

The Influence of Discrepancies Between Adolescent and Parent Ratings of Family Dynamics on the Well-Being of Adolescents

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The present study examined whether discrepancies between adolescent and parent ratings of family dynamics predict adolescent well-being over time. Self-report data from 972 adolescent–parent dyads collected at two time points separated by one year were analyzed. Both adolescents and parents rated a variety of family dynamics (e.g., cohesion), and adolescents reported on their levels of well-being (confidence, purpose in life, and positive relations with others). Significant discrepancies between adolescents' and parents' perceptions of family functioning were found for all positive family dynamics, but not for family conflict. Furthermore, discrepancies increased over time and larger discrepancies were noted for older adolescents. Results from the residualized path model showed that discrepancies were bidirectionally related to adolescent well-being. In addition, age was found to moderate the predictive model. Specifically, 14–15 year olds (year 10) were found to be more stable in their well-being over time than younger adolescents. Also, results indicate that well-being is a significantly stronger negative predictor of discrepancies over time for the 14–15 year olds (year 10) than the for 10–11 year olds (year 6). The authors suggest that future research would benefit from investigations of the relationship between divergent perspectives of family members and adjustment outcomes of adolescents.

Keywords: parents, adolescents, family dynamics, well-being, discrepancies

During adolescence, family relationships undergo important changes that are often characterized by dramatic increases in intergenerational conflict or disagreements between parents and children. Such changes in the interaction between family members are thought to be a result of young people beginning to seek autonomy, which is driven by the desire to establish an independent identity (Phinney, Kim-Jo, Osorio, & Vilhjálmsdóttir, 2005). Previous research has indicated that increases in intergenerational conflict can affect the perceptions of the quality of family relationships and parenting (Ohannessian, Lerner, Lerner, & von Eye, 1995; Rask, Astedt-Kurk, Paavilainen, & Laippala, 2003). In fact, research shows that adolescents tend to view the family more negatively and to overestimate the number of major differences between themselves and their parents, whereas parents tend to underestimate the number of differences (Smetana, 1989; Steinberg, 1990).

Various studies have shown little agreement between parents and adolescents on ratings of an array of family factors, including cohesion (Noller & Callan, 1986; Wentzel & Feldman, 1996), the exercise of power within the family (Feldman & Gehring, 1988; Feldman, Wentzel, & Gehring, 1989), perceptions of communicative relationships, and parenting (Schwarz, Barton-Henry, & Pruzinsky, 1985). Furthermore, it is commonly found that adolescents report higher levels of family conflict and lower levels of intimacy than parents (Noller, Seth-Smith, Bouma, & Schweitzer, 1992), that they are generally less satisfied with the family, and believe the family to be more conflictual and less cohesive compared with their parents (Noller et al., 1992; Paikoff, Carlton-Ford, & Brooks-Gunn, 1993; Smetana, 1989).

Although discrepant reports are abundant in research on child psychology, these have traditionally been treated as methodological artifacts (Achenbach, 2011; De Los Reyes & Kazdin, 2004). Recently, however, researchers have suggested that because all informants provide valid perspectives on behavior, these discrepancies are important in their own right (De Los Reyes, Henry, Tolan, & Wakschlag, 2009). Furthermore, the extent and direction of the difference in reports may be an indicator of relationship quality between the informants (De Los Reyes & Kazdin, 2006). In the context of parent–child relationships, where the informants have extended contact and knowledge of one another, discrepancies may explain child outcomes over and above the influence of self or parent reports of family dynamics (De Los Reyes, 2011; Reynolds, MacPherson, Matusiewicz, Schreiber, & Lejuez, 2011).

It has been argued that discrepancies provide useful information concerning the degree of overlap in perceptions of family relationships between parents and young people, effectively enabling a more precise assessment of family functioning (Guion, Mrug, & Windle, 2009). Recent research has found that discrepancies be-

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tween parent and child self-reports in and of themselves predict negative family dynamics, and consequently affect adolescent adjustment (Holmbeck & O'Donnell, 1991; Paikoff et al., 1993). The phenomenon of discrepancies in ratings of family functioning between parent and adolescent dyads is an essential area of research to explore, particularly if discrepancies reflect underlying problems in family functioning (e.g., miscommunication, lack of support), which are critical for developmental outcomes.

From a review of the research, it is clear that adolescents and parents possess differing perceptions of family quality across a number of dimensions, but the question of whether these differences have consequences for adolescent well-being remains largely unanswered (Bell, Rychener, & Munsch, 2001). Relatively few studies have explored the implications of discrepancies for adolescent adjustment, and of those that have, methods tend largely to be cross-sectional, and findings reported are inconsistent. The purpose of the present research, therefore, is to highlight key issues in the conceptualization and analysis of adolescent–parent discrepancies and to examine their relationships to adolescent well-being.

Intergenerational Discrepancies and Adolescent Adjustment

From a family systems perspective, intergenerational discrepancies are thought to lead to poorer well-being and worse psychosocial adjustment (Ohannessian et al., 1995; 2000). According to this theory, congruent perceptions of the family between parents and adolescents are vital for the well-being of family members and for adaptive family functioning (Reiss, Oliveri, & Curd, 1983; Sher-Censor, Parke, & Coltrane, 2011). Specifically, Olson et al. (1983) argue that discrepant views increase the tension in adolescent–parent relationships and Paikoff et al. (1993) suggest that discrepancies point to difficulties in family communication, which in turn lead to poorer adolescent well-being. In fact, research has shown that discrepancies are associated with higher levels of stress (Olson et al., 1983) and lower levels of cohesion (Reiss et al., 1983) for the family overall. In addition, at the individual level, a variety of negative outcomes have been associated with discrepancies. Research has shown that discrepancies in perceptions of family dynamics between adolescents and their parents are related to increases in adolescent deviance (Reynolds et al., 2011), poorer metabolic regulation in adolescents with diabetes (Butner et al., 2009), higher levels of anxiety and depression (Ohannessian et al., 1995), and lower levels of self-esteem and self-competence (Carlson, Cooper, & Spradling, 1991).

Unlike family systems theories, which suggests that intergenerational discrepancies in the perception of family functioning negatively impact adolescent well-being, developmental theories propose that disagreements between adolescents and parents may be functional or adaptive under some conditions (Butner et al., 2009). The fact that parents tend to report higher levels of cohesion and perceive family functioning as more supportive than do adolescents can be interpreted as reflecting the distinct developmental tasks of parents and children. For parents, it is part of their role to maintain family cohesion and harmony, which may motivate them to perceive family relationships in a more positive light. During adolescence, however, one of the young person's tasks is to become autonomous, meaning that perceiving the family nega-

tively could facilitate this developmental goal (Sher-Censor et al., 2010; Welsh, Galliher, & Powers, 1998).

The developmental perspective on discrepancies is consistent with Grotevant and Cooper's (1986) model of individuation and Kagitçibasi's (2005) conceptualization of autonomy and embeddedness, in which both adolescent autonomy and connectedness to the family are equally important components of development. According to these models, adolescents need to assert their independence from the family so that they can successfully manage developmental tasks such as identity formation. However, for positive adjustment to occur, autonomy must be granted under conditions of connectedness, in that the independent adolescent remains a valued and integral element of the family unit. Therefore, discrepancies may reflect adolescents' development of autonomy, whereas shared views reflect connectedness between family members. In these models, the optimal outcome of individuation for adolescents is a balance between autonomy and connectedness/embeddedness within the family (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986; Kagitçibasi, 2005).

These two distinct perspectives on intergenerational discrepancies may not be mutually exclusive. The developmental perspective acknowledges that parent–adolescent discrepancies may incite conflict and poorer psychological adjustment (at least initially), which is consistent with the family systems perspective. However, because discrepancies are consistently found to increase during adolescence and decrease throughout adulthood without any long-term harmful effects on the family (Fuligni, 1998), it may be the case that disagreements elicit changes in the parent–child relationship so that discrepancies are eventually reduced. Therefore, positive adjustment outcomes may be facilitated by the existence of some discrepancies between adolescents and parents, but not too much (i.e., a balance between individuation and connectedness) (Sher-Censor et al., 2010; Welsh et al., 1998). Thus, it is important to examine the magnitude of discrepancies, as larger differences in ratings of family functioning may have the greatest negative impacts on adolescent adjustment (Carlson et al., 1991; Feinberg, Howe, Reiss, & Hetherington, 2000).

The Impact of Age and Gender on Adolescent–Parent Discrepancies

Disagreements between adolescents and parents have been found to vary by both the gender and age of the adolescent, although the nature of differences often depends on the topic of contention (Bell et al., 2001). With regard to age, younger adolescents tend to have fewer negative views of the family and to report lower levels of intergenerational conflict than older adolescents (Carlson et al., 1991; De Goede, Branje, & Meeus, 2009; Noller & Callan, 1986). These findings are not surprising, as discrepancies are likely to show an initial rise during mid-adolescence and a decline in later adolescence (Butner et al., 2009).

Recent studies indicate that the adolescent's gender may also have an important influence on the relationship between adolescent–parent discrepancies in perceptions of family functioning and adolescent adjustment. For example, Ohannessian et al. (1995) found that discrepancies in perceptions of family functioning were related to higher levels of anxiety and depression for girls, but not for boys. Similarly, Carlson et al. (1991) found that discrepancies in family conflict were related to lower levels of

adolescent self-esteem and self-competence for female adolescents. In explaining gender differences in discrepancies, Shek (1998) refers to gender socialization theories, which suggest that sons are socialized to focus on separateness, whereas daughters are socialized to define themselves in terms of closeness and connection to others. Therefore, when discrepancies exist in parent–adolescent relationships, this can tend to have a more negative impact on girls. Also, because girls are more susceptible to the influence of family emotional climate than adolescent boys (Eisenberg et al., 1992), they are more likely to have accurate representations of family dynamics, meaning they are likely to have lower levels of discrepancies than boys.

Measuring Discrepancies

A number of methods have been proposed to analyze discrepancies (e.g., Carlton-Ford, Paikoff, & Brooks-Gunn, 1991; De Los Reyes, 2011; Feinberg et al., 2000; Guion, Mrug, & Windle, 2009), although there is no single, generally accepted method of analysis. The most frequently used method of measuring discrepancies is through the computation of difference scores, where one informant's rating on a behavior is subtracted from another informant's score. Three common ways of calculating a difference score are (a) the absolute difference, (b) the raw difference, and (c) the standardized difference (Reynolds et al., 2011). Absolute difference scores assess the magnitude of the difference in reports, but do not preserve the direction of the differences. The raw difference score, although easier to interpret than the other methods, is affected by the distributions of the individual scores, meaning that the measure tends to correlate more highly with reports that have a larger variance (Guion, Mrug, & Windle, 2009). In contrast, informant reports contribute equally to difference scores computed from standardized variables, and this approach adjusts for any systematic biases in level or variability of informant responses (De Los Reyes & Kazdin, 2004).

Because previous research indicates that there tends to be a positive discrepancy between parents and children on rating of positive family dynamics, and a negative discrepancy on negative family dynamics (children rate family dynamics as less positive and more conflictual than their parents; Paikoff et al., 1993), it is important to preserve the direction of the discrepancy. Thus, in this research discrepancy scores were measured with standardized difference scores (SDS), consistent with the strategy outlined by De Los Reyes and Kazdin (2004, 2006). This method takes into account both the direction and magnitude of differences. However, because information on the level and variability of ratings of each individual on family functioning are lost, mean-level differences in ratings of family dynamics will also be assessed.

Hypotheses

The results from studies examining adolescent–parent discrepancies in perceptions regarding the family are inconsistent, and this lack of agreement may reflect the various roles of discrepancies during this tumultuous period of time. Unfortunately, there is a lack of longitudinal studies that examine the impact of discrepancies between adolescents and parents on perceptions of the family over time. Furthermore, very few studies have specifically examined the relationships of adolescent age and gender to discrepancies, and of those that do, no studies were found that look at the

moderating influences of these factors. The present study sought to fill this gap in the literature by investigating discrepancies between parents and adolescents longitudinally on a variety of family dynamics measures. Also, the influence of age and gender (of the adolescent) were considered to be covariates affecting the ratings of family dynamics, as well as potential moderators of the relationship between discrepancies and adolescent well-being.

Following the review of the literature, it is hypothesized that parents will give positive family dynamics higher ratings than adolescents, and will give conflict lower ratings than adolescents. Additionally, it is hypothesized that ratings of positive family dynamics will decrease over time for both parents and adolescents (reflecting the individuation process), whereas ratings of conflict will increase. It is also predicted that over time, the size of the discrepancies in ratings on family dynamics will grow larger, reflecting the anticipated higher level of intergenerational disagreements usually noted in middle adolescence. Furthermore, discrepancies are expected to be negatively associated with adolescent well-being (as there is a consensus that discrepancies lead to worse outcomes in the short term), however it is unknown in which direction this association will manifest over time.

With regard to age and gender, it is hypothesized that younger adolescents will give positive family dynamics higher ratings than older adolescents, and consequently will experience lower levels of discrepancies with their parents than older adolescents, and that girls will give positive family dynamics higher ratings than boys, and consequently will evidence lower levels of discrepancies than boys. Following from these mean group-difference hypotheses, we also seek to examine whether adolescent age and/or gender will moderate the effect of discrepancies on well-being over time.

Method

Study Design and Procedures

Data were drawn from the Youth Connectedness Project (YCP), a longitudinal study in New Zealand that followed young people initially assessed between 10 and 15 years old over three years (2006, 2007, and 2008). In 2006, the students participating in the research fell into three school age groups; 10–11 (Year 6), 12–13 (Year 8), and 14–15 (Year 10). The survey focused on young people's perceived connections to families, schools, peers, and communities (for more information see: <http://www.vuw.ac.nz/youthconnectedness/index.aspx>). Participants were recruited from 78 schools located in New Zealand's North Island in a stratified random sampling approach. After obtaining parental consent and adolescent assent, the survey was administered three times (one year separating each time of measurement) via laptop computers in participants' schools in small groups in the presence of a teacher and a research assistant. Parents were also invited to participate in a shortened, parallel version of the survey, which was distributed in hard copy.

Participants

The total number of participants who took part in the three waves of data collection in the YCP study was 1774 young people. However this study focuses on the 972 child and parent dyads who provided data for years one (Y1) and two (Y2). Year 3 data were excluded due to high parental attrition rates. Youth whose parents

did not complete the survey, or whose parents only completed the survey at one of the time points (Year 1 *or* Year 2; $N = 802$) were excluded from the analyses. In order to check for differences between youth who were included in the study versus those who were excluded, a MANOVA was conducted on demographic (age and average school socioeconomic status) and outcome (family dynamics and well-being) variables. A significant multivariate main effect was found between those who were included and those who were excluded from further analyses, Wilk's $\lambda = .96$, $F(8, 1728) = 9.62$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$. Tests of between-subjects effects indicated that the only significant difference between the groups was for school socioeconomic status, $F(1, 871) = 67.14$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$. Excluded participants evidenced lower average school socioeconomic status than those who were included in further analyses. These findings indicate that the individuals who are included tend to come from more affluent school environments.

The 972 children who constituted the sample in the present study had an even gender split, with 49% (466) female. At Y1, 40% (384) were aged 10–11 (Year 6), 30% (284) were aged 12–13 (Year 8), and 30% (277) were aged 14–15 (Year 10). Sixty-nine percent (649) reported a New Zealand European background (the majority cultural group in New Zealand), with a representative number reporting Maori ethnicity (22%, 210) and “other” ethnic backgrounds (9%, 86). In terms of the parents’ demographics, 85% (817) indicated that they were the mother of the child, 11% (112) indicated that they were the father of the child, and 4% (35) indicated that they had some other familial relationship with the child (i.e., step-parent, grandparent, aunt, etc.). Two thirds of the families (67%, 632) were intact, 20% (190) were single-parent or lone-parent families, and 13% (127) were extended or step-families, typical frequencies within New Zealand (Milligan, Fabian, Coope, & Errington, 2006).

Family Measures¹

Five distinct, interrelated areas of family dynamics were assessed for both parents and adolescents. These measures included cohesion, conflict, mutual activities, autonomy, and identity.² Items for family conflict and autonomy were modified from the Family Climate Inventory by Kurdek, Fine, and Sinclair (1995). These scales were each comprised of three items (e.g., conflict, “People in my family criticize each other,” and family support for autonomy, e.g., “Someone in my family makes me feel that what I have to say is important”). The items assessing family cohesion and family mutual activities were modified from the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale (FACES II) by Olson, Portner, and Bell (1982). The family cohesion scale was comprised of five items (e.g., “For my family, spending time together is very important”), and the family mutual activities scale was comprised of four items, (e.g., “My family and I have meals together”). The two items for the family identity scale were specifically generated for this study and assessed how much individuals identify with and are proud of their families (e.g., “We are proud to be members of our family”). All of the items for these subscales were presented in 5-point Likert-scale format ranging from *never/almost never* (1) to *always/almost always* (5). Reliability analyses confirmed that these subscales were reliable for both parents and children. Cronbach's α s for the adolescent measure ranged from .73 to .89 at Y1

and from .76 to .92 in Y2; for parents, scores ranged from .64³ to .83 at Y1 and from .69 to .88 in Y2 (see Table 1). The five family dynamics scales were used to compute SDSs (see results section for more information).

Adolescent Measures⁴

Well-being. Young people's perceptions of well-being were measured with 11 items adapted from the Ryff Well-Being Scales (Ryff & Keyes, 1995); four items assessed purpose in life (e.g., “I am serious about working hard now so that I have a good future”); four items assessed confidence (e.g., “I feel confident and positive about myself”); and three items assessed positive relations with others (e.g., “I find it easy to get on with other people”). These items were presented on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) *strongly disagree* to (5) *strongly agree*. The overall well-being construct yielded Cronbach's α s of .85 in Y1 and .88 in Y2.

Results

The results are divided into three sections. The first section reports investigations of mean-level differences in the scores on family dynamics for parents and adolescents over time and assesses the impact of gender and age of the adolescent on ratings of family dynamics. The second section describes the computation of discrepancy scores, differences in levels of discrepancy across time, age, and gender, as well as an examination of the predictive relationship between discrepancies and well-being. The last section concerns an exploration of the predictive relationships between discrepancies and well-being as moderated by age.

Differences in Family Dynamics Over Time and Family Role

Bivariate Pearson's correlations were computed between the adolescent and parent measures of family dynamics at Y1 to assess the degree to which family members scores were associated with one another (see Table 2). Ratings on all of the dimensions were found to significantly, moderately correlate (.11–.43, $p < .01$). These results indicate that although there is some overlap between parents and adolescents, the ratings on measure of family dynamics do not correspond strongly between family members.

To investigate whether scores on the family-dynamics variables varied by role in the family (parent vs. child) over time, a repeated-measures MANCOVA was conducted with time and role as the within-subjects factors, and age, gender of child, and status of parent (mother or father) as covariates. Multivariate main effects were obtained for age, Wilk's $\lambda = .94$, $F(10, 871) = 5.33$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$; family role (parent vs. adolescent), Wilk's $\lambda =$

¹ Obtained from both parents and adolescents.

² In order to assure the relevance of the measures to the New Zealand context, focus groups with young people and consultation with local experts were the basis of the selection, adaptation, and construction of the items.

³ The cutoff Cronbach's α is generally considered to be .70, although because this score is affected by the N of scale items, scales with fewer than five items tend to have lower reliability. Interitem correlations were examined for the parent scales, with $\alpha < .70$; these fell between .32 and .47, establishing consistency despite the relatively low α (Briggs & Cheek, 1986).

⁴ Obtained from adolescents only.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for Family Dynamics Measures by Role, Age, and Gender

	Cohesion		Conflict		Family Identity		Autonomy		Mutual Activities		Wellbeing	
	Y1	Y2	Y1	Y2	Y1	Y2	Y1	Y2	Y1	Y2	Y1	Y2
Adolescent (SD)	3.69 (.86)	3.54 (.86)	2.25 (.98)	2.25 (.99)	4.45 (.82)	4.25 (.96)	3.76 (.91)	3.67 (.93)	3.91 (.76)	3.79 (.80)	4.14 (.50)	4.09 (.54)
Parent (SD)	4.04 (.62)	3.86 (.67)	2.32 (.73)	2.28 (.72)	4.75 (.50)	4.63 (.82)	4.28 (.62)	4.20 (.59)	4.19 (.61)	4.09 (.66)		
Cronbach's α												
Adolescent	.88	.91	.82	.86	.89	.92	.80	.82	.73	.76	.85	.88
Parent	.85	.87	.78	.80	.85	.88	.77	.77	.64	.69		
M raw discrepancy	.35	.32	.03	.07	.30	.39	.52	.53	.28	.30		

.81, $F(5, 871) = 40.04, p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .19$, and for time, Wilk's $\lambda = .91, F(5, 871) = 17.09, p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .09$.

For family role, significant univariate results were obtained for all of the dimensions of family dynamics, with the exception of conflict, $F_s(1, 871) = 28.43$ to $53.18, p_s < .01$, partial $\eta^2_s = .08$ to $.13$. Pairwise comparisons revealed that adolescents gave all positive family dynamics significantly lower ratings than their parents, although conflict was not rated significantly differently by parents and children (see Table 1). There were significant univariate interactions between age and role for all of the measures, with the exception of mutual activities, $F_s(1, 871) = 2.49$ to $5.89, p_s < .05$, partial $\eta^2_s = .01$ to $.02$. Mean-level differences indicated that older adolescents and their parents gave positive family dynamics lower ratings than younger adolescents and their parents. However, older adolescents' gave conflict higher ratings than younger adolescents, and in contrast, parents of older adolescents gave conflict lower ratings than parents of younger adolescents.

For time, significant univariate results were obtained for all of the dimensions of family dynamics, with the exception of conflict, $F_s(1, 871) = 8.31$ to $48.70, p_s < .05$, partial $\eta^2_s = .01$ to $.05$. Pairwise comparisons revealed a decreasing linear trend in positive family dynamics. Results also indicate that there was a significant univariate interaction between time and age on mutual activities, $F(2, 871) = 4.93, p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .01$. Mean-level differences indicated that younger adolescents gave mutual activities higher ratings than older adolescents at both time points, and older adolescents' mean ratings of mutual activities decreased at a greater rate over time.

Between-subjects effects indicate that there were significant effects of age on all of the family-dynamics variables with the exception of conflict, $F_s(2, 871) = 3.33$ to $18.35, p_s < .05$, partial $\eta^2_s = .01$ to $.04$. Pairwise comparisons indicated that for each of the measures, there were significant decreases in positive family dynamics for older versus younger adolescents. Two significant effects were also found for gender, with boys endorsing greater mutual activities and family identity than girls. No significant differences were found for parent gender (mother vs. father).

Discrepancy Scores Between Parents and Adolescents

To begin with, raw discrepancy scores were computed by subtracting the adolescents' scores on the family dynamics measures from the parents' scores. This technique enables the direction of differences in ratings on family dynamics to be easily interpreted (e.g., difference scores of 0 represent perfect agreement and positive numbers suggest positive discrepancies; see Table 1). An examination of these raw discrepancy scores indicated that on average, parents tend to give positive family dynamics higher ratings than adolescents, but that ratings of conflict are only marginally different between parents and adolescents. Following this, SDSs were computed consistent with the strategy outlined by De Los Reyes and Kadzin (2004, 2006). Specifically, SDSs were created for each of the measures of family dynamics by first converting both adolescent and parent ratings each into z scores and then subtracting the adolescent's z score on each subscale from the parent's z score on that same subscale.

In order to assess the relationship between the SDS measures and adolescent well-being, bivariate correlation coefficients were calculated (see Table 3). Results indicate that the SDS measures on

Table 2
Correlation Matrix for Year 1 Adolescent and Parent Family Dynamics

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Adolescent									
1. Y1 cohesion									
2. Y1 conflict	-.30*								
3. Y1 autonomy	.58*	-.29*							
4. Y1 identity	.44*	-.26*	.51*						
5. Y1 mutual	.61*	-.26*	.46*	.33*					
Parent									
6. Y1 cohesion	.39*	-.15*	.23*	.27*	.27*				
7. Y1 conflict	-.13*	.32*	-.06	-.14*	-.14*	-.29*			
8. Y1 autonomy	.18*	-.10*	.11*	.15*	.16*	.48*	-.29*		
9. Y1 identity	.26*	-.17*	.25*	.25*	.21*	.43*	-.29*	.40*	
10. Y1 mutual	.29*	-.13*	.14*	.19*	.43*	.55*	-.25*	.39*	.32*

Note. Bolded correlations indicate associations between parents and adolescents on corresponding family dynamics measures.

* $p < .01$.

positive family dynamics are all positively interrelated, but negatively correlated with well-being. The opposite is true for conflict, with the SDS for conflict negatively related to the SDS for the other family dynamics measures, and positively related to well-being.

Discrepancy Scores and Adolescent Well-Being Over Time

The following section addresses the question of how discrepancies are related to adolescent well-being over time and whether the relationships between the variables are moderated by age and gender. AMOS, the model-generation application of SEM (Kline, 2005), was used to test an autoregressive cross-lagged model in order to examine the relationships between the two latent variables (discrepancy and well-being) over the two time points of measurement. The latent discrepancy variable was made up of the five standardized discrepancy scores (cohesion, conflict, autonomy, identity, and mutual activities). The latent well-being variable was comprised of the three well-being subscales (purpose in life, positive relations with others, and confidence).

All of the observed variables significantly loaded (greater than $p < .01$) onto their anticipated latent variable at both time points (see Figure 1). To test the residualized relationships between the latent variables over time, a fully saturated model was tested, including stability coefficients, cross-lag relationships, and correlated error across the two time points. In addition, the covariance between the latent variables at Y1 was tested (see Figure 1). The resulting model was found to fit the data well, yielding $\chi^2(91) = 289.64$, a comparative fit index (CFI) of .97, an incremental fit index (IFI) of .97 and a root mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) of .05. Stability coefficients between contiguous time points were significant and moderately high for both discrepancy and well-being ($\beta_s = .57$ and $.54$, $p < .01$). At Y1, discrepancy and well-being were significantly negatively correlated ($\beta = -.33$, $p < .01$), and a significant bidirectional relationship was evident between discrepancy and well-being across the two time points, with discrepancy at Y1 negatively predicting well-being at Y2 ($\beta = -.11$, $p < .01$), and well-being at Y1 negatively predicting discrepancy at Y2 ($\beta = -.11$, $p < .01$; see Figure 1). These results partially address the question of direction of predic-

tion, with findings indicating that not only do discrepancy and well-being negatively interrelate cross-sectionally, they negatively predict each other over time.

Moderation Analyses

We began by testing the chi-square difference between the constrained and unconstrained models for both moderators (gender and age), to see whether there were significant differences between the model without moderation and the model with moderation. The chi-square difference for the gender model was not significant, although the chi-square difference for age was, $\chi^2(10)$ change = 18.7, $p < .05$. These results indicated that the model was not significantly moderated by gender, therefore further analyses were not conducted on this moderator. However, because the chi-square difference indicated that age was a significant moderator, a critical ratio-difference test,⁵ which tests the hypothesis that pairs of parameter estimates were equal (Arbuckle, 1995), was used to investigate the difference between regression weights of each pathway. This procedure enabled us to examine, in turn, whether each regression parameter of the model was significantly different across the three age groups.

Results indicated that there was a significant difference between the older age group and the younger age group on the stability coefficient between well-being at Y1 and well-being at Y2. For the 14–15 year olds, the relationship between well-being at Y1 and well-being at Y2 ($\beta = .66$, $p < .01$), was significantly stronger than the same relationship for 10–11 year olds ($\beta = .46$, $p < .01$, z -score difference = 2.35, $p > .01$) and for 12–13 year olds ($\beta = .52$, $p < .01$, z -score difference = 2.55, $p < .01$). Furthermore, the relationship between well-being at Y1 to discrepancies at Y2 was significant and negative for 14–15 year olds ($\beta = -.19$, $p < .01$), although this was not the case for 10–11 year olds ($\beta = -.02$, n.s.,

⁵ The critical-ratio difference test in AMOS is used to test the null hypothesis that two parameter estimates are equal (Arbuckle, 1995). This test can be applied by performing a set of z -score contrasts among parameter estimates of interest and examining whether there are significant differences in the pathways between groups. The test was used in this study as a tool for assessing differences in structural paths in the multigroup analyses.

Table 3
Correlation Matrix of Year 1 and Year 2 SDS and Wellbeing

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Year 1											
1. SDS cohesion	—										
2. SDS conflict	-.23*	—									
3. SDS autonomy	.44*	-.21*	—								
4. SDS identity	.39*	-.24*	.37*	—							
5. SDS mutual	.49*	-.20*	.40*	.32*	—						
6. Wellbeing	-.22*	.13*	-.18*	-.21*	-.17*	—					
Year 2											
7. SDS cohesion	.42*	-.19*	.24*	.23*	.27*	-.16*	—				
8. SDS conflict	-.12*	.72*	-.12*	-.21*	-.09*	.15*	-.18*	—			
9. SDS autonomy	.30*	-.13*	.67*	.29*	.28*	-.20*	.34*	-.14*	—		
10. SDS identity	.20*	-.12*	.16*	.36*	.17*	-.14*	.48*	-.16*	.30*	—	
11. SDS mutual	.29*	-.14*	.23*	.18*	.38*	-.14*	.51*	-.15*	.29*	.38*	—
12. Wellbeing	-.16*	.13*	-.17*	-.15*	-.15*	.53*	-.27*	.18*	-.18*	-.27*	-.26*

Note. SDS = Standardized discrepancies between adolescents' and parents' ratings of family-dynamic variables.

* $p < .01$.

z -score difference = 1.95, $p < .05$). The same pathway was significant for 12–13 year olds ($\beta = -.15$, $p < .05$), but was only marginally significantly different from the 10–11 year olds (z -score difference = 1.56, $p = .06$). The age-moderated model was found to fit the data well, yielding $\chi^2(273) = 206.18$; CFI of .96, IFI of .96 and a RMSEA of .03. These findings indicated that there were small variations in the strengths of relationships between discrepancy and adjustment over time for the different age groups.

Alternative Test Based on Individual Parent and Adolescent Reports

The individual effects of parent and adolescent family-dynamics ratings on well-being over time were tested following the procedure outlined by De Los Reyes, Goodman, Kliewer, and Reid-Quinones (2010). This test enables a check of whether the predictive effects found for discrepancies are a result of the mean level effects of the family-dynamics variables on the outcome. A hierarchical regression model predicting adolescent well-being at Y2 was conducted consisting of two steps, (a) age, gender, and well-being of the adolescent at Y1, and (b) the ratings of all five family dynamics of both the parent and adolescent. To reduce multicollinearity between the measures, the subscales were converted into z scores before entry into the regression model. The first step accounted for a large amount of the variance in well-being at Y2 ($R^2 = .29$, $\Delta F = 131.99$, $p < .01$), with age ($\beta = -.10$, $p < .01$) and baseline well-being ($\beta = .52$, $p < .01$) emerging as significant predictors. This result confirms the findings of the SEM. The second step also accounted for a significant amount of the variance ($\Delta R^2 = .04$, $\Delta F = 5.78$, $p < .01$), although the only significant effects were adolescent ratings of conflict ($\beta = -.08$, $p < .05$) and adolescent ratings of autonomy ($\beta = .10$, $p < .01$). These results show that when family-dynamics reports were treated independently, adolescents' reports had a minimal effect, and parents' reports had no significant effect on well-being at Y2. This suggests that the previous significant findings on the impact of discrepancies on well-being is not a result of the independent main effects of adolescent or parent ratings of family dynamics, but rather that

discrepancies provide distinct, uniquely predictive negative effects on adolescent well-being.

Discussion

As found in many previous studies (e.g., Achenbach, McConaughy, & Howell, 1987; Treutler & Epkins, 2003), discrepancies between parents and adolescents were indeed evident in ratings of family dynamics. In fact, we found that parents rated all forms of positive family dynamics (cohesion, mutual activities, autonomy, and family identity) more highly than their children, whereas there were no significant differences in the ratings of family conflict between family members. This result confirms findings from previous research that adolescents consistently rate positive elements of family relationships lower than

their parents (Smetana, 1989; Steinberg, 1990), but contradicts research that has found that adolescents view the family as more conflictual than their parents (Noller et al., 1992). In addition, ratings of positive family dynamics were found to decrease for both parents and adolescents over time, also consistent with previous research (Ohanessian, Lerner, Lerner, & von Eye, 2000), although ratings of conflict did not, which is a novel finding.

The decline in ratings of positive family dynamics for both family members coupled with consistency in discrepancies over time suggests that negative elements of family dynamics (conflict) may not be the major source of divergent views. In fact, ratings of family conflict did not significantly differ between parents and adolescents and seemed to converge over time. This result may be interpreted in a number of ways. First, family conflict may be a more stable indicator of family dynamics than the other indicators, meaning that family members have more accurate (less divergent) perceptions of the amount of conflict experienced. Second, conflict may represent an enduring aspect of family dynamics that is less responsive to the changes in family relationships that result from adolescent development. Finally, it may be the case that the individuation process that young people go through predominantly involves decreases in connectedness (an element of positive family dynamics) rather than increases in conflict (an element of negative family dynamics).

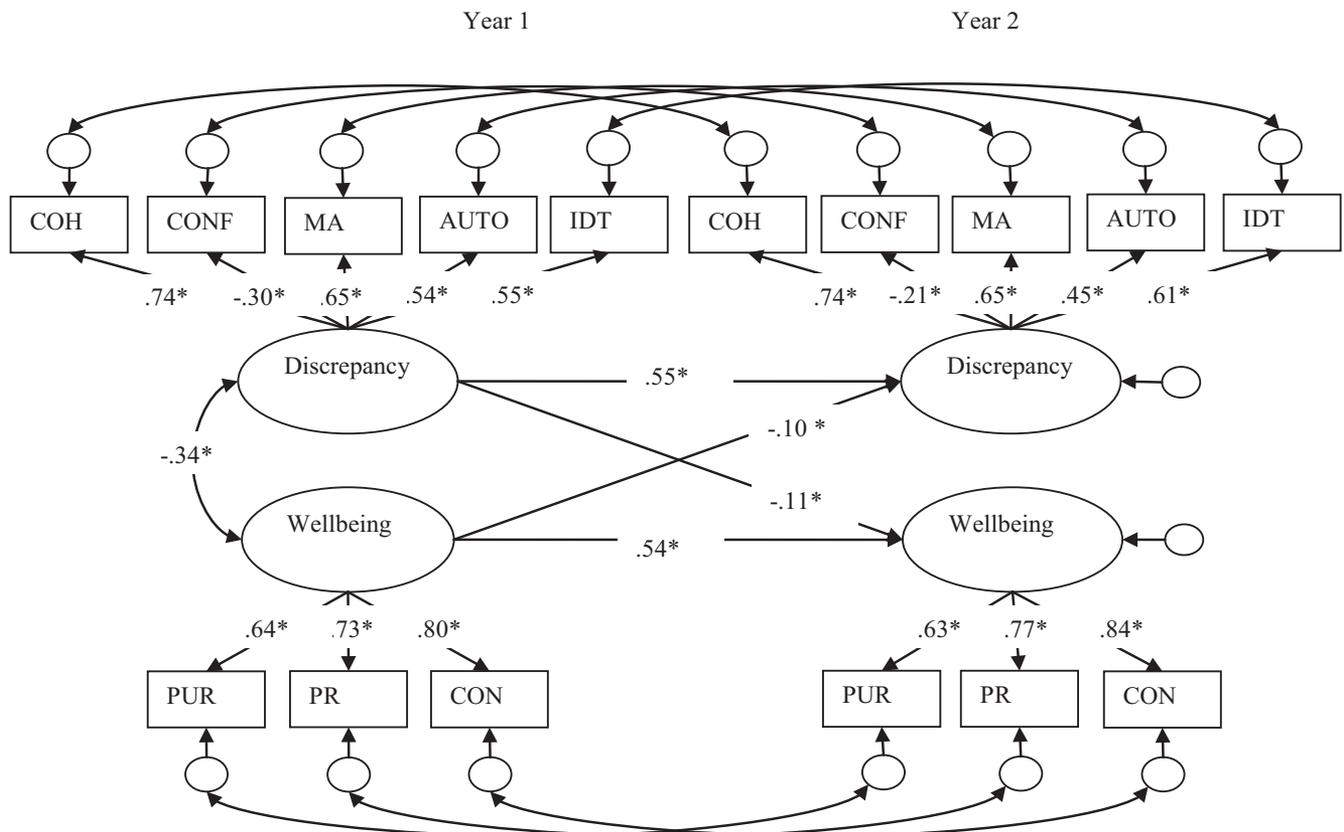


Figure 1. Residualized regression model. COH = standardized discrepancies score (SDS) for family cohesion; CONF = SDS for family conflict; MA = SDS for mutual activities; AUTO = SDS for autonomy; IDT = SDS for family identity; PUR = purpose in life; PR = positive relations with others; CON = confidence. *Note.* Fit indices for the overall model were as follows: $\chi^2(91) = 289.64, p = .01$; CFI = .97; RMSEA = .05; IFI = .97; TLI = .95. * $p < .01$.

With regard to age, it was hypothesized that due to the individuation process (Butner et al., 2009), younger adolescents would rate positive family dynamics higher than older adolescents, and consequently would experience lower levels of discrepancies with their parents than older adolescents. As predicted, we found that younger adolescents rated all elements of positive family dynamics higher than older adolescents. There was also a significant interaction between role and age, with both younger adolescents and their parents rating positive family dynamics significantly higher than older adolescents and their parents. Further, older adolescents rated conflict higher than younger adolescents and their parents, and the parents of older adolescents rated conflict lower than younger adolescents and their parents. These results suggest that even though there are differences in the level of positive family dynamics for older and younger adolescents, similar discrepancies still exist in the parent-adolescent dyad regardless of adolescent age. However, ratings of conflict seem to converge for older adolescents and their parents.

It was hypothesized that girls would give positive family dynamics higher ratings than boys, and consequently would evidence lower levels of discrepancy. This hypothesis was not supported, although boys and girls were found to significantly differ in their

ratings of mutual activities and family identity. In fact, it was found that male adolescents report significantly greater levels of mutual activities and identity than female adolescents. Previous research has yielded findings of gender differences in the relationships between discrepancies and anxiety, depression, and self-esteem (Carlson et al., 1991; Ohannessian et al., 1995). It has been suggested that the nature of differences in ratings of family dynamics often depends on the topic of contention (Bell et al., 2001), therefore it may be that the measures did not capture family-relationship variables that produce meaningful gender differences. Future research should continue to examine gender differences in discrepancies across the domains of family functioning.

The results of this study provide evidence to support the growing body of literature on discrepancies between adolescents and their parents, but we also sought to answer the question of whether these discrepancies are related to adolescent well-being. Initial correlational analyses found that the discrepancy scores on positive family dynamics were positively related to adolescent well-being, whereas the discrepancy score on conflict was negatively associated with well-being. Subsequent longitudinal analyses confirmed that there is a bidirectional link between discrepancy and well-being over time. These results indicate that greater discrep-

ancies significantly contribute to lower levels of adolescent well-being, and that adolescents who have higher levels of well-being are less likely to evidence divergent attitudes with their parents over time. These results are congruent with family systems theory, indicating that adolescent well-being may lead to enhanced communication and emotional support within the family system, and in conjunction with this, a breakdown of family ties may lead to worse outcomes for the individual (Ohannessian et al., 1995).

Upon further analysis of the moderating effects of age, it became evident that stability of well-being and the relationship between well-being and discrepancy differed significantly for the age groups. Specifically, well-being at Year 1 was a significantly better predictor of well-being at Year 2 for the older adolescents. It was also found that for older adolescents, initial levels of well-being significantly predicted lower discrepancies over time. Therefore, not only is well-being more stable for older adolescents, it also has a more positive effect on family relationships. Taken together these results indicate that the high levels of variability in well-being that are characteristic of the developmental period of adolescence may be beginning to stabilize for this group (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986).

The present study contributes to the literature in a number of respects, particularly in illuminating the mechanisms through which disagreements between parents and adolescents influence adjustment outcomes, however limitations also warrant mentioning. As with any longitudinal subject-variable study, relationships noted here cannot be assumed to be causal, particularly as discrepancies were measured over a relatively small time frame. Future researchers would benefit from examining discrepancies across a longer time frame with more data points, as this would enable variability in the patterns of discrepancies to emerge. In addition, the generalizability of the results is limited, due to the bias toward more affluent and potentially better functioning families. Preliminary analyses indicated that the youth who were excluded from the analyses (due to parents not completing the survey at Y1 or Y2) had significantly lower school SES than those who were included. Future researchers should attempt to investigate whether the relationships found between discrepancy and well-being in the current research generalize to less well-functioning families.

Furthermore, we utilized SDSs to measure discrepancies. Difference scores can be methodologically problematic (see De Los Reyes, 2011; De Los Reyes & Kazdin, 2004), and recent research has yielded a variety of novel ways of measuring disagreements (e.g., Butner et al., 2010; Mounst, 2007). Future researchers should seek to investigate discrepancies across a variety of family formations, to examine different types of adolescent outcomes, and to utilize novel ways of measuring informant disagreements.

The findings of the current research lead us to emphasize the importance of gathering information on family functioning from both parents and youth when evaluating adolescent adjustment. For clinicians, regardless of the objective accuracy of either the child or the parent, there is value in collecting data from more than one family member and considering how these have an impact on youth psychopathology, independently and in conjunction with one another (Guion, Mrug, & Wingle, 2009; Reynolds et al., 2011). Furthermore, discrepancies may reflect an underlying latent indicator of the quality of intergenerational relationships that goes above and beyond adolescent and parent self-reported relational quality. Therefore, interventions that act to reduce discrepancies may be helpful in clinical settings. In fact, Achenbach (2011) suggests that awareness of discrepancies can

promote parental problem solving and develop therapeutic alliances. Therefore, although discrepancies pose methodological and interpretive difficulties, they also provide invaluable information about differences in informants' perceptions that may inform family interventions (Feinberg et al., 2000).

In conclusion, theoretical and empirical scholarship on family relationships would be enhanced by more attention to the issue of discrepancies in ratings of family dynamics between parents and adolescents. In the present study, disagreements between adolescents' and parents' perceptions of family functioning were found to increase over time and were bidirectionally related to adolescent well-being. These results suggest that there is an increasing divergence between young people and their parents during middle adolescence regarding their views of the family system that is intertwined with adolescent adjustment over time. In short, greater distance in views between parents and adolescents predicted lower subsequent levels of well-being one year later, and vice versa. Therefore, young people who feel good about themselves have fewer discrepancies with their parents. These findings not only indicate that young people's feelings and experiences are integral to positive family functioning, but also that adolescents have the agency to transform relationships with their parents. The research described in this study provides insight into the connections between reports of family dynamics and adolescent well-being, and we would argue that there is potentially much more to be learned from viewing the divergent perspectives of family members as a substantive question rather than simply as an uninteresting case of lack of reliability between sources of data.

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Call for Papers for a Special Section of the *Journal of Family Psychology*: Spirituality and Religion in Family Life

Editors: Annmarie Cano and Annette Mahoney

This special section of the *Journal of Family Psychology* aims to stimulate the breadth and depth of rigorous scientific studies on the interface of faith and family life. Recent reviews demonstrate that spirituality and religion remain relevant to contemporary families, but critical gaps in the research literature compromise a balanced or deep understanding how faith operates in a family context (see Mahoney, Swank & Tarakeshwar, 2001; Mahoney, 2010; Mahoney, in press). For example, repeated studies suggest that higher religious attendance and salience helps to form (e.g., marital unions) and maintain (e.g., lowers divorce risk) traditional family bonds. But scarce research exists on specific positive or negative roles that spirituality and religion may play in families, especially in nontraditional or distressed families. To help address these gaps, we invite papers that address any of the following ways in which specific spiritual cognitions and behaviors centered on family life may:

- help or harm relational and individual adjustment, including, but not limited to, the sanctification of an aspect of family life, prayer for a family member, positive religious/spiritual coping strategies to cope with family issues, spiritual struggles or negative religious/spiritual coping tied to family difficulties, and perceiving negative family events as a sacred loss and/or desecration.
- facilitate or undermine the formation and maintenance of diverse types of families (e.g., cohabiting unions with and without children, same-sex couples with and without children, blended, foster, adoptive, and multi-generational families).
- be part of the problem or solution in coping with family-related distress. This includes, but is not limited to, difficulties in the formation (e.g., unwanted singlehood or cohabitation, unintended pregnancy, infertility) and maintenance (e.g., coping with infidelity, partner or parent-child violence, chronic relational conflict, divorce, or a family member who has medical, mental health, or developmental problems) of family relationships.

Questions about the special section can be addressed to the section editors, Annmarie Cano, Ph.D. (acanowayne.edu) or Annette Mahoney, Ph.D. (amahonebgsu.edu) Submit manuscripts through the *Journal of Family Psychology* portal (<http://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/fam>) no later than **May 3, 2013** and please note that the submission is for this special section.