

Fun and frustrations: Low-income Chilean parents reminiscing with their children about past emotional experiences

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Abstract. One way in which parents support the development of children's socioemotional abilities is through reminiscing about emotional experiences. This study: a) investigated how low-income Chilean families through reminiscing label, explain, and reason about emotionally positive and negative experiences; and b) documented the emotional narrative themes that families discuss. Sixty-two parents and their preschoolers were videotaped reminiscing about a time when the child was happy and a time when the child was unhappy. Half of the children were girls. Narratives were transcribed and coded for a variety of emotion-content categories. Results showed that conversations about negative experiences were richer in emotional content (emotional states, facial expressions, emotional evaluations, emotion causes, emotion consequences, and mind-emotion connections) than positive conversations. Dyads more often discussed outing themes when reminiscing about positive experiences and peer conflict themes when reminiscing about negative experiences. This work can inform interventions targeting low-income families in Latin America.

Key words: Latino, reminiscing, narratives, emotion, preschool.

Resumen. Una manera en que los padres de familia apoyan el desarrollo de las habilidades socio-emocionales de sus niños/as es a través de narrativas (reminiscencia) sobre experiencias emocionales. Este estudio: a) investigó cómo las familias Chilenas de bajos recursos económicos identifican, explican y razonan acerca de experiencias emocionales positivas y negativas; b) documentó los temas narrativos que se discutieron. Sesenta y dos padres de familia y sus niños/as fueron grabados en video mientras recordaban una vez cuando el niño/a estaba feliz y una vez cuando no estaba feliz. La mitad eran niñas. Las narrativas fueron transcritas y codificadas usando varias categorías sobre contenido emocional. Los resultados muestran que las conversaciones negativas son más ricas en contenido emocional que las conversaciones positivas. Las diadas discutieron más frecuentemente temas sobre eventos familiares cuando recordaron experiencias positivas y conflictos con pares cuando recordaron experiencias negativas. Este trabajo puede informar intervenciones con familias en Latinoamérica.

Palabras clave: latino, reminiscencia, narrativo, emoción, preescolar.

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Introduction

The ability to talk about personal and interpersonal emotional experiences is an important component of emotional competence (Bretherton, Fritz, Zahn-Waxler, & Ridgeway, 1986; Denham, 1998; Denham, Zoller, & Couchoud, 1994; Saarni, 1990, 1999). Indeed, opportunities for children to evaluate, interpret, and understand their own and other people's affective reactions through conversations with their parents about past emotional experiences are central to their socioemotional development. In particular, discussions about emotions and mental states during family interactions have been linked to the development of emotion recognition (Dunn, Brown, & Beardsall, 1991), affective perspective-taking (Dunn & Brown, 1993), and understanding of mind (Brown, Donelan-McCall, & Dunn, 1996; Dunn, Brown, Slomkowski, Tesla, & Youngblade, 1991; Guajardo & Watson, 2002; Hughes & Dunn, 1997; 1998). Thus, parent-child conversations about emotional experiences are a unique context for fostering children's socioemotional development (Fivush & Nelson, 2006; Fivush & Wang, 2005). The relation between quality of parent-child discourse and children's socioemotional development is based on the premise that discourse about the social world mediates in part key socioemotional advances in child development such as emotion understanding, and regulation and psychological adaptation (Vygotsky, 1929/1978). Indeed, as stated by Nelson and Fivush (2005), several components contribute to the development of children's personal narratives and autobiographical memory, including language and basic memory abilities, understanding of self and others, and adult memory talk.

The majority of research on differences in family conversations about past emotional experiences has been conducted with middle-class East Asian and European American families (Dehnham, Cook, & Zoller, 1992; Fivush & Sales, 2006; Laible, 2004; Laible & Panfile, 2009; Laible & Thompson, 2000; Sales & Fivush, 2005; Wang, 2001; Wang, Leichtman, & Davies, 2000; Wang & Fivush, 2005). Although to our knowledge there are no studies directly comparing family conversations about past emotional experiences across different socio-economic statuses, prior research suggests that the amount and quality of child-directed speech in middle-income families is significantly higher than that of low-income families (Hart & Risley, 1995; see also Schady et al., 2013).

A study by Marin, Bohanek, and Fivush (2008) found that some of the narrative topics on negative emotions discussed by American parents and their preadolescent children included the death of a family member or pet, illness or injury, and an accident or disaster. Wang, Doan, and Song (2010) found East Asian communities discussing topics related to group activities, social interactions, and behavioral discipline. Studies on Latino family narratives reveal that typically these narratives focus on interpersonal themes such as birthday parties and family trips, activities involving immediate and extended family and friends (Cristofaro & Tamis-LeMonda, 2008; Silva & McCabe, 1996; Leyva, Berrocal, & Nolivos, 2012).

This emphasis on social activities has been described as reflecting the cultural values of relatedness and familismo - a deep sense of loyalty to the family (Halgunseth et al., 2006; Suarez-Orozco & Paez, 2002; Valdes, 1996). In general, Latino parents give great importance to

developing children's social and interpersonal skills through personal narratives (Melzi & Caspe, 2005). For this reason, some studies have found that when engaging in family conversations, Latino parents encourage children to actively participate in the conversations (Eisenberg, 1985; Melzi, Schick, & Kennedy, 2011; Schieffelin & Eisenberg, 1984; Wishard Guerra, 2008; see also Sparks & Leyva, 2013). As a result, less emphasis is placed on the accuracy of the recount or on the temporal and organizational aspects of the narrative (Casper & Melzi, 2008; Melzi, 2000; Melzi & Caspe, 2005; Melzi et al., 2011). The extent to which parents invite children to participate in a narrative by contributing new pieces of information about a past event is related to their autonomy support (Cleveland & Reese, 2005; Leyva, Reese, Grolnick, & Price, 2008). Parents who invite children to co-construct a narrative are giving them a voice; they are providing children with the opportunity to express their own thoughts and feelings in the narrative, and in doing so, they are supporting their autonomy and fostering their sense of self (Fivush, 2001). Importantly, the extent to which Latino parents are supportive of the child's autonomy in narratives greatly depends on the topic of conversation. For example, when Latino parents talk about the child's past misbehaviors, they tend to control the conversation and are not as supportive of autonomy because their main goal is to teach the child a lesson rather than to reminisce about a past event (Leyva et al., 2008). Overall, Latino parents focus more on behavioral expectations and social norms rather than children's thoughts and feelings when discussing emotional experiences (Eisenberg, 1999; Fernandez & Melzi, 2008; Melzi & Fernandez, 2004; King & Gallagher, 2008; Leyva et al., 2008). Similar findings on parents' use of

personal narratives as teaching moments for their children have been documented in East Asian cultures (Mullen & Yi, 1995).

Thus, the objectives of this study were to examine how low-income Latino dyads, when reminiscing, label, explain, and reason about past emotional experiences taking into account additional emotional categories and emotion-term variability. In addition, we also sought to examine the most common narrative themes in those discussions.

Positive versus negative emotion conversations

There are several reasons to expect significant differences in how positive experiences versus negative experiences are evaluated, explained, and talked about by families. Prior research indicates that parent-child conversations about negative emotions, are particularly explanatory, elaborative, and reflective (Fivush, Sales, & Bohanek, 2008). There are more demands to regulate the direction, intensity, and duration of conversations about negative emotions than positive emotions because negative emotions are by definition problematic and disruptive (Denham, 1998; Fox, 1994; Kopp, 1989). In addition, conversations about negative experiences typically revolve around a goal failure or a conflict. By talking about and reflecting upon one's own negative emotions or those of others', families strive towards insight into the causes and consequences of emotions as well as links to other mental states. Family conversations about negative experiences may constitute attempts to understand these emotions, learn how to cope with them, and possibly prevent their reoccurrence (Laible, 2004).

Because the form, function, and processing of negative emotions are essentially different

from those of positive emotions (Lazarus, 1991; Oatley & Jenkins, 1996; Stein & Levine, 1989), we expected differences in family conversations about negative versus positive emotional experiences. While negative emotions are commonly associated with blocked goals and can lead to problematic social interactions and maladaptive behaviors, positive emotions are linked to goal achievement and are related to constructive social interactions and behaviors (Frederickson, 1998). From very early on, children display a remarkable ability to differentiate between negative and positive emotions. For example, infants effectively and appropriately respond to negative versus positive vocalizations and facial expressions (Bigelow, 1999) and can signal distress and pleasure using different vocalizations and facial expressions (Oatley & Jenkins, 1996). Toddlers can effectively match objects with people based on the positive or negative emotions associated with these objects (Repacholi & Gopnik, 1997). During the preschool years, children become proficient at categorizing emotion words as pertaining to positive or negative affect (Russell, 1980; Russell & Ridgeway, 1983).

Notably, when families reminisce about past events, they usually talk more about negative than positive emotional experiences (Brown, 1995; Fivush, 1991; Hudson, 1991). Thus, it is conceivable that children are more likely to talk about causes for the negative rather than the positive experiences in conversations with their parents (Ackil, Van Abbema, & Bauer, 2003; Dunn, Bretherton, & Munn, 1987; Dunn, et al., 1991; Sales, Fivush, & Peterson, 2003), and use more emotion words when doing so (Peterson & Biggs, 2001). Children are also better at remembering and linking previous mental

states to negative than positive experiences (Lagattuta & Wellman, 2001). Furthermore, both adults and children are more likely to use internal state language and, specifically, more cognitive processing words (e.g., realize, think, understand, believe) when discussing past positive and negative emotional experiences (Baker-Ward, Eaton, & Banks, 2005; Bauer, Stark, Lukowski, Rademacher, Van Abbema, & Ackil, 2005; Fivush et al., 2008; Hudson, Gebelt, & Haviland, 1992; Lagattuta & Wellman, 2002). This high rate of cognitive processing words suggests that conversations about negative emotional experiences require more effort for meaning-making than conversations about positive emotional experiences (Burch, Austin, & Bauer, 2004; Fivush & Haden, 2005; Fivush & Nelson, 2006; Fivush & Baker-Ward, 2005; Fivush, Marin, McWilliams, & Bohanek, 2009; Fivush et al., 2008; Sales & Fivush, 2005). Overall, family conversations about emotions constitute a unique setting for the study of children's understanding and reasoning about the emotional and mental world.

Antecedent to the present study

In a previous study (Leyva et al., 2012), we asked these families to talk about past emotional experiences. Parental utterances were coded for emotional content including emotion cause and emotion attribution. Emotion causes involved instances where parents provided explanations about emotion states or reactions to their children ("When Mariano said you were ugly, you became sad.") and/or requested children to provide explanations for their emotions ("Why were you sad?"). Emotion attributions involved instances where parents attributed emotion states and reactions to others or themselves ("It's because you were bored, weren't you?").

We found that low-income Chilean parents used more emotion explanations and inquired about the causes of emotion states or reactions in conversations about negative rather than positive experiences (Leyva et al., 2012). However, parents did not attribute more emotions to the children and/or to themselves when discussing negative as opposed to positive experiences. Furthermore, we did not find a relation between parents' use of emotion causes in conversations and children's social skills as measured by the Challenging Situations Task (Denham, S., Bouril, B. & Belouad, F., 1994, adapted by Bierman, K.L., Domitrovich, C.E., Nix, R.L., Gest, S.D., Welsh, J.A., Greenberg, M.T., Blair, C., Nelson, K. & Gill, S., 2008). One way to explain this lack of association was that parents' inquiries and emotion explanations were sometimes repetitive and did not elaborate on emotion causes. Hence, it was possible that these inquiries and explanations were not conducive to increase children's understanding of their own or other people's emotions. For example:

*PARENT: Why did you like it?

*CHILD: Because I did.

*PARENT: And did you like the animals too?

*CHILD: Yes.

Another way to explain this lack of association was that the category "emotion cause" was too broad. Prior research suggests that there is an important distinction between emotion cause and emotion consequence (Frijda & Mesquita 1998; Saarni, 1999). Because action tendencies that result from emotions are a different component of emotion processing than events and appraisals that lead to emotion reactions, emotion consequences (i.e., emotions leading to events/appraisals such as "I hit him because I was angry!") should be differentiated from emotion causes (i.e., events/appraisals leading

to emotions such as "I started crying because they didn't give me any chocolate"). In our prior analyses, we did not make this distinction.

Furthermore, although the categories (i.e., emotion causes and emotion attributions) used in our previous study are important ways to describe emotion content in parental utterances, they are not exhaustive. There may be other ways in which parents discuss emotions with their children besides emotion causes and attributions, which has the potential to be relevant for the development of children's socioemotional abilities. For example, parents may discuss facial expressions (e.g., crying, yelling) (Lagattuta and Wellman, 2002), emotional attitudes (e.g., like, hate), emotional evaluations (e.g., fun, boring), and mind-emotion connections (e.g., "You were sad because you wanted to go out and play.") with their children in conversations about positive and negative past experiences.

The present study

In this study we investigated how low-income Chilean families reminiscing with their children during the preschool years, label, explain, and reason about positive and negative emotional experiences. Discussing facial expressions, emotional attitudes, emotional evaluations and mind-emotion connections can help children learn how to label, express, and reason about emotions. Hence, it is plausible that by limiting our previous analysis (discussed above) to emotion causes and attributions, we did not capture the nuances of the strategies that low-income Spanish-speaking parents use when reminiscing about emotional experiences with their children. Furthermore, in the previous study, narrative themes were coded in a general way as either interpersonal or personal. In this study, we extended this theme analysis by identifying

the specific topics that families discussed with their children in conversations about positive and negative emotional experiences. This information can contribute towards a better understanding of the socialization practices in Latino parent-child interactions and whether there are cultural differences in narrative topics chosen between Latino, American, and East Asian cultures.

Furthermore, we were interested in deepening our understanding of how low-income Chilean parents and their preschoolers talk about past emotional experiences. This study extends the results of our previous study by including other emotion categories such as facial expressions, emotional attitudes, emotional evaluations and mind-emotion connections, and differentiating between emotion causes and emotion consequences. We sought to: a) investigate whether the differences between conversations about positive and negative emotional experiences observed in our previous study persisted when other emotion categories and emotion-term variability were considered; and b) document the most common narrative themes that these families talked about when discussing past emotional experiences. Our main research questions were:

H1. Are there differences in parental emotional content (i.e., emotional states, facial expressions, emotional attitudes, emotional evaluations, and mind-emotion connections), in conversations about past positive and negative emotional experiences? In line with prior research with other communities, we hypothesized that there would be differences in parental emotional content.

H2. Are parents who use a particular emotional content category (i.e., facial expressions) more

likely to use another emotional content category (i.e., emotional states)? It was possible that there was a strong correlation in the use of different content categories by parents which provides evidence that they can be clustered. However, it was also possible that the categories were not particularly related.

H3. What are the most common narrative themes used by families in conversations about past positive and negative experiences? In line with prior research on Latino narratives, we expected interpersonal themes to be an important part of their conversations. We documented the specific topics that this sample of low-income Chilean families chose to discuss in conversations about past positive and negative emotional experiences.

Method

Participants

Participants were 62 low-income Chilean primary caregivers (56 mothers and 6 fathers) and their preschool children (31 girls and 31 boys) living in Santiago. The mean age of the children was 53.93 months ($SD = 3.65$) with ages ranging from 46 to 60 months. Sixty percent of the caregivers had a high school diploma or a GED at the time of the study. Families were recruited during a Parent-Association Meeting at the beginning of the school year as part of a longitudinal study (*Un Buen Comienzo*) examining the effects of a teacher professional development training on children's academic and socioemotional development. The study was conducted according to APA ethical principles. Parents signed a consent form to participate in the study. All children attended prekindergarten at the time of the study (Chilean prekindergarten classrooms are part of the primary school

system). All schools were public and served primarily “at-risk” children. According to the Chilean Ministry of Education, “at-risk” status is based on: a) parent education; b) family income, and c) whether the household receives social or health benefits from the government (Ministerio de Educación, 2011). Hence, our sample was primarily low-income. Schools were located throughout four municipalities in Santiago.

Procedure

Parents and children were instructed to talk, like they normally would do at home about a time when the child was happy and a time when the child was unhappy. The prompts in Spanish were: “Hable sobre algo que pasó o que hicieron juntos y que su hijo/hija estuvo feliz.” “Hable sobre algo que pasó o que hicieron juntos y que su hijo/hija no estuvo feliz.” The order of the conversations (happy vs. unhappy) was counterbalanced across participants. Instead of choosing a specific negative emotion (e.g., sad, angry, frustrated), we allowed parents to select the negative experience that was more meaningful for them to discuss with their preschooler. Prior research on non-European American family emotional narratives used similar elicitation techniques (Wang & Fivush, 2005; Wang, 2001). Parents were instructed to talk about events that had occurred within the last six months. To facilitate the conversation, children drew a picture and parents used the picture as a conversation starter (this procedure was adapted from Peterson & McCabe, 1983 who used it to elicit personal narratives about injuries in preschoolers).

Conversations took place at the preschool in a room separate from everyone else when the parent either picked up or dropped off the child. In a pilot study, parents were given the option to

conduct the study at home or at school. Most of the parents chose the school because of the convenience. Conversations were videotaped and transcribed using a standardized format, Codes for the Analysis of Human Language (CHAT), which is part of the Child Language Exchange System (CHILDES; MacWhinney, 1995). Tapes were transcribed in Spanish by native speakers. Research assistants stepped out during the conversations so that the dyads would feel more comfortable. Parents were not given any time constraints for completing the task. On average, positive emotion conversations were 3.18 minutes long (range: 0.50 - 6.27 minutes) and negative-emotion conversations were 2.92 minutes long (range: 0.54 - 6.02 minutes).

Coding

Emotional content. Using an adaptation of the coding scheme developed by Lagattuta and Wellman (2002), each parental and child utterance was coded for emotion content as either an emotional state, a facial expression, an attitude, or an emotional evaluation. After the initial coding, the utterances were then categorized as either an emotion cause, an emotion consequence or a mind-emotion connection. Emotional states included terms such as happy and sad; facial expressions included terms such as yelling and crying; emotional attitudes included terms such as like and dislike, and emotional evaluations included terms such as enjoyed and affectionate.

Whenever a parent or child identified an emotion or emotions that resulted from events or behaviors, those utterances were coded as emotion causes (“Are you sad because he left?”). When a parent or child identified an event or behavior as a consequence of an emotion (“Did you hit him because you were angry?”), the utterance was coded as an emotion consequence.

Whenever an emotion was an express result of a mental state (“I’m angry because I wanted to play outside.”), the utterance was coded as a mind-emotion connection.

Narrative themes. Each transcript was coded for narrative theme. To categorize these themes, we adapted categories created by others (Cristofaro & Tamis-LeMonda, 2008; Wang, 2001) such as family outings and also created other categories not reported by them such as family visits and wants denied.

Results

H1. Are there differences in parental emotional content (i.e., emotional states, facial expressions, emotional attitudes, emotional evaluations, emotion causes, emotion consequences, and mind-emotion connections) in conversations about past positive and negative emotional experiences?

Preliminary analyses (t-tests) showed that child gender bore no relation to emotion content in parent’s or children’s utterances ($t = -1.68$). Thus, child gender was not included in subsequent analyses. As for the emotional content in conversations about negative experiences, 84% of parents discussed emotional states, 45% talked about emotional attitudes, 31% spoke of emotional evaluations, and 29% used facial expressions. Furthermore, 50% talked about emotion causes and 19% talked about mind-emotion connections yet only 11% discussed emotion consequences. In conversations about positive experiences, 68% spoke of emotional attitudes, 50% discussed emotional states, 40% talked about emotional evaluations, and 10% used facial expressions. Although 32% of parents talked about emotion causes while reminiscing about positive experiences, not one discussed emotion consequences or mind-emotion

connections. Note that the aforementioned categories in conversations of either positive or negative experiences were not mutually exclusive. Thus, an utterance could have been coded more than once.

Paired t-tests were conducted in order to determine whether there were significant differences in the frequency with which parents used emotion-content categories in conversations about negative versus positive emotional experiences. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for each of the emotion categories for parents and children in both conversations as well as the results of the paired t-tests. Parent’s used significantly more emotional states, facial expressions, emotional evaluations, emotion causes, emotion consequences, and mind-emotion connections in conversations with their children about negative experiences. However, parents used more emotional attitudes when reminiscing with their children about positive experiences.

Chilean children’s utterances were not as likely as their parent’s utterances to have as much emotional content. In conversations about negative experiences, only 23% used emotional states, 19% used facial expressions, 18% used emotional evaluations, and 13% used emotional attitudes. Furthermore, 26% used emotion causes, 6% used emotion consequences, and 5% used mind-emotion connections. Similarly, in conversations about positive experiences, only 15% used emotional evaluations, 13% used emotional attitudes, 10% used emotional states, and 3% used facial expressions. In addition, 10% used emotion causes, 2% used mind-emotion connections but none used emotion consequences. Due to the low frequencies of emotion terms in children’s utterances, we did not conduct t-tests.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics and results of paired t-tests for parents and children's emotional content

| | Negative Emotion Conversation | | Positive Emotion Conversation | | t-test value and sig. |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------|-------------------------------|-------|-----------------------|
| | M (SD) | Range | M (SD) | Range | |
| <i>Parent's emotional content</i> | | | | | |
| Emotion states | 4.63 (4.11) | 0-19 | 1.84 (3.12) | 0-20 | 5.16** |
| Facial expressions | 1.08 (1.63) | 0-6 | 0.23 (.80) | 0-5 | 3.58** |
| Emotional attitudes | 0.90 (1.57) | 0-8 | 2.72 (3.96) | 0-23 | -3.53** |
| Emotion evaluations | 0.98 (2.38) | 0-17 | 0.69 (1.08) | 0-4 | 0.85 |
| Emotion causes | 2.79 (2.30) | 0-9 | 0.69 (1.29) | 0-5 | 7.10** |
| Emotion consequences | 0.15 (0.44) | 0-2 | 0 | 0 | 2.61** |
| Mind-emotion connections | 0.32 (0.70) | 0-4 | 0 | 0 | 3.65** |
| <i>Children's emotional content</i> | | | | | |
| Emotion states | 0.32 (0.70) | 0-3 | 1.09 (0.30) | 1-2 | --- |
| Facial expressions | 0.23 (0.49) | 0-2 | 1.03 (0.18) | 1-2 | --- |
| Emotional attitudes | 0.19 (0.57) | 0-3 | 0.18 (0.50) | 0-2 | --- |
| Emotion evaluations | 0.21 (0.48) | 0-2 | 0.24 (0.64) | 0-3 | --- |
| Emotion causes | 0.39 (0.75) | 0-3 | 0.10 (0.30) | 0-1 | --- |
| Emotion consequences | 0.08 (0.33) | 0-2 | 0 | 0 | --- |
| Mind-emotion connections | 0.06 (0.31) | 0-2 | 1.02 (0.13) | 1-2 | --- |

Note. $df=61$

** $p < .01$

H2. Are parents who use a particular emotional content category (i.e., facial expressions) more likely to use another emotional content category (i.e., emotional states)?

Pearson correlations were conducted to determine whether parents who used certain emotional content categories were more likely to use other emotional categories within each type of conversation (a negative versus a positive experience). Table 2 shows the results of these analyses. In conversations about negative experiences, parents who used more emotional states were more likely to use emotion causes and mind-emotion connections. Parents who used more facial expressions were more likely

to use emotion causes, emotion consequences, and mind-emotion connections. Parents who used more evaluations were more likely to use emotion causes. In conversations about positive experiences, parents who used more emotional states were more likely to use emotional evaluations and emotion causes. Parents who used more emotional evaluations were also more likely to use emotion causes.

H3. What are the most common narrative themes used by families in conversations about past positive and negative emotional experiences?

During conversations about negative emotional experiences, the theme most often

Table 2
Correlations among parent's emotional codes in conversations about negative and positive experiences

| <i>Negative Experiences</i> | 1. | 2. | 3. | 4. | 5. | 6. | 7. |
|-----------------------------|--------|--------|-------|--------|--------|------|-----|
| 1. Emotion states | --- | | | | | | |
| 2. Facial expressions | 0.12 | --- | | | | | |
| 3. Emotional attitudes | -0.01 | -0.10 | --- | | | | |
| 4. Emotion evaluations | -0.08 | 0.00 | 0.20 | --- | | | |
| 5. Emotion Causes | 0.65** | 0.25* | -0.00 | 0.38** | --- | | |
| 6. Emotion Consequences | 0.02 | 0.26* | -0.03 | 0.02 | 0.03 | --- | |
| 7. Mind-emotion connections | 0.52** | 0.40** | -0.02 | -0.08 | 0.41** | 0.11 | --- |
| <i>Positive Experiences</i> | | | | | | | |
| 1. Emotion states | --- | | | | | | |
| 2. Facial Expressions | 0.07 | --- | | | | | |
| 3. Emotional Attitudes | -0.11 | -0.07 | --- | | | | |
| 4. Emotion Evaluations | 0.41** | 0.00 | -0.11 | --- | | | |
| 5. Emotion Causes | 0.65** | 0.16 | -0.05 | 0.45** | --- | | |
| 6. Emotion Consequences | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | |
| 7. Mind-emotion Connections | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

discussed with both genders was peer conflict (25%). Examples of peer conflict issues included name calling or exclusion from play activities by peers. Loss was the second theme most often discussed, predominantly with girls (14%). Death of a family member or a beloved pet are two examples of what parents discussed with their daughters. The second theme most often discussed, predominantly with boys, was “wants denied” (14%). Examples of “wants denied” included the child not being allowed to go outside to play or not being given a desired toy. In conversations about positive emotional experiences, the theme parents most often discussed with both their sons and daughters was outings (30%) -to a theme park or camping, for example. The second most often discussed theme, again with both genders, was social

gatherings such as birthday parties or play dates (22%). Family visits such as going to grandma’s or auntie’s house was the third theme most often discussed during conversations about positive experiences (15%).

Discussion

The main goal of this study was to deepen our understanding of the ways in which low-income Chilean families label, identify, and reason about emotions in conversations about past experiences. Parents used a considerable variety of emotion content when discussing past emotional experiences with their preschoolers. This variety included emotional states, facial expressions, emotional attitudes, emotional evaluations, emotion causes, emotion consequences, and connections between mental

and emotional states. In other studies, the amount and quality of child-directed speech in low-income families tended to be significantly lower than that of families from higher socioeconomic statuses (Hart & Risley, 1995; Schady et al., 2013); therefore, it is particularly remarkable that these low-income Chilean parents are using all these different strategies to discuss emotional experiences with their preschool children.

One of the most striking findings of our study was the distinctive use of emotional states, causes and consequences, and mind-emotion connections by these parents in conversations with their preschoolers. Although most parents (84%) talked about emotional states when discussing negative emotional experiences, only half of the parents (50%) talked about the causes of these emotional states. More surprisingly, less than 20% of parents (11%) discussed the consequences of emotional states and only 19% made connections between mental and emotional states. Conversations about positive emotional experiences followed a similar pattern to those of negative experiences. Whereas many parents talked about emotional states (65%), only some of them discussed the causes of the emotional states with their children (32%). Notably, none of the parents discussed the consequences of emotional states or made connections between mental and emotional states in conversations about positive emotional experiences. It is worth mentioning that, on average, emotional attitudes, facial expressions, and emotional evaluations were used by few parents (18%) across both conversations.

Our results indicate that low-income Chilean parents tend to focus more on identifying and labeling emotional states than on reasoning about the antecedents or consequences of these

emotional states or on making connections between mental and emotional states. It is possible that low-income Chilean parents believed that it is more cognitively appropriate for their preschoolers to be involved in family conversations where emotional states are identified and labeled than in conversations where the causes and consequences of emotional states are discussed. Indeed, in other studies on family conversations, it has been documented that between the ages of 2 and 5 years, there is a significant increase in the frequency with which parents and children talk about emotion causes and consequences (Bartsch & Wellman, 1995; Bretherton et al., 1986; Dunn & Brown, 1993; Dunn et al., 1991). Nonetheless, there is no significant increase in talk about emotional states between the ages 2 to 3 years and the ages 3 to 5 years (Lagatutta & Wellman, 2002). In addition, other studies have documented that many Latino parents do not engage in elaborate conversations with young children because they consider children unprepared for the conversations and thus, unequal conversational partners (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994).

When emotion causes and consequences were discussed, it seemed that understanding the antecedents of emotional states was more relevant for these low-income Chilean families than appreciating the consequences of these emotional states. It is possible that parents believed it was easier for their preschoolers to identify the events or appraisals leading to an emotional state (i.e., causes) rather than identifying the emotional states leading to events or appraisals (i.e., consequences). Remembering what happened before the emotional event rather than after may be easier for children because 'thinking straight' and remembering details immediately after experiencing distress or

euphoria can sometimes be a challenge (Laible, 2004). In general, the finding that low-income Chilean parents provided substantially more explanations about the causes than about the consequences of emotions is in line with research on narratives with other ethnicities (Lagattuta & Wellman, 2002).

Prior research indicates that understanding both causes and consequences of emotional states are important for children's socioemotional development (Frijda & Mesquita 1998; Saarni, 1999). Overall, we found that during reminiscing, these low-income Chilean parents were investing more time and effort on emotion recognition and less on other aspects of socioemotional development -aspects linked to discussing emotion causes and consequences such as affective perspective-taking and understanding of mind. Future research should examine parental beliefs around discussing emotion causes and consequences and link these beliefs to parents' emotional content in conversations about past emotional experiences with their children.

In line with previous research, we found significant differences in the amount of emotion content as a function of the valence of the emotional experience discussed (Ackil et al., 2003; Baker-Ward et al., 2005; Bauer et al., 2005; Dunn, et al., 1991; Dunn et al., 1987; Fivush et al., 2008; Hudson et al. 1992; Lagattuta & Wellman, 2002; Sales, et al., 2003). This finding reflects the differential cognitive demands and effort required to participate in conversations about negative versus positive experiences. Because we often make meaning of negative experiences by talking about them with others, when parents and children discuss these types of experiences, the need to use more emotional states, emotion causes, and emotion consequences is greater

(Fivush & Haden, 2005; Fivush & Nelson, 2006; Fivush & Baker-Ward, 2005; Fivush, Bohanek, Marin, & Sales, 2008; Fivush et al., 2008; Sales et al., 2005). Our finding also reflects the central role that discussions of negative emotional experiences plays in children's socioemotional development in cultures other than middle-class East Asian and European American.

One key difference in emotion content between conversations about positive versus negative emotional experiences was emotional attitudes (e.g., don't like). Parents used significantly more emotional attitudes in conversations about positive experiences than negative experiences. Why are discussions on emotional attitudes about positive experiences preferred during conversations with preschoolers? In our previous study (Leyva et al., 2012), we found that parents discussed an event or events significantly more during conversations about positive rather than negative experiences. Perhaps parents wanted to learn if the child considered the experience (an outing, a social gathering, or a family visit) a positive one, whereas negative experiences (peer conflict or loss) are unquestionable. Further research could clarify the unique role emotional attitudes play in conversations about the positive experiences of low-income Chilean families.

Notably, parents who used more emotional states tended to use more emotion causes, and parents who used more emotion causes tended to use more emotion evaluations in conversations about positive and negative experiences. The positive association between emotional states and emotion causes is clear: all emotion causes imply the use of emotional states (but not vice versa). The positive association between emotion causes and emotion evaluations, on the other hand, deserves further investigation.

The amount of emotion content in children's utterances was surprisingly low in these family conversations. It seems that, in these conversations, children were provided with many opportunities to hear parents identify and label emotional states, discuss emotion causes and consequences at times, and make connections between mental and emotional states. However, these preschool children had very few opportunities to actively use these emotional labels, discuss causes and consequences of emotional states with their parents, or make their own connections between mental and emotional states. The lack of opportunities for preschoolers to actively label emotional states and discuss causes and consequences of emotional states, could also help explain why in our previous study (Leyva et al., 2012) the frequency with which parents discussed emotion causes with their preschoolers was not associated with children's social problem-solving skills.

Besides conducting a more in depth analysis of the emotional content of parent's and children's utterances in conversations about past positive and negative emotional experiences, we also documented the narrative themes in more detail. We found that peer conflict is the most common narrative theme when discussing negative emotional experiences followed by loss and denied desires. Outings and family events were the two most common narrative themes in conversations about positive experiences. Taken together, these narrative themes are strongly linked to Latino parent's socialization goals, particularly those related to developing social skills through family narratives and giving children the opportunity to actively participate in the conversations (Eisenberg, 1985; Melzi, Schick, & Kennedy, 2011; Schieffelin & Eisenberg, 1984; Wishard Guerra, 2008).

Our study was conducted with a relatively small sample of low-income Chilean families living in Santiago. Thus, our ability to generalize the findings of this study to other Latin American countries beyond Chile and to Latino populations living in the U.S., depends on finding further evidence in other communities with similar as well as different characteristics from the one we studied here. We acknowledge that the term Latino is a label of convenience and that although this label represents a group with some shared history (Harwood et al., 2002), there is a significant amount of within-group heterogeneity in Latino practices. It is important to keep in mind that Chile is characterized by a relatively low rate of mestizaje (combined Indigenous American and European ancestry) compared to other countries such as Mexico and Peru (Serrano, León & Rengifo, 2012). It is also important to mention that Chile is now the Latin American country with the highest per capita income and thus known for its relatively stable economic and political environment (Serrano, León & Rengifo et al., 2012). Thus, the living conditions of low-income families in Chile living in Santiago could very well differ significantly from the conditions of low-income families in other countries in Latin America with weaker economies and less stable governments. In future research, we hope to work towards bridging this gap by including other communities outside the metropolitan area of Santiago and outside Chile to fully understand how family practices influence child development in these communities.

Implications

The findings of this study can inform early childhood programs and interventions targeted at developing the socioemotional abilities,

particularly during the preschool years, of children from low-income Latino families. Most family programs on reminiscing strategies in the U.S. and elsewhere have focused on developing children's language and literacy skills (Reese & Newcombe, 2007; Reese, Leyva, Sparks & Grolnick, 2010). There are fewer intervention programs on reminiscing that focus on children's socioemotional development (Van Bergen, Salmon, Dadds & Allen, 2009). Low-income families in Latin America could benefit from intervention programs focused on reminiscing strategies because as our study showed, these parents already use many diverse strategies to discuss emotional experiences with their children. Rather than impose new strategies on families, intervention programs can capitalize on present conversational practices to help children label, identify and reason about past emotional experiences. Thus, programs that promote reminiscing among low-income Latino parents and children may further cultivate children's socioemotional abilities and subsequently foster healthy development and well-being.

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Recibido: 31 de marzo de 2013

Aceptado: 16 de agosto de 2013