

Reversal Theory and Emotional Processes in the Low-Conflict and High-Conflict Mother-Daughter Dyadic Interactions*

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Abstract

As a part of a series of studies conducted for a PhD thesis at the university of Tasmania, this experiment investigated the emotional processes in the low-conflict and high-conflict mother-adolescent daughter dyads using reversal theory constructs (Apter, 1982) including metamotivational states, and reversal processes. Among 63 mother-daughter dyads participating in a previous experiment (Ghafar-Tabrizi, 2003), a high-conflict group (12 dyads) and a low-conflict group (12 dyads), were established on the basis of the Conflict subscale of Family Environment Scale (Moos & Moos, 1994). The study examined emotional changes during neutral, conflictual, and pleasant conversational interactions. The high-conflict group experienced greater levels of unpleasant emotions and positive transactional emotions than the low-conflict group. On the whole, the results demonstrated the utility of reversal theory constructs in explaining the interplay between the operative metamotivational state, reversal processes, and contextual features in emotional processes in the low-conflict and high-conflict mother daughter dyads. However the verbal, non-verbal, and cognitive factors that instigate reversals remain to be investigated

Keywords: Reversal theory, Metamotivational states, Reversal processes, Low-conflict, High-conflict, Mother-daughter dyads, Perceived conflict, Somatic and transactional emotions

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Dysfunctional emotional responses to others are based on prior learning in relationships and on the influences these experiences have on the way in which current situations are construed, experienced, and reacted to (Greenberg, 1996). Such dysfunctional patterns of emotions are more likely to occur in conflicted families than harmonised ones. A few studies have attempted to explore the effect of cohesion and adaptability in the family environment on cognitive, affective, behavioural, and physiological responses of the individual (Woodball & Matthews, 1989; Larkin, Frazer, & Semenchuk, 1996). Although, the perceived conflict in the family has been identified as the most salient index of the parent-adolescent relationship (Minuchin, 1985; Hall, 1987; Katz, Kramer, & Gottman, 1992; Graber & Brooks-Gunn, 1999; Powers & Welsh, 1999, Rosenberg et al., 2006), as a basis for comparison of emotional processes for different groups of parent-adolescent dyads, it has received little attention.

Negative affect has been found to be a discriminator of relationship satisfaction in parent-child dyads (Dix, 1991). Conger and Ge (1999) discovered that increased negative affects and hostility and decreased positive affect towards parents were characteristics of boys and girls in the conflicted families with lower levels of warmth and supportiveness. Few studies have examined the impact of various conversational tasks on observer ratings of affective expression during parent-adolescent dyadic interactions (Capaldi, Forgatch, & Crosby 1994; Flannery, Montemayor, Eberly, & Torquati, 1993; Rossi & Rossi, 1990, Montemyer, Eberly, & Flannery, 1993; Hollenstein & Lewis, 2006). Among parent-adolescent child dyads, mother-daughter dyads with the highest level of conflict (Paikoff, Carlton-Ford, & Brooks-Gunn, 1993), increased negative affect (Montemyer, et al., 1993), and cohesion (Rossi & Rossi, 1990) require further investigation. It appears that previous work on parent-adolescent dyads, while emphasizing affective expression, is not based on a theoretical framework that could account for the complexity of emotional experience. Such complexity is difficult to elucidate, unless the subjective experience of emotions, or a phenomenological approach, is used as the frame of

reference. Consideration of subjective experience is likely to reveal that the emotional response to an environmental event or bodily change depends on the operative metamotivational state of the individual. In this regard, reversal theory (Apter, 1982) with its structural phenomenological approach, presents a theoretical framework which may account for the different states of mind and the processes that govern the abrupt changes in the operative state of the individual, and facilitate understanding of the dynamics of emotional process in dyadic interactions.

Reversal theory, as a structural phenomenological approach, provides a complete and unitary account of motivation and emotion in human personality (Apter & Smith, 1985). Apter and Smith maintain that reversal theory is structural as it proposes certain metamotivational states which structure experience in distinct ways on one hand, and postulates a pattern of alternation between pairs of metamotivational states over time on the other. Reversal theory is built upon the premise that human beings are inherently inconsistent in that not only do they behave in different ways at different times in similar circumstances or behave in similar ways in diverse circumstances, but also they behave in similar ways at different times with different underlying motivations (Pothook & Murgatroyd, 1993).

Reversal theory proposes that there are a number of metamotivational states which are identifiable and discrete ways of experiencing the world, and are each associated with their own range of emotions (Apter, 1989). The reversal theory proposes two pairs of somatic ((i.e., telic-paratelic, conformistic-negativistic) and two pairs of transactional metamotivational states (i.e., anti-alloic and mastery-sympathy). The telic state is characterized as an arousal-avoiding, future-focused, goal-oriented, and serious-minded state. People in paratelic state are sensation oriented, arousal seeking, present-focused, playful, and spontaneous (Apter & Svebak, 1992; Potocky & Murgatroyd, 1993). The conformist and negativistic pairs of metamotivational states concern the extent to which one temporarily conforms with or reacts against any restrictions on one's

behavior including another person's expectations, social pressure, norms, rules, regulations, and traditions. (Potocky & Murgatroyd, 1993). The combination of telic/paratelic and conformist/negativistic pairs of metamotivational states produce four state combinations: telic-conformist, telic-negativistic, paratelic-conformist, and paratelic-negativistic.

Apter (1988a) presented a systematic account of pleasant and unpleasant emotions, being dependent upon the operation of particular modes of consciousness. The telic/paratelic and negativistic/conformist states produce eight somatic emotions which are modulated by felt arousal. Low arousal in the telic-conformist state and the telic-negativistic state is associated with emotions like relaxation and placidity respectively; high arousal is experienced as anxiety and anger. Low arousal in the paratelic-conformist state and the paratelic-negativistic state produces emotions like boredom and sullenness respectively; whereas high arousal is experienced as excitement and provocativeness.

In addition to the eight somatic emotions, there are eight other emotions which are modulated by felt transactional outcome. The felt transactional outcome is the degree of gain or loss that the person experiences as a result of transactions with others (Potocky & Murgatroyd, 1993). Apter and Smith (1985) describe the mastery/sympathy and autic/alloic pairs of metamotivational states. These two pairs jointly define the person's emotions with respect to felt outcomes of a transaction. In the mastery state, one feels a need to dominate or control the other with whom he/she is interacting, and transactions are experienced as involving taking or yielding (Murgatroyd, 1985). The person who is in a mastery-oriented state views a relationship as a power struggle and evaluates relationship outcomes in terms of winning power and control and values hardness and toughness (Frey, 1997). When people are in the sympathy state, they view the situation in terms of harmony or unity. They are focused on caring and they value tenderness and sensitivity, and transactions are experienced as giving or receiving (Potocky & Murgatroyd, 1993; Frey, 1997).

The second pair of transactional states consists of the autic and alloic

states. An individual in autic state is primarily focused on his or her own outcomes, whereas, for a person in the alloic state, the outcome and happiness of the other person with whom one is interacting is the matter of primary concern (Frey, 1997). The combination of the mastery/sympathy and autic/alloic pair of states produces four transactional combinations: autic-mastery, alloic-mastery, autic-sympathy and alloic-sympathy. In mastery/autic state, gain is associated with the emotion of pride and loss with humiliation; in the mastery/alloic state, gain produces the emotion of modesty and loss leads to shame. In the sympathy/autic state, gain produces the emotion of gratitude and loss leads to resentment; whereas in the sympathy-alloic state, gain is associated with feeling of virtue and loss with guilt (O'Connell & Apter, 1993).

Reversal from one state to the other can be triggered by contingent events (internal or external stimuli), frustration, and satiation or some combinations of these factors (Apter, 1989). "Contingent factors" are events and situations which, when suitably interpreted by an individual, facilitate or induce a reversal. Frustration of all kinds in achieving the satisfaction of the prevailing system will eventually induce reversal on its own or with the help of other factors. When a person is in a particular state for a period of time without achieving the satisfaction of that state, he/she may spontaneously reverse to the opposite state. Satiation is an innate process which builds up in strength, even in the absence of the other factors, and will automatically induce a reversal" (Apter & Svebak, 1992, p. 329).

By introducing pairs of metamotivational states which structure experience and their pattern of alternation, the theory not only differentiates the emotional processes of the problematic and harmonized dyads on the basis of positive and negative emotions, but also takes one step further to examine the operative metamotivational state that determines the emotional experience at a given time. Apter and Smith (1979) and Apter (1982, 1989) postulate that many of the parent-child problems arise out of an incompatibility between family members in terms

of the telic-paratelic or negativistic-conformist mode opposition. It is possible that the mode opposition is more significant for parents and adolescents in the high-conflict than the low-conflict dyads. In this respect, the reversal theory measures of metamotivational states and emotions while exploring the negative and positive aspects of emotional experience are capable of exploring the parent-child mode opposition in the two groups of families. One other factor to be considered is that the high-conflict families may be subject to a number of different kinds of stressor as a function of ongoing arguments and unresolved disagreements (Woodball & Matthews, 1989; Altorfer, Kasermann & Hirsbrunner, 1998).

Overall, The aims of this experiment were to compare two groups of high-conflict and low-conflict mother-daughter dyads in terms of operative metamotivational state and pleasant/unpleasant somatic and transactional emotions. It was hypothesized that the high-conflict mother-daughter dyads would experience greater levels of stress and unpleasant somatic/transactional emotions and lower levels of pleasant somatic/transactional emotions than the low-conflict dyads.

Method

Participants

Participants in Experiment 2 were two groups of twelve mother-daughter dyads. Mothers' ages ranged from 32.9 to 55.7 ($M = 43.4$, $SD = 6.1$) and daughters' ages ranged from 13.9 to 17.5 ($M = 15.1$, $SD = 0.9$). Two groups of dyads with lowest (low-conflict group) and highest scores (high-conflict group) on Conflict in the Family Environment (CFE) (Moos & Moos, 1994) were formed. From the 63 dyads in the previous study (Ghafar-Tabrizi, 2003), two groups of 12 dyads with extreme CFE scores completed this experiment. The CFE scores for the low-conflict group ranged from 0.5 to 4.5 ($M = 1.79$, $SD = 1.45$). The scores for the high-conflict group ranged from 5.0 to 8.0 ($M = 6.17$, $SD = 1.11$).

Apparatus

The audio-tapes of conversations were played through a TC-D5M Sony

tape-recorder in an equipment room. Each participant listened to the audio-tapes via a headphone.

Measures

Family Environment Scale (FES) (Moos R. & Moos B., 1994). The FES is composed of 10 subscales that measures the actual, preferred, and expected social environment of families. These 10 FES subscales include Cohesion, Expressiveness, Conflict, Independence; Achievement Orientation, Intellectual-Cultural Orientation, Active-Recreational Orientation, Moral-Religious Emphasis, Organization and Control subscales. The raw score of 0 indicates the absence of that characteristic in the family measured by each subscale, and a score of 9 demonstrates a high level of that characteristic in the family. Each dyad's score is calculated by averaging the scores of the mother and daughter in that dyad.

Moos's (1994) findings drawn from a sample of 1067 families indicates 2-month test-retest reliability for Form R (actual family environment) varying from a low of .68 for independence to a high of .86 for cohesion. Test-retest reliabilities were also high for the 4-month interval. The internal consistency for the 10 FES subscales were all in an acceptable range and varied from moderate for independence and achievement orientation to substantial for cohesion, organization, intellectual-cultural orientation, and moral-religious emphasis (Moos, R, & Moos B., 1994). "Validity analyses with the Family Routines Inventory and the Spanier Dyadic Adjustment Scale have yielded strong correlations attesting to FES's validity" (Ross, Marrinan, Schattner & Gullone, 1999, p. 60).

The Tension and Effort Stress Inventory (TESI)-State Version (Svebak, 1991). The state TESI has 20 response items, each rated on a scale of 1–7 ranging from 'not at all' to 'very much'. There are 16 items measuring the reversal theory emotions and four stress items measuring external and somatic tension stress and external and somatic effort stress. Because the TESI has only one item for each emotion or stressor, Cronbach alpha coefficients can not be derived for individual measures; however, the

emotion ratings have either positive or negative hedonic tone in common, and Male and Kerr (1996 in Kerr, Wilson, Svebak & Kirkealdy, 2006) reported an alpha coefficient of 0.88 for the eight positive emotions and an alpha coefficient of 0.75 for the eight negative emotions.

Procedure

The dyads were given a short description of the experiment and their voluntary participation sought. At the beginning of the session, the participants were briefed and asked to sign a consent form. Each member of the dyad went through the experiment separately. The order of participation for mother and daughter was counterbalanced in different pairs. Then, necessary instructions regarding TESI were given. The three five minute pleasant, neutral, and conflictual mother-daughter conversations, recorded at the previous study (Ghafar-Tabrizi, 2003) were played for the participants in a counterbalanced order. The reason for using audio tapes was to prevent the effects of speech on the physiological measures which were examined simultaneously (the same study). Each conversation was preceded by a five minute baseline during which participants were asked to relax and think about a neutral event like making a cup of coffee or taking a dog for a walk. The baselines were planned in order to return the arousal level of participants to the pre-conversation stage. Immediately before each conversation topic (after the baseline preceding that conversation topic) and after each conversation topic (i.e., before the baseline preceding the next conversation topic) participants were asked to fill out the TESI. At the end of the session, the participants were debriefed.

Design

To compare the two groups in terms of emotional concomitants before and after listening to their conversation, a mixed (within-subject and between-group) repeated measures design was used. The between-group factor was Conflict (high and low-conflict). Within-subject variables were

Mother/Daughter, Time (before and after conversation) and Topic (neutral, conflictual, and pleasant). The dependent variables were tension/effort-stress from body and external factors; pleasant and unpleasant somatic and transactional emotions.

Data Analysis

The emotional responses during listening to the conversations were analyzed using 2 (Mother/Daughter) X 2 (Time: Before/After) X 3 (Topic: Neutral, Conflictual and Pleasant) X 2 Conflict (Low-conflict/High-Conflict) ANOVAs. ANOVAs, with Greenhouse-Geisser corrections for repeated measures, were employed to assess the change in each dependent variable across all of the independent variables. ANOVA and t-tests were performed to identify the source of significant main effects or interactions as appropriate.

Results

In this section, due to the large number of ANOVA tables, mean scores, and graphs, only the summary of results are presented.

Tension/Efforts-Stress from Body and External Factors

The ANOVAs on the tension/effort-stress from body and external factors did not yield any main effects or significant interactions. In this section, the lack of any significant results could be due to the relaxed setting of listening to the audio-tapes instead of being caught in the ebb and flow of actual conversation.

Pleasant Somatic Emotions

According to the ANOVAs on somatic emotions, the mother/daughter x conflict interaction showed that daughters in the high-conflict group experienced greater levels of excitement ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 1.11$; $M = 1.89$, $SD = 0.69$), $t(22) = -3.42$, $P = .003$, and provocativeness ($M = 2.64$, $SD = 1.67$; $M = 1.33$, $SD = 0.53$), $t = -2.58$, $p = 0.22$ than those in the low-conflict

group. For relaxation, the time x topic interaction indicated that postconversation relaxation ($M = 4.60$, $SD = 1.34$; $M = 5.42$, $SD = 1.35$, $t(23) = 3.16$, $p = .004$; ($M = 4.60$, $SD = 1.34$; $M = 5.23$, $SD = 1.29$), $t(23) = -2.72$, $p = .012$ and placidity ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 1.19$; $M = 4.26$, $SD = 1.30$), $t(23) = 2.24$, $p = .035$; ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 1.19$; $M = 4.40$, $SD = 1.24$), $t(23) = -2.69$, $p = 0.13$, was significantly lower for the conflictual conversation than the neutral or pleasant conversation. Also post conversation provocativeness was greater during the conflictual conversation ($M = 2.17$, $SD = 1.04$) than the neutral conversation ($M = 1.56$, $SD = 0.78$), $t(23) = -3.73$, $p = .001$. There were reductions in the levels of relaxation ($M_{pre} = 5.35$, $SD = 1.30$; $M_{post} = 4.60$, $SD = 1.34$), $t(23) = 3.30$, $p = .003$, and placidity ($M_{pre} = 4.38$, $SD = 0.81$; $M_{post} = 3.33$, $SD = 1.31$), $t(23) = 4.85$, $p < .001$ and increase in the level of provocativeness ($M_{pre} = 1.5$, $SD = 0.81$; $M_{post} = 2.17$, $SD = 1.04$), $t(23) = -5.27$, $p < .001$, from before to after the conflictual conversation. Daughters experienced greater levels of provocativeness than did mothers.

Unpleasant Somatic Emotions

The ANOVAs on anxiety and boredom did not yield any main effects or significant interactions. A significant main effect for conflict occurred for the ANOVA for sullenness and not for anger. The high-conflict group experienced significantly greater sullenness ($M = 1.93$, $SD = 0.95$) than did the low-conflict group ($M = 1.30$, $SD = 0.33$). The time x topic x conflict interaction provided additional information in that, during the conflictual conversation, the high-conflict group experienced significantly greater level of postconversation sullenness than did the low-conflict group ($M = 2.63$, $SD = 0.17$; $M = 1.38$, $SD = 0.53$), $t(22) = -3.37$, $p = .003$. For the high-conflict group, the level of sullenness increased significantly from before to after listening to the conflictual conversation ($M_{pre} = 1.79$, $SD = 0.94$; $M_{post} = 2.63$, $SD = 1.17$), $t(11) = -3.71$, $p = .003$. The main effect for mother-daughter revealed that anger ($M = 1.82$, $SD = 1.44$; $M = 1.26$, $SD = 0.38$) and sullenness ($M = 1.95$, $SD = 1.35$; $M = 1.28$, $SD = 0.42$) were

greater for daughters than for mothers. A main effect for topic occurred for anger. The conflictual conversation produced greater level of anger ($M = 1.79$, $SD = 0.93$) than the neutral ($M = 1.41$, $SD = 0.83$), $t(23) = -3.66$, $p = .001$, or pleasant conversation ($M = 1.42$, $SD = 0.83$), $t(23) = 3.30$, $p = .003$. For sullenness, the mother-daughter \times topic interaction showed that daughters experienced greater levels of sullenness during the conflictual conversation ($M = 2.25$, $SD = 1.53$) than the pleasant conversation ($M = 1.65$, $SD = 1.29$), $t(23) = 3.80$, $p = .001$.

Pleasant Transactional Emotions

Significant main effects for conflict occurred for the ANOVAs on pride, gratitude, and virtue. The high-conflict group experienced greater levels of pride ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 1.03$; $M = 2.45$, $SD = 1.01$), gratitude ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 0.78$; $M = 2.14$, $SD = 0.84$) and virtue ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 1.12$; $M = 2.84$, $SD = 0.65$) than the low-conflict group. The main effect for mother-daughter confirmed that mothers experienced greater levels of pride ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.60$; $M = 2.54$, $SD = 1.25$) and modesty ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.63$; $M = 2.44$, $SD = 0.94$) than did daughters. For daughters, modesty decreased from before to after the conversations. The main effect for topic showed that pleasant conversation ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 1.15$) induced greater level of gratitude than the neutral ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 1.24$), $t(23) = -2.33$, $p = 0.29$, or conflictual conversation ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 1.14$), $t(23) = -2.28$, $p = .032$.

Unpleasant Transactional Emotions

For humiliation, shame, and resentment, the ANOVAs showed significant effects for conflict. The high-conflict group experienced a significantly greater level of humiliation ($M = 1.86$, $SD = 0.77$; $M = 1.24$, $SD = 0.42$), and resentment ($M = 1.99$, $SD = 0.87$; $M = 1.27$, $SD = 0.34$). For shame, the topic \times conflict interaction revealed that for the conflictual conversation the high conflict group experienced greater level of shame ($M = 1.88$, $SD = 0.60$) than did the low-conflict group ($M = 1.31$, $SD = 0.43$),

t(20.43), $p = 0.013$. The interaction provided additional information in that, for the high-conflict group, shame was significantly greater during the conflictual conversation ($M = 1.88$, $SD = 0.57$) than the neutral ($M = 1.33$, $SD = 0.53$), $t(11) = -3.68$, $p = .004$, or pleasant conversation ($M = 1.23$, $SD = 0.34$), $t(11) = 3.87$, $p = .003$. Main effect for mother-daughter occurred for humiliation, resentment, and shame. The levels of humiliation ($M = 1.82$, $SD = 1.15$; $M = 1.28$, $SD = 0.95$), shame ($M = 1.55$, $SD = 0.68$; $M = 1.15$, $SD = 0.24$), and resentment ($M = 1.98$, $SD = 1.41$; $M = 1.28$, $SD = 0.51$) were greater for daughters than for mothers. The main effect for time showed that humiliation ($M_{pre} = 1.33$, $SD = 0.48$; $M_{post} = 1.77$, $SD = 0.93$) and resentment ($M_{pre} = 1.47$, $SD = 0.67$; $M_{post} = 1.80$, $SD = 0.90$) increased significantly from before to after the conversations. However the time x topic interaction showed that, for shame, such an increase was exclusive to the conflictual conversation $M_{pre} = 1.33$, $SD = 0.56$; $M_{post} = 1.85$, $SD = 0.76$), $t(23) = -3.65$, $p = .001$. For shame, a main effect occurred for topic. Shame was significantly greater for the conflictual conversation ($M = 1.59$, $SD = 0.57$) than for the neutral ($M = 1.26$, $SD = 0.23$), $t(23) = -3.47$, $p = .002$, or pleasant conversation ($M = 1.20$, $SD = 0.32$), $t(23) = 3.55$, $p = .002$.

Discussion

Before discussing the hypotheses of this experiment, it is important to mention mother-daughter distinction which was found for the high-conflict group. In this group, provocativeness was significantly greater for daughters than their mothers indicating that daughters in this group were in the paratelic/negativistic state. Given the definition of provocativeness as a tendency to arouse anger, annoyance, and controversy (Hornby, 1990), the finding may not be surprising. This outcome provides partial support for the contention that parent-child problems arise out of an incompatibility between family members in terms of the telic-paratelic or negativistic-conformist state opposition (Apter, 1982, 1989; Apter & Smith, 1979). O'Connor (1992) found that mothers like arousal-avoiding and conformist

daughters more than arousal-seeking and negativistic daughters. Also, for two groups, main effect for mother-daughter proved that daughters experienced higher levels of sullenness, shame, resentment and, humiliation than their mothers while the levels of modesty and pride were greater for mothers than their daughters. These findings indicate that listening to the conversations produced greater levels of transactional loss and lower levels of hedonic tone and transactional gain for daughters than their mothers. It is suggested that cognitive factors beyond these outcomes warrant further investigations.

The hypothesis regarding the group differences in emotional outcomes of interactions was partially upheld. Although the data on pleasant somatic emotions did not yield any group differences, the impact of conflictual conversation on reducing the levels of relaxation and excitement and producing the highest level of provocativeness indicates reversal from the conformist state to the negativistic one. It was found that sullenness, a low-arousal paratelic/negativistic emotion, was greater for the high-conflict group than the low-conflict group. In this respect, the conflictual conversation induced the highest levels of sullenness. With respect to the unpleasant transactional emotions, humiliation and shame were significantly greater for the high-conflict group than the low-conflict group. This finding implies that transactional loss in autistic-mastery and autistic-sympathy states was greater for the high-conflict group than the other group suggesting that people feel more conflict with others when they are concerned about their own outcomes.

Overall, the data regarding the group differences in stress and unpleasant emotions is in line with previous data (Dix, 1991,) introducing negative affects as discriminators of relationship satisfaction in parent-child dyads. The impact of conflictual conversation on producing the highest levels of negative emotions supported earlier studies on conversational tasks (Flannery et al., 1993; Capaldi, et al.1994; Flannery, et al., 1993; Rossi & Rossi, 1990, Montemyer, et al., 1993). Furthermore, the data regarding provocativeness indicates that the conflictual conversation

could provide hedonic tone in a paratelic-negativistic state.

Although the data on pleasant somatic emotions did not yield any group differences, for the pleasant transactional emotions, there were unexpected outcomes. The main effects for conflict showed that pride, gratitude, and virtue were significantly greater for the high-conflict group than the low-conflict group. The afore-mentioned group differences in unpleasant transactional emotions revealed that the transactional loss was greater for the high-conflict group than the low-conflict group. In this respect, the greater level of transactional gain for the high-conflict group requires careful interpretation. Here, the cognitive and behavioral factors contributing to greater levels of pride is unknown. However, pride might be the result of getting one's way or being a successful bully. The finding that the high-conflict group experienced greater levels of gratitude than the other group might result from the fact that the dyads in the low-conflict families, in contrast to the other group, take the pleasant outcome of their interaction for granted. This finding may be accounted for by the fact that the less frequently a behavioral is repeated, the more likely it will be perceived as change, and thus, its causal status as an instigator of emotion is likely to increase (Dillard, 1993). In other words, for the high-conflict group, the daily interactions are less likely to include pleasant aspects. Therefore, if such outcomes occur, it is likely to be perceived as a positive change and hence instigate pleasant emotions. For the low-conflict group, these good aspects of dyadic interaction are more common and do not induce the same level of positive affects. Many dyads admitted that they did not regularly engage in conversation in the way they did during the experiment. This type of interaction might be even less frequent for the high-conflict families.

On the whole, the finding of this experiment confirmed significant utility of reversal theory in distinguishing the pattern of the emotional processes for mother-daughter dyads in the two groups of families. The findings revealed that the pleasant and unpleasant features of emotions do not sufficiently distinguish the two types of families. Instead, there are

other distinctive features which are accounted for by metamotivational state of the individual. A few methodological limitations should also be considered in the generalization of data. The small numbers in each group reduces the power of statistical comparisons and increasing the possibility of both Type 1 and Type 2 errors. Also, the felt emotions could be more intense if the measurements were made during actual conversations.

Despite the methodological limitations, the results of this experiment have important implications for the counsellors working with families. The family therapists should not only search for the unpleasant emotional outcomes of the conflictual interaction for the high-conflict dyads but also explore different kinds of hedonic tone and transactional gain that interpersonal interaction provide for the particular metamotivational state of each member of the family. The counsellors can help the problematic families become aware of these processes, and help them achieve the optimal hedonic tone and transactional gain through neutral and pleasant interactions. It is also likely that the members of dyads avoid conflictual conversations they find unpleasant in a particular metamotivational state or alternatively engage in intense conversations they find enjoyable in a different metamotivational state.

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