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Running Head: CONFLICT IN FRIENDSHIPS

Conflict in Adolescent Friendships across Cultures: Indonesia, South Korea,
and the United States

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Conflict in Adolescent Friendships across Cultures: Indonesia,
South Korea, and the United States

Traditionally, adolescence is conceptualized as a period of turmoil during which adolescents are moody, hostile and behave in maladaptive ways. In reality, this stage of development is not as terrible as the stereotypes suggest. Of particular interest during this time is an adolescent's experience of rapid physical, cognitive, and social changes which necessitate interpersonal adjustment to maintain positive relationships with others (Collins & Laursen, 1992). During this developmental period, there is a transformation in children's networks of interpersonal relationships in that there is a substantial increase in the relative importance of friends as confidants while dependence on parents falls as adolescents transfer allegiance to their peers (Buhrmester, 1996; Rothbaum, Pott, Azuma, Miyake, & Weisz, 2000; Berndt, 1982, French, Rianasari, Pidada, Newlan, & Buhrmester, 2001). These changes in social networks are accompanied by the powerful biological and emotional changes of puberty which can exacerbate the difficulties of this period (Gottman & Mettetal, 1986). Although it is generally agreed upon that these processes are common to Western cultures, they may not be universal across other cultures.

In recent years there has been a significant amount of research regarding the positive influence of general peer interaction on children's current and long-term social and emotional adjustment (Ginsberg, Gottman, & Parker, 1986; Parker, 1986). According to Sullivan (1953), friendships provide consensual validation of interests, hopes, and fears, bolster feelings of self-worth, and promote the development of interpersonal sensitivity. The existing evidence supports the argument that friendship, the ability to make friends, and the ability to be well liked and accepted by peers is important in several dimensions of life (Ginsberg et al., 1986). It is evident

that the processes that are salient to friendship change according to the developmental periods in predictable ways (Parker & Gottman, 1989). During adolescence children develop more friends and experience changes in the amount, content, and perceived meaning of social interactions (Collins & Laursen, 1992). This period, in which friends play a very important role, is characterized by the theme of defining who one is and who one will become (Hartup, Laursen, Stewart, & Eastenson, 1988; Brown, 1989; Parker & Gottman, 1989).

Given the nature of human behavior and the close interaction that exists as adolescents develop close relationships, conflict within interpersonal relationships is inevitable. The existing data suggests that significant changes occur in conflict and its role in friendship during adolescence (Hartup, 1996a). The major theories of development address both interpersonal and intrapsychic conflict and highlight the issues that make conflict particularly prevalent in adolescence (Shantz, 1987; Collins & Laursen, 1992). The early theories of Freud and Erickson are constructed around conflict as a core construct. Neo-Freudians contend that physiological maturation during adolescence produces psychological and behavioral realignment which produces intrapsychic conflict between the id and superego (Laursen & Collins, 1994). Piaget argued that social conflict, especially between individuals with equal power, was essential for the development of egocentrism (Shantz, 1987; Laursen & Collins, 1994; Aboud, 1989). According to his theory, adolescents have increased cognitive capacities that allow them to recognize imperfections and inconsistencies in others and are more likely to view these issues as matters of personal concern (Collins & Laursen, 1992). Although conflict is a central component of the early developmental theories, there has been a limited amount of research concerning its structure and function in adolescents.

The purpose of the current study is to extend the research on adolescent conflict in friendship relations to investigate cross-cultural differences in conflict. In this study, conflict is defined as the perceived and/or actual incompatibility of needs, interests, or goals between two parties over task related or affective issues. It is evident that there are powerful differences in the nature and course of conflict across culture; however, it is unclear how to fully explain these differences (Markus & Lin, 1999; French, Lee, & Pidada, in press). The general nature of conflict and the characteristics of conflict in friendships versus nonfriends will first be discussed followed by a discussion of conflict within adolescent close relationships and how it differs from conflict between parents and siblings. Then, to understand differences in conflict across cultures, the frameworks of individualism and collectivism will be discussed to demonstrate how ideals, practices, and institutions promote different styles of conflict management.

Conflict

Structure of Conflict

Conflict is typically defined as a state of incompatible behavior or goals where one person overtly opposes another's actions or statements (Shantz, 1987; Hartup et al., 1988). Conflicts of interest can arise in many different contexts including maintaining reciprocity, helping a friend in need, managing disagreements over resources, and dealing with issues of exclusivity (Rose & Asher, 1999). Virtually any behavior, however, can provoke a conflict episode (Shantz, 1987). Generally, conflict episodes are brief, temporal events distinguished by onset, affective intensity, resolution, and outcome (Laursen, 1996; Shantz, 1987). Shantz (1987) argues that conflict issues exhibit a developmental trend in that as age increases, the issues become less about that physical environment and more about the social environment.

It is important to distinguish between conflict and the related constructs of aggression and competition. Aggression and competition are distinct constructs that overlap with conflict to some extent (Shantz, 1987; Hartup, 1996a, 1996b). Aggression is defined as behavior aimed at harming or injuring another person and most often occurs in the context of social conflict (Shantz, 1987). Contrary to popular belief, the majority of conflict episodes are neither instigated nor resolved aggressively (Hartup, 1996a). Similarly, competition does not always provoke conflict. Hartup (1996a) contends that competition develops when interdependence between individuals constrains their access to rewards. Competitive situations may elicit disagreements, however not all interpersonal relationships are competitive and result in conflict. It is important to acknowledge this distinction when investigating the nature of conflict.

Although the structure of conflict continues to be debated, most theorists recognize the dyadic nature of conflict. As Shantz (1987) points out, conflict is not defined as an individual's behavior, response, or personality trait. Rather, it is characterized by overt oppositional behavior between two or more individuals as a result of perceived or actual incompatibility of needs, interests, or goals (Laursen & Collins, 1994; Shantz, 1987; Ting-Toomey, Gao, Trubisky, Yan, Kim, Lin, & Nishida, 1991). This presumes that the children's goals are to overcome the opposition or resistance. This state of mutual opposition generally encompasses a minimum of three events: A attempts to influence B, B objects or protests, and A either persists in the original behavior or offers counteropposition. Two-unit exchanges in which A attempts to influence B and B then resists are believed to represent noncompliance rather than conflict (Hartup, 1988).

These oppositional interactions can be understood in terms of the exchange theory in which the interaction between two individuals is explained in terms of the rewards and costs

provided to each other (Laursen, 1996; Laursen & Collins, 1994; Hartup, 1996a). According to the exchange theory, equity and reciprocity are the basic conditions of friendship (Hartup, 1996a). Mutually rewarding interactions will provoke participants to seek each other out for future interactions. To establish and maintain close relationships, participants must integrate their goals and behavior. Difficulties arise as a result of inequality in which interactions are perceived as more rewarding for one individual over the other. Upon encountering opposition or inequality, children construct goals which provide a framework for processing the situation by directing attention and affecting interpretation (Murphy & Eisenberg, 2002). If children are invested in the relationship, they will minimize the potentially disruptive impact of conflict to continue rewarding exchanges. Hartup (1996a, 1996b) posits that conflicts allow children to recognize whether common ground exists between them and are essential in the construction of close relationships.

Conflict in Friendships

Researchers agree that friendships, defined as a close relationship between two individuals, serve more specific functions than casual relationships between peers (Ginsberg et al., 1986). However, becoming friends is a very complex process in that children do not become friends with every child they meet, regardless of how much repeated contact they experience (Parker, 1986). Children must exert much effort into establishing and maintaining a friendship, especially in their ability to avoid and resolve conflict. It is presumed that the ability to effectively manage conflict is instrumental in initiating and maintaining friendships (Hartup, 1996a; Verbeek, Hartup, & Collins, 2000). Much of the literature suggests that conflict with friends may be more frequent and salient in adolescence than other developmental periods (Hartup, 1996a). The current section will explore differences in conflict behavior between

friends and nonfriends, highlighting the important characteristics of friends and nonfriends that promote or prevent conflict behavior.

The available evidence indicates that children manage conflict with friends in qualitatively different ways than they do with nonfriends. Beginning in early childhood, children's relations with other children are differentiated in terms of time spent with one another and certain characteristics of their interaction (Hartup et al., 1988). Children spend more time with friends than nonfriends and as a result are not as invested in relationships with nonfriends (Hartup & Abecassis, 2002). Parker's (1986) observations of children who did not hit it off demonstrated that nonfriends had difficulty establishing common-ground activities and engaged in behavior characterized by greater squabbling and conflict than those individuals who hit it off.

The evidence suggests that conflict management techniques between friends and nonfriends differ as a function of the actual quality of their relationship. Because of the lack of importance placed on relationships with nonfriends, children are less likely to deal with conflict in a constructive manner when it arises. Conflict episodes with nonfriends are usually dominated by coercion in which one child tries to dominate the other without attempting to reach a solution while negotiation is more common in resolving conflicts between close peers (Laursen, 1996).

Surprisingly though, conflict is more prevalent in mutual close relationships than in other peer relationships. Among adolescents, conflicts with friends were reported as occurring nearly four times as often as conflicts with nonfriends (Hartup, 1996b; Collins & Laursen, 1992). Furthermore, U.S. and Indonesian youth reported conflicts most often with friends (French, Pidada, Denoma, McDonald, & Lawton, 2005). Although conflicts between friends and nonfriends do not differ in frequency, length, or the issues that cause them, conflicts between friends are usually less intense than those involving nonfriends and are handled in ways to

minimize the potential for relationship disruption, such as negotiation and disengagement (Laursen, 1996; Hartup et al., 1988; Hartup & Abecassis, 2002). Conflicts between nonfriends are more likely to consist of standing firm and subordination (Verbeek et al., 2000). Hartup et al. (1988) found that equal or near equal outcomes were more common between friends than acquaintances who were more likely to rely on winner/loser outcomes. Following conflict resolution, friends were more likely to remain together and continue interacting. In addition, Aboud (1989) found that after engaging in disagreements with a close friend, children were more likely to change their thinking, often assuming a more mature understanding of the emotions of their friend.

Conflict in Adolescence

It is largely recognized that conflict instigation and its management vary as a function of developmental change. The existing research suggests that conflicts between adolescents and their parents differ from those between adolescents and their peers in terms of the causes, characteristics, and resolution styles (Verbeek et al., 2000). The current section will highlight differences in adolescent conflict behavior across relationships focusing on how parent-child conflict and sibling conflict differ from conflict within friendships.

Conflict is a prominent theme in several of the prevailing models of adolescent development. Several historical models, including psychoanalytic, sociobiological, and cognitive-developmental, emphasize age related differences in conflict behavior and minimize the contribution of relationships and contexts; variations in conflict behavior are considered to be the results of individual maturation (Laursen & Collins, 1994). Alternatively, the more contemporary social relational theories suggest that behavioral differences in adolescent conflict are a function of setting and characteristics of the dyad (Laursen & Collins, 1994). Laursen &

Collins (1994) argue that adolescent conflict behavior varies more as a function of the relationships in which it arises and the setting in which it takes place than as a function of age or maturation. It is likely, however, that conflict can be explained by elements of all of these developmental theories.

The characteristics of closeness and relationship stability are presumed to interact to determine adolescent conflict behavior across all interpersonal relationships. Most theories of adolescent development emphasize the significance of parent-child conflict, with conflict expected to be more frequent and intense with parents than with sibling or close peer relationships. According to sociobiological models, the emotional changes that accompany puberty enhance conflict with parents, altering the relationship to ensure that adolescents spend more time with individuals outside of the immediate family (Laursen & Collins, 1994). Once distance is achieved from the family, conflict typically subsides (Laursen & Collins, 1994; Steinberg, 1987, 1988). Similarly, cognitive-developmental models assert that cognitive reorganization during mid to late adolescence increases parent-child conflict (Laursen & Collins, 1994).

In comparison to close peer relationships where adolescents are expected to minimize disagreements and compromise when disagreements do occur, family conflict is more likely to occur because the risk of terminating that relationship does not exist. In other words, the relationship between the parent and adolescent will persist, regardless of the significance of the conflict. As a result, precautions such as compromise and disengagement are not necessary to preserve ties with family members

The existing research suggests that sibling relationships are quite distinct in certain respects from other social relationships. Unlike relationships with peers, sibling relationships are

embedded within the context of relationships with other family members (Buhrmester, 1992). In contrast to the asymmetrical quality of parent-child relationships attributable to the social, physical, financial, and cognitive power that adults have over children, sibling relationships are largely marked with more equal power (Shantz & Hobart, 1989). This equal footing does not, however, prevent the occurrence of conflict.

Siblings generally engage in relatively higher levels of conflict than friends. Buhrmester (1992) found that adolescents' reports of conflict with siblings averaged a full standard deviation higher than conflict in relationships with friends. Sibling relationships, unlike peer relationships, are characterized by feelings of competition and rivalry, both of which intensify with age (Shantz & Hobart, 1989). Unlike the issues of conflict in peer relationships, conflict with siblings often involve disagreement over the immediate issue, the struggle for status, and the underlying core of resentment that has accumulated over the years (Neisser, 1951, as cited in Shantz & Hobart, 1989). Given the involuntary nature of this relationship, siblings are eventually forced to resolve their conflicts because future interaction is inevitable. Conflict resolution in friendships, however, is as a function of both children being invested in the relationship.

The differences that exist in adolescent conflict behavior with family members and friends can be explained by the differences in conflict issues. It is common for family members to engage in conflict over family rules as a result of differing expectations of behavior (Verbeek et al., 2000). Parents blame the adolescent for not following what is expected of them while adolescents argue that the parent was not clear in his or her expectations. Conflict episodes with parents are commonly terminated through power assertion and disengagement, with negotiation strategies becoming more common towards the end of adolescence (Verbeek et al., 2000). This type of conflict rarely has a negative impact on future interaction and gradually declines as

mental abilities improve and issues and role are negotiated (Verbeek et al., 2000; Laursen & Collins, 1994). In comparison, conflict with friends is typically resolved by negotiation and disengagement because adolescents are much more invested in preserving their friendship to ensure future interaction.

Incidence and intensity of adolescent conflict as well as resolution styles are also influenced by relationship status. Laursen (1996) contends that across the adolescent years, greater costs, resulting in more frequent conflicts, are associated with involuntary than voluntary relationships. Collins and Laursen (1992) found that regardless of age, most conflicts involve mothers followed by siblings and then friends. Based on exchange theory, in close peer relationships adolescents should attempt to minimize the frequency of disagreements and compromise in disagreements that do arise to prevent disruption of the relationship (Laursen & Collins, 1994; Laursen, 1996). Relationships with family members are closer and more interdependent and are therefore more likely to foster conflict.

For the reasons cited above, one aspect of the assessment of the current study will examine the similarities and differences among various personal relationships in adolescents' social networks. Furman and Buhrmester's (1985) Network of Relationships Inventory (NRI) will be used to compare adolescents' ratings of conflict to ratings of conflict with their mother, father, sibling, and friend. The advantage of this measure over others is that participants rate the different provisions simultaneously with family members and friends. It is thought that this provides participants with an anchor to appraise their level of conflict with friends to conflict in other relationships (French et al., in press). In agreement with the previously mentioned findings, it is hypothesized that U.S. children will report conflict as being significantly more prevalent in family relationships than with their friend.

The available evidence on adolescent conflict behavior and the characteristics of conflict between friends and nonfriends indicates that conflict behavior in close relationships is quite different than that which occurs among associates and family members. Relationship characteristics are therefore powerful determinants of conflict behavior. In close peer relationships children are invested in promoting mutually rewarding experiences and will work to ameliorate inequality should it arise.

Function of Conflict

Much debate exists regarding the function of conflict and the extent to which it has beneficial effects on the social and emotional development of children. Most theorists agree that friendships provide opportunities for children to master certain social competencies, but they are unclear about the specific attributes that conflict brings to the relationship (Hartup, 1996a). It is useful to apply Deutsch's (1973) conceptualization of conflict as being either constructive or destructive. Destructive conflict behavior tends to escalate the issues, relying on threats and coercion, and ultimately has a negative impact on the interaction (Murphy & Eisenberg, 2002; Jensen-Campbell, Graziano, & Hair, 1996; Aboud, 1989). Laursen and Collins (1994) emphasize that the cumulative effects of contentiousness in conflict are detrimental causing relational bonds to deteriorate. Constructive conflict behavior, characterized by non-threatening tactics, generally has a positive impact on the relationship. Laursen and Collins (1994) report that adolescents involved in constructive conflict showed more advanced ego-identity and social perception skills and were likely to report more positive self-esteem.

Despite the popular belief that conflict is a destructive force that undermines social harmony and the orderly process of development, many theorists argue that disagreements are essential to the construction of close relationships (Hartup, 1996a; Jensen-Campbell et al., 1996,

Verbeek et al., 2000). Conflict management is believed to determine whether children become friends and is indicative of the quality of the relationship, thus influencing reciprocated friendship status (Hartup, 1996a; Katz, Kramer, & Gottman, 1992; Hartup et al., 1988). Hartup (1996a) argues that conflict assists in establishing relationships by promoting the “fit” between individuals, that is, whether their skills, interests and goals are compatible. Children who are able to manage conflicts interact at high levels of social engagement and possess greater social understanding (Katz et al., 1992). Unlike conflict with siblings and other peers, social interaction between close friends is likely to continue in a constructive manner following a conflict episode to guarantee future interactions (Collins & Laursen, 1992; Hartup, 1996a).

In summary, much of the research indicates that conflict is an important component of close relationships and is a significant theme in adolescence. Adolescents are very much aware of the costs that are associated with conflict in mutual friendships and attempt to minimize negative outcomes to guarantee future interactions. Although conflict seems to be more evident in close relationships, conflicts between friends are less heated and are managed in ways to guarantee future interaction.

It is important to note, however, that much of the research on conflict has been conducted with Western populations. Recent work in Indonesia and South Korea has revealed that there are differences in children’s reported conflict with friends as compared to children’s reports in the U.S. (French et al., in press; French et al., 2005b; French, Bae, Pidada, & Lee, 2006). Therefore, it is important to further explore the issue of conflict across cultures to provide an understanding of similarities and differences in how culture affects conflict behavior.

Culture and Conflict

Although conflict is considered to be an inevitable consequence of all social relationships, anthropological evidence suggests that people in different societies have different understandings and implicit models of conflict (Markus & Lin, 1999; French et al., in press). Recent cross cultural research suggests that the peer setting characteristic of Western societies is not representative of children's social environment in other parts of the world (Goudena, in press; Markus & Lin, 1999). In non-Western societies, interaction with mixed age groups is much more common and more emphasis is placed on maintaining the parent-child relationship than in U.S. society.

In order to fully understand conflict across cultures, it is necessary to consider the core cultural ideas, practices, and institutions of a particular society and how they shape representations of social relationships. It is likely that there are cultural differences in the formation, importance, and strength of close relationships and also in the meaning and dynamics of these relationships (Rothbaum et al., 2000; Goudena, in press). The current section will begin with a discussion of culture with an emphasis on the frameworks of individualism and collectivism and how they can be used to understand the development and management of conflict. A discussion of culture and conflict will follow and information on interpersonal relationships and conflict in Indonesia, the United States, and South Korea will be presented.

Culture

To discuss cultural differences in conflict, it is necessary to first understand the meaning of culture. Triandis (1994) defines culture as the human-made part of the environment that provides traditions to inform individuals of what worked in the past, making it easy for them to choose behavior that may work again in the present. Probst, Carnevale, and Triandis (1999)

argue that culture has a subjective aspect that results in the automatic processing of information that specifies the types of behavior that are noticed and how they will be evaluated. Cultural differences therefore can be conceptualized as different patterns of sampling of the information found in environments. The beliefs and norms of a culture help interpret acceptability of individual characteristics and the types and ranges of interactions that are likely and permissible. When conflicts arise, individuals have a cultural blueprint that dictates the proper response (French et al., in press; Ting-Toomey et al., 1991). Goudena (in press) refers to these blueprints as 'ethnotheories' that are shared by members of cultural communities and form the guidelines for parents' developmental and socialization goals for their children. It can therefore be argued that culture shapes personality and behavior by specifying the norms, role, and values of a particular society (Triandis & Suh, 2002; Probst et al., 1999).

Individualism/Collectivism

Much of the cross-cultural research relies on the frameworks of individualism and collectivism to explain cultural variability and examine the norms and rules in different cultures (Schneider, Smith, Poisson, & Kwan, 1997; Ting-Toomey et al., 1991; Trubisky, Ting-Toomey, & Lin, 1991). The collectivism or individualism of a society is thought to have a profound effect on interpersonal relationships at the group or dyadic level (Schneider et al., 1997). English-speaking countries are generally considered to be the most individualistic while Asian and South American countries are perceived as the most collectivist (Leung, 1988). Within individualist and collectivist societies, the self is experienced in different ways and much variability exists regarding behavioral norms (Goudena, in press).

In individualist societies, priority is afforded to a separate, nonsocial individual who is viewed as autonomous and not reliant upon a larger social network (Markus & Lin, 1999;

Triandis, 2000). In its extreme form, priority is given to personal goals and individuals typically pay attention to their own needs and concerns over the needs and concerns of the group (Triandis, 2000; Ting-Toomey et al., 1991). Overall, there is very little sense of collective responsibility or obligation to the group as a whole (Ting-Toomey et al., 1991).

In contrast, in collectivist or interdependent worlds, the self is viewed as a relational entity that is inherently and fundamentally connected to others (Markus & Lin, 1999). Collectivism places much greater emphasis on social and relational responsibilities to the in-group. As defined by Han and Park (1995), the in-group is a set of people with whom one shares some attribute that contributes to one's positive social identity. Individuals in collectivist societies expect more frequent future contact with in-group members and therefore encourage the promotion of social harmony (Han & Park, 1995). The underlying goal of the interdependent perspective is the preservation of social relationships (Markus & Lin, 1999). For example, Chinese culture, which generally ranks high in collectivism, promotes avoidance of direct expression of feelings confrontations. Schneider et al. (1997) argue that this avoidance and rapid resolution of conflict serves to preserve interpersonal relationships which are assigned high priority in the Chinese Confucian value system. The Chinese then are representative of the traditional collectivist beliefs of discouraging behaviors that further an individual's own interests at the expense of others.

One must be cautious however in applying the frameworks of individualism and collectivism to cross-cultural research. Several criticisms exist including the argument that the terms are applied too loosely and that Triandis' (1994) position is flawed (Oyserman, Coon, & Kimmelmeier, 2002; French et al., in press; Han & Park, 1995). Oyserman et al. (2002) argue that the terms are often too broadly construed and used to explain almost any cultural or cross-

cultural difference instead of directly studying specific beliefs and practices. These frameworks also place culture into an overly simplistic dichotomy that overlooks the variation in social situations (Pilgrim & Rueda-Riedle, 2002). Another problem stems from the fact that no society is solely individualist or collectivistic; instead, much variation exists across cultures (Han & Park, 1995).

Furthermore, studies that have investigated the impact of collectivism on procedural preferences have relied on Asian samples that have value orientations unique to Asian culture (Gire & Carment, 1993). Gire and Carment (1993) compared Nigeria, a non-Asian collectivist culture, with Canada, a less frequently used individualistic population, and found that the Canadians were more likely to use negotiation more compared to the Nigerian preference for threats, which contradicts the behaviors expected by the individualism/collectivism framework. Therefore, since cultural differences do not hold true for all groups and situations, a reorientation of the way in which culture is viewed is needed.

The limitations of the frameworks of individualism and collectivism are also evident when applied to friendship characteristics. According to Triandis' (1994) argument, individuals in collectivist cultures develop more intimate and long-lasting friendships and restrict membership to in-group members (French et al., 2006; Triandis, 1994). French et al.'s. (2005b, 2006) findings refute this argument. Based on Triandis' (1994) argument, one would expect South Korean and Indonesian youth to be similar in characteristics of friendship exclusivity and longevity since they are both generally characterized as collectivist countries. However, French et al. (2005b, 2006) found that friendship qualities of the two countries were opposite in that Indonesian and Korean youth significantly differed from each other on seven of the eight

variables assessed. The U.S. typically fell between the two extremes, resembling Indonesian youth on some variables and Korean youth on others.

To remedy these issues, Han and Park (1995) argue that we need to directly measure individualism and collectivism instead of relying on countries as a substitute measure. A common research practice is to simply select countries assumed to differ in individualism and collectivism and attribute emerging differences in variables to differences in individualism and collectivism (Oyserman et al., 2002). Because individualists and collectivists differ in sociability, the meaning of social interactions, and beliefs about important groups it is problematic to make generalizations like these (Oyserman et al., 2002).

Individualism/Collectivism and Conflict

Although one must be cautious in applying the constructs of individualism and collectivism to label countries as a whole, the constructs can be applied to the prevailing cultural beliefs to explain the existence of individual differences in conflict behavior in close relationships including the values shared by individuals, the ecocultural setting they live in, and the socialization practices that prevail (Goudena, in press). It is evident that cultural values have a significant role in influencing cooperative and competitive behavior and determining the direction of conflicts. Rothbaum et al. (2000) contend that rather than considering the effects of cultural differences on the importance of relationships, differences in the meaning and dynamics of social relationships across cultures should be considered. It is also important to understand the conception of self to make sense of the meaning and practices of conflict in different cultures (Markus & Lin, 1999). The following section will discuss the perceptions of conflict and its management according to the frameworks of individualism and collectivism as well as point out

differences in conflict management techniques. What is known about cultural beliefs of conflict in Indonesia, South Korea, and the United States will then be presented.

In the Western more individualistic view of close relationships, conflicts between the needs of the self and those of others are inevitable (Rothbaum et al., 2000). The focus is on the autonomous individual rather than on the social unit of which the individual is a part and the self is believed to be responsible for his or her own behavior (Markus & Lin, 1999). Individuals are expected to take action in a way that is oriented toward the expression of their opinions and beliefs and relationships are often regarded as competing with personal needs and goals (Markus & Lin, 1999). As a result of the focus on autonomy, any perceived constraint on individual freedom is likely to lead to problems (Markus & Lin, 1999). Individualism therefore promotes the right to disagree and encourages individuals to voice an opinion, fostering the expectations that conflict will inevitably occur.

The evidence suggests that members of individualistic cultures tend to prefer direct conflict communication styles that are solution oriented (Trubisky et al., 1991). These styles reflect the emphasis on autonomy, competitiveness, and need for control, all of which are characteristic of individualistic societies. Markus & Lin (1999) argue that very few established, publicly recognized procedures for handling interpersonal conflict exist among European Americans in the U.S. The desirable mode of behavior during conflict is detached, cool, quiet, and without affect and rational debate is encouraged however diverse methods of conflict resolution exist (Markus & Lin, 1999).

Across collectivist cultures, equality is preferred over the equity that is encouraged in the West (Han & Park, 1995). Individuals in collectivist societies place greater emphasis on establishing intimate, long-term relationships and maintaining harmony among group members

is especially important (Triandis & Suh, 2002; Markus & Lin, 1999). For example, in Central and South America conflict is believed to be produced by tangled interpersonal webs while conflict in European and American societies is perceived as incompatibility in beliefs or goals (Markus & Lin, 1999). Individuals in collectivist societies are hypothesized to regard personal beliefs as secondary to societal norms and group relationships (Markus & Lin, 1999). The underlying goal then of social behavior is not the preservation and manifestation of individual rights and attributes but rather the preservation of relationships.

Collectivist beliefs and values promote conflict resolution techniques very different from what is common in Western societies. Strategies of indirectness, mediation, apology, or avoidance are used to smooth over rather than fully resolve conflict (Markus & Lin, 1999). Fry (2000) argues that when disputants have important attachments and are interdependent on one another, they will likely mend strained relationships to avoid keeping others angry with them. For example, French et al. (2005b) found that disengagement from another person for a particular period of time was especially common among Indonesian adolescents. Indonesian children referred to this type of disengagement as *musuhan*, or 'acting enemies', and would persist in avoiding the friend for a period of hours or days until finally re-establishing the relationship (French et al., 2005b).

This tendency of collectivists to avoid conflict with members of the in-group has been replicated by several researchers. Leung (1988) found that Chinese subjects in relation to American subjects showed more conflict avoidance with friends and less avoidance with strangers. Furthermore, in comparison to the bickering that was common among U.S. youth and parents, Rothbaum et al. (2000) found that Japanese youth were able to attend to subtle contextual cues in order to avoid conflict situations. Interestingly, Japanese youth are more

invested in maintaining their relationship with parents and do not place as much importance on peers as U.S. youth (Rothbaum et al., 2000).

The preceding review has suggested that differences in conflict behavior occur in the context of close relationships and can be understood within the framework of individualism and collectivism. In order to understand conflict as it exists in friendships it is necessary to understand the prevailing models of close relationships and conflict in each culture. The purpose of the following section is to highlight the prevailing principles of close relationships in Indonesia, South Korea, and the U.S. and present what is known about the perceptions and maintenance of conflict across these three cultures.

Indonesia. The features of friendships of middle-class urban Indonesian youth appear to be similar to those of U.S. children (French, Jansen, Riansari, & Setiano, 2003; French et al., 2006). French et al. (in press) report that Indonesian children develop friendships with peers who resemble them, obtain companionship and intimacy from friends, and that children with friends exhibit greater social competence than those without friends. Societal norms stress the engagement and maintenance of polite interactions with stranger and acquaintances and a de-emphasis of specific friends is evident.

The fundamental principle of Javanese life is the avoidance of confrontation in every situation (Magnis-Suseno, 1997). The principle goal of conflict avoidance is to establish and maintain social harmony, which is captured in the term *rukun* (Mulder, 1992; Magnis-Suseno, 1997). *Rukun* is achieved by each individual's active willingness to respect and adjust to family members and neighbors which is based on the recognition that one is not self-sufficient and needs others to pursue one's goals in life (Mulder, 1992; Magnis-Suseno, 1997). However, this focus on harmonious relations does not mean that conflicts do not arise. When conflicts do arise

though avoidance is used to manage them as is captured in the term *jothakan*, or behaving as if the other were thin air (Mulder, 1992). Therefore, when conflicts do develop, the prevailing beliefs of the Javanese culture encourage individuals to keep their opponent at a distance while being polite and respectful at the same time.

South Korea. Confucianism provides guidelines for virtually every aspect of South Korean society. Much emphasis is placed on human relationships (Kim, 1996; Choi, Kim, & Choi, 1993). Confucius considered individuals to be linked in a web of social networks in which family was the most important; social relationships were considered an extension of family relationships (Choi et al., 1993). Both of these relationships are characterized by extreme intimacy that is captured by the word *cheong* which refers to the melding of identities of individuals into a collective unit (French et al., 2006; Choi et al., 1993). In Korean society the group takes precedence over the individual and the affective bond between members is key in uniting members into a close unit (Choi et al., 1993). This relational plurality is evident in the Korean concept of we (*woori*) in which affective bonds unite members of a group into a coherent whole (Han & Park, 1995). Interpersonal relationships are associated with unconditionality, sacrifice, empathy, care, sincerity and shared experience (Choi et al., 1993).

Very little empirical research has explored friendship and conflict in South Korea. French et al.'s (2006) previous findings suggest that Korean friendships are exclusive and that Korean youth more often interact with small groups of close friends. Korean friendships were also found to be high in intimacy (French et al., 2005b, 2006, in press), suggesting that Korean youth might minimize the impact on conflict on their friendships to preserve the beneficial provisions these relationships provide.

United States. The importance of friendships is evident at a very early age in the United States. The label of friend is applied in many different ways and individuals differ in the extent to which they have friends and the qualities of these relationships (Hartup et al., 1988). In the United States there is less emphasis on close group relations and instead individuals are free to associate with many different groups. Individuation is a dominant theme characterized by autonomy, expressiveness, and exploration and tension in relationships is considered normative (Rothbaum et al., 2000). Individuals are expected to express their own beliefs and pursue their own goals because it is their duty to do so and attitudes and ideas are perceived as defining one's self (Markus & Lin, 1999). Parents emphasize both the expression of the self's will and foster skills to teach children how to negotiate one's own needs with the needs of others. As a result, beginning at an early age, children are encouraged to assert their personal preferences directly, which ultimately increases the potential for the development of conflict (Rothbaum et al., 2000).

In the U.S. conflict is perceived as emerging from individual situations rather than being the product of the ongoing process of being in a relationship (Markus & Lin, 1999). Despite its acceptance as an inevitable consequence of social relationships, conflict is generally perceived as a negative situation to be avoided or resolved as quickly as possible. The norms that regulate conflict resolution include rational debate, confrontation, direct expression of opinions, and quick decisiveness and individuals are expected to behave in a detached way without the expression of affect which is seen as a sign of weakness (Markus & Lin, 1999; Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

Conflict in Adolescent Friendships across Cultures

The current study is a subset of a larger on-going investigation of the cultural context of friendship among Indonesian, South Korean, and United States adolescents (French et al., 2006;

French et al., in press). Data have previously been collected in Bandung, Indonesia, a large city of approximately two million inhabitants on the Island of Java, and Chungbuk, South Korea, a medium sized city at the center of the South Korean province with approximately one million inhabitants (French et al., 2005a). Data was collected across several dimensions of friendship including exclusivity, intimacy, instrumental aid, companionship, enhancement of worth, longevity of friendship, and conflict. Friendship quality was assessed with a battery of instruments including a friendship expectations questionnaire (French et al., 2005a), the Network of Relationships Inventory (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985), the Modified Friendship Quality Questionnaire (Parker & Asher, 1993; French et al., 2005b), a loneliness scale (Asher & Wheeler, 1985), and a social network inventory (French et al., 2005a).

The current analyses focused on conflict as measured by the Modified Friendship Quality Questionnaire (M-FQQ; Parker & Asher, 1993) and the Network of Relationships Inventory (NRI; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985). A social network inventory was also administered to obtain lists of friends in order to identify reciprocal friendships. Two reciprocal friends were randomly chosen and children were asked to report on the qualities of their close friendships with specific individuals using the M-FQQ. This reference to a specific friend was done to discourage children from completing the questionnaire on the basis of an internalized stereotype or idealized representation of a mental composite of several different friends.

The NRI, as was previously mentioned, was used to compare reports of conflict in friendships to conflict in other close relationships. Although participants provided information regarding conflicts with mothers, fathers, and siblings, only reports of conflict with mothers and siblings were used in the analyses. The mother is most often responsible for family affairs and child-rearing in Javanese culture (Magnis-Suseno, 1997) and U.S. mothers often spend the

greatest amount of time with children compared to fathers. Similarly, the mother is an important figure in the lives of Korean children (Choi et al., 1993). In addition, sibling relationships are typically recognized as highly conflictual relationships in the U.S. however very little research is available regarding the characteristics of this relationship in Indonesian and South Korean culture.

The type of conflict being measured was not specifically defined in the current study and instead participants were asked to report whether several different types of conflict characterized their specific friendship or familial relationship. The two measures of conflict included a variety of items measuring different types of conflict including verbal conflict, overt opposition, and conflicts that result from a violation of trust.

Asking children to report about their friendship interactions can be a valuable method of obtaining data on the expectancies of friendships and well as their beliefs about their interactions. Children interact with their friends on a continual basis and therefore are best able to report who their close friends are as opposed to determining mutual friends by teacher reports or direct observation. In addition, they are very much aware of their social position as well as that of others in society and are therefore valuable resources for learning about social processes of development. Compared with outsider views that may be subjective and biased, children's own views of conflict and friendship dynamics are generally very accurate. For these reason, children, rather than their parents or the adults that supervise them, were asked to provide the names of their closest peers and report on the quality of those relationships.

The previous literature on friendship demonstrates that children and their friends are generally concordant in age beginning in early childhood and typically partake in same-sex friendships through adolescence (Hartup, 1996a). These same-sex friendships are thought to be

closer and more intense in early adolescence than in any other phase of the life span (Berndt, 1982). For these reasons, in the present study seventh grade adolescents will be asked to report on their same-sex, non-kin friendships with individuals from the same grade level. At this age adolescents are old enough to focus on establishing close relationships with their same-sex peers and are not yet as interested in opposite sex relationships.

The current study will involve the collection of U.S. comparison data and will complete the data set for all three countries. The procedure and methodology in the current study is modeled off of the previous projects (French et al., 2005a, 2006, in press). Because the aim of this study is to investigate the cross-cultural differences of conflict, only those instruments that measure conflict are described in detail in the following section. Although the procedure focuses specifically on the collection of data in the U.S., all three countries are included in the analyses of conflict across cultures.

Similar to French et al.'s (in press) previous findings, it was hypothesized that U.S. adolescents would more closely resemble South Korean adolescents with the highest reports of conflict with friends whereas Indonesian youth would report the lowest levels of conflict. In regards to conflict with friends in relation to conflict in other close relationships, it was hypothesized, based on the theories of individualism and collectivism, that U.S. adolescents would report higher levels of conflict with family members, especially mothers, than Indonesia and South Korea youth. It was also hypothesized that differences in conflict with siblings compared to friends would be evident with the U.S. reporting more conflict with siblings. The relationship between friend and sibling conflict in Indonesian and South Korea, however, was unclear.

Method

Participants

A sample of 111 seventh grade adolescents (52 male, 59 female; Mean= 12.5 years) was recruited from Havana and Petersburg, two rural towns in central Illinois. Both towns are located approximately 25 miles away from larger cities where most parents work in healthcare, government, education, or industrial jobs. Students were recruited from predominantly middle class areas. A demographics questionnaire was included with the parent permission form to compare the actual characteristics of the U.S. sample with the Indonesian and South Korean samples. Parents were asked to provide ethnicity and their level of education as well as a brief description of occupation.

The sample from the first school (N=49) consisted of 29 male and 26 female students. All participants reported that they were Caucasian. The ages of the participants ranged from 12 to 16 years (M = 12.31 years). The sample from the second school (N= 62) consisted of 29 male and 33 female students who ranged in age from 12-15 years (M= 12.56 years). The majority of the participants (95%) were Caucasian with the remainder identifying as African American, Hispanic, or Native American.

The method of recruitment for Indonesian and South Korean participants was similar to the procedures followed in the U.S. The South Korean sample was recruited from junior high schools in Chungbuk, a provincial city of approximately one million inhabitants. Of the 233 participants, there were 126 male and 107 female students (M= 12.88 years). The population was predominantly middle- to lower-middle class.

The 147 Indonesian subjects (71 male, 76 female; M= 13.07 years) were recruited from junior high schools in the city of Bandung. Bandung is the third largest city in Indonesia with a population of two million people and is located approximately 180 km from Jakarta on the island

of Java. The city is a center for textile production, education, and technological development. Further information on the Indonesian and South Korean samples is provided in French et al. (200b, in press).

Measures

Multiple measures were used to investigate the numerous dimensions of friendship in order to avoid the problems associated with cross-cultural research. Students' expectations of friendships, ratings of personal friendships, experience of loneliness, feelings of envy, characteristics of social relationships, and listings of the members of their social networks were assessed in the larger project. The current study however, focused only on conflict and therefore only relied on those instruments that measured conflict. These included the Social Network Inventory, the Network of Relationships Inventory (NRI), and the Modified Friendship Quality Questionnaire (M-FQQ).

Social Network Inventory. Mutual same-sex friendships were identified by a social network inventory. Participants were provided with two grids on which they identified six of their friends at school and six friends outside of school, such as those from their neighborhood or church. They provided age, sex, length of time associated with each person, and whether or not the friend was a relative. Having students provide friends outside of school allowed the research team to compare the qualities, such as duration of the friendship, between the different types of friendships that students have.

Modified Friendship Quality Questionnaire. Friendship quality of children's very best friendships was assessed using a modified version of Parker and Asher's (1993) Friendship Quality Questionnaire (M-FQQ), an instrument designed to measure children's perceptions of

various qualitative aspects of close friendships. French et al. (2005b) added an exclusivity scale to better compare friendship characteristics across cultures.

The questionnaire consisted of 42 items, five of which measured conflict between friends, in which children were asked to indicate on a 7-point scale how true a particular quality was of their relationship with a specific friend (1= does not describe my friendship, 3-4= only partly describes my friendship, 6-7= very much describes my friendship). Subscales include intimacy (e.g. “there are important secrets that we have shared”), companionships (e.g. “we do fun things together”), conflict (e.g. “one of us sometimes annoys the other”), and exclusivity (e.g. “our friendship is more fun if it is just the two of us and others are not with us”). There were a total of five items measuring conflict. The child completed this questionnaire with reference to a specific friend that was identified in the directions at the top of the first page. Participants completed this instrument for two same-sex nonkin individuals whom they identified as friends on the Social Network Inventory.

Network of Relationships Inventory. The Network of Relationships Inventory (NRI) (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985) was created to assess several provisions of social relationships. The current study used five provisions of children’s relationships including: instrumental aid, companionship, affection, conflict, and intimacy. Conflict was assessed by three different items. Subjects answered 15 questions about relationships with members of their social network including: (a) mother or stepmother, (b) father or stepfather, (c) most important/closest sibling, and (d) most significant same-sex friend. Children who did not have any siblings did not respond to questions for that individual.

This measure contained three items measuring conflict (e.g. “How much do you and this person argue with each other?”, “How much do you and this person get upset with or mad at

each other?”. Ratings were given on a five-point Likert scale for each of the relationship targets (1= little or none and 5= the most). This measure allowed the research team to differentiate across the different features of relationships that are provided by multiple members of the social network.

Procedure

Upon receiving approval from school principals in the U.S., letters about the project and permission forms were sent home with students. After two weeks, parents of students who had not returned forms were then contacted by mail to grant consent to allow their student to participate in the project. The parents of students who did not return their permission forms after two rounds of mailing were contacted by phone. Data was collected during the school day at times that were convenient for the administrators and teachers. At school one, collection occurred during the students’ homeroom period, their first class of the day which is a time that is usually designated for homework and silent sustained reading. Data collection at school two occurred during advisory period, a time before their lunch period in which students usually work on homework or participate in organized activities. Each of these periods was approximately thirty minutes long. Data collection occurred over the course of three different sessions that took place over the course of two weeks.

Data collection occurred in the smaller groups of each classroom and a research assistant was placed in each location to administer the directions and answer any questions that arose. At the first session, those students whose parents who gave consent to allow their child to participate were given a form to read, asking them to assent to participate in the project. Students were informed that they could withdraw from participating at any time and for any reason. Three students in the second school chose to exercise this right. Upon signing the

participation agreement, students were given a packet containing the friendship expectations and loneliness questionnaires.

During the second session students were asked to complete the social network inventory to allow the research team to identify reciprocal friendships. To facilitate accurate identification of reciprocal friendships, students were asked to provide first and last names of the friends they identified to prevent any sort of ambiguity in matching up friendship pairs. Similar procedures were followed in Indonesia and South Korea however the identification of South Korean reciprocal friends was complicated by the fact that, due to cultural emphasis on large group interaction, students were hesitant to provide full names of their friends. As a result, students were allowed to provide nicknames or pseudonyms to identify their friends. Therefore, of the 233 South Korean participants, only 89 reciprocal friends could be identified. It is likely that there were significantly more reciprocal friends in this sample however students' use of nicknames made it impossible to identify reciprocated friendships.

The NRI was also completed during the second session. Research assistants read the NRI directions aloud to students and helped them complete the first page that asked for information regarding the figures they would be describing. The names that the students provided on the social network inventory for school friends facilitated the identification of mutual same-sex friendships. The process of identifying friends took approximately one week.

After mutual friendships were identified, the research team returned to the schools approximately one week later to administer the third set of assessments. During this session, students completed a measure of envy and two M-FQQs regarding their relationship with two specific friends that were identified by the social network inventory. On the M-FQQs, a specific name of a child appeared at the top of the page and students were instructed to rate the

statements in regards to their friendship with that specific person. Those students who only identified one mutual friend or did not identify any mutual friends completed two M-FQQs for individuals that they identified as friends, but were not reciprocated by another individual.

Similar procedures of data collection were followed in both Indonesia and South Korea however data was collected over the course of two longer sessions instead of the three sessions that were used in the U.S. Questionnaires were administered in small groups or in the classroom setting. See French et al. (2005b, 2006, in press) for more specific procedural information.

Results

The major analyses focused on whether differences existed in reports of conflict with friends across countries and how reports of conflict with friends compared to reports of conflict in other close relationships. Items measuring conflict on both the NRI and M-FQQ were summed to compute a friend conflict scale for each measure. M-FQQ reports of conflict were further differentiated into values of conflict with reciprocated and nonreciprocated friends. Only M-FQQ scores of conflict with reciprocated friends were used for analyses. Conflict scores on the NRI were computed for the mother, sibling, and friend values.

Mean difference scores were then computed to compare conflict in friendships to conflict with mothers and siblings. A 2 (sex) x 3 (country) factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) was computed for both measures of conflict as well as for the difference scores of conflict with friends versus conflict with mothers and siblings. Significant main effects were followed up by the Bonferroni post hoc method with the significance level set at $p < .05$.

Data from students who were absent from the second and third sessions was not used. Students who only missed one of these sessions, however, were included in the analyses and the

items they did not have scores for were treated as missing data. Therefore, slightly different numbers of total participants were used in each of the following analyses.

Before beginning analyses, the internal consistency of the different constructs within the M-FQQ and NRI was checked to ascertain that all items were in fact measuring the same thing. Cronbach's alpha was used to test the overall consistency of the different items. Reliability of conflict on the M-FQQ was acceptable, $\alpha = .79$. Reliability of the conflict scales on the NRI was relatively high: $\alpha = .83$ for conflict with mothers, $\alpha = .81$ for conflict with siblings, and $\alpha = .77$ for conflict with friends.

Conflict with Friends

Partial correlations controlling for sex were computed for the NRI and M-FQQ conflict scales; these were computed separately for each country. All three correlations were significant but revealed relatively small positive correlations: $r(141) = .24, p < .05$ for Indonesia, $r(86) = .34, p < .05$ for the U.S., and $r(98) = .29, p < .05$ for South Korea. Thus, NRI ratings of conflict were positively associated with M-FQQ ratings of conflict across all three countries.

The Factorial ANOVA for conflict with reciprocated friends on the M-FQQ revealed a main effect for country. Adolescents in South Korea reported the highest amounts of conflict with reciprocated friends, $F(2,332) = 21.18, p < .05$. Bonferroni post hoc tests revealed significant differences between Indonesia and South Korea and the U.S. and South Korea with no significant difference between Indonesia and the U.S. There was no significant main effect for sex in reports of conflict with reciprocated friends, $F(2,332) = .46, p = .50$ nor was there an interaction between sex and country, $F(2,332) = 3.13, p = .05$.

Factorial ANOVA's of reports of conflict with a close friend on the NRI revealed a similar main effect for country. South Korean children reported significantly more conflict with

their friend than did U.S. and Indonesian children, $F(2,485) = 22.67, p < .05$. Bonferroni post hoc tests revealed that South Korean adolescents' reports of conflict significantly differed from those of U.S. and Indonesian children. There were no significant differences between the U.S. and Indonesia. There was no significant main effect for gender, $F(1,485) = 3.74, p = .054$ nor was there an interaction effect, $F(2,485) = .32, p = .73$.

Mean and standard deviation values and standardized scores of reports on conflict from both the M-FQQ and NRI are presented in Table 2. The relation between the two measures of conflict using standardized scores is graphically represented in Figure 1.

Friends vs. Family Conflict

The next set of analyses focused on understanding friend conflict in relation to conflict in other close relationships. To perform these analyses, difference scores of mean values of conflict in each relationship were computed. Using the NRI conflict scales, difference scores for each subject across relationships with mothers and siblings were computed by subtracting the mean value of conflict with the mother or sibling from the mean value of conflict with the friend. Positive values represented more conflict with friends compared to the family member whereas negative values represented more conflict in the relationship with the family member.

Factorial ANOVA's were then computed with these new variables in order to compare conflict with friends to conflict in other close relationships. For the purpose of the current study, only difference scores of conflict with mothers and friends and siblings and friends were analyzed.

The factorial ANOVA of the difference score of conflict with mothers revealed main effects for sex and country. Across all three countries female adolescents had significantly higher mean scores for conflict with mothers compared to conflict with their friends, $F(1,484) =$

6.23, $p < .05$. In regards to the main effect for country, Indonesians reported significantly more conflict with friends than mothers compared to both U.S. and Korean subjects who reported more conflict with mothers, $F(2,484) = 11.12$, $p < .05$. Bonferroni post hoc tests were used to identify the nature of the difference across countries. Indonesia was significantly different from both the U.S. and South Korea with no significant difference between the U.S. and South Korea. There was no significant interaction effect between sex and country on difference scores between mother and friend conflict, $F(2,484) = 11.12$, $p = .32$.

Main effects for sex and country were also evident from the factorial ANOVA of the difference score for conflict with siblings in relation to friend conflict. Females adolescents reported higher levels of conflict with siblings compared to friends, $F(2,471) = 14.47$, $p < .05$. Adolescents across all three countries reported more conflict with siblings however U.S. adolescents reported significantly higher amounts of conflict with siblings, $F(2,471) = 14.94$, $p < .05$. Bonferroni post hoc tests revealed that the U.S. was significantly different than both Indonesia and South Korea and no significant differences existed between Indonesia and South Korea. There was no significant interaction between sex and country, $F(2,471) = .69$, $p = .50$.

Means and standard deviation values of NRI difference scores with mothers and siblings are presented in Table 3. Figures 2 and 3 present a visual representation of these differences.

Discussion

Two sets of competing hypotheses regarding country differences in conflict were developed for the current study: hypotheses derived from the theories of individualism and collectivism and hypotheses derived from past research. These two sets of hypotheses will first be explained and then applied to the current findings.

The first set of hypotheses was derived from Triandis' (1994) theories of individualism and collectivism. These theories suggest that Indonesia and South Korea exhibit similar high levels of collectivism and would therefore demonstrate similar patterns of behavior in close relationships. Both of these countries are believed to emphasize social harmony and interconnectedness among individuals and prevent and minimize conflict in interpersonal relationships. The U.S., in contrast, is perceived as being more individualistic, focusing on individual goals and autonomy. Conflict in interpersonal relationships is viewed as an inevitable consequence of social relationships that is dealt with accordingly when it arises. Applying this theory to the current study, South Korean and Indonesian adolescents would be expected to report lower levels of conflict with their friends than U.S. youth.

The second set of hypotheses was derived from French et al.'s (2006, in press) past research on South Korean, Indonesia, and U.S. college students. French et al.'s (2006, in press) findings contradict these hypotheses derived from individualism and collectivism suggesting instead that conflict in friendship can not be accurately understood within the theories of individualism and collectivism. French et al. (2006, in press) found that South Korean students were significantly different from Indonesian students on several dimensions of friendship, including conflict. Instead of reporting low levels of conflict with friends as would be expected, South Korean students, in relation to Indonesian and U.S. students, actually reported the highest amount of conflict in their friendships. U.S. students' reports of conflict with friends fell in between Indonesia and South Korea, more closely resembling South Korean students.

In the current study it was hypothesized that, in accordance with French et al.'s (2006) findings, U.S. adolescents would more closely resemble South Korean adolescents with higher reports of conflict with friends whereas Indonesian adolescents would report the lowest amount

of conflict within friendships. The results are consistent with part of this prediction in that South Korean youth consistently reported higher levels of conflict with friends across both measures of conflict and significantly differed from Indonesian youth. The U.S. youth, however, fell between these extremes, more closely resembling Indonesian youth with significant differences from South Korean youth.

There are several possible explanations for why, contrary to the theories of collectivism, South Korean adolescents reported the highest amount of conflict with their friends. French et al.'s (2006, in press) previous research with samples of South Korean college students and adolescents reveals that South Korean friendships are marked by extreme closeness, intensity and exclusivity. The prevailing cultural model of close relationships in South Korea emphasizes the melding of identities and therefore places many demands on the friend dyad to fulfill these societal expectations (Choi et al., 1993). Given that conflict is generally more prevalent in close friendships than with nonfriends (Hartup, 1996a; Collins & Laursen, 1992), it is understandable that South Korean children would engage in more conflict with friends because they spend a significant amount of time together and expect so much from each other.

It is also possible that South Korean youth may not be as collectivistic as the previous literature suggests. French et al. (2006) suggest that the major social changes in South Korea may be partly explained by the recent advances in technology and economic development. It is likely that these advances have increased individualization, especially among the young and highly educated. Using the framework of collectivism, Korean adolescents would be expected to minimize conflict with friends to maintain harmonious interpersonal relationships (Choi et al., 1993); this, however, is not the case in the current study. Future studies need to address this issue to better understand differences in conflict behavior across cultures.

The finding of Indonesian adolescents reporting lower amounts of conflict with friends compared to South Koreans youth makes sense based on what is known about Indonesian culture. A central feature of Javanese society is the need to maintain harmony in daily interaction and avoid conflict (Magnis-Suseno, 1997). Indonesians are less focused on the development of close relationships and instead focus on integration into the community (Magnis-Suseno, 1997; Mulder, 1992). French et al. (in press) found that in comparison to Korean college students, Indonesian students were less concerned with violations of exclusivity, demonstrating the acceptable nature of interacting with many members of one's social group. This de-emphasis of specific friends limits the amount of time children would spend in close relationships interacting with a few select individuals and may minimize the potential for conflict. It is also possible that within interdependent groups close friendships may be viewed as disruptive to the larger social group because they introduce coalitions and isolate certain members and present the potential for conflict and division (French et al., 2006). It is therefore likely that some sort of cultural blueprint operates within Javanese society that functions to minimize conflict.

The current results are in accordance with French et al.'s (2001, 2006) findings that Indonesian adolescents display lower levels of conflict than U.S. and Korean youth. These results are also consistent with the anthropological evidence that suggests conflicts are likely to be minimized or avoided in close relationships of collectivistic societies. Indonesian communities impose strict rules and expect a certain amount of conformity to promote smooth relationships (Mulder, 1992). Despite the promotion of social harmony, conflicts do arise. When one feels insulted, however, avoidance and disengagement are typically encouraged. Mulder (1992) reports that among children in Yogya avoidance behavior, *jothakan*, is learned at

a young age and is expressed by behaving as if the other individual were thin air. An additional accepted method to prevent disharmony is to avoid speaking to another person for a period of time that may last for a few hours or, in extreme cases, a few months or even years (Magnis-Suseno, 1997). This emphasis on avoidance of conflict suggests that Indonesian adolescents would therefore be expected to have less frequent conflict in close relationships.

The current findings of lower reports of conflict in Indonesian friendships are also in accordance with the hypotheses derived from the theories of individualism and collectivism as well as with the hypotheses from past research in that Indonesian adolescents appear to be focused on maintaining relationships with all individuals in their social network and work to avoid conflict within their friendships.

It is difficult to formulate any specific explanations as to why U.S. adolescents were, contrary to French et al.'s (2006) findings, more similar to Indonesia youth in reporting lower levels of conflict with friends. One possible explanation is that the low reports of conflict could reflect the relative importance of friends during this developmental period. In the U.S., adolescence is marked by significant changes in a child's network of relationships in that relative dependence on parents decreases and children turn to their peers for support (Collins & Laursen, 1992; Berndt, 1982). Because friends have such an important role in overcoming the social and emotional obstacles of this developmental period, adolescents may not openly acknowledge the conflict that occurs within their friendships in an effort to preserve these relationships which function to minimize the negative emotions and experiences characteristic of this period. Furthermore, from what is known about conflict between adolescents and their parents during this period (Collins & Laursen, 1992), it is quite possible that conflict within friendships is overshadowed by the intense conflict children experience with their parents.

According to the framework of individualism, close relationships are often characterized by competing personal needs and goals (Markus & Lin, 1999). When perceived or actual inequality exists in the rewards and costs each individual receives from the interaction, conflicts are thought to arise (Hartup, 1996a). The current findings suggest that conflict among U.S. adolescents may not be perceived as an inevitable aspect of close relationships and instead, may be prevented or minimized to a certain extent, especially in adolescent friendships. It is evident that further investigation of conflict in U.S. adolescent friendships is necessary.

The findings from the current study regarding conflict with friends to some extent refute the assumptions of the theories of individualism and collectivism and instead suggest that conflict is undoubtedly embedded in a cultural context that is specific to each individual culture. The findings regarding relatively low reports of conflict in Indonesian friendships were supported by the two competing hypotheses derived from Triandis (1994) and French et al. (2006) however the findings regarding South Korea adolescents are only consistent with the hypotheses derived from French et al.'s (2006) research. Furthermore, the findings regarding lower reports of conflict in U.S. adolescents contrast what would be expected from past French et al.'s (2006) past research as well as the theories of individualism that suggest conflict is more prevalent.

Conflict with Friend vs. Family Members

The hypotheses regarding the relation of conflict with friends to conflict with family members were also derived from the theories of individualism and collectivism. Given the emphasis that collectivist societies place on the interconnectedness of social networks, especially family members, South Korean and Indonesian adolescents would be expected to report less conflict with family members compared to friends whereas the U.S. adolescents, given the focus

on autonomy and self-expression and the transformation of interpersonal networks that occurs during the period of adolescence, would be expected to argue more with mothers than friends.

Analyses of reports of conflict with friends compared to reports of conflict in other close relationships yielded significant gender and country effects. With regards to conflict with friends compared to conflict with mothers, it was hypothesized that U.S. youth would report higher levels of conflict with mothers and report more conflict with their mother than their friend. Both U.S. and Korean adolescents reported higher levels of conflict with their mothers than their friends with the U.S. reporting significantly higher amounts. In contrast, Indonesian youth reported significantly more conflict with friends than mothers.

The findings from the analyses of the NRI regarding the relation of conflict with friends to conflict with mothers concur with what is known about relationships with family members across all three cultures. In comparison to South Korean and U.S. adolescents who reported higher levels of conflict with their mothers than with friends, Indonesian youth reported more conflict with their friends. French et al. (2001) found similar results for conflict with mothers for elementary and junior high school aged children in that U.S. children in comparison to Indonesian children reported greater conflict with mothers.

Indonesian adolescents' higher reports of conflict with friends compared to mothers can be explained by the intense sense of obligation that Indonesian children develop toward their parents, especially mothers, beginning at a young age (Mulder, 1992; Keeler, 1987). Mothers are often very overprotective and invest much time in caring for their young children. As a result, deep feelings of trust and dependence on the support from the mother develop. Children also learn that transgressions against the wishes of their parents are particularly threatening and they should instead revere and honor parents because of the protection they provide (Mulder,

1992; Keeler, 1987). Therefore, compared to Korean and U.S. adolescents, Indonesian youth, in accordance with the theory of collectivism, are more likely to report conflicts with friends than with family members because conflict with family members is perceived to oppose the prevailing cultural blueprints that emphasize social harmony.

The fact that U.S. adolescents reported more conflict with mothers than friends can most likely be attributed to what is known about the social and emotional changes that accompany the development period of adolescence in the U.S. During this period adolescents experience a significant change in their network of relationships in that they start to pull away from parents and focus more on developing close relationships with friends (Buhrmester, 1996; Berndt, 1982; Rothbaum et al., 2000). As adolescents begin to develop their own identity they are more likely to challenge the rules and values set by their parents, ultimately resulting in conflict (Laursen & Collins, 1994). Adolescents are more invested in relationships with friends and, unlike their behavior with parents, will work to minimize disagreement and compromise when it does occur.

It is difficult to understand why South Korean adolescents reported more conflict with mothers than friends. Based on the framework of collectivism, South Korean youth would be expected to minimize conflict with family members due to the emphasis that the values of Confucianism place on relationships with family members (Choi et al., 1993). Given the high reports of conflict with friends that South Korean youth reported on both the M-FQQ and NRI, it is surprising that the relative level of conflict with friends was not higher than conflict with mothers.

In regards to the relationship between conflict with friends compared to conflict with siblings it was hypothesized that the U.S. adolescents would report more conflict with siblings than friends and would significantly differ from Indonesian and South Korean youth. These

hypotheses were attributed to the fact that collectivism emphasizes the importance of family relationships and thus sibling relationships were expected to be close in collectivist cultures. Because of the lack of research on sibling relationships in these two countries, it was unclear if Indonesian and South Korean youth would report more conflict with siblings or friends. Interestingly, all three countries reported more conflict with siblings than with friends. The U.S. youth, however, was significantly higher than both Indonesian and South Korean youth.

Sibling relationships are typically perceived as the most conflicted type of relationship (Shantz & Hobart, 1989) therefore it is no surprise that across all three countries there were higher reports of conflict with siblings than with friends. Sibling relationships are different than peer relationships due to age differences, in that, except in the case of twins, one child is always older than the other (Shantz & Hobart, 1989). Another difference exists in the fact that so much of their daily lives are intertwined, fostering feelings of competition and rivalry (Shantz & Hobart, 1989). In Indonesia, similar to the U.S., the birth of a child results in the withdrawal of maternal support for the older child (Keeler, 1987). Older children in Indonesia, however, are expected to accept that their own needs and desires will not be fulfilled over those of their sibling (Keeler, 1987). They are taught to defer to the wishes of their sibling and in this sense most likely develop similar feelings of competition and rivalry common in the U.S. The fact that Indonesian adolescents in the current study reported more conflicts with siblings compared to friends is therefore not surprising and supports what is known about these relationships.

Given that Korean adolescents reported more conflict with mothers than with friends and do not exhibit the trend that would be expected of a collectivist culture in terms of avoiding conflict in close relationships (Choi et al., 1993), it is of no surprise that they also reported high levels of conflict with siblings. For Korean individuals, the family occupies the central place in

one's life and individual members are expected to contribute to the family's overall happiness (Choi et al., 1993). This, however, does not appear to be completely true for the adolescents in this sample. It appears then that South Korean youth might be similar to U.S. youth in the relative importance of friends during this period. The involuntary nature of sibling relationships guarantees future interaction therefore children are able to invest more time in their relationships with friends and engage in significantly less conflict. These, however, are only possible explanations. It is evident that future research needs to more thoroughly explore close relationships among South Korean youth.

Methodological Issues and Limitations

There are several methodological issues and limitations of the present study. First, it is likely that cultural differences exist in the meaning of friendship. For example, the Korean term for extremely close friend reflects a sharing of one's life and knowledge and conveys a level of intimacy and melding of identities that is not reflected in either the U.S. or Indonesian concepts of friendships (French et al., 2006). In contrast, in the U.S. the label "friend" is used to describe a wide variety of relationships including casual acquaintances to individuals who are often as close as family members (Hays, 1988). In the current study the term "friend" was not defined for the subjects nor were the subjects asked to provide their own interpretations of what the term friend actually meant. Future studies should address this limitation by supplementing questionnaire data with interviews.

It is also possible that differences exist in the meaning and significance of conflict. The wording of the items measuring conflict (such as "quarrel, disagree, or annoy") may be more extreme in South Korea whereas in that U.S. incidents like these may be perceived as somewhat normative. It is also possible that conflicts of this nature do not typically occur in Indonesian

society and therefore conflict was not accurately measured. The current study only relied on quantitative data and therefore has no information to determine if reports of conflicts with friends mean the same thing across all three cultures. The use of qualitative data, however, risks the attribution of imposed etic which results when findings across different countries are interpreted without reference to the context of the culture (Berry, 1989; French et al., in press).

Limitations also exist in the selection of samples and it is difficult to determine whether differences are attributable to culture or social class. Although the U.S. sample matched the middle class socioeconomic status of the Indonesian sample, it was drawn from a more rural area and therefore may not be representative of all areas in the U.S. and may be qualitatively different from the Indonesian and South Korean samples that came from larger cities. In addition, the Korean sample was more representative of the working class population which may account for differences in reports of conflict. It is difficult, however, to obtain comparable samples in all three countries because the selection of participants who are equivalent on one dimension inevitably produces inequalities on other dimensions (French et al., 2005a).

Furthermore, the results from the current sample cannot be generalized to the larger population due to the specificity of the samples. The Indonesian sample consisted of Javanese and Sudanese individuals and may not be indicative of the other cultural groups in Indonesia. The same can be said for the U.S. sample which was racially homogenous and from one particular area of the country that is not representative of other places. Thus, variation within cultures cannot be ignored.

The interpretation of the current results could also be confounded by the possible influence of response sets. Several researchers (Hui & Triandis, 1989; Chen, Lee, & Stevenson, 1995) have found differences in the extent to which U.S. and Asian populations use extreme

points on rating scales (French et al., in press). Similarly, Chang's (2002) findings suggest the notion that certain Asian populations may express strong self-effacing tendencies. In applying these findings to the current study, it is possible that South Korean youth might express elevated levels of pessimism or self depreciating beliefs in regards to their relationships with their mothers. These possible confounds need to be addressed in future research.

It is also possible that U.S. and Indonesian adolescents reported lower amounts of conflict based on their expectations of friendship provisions. In both countries friends are expected, in somewhat differing degrees, to get along and maintain close ties with each other. It is likely that subjects were aware of these expectations and reported lower levels of conflict to conform to the prevailing values of society. Thus, there are concerns regarding the extent to which scores have the same meaning across cultures (French et al., in press). To address this issue, future studies need to more thoroughly assess models of friendships across cultures and incorporate qualitative data to understand specific meaning of conflict and friendship.

Conclusions

Given that the results of the current study contradict what would be expected by the frameworks of individualisms and collectivism, it is evident that future studies need to address the issue of measuring and describing cultural differences. Future research of psychologists and anthropologists needs to focus on friendship patterns and qualities across cultures to expand the traditional Western model of peer relationships to better understand the conceptions and patterns of friendship in traditionally collectivistic cultures (French et al., 2005a). Once patterns of friendship are identified, researchers can then begin to explore the relation between friendships and other close relationships.

The present findings and lack of available research to fully explain cultural differences in conflict behavior among friends and family members suggests that further research is warranted to fully understand differences in conflict behavior across cultures. Although some research has investigated the characteristics of conflict, the majority of these studies have focused on the developmental period of childhood and virtually ignored conflict in adolescence. Given the important changes in interpersonal networks of relationships that occur during this period (Buhrmester, 1996; Berndt, 1982), it is important to explore conflict in adolescent friendships to better understand the function of both conflict and friendship. Further research on conflict and culture is also necessary given the changing composition of societies around the world (Markus & Lin, 1999). With the increasing interaction of different cultural groups in the workforce, conflicts of interest and ideas will inevitably arise from a misunderstanding of the different cultural frameworks that each individual comes from. Understanding the qualities and characteristics of conflict during adolescence would likely help understand how these differences develop over time.

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Table 1

Items Measuring Conflict on the M-FQQ and NRI

M-FQQ

1. We often argue.
2. One of us sometimes annoys the other one.
3. We disagree about things.
4. We have conflicts that we have not yet resolved.
5. One of us has violated the trust of the other one.

NRI

1. How much do you and this person argue with each other?
2. How much do you and this person disagree and quarrel?
3. How much do you and this person get upset or mad at each other?

Notes. M-FQQ items were rated according to the extent to which they characterized a particular relationship on a 7-point scale. NRI items were rated according to how prevalent a particular quality was in each relationship on a 5-point scale.

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations of Raw and Standardized Scores for Conflict on M-FQQ and NRI Broken Down by Country and Gender

	M-FQQ	M-FQQ- Z scores	NRI	NRI- Z scores
United States	3.24 (1.08)	-.26 (.96)	2.00 (.83)	-.39 (.91)
Male	2.93 (1.13)	-.51 (.90)	2.13 (.81)	-.24 (.90)
Female	3.51 (1.21)	-.04 (.97)	1.88 (.83)	-.53 (.91)
Indonesia	3.33 (1.08)	-.19 (.87)	2.19 (.74)	-.19 (.82)
Male	3.36 (1.06)	-.17 (.85)	2.23 (.79)	-.13 (.87)
Female	3.30 (1.11)	-.22 (.89)	2.14 (.70)	-.24 (.77)
South Korea	4.18 (1.30)	.50 (1.03)	2.63 (.95)	.30 (1.05)
Male	4.35 (1.59)	.63 (1.27)	2.69 (.96)	.36 (1.06)
Female	4.12 (1.13)	.43 (.91)	2.56 (.94)	.23 (1.04)

Notes. Standard deviations are in parentheses.

Main effect for country on both NRI and M-FQQ: M-FQQ- Korea (N=104) > Indonesia (N=145) and U.S. (N=89). NRI- Korea (N=234) > Indonesia (N=147) and U.S. (N=110)

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations of NRI Difference Scores of Conflict with Friends versus Mothers and Siblings

	Mother		Sibling	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
United States	-.21	.98	-1.04	1.21
Male	-.07	1.02	-.78	1.19
Female	-.34	.94	-1.29	1.19
Indonesia	.30	.82	-.30	.91
Male	.34	.86	-.19	.90
Female	.26	.78	-.41	.90
South Korea	-.19	1.26	-.48	1.14
Male	.01	1.38	-.28	1.10
Female	-.41	1.07	-.73	1.14

Notes. Main effects for sex and country in both relationships: Males > conflict with friends than mothers; females > conflict with mothers. Indonesia > conflict with friends than mothers; Korea and U.S. > conflict with mothers. Females > conflict with siblings than males. U.S. > conflict with siblings than Korea and Indonesia.

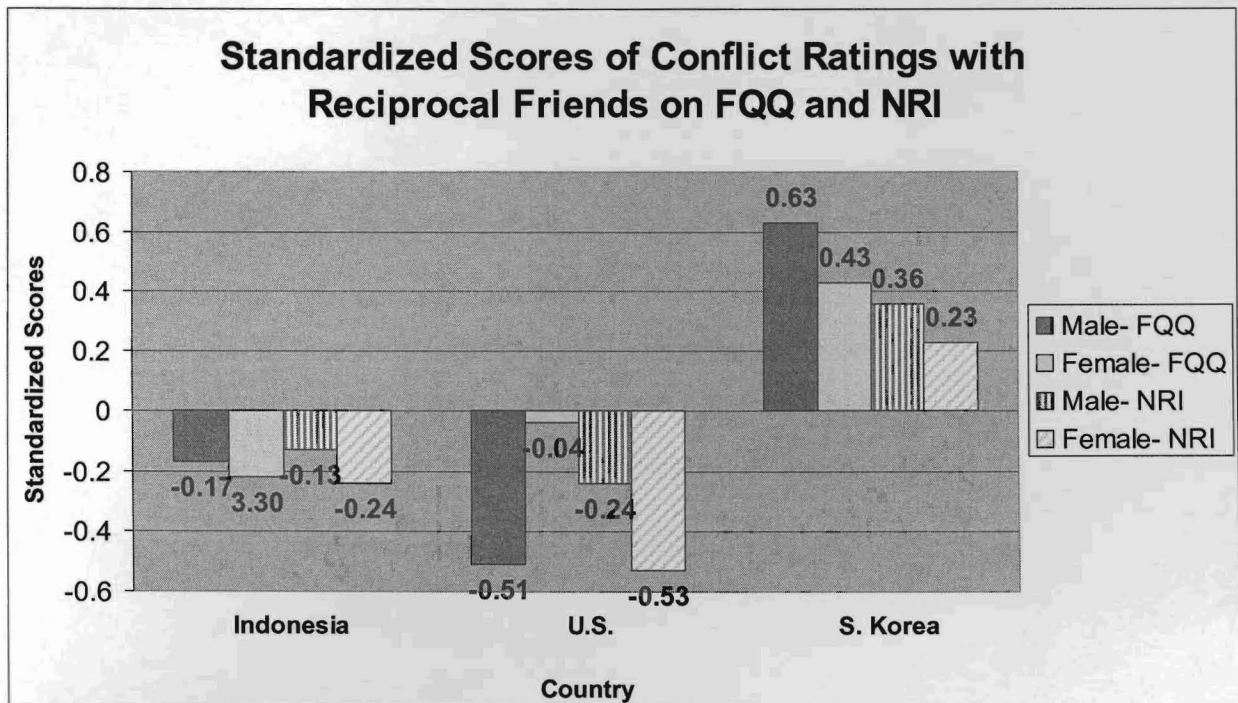


Figure 1. Standardized scores of reports of conflict on the NRI and FQQ broken down by country and gender. Solid colored bars represent male and female Z scores of conflict with reciprocated friends on the FQQ. The bars with lines represent male and female reports of conflict with friends on the NRI.

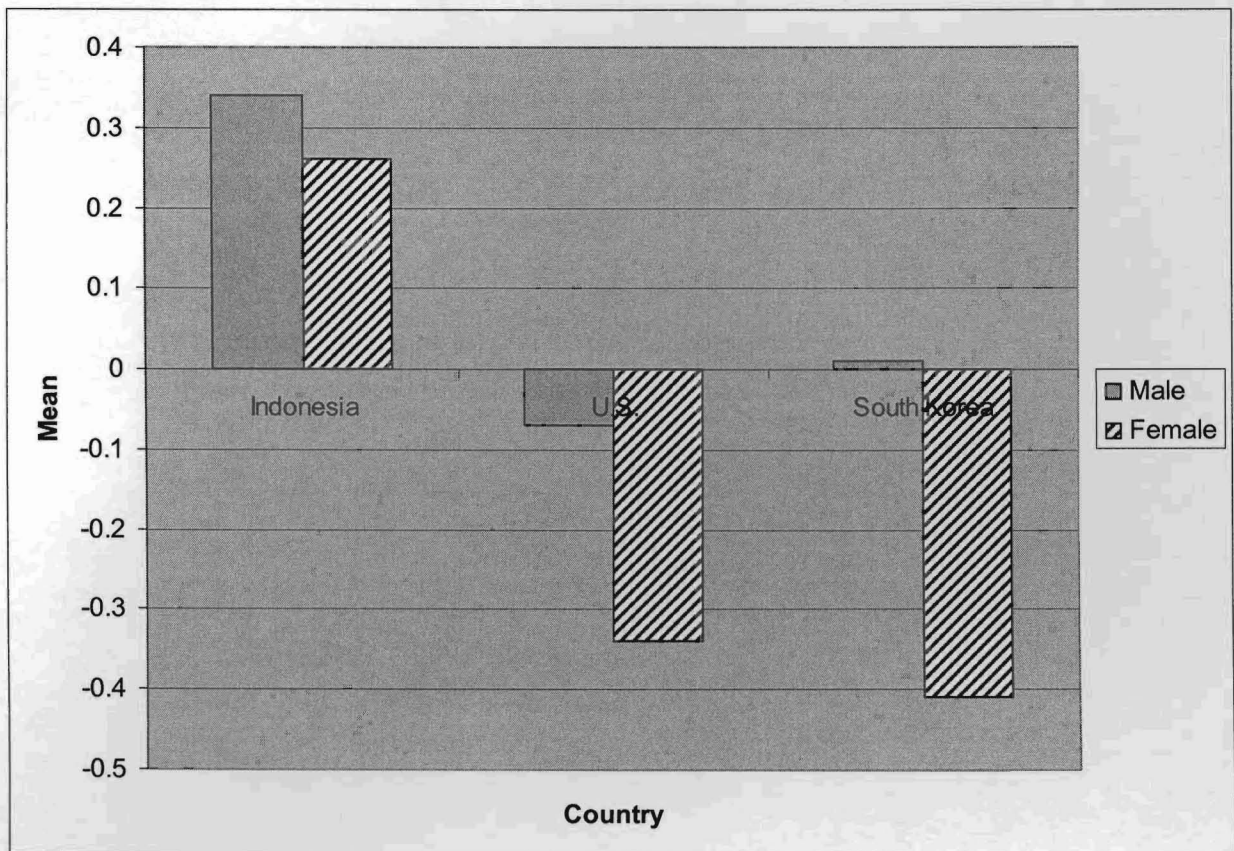


Figure 2. Mean difference scores of NRI reports of conflict with friends compared to mothers.

Negative values represent more conflict with mothers compared to friends. Solid color bars represent scores for males.

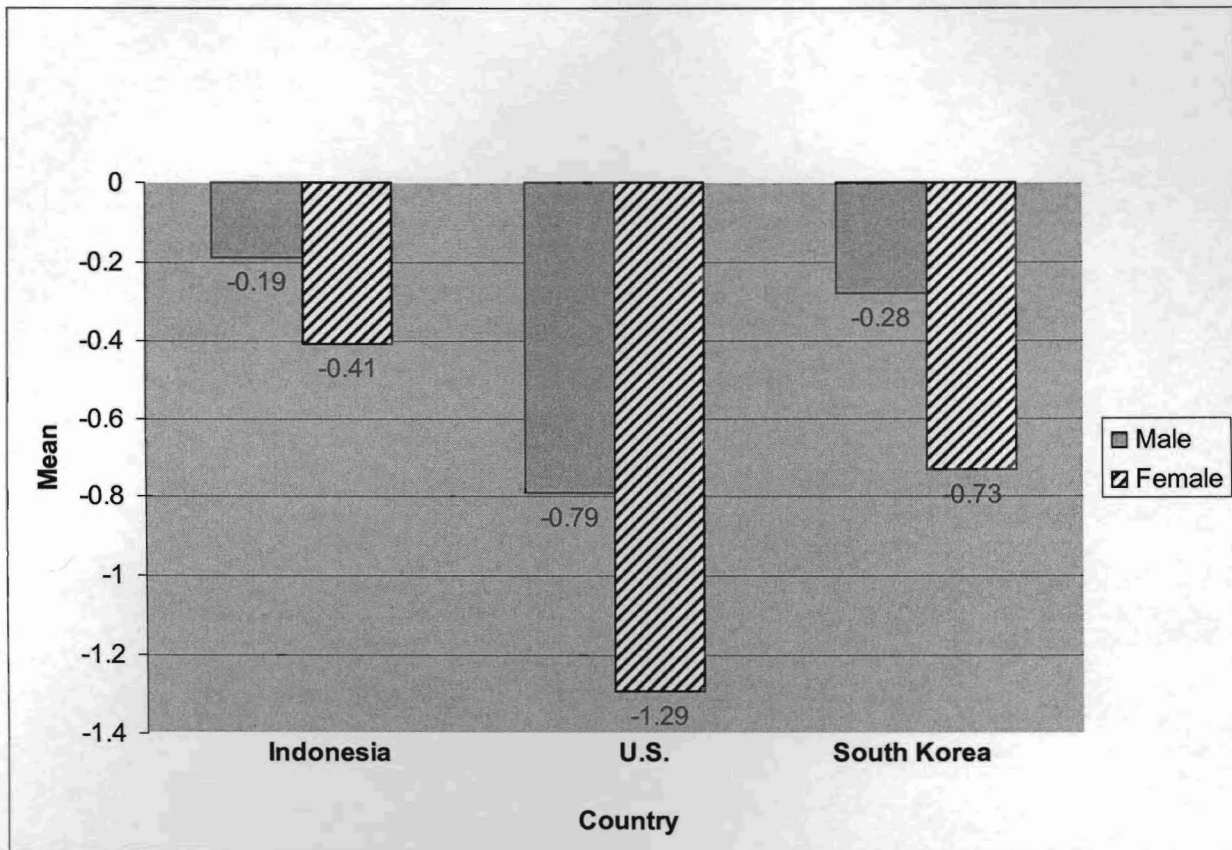


Figure 3. Mean difference scores of NRI reports of conflict with friends compared to siblings. Negative values represent more conflict with siblings compared to friends. Solid colored bars represent scores for males.