Moral Socialization in Mother-Child Conversations about Hurting Siblings and Friends

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ABSTRACT

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Parents play an important role in helping their children make sense of their harmful actions towards others (Recchia & Wainryb, 2014). The purpose of this study was to examine the socialization strategies that mothers employ in conversations about children's experiences of harm, and particularly how these strategies vary in response to children's distinct experiences of conflict with siblings and friends. Thirty-four mothers and their 7-year-old children discussed two events: one in which they harmed a friend and the other, a younger sibling (order counterbalanced). Conversations were transcribed verbatim and a presence/absence coding system was employed for various moral socialization strategies. Results indicated that mothers employed different strategies to support their children's moral understandings depending on the relationship context (sibling, friend). Perhaps due to the more terminable nature of children's friendships, mothers more frequently highlighted repair and consequences for the relationship in these conversations. In contrast, in conversations about siblings, mothers more often negatively evaluated the harmful act and encouraged their child to explore feelings of guilt. Given the uniquely ruthless nature of children's harm against siblings (Recchia, Wainryb & Pasupathi, 2013), mothers may use these strategies to encourage children's moral concern for their sibling. Findings suggest that mothers may be responsive to the distinct features that characterize their children's experiences with their siblings and friends in ways that may serve to highlight and maximize their children's moral development.

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Moral socialization research reveals that young children develop an understanding of the moral world in part via conversations with others (e.g., Thompson & Winer, 2014; Nucci, 2014; Pasupathi & Wainryb, 2010a). More specifically, the literature suggests that parents play an important role in helping their children make sense of their harmful actions towards others (Recchia & Wainryb, 2014). However, it is not known how these parent-child conversations vary across children's experiences in different close relationships with age-mates. Research investigating children's conflicts with their siblings and friends has documented relational differences in the nature of these experiences (Recchia, Wainryb, & Pasupathi, 2013). For example, children who perpetrate harm against their siblings describe these experiences as typical, ruthless, angry, provoked and as eliciting more feelings of remorse or regret. On the other hand, children describe harm perpetrated against friends as unusual, unforeseeable and circumstantial. This suggests that conversations about harm in these distinct relationships may also be characterized by unique features and may consequently provide unique opportunities for moral socialization. The purpose of this study was to investigate the moral socialization strategies mothers employ in conversations about children's experiences of harm and how these strategies vary in response to children's distinct conflict experiences with their siblings and friends.

In the following sections, the literature on children's moral development will be reviewed. More specifically, research findings on parent-child conversations about children's harmful experiences and how they serve as an important context for the

development of children's moral understanding will be discussed. Further, the body of research on children's sibling and friend relationships will be described, with emphasis on the similarities and differences between children's sibling and friend relationships, as well as their conflict experiences. Following the moral socialization and relationship literature reviews, the hypothesis that mothers adapt their moral socialization strategies depending on the relationship context (sibling, friend) will be elaborated by referring to the particular strategies that mothers are expected to use in each relationship context.

Children's Moral Development

Historically, in the psychological literature, early childhood was viewed as a period of egocentric thinking and irrationality. However, in contrast to these previous conceptualizations, more recent perspectives underscore that this is a foundational period for moral development (Thompson, 2012). In fact, contemporary socialization researchers have revealed that, beginning in early childhood, children are actively engaged in constructing their understanding of the social world. Moreover, a child's construction of morality is now believed to be connected to their social representations, including how they perceive themselves as moral agents, how they understand relationships and moral obligations, as well as their beliefs about what other people are like and expect from them (Thompson & Winer, 2014). Furthermore, although Piaget originally believed the social asymmetry exemplified in parent-child interactions would not be conducive to children's moral development (Piaget, 1932), it is now argued that parent-child conversations are a context for moral learning (Nucci, 2014). Related to this, moral socialization has transitioned from being investigated as a unidirectional

transmission of parental values to an interaction between parental guidance and a child's construction of moral understandings (Thompson & Winer, 2014).

Following from this relational understanding of moral development, research has provided evidence for moral growth through language and conversations with others, including parents. Originating from Vygotsky's theory of language development (as cited in Wareham and Salmon, 2006), researchers have revealed that as children develop language skills and engage in more conversations with their parents about the past, they learn to represent their experiences in an organized form and consequently develop an enhanced understanding of the moral world. In fact, language allows children to connect behavior to evaluative terms that categorize their relational experiences, providing the basis for acceptable and unacceptable conduct. Their mental models of the social world therefore become furthered through conversations as they not only pertain to codes of conduct but also moral judgments, causal attributions, evaluative statements, attributions of personal responsibility, and other morally relevant elements (Thompson & Winer, 2014). For example, children's conversations about past events with their mothers have been shown to increase emotional understanding through maternal elaborations, which provide considerable information about emotion, including the associations between the child's experiences and those of others (Ontai & Thompson, 2002). Additionally, research shows that mothers who more frequently discuss people's feelings and use more evaluative terms have children who are more advanced in conscience development (Laible & Thompson, 2000). In sum, this research shows that parents can contribute to conversations in ways that support their children's moral development.

Considered in the broader context of parent-child discussions that touch on moral topics, conversations about children's acts of harm are also unique in that these experiences may pose particular challenges to children's positive self-views (Pasupathi & Wainryb, 2010a). Research has shown that even young children base their prescriptive judgments on principles of care and justice and therefore they believe it is wrong to hurt or upset others (Smetana, Jambon, & Ball, 2014). Thus, harming others creates a tension between children's endorsement of principles of care and justice and their own harmful actions. Previous research has shown that through making sense of experiences of harm with the help of their parents, children can obtain a better understanding that behavior sometimes stems from the need to make difficult decisions between their own desires and those of others (Pasupathi & Wainryb, 2010a; Recchia & Wainryb, 2014; Recchia, Wainryb, Bourne, & Pasupathi, 2014). In other words, these experiences contribute to the understanding that harmful behavior sometimes occurs as a consequence of navigating trade-offs between obligations to oneself and others. As well, since these events sometimes occur due to misunderstandings, conversations about these experiences can enhance children's understanding of imperfections in their understandings of others' and their own beliefs and desires. These more complex understandings of harm allow children to experience themselves as imperfect but nevertheless moral agents who are responsible for their moral actions, inasmuch as they follow from their own goals and beliefs (Pasupathi & Wainryb, 2010a).

In this respect, conversations between a parent and child about children's experiences of harm are an important context for development and moral growth. Conversations with the child as the perpetrator of harm are particularly important to

examine because they are linked to a dual focus on both the child's own and the other's desires, goals and beliefs and thus allows them to grapple directly with issues of agency (Wainryb, Brehl, & Matwin, 2005). Children's experiences as the victim of harm, on the other hand, are different in the sense that they are typically described in self-focused ways that may have self-protective functions and are less challenging to their sense of moral agency (Pasupathi & Wainryb, 2010a). For example, Wainryb et al. (2005) revealed that children who are the victims of harm construe the other's harmful actions as unequivocally negative and thus only from their own perspective. By viewing the harmful behavior in a more ambivalent way (i.e., "sort of okay and sort of not okay"), which is more likely to occur when considering events from the perpetrator's perspective (Wainryb et al., 2005), children's sense of moral agency can be further developed. This is particularly because, in this context, the constructive process allows children to coordinate the different perspectives represented on the conflict scenario.

With this in mind, Recchia and Wainryb (2014) have revealed that, in conversations about children's past transgressive experiences, parents may respond in various ways and use diverse strategies to support their children's moral agency. For instance, in some conversations, parents may focus on their child's wrongdoings without protecting their positive self-views. Often, this method involves engaging in punitive strategies and focusing on material consequences (e.g., discussing the punishment that ensued), a strategy proven to be an ineffective way to promote children's moral learning (Laible & Thompson, 2000; Recchia & Wainryb, 2014). In contrast, parents may respond in ways that minimize children's wrongdoings and responsibility for their own actions. Although this strategy may not always be an effective way to resolve children's moral

conflicts, in certain situations, parental reframing may be appropriate to help their children understand their own behavior as legitimate given the larger context within which it occurred (Recchia & Wainryb, 2014). For example, parents might respond by dismissing the negative actions and mitigating the child's responsibility for their actions (e.g., "it wasn't all you then"), particularly in situations where they do not want their child to become over-focused on the moral features of their experience (Recchia & Wainryb, 2014). These situations might include a misunderstanding between two friends that results in harm (e.g., one child thought the game involved running around with the ball). This research also suggests that in some parent-child conversations, parents engage their child in ways that highlight moral agency (Recchia et al., 2014) and thus go beyond chastising their child for their misbehavior or, at the other end of the spectrum, simply minimizing the harm. One effective strategy parents utilize is helping their children anchor the harm in a particular context by elaborating on their underlying psychological perspective (Recchia & Wainryb, 2014). By encouraging their children to consider the possibility that internal, psychological reasons might sometimes result in their own harmful behavior, parents are helping them take ownership of their actions and thus supporting their construction of themselves as moral agents. One example of this is asking children to explore what they were *trying* to do in the harmful situation. In doing so, parents are prompting their children to consider the internal reasons for their harmful actions and to take ownership of these actions (Recchia & Wainryb, 2014). As well, findings show that parents draw their child's attention to the others' characteristics and psychological experience in order to develop their understanding that in certain instances, their actions may be uniquely upsetting for a particular individual (e.g., "that's something

that you need to remember throughout your life, that everybody handles grief differently") (Recchia & Wainryb, 2014). This strategy underscores the natural differences between individuals and serves to enhance their understanding that the harmful consequences of their actions can follow from others' unique characteristics (Recchia & Wainryb, 2014). Moreover, parents promote their children's moral awareness by enhancing their understanding of the epistemological processes whereby they became aware of the harmful emotional consequences of their actions for others (e.g., "so how did you know it upset her?"). By focusing on how they came to recognize that their actions resulted in harmful emotional consequences for another, they are furthering their children's understanding of how to recognize others' needs and how to be sensitive to them. Finally, parents may sometimes focus their children's attention on reparation in the aftermath of harm. By highlighting reparation, parents are promoting the understanding that in spite of their wrongdoings there is the potential for moral growth and learning (Recchia & Wainryb, 2014). Findings from Recchia and Wainryb (2014) therefore suggest that parents engage in various strategies to enhance their children's moral understandings and to help them construct increasingly sophisticated meanings from their experiences.

Taken together, previous research suggests that parents engage in particular discourse that can support moral agency and moral understanding. Nevertheless, there is room to delve deeper in order to better understand the specific processes involved in moral socialization. In particular, it is not yet known whether the nature of parent-child discourse about children's transgressive experiences varies depending on the relationship the child has with the victim of harm. In the next section, relationship research will be

reviewed to investigate the characteristic features of children's friend and sibling relationships. Additionally, the following section will review the literature on children's conflict experiences with their siblings and friends and how each of these relationships may contribute to unique moral lessons and serve as distinct contexts for moral development.

Sibling and Friend Relationships

Relationships theory underscores that children's development occurs in the context of particular intimate and close relationships, including those with parents, siblings and friends (Carpendale & Lewis, 2006; Dunn, 2002). Previous research has revealed the existence of two types of relationships, characterized by two main types of interactions: complementary/hierarchical and reciprocal/mutually-returned interactions. Complementary interactions are characterized by the unequal distribution of power and knowledge, typical of parent-child relationships. Parent-child conversations are thus a particularly important resource for children. Because they have greater knowledge and power (compared to their children), parents have a unique ability to scaffold their children's understanding of their experiences of harm by talking with them about these events. On the other hand, reciprocal interactions are characterized by equal exchanges, typical of peer and friend relations as seen in play and conflict (Hinde, 1979). Due to the more reciprocal nature of interactions between agemates, transgressions pertaining to the moral domain (i.e., that violate principles of fairness or justice) are more frequent among siblings and friends than between parents and children (Howe, Ross, & Recchia, 2011). In other words, the topics for dispute vary as a function of the relationship. Specifically, findings have shown that disputes between siblings and thus reciprocal relations tend to

involve issues about rights and possession. Contrarily, disputes between mothers and children focus on conventional issues such as destruction of property and daily routines (Dunn & Munn, 1987). Due to this prevalence of morally-relevant disputes in reciprocal interactions, sibling and friend relationships are thus the main focus of the proposed study.

Although age is one feature contributing to equal interactions, even though siblings and friends are both similar in age, these relationships have different characteristics. For instance, research suggests that sibling interactions are defined by a unique combination of both complementary and reciprocal exchanges. This particular feature of sibling relationships not only suggests that this relationship is distinct from others, but also that it serves as a unique context for development. Research also reveals that the sibling relationship is among the most enduring relationships and that it plays a critical role in family dynamics (Howe et al., 2011). Dunn (1983) argued that the long, shared history of reciprocity between siblings creates critical opportunities to promote social understanding. In addition to this, she argued that these types of interactions are the building blocks of relationships, given that they provide an understanding of the self and other. This is because, in order for siblings to co-construct shared meanings during mutual and returned exchanges they require an understanding of the other's perspective, which may not always be similar to their own. These intimate, shared understandings can be used for different purposes as well. For instance, they may use their enhanced shared understanding to purposely push their sibling's buttons and in essence be nasty to one another. In fact, sibling relationships tend to be quite ruthless at times and thus involve harmful actions characterized by an apparent disregard for the other, such as deliberate

harmful behavior understood to be intrinsically harmful (e.g., “I was hitting her Barbie dolls across the room with a gold club”) or using harmful means to a accomplish a goal that could have been achieved using less harmful behavior (e.g., “He was chewing with his mouth open, so I called him a fag”) (Recchia et al., 2013). Sibling relationships are also described as “emotional, intense, uninhibited…steeped in an understanding of how this person behaves and what will affect him” (Dunn, 1984, p.14). Indeed, one of the major characteristics of this unique, dynamic relationship is that sibling interactions can switch quickly between having a positive and negative emotional tone. Because sibling relationships are for life and children must therefore learn to live together and share their resources, their relationship is steeped with strong positive, negative and sometimes ambivalent affect (Howe et al., 2002). In addition to this, siblings share common history. By spending a great deal of time together, they come to know each other very well and this results in establishing an intimate bond. There are also a wide variety of individual differences in sibling relationships, including quality, age differences as well as asymmetry of power. These relationship differences are linked to the kinds of interactions they engage in, as well as their conflict and cooperation dynamics. For instance, findings have shown that siblings who are close in age have smaller power differentials and are thus more likely to engage in disputes (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985). As well, older siblings tend to have more power and use more physical or verbal aggression compared to younger siblings (Perlman, Siddiqui, Ram, & Ross, 2000). All in all, the research suggests that there are characteristic features that are unique to sibling relationships.

Research on friend relationships has revealed differing characteristic features when compared to sibling relationships. Friendship relations are voluntary, reciprocal,

and mutual (Recchia et al., 2013). As a consequence, friends tend to exhibit higher quality and intimacy than siblings or same-aged peers, with friendships becoming increasingly based on mutual understanding, trust and intimate disclosure as children get older (Buhrmester, 1992). In fact, research conducted on children's perceptions of their close friendships has revealed that friends view one another as their greatest source of companionship and that friends score similarly to mothers on measures of intimacy (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985). Furthermore, friendships require more maintenance work because falling out with friends may potentially have detrimental consequences that can result in the termination of the relationship (Punch, 2008).

The distinct features of each relationship mentioned above are also linked to unique conflict characteristics. For instance, sibling conflict has been historically discussed as a manifestation of unconscious rivalry (Adler, 1924 as cited in Howe et al., 2011). However, more recent research has examined sibling conflict using a realistic approach, by acknowledging that siblings who share space, property and time interacting with one another naturally disagree because their goals and desires are not always compatible. This conflict therefore provides them with opportunities to learn to appreciate others' perspectives and resolve their differences (Howe et al., 2011). On the other hand, friendship conflict may provide distinct learning opportunities since conflicts with friends may have especially serious consequences given the voluntary nature of this relationship. Perhaps because conflict between friends can result in the end of the friendship and because friendships are generally of higher quality than sibling relationships, research shows that friends tend to resolve their conflict more constructively, to use more conciliatory strategies, provide explanations and to reach

compromising resolutions on their own more often (see Recchia et al., 2013 for a review).

According to Raffaelli (1997), there are specific differences in the onset, process and aftermath of conflict depending on whether the conflict is between friends or siblings. At the onset of conflict, siblings tend to quarrel over their shared life and personality differences. On the other hand, friendship conflict tends to revolve around relationship concerns or issues related to their shared interactions. During the process of conflict, siblings tend to utilize withdrawal and authoritarian solutions in order to resolve conflict. In contrast, friends tend to use increasingly sophisticated conflict resolution strategies that resolve conflict more effectively. During the aftermath of conflict, friends report more overt repair strategies compared to siblings (Raffaelli, 1997). Due to the terminable nature of friendships and the enduring nature of sibling relationships, these conflict patterns make sense in order to satisfy the particular needs associated with each.

One previous conflict research study, using the same dataset as the current study, examined differences between how children describe harming their siblings and friends (Recchia et al., 2013). Consistent with conflict research, findings suggested that children's experiences of harm committed against friends tended to involve relationship violations such as trust, honesty and sensitivity violations whereas harm committed against siblings involved offensive behavior and property. Additionally, findings revealed that siblings engaged in more ruthless behavior than friends. In particular, children described their own harmful behavior as involving more disregard for the victim when perpetrated against a sibling compared to a friend. With respect to children's intentions for enacting harm, friends tended to describe having benevolent intentions and

perpetrating harm as a result of external circumstances. Often, children who have perpetrated harm against their friends perceived that the harm resulted as a consequence of their friend's misinterpretation of their behavior. They also described that their friends engaged in more constructive forms of assertive verbal expression as a response to the harm. In contrast, for siblings, children tended to perceive harm as resulting from provocation by the other, as well as their own impulsive emotions (e.g., being overwhelmed by anger). Siblings who had perpetrated harm also perceived escalation by the victim, and described responses that included victim crying, reacting with anger and adult intervention (Recchia et al., 2013).

The findings of Recchia et al. (2013) also suggested that depending on the relationship context being discussed, children are learning different moral lessons. For one thing, young children who have perpetrated harm were more likely to invalidate their sibling's perspective than their friend's perspective. However, in the aftermath of conflict, they were more likely to make spontaneous references to moral emotions (i.e., guilt, remorse, regret or the senselessness of conflict), when discussing the harm they perpetrated against their sibling. Taken together, these findings suggest that children experience conflict differently and are learning different moral lessons depending on the relationship context.

Relationships as Unique Contexts for Moral Development: Elaboration of Hypotheses

As noted above, experiences in which the children themselves caused harm or upset another can provide unique opportunities for moral reflection. In fact, children's reflections on their own perpetration of harm in these different relational contexts may

provide distinct but complementary opportunities for socio-moral development (Recchia et al., 2013). The research described above suggests that children understand their harmful actions towards their siblings and friends in different ways.

Building on this research, based on the distinct features of children's experiences of harm with friends and siblings, we hypothesized that parents may engage in different strategies across relationships. More specifically, based on the literature described above, we anticipated that some parental moral socialization strategies would be used more frequently when discussing instances of harm committed against a friend than a sibling. These included more frequent mention of repair, negative consequences for the relationship, others' unique characteristics, positive evaluations of the resolution strategy and intent, as well as indicators of harm. First, we expected that repair and negative consequences for the relationship would be more likely to be highlighted by mothers when discussing harmful actions towards a friend rather than a sibling due to the terminable nature of the friendship relation. As described above, friendships are less enduring relationships when compared to sibling relationships (Howe et al., 2011), and so mothers may want to maximize their children's understanding that there are negative consequences associated with their harmful actions that can terminate a friendship permanently. An example of this strategy includes: "don't you want to play with your friend next time?". Further, they may want to emphasize the importance of repairing the relationship by asking about the resolution strategy employed and underscoring the need to work things out positively. Some examples of this strategy may include mothers asking questions such as "did you say sorry?" and "I think it would be good for you to talk to her when you see her at school next."

Mothers may also be more motivated to sharpen their child's understanding that some friends may be more sensitive than others due to their unique characteristics or preferences, making them more prone to becoming upset or hurt. Mothers may emphasize this more frequently in conversations about friends because their child likely knows less about their friend than their sibling due to the fact that they share less common history. Also, friends control access to information and may thus choose to reveal less about themselves (Punch, 2008). For instance, mothers may highlight that "not everyone wants to play your imagination games" or that "when you have a friend that gets their feelings hurt easily, you have to be careful that you don't hurt their feelings".

When discussing harm perpetrated against friends, mothers were also hypothesized to evaluate their child's intentions and how they handled the situation more positively than with siblings. Since friendships tend to involve less ruthless behavior than sibling relationships, the reasons underlying the harm may be less of a concern for parents. As noted above, research suggests that harm perpetrated against friends is more often based on misunderstandings and also that conflicts with friends tend to be resolved relatively constructively (Recchia et al., 2013). Mothers were therefore expected to evaluate their children's intentions and resolutions in a more positive light and were therefore expected to underscore what the child *did* do well in the situation. For instance, mothers may evaluate the child's intentions positively by saying something like "at least your goals were good". Similarly, they may positively evaluate the resolution of conflict by saying "It was great that you said sorry".

It was also hypothesized that mothers may be more focused on identifying how their child arrived at the understanding that their friend was upset or angry as a result of

their actions. Because children are less familiar and have less shared history with their friends compared to siblings (Howe et al., 2011), mothers may be more inclined to work on developing children's skills in identifying when their friends are hurt. Moreover, mothers may more often develop their children's skills in identifying when their friend is hurt (compared to siblings), due to the types and reasons for harm involved in friendship relations. Specifically, since harm committed against friends tends to involve less overt hurtful behavior and more benign intent (i.e., that harm may result from friends' misinterpretations of children's nonmalicious goal-directed or even benevolent behavior) (Recchia et al., 2013), children may need to be more skilled to identify when their friend is hurt. For these reasons, mothers may therefore discuss the specific indicators that led their child to the understanding that they hurt someone else. They may therefore ask questions such as "how did you know he/she was upset?" and/or "was it something on his/her face that helped you know he/she was upset"?

In contrast, mothers were predicted to engage in different moral socialization strategies when discussing a time their child perpetrated harm against their younger sibling. In these conversations, mothers were expected to evaluate the act of harm negatively and explore the child's feelings of guilt, as well as to encourage self-regulation, perspective-taking and adult intervention. Given the uniquely ruthless nature of sibling conflict (Recchia et al., 2013) as well as its associated descriptors including "emotional, intense, [and] uninhibited" (Dunn, 1984, p.14), mothers were expected to evaluate these acts more negatively and explore the child's feelings of guilt in the aftermath of harm, as well as to emphasize self-regulation, perspective-taking, and adult intervention in an attempt to enhance their children's moral and emotional concerns.

Examples of negative evaluations of the act included “what do you mean you hit your sister?!” and “that was a mean thing to do!” Examples for exploration of guilt included “how did it make you feel when you hit your sibling?” and “so why did it make you feel bad?” Examples for self-regulation, perspective-taking, and adult intervention included “next time take a breath and relax”; “but would you like it if your brother/sister said your friends are mean?” and “next time come and get me”, respectively.

Summary: The Current Study

Drawing together all the diverse areas of research described above, the current study examined the different moral socialization strategies mothers employed in discussing a time their child harmed a sibling and friend. To investigate these differences, 34 audio-recorded transcripts of conversations between mothers and their 7-year-old children discussing a time that the child hurt a younger sibling and friend were coded for the presence or absence of particular moral socialization strategies used by mothers. This investigation focused on 7-year-olds in particular because past research has revealed that this age group (as compared to 11- and 16- year-olds) has less ability to consider psychological aspects as they come to understand their social situations (Pasupathi & Wainryb, 2010b). In light of this, it was expected that mothers of children in this age group would be motivated to engage in strategies that enhance their children’s moral understandings of their harmful experiences. Another reason was that, at this age, children’s narrative accounts of conflicts in each relationship are quite distinct from each other as compared to older age groups (Recchia et al., 2013). Thus, given the focus of the present investigation, we expected that differences between conversations would be most readily observed in this age group. To summarize the hypotheses described above, it was

expected that mothers would mention repair, consequences for the relationship, and unique characteristics more frequently with friends than siblings; we also expected them to evaluate children's conflict resolution strategies and intentions more positively and mention indicators of harm more frequently in this conversation. In contrast, it was expected that mothers would negatively evaluate the harmful act and explore children's experiences of guilt, as well as encourage more self-regulation, perspective-taking and adult intervention in their conversations about a time their child harmed their sibling.

Method

Participants

Families were recruited in a mid-sized city in the western United States via flyers posted in the community and at schools, as well as through word-of-mouth. To be eligible for the study, children had to have at least one younger sibling and the two children had to be born less than four years apart. One hundred mothers and their 7-, 11-, or 16-year-old children participated in the larger project, however only the conversations between the 7-year-old children and their mothers were the focus of this study (*M* age = 7.27, range = 6.05 to 8.14; 20 girls). A total of 35 seven-year-old children and their mothers participated, with one mother-child dyad excluded because the child could not think of a time they hurt or upset a friend; this resulted in a final sample of 34 mother-child dyads. Among the final sample of 7-year-old children, the mean age gap between the children and their younger sibling was 2.37 years (range = 1.00 to 4.42). Most of the 7-year-old children were the first-born in their families (71%, compared to 29% who were later born). Although some participants were from two-child families, 55.9% of participating children had one or more other siblings in addition to the younger sibling on whom they

were reporting. Approximately half of the sample consisted of same sex sibling dyads (55.9%). With the exception of one case, mothers were biologically related to their 7-year-old child. Aside from one mother who chose not to respond, all mothers were American citizens, however 85.3% of mothers were born in the United Stated, compared to 11.8% born outside of the United States, (e.g., Australia, Germany, Iran, Switzerland). Mothers' *M* age was 35.91 years, range = 29 to 45. Most mothers worked outside the home (58.8%) and were married (88.2%, compared to 5.9% who were divorced, 2.9% single and 2.9% living with a partner). The sample was primarily European American (91%), with the remaining mothers from a variety of ethnic backgrounds (e.g., mixed descent, Persian). The sample was largely educated (94% of mothers had completed college). In terms of religious affiliation, a large subset of mothers identified as Christian (70.6%) compared to those who were nonreligious (26.5%) or from another faith (2.9%). Of the 70.6% who identified as Christian, 35.3% of mothers reported their religious affiliation to be LDS (i.e., Mormon) and 35.3% practiced other forms of Christianity (i.e., Protestant, Catholic, Episcopalian). Written parental consent and child assent were obtained for all mother-child dyads. Families received movie gift certificates in appreciation for their participation.

Procedure

This study used data from a larger investigation of children's moral development (see Recchia et al., 2013, Recchia & Wainryb, 2014, Recchia et al, 2014); only procedures relevant to this study are described. Children were initially interviewed independently by a researcher in a private setting at either their family's home or at a university laboratory. They were asked to nominate (a) "a time you did or said something

that ended up hurting or upsetting a friend" and (b) "a time you did or said something that ended up hurting or upsetting your sibling" (in counterbalanced order). The children were asked to choose events that were important to them and that they remembered well. If they nominated a generic or recurrent event (e.g., "I always take his stuff"), they were asked to describe a specific episode. Following the event nominations, children were brought to a common area (e.g., the family room) and were asked to discuss the events with their mother in the order initially elicited. Dyads were asked to "talk about what their child did that time, to try to figure out everything that happened around it, and also see if there is something to be learned from it". The researcher then left the room to allow dyads to discuss each issue on their own. These conversations were audio- and video-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Coding

A presence/absence coding scheme was designed to examine mothers' use of various moral socialization strategies. This coding procedure was designed to determine whether the hypothesized moral socialization strategies were present or absent in conversations about siblings and friends.

The coding scheme was adapted in part from coding schemes used in previous research. For instance, codes such as consequences for the other, exploration of guilt and self-regulation were adapted from the coding scheme designed by Bourne (2013) in order to examine the degree to which children were deemed responsible for their harmful actions. Elements such as repair, evaluations and unique characteristics were adapted from the coding scheme designed by Recchia et al.,2014, a study that investigated the

reasons, evaluations, insights, and strategies mothers are using in conversations with their children about harming and helping others.

The adapted coding scheme is included in Appendix A with multiple examples and descriptions of each code. Revisions and additions were made in order to clarify and refine particular codes. The particular codes included repair, consequences for the relationship, other's unique characteristics, positive and negative evaluations of conflict resolution and intent, indicators of harm, positive and negative evaluations of the harmful act, exploration of guilt, self-regulation, perspective-taking, and adult intervention (see Appendix A for details). Some codes were collapsed due to their rare occurrence. Specifically, positive evaluation of resolution and positive evaluation of intent were collapsed into one category renamed as *positive evaluation of resolution and intent*. Similarly, negative evaluation of the resolution and negative evaluation of the intent were collapsed into the category of *negative evaluation of resolution and intent*. In each case, these codes were collapsed into one category based on their similar features (i.e., that they involved a positive or negative evaluation of the child's intentions and resolution of conflict, in contradistinction to the evaluation of the harmful act itself) and also because the hypotheses pertaining to these categories were similar (e.g., mothers were hypothesized to positively evaluate the resolution and intent more often when discussing the friend harm conversations).

Interrater Reliability

A naïve coder was trained in order to establish interrater reliability for all codes. Coders first discussed the categories as well as their definitions, followed by jointly coding a subset of the narratives. Interrater reliability was then established on 25% of the

interview transcripts coded independently. Disagreements were resolved via discussion and consensus. Cohen's kappas were as follows: (a) *repair* (*kappa* = .79), (b) *consequences for the relationship* (*kappa* = .70), (c) *other's unique characteristics* (*kappa* = .77), (d) *positive evaluation of resolution and intent* (*kappa* = .60), (e) *negative evaluation of resolution and intent* (*kappa* = .65), (f) *indicators of harm* (*kappa* = 1.0), (g) *negative evaluation of act* (*kappa* = .80), (h) *positive evaluation of act* (*kappa* = 1.0), (i) *exploration of guilt* (*kappa* = .71), (j) *self-regulation* (*kappa* = .74), (k) *perspective-taking* (*kappa* = .83), (l*) adult intervention* (*kappa* = 1.0).

Results

Plan of Analysis

Analyses were conducted separately for each type of moral socialization strategy with relationship context (sibling, friend) as a repeated measure and child gender (boy, girl) as a between-subjects factor. Gender was included in analyses to control for any possible gender effects (although no specific hypotheses were advanced). ANOVA-based procedures were used because they have been shown to be more appropriate for analyzing this type of data than are loglinear-based procedures, as the latter run into a distinct estimation problem (see Wainryb, Shaw, Laupa, & Smith, 2001). Furthermore, a series of chi-square analyses examining associations between relationship type and strategy revealed the same pattern of results. For each significant effect, effect size is reported as partial eta-squared (η^2).

Analyses of Mothers' Use of Moral Socialization Strategies

Repair. A 2 (relationship: sibling, friend) x 2 child gender (boy, girl) mixed-model ANOVA with *repair* as the dependent variable revealed an effect of relationship, $F(1, 32) = 7.49$, $\eta^2 = .19$, $p < .05$. As expected, mothers used the reparation of harm strategy more in conversations about friend harm compared to sibling harm (see Table 1).

Consequences for the relationship. A 2 (relationship: sibling, friend) x 2 (child gender: boy, girl) mixed-model ANOVA with *consequences for the relationship* as the dependent variable revealed an effect of relationship, $F(1, 32) = 9.34$, $\eta^2 = .23$, $p < .05$. As expected, mothers emphasized consequences for the relationship significantly more in conversations about friend harm compared to sibling harm (see Table 1).

Unique characteristics. A 2 (relationship: sibling, friend) x 2 (child gender: boy, girl) mixed-model ANOVA with *unique characteristics* as the dependent variable revealed a marginally significant effect of relationship, $F(1, 32) = 3.19$, $\eta^2 = .09$, $p < .10$. Although mothers did not emphasize others' unique characteristics significantly more in conversations about friend harm compared to sibling harm, a trend in this direction was revealed (see Table 1).

Positive evaluation of the resolution and intent. A 2 (relationship: sibling, friend) x 2 (child gender: boy, girl) mixed-model ANOVA with *positive evaluation of the resolution and intent* as the dependent variable failed to reveal any significant effects. Contrary to what was hypothesized, mothers did not positively evaluate the resolution and intent significantly more in conversations about friend harm compared to sibling harm (see Table 1).

Negative evaluation of the resolution and intent. A 2 (relationship: sibling, friend) x 2 (child gender: boy, girl) mixed-model ANOVA with *negative evaluation of*

the resolution and intent as the dependent variable failed to reveal any significant effects (see Table 1).

Indicators of harm. A 2 (relationship: sibling, friend) x 2 child gender (boy, girl) mixed-model ANOVA with *indicators of harm* as the dependent variable failed to reveal any significant effects. Contrary to what was hypothesized, mothers did not highlight indicators of harm significantly more in conversations about friend harm compared to sibling harm (see Table 1).

Negative evaluation of the act. A 2 (relationship: sibling, friend) x 2 (child gender: boy, girl) mixed-model ANOVA with *negative evaluation of the act* as the dependent variable revealed an effect of relationship, $F(1, 32) = 4.03$, $\eta^2 = .11$, $p < .05$. As expected, mothers negatively evaluated the harmful act more in conversations about sibling harm compared to friend harm (see Table 1).

Positive evaluation of the act. A 2 (relationship: sibling, friend) x 2 (child gender: boy, girl) mixed-model ANOVA with *positive evaluation of the act* as the dependent variable failed to reveal any significant effects (see Table 1).

Exploration of guilt. A 2 (relationship: sibling, friend) x 2 (child gender: boy, girl) mixed-model ANOVA with *exploration of guilt* as the dependent variable revealed an effect of relationship, $F(1, 32) = 9.46$, $\eta^2 = .23$, $p < .05$. As expected, mothers explored guilt significantly more in conversations about sibling harm compared to friend harm (see Table 1).

Self-regulation. A 2 (relationship: sibling, friend) x 2 (child gender: boy, girl) mixed-model ANOVA with *self-regulation* as the dependent variable failed to reveal any significant effects. Contrary to what was hypothesized, mothers did not emphasize self-

regulation significantly more in conversations about sibling harm compared to friend harm (see Table 1).

Perspective-taking. A 2 (relationship: sibling, friend) x 2 (child gender: boy, girl) mixed-model ANOVA with *perspective-taking* as the dependent variable failed to reveal any significant effects. Contrary to what was hypothesized, mothers did not use perspective-taking significantly more in conversations about sibling harm compared to friend harm (see Table 1).

Adult intervention. A 2 (relationship: sibling, friend) x 2 (child gender: boy, girl) mixed-model ANOVA with *adult intervention* as the dependent variable failed to reveal any significant effects. Contrary to what was hypothesized, mothers did not highlight adult intervention significantly more in conversations about sibling harm compared to friend harm (see Table 1).

Table 1

Mothers' Use of Moral Socialization Strategies in Conversations about Children's Harmful Behavior with Friends and Siblings

	Harm against Friends *M* proportion of conversations *(SE)*	Harm against Siblings *M* proportion of conversations *(SE)*
Repair	.47 (.09)[a]	.17 (.07)[b]
Consequences for relationship	.41 (.09)[a]	.10 (.05)[b]
Unique characteristics	.21 (.07)	.05 (.04)
Positive evaluation of resolution and intent	.30 (.07)	.17 (.07)
Negative evaluation of resolution and intent	.09 (.05)	.22 (.07)
Indicators of harm	.21 (.07)	.11 (.05)
Negative evaluation of harmful act	.39 (.09)[a]	.62 (.09)[b]
Positive evaluation of harmful act	.06 (.04)	.02 (.03)
Exploration of guilt	.12 (.06)[a]	.36 (.07)[b]
Self-regulation	.18 (.07)	.20 (.07)
Perspective-taking	.10 (.05)	.22 (.07)
Adult intervention	.13 (.05)	.24 (.08)

*Note. M*s in the same row are labeled with different superscripts when analyses revealed significant differences at $p < .05$.

Summary of Key Findings

Results revealed that mothers used distinct strategies depending on the relationship context (sibling, friend). As expected, mothers used repair and highlighted consequences for the relationship significantly more in conversations with their children about harm perpetrated towards a friend. Also in line with hypotheses, mothers explored guilt and evaluated the act of harm negatively in conversations about sibling harm compared to friend harm. Contrary to what was expected, mothers did not emphasize indicators of harm, nor did they evaluate the resolution and intent positively in conversations about friend harm. However, in accordance with what was predicted, results revealed a trend towards mothers emphasizing the other's unique characteristics when discussing events of harm perpetrated towards a friend. Further, results did not reveal that mothers used significantly more perspective-taking, emphasized self-regulation, nor adult intervention when discussing harm perpetrated towards a sibling.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to examine the particular moral socialization strategies that mothers employ when discussing their children's narrative accounts of perpetrating harm towards their friend and younger sibling. As expected, the results revealed that mothers are in fact using diverse moral socialization strategies depending on the relationship context they are discussing (i.e., sibling, friend). More specifically, consistent with the hypotheses, mothers more often discussed repair and highlighted consequences for the relationship when discussing harm towards a friend. Results also revealed a trend suggesting that mothers emphasized other's unique characteristics more often in conversations about friends. Moreover, in conversations about harm towards a

younger sibling, mothers explored guilt and negatively evaluated their children's harmful actions significantly more often than in conversations about friends. Inconsistent with the hypotheses, the results also failed to reveal significant relationship differences for a number of moral socialization strategies. Specifically, mothers did not focus more frequently on indicators of harm, nor did they positively evaluate the resolution and intent more often when discussing harm perpetrated towards friends. Further, mothers did not encourage significantly more perspective-taking, self-regulation, nor did they suggest adult intervention more often in conversations about sibling harm.

In light of these findings, this research suggests that mothers were responsive to the distinct characteristic features of each relationship (sibling, friend) in ways that may promote their children's moral learning. The following section will discuss the moral socializing strategies mothers emphasized in conversations about harm towards friends and attempt to explain the findings given the characteristic features of friendship relations. Next, the moral socialization strategies highlighted by mothers in conversations about harm towards their younger sibling will be discussed and explained in the context of the characteristic features of sibling relationships. Further, a discussion regarding the unsupported hypotheses will follow.

Moral Socialization Strategies in Conversations with Friends

Previous research regarding the friendship relation has revealed developmental differences in how children view their friendships. More specifically, with increasing age, friendships tend to be characterized by increasing intimacy, loyalty and mutual understanding. However, at younger ages, friendships tend to be perceived more concretely by children (Hartup & Stevens, 1999). In fact, children between the ages of 4

and 7 view their friends as playmates and therefore someone they spend a lot of time playing with and sharing toys. However, when one partner refuses to share, hits or is not available to play, young children believe that the friendship has dissolved and that they are no longer friends (Hartup & Stevens, 1999). Therefore, as compared to older children, preschool and early school-aged children may be less likely to view friendship as having long-term, enduring qualities. This highlights how very young children may not entirely understand that friendships can withstand conflict and may ultimately be unprepared to handle conflicts with their friends. Thus, socialization strategies that highlight the importance of maintaining and repairing the relationship may be developmentally appropriate with this age group. Mothers may use such strategies to enhance their children's understanding that friendships can be repaired as well as provide them with the necessary skill set to mend their relationship and restore good feelings after harm was done. Given that friendships are perceived by young children as lacking long-term and enduring qualities (Hartup & Stevens, 1999), and are characterized as reciprocal, voluntary relationships that require maintenance work (Punch 2008; Recchia et al., 2013), mothers may use the strategy of repair significantly more when discussing harm towards friends in order to assist their children to maintain their relationship. By emphasizing the importance of repairing the relationship, mothers are likely stressing the necessity of restoring the relationship after hurting a friend so that it is not permanently damaged or terminated. In essence, with this strategy, mothers may be attempting to assist their children to move beyond the hurt associated with their harmful actions in order to rebuild a positive and close relationship (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985; Buhrmester, 1992). Further, mothers might emphasize the importance of working things out more with

friends than with siblings, to encourage their children to take responsibility for their actions by actively repairing the damage that was done. Compared to sibling relationships, in which future interactions are inevitable (Howe et al., 2011), future interactions with friends are not necessarily a given. Mothers might therefore highlight the necessity of repair so that their young children engage in future interactions with their friends in an attempt to actively rebuild their friendships.

Similarly, given that friendships are voluntary compared to sibling relations, mothers might be more inclined to illustrate that there are negative consequences associated with children's harmful actions towards friends. By focusing on the negative outcomes that can occur to the relationship, mothers are likely attempting to promote their young children's understanding that there are possible consequences associated with hurting their friend, such as damaging or even terminating the relationship. Mothers are likely attempting to underscore that friendships may be negatively impacted by experiences of harm and so it is important to be cautious and sensitive with friends in order to maintain the relationship and have future interactions with them.

Moreover, a trend was revealed for the moral socialization strategy of other's unique characteristics. Mothers likely focused on sharpening their children's understanding that others may have unique characteristics that make them more sensitive to harm in an attempt to inform their children that it is important to be sensitive to their friends so that the relationship does not end. Further, they may use this strategy to promote their children's understanding that other people have different internal experiences from their own and ultimately foster their moral agency by promoting their understanding that others may have distinct psychological experiences (i.e., emotions,

beliefs, desires) and that these differences can result in harm. Given young children's less sophisticated psychological and emotional understandings (Pasupathi & Wainryb, 2010b), highlighting others' unique characteristics may be developmentally appropriate to foster their psychological and emotional understanding and thus support the development of moral agency. In this way, mothers are not only improving their young children's understanding that harm may result from their diverging psychological experiences but are also illustrating the importance of taking other's unique experiences into account so that they are less likely to harm their friends in the future.

Taken together, mothers may have used the moral socialization strategies of repair, consequences for the relationship as well as a tendency to emphasize other's unique characteristics in conversations about harm towards friends given the voluntary nature of friendships. Mothers likely used these particular strategies to promote their young children's understanding that although friendships can terminate, efforts to repair the relationship can and should be pursued in order to maintain the friendship. Further, an enhanced understanding of others' perspectives as well as a more complete understanding that there are possible consequences related to their harmful actions might promote increased sensitivity and friendship maintenance.

Moral Socialization Strategies for Conversations with Siblings

Similar to conversations about friends, the particular moral socialization strategies that mothers used with siblings appeared to be responsive to the characteristic features of sibling harm. Specifically, previous research reveals that harm towards siblings tends to involve more disregard for the victim, ruthless actions, as well as invalidation of the others' perspective (Recchia et al., 2013). Thus, mothers may have utilized the strategies

of negative evaluation of the act as well as exploration of guilt to encourage their children's moral concern towards their brother or sister. Specifically, although preschoolers are aware that it is wrong to hurt others (Smetana et al., 2014), mothers might negatively evaluate the act of harm to re-iterate that such behaviors are wrong and unacceptable and encourage their young children to reflect on these harmful actions. By doing so, they are promoting their children's tendency to consider their negative moral judgments of harm while engaged in ongoing interactions with their sibling.

Consistent with the previous assertions, mothers likely explore guilt more often in conversations about sibling harm, given the unique ruthless features of sibling harm. By assisting their children to make sense of their internal experiences following from their harmful actions towards their brother or sister, mothers are fostering moral learning. More specifically, by encouraging their children to reflect on and explore how they felt and the reasons why they felt remorseful, sadness or guilt after hurting their sibling promotes their emotional understanding in relation to their actions. This increased emotion understanding is expected to discourage future instances of harm and increase their moral concern for their sibling as they have developed a more complete understanding of the negative emotions (i.e., guilt, regret, remorse) associated with hurting a sibling. Even though previous research has shown that children make significantly more spontaneous references to moral emotions when discussing narrative accounts of sibling harm compared to harm towards friends, generally, children do not make these spontaneous references very often (Recchia et al., 2013). Mothers may therefore use the strategy of exploring guilt to increase the predominance of moral emotions in the aftermath of harm and highlight the importance of feeling bad about

hurting their brother or sister, given the ruthless types of harm involved (Recchia et al., 2013).

Similarities in Moral Socialization Across Relationships

Despite the fact that this research study served to investigate the different moral socialization strategies mothers employed in conversations with their young children about their acts of harm against their friends compared to their younger siblings, these two sets of conversations had multiple similar features. Specifically, both conversations focused on 7-year-old children's acts of perpetrating harm towards a child of similar age. Previous research has shown differences between children's narrative accounts of harm depending on whether they are the victim or perpetrator of harm (Wainryb et al., 2005). When children are the perpetrators of harm, they tend to be more balanced in describing their own as well as the victims' perspectives (i.e., thoughts, goals, desires, intentions). In contrast, when children are the victims of harm, they tend to engage in more self-focused descriptions of their harmful experiences (Wainryb et al., 2005). In our study, given that both conversations involved the child as the perpetrator of harm and therefore a dual focus on their own and other's construals of the experience, mothers may have been responsive to these contributions by their children in both relationship contexts. In particular, mothers might not have used different strategies across relationship contexts for every moral socialization strategy inasmuch as the child's experiences across relationships shared some features. In other words, mothers may have attempted to develop their children's understanding of their harmful experiences more generally and not necessarily in a way specifically tailored toward the relationship context (sibling, friend).

For instance, the results did not reveal significant differences for the following strategies: indicators of harm, positive evaluation of the resolution and intent, perspective-taking, self-regulation, and parental-intervention. More specifically, inconsistent with the hypotheses, mothers did not focus on indicators of harm or positively evaluate the resolution and intent significantly more often in conversations about harm towards friends. Moreover, mothers did not engage in perspective-taking, promote self-regulation nor emphasize adult intervention significantly more often on conversations about sibling harm. These findings might suggest that mothers are using particular strategies similarly across the relationship contexts. On the other hand, these nonsignificant findings might simply be due to the small sample size, which limited statistical power to detect significant effects. In some cases, the pattern of findings seemed to be more in line with the former interpretation, since the proportionate use of some strategies was almost identical across relationship contexts. More specifically, the results showed that mothers encouraged self-regulation in both relationship contexts in equal proportions. They may be using this strategy equally in conversations about siblings and friends in order to highlight the importance of controlling behavior and emotions, as well as engaging in self-monitoring. Arguably, a lack of self-regulation could produce detrimental effects in each relationship context. For example, the absence of self-regulation could result in aggressive harm towards siblings and the dissolution of the relationship for friends. Moreover, the results revealed that mothers were positively evaluating the resolution of conflict and intent equally across these relationships, possibly in an attempt to restore their children's positive sense of self, given the challenge that harm can pose to children's understandings of themselves as good people. In contrast, the

pattern of results suggested that other null findings might be due to a lack of power, since the results revealed differences between mean proportions across relationships, but these differences were not of adequate magnitude to reach statistical significance in a small sample. This appeared to be the case for indicators of harm, perspective-taking and adult intervention. Therefore, it may be important to replicate the findings in a larger sample.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study had a number of limitations. First, the sample size of mother-child dyads was relatively small due to the inclusion of only the 7-year-old children for the purpose of this investigation. The small sample size may have resulted in limited power for the analysis. In addition, this study's unique focus on 7-year-old children and their mothers may have ultimately produced different results than a study also including the conversations between the 11- and 16-year old children and their mothers. This reduces the generalizability of findings to all children and instead revealed the moral socialization strategies employed in each relationship context only among 7-year old children. It is expected that similar findings would result with the inclusion of older children in the sample. In fact, the larger sample size and inclusion of both younger and older children in the sample might result in more significant differences across relationship contexts. However, an analysis comparing age groups might reveal that mothers are engaging in fewer moral socialization strategies with their older children, given their more advanced understandings of the psychological aspects of their harmful as well as their increased experiences with conflict resolution strategies. Preliminary analyses suggest mothers are emphasizing repair, positively evaluating the resolution and intent as well as guilt exploration significantly more with their younger children. In contrast, mothers are

highlighting self-regulation more often with their 11-year-olds (Scirocco, Recchia, Wainryb, & Pasupathi, 2014) These differences might reflect mothers' attempts to equip their younger children with conflict resolution strategies and further their younger children's emotion understanding. Given older children's more advanced self-regulation skills, mothers might have higher expectations for their older children's capacity to engage in self-control and may use this particular strategy to re-iterate the importance of controlling behavior and emotions. Overall, age-related comparisons would complement the findings in this thesis, and are expected to demonstrate that mothers may be scaffolding their children's moral learning in developmentally appropriate ways.

Further, the generalizability of the findings was reduced due to limited variability in the sample of participants. For instance, because the sample only included participants from one geographic location and was mostly a European American, Christian and educated sample, the findings cannot be extended to diverse populations. Previous research has revealed that moral socialization varies across cultural contexts. For instance, when discussing children's transgressions, European-American mothers tend to have child-centered conversations with discussions that regard the causes and consequences of their child's feeling states and emotional experiences (Wang & Song, 2014). In comparison to East Asian mothers, European-American mothers also tend to approach children's past misdemeanours lightly during conversations, perhaps due to fear of damaging the child's self-esteem. On the other hand, East Asian mothers set the direction of conversations, emphasize interpersonal experiences and frequently discuss moral rules and behavior expectations with their children in these conversations. They also make fewer comments about their children's feelings and instead attempt to promote

their sense of belonging within their cultural community by internalizing cultural expectations of obedience, proper behavior and social obligation (Wang & Song, 2014). These cultural differences might therefore also extend to the particular moral socialization strategies mothers use when discussing their children's acts of harm perpetrated towards siblings and friends. Similarly, ethnographic research reveals differences in parent-child conversations depending on families' socioeconomic status (e.g., Miller, Cho, & Bracey, 2005). These findings highlight the need to investigate the moral socialization strategies mothers employ in various cultural and socioeconomic contexts.

Finally, marginal interrater reliability was attained for the strategies of positive evaluation of the resolution and intent (*kappa* = 0.60) and negative evaluation of the resolution and intent (*kappa* = 0.65), reflecting the infrequent coding of these particular strategies. This serves as a limitation of the study as it reduces the potential of observing significant associations with these codes.

This research study has suggested many directions for future research. Aside from extending the sample size, including older children, and examining cultural and socioeconomic differences, future research should also examine moral socialization strategies that are expected to be similar rather than different across relationship contexts. This would illuminate how mothers respond to their children's experiences of harm across relationships. Moreover, future research should examine the particular goals that mothers have when they discuss their children's acts of harm and investigate specifically what mothers are aiming to do in these conversations. Further, given that moral socialization involves contributions from both conversational partners, it is crucial for

future research to examine how the children themselves contribute to these conversations. Particularly, it is important to examine how children's contributions may evoke particular moral socialization strategies from their mothers, and also to investigate how children respond to particular strategies to provide insight on the bidirectional process of moral socialization.

Implications and Conclusions

In conclusion, this study was designed to investigate the moral socialization strategies that mothers use when discussing their 7-year-olds' experiences of perpetrating harm towards their friends and younger siblings. The findings provided evidence to support the hypothesis that mothers are engaging in diverse strategies depending on the relationship context (friend, sibling). These results provide new insights into the processes of children's moral development and how they vary as a function of the relationship context. More specifically, the findings suggest that mothers adapt their approaches to moral socialization as a function of the relationship context by being responsive to the distinct features that characterize their children's harmful experiences with their siblings and friends. Arguably, our results also suggest that mothers are responding in ways that serve to highlight and maximize their children's moral agency. By using these particular moral socialization strategies, mothers are fostering their children's moral agency by furthering their young children's understanding of the emotional and psychological aspects related to their experiences of harm. Moreover, they are sharpening children's understanding that they may hurt others due to their diverging internal experiences and not because they are "bad" people. Our results also imply that there may be particular aspects of experiences that are particularly appropriate foci of

reflection in the aftermath of harm given the unique features of harm that are typical of each relationship context (sibling, friend). For example, exploring guilt may be an effective strategy when harm is perpetrated towards a younger sibling given the ruthless and purposeful nature of sibling harm. However, because harm towards friends tends to involve misinterpretations, guilt induction may not be an appropriate strategy in this relationship, as mothers likely do not want their children to feel bad about something that resulted because of a misunderstanding. Thus, our results build on past research by suggesting that the suitability of some moral socialization strategies varies substantively across different contexts, in contrast to a "one-size-fits-all" approach. Overall, these results have implications into how parents can effectively intervene across relationships by being aware of and responsive to the unique features of different types of harm experiences. Furthermore, the findings show how distinct relationships provide unique opportunities for children's moral learning as each relationship might generate distinct discussions and allow mothers to support children's moral understandings in varied (and perhaps complementary) ways.

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Appendix A

Strategy	***Definition***	***Examples***
Repair	-Strategies used to repair the relationship (not strategies to handle the conflict) -Deals with the process of repair in order to fix the relationship -Must imply that the perpetrator of harm is responsible for fixing things -Emphasis on YOU need to work things out with others	"Did you say sorry?" "Did you ever work things out with him?" "Did you try to talk it out?" "How did you help him?" "Could you think of a compromise that would make you both happy?" "So have you done anything else to let her know that you are still friends?" " I think it would be good for you to talk to her when you see her at school next"
Consequence for relationship	-Focus on the negative things that happen/can happen to the relationship (e.g., terminating the relationship) -About the outcome, if the relationship has been repaired or not -If the relationship has been damaged or could be damaged -Asking questions or making statements to see if something negative happened to the relationship or could happen to the relationship -Acknowledges the relationship can end negatively or terminate	"Don't you want to play with your friend next time?" "Well, well he didn't want to be your friend because you wouldn't share?" "Did you learn that after a disagreement you can also not be friends?" "Well you guys are friends now right?" "But tell her that you still want to be her friend right?" "Did you tell her that you're broken up?" "Is she still your friend?"
Other's unique characteristics	-Focus on the understanding that others may have unique characteristics making them more sensitive to harm -Focus on the understanding that other people have different preferences/interests	"When you have a friend that gets their feelings hurt easily, you have to be careful that you don't hurt their feelings, right?" "Not everyone likes to

	that don't match your own	play your imagination games"
Evaluations	-When mothers evaluate either negatively or positively -Using words like "should", "shouldn't", "better", "happy", "glad", "pleased" indicate evaluations -Evaluations can also be present when these words are not mentioned. When this is the case, the mother must be evaluating either the harm, the intent or resolution and it might sound like a moral lesson (see Examples) -For evaluations that do not use evaluative words (e.g., could've) ask yourself: is the mother trying to say it is okay or not okay? Is the mother casting judgment?	"What do you mean you hit him??" (Negative evaluation of harmful act) "Cause when we have a guest, even though we may not like them always, we can't just leave them there right?" (Negative evaluation of harmful act)
Evaluations of conflict resolution a) Positive evaluations b) Negative evaluations	-Positive/negative evaluation of how the situation was handled in the aftermath of the harm	"It was great that you said sorry" "It was good that you said are we still friends"
Evaluations of intent a) Positive evaluations b) Negative evaluations	-Positive/negative evaluation of the intentions of the child	"At least your goals were good"
Evaluations of harmful act a) Positive evaluations b) Negative evaluations	-Positive/negative evaluations of the harmful act itself -Must be about the child's actions	" I'm glad that you look out for your friends" "That was a mean thing to do" "I don't like it when you make your sibling cry" "Cause when we have a guest, even though we may not like them, we can't just leave them there" "What do you mean you hit him?"
Indicators of harm	-Emphasis on how the child became aware that the other	"How did you know she/he was upset?"

	person was upset -Focus on indicators that the person was upset/sad/mad	"What did he say or do that made you say your sibling is upset?" "Was it something on his face?" "How were you able to tell it hurt her feelings?"
Exploration of guilt	-Focus on how the child felt when they upset the other person -Focus on the reasons why they felt guilty/sad after their harmful actions -Although it could involve perspective-taking, the mother elaborates on feelings of guilt and/or remorse	"How did it make you feel when you hit your sibling?" "So why did it make you feel bad?" "How did you feel about hurting him?" "So why did it make you feel bad that your sister feels sad about not being able to play with you?"
Self-regulation	-References to controlling emotions, behavior or self-monitoring	"Next time you should take a breath and relax" " Maybe you should think things through first" "Do you think maybe before you start fighting over something, you know who's it is first?
Perspective-taking	-Mother gets the child to put themselves in the other persons shoes -Emphasis on "how would you like it if it happened to you" -Mother attempts to get their child to take the cognitive and/or affective perspective of the other person -Mother attempts to simulate the experience	" Do you like to be left out?" "But would you like it if sib said your friends are mean?" "Wouldn't you feel sad if he hit you?"
Adult intervention	-Mention a 3rd person should intervene in the future -Mention adult intervention as a good strategy to resolve conflict	"Next time come and get me"