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Emily Gallo 04/11/11

# Investigating Dinnertime: How families communicate and the relation to child well-being

by

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An abstract of
a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
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# Investigating Dinnertime: How families communicate and the relation to child well-being

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## Abstract

This study aims to build on previous literature regarding the effects of family communication styles on child well-being by examining family dinnertime conversation in terms of conversational topics and utterance types. Thirty-seven two-parent families with at least one child between the ages of 9-12 were asked to record two of their family dinnertime conversations. The results reveal that families tend to discuss the past and future the most and that mothers tend to talk the most. No definitive conclusions were drawn regarding the relation of family communication to child well-being, but the child's participation in the conversation may be important. Future research would benefit from focusing on a more diverse population and a less concrete coding scheme.

# Investigating Dinnertime: How families communicate and the relation to child well being

A growing body of literature has begun to focus on family communication in order to examine how it is related to the development of family relationships, family history, and the well being of the family members. It has been suggested that family communication patterns help to shape individual identity, social norms, and communication skills outside of the family setting. If family communication can play a role in identity development, it may also be playing a strong role in child well being. The majority of this literature focuses on conversations between mothers and children because mothers are generally considered the primary caregivers in the family. Although these studies are very useful for examining the relationship between mothers and children, a need for more studies of the family as a whole has been expressed. The analysis of family dinnertime conversations has been used as a construct for studying family communication, as it provides a more natural setting for family interactions. The purpose of this project is to further investigate how families communicate in a dinnertime setting and how these methods of communication relate to measurements of well being in the children.

## *Parenting Style*

Based on a review of past family communications literature, Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2004) have developed a theoretical model of family communication styles. In this model, Koerner and Fitzpatrick discuss two categories of parenting style associated with the family communication patterns. A person-centered approach is most often used by parents of families that tend to create an

environment in which all family members are encouraged to participate, referred to as a high conversation orientation, and focuses on how one's behavior affects others. This parenting style encourages children to develop communication skills that allow them to better understand and consider the perspectives of others. A position-centered approach is commonly used by parents of families that stress homogenous attitudes, beliefs, and values, referred to as a high conformity orientation, and focuses on rules and regulations regardless of how others are affected by them. This parenting style often leads to communication skills that focus on rules and what is considered acceptable behavior regardless of the perspectives of others. Koerner and Fitzpatrick also emphasize that children can influence family communication patterns even at a very young age, as parents begin to change their behavior based on that of their children. For example, extroverted children with high self-esteem would be less likely to easily conform to the ideals of the family and may therefore lead to a lower conformity orientation in the family. On the other hand, a child who is more introverted would be more likely to conform to the ideals of their parents and would therefore reinforce the use of conformity orientation in the family.

*Family Communication*

It is obvious that families communicate differently and the members of the family play a role in shaping the family communication style. Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2004) also emphasize two types of family communication patterns in their theoretical model that are related to the more general parenting style: conversation orientation, or the degree to which a family creates an environment in which all members are encouraged to participate, and conformity orientation, or the

degree to which a family stresses homogenous attitudes, beliefs, and values. Combinations of different degrees of these patterns create four specific communication types, which are labeled consensual, pluralistic, protective, and laissez-faire. Consensual families have a high degree of conversation and conformity orientation and are characterized by a desire to maintain family values but to encourage open communication at the same time. Pluralistic families have a high degree of conversation orientation but a low degree of conformity orientation and are characterized by completely open conversations in which all family members participate. Protective families have a low degree of conversation orientation and a high degree of conformity orientation and are characterized by a high regard for parental authority. Laissez-Faire families have a low degree of conversation and conformity orientation and are characterized by very few family interactions. From this analysis of communication styles in families it becomes clear that each family member's contributions add to the family dynamic. The communication style that develops in a family can shape one's identity and the way in which they communicate and behave, not just in the family, but in other social situations as well.

Kellas (2005) discusses family conversational styles in terms of family storytelling. In this study, 60 university students were asked to tell a family story with two other family members, one of which had to be a parent. The stories were analyzed based on the themes discussed, how much the story was told as a group or individually, any identity statements that were used in the storytelling process, and how interactional the family members were. The analysis of the family stories, along

with a measure of family functioning, demonstrated that those families who worked together more in their storytelling felt as though they were more cohesive as a family and had good overall family functioning. The results also demonstrated that the more identity statements that connected the self to the family unit that were used, the higher the rate of family well-being. Kellas concludes that storytelling as a family helps to create a family identity as well as shape one's individual identity.

In a study of 24 families with a child between the ages of 9-12, Marin, Bohanek, and Fivush (2008) examine the benefits of discussing negative events in the family for the child's social and academic competencies. Families tended to use either a negatively or positively valenced emotion in their conversations about a negative family event, and the results demonstrate that these different valences have varying effects on the child's competencies. Families who used and explained negatively valenced emotion talk had children with higher social competence, whereas families who explained positively valenced emotion had children with higher self-esteem. The authors suggest that families who use a more explanatory style when discussing a negative event have children with higher competencies and higher self-esteem because the families allowed emotion to be expressed and were able to provide an explanation for this negative experience. The authors also suggest that explanations of both positive and negative emotion may lead to even greater benefits to the child's emotional development.

A child's interactions in a family setting can also influence the development of their sense of self. In Bohanek, Marin, Fivush, and Duke's (2006) study of 40 families with at least one child between the ages of 9-12, the families were asked to

discuss one positive and one negative event that had occurred in the last 2-3 years. The narratives collected consisted of three family interactional styles characterized as coordinated, or a style in which children are encouraged to work as a group with the rest of the family to discuss problems, individual, a style in which each family member takes turns discussing their opinions, and imposed, a style in which one parent is in control of the conversation and no other family member's opinions are expressed. Based on well being data collected on the children of each family, the authors determined that a coordinated interactional style led to children with higher self-esteem because they were raised in a supportive environment in which their opinions were valued. Families that made use of an individual interactional style had children with a more external locus of control because their family environment led them to see their opinion as only one possible perspective on a certain issue. Bohanek, et. al found an imposed interactional style to be unrelated to self-esteem and external locus of control, but contributed this result to a low frequency of occurrence in the sample.

Fivush, Bohanek, and Duke (2007) also examine the role of the family in the process of identity development. It is through family conversations, in this case dinnertime conversations, that children begin to understand that their memories of the past are their own and others' memories may differ. This process allows the family to guide the child in their identity development, which may prove helpful during the adolescent period. Sharing experiences with the family also allows the child to connect their sense of self with their identity within the family unit. In one particular study, children who engaged in more conversations regarding family

history tended to know more family history and as a result have a higher level of family functioning and a more internal locus of control. Fivush et. al suggest that co-narration in the family is necessary for the child's development of their identity and an understanding of their memories as something unique.

*Fathers*

Although it would seem that the father's role is important to the family dynamic as a whole, very few studies of family communication include fathers. According to Lareau (2000), studying fathers could prove to be unreliable because fathers often do not know many details of their children's lives and often rely on information they have received from their wives to answer questions regarding their children. In her study, the mothers and fathers from 88 families from middle-class, working-class, and poor backgrounds were interviewed separately regarding their family patterns and involvement. The families were also observed repeatedly in order to collect more information about how the families behaved. Lareau found that fathers were unable to give as many details about their children's lives as mothers could, simply because they usually were not the primary caregivers. Regardless of this, fathers still felt as if they were very involved in their children's lives. Fathers in this study were often general in their interview responses about their children's activities and in many cases claimed that they heard the information through their wives and not from first-hand experience. In addition to these biases associated with information gathered from fathers, Lareau also concluded that the father's role with the children tends to be more playful and carefree, whereas the

mother plays a stricter role. Fathers also appeared to dominate the conversational space and control the dynamic of family conversations.

Silverstein (2002) also discusses the lack of fathering literature and the importance of fathers on child wellbeing  Although mothers are usually the parent included in studies regarding child well being, Silverstein stresses that mothers are not more natural caregivers than fathers, but simply become more experienced parents as they spend more time with the children. Silverstein expresses that mothering and fathering should not be considered the same thing and that good fathering should not be judged in terms of mothering. Silverstein defines paternal involvement in terms of the definition proposed by Lamb, Peck, and Levine (as cited in Silverstein). This definition provides three levels of paternal involvement: accessibility, or the amount of time the father is in contact with the children, engagement, or the amount of time the father is interacting with the children, and responsibility, or the time the father spends being directly responsible for the child's needs. In her review of the literature on fathering she found several different outcomes of high paternal involvement. In most studies, high paternal involvement had positive outcomes for children, such as positive sibling interaction, improvements in cognitive competence, self-esteem, social skills, less gender role stereotyping, and an increase in positive maternal interactions. The literature showed both positive and negative outcomes for marriages and both positive and negative outcomes found for the father's well being. Although paternal involvement varies depending on the father and mother's employment status as well as other factors, it is clear that high paternal involvement is beneficial for the child in most

cases. Silverstein also found that fathers were just as willing as mothers to participate in clinical studies involving child development when given the opportunity and flexible schedules, stressing the fact that involving fathers in research may not be as difficult as previously thought.

*Mothers vs. Fathers and the Effects on Child Well-Being*

Building on Silverstein's idea of fathering and mothering as distinct entities, Parke (2004) discusses the complete experience and act of fathering. Parke cites several examples of biological changes that take place in a father during his partner's pregnancy and after the child is born. For example, men with lower levels of testosterone were more likely to hold a baby longer and to be more responsive to a baby's cry than men with higher levels of testosterone. Parke also discusses the father's role as a playmate, which is often considered to be the trademark of fathering, but may not be a universal characteristic of fathers across cultures. Members of the family other than a typical father figure may also display the common characteristics of fathering. For example, a study of gay and lesbian households shows that these families are raising children who are developing in the normal range without a typical father figure. Parke suggests that there is a style of interaction typical of "fathering" that may be more important to the development of the child than the actual gender of the parents. Parke concludes his review by explaining fathering as a lifelong process that causes changes in the father and the development of the child. It is suggested that fathering affects the development of the father as a person, which in turn affects his interactions with the child, which then has important effects on the child's own development.

When examining the differences in how mothers and fathers talk to their children it appears, in general, that mothers and fathers do not differ much in terms of narrative style. Instead, the differences are seen in the overall amount of speech, as mothers tend to talk more than fathers, and in the types of statements mothers and fathers make in conversations with their children. In their study of 24 2-parent families with 3-year-old children, Reese and Fivush (1993) asked mothers and fathers to discuss a recent past event individually with their child. Analysis of the resulting narratives showed two types of narrative style, elaborative and repetitive, that were used by both mothers and fathers and were not associated with the gender of the parent. The elaborative style was characterized by longer conversations about an event that included many elaborations, explanations, and elaborative questioning by the parent. Frequent question and statement repetitions and more yes-no questioning characterized the repetitive style. These two styles were used by both mothers and fathers, demonstrating no distinct differences in narrative style among opposite gender parents.

Leaper, Anderson, and Sanders (1998) conducted a meta-analysis of studies related to parent-child communication in order to better understand the differences in how mothers and fathers communicate with their children. The meta-analysis looked at the amount of talking done by mothers and fathers as well as the types of speech they were using. The five types of speech examined included supportive speech, or any positive responses including praise or agreement, negative speech, such as criticism, directive speech, including imperative statements or direct suggestions, giving information, and questions. Results of the analysis showed

mothers to be significantly more talkative overall than fathers. In terms of supportive speech, mothers tended to use more of this type of language than fathers did. Mothers also tended to use more negative speech in conversations with their children than fathers did. Fathers were more likely to use directive speech and make more informing statements than mothers were. Fathers also posed more questions than mothers did when communicating with their children. Although there do not appear to be any substantial differences in the narrative styles of mothers and fathers, it is clear that there are major differences in what mothers and fathers are saying to their children. It seems that mothers tend to be more elaborative in their speech with their children, whereas fathers tend to be more directive and supply more information to their children.

Moreover, how parents talk with their children seems to be related to their children's developing well-being. Most of this research has focused on mothers, especially in terms of discussing emotionally charged information. In a study of 70 4 year-olds and their mothers, mothers were asked to discuss three different past events with their children in which the child had experienced sadness, anger, and fear respectively (Fivush, Berlin, McDermott Sales, Mennuti-Washburn, Cassidy, 2003). The results show that mothers tended to elaborate on and evaluate the events discussed more with their daughters than with sons, and in turn daughters were generally more elaborative than sons. Mothers focused on different aspects of the experience depending on the emotion expressed. For example, for most emotional experiences mothers focused on the causes of the emotion in the child, but when discussing fear they focused mostly on the facts of the situation. Children

followed a similar pattern when discussing these emotional past events. The authors suggest that discussing sadness in an accepting way allows children to understand and alleviate the emotion as well as understand how the emotion affects them. Discussing fear in a more factual manner allows children to feel as if they don't have to experience fear. Most conversations regarding anger, however, did not evaluate the situation to any great extent or help the child to resolve the issue, leading to the idea that anger is not an acceptable emotion to express. Fivush et. al conclude that the children's conversations with their parents regarding emotional events allow them to better understand how emotions affect them, how to deal with these emotions, and how to express them to others, thus adding to their sense of self (2003).

*Dinnertime Conversations as a Construct for Studying Conversation*

Family dinnertime conversations are a convenient way to observe how families communicate in a more natural setting. Blum-Kulka (1997, chap. 2) observes the general dynamics of a family dinnertime conversation. She comments on the tension present in every dinnertime conversation between the social aspects of the meal and the practical aspects of the dinnertime routine. Blum-Kulka identifies three themes common in most dinnertime conversations, which are situational concerns, such as asking for food, immediate family concerns, such as the details of each family member's day, and non-immediate concerns, such as common knowledge information. The situational themes demonstrate the parents' nurturing characteristics, such as helping the child cut their food or giving them a dish. Immediate family concerns are attempts to keep the family members involved in

each other's lives, but children can either interpret their parent's questions as either an opportunity to be involved or as invasive. Blum-Kulka suggests that non-immediate concerns allow the child to be involved in the adult world and express their maturity. Blum-Kulka also observes the cultural aspects present in dinnertime conversations and explains that family dinner talk serves as an important socializing tool and a way to demonstrate what is appropriate social behavior.

Fiese and Marjinsky (1999) observed dinnertime stories in families with at least one child between the ages of 5 and 7. The parents were asked to tell the children a story about a mealtime when they were children and the conversations were videotaped. Measures of child adjustment, well-being, and family functioning were also collected. Correlations of the parents' abilities to modulate their affect well during dinnertime narratives with marital satisfaction and child behavior problems revealed a relationship between all three factors. The ability to modulate affect is a predictor of marital satisfaction, which in turn was related to having children with fewer externalizing problems. In general, mothers tend to show stronger affect modulation than fathers. Fiese and Marjinsky suggest that successful modulation of affect by the parents serves as a model for the children to learn how to modulate their own affect. The authors also note that the child's behavior does have the ability to effect how the parent modulates affect in dinnertime narratives as well, making the development of a narrative style a more interpersonal process.

*Talking about the Past*

A great deal of the previous literature examining conversations between family members has focused on conversations about past events, and the way in

which family narratives are co-constructed. Conversations about the past have proven to be important for the development of autobiographical memory and a sense of self in young children (Fivush, Reese, & Haden, 2006). In a review of maternal reminiscing styles, Fivush, et. al discuss the developmental effects of parent-child interactions. Cultural socialization is a key benefit of parent-child reminiscing because each interaction serves as an example of what is socially acceptable and what beliefs are held in the child's culture. The authors also argue that mother-child conversations about the past are essential for the child's autobiographical memory development and that the mother's interactional style can effect this development. Mothers that were highly elaborative and probed their children for more specific details about past events, as opposed to mothers who engaged in very non-specific conversations, had children who participated in much richer conversations about the past later on.

A review of past literature has shown that maternal reminiscing style is influenced by several factors. For example, mothers tend to elaborate more in conversations with their daughters than with their sons. Mothers also tend to elaborate more with children who are more proficient linguistically, who are more sociable, and who display a more secure attachment style. Fivush et. al also express that, regardless of this information, maternal reminiscing style is a predictor of the child's autobiographical memory development even when other factors are held constant. The authors also discuss major areas of development in which maternal reminiscing style plays a key role. They describe a clear relationship between an elaborative reminiscing style and the child's development in the areas of memory,

literacy, and language. There are also less cogent, but possible, connections between an elaborative reminiscing style and the child's understanding of mental states and a sense of self. Fivush et. al stress the importance of studying maternal reminiscing style because of it's importance in the development of the child's autobiographical memory, sense of self, and ability to relate to others.

Although most studies involving narratives and discussion of past events have focused on preschool aged children, it has been shown that adolescence is a particularly important time for the development of one's identity (Erikson, 1959/1980, as cited in Fivush, Bohanek, Zaman, Grapin, 2011). Adolescence is the period in one's life where individuals begin to understand themselves in relation to others and become more focused on what will be their individual adult self. For this reason, the current study focuses on children between the ages of 9-12, as they are entering the adolescent period. In one of the few studies focusing on family narratives in relation to well-being during adolescence, Fivush, Bohanek, and Zaman (2009) found that families with mothers who played more of a role in co-narrating family stories had children with fewer internalizing behaviors and families with fathers who prompted their children with questions about their day had children with fewer internalizing and externalizing behaviors. Overall, children in families who share more family stories tended to have higher levels of emotional well-being. Fivush et. al suggests that family stories are assisting adolescents in understanding themselves to some extent.

*The Current Study*

The current study is part of a larger study related to family communications and adolescent well-being. As part of this project , thirty-seven families agreed to record 2-3 of their family dinnertime conversations. Each family had at least one child between the ages of 9 and 12 who is referred to as the target child. The mothers also completed the Child Behavior Checklist for the target child. A first analysis of these dinnertime conversations focused on family narratives told around the table (Bohanek, Fivush, Zaman, Lepore, Merchant, and Duke, 2009). Narratives were defined as conversations about past events. The results examining just the narrative portions of these conversations indicated that mothers provide and negate more information than fathers, which the others suggest may demonstrate that mothers play a larger role in forming elaborative family narratives. Fathers tended to have a more in-the-moment role, as opposed to the mothers who tend to work towards creating a shared family history. Information from the analysis of the narratives along with information gathered from the CBCL demonstrate that mothers who provide, confirm, and negate information more frequently have children with fewer internalizing and externalizing problems and children who are more involved in the creation of family narratives have higher levels of well-being.

The current project aims to build on the initial set of analyses by examining the dinnertime conversations more completely. With this information, we can better understand what families are talking about over the dinner table and how these types of conversations relate to child well-being. The goal of this project is to explore as best as possible what families are talking, how they are talking about it,

who is doing the talking, and how these communication styles are related to child internalizing and externalizing behaviors. Because this is largely an exploratory study, no specific predictions were made.

## Method

### *Participants*

Forty middle-class two-parent, opposite gender families were recruited to take part in a larger study examining family communication and well-being. These families all had at least one child between the ages of 9 and 12 who will be referred to as the target child. Of the 40 families, 37 families participated in the dinnertime portion of the study, which is the data set used for the current study. Twenty-eight families are Caucasian, 3 are African-American, 5 are mixed race and one is Asian-American. Each family had between 1 and 6 children who ranged from age 2 months to 23 years. Three families had 1 child at the meal, 22 families had 2 children, 8 families had 3 children, 3 families had 4 children, and 1 family had 5 children present. Thirty of the families are traditional families, 5 are blended families, and 2 were families with one additional adult living in the home. All of the parents gave informed consent to the procedures and the children gave verbal assent. Each family was paid $25 for their participation and the children were given movie tickets.

The families were given a tape recorder and were asked to record 2-3 dinnertime conversations within 2 weeks. Thirty-one families recorded at least 2 conversations and 6 returned only 1 conversation. The second conversation was analyzed, when available, to reduce the likelihood of technical difficulties or the family feeling uncomfortable with the tape recorder. Each conversation was

transcribed from the tapes provided and checked before they were coded. The dinnertime conversations ranged in length from 20-45 minutes each.

The mothers were also asked to complete the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) for their target child.

*Child Behavior Checklist*. The Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach, 1991) is commonly used to determine the presence of internalizing and externalizing behaviors in children and was therefore chosen for use in this study. Only the scales for internalizing and externalizing behaviors are used in the present study. The scores of 32 items are summed to create the internalizing score and the sum of 33 separate items is used to find the externalizing score. Each item is scored from 0-2 ("not true"-"very true" of the child). Lower scores are indicative of less frequent internalizing or externalizing behaviors whereas higher scores are indicative of more frequent internalizing or externalizing behaviors. As mothers have been shown to be more reliable in their reporting on this measure, only the mother's data was used.

Cronbach's alphas were calculated for each scale as a measure of internal consistency (Achenbach, 1991). Strong internal consistency is indicated with the internalizing scale $\alpha = .90$ and the externalizing scare $\alpha = .93$. The 1-week test-retest reliability Pearson *r*s for the internalizing and externalizing scales are .89 and .93, according to Achenbach.

*Coding*

All dinnertime conversations were transcribed and checked by a professional transcriber who had become familiar with the families before being coded. The

conversations were coded in two parts. First, the conversations were coded in terms of conversational topic in order to establish what the families were talking about around the dinner table. Next, all conversational comments were coded for utterance type, defined as any comment with an explicit or implied subject and verb, in order to examine how the family members were talking about each topic.

Two coders read through each of the dinnertime conversation transcripts and coded each part of the conversations into one of 10 categories. These ten categories were developed with a basis in previous descriptive research and driven by the data. The ten conversation categories were:

Recent Past- Any talk about an event that occurred yesterday or earlier today. These conversations are typically in the past tense but a few comments may be in the present or future tense. For example, the father asks the child about their day at school or the mother describes an event that occurred at work.

Distant Past- Any talk about an event that occurred more than a day ago. These conversations are typically in the past tense but a few comments may be in the present or future tense. Note that most conversations involved events that occurred months or years in the past. The family recalling a vacation to Disney World or discussing the child's baseball game the previous week would be examples of this topic.

Near Future- Any talk about an event that will happen tomorrow or later today. These conversations are typically in the future tense but a few comments may in the past or present tense. For example, the parent reminds

the child about a doctor's appointment the next day or the child asks permission to see a friend that night.

Distant Future- Any talk about something that will occur more than a day from now. These conversations are typically in the future tense but a few comments may be in the present or past tense. For example, the parents tell the child they will be visiting their grandparents next weekend or the child asks a sibling if they will be playing on the baseball team next year.

General Knowledge- Any talk about facts, academics, world knowledge, general knowledge, or descriptions of concepts or objects. These conversations are typically in the present tense but a few comments may be in the past or future tense. The father explaining to the child what a word means or the child describing a historical event they learned about in school would be examples of this topic.

Ongoing Event- Any talk about what is going on right now. This may include talk about the food, discipline, requests for food, talk about what someone is doing right now, managing dinnertime, etc. These conversations are typically in the present tense but some comments may be in the past or future tense. For example, the mother asks the child to set the table or the child asks a sibling to pass the salt.

Description of People- Any talk about what a person is like. This is not dependent on whether or not the person is present at the time of the conversation or whether or not the person is part of the family. These conversations are typically in the present tense but may include some

comments in the past or future tense. The child describing a bully in their class would be an example of this topic.

Banter- Any back and forth conversations that appear to be solely for entertainment or bonding. These may be silly, teasing, or argumentative, but are not serious conflicts. Singing may also be included in this category. For example, the family teases a child for having a boyfriend or girlfriend.

Hypothetical Events- Any talk about something that could possibly happen in the future. These conversations may also be wishful thinking or fantasizing. For example, the parents talk about the family going on a trip to Hawaii if all the children have the same spring break next year.

Conflict- Any serious argument or real conflict. A child arguing about their curfew with the parent would be an example of this topic.

After all the transcripts were coded for conversational topic, a second coding scheme was used to code each utterance type. As previously defined, an utterance was considered any comment with an explicit or implied subject and verb, but also includes exclamations and confirmations or negations of previous statements. Each utterance was coded as one of the following:

Provide- The provision of information whether prompted or not. For example:

"I'm gonna get the rest of the corn" or "We were just playing around, you know, and all that stuff"

Request- Asking for information in the form of a question. For example:

"Do you want to put cheese on it, James?" or "So what…your day was boring?"

Confirm- Validating or repeating information that has previously been provided; the use of "yes" or any variation of "yes" as the response to a provision of or request for information.

Negate- Disconfirming information that has been provided; the use of "no" or a "no" variation in response to a request for or provision of information. These negations are typically not argumentative, but rather used to negotiate facts.

The two coders established reliability by coding 82 of the 782 total pages of transcripts. For both conversational topics and type of utterance the coders showed 87.5% agreement overall.

## Results

*What are families talking about?*

The first question aims to answer the question of what are families talking about around the dinner table. In order to answer this question, each family's conversation was coded in terms of 10 conversational topics: recent past, distant past, near future, distant future, general knowledge, ongoing event, description of people, banter, hypothetical events, and conflict. The number of conversations of each type was calculated for each family. As seen in Figure 1, families had the most conversations about ongoing events and general knowledge, followed by the future and recent past, and the fewest conversations about the distant past and banter. The general knowledge and ongoing event topics had the greatest number of conversations, with 257 and 272 respectively, while the hypothetical events, near future, and conflict topics had the fewest conversations, with 30, 49, and 2

respectively. Due to low frequency, the conflict and description of people topics were eliminated and the categories for hypothetical events, near future, and distant future were combined to form one future category, resulting in a total of 6 conversational topics that were used in all subsequent analyses. These topics are recent past, distant past, future, general knowledge, ongoing event, and banter.

A related question was to determine how often the family members were contributing to the conversations in each conversational topic. Thus, the number of turns across family members for each conversation topic was calculated (Figure 2). A one-way repeated measures analysis of variance of the mean number of turns per category revealed a significant difference between groups, $F(5, 199)= 24.34$, $p< .001$. Post hoc analysis using Tukey's HSD criterion reveal that the mean turns in recent past conversations ($M$=17.92, $SD$=9.31) is significantly greater than in ongoing event ($M$=10.48, $SD$=4.82) and banter ($M$=9.39, $SD$=4.41) conversations, $p<.05$. The mean turns in distant past conversations (M=13.21, SD=6.08), future conversations (M=13.98, SD=9.74), general knowledge conversations (M=13.73, SD=6.22) and ongoing event conversations are significantly greater than banter conversations, $p<.05$. The mean turns in banter conversations is significantly lower than the mean turns in all other conversation categories, $p<.05$. Thus, overall, families were making the most comments in conversations about the recent past, followed by future, general knowledge, distant past and ongoing events, and the least amount of comments in banter conversations.

*Who is talking?*

Across all conversational topics, the amount each family member contributed to the conversation was also of interest. In order to measure the differences between family members the overall number of turns by mothers, fathers, and children across conversation topics was calculated (Figure 3). A one-way analysis of variance shows a significant difference between groups, $F(3, 144)=3.49$, $p<.05$. Post hoc analyses reveal that mothers ($M=115.05$, $SD=63.43$) talk more than children ($M=85.08$, $SD=45.45$), $p<.05$ but there were no differences between mothers and fathers or fathers and children. Although it appears that fathers contributed less to the conversations than mothers, the only significant difference was seen in the contributions of mothers versus the contributions of children.

*How are families talking?*

Beyond conversational topics, the way in which the families communicate within each topic was also of interest. In order to examine how information is shared throughout the conversation, each individual utterance was identified and coded. For every dinnertime narrative, each utterance was coded as one of four utterance types: provide, request, confirm, or negate. The amount of talk and type of utterance for each family member was examined separately for each conversation topic. To foreshadow, the general knowledge, distant past, and banter conversation types showed a similar pattern in which there was a main effect of utterance type, but no main effect of which family member is speaking and no interaction. The future and ongoing event topics can also be grouped together, as they both revealed a main effect of utterance type as well as a main effect of family member and an

interaction. The recent past topic was slightly different from the other topics in that there is a main effect of utterance type and an interaction, but no main effect of family member.

In the general knowledge category, there is a main effect of utterance, $F(2, 108)=154.74$, $p<.001$ but no main effect of family member and no interaction (Figure 4). A post hoc test using Tukey's HSD criterion show the number of provides to be significantly greater than the number of requests, confirms and negates and the number of requests is significantly higher than the number of negates, $p<.05$.

In the distant past conversations there was also a main effect of utterance, $F(2, 108)=21,73$, $p<.001$ but no main effect of family member and no interaction (Figure 5). The post hoc tests show the number of provides to be significantly greater than the number of requests, confirms and negates, $p<.05$ but no other significant differences between utterance types.

The banter conversations show a similar pattern to the distant past and general knowledge conversations. There is a main effect of utterance, $F(2, 108)=24.15$, $p<.001$ but there is no main effect of family member and no interaction (Figure 6). The post hoc tests show the number of provides to be significantly greater than the number of requests, confirms and negates, $p<.05$ but no other significant differences between utterance types.

The future conversation category has a main effect of utterance, $F(2, 108)=69.01$, $p<.001$ as well as a main effect of family member, $F(2, 108)=6.54$, $p<.01$ and an interaction, $F(2, 108)=6.43$, $p<.01$ (Figure 7). This was followed up by a one-way analysis of variance for each type of utterance. A one-way analysis of provide

utterances reveals a significant difference between groups, $F(2, 108)=6.15$, $p<.01$. A post hoc test using Tukey's HSD criterion shows that mothers used significantly more provide utterances than both fathers and target children, $p<.05$. A one-way analysis of variance for request utterances also shows a significant difference between groups, $F(2, 108)=5.43$, $p<.01$. A post hoc test shows that mothers also used significantly more request utterances than both fathers and target children, $p<.05$. There are no significant differences between mothers, fathers, and target children in terms of confirm, $F(2, 108)=3.20$, $p=.045$, and negate utterances. $F(2, 108)=1.33$, $p=.27$.

The ongoing event category also has a main effect of utterance, $F(2, 108)=98.60$, $p<.001$ as well as a main effect of family member, $F(2, 108)=7.54$, $p<.001$ and an interaction, $F(2, 108)=6.90$, $p<.01$ (Figure 8). A one-way analysis of variance for provide utterances shows a significant difference between groups, $F(2, 108)=4.97$, $p<.01$. A post hoc test shows that mothers used significantly more provides than both fathers and target children, $p<.05$. The one-way analysis of variance for requests also shows a significant difference between groups, $F(2, 108)=14.30$, $p<.001$. A post hoc test shows that mothers used significantly more requests than both fathers and target children, $p<.05$. There were no significant differences between groups for confirm, $F(2, 108)=2.64$, $p=.076$, or negate utterances, $F(2, 108)=.58$, $p=.559$.

Finally, the recent past category had a main effect of utterance $F(2, 108)=56.68$, $p<.001$ and an interaction $F(2, 108)=2.08$, $p<.055$ but no main effect of family member (Figure 9). This was followed up with a one-way analysis of variance

for type of utterance. The one-way analysis of variance for provide utterances does not show a significant difference between groups, $F(2, 108)=1.72$, $p=.184$. The one way analysis of variance for requests does show a significant difference between groups, $F(2, 108)=7.42$, $p<.001$. A post hoc test shows that mothers used a significantly greater amount of request utterances than the target children, $p<.05$. The one-way analysis of variance for confirm utterances also does not show a significant difference between groups, $F(2, 108)=1.46$, $p=.237$. The one-way analysis of variance for negate utterances does show a significant difference between groups, $F(2, 108)=4.65$, $p<.05$. A post hoc test shows that mothers used significantly more negate utterances than fathers, $p<.05$.

In general there appear to be two main groups of conversational topics. The first group, which includes general knowledge, distant past and banter, do not show a clear relationship between the type of utterance and the family member speaking, but do show distinct differences in the usage of the different types of utterances. The second group, which includes future, ongoing events, and recent past, do show a relationship between the utterances used and the family member speaking, as well as differences in the usage of the different types of utterances. The recent past topic is slightly different from the other topics in this group in that are no distinct differences in the amount of utterances used by each family member as seen in both the future and ongoing event topics.

*Relation to Child Well-being*

In order to understand how the observed family communication styles and patterns contribute to child well-being, several correlations were run. For each

conversational category, the number of provides, requests, confirms, and negates made by each family member were correlated to the rates of internalizing and externalizing behaviors of the target children as reported by their mothers. Overall, no distinct patterns were seen in the distant past, general knowledge, recent past, or future categories. Only the banter and the ongoing event categories show some patterns relating the child's participation in the conversation and their amounts of internalizing and externalizing behaviors. Correlations between utterances by family members for each conversational topic and children's well-being are shown in Tables 1 through 6.

For the ongoing event category (shown in Table 1) there are negative correlations indicating that mothers who provide more information and fathers who negate more information have children with lower levels of internalizing behavior. In addition, children who provide, request and confirm more information during conversations about ongoing events display lower levels of internalizing behavior.

A similar pattern can be seen in the banter category, as seen in Table 2. There are positive correlations that demonstrate that the amount of confirming statements made by the father lead to higher levels of externalizing behaviors seen in the target child. Again, there is a pattern between the child's participation in the family conversation and their levels of internalizing and externalizing behaviors. There are positive correlations showing that target children who request more information tend to have higher levels of externalizing behaviors and that target children who confirm more information tend to have higher levels of internalizing behaviors.

Children who confirm more information also tend to show higher levels of externalizing behaviors..

There are no correlations observed in the distant past category (Table 3), the general knowledge category (Table 4), or the recent past (Table 5). Although there are two positive correlations in the future category, they show no real pattern (Table 6). There are positive correlations showing that mothers who negate more information and children who provide more information are related to higher levels of externalizing behaviors observed in the child, but as previously stated, they do not demonstrate a clear pattern.

In general, correlations between the types of utterances made by the family members and the amount of internalizing and externalizing behaviors observed in the target child reveal very few significant patterns. The banter and ongoing event categories did reveal some significant correlations between the target child's participation in the family conversation and their levels of internalizing and externalizing behaviors. The distant past, recent past, and general knowledge categories revealed no significant correlations at all. The future category revealed only two significant correlations, both of which did not appear to form a clear pattern.

## Discussion

As this study was largely an exploratory study, no definitive predictions were made, but several questions were posed in order to further investigate family communication styles over the dinner table. The first set of questions I aim to answer were what topics families were typically discussing at dinnertime, how the

family members were discussing these topics, and which family members were contributing to the conversations. The second set of research questions I aimed explore were if and how the way the family members were communicating was affecting the child's display of internalizing and externalizing behaviors.

This study was developed in order to build on a previous study of dinnertime conversations conducted with the same data set (Bohanek, Fivush, Zaman, Lepore, Merchant, and Duke, 2009). Family communication has proven to be an influential part of a child's development of a sense of self, an understanding of social rules, and a mechanism for creating a shared family history, therefore making it an important topic to study. As the previous study focused only on excerpts of the conversations discussing the past, I aimed to obtain a clearer picture of family communication styles by analyzing the entire dinnertime conversation for each family. The previous study analyzed conversations about the past in terms of the relation between the number of each type of utterance (i.e. provide, request, confirm, negate) used by each family member and the levels of internalizing and externalizing behaviors observed in the child. Before conducting these analyses in the current study, I first divided the conversations in terms of conversational category (i.e. general knowledge, ongoing event, distant past, recent past, future, and banter) and then analyzed what was being said in each category in terms of utterance type and who is speaking. By examining the conversational topics, the goal was to gain a better understanding of what families were talking about and how the family's participation in each individual topic may be affecting the child's well-being. Most of the previous literature exploring family communication focuses on past events only,

and although conversations about the past have proven to be extremely important for child development (Fivush, Reese, & Haden, 2006, Fivush, Bohanek, and Zaman, 2009, and Bohanek, Fivush, Zaman, Lepore, Merchant, and Duke, 2009), this study looked at 6 different conversational categories in order to get a more full and natural representation of how the families are communicating.

This study included two phases: the first focusing on the manner in which the family was communicating over the dinner table and the second focusing on how these communication styles affected child well-being. In the first section I aimed to answer four major questions. The first question I aimed to answer is how often families were discussing each conversational topic. Once this was determined, the goal was to see how long families were discussing each topic once it was brought up in conversation. The third question I looked to answer was which family members were contributing the most in the dinnertime conversations. The final point of interest regarding the conversations in general was how the family members were discussing each topic in terms of the language they were using. The major question I aimed to answer in the second phase was if these family communication patterns were related to child well-being, as measured by the levels of internalizing and externalizing behaviors observed in the child. Although no specific hypotheses were made, the goal was to use the information gathered to create a clearer picture of how families communicate in a more natural setting and how this communication may or may not be related to child well-being.

In terms of what families are talking about, the results reveal that families brought up topics regarding general knowledge and ongoing events the most. As

ongoing events tend to be dinnertime logistical conversations and general knowledge refers to any topic related to facts or information about the world, it would make sense that these topics would be the most heavily discussed. As the dinnertime conversations progress in each family, the regular conversation is constantly interrupted by talk about the food on the table, requests for food to be passed, requests for proper dinnertime behavior, and other such remarks all of which fall under the ongoing event category. These types of remarks are necessary for normal social functioning and therefore it is not surprising that they occur at a high rate during dinnertime as well. General knowledge conversations may be a way of sharing information between family members, creating a sense of shared family knowledge and togetherness. The recent past and future topics were the next most frequently discussed. Previous literature (Fivush, Bohanek, and Duke, 2007) has discussed the importance of conversations about the past for the child's development of a sense of self and the creation of a shared family history, and it is evident that conversations about the past were an important topic for these families as well. The abundance of future conversations adds to the idea that families are not just discussing the present; they are sharing a past history and planning for the future as a group.

Interestingly, although some conversational topics may have been brought up more frequently over the course of the dinnertime, certain topics were discussed at greater length when they were brought up. Families talk the most in conversations about the recent past and the future, showing the importance of and interest in these topics for the family members. This again demonstrates that

families are spending the majority of their dinnertime conversations discussing the past, both shared and individual, and the future, rather than the present, which appears to aid in the creation of a shared family history. Family members appear to be most engaged and active in conversation on these topics, suggesting that these topics provide a greater sense of family togetherness.

Surprisingly, no significant differences were found between mothers and fathers in terms of how much they were participating in the conversation as measured by the number of turns taken, but there was a difference between the mother and the child. This supports the claims of previous literature (Bohanek, Fivush, Zaman, Lepore, Merchant, and Duke, 2009 and Leaper, Anderson, and Sanders, 1998) that the mother tends to be the kin keeper of the family and plays a major role in scaffolding the conversation for the child and the family as a whole. Although, based on previous literature, it would be predicted that fathers would be talking less than mothers, it is important to remember the difference between turns and utterances. Although the fathers may be taking a similar amount of turns as mothers, they may be making fewer statements within those turns. After reading through the transcripts of each dinnertime conversation, there appears to be a difference in the way fathers and mothers communicate with their children that cannot be fully captured in this study. Fathers and mothers may be contributing different types of information or interacting with their children in a way that may not be noticeable in these analyses. For example, Leaper, Anderson, and Sanders (1998) suggest from their findings that mothers tend to be more elaborative in their speech with their children whereas fathers tend to be more informative and

directive in their speech. Mothers and fathers appear to be equally engaged in the family conversation, as they are taking the same amount of turns, but it is possible that fathers are making fewer utterances in each turn, therefore contributing different amounts of information each time they participate.

In general, the analysis of utterance type by family member in each conversational category revealed two major patterns. In the future, ongoing event, and recent past categories we see an interaction between the family member speaking and the utterance type used, whereas in the distant past, general knowledge, and banter categories this is not present. Overall, across all conversational topics, family members provide more information than they request and request more information than they confirm or negate. From these analyses, we can gather that the family members are spending more time contributing their own information to the conversation than they do trying to get others involved. Dinnertime is often the only point in the day that the family is together and therefore it seems appropriate that each family member would be most concerned with sharing their own stories from the day. As conversational topics change rapidly over the course of dinnertime conversation, they are also not spending much time negotiating each topic (i.e. confirming or negating information given by others).

Importantly, for the future, ongoing event, and recent past, mothers provided more information than fathers and children. As stated earlier, although mothers and fathers may be taking the same amount of turns, mothers are making more utterances each time they speak, suggesting that they are supplying more information overall about specific conversational topics. Perhaps the distant past,

banter, and general knowledge categories are topics more frequently discussed by all family members. As these categories include topics such as a family story, new information learned that day, and the teasing of a sibling, they may simply be the categories most accessible to all family members. The future, ongoing event, and recent past categories are more likely to be topics in which mothers may be more active than the children because they include talking about the family's future together, controlling dinnertime behavior, and discussing recent events in the family members lives (i.e. how was your day at school?). Ongoing event topics are usually related to behavior regulation at the dinner table, and while fathers may be disciplining the children as well, it may be mothers who tend to play a more active role in maintaining order over the course of the meal. Mothers may also be talking more about the recent past and future topics in order to enhance the feeling of family unity. They may be discussing the recent past in order to help the family reconnect at the end of the day. Discussions about the future may also build family cohesion by creating shared plans for the future as a family.

Although there were not many significant relations between family communication style and child well-being, a few general patterns can be detected. Although there is not a conclusive pattern, it is possible that it is the child's level of participation in the family conversation that is related to their display of internalizing and externalizing behaviors. This an interesting pattern considering that most of the past literature focuses on the effects of how the parents' communication relates to child well being (Fivush, Reese, & Haden, 2006, Fiese and Marjinsky,1999, Fivush, Berlin, McDermott Sales, Mennuti-Washburn, Cassidy,

2003, Fivush, Bohanek, and Duke, 2007, and Bohanek, Marin, Fivush, and Duke's, 2006). Past literature has discussed the importance of parental elaboration and resolution of emotional topics on child well-being, but in the current study it appears to be the child's communication patterns that are most important. The majority of the conversational topics showed no significant correlations, but in the ongoing event category children who provided, requested, and confirmed more information tended to have less observed internalizing behaviors. In the banter category, children who confirmed more information had more observed internalizing and externalizing behaviors and children who negated more information also tended to have more externalizing problems. The negative correlations seen in the ongoing event category may be related to behavior regulation, as ongoing event conversations often have to do with dinnertime logistics. This relation may also be showing that children who are more engaged in the family dinnertime in general tend to display fewer internalizing and externalizing problems. It is possible that the positive correlation seen in the banter category is related to the teasing and joking normally seen in banter conversations. Perhaps this type of teasing behavior is related to acting out in some form. Firm conclusions cannot be drawn from this data, but it is possible that these patterns may be more emphasized in less highly-functioning families where internalizing and externalizing behaviors may be more common in the children in general.

There are several notable limitations to this study. Most importantly, the population included in the study is made up only of highly functioning opposite sex, two-parent families. Although this information is useful and informative, it may not

be applicable to families with varying structures and levels of functioning. As these families are all highly functioning, very few of the children displayed internalizing or externalizing behaviors above the normal range. This may explain the very few significant results in the correlations of utterance type and child well-being. Also, the child's levels of internalizing and externalizing behaviors are reported by the mother. Although it has been demonstrated that mothers are highly effective reporters, there may be some bias here. A final limitation regarding the well-being data is that the dinnertime conversations and the child well-being data were collected at the same time. It is possible that the family communication styles may have a longitudinal effect on child well-being that this study was unable to observe.

Future research would benefit from observing dinnertime conversations in varying family structures in order to determine if different types of families differ in their communication styles. It would be beneficial to observe families who may not be as highly functioning, as there may be clearer relationships seen between communication style and child internalizing and externalizing behaviors in these families. Although this coding scheme was based in previous literature and driven by the data, it may be useful to develop a way to look at what families are talking about that captures more of what the conversations are really about. A coding scheme that involves breaking down the conversations into more specific categories (i.e. play conversations, school conversations, family plans, etc.) may be helpful for better understand what types of information each family member tends to contribute.

To summarize, the goal of this study was to build on previous literature by conducting a more in depth analysis of family communication styles around the dinner table and to relate this information about family communication to child well-being. The way families communicate is extremely important for child development and dinnertime seems to be the most naturalistic setting in which to observe it. The results reveal that families tend to talk about the past and the future the most when these topics are brought up, supporting the findings of past literature regarding the creation of shared family history. I found that mothers tend to talk the most, again supporting previous literature that claims that mothers play more of a scaffolding role in family conversations (Leaper, Anderson, and Sanders, 1998 and Bohanek, Fivush, Zaman, Lepore, Merchant, and Duke, 2009). Fathers do appear to be involved in the conversations, as the total number of turns taken by mothers and fathers are not significantly different, but they may be participating in a different manner. Although there were no distinct findings relating these family communication styles to child well-being, some patterns were observed. It appears that the child's level of participation in the family conversation may be related to their levels of internalizing and externalizing behaviors. Although previous research has focused mostly on the parents' influence on child well-being, it may be useful to further investigate how the child's behavior affects the family dynamic. It has been shown previously that the behavior of the child can change the behavior of the parent (Koerner and Fitzpatrick, 2004), suggesting that it is necessary to look at all of the family members involved in the conversation in order to get a clear picture of the effect on well-being. Future research that focuses on a more diverse population,

rather than only high functioning families, may be necessary in order to see more distinctive results in terms of child well-being.

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Figure 1.

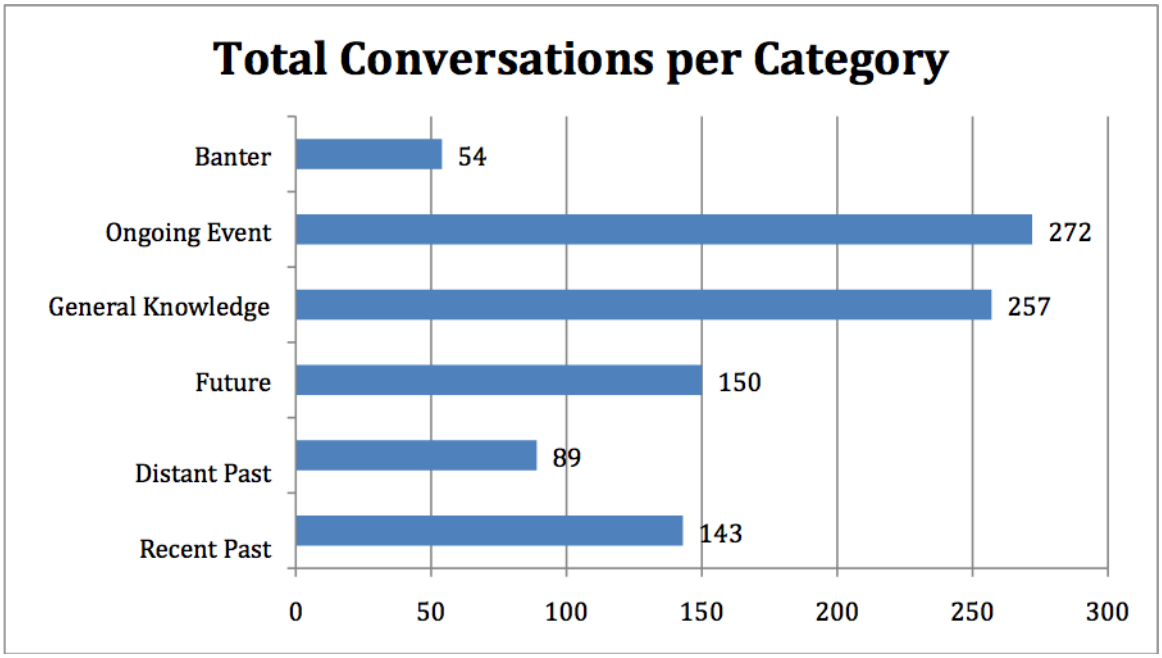


Figure 1: Total number of conversations in each conversational category for all families

Figure 2.

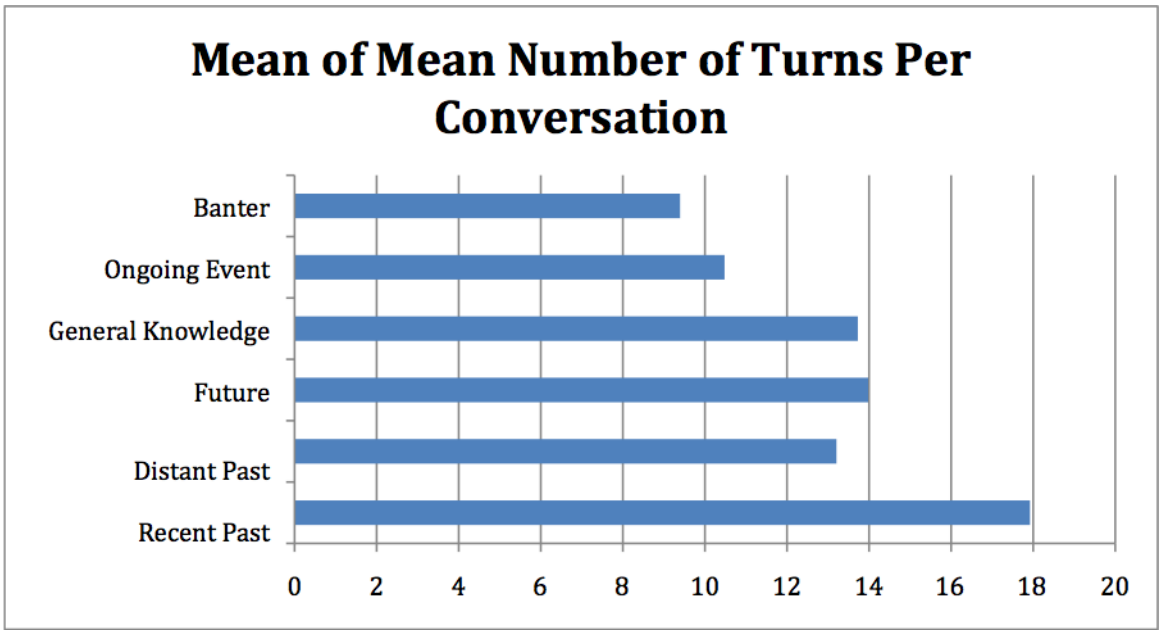


Figure 2: Average of the mean number of turns taken in each conversational category

Figure 3.

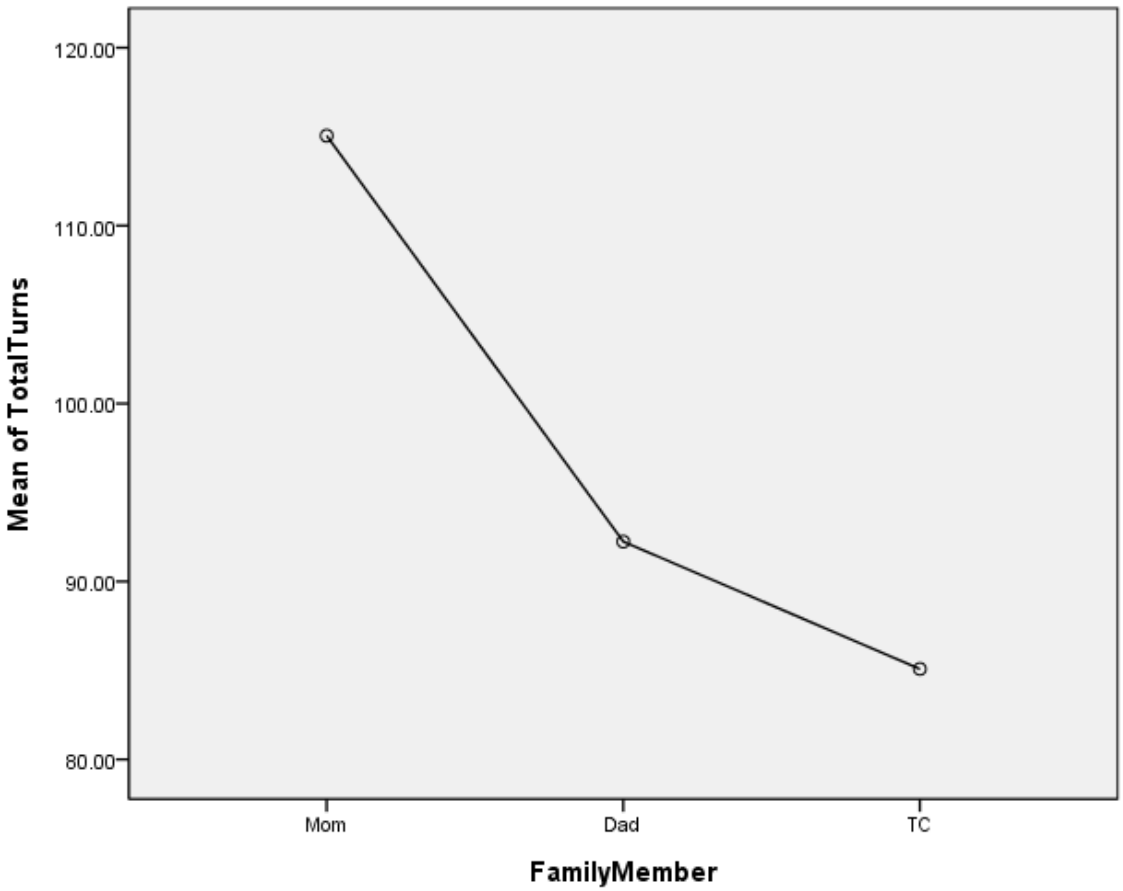


Figure 3: Mean number of turns taken by mothers, fathers, and target children across all families in all conversational categories

Figure 4.

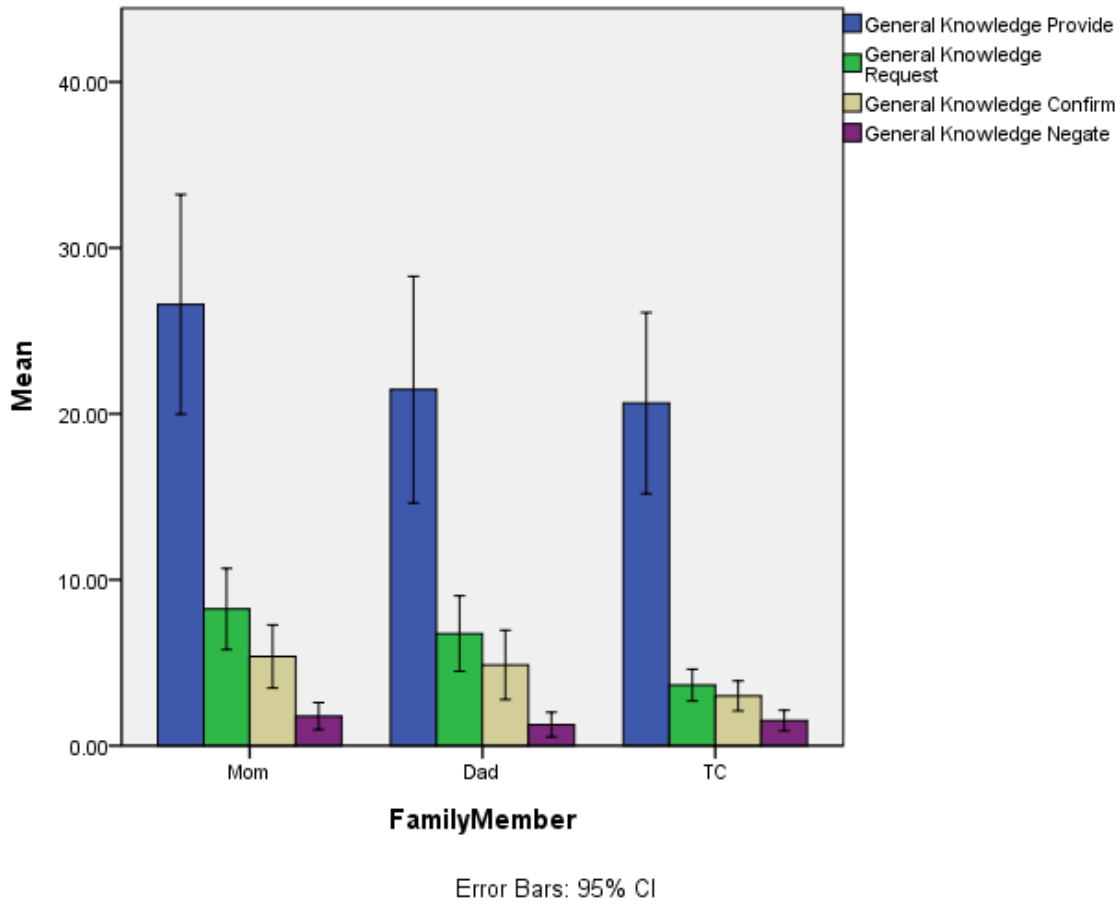


Figure 4: Mean number of turns taken per utterance type by mothers, fathers, and target children across families in the general knowledge category

Figure 5.

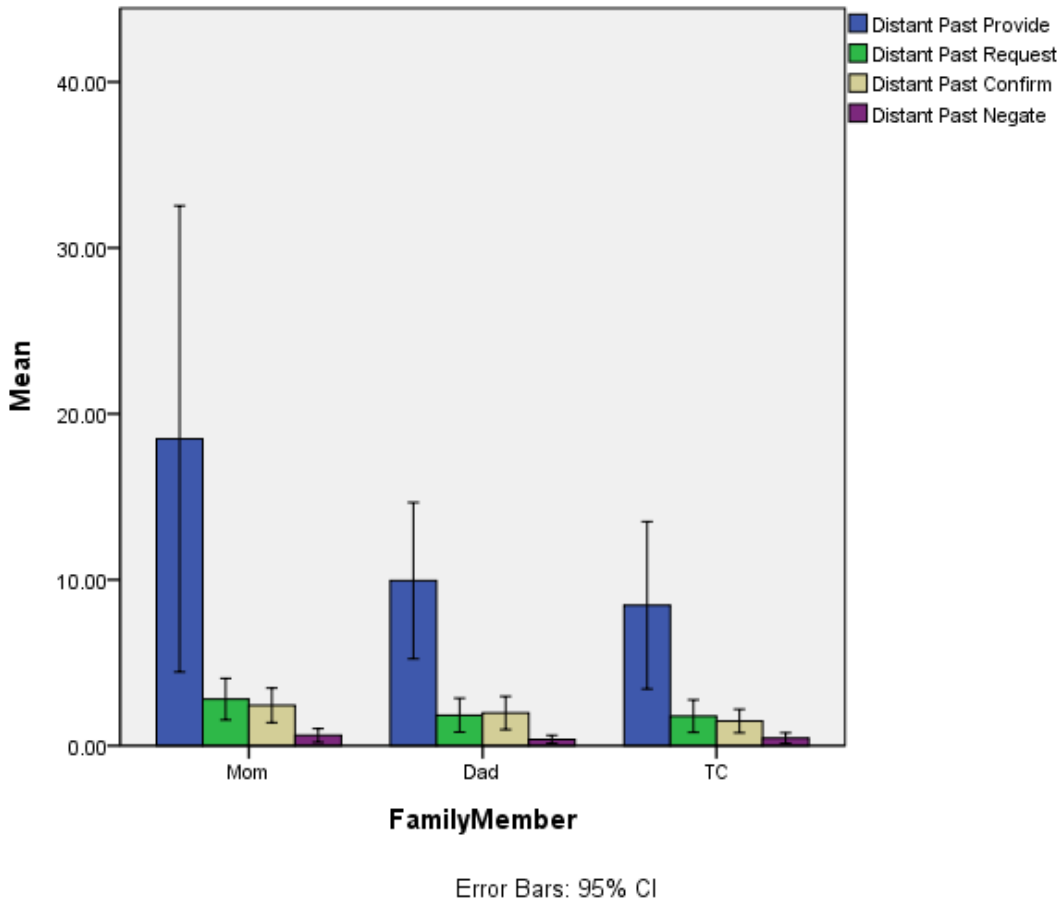


Figure 5: Mean number of turns taken per utterance type by mothers, fathers, and target children across families in the distant past category

Figure 6.

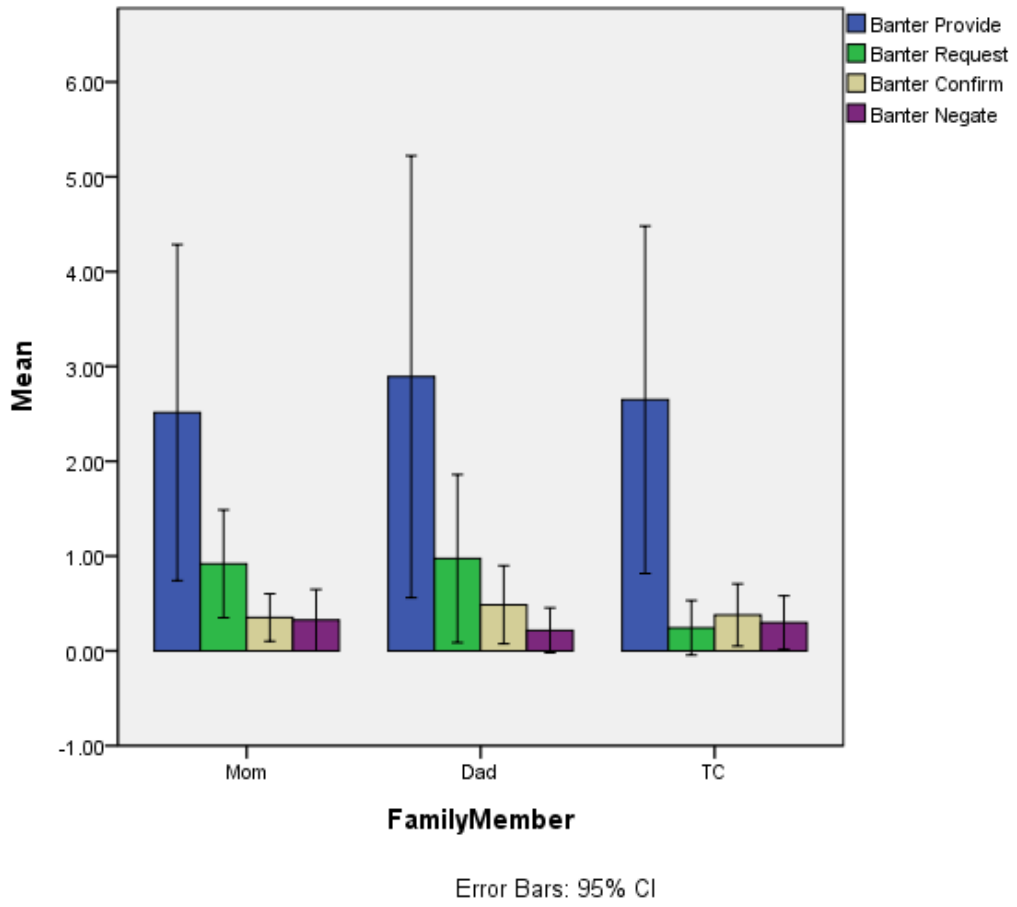


Figure 6: Mean number of turns taken per utterance type by mothers, fathers, and target children across families in the banter category

Figure 7.

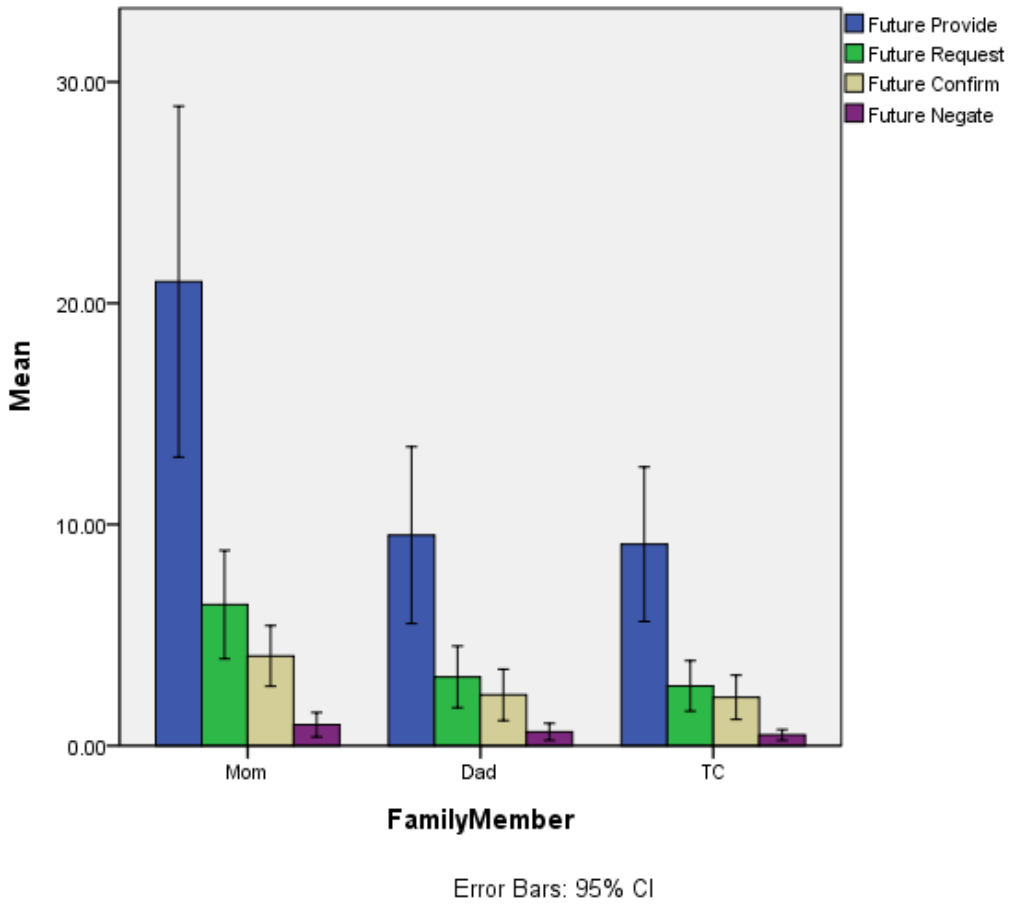


Figure 7: Mean number of turns taken per utterance type by mothers, fathers, and target children across families in the future category

Figure 8.

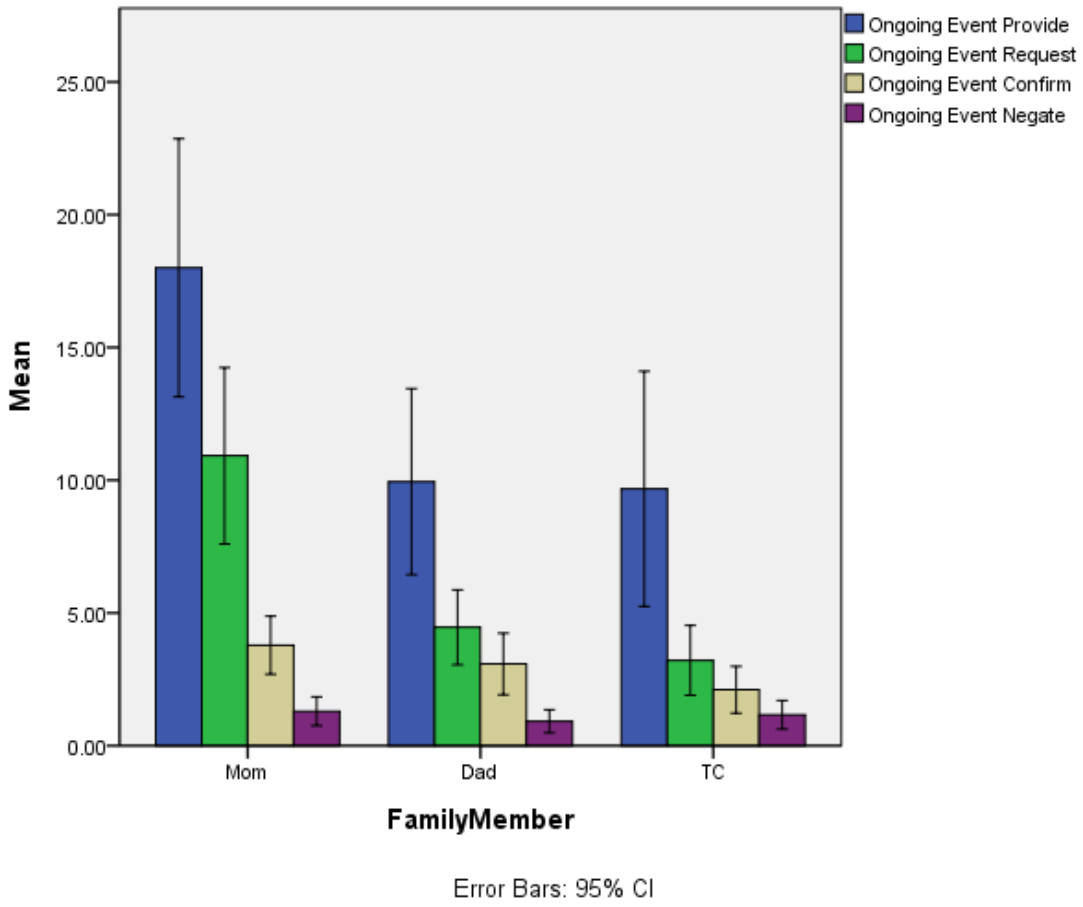


Figure 8: Mean number of turns taken per utterance type by mothers, fathers, and target children across families in the ongoing event category

Table 1.

| Ongoing Event | Internalizing | Externalizing |
|---|---|---|
| **Mom** Provide | -.188 | -.193 |
| Request | -.271 | -.049 |
| Confirm | -.339* | -.015 |
| Negate | -.244 | -.206 |
| **Dad** Provide | -.209 | -.027 |
| Request | -.103 | .007 |
| Confirm | -.072 | -.177 |
| Negate | -.458** | -.076 |
| **Target Child** Provide | -.432** | -.253 |
| Request | -.431** | -.228 |
| Confirm | -.349* | -.317 |
| Negate | -.246 | -.252 |

Table 1: Correlations in ongoing event conversations of mothers, fathers, and target children's number of provides, requests, confirms, and negates with the target child's internalizing and externalizing behaviors as reported by the mother

Table 2.

| Banter | Internalizing | Externalizing |
|---|---|---|
| **Mom** Provide | .046 | .132 |
| Request | .063 | .200 |
| Confirm | .148 | .239 |
| Negate | -.114 | -.125 |
| **Dad** Provide | .148 | .061 |
| Request | .228 | .023 |
| Confirm | .301 | .432** |
| Negate | .046 | -.060 |
| **Target Child** Provide | .103 | .283 |
| Request | .173 | .333* |
| Confirm | .399* | .388* |
| Negate | .062 | .219 |

Table 2: Correlations in banter conversations of mothers, fathers, and target children's number of provides, requests, confirms, and negates with the target child's internalizing and externalizing behaviors as reported by the mother

Table 3.

| Distant Past | Internalizing | Externalizing |
|---|---|---|
| **Mom** Provide | -.157 | -.134 |
| Request | -.057 | .074 |
| Confirm | -.231 | .130 |
| Negate | -.210 | -.113 |
| **Dad** Provide | .066 | -.042 |
| Request | .071 | .049 |
| Confirm | .003 | -.053 |
| Negate | -.202 | -.202 |
| **Target Child** Provide | -.052 | .250 |
| Request | .003 | .263 |
| Confirm | -.032 | .293 |
| Negate | -.004 | .238 |

Table 3: Correlations in distant past conversations of mothers, fathers, and target children's number of provides, requests, confirms, and negates with the target child's internalizing and externalizing behaviors as reported by the mother

Table 4.

| General Knowledge | Internalizing | Externalizing |
|---|---|---|
| **Mom** Provide | -.057 | -.070 |
| Request | -.058 | -.015 |
| Confirm | -.088 | .052 |
| Negate | .000 | .022 |
| **Dad** Provide | .223 | -.013 |
| Request | .055 | -.061 |
| Confirm | -.005 | -.004 |
| Negate | .002 | -.055 |
| **Target Child** Provide | .007 | .326 |
| Request | -.187 | -.094 |
| Confirm | .093 | .094 |
| Negate | .205 | .257 |

Table 4: Correlations in general knowledge conversations of mothers, fathers, and target children's number of provides, requests, confirms, and negates with the target child's internalizing and externalizing behaviors as reported by the mother

Table 5.

| Recent Past | Internalizing | Externalizing |
|---|---|---|
| **Mom** Provides | -.027 | -.241 |
| Requests | -.322 | -.091 |
| Confirms | -.237 | -.164 |
| Negates | -.166 | -.180 |
| **Dad** Provides | -.034 | -.249 |
| Requests | -.192 | -.171 |
| Confirms | .091 | -.207 |
| Negates | .054 | -.076 |
| **Target Child** Provides | .033 | -.011 |
| Requests | -.250 | -.159 |
| Confirms | -.039 | -.151 |
| Negates | -.069 | -.147 |

Table 5: Correlations in recent past conversations of mothers, fathers, and target children's number of provides, requests, confirms, and negates with the target child's internalizing and externalizing behaviors as reported by the mother

Table 6.

| Future | Internalizing | Externalizing |
|---|---|---|
| **Mom** Provide | -.006 | .038 |
| Request | -.079 | -.063 |
| Confirm | .072 | .312 |
| Negate | .196 | .343* |
| **Dad** Provide | .121 | .081 |
| Request | -.046 | -.004 |
| Confirm | .033 | -.067 |
| Negate | .069 | -.011 |
| **Target Child** Provide | .134 | .417* |
| Request | -.008 | .016 |
| Confirm | -.080 | .095 |
| Negate | -.175 | -.077 |

Table 6: Correlations in future conversations of mothers, fathers, and target children's number of provides, requests, confirms, and negates with the target child's internalizing and externalizing behaviors as reported by the mother