PARENT-ADOLESCENT CONFLICT AND ADOLESCENT FUNCTIONING
IN A COLLECTIVIST, ETHNICALLY HETEROGENOUS CULTURE: MALAYSIA

DISSERTATION

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By

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ABSTRACT

Little attention has been directed toward exploring the relationship between parent-adolescent conflict and adolescent functioning in heterogeneous, collectivist cultures. This study explored parent-adolescent conflict in terms of conflict incidence and conflict intensity (with both parents) as a function of ethnicity and gender, and the relationship of conflict to adolescent functioning in terms of externalized (delinquency and academic achievement) and internalized (self-esteem and depression) behaviors. The sample consisted of Malays, Indian-, and Chinese- Malaysian adolescents. Subtypes of conflicts were examined in each group. Using common factor analyses, seven subtypes of conflicts with fathers were extracted. The seven domains were (a) cooperative behavior, (b) managing time, (c) family relations, (d) academic, (e) finances, (f) appearance, and (g) daily hassles. Academic issues, time management, and daily hassles seemed to be salient issues of conflict in the Malay and Chinese groups, whereas daily hassles, time management, and cooperative behavior were most frequently the issues of conflict in Indian groups. No significant gender differences were noted in conflict subtypes. Conflict incidence and intensity with fathers were higher compared to mothers. No significant relationships were noted between any of the independent and the dependent variables for the Chinese groups. Conflict incidence and intensity were found to be
correlated with self-esteem, delinquency and academic achievement in some of the other ethnic groups. For instance, high levels of conflict incidence (with fathers), even when low in intensity, were found to be negatively correlated to self-esteem among Malay males, but when conflict incidence is moderately high it was positively correlated to self esteem; this was also as seen in the Indian male group. A similar pattern was found in regard to conflict with mothers. However, significant relationships emerged for Malay females and Indian males only. For delinquency, in all groups, conflict intensity was negatively correlated to delinquency whereas conflict incidence was positively correlated. When both conflict incidence and intensity were high, delinquency also was high. In terms of depression, no significant relationships were noted for group. Only the Malay female adolescent group showed a significant and positive relationship between conflict incidence with fathers and academic achievement. Conflict incidence alone, especially when intensity is low, seems to facilitate positive adolescent functioning, in terms of higher self-esteem and lower delinquency reports.
Dedicated to

my Mom,

and the memory of my Dad.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Conflict in families is defined as an interaction characterized by discomfort and the use of disagreement to lessen that discomfort (Montgomery & Fewer, 1988). It is a state of tension and dispute that is a significant stressor that has been found to be related to negative feelings or emotions (Katz, Kramer, & Gottman, 1992). Parent-adolescent conflict is an important area of study in family science because it has been found to be related to a number of externalized and internalized disorders in adolescents, e.g., delinquency (Adams, Gullota, & Clancy, 1985; Demo, 1991; Patterson, 1982; Rutter, Graham, Chadwick & Yule, 1976).

Findings from research that examined the effects of parent-adolescent conflict is inconclusive (Dekovic, 1999). This is mainly because empirical studies provide support for both the negative and positive effects of parent-adolescent conflict on adolescent functioning. Early theorists like G. Stanley Hall (1904) and Freud (1958) regarded turbulent relations with parents as “unfortunate, but an inevitable consequence of adolescent maturation” (Laursen, Coy & Collins, 1998). According to this perspective, parent-adolescent conflict is an indicator of disturbances in the relationship, and hence a
problem. Support for this view has been found in several studies. The level of conflict in parent-adolescent dyads has been found to be positively related to externalizing and internalizing adolescent problems, such as delinquency (Patterson, 1982), running away from home (Adams, Gullota, & Clancy, 1985), lower adolescent self-esteem and depression (Rutter, Graham, Chadwick, & Yule, 1976), and decreases in family cohesion (Demo, 1991).

On the other hand, another perspective is that the occurrence of conflicts in adolescence is normative and only temporary. Conflicts are also regarded as necessary for facilitating the “renegotiation of boundaries and roles” and thus transforming parent-child relationships (Steinberg, 1990; Silbereisen & Kracke, 1993). The salience of the individuation process in adolescence is evidenced by the presence of conflict (Steinberg, 1990). Conflict is also a way in which parents and adolescents redefine family system boundaries (i.e., rules, events, and regulations) as the adolescent strives for autonomy (Smetana, 1988). Therefore, parent-adolescent conflict can be viewed as a normal aspect of development and a facilitator of psychological growth, fostering the development of identity formation, role-taking ability, individuation, and moral judgment. Conflicts are also regarded as providing the “impetus for communication” and allowing the venting of emotions which may, in fact, improve the parent-adolescent relationship. Conflicts may indicate that current ways of interaction are ineffective and that more co-operative and functional strategies are needed. From this perspective, conflicts provide opportunities for adolescents to renegotiate their relationship (Hofer, Sassemberg, & Pikowsky, 1999).

Studies have found that parent-child conflicts follow a curvilinear-shaped function that peaks during adolescence. Montemayor (1983) states that conflict increases
during early adolescence, remains reasonably stable during middle adolescence, and declines when the adolescents leave home. In studies where the characteristics of conflict are taken into consideration, a different pattern is noted. There was greater negative affect reported during middle adolescence than during early adolescence, which then decreased during late adolescence to a level somewhere between the two earlier age periods (Laursen, Coy & Collins, 1998). These findings imply that parent-child conflict is less frequent, but more heated, in middle adolescence compared to early adolescence; a further decline in frequency of conflict is noted in late adolescence although there is little change in negative affect (Laursen et al., 1998). For this reason, this study focused on parent-adolescent conflict during middle adolescence -- the period when it is expected to be at its peak.

An attempt is made in this study to address methodological concerns that may have led to inconsistencies in some research findings pertaining to parent-adolescent conflict and adolescent functioning. First, most studies have utilized very simplistic models of conflict either combining aspects of conflict or examining conflict frequency only. The persistence of parent-adolescent conflict needs to be examined in relation to the rate of conflict (frequency), the intensity of conflict (affect), and in terms of the development of the adolescent (age, pubertal maturation, gender, etc.) and parent (dyadic relationship). There is evidence that conflict (low incidence or frequency) that does not lead to escalations in intensity, may in fact facilitate the development of relationship skills such as problem-solving, compromise, and perspective-taking. These skills that are learned through conflict resolution may be associated with positive feelings (O’Brien, Margoin, John, & Krueger, 1991). Conflict can be “overt and explicit or covert and
hidden, constructive (dealing directly with source) or destructive (lessens discomfort, at least temporarily, without affecting source), and complementary or symmetrical” (Montgomery & Fewer, 1988). Depending on the dimension of the conflict, it can cause a rift in a relationship, or make the relationship mutually and personally more satisfying. In order to fully understand which characteristics of conflict are related to positive or negative functioning, the aspects of conflict need to be examined. Few studies on parent-adolescent conflict have addressed both conflict frequency and conflict intensity.

Another methodological problem related to the measurement of conflict is in the computation of the conflict intensity and conflict incidence subscales. Conflict intensity has been measured in most studies by simply calculating the mean level of intensity of all discussed topics (e.g., Maggs & Galambos, 1993). In this case, high conflict intensity levels may have stemmed from frequently discussed issues. To avoid this, computation of conflict intensity must be adjusted. A more appropriate method of computing conflict intensity would be to sum the products of each conflict intensity and the corresponding frequency estimate, then divide by the total number of issues argued (Printz et al., 1979). In this study, conflict intensity was measured in this way. As for conflict incidence, studies have summed the number of times each conflict occurred during the previous two weeks irrespective of whether the issues were discussed “very calmly” or otherwise (Weng, 1996). This computational problem compromises the accuracy of results because issues that are discussed “very calmly” which should not be included as conflict, are included. This study addressed these measurement problems by calculating conflict incidence by summing only topics that have an intensity rating of 2 or above (ranging from “a little angry” to “angry”).
Parent-adolescent conflict also differs by type and frequency of interaction that occurs with respect to gender of parent and adolescent. Most studies have found that adolescents are closer to mothers than fathers (Paterson, Field, & Pryor, 1994); they share about five times more time with mothers than with fathers (Larson & Richards, 1994). From the symbolic interaction perspective, the interaction is more frequent with mother than father, and therefore, their relationship provides more opportunity for misunderstandings and misperceptions to occur in the mother-adolescent interaction. Thus, the frequency and the progression of conflicts between adolescents and mothers are higher than with fathers (Laursen, 1993). Adolescents have been found to strive earlier for “new and co-operative” ways of dealing with their mothers than with their fathers. Due to this, adolescents experience greater incidence of conflict with mothers earlier than they do with fathers.

Boys and girls also experience different kinds of interaction with their mothers (Laursen, 1993; Youniss & Smollar, 1985), with boys experiencing greater “non-shared relational perspectives” than girls (Cooper, 1988). In adolescence, sons experience a temporary shift in the balance of power toward dominance (Steinberg, 1981) because boys are socialized to be more independent. There is higher tolerance for expressions of independent beliefs and behaviors in boys compared to girls. Girls are socialized to be more dependent (Huston & Alvarez, 1990). Furthermore for girls, topics of discussion with parents frequently pivot around personal problems and questions of relationship compared to any other parent-child dyads (Youniss & Smollar, 1985). Parents still have much control in these matters in adolescence, thus increasing the likelihood of more conflict between daughters and parents compared to sons. For example, conflict over
issues such as curfews and sex tend to be more intense with adolescent daughters than with sons. Therefore, mother-daughter dyads tend to experience more conflicts, and at the same time the conflicts tend to be more intense than in the mother-son dyads. Because significant gender differences in parent-child dyadic relationships have been found in previous studies, it is necessary to examine conflict in separate parent-adolescent dyads within the family. Consequently, this study did not only utilize a more comprehensive model, but it also examined dyadic-specific conflict and gender differences.

Social Orientation and Parent-adolescent Conflict

Social orientation plays an important part in understanding the prevalence and progression of parent-adolescent conflict. This is because the perception and meanings of the parent-adolescent relationship are steeped in the shared beliefs, attitudes, norms and values of a culture (Triandis, 1995). Studies have found that apart from puberty, the rate and incidence of conflict between parents and adolescents are related to the perception of social conventions, and expectancies of relationship with parents (Collins, 1990; Smetana, Yau, Restrepo, & Braeges, 1991). As cultures differ so would perceptions of social conventions and expectancies of relationship with parents in different cultural or social orientations. Different internalized cultural values influence family relationships and encourage different interaction patterns and child/adolescent outcomes (Kagitcibasi, 1996; Lam, 1997; Triandis, 1995).

The common dimensions of cultural or social orientations used to refer to socialization patterns are the individualism and collectivism dimensions (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1989, 1995). Individualist cultures emphasize “I” consciousness, autonomy, emotional independence and right to privacy, whereas
collectivist cultures emphasize “we” consciousness, collective identity, emotional dependence, group solidarity, sharing, and duties and obligations (Hofstede, 1991; Hui & Triandis, 1986). The majority of the available research focusing on parent-adolescent conflict is based on the study of individualistic and Western cultures. Consequently, the attribution of intra-family conflict to the individuation process in adolescence, where the adolescent strives to attain psychological and behavioral autonomy and independence, may originate from an individualistic cultural approach (Fuligni, 1998).

In individualistic cultures, independence and autonomy are important developmental issues in adolescence, which lead to self-confidence and competence. Conflict may be a way that adolescents express opinions and develop autonomous thinking. It provides an avenue for re-negotiating boundaries and readjusting interaction patterns in facilitating adolescent development (Cooper, 1988; Laursen, 1993). Parent adolescent conflict then is viewed as vital to the adolescent’s psychological functioning, attainment of autonomous behavior, independence, individuation, etc.

In collectivist cultures (such as in Malaysia), socialization practices emphasize interdependence and conformity because these values are believed to be necessary in preserving group harmony, filial piety, and leading to positive outcomes such as academic achievement (Chao, 1996; Triandis, 1995). This perception of relationships reinforces the adherence to conventions and obedience which are strongly encouraged. In return for the “unquestioned loyalty” to the group, the adherents enjoy the protection and security that the group provides. Individual or personal goals are subordinate to communal goals, therefore, independence and autonomy are discouraged. Behaviors that threaten group harmony such as hostility, aggression, and impulsive behavior are strictly
prohibited (Ho, 1986; Lam, 1997; Triandis, 1995). However, the absence of conflict may be a result of the cultural demands to avoid controversial issues due to the expectations of conformity and emphasis on group harmony, rather than an actual lack of differences. Therefore, lower levels of conflict may be reported in collectivist cultures; however these low levels of conflict may not indicate positive adolescent functioning as in individualistic cultures (Barber, 1994). Taking this into consideration, this study predicted that low levels of parent-adolescent conflict, as measured by incidence and intensity, in collectivist cultures, is not necessarily related to higher levels of adolescent functioning as has been found in individualist cultures (Laursen, Coy, & Collins, 1998).

Unfortunately, research on parent-adolescent conflict in collectivist cultures is scarce. More, scant attention has been paid to Southeast Asian nations, and no study has examined conflict in heterogeneous collectivist cultures. The Malaysian population consists of people of the Malay, Chinese, and Indian cultures which are all collectivist cultures. In addition, cultural maintenance is still an important part in the socialization of children and families because these diverse cultures reside within a larger collectivist, Islamic nation where half the population consists of non-Muslims. In this study, the ethnically diverse Malaysian sample of Malay, Chinese- and Indian-Malaysian adolescents provides a unique opportunity to examine diversity within a heterogeneous, collectivist culture.

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine the levels of parent-adolescent conflict intensity and incidence during middle adolescence in an ethnically heterogeneous and collectivist culture (Malaysia), including group differences in
subscales/subtypes of conflict. This study also examined the relationship between
conflict intensity and incidence and adolescent internalized (depression and self-esteem)
and externalized (delinquency and academic achievement) behaviors. This study also
investigated if low levels of conflict incidence and intensity are negatively related to
adolescent internalized and externalized problems in this collectivist cultural setting.

This study extends previous research by utilizing a more complex and realistic
model of co-occurring adolescent and family variables in examining diversity within a
collectivist culture. Characteristics of conflict (intensity and incidence) will be specific
measures as opposed to a general measure of conflict. Measurement of the conflict
variables is done more accurately in order to reflect a more valid measure of parent-
adolescent conflict. This will reduce the measurement error of the scales. Adolescent
functioning includes both externalized and internalized behaviors. The sample used will
present a unique opportunity to examine possible differences within a collectivist culture.

In summary, this study significantly contributes to research on families, which is much needed but scarce regarding Malaysia. More importantly, no
study has examined together (a) the various aspects of conflict and adolescent
functioning
in terms of both internalized and externalized problems, and (b) specific parent-
adolescent dyadic relationship within a diverse collectivist culture together.

Variables

The independent variables in this study are gender (adolescent and parent),
etnicity (Malays and Indian- and Chinese-Malaysians), conflict incidence and conflict
intensity, whereas the dependent variables are those associated with adolescent functioning, including depression, self-esteem, delinquency, and academic achievement.

Definition of Variables

**Conflict incidence** refers to the frequency of conflicts in a relationship, whereas **conflict intensity** refers to the “affective heat of the argument”. Conflict intensity is one of the significant components of conflict process that is related to adjustment (Laursen et al., 1994). Conflicts of high levels of intensity indicate poor conflict management (Katz et al., 1992; Tesser, Forehand, Brody, & Long, 1989), and may lead to violence, lack of resolution, and reciprocal acts of negativity (Gottman & Levenson, 1986; Krokoff, 1991).

**Depression** refers to a state that is marked by depressive episodes and characteristics that may last for at least two weeks or longer. Depressive symptoms include significant changes in body weight, reduction in interests in activities, feelings of worthlessness, problems in concentration, and suicidal tendencies (American Psychiatric Association, 1994; Santrock, 2003)

**Self-esteem** refers to the evaluative component of the self (Rosenberg, 1965). When a healthy sense of self is developed, adolescents are able to view themselves as worthy individuals. This sense of self serves as an internal psychological resource and contributes to the adolescent’s social competence (Rollins & Thomas, 1979).

**Delinquency** refers to a wide range of behaviors ranging from socially undesirable behaviors to status offenses that includes offending, neglecting or violating duty, rules, or law. This study will examine delinquency in six domains: vandalism, theft,
physical aggression, truancy and other school problems, disruptive behavior and status offenses.

**Academic achievement** refers to the adolescent’s actual performance based on grades received at school.

The dyadic relationships examined will be mother-daughter, mother-son, father-daughter, and father-son dyads. The hypothesized conceptual model that was used to examine the relationship between the independent variables (i.e., parent-adolescent conflict intensity and conflict incidence) and the dependent variables (i.e., adolescent depression, self-esteem, delinquency and academic achievement) is presented in Figure 1.

Research Questions

1. What are the group differences (gender and ethnicity) with respect to parent-adolescent conflict incidence and conflict intensity?
   a. Are there group differences in subtypes of conflict?
2. What are the relationships between adolescent characteristics (gender and ethnicity), parent-adolescent conflict incidence, parent-adolescent intensity, and self-esteem?
3. What are the relationships between adolescent characteristics (gender and ethnicity), parent-adolescent conflict incidence, parent-adolescent intensity, and delinquency?
4. What are the relationships between adolescent characteristics (gender and ethnicity), parent-adolescent conflict incidence, parent-adolescent intensity, and depression?
5. What are the relationships between adolescent characteristics (gender and ethnicity), parent-adolescent conflict incidence, parent-adolescent intensity, and academic achievement?
Assumptions

1. The conflicts that occur and how they are expressed reflect the Malaysian, collectivist culture.

2. There is variance between and among collectivist ethnic groups.

Limitations

The sample of this study consists of Malaysian adolescents between ages 14 and 16 from urban areas. The adolescents are from middle-class, two-parent biological families. Generalizations to single parent families, and other family configurations, and to families in rural areas should be made with caution. As this study is based on a Malaysian sample, generalizability of findings to other cultures is not possible. Diversity exists within the collectivist groups. This sample also consists of adolescents from randomly chosen classes from four secondary schools in Selangor, Malaysia.

Adolescents and families that gave consent to participate in the study may also be different from those who decline to participate. Murray (1984) and Odor (1986) have noted that subjects may decline to participate because they are too busy, not interested, less invested in family roles, protective of their privacy, or experiencing a significant amount of parent-adolescent conflict.

Another limitation of this study is that the assessment of conflict is based on adolescents’ self-reports only. Parents’ reports of conflict were not obtained nor were parent-adolescent interaction observed directly due to limitations in resources and time constraints. Studies using multiple informants have shown that family members may differ significantly in their perception of similar events (Alessandri & Wozniak, 1989; Holmbeck & O’Donnell, 1991; Papini & Micka, 1991; Smetana, 1988, 1989, 1995;
Smetana & Asquith, 1994). There is a possibility that if parent reports were used, this study may have different results.

This study has sampled subjects who are in middle adolescence. Though middle adolescence is an important period in the study of conflict because it is a time of heightened conflict with parents, this study is unable to examine developmental changes in the incidence and intensity of conflict during adolescence. There is a need for research in the area of parent-adolescent conflict assessing developmental patterns in culturally diverse samples. It is important to study children in families before they reach adolescence, early adolescence, middle adolescence, as well as late adolescence and adulthood in a cross-sequential design in order to accurately depict the developmental nature of parent-adolescent relationship.

This study also assumes that the sample would reflect parent-adolescent conflict as it exists in a collectivist culture. Cultures do not have unitary orientations, and therefore the reasoning and psychological functioning of its people cannot be simply defined as individualistic or collectivist, but rather a coexistence of different orientations (Yau & Smetana, 1996). Future research should address the coexistence of different orientations so as to capture important variations among cultures in different countries.
Figure 1: Hypothesized Conceptual Model

Self-esteem / Depression / Delinquency / Academic Achievement

P-A Conflict Incidence

P-A Conflict Intensity

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The literature focusing on parent-adolescent conflict (intensity and incidence) in relation to adolescent functioning is discussed. First, social orientation, and socialization of children in collectivist culture, especially in the diverse Malaysian ethnic cultures are discussed. Second, literature on the aspects of conflict is reviewed. Finally, research findings pertaining to parent-adolescent conflict in relation to gender, ethnicity, and parent-adolescent dyads that may differentially experience conflict (i.e., incidence and intensity of parent-adolescent conflicts), with respect to adolescents’ depression, self-esteem, delinquency, and academic achievement are discussed.

Social Orientation

Triandis (1995) uses the terms “individualism” and “collectivism” to denote social patterns or social orientations. Certain “unstated assumptions” that organize behavior prevail in these social orientations. In each of these social orientations, the understanding and meanings of relationships are colored by the values emphasized in the socialization of its people. The fundamental beliefs and assumptions that permeate socialization in individualistic cultures are that individuals are independent, different and distant from their groups. Therefore, attitudes, norms and values that emphasize
independence (behavioral and emotional), autonomy, and right to privacy, leading to self-confidence and competence are emphasized. The fundamental assumption in collectivist cultures is that interdependent individuals are bound together. In line with this assumption, collectivist cultures emphasize “collective identity, emotional dependence, group solidarity, sharing, and duties and obligations” (Hofstede, 1991; Hui & Triandis, 1986). Experiences such as conflict in each of these orientations typically are viewed differently. In individualistic cultures, because independence and autonomy are important developmental issues in adolescence, conflict may be a way for adolescents to express opinions and develop autonomous thinking, and an avenue for re-negotiating boundaries and readjusting interaction patterns in facilitating adolescent development (Cooper, 1988; Laursen, 1993). In collectivist cultures (such as in Malaysia), because interdependence and conformity are fostered, and are crucial for group harmony, and filial piety, adherence to conventions, obedience, and unquestioned loyalty to the group and family are strongly encouraged. Independence and autonomy are discouraged, and hostility, aggression, and impulsive behavior strictly prohibited (Ho, 1986; Lam, 1997; Triandis, 1995). Conflict in this social orientation is regarded as a threat to the group goals.

The Malaysian Cultural Mosaic and Socialization Practices

Malaysia has a multicultural population. Its cultural diversity is derived from many different cultures. Among these are the Malay, Chinese, Indian, and the indigenous tribal cultures. Although cultural maintenance is still an important part of family socialization because of the demands of the collectivist culture residing within a
dominant collectivist nation, the blending together of the cultures was inevitable with the passage of time.

Malaysia presents a unique cultural setting because it is a Muslim nation, yet it is not an Islamic State in the true sense of the term. Religion is paramount in the running of the nation, yet it has a unique cultural mosaic; about half the population are non-Muslims who are mostly second generation immigrants. Religion is also highly correlated to ethnicity in Malaysia.

The Malays constitute about 65 percent of the Malaysian population (Malaysian Statistics Department, 2000). Almost all Malays are Muslims. The origin of the Malay race has been traced to Yunan in China. The present day Malays are described as “deutero-Malays” and are the descendents of the tribal Malays mixed with modern Indian, Thai, Arab, and Chinese individuals (Zain, 2000). The Chinese form about 23 percent of the population. They are descendents of Chinese immigrants who began settling in Malaysia in the 19th Century. Most Chinese are Tao Buddhist. About ten percent of the Malaysian population is Indian. Most Indians are Hindus. The oldest inhabitants, the tribal peoples, account for about five percent of the total population. This study will not include this cultural group as they are located mainly in East Malaysia/Borneo.

No studies have investigated socialization in Malaysian families. Patterns of socialization have been inferred from cross-cultural studies that have utilized Chinese and Indian samples. No studies exist on Malay socialization patterns in Malaysia.

Socialization practices in the Malaysian ethnic cultures are organized along the collectivist dimensions. As in other collectivist cultures, group affiliation is emphasized.
The family provides the socialization for upholding values such as cooperation, interpersonal relationships, helpfulness, obedience, and dependence. In the Malaysian ethnic groups, an external locus of control is expected because of the emphasis on cooperativeness and obedience (Rafaei, 1976). Independence and autonomy are discouraged. Parents are regarded as clear authority figures and are obeyed without question. Filial piety and the subordination of personal goals for those of the family/group are common features of the cultures. Cultural scripts that prevail in the Malay culture are evidence of the values emphasized in the socialization of children and family (Goddard, 1997; Sulaiman, 1981).

Group harmony, conformity, and adherence to social conventions are regarded as goals in child socialization. Children appear to be more socially introverted compared to children in individualistic cultures because children in collectivist cultures are strongly encouraged to be less direct and open in social interactions -- therefore they are more cautious in expressing feelings. Assumptions of collectivists cultures such as ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving, “the nature of social relationships”, and the expectations of behavior are implicitly transmitted to children through rituals, activities in their daily life, and in the parenting of children. This is evident in each ethnic group. Studies done on personality traits of Malay youths support the values emphasized above (Khairul, Jin & Cooper 2000). Malay youths were found to score high on agreeableness and low on extraversion and openness compared to youths in individualist cultures.
Socialization in the Malay Culture

The Malay culture has been strongly influenced by that of others including Siamese, Javanese, Sumatran and, especially, Indians. According to Zain (2000), the influence of Hindu India has been very great historically because the Malays were largely Hinduized before they were converted to Islam in the 15th Century. For nearly two thousand years, there had been inter-marriages between Malays and Indians. Some Hindu rituals still survive in the Malay culture such as ceremonies of state and marriage as well as more ancient animistic beliefs.

Today, almost all Malays in Malaysia are Muslims. To Malays religion and prayers are central in daily life. Spiritual tenets contained in the Qur’an, Sunna, and Hadith provide guidelines to address practically every aspect of daily life and delineate a complete way of life (Qureshi, 1991). The obligatory prayers (solat) performed at dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, and nightfall determine the rhythm of the day. These rituals are opportunities for quality family time, and facilitate the intergenerational transmission of tradition and values. Prayers are led by the most learned person who knows the Qur’an and is carried out in a family context; this person would more often than not be the head of the family (father; grandfather). This reinforces the parental roles and clarifies the boundaries within the parent-child dyads. The family is considered the starting point for learning and internalizing the teachings of the religion and the culture. The peace and security offered by a stable family unit is greatly valued and is seen as essential for spiritual growth of its members. Therefore, a strong sense of familism, and a patriarchal structure prevails in the Malay culture. Family members are constantly involved in common activities that help build and strengthen family bonds. Caring for one’s parents
is considered an honor and a blessing. Mothers are particularly honored; children are taught that “paradise lies at the feet of mothers”.

The Qur’an also contains certain moral and legal ordinances (Almeida, 1996). It forbids activities such as gambling, those that involve earning of credit, mixed sex activities, premarital sex, homosexuality, adultery, and the consumption of alcohol, pork, and meat that has not been prepared according to religious guidelines. The degree of tolerance within the moral and legal ordinance is also clearly defined using terms such as “haram” (absolutely forbidden) and “makruh” (not forbidden, but not encouraged either). The individual is held responsible for maintaining a healthy and clean life. Values such as unity, sharing, and caring for others, are emphasized among the Malay culture. In the Muslim Malay family, filial piety is also emphasized. Serving one’s parents is a duty second only to prayer, and it is the parents’ right to expect it. It is considered despicable to express any irritation when aging parents become difficult.

Socialization in the Indian Culture

Asian Indian socialization and relationship with children are also strongly influenced by religion. A majority of Indian-Malaysians are Hindus. Hinduism's ethical restraints define the codes of conduct, relational behavior and socialization goals. These provide guidelines for family life and intergenerational relations in the form of advice, and are not commandments. In other words, these constraints provide a code of conduct and also serve as deterrents especially to delinquent behavior, and as guidelines to relational behavior.

One of the ethical restraints that help in socializing children and organizing behavior is non-injury; “ahimsa.” It demands entire abstinence from causing any pain or
harm whatsoever to any living creature, either by thought, word, or deed. Non-injury requires a harmless mind, mouth, and hand. It is a pre-requisite in the development of a mental attitude in which hatred is replaced by love, true sacrifice, and forgiveness. Relational behaviors emphasized in socialization of children and individuals are those that promote unity and are pro-social in nature. Respect for elders is expected to be shown through verbal and non-verbal behaviors throughout life. Speech and conduct between family members are to depict this at all times. The Indian languages distinguish words that are “respectful” and “disrespectful” based on the social context that one may use with a younger sibling without offending him/her, but the same word would incur the wrath of an older person.

Another restraint is “satya” which refers to truthfulness; refraining from lying and betraying promises, and consonance of thoughts, words, and deeds. “Asteya” is restraint from stealing, misappropriation of physical property and entering into debt. It also demands restraint from intangibles such as credit for something not done or undeserved privileges.

“Brahmacharya” is "divine conduct." It commands that individuals control lust by remaining celibate when single, leading to faithfulness in marriage. Parents also exercise control over their children’s socializing behavior outside of the home, and choice of life partners for their children. Sexuality is not acknowledged. Kakar (1998) notes that love and dating prior to marriage are not encouraged, and pre-marital sex is frowned upon and almost non-existent in the Indian ethnic culture. Compassion or “daya” which is restraint from cruel, insensitive feelings toward all beings, and honesty or “arjava”, requires
renouncing deception and wrongdoing. These guidelines foster family and group harmony.

A sense of moderation “Mitahara” is encouraged. This concept is steeped in collectivism. Moderation is a preventive measure for shortages, and starvation in society. Individual needs are superseded by society’s needs. A sense of caring and sharing for the family and extended family is instilled through the practice of ‘mitahara’. This concept also includes non-violence toward all.

“Shaucha,” means "purity" and requires adherents to avoid impurity in body, mind and speech. This sets the tone for relational behavior in the family and larger group. Harsh words and conflicts are to be avoided.

Contentment or “santhosa” refers to the absence of greed and, cheerfulness. This guideline sets the mood in the family, and fosters caring. “Ishvarapranidhana” means ‘selflessness.’ Interpersonal behavior in the family is marked by the undertones of self-sacrifice. Children are taught to “renounce their self-interest and pleasure for the family” (Kakar, 1998).

“Karma” and “Dharma” are two overarching concepts that directly relate to family life and the socializing of children. “Karma” is destiny; the belief that the present state is the result of previous actions. The saying “as you sow, so you will reap” aptly relays the implications of “karma” on child-rearing. Child-rearing is taken seriously, and any negative outcomes are associated with ill up-bringing and shame to the family. “Dharma” is the ultimate law that brings order to the world through prescribed roles. The “dharma” for women is to be a devoted daughter, wife, and mother; for men, it is to be the provider and protector. In this sense, it dictates the roles of family members and
defines the interactional patterns within it. There is clear role differentiation, delineating expectations and type of interaction in families based on gender.

The traditional Asian Indian family structure subscribes to a rigid, hierarchical organization of its members by age, gender, and generational status which are the primary determinants of behavior and role relationships. The role of each member is clearly defined. The communication styles and interaction patterns are restrictive and rule-bound. The family system is patriarchal, patrilineal, and patrilocal (Sheth, 1995). The father is the dominant figure in the family; he is the primary breadwinner, decision-maker, disciplinarian, and protector of the young, women, and the elderly (Mindel, Habenstein, & Wright, 1998; Sala, 2002). The female is subordinate to the male. She is expected to be dependent all her life, first to her father, then her husband, and then her eldest son. The mother is primarily responsible for care-giving, nurturing, and transmitting and instilling cultural values in children (Sheth, 1995). She is expected to be obedient, respectful of her husband, conforming, dependent, and inhibited. She acts as helper to the father. Talking ill of one’s mother, even in the context of an overall positive opinion, is almost sacrilegious.

Children are expected to be good, respectful, and bring honor to the family through high achievement. Parents exercise considerable amount of control over their children’s lives. Their desires and ambitions are usually decided by parents. Independence is not encouraged, and non-compliance is seen as a threat to parents’ authority (Sala, 2002). Children are dependent emotionally to parents throughout life. Parents differentiate between sons and daughters. They tend to be protective over female children (Mindel et al, 1998). Assertive behavior and autonomy is not encouraged.
especially in girls. Patience, self-control, self-discipline, and not yielding to passion are valued. Parenting practices often include modeling of these values as they socialize, discipline, and guide their children.

Close family ties are also maintained, and parents are always available for caregiving. Children are rarely left with non-family caregivers. According to Varma (1980), the negligible delinquency among Asian Indian children can be attributed to the constant availability of close family members.

Socialization in the Chinese Culture

The Chinese are also a collectivist culture like the Indians and the Malays. Little or no emphasis is placed on independence and parents tend not to be tolerant of aggressive behavior (Tseng & Hsu, 1969). In order to achieve social competence, values such as conformity to authority, group harmony, dependency, a moral orientation with high internalization of values related to standards of behavior, conformity to explicit, and an extreme reluctance to express hostility, especially towards authority are fostered (Ho, 1981).

According to Ho (1981), two interesting concepts influence socialization of children in traditional Chinese culture. “Yang-yu” refers to rearing or nurturing. Generally parents are indulgent and more nurturing with younger children. “Chiao-yang” refers to parental responsibility for children’s education in the sense of bringing up well-bred children. This guideline is as important in the upbringing of children as “Yang-yu” is because the primary concern is on the proper development of character. It implies that there is a moralistic rather than a psychological orientation of adults toward the young in traditional societies. The formation of personality is sometimes equated to the formation
of moral character. The failure to bring up children properly reflects poorly on the parents.

Both “yang-yu” and “chiao-yang” have influenced the expectations of behavior and the socialization of children in the Chinese culture. Apart from these, socialization goals may be seen in several over-arching concepts such as filial piety, age-appropriate parenting, harmony, control and other-directedness.

Chinese parenting is concerned with impulse control, which is grounded in Confucian ethic of filial piety (Ho, 1981, 1986, 1989). Filial piety is instilled in children through strictness in discipline and proper behavior. There is less emphasis on children’s expression of opinions, independence, and overall development. It is central to fulfill filial obligations. Fulfilling filial obligations earns respect and honor for the family. Filial piety is a fundamental guiding principle for socializing children.

One important assertion in Chinese socialization is that the parent-child interaction pattern changes as the function of age (Wolf, 1970). Parents tend to be lenient towards infants and young children below approximately six years of age because they were regarded as being too young to “understand things” (tung-shih). Parents are strict and even harsh towards older children. Older children must now learn to control or inhibit the impulses of earlier years. Thus, difficulties and conflicts are more likely to be encountered in middle childhood and early adolescence when increasing expectations are placed on the child to conform to parental demands. However, the period of adolescence has not been found to be marked by the “storm and stress” as it is typically observed in contemporary Western societies (Ho, 1981).
The maintenance of group harmony is also emphasized. This reflects the strong influence of Confucian principles as well. According to this guideline, “the maintenance of harmony and the negation of conflict” are important and essential organizational principles for the group and family. Therefore, a “good” child is one who is non-aggressive, quiet, and obedient (Ho, 1981).

Chinese parents are generally more concerned with control than their Western counterparts. Although increasing expectations of behaviors are placed on children upon reaching the age of “tung-shih,” socialization encourages dependency. Major decisions such as career and sometimes even marriage choices are made for them or need approval from parents. Filial piety is expected even after the death of parents. Children are expected to continue the aspirations left by the deceased. It is only then that the child is called filial; i.e., if he/she does not depart from the teachings of the parents. Therefore, obedience to parents and elders is expected throughout one’s lifetime.

There is a high degree of “other-directedness” in the socialization of children. Emphasis is placed on sensitivity to views and judgments of others regarding oneself. Therefore there is a tendency for individuals to act to meet approval. Children seek approval from parents, and are careful to safeguard the “face” of the family.

Research on parent-adolescent relations in the Chinese culture indicates that there is a clear gender differentiation in parenting of children (Chan, 1981). This may indicate that there are gender differences in how conflict is experienced in parent-adolescent dyads in this culture. There is a tendency to rely more on induction when disciplining daughters than when disciplining sons. In addition to this, there is use of more power assertion and love withdrawal styles when disciplining sons than when disciplining
daughters. Because of this gender differences in parenting, the incidence and intensity of conflict, and outcomes of conflicts can be expected to be experienced differently by gender. Chan (1981) found that children viewed mothers more favorably (i.e., closer and more affectionate with mothers) than fathers (i.e., the disciplinarian and therefore strict, cold and distant). Boys experienced restrictive treatment and demanding teaching by fathers, as well as stronger autocratic discipline by both parents than did the girls. Further, support for greater affectional distance between father–child dyads was obtained in a Chinese study by Shek (1998) who found parenting characteristics that differed by gender of parent. Fathers were found to be relatively more responsive, less demanding, less concerned, but more harsh and having more conflict with their children than mothers.

Taken together, the emphasis on the influencing concepts on parenting and socialization of children, especially filial piety (that discourages aggressive expression of disagreements and opinions) and the change in parenting that comes with a child’s achieving “tung-shih,” may indicate low levels of conflict overall, but such changes may not necessarily be indicative of positive psychological and behavioral functioning.

Aspects of Conflict

There are various characteristics to conflict such as initiation, resolution duration, incidence, intensity, issues, and attributions. The present study focused on conflict incidence and conflict intensity in order to understand their influence on adolescent functioning. Few studies have examined these aspects of conflicts together, many equating level of conflict to rate or incidence of conflict.

Studies have indicated that a moderate level of conflict may be healthy whereas extremely high levels may be unhealthy (Gehring et al., 1990). This difference is thought
to be related to the view that moderate levels of conflict allow individuals within the family to express opinions and develop autonomous thinking (Laursen et al., 1994). However, higher levels of conflict have been related to adolescent antisocial behavior and family violence (Maggs et al., 1993; Patterson et al., 1992). When perceptions of conflict with parents were high, adolescents were found to be more likely to engage in problem behaviors in the future, and a relative absence of conflict at home predicted not engaging in such behavior (Maggs et al., 1993).

Conflict intensity is one of the significant components of conflict process that is related to adjustment (Laursen et al., 1994). Conflicts of high intensity indicate poor conflict management (Katz et al., 1992; Tesser, Forehand, Brody & Long, 1989), and may lead to violence, lack of resolution, and reciprocal acts of negativity in families (Gottman & Levenson, 1986); Krokoff, 1991). Conflicts high in intensity within the family have also been related to problem behaviors in adolescents (Maggs & Galambos, 1993). Higher levels of conflict intensity during parent-adolescent conflicts are related to higher levels of externalizing and internalizing problems, lower levels of social competence, and lower grade point averages in adolescents (Tesser et al., 1989).

Cross-cultural Differences in Parent-Adolescent Conflict

Research on cross-cultural differences in parent-adolescent conflicts are scarce. Barber (1994) evaluated whether parent-adolescent conflict was similar across cultures (Caucasian, African-American, and Hispanic), and whether and how conflict varied in different cultural groups. Expectations parents had of their children were the only factor found to be substantially different between the three cultural groups. Frequency of conflict was also found to be lower in both the minority groups in comparison to the
Caucasian families. There was a link between expectations of behavior and interaction patterns evident for Hispanic families. Overall, parent-adolescent conflict was found to be similar across cultural boundaries, with families in each group disagreeing about the same issues. Limitations in this study include the fact that it was based on self-report data (from parents) and being such, can imply an underlying negative parental appraisal of adolescents, or unmeasured personality or response characteristics of the parents.

Most studies on collectivist samples have focused on youth in North America (Sung, 1985; Yew 1987). Parent-adolescent conflict that was reported in these studies pivoted around problems of the adolescents’ second cultural acquisition. Yau and Smetana (1996) studied parent-adolescent conflict among youth in Hong Kong and found that conflict, even in collectivist cultures, facilitated individuation. There was a high appeal for personal jurisdiction in conflicts, while at the same adolescents were concerned with maintaining harmony. This suggests that the interaction between parents and adolescents is more complex than that which is assumed simply based on the social orientation dichotomy. Within the collectivist orientation lies diverse variations.

Subtypes of Conflicts

Various studies have explored the subtypes of conflicts. Most studies have found that issues of conflict between parents and adolescents were those pertaining to every day issues such as household chores; homework; choice of activities; fighting with siblings; choice and regulation of activities; noncompliance; and personal care (Hill & Holmbeck, 1987; Montemayor, 1986; Steinberg, 1981). More recently, studies have utilized different scales for measurement of conflict and various methods of analysis to detect underlying domains of conflict issues between adolescents and their parents.
Few studies have dimensionalized parent-adolescent conflict issues in collectivist cultures. Using content analysis, Smetana (1989) derived 10 categories of conflict from self-generated issues of conflict obtained from adolescents. The ten categories were chores, appearance, personality/behavioral style, homework and academic achievement, interpersonal relations, regulation of interpersonal activities, bedtime and curfew, health and hygiene, and finances. When similar studies were conducted with Chinese adolescents in Hong Kong, these dimensions were reduced to eight: regulation of activities; chores; homework and academic achievement; interpersonal relationships, parents’ problems; health and appearance among others.

Papini’s (1987) attempt to dimensionalize conflict issues using the Behavior Checklist also created seven similar categories. Issues of conflict were found to pertain to school issues, household issues, room care issues, appearance issues, leisure issues, time schedule issues, and persistent concerns and issues. The same scale was later factor analyzed to create four subscales: school issues; household behavior; self-responsibility; and persistent issues and concerns (Papini, Clark, Barnett, & Savage, 1989). More recently, Adams and Laursen (2001) derived three categories of issues from the Issues Checklist: daily hassles; autonomy; and relationships. These changes in number of factors derived from using the same scale indicate that there is variability in factor structures generated among different samples. Thus, differences in subtypes of conflict were also expected in this study.

Gender and Conflict

Most studies that examined gender of adolescent and conflict with parents have found that mother-daughter dyads are more prone to conflict than other dyads (Brooks-
It is suggested that the higher frequency of interaction between daughters and mothers compared to other dyads is the reason for this. Most studies show that adolescents are closer to mothers than fathers (Paterson, Field, & Pryor, 1994); about five times more time is shared with mothers compared to fathers (Larson & Richards, 1994), and therefore the frequency of contact provides more opportunity for misperceptions to occur in the mother-adolescent interaction. Another reason for greater conflict between adolescent daughter-mother dyads compared to other dyads is that boys and girls also experience different kinds of interaction with their mothers (Laursen, 1993; Youniss & Smollar, 1985); boys experience greater nonshared relational perspectives than do girls (Cooper, 1988). The balance of power temporarily shifts toward dominance for sons during adolescence (Steinberg, 1981). For girls, personal problems and questions of relationship are discussed more often than in any other parent-child dyad (Youniss & Smollar, 1985). These are areas where parents still exert more control in adolescence, therefore contributing more to conflicts in mother-adolescent daughter dyads.

Several other studies have found that conflict is more common among families with boys than with girls (Demo, 1991; Ellis-Schwabe & Thornburg, 1986; Flannery, Montemayor, Eberly, & Torquati, 1993; Steinberg, 1987). In more recent studies, gender differences have been found to be lacking (Dekovic et al, 1996; Dekovic & Meeus, 1997, Dekovic, 1999). The lack of gender differences is largely a result of gender-based expectations beginning to disappear with parents having similar standards for behavior for sons and daughters. Several methodological weaknesses in these studies could have lead to the inconsistent findings that render them inconclusive. These studies did not
differentiate between the aspects of conflict, therefore even though incidence of conflict may be higher for daughters than sons, the differential impact on the daughters need not necessarily be greater for daughters. Outcome variables may also be influenced by the absence of a measure of conflict intensity which is more significantly related to adolescent adjustment.

Few cross-cultural studies have examined parent-adolescent conflict by gender of adolescent or parent. The strong emphasis on gender role differentiation and expectations in behavior in collectivist cultures may indicate that adolescent boys and girls experience different levels of conflict with parents. Studies have shown that fathers being harsher disciplinarians, allows for more opportunities for conflict with sons more often than daughters, whereas both parents tend to use more induction with daughters than sons (Ho, 1981).

Ethnicity and Conflict

An examination of previous studies shows that there is no reported study that has examined parent-adolescent conflict and adolescent functioning in Malaysian samples. Thus, studies that have used the individualism-collectivism dimensions in examining parent-adolescent relationships will be reviewed.

Values such as obedience and conformity are emphasized in the socialization of children in collectivist cultures. These values are far more adaptive than independence in these cultures because they facilitate and foster group harmony which is an important organizational principle in collectivists cultures (Steinberg, 1985). Participation in and loyalty to family is also a central concern for Asians in general. The parent-child relationship is highly honored; qualities of filial piety, obedience, and sense of obligation
to family are greatly esteemed (Harrison, Serafica, & McAdoo, 1982). This is thought to be reflected among the Malaysian ethnic groups in the low incidence and intensity of conflict; however, the lower rates are not expected to necessarily correlate with better adolescent functioning as is seen in studies utilizing individualist cultures.

Empirical studies in individualistic cultures have shown that parent-child conflict and emotional distancing are a function of adolescents’ autonomy. Expectations for autonomy, which have been attributed to parent-adolescent conflict, have been found to vary along the individualism-collectivism dimension (Rosenthal & Bornholt, 1988). In more collectivist cultures, a lack of or delayed push for autonomy in youth is expected. Therefore, parent-child conflict may not be culturally relevant or easily noted during middle adolescence.

Although some cross-cultural research has indicated that parent-adolescent conflict is experienced similarly in both collectivist and individualistic societies, several limitations can be highlighted from these studies. Fuligni (1998) found that although Mexican, Chinese, Filipino, and European adolescents reported different beliefs about parental authority, and adolescent autonomy, all reported similar levels of conflict with their parents. However, subjects in this study were students in ethnically diverse California district schools. Cultural beliefs regarding autonomy and authority may only play a small role in parent-adolescent relationship if the beliefs are not supported by the larger society. This is largely a result of difficulty in maintaining traditional norms of interacting with parents in a culturally different majority culture. In addition to this, Fuligni’s (1998) study utilized three questions on whether it would be appropriate to
openly disagree with parents as a measure of belief or value system of respondents. A more specific scale is needed that taps beliefs and values.

Conflict and Depression

Depression is the most common internalizing disorder of the adolescent developmental period. It has been estimated that nearly half of all adolescents suffer from depressed mood and feelings of hopelessness and sadness at one point in time (Gans, 1990). Only five percent of adolescents have symptoms of a depressive syndrome, and even fewer, about three percent, meet the clinical diagnostic criteria for clinical depression (Compas, Ey & Grant, 1993). Generally, adolescent girls, more than adolescent boys report depressed mood (Petersen et al., 1992). After puberty especially, reports of significant episodes of depressed mood (lasting two weeks or more) increase for both genders with a more pronounced effect for girls.

A relationship between family environment and adolescent internalizing and externalizing disorders has been established. Adolescents from families with high levels of conflict and low cohesion have reported significantly higher levels of depression compared to adolescents from families with low conflict levels and high cohesion (Aseltine, Gore, & Colten, 1994).

There is evidence that the amount of conflict in a parent-adolescent relationship is negatively correlated to adolescent’s depressive moods in father-son dyads (Cole & McPherson, 1993; Dekovic, 1999). The study findings indicated that father-adolescent conflict was significantly related to adolescent depressive symptoms, whereas mother-adolescent conflict was not significantly related to adolescent depressive symptoms. The gender differences in parent-adolescent conflict also indicate that adolescent functioning
may differ according to the gender of parent with whom the conflict is experienced (Cole & McPherson, 1993). These studies, however, did not examine various characteristics of conflict and the accuracy of results are compromised. The present study (a) addressed this weakness and (b) measured the aspects of conflict (incidence and intensity) to examine their differential effects on adolescent functioning.

Hurrelmann, Engel, and Weidman (1992) found that adolescents (aged 13-16) who experienced conflict with parents (especially about previous scholastic achievements and future educational plans) also experienced more intense socio-emotional distress which became a source of psychosocial stress. This also resulted in a higher dissatisfaction with school performance, an increase in health complaints, and psychosomatic disorders.

Conflict and Self-Esteem

Self-esteem refers to the evaluative component of the self (Rosenberg, 1965). Level of self-esteem is determined by the amount of discrepancy between what one would like to be and what one is, and the general level of support that one receives. Self-esteem is related to perceived competence or satisfaction (Harter, 1993). Changes in approval from significant others (such as parents) are aspects of the social environment that may lead to changes in perceived competence.

Adolescence is characterized as a period of increased introspection, made possible by the cognitive development that takes place. In this process, adolescents are preoccupied with self-judgments and with how one is viewed by others (Barber, Chadwick, & Oerter, 1992). Others’ views of them expressed in interaction or implicitly indicated through behaviors, are incorporated to form their self-concepts. Parents play an important role in this process because the development of self is possible only with social
interaction. The behaviors of others, especially significant others such as parents, are also perceived as symbols of self-worth. Demonstrations of supportive behavior by parents convey to the adolescent that he or she is a person of value. On the other hand, in conflict–ridden parent-adolescent relationships, parental behaviors are seen as unsupportive or coercive, and the adolescent has doubts on his/her worth and value as a member of the family.

Few studies have examined the relationship between parent-adolescent conflict and self-esteem. Dekovic (1999) found that the amount of conflict was negatively related to the adolescent’s self-esteem. Kurdek (1992) found that warmth in the parent-adolescent relationship was positively related to self-esteem, whereas conflict was negatively related to self-esteem.

In a longitudinal study using a Chinese sample, Shek (1998) found that parent-adolescent conflict was related to general adolescent functioning as measured by hopelessness, life satisfaction, self-esteem, purpose in life, and psychiatric morbidity. Although the strengths of association between parent-adolescent conflict and adolescent psychological well-being were similar for male and adolescents, father-adolescent conflict, relative to mother-adolescent conflict, was found to be a stronger influence on adolescent psychological well-being.

Studies examining the extent to which adolescent self-esteem can be predicted by parental socialization have found that parental behavior, specifically parental supportive behavior was positively related to self-esteem (Barber, 1990; Barber & Thomas, 1986; Felson & Zielinski, 1989). The findings of cross-national and cross-cultural studies have been inconclusive. Barber (1992) compared American and German adolescents and
found that although there was an association between parental behaviors such as support and adolescent self-esteem in U.S. samples, there was a lack of an association in the German samples. An important implication of this finding is that cultural variations exist in socialization that may limit the connection between aspects of parental behavior and adolescent outcomes to certain cultures. Research thus needs to be sensitive to these cultural variations. No published Malaysian studies specifically examining the relationship between parent-adolescent conflict and adolescent self-esteem were found.

Conflict and Delinquency

Studies on the relationship between delinquency and family characteristics have found that the features of the parent-child relationship are salient before puberty. However, in adolescence there is a decline in the quality of the relationship and become increasingly complex because of the need for autonomy, consequences of puberty and re-negotiating parental discipline and control become important issues in the child’s life (Barber, 1992). Studies have also found that chronic delinquents’ home life is characterized by disorganization, and hostile, inept and neglectful parents who have mistreated their children and failed to instill proper standards of behavior and control (Coughlin & Vuchnich, 1996; Moffit, 1996). Kurdek (1992) studied the relationship between the quality of parent-adolescent relationships and adolescent adjustment and found that the lack of warmth and problem-solving skills which are characteristics of conflict-ridden relationships, were found to be negatively related to health problems and drug usage. This incidence of conflict in the dyads was found to be positively related to health problems and drug usage especially in adolescent girls in stepmother families (Kurdek, 1992).
Several correlational studies have provided support for the relation between parent-adolescent conflict and problem behaviors. Conflict with parents have been found to correlate positively with delinquency (Borduin, Pruitt, & Henggeler, 1986; Forehand, Long, & Hendrick, 1987; Foster-Clark, 1989), alcohol use (Baer, Garmezy, McLaughlin, Pokorny, & Wermick, 1987), substance use (Kandel, Kessler, & Margulies, 1978), and dropping out of school (Bachman, Green, & Wirtanan, 1971).

Conflict and Academic Achievement

Academic achievement refers to the psychosocial domain that involves behaviors and performance in academic settings; these are typically measured by standardized tests. Research has shown that conflict and a lack of warmth in the parent-adolescent relationship are negatively related to grades (Kurdek, 1992; Shek, Lee, & Chan, 1998). Shek et al. (1998) compared Chinese adolescents’ (aged 12-16 years) conflict with their mothers and fathers with students with relatively higher academic achievement and lower academic achievement. Shek et al. found that students with low academic achievement also reported more conflict with their parents than the higher academic students.

One of the most important obligations towards the family, especially in the Chinese culture, is achievement (Ho & Kang, 1984). Yu (1974) and Blumenthal (1977) found that achievement was a central behavior in socialization, and achievement was almost always for the group rather than personal goals. An interesting question that arises then is whether differential adolescent outcomes may be expected in ethnic groups with similar levels of conflict. Even though expressions of conflict and opinions may not be reflected in adolescent reports in all ethnic groups, the group responsibility to perform
well, which is emphasized more in the Chinese ethnic group, may contribute to group differences.

Conclusion

The importance of understanding parent-adolescent conflict and adolescent functioning by using a more complex and realistic model has been emphasized. Aspects of conflict (incidence and intensity) affect adolescent functioning in different ways. Additionally, the social context within which this conflict occurs in terms of social orientation affects the level of conflict frequency/incidence and conflict intensity as these are influenced by expectations of behavior and the degree to which conformity and group harmony is emphasized. Socialization in cultures dictates the extent to which conflict may be expressed or suppressed. The effect of unexpressed disagreements may even be greater than in a relationship where conflict incidence is high. This exploratory study examined the aspects of conflict and adolescent functioning utilizing a comprehensive model that will provide insight into the parent-adolescent relationship in a collectivist culture.
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

The purpose of this cross-sectional study was to examine the relationship between incidence and intensity of parent-adolescent conflict and adolescent functioning in terms of self-esteem, depression, delinquency, and academic achievement during middle adolescence. Data collection procedures are outlined. The demographic profile and descriptive statistics for the sample are presented (age, parents’ level of education, independent and dependent variables), and the measures utilized in this study, including sample items, scaling, and reliabilities for each of the measures are provided.

Procedures

Sample

Data for this cross-sectional study were obtained from an ethnically heterogeneous collectivist (presumed) sample in Malaysia. Data were collected from 231 respondents. Two subjects were dropped from the study because they did not belong to the ethnic groups being studied. The data collected were not normally distributed. Therefore regression diagnostics used to normalize data also led to loss of subjects. The sample that was used for this study was drawn from a dataset of 208 male and female adolescents of Malay (males = 32; females = 31), Indian (males = 24; females = 25), and
Chinese (males = 44; females = 52), backgrounds recruited from randomly selected classes from four selected urban public schools in Selangor, Malaysia.

**Participants**

Adolescents included in this study were those who were between 14 years (13 years, 10 months to 14 years, 10 months), and 16 years (15 years, 10 months to 16 years, 10 months) with a sample mean age of 15.26. Means and standard deviations were computed for ethnicity and age, to ascertain that the sample is representative of the larger surrounding community’s demographics.

**Malay sample.** The Malay sample consisted of 66 adolescents selected from two all-boys and two all-girls public schools in Klang. The gender of the participants were fairly evenly distributed by gender, i.e. 47% females (31), and 53% males (35). An examination of the parents’ education level indicated that there was a wide range in socioeconomic backgrounds varying from elementary education to a college education (first degree). For fathers’ education, 24.2% had successfully completed basic school education, 22.7% had completed high school (11 years of school), 22.1% had technical training, 9.1% completed college, and 10.6% had graduate education. For mothers, 11.1% had successfully completed basic school education, 59.1% had completed high school (11 years of school), 10.6% had technical training, 7.6% completed college, and 10.6% had graduate education.

**Chinese-Malaysian sample.** The Chinese-Malaysian sample consisted of 101 adolescents selected from two all-boys and two all-girls public schools in Klang. The gender of the participants was also fairly evenly distributed, i.e. 52.5% females (53) and 47.5% males (48). Adolescents report of their parents’ education level indicated that
there was a wide range in socioeconomic backgrounds represented varying from elementary education to a college education (first degree). For fathers’ education, 33.6% had successfully completed basic school education, 56.4% had completed high school (11 years of school), 2% had technical training, 5% completed college, and 1% had graduate education. For mothers, 55.4% had successfully completed basic school education, 31.7% had completed high school (11 years of school), 4% had technical training, 2% completed college, and 1% had some graduate education.

Indian-Malaysian sample. The Indian-Malaysian sample consisted of 52 adolescents selected from two all-boys and two all-girls public schools in Klang. The gender of the participants were evenly distributed, i.e. 50% females (26), and 5% males (26). The parents’ education level for this ethnic group also indicated that there was a wide range in socioeconomic backgrounds varying from elementary education to a college education (first degree). For fathers’ education, 21.2% had successfully completed basic school education, 61.6% had completed high school (11 years of school), 3.8% had technical training, 3.8% completed college, and 1.9% had graduate education. For mothers, 32.7% had successfully completed basic school education, 46.2% had completed high school (11 years of school), 3.8% had technical training, 3.8% completed college, and 1.9% had graduate education.

The sample of 30.1% Malays, 46.1% Chinese-Malaysians, and 23.7% Indian-Malaysians, as well as the range of socioeconomic backgrounds is representative of the larger population for Klang district from which the sample was drawn.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Mother’s Education</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Father’s Education</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
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<td>1.01</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>15.69</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1 Descriptive Statistics for sample

Data Collection

Data consisted of adolescent responses to a paper and pencil based survey questionnaire. Data collection for the research began after the research proposal had been reviewed and approved by the Ministry of Education, Malaysia, and the Department of Education Selangor, Malaysia.

To ensure meaning equivalence and comparability, prior to data collection a careful back translation procedure was used in which the questionnaire was first translated from English to Malay by a bilingual graduate student at Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Serdang, Malaysia. The Malay version of the questionnaire was then
translated back to English by a different bilingual graduate student who was unfamiliar with the original version. The two English versions were then compared and any inconsistencies or discrepancies were accounted for through changes in the Malay version.

Four schools from Klang district in Selangor, Malaysia were used in the data collection for this study. Consent was sought from participants and parents. A total of 300 letters of invitation for participation and consent forms were sent home to the families of the adolescents and 231 letters of acceptance were returned to a research representative at the school office in the following day(s). The response rate was 77%. Questionnaires and data were coded by number not by name. Questionnaires were administered to participants by a representative at the selected schools.

Instrumentation

**Demographic Questionnaire.** The demographic information includes age, birth order, gender, familial structure, religion, ethnicity, and education level of both parents (proxy for family socio-economic status).

**The Issues Checklist.** The Issues Checklist (Prinz, Foster, Kent, & O’Leary, 1979; Robin & Foster, 1989) was used to assess conflict incidence and conflict intensity. Respondents indicated whether or not each of the issues (e.g., “cleaning up bedroom,” “how money is spent”) had been the topic of conflict with their parents during the previous two weeks. Responses were computed in two ways:

1) The intensity of conflict was calculated by summing the products of each conflict intensity topic (based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1= “very calm” to 5= “very angry”), and the corresponding frequency estimate was then
divided by the total number of issues argued. This score adjusts for the possibility that highly intense conflicts might be related to frequently discussed issues (Printz et al., 1979). Higher scores indicate more intense conflicts and lower scores indicate less intense conflicts.

2) The incidence of conflict was measured by the number of times each issue with an intensity rating of two or above has been argued about (Maggs & Galambos, 1993). Higher scores indicate higher levels of conflict incidence.

The Issues Checklist has been shown to discriminate between distressed and non-distressed dyads, and correlates moderately with other measures of family interaction (Robin & Foster, 1989). Test-retest for this measure ranged from .49 to .80 after a two week interval (Enyart, 1984). In this study, Cronbach’s alpha was .77 for mothers and .84 for fathers.

**Adolescent Self-Esteem.** The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965, 1979) is a measure of an individual’s global self-worth. Participants responded to 10 items on a four-point scale from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” Some of the items provide positive assessments of self-issues (e.g., “I feel I have a number of good qualities”), whereas others are measures of self-derogation (e.g., “I feel useless at times”). Final scores range from 10 to 40. Lower scores represent lower levels of self-esteem. The scale has been found to be negatively related to depression and positively related to aspects such as parental support (Gecas et al., 1986; Robertson & Simons, 1989). This scale has been used in numerous studies with adolescents including collectivists cultural groups and has been reported to be valid and reliable (Bush, Supple & Peterson, 1998; Bush et al., 2000). Cronbach’s alpha values of between .77 (Dobson, et al., 1979) and .88 (Fleming &
Courtney, 1984) have been reported for this scale. Test-retest correlations for this measure range from .85 and .85 (Silber & Tippett, 1965; Fleming & Courtney, 1984). Cronbach’s alpha for this study was .73.

**Delinquent Behavior.** This 25-item measure developed by Loeber and Dishon (1983) taps delinquency in six domains: vandalism, theft, physical aggression, truancy and other school problems, disruptive behavior and status offenses. Respondents indicated the number of times they have done each behavior in the past year. Scores on each subscale was totaled. High scores indicate greater delinquency. Cronbach’s alpha was .79.

**Depression.** The Self-Rating Depression Scale (Zung, 1965) consists of 20 items, 10 of which are reverse-coded. A four-point Likert scale was used for each item ranging from 1= “none or a little of the time” to 4 = “most or all of the time.” Scores for the Self-Rating Depression Scale were calculated by summing all responses, with a possible range of 20 to 80. Higher scores indicate more depressive symptoms. Reliability scores of between .79 and .92 have been reported for this scale (Knight, Waal-Manning, and Spears, 1983; Zung, 1986). Significant moderate to high convergent validity has been noted between this scale and Hamilton Rating Scale for Depression (HRSD), Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), and the “D” scale of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (Biggs, Wylie, Ziegler, 1978; Brown & Zung, 1972; Zung 1967; Zung, Richards, & Short, 1965). This scale has been shown to successfully discriminate between depressed and non-depressed individuals. It has also been translated into at least 30 other languages and widely used in cross-cultural studies. Cronbach’s alpha in this study was .70.
Academic Achievement. Adolescents’ academic achievement was measured based on self-reports on the most recent exam scores. Responses that best represented their grades over the last year were indicated on the questionnaire (e.g., 5 = “mostly A’s” to 1 = “mostly F’s”). High correlations have been found in previous crosscultural studies between adolescents actual grades and self-reported grades (Dornbush et al., 1987).

Data Analyses

The raw data were examined for any obvious response sets, focusing especially on any response that seem suspicious. Items that were reverse-coded were recoded, and data were entered on file using SPSS. The data file was checked against a quarter of cases in the raw data that were randomly chosen. This was done to verify the accuracy of data entry. Following this, summary variables were computed for each scale. The range of scores (highs and lows) were examined to ensure that values did not exceed the limitations of the scales. Descriptive statistics were computed on the entire sample. The Shapiro Wilks test was used to test for normality of data. Initial tests indicated a non-normal distribution of data for all variables except academic achievement. Regression diagnostics were used to normalize the data. Detailed explanation of this technique is provided in the following chapter.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: What are the group differences (gender and ethnicity) with respect to parent-adolescent conflict incidence and conflict intensity?

To ascertain whether there are significant differences in conflict incidence and conflict intensity between and among the three ethnic groups and the two gender groups, a decision was made to utilize ANOVA.
Groups that did not differ significantly were collapsed to analyze parent-adolescent dyads and gender differences (means and standard deviations). Post hoc comparisons were done to examine specific differences when there was a significant ethnicity main effect or interaction.

a. Are there group differences in subtypes of conflict?

Common Factor Analysis was utilized to examine the differences between groups based on subtypes of conflict. First, the initial unrotated factor matrix was extracted to obtain a preliminary indication of the numbers of factors. Then, a rotated factor matrix was computed to redistribute the variance from earlier factors to later ones to achieve a simpler, theoretically more meaningful factor pattern. The oblique rotation was used because theoretically, the underlying dimensions were assumed to be correlated. The criteria used to determine the number of factors to be extracted was the eigenvalue considering that the number of variables was between 20 and 50. The scree plot was also examine to determine the number of factors to be extracted. Factor loadings of at least .40 were regarded as significant for this sample size.

**Research Questions 2-5.** What are the relationships between the independent variables (parent-adolescent conflict incidence and intensity) and dependent variables (depression, self-esteem, delinquency, and academic achievement) for each group (ethnic and gender).

Multiple regression was used to determine if independent variables were simultaneously and significantly predicting the dependent variables. Wilks Lamda, F-values, and p-values are reported for this purpose. Subsequently, univariate analyses
were done to examine the “goodness-of-fit” for the model. Individual relationships between the independent and dependent variables were then examined.

The relationships between the variables (parent-adolescent conflict variables and adolescent functioning variables) was examined by gender (i.e., gender of adolescent and gender of parent), and ethnic group (Malay, Indian, Chinese).

The strength of the equations predicting each dependent variable was measured by squared multiple correlations, $R^2$ (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1988). The squared multiple correlations of the dependent variables were examined for indications of the amount of variance accounted for in the dependent variables by the independent variables.

Examination of the beta coefficients was done to assess the significance of individual hypothesized paths. This indicates the direct relationships between the independent variables (i.e., parent-adolescent conflict intensity and conflict incidence) and the dependent variables (i.e., adolescent depression, self-esteem, delinquency and academic achievement). Significant relationships among the variables were examined for each gender, ethnicity, and parent-adolescent dyad group.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The present study explored the relationship between the incidence and intensity of parent-adolescent conflict and adolescent internalized (depression and self-esteem) and externalized (delinquency and academic achievement) behaviors during middle adolescence in an ethnically heterogeneous and collectivist culture. Group differences in subscales/subtypes of conflict were also investigated. Descriptive statistics were computed on the entire sample for information regarding conflict (incidence and intensity) and adolescent outcome variables (depression, self-esteem, delinquency, and academic achievement). Test of normality was done using the Shapiro Wilks test. ANOVA was used to ascertain whether there were significant differences between the three ethnic and two gender groups. Where no significant differences between groups (gender and ethnicity) were noted, the groups were collapsed and analyzed for parent-adolescent-dyad differences pertaining to aspects of conflict and adolescent functioning. Common factor analysis was done to extract subtypes of conflicts reported by adolescents. The remaining four research questions pertaining to predictors of adolescent self-esteem, depression, delinquency and academic achievement were examined using multiple regression analysis. Next, univariate regression analyses were utilized to
examine beta values for specific significant relationships between independent and the dependent variables. An alpha level of .05 was used to determine significance of relationships for all analyses (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998).

Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) and Pearson product moment correlations for study variables are reported in Table 4.1. Results of the two-way ANOVA between gender, ethnicity, conflict incidence, and conflict intensity are shown in Tables 4.2. Eigenvalues and variance for factors extracted are presented in Table 4.3. Subtypes of conflicts reported by each ethnic group are reported in Table 4.4, and the correlations for the research questions explored are presented in Table 4.5. Regression analyses are presented in tables 4.6-4.12.

A total of six groups were initially examined: Malay adolescent females (Group 1), Malay adolescent males (Group 2), Chinese adolescent females (Group 3), Chinese adolescent males (Group 4), Indian adolescent females (Group 5), and Indian adolescent males (Group 6).

Descriptive Statistics

Initial Shapiro-Wilk statistics for test of normality indicated non-normal distribution for all variables. Because further analyses utilized statistical procedures such as regression analysis that were not robust to deviations from normality, changing the distributional form was necessary.

Regression diagnostic tests were performed to identify and treat influential outliers. Influential outliers were identified as those that contributed largely to the regression relations (Belsley, Kuh, & Welsh, 1980; Bollen & Jackman, 1990; Fox, 1991; Judd & McClelland, 1993; Velleman & Welsh, 1981; Williams, Jones, & Tukey, 1999). In
other words, the inclusion or exclusion of these outliers will cause substantial changes to the fitted models being examined. Because outliers in one dimension may not be outliers when all variables are examined together in a regression equation, the influential outliers were identified as those that violated all of the following:

a. Leverage points were used to identify the outliers based on the independent variables. Values greater than 2*P/n (or .0186 for this sample) were considered outliers (Judd & McClelland, 1993; Velleman & Welsh, 1981).

b. Studentized deleted residuals were used to identify outliers based on the dependent variables. This value was obtained by dividing the deleted residual by the estimate of its standard error. Values more than the critical value of the t-distribution at \((1 - \alpha / n)\) and \((n-p-1)\) degrees of freedom were considered outliers based on the dependent variables.

c. DFFITS measures the influence each case has on the fitted values of the dependent variable. When observations were identified as outliers in both cases above (leverage and studentized deleted residual values), their impact on the regression function and parameter estimates were examined using this statistic. If values were more than \(2* \sqrt{p/n}\), they are considered influential outliers.

d. DFBETAS values indicate the influence of an observation on a particular regression coefficient. Values greater than \(2 / \sqrt{n}\) were considered influential outliers.

Through this elimination process, the sample was reduced to 208 adolescents; 32 Malay males and 31 Malay females; 44 Chinese males and 52 Chinese
females; 25 Indian males and 24 Indian females. Descriptive tests were run again for the remaining data, and the distribution was found to be fairly normal for all variables.

Visual inspection of the distribution plots indicated that the distribution of scores for all variables were fairly normal. Skewness ranged from .03 to .20, whereas kurtosis ranged between .13 and .01. Shapiro-Wilks test of normality was significant (p-values ranged between .41 and .52).

Pearson product moment correlation coefficients were examined to measure the strength of association between all study variables. As shown in Table 4.1, conflict incidence with fathers was positively correlated with intensity of conflict with father ($r = .58, p < .001$), conflict incidence with mothers ($r = .58, p < .001$), intensity of conflict with mothers ($r = .28, p < .001$), and delinquency ($r = .18, p < .05$). Intensity of conflict with fathers was positively correlated to conflict incidence with mothers ($r = .36, p < .001$) and intensity of conflict with mothers ($r = .56; p < .001$), and negatively correlated to self-esteem ($r = -.16; p < .05$). Conflict incidence with mothers was positively correlated to intensity of conflict with mothers ($r = .46, p < .001$), and negatively correlated to self-esteem ($r = -.21; p < .001$). Conflict intensity was positively correlated to academic achievement ($r = .18; p < .001$) and negatively correlated to self-esteem. Self-esteem was negatively correlated to depression ($r = -.26, p < .001$) and delinquency ($r = -.23; p < .001$). Delinquency was positively correlated to depression ($r = .24, p < .001$). Depression was found to be negatively correlated with academic achievement ($r = -.19; p < .001$).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>1.</th>
<th>2.</th>
<th>3.</th>
<th>4.</th>
<th>5.</th>
<th>6.</th>
<th>7.</th>
<th>8.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1. FAConInc</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>3. MAConInc</td>
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<td>0.36**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. MAConInt</td>
<td>0.28**</td>
<td>0.56**</td>
<td>0.46**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Self-esteem</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-0.16*</td>
<td>-0.21**</td>
<td>-0.15*</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Delinquency</td>
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<td>-0.04</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>-0.23**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Depression</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>-0.16*</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-0.27**</td>
<td>0.24**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Academic achievement</td>
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<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.18**</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.19**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
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<th>36.9</th>
<th>7.1</th>
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<td>S.D.</td>
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<td>1.3</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>6.56</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<.05  ** p<.001
FAConInc – father-adolescent conflict incidence
FAConInt – father-adolescent conflict intensity
MAConInc – mother-adolescent conflict incidence
MAConInt – mother-adolescent conflict intensity

Table 4.1 Descriptive statistics and correlations between all variables: Pearson Coefficients

Research Questions

1. What are the group differences (gender and ethnicity) with respect to parent-adolescent conflict incidence and conflict intensity?

   To examine if there were significant gender and ethnicity differences in conflict incidence and conflict intensity, two-way (factorial) ANOVA tests were run separately
for conflict incidence and conflict intensity for mothers and fathers. Results of the four separate two-way ANOVA are combined and presented in Table 4.2.

The first two-way ANOVA tested for group differences based on gender and ethnicity on conflict incidence with fathers. Significant main effects were noted for ethnicity (df = 2, F=11.68, p<.001) but not for gender. Post hoc comparisons (Scheffe’s test) revealed that Malay adolescents (mean = 21.44) experienced significantly more conflict with fathers compared to Chinese adolescents (mean = 10.19, p<.0001). Indian adolescents (mean = 20.88) also reported significantly higher incidence of conflict compared to Chinese adolescents (p<.01). The Malay and Indian groups did not differ significantly. No significant interaction effects were noted.

The second two-way ANOVA was used to detect differences in intensity of conflict experienced with fathers based on gender and ethnicity. Significant main effects were found for ethnicity and conflict intensity. (df = 2, F=7.75, p<.001). Post hoc comparisons revealed that the mean scores for conflict intensity were highest for the Malay adolescent group (mean = 6.40), followed by the Indian adolescent group (mean = 5.32), and the lowest for the Chinese adolescent group (mean = 3.84). The mean scores for both Malay and Indian groups differed significantly (p<.01) from that of Chinese adolescents, but the Malay and Indian groups did not differ significantly. The intensity of conflict experienced by the Indian adolescents was at a level in between those experienced by the Malay and Chinese adolescents. Only marginally significant main effects were noted between gender and conflict intensity (df=1, F= 3.8, p=.052). Mean scores indicated that level of intensity of conflicts were higher for girls (mean = 5.4) compared to boys (4.47).
The third two-way ANOVA tested for significant differences between ethnic and gender groups on conflict incidence with mothers. No main effect was noted between gender and conflict incidence with mothers. However, a main effect was found between ethnicity and conflict incidence \( (\text{df} = 2, F = 4.88, p < .005) \). Results of follow-up analysis indicated that Malay adolescents reported significantly higher conflict incidence (mean = 13.98, \( p < .005 \)) compared to Chinese adolescents (mean = 8.48). Mean scores for Indian adolescents (mean = 14.73, \( p < .005 \)) were also significantly higher than those of Chinese adolescents. The Malay and Indian groups did not differ significantly. No interaction effect between gender, ethnicity, and conflict incidence was revealed in this test.

The fourth ANOVA tested for significant differences between the groups in intensity of conflict with mothers. A significant main effect emerged between ethnicity and conflict intensity \( (\text{df} = 2, F = 5.47, p < .005) \). Post hoc comparisons revealed that conflict intensity with mothers was significantly higher among Indian adolescents (mean = 5.88; \( p < .05 \)) compared to Chinese adolescents (mean = 3.18). A similar pattern was noted between the Malay and the Chinese groups. The mean difference between the Malay adolescent group’s report of conflict intensity with their mothers (mean = 5.28; \( p = .053 \)) compared to those of the Chinese adolescent group, was only marginally significant. The Malay and Indian groups did not differ significantly.

A marginally significant main effect was found between gender and conflict intensity \( (\text{df} = 1, F = .102, p = .054) \). The mean score for boys on this measure was 3.9 whereas the score for girls was 4.9.
### Table 4.2: Two-way ANOVA for conflict variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender X Ethnicity</th>
<th>Within</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FAConInc</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>12.96</td>
<td>3090.59</td>
<td>159.41</td>
<td>264.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>11.68**</td>
<td>.602</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAConInt</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>64.92</td>
<td>131.49</td>
<td>46.33</td>
<td>16.97</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>7.75**</td>
<td>2.73</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAConInc</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>17.40</td>
<td>835.58</td>
<td>406.74</td>
<td>171.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>.102</td>
<td>4.88*</td>
<td>2.37</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAConInt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>101.49</td>
<td>147.12</td>
<td>112.141</td>
<td>26.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>5.47*</td>
<td>4.17</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: df=1 for gender; df=2 for ethnicity and gender x ethnicity; df=202 for within group

* p<.005

** p<.001

Common factor analysis was used to identify common latent factors underlying the 43 items on the Issues Checklist. Significance level for Bartlett’s test of sphericity for conflict issues with fathers was high, thus rejecting the null hypothesis that the correlation matrix was an identity matrix. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of
sampling adequacy was moderate (.70). Factor analysis was deemed appropriate for examining the subtypes of conflicts with fathers. For mothers, the significance level for test of sphericity was low (.00) indicating that the correlation matrix was an identity matrix, and the KMO value was mediocre (.53). Therefore, factor analysis was not deemed appropriate for analysis of subtypes of conflict with mothers. Because the ratio of cases to variables was small (less than 2:1) for the ethnicity groups, especially for the Malay and Indian groups, factor analyses for subtypes of conflict issues was not possible for gender within each ethnic group. To determine if analyses for the gender groups needed to be done separately, and with mean-deviated values, the assumption that the gender groups had equal means (tests of between-subjects effects) was tested. This test was not significant (df=1, F=.58, p=.49), indicating that the mean differences between the gender groups were not significant; therefore, the gender groups were analyzed together.

Theoretically the underlying factors were assumed to be correlated; therefore, oblique rotation was used. Factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were taken into consideration for interpretation. The scree plot was also examined for the same purpose. Factor loadings greater than .40 (Stevens, 1996) were used to identify variables that loaded on particular factors. Items without responses and variables that did not load significantly on any factor were deleted and the factor analysis was run again. Using this method, seven factors were extracted from 22 variables.

Eigenvalues and percentage of variance accounted for by the factors are presented in Table 4.3. Factor loadings are presented in Table 4.4. Loadings lower than .40 are not reported. Where loadings were significant on more than one factor for any variable, theoretical considerations were made in clustering variables.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Total Eigenvalue</th>
<th>% variance</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
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<td>18.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2.80</td>
<td>12.73</td>
<td>31.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>10.34</td>
<td>41.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>7.14</td>
<td>48.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>6.30</td>
<td>55.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>60.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>4.91</td>
<td>65.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3  Eigenvalues and variance accounted for by factors

A total of 4539 conflicts were reported by the 208 subjects. The conflicts appeared to be organized around seven domains. Collectively the seven subtypes of conflict that were named based on these domains accounted for 65.7% of the variance. Issues related to cooperative behavior such as helping in household chores and expectations of appropriate behavior (respectful) loaded on Factor 1. Regulation of activities based on time such as waking up, going to bed, coming home on time and how free time is spent loaded on Factor 2. Compliance and behaviors that stir up disturbances in the family’s emotional environment loaded on Factor 3. School-related issues loaded on Factor 4, decisions on spending money on Factor 5, personal hygiene and appearance on Factor 6 and daily hassles and manners loaded on Factor 7. Factors retained were
similar to previous studies that used the Issues Checklist to measure parent-adolescent
collision. Factor names and communality are provided in Table 4.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Loadings</th>
<th>Communality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>F1: Cooperative Behavior</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping out around the house</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putting feet on furniture</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning up room</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putting away clothes</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F2: Managing Time</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting up in the morning</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coming home on time</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to spend free time</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time for going to bed</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F3: Family relations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making too much noise</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting with siblings</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking back to parents</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F4: Academic</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low grades</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing homework</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F5: Finances</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying CDs, toys, etc.</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How money is spent</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F6: Appearance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleanliness –personal hygiene</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How neat clothing look</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which clothes to wear</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F7: Daily Hassles</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing stereo too loud</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone calls</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using television</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table manners</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4  Factor loadings and communality estimates on factors
Regression analysis

Before proceeding to use regression statistics, the variables were tested for multicollinearity. Tolerance statistics were close to one (.75) and variance inflation factor (VIF) statistics were low (ranged from 1.2-2.0). These indicated that multicollinearity was not a problem for analyses of this data. Assumptions were also tested by examining the normal probability plots of residuals and scatter diagrams of residuals. No violations of normality, or homoscedasticity of residuals were detected. Box plots also did not reveal any outliers.

A preliminary analysis was done before proceeding to examine the remaining research questions. A standard multivariate regression was performed between each of the dependent variables and the independent variables (FAConInc and FAConInt, and MAConInc and MAConInt) separately for each gender and ethnic group. This was to examine whether the independent variables were significantly and simultaneously predicting the dependent variables (self-esteem, depression, delinquency, academic achievement) for all groups. Results of this test (Wilk’s Lambda) are presented in Table 4.6. This was followed by univariate analyses to examine separate beta (β) values for each group.
Multivariate regression

Overall, the multivariate analyses revealed that all four independent variables (FAConInc, FAConInt, MAConInc, and MAConInt) simultaneously and significantly predicted the dependent variables -- self-esteem, delinquency, depression, and academic achievement. Results for each group are presented in Table 4.6. This pattern of relationship was noted in both the Malay female and male groups. In Malay females the independent variables (FAConInc (F=3.14), FAConInt (F=7.68), MAConInc (F=8.53), and MAConInt (F=9.66) significantly predicted adolescent functioning. Similarly, in the male group the independent variables FAConInc (F=35.78), FAConInt (F=20.63), MAConInc (F=3.74), and MAConInt (F=3.58) simultaneously predicted the independent variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FAConInc</td>
<td>.64*</td>
<td>.14***</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.41**</td>
<td>.40**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAConInt</td>
<td>.42***</td>
<td>.23***</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAConInc</td>
<td>.39***</td>
<td>.62**</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAConInt</td>
<td>.36***</td>
<td>.63**</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.49*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1= Malay females 3= Chinese females 5= Indian females
2= Malay males 4= Chinese males 6= Indian males
* p<.05 ** p<.005 *** p< .001

Table 4.5 Multivariate analysis: variables predicting dependent variables simultaneously
For the Chinese adolescents as a group, the independent variables were not significantly predicting the dependent variables when considered simultaneously. No further analyses were done for this group. For the Indian female group, only FAConInc was predicting the dependent variables significantly. For Indian male adolescents, FAConInc and MAConInt significantly predicted the dependent variables. MAConInc was only (marginally) significant (F=2.90, p=.055) as a predictor variable when considered simultaneously with other predictor variables.

**Univariate analyses**

In Malay females the independent variables FAConInc (F=3.14), FAConInt (F=7.68), MACoInc (F=8.53), and MAConInt (F=9.66) significantly predicted adolescent functioning overall. MaConInc (F=5.12, p<.05) significantly predicted self-esteem, FAConInc (F= 10.53, p<.005) and MACoInc (F=8.99, p<.05) predicted delinquency, MAConInc (F=5.0, p<.05) predicted depression, and FAConInt (F=10.94, p<.005) and MAConInt (F= 16.21, p<.001) predicted academic achievement significantly.

In the Malay male group, the independent variables FAConInc (F=35.78), FAConInt (F=20.63), MAConInc (F=3.74), and MAConInt (F=3.58) simultaneously predicted the independent variables. The variables FAConInc (F= 30.30, p<.001) and MAConInc (F=6.92, p<.05) predicted self-esteem, FAConInc ((F=44.69, p< .001), FAConInt (F=16.0, p<.001) and MAConInt ((F=14.19, p=.001) predicted delinquency, and FAConInt (F=5.37,p<.05) predicted depression.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
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<td>.92*</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAConInt</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAConInc</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>6.92*</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>5.97*</td>
</tr>
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<td>MAConInt</td>
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<td>7.28*</td>
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</table>

1= Malay females 3= Chinese females 5= Indian females
2= Malay males 4= Chinese males 6= Indian males
* p<.05 ** p<.005 *** p< .001

Table 4.6 Univariate analysis: F-values for self-esteem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FAConInc</td>
<td>10.53**</td>
<td>44.69***</td>
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<td>5.87*</td>
<td>ns</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAConInt</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>16.0***</td>
<td>ns</td>
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<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAConInc</td>
<td>8.99*</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>4.47*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAConInt</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>14.19***</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>4.86*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1= Malay females 3= Chinese females 5= Indian females
2= Malay males 4= Chinese males 6= Indian males
* p<.05 ** p<.005 *** p< .001

Table 4.7 Univariate analysis: F-values for delinquency
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
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<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAConInt</td>
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<td>5.37*</td>
<td>ns</td>
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<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAConInc</td>
<td>5.0*</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>5.97*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAConInt</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.49*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1= Malay females  
2= Malay males  
3= Chinese females  
4= Chinese males  
5= Indian females  
6= Indian males  
* p<.05

Table 4.8 Univariate analysis: F-values for depression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>6</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FAConInc</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.41**</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAConInt</td>
<td>10.94**</td>
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<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>6.38*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAConInc</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAConInt</td>
<td>16.21*</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1= Malay females  
2= Malay males  
3= Chinese females  
4= Chinese males  
5= Indian females  
6= Indian males  
* p<.05

Table 4.9 Univariate analysis: F-values for academic achievement

For Indian females, the variable FAConInc (F= 5.87, p<.05) predicted delinquency. For males in this group, MAConInc (F= 5.97, p<.05) and MAConInt (F=7.28, p<.05) significantly predicted self-esteem. These variables also significantly...
predicted delinquency: MAConInc (F= 4.47, p< .05) and MAConInt (F= 4.86, p< .05).
MAConInc (F=5.97, p<.05) significantly predicted depression whereas FAConInc marginally (F= 4.12, p=.057) predicted depression. Only FAConInt (F=6.38, p<.05) significantly predicted academic achievement for this group.

Regression analyses were also done for each group to examine model strength of relationship between the independent variables and dependent variables (β), and the fit for the hypothesized model. The amount of variance in the dependent variables that were predictable on the basis of the independent variables are indicated (R²) for each of the research questions below.

2. What are the relationships between adolescent characteristics (gender and ethnicity), parent-adolescent conflict incidence, parent-adolescent intensity, and self-esteem?

Univariate regression analyses on ethnic groups revealed that the model significantly predicted self-esteem for Malay males, F= (2,29), p<.05, and marginally significant for predicting self-esteem for Indian males, F=(2,22), p=.052, only with regard to conflict incidence and intensity with fathers. For Malay males, the R² for the model was .30 indicating that 30 % of the variance in self-esteem is predictable on the basis of the independent variables, FAConInc and FAConInt. In terms of individual relationships between the independent variables and self-esteem, FAConInc (t=-3.47, p<.005) predicted self-esteem whereas FAConInt (t=1.81, p=.081) did not. There was a negative significant relationship between self-esteem and FAConInc (β=-.724, p<.005). Adolescents who reported more conflict with their fathers also reported lower self-esteem compared to those who reported less conflict.
For Indian males, the $R^2$ was .48 indicating that 48% of the variance in self-esteem was accounted for by the independent variables. In terms of individual relationships, a similar pattern to the Malay males was observed. The variable FAConInc ($t=2.07, p=.05; \beta=.46, p<.05$) significantly predicted self-esteem whereas FAConInt ($t=.16, p>.05; \beta=.035, p>.05$) did not. However, there was significant positive relationship between self-esteem and FAConInc. Adolescents who reported more conflicts also had higher self-esteem scores. Conflict for this group seemed to be facilitating positive development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malay males</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAConInc</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>-.72</td>
<td>-3.47</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAConInt</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>.081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian males</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAConInc</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>.052</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.10  Regression coefficients predicting self-esteem
3. What are the relationships between adolescent characteristics (gender and ethnicity), parent-adolescent conflict incidence, parent-adolescent intensity, and delinquency?

The model successfully predicted delinquency for the Malay male and Indian female groups only. For Malay males, F(2,29)=19.57, p<.001, the R² for the model was .57. The standardized coefficients were significant for FAConInc (β=.987; p<.001) and FAConInt (β=-.84, p<.001). Although both conflict incidence (t= 6.07, p<.001) and conflict intensity (t=-5.17, p<.001) significantly predicted delinquency, FAConInc was a better predictor delinquency compared to FAConInt. The results indicated that the more adolescents experienced conflict, the higher the delinquent behaviors they engaged in. However, the higher the conflict intensity, the lower the reports of delinquency compared to adolescents who reported lower levels of conflict intensity.

For Indian female adolescents the model significantly predicted delinquency, F(2,24)=10.23, p<.001. The independent variables in the model accounted for 49% of the variance in delinquency. However, only FAConInc (β=.812; p<.005; t=3.83) was significantly (positive) predicting delinquency. The more adolescents experienced conflicts, the higher were their reports of delinquent behaviors.

With regard to conflict with mothers, the model indicated a fit for Malay females, F(2,28)=6.29, p<.05 although this was not the case with fathers. The independent variables contributed to only 31% in shared variability. MAConInc (t=-1.54, p>.05) did not significantly predict delinquency whereas MAConInt (t=3.83, p<.05) did. There was a negative relationship between MAConInt and delinquency (β=-.48). This indicated
that the more intense the conflicts were with mothers, the lower the adolescents’ reports of delinquent behavior.

Both MAConInc (t=3.89, p<.005) and MAConInt (t=-4.01, p<.001) significantly predicted delinquency in Malay males, and accounted for 37% of the variance in delinquency. Compared to MAConInc (β=1.10; p<.005), MAConInt (β=-1.13; p<.005) was a better predictor of delinquency in this model. Similar to conflict with fathers, MAConInc showed a positive relationship with delinquency whereas MAConInt showed a negative relationship with delinquency. The more conflict adolescents experienced with their mothers, the higher were their reports of delinquent behavior. However, the more intense the conflicts were, the lower were their reports of delinquent behavior. Stricter or authoritarian parenting seems to deter delinquency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malay females</td>
<td>MAConInt</td>
<td>-.23</td>
<td>-.48</td>
<td>-3.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malay males</td>
<td>FACOnInc</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>6.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FACOnInt</td>
<td>-4.67</td>
<td>-.84</td>
<td>-5.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MAConInc</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>3.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MAConInt</td>
<td>-5.80</td>
<td>-1.13</td>
<td>-4.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian females</td>
<td>FACOnInc</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>3.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.11  Regression coefficients predicting delinquency
4. What are the relationships between adolescent characteristics (gender and ethnicity), parent-adolescent conflict incidence, parent-adolescent intensity, and depression?

The model was not a good fit for any group as far as conflict with fathers or mothers were concerned. Considered individually, the independent variables were also not significantly predicting depression.

5. What are the relationships between adolescent characteristics (gender and ethnicity), parent-adolescent conflict incidence, parent-adolescent intensity, and academic achievement?

The model had some fit for only one group when univariate regression was run. FACOnInc and FACOnInt jointly accounted for 27% of the variance in academic achievement ($F=5.05$, $p<.05$) for the Malay female group. When individual relationships were examined it was noted that only FACOnInc ($\beta=.48$; $p<.05$; $t=-2.58$) predicted academic achievement significantly. The relation was positive between FACOnInc and academic achievement indicating the higher the conflict incidence with fathers, the better the academic achievement was for Malay females.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malay females</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FACOnInc</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>-.48</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.12 Regression coefficients predicting academic achievement
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationships between parent adolescent conflict incidence and intensity, and adolescent functioning in terms of internalized (depression and self-esteem) and externalized (delinquency and academic achievement) behaviors in an ethnically heterogeneous and collectivist culture. This study also examined group differences in subtypes of conflict experienced by adolescents with their parents. Data for this cross-sectional study were gathered from a total of 208 Malaysian adolescents of Malay, Chinese, and Indian ethnic backgrounds. Comparisons were made between gender, ethnic, and dyadic-specific conflict groups. It was expected that group differences would emerge in each of the research questions examined. Within this chapter, the gender and ethnicity differences in conflict incidence and conflict intensity with mothers and fathers are discussed. Next, the subtypes of conflicts experienced by adolescents in this sample are presented. The relationships between the independent variables (conflict incidence and conflict intensity) and the dependent variables (self-esteem, delinquency, depression, academic achievement) are discussed. Finally, strengths and limitations of the present empirical study are presented.
Research Questions

1. What are the group differences (gender and ethnicity) with respect to parent-adolescent conflict incidence and conflict intensity?

Separate two-way ANOVA tests revealed that there were significant main effects for ethnicity but not gender as far as conflict incidence with fathers was concerned. Malay and Indian adolescents experienced more conflict with their fathers compared to Chinese adolescents. Both the Malay and Indian adolescents differed significantly from Chinese adolescents; however Malay and Indian adolescents did not significantly differ from each other. No significant interaction effects were noted between gender and ethnicity. Marginally significant main effects were noted between gender and conflict intensity with fathers, with girls reporting higher intensity of conflicts than boys. Ethnic group differences were also seen in conflict intensity with the Malay group reporting the highest intensity, followed by the Indian group. The Chinese group, which had the lowest score, was significantly different from the other two ethnic groups. The Malay and Indian groups did not differ significantly. As far as conflict incidence and conflict intensity with fathers were concerned, the Malay and Indian groups were similar. The interaction effect between gender and ethnicity was only marginally significant.

For conflict incidence with mothers, the Indian (highest) and Malay groups were found to be significantly different from the Chinese group (lowest). The Malay and Indian groups did not differ significantly. No gender differences or interaction effects between ethnicity and gender were noted for conflict incidence with mothers. The tests also revealed that only a marginally significant gender difference was present for conflict
intensity with mothers, with girls reporting higher conflict intensity with mothers compared with boys. Conflict intensity with mothers was also found to be highest among Indian adolescents followed by Malay adolescents. These groups, which did not differ significantly, had significantly higher scores than the Chinese group. A significant interaction was noted between gender, ethnicity, and conflict intensity with mothers. The highest conflict intensity scores were reported by Malay adolescent females followed by Indian adolescent females and Indian adolescent males, whereas Chinese adolescent females, Malay adolescent males, and Chinese adolescent males experienced much lower conflict intensity.

When dyad-specific conflict incidence differences were examined, mean scores for fathers were higher than that for mothers for all ethnic and gender groups. For conflict intensity, this same pattern was noted.

These findings partially support previous research on parent-adolescent conflict. The period of adolescence in this sample did reflect considerable levels of conflict incidence and intensity. Adolescence in the Malaysian sample does seem to be a period of some conflict. However, an interesting and useful finding is that conflict can be experienced differently in ethnic groups within the same collectivist social orientation. For instance, the Malay and Indian groups were more similar to each other compared to the Chinese group. This is due to the differential patterns of socialization that exist between groups. The lower levels of conflict in the Chinese group can be attributed to this. Ho (1981) found that the period of adolescence in the Chinese culture was not marked by “disturbances” as in the Western cultures because the imposition of discipline and demands are already placed on the child at the age of “tung shih” (understanding),
which is well before adolescence. Therefore, from this period (school-going age) through adolescence, and later adulthood there is a high degree of continuity; the child is already aware of expectations of behaviors.

Most studies on parent adolescent conflict have not examined dyad-specific conflict incidence and conflict intensity. The finding on gender differences in mother-adolescent conflict is consistent with previous research in that daughters reported more conflict incidence with mothers than sons. However, when dyad-specific comparisons were made, both conflict incidence and intensity were found to be higher with fathers compared to mothers. Parental roles and socialization patterns may explain this. Differentiation of parental roles is clearer in the Malaysian population. The role of the mother is that of a nurturer and “manager of the emotional climate” of the family. Typically, children are closer and enjoy warmer relationships with mothers compared to fathers. The father’s role is that of a disciplinarian; therefore, he is expected to be more frequently and directly involved in handling children’s misbehaviors. This role of the fathers, especially in the Chinese culture, is felt more after the child reaches the age of “understanding” (Ho, 1989). The role of the father in the Malay culture is central in the transmission of values, and teaching of the religion (Islam), especially as the head of the family who also leads prayers each day. Although gender and ethnicity interaction effects were not seen, except for conflict intensity with mothers, it should be noted that the socialization of sons and daughters is based on differentiated sex roles. Parenting practices are consistent with this. The responsibility for socializing daughters lies with the mothers; therefore, more conflicts can be expected between mothers and daughters, especially in the Malay and Indian cultures. For the Chinese, however, studies have
found that daughters are disciplined using induction more frequently than boys. This, together with the fact that adolescence is not regarded as a period of turmoil for Chinese adolescents, may explain why levels of conflict generally are lower for Chinese adolescents compared to the Malay and Indian groups. More importantly, the differences noted in these analyses and between findings of previous studies illuminate the importance of studying parent-adolescent in the cultural context in which it occurs.

1a. Are there group differences in subtypes of conflict?

Using factor analysis of conflicts reported with fathers, based on the 43 items in the Issues Checklist, seven underlying latent subtypes/domains of conflict were extracted. No gender differences were noted for mean values of conflict; therefore, the groups were collapsed. Because of the small sample size, ethnic group comparisons were not made.

The seven subtypes of conflict were organized around cooperative behavior (helping out around the house, putting feet on furniture, cleaning up room, putting away clothes), managing time (getting up in the morning, coming home on time, how to spend free time, time for going to bed), family relations (making too much noise, fighting with siblings, talking back to parents), academic issues (low grades, doing homework), finances (buying CDs, toys, etc., how money is spent), appearance (cleanliness, personal hygiene, how neat clothing look, which clothes to wear), and daily hassles (playing stereo too loud, telephone calls, using television, table manners).

The factors extracted were similar to previous studies (Papini & Sebby, 1987; Papini, et al., 1989; Yau & Smetana, 1996). The multidimensional nature of parent-adolescent conflict is evident. Most conflict issues pivoted around daily household
chores, regulation of activities, compliance, personal care and responsibility. Consistent with Gehring et al.’s (1990) study, adolescents in this group did not have conflicts with their parents over any major issues, such as substance abuse (drinking alcohol, drugs, etc.).

Another important observation in this analysis was that the frequency of issues of conflict differed in the ethnic groups but not the gender groups. This was revealed in the MANOVA analyses. For instance, the issues in descending frequency for the Malay group were academic issues (21.8%), daily hassles (21.4%), managing time (18.9%), family relations (16.6%), cooperative behavior (12.5%), finances (4.9%) and appearance (3.6%). For the Chinese group, they were daily hassles (23.9%), academic (19.9%), managing time (17.8%), cooperative behavior (16.8%), family relations (12.15%), finances (6.9%), and appearance (2.3%). For the Indian group, they were daily hassles (23.4%), cooperative behavior (20.9%), managing time (17.8%), academic (15.1%), family relations (14.6%), finances (5.1%), and appearance (3.1%). Therefore, some domain or subtypes of conflict were more salient for some groups compared to others. Finances and appearance issues were the least conflict prone issues in all three ethnic groups.

This finding is similar to previous studies conducted on Western cultures (Smetana, 1989). Overall, for the Malay group, conflicts pivoted around academic, time management and daily hassles; whereas for the Chinese, it was daily hassles followed by time management and academic issues; and for the Indian group, it was daily hassles, time management, and cooperative behavior. Academic issues are more frequent issues of conflict between parents and adolescents for the Malay and Chinese groups compared
to the Indian group. In both these cultures, academic achievement is seen as part of religious (for the Malays) and filial piety. For Malays (Muslims), it stems from their religious orientation that emphasizes the pursuit of knowledge. For instance, the Qu’ran (Qur’an 18:36) emphasizes that education should be pursued no matter how much sacrifice is involved in its pursuit. Parents are obligated to ensure that their children learn well, or use force if necessary. With respect to learning the holy book, parents are directed to instruct children to learn sections of it by the time they are "seven and hit them if they do not do so when they are ten." (Dawud, 1992). Such expectations are extended to education as well. Parents are considered neglectful if their children’s education is not emphasized.

Yau and Smetana (1989) have noted that Chinese adolescents do report more conflicts with parents over academic issues such as doing homework and academic achievements (grades) compared to Western samples. The higher frequency was attributed to values placed on academic achievement and success in the Chinese culture. It is part of filial duty to perform well in school and to earn a good “name” for the family.

With regard to dyadic-specific conflict subtypes, significant mean differences were noted for conflict with both parents regarding managing time. Malay and Indian groups had significantly higher scores compared to the Chinese group. Mean values for appearance issues (with mothers) were also significantly higher among the Malay and Indian groups compared with the Chinese group. Time management issues are salient in these groups, especially the Malay, because daily activities are organized around religious rituals. For the Malay in this sample (Muslims), daily activities pivot around the five “azans” or call for prayers each day. Observance of prayer times is obligatory
(“solat”) and emphasized, and tolerance for non-compliance is low. Thus, it is understandable how important managing time is in this group because religion is second to none, and it sets the rhythm of the day (Almeida, 1996). Furthermore, the frequency of prayers in a day gives rise to more opportunities for parents to raise issues pertaining to managing time. For the Indian cultural group, observance of prayer time, usually at dusk, may require certain tasks and duties to be performed prior to it. Thus, the focus on time management is emphasized for the Indian group.

With regard to gender and ethnicity interaction effects for conflict subtypes, conflicts pertaining to cooperative behaviors (with mothers) were more frequent among males compared to females in both the Malay and Chinese ethnic groups. Females’ scores were higher in the Indian group.

Conflicts related to academic issues with mothers were highest among Malay and Indian females and lowest for Indian males and Chinese females. Conflicts on issues regarding time management were more evident in the Malay female compared to other ethnic or gender groups, and the lowest among the Chinese female group. Daily hassles were issues of conflict with mothers more frequently among Indian males, followed by Malay males and Malay females. Chinese females had the lowest report of this type of conflict.

In comparison to other subtypes of conflict, it was noted that the highest percentage of conflicts was regarding academic issues with fathers. This was reported by Malay females. This was followed by conflicts pertaining to daily hassles with fathers reported by Indian males. Conflicts regarding time management with fathers reported by
Chinese females were next, followed by daily hassles with fathers reported by Chinese males and Chinese females.

The results of these analyses support previous research studies that found latent underlying domains of conflict exist in parent-adolescent conflict (Papini & Sebby, 1988; Papini et al., 2001; Yau & Smetana, 1989). Conflicts were over similar types of conflict issues (Laursen & Collins, 1994; Montemayor, 1986; Papini et al., 2001; Smetana, 1989). Although the general types of conflicts were similar to those found in Western cultures, there were variations in the types of conflicts. In addition, this study revealed that the subtypes of conflict experienced vary across gender and ethnic groups even in the same social orientation. This study has extended research on parent-adolescent conflict to heterogeneous, collectivist samples.

2. What are the relationships between adolescent characteristics (gender and ethnicity), parent-adolescent conflict incidence, parent-adolescent intensity, and self-esteem?

Analyses for the Chinese group were not done for the remaining research questions because the results did not indicate any significant fit for the hypothesized model nor show any significant individual relationships with the dependent variables. This was indicated by initial multivariate regression analyses on conflict incidence and intensity (for both parents) by ethnicity and gender.

With respect to conflict with fathers, a moderate but significant fit for the model was seen only for the Malay and Indian male groups. The model significantly predicted self-esteem for these groups. Although this was the case, in terms of individual relationships, conflict incidence predicted self-esteem but not conflict intensity. This may
seem surprising; however, the overall level of conflict intensity reported was low. Thus, the insignificant relationship between conflict intensity and self-esteem is evident. Findings also indicated that Malay adolescents who reported more conflict with their fathers also reported lower self-esteem. The negative effect of parent-adolescent conflict on self-esteem is noted. Conflicts, even those low in intensity, if they occur frequently and persistently over a period of time can influence adolescents’ self-esteem.

For the Indian male group, a similar pattern was seen. The model had a good fit for the data from this group. Conflict incidence was significantly related to self-esteem, whereas conflict intensity was not. For this group, there was significant positive relationship between self-esteem and conflict incidence. Adolescents who reported more conflicts also had higher scores in self-esteem. Conflict for this group seemed to be facilitating positive development. For this group, report of conflict incidence was lower than that of the Malay group. It can be inferred that conflict incidence below a certain level, coupled with low levels of conflict intensity, could facilitate adolescent functioning in terms of self-esteem. This is consistent with previous studies that have shown that moderate levels of conflict allow for positive development of self, whereas extremely high incidences may be unhealthy (Gehring et al., 1990; Laursen et al., 1994).

Considering that the conflict intensity reported for this group was low, the lack of association between conflict intensity and self-esteem is not surprising. A similar pattern was noted for this group regarding conflict with mothers. This was also the case for Malay females and conflict with mothers.

For conflict with mothers, the model did not significantly predict self-esteem for all groups. Some significant relationships emerged among individual relationships in the
model, e.g. conflict incidence among Malay females (marginal) and Indian males (positive). For conflict intensity, a similar pattern was noted as for fathers. Conflict intensity was not related to self-esteem for any of the groups.

3. What are the relationships between adolescent characteristics (gender and ethnicity), parent-adolescent conflict incidence, parent-adolescent intensity, and delinquency?

For conflict with fathers, the model showed a good fit for the Malay male and Indian female groups only. Significant individual relationships were seen in the Malay male group indicating that conflict incidence (positive) and conflict intensity (negative) successfully predicted delinquency. In other words, adolescents who reported more conflicts also reported higher delinquency, but adolescents who reported higher intensity of conflict reported less delinquent behaviors. Similarly, with regard to conflict with mothers in the Malay female group, only conflict intensity was significant and negatively related to delinquency. This has important implications for parenting. Intensity of conflict seems to be associated with lower incidences of delinquency. Although data were not collected to examine parenting style, it may be possible to infer that when parents are firm with adolescents and express it during conflicts, this may deter delinquent behavior. Such an inference is consistent with findings of cross-cultural studies on parenting that have found that authoritarian parenting is sometimes more adaptive and beneficial in some collectivist cultures because authoritarian parenting and harsh discipline are seen as parental involvement in some Asian subgroups (Lau, Lew, Hau, Cheung & Berndt, 1990). Such may be the case in the perception of parental harshness in the minds of the adolescents in this group.
For the Indian female group, the model significantly predicted delinquency; however, only conflict incidence with fathers was a significant predictor. A similar relationship was also noted for Indian females with regard to conflict incidence with mothers and delinquency. The more the adolescents experienced conflicts, the higher were their reports of delinquent behaviors. When descriptive data were examined, it was noted that this group had the second highest report of conflict incidence with fathers and the highest with mothers, but low levels of conflict intensity with both parents. This is consistent with the findings of previous research which found that when frequency of conflict is high, it can be unhealthy (Gehring et al., 1990). Maggs et al. (1993) also noted that frequent conflicts can lead to antisocial behavior.

Conflict incidence and conflict intensity with mothers were significant predictors of delinquency only for Malay males. Compared to conflict incidence, conflict intensity was a stronger predictor of delinquency because of the higher beta-value associated with it. Similar to conflict with fathers, conflict incidence with mothers showed a positive relationship with delinquency whereas conflict intensity had a negative relationship with delinquency. The more conflict Malay male adolescents experienced with their mothers, the higher were their reports of delinquent behavior. However, the more intense the conflicts were, the lower were their reports of delinquent behavior. A review of descriptive statistics revealed that this group reported the highest number of conflicts with mothers, intensity was average, and the delinquency mean value was the highest. Interestingly, only when conflict incidence was high and intensity moderate was this group’s report of delinquency consistent with findings from Western studies utilizing individualist cultures, which indicate that high levels of conflict incidence and conflict
intensity are related to adolescent problem behaviors and antisocial and violent behaviors (Silverberg & Steinberg, 1987; Patterson et al., 1992; Maggs et al., 1993).

4. What are the relationships between adolescent characteristics (gender and ethnicity), parent-adolescent conflict incidence, parent-adolescent intensity, and depression?

For this research question, no significant results were found for either the model fit or individual relationships. More information is needed to delve deeper into this. For instance, adolescents’ perception of conflict with their parents, and the justification for it, may color the effect afterward and their interpretation of the conflict may differ. In certain social and cultural groups, conflict with parents is viewed as parental involvement (Lau et al., 1990). When that is the case, few negative outcomes may be expected out of parent-adolescent conflict especially when conflict intensity is low. Adams and Laursen (2001) have found that conflict with parents is usually over daily hassles topics, and when this is the case, the effect afterward is neutral. Overall, daily hassles seem to be highly rated as conflict topics in the current study. Issues pertaining to emotional ties or distress were not reported. In addition, when conflict intensity levels are low, they act as deterrents to antisocial behavior. Furthermore, depressive symptoms in adolescents are not as prevalent as they are perceived to be; only about five percent of adolescents report to have symptoms of depressive syndrome (Compas, Ey & Grant, 1993). Therefore, in this sample, depressive symptoms did not seem to be related to conflict with parents.
5. What are the relationships between adolescent characteristics (gender and ethnicity), parent-adolescent conflict incidence, parent-adolescent intensity, and academic achievement?

The model fit was achieved for only the Malay female group, and only conflict incidence with fathers had a positive and significant influence on academic achievement. The higher the conflict incidence with fathers, the better the academic achievement was for Malay females. The mean values for conflict incidence with fathers were high whereas academic achievement levels were below average. For this group, the area of greatest conflict with fathers was also on academic issues. It can be inferred that parental conflict for this group facilitated or improved academic performance. Parental conflict, especially when conflict is not intense, may be construed more as parental involvement, e.g., monitoring. Previous studies on collectivist cultures have reported that conflict and a lack of warmth are negatively related to academic achievement (Kurdek, 1992; Shek, Lee, & Chan, 1998). Furthermore, studies have also found that students with lower academic achievement reported more conflict with parents compared to those with higher levels of academic achievement (Shek et al., 1998). However, these studies did not examine the aspects of conflict, nor did they examine dyad-specific relationships, with regard to conflict. This study has shown that when conflict intensity is taken into consideration, the results may indicate different outcomes.

The results demonstrate that several important variables need to be considered by researchers when studying parent-adolescent conflict. First, the understanding of parent-adolescent conflict would be incomplete if all aspects of conflict are not taken into
account. Few studies have examined the aspects of conflicts (Collins, et al., 1992) in different social orientations; therefore, this study provides a basic understanding of how these factors can affect adolescent functioning and, more generally, adolescent development.

This study has shown that variations in adolescent outcomes exist when the aspects of conflict are considered together and separately. The experience of conflict intensity and incidence have different outcomes based on ethnic groups even in similar social orientations. As seen in the Chinese sample, low levels of conflict, both in incidence and intensity, did not significantly relate to adolescent outcomes. These findings suggest that the expectation that low levels of conflict in collectivist cultures that emphasize group harmony may lead to negative outcomes because of suppressed disagreements may be wrong. At the same time, when conflict incidence is high, but intensity is low, the outcomes may be negative because of the frequency of the conflict. Lower levels of conflict may facilitate positive adolescent functioning. When conflict intensity is present, with lower levels of conflict incidence, the conflict can act as a deterrent to antisocial behavior. When both high levels of conflict incidence and intensity are noted, results are similar to that of Western, individualist cultures. Future research needs to examine if an escalation in conflict incidence will also lead to increased conflict intensity; thus resulting in the same negative outcomes as high levels of conflict intensity has shown.

The interpretation of conflict also may vary among cultural and ethnic groups, affecting the experience and the outcomes of the conflict. Thus, it is important to study adolescents in their contextual environment. Moreover, research has shown that conflict
dynamics differ across ethnic and gender groups (Adams & Laursen, 2001). Therefore, studying the contextual environment of adolescents will allow for a more comprehensive and accurate study of parent-adolescent conflict and adolescent functioning.

Unlike most studies, this study has explored the differential outcomes of conflict with both mothers and fathers. This is crucial because parental roles may differ by cultural and social orientations. The conflict experienced by the adolescent may be intensified or lessened by the socially-construed meanings of the conflicts based on the roles prescribed to mothers and fathers in the culture. Parenting practices are also related to the roles. If authoritarian parenting is seen as parental involvement and necessary for successful parenting, then harshness and strictness on the part of the parents may not be seen as conflictual to adolescents but viewed as the norm for parents in the culture. This is another consideration for future research. Justification for parental authority in areas of conflict based on these norms may relate to the impact of the conflict incidence and intensity on the adolescent.

This study utilized a more accurate measure of two aspects of conflict: conflict intensity and conflict incidence. The conflict intensity score was adjusted for the possibility that highly intense conflicts might be related to frequently discussed issues (Printz et al., 1979). The incidence of conflict was measured by the number of times each issue with an intensity rating of 2 or above was been argued about (Maggs & Galambos, 1993). This was done to eliminate conflict issues that were discussed calmly, which would not be considered as conflict.

Future research needs to address several other factors in order to lend comprehensiveness to the understanding of parent-adolescent functioning. The
significance of the conflict to the adolescent and the way they were resolved need to be included in future research. Research has shown that males and females handle conflict quite differently. Males are better able to separate themselves from the conflict and to make more optimistic evaluations of them compared to females (Rauste-von Wright, von Wright, & Frankenhauser, 1981). Research has shown that the seriousness of conflicts and problems are sometimes perceived as much as four times greater by females compared to males (Seiffge-Krenke, 1998).

Another aspect of conflict that needs to be studied is whether and how parent-adolescent conflicts are resolved. When conflicts are resolved using adaptive strategies, the quality of parent-adolescent relations and adolescent functioning is not jeopardized.

This study assumed that the Malaysian sample was of a collectivist social orientation. A measure for social orientation is necessary in future research. Furthermore, the acculturation process as well as social changes that each ethnic group may have experienced should be examined. A larger sample size is required to examine if the subtypes of conflicts are similar within each ethnic group (whether and how the factor structure and loadings of each item on the factors differ). Another limitation of this study is that the sample is cross-sectional, and includes subjects in middle adolescence only. That being the case, there is no way to ascertain whether or not for the Malaysian culture the peak period in parent-adolescent conflicts occurs during middle adolescence as is found in cultures of different cultural and social orientations. This study also does not include a multiple responses data set. Multiple perspectives would provide a more in-depth understanding of parent-adolescent conflict and adolescent functioning. In the future, a larger sample, using a longitudinal or cross sequentially designed sample is
needed to examine the simultaneous and reciprocal relationships between the different aspects of conflict and the outcome variables. This would provide a more comprehensive model to analyze the dynamics of parent-adolescent conflict.

The question of directionality and causality of relationships remain in this study. It was assumed that the two aspects of conflict were leading to or affecting adolescent functioning. Future research needs to examine possible bidirectionality of this relationship. Adolescents’ traits and personalities and higher intellectual functioning that question old ways of thinking and outdated value systems may give rise to conflict incidence and intensity. Examined this way, the high conflict incidence and intensity may not be facilitating positive adolescent functioning as was seen in this study.

Scales used in this study such as the Self-Rating Depression scale elicit information on depressive symptoms that are commonly manifested in Western and individualist cultures. Future research needs to address ethnic and cultural variations in the experience of depression so as to capture the phenomenon accurately. In this way, understanding family dynamics in collectivist culture may be done in a more comprehensive manner.
APPENDIX A

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1 = Malay females</th>
<th>2 = Malay males</th>
<th>3 = Chinese females</th>
<th>4 = Chinese males</th>
<th>5 = Indian females</th>
<th>6 = Indian males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>38.1 2.30</td>
<td>37.0 3.45</td>
<td>36.36 3.13</td>
<td>36.10 3.5</td>
<td>37.66 3.30</td>
<td>37.00 2.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delinquency</td>
<td>4.55 3.0</td>
<td>15.76 2.8</td>
<td>2.63 4.81</td>
<td>13.15 1.56</td>
<td>3.25 1.76</td>
<td>7.88 1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acad. Ach.</td>
<td>5.36 2.11</td>
<td>5.84 1.9</td>
<td>5.94 1.96</td>
<td>5.77 1.72</td>
<td>6.83 1.80</td>
<td>6.12 1.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1= Malay females 3= Chinese females 5= Indian females
2= Malay males 4= Chinese males 6= Indian males

Table 4.13 Descriptive Statistics for Group Comparison of Adolescent Functioning
## Mean Scores for Subtypes of Conflict

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Malay</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Indian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender:</td>
<td>f  m</td>
<td>f  m</td>
<td>f  m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative Behavior (mother)</td>
<td>.6 3.2</td>
<td>1.0 2.1</td>
<td>3.0 1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative Behavior (father)</td>
<td>2.5 3.5</td>
<td>1.3 1.4</td>
<td>3.8 3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic (mother)</td>
<td>2.3 1.8</td>
<td>1.2 2.0</td>
<td>2.3 .8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic (father)</td>
<td>7.3 2.4</td>
<td>1.5 2.2</td>
<td>3.2 2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing time (mother)</td>
<td>2.3 1.5</td>
<td>.6 1.1</td>
<td>1.5 1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing time (father)</td>
<td>3.8 3.4</td>
<td>2.3 2.1</td>
<td>3.8 3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family relations (mother)</td>
<td>2.2 2.2</td>
<td>.7 1.0</td>
<td>2.1 2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family relations (father)</td>
<td>2.1 2.6</td>
<td>1.1 1.3</td>
<td>2.0 2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finances (mother)</td>
<td>.7 2.0</td>
<td>.2  .5</td>
<td>.8  .2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finances (father)</td>
<td>2.6 .8</td>
<td>2.4 3.5</td>
<td>3.1 2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance (mother)</td>
<td>.7 2.0</td>
<td>.1  .3</td>
<td>.4  .3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance (father)</td>
<td>.3  .7</td>
<td>.3  .2</td>
<td>.3  .9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily hassles (mother)</td>
<td>2.6 2.8</td>
<td>1.1 1.9</td>
<td>1.5 3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily hassles (father)</td>
<td>4.0 2.1</td>
<td>2.2 3.0</td>
<td>3.9 4.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.14  Mean Scores for subtypes of conflict
APPENDIX B

MEASURES
A. Background information

Please read each of the following questions and circle or write your responses on the space provided.

1. How old are you?:  10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18

2. Are you male or female?
   a) Male
   b) Female

3. What is your religion?
   a) Christian
   b) Muslim
   c) Hindu
   d) Buddhist
   e) Taoism
   f) None
   g) Not listed (Please specify on answer sheet)

4. What is your ethnicity or race?
   a) Malay
   b) Chinese
   c) Indian
   d) Eurasian
   e) Bumiputra Sarawak
   f) Bumiputra Sabah
   g) Other (Please specify) _____________________________________________

5. In what grade are you in school?:  Darjah 5  Tingkatan 2  Tingkatan 4

6. What is the highest educational level of your father (or the person who functions as your father most often) ?
   a) Some primary school
   b) Completed primary school
   c) PMR
   d) SPM
   e) SPM and also had other training, but not college (e.g., technical training, business school)
   h) STPM
   i) University (Bachelors degree)
   j) Graduate degree, including M.D., M.A., Ph.D., J.D., etc.
   k) Not listed (Please specify)

7. What is highest educational level of your mother (or the person who functions as your mother most often) ?
   a) Some primary school
b) Completed primary school

c) PMR

d) SPM

e) SPM and also had other training, but not college (e.g., technical training, business school)

h) STPM

i) University (Bachelors degree)

j) Graduate degree, including M.D., M.A., Ph.D., J.D., etc.

k) Not listed (Please specify)
B. The Issues Checklist

Below is a list of topics that are sometimes argued about at home. Circle YES for the topics that you and your parents/guardian have argued about during the past two weeks. Circle NO for those that have not been argued about. Go back over the list. For those topics that you circled YES answer these questions:
1) how many times during the past two weeks have you argued about it,
2) how intense were the arguments?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>How many times?</th>
<th>Calm</th>
<th>A little angry</th>
<th>Angry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Telephone calls</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Time for going to bed</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Cleaning up room</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Doing homework</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Putting away clothes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Using the television</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Cleanliness (washing, showers, brushing teeth)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Which clothes to wear</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. How neat clothing looks</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Making too much noise</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Table manners</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Fighting with brothers and sisters</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>13. Cursing</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. How money is spent</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Picking books or movies</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>16. Allowance</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Going places without parents (shopping, movies, etc)</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Playing stereo or radio too loud</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Turning off lights in house</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Drugs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Taking care of toys, CDs, bikes, pet, etc.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Drinking beer or other liquor</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Buying CDs, games, toys and things</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Who should be your friends</td>
<td></td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>Selecting new clothes</td>
<td></td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>Coming home on time</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>Getting to school on time</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>Getting low grades in school</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>Getting in trouble in school</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>Lying</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Helping out around the house</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Talking back to parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Getting up in the morning</td>
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<th>How many times?</th>
<th>Calm</th>
<th>A little angry</th>
<th>Angry</th>
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96
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<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>________</th>
<th>Calm</th>
<th>A little angry</th>
<th>Angry</th>
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<td>35. Bothering parents when they want to be left alone</td>
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<tr>
<td>36. Bothering you when you want to be left alone</td>
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<tr>
<td>37. Putting feet on furniture</td>
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<td>38. Messing up the house</td>
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<td>39. What time to have meals</td>
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<td>40. How to spend free time</td>
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<td>41. Smoking</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>42. Earning money away from the house</td>
<td></td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>43. What teenagers eat</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>44. Others (please specify)</td>
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</table>

### C. Self-Esteem Scale

Using your answer sheet, please circle an answer for the following statements which are about how you feel. Circle the answer which indicates how much you agree or disagree with each statement as follows:

SA = Strongly Agree  A = Agree  D = Disagree  SD = Strongly Disagree

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on equal basis with others.
   SA  A  D  SD

2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
   SA  A  D  SD
3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure. (R)  
   SA  A  D  SD
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people. 
   SA  A  D  SD
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of. (R) 
   SA  A  D  SD
6. I take a positive attitude toward myself. 
   SA  A  D  SD
7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself. 
   SA  A  D  SD
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself. (R) 
   SA  A  D  SD
9. I certainly feel useless at times. (R) 
   SA  A  D  SD
10. At times I think I am no good at all. (R) 
    SA  A  D  SD

D. Frequency of Delinquent Behavior

How many times have you…..

1. On purpose broken or damaged or destroyed something belonging to a school? ______
2. Stolen or tried to steal a bicycle or skateboard? ______
3. Taken something from a store without paying for it? ______
4. Taken money at home that did not belong to you like from your mother’s purse or your parents’ dresser? ______
5. Taken anything at school from the teacher or other kids that did not belong to you? ______
6. Taken something from a car that did not belong to you? ______
7. Cheated on school tests? ______
8. Hit, slapped, or shoved a teacher or another grown-up at school? ______
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Question</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Hit, slapped, or shoved one of your parents?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Hit, slapped, or shoved other kids or got into a physical fight with them?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Gone into somebody’s garden, backyard, house, or garage when when you were not supposed to be there?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Run away from home?</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Skipped school without an excuse?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Been sent home from school for bad behavior?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Written things or sprayed paint on walls or sidewalks, where you were not supposed to?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Been loud, rowdy, or unruly in a public place that people complained about it, or you got into trouble?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Purposely set fire to a building, car, or something else or tried to do so?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Carried a weapon with you?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Avoided paying for things such as movies, bus or train rides, or food?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Snatched someone’s purse/wallet or picked someone’s pocket?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Thrown rocks or bottles at people?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Consumed any liquor?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Smoked or chewed tobacco?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Smoked marijuana? Experimented with drugs?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Sniffed glue?</td>
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<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Others (Please specify)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
E. Self-Rating Depression Scale

Using your answer sheet, please circle an answer for the following statements which are about how you feel. Circle the answer which indicates how much you agree or disagree with each statement as follows:

1 = None or little of the time
2 = Some of the time
3 = Good part of the time
4 = Most or all of the time

1. I feel down-hearted, blue and sad.
2. Morning is when I feel the best. (R)
3. I have crying spells or feel like it.
4. I have trouble sleeping through the night.
5. I eat as much as I used to. (R)
6. I enjoy looking, talking to and being with attractive friends. (R)
7. I notice that I am losing weight.
8. I have trouble with constipation.
9. My heart beats faster than usual.
10. I get tired for no reason.
11. My mind is as clear as it used to be. (R)
12. I find it easy to do the things I used to. (R)
13. I am restless and can’t keep still.
14. I feel hopeful about the future. (R)
15. I am more irritable than usual.
16. I find it easy to make decisions. (R)
17. I feel that I am useful and needed. (R)
18. My life is pretty full. (R)  
19. I feel that others would be better off if I weren’t around them.  
20. I still enjoy the things I used to do. (R)

F. Using your answer sheet, please circle an answer for the following statements which are about how well you do at school. Circle the answer which indicates how much you agree or disagree with the following statement.

1. Which of the following best describes the grades you are getting at school:
   (1) mostly A's
   (2) A’s and B’s
   (3) mostly B's
   (4) B’s and C’s
   (5) mostly C's
   (6) C’s and D’s
   (7) mostly D's
   (8) D’s and F’s
   (9) mostly F's
REFERENCES


Social Behavior and Personality, 26 (1), 89-99.


Spinks, J.A., & Ho, D.Y.F. (1993). People, culture, and society: A Researcher’s guide to psychological studies in Hong Kong. Hong Kong: Social Science Research Centre, University of Hong Kong.


