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Mediation as a Method of Parent Intervention in Children's Disputes

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This study examined the feasibility and short-term effects of mothers' use of mediation to help children (5 to 8 years) resolve disputes. Families in which mothers were trained to use mediation were compared with control families on intervention strategies at home and discussion of a recurring conflict in the laboratory. With training, mothers could use mediation strategies, and these strategies were favored by both mothers and children. Children responded appropriately to mediation (reasoning, discussing emotions, and understanding motivations more often than in control families). Mediation empowered children, particularly younger siblings, to solve conflict issues. Although questions of the long-term implications of mediation remain, this study suggests that mediation may be a powerful parenting tool, promoting social understanding and productive conflict resolution.

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Past research has shown that sibling conflicts are generally frequent, intense, and poorly resolved. Therefore, the development and evaluation of methods that can be used to effectively deal with these types of disputes are important research goals. The objective of the present study was to investigate whether mediation is an effective and constructive way for parents to deal with their children's sibling conflicts. Mediation is a method of intervention by a third party designed to foster cooperative problem solving between disputants, and it allows people in conflict to reach their own solutions. Mediators control the process of negotiation, ensuring that each party's voice is heard, thereby empowering disputants to resolve their differences themselves. Perhaps because it provides a safe environment in which to discuss issues and develop understanding, mediation can often lead to more positive conflict resolutions and improved communication patterns and has been found to be effective in many different contexts. However, no past studies have examined the use of mediation by parents in disputes between their children.

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Past Research on Parent Intervention

The potential use of mediation techniques adds a new dimension to the long-standing debate over whether parents should intervene in their children's conflicts or leave children to solve issues on their own. Many researchers believe that parent intervention may have negative implications for children. Parents' interventions, it is reasoned, may prevent children from learning how to solve their differences, because parents take the decision-making processes out of the children's hands and may in fact make disputes worse (Dreikurs, Gould, & Corsini, 1974). In arguing for "benign neglect," Dreikurs et al. (1974) stressed that the main cause of sibling disputes is children's desire for parental attention. As children learn that they can gain parents' attention through conflict behaviors, these behaviors may increase. Supporting this notion, Corter, Abramovitch, and Pepler (1983) found that mothers' presence tended to result in relatively more agonistic behaviors than when mothers were absent. Other work has shown that the issue is more complex. For example, Dunn and Munn (1986) found that even though a higher frequency of maternal involvement in sibling conflict was associated with longer conflict durations and higher proportions of physical aggression by children, this involvement was also associated with more mature conflict behaviors (e.g., conciliation, prohibition with justification, and reference to social rules).

Other researchers, who view parental intervention in a positive way, have discussed parental interventions that reduce tension (Valsiner & Cairns, 1992) and uphold family rules of fairness (Ross, Filyer, Lollis, Perlman, & Martin, 1994). Consistent with Dunn and Munn's (1986) findings, Perlman and Ross (1997a) found that parents were more likely to intervene in their children's longer, more aggressive conflicts, but also that intervention decreased conflict intensity and increased children's reasoning. In addition, mothers' use of other-oriented reasoning has been shown to be positively correlated with later constructive conflict management with friends, whereas self-oriented reasoning has been shown to produce the opposite pattern (Herrera &

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Dunn, 1997). Indeed, mothers' early use of argument is more strongly correlated with children's later conflict management than children's own early argument style.

Family members also have their own perspectives on the advisability of parent intervention and the form it should take. In one study, in contrast to Dreikurs's claim, fourth- and fifth-grade children reported that they rarely fought for parent attention (Prochaska & Prochaska, 1985). These children, if anything, saw parents as decreasing the length of conflicts or minimizing their intensity rather than increasing the frequency of conflicts. In other research, children between 4 and 8 years of age reported that they preferred to preserve their autonomy by resolving sibling problems on their own, whereas parents of children in this age group preferred that children and parents resolve sibling differences together (Piotrowski, 1999; Siddiqui & Ross, 2000). These parents also did not feel that their children fought for their attention, and most indicated that it would be best for them to become involved when aggression was occurring or seemed imminent (Piotrowski, 1999). It appears, then, that family members see benefits of both parent intervention and child autonomy in the matter of sibling conflict resolution. We argue that mediation is a procedure that can help families realize these apparently contradictory goals.

Nonetheless, parents do not use a mediational style when they intervene in their children's disputes. Family observations indicate that parents rarely encourage or support autonomous conflict resolution when they intervene in their children's disputes and that they rarely promote or provide the structure for their children to communicate or work issues out on their own. Instead, they intervene from positions of authority, control their children, suggest resolutions, and attempt to settle issues for their offspring (Perozynski & Kramer, 1999; Ross et al., 1996). However, it is important to differentiate intervention style from the structure of conflict resolution. An important structural component of mediation is the matter of who decides the outcome of disputes. Quite often children's conflicts continue beyond the point of parent intervention, and the children resolve issues themselves (Perlman & Ross, 1997b; Siddiqui & Ross, 1999). One effect of this type of intervention is that children who reconcile their differences with parent help are more likely to compromise in conflicts 2 years later (Siddiqui & Ross, 1999). Siddiqui and Ross (1999) found that conflicts in which parents intervene but the children ultimately resolve the issues occur 42% of the time in families with preschool-aged children. This procedure has the formal structure of mediation—intervention by a third party and resolution by the initial disputants—although parents' directive interventions depart from the style typical of mediation. What is not established in the parent–child literature is the feasibility or effects of implementing formal mediation procedures that include changes to both the style and the structure of parents' conflict interventions.

Mediation Procedures and Effects

Generally, the process of mediation involves four stages (e.g., Danielsson, 1994; Vanderkooi & Pearson, 1983). During Stage 1, outlining the expectations for the mediator's and disputants' roles and obtaining consent to the ground rules for the procedure help set the tone for a calm and reasoned conflict resolution and create a safe environment in which discussion can proceed. The mediator establishes his or her influence over the process but clearly places the responsibility for resolution on the disputants in this first stage. In Stage 2, dispute issues are identified and areas of agreement are highlighted to help provide the mediator and the disputants an understanding of each party's perspective. In Stage 3, understanding of each disputant's desires, reasons, and emotions is developed through a discussion of each party's perspective, and, as a result, empathy is enhanced between the opponents. Finally, during Stage 4, solutions to disputed issues are formulated. Because of the controlled nature of the mediations up to this point and the potential for increased understanding, solutions that are satisfactory to both disputants may be developed.

It is only within the last 30 years that mediation has been used in North America, originating in attempts to forestall industrial conflict in labor–management disputes and as an alternative to adjudication procedures in the court system. Mediation is now used to resolve interpersonal conflicts as diverse as those between victims and offenders, spouses in divorce cases, peers at school, and parents and their adolescent children (Emery & Wyer, 1987; Irving & Benjamin, 1992; Johnson, Johnson, Cotton, Harris, & Louison, 1995; Umbreit & Coates, 1992). Although there has not been a great deal of research conducted on mediation, the past empirical work has generally shown that mediation results in more constructive outcomes than other forms of conflict resolution, with high levels of disputant compliance and satisfaction (Kressel & Pruitt, 1985).

Mediation that involves child participants has been studied in two contexts: parent–adolescent disputes and school-based peer mediation programs. Sometimes parent–adolescent conflicts deteriorate and become severe enough to warrant formal third-party intervention. The goals of this type of mediation are to enhance family functioning, to prevent adolescent maltreatment, and to keep children from being placed in shelters or foster care (Smith, 1995). It has been found that mediation is perceived to improve family functioning (e.g., encouragement of independence by parents) and results in high rates of disputant satisfaction with the process (Van Slyck, Stern, & Newland, 1992).

In addition, peer mediation programs are increasingly being introduced in schools, where they have proved to be highly effective in ending students' disputes. Many studies have shown that participation in peer mediation programs has positive effects on disputants and mediators in terms of problem solving, communication, academic grades, perspective taking, and conflict resolution skills (Araki, 1990; Lane-Garon, 1998). Peer mediations have also been found to help children reach and maintain agreements and to have high rates of satisfaction (Crary, 1992). As well, children who have been trained as mediators use more constructive strategies for resolving conflict and do so in many different contexts (Gentry & Benenson, 1992; Johnson, Johnson, Dudley, & Acikgoz, 1994; Johnson, Johnson, Dudley,

Ward, & Magnuson, 1995). Johnson and colleagues found that after formal training in mediation procedures, children were more likely to express feelings, reverse perspectives, formulate multiple agreements, or explain the reasons for their positions (Johnson et al., 1994; Johnson, Johnson, Dudley, et al., 1995). Months after training, and at home as well as at school, children continued to use the mediation steps that they were taught in naturalistic negotiations. Whereas untrained students most often left conflicts unresolved, had an adult deal with them, and engaged in very little negotiation, students trained in mediation negotiated and created new solutions. Indeed, in a survey study conducted by Gentry and Benenson (1992), parents and children perceived the frequency and intensity of sibling conflicts to have declined after target children had been trained in peer mediation procedures. Parents noted improvements in their children's abilities to talk productively with siblings and felt that the frequency of their own interventions had declined.

Goals of This Study

Despite the effectiveness of mediation in other contexts, empirical studies have not previously been extended to the use of mediation in the sibling relationship. Mediation may be beneficial during sibling conflicts because it may promote a greater understanding of self and others and facilitate the acquisition of social rules and the establishment of boundaries within relationships. These benefits may be important in sibling conflict because disputes between siblings are frequent, rarely resolved constructively, and sometimes violent, which is perhaps why these types of conflicts can be a source of concern for parents (Siddiqui & Ross, 1999).

The purpose of the present study was to examine the use of mediation to resolve sibling disputes. We had three main sets of research questions. The first concerned the appropriateness of parent mediation as a method of conflict management: Are parents able to use mediation techniques? Do they report using these procedures during their children's disputes? Does experience with mediation influence their views on conflict management? The second set of questions dealt with children's responses to parents' mediation efforts: How do children react to the use of mediation procedures? Can children respond appropriately to mediation? Does experience with parent mediation influence how children view conflict management? Finally, the short-term impact of mediation was examined: Can mediation bring about more conciliatory resolutions in sibling conflicts? Are children empowered through the use of mediation procedures?

Method

Participants

The data for this study came from 48 English-speaking, Canadian families. A list of families was developed through newspaper announcements of the births of younger children in the targeted age group. Once this list was narrowed to families still residing in the Kitchener–Waterloo area, parents were contacted and recruited to participate in the study if older children were in the appropriate age range. Three members of each family participated: two siblings and their mother. Mothers were selected to participate because it was believed that they would be more likely than fathers to be the primary caregivers; validating this claim, mothers reported being primary caregivers in 85% of the families and as intervening in sibling conflicts most often in 81% of the families. Most other families reported that the two parents played these roles equally.

Families were randomly assigned to either a mediation or a control group. These groups were not significantly different from each other on any of the following family characteristics. Older children averaged 8.5 years of age (range = 6.3 to 10.9) and younger children 5.6 years (range = 4.0 to 7.0). The age difference between the children averaged 2.9 years (range = 1.1 to 5.4). Family sizes ranged from 2 to 5 children, with an average of 2.4 children per family. Equal numbers of all brother and sister combinations were sampled in each group. Mothers' ages ranged from 28 to 48 years (M = 37 years). In 47 families, the parents were married and the children were their biological offspring (only 1 mother in the control group was divorced). Forty-four percent of the mothers had completed a university degree, 33% had completed a college program, 19% had completed high school, and 4% had completed other certificate programs (e.g., real estate); 86% were employed on a full- or part-time basis. Mothers were asked about their previous mediation experience, and no differences were found between the two groups; 43% of the mothers reported some prior experience with mediation.

Procedure

All mothers participated in two laboratory sessions, whereas children participated only in the second session. Sessions were separated by a 1-week interval during which mothers reported daily on sibling conflicts to a voice-mail phone diary. In the initial session, mothers of children in both groups were instructed on how to use the phone diary, and those in the mediation group were also trained in the use of mediation procedures. Children were not present during this initial session and could not have been directly influenced by this training; rather, any influence of training was indirect, a result of their mothers' use of mediation at home. During the second session, mothers and children discussed an issue of recurring sibling conflict, followed by interviews of each family member (recurring conflict discussion and interviews). In addition, a scale concerning mothers' behavior during the previous week (parent behavior questionnaire) was administered to all family members. Finally, approximately 1 month later, mothers were interviewed about changes in conflicts that had occurred since the second session. The tasks and interviews during the second session were both audio- and videotaped; reliability (reported subsequently) was established for all coding by having a second observer independently code 20% of the transcripts.

Phone diary. During the initial session, mothers were asked to call the phone diary each day for 1 week to report whether or not conflicts had occurred between their children and, if they had, to describe the conflicts. Mothers were given a list of 13 questions to use to help them with this process (e.g., "How did the conflict end?" and "What did you do, if anything?"). Examples of typical phone diary reports were provided. The phone diary reports were used to assess mothers' interventions at home and to determine whether or not mediation group mothers used the procedures taught.

Phone diaries revealed four reported methods of dealing with the children's sibling disputes: mediation, adjudication, punish-

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ment, and no intervention. *Mediation* was defined as occurring when mothers mentioned using specific mediation procedures (e.g., invoking ground rules and intervening but allowing the children to resolve the dispute themselves, etc.). *Adjudication* took place when mothers reported suggesting, endorsing, or enforcing decisions concerning the outcome of a dispute. *Punishment* occurred when there was a tangible negative consequence for the actions of one or both of the children. *No intervention* was coded if mothers did not participate in children's disputes. The kappa value for coding of intervention method was .91.

Mediation training. During the first session, mediation group mothers were individually trained in the process of mediation, with an emphasis on allowing children to resolve conflicts themselves, under the guidance of the mothers. Training followed the process outlined in many formal mediation training courses, including instruction in the four-stage mediation procedure (see the Appendix) and active participation through role playing. The four stages of the mediation process covered were as follows: (a) discussing and gaining consent to the ground rules and the roles of each participant, (b) clarifying each disputant's position and interests, (c) developing empathy and understanding, and (d) helping to develop a realistic agreement on the issue. In addition, mothers were trained in active listening skills such as clarifying (i.e., seeking more information), restating (i.e., rephrasing basic points), reframing (i.e., rephrasing more positively), reflecting (i.e., stating another's feelings), and summarizing (i.e., restating major ideas). They were told to use these communication skills throughout each stage of the procedure as needed. Mothers were given an opportunity to view a video clip of mother–child mediation and to play the role of mediator in several child conflict scenarios (with the researcher playing the roles of the children) as part of their training. Mediation training required between 1 and 1.5 hr, and the first author trained mothers in all mediation families.

Recurring conflict discussion. For the second session, three interviewers were assigned to the family, one for each child and one for the mother. The family came to the university and was escorted to the laboratory play room, where the children met their interviewers. When the children appeared to be comfortable, mothers were separated from them and were asked to nominate an issue of conflict that occurred frequently and repeatedly between the siblings. Mothers in the mediation group were asked to use the mediation skills that they were taught, and mothers in the control group were asked to deal with the situation as they normally would at home in the ensuing conflict discussion.

Mothers and children were then brought together to discuss the issue with each other, with instructions to resolve their dispute so that it would not recur. Family members were left alone to discuss this matter. Discussions ended when family members indicated that they had resolved their issues or when it became apparent that no resolution was imminent after 10 min of discussion, at which time the researcher intervened to end the episode. The researcher who trained the mothers in the first session also instructed the families concerning the recurring conflict discussion and was the only member of the research team who knew whether families were in the mediation or control group. Interviewers did not view the conflict discussions, and, along with those who subsequently coded the transcripts, they were unaware of the experimental condition of each family.

The audiotape recordings of the recurring conflict discussions were transcribed by one transcriber and then confirmed and verified, through the use of the videotape recordings, by another transcriber. A conflict issue, a conflict ending, and an initiator of the resolution were documented for each family discussion. Three mutually exclusive categories of *conflict issues* were identified: (a) property (disputes about property that was owned by one of the children), (b) entitlement (conflict concerning rights to a family resource such as the television remote control or the computer), and (c) teasing (issues centering on one child repeatedly interfering in the other's activities or engaging in activities to which the other took exception, such as making faces). The reliability (kappa) for issue coding was .81.

Four mutually exclusive categories of *conflict endings* were distinguished: (a) submission (any overt verbal or physical behavior by which one party gave up his or her own position), (b) no resolution (the conflict discussion ended without resolution of the issue), (c) issue compromise (children arrived at a middle position or a new solution was developed in which both children gained), and (d) relationship compromise (participants decided to take others' feelings into account when dealing with the situation in the future and resolved to change their patterns of interaction in such a way that this same issue would not recur). The kappa value for coding of conflict ending was 1.0.

The person (older child, younger child, mother, or a combination) whose idea directly led to resolution of the issue was deemed the *initiator of the resolution.* In conflicts that ended in submission, the child who yielded was considered the initiator. The person who gave the first idea for either issue or relationship compromises was said to have taken the initiative for the compromise. Unresolved conflicts referred to instances in which none of the family members initiated a resolution. The reliability (kappa) for resolution initiator coding was .82.

Each conversational turn by the children or the mother was coded for *topic* and *strategy.* Conversational turns were generally defined as the speech or nonverbal behavior of an actor bounded by the speech or behavior of another actor. A single actor could sometimes take successive conversational turns within the boundary denoted by new actors if such turns were distinguished by differences in speech function (i.e., question vs. statement), topic, or strategy (Table 1). Coding reliabilities (kappas) were .89 for topic and .81 for strategy. Recurring conflict discussions were also timed from the interviewer's leaving the room until the participants indicated that the negotiation was completed or when the family members were interrupted because they appeared to be unable to resolve their differences.

Recurring conflict interview. After the conflict discussion, family members were separated and individually interviewed concerning their satisfaction with the recurring conflict discussion, with the procedures used to arrive at the outcome, and with the outcome itself. They were also asked about their general preferences for intervention and conflict management (i.e., "Who should resolve recurring sibling disputes?"). The reliability (kappa) for coding of satisfaction (coded as yes or no) was .63. General conflict management procedures were coded as parent, children, or both (allowing the children an opportunity to resolve with the aid of parents as needed; $\kappa = .95$).

In addition, family members were asked about the children's goals and the reasons motivating their goals during the discussion to assess how well they understood each child's desires and reasons for them. *Goals* were defined as the objects, aims, or overt desires of the participants. Although similar to goals, *reasons* dealt with the underlying motivations for, and the reasons behind, family members' desires (e.g., an individual who wants fighting to cease because he or she desires peace and quiet). Categories of goals and reasons were defined in the same way (although some were more likely to be goals and others to be reasons). These categories were property (wanting things that were owned by one of the children), entitlement (wanting rights to the use of family property), fairness (wanting equal or equitable treatment), domi-

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Table 1
Definitions of Topic and Strategy Codes

Category	Definition
	Topic
Ground rules	Discussion centering around rules governing the process (e.g., take turns, no interrupting, and no name calling)
Process	How issues are to be negotiated, and the role of each individual in these discussions (e.g., the mother would help, but the children would make the decision)
Information	Discussion of topic, general information
Interests	Each person's goals and the reasons justifying them
Emotions	The feelings of the individuals involved
Solutions	Resolutions or outcomes of the conflict issues
	Strategy
Clarify	Seek more information, request repetition of previously stated information
Supply	Provide new information, elaborate or restate previously given information
Direct	Provide guidance, direction, suggestions
Counter	Disagree, provide reasons against other's position
Reason	Give reasons for own or other's position, justify, explain, help see the other's perspective, ensure participants are happy with decisions
Develop	Brainstorm solutions, challenge solutions to develop more realistic options, ensure agreement with solutions

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nance (wanting one's own way, at the expense of the other), respect (wanting to be acknowledged or listened to), cohesion (wanting everyone to get along), and peace (wanting a calm environment). Kappa reliability values were .84 for goals and .71 for reasons. Family members' reports of the children's goals and reasons were then compared by matching the target individual's own response to the others' responses about the target. For example, older children's reports of their own goals were compared with younger children's responses about older children's goals, and the proportion of agreement (agreements divided by agreements plus disagreements) between the responses was calculated.

At the end of the interview, children and parents responded to a 13-question *parent behavior questionnaire* that evaluated mothers' behaviors in response to their children's conflicts during the week before the session. Positive (mediation-like) and negative (more coercive or neglectful) strategies were included, and family members assessed mothers' use of these strategies as occurring "not at all" (scored as 0), "a little" (scored as 1), or "a lot" (scored as 2). Positive items consisted of mothers helping the children to (a) not blame each other, (b) see how the other one felt, (c) think of solutions to their fights, (d) say what each child wanted, (e) make their own decisions about how the fight should end, and (f) make sure they were both happy with the solution. Negative items indicated that mothers (a) decided how children's fights should end, (b) yelled at them for fighting, (c) ignored them when they fought, (d) punished them for fighting, (e) got angry at them when they fought, (f) took sides when they fought, and (g) told them to work it out themselves. Scores for positive and negative items were summed, and negative scores were subtracted from positive ones.

Follow-up interview. One month after the second session, follow-up telephone interviews were conducted with mothers to determine whether they perceived that any changes (i.e., coded as yes or no) had occurred since their participation in the study in the nature of the children's conflicts and, if there were, what these changes consisted of. A number of responses were coded: fewer conflicts, decreased conflict intensity, participants calmer, improved conflict outcomes, increased autonomy, increased awareness of conflicts, and improved communication skills. Negative categories were not included because mothers did not report any negative changes in their children's conflicts (e.g., increased fighting). Coding of changes had a kappa reliability of .72. Mothers were also asked specifically about the recurrence (i.e., coded as yes or no) of the conflict that family members discussed in the laboratory. In addition, mediation group mothers were asked to report whether or not they would continue to use mediation in the future.

Predictions. Training was expected to positively influence the strategies that mothers and children used in discussion and negotiation of conflict situations. Mothers in the mediation group were expected to use more mediation procedures at home during their children's conflicts (as reported on the phone diary and by family members on the parent behavior questionnaire) and in recurring conflict discussions in Session 2 than mothers in the control group. Mediation families were expected to take more time to discuss recurring conflicts and to speak more often about topics such as ground rules, processes, goals, and emotions than families in the control group. Mediation families were predicted to use more reasoning strategies that emphasized a better understanding of the other party than their counterparts in the control group. Family members in the control group were expected to focus more on solution development than those in the mediation group. It was predicted that children would be more active in initiating resolutions to recurring conflicts in the mediation group and that mothers would more often initiate resolutions in the control group. In addition, there would be more issue and relationship compromise in the mediation group than in the control group. Finally, more satisfaction with process and outcome and greater agreement concerning children's goals and reasons were predicted for family members in the mediation group than those in the control group.

Results

In analyzing the data, four major issues were considered: (a) use of mediation procedures by mothers, (b) influence of mediation use on children's conflict discussions with their

mothers and siblings, (c) impact of mediation on conflict resolution, and finally (d) mothers' and children's perspectives on conflict management.

Mothers' Reported Use of Mediation at Home

Initial analyses indicated that mothers in both groups reported an equivalent number of conflicts during the week between sessions (Ms = 2.9 and 3.2 in the mediation and control groups, respectively), $t(46) = -0.51$. Two mothers in the mediation condition and 2 mothers in the control condition did not call to report conflicts during the phone diary week. Mothers in both conditions telephoned an average of 3.67 times (SD = 2.01). Numbers of conflicts reported ranged from 0 to 8, and a total of 142 conflicts were called in. Mothers' phone diary reports of their own behavior during their children's sibling disputes during the week between parent training and the family's laboratory visit were analyzed in a mixed-model analysis of variance (ANOVA) with group (two levels) as a between-subjects factor and intervention method (three levels) as a within-subject factor. This analysis yielded a significant Group $\times$ Intervention Method interaction, $F(2, 39) = 28.84$, $p < .01$. Independent t tests showed that mothers in the mediation group reported using mediation more frequently than did mothers in the control group, $t(26) = 6.20$, $p < .01$[1] (Table 2). In addition, they used adjudication, $t(27) = -4.69$, $p < .01$, and no intervention, $t(30) = -2.35$, $p = .03$, less often than mothers in the control group. Among the mothers who called to report conflicts during the week, all of those in the mediation group reported using mediation at least once and up to seven times during the week, whereas only 6 mothers in the control group reported using mediation procedures once or twice during the week.

Mothers and children responded to 13 structured questions regarding mothers' interventions during the week between the sessions. Both older and younger children in the mediation group viewed mothers' interventions during the previous week as being more positive than children in the control group (Ms = 4.88 and 2.17 for older children and Ms = 4.29 and 0.42 for younger children in the mediation and control groups, respectively), $t(46) = 2.95$, $p < .01$, for older children and $t(46) = 4.20$, $p < .01$, for younger children. In contrast, mothers in the two groups were equally likely to report that they used the more positive methods of intervention, $t(46) = 0.68$, $p = .50$ (Ms = 2.92 and 2.21).

Table 2
Mean Frequencies of Reports of Intervention Methods Used During Phone Diary Week, by Group

	Mediation group		Control group	
Method	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Adjudication	0.19	0.51	1.57	1.25
Mediation	2.52	1.47	0.38	0.59
Punishment	0.05	0.22	0.48	0.60
No intervention	0.48	0.60	1.14	1.15

Mothers' Use of Mediation During Recurring Conflict Discussions

Frequencies of mothers' and children's behaviors during the recurring conflict negotiations were used in the main analyses reported here. Given that negotiations during the recurring conflict discussion were longer in the mediation than in the control group (means of 7.92 min and 5.10 min, respectively), $t(46) = 1.99$, $p = .05$, and because mothers in the mediation group had more conversational turns than those in the control group (means of 90 and 58 turns, respectively), it was also meaningful to consider proportionalized data (i.e., the frequency of each individual's target behavior was divided by the total number of his or her behaviors) in supplementary analyses. These proportions reflected group differences in the relative emphasis given to different negotiation strategies and conflict management processes.

To assess whether mothers in the mediation group selected different issues for recurring conflict discussions, we conducted a mixed-model ANOVA, with group as the between-subjects variable and issue as the within-subject variable. There were no differences between the groups in terms of any of the issues discussed, $F(2, 45) = 0.79$, $p = .46$. Thus, issue was not a confounding factor in comparisons of the mediation and control groups. Property was discussed in 30% of families, 57% discussed entitlement issues, and 15% of the discussions concerned teasing.

Did mothers in the mediation group use mediation procedures more often during conflict discussions than those in the control group? Two separate mixed-model ANOVAs were carried out with mothers' behaviors; group (two levels) was a between-subjects factor, and either topic (six levels) or strategy (six levels) was a within-subject factor. Both the Group $\times$ Topic, $F(5, 42) = 3.15$, $p = .02$, and Group $\times$ Strategy, $F(5, 42) = 3.58$, $p = .01$, interactions were significant.

Independent t-test comparisons between the groups revealed that mothers in the mediation group spoke more often than mothers in the control group about emotions, $t(46) = 3.26$, $p < .01$; reasons, $t(46) = 2.17$, $p = .04$; and process, $t(46) = 2.61$, $p = .01$ (Table 3). Only 10 mothers in the control group spoke about emotions, as compared with 20 mothers in the mediation group. In addition, ground rules were discussed only in the mediation group, with 21 of the 24 mediation mothers doing so. Mothers in the two groups discussed solutions equally often; however, discussion of solutions constituted a greater proportion of the topics addressed by mothers in the control group (M = .54) than by mothers in the mediation group (M = .30), $t(33) = -4.32$, $p < .01$.

In addition, when the mothers' strategies were analyzed, mediation group mothers more often tended to supply information, $t(46) = 2.81$, $p = .01$; direct discussions, $t(39) =$

[1] Whenever there was heterogeneity of variance between the groups, adjusted degrees of freedom and probability levels were used.

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Table 3
Mean Frequencies of Mothers' Recurring Conflict Discussion Conversational Topics and Strategies, by Group

Category	Mediation group *M*	Mediation group *SD*	Control group *M*	Control group *SD*
Topic				
Solutions	23.79	11.33	23.54	14.85
Information	17.79	14.27	13.58	14.81
Process	18.75	15.54	7.92	13.14
Interests	8.33	6.84	4.42	5.58
Ground rules	8.38	6.61	0.00	0.00
Emotions	7.42	6.45	2.17	4.54
Strategy				
Supply	28.13	17.76	15.92	11.71
Clarify	20.88	11.30	15.29	12.39
Develop	12.54	5.67	9.92	6.29
Direct	14.75	12.31	5.96	7.99
Reason	4.96	3.51	1.88	2.49
Counter	3.17	3.67	2.71	3.87

2.93, $p = .01$; and reason, $t(41) = 3.51$, $p < .01$, during the negotiations (Table 3). Although mothers in the two groups worked to develop solutions equally often, mothers in the control group concentrated on developing solutions proportionally more often than mediation mothers, $t(46) = -2.19$, $p < .03$ (mean proportions: control, .20; mediation, .16).

Influence of Mediation on Children's Negotiation Strategies

Both older and younger children in the mediation group averaged 33 conversational turns per discussion. In the control group, older children had approximately 29 conversational turns per discussion, whereas their younger counterparts had 25 turns per discussion. As with the mothers' behaviors, mixed-model ANOVAs were conducted with the children's behaviors. Group (two levels) × Age (two levels) × Topic (six levels), and Group (two levels) × Age (two levels) × Strategy (six levels) analyses were carried out. Group was a between-subjects variable; age, topic, and strategy were within-subject variables; and family was the unit of analysis. The Group × Topic interaction was not significant, $F(5, 42) = 0.71$, $p = .62$, but the Group × Strategy interaction approached significance, $F(5, 42) = 2.15$, $p = .08$. Because specific predictions were made concerning both topic and strategy, contrasts between the mediation and control groups were examined in terms of children's individual behaviors.

Independent *t* tests focusing on the children's conversational topics revealed that both older and younger children in the mediation group more often discussed emotions, $t(44) = 2.41$, $p = .02$, and $t(36) = 3.56$, $p < .01$, respectively (Table 4). Only 9 of the older children and 2 of the younger children in the control group discussed emotions. In comparison, 19 older children and 19 younger children in the mediation group talked about emotions. In addition, none of the children in the control group spoke about ground rules, whereas only 10 of the 24 older children and 10 of the 24 younger children in the mediation group neglected to speak of ground rules. Although children in the two groups spoke equally often about solutions, those in the control group spoke proportionally more often about that particular topic than did children in the mediation group: older children, $t(46) = -3.40$, $p < .01$ (mean proportions: mediation, .37; control, .58), and younger children, $t(46) = -3.11$, $p < .01$ (mean proportions: mediation, .40; control, .61).

Table 4
Mean Frequencies of Children's Recurring Conflict Conversational Topics and Strategies, by Group

Category	Mediation Older *M*	Mediation Older *SD*	Mediation Younger *M*	Mediation Younger *SD*	Control Older *M*	Control Older *SD*	Control Younger *M*	Control Younger *SD*
Topic								
Solutions	10.79	7.28	10.54	7.73	13.54	14.65	11.17	13.22
Information	7.38	6.19	7.25	9.09	5.42	7.04	4.46	5.44
Process	2.58	2.90	2.38	2.67	1.75	2.15	1.79	2.73
Goals	3.63	3.52	3.33	3.07	3.04	4.40	2.04	3.09
Ground rules	1.67	2.22	1.33	1.66	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Emotions	2.71	2.56	2.71	2.76	1.08	2.08	0.42	1.53
Strategy								
Supply	20.71	10.13	20.00	13.29	16.25	12.72	12.54	8.88
Clarify	1.21	1.56	0.92	1.28	0.96	1.55	0.67	1.31
Develop	0.25	0.53	0.21	0.51	0.42	1.06	0.33	0.87
Direct	0.63	0.97	0.46	0.98	1.75	2.88	0.42	0.83
Reason	2.67	2.26	2.04	2.51	2.13	3.00	0.75	1.73
Counter	2.63	3.49	2.67	3.42	2.88	4.45	4.25	9.15

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Table 5
Mean Proportions of Participants' Preferences Regarding Who Should Resolve Recurring Sibling Disputes, by Group

	Mediation group						Control group					
	Mother		Older		Younger		Mother		Older		Younger	
Reporter	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Both	.21	.41	.21	.41	.04	.20	.46	.51	.29	.46	.00	.00
Children	.67	.48	.46	.51	.58	.50	.42	.50	.33	.48	.21	.41
Parent	.13	.34	.29	.46	.33	.48	.08	.28	.38	.49	.75	.44

When children's conversational strategies were analyzed, it was found that younger children in the mediation group supplied information, $t(46) = 2.29$, $p = .03$, and reasoned, $t(46) = 2.08$, $p = .04$, more often than their counterparts in the control group (Table 4). Whereas 15 younger children in the mediation group reasoned, only 8 younger children in the control group did so.

Effect of Mediation on Conflict Outcomes

We predicted that families in the mediation group would compromise more often than those in the control group. There was a trend in this direction for relationship compromises (12 mediation families resolved their discussion in this way vs. 6 control families; $p = .068$ by Fisher exact test). In contrast, control families compromised on issues slightly more often than mediation families (15 vs. 12 families), but differences between them were not statistically significant. There were only two discussions resolved through submission and one case in which there was no resolution, and these occurred only in the control group.

As predicted, mothers more often initiated resolutions in the control group than in the mediation group ($n = 8$ vs. 1, $p = .009$ by Fisher exact test), and younger children were more likely to do so in the mediation group than in the control group ($n = 7$ vs. 1, $p = .028$ by Fisher exact test). Interestingly, older children were active in resolving issues in both groups ($n = 14$ in the mediation group vs. 10 in the control group). Six resolutions were initiated jointly by two family members (2 in the mediation group and 4 in the control group), with no significant group differences.

Family Members' Perspectives on Conflict Management: The Recurring Conflict Interview

Were family members in the mediation group more satisfied with the resolution process and outcome than those in the control group? More than 75% of the participants in each group were satisfied with the recurring conflict discussions. Furthermore, none of the participants in either of the two conditions reported being dissatisfied with the process used to arrive at the resolutions, and only 1 mediation parent, 1 younger mediation child, and 2 younger control children were dissatisfied with the outcomes attained.

What were family members' preferences regarding conflict management and resolution? A mixed-model ANOVA was conducted in which group (two levels), person (three levels), and choice of who should resolve the dispute (three levels) were factors. The analysis resulted in a significant three-way Group × Person × Choice interaction, $F(4, 43) = 3.10$, $p = .03$. In comparison with children in the mediation group, younger children in the control group stated significantly more often that parents should resolve recurring conflicts, $t(46) = 3.12$, $p < .01$; those in the mediation group reported significantly more often that children should resolve disputes, $t(44) = 2.82$, $p < .01$ (Table 5). Participants who preferred parent solutions cited parents' authority and knowledge in justifying their choices; those who chose children to resolve disputes cited the development of children's autonomy as being important.

Were family members more likely to agree on the children's goals and reasons in the mediation than in the control group? The rates of concordance between the family members' identification of each child's goals and reasons were examined by determining the proportion of goals and reasons in which two family members agreed versus disagreed with each other. Table 6 presents the proportion of agreement between the family members in each group on older children's goals and reasons. In general, there was greater agreement concerning goals than reasons. Chi-square analyses were carried out with group (two levels) and agreement (four levels) as factors. For older children's goals, there was no Group × Agreement interaction, $\chi^2(3, N = 96) = 4.56$, $p = .21$. In contrast, there was a Group × Agreement interaction for older children's reasons, $\chi^2(3, N = 96) = 8.48$, $p = .04$; the participants in the mediation group agreed about older children's reasons more often than those in the control group. In contrast to the findings with older children's goals and reasons, there were no significant differ-

Table 6
Proportion of Agreement Between Mothers' and Siblings' Reports and Each Child's Stated Goals and Reasons, by Group

	Mediation group		Control group	
Category	Younger child	Mother	Younger child	Mother
Older child's goals	.29	.50	.33	.22
Older child's reasons	.33	.33	.17	.06
	Older child	Mother	Older child	Mother
Younger child's goals	.50	.42	.46	.46
Younger child's reasons	.13	.21	.17	.04

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ences between the groups with respect to younger children's goals and reasons, $\chi^2(3, N = 96) = 0.17$, $p = .98$, for goals and $\chi^2(3, N = 96) = 3.22$, $p = .36$, for reasons.

Mothers' Perspectives on the Impact of Mediation: The Follow-Up Interview

Mothers in the mediation group reported more frequent changes in their children's conflicts, $t(27) = 4.05$, $p < .01$ ($M = 1.89$, $SD = 0.32$ for change in the mediation group and $M = 1.00$, $SD = 1.00$, for change in the control group). Mothers who reported changes frequently mentioned that fewer conflicts were taking place, that they were more aware of their children's conflicts, or that conflict outcomes had improved. When mothers in the mediation group reported that change had occurred, they most often cited participation in the study or changes in the children's motivations as factors. In contrast, when mothers in the control group reported changes, they more frequently mentioned a lack of opportunity for conflicts to occur. In contrast, there were no differences between groups in the reported reoccurrence of the specific conflict issue that family members had discussed in the laboratory; 10 mediation and 14 control group mothers reported reoccurrences. All of the mothers in the mediation group reported that they would continue to use the mediation procedures that had been taught to them. When asked to indicate what they believed was effective about mediation, mothers mentioned that these procedures helped them to remain calm and be less emotional, improved their intervention skills, and helped their children develop their own solutions under the parents' guidance.

Discussion

Can Mothers Use Mediation Procedures? Do They Do So?

It is evident from the results of the present study that mothers can and do use mediation procedures once they have been given some training and there is an appropriate opportunity to use these skills. Mothers in the mediation group reported that they used mediation procedures more often, and adjudication or no intervention less often, during children's disputes at home during the phone diary week. In addition, children in the mediation group reported that their mothers used mediation-like interventions during this week more often than did children in the control group. Importantly, mothers in the mediation group were observed to use mediation procedures during the recurring conflict discussion: They spoke more often about emotions, interests, the process, and ground rules than comparison mothers did. As well, they supplied information, directed discussion, and reasoned more often during the discussion about recurring issues than did mothers in the control group. These topics and strategies are similar to those used by more formal mediators (Slaikeu, Culler, Pearson, & Thoennes, 1985).

Although many mothers had some knowledge of mediation procedures, they were unlikely to be using these procedures in their children's disputes. Control group mothers reported only negligible use of mediation techniques in their phone diary reports, and, presumably, mediation group mothers would have done the same without the specific training they received in this study. However, every mother in the mediation group reported that she would continue to use mediation procedures. Why were mothers not previously using mediation procedures at home with their children? And why did mediation group mothers want to use these procedures after the study? This type of "paradox of the hesitant but satisfied mediation participant" (McEwen & Milburn, 1993, p. 23) is not unique to this study but has been found in other research as well. It may be that mothers rarely used familiar mediation procedures at home because they did not previously think to do so within the context of sibling disputes. It is likely that what they knew about mediation had been applied to adult negotiations and had not been specifically adapted for use with children; they may not have expected that their children would be responsive to mediation procedures. However, after using mediation to discuss their children's recurring issues, these mothers reported high rates of satisfaction with the procedures.

Another reason that mothers may not have previously used mediation at home with their children is time pressure. Mediation is the style of choice when time is not as important and when the parties have to work together in the future (Lewicki & Sheppard, 1985). It is important to not rush into settlement during mediations because power imbalances between antagonists may be ignored when outcomes are rushed. Indeed, many power imbalances may be addressed by "merely spending time with the parties, together or in separate caucuses" (Davis & Salem, 1984, p. 23).

Can Children Respond to Mothers' Mediation Efforts Appropriately?

Similar to their mothers, the children in the mediation group discussed emotions and ground rules more often than their counterparts in the control group during the recurring conflict discussion. Talk about emotions is particularly significant. Past work has revealed links between parents' emotional expressiveness and children's later responses to others' distress or anger as well as children's emotional understanding (Dunn, Brown, & Beardsall, 1991; Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, & King, 1979). Therefore, the increased level of discussion of emotions during mediations may facilitate or scaffold children's emotional understanding and prosocial behavior. In turn, improved emotional understanding may lead to more positive relationships overall. For example, mothers' fostering of talk of emotions and individual differences in children's ability to use internal state language are related to sibling relationship quality in both preschool and school-aged dyads (Dunn, Bretherton, & Munn, 1987; Dunn & Kendrick, 1982; Howe, Petrakos, & Rinaldi, 1998).

Two important short-term effects of using mediation procedures were found in this study. First, the conflict negotiations and resolutions in the mediation group tended to be more focused on developing understanding between family members than the negotiations of the control participants.

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Second, mediation helped to empower the children, particularly the younger siblings, who assumed more responsibility for resolving mediated disputes.

Humanistic Mediation Promotes Interpersonal Understanding

There are two major approaches to mediation: the humanistic method and the settlement-driven method. The potential value of settlement-driven mediation is the development of win–win solutions. The value of humanistic mediation resides in factors such as understanding others' needs and feelings and relational development (Folger & Bush, 1996; Pearson & Thoennes, 1988). A case may be made that the mothers in the present study used more of a humanistic approach to mediation than a settlement-driven approach. In this study, family members in the mediation group talked about emotions more often than comparison families did. In addition, mothers and younger children in the mediation group used reasoning more often than their counterparts in the control group, and mediation families tended to resolve recurring conflicts using relationship compromise more often than control families. In contrast, the control participants most frequently arrived at compromises relevant to the issue without attention to improving the quality of their relationships. It was only within control families that issues were left unresolved or that resolutions came about by forcing one child to submit to the other. These strategies and outcomes show that family members in the mediation group were as concerned with relationship or humanistic elements as they were with finding solutions to the issue at hand. In fact, both mothers and children in the mediation group spoke proportionally less often about solutions than their counterparts in the control group. Therefore, it appears that mediation participants were more focused on promoting positive understanding between family members than the control participants were, whereas the control families were more focused on finding solutions to their problems.

Furthermore, mothers reported improved conflict processes in general after mediation training, but there were no differences in the reoccurrence of the specific conflict issue between groups. It could be argued that solution-focused discussions were as effective as the more relationship-oriented processes that mediation families used in resolving specific issues. However, mothers reported more general improvements in conflict processes in mediation families. Moreover, the continuing implementation of mediation procedures may have had more pervasive effects on the relationship between the siblings.

Greater positive emotional understanding may also be linked to greater understanding of disputants' reasons or motivations for their positions. For example, Dunn and her colleagues (1991) found a positive longitudinal association between the frequency of triadic family discussions (especially in conflict situations) about emotions when the second-born child was 3 years of age and this child's affective perspective taking at 6 years of age. In the present study, family members in the mediation group were found to have a better understanding of older children's reasons than did participants in the control group; mothers and younger children in the mediation group more often agreed with older children about these children's reasons. Therefore, mediation procedures appear to have helped improve family members' understanding of older children's motivations. Mediation training has been shown to increase expressions of feelings and explanations of reasons underlying positions in other studies as well (Johnson et al., 1994). Participants explicitly share perspectives in mediation; this experience may lead to improvements in children's perspective-taking abilities by helping to create a shared view of the world (Howe, 1991). It has been found that experience with mediation can significantly improve children's perspective-taking skills over time (Lane-Garon, 1998; Long, Fabricius, Musheno, & Palumbo, 1998). In addition, parties might be better able to see one another's perspectives once they have had a chance to express their own (Davis & Salem, 1984). Facilitation of understanding between family members could be valuable given that siblings (Wilson, Smith, Ross, & Ross, in press) and parents and children (Stein, Trabasso, & Liwag, 1994) have been found to have very different perspectives of the same conflict events. Improved understanding is particularly important in ongoing relationships, because conflicts occur frequently and are not simply isolated incidents. Indeed, recurring issues may be the result of a pattern of misunderstanding about each of the disputants' motivations and interests.

A question arises, however: Why did mediation efforts not improve understanding of the reasons motivating younger children's goals? It may be that younger children themselves were not completely sure of what their own reasons were, making it difficult for others to agree on these reasons. In addition, conflict discussions were relatively brief. More discussion may also have helped the participants articulate, better understand, and remember younger children's motivations.

Empowerment

One benefit of mediation procedures is the empowerment of disputants. Younger children may especially benefit from the use of mediation procedures, given that past research has shown that older siblings use varied sources of power to advance their own causes in disputes (Perlman, Siddiqui, Ram, & Ross, 2000). Older siblings are more aggressive, more argumentative, more likely to invoke parental assistance, and more likely to take a leadership role than their younger brothers or sisters (Brody, Stoneman, & Mackinnon, 1982; Corter et al., 1983; Ross et al., 1994, 1996). When such a power imbalance exists, it is important for mediators to try to balance the situation and empower the weaker party to ensure that a fair agreement is reached (Boskey, 1994).

Mothers' use of mediation procedures in the present study did indeed help to empower the younger children. Although they were not directly instructed to support weaker parties, mothers addressed the power imbalance by

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laying out the process that was going to be used to discuss the issues at the beginning of the conversations, using ground rules (i.e., no interruptions, no name calling, etc.), modeling respectful behavior (i.e., listening and projecting interest), and recognizing the need to express emotions. In turn, mothers' behavior influenced the interactions of the children. Whereas older children in the control group directed discussions more often than their younger siblings did, this did not take place in the mediation group. In addition, younger children in the mediation group initiated the resolution to the recurring conflict discussions more often than those in the control group.

Mediation procedures even influenced the way that younger children viewed conflict management. For example, younger children in the control group chose parents to resolve recurring disputes more often than their mothers and their older siblings, as well as more often than their counterparts in the mediation group; younger mediation group children reported that children should resolve recurring disputes. Therefore, younger children may be able to see that they are able to resolve even complex disputes such as recurring conflicts when they have been exposed to mediation procedures.

Implications for Application and Public Policy

Mediation may hold great promise as a technique for parents' intervention in their children's disputes. However, there are certain limitations of the present study that should be addressed before we can confidently advocate the use of mediation. These limitations include the limited amount of training time for mediation mothers, the use of discussions about conflict rather than actual conflict situations, and the lack of unbiased follow-up procedures to examine changes in the conduct of conflict.

Mediation mothers received only an hour to an hour and a half of training in mediation procedures. Most other training programs usually involve more ongoing and intensive training, often ranging from 16 to 28 hr in duration or requiring an apprenticeship with a trained mediator (Araki, 1990; Danielsson, 1994; Gentry & Benenson, 1992). Therefore, it may be important for future parent training programs to incorporate more gradual and prolonged mediation training. Interestingly, despite the limitations in our mediation training procedures, mothers were clearly able to use mediation and influence the way in which their children dealt with conflicts as they mediated. Perhaps their extensive experience as third parties to their children's conflicts allows mothers to rapidly incorporate mediation procedures in this domain.

Because the recurring conflict discussion was not an actual conflict situation, mothers' and children's behaviors during this discussion may not have been representative of what normally takes place during actual disputes. However, parallel differences in conflict processes were reported by mothers in the phone diaries, and mediation-like procedures were rated by the children as occurring more often at home in the mediation than in the control group. The use of these procedures to assess increases in the use of mediation indicates the generalizability of our findings. What is missing is home-based observations to further verify mothers' increased use of mediation, as well as observations of children's responses and changes in the resolution of issues, parallel to those found in recurring conflict discussions.

Follow-up measures reflecting the long-term impact of mediation were limited to assessments made by mothers 1 month after this study. Although mediation group mothers intended to continue to use the procedures with their children, we do not know whether they did so. Mothers in the mediation group also reported decided improvements in the ways in which their children resolved conflicts; however, their responses could have been biased by the expectations engendered by the training procedures. Clearly, given the positive findings in other aspects of this study, observations of conflict processes subsequent to the implementation of a mediation program are warranted.

Examinations of the effects of mediation on children's independent conflict resolutions would further extend the scope of this research. In addition, the effects of training both parents in mediation and its continued use in the family over a longer period of time, the effects of long-term use of mediation on mental health and well-being, and the effects of mediation in families at high risk for aggression should all be investigated. As well, ways in which to adapt the mediation process to make it better fit family life (e.g., how to make it more convenient) should be explored. All of these avenues of investigation would help in establishing the practical utility and potential impact of parent mediation in children's disputes. What the current investigation does establish is that mothers can use mediation, that young children can be active participants in the process, and that even a limited mediation program can have short-term beneficial effects on children's conflict resolution.

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Appendix

Stages of the Mediation Process

Stage 1: Establishing Roles and Ground Rules

Discuss the role of the mediator and the process of mediation (e.g., there to help but not solve problem, will not be taking sides, teach the word *mediation* and define what it means)

Discuss ground rules (e.g., no name calling, no interrupting, and no blaming)

Obtain consent for ground rules (remind parties that they consented if later broken; if parties are too emotional or continually break rules, try mediation later)

Stage 2: Defining Issues and Clarifying Positions and Interests

Ask for each person's perspective one at a time; ask clarifying questions and restate as needed

Summarize points after each perspective provided

Highlight common ground (i.e., common motivations and interests) between disputants and the issues that need to be resolved

Stage 3: Developing Empathy and Understanding

Work through each identified issue (use open-ended questions to obtain more information)

Discuss goals, emotions, and underlying motivations

Develop empathy by having each disputant repeat back other's points or place one in the position of the other and ask how he or she would have felt in that situation

Stage 4: Reaching Agreement

Brainstorm (ask each party to think of solutions)

Reality check solutions (if solutions are unrealistic, test disputants by asking "what if" questions and make the agreement more specific to include the answers to these questions)

Ensure solutions are acceptable to both parties

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