## Abstract

Abstract: As part of a longitudinal study of sibling and friend relationships, we examined 7 -year-olds' conflicts with siblings and with friends during construction tasks, board game play, and free play. Partner, gender, age composition, and task all made a difference in various aspects of the conflicts observed during the sessions.

Introduction
Relationships with siblings and friends provide important but differing contexts for social interaction in childhood Relationships with siblings and friends provide important but differing contexts for social interaction in childhood
and adolescence. As part of a longitudinal study of sibling and friend relationships from early childhood through and adolescence. As part of a a longitudinal study of sibling and friend relationships from early childhood through
adolescence, we examined 7 -year-olds' ocnflicts with siblings and friends in semi.structured closed-field interaction
situations. Differences have been observed between elementary schoolers' conflicts with siblings and peers, but little siolescence, we exacined-year-observed between elementary schoolers' conflicts with siblings and peers, but littli
is known Differences have been obsert how these oppositional interactions may change depending on the tasks the children are asked to is known about how these oppositional interactions may change depending on the tasks the children are asked
perform together. Variations in structure, materials available, and the degree to which the task fosters either perform together. Variations in structure, materials available, and the degree to which the task fosters eith
competition or cooperation might be expected to make a difference in conflict rate, length, and structure.

Participants

## Methods

73 white, middle-class American 7 -year olds living in Western New York Half of the siblings were two years older than the target child, half two years younger. Half of the target children were female, half male.
Half of the sibling pairs were same-sex, half mixed-se
A same-age, same-sex friend of each target child also participated in the study.
Procedure
Target children were videotaped at home in separate 30 -minute sessions with sibling and friend.
Each taping session was divided into three segments of approximately 10 minutes each: a construction task, a board game, and a free-play session with toys provided by the e
The videotapes were transcribed and coded for conflicts.
Confficts were defined as exchanges containing mutual opposition, either verbal or behavioral. Once identified, conficict were further coded for frequency, number of furns, instigator, issue, and termination strategy.
Social engagement was coded at 10 -second intervals. For the purposes of the present analysis, social e. Social engagement was coded at 10 -second intervals. For the purposes of the present analysis, social engagement
was collapsed into three categories: engaged (partners mutually participating in the activity or engaged with each other), semi-engaged (one partner watching or trying to engage the other), and unengaged (partners not socially engaged with each other).
Analyses
Conflict rates and characteristics were analyzed using separate 2 (partner) $\times 3$ (task) $\times 2$ (target child gender) $\times 2$ (sib gender) $\times 2$ (age group) repeated measure ANOVAs and MANOVAs.
Table and Graph Key
FF=female target, female sibling
$\mathrm{FM}=$ female target
$\mathrm{FM}=$ female target, male sibling
MF=male target, female sibling
MM $=$ male target, male sibling


Figure 2. Turns per Conflict During Sibling and Friend Sessions


Figure 3. Conflict \% Target Instigated



## Result

## Conflict Rates (Figure I)

Overall, siblings had a higher rate of conflicts than friends did $(\mathrm{p}<.001)$. There was a significant partner x task x target child gender interaction ( $\mathrm{p}=.042$ ). The partner effect held true for dyads with female targets across all three tasks. For dyads with male targets, there was no sibling/ friend difference during free play
Turns (Figure 2)

- Sibling conflicts had more turns than friend conflicts during game and free-play sessions, while friend conflicts had more turns during construction sessions $(\mathrm{p}=.05)$
There was a significant task x target child gender x sib gender interaction for turns $(\mathrm{p}=.05)$. For game
and free-play sessions, samesex and free-play sessions, same-sex pairs had more turns than mixed-sex pairs. On the other hand, mixed-sex pairs had more turns than same-sex pairs during construction sessions.
Confict Instigation (Figure 3)
There was a significant task $x$ age $x$ target child gender $x$ sibling gender interaction $(p=.01)$ for who was most likely to instigate conflicts. During the game, boys with older sisters were most likely to instigate conflicts. During free play, it was girls with younger brothers. During construction, it was boys with Issue (Table I)
There were task effects for behavioral, plans for play, and ideas or facts issues ( $\mathrm{p}<.001$ ). Issues about behavior and ideas or facts were most prevalent during game sessions, followed by free-play sessions
and then construction sessions. Issues about plans for play were equally prevalent during free-play and construction sessions, and significantly less prevalent during game sessions.
Termination Strategy (Table 2)
There were significant task effects for standing firm and surrender (p $<.001$ ). Standing firm was most prevalent during the game, followed by construction, followew by free play. On the other hand
surrender was more prevalent during free play and construction than during the game.


## Discussion

Task was found to have an effect on all aspects of conflicts covered by our coding scheme, although partrer and gender/age composition of sibling dyads had impacts as well. Some of the diffierences may be
attributable to the degree of structure in each task. For example, he highest rate of conflicts occurred during parter and gender/age composition of sibling dyads sad impacts as well. Some of he enficts occurred
attributable to the degree of structure in eact task. For example the highest rate of conter
fee lay sessions, perthaps because it was the least structured task and therefore provided the most free play sessions, perhaps because it was the least strucurured task and therefore provided the most opportunities for contrasting opinions and oppositional interactions.
The extent to which each task fostered either competition or cooperation also seemed to play a role. Game sessions, which were intended to be competitive, elicited conflicts about game rules (ideas facts
or behavior), whereas the construction task, designed to foster cooperation, produced conflicts about ho intly proceed with the task (plans for play). The highly structured, competioduced conflicts about how to jointly proceed with the task (plans for play). The highly structured, competitive game task seemed to
the use of standing firm as a way to end conflicts, whereas the less structured, more cooperative tasks the use of standing firm as a way to end conflicts, whereas the less structure,
seemed to leave children more willing to give in to their partners' wishes
Task also interacted with other variables in interesting ways, most notably in who instigated the
conflicts. Children responded to the tasks differently, depending on the age and gender composition of their
ibling dyad.

