged children's effortful control of emotions and to less externalizing behavior.

The extent to which parents engage in explicit conversation about emotions with their children can also impact children's emotion socialization. Parents' discussion of emotion with children is theorized to provide children validation and understanding of emotional issues (Malatesta & Haviland, 1985), which in turn has been theoretically linked to children's ability to regulate their own emotions (Kopp, 1992). This notion has been supported by research showing that parents' discussion of emotional issues with children is associated with children's increased awareness and understanding of emotion (Denham, Cook, & Zoller, 1992; Dunn, Brown, & Beardsall, 1991; Eisenberg et al., 2001; Gottman, Katz, & Hooves, 1996; Thompson, 2000), children's emotion-related speech (Dunn et al., 1991), and children's future ability to understand other people's affective perspective (Dunn et al., 1991). Further, research with preschoolers, elementary school age children, and adolescents has demonstrated that parents' emotion coaching responses positively predict children's ability to manage negative emotions and their prosocial behavior and negatively predicts children's internalizing and behavioral problems (Katz & Gottman, 1997; Katz & Hunter, 2007; Katz & Windecker-Nelson, 2004, 2006; Legace-Se'guin & Coplan, 2005; Legace-Se'guin and d'Entremont, 2006; Lunkenheimer, Shields, & Kai, 2007; Shipman, Schneider, Fitzgerald, Sims, Swisher, & Edwards, 2007; Stocker et al., 2007).

Parents' beliefs about children's emotion have been suggested to determine parents' approaches to emotional interactions with their children (Eisenberg et al., 1998; Gottman et al., 1996). Specifically, parents' emotion-related beliefs and values are theorized to affect their choices for emotion socialization practices (Dix, 1991, 1992, 1993; Dunsmore & Halberstadt,

1997; Eisenberg et al., 1998). Gottman, Katz, and Hooven (1997) referred to parents' beliefs about children's emotion as their meta-emotion philosophies. Gottman et al. (1997) described parents as falling into one of two categories: (1) parents with emotion coaching philosophies, and (2) parents with emotion-dismissing philosophies. An emotion coaching philosophy is characterized by comfort with emotion and a view that children's emotions are opportunities for intimacy and teaching. An emotion dismissing philosophy is characterized by the view that emotions are harmful, leading parents to perceive their task as needing to quickly end emotionally-charged situations.

Parents' meta-emotion philosophies have been linked with parent-child relationship quality and with children's emotional outcomes. Hooven, Gottman, and Katz (1995) found that parents' emotion coaching philosophies when children were 5 years of age was related to less negative play and fewer behavior problems at 8 years of age. Gottman et al. (1996) found that parents with emotion coaching philosophies had children with better physiological regulation during emotionally-charged events. These parents also tended to exhibit less derogation in parent-child interactions. Ramsden and Hubbard (2002) found that parents' meta-emotion philosophies were related indirectly to children's levels of aggression through children's own emotion regulation.

### **The Current Study**

Studies have demonstrated that children's coping responses when dealing with peer conflict (e.g., Andreou, 2001; Causey & Dubow, 1992) and when dealing with peer victimization (Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004; Visconti and Troop-Gordon; 2007) are related to future victimization and other socioemotional outcomes; thus, understanding factors that may contribute to children's coping strategies is imperative for future development of effective intervention strategies.

Despite potential links between parent beliefs and behaviors and children's coping strategies during sibling and peer victimization, researchers have yet to empirically examine those relations. This study attempted to begin filling this research gap. I had the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 1: Emotion coping during sibling and peer victimization.** Consistent with McHale & Crouter's (1996) suggestion that sibling interactions provide a context for skill development and that these skills often generalize to peer contexts, I hypothesized that children's coping with sibling victimization would be similar to their coping with peer victimization.

**Hypothesis 2: Mediating role of mothers' punishing conflict management strategies in the positive relation between their negative beliefs about children's emotions and children's maladaptive coping with sibling and peer victimization.** Given that parents' beliefs about children's emotions are thought to influence parents' response to children's emotional expressions (Eisenberg et al., 1998; Gottman et al., 1996), I predicted that mothers' negative beliefs about emotions would be related to their endorsement of punitive responses to sibling conflict. Consistent with findings that parents' punitive or emotion-neglecting response to children's emotions is related to children's externalizing behavior (Klimes-Dougan et al., 2007; Stocker, Richmond, Rhoades, & Kiang 2007), I predicted that mothers' use of punitive strategies would be positively related to children's maladaptive coping with sibling and peer victimization. I also expected punitive strategies would mediate the positive relation between mothers' negative beliefs about emotions and children's maladaptive coping (See Figure 1).

**Hypothesis 3: Mediating role of mothers' coaching sibling conflict management strategies in the positive relation between their positive beliefs about children's emotions and children's adaptive coping with sibling and peer victimization.** Given that parents' interactions with children are influenced by parents' beliefs about children's emotions



(Eisenberg et al., 1998; Gottman et al., 1996), I predicted that mothers who view children's emotions positively would be more likely to endorse coaching children through sibling conflict. Consistent with findings that parents' support for children emotions is related to children's use of more adaptive emotional and social skills (Eisenberg et al., 1998; Valiente et al., 2007), I expected that mothers' endorsement of coaching children through sibling conflict would be positively related to children's use of adaptive coping with sibling and peer victimization. I expected mothers' endorsement of coaching during conflict would mediate a positive relation between their positive emotion socialization beliefs and children's adaptive coping (See Figure 2).

**Hypothesis 4: Moderating role of mothers' emotion socialization beliefs in the relation between taking control of sibling conflict and children's coping with sibling and peer victimization.** I predicted that mothers' emotion socialization beliefs would moderate the relation between taking control of sibling conflict and children's coping with sibling and peer victimization. For mothers who hold negative beliefs about children's emotions, I predicted that taking control of conflict would be associated with children's maladaptive coping. For mothers who hold positive beliefs about children's emotions, I predicted that taking control would be related to children's adaptive coping (See Figure 3). I reasoned that mothers could take control of sibling conflict for a variety of reasons (e.g., to reduce their own discomfort with children's emotions, to guide children toward appropriate coping) and that mothers' emotion socialization beliefs could influence the purpose and manner in which mothers respond.

## Method

### Participants

Participants were 98 fourth grade children (50% boys) and their mothers from a larger study ( $N = 301$ ) examining correlates of peer victimization. Families were recruited from seven elementary schools in the Midwest. Caregivers (e.g., mothers, fathers, grandparents, etc.) and children were eligible if caregivers consented to children's participation in a grade-wide assessment at school and to their own participation. Children also had to provide assent to their own participation to be included in this study. During the caregiver portion of the study, caregivers must have agreed that the nearest-age sibling identified by the 4<sup>th</sup> grade child (identified during the grade wise assessment) does live in the home. Of children participating in this study, 28.9% were Hispanic. The mean age difference between siblings was 3.83 years.

A total of 278 parents and other primary caregivers from the larger study ( $N = 301$ ) agreed to participate in this study. Of those caregivers, 22 who agreed to participate were not contacted because their fourth grade child identified not having a sibling in the home. Of the remaining 256 caregivers who agreed to participate in this study, 110 did not complete assessment materials. The distribution of noncompleters across assessment modalities (mail-in paper-and-pencil, internet, telephone, or meeting with a researcher) was similar to the distribution of caregivers who completed assessment materials: 45 did not return mail-in assessment materials and 7 caregivers moved out of the area before assessment materials could be distributed. Another 31 did not respond to the emailed survey, 14 provided telephone numbers that were inaccurate or were not in service, 13 caregivers could not be reached, 1 caregiver stated she no longer wished to participate, and 1 caregiver stated that she did not understand the

Spanish translators' spoken language. Of those who consented to meet with a researcher, 12 did not attend scheduled meetings with researchers.

The remaining 146 caregivers completed assessment materials. Four caregivers who completed assessment materials were excluded from this study because they indicated that the fourth grade child does not have a sibling living in the home. Of the 142 remaining caregivers who completed surveys, 98 were mothers. Because previous studies have shown that parents' emotion socialization beliefs predict children's socioemotional functioning differently depending on parent gender, only mothers and their children were included in this study.

## **Measures**

**Child-provided demographic information.** Children provided information pertaining to gender and ethnicity as part of the larger study. Children also identified adults who live in their home (i.e., mother, father, step-parents, grandparents, other relations) and were asked to provide the name of the nearest-age sibling living in the home.

**Mother-provided demographic information.** Mothers were asked to provide information regarding their gender, child's age, number of brothers and sisters living in the home, all siblings' ages (including the identified sibling), and gender of all siblings living in the home (including the identified sibling).

**Parents' Beliefs about Children's Emotions.** The Parents' Beliefs about Children's Emotions (PBACE; Halberstadt et al., 2008) scale is a measure of parents' beliefs about the value and danger of children's emotions and about parents' role in socializing children's emotions. The PBACE contains 105 items across 11 subscales: positive emotions are valuable, negative emotions are valuable, all emotions are dangerous, emotions just are, parents need to

guide, children can learn on their own, control, contempt, manipulation, privacy, and developmental processes. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses have demonstrated good factor structure for the PBACE when used with Caucasian, African American, and Lumbee Native American parents (Stelter & Halberstadt, 2011). Subscales of the PBACE have also shown good predictive validity for parents' emotion socialization practices (Wong et al., 2009), children's emotional understanding (Dunsmore et al., 2009), and children's self-perceived competence with peers (Wong et al., 2008). Subscales of the Parents' Beliefs about Children's Emotions scale have shown good internal consistency in other studies ( $\alpha = .78$  to  $.86$ ; Halberstadt et al., 2008).

Given time constraints imposed by the larger study in which my study took place, I was not able to administer all 11 PCBE subscales; instead I administered the seven subscales shown in previous studies to be most related to parents' emotion socialization practices and to children's outcomes (Halberstadt et al., 2008). The seven subscales I administered, which contained 70 items total, were as follows: children can learn on their own (e.g., "Children can learn to manage their emotions without help from parents"), contempt (e.g., "Making fun of children's feelings is sometimes a good way to get them to change their behavior"), guidance (e.g., "It's the parent's job to teach children how to handle negative feelings"), negative emotions are valuable (e.g., "It is useful for children to feel sad sometimes"), positive emotions are valuable (e.g., "Joy is an important emotion to feel"), all emotions are dangerous (e.g., "When children are too loving, others take advantage of them"), and emotions just are (e.g., "Feeling all emotions is a part of life, like breathing").

The 70 items of the PBCE were subjected to exploratory factor analysis using varimax rotation. Inspection of the scree plot revealed a clear break after the fourth factor. The four-factor

solution explained a total of 38.62% of the variance, with the first factor contributing 15.43%, the second factor contributing 11.60%, the third factor contributing 7.07%, and the fourth factor contributing 4.52%. Items that did not exhibit a factor loading  $\geq .40$  (six items) were excluded. For cross-loading items to be included in a factor, the item must not have loaded on more than one item  $\geq .40$  and the absolute value of factor loading differences must have been  $> .15$ . Using these criteria, 13 cross-loading items were excluded. The content of each factor, its name, and the number of items loading on it were as follows: proactive guidance and support of children's positive emotions ("Guidance of Positive," 15 items), acceptance and valuing of children's negative emotions ("Accept Negative," 10 items), emotions can be dangerous ("Emotions Dangerous," 12 items), and dismissing beliefs about children's emotions ("Dismissing," 9 items). Factor loadings are shown in Table 1. Item loadings were used to form subscale scores based on each exploratory factor. Reliabilities for the subscales were adequate, as shown in Table 2. Bivariate correlations among PCBE subscale scores are presented in Table 3.

**Strategies for managing sibling conflict.** Mothers' strategies for managing sibling conflict were assessed using a scale adapted from one used previously by Elledge (2010; see Appendix A). Elledge (2010) found that parents' sibling conflict management strategies fell into five categories: punish the instigator, punish both children, give children advice so they can work out conflict on their own, stop the conflict by separating children or telling them to stop, and figure out who started the conflict. The current measure used four different vignettes to assess mothers' endorsement of each of the five strategies. Mothers read each vignette and were asked to rank the order in which they would likely use each of the five strategies (1 = *first*; 5 = *last*). Mothers then rated how often they used each strategy during a typical month (0 = *Never*, 1 = *Rarely*, 2 = *Sometimes*, 3 = *Usually*, 4 = *Always*). Two vignettes depicted verbal sibling conflict,

with one witnessed by the mother and one not witnessed. Two vignettes depicted relational sibling conflict, one witnessed and one not witnessed. Strategy rankings ( $\alpha = .82$  to  $.95$ ) and frequency ratings ( $\alpha = .89$  to  $.94$ ) showed good reliability across vignettes (see Table 2). Because it was possible that some sibling conflict strategies were never or seldom used by mothers, cross-product scores were used so that rankings for sibling conflict management (reverse coded) were weighted by mean frequency ratings.

**Children's Coping with victimization.** I administered a modified version of Causey and Dubow's (1992) Self Report Coping Scale. The Self Report Coping Scale asks children to indicate how often (0 = *Never*, 1 = *Hardly ever*, 2 = *Sometimes*, 3 = *Most of the time*, 4 = *Always*) they would use each of 34 coping strategies in a stressful situation. The strategies span five domains: seek support, problem solving, avoidance, internalizing, and externalizing. Kochenderfer-Ladd and Skinner (2002) modified Causey and Dubow's (1992) scale to assess children's emotion regulation strategies during peer conflict. Kochenderfer-Ladd and Skinner (2002) used the vignette: "When I have a problem with a kid at school, I..." and presented each of the coping strategies to children. Because I was interested in children's responses to peer victimization, I further refined this vignette to, "Imagine if you and one of your classmates was teasing you or leaving you out of activities on purpose." To assess whether this vignette elicited negative affect, children were asked to rate (0 = Not at all, 1 = Just a little, 2 = Sort of, 3 = A lot, 4 = Very much) the extent to which they would feel angry, scared, embarrassed, and/or sad in that situation. Due to time constraints as part of the larger study, I administered the 4 items from each domain that loaded highest on the factor. Thus, while Causey and Dubow's (1992) original scale totaled 34 items, my scale had only 20 items (See Appendix B). A parallel scale was used to assess children's coping with instances of sibling victimization. Presented was the following

vignette, “Imagine your sister or brother is teasing you or leaving you out of activities.” In this study, scales assessing peer victimization coping ( $\alpha = .62$  to  $.74$ ) and sibling victimization coping ( $\alpha = .60$  to  $.80$ ) showed adequate reliability. Coping index means, standard deviations, and reliabilities are included in Table 2.

## **Procedures**

Data were collected from 4<sup>th</sup> grade children as part of a larger project examining correlates of peer victimization. Caregiver consent and child assent was obtained for child participation in the larger study. Caregivers who consented to children’s participation in the larger study could also chose to complete a caregiver-phase of data collection. If caregivers consented to completing questionnaires as part of the parent-phase of the project, they were asked to specify whether they would prefer to complete study materials via mail-in paper-and-pencil survey, internet survey, telephone survey, or by meeting with a researcher to complete a survey at the child’s school. If caregivers consented to participating in the caregiver phase, they were asked to provide contact information (e.g., telephone number, address, and/or email address). All consent forms were sent home with children in their weekly school folders. Consent forms were provided in English and in Spanish.

Children completed all self-report questionnaires in a group setting (e.g., classroom, school cafeteria) overseen by trained graduate and undergraduate research assistants during the fall semester. To minimize discussion, children were adequately spaced, instructed to keep their answers covered, and allowed to work on distracter activities (e.g., mazes) between each set of questions.

Caregivers could choose to participate via a mail-in paper-and-pencil survey, an internet survey, a telephone survey, or by meeting with a researcher at the child’s school during the Fall

or Spring semesters. Mail-in surveys were sent home in children's weekly school folders for mothers who indicated they wished to a completed internet or telephone survey but could not be reached after greater than 5 attempts on different days. For caregivers who were provided mail-in surveys, new surveys were sent home in children's weekly school folders up to four times or until caregivers returned a completed survey.

Caregivers could choose to complete measures in English or in Spanish. Measures were translated into Spanish via forward-translation by a non-native Spanish speaker and were revised separately by two native Spanish speakers. Mothers received a \$20 gift card to a local store for participating in the parent assessment phase of this study.

### **Data Analytic Strategy**

SPSS (version 19) was used for all analyses except where otherwise noted. Data were screened for multivariate normal distribution, linearity, and outliers. Outliers were recoded to reflect the next-most extreme score on their respective items. I used Chi-square tests and independent samples *t* tests to compare children in my study to children in the larger study on key demographic variables. Tukey's HSD tests were performed as post hoc analyses for significant ANOVA findings.

Manipulation checks of measure vignettes were also conducted. I examined frequencies with which children reported they would feel "a little" to "very much" angry, scared, sad, and/or embarrassed for each vignette depicting victimization in the modified Self Report Coping Scale. Because the measure designed to assess mothers' sibling conflict management strategies had not been validated, I examined how often mothers reported that each vignette depicted actually occurred in their home. I computed means, standard deviations, and subscale reliabilities for all primary measures.



To evaluate Hypothesis 1, I examined bivariate correlations between children's strategies for coping with sibling victimization and their strategies for coping with peer victimization. I also used paired-samples t-tests to test for differences in means between contexts. Bivariate correlations were also used as a first step toward examining links among measures of mothers' emotion socialization beliefs, their conflict management strategies, and children's coping.

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test Hypotheses 2-4. Before conducting structural equation modeling, I examined bivariate correlations between subscales of mothers' conflict management strategies and children's coping to identify components of latent variables. I also examined demographic predictors of the mothers' conflict management strategies and children's coping strategies to identify covariates to be included in structural equation models. I examined bivariate correlations between mothers' beliefs and children's coping as a first step toward testing Hypotheses 2 and 3.

I computed four structural equation models (by obtaining maximum likelihood parameter estimates using AMOS 16.0.0). Two models tested whether mothers' conflict management strategies mediated the relation between their emotion socialization beliefs and children's coping. Two models tested the possible moderating role of mothers' emotion socialization beliefs on the relation between their conflict management strategies and children's coping. Significant interactions were explored using Holmbeck's (2002) recommendations.

## **Results**

### **Data Screening**

The data were screened for multivariate normal distribution, linearity, and outliers. Three outliers were recoded to reflect the next-most extreme score on their respective items.

## Preliminary Analyses

I compared children of primary caregivers who completed study questionnaires to those in the original, larger sample ( $n = 301$ ) on key demographic variables to determine whether the groups differed. Chi-square tests revealed a significant group difference in ethnicity,  $\chi^2(1, n = 292) = 6.03, p = .01$ . In the larger sample, 47.7% of children identified themselves as Hispanic. In the smaller sample, 33.6% of children identified themselves as Hispanic. Next, I compared the smaller sample to the larger study sample on number of children living in the home (two children versus more than two children), excluding families with only one child in the home. Compared were families with two children and families with more than two children. Chi-square tests revealed a significant group difference,  $\chi^2(1, n = 301) = 19.17, p < .01$ . In the larger sample, 45.1% of families had more than two children living in the home. In the smaller sample, 21.4% of families had more than two children living in the home. Chi-square tests revealed no significant group differences in child gender,  $\chi^2(1, n = 298) = .50, p = .48$ , or in percentage of families with a single caregiver,  $\chi^2(1, n = 301) = .06, p = .80$ .

I used Chi-square tests to explore differences in ethnicity (Hispanic vs. non-Hispanic) among mothers who completed the questionnaires via mail-in paper-and-pencil version, internet, telephone, and meeting with a researcher at the child's school. Only eight mothers completed telephone surveys; only four caregivers met with a researcher at the child's school. Thus, mothers who completed surveys via telephone or by meeting with a researcher were combined. Chi-square tests revealed a significant group difference,  $\chi^2(2, n = 97) = 12.96, p < .01$ . For Hispanic mothers, 67.9% completed the mail-in survey, 10.3% completed the internet survey, and 21.4% completed the survey by telephone or by meeting with a researcher. For non-Hispanic mothers, 44.9% completed the mail-in survey, 47.8% completed the internet survey, and 7.2%

completed the survey by telephone or by meeting with a researcher. Further analyses revealed that Hispanic mothers were more likely to complete the mail-in survey,  $\chi^2(1, n = 137) = 16.01, p < .01$ , less likely to complete the internet survey,  $\chi^2(1, n = 97) = 11.75, p > .01$ , and more likely to complete the survey by telephone or by meeting with a researcher,  $\chi^2(1, n = 97) = 3.99, p = .05$ .

I used a one-way between groups analysis of variance to determine whether mothers' emotion socialization beliefs or conflict management strategies differed by method of survey completion (mail-in paper-and-pencil, internet survey, telephone or individual meeting survey). There was a significant difference for mothers' Accept Negative beliefs,  $F(2, 94) = 3.85, p = .03$ , with an effect size of eta squared = .08. Tukey's HSD post hoc analyses revealed that mothers who mailed in the survey ( $M = 3.85$ ) endorsed Accept Negative beliefs less than mothers who completed the survey by telephone or by meeting with a researcher ( $M = 5.09$ ),  $p = .03$ . There was also a significant difference for mothers' Emotions Dangerous beliefs,  $F(2, 94) = 15.87, p < .01$ , with an effect size of eta squared = .26. Hispanic mothers ( $M = 4.31$ ) endorsed Emotions Dangerous beliefs more strongly than non-Hispanic mothers ( $M = 3.19$ ).

There was a significant difference in mothers' tendency to endorse Coaching during sibling conflict,  $F(2, 89) = 9.71, p > .01$ , with an effect size of eta squared = .18. Mothers who completed the survey by internet ( $M = 7.73$ ) endorsed this strategy less strongly than mothers who mailed-in their survey ( $M = 12.85$ ),  $p = .01$ .

### **Manipulation Checks**

A manipulation check of the revised Self-Report Coping Scale revealed that 79.6% of children reported that the vignette depicting peer victimization would make them feel "a little" to "very much" angry ( $M = 1.91, SD = 1.44$ ), 29.2% reported the vignette would make them feel "a

little” to “very much” scared ( $M = .48, SD = .93$ ), 50.0% reported the vignette would make them feel “a little” to “very much” embarrassed ( $M = .99, SD = 1.28$ ), and 79.2% reported the vignette would make them feel “a little” to “very much” sad ( $M = 1.86, SD = 1.50$ ). For the vignette depicting sibling victimization, 82.1% reported the vignette would make them feel “a little” to “very much” angry ( $M = 1.94, SD = 1.49$ ), 40.5% reported the vignette would make them feel “a little” to “very much” scared ( $M = .67, SD = 1.01$ ), 36.9% reported the vignette would make them feel “a little” to “very much” embarrassed ( $M = .74, SD = 1.17$ ), and 65.5% reported the vignette would make them feel “a little” to “very much” sad ( $M = 1.58, SD = 1.54$ ).

On the measure of mothers’ strategies for managing sibling conflict, mothers were asked to report whether a situation similar to the vignette depicted occurs in their home. Mothers were more likely to report that vignettes depicting verbal victimization “sometimes to always” occur in their home (65.1 - 79.3%) than they were to report that vignettes depicting relational conflict “sometimes to always” occur in their home (17.6 – 33.7%).

### **Descriptive Statistics**

Means and standard deviations for all key variables, along with all subscale reliabilities, are presented in Table 2.

### **Primary Analyses**

#### **Hypothesis 1: Similarities in Children’s Coping with Sibling and Peer Victimization**

Bivariate correlations between children’s coping with peer victimization and their coping with sibling victimization are presented in Table 4. These correlations indicated significant overlap between children’s coping in these two contexts. Paired-samples t-tests indicated that children were significantly more likely to endorse problem solving for peer victimization ( $M = 2.15, SD = .94$ ) than for sibling victimization ( $M = 1.84, SD = .96$ ),  $t(83) = 3.12, p < .01$  (two-

tailed). The mean difference in scores was .31 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .11 to .50. The eta squared statistic (.11) indicated medium effect size. Children were significantly more likely to endorse support seeking for peer victimization ( $M = 1.90, SD = .96$ ) than for sibling victimization ( $M = 1.67, SD = 1.10$ ),  $t(83) = 2.38, p = .02$  (two-tailed). The mean difference in scores was .22 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .04 to .41. The eta squared statistic (.06) indicated medium effect size. Children were significantly more likely to endorse avoidance for peer victimization ( $M = 1.67, SD = 1.01$ ) than for sibling victimization ( $M = 1.34, SD = 1.01$ ),  $t(83) = 3.03, p > .01$  (two-tailed). The mean difference in scores was .33 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .11 to .55. The eta squared statistic (.10) indicated medium effect size. Neither children's endorsement of externalizing,  $t(83) = -.10, p = .93$  (two-tailed), nor their endorsement of internalizing,  $t(83) = .75, p = .46$  (two-tailed), differed between contexts.

#### **Hypotheses 2-4: Relations among Mothers' Emotion Socialization Beliefs, Their Conflict Management Strategies, and Children's Coping.**

To reduce the number of scales utilized in structural equation models, I examined bivariate correlations between mothers' conflict management strategy cross-product scores. Consistent with a priori hypotheses, mothers' punishing strategies (punish the instigator and punish both children) were strongly correlated ( $r = .33, p < .01$ ). Thus, subsequent analyses combined these scores to index mothers' overall "Punishing" strategies. Cross-product scores for stopping conflict by separating children or telling them to stop and figuring out who started the conflict were also strongly correlated ( $r = .48, p < .01$ ). Subsequent analyses combined cross-product scores of these two strategies to index mothers' overall "Take Control" strategies. The "Coaching" cross-product score was used to index mothers' endorsement of giving children

advice so they can work through conflict on their own. Bivariate correlations among mothers' strategy indices are presented in Table 5.

Next, I examined bivariate correlations between subscales of the child coping measure. Because bivariate correlations examined to test Hypothesis 1 revealed overlap in children's strategies for peer and sibling victimization, I indexed children's endorsement of each strategy by averaging subscale scores across sibling and peer victimization. Children's endorsement of coping that involved problem solving and support seeking were strongly correlated within and across vignettes (see Table 4). Subsequent analyses combined these two subscales to index "Adaptive Coping." Children's endorsement of internalizing and externalizing forms of coping were also strongly correlated within and across vignettes. Contrary to expectations, avoidant coping was not strongly correlated with internalizing or externalizing coping. Subsequent analyses dropped the avoidant coping subscale and combined internalizing and externalizing subscales to index children's "Maladaptive Coping."

I next examined demographic predictors of endogenous variables (mothers' Punishing strategies, mothers' Coaching strategies, and children's Maladaptive Coping and Adaptive Coping) to identify potential covariates to include in structural equation models. One-way ANOVAs were used to test for mean differences by ethnicity (Hispanic vs. non-Hispanic), having a single-parent household (vs. having more than one adult), having more than two children in the home, sibling dyad gender composition (male-male, female-female, or mixed-gender dyad), birth order (fourth grade child younger vs. older than the identified sibling) and child gender. Bivariate correlations were used to examine whether child age or age difference of the sibling dyad were related to endogenous variables. Mothers' use of Punishing was not predicted by demographic variables, but Coaching was predicted by child gender,  $F(1, 89) =$

7.96,  $p = .01$ , eta squared = .08. Mothers endorsed Coaching more strongly for girls ( $M = 11.34$ ,  $SD = 5.64$ ) than for boys ( $M = 8.17$ ,  $SD = 4.93$ ). Mothers' endorsement of Coaching was negatively related to sibling dyad age difference ( $r = -.28$ ,  $p < .01$ ), meaning mothers were less likely to endorse Coaching as a sibling conflict strategy when there was wider difference in the age of their children. Maladaptive Coping scores differed for children living with more than one sibling,  $F(1, 97) = 10.98$ ,  $p < .01$ , eta squared = .10. Children who had more than one sibling were more likely to endorse Maladaptive Coping ( $M = 1.18$ ,  $SD = .95$ ) than children with only one sibling ( $M = .67$ ,  $SD = .57$ ). Adaptive Coping was predicted by birth order,  $F(1, 97) = 8.59$ ,  $p < .01$ , eta squared = .08. Children who were older than their sibling ( $M = 2.13$ ,  $SD = .83$ ) endorsed more Adaptive Coping than younger siblings ( $M = 1.68$ ,  $SD = .68$ ).

Before examining structural equation models, I computed bivariate correlations among all primary variables (see Table 5). All structural equation models included relevant demographic variables as covariates when these variables were correlated with one or more endogenous variable. Only significant paths between primary variables are denoted in the text or in corresponding figures. Covariances were dropped where significance was greater than  $p = .50$ . By convention, the  $\chi^2$  goodness-of-fit index is used to help evaluate path models (Compas et al., 2006). However, this index is sensitive to sample size and is often statistically significant in large samples due to small discrepancies between the model and the data (e.g., Bentler & Bonnett, 1980; Bollen, 1989). Thus, I also examined other indices less sensitive to sample size. I examined the comparative fit index (CFI; Gerbing & Anderson, 1993), the ratio of the minimum discrepancy to degrees of freedom (CMIN/df), and the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) statistics. Models with good fit have CFI values greater than .95 (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Sivo, Fan, Witte, & Willse, 2006), a CMIN/df statistic less than 2.0 (Byrne, 1989), and an

RMSEA confidence interval that contains .06 (see Hu & Bentler, 1999). Effect sizes for the standardized path loadings were assessed according to Cohen (1988): 0.1 = small, 0.3 = medium, and 0.5 = large.

**Structural equation model 1: Mediation model predicting maladaptive coping.** The model exhibited good fit to the data,  $\chi^2 = 14.99$ ,  $df = 14$ ,  $p = .38$ ; CFI = .99; CMIN/ $df = 1.07$ ; RMSEA = .03 (90% CI = .00, .10). No paths between primary variables were significant. The model is depicted graphically in Figure 5.

**Structural equation model 2: Mediation model predicting adaptive coping.** The model exhibited good fit to the data,  $\chi^2 = 4.34$ ,  $df = 10$ ,  $p = .93$ ; CFI = 1.00; CMIN/ $df = .43$ ; RMSEA = .00 (90% CI = .00, .03). Accept Negative emotion socialization beliefs were positively related to mothers' endorsement of Coaching,  $\beta = .26$ ,  $p = .01$ , with small effect size. The model is depicted graphically in Figure 7.

**Structural equation model 3: Examining mothers' negative beliefs about emotions as potential moderator of the relation between taking control of sibling conflict and children's maladaptive coping.** The model exhibited good fit to the data,  $\chi^2 = 11.46$ ,  $df = 17$ ,  $p = .83$ ; CFI = 1.00; CMIN/ $df = .67$ ; RMSEA = .00 (90% CI = .00, .06). The interaction between Dismissing and Take Control was positively related to Maladaptive Coping,  $\beta = .36$ ,  $p < .01$ , with a medium effect size. Post hoc analyses revealed that for mothers who endorsed dismissing beliefs, taking control of conflict was negatively related to children's maladaptive coping,  $\beta = -.69$ ,  $t = -2.75$ ,  $p = .01$ . For mothers who were less likely to endorse dismissing beliefs, taking control of conflict was also negatively related to children's coping,  $\beta = -1.44$ ,  $t = -2.98$ ,  $p < .01$ , but the magnitude of the relation was larger. The model is depicted graphically in Figure 6.



**Structural equation model 4: Examining mothers' positive beliefs about emotions as potential moderator of the relation between taking control of sibling conflict and children's adaptive coping.** The model exhibited good fit to the data,  $\chi^2 = 10.41$ ,  $df = 16$ ,  $p = .84$ ; CFI = 1.00; CMIN/df = .65; RMSEA = .00 (90% CI = .00, .05). Take Control was positively related to Adaptive Coping,  $\beta = .37$ ,  $p = .03$ , with medium effect size. Paths between interactions and adaptive coping were not significant. The model is depicted graphically in Figure 7.

## **Discussion**

This study examined similarities between children's coping with sibling victimization and peer victimization. This study also examined mothers' emotion socialization beliefs and their strategies for managing sibling conflict as predictors of children's coping with sibling and peer victimization. I made four predictions. First, I hypothesized that children's strategies for coping with peer victimization would be similar to their strategies for coping with sibling victimization. Second, I hypothesized that mothers' endorsement of punishing strategies for managing sibling conflict would mediate a positive relation between their negative beliefs about emotions and children's maladaptive coping. My third hypothesis was that mothers' endorsement of coaching children through sibling conflict would mediate a positive relation between mothers' positive beliefs about emotions and children's adaptive coping. Finally, I hypothesized that mothers' emotion socialization beliefs would moderate the relation between taking control of sibling conflict and children's coping with sibling and peer victimization.

### **Hypothesis 1: Similarities between Children's Sibling Victimization and Peer Victimization Coping**

Children's reports of coping with sibling and peer victimization were significantly correlated, suggesting that children use similar strategies at home when faced with non-physical

sibling victimization as they use at school with victimizing peers. The magnitude of children's strategy endorsements differed across contexts, such that children tended to endorse adaptive coping more strongly for the peer context than for the sibling context. To my knowledge, no previous studies have examined links between children's coping with victimization across sibling and peer contexts. Previous studies have demonstrated similarities between the quality of children's sibling relationships and the quality of their peer relationships (Duncan, 1999; Lockwood, Kitzmann, & Cohen, 2001; MacKinnon-Lewis, Starnes, Volling, & Johnson, 1997; Stormshak, Bellanti, & Bierman, 1996). Researchers have also demonstrated links between the extent to which children are bullies or victims at school and the extent to which they are similarly involved in bullying or victimization with siblings (Duncan, 1999; Wolke & Samara, 2004). The notion that children cope in similar ways across contexts fits with theory suggesting that emotional and social skills acquired through sibling interactions generalize to peer contexts (MacDonald & Parke, 1984; Ostrov, Crick, & Stauffacher, 2006; Parke, MacDonald, Beitel, & Bhavnagri, 1988; Putallaz, 1987). Of course, it is also possible that various traits or characteristics (e.g., temperament) explain commonalities in coping across contexts.

If replicated in future studies, findings suggesting overlap in children's manner of coping with sibling and peer victimization present a potential avenue for preventing children's peer victimization. Currently available interventions place heavy emphasis on universal, school-wide programs, and outcome studies have yielded a mix of findings (Merrell, Gueldner, Ross, & Isava, 2008; Smith, Schneider, Smith, & Ananiadou, 2004). My findings suggest the possibility for family-based interventions that selectively target children who struggle with conflict management skills (Fienberg, Solmeyer, & McHale, 2012). Such interventions could provide a

useful adjunct to school-based interventions that is potentially less stigmatizing and more appealing for bullied children who are reluctant to seek help (Rigby, 2005).

**Hypotheses 2 and 3: Mothers' Conflict Management Strategies as Mediator between Their Emotion Socialization Beliefs and Children's Coping with Sibling and Peer Victimization**

To test these hypotheses, I first examined bivariate relations between mothers' negative emotion socialization beliefs and children's maladaptive coping (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Contrary to expectations, mothers' beliefs about emotions were unrelated to children's coping with sibling and peer victimization. Given that I could find no studies that directly examined links between mothers' emotion socialization beliefs and children's coping with sibling or peer victimization, it is unclear how to interpret the failure to find an association between these two variables. These findings are perhaps inconsistent with studies indicating that children exhibit greater emotional understanding if parents believe children need guidance, if parents believe in the value of negative emotions, and if parents do not hold dismissing beliefs about emotions (Denham & Kockanoff, 2002; Dunsmore & Karn, 2001, 2004; Ramsden & Hubbard, 2002; Shipman et al., 2007). Previous studies have also revealed that children are more likely to use avoidant coping after a traumatic event if parents believe emotions are dangerous (Halberstadt et al., 2008) and that children are rated (by fathers but not mothers) as having poor emotion regulation and greater internalizing and externalizing problems when parents hold dismissing beliefs about emotions (Lunkenheimer, Shields, & Cortina, 2007). On the other hand, Parker and Halberstadt (2007) found that parents' beliefs about the value of emotions were unrelated to children's knowledge of emotion display rules.

Despite failing to find significant relations between mothers' beliefs about emotions and children's coping, I used structural equation modeling to examine further the relation between mothers' emotion socialization beliefs and strategies for managing sibling conflict and the relation between mothers' sibling conflict strategies and children's coping with victimization.

Unexpectedly, I found that mothers' beliefs about emotions were unrelated to their tendency to endorse punishing strategies. This finding is in contrast to a recent study showing that parents who have negative beliefs about emotions are more likely to provide dismissing or punitive responses to children's emotional arousal (Nelson, Leerkes, O'Brien, Calkins, & Marcovitch, 2012). Perhaps mothers play a unique role in sibling conflict; mothers are tasked with managing simultaneously the emotion arousal of both children. As such, mothers' responses to sibling conflict might not represent their typical responses to children's negative emotions. Mothers who punish children during sibling conflict might not use punitive strategies in emotion-laden contexts that involve only one child. The lack of relations between mothers' beliefs about emotions and their tendency to use punishing strategies for managing sibling conflict can also be understood in light of research documenting that attitudes (i.e., beliefs) toward an object are not as strong behavioral predictors as individuals' intentions to engage in a particular act (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). Thus mothers' beliefs about emotions might be a poorer predictor of their sibling conflict management strategies than mothers' beliefs about or intentions to use specific disciplinary practices. It is also possible that unmeasured parent characteristics, beyond their beliefs about emotions (i.e., emotion regulation, childhood experiences), are better predictors of mothers' use of punishing strategies for managing sibling conflict.

Although mothers' beliefs were not associated with their punishing strategies, beliefs were associated with coaching sibling conflict management strategies. Specifically, I found a

positive relation between mothers' acceptance of negative emotions and their tendency to endorse coaching children through sibling conflict. This finding is consistent with studies showing that parents' positive beliefs about emotions are related to their employment of emotion coaching behavior (e.g., Baker et al., 2011). I did not find relations between other emotion-related beliefs and mothers' tendency to endorse coaching strategies. No previous studies have examined parents' emotion coaching practices in light of their beliefs about guiding positive emotions, about the danger of emotions, and about dismissing children's emotions. Again, it is possible that mothers' responses to sibling conflict systematically differ from their general responses to children's emotion.

Contrary to expectations, I found no relation between mothers' punishing strategies and children's maladaptive coping. To my knowledge, previous studies have not specifically investigated relations between mothers' strategies for managing sibling conflict and children's coping. But, the lack of relation in my study appears to diverge from previous findings that parents' punitive responses to children's emotions are related to children's poorer emotional competence (Denham et al., 1997). An explanation for the lack of relation in my study could be that mothers who respond punitively to sibling conflict may not respond similarly to other contexts in which children express negative emotions. The lack of relation in my study could also be explained by including only mothers in my analyses. In both non-Hispanic (Rane & McBride, 2000) and Hispanic (Parke & Buriel) cultures, fathers are often the principle disciplinarians. It is possible that a lack of relation between mothers' punishing strategies and children's maladaptive coping could reflect mothers' tendencies not to administer punishment. Indeed, punishing the instigator and punishing both children were the least endorsed strategies among mothers in my study. A final explanation for the lack of relations between mothers'

punishing strategies and children's maladaptive coping could be the large number (28.9%) of Hispanic families in my study. Although Hispanic and non-Hispanic mothers in my study did not differ in the magnitude of their endorsement of punishing strategies (see Table 6), it is still possible that relations between punishing strategies and children's maladaptive coping are moderated by ethnicity. This proposition follows from the valued and normative practice of strict discipline that is often a part of Mexican culture (Parke & Buriel, 2006), the often neutral effect of authoritarian discipline on Mexican-American children (Hill, Bush, & Roosa, 2003; Ipsa et al., 2004), and the large number of Mexican immigrants in the city in which my data were collected (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Unexpectedly, bivariate correlations and structural equation models revealed no relations between mothers' tendency to coach children through sibling conflict and children's adaptive coping. This finding appears dissimilar to other studies showing that mothers' emotion coaching responses to children's negative emotions positively predicts children's emotional competence (Eisenberg, Losoya, et al., 2001; Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1996; Ramsden & Hubbard, 2002; Thompson, 2000). Sibling conflict could provide too narrow a context in which to ascertain mothers' general responses to children's emotions. Also possible is that variability in the type of coaching mothers provide accounts for the lack of relation between coaching responses to sibling conflict and children's adaptive coping. Some mothers might use coaching as a supportive response whereas other mothers might use coaching as a way to encourage children to retaliate against the sibling.

**Hypothesis 4: The Moderating Role of Mothers' Beliefs in the Relation between Taking Control of Sibling Conflict and Children's Maladaptive or Adaptive Coping**

I predicted that mothers' emotion socialization beliefs would moderate the relation between taking control of sibling conflict and children's coping. For mothers who have positive beliefs, I expected taking control of sibling conflict to positively predict children's adaptive coping. For mothers who have negative beliefs, I expected taking control to positively predict children's maladaptive coping. Structural equation modeling revealed that mothers' tendency to take control of sibling conflict was related to children's adaptive and maladaptive coping, but in ways that were not anticipated.

I found a main effect for mothers' taking control of sibling conflict when predicting children's adaptive coping. Children whose mothers who endorsed taking control reported more adaptive coping with sibling and peer victimization. One explanation for this finding could be that children whose mothers take control over sibling conflict come to learn that seeking support in the face of victimization is likely to result in a prompt response from available adults. It is also possible that mothers who take control of sibling conflict model assertiveness or other conflict management skills (e.g., separating children until they have calmed themselves enough to constructively talk about the dispute, engaging in discussions about how each child's behavior contributed to the dispute).

Partially supporting Hypothesis 4, I found that children's maladaptive coping was predicted by a significant interaction between mothers' dismissing beliefs and their taking control strategies. For mothers who scored relatively high on dismissing beliefs, taking control was negatively related to children's maladaptive coping. Taking control was also negatively related to children's maladaptive coping for mothers who were low in dismissing beliefs, but the magnitude of the relation was greater for these mothers. Thus, it is possible that the lessons children learn from mothers' sibling conflict management strategies are related indirectly to

mothers' emotion socialization beliefs. Children appear to engage in less maladaptive coping when mothers take control of sibling conflict but without strongly held beliefs about dismissing children's emotions.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

This study had a number of strengths. First, my study was the first to examine the overlap between children's coping with sibling victimization and their coping with peer victimization. This study was also the first to examine mothers' emotion socialization beliefs and sibling conflict management strategies as potential predictors of children's coping with sibling and peer victimization. The current study extends Elledge's (2010) examination of parents' sibling conflict management strategies by obtaining both rankings of preferred strategies and ratings of strategy frequencies. Combining frequency ratings and strategy rankings was designed to obtain a more comprehensive assessment than that used in Elledge's (2010) study. Because that study is the only other investigation that assessed parents' self-reports of sibling conflict management strategies, the current study adds to a scarce body of literature. Finally, the sample represented a somewhat diverse ethnic mix, which was perhaps facilitated by allowing mothers to complete study materials through a variety of avenues (i.e., mail-in paper-and-pencil survey, internet survey, telephone survey, or in-person paper-and-pencil survey). Evidence that this variety increased sample diversity was seen in the fact that mothers' ethnicity significantly differed across assessment mediums. Thus a strength of this study is the inclusion of Hispanic mothers and children who might not otherwise participate.

This study also had limitations. First, findings were based on cross-sectional data, which obviates drawing causal inferences about the relations found. I did not control for many aspects of the sibling relationship or for certain child and parent characteristics that could also explain



variance in children's coping with sibling and peer victimization. Physical conflict between siblings, sibling warmth, child temperament and self-regulation, mothers' emotion regulation, personality, and attachment tendencies are just a few of the variables that could also be operating. I relied on self-report to assess mothers' beliefs about emotions and conflict management strategies and to assess children's coping with victimization. Reliance on self-report measures could be particularly problematic when assessing mothers' conflict management strategies, given the argument that observational data is essential in assessing parenting behavior (Gopfert, Webster, & Nelki, 2004; Hynan, 2003).

This study is also weakened by the fact that some of the structural equation models examined in this study lacked adequate sample sizes. Scholars typically recommend 10-20 observations per variable in structural equation models (Everitt, 1975; Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1995; Marascuilo & Levin, 1983; Nunnally, 1978; Velicer & Fava, 1998). Although my models met the criterion of 10 cases per observed variable, none included 20 cases per variable. Also, to avoid Type II error in this preliminary study, I used a conventional alpha level ( $p \leq .05$ ) across a large number of analyses.

Other limitations concern potential measurement error. I allowed mothers to participate in the study through a range of media. As noted in the results, mothers' emotion socialization beliefs and sibling conflict management strategies differed across methods of completion. These differences were not anticipated and it is unclear whether the differences reflect measurement error or differences in mothers' ethnic background, given that Hispanic mothers were more likely to complete mail-in, telephone, or in-person surveys and less likely to complete internet surveys compared to non-Hispanic mothers. Ethnic differences in completion methods are consistent

with previous findings that Latinos are less likely than Caucasians to access the internet (Livingston, 2011).

Mothers were significantly less likely to report that vignettes depicting relational sibling conflict occur in their home when compared to vignettes depicting verbal sibling conflict. This finding could reflect a tendency for verbal sibling conflict to occur more frequently than relational sibling conflict. However, it is also possible that the relational conflict vignettes did not adequately capture sibling conflict phenomena. Vignettes designed to assess mothers' strategies for managing physical sibling conflict were not presented.

Several mothers who completed study materials by phone or through face-to-face meetings with a researcher commented that their emotion socialization beliefs tend to differ for each child, based on such factors as child age, gender, and personality. These comments suggest that global assessment of mothers' emotion socialization beliefs, as used in this and most other previous studies (e.g., Hooven, Gottman, & Katz, 1995; Gottman et al., 1996; Ramsden & Hubbard, 2002), might fail to capture mothers' child-specific emotion socialization beliefs. This study also did not assess whether mothers' inconsistent responses to sibling conflict predicted children's coping with sibling and peer victimization. Inconsistent responses to sibling conflict, perhaps driven by parental discomfort with emotions or by the frequency and intensity of sibling conflict, could predict children's maladaptive coping. This study utilized a modified version of the Self Report Coping Scale in which only the four items loading highest on each subscale from previous studies were included. The validity of the modified version is unknown.

Finally, my sample significantly differed from the original, larger study sample in terms of children's ethnicity and the number of children living in the home. The fact that my sample included proportionately fewer families with more than two children living in the home could

mean that mothers with more than two children were less likely to have the time or energy to participate in my study. My study also had a smaller percentage of children who identified as Hispanic, compared to the original sample. This discrepancy could reflect Hispanic mothers' discomfort with participating in research of this nature or difficulties understanding the nature of the study, despite my use of Spanish-language consent forms.

### **Implications and Future Directions**

Findings from my study suggest children cope in relatively similar fashion to both sibling and peer victimization. Longitudinal studies are needed to examine temporal relations in the development of victimization coping skills across contexts. Future research studies should evaluate whether interventions that promote more adaptive coping in one context generalizes to more adaptive coping in the other context. Successful interventions could be especially beneficial for children who are bullied by peers but are reluctant to seek or accept help from parents for fear that intervention would make matters worse (Rigby, 2005).

This study found that mothers' acceptance of negative emotions was related to their endorsement of coaching children through sibling conflict. A reasonable question is whether coaching as a conflict management strategy is related to mothers' use of emotion coaching behavior more generally. I found that mothers' endorsement of taking control of sibling conflict was positively related to children's adaptive coping and negatively related to children's maladaptive coping (moderated by mothers' dismissing beliefs). Also needed are studies that use observational methods to assess mothers' tendency to take control of sibling conflict as a way to examine more fully the significant interaction between taking control of sibling conflict and mothers' dismissing beliefs in predicting children's maladaptive coping.

Finally, research is needed to address potential measurement issues in this study. Mothers indicated that vignettes depicting relational sibling conflict were not common occurrences in their home. Future studies should evaluate the utility of different vignettes depicting relational sibling conflict to determine whether modified vignettes better capture mothers' perceptions of sibling interactions. Future studies should also evaluate mothers' strategies for managing physical sibling conflict, as strategies for managing physical conflict are likely to differ from those used to manage verbal or relational conflict (Piotrowsky, 1999). This study found no relation between mothers' coaching strategies and children's coping, but it is unknown whether this lack of relation reflects variance in the kind of coaching used by mothers. Needed are studies that unpack the coaching strategy into its multiple variants.

With regard to mothers' emotion socialization beliefs, future studies should evaluate whether mothers' beliefs tend to be global or child specific. If mothers' beliefs about emotions vary across children, studies are needed to determine the child (e.g., temperament, attachment, internalizing and externalizing problems) and mother characteristics (e.g., emotion regulation, coping strategies, personality, and attachment) that predict those child-specific emotion beliefs. The presence of child-specific beliefs could explain why I found few significant relations between mothers' beliefs about emotions and children's coping with sibling and peer victimization.

## **Conclusions**

This study enriches our understanding of relation between children's sibling and peer victimization coping strategies and sheds light on the degree to which mothers' beliefs about emotions and strategies for managing sibling conflict predict children's coping. This study is the first to my knowledge to evaluate the potential overlap between children's strategies for coping

with sibling victimization and their strategies for coping with peer victimization. I found that children endorse relatively similar patterns of coping across the two contexts.

Consistent with previous findings, this study revealed that mothers' acceptance of children's negative emotions was positively related to mothers' use of coaching as a strategy for managing sibling conflict. I also found that mothers' tendency to take control of sibling conflict was positively related to children's adaptive coping and negatively related to children's maladaptive coping. The negative relation between mothers' take-control strategies and children's maladaptive coping was especially strong for mothers who were low in dismissing beliefs about children's emotions. Although preliminary, findings in this study suggest that sibling conflict may be a context in which children learn adaptive coping skills.

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Table 1

*Factor Loadings for the Parents' Beliefs about Children's Emotions Scale*

Factor and item	1	2	3	4
1. It's good for the family when children share their positive emotions.	<b>.721</b>			
It is important for children to be able to show when they are happy.	<b>.684</b>			
It is important for children to express their happiness when they feel it.	<b>.683</b>			
It's important for parents to teach children the best ways to express their feelings.	<b>.662</b>			
It is important for children to be proud of a job well done.	<b>.647</b>	.355		
It is the parent's job to teach their children how to handle their emotions.	<b>.635</b>			
Joy is an important emotion to feel.	<b>.628</b>			
It is important for children to share their positive emotions with others.	<b>.609</b>	.319		
It's important for parents to help a child who is feeling sad.	<b>.581</b>			
It is important for children to feel pride in their accomplishments.	<b>.567</b>			
It's the parent's job to teach children about happiness.	<b>.539</b>			
Having lots of joy is very important for a child.	<b>.539</b>			
It is important for children to develop lots of ways to be happy.	<b>.513</b>			
Parents have to teach children how to deal with distress and other upsetting feelings.	.512			-.455
When children are feeling angry, parents can help them work through those feelings.	<b>.509</b>			
It's the parent's job to teach children how to handle negative feelings.	<b>.504</b>			
It is important for parents to teach children when and how to show pride in themselves.	.331			
Feeling sad helps children to know what is important to them.	.316			
It is not helpful for parents to make fun of their children's behavior. (reverse-coded)				
Parents should not mock children's feelings. (reverse-coded)				

Table 1 (Cont'd)

*Factor Loadings for the Parents' Beliefs about Children's Emotions Scale*

Factor and item	1	2	3	4
2. It is useful for children to feel angry sometimes.		<b>.731</b>		
Children's anger can be a relief to them, like a storm that clears the air.		<b>.699</b>		
Being angry isn't "good" or "bad" – it is just a part of life.		<b>.677</b>		
It is good for children to feel sad at times.		<b>.644</b>		
Being sad isn't "good" or "bad" – it is just a part of life.	.308	<b>.617</b>		
It is okay when children feel angry, and it is okay when they don't.		<b>.609</b>		
Showing sadness is neither bad nor good, it is just part of being human.	.413	.593		
Feeling angry sometimes is just a part of life.	.404	.554		
It is good for children to let their anger out.		<b>.517</b>		
Feeling all emotions is a part of life, like breathing.	.502	.517		
Feeling sad sometimes is just a part of life.	.415	.514		
Showing anger is not a good idea for children.		-.505	.492	.343
It is okay when children feel sad, and it is okay when they don't.		.499	-.358	
Expressing anger is a good way for a child to let his/her desires and opinions be known.		<b>.450</b>		
The experience of anger can be a useful motivation for action.		<b>.424</b>		
Being angry can motivate children to change or fix something in their lives.		<b>.421</b>		
It is okay when children feel happy, and it is okay when they don't.		.389		
Children's show of anger, lets you know that something is important to them.		.362	.351	
Making fun of children's behavior is never a good idea. (reverse-coded)		-.348		
Parents should not mock their children's behavior. (reverse-coded)		-.331	.324	
3. When children get angry, it can only lead to problems.			<b>.722</b>	



Table 1 (Cont'd)

*Factor Loadings for the Parents' Beliefs about Children's Emotions Scale*

Factor and item	1	2	3	4
Negative emotions are a dead end street, and children should avoid them.			<b>.711</b>	
It is important for children to avoid feeling sad whenever possible.		-.408	.692	
When children get angry they create more problems for themselves.			<b>.669</b>	
When children are too loving others take advantage of them.			<b>.656</b>	
Children's feelings can get hurt if they love too much.			<b>.655</b>	
Feeling sad is just not good for children.		-.353	<b>.640</b>	
Anger in children can be emotionally dangerous.			<b>.617</b>	
One never knows where children's strong emotions will end up.			<b>.613</b>	
When children are too happy, they can get out of control.		.348	<b>.602</b>	
Children can think more clearly when emotions don't get in the way.			<b>.467</b>	
When children show pride in what they've done, it's a good thing.			<b>.463</b>	
When children are angry, it is best to just let them work it through on their own.		.327	.443	.353
Children's expression of anger forces family to deal with the consequences.			<b>.437</b>	
Sometimes it is good for a child to sit down and have a good cry.				
4. Mocking children can teach children to change what they are doing.				<b>.606</b>
Making fun of children's feelings can get them to change their behavior.				<b>.587</b>
Children learn how to deal with their angry feelings without parents telling them how.			.403	.558
Children can figure out how to express their feelings on their own.			.390	<b>.546</b>
Children have to figure out on their own how and when to show positive emotions.			.414	.540
When children are sad or upset, parents can let them manage their feelings on their own.				<b>.511</b>

Table 1 (Cont'd)

*Factor Loadings for the Parents' Beliefs about Children's Emotions Scale*

Factor and item	1	2	3	4
Children can figure out how to express sad feelings on their own.				<b>.509</b>
It's usually best to let a child work through their negative feelings on their own.				<b>.489</b>
Children can learn to manage their emotions without help from parents.				<b>.482</b>
Making fun of children's behavior can help children to change what they are doing.				<b>.448</b>
It is important for children to show others when they feel upset.				<b>-.447</b>
Sarcasm is an effective way to get children to change what they are doing				.337
Showing emotions isn't a good thing or a bad thing, it's just part of being human.				-.319
Getting mad can help children do things they need to.				.319
It's the parent's job to help children know how to express their positive emotions.				

*Note:* Factor loadings  $\geq .30$  listed. Factor loadings  $\geq .40$  that fit criteria for inclusion in the factor-derived subscale are listed in boldface type. Values less than .30 were suppressed.

Table 2

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliabilities for Primary Variable Subscales*

	Mean	SD	$\alpha$
Guidance of Positive Beliefs	5.66	.41	.84
Accept Negative Beliefs	4.54	.88	.79
Emotions Dangerous Beliefs	3.38	1.08	.86
Dismissing Beliefs	2.41	.79	.74
Caregiver Strategy Ranking: Stop Conflict	1.73	.75	.83
Caregiver Strategy Ranking: Coaching	2.61	1.11	.88
Caregiver Strategy Ranking: Figure out Who Started	2.64	.89	.87
Caregiver Strategy Ranking: Punish Instigator	3.70	.82	.88
Caregiver Strategy Ranking: Punish Both	4.33	.86	.95
Caregiver Strategy Frequency: Stop Conflict	2.76	1.04	.89
Caregiver Strategy Frequency: Coaching	2.90	1.01	.91
Caregiver Strategy Frequency: Figure out Who Started	2.56	1.12	.94
Caregiver Strategy Frequency: Punish Instigator	2.00	1.13	.93
Caregiver Strategy Frequency: Punish Both	1.85	1.03	.94
Child Peer Victimization Problem Solving	2.01	.84	.62
Child Peer Victimization Seek Support	1.74	.97	.74
Child Peer Victimization Avoidance	1.48	.88	.68
Child Peer Victimization Externalizing	.73	.94	.74
Child Peer Victimization Internalizing	1.04	.88	.64
Child Sibling Victimization Problem Solving	1.84	.96	.73
Child Sibling Victimization Seek Support	1.67	1.10	.80
Child Sibling Victimization Avoidance	1.34	1.01	.71
Child Sibling Victimization Externalizing	.71	.88	.60
Child Sibling Victimization Internalizing	1.02	.98	.72

Table 3

*Bivariate Correlations across Mothers' Emotion Socialization Beliefs Factor-Derived Subscales*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Guidance of Positive (1)	--	.22*	.26**	-.14
Accept Negative (2)		--	-.03	-.01
Emotions Dangerous (3)			--	.15
Dismissing (4)				--

Note: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

Table 4

*Bivariate Correlations between Children's Coping Strategies across Vignettes*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Sibling Problem Solving (1)	--	.48**	.32**	.19	.28*	.56**	.55**	.19	.13	.28*
Sibling Seek Support (2)		--	.15	.09	.36**	.33**	.66**	-.08	.16	.40*
Sibling Avoidance (3)			--	.12	.21	.15	.04	.51**	.15	.24*
Sibling Externalizing (4)				--	.55**	.07	.02	.09	.66**	.42*
Sibling Internalizing (5)					--	.16	.16	.09	.51**	.64*
Peer Problem Solving (6)						--	.37**	.35**	.06	.18
Peer Seek Support (7)							--	.05	-.05	.15
Peer Avoidance (8)								--	.08	.01
Peer Externalizing (9)									--	.45*
Peer Internalizing (10)										--

Note: \* $p < .05$ ;\*\* $p < .01$

Table 5

*Bivariate Correlations between All Primary Variables*

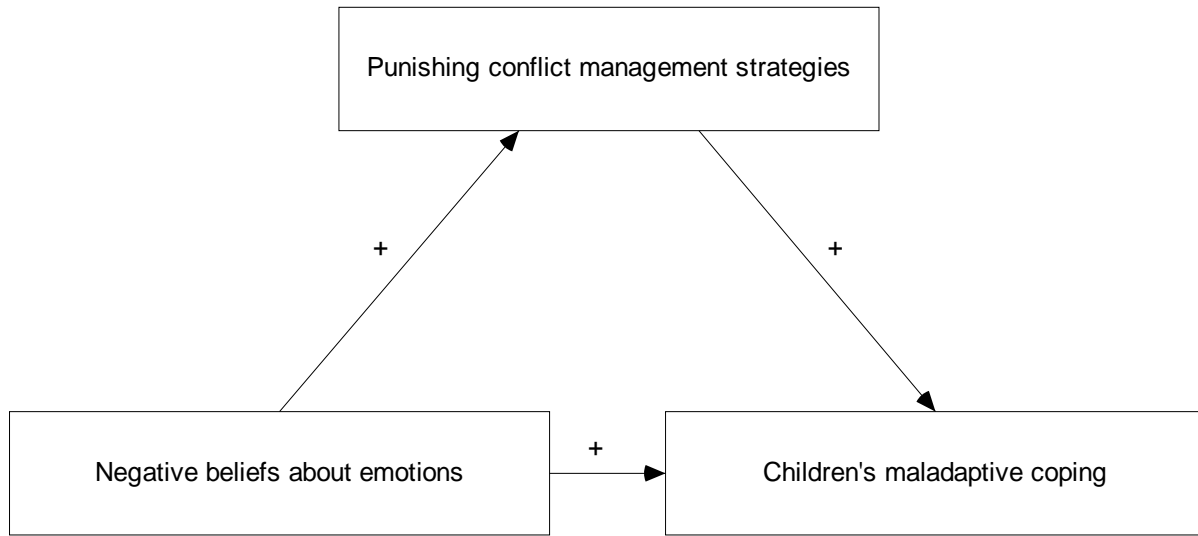
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Guidance of Positive(1)	--	.22*	.28**	-.14	-.09	.07	-.03	-.06	.05
Accept Negative (2)		--	-.03	-.01	-.19	.16	-.17	-.13	.01
Emotions Dangerous (3)			--	.15	-.06	-.12	.04	.13	.14
Dismissing (4)				--	.18	.12	.09	.15	.01
Punishing (5)					--	-.07	.30**	.09	-.09
Coaching (6)						--	.12	.13	.11
Take Control (7)							--	.28**	.01
Adaptive Coping (8)								--	.20*
Maladaptive Coping (9)									--

Note: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

Table 6

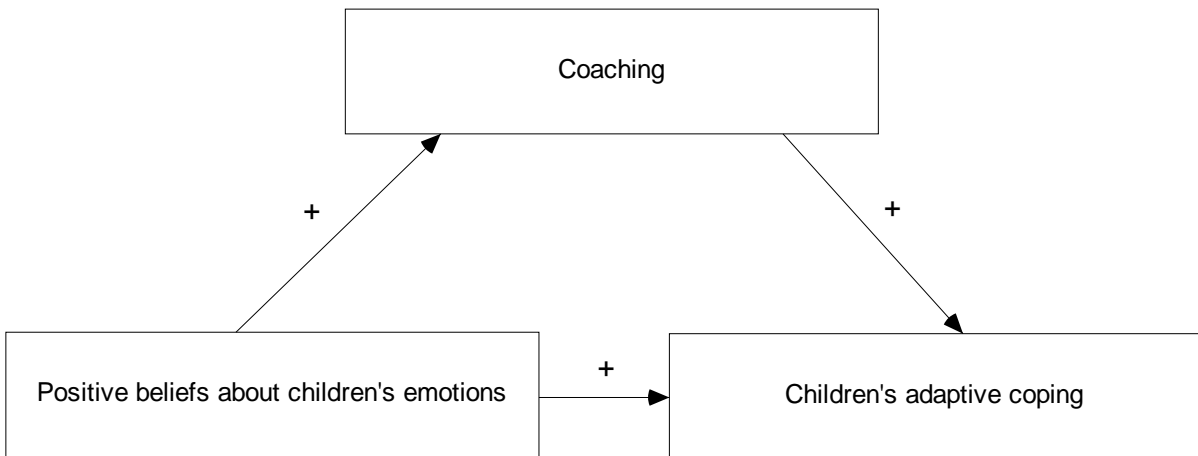
*Means and Standard Deviations of Mother Variables Separated by Ethnicity and Survey Language*

	Ethnicity <i>M(SD)</i>		Survey language <i>M(SD)</i>	
	Hispanic	non-Hispanic	Spanish	English
Guidance and Support of Positive	5.77(.33)	5.57(.45)	5.75(.37)	5.60(.44)
Acceptance and Valuing of Negative	4.38(.79)	4.65(.81)	4.42(.81)	4.64(.83)
Emotions Can Be Dangerous	4.31(1.04)	3.19(.95)	4.55(.98)	3.22(.95)
Dismissing Beliefs	2.57(1.02)	2.31(.61)	2.59(1.04)	2.32(.65)
Stop Conflict Ranking	1.50(.76)	1.83(.74)	1.50(.88)	1.79(.72)
Give Advice Ranking	2.95(1.09)	2.49(1.10)	3.06(1.06)	2.50(1.10)
Figure out Who Started Ranking	2.79(.89)	2.57(.90)	2.75(.85)	2.61(.91)
Punish Instigator Ranking	3.74(.79)	3.68(.84)	3.68(.90)	3.71(.80)
Punish Both Ranking	4.07(1.06)	4.42(.76)	4.01(1.17)	4.41(.75)
Stop Conflict Frequency	2.96(1.12)	2.90(.98)	2.96(1.25)	2.89(.95)
Give Advice Frequency	2.79(.99)	2.74(1.07)	2.91(.99)	2.72(1.05)
Figure out Who Started Frequency	2.99(1.11)	2.41(1.08)	3.22(1.10)	2.39(1.06)
Punish Instigator Frequency	1.93(1.41)	2.05(1.00_)	1.99(1.13)	2.00(1.06)
Punish Both Frequency	2.04(1.35)	1.81(.86)	2.03(1.31)	1.81(.95)

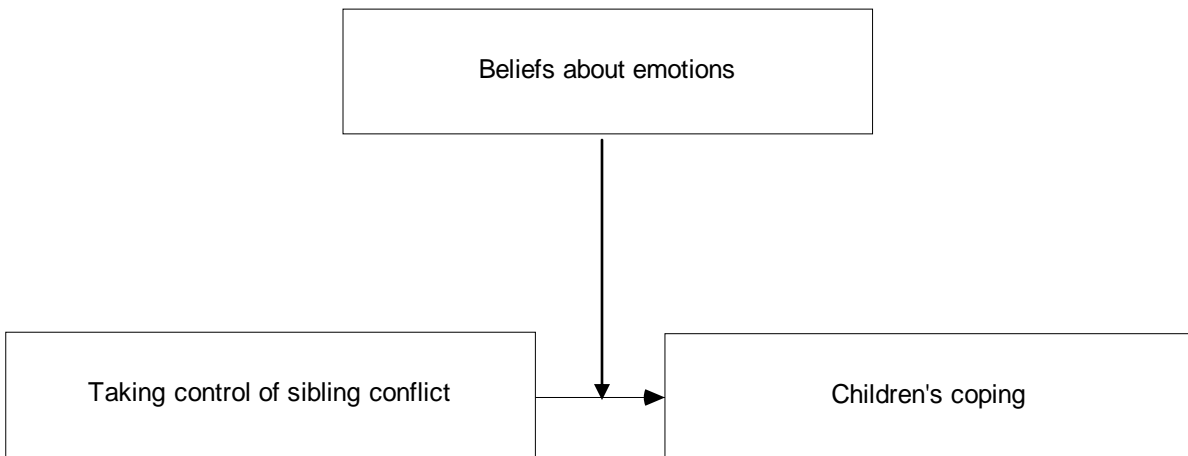


*Figure 1.* Mediating role of mothers' punishing conflict management strategies in the positive relation between mothers' negative beliefs about emotions and children's maladaptive coping.





*Figure 2.* Mediating role of mothers' coaching strategies in the positive relation between mothers' positive beliefs about emotions and children's adaptive coping.



*Figure 3.* Moderating role of mothers' emotion socialization beliefs in the relation between taking control of sibling conflict and children's coping.

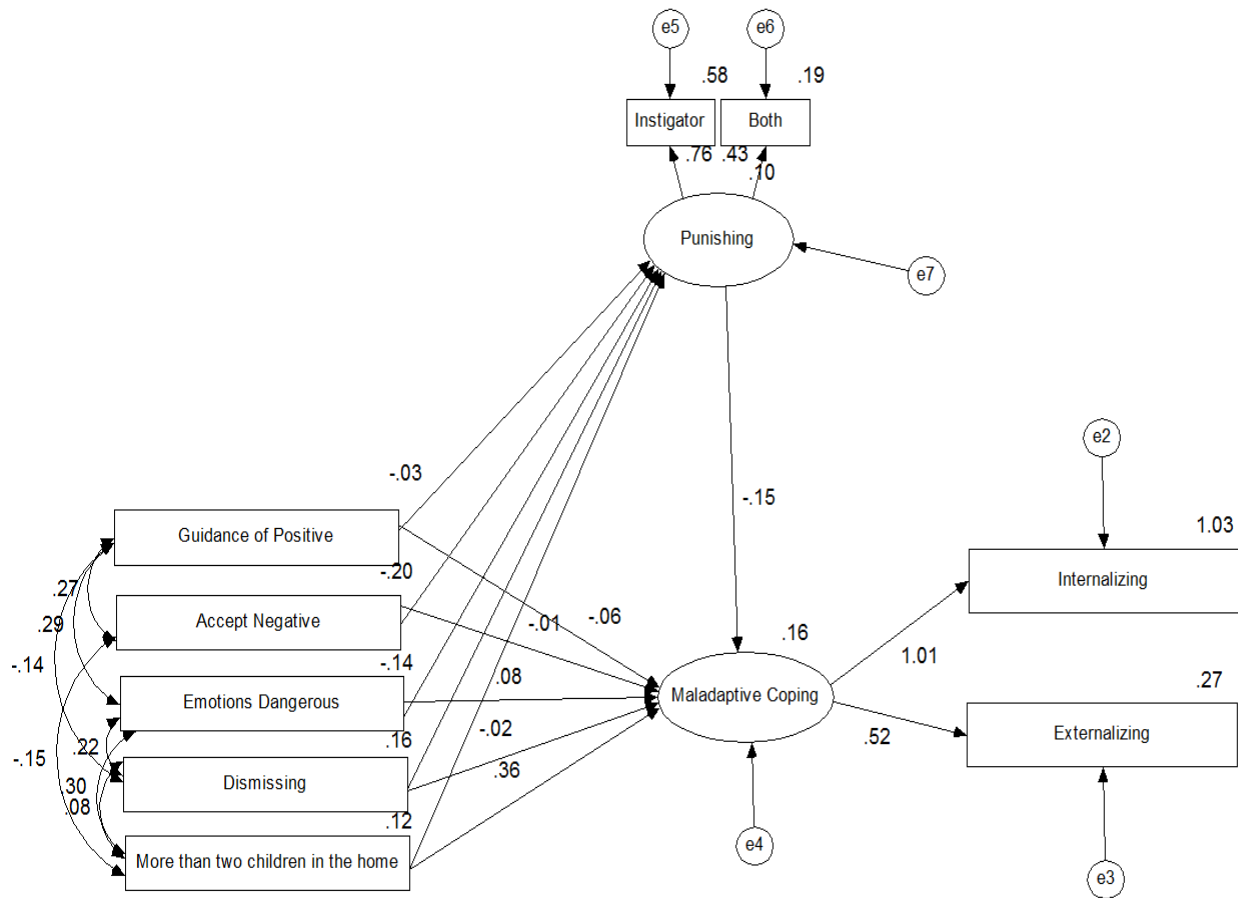


Figure 4. Structural equation model 1: Mothers' punishing strategies as a potential mediator between their negative beliefs about emotions and children's maladaptive coping.

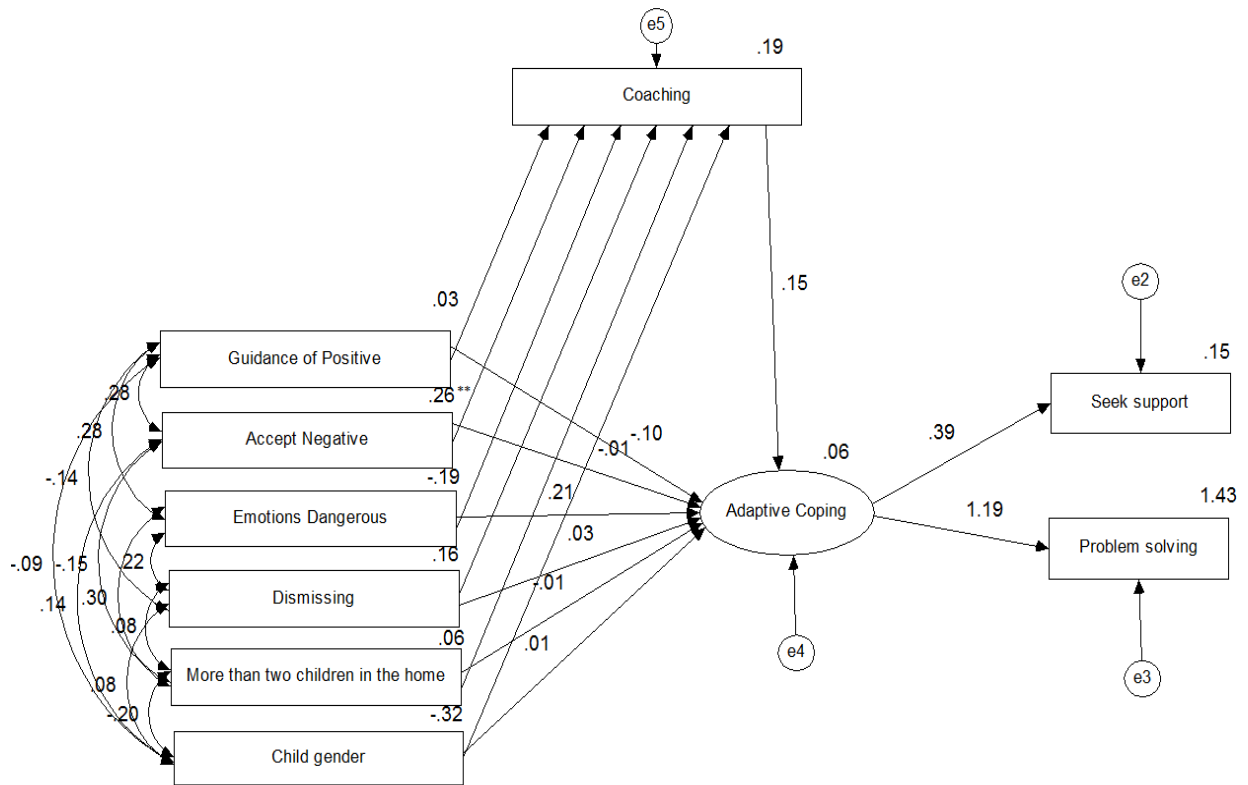


Figure 5. Structural equation model 2: Mothers' coaching strategies as a potential mediator between their positive beliefs about emotions and children's adaptive coping.

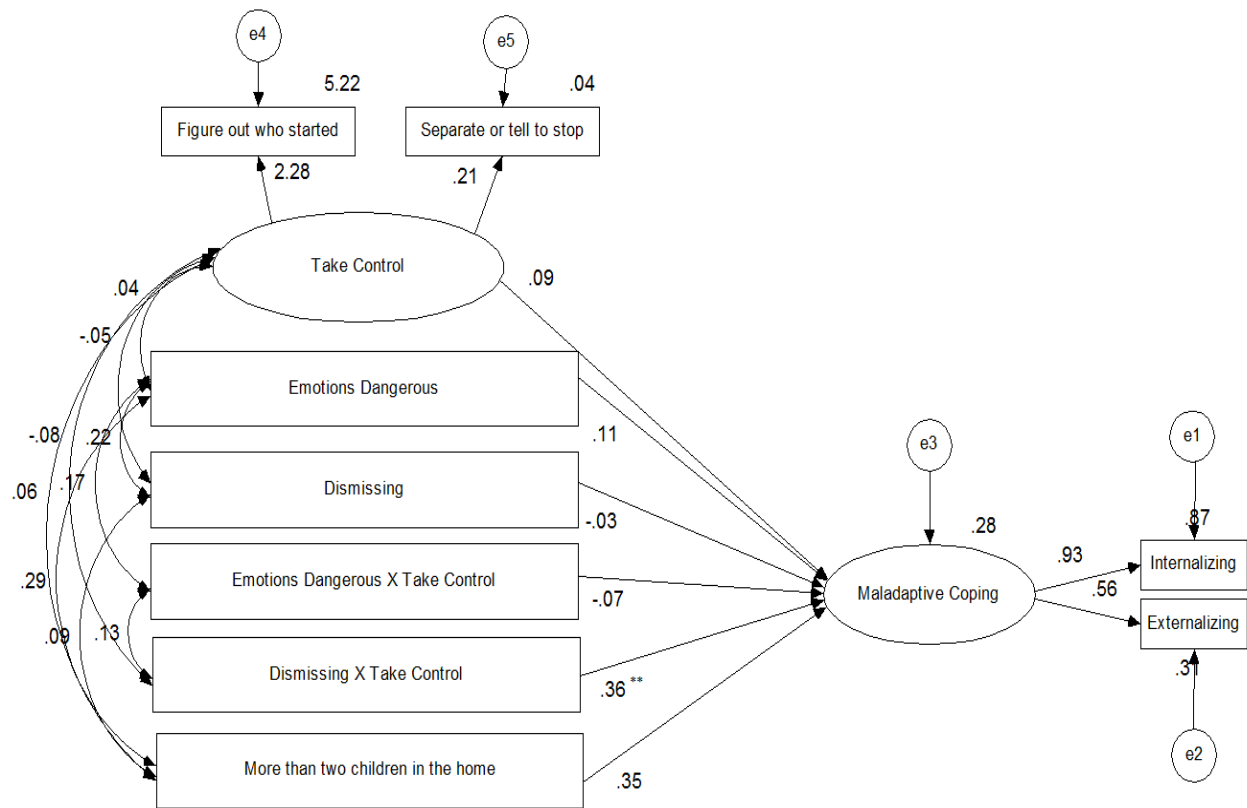


Figure 6. Structural equation model 3: Mothers' beliefs as a potential moderator between their endorsement of taking control of sibling conflict and children's maladaptive coping.

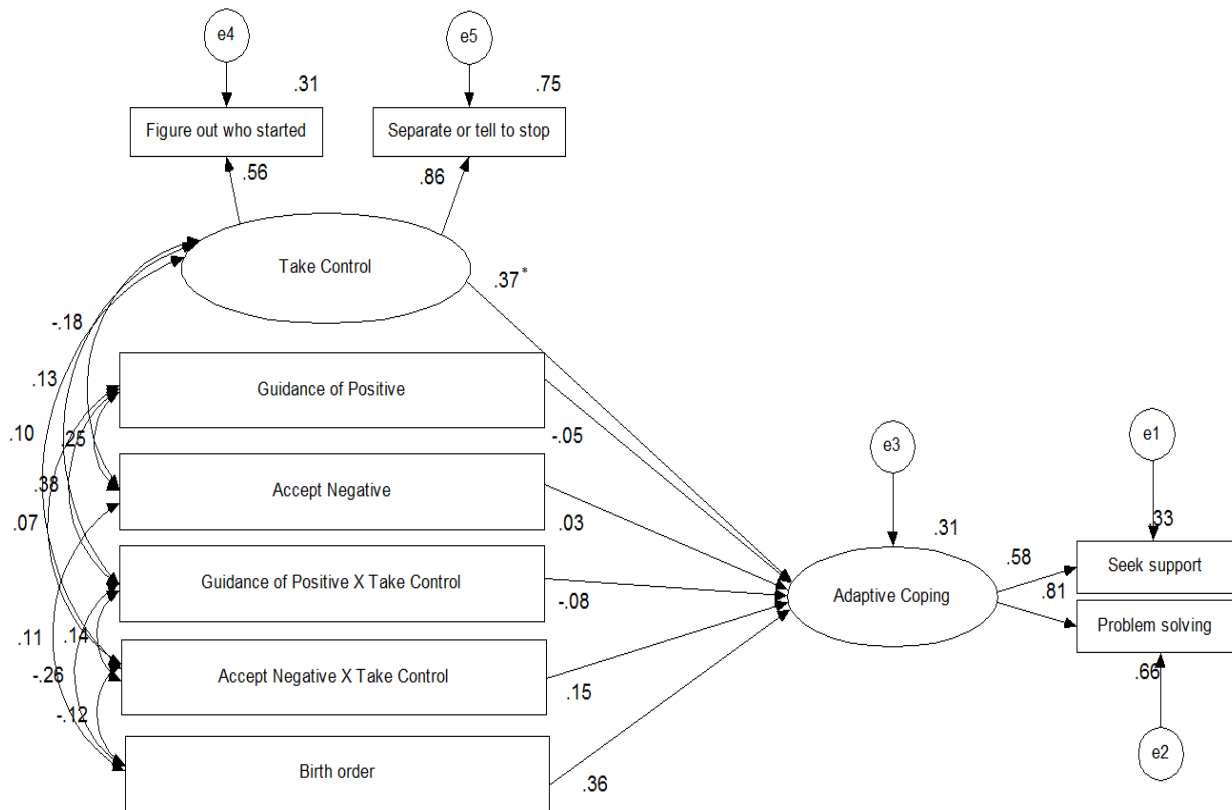


Figure 7. Structural equation model 4: Mothers' positive beliefs about emotions as a potential moderator between their endorsement of taking control of sibling conflict and children's adaptive coping.

## Appendix A

### Strategies for Managing Sibling Conflict

We want to know how you deal with sibling conflict—when brothers and sisters argue or fight with each other. Below are different situations involving sibling conflict. You will be asked how you would handle each one. The first two situations are for when one of your children **tells you** about a certain kind of arguing or fighting.

**I. Imagine you are outside while your children are inside watching TV. Suddenly one of your children comes running up to you very upset and says “He/She is teasing me and calling me mean names.”**

**A.** In a normal month, how often does this kind of situation happen in your family?  
**Please circle your answer below:**

**0** = Never            **1** = Rarely            **2** = Sometimes            **3** = Usually            **4** = Always

**B.** Below is a list of things parents could do in this situation.

- a. Please tell us which one you would use 1<sup>st</sup>. Put a **1** by that choice.
- b. Now tell us which one you would use next. Put a **2** by that choice.
- c. Now rank the other choices using a **3**, a **4**, and a **5** (with **5** being your last choice). **Please be sure to put a different number on each line.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Stop the conflict by separating them or telling them both to stop

\_\_\_\_\_ Give them advice so they can work it out on their own

\_\_\_\_\_ Help settle the conflict by trying to figure out who started it

\_\_\_\_\_ Punish or threaten to punish the one who started it

\_\_\_\_\_ Punish or threaten to punish both children

**C.** How often do you use these choices in a normal month? Please give your answers by putting a circle around one of the numbers (0 to 4). Here is what the numbers mean:

0 = Never	1 = Rarely	2 = Sometimes	3 = Usually	4 = Always
-----------	------------	---------------	-------------	------------

Stop the conflict by separating them or telling them both to stop    0   1   2   3   4

Give them advice so they can work it out on their own            0   1   2   3   4

Referee the conflict and try to figure out who started it            0   1   2   3   4

Punish or threaten to punish the one who started it                0   1   2   3   4

Punish or threaten to punish both children                            0   1   2   3   4

**II. You are cooking dinner in the kitchen while your two children are in another room playing with friends. All of a sudden one of child comes into the kitchen very angry and says “He/She is telling our friends not to let me play”.**

**A. In a normal month, how often does this kind of situation happen in your family?  
Please circle your answer below:**

**0 = Never            1 = Rarely            2 = Sometimes            3 = Usually            4 = Always**

**B. Below is a list of things parents could do in this situation.**

- a. Please tell us which one you would use 1<sup>st</sup>. Put a **1** by that choice.
- b. Now tell us which one you would use next. Put a **2** by that choice.
- c. Now rank the other choices using a **3**, a **4**, and a **5** (with **5** being your last choice). **Please be sure to put a different number on each line.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Stop the conflict by separating them or telling them both to stop

\_\_\_\_\_ Give them advice so they can work it out on their own

\_\_\_\_\_ Help settle the conflict by trying to figure out who started it

\_\_\_\_\_ Punish or threaten to punish the one who started it

\_\_\_\_\_ Punish or threaten to punish both children

**C. How often do you use these choices in a normal month? Please give your answers by putting a circle around one of the numbers (0 to 4). Here is what the numbers mean:**

0 = Never	1 = Rarely	2 = Sometimes	3 = Usually	4 = Always
-----------	------------	---------------	-------------	------------

Stop the conflict by separating them or telling them both to stop    0    1    2    3    4

Give them advice so they can work it out on their own            0    1    2    3    4

Referee the conflict and try to figure out who started it            0    1    2    3    4

Punish or threaten to punish the one who started it            0    1    2    3    4

Punish or threaten to punish both children                            0    1    2    3    4



Now we want to know how you deal with sibling conflict when **you see or hear** that they are arguing or fighting with each other.

**III. You hear your two children arguing loudly. Now they're getting really loud and emotional and you hear one child yelling and teasing the other one.**

**A.** In a normal month, how often does this kind of situation happen in your family?  
**Please circle your answer below:**

**0** = Never            **1** = Rarely            **2** = Sometimes            **3** = Usually            **4** = Always

**B.** Below is a list of things parents could do in this situation.

- a. Please tell us which one you would use 1<sup>st</sup>. Put a **1** by that choice.
- b. Now tell us which one you would use next. Put a **2** by that choice.
- c. Now rank the other choices using a **3**, a **4**, and a **5** (with **5** being your last choice). **Please be sure to put a different number on each line.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Stop the conflict by separating them or telling them both to stop

\_\_\_\_\_ Give them advice so they can work it out on their own

\_\_\_\_\_ Help settle the conflict by trying to figure out who started it

\_\_\_\_\_ Punish or threaten to punish the one who started it

\_\_\_\_\_ Punish or threaten to punish both children

**C.** How often do you use these choices in a normal month? Please give your answers by putting a circle around one of the numbers (0 to 4). Here is what the numbers mean:

0 = Never	1 = Rarely	2 = Sometimes	3 = Usually	4 = Always
-----------	------------	---------------	-------------	------------

Stop the conflict by separating them or telling them both to stop    0   1   2   3   4

Give them advice so they can work it out on their own            0   1   2   3   4

Referee the conflict and try to figure out who started it            0   1   2   3   4

Punish or threaten to punish the one who started it                0   1   2   3   4

Punish or threaten to punish both children                            0   1   2   3   4

**IV. Your two children are arguing loudly (add and emotional) and you hear one child say to the other “I can’t wait to tell your friends at school that you’re a cry baby.”**

**A.** In a normal month, how often does this kind of situation happen in your family?  
**Please circle your answer below:**

**0** = Never            **1** = Rarely            **2** = Sometimes            **3** = Usually            **4** = Always

**B.** Below is a list of things parents could do in this situation.  
 a. Please tell us which one you would use 1<sup>st</sup>. Put a **1** by that choice.  
 b. Now tell us which one you would use next. Put a **2** by that choice.  
 c. Now rank the other choices using a **3**, a **4**, and a **5** (with **5** being your last choice). **Please be sure to put a different number on each line.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Stop the conflict by separating them or telling them both to stop

\_\_\_\_\_ Give them advice so they can work it out on their own

\_\_\_\_\_ Help settle the conflict by trying to figure out who started it

\_\_\_\_\_ Punish or threaten to punish the one who started it

\_\_\_\_\_ Punish or threaten to punish both children

**C.** How often do you use these choices in a normal month? Please give your answers by putting a circle around one of the numbers (0 to 4). Here is what the numbers mean:

0 = Never	1 = Rarely	2 = Sometimes	3 = Usually	4 = Always
-----------	------------	---------------	-------------	------------

Stop the conflict by separating them or telling them both to stop	0	1	2	3	4
Give them advice so they can work it out on their own	0	1	2	3	4
Referee the conflict and try to figure out who started it	0	1	2	3	4
Punish or threaten to punish the one who started it	0	1	2	3	4
Punish or threaten to punish both children	0	1	2	3	4

## Appendix B

### My Emotions

**Imagine if one of your classmates was teasing you or leaving you out of activities on purpose. Now we want to know how you would feel in this situation. How much would you feel...**

	Not at all	Just a little	Sort of	A lot	Very much
Angry					
Scared					
Embarrassed					
Sad					

**We also want to know what you would do if one of your classmates was teasing you or leaving you out of activities on purpose. I would...**

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1.) Ask a family member for advice					
2.) Know there are things I can do to make it better					
3.) Tell myself it doesn't matter					
4.) Worry too much about it					
5.) Get mad and throw or hit something					
6.) Talk to somebody about how it made me feel					
7.) Change something so things will work out					
8.) Forget the whole thing					
9.) Become so upset that I can't talk to anyone					
10.) Curse out loud					

	<b>Never</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Always</b>
11.) Get help from a family member					
12.) Try extra hard to keep this from happening again					
13.) Make believe nothing happened					
14.) Cry about it					
15.) Yell to let off steam					
16.) Ask a friend for advice					
17.) Do something to make up for it					
18.) Refuse to think about it					
19.) Just feel sorry for myself					
20.) Take it out on others because I feel sad or angry					