EMOTION SOCIALIZATION PRACTICES AMONG LOW-INCOME AFRICAN AMERICAN MOTHERS

by

N. CHANDLER SIMS

(Under the Direction of Kimberly Shipman)

ABSTRACT

Parental socialization of emotion is associated with the development of emotion skills in children. Culture is recognized as an important factor in this process, but little research has investigated emotion socialization among low-income African American parents. Greater understanding of these practices is important considering the unique risk factors that African American children may encounter (e.g., poverty, discrimination). The present study measured parental emotion socialization, including a) awareness, b) acceptance, and c) coaching, as a function of emotion type (e.g., fear, anger, sadness) and child gender. Fifty mother-child dyads were recruited through community organizations and were administered the *Meta-Emotion Interview—Parent Version*. As hypothesized, maternal awareness of child anger was greater and coaching of child anger was less than for other emotions. A gender by emotion interaction emerged for parental acceptance of emotion. No significant gender effects emerged for parental awareness or coaching of emotion. The current study is an important initial investigation of parental emotion socialization practices in African American families.

INDEX WORDS: Emotion socialization, culture and childrearing, emotional development.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A considerable amount of research has demonstrated that emotion management skills are an important component of socioemotional competence in children and psychosocial adjustment throughout the lifespan. Emotion management skills are best described in three categories (a) emotional encoding and decoding which involve the ability to recognize emotional expression in others and the ability to produce clear and appropriate displays, (b) emotional understanding which involves emotional awareness and understanding the causes and consequences of emotional expression, and (c) emotion regulation which describes the ability to regulate emotional expression and experience. The development of skills in each of these categories has been shown to relate to social competence (Denham, McKinley, Couchoud, & Holt, 1990) and psychological health (Cook, Greenberg, & Kusche, 1994). These findings support the assertion that one of the major goals of child rearing is teaching children how to respond to emotionally arousing situations (Barrett & Campos, 1987).

Children's emotional development depends in large part on parental socialization practices, which have several interrelated functions. These functions include influencing the events to which children ascribe emotional significance, teaching culturally "appropriate" reactions to emotionally arousing situations, and promoting culturally prescribed rules for regulation of emotion expression. Thus far, much research has investigated emotion socialization processes among Caucasians, but few studies have focused on socialization among other cultural groups. Considering the important role that cultural expectations play in the

socialization process, it is surprising that so little attention has focused on emotion socialization practices in different cultural groups. Furthermore, despite the lack of attention to specific emotion socialization practices in non-Caucasian cultures, considerable research demonstrates cultural differences in adult emotional experiences, such as emotion expression or emotional understanding in adults. What is omitted thus far in the research is how cultural differences in parental socialization practices may lead to and result from unique cultural experiences of emotion.

The present study investigated emotion socialization practices among African American mother-child dyads. To gain insight into the socialization process, this study investigated parental socialization practices of the emotions of sadness, anger, and fear. Differences in socialization practices as a function of child gender were also considered. The investigation of African American socialization utilizing emotion type and child gender illuminates the unique beliefs and practices that African American mothers employ in teaching children about emotions. A deeper understanding of emotion socialization processes among African Americans is important considering the unique risk factors that African American children may encounter in their development (e.g., poverty, racial discrimination, neighborhood dangers). Investigation of emotion socialization within African American families contributes to a more complete understanding of how culture in general influences the emotion socialization process.

Functionalist Theory and Emotion Socialization

Functionalist theory of emotion provides a foundation for understanding the role that parental socialization plays in the development of emotion management skills and the way that culture may influence socialization practices (Barrett & Campos, 1987; Campos, 1994; Campos, Campos, & Barrett, 1989; Campos; Mumme, Kermoian, & Campos, 1994). The functionalist

approach defines emotions as "bi-directional processes of establishing, maintaining, and/or disrupting significant relationships between an organism and the external or internal environment" (Barrett & Campos, 1987, p. 558). Within this framework, emotion is seen as having both intrapersonal and interpersonal consequences, facilitating individual well-being and social adaptation (Barrett & Campos, 1987; Campos et al., 1989; Frijda, 1986). Interpersonal experiences, primarily in the form of parent-child interactions, are thought to influence the development of emotional competence in children (Barrett & Campos, 1987; Halberstadt, 1991; Saarni, 1990). To function adaptively within their social context, children must learn to express and regulate their own emotions and to respond to the emotional displays of others in a culturally appropriate manner.

The functionalist approach to emotion represents a shift from traditional theories that viewed emotions as feeling states with little or no influence on external events (Cannon, 1927; James, 1890), as well as from theories that define emotions in relation to their characteristic experiential, physiological, and expressive response patterns (Izard & Malatesta, 1987). Although the functionalist approach recognizes the importance of feeling states as well as physiological and expressive response patterns, it emphasizes the intrapersonal and interpersonal functions of emotion. According to functionalist theory, emotions function to meet the needs and goals of the organism experiencing the emotion (Barrett & Campos, 1987; Campos et al., 1989). For example, joy functions interpersonally to increase the likelihood that an individual will continue his or her activity while, at the same time, signaling to others to maintain the interaction. Similarly, sadness functions to elicit help in situations in which an individual recognizes he or she will be unable to attain a goal without assistance. The functional nature of emotion, as emphasized in functionalist theory, has roots in historical theories of emotion

(Darwin, 1872) and plays a major role in several current theories of emotional development (Ekman, 1984; Emde, 1984; Izard & Malatesta, 1987; Scherer, 1984).

Functionalist theory emphasizes that children's emotional development arises through experiences with their environment; these socialization experiences are most concentrated within the parent-child interaction. The functionalist perspective suggests that socialization influences a child's emotional development in several ways (Barrett & Campos, 1987; Campos et al., 1994). First, socialization within the family and the cultural setting prescribes the events that are to be recognized as emotionally significant. Second, socialization experiences demonstrate culturally appropriate responses to emotionally arousing situations so that children may learn how to manage their own and others' behaviors. Finally, in accordance with culturally prescribed rules concerning emotional expressivity, socialization instructs children as they learn to label emotions and to regulate the facial, vocalic, and physiological expressions of them. The socialization figure, most often the parental figure, socializes a child based on her own understanding of emotions, emotion regulation, and expression within the family and cultural context. Through the socialization process, a parent teaches the values, behavior, and cultural expectations that she, through her own experience, understands to be most adaptive within a cultural context.

Other emotion theorists emphasize the interpersonal nature of emotion and the critical role of socialization in emotional development (Lewis & Michalson, 1983; Saarni, 1989, 1990, 1993). Saarni conceptualizes the development of emotional competence as embedded in a social context and emphasizes the adaptiveness of emotion management skills within this context. According to Saarni, emotion socialization occurs through direct and indirect methods and through expectancy communication regarding emotional experiences (Saarni, 1993). Direct socialization methods consist of practices such as didactic teaching and contingency learning.

Indirect processes may also be involved in the socialization process, such as when a child engages in imitation or social referencing. Lastly, expectancy communication involves verbal or nonverbal suggestions regarding expected emotional reaction in a particular situation, resulting in the child's response internalization. Lewis and Saarni (1985) consider the primary function of emotion socialization to be the promotion of emotional competence, or those skills needed for a person to accomplish his or her goals in emotionally eliciting social transactions. They describe emotional development as a process in parallel with an individual's growing awareness of the self in a larger culture. Children may obtain this guidance not only from parental socialization practices but also from a larger cultural socialization process (Lewis & Saarni, 1985).

Lewis and Michalson (1983) propose a similar socialization model, suggesting that children learn how and when to express emotions by adopting culturally determined socialization rules (e.g., a rule that suggests that it is appropriate to say you are angry but inappropriate to show your anger). Further, socialization practices are described as teaching children how to label and decode emotions within specific situations, how to identify emotionally arousing situations, and how to show and dissemble emotional experiences as culturally indicated (Lewis & Michalson, 1983). Consistent with functionalist theory, this model predicts that children who adopt the appropriate socialization rules will function adaptively within their culture. According to each of these emotion theories, socialization experiences influence the development of emotion management skills that are critical to children's socioemotional competence.

Culture and Emotional Development

Numerous emotion theorists recognize culture as an important influence on the socialization process. Saarni, Mumme, and Campos (1998) define culture as "a set of traditional, explicit, and implicit beliefs, values, actions, and material environments that are transmitted by

language, symbol, and behavior within an enduring and interacting group of people" (p. 247). They note the "profound" impact of cultural effects on child development and recognize both direct influences, like diet, housing, or physical objects of an environment, and indirect influences, like the social context in which a child is raised or nonverbal communication strategies. Thus, culture must heavily influence parental socialization practices, as successful socialization by definition requires teaching a child to function successfully within a cultural group (Saarni, 1999; see Eisenberg, Cumberland, & Spinrad, 1998 for a review). Parental emotion socialization practices act as a conduit between cultural context and a child's emotional development within that context. A parent's socialization style depends not only on the private context of the parent-child dyad (i.e., home and family environment) but must also follow from the larger cultural context in which the dyad functions. Parental emotion socialization practices should be profoundly influenced by the very cultural meanings and values that provide cultural group identity.

Parental Emotion Socialization

Consistent with the functionalist theory of emotion, research has demonstrated that parental socialization of emotion plays an important role in children's development of emotional competence. Several important components of emotion socialization have been investigated as specific correlates to emotional competence in children, including family expressivity and emotion discussion and parental response to child's emotion. These components of parental socialization are examined as they influence children's ability to understand, regulate, and express emotions within their social environment in an emotionally competent manner.

Research indicates that family emotional climate (i.e., parental expressiveness) and parental discussion about emotion influence children's development of emotion management

skills and social competence. Parental and family expressivity is associated with children's development of emotional understanding and regulation skills (Denham & Grout, 1992; Denham, Renwick-DeBardi, & Hewes, 1994; Denham, Zoller, & Couchoud, 1994; Kopp, 1992). Research suggests that emotion-eliciting interactions between mothers and children allow children to learn appropriate responses to emotion (Halberstadt, 1991). By watching a mother's emotional behavior, children learn how to respond to their own and others' emotions appropriately. In fact, research indicates that children's affective behavior is very similar to the affective behavior of their mothers (Putallaz, 1987). For example, mothers who discussed feelings with their children in a supportive manner had children who responded to peers in a socially appropriate manner, and mothers who were demanding and disagreeable had children who were overly self-focused when interacting with other children. Denham and Grout (1992) found that mothers who reported less frequent and intense anger had children who displayed more positive emotion, whereas mothers who expressed frequent and intense anger had children who displayed higher levels of anger. Similarly, more frequent expressions of happiness in mothers were related to higher levels of positive emotion in children (Denham & Grout, 1992).

Additionally, children benefit not only from the tone and content of parental emotion expression but also from the overall level of expressiveness. Much research has demonstrated that parental emotional expressiveness is positively associated with children's socioemotional competence (Cassidy, Parke, Butkovsky, & Braungart, 1992; Denham and Grout, 1993). Denham and Grout (1993) demonstrated that emotional expressivity in mothers leads to preschoolers' emotional competence. Emotional competence in this study was based on coded observation of child interactions with mothers and with other children, including the child's emotional displays and reactions to others' emotional displays. Similarly, Cassidy et al. (1992)

found that both mother and father expressivity in the home predicted children's success with peer relationships, as rated by peers.

Empirical research suggests that parental discussion of emotion, in addition to general expressivity, facilitates emotional competence skills in children. Parents who teach their children to recognize and label emotions and who explain the causes and consequences of emotions have children who are better able to understand and regulate their emotions. Maternal use of emotion language (e.g., emotion words, discussion of internal states) to comment, explain, or respond to questions have been found to predict children's concurrent and later understanding of emotion (Denham, Cook, & Zoller, 1992; Denham, Zoller, et al., 1994; Dunn & Brown, 1994; Dunn, Brown, and Beardsall, 1991; Dunn, Brown, Slomkowski, Tesla, & Youngblade, 1991). Research further demonstrates that maternal explanation of causes and consequences of emotion is significantly related to children's emotional understanding. Dunn, Brown, and Beardsall (1991) examined talk about feeling states among preschool children and their mothers and showed a positive relation to the child's understanding of emotions at six years of age. In addition, those mothers who spontaneously explained their emotions during the laboratory simulation had children who were more adept at understanding emotions. Similar to the findings of Dunn and colleagues, Denham, Cook, and Zoller (1992) found that mother-child discussion of the causes and consequences of emotion is important in predicting children's ability to identify emotional expression. Mothers in this study who talked more about the emotions they were asked to simulate had children with greater emotion knowledge.

Parental response to child emotion, whether supportive or punitive, has been shown to significantly impact a child's development of emotional competence. In general, research has demonstrated that parental support of emotion expression leads to children's development of

emotional competence. Roberts and Strayer (1987) showed that parental acceptance of children's negative emotion led to increased general competence in children, a construct based on teacher ratings of seven factors observed in the child's behavior (e.g., friendly vs. hostile, cooperative vs. resistant with adults, purposive vs. aimless). These results indicate that encouragement and support of negative affect significantly increase a child's general competence. The study does suggest, however, that the benefits of parental support have an upper limit and that too much support of negative emotion eventually lowers the child's general competence level. Research also suggests that parental support of emotional expressivity in children has a specific positive impact on emotion regulation (see Eisenberg, Cumberland, & Spinrad 1998 for a review).

Conversely, parents who punish emotion expression in their children have children who are less competent and often emotionally dysregulated. Roberts and Strayer (1987) suggest that parental suppression of an emotion may cause a child to store the negative emotion memory with maladaptive consequences for future experiences with that emotion. Furthermore, mothers who are more controlling (Calkins, Smith, Gill, & Johnson 1998) or who punish or minimize their children's expression of negative affect have children who are more likely to be emotionally dysregulated (see Eisenberg, et al., 1998 for a review; Eisenberg, Fabes, & Murphy, 1996; Eisenberg, Fabes, Shepard et al., 1999).

Emotion Socialization: The Influence of Emotion Type and Gender

Research has demonstrated that parents socialize children's emotions differently as a function of emotion type and child gender (Fuchs & Thelen, 1988; Zeman & Garber, 1996; Zeman & Shipman, 1998). With regard to emotion type, findings indicate that parents respond less supportively to children's displays of anger than to displays of happiness or sadness

(Shipman & Zeman, 2001, 1999). These findings are consistent with previous research indicating that children expect their mothers to respond more positively to displays of sadness than to displays of anger (Fuchs & Thelen, 1988; Zeman & Shipman, 1996). Researchers suggest that mothers socialize children to control their expression of anger in particular. Likely as a result of these early socialization experiences, elementary-school children expect little emotional support or assistance from their parents following expression of anger (Zeman & Shipman, 1996). Gottman, Katz, and Hooven (1997) report that some parents in their studies punished the expression of anger, even when the anger was not accompanied by any misbehavior.

Socialization practices also differ as a function of the child's gender. Research demonstrates that parents respond less supportively to expressions of sadness in boys than in girls (Brody, 1999; Brody & Hall, 1993; Casey & Fuller, 1994; Malatesta & Haviland, 1982). Findings indicate that girls expect more support for displays of sadness than do boys (Fuchs & Thelen, 1988), and boys expect more support for displays of anger than do girls (Perry, Perry & Weiss, 1989). Research with predominantly Caucasian participants suggests that emotion socialization practices reflect stereotyped gender socialization, in that boys are supported in feeling anger and pride, whereas girls are supported in feeling emotions that "restore social bonding" (e.g., empathy, sadness) (Chaplin, Cole, & Zahn-Waxler, 2005; Brody, 1999) .

Differences in emotion socialization as a function of gender are reflected in parental discussion of emotion with their children (Brody & Hall, 2000; Cervantes & Callanan, 1998). Brody and Hall (2000) report that parents of preschoolers talk about emotion more with girls than they do with boys and often emphasize the emotional experience and expression as they do so. Others have found that mothers speak more frequently about anger with boys than with girls

(Dunn, Brown, & Beardsall, 1991; Radke-Yarrow & Kochanska, 1990). Together, these studies suggest that parents socialize boys and girls differently, and these differences likely reflect different expectations and goals that parents have for emotion expression in their boys and girls.

Consistent with socialization research, children's emotional behavior differs as a function of gender (Brody, 1999; Saarni, 1993, Zeman & Shipman, 1998). In general, research suggests that girls are more likely to express the emotion of sadness because they expect to receive more support for this expression than do boys (Zeman & Garber, 1996: Zeman & Shipman, 1996). Zeman and Garber (1996) found that boys regulate the expression of sadness and pain more than girls. Similarly, Belle, Burr, and Cooney (1987) found that girls are more likely than boys to seek emotional support from others through expression of negative emotion. Consistent with past research, Shipman, Zeman, Nesin, and Fitzgerald (2003) found that girls reported using crying to express emotion more than boys. These findings are consistent with theories of gender role socialization indicating that certain emotional displays are considered to be more culturally appropriate for females than males (Brody & Hall, 2000). Finally, findings indicate that girls are better able than boys to encode facial expressions, probably because girls' emotional expression is encouraged more than boys' (Buck, Miller, & Caul, 1974; Hall, 1984; Zuckerman & Przewuzman, 1979; see Saarni, 1999 for a review).

Emotion Socialization and African American Families

Culture has been shown to play a significant role in shaping parental socialization practices. Numerous researchers have emphasized the influence of cultural context on parental emotion socialization and children's emotional development (see Saarni, 1999 for a review). A majority of available studies, however, have focused on Caucasian, middle-class families, with only a few studies focusing on African American families. Smith & Walden (1998, 2001) have

investigated components of emotional development with a specific focus on African American children. In 1998, they found that the effects of child age and cognitive-language ability had similar effects on emotional development among African American children as have been found among Caucasian samples. That is, research among both Caucasian and African American children suggests that age and cognitive-language ability contribute to the child's emotional understanding. Smith and Walden (2001) investigated the effect of maternal emotion socialization practices on children's ability to regulate their behavior in emotionally-arousing situations in African American families. Findings indicated a relation between supportive parental response to negative emotion and children's use of adaptive coping styles. As with previous findings among Caucasian families, they also found that child socioemotional competence and parental socialization practices predicted behavioral regulation in children.

One group of researchers has investigated gender differences in emotion expression among African American participants (Underwood, Coie, and Herbsman, 1992). After presenting anger-arousing vignettes to 8-to-13 year old African American children, the investigators found that preadolescent girls in this group judged themselves less likely than boys to mask their expression of anger. The authors suggest that among African Americans, boys are expected to "contain" themselves and their expression of anger more than girls are expected to do so. These findings appear to be different from previous research with Caucasian samples.

Finally, research with African American children has investigated emotional understanding across emotions. Smith and Walden (1998) found that African American children in their study were equally able to identify fear as they were able to identify sadness, anger, and happiness. They pointed out that this result marks a departure from previous research suggesting that Caucasian children are more capable of identifying happiness and sadness than anger, fear,

and surprise (Camras & Allison, 1985; Walden & Field, 1982) and that African American children may show more understanding of happiness, anger, and sadness than of fear (Garner, Jones, & Miner, 1994).

The Present Study

The present study examined maternal emotion socialization practices within African American families as a function of emotion type (i.e., sadness, anger, and fear) and child gender. In particular, three aspects of emotion socialization were investigated (a) awareness (e.g., parents' ability to accurately identify, describe, and speak with the interviewer about child's emotion), (b) acceptance (e.g., parents' comfort level with emotion and non-punitive response to emotional expression), and (c) coaching (e.g., parents' involvement in child's experience of emotion, discussion of emotion with child, and teaching about emotion). This study contributes to the literature on parental emotion socialization by investigating socialization processes within a specific cultural context. This investigation may offer insight into the unique beliefs and values that shape African American mothers' emotion socialization practices. A better understanding of socialization practices in this culture is particularly important considering certain factors that affect low-income African American families (e.g., poverty, racial discrimination, neighborhood dangers).

Given research that demonstrates socialization differences as a function of emotion type, this study investigated socialization practices using three types of emotion (Fuchs & Thelen, 1988; Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1997; Shipman & Zeman, 2001). The emotions of sadness, anger, and fear were included because they are commonly experienced in childhood and, when socialized effectively, are thought to help children to achieve goals important to their intra- and interpersonal well-being (Barrett & Campos, 1987). Research has demonstrated that parents

respond less positively to expressions of anger beginning in infancy and continuing through childhood. In particular, parents do not support and sometimes punish anger expressions in order to promote the goal of anger reduction in their children (Fuchs & Thelen, 1988; Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1997). The majority of this research has been conducted with middle-class Caucasian families.

Research with predominantly Caucasian families further suggests that parental socialization practices differ according to the gender of the child (Brody, 1999; Brody & Hall, 1993; Casey & Fuller, 1994; Fuchs & Thelen, 1988). Findings indicate that parents support girls more than boys in most forms of emotional expression, especially with regard to sadness and emotional displays like crying (Brody, 1999; Fuchs & Thelen, 1988; Shipman et al., 2003). Boys, on the other hand, may be more supported in expressions of anger than girls (Brody, 1999; Perry, Perry & Weiss, 1989). The present study will extend these findings among Caucasian families to investigate the impact of child gender on African American mothers' socialization practices.

Hypotheses

Based on the general tenets of the functionalist approach and a review of the available literature, a set of hypotheses was generated. These hypotheses were based on available research conducted with middle-class Caucasian parents; applicability of these findings to low-income African American families is unknown. It was hypothesized that maternal socialization (i.e., mothers' awareness, acceptance, and coaching) would differ as a function of type of emotion and child gender. Given research that shows that parents provide less support and assistance in response to child anger than to sadness and fear, it was hypothesized that mothers would show less acceptance and engage in less emotion coaching for child anger. Further, given research that

demonstrates a heightened vigilance regarding anger among many parents, it was hypothesized that mothers' awareness of their children's anger would be greater than for sadness or fear.

Finally, with regard to child gender, research suggests that parents support girls' emotional expression more than boys', especially with regard to sadness and fear (Brody, 1999; Casey & Fuller, 1994; Fuchs & Thelen, 1988). Therefore, it was hypothesized that mothers would show more acceptance and engage in more emotion coaching in response to expressions of sadness and fear in girls than boys. Additionally, given research that suggests that mothers may be more concerned about anger expression in boys, it is possible that mothers would show more awareness of boys' anger than of girls' anger (Radke-Yarrow & Kochanska, 1990).

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Participants

Participants were fifty mothers with children between the ages of 5 and 12 (29 boys and 21 girls; mean age = 109 months [9.1 years], *SD* = 24.2 months). Participants were included in the study if they identified their own and their children's ethnicity as African American. Mothers were recruited for a larger research study on emotion socialization from Head Start, community organizations, and local shopping centers. Interested mothers were then contacted by phone and scheduled for an in-home interview. Sixty-two percent of mothers were single and non-cohabitating; mean family income was $23, 232, and median was $14,700.

Procedure

Mothers interested in participating were asked to sign a consent form giving permission for both the parent and child to participate. Participants were told that they could stop the interview at any time and would be paid for the portion of the project that they completed. Female research assistants with specialized training in clinical psychology and child development conducted the parent interviews. Mothers received fifty dollars, and children received a small toy for their participation. The entire study required approximately three hours to complete.

Materials

Family Information Sheet

The Family Information Sheet was completed in order to obtain demographic information, including family income level, educational attainment, family composition, race of parent and child, and ages of parent and child (see Appendix A).

Meta-Emotion Interview—Parent Version

The Meta-Emotion Interview—Parent Version (MEI-PV; Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1996) is a semi-structured interview in which a parent answers a series of open-ended questions about the emotions of sadness, anger, and fear (see Appendix B). Mothers were interviewed in-person by a graduate research assistant. The interview was audiotaped and required approximately 30 minutes to complete.

The MEI-PV assesses several domains of emotional functioning (e.g., awareness, acceptance, coaching, and regulation) for both parents and children. Given the present study's emphasis on parental socialization, this study includes three scales (1) parental awareness of child's emotion, (2) parental acceptance of child's emotion, and (3) parental coaching of child's emotional experience. Interviews were coded using clusters of items corresponding to these three scales across three emotions. Items were coded from 1 to 5, with some items reverse-coded. Domain scores were computed as the average of scored items, such that items scored "Don't Know" were not included as part of the domain score.

The parental awareness scale measures the extent to which a parent notices their child's emotional experience and recognizes various aspects of their child's emotional expression. A parent with a high awareness of their child's emotion may be able to describe their child's emotional experience and discuss various components of the child's emotional experience with

the interviewer in a way that demonstrates the parent's interest. Awareness is measured with 9 items. Sample items include *noticing that the child has this emotion*, *ability to describe the child's experience of this emotion*, and *answering questions quickly and easily about the child's experience*.

The parental acceptance scale measures a parent's comfort level and empathy in response to their child's expression of emotion. A parent with a high acceptance of emotion is unlikely to punish or isolate their child for expressing an emotion. Rather, a parent who accepts the child's emotional experience conveys to the child that experiencing the emotion is normal and that the child should feel free to talk about the experience with the parent. Acceptance is measured with 13 items. Sample items include *empathizing with the child's emotion*, *ever isolating the child when expressing*, and *seeming comfortable with the child's emotion and expression*.

The parental coaching scale measures a parent's tendency to respect a child's experience of emotion while discussing and strategizing with the child in order to teach about the emotion. A parent who engages in emotion coaching may feel she can help the child learn about the nature of the emotion and teach appropriate methods and rules for managing the emotion. Coaching is measured with 11 items. Sample items include *talking about the situation and emotion when the child is upset*, *teaching the child strategies to soothe own emotion*, and *teaching the child rules for appropriate expression of emotion*.

Recent research has established inter-rater reliability (range, $r = 0.73 - 0.86$) and internal consistency (range, coefficient $\alpha = .63 - .84$.) as well as construct validity for the meta-emotion variables (Gottman et al., 1997). Construct validity for the MEI-PV has been established using three parenting dimensions (e.g., derogation, warmth, and scaffolding/praising) observed during a parent-child interaction (Gottman et al., 1997). The investigators found an expected relation

between the meta-emotion variables and parenting dimensions. Findings included a positive association between parental awareness of child's emotion and the use of scaffolding and praise and a negative association between parental awareness of child's emotion and derogatory parenting. Further, parental awareness of child's emotions was not significantly associated with parental warmth, indicating discriminant validity. Additional evidence indicates an association between meta-emotion constructs (e.g., awareness and coaching child's emotion) and socioemotional and physical well-being as well as academic achievement.

Power Analyses

Power analyses were computed according to Cohen (1988) using the G*Power Analysis Software (Buchner, Erdfelder, & Faul, 1997). Findings from previous studies demonstrated large effect sizes for the relation between socialization variables and emotion type and medium effect sizes for the relation between socialization variables and child gender.

Emotion Type Findings	*d*
Shipman and Zeman (2001)	
"Should your child show or not show *emotion type*?"	.73
"What would your mother do if you showed your *emotion type*?"	.96
Child Gender Findings:	*d*
Dunn, Bretherton, and Munn (1987)	
"Do you discuss emotions with your child (girl/boy)?"	.59

Based on this information, with power set at .80, an alpha level of .05, and a range of effect sizes from .59 to .73, 48 to 72 subjects are needed (Buchner et al., 1997).

Coding Procedures

Interrater reliability for MEI-PV was calculated on 20% of interviews coded as part of a larger study of emotion socialization practices. Interrater reliability was calculated using intraclass correlations for two coders. The following provides information regarding the intraclass correlations for each scale of the interview across three emotions: (a) Awareness: Sadness, $r = .78$; (b) Awareness: Anger, $r = .86$; (c) Awareness: Fear, $r = .66$; (d) Acceptance: Sadness, $r = .76$; (e) Acceptance: Anger, $r = .64$; (f) Acceptance: Fear, $r = .82$; (g) Coaching: Sadness, $r = .79$; (h) Coaching: Anger, $r = .82$; (i) Coaching: Fear, $r = .84$.

Data Analysis Strategy

The repeated-measures Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) procedure, or mixed-method solution, was utilized for each of the 3 dependent variables (e.g., awareness, acceptance, and coaching of emotion). Child gender served as the between-subjects variable, and emotion type (e.g., sadness, anger, and fear) served as the within-subjects variable. Significant interactions were broken down using simple main effects. The mixed-model solution yields the same findings as the MANOVA solution for between-subjects factors and their interactions but is more powerful for within-subjects factors when the assumptions of sphericity are met or have only minor violations. Greenhouse-Geisser epsilon values, which fell very near to 1, indicated that assumptions of sphericity were met or only had minor violations (Hertzog & Rovine, 1985).

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Parental Awareness of Child's Emotion. A repeated measures Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine differences with regard to parental awareness as a function of child gender and emotion type (i.e., sadness, anger, fear). The dependent variable was the mean score for each parent on the MEI-PV awareness scale within each emotion. The mixed-model solution was interpreted for the within-subjects factor because the Greenhouse-Geisser epsilon value (GG epsilon= .97) indicated only very minor violation of the sphericity assumption.

An emotion main effect emerged, F (2, 96) = 4.44, p = .014, in which parents demonstrated greater awareness of their children's expressions of anger (M = 3.66, SD = .30) than children's expression of fear (M = 3.53, SD = .40), with sadness (M = 3.60, SD = .37) not significantly different from anger or fear. No significant effects emerged for gender or gender by emotion.

Parental Acceptance of Child's Emotion. A repeated measures Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine differences with regard to parental acceptance as a function of child gender and emotion type (i.e., sadness, anger, fear). The dependent variable was the mean score for each parent on the MEI-PV acceptance scale within each emotion. The mixed-model solution was interpreted for the within-subjects factor because the Greenhouse-Geisser epsilon value (GG epsilon= .95) again indicated only very minor violation of the sphericity assumption.

A group by emotion interaction emerged, F (2, 96) = 3.48, p = .035, and was best explicated by examining differences within each emotion type. Findings indicated that parents are more accepting of boys' expressions of sadness (M = 3.69, SD = .44; p = .044) than of girls' expressions of sadness (M = 3.49, SD = .52).

Parental Coaching of Child's Emotion. A repeated measures Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine differences with regard to parental coaching as a function of child gender and emotion type (i.e., sadness, anger, fear). The dependent variable was the mean score for each parent on the MEI-PV coaching scale within each emotion. The mixed-model solution was interpreted for the within-subjects factor because the Greenhouse-Geisser epsilon value (GG epsilon= .99) indicated only very minor violation of the sphericity assumption.

An emotion main effect emerged, F (2, 96) = 6.33, p = .003, in which parents demonstrated less coaching of their children's expressions of anger (M = 3.11, SD = .54) than children's expression of sadness (M = 3.30, SD = .54) and fear (M = 3.29, SD = .51). No significant effects emerged for gender or gender by emotion.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The present study investigated emotion socialization beliefs and behaviors of African American mothers, an area that has received little attention thus far. Mothers reported greater awareness (i.e., noticing, describing, demonstrating insight) of anger than of fear. Additionally, they indicated less coaching (i.e., talking about emotion, comforting, teaching coping strategies) in response to anger than to fear or sadness. With regard to acceptance (i.e., feeling comfortable, empathizing, talking about situation), mothers reported greater acceptance in response to boys' sadness than girls'. Taken together, these findings suggest that mothers respond differently to children's emotions as a function of emotion type. Results are consistent with functionalist theory, which suggests that emotions serve different functions and that mothers' socialization strategies reflect these differences. With regard to emotion type, findings were mostly consistent with previous studies with Caucasian samples. However, the current study found fewer gender differences compared to previous studies with Caucasian samples.

Emotion Type

Mothers reported emotion socialization strategies that varied as a function of emotion type. With regard to awareness, parents indicated greater awareness of children's anger than fear, with no differences for sadness. While there is little research specifically related to parental awareness of anger, previous studies suggest that mothers are more likely to notice externalizing (e.g., hostile, angry) behaviors than internalizing (e.g., fearful, anxious) when reporting on their children's behavior (Ross, 1972). With regard to coaching, parents reported less coaching of

anger than sadness or fear. These findings are consistent with past research indicating that children expect little emotional assistance from their parents following expression of anger (Fuchs & Thelen, 1988; Zeman & Shipman, 1996).

With regard to acceptance, parents indicated no differences in their acceptance of sadness, anger, or fear. This finding is surprising given that participants reported more awareness and less coaching of anger, suggesting that they respond to anger differently. This result is also inconsistent with previous research, which indicates that parents respond less supportively to children's displays of anger than to displays of happiness or sadness (Shipman & Zeman, 2001, 1999) and that parents are more likely to punish their children's expressions of anger (even without accompanying misbehavior) than other emotions (Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1997). It may be that mothers, while relatively accepting of the expression of anger, are less likely to provide active support in response to such displays.

Child Gender

With regard to child gender, findings indicated few differences in maternal response to child emotion. This is surprising given previous findings with Caucasian families which indicates that girls expect more support for displays of sadness while boys expect more support for anger (Brody, 1999; Casey & Fuller, 1994; Fuchs & Thelen, 1988; Perry, Perry, & Weiss, 1989; Chaplin, Cole, & Zahn-Waxler, 2005). In the present study, the single gender difference that emerged indicated that mothers are more accepting of sadness in boys than in girls; this is an unexpected result given past research. Findings of the current study suggest that mothers may be particularly concerned with their sons' experiences of sadness. This is consistent with statements that mothers made while speaking with interviewers, such as, "It's OK to be sad. You're not less of a man, less of a boy. You're human," as well as "I want to teach him that it's OK for boys to

cry." Findings may reflect mothers' stated attempts to accept their sons' sadness in recognition that men's expression of sadness is a less commonly accepted behavior according to stereotyped gender roles. It is also possible, however, that mothers living in stressful circumstances are particularly focused on preventing depression in daughters. There were no differences in maternal awareness or coaching as a function of child gender.

Future Directions

The goal of the current study was to obtain an understanding of the unique emotion socialization practices of African American mothers. A particularly interesting expansion of the current study would be to examine the link between emotion socialization variables and child adjustment in African American families. It is possible that the relation between parental socialization and children's adjustment may be different for African American families than what is currently known about Caucasian families. Future research should also include data on fathers' and extended family members' socialization practices to provide a more complete understanding of the emotion socialization that children receive. In African American families, extended family members have traditionally been integral to childrearing, so studying these influences would be particularly valuable. Additionally, future research should consider other emotions (e.g., happiness) in addition to sadness, anger, and fear, given that parental response to these emotions may have unique import within parent-child interactions.

In addition, it would be interesting to expand the current study by investigating racial socialization and emotion socialization in combination. While there is little empirical understanding of emotional socialization practices in African American families, racial socialization practices have been widely investigated as an important component of childrearing in African American families. Racial socialization is the process by which parents communicate

cultural values and messages to their children, thereby instilling a sense of racial identity and preparing them for experiences of racial hostility (Stevenson & Renard, 1993; Fischer & Shaw, 1999). An understanding of racial socialization processes is important to the present study because a primary goal of racial socialization involves teaching children about the emotional experience of racism. What is known about racial socialization practices and associated mental health outcomes may shed light on the unique practices that characterize emotion socialization in African American parents that are more general (and not necessarily in response to racist events) in nature. Interestingly, the extent to which parents value and implement racial socialization processes appears to be heterogeneous among African American parents (Spencer, 1983); this variability is similar to what might be expected for employment of emotion socialization practices as well. Although not a goal of this study, it will be important to investigate the intersection of emotion socialization and racial socialization in African American families in future studies. While the current study provides an initial look at emotion socialization practices among low-income African American mothers, further research is critical to understanding these socialization practices, the impact that they have on children, and the unique aspects of African American family life that shape emotion socialization.

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APPENDIX A

FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET

Child's Name (including all names used now and in the past):

Mother/Father's Name: (including all names used now and in the past):

Phone (home, work, other contact number):

Address:

Mother/Father's Social Security Number:

Today's Date:

Name of Interviewer of Child: Name of Interviewer of adult:

Child Birthdate: Race of Child:

Mother's/Father's Birthdate: Race of Mother/Father:

Family Constellation (Who does the child live with?): Circle all that apply and be sure to indicate the child's primary residence if the child spends time in 2 parents' homes.

- Mother and father
- Mother only
- Father only
- Grandmother
- Grandmother and grandfather
- Mother and stepfather/significant other
- Father and stepmother/significant other

Please list number of adults that live in the household.

Please list number of siblings that live in the household.

Mother's education (number of years, degree):

Mother's occupation:

Father's education (number of years, degree):

Father's occupation:

Family income and any other financial assistance (e.g., TANF, child support):

Ask at end of interview. Treatment for parent or child (e.g., parenting classes? How many completed?):

APPENDIX B

Meta-Emotion Interview—Parent Version

Introduction

Interviewer (I): In this part of your visit, we would like to ask you some questions about how you feel about different emotions.

What we are looking for is your natural responses to the questions. There is a broad range of answer for questions about emotions. Take surprise for example. Some people don't ever like being surprised. They hate surprise parties, and if you throw them a surprise party, they wouldn't like it at all. On the other hand, some people love to be surprised and love surprising others. They go out of their way to experience that emotion more often. In both cases, people experience the emotion of surprise in very different ways and neither is right or wrong. The same is true for the emotions that we will talk about today. People are just different.

We are going to talk about three emotions today: sadness, anger, and fear. Each emotion is broken into two parts: how you feel today and how (child's name) feels. Even though the questions may begin to sound familiar to you, they are addressing different emotions you feel.

Again, there are no right or wrong answers. What I am going to be asking you about is your own feelings regarding your emotions. How you experience different feelings and how you feel about feelings in general, OK? Before we start do you have any questions?

AUDIO RECORD this instead of trying to write things down. Repeat what parent says if their voice is soft.

……

The Interviewee's and Child's [Sadness/Anger/Fear]

I: Let's talk about feeling [emotion].

- What is it like for you to be [emotion]? How often do you feel [emotion]?
- What do you look like? If I saw you could I tell you were [emotion]? What would I see?
- What are you feeling inside when you are [emotion]?
    - Are there any physical sensations (ways that your body feels) that you have when you're sad?
- What do you think about when you're [emotion]?
    - Are there any thoughts or pictures that go through your mind?
- Is there anything you do to try to get through feeling [emotion] (make it better?
    - Does this work for you?
- Can you give me an example of one time you were [emotion]? What happened, who was there, what was said and how did you resolve it (try to get a play-by-play account of what

happened)? What other kinds of things make you [emotion]? What do you do when you're [emotion]? Do you want to talk with someone about it or not so much?

- What do you think about [emotion] in general? Do you think it's okay to feel [emotion]? Is it okay to show [emotion]?

I: Let's talk about your child's [emotion].

- What about _____ (the child)? Can you tell when (s)he's [emotion]? How often is (s)he [emotion]? How long does (s)he stay [emotion]?
- What does (s)he do when [emotion]?
- Is there anything (s)he does to try to get over feeling [emotion]? Does that work? *If parent says child goes to room or off by self in some way, ask parent "What is your response to that?"
- What do you do to help your child get over this emotion? (Get details about what parent says/does and how child responds.)
- What are your reactions, thoughts, and feelings when _____ (child) is [emotion]? What do you do when your child is [emotion]? (Get details about what parent does/says and how child responds.)
- Can you give me an example of one time that _____ (child) was [emotion]? What happened, who was there, what was said and how did (s)he get over it? (Try to get a play-by-play account of what happened.) Why do you think (s)he felt [emotion] in this situation?
- What do you want to teach _____ (child) about [emotion]? Is there anything you want your child to do when (s)he is feeling [emotion]?
- Has your child's [emotion] ever caused problems for him/her?

APPENDIX C

Meta-Emotion Interview—Parent Version: Coding Sheet

ID # _____ Child Emotion (S, A, F): _____

Awareness

SA	A	N	D	SD	DK	
	4	3	2			1. P notices that child has this emotion
	4		2		DK	2. P has no problem distinguishing this emotion
	4		2		DK	3. P is descriptive of child's experience of emotion
	4		2		DK	4. P has insight into child's experience of this emotion
	4		2		DK	5. P is descriptive of some part of the remediation process
	4		2		DK	6. P knows cause of C's emotion
	4	3	2	1		7. P talks at length about C's experience
	4	3	2	1		8. P answers questions quickly and easily about C's experience
	4	3	2			9. P's voice shows interest (excitement) re C's experience

Acceptance

SA	A	N	D	SD	DK	
	4	3	2			1. P seems comfortable with C's emotion and expression
	4		2		DK	2. C expresses this emotion
	4	3	2	1	DK	3. P emphasizes with C's emotion (look at voice tone)
	4	3	2		DK	4. P wants C to know it's OK to have this feelings
	4		2		DK	5. P wants C to talk to them about this emotion
1	2	3	4		DK	6. P seems concerned about appropriateness, usually of expression
	2		4		DK	7. C is ever isolated when expressing
	2		4		DK	8. C is ever punished when/for expressing
	2		4		DK	9. Child is ever restrained for expressing
	2		4		DK	10. P refers child to be soothed before P gets involved
	2		4		DK	11. P ever distracts from emotion
	2				DK	12. P ever offers treat to distract from emotion
	2		4		DK	13. P uses a mental (analytical) approach to C's emotion

Coaching

SA	A	N	D	SD	DK	
5	4	3	2	1	DK	1. P shows respect for child experience of emotion
	4		2		DK	2. When child is upset, P talks about situation, emotion
	4	3	2		DK	3. P intervenes (protects from cause) in situations causing emotion
	4	3	2		DK	4. P comforts during emotion
	4		2		DK	5.. P teaches rules for appropriate expressiveness to C
	4	3	2		DK	6. Strategies used seem age and situationally appropriate
	4				DK	7. P talks with C about the nature of this emotion
	4		2		DK	8. P teaches strategies to soothe own emotion
5	4	3	2		DK	9. P seems involved in child's experience of this emotion
	2		4		DK	10. P seems at a loss over how to deal with this emotion
	4	3	2		DK	11. P has given thought and energy to what child knows of emotions

SA: Strongly Agree
A: Agree
N: Neutral
D: Disagree
SD: Strongly Disagree
DK: Don't Know