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Cohesion, Satisfaction With Family Bonds, and Emotional Well-Being in Families With Adolescents

The present paper investigated whether higher cohesion and satisfaction with family bonds were associated with the daily experience of emotional well-being in varying social circumstances. Using a sample of school-age adolescents (N = 95) and both their parents, data were gathered daily over 1 week using a diary approach in addition to self-report instruments. Multilevel analyses revealed higher cohesion to be associated with well-being in fathers and adolescents, but not in mothers. Parents also reported higher well-being when with friends or colleagues than when alone. Moreover, fathers who scored higher on cohesion reported higher well-being when with

family members than when alone, whereas adolescents who scored higher on satisfaction with bonds reported lower well-being when with peers or siblings than when alone.

Experiences in the family are one of the most important sources of both well-being and distress. Experiences of relations with family members are particularly important for the development of interpersonal skills and social bonds (e.g., Ainsworth, 1989; Bowlby, 1977) and, at the same time, represent important individual needs regarding social experiences, such as experiences of relatedness (e.g., Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Given the importance of family experiences for individual well-being and social adjustment, it is important to understand whether and how family functioning characteristics shape emotional experiences inside and outside the familial context. One such characteristic that has received attention as a predictor of well-being in the family is familial cohesion (Olson, Portner, & Lavee, 1985). Indeed, familial cohesion, defined as the degree of togetherness or closeness or emotional bonding that family members have toward one another, was found to be correlated with interpersonal well-being and satisfaction in adults (e.g., Green, Harris, Forte, & Robinson, 1991a, 1991b). Also labeled closeness-caregiving, the

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most important elements of the concept of high cohesion include warmth, nurturance, time together, physical intimacy (affection), and consistency (Green & Werner, 1996). Satisfaction with family bonds, which is related to cohesion, reflects the extent to which the need for cohesion or closeness in family relations is generally satisfied. Research using this type of concept underscores the importance of familial experiences for individual well-being and mental health, yet deeper knowledge of this linkage is required, including which specific affective and social experiences of an individual, within and outside the family, go along with familial cohesion. Is familial cohesion linked to particular feelings in everyday life situations? Is this linkage specific to relationships such as family bonds or peer relationships, or is it nonspecific? Is cohesion linked to specific affective experiences beyond satisfaction with family bonds, or is such a linkage conditional on satisfaction with family bonds? Finding answers to these questions is important because it will help us understand how family characteristics and experiences strengthen or weaken individual well-being and adjustment.

The current study aimed to address these questions using data collected under ecologically valid conditions in daily life by means of an electronic assessment tool. These data allowed us to link familial cohesion and satisfaction with family bonds with the affective experiences (emotional well-being) that adolescents and their parents had in different social situations.

Individual Well-Being and Familial Cohesion

Individual well-being includes a cognitive component, comprised of judgments of life satisfaction, and an emotional component, comprised of high levels of positive and low levels of negative affect (Larsen & Prizmic, 2008). Accordingly, the emotional component ebbs and flows, is subject to situational influences, and can therefore be diminished or enhanced by a wide range of personal responses to the social environment (Larsen & Prizmic). The quality of emotional ties between family members is an important characteristic that affects the situational and generalized well-being of family members and particularly their adjustment to social situations. Important aspects of this may be captured by the concept of familial cohesion (Olson et al., 1985). Studies generally support the notion

that higher familial cohesion plays an important role in individual well-being. For instance, one cross-sectional study on family functioning found higher levels of perceived cohesion among young adult family members to be associated with higher life satisfaction (Manzi, Vignoles, Regalia, & Scabini, 2006). In contrast, lower cohesion has often been linked to psychological problems. One study showed lower familial cohesion to be associated with more problems in social functioning, lower quality of life, and lower subjective well-being in a sample of adult psychiatric patients (Kager et al., 2000). One longitudinal epidemiological study of school-aged adolescents found lower levels of familial cohesion to be associated with affective disorders at baseline, but not at follow-up (Cuffe, McKeown, Addy, & Garrison, 2005). Another longitudinal study found lower familial cohesion assessed at baseline to be an independent predictor of substance abuse in offspring of depressed parents assessed two decades later (Pilowsky, Wickramaratne, Nomura, & Weissman, 2006).

The association between higher cohesion and well-being has been demonstrated in several studies using global measures of emotion (e.g., Berger, 2003; Ellerman & Strahan, 1995; McCarthy, Lambert, & Seraphine, 2004; Vandeleur, Perez, & Schoebi, 2007; Weiss, 1999). Most studies have found this association in samples of adolescents or younger adults. In older adults, Weiss found higher familial cohesion to be negatively correlated with familial stress and positively correlated with physical health, emotional well-being, and satisfaction with life in a sample of 618 subjects (age 18 to 70 years) recruited via an opinion research institute in Germany. Less is known about associations between cohesion and more immediate aspects of family members' emotional well-being. Knowledge on the correlates of cohesion as experienced in everyday life is important because it may provide information on the mechanisms underlying the link between family experiences and the emotional relevance of interpersonal situations and thus about the basis of emotional well-being.

Emotional Well-Being in Different Social Settings

Emotional well-being may vary across social settings and in function of gender. Some argue that women and men hold different standards for

their close relationships and that they have different beliefs about appropriate relational behavior, albeit this positions received little empirical support (Burleson, 2003). Rather, men and women seem to hold similar general standards, but have different relational experiences, which could be a result of gender differences in relational roles and in the way in which roles are fulfilled through behavioral styles (Impett & Peplau, 2006). An important reflection of such a gender difference might be that women are more relationship oriented than men (Impett & Peplau). Relationships are more central in women's thoughts, motives, and behaviors than in men's (Cross & Madson, 1997). As a result, women may adopt a nurturing or caring role in their relationships more easily, and they may be more effective in relationship maintenance behaviors. For example, in a daily diary study, Neff and Karney (2005) found no important difference in the extent to which men and women provided support to each other, but women's support was more adequately timed and adjusted to their partner's needs than was men's support. As a result, men may be more likely to make more positive experiences in relationship contexts than women. A difference in the experience of relationship or family contexts versus extrafamilial contexts between the genders may further be influenced by gender role expectancies with regard to family work, parenting, and professional work (e.g., Coltrane, 2000), which are likely to shape the range of experiences men and women are likely to have within and outside the family.

One previous study of dual-career couples documenting everyday emotions using the experience sampling method during a typical week showed husbands and wives to report different emotional experiences by types of location and companionship (Koh, 2005). Indeed, husbands reported less positive and more negative affect when at work than when at home or in public places. In turn, wives reported more positive affect in public locations than at home or at work. With respect to companionship, husbands reported more positive affect while being with their families than with coworkers or while being alone. Wives reported similar levels of positive affect across all types of companionship but reported less positive affect while being alone (Koh). A similar previous study had shown that mothers typically reported experiencing more positive affect doing activities away from their homes, including being with colleagues and

working at their jobs, whereas fathers reported experiencing more positive affect doing recreational activities in the home sphere (Larson, Richards, & Perry-Jenkins, 1994).

Emotional well-being has also been shown to be affected by the type of social contact during the stages of adolescence. Affect experienced within the family circle decreased in positivity in young adolescence and increased in positivity around middle adolescence for boys, whereas affect with friends became more positive over time, especially for girls (Larson & Richards, 1991). In fact, it has been shown that adolescents become increasingly aware of the differences between the two main social networks in which they simultaneously take part: that of their parents, which is mainly hierarchical, and that of their peers, in which they share more equality (Youniss, 1980). Although younger adolescents had been found to feel more positive toward their parents than toward their friends (O'Donnell, 1979), research has generally indicated that there is a shift in the relative importance of family to friends during adolescence, with girls in particular sharing more intimacy and time with friends than with their parents (Larson & Richards).

Adolescents also spend much time by themselves as a frequent alternative to being with family members or friends (Montemayor, 1982). This may fulfill important emotional needs. Indeed, whereas affect has been reported to be less positive while one is alone than while one is with family or friends (Larson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1978; Larson & Richards, 1991), adolescents generally show better overall adjustment after having spent a certain amount of time alone (Larson & Csikszentmihalyi), particularly older adolescents (Larson, 1997).

Emotional Well-Being and Family Functioning in Different Social Settings

Hartup (1979) maintained that a sense of emotional security provided by parents would allow growing adolescents to become involved in relationships outside of the family, such as relationships with peers that facilitate the achievement of identity. A study by Romig and Bakken (1992) provided some support for this notion, showing that higher familial cohesion was associated with a greater desire for companionship and intimacy in relationships with others (i.e., non-familial relationships) in adolescent girls, and

satisfaction with familial cohesion was associated with an increased desire for affection in these relationships in adolescent boys. Higher levels of cohesion have also been found to be associated with greater satisfaction with family functioning, which includes cohesion as well as family power and decision-making dynamics. For instance, Scabini, Lanz, and Marta (1999) showed that adolescents from families that provided a close, supportive environment with good communication generally reported more satisfaction. Higher cohesion and satisfaction with family functioning have also been found to be associated in adults (Greeff, 2000). Investigation of whether the effects of cohesion or satisfaction with family bonds are specific to close family relationships or to peer relationships or whether they are rather nonspecific may provide further information on the mechanisms through which cohesion is related to well-being.

The association between cohesion and satisfaction with family bonds requires further attention, and it is important to clarify whether cohesion operates as a dimension that is conceptually distinct from satisfaction with family bonds. In addition, it is important to clarify whether and how familial cohesion and satisfaction with family bonds combine to shape everyday life experiences. Indeed, familial cohesion may contribute to the fulfillment of a basic need for interpersonal experiences in the family, and satisfaction with family bonds would reflect the extent to which this need is generally satisfied. Satisfaction with family bonds would thus mediate cohesion effects on daily emotional well-being. An alternative perspective would entail that cohesion effects are conditional on satisfaction with family bonds. Such a moderator effect could be hypothesized for family members, who would report increased satisfaction with weaker familial bonds if it allowed them to pursue individual goals, like a challenging career for adults, for example. Hence, family members who are satisfied with their family bonds, irrespective of whether they are stronger or weaker, would experience more positive emotional well-being than those who are not. This study also assesses whether satisfaction with family bonds either mediates or moderates the effects of cohesion on emotional well-being in both adolescents and adults.

The Present Study

The main goals of the present study can be summarized as follows. First, we aimed to investigate whether higher familial cohesion and satisfaction with family bonds predicted the daily experience of emotional well-being in both adolescents and their parents. Second, we aimed to determine whether satisfaction with family bonds either mediated or moderated the effects of familial cohesion on emotional well-being. Third, we examined whether being in different social settings affected family members' emotional well-being and, fourth, whether differences in emotional well-being across the different social settings were greater for family members who reported higher versus lower levels of familial cohesion and of satisfaction with family bonds. Concerning this last goal, we hypothesized that adolescents who perceived their families as higher on cohesion and on satisfaction with family bonds would report smaller differences in daily emotional well-being across different types of social settings than those who reported lower cohesion or lower satisfaction with family bonds. We argued that adolescents from families with higher cohesion and who were satisfied with bonds in their families would experience similar well-being in the presence of their parents and peers as well as while being alone. In other words, we expected a spillover or contagion effect from feeling well with parents to feeling well in other social settings. In contrast, we expected that adolescents who reported lower cohesion and lower satisfaction with family bonds would experience greater contrast in emotional well-being across these settings. We expected them to experience higher well-being while being with peers or while being alone as compared to while being with their parents. We expected the same pattern of associations for parents.

METHOD

Sample

The sample of this study participated in a larger study that aimed to assess familial stress, emotional well-being, and coping strategies in naturalistic life conditions. Letters were sent to families contacted via the schools, parental associations, and the town registrar in western Switzerland. The letters invited two-parent families with adolescent children who

all lived in the same home to participate in a study on how families meet the demands of everyday life. A total of 118 volunteering families responded to the letters. Inclusion criteria consisted of speaking one of the survey languages (French or German) fluently, both parents and the participating adolescent(s) being present in the home at some time for at least 5 days during the self-observation week, and the study participation week being a normal week (no holidays, no moving, and no major life events experienced during the past 6 months or expected in the near future). From the original 118 families, 102 families were eligible for participation on the basis of these criteria, from which 99 finally agreed to participate. From this sample, 95 families delivered adequate data. The remaining families either did not complete the assessment procedure or delivered inadequate data, mainly attributable to technical problems with the electronic diary device.

Data from both parents and one child per family (the oldest participating child) were included in analyses. The final sample was thus comprised of 95 adolescents and both their parents. Parents (50% male; mean age: 46 years; *SD*: 5.8 years) were mostly married (91%) and well educated, many of them having completed professional specialty education (37%). Indeed, 53% of the husbands and 21% of the wives had completed higher education. The adolescents (54% male) revealed a mean age of 15.6 years (*SD*: 0.90 years), their ages ranging from 13.4 to 18.5 years. Sixty-nine percent of the children were first born in the family, with 16%, 12%, and 3% second, third, and fourth born, respectively.

Instruments

Data on emotional states were collected using a diary approach. Variants of this method have been developed by several authors over the past decades (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1987; Fahrenberg & Myrtek, 1996). The diary method records experiences in real-life circumstances in an ongoing sequence of actions and reactions and, therefore, offers the advantage of capturing emotions and behaviors in their natural context (Perrez & Reicherts, 1987, 1996). Our study used Hewlett Packard HP 360 XL pocket computers with a touch screen sensitive to a pointing device, which could be carried around by family members during their everyday activities. These

computers produced random acoustic signals six times per day (over the period of 1 week) within certain time slots (three at mealtimes, two during the day, and one in the evening), and subjects then completed preprogrammed questions. The diary software (Family Self-Monitoring System-revised version [FASEM-C]; Perrez, Schoebi, & Wilhelm, 2000) was specifically designed for the study and allowed for the recording of contextual indicators, including the presence of other family members or colleagues and friends. At baseline, subjects had also completed several other self-rating scales assessing psychopathology and aspects related to dyadic and familial adjustment. There were no significant differences between the French and German versions of the scales used in the present paper.

The FASEM-C. Subjects were asked to specify how they felt at each moment of recording according to a series of six adjectives rated on a Likert scale: *satisfied-unsatisfied*, *sad or depressed-happy*, *concerned or anxious-confident*, *angry-peaceful*, *tense-relaxed*, and *stressed-at ease*. As the subjects had completed the questions on emotional well-being 6 times per day, a total of 42 moments of observation were available for each subject for the week. Prior analysis of the FASEM-C revealed satisfactory psychometric properties for the emotional subscale including a split-half reliability coefficient of .98 (Perrez et al., 2000). Moreover, subjects were asked to specify which persons were present at each time of recording. The specific social settings variables linked to each recording were defined as binary dummy variables in our analyses as follows: in parents (a) *being with the spouse, the child(ren) or both*, (b) *being with colleague(s) or friend(s)*, and (c) *being alone* (reference category); in adolescents (a) *being with the parent(s)*, (b) *being with peers, sibling(s) or both*, and (c) *being alone* (reference category).

The Family Life Scale (FLS). The FLS is a self-report instrument based on the Coping and Stress Profile (CSP; Olson & Stewart, 1991). The FLS included items assessing familial cohesion, adaptability, and communication. Previous analyses revealed satisfactory psychometric properties for the German and French versions of

the FLS (Vandeleur, 2003). From the three original subscales, only the cohesion score was used in our analyses. The cohesion items revealed α coefficients of .83 in adults and .87 in adolescents. An example of a cohesion item is "In our family, we feel very close to each other."

Six items, which were developed for the current study, assessed satisfaction with family functioning on the cohesion, adaptability, and communication dimensions (two items for each subscale). For the current purpose, a subscore including the two items assessing satisfaction with cohesion, which we have labeled satisfaction with family bonds, was used. We found satisfactory α coefficients for this subscore: .84 in our adult and .76 in our adolescent samples, respectively. The satisfaction with family bonds questions were "How satisfied are you personally with the emotional climate in your family in general?" and "How satisfied are you personally with the way in which family members attend to each other, show their attention and comfort each other?"

Statistical Analyses

Prior to testing our main hypotheses, preliminary analyses were conducted including testing for differences in FLS and Emotion FASEM-C scores between the family members (using paired sampled t tests for nonindependent data) as well as establishing (Pearson) correlation coefficients between the scores of family members. In these analyses, the overall emotion score was an average score for each person across all types of situations.

Owing to the nested structure of the repeated measures data, we chose a multilevel analysis approach to test our hypotheses (e.g., Goldstein, 1995; Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006; Singer, 1998; Wilhelm, 2001), using the PROC MIXED procedure from the Statistical Analysis System for Windows (SAS version 9.1.3). Because data from fathers, mothers, and adolescents were not independent, we used a multiple intercept approach to simultaneously estimate family members' coefficients in a single equation (e.g., Kenny et al.; Raudenbush, Brennan, & Barnett, 1995). The basic application of this approach to daily diary data from family members is described by Laurenceau and Bolger (2005). In this approach, nonindependence between family members' reports is captured by correlated residuals of outcomes across time (repeated

measurements), and across families. The first independent variable introduced into the model was familial cohesion, which was grand-mean centered for mothers, fathers, and adolescents, separately. Next, two series of dummy variables were created to evaluate the three types of social situations ("being with family members" and "being with colleagues or peers" versus "being alone" used as the reference category). To control for the between-person effects of these social contacts variables on emotional well-being, the average for each dummy variable was computed, reflecting the person's odds of being in that particular social situation, and entered into the model as a fixed effect. In addition, the models were adjusted for gender of adolescents, and age of adolescents.

This information is specified in the following equation where Level 1 was defined as

Well-being

$$\begin{aligned}
 &= b_0(\text{Wb_M}) + b_1(\text{Wb_F}) \\
 &+ b_2(\text{Wb_A}) + b_3(\text{FAM_M}) \\
 &+ b_4(\text{FAM_F}) + b_5(\text{FAM_A}) \\
 &+ b_6(\text{COL_M}) + b_7(\text{COL_F}) \\
 &+ b_8(\text{COL_A}) + b_9(\text{FAM_mean_M}) \\
 &+ b_{10}(\text{FAM_mean_F}) + b_{11}(\text{FAM_mean_A}) \\
 &+ b_{12}(\text{COL_mean_M}) + b_{13}(\text{COL_mean_F}) \\
 &+ b_{14}(\text{COL_mean_A}) + r_1(\text{M}) \\
 &+ r_2(\text{F}) + r_3(\text{A}).
 \end{aligned}$$

In this model (Model 1), the parameters b_0 to b_2 reflect the mothers', fathers', and adolescents' emotional well-being in "being alone" situations when all predictors are held constant at the individual's average level. The estimates for b_3 to b_8 represent the within-person effects of social situations "being with family members" (FAM) and "being with colleagues or peers" (COL) for each individual. Next, the estimates for b_9 to b_{14} represent the between-person effects (mean scores) of the social situations variables for mothers, fathers, and adolescents, respectively. Finally, r_1 , r_2 , and r_3 represent the level -1 residuals of each family member, and these were allowed to be correlated.

The between-family Level 2 of Model 1 was defined as

$$\begin{aligned} b_0 &= g_{00} + g_{01}(\text{COH_M}) + u_0 \\ b_1 &= g_{10} + g_{11}(\text{COH_F}) + u_1 \\ b_2 &= g_{20} + g_{21}(\text{COH_A}) \\ &\quad + g_{22}(\text{GENDER_A}) + g_{23}(\text{AGE_A}) + u_2. \end{aligned}$$

The estimates for g_{00} , g_{10} , and g_{20} reflect the sample average of mothers', fathers', or adolescents' emotional well-being. The estimates for g_{01} , g_{11} , and g_{21} capture the main effect of the subjects' cohesion scores on their average emotional well-being in "being alone" situations. Finally, u_0 to u_2 are the family level residuals.

The second model (Model 2) expressed emotional well-being as a function of social contacts, with the influence of social contacts on well-being being mediated by cohesion. Indeed, cohesion is likely to partially account for the frequency of type of social settings (e.g., persons scoring higher on familial cohesion are likely to experience more frequent contacts with family members). This model used the same Level 1 equation as Model 1, although Level 2 was further defined as

$$\begin{aligned} b_0 &= g_{00} + g_{01}(\text{COH_M}) + u_0 \\ b_1 &= g_{10} + g_{11}(\text{COH_F}) + u_1 \\ b_2 &= g_{20} + g_{21}(\text{COH_A}) \\ &\quad + g_{22}(\text{GENDER_A}) + g_{23}(\text{AGE_A}) + u_2 \\ b_3 &= g_{30} + g_{31}(\text{COH_M}) + u_3 \\ b_4 &= g_{40} + g_{41}(\text{COH_F}) + u_4 \\ b_5 &= g_{50} + g_{51}(\text{COH_A}) + u_5 \\ b_6 &= g_{60} + g_{61}(\text{COH_M}) + u_6 \\ b_7 &= g_{70} + g_{71}(\text{COH_F}) + u_7 \\ b_8 &= g_{80} + g_{81}(\text{COH_A}) + u_8. \end{aligned}$$

The effects g_{31} to g_{81} capture the moderator effects of the family member's cohesion on the social situation effects (i.e., whether differences in social situation effects across families are associated with cohesion).

Third, the association between cohesion, satisfaction with family bonds, and well-being was tested in Model 3 by entering both FLS

variables simultaneously into the equation. We tested for a mediational path from cohesion to emotional well-being via satisfaction with family bonds. Alternatively, we tested for a moderation effect of satisfaction with family bonds on the path from cohesion to emotional well-being by including the interaction term of Cohesion \times Satisfaction with family bonds into the models.

In a next step, Model 1 was extended to assess the independent effect of satisfaction with family bonds on emotional well-being (Model 4) and moderator effects of satisfaction with family bonds and the social contacts variables on emotional well-being (Model 5).

All models were evaluated by comparing the deviance statistics (-2 Res Log Likelihood Criterion) to determine whether the fit of a model had improved as compared to a previous model.

RESULTS

Descriptive Analyses

Table 1 provides the mean scores and standard deviations by gender of parents and offspring. Paired sample t tests revealed only a few differences in mean scores between family members. Mothers and fathers rated cohesion higher than their sons (mothers – sons: $t = 2.92$, $p < .01$; fathers – sons: $t = 3.80$, $p < .001$), whereas mothers rated satisfaction with family bonds higher than their sons ($t = 2.30$, $p < .05$).

Table 2 reveals the correlation coefficients for the FLS and well-being scores by gender of parents and offspring. All the scores were significantly correlated in fathers. In mothers, satisfaction with family bonds was correlated with cohesion ($r = .59$, $p < .001$) and with emotional well-being ($r = .32$, $p < .01$), although cohesion and emotional well-being were not intercorrelated ($r = .09$, ns). In both girls and boys, cohesion was significantly correlated with satisfaction with family bonds (girls: $r = .71$, $p < .001$; boys: $r = .65$, $p < .001$), although neither of the FLS scores was correlated with emotional well-being (Table 2).

Effects of Cohesion and Social Contacts on Emotional Well-Being

First, the variables for emotional well-being in mothers, fathers, and adolescents in default

Table 1. Mean Scores and Intrafamilial Differences for FLS and Well-Being

Sample	Mean Scores (SD)			
	1	2	3	4
	Mothers (n = 95)	Fathers (n = 95)	Girls (n = 41)	Boys (n = 54)
Cohesion	22.9 (3.85)	22.6 (3.64)	21.9 (4.33)	20.7 (4.62)
Satisfaction with bonds	9.9 (1.81)	9.4 (1.78)	9.6 (2.42)	9.2 (1.99)
Emotional well-being	4.9 (.63)	4.8 (.62)	4.9 (.64)	5.0 (.48)

Comparisons	Intrafamilial Differences: Paired Sample <i>t</i> Tests (<i>t</i> Values)				
	1 vs. 2	1 vs. 3	1 vs. 4	2 vs. 3	2 vs. 4
Cohesion	−0.52	1.84	2.92**	−0.16	3.80***
Satisfaction with bonds	−1.56	0.37	2.30*	−0.88	1.04
Emotional well-being	−0.84	−0.52	−1.09	−1.54	−1.35

p* < .05. *p* < .01. ****p* < .001.

Table 2. Pearson Correlations Between FLS and Well-Being Scores

Subscores	1	2	3
Mothers (<i>n</i> = 95: above the diagonal); Fathers (<i>n</i> = 95: below the diagonal)			
1. Cohesion	—	.59***	.09
2. Satisfaction with bonds	.63***	—	.32**
3. Emotional well-being	.32**	.42***	—
Girls (<i>n</i> = 41: above the diagonal); boys (<i>n</i> = 54: below the diagonal)			
1. Cohesion	—	.71***	.13
2. Satisfaction with bonds	.65***	—	.29
3. Emotional well-being	.20	.22	—

p* < .01. *p* < .001.

social situations when all predictors were held constant were high, showing family members to have reported rather positive emotions during the week (Table 3). With an average value of 6.3 (*p* < .001) over all observations, adolescents reported particularly high well-being. Model 1 reveals higher cohesion to significantly predict emotional well-being in fathers ($\beta = .05, p < .01$) and children ($\beta = .03, p < .05$), but not in mothers ($\beta = .01, ns$). With respect to the within-person effects of the social contacts variables, being with friends or colleagues was associated with higher emotional well-being than being alone in both mothers ($\beta = .47, p < .001$) and fathers ($\beta = .28, p < .01$), and being with the spouse, children, or both was associated with higher emotional well-being in fathers ($\beta = .07, p < .01$) than being alone.

In adolescents, being with peers or siblings was associated with higher emotional well-being ($\beta = .16, p < .001$) than being alone. With respect to the between-person effects of the social contacts variables, mothers tended to report more positive emotional well-being when with family members ($\beta = .84, p < .05$) than when alone, whereas adolescents tended to report lower emotional well-being when with their parents ($\beta = -1.1, p < .01$) than when alone. To summarize, higher cohesion was significantly associated with well-being in fathers and children, but not in mothers. Furthermore, being with friends or colleagues was associated with higher well-being than being alone in both mothers and fathers, whereas being with the spouse, children, or both was associated with higher well-being in fathers than being alone. In adolescents, being with peers or siblings was associated with higher well-being than being alone. Model 2 (Table 3) essentially confirmed these associations and further estimated whether the differences in social situation effects were associated with cohesion. In this model, being with the spouse, children, or both was associated with higher emotional well-being than being alone for fathers who scored higher on cohesion ($\beta = .01, p < .05$).

Cohesion, Satisfaction With Family Bonds and Emotional Well-Being

Table 4 shows the results of Model 3 with both FLS variables entered simultaneously into the equation. There were significant associations

Table 3. *Effects of Cohesion and Social Contacts on Emotional Well-Being (N = 95 Families)*

	Model 1		Model 2	
	12,781.8		12,815.7	
Fixed Effects	β	SE	β	SE
Mothers (<i>n</i> = 95)				
Emotional well-being (constant)	4.3***	.22	4.3***	.22
Cohesion	.01	.02	.01	.02
Being with spouse and/or children	.03	.03	.04	.03
Being with friends or colleagues	.47***	.07	.46***	.07
Being with spouse and/or children (mean)	.84*	.38	.84*	.38
Being with friends or colleagues (mean)	.69	1.2	.69	1.2
Cohesion \times being with spouse and/or children	—	—	.00	.01
Cohesion \times being with friends or colleagues	—	—	.01	.02
Fathers (<i>n</i> = 95)				
Emotional well-being (constant)	4.5***	.15	4.5***	.15
Cohesion	.05**	.02	.04**	.02
Being with spouse and/or children	.07**	.03	.07**	.03
Being with friends or colleagues	.28**	.09	.28**	.09
Being with spouse and/or children (mean)	.57	.35	.57	.35
Being with friend or colleagues (mean)	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.3
Cohesion \times being with spouse and/or children	—	—	.01*	.01
Cohesion \times being with friends or colleagues	—	—	.00	.03
Adolescents (<i>n</i> = 95)				
Emotional well-being (constant)	6.3***	.94	6.3***	.94
Cohesion	.03*	.01	.03*	.01
Gender	-.18	.11	-.18	.11
Age	-.06	.06	-.06	.06
Being with parents	.01	.05	.01	.05
Being with peers or siblings	.16***	.04	.16***	.04
Being with parents (mean)	-1.1**	.40	-1.1**	.40
Being with peers or siblings (mean)	-.07	.35	-.06	.35
Cohesion \times being with parents	—	—	-.01	.01
Cohesion \times being with peers or siblings	—	—	-.02	.01

p* < .05. *p* < .01. ****p* < .001.

between satisfaction with family bonds and well-being in mothers ($\beta = .14$, $p < .01$) and in fathers ($\beta = .13$, $p < .01$). In adolescents, this association did not reach statistical significance ($\beta = .06$).

Next, we tested whether satisfaction with family bonds mediated the effects of cohesion on emotional well-being. A regression analysis showed cohesion to significantly predict satisfaction with family bonds (mothers: $\beta = .28$, $p < .0001$; fathers: $\beta = .31$, $p < .0001$; adolescents: $\beta = .33$, $p < .0001$). Furthermore, the Sobel test suggested that the association between cohesion and emotional well-being was significantly mediated by satisfaction with family bonds in both mothers

(Sobel = 3.13, $p < .01$) and fathers (Sobel = 3.0, $p < .01$), but not in adolescents (Sobel = 1.95, *ns*). An additional model, which included the FLS interaction terms, showed that satisfaction with family bonds did not moderate the effect of cohesion on emotional well-being in any of the family members (i.e., the interaction terms were all nonsignificant).

Effects of Satisfaction With Family Bonds and Social Contacts on Emotional Well-Being

Table 5 shows the results of the models for the effects of satisfaction with family bonds and social contacts on emotional well-being. Model 4 reveals satisfaction with family

Table 4. *Effects of Cohesion and Satisfaction With Family Bonds on Emotional Well-Being*

	Model 3	
–2 Res Log Likelihood	12,769.4	
Fixed Effects	β	SE
Mothers ($n = 95$)		
Emotional well-being (constant)	4.8***	.07
Cohesion	–.02	.02
Satisfaction with bonds	.14**	.04
Fathers ($n = 95$)		
Emotional well-being (constant)	4.8***	.06
Cohesion	.01	.02
Satisfaction with bonds	.13**	.04
Adolescents ($n = 95$)		
Emotional well-being (constant)	6.3***	.95
Cohesion	–.00	.02
Satisfaction with bonds	.06	.03
Gender	–.17	.11
Age	–.07	.06

** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

bonds to significantly predict emotional well-being in all family members, even in adolescents (mothers: $\beta = .12$, $p < .001$; fathers: $\beta = .14$, $p < .001$; adolescents: $\beta = .08$, $p < .01$). With respect to the within- and between-person effects of the social contacts variables, results similar to those for cohesion were observed in all family members (Table 5). Model 5 essentially confirmed these results and further estimated whether the differences in social situation effects were associated with satisfaction with family bonds. In this model, being with peers or siblings was associated with lower emotional well-being than being alone for adolescents who scored higher on satisfaction with family bonds ($\beta = -.05$, $p < .01$).

DISCUSSION

Our study shows that higher familial cohesion and satisfaction with family bonds contribute to family members' emotional well-being across varying social circumstances in normative middle-class dual-parent families in Switzerland. This study was undertaken to help bridge the gap in research on the processes through which experiences of interpersonal bonds may impact emotional well-being in different contexts and settings. This is one of the first attempts to apply a multilevel approach to study these

dynamics. From a statistical point of view, we used an innovative multiple intercept approach to simultaneously estimate family members' coefficients in a single equation. Moreover, by examining the interactions between the family level variables and the social settings in which emotional well-being was reported, we were able to show that the sociofamilial and emotional dynamics were different for mothers, fathers, and adolescents. Indeed, in accordance with role theory ideologies, the emotional and familial dynamics varied according to familial roles and gender. Hence, a more complete picture of familial everyday life emerges.

Our analyses revealed higher cohesion to significantly predict emotional well-being in fathers. The fact that fathers benefit from emotional closeness to their family members was compatible with the finding that fathers reported higher emotional well-being while being with other family members than while being alone. Interestingly, our data revealed this to be particularly true for fathers who scored higher on cohesion. Therefore, their feeling good with family members depends on the degree of emotional closeness in relationships established with other family members. This is in line with Impett and Peplau (2006) and Neff and Karney (2005), who concluded that men are likely to have positive experiences in relationships. The fact that fathers benefit greatly from emotional closeness in marriage and family life has previously been documented (e.g., Townsend, 2002). On the basis of sociological descriptions from fathers themselves, Townsend further found that the emotional closeness fathers establish with their children is often mediated by mothers. This underlines the role that mothers may play in enhancing familial cohesion.

The present data revealed important negative findings for mothers in that there was no association between familial cohesion and emotional well-being. Moreover, the data did not show mothers to report higher emotional well-being while being with other family members than while being alone. The fact that wives do not benefit from marriage and family life to the same extent as their husbands do has also been documented in the literature. Because relationships are a more central concern to women than to men (Cross & Madson, 1997; Impett & Peplau, 2006), women may adopt a more nurturing role in their relationships

Table 5. *Effects of Satisfaction With Family Bonds and Social Contacts on Emotional Well-Being*

	Model 4		Model 5	
	12,769.9		12,789.6	
Fixed Effects	β	SE	β	SE
Mothers ($n = 95$)				
Emotional well-being (constant)	4.3***	.21	4.3***	.21
Satisfaction with bonds	.12***	.03	.11**	.03
Being with spouse and/or children	.04	.03	.04	.03
Being with friends or colleagues	.47***	.07	.46***	.07
Being with spouse and/or children (mean)	.88*	.37	.89*	.37
Being with friends or colleagues (mean)	.57	1.1	.57	1.1
Sat w Bonds \times Being with spouse and/or children	—	—	.02	.01
Sat w Bonds \times Being w friends or colleagues	—	—	.07	.06
Fathers ($n = 95$)				
Emotional well-being (constant)	4.6***	.15	4.6***	.15
Satisfaction with bonds	.14***	.03	.13***	.03
Being with spouse and/or children	.07**	.03	.07**	.03
Being with friends or colleagues	.28**	.09	.28**	.09
Being with spouse and/or children (mean)	.43	.34	.43	.34
Being with friends or colleagues (mean)	.80	1.3	.79	1.3
Sat w Bonds*being with spouse and/or children	—	—	.01	.01
Sat w Bonds*being with friends or colleagues	—	—	-.01	.06
Adolescents ($n = 95$)				
Emotional well-being (constant)	6.4***	.94	6.4***	.94
Satisfaction with bonds	.08**	.02	.10***	.03
Gender	-.16	.11	-.16	.11
Age	-.07	.06	-.07	.06
Being with parents	.01	.05	.02	.05
Being with peers or siblings	.16***	.04	.16***	.04
Being with parents (mean)	-.90*	.39	-.91*	.39
Being with peers or siblings (mean)	-.08	.35	-.07	.35
Sat w Bonds \times Being with parents	—	—	-.03	.02
Sat w Bonds \times Being with peers or siblings	—	—	-.05**	.02

Note: Sat w Bonds = Satisfaction with family bonds.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

than men. Indeed, it has been shown that the management of emotions in the family or “emotion work,” which mainly consists of providing emotional support to family members and enhancing their psychological well-being, is mostly done by women (see Erickson, 2005). Providing such emotional support should be regarded as work, as one of the potential consequences of this work is emotional exhaustion or feelings of burnout (Erickson, 1993). Strazdins and Broom (2004) showed that the gender imbalance in emotion work affected women’s psychological well-being in a sample of couples of small children. Indeed, when wives do a large amount of emotion work,

their experience of marriage as a source of care and support is eroded, which entails an increased risk of depression in women (Strazdins & Broom). In this respect, we can speculate that if women perform most of the emotion work while being with their husbands and children, this may obstruct them from benefiting from their family lives in the same way as fathers do. Indeed, women may find that they need to do the work of relationships if they want to maintain the emotional closeness that they value, at the cost of benefiting less than men do from the emotional resources in the family (Strazdins & Broom). It would have been interesting to assess the gender distribution and impact of emotion

work on our mothers' sense of emotional well-being while being with their families. This type of data should be collected in similar future studies.

In any case, our data suggested that mothers did not feel better while being with their husbands and children than while being alone. This contrasts to the findings of Koh (2005). It is relationships outside of the family circle that contributed to emotional well-being in our sample of mothers, as they reported higher emotional well-being while being with friends or colleagues than while being alone. This is, however, in line with the finding of Larson et al. (1994). The current sample consists of women with adolescent children and relatively traditional gender roles. For these women, time spent with friends and colleagues outside the family may be more strongly related to leisure and personally rewarding professional opportunities, whereas time spent at home would be more strongly defined by everyday life duties. In contrast, men's time at home is likely to be related to leisure activities. Moreover, similar to Koh, who found husbands to report more positive affect when with coworkers than when alone, our data also showed that fathers reported feeling better while being with friends or colleagues than while being alone, therefore not limiting well-being in fathers to time spent with their families, but to relationships more generally. It should be underlined that our fathers, mothers, and adolescents reported high levels of well-being overall (scoring on average between 4.8 and 5.0 out of a maximum score of 6.0; see Table 1), showing family members to have reported rather positive emotions during the week. This could potentially point to bias in that our subjects reported mostly positive experiences on the measures used in this study. Because our sample of families were volunteers, however, it is likely that they were well-functioning families who showed an increased interest in understanding familial relations.

In adolescents, our data showed that familial cohesion was associated with well-being. The fact that higher familial cohesion contributes to emotional well-being in growing adolescents has been highlighted in several other studies (e.g., Romig & Bakken, 1992; Verma & Larson, 1999). Adolescents also reported higher emotional well-being while being with peers or siblings than while being alone. In contrast, they did not experience higher well-being when

with their parents than while being alone. These findings corroborate those of Larson and Richards (1991), who found adolescents to experience more positive affect with friends over time as the importance of social relationships shifted from parents to friends. Our analyses revealed this to be untrue for adolescents who scored higher on satisfaction with family bonds, as these adolescents reported lower emotional well-being while being with peers or siblings than while being alone. We could speculate that adolescents who reported higher satisfaction with family bonds (and thus had certain emotional needs fulfilled) experienced greater emotional well-being while being alone than while being with peers because this gave them more opportunity for personal growth. Indeed, solitude may provide adolescents with opportunities for personal growth, individuation, and identity formation (Buchholz & Catton, 1999; Goossens & Marcoen, 1999; Larson, 1990, 1997). This could be particularly true for adolescents who are satisfied with the emotional closeness in their families because they benefit more from time spent alone than those who are not satisfied with their families.

Overall, the current data provided unique results concerning emotional well-being in different social situations and how these experiences are—or are not—related to cohesion and satisfaction with family bonds. Taken together, it is important to note that the data did not suggest a consistent association between cohesion or satisfaction with family bonds and how individuals experienced relationships with family members emotionally, compared to when they were alone or with others. The data thus suggest that cohesion effects were rather unspecific to social relationships, although the data hint at the possibility that they may be more important for well-being in the context of family relationships, at least for fathers. Further studies with improved sampling of social situations are necessary to gain more insight in this regard, which will help us to understand how cohesion and satisfaction with family bonds operate to bring about the effects with individual well-being reported in the literature.

With respect to the association between satisfaction with family bonds and well-being, satisfaction with family bonds, which accounted for the association between cohesion and emotional well-being in parents, significantly predicted emotional well-being in all family members. Thus, satisfaction with family bonds mediated

the link between cohesion and well-being in parents. Although this mediating effect was not demonstrated in adolescents, the association between cohesion and satisfaction with family bonds was also positive, which supports the idea that higher cohesion is perceived to be optimal for feelings of satisfaction with the family. These findings corroborate those of Scabini et al. (1999) and Greeff (2000), who found family members from close, supportive environments to generally report more satisfaction.

Some limitations of the current study warrant interpretation with caution. The sample was highly selective, as indicated by the low participation rate. Parents' educational level was above average, and it is likely that participating families were well-functioning families that showed an increased interest in understanding familial relations. This may have had an impact on the results in the sense that limited variability (i.e., because of the homogenous nature of the sample) led to a bias, and the effects attributable to the lower end of the dimensions (i.e., low cohesion, negative emotional experiences) might underestimate the true population effects. It is thus clear that the current findings are not generalizable to all types of families. Nevertheless, our findings can be considered generalizable to well-educated, middle-class, dual-parent families with adolescents, which still represent one of the most important segments of the Swiss population (Swiss Federal Statistical Office, 2007). A further limitation is that the assessment of social situations, although asked in situ, is relatively crude. More detailed information on the social contacts, the relationships with the partners in these situations, and the activities during these situations is desirable. Finally, the further investigation of cohesion and satisfaction with family bonds warrants more detailed scales to assess their associations with familial and social constructs. Perhaps future studies could obtain more extensive details regarding family members' cohesive attitudes in conjunction with their emotional responses recorded in familial and social situations using the diary methodology.

In sum, our analyses showed that fathers who scored higher on cohesion reported higher emotional well-being when with family members than when alone, whereas mothers did not report greater emotional well-being when cohesion was higher or when with their family members as

compared to when alone. Furthermore, adolescents who scored higher on satisfaction with family bonds reported lower emotional well-being when with peers or siblings than when alone. Future studies may strive to examine the potential long-term effects of these findings prospectively, both in clinical and nonclinical samples, and in particular in adolescents who later form their own families of procreation. Indeed, the important question regarding the nature of the associations between familial dynamics, including family functioning for the family as a whole and related social interactions, and psychological and emotional health in families of origin, perpetuated or relinquished across future generations, needs to be further elucidated.

NOTE

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