



Project
MUSE[®]

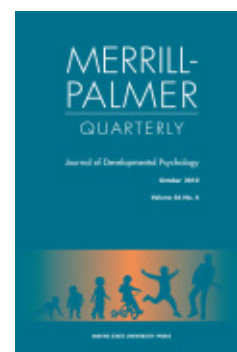
Today's Research. Tomorrow's Inspiration.

Constructing Emotional and Relational Understanding: The Role of Affect and Mother-Child Discourse

Laible, Deborah.
Song, Jeanie.

Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, Volume 52, Number 1, January 2006,
pp. 44-69 (Article)

Published by Wayne State University Press
DOI: [10.1353/mpq.2006.0006](https://doi.org/10.1353/mpq.2006.0006)



 For additional information about this article

<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/mpq/summary/v052/52.1laible.html>

Constructing Emotional and Relational Understanding: The Role of Affect and Mother-Child Discourse

Deborah Laible, *Lehigh University*

Jeanie Song, *Southern Methodist University*

Research suggests that both emotion-laden discourse and positive affect facilitate the construction of emotional and relational understanding. Despite this, research has not typically examined simultaneously the connections among affect, emotional discourse, and socioemotional development. In this study, 51 preschool children (M age = 52.80 months) and their mothers took part in two discourse tasks (a reminiscing task and a storybook reading), and both tasks were coded for the emotional content and style of the discourse and for the emotional quality of the interaction between the mother and child. Children also completed measures of emotional understanding and representations of relationships, and mothers completed a maternal report of aggressive behavior. Both the level of shared positivity and the style and content of the discourse between the dyad was related to the child's level of socioemotional development.

Although there is little doubt that young children come prepared to learn about emotions and relationships, their readiness to learn about these phenomena is complemented by rich learning opportunities within the context of the family. Interactions with parents and siblings, including conflict, discourse, and affection, provide the child with abundant opportunities to construct emotional and relational understanding. As a result, it is probably not surprising that the quality of the interaction between the caregivers

Deborah Laible, Department of Psychology; Jeanie Song, Department of Psychology.

Support for this project was provided by a Young Scholar's Grant from the Templeton Foundation.

Address correspondence to Deborah Laible, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Lehigh University, 17 Memorial Drive East, Bethlehem, PA 18015-3068. E-mail: del205@lehigh.edu.

Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, January 2006, Vol. 52, No. 1, pp. 44–69. Copyright © 2006 by Wayne State University Press, Detroit, MI 48201.

and the child (and even the sibling and the child), including the amount of warmth and support, the quality of the communication and scaffolding, and the quality of conflict between the dyad, have been associated with optimal socioemotional outcomes in young children (see, e.g., Brown & Dunn, 1996; Howe, Aquan-Assee, Bukowski, Lehoux, & Rinaldi, 2001; Laible & Thompson, 2000; Stormshak, Bellanti, & Bierman, 1998; see Thompson, 1998, for a review).

Attachment theorists have argued that children are constructing internal working models of the self, others, and relationships out of these early interactions with caregivers (Bowlby, 1980; Bretherton, 1990). According to attachment theorists, these internal working models are consolidated across development and guide a child's expectations about relationships with caregivers, beliefs about the self, and assumptions about other people's motives and intentions. Theorists outside the attachment field have similarly argued that a child's knowledge and understanding of the social world are organized in scripts (Nelson, 1981; Schank & Abelson, 1977) and that children use these scripts to guide their behavior in social situations (Laible, Carlo, Torquati, & Ontai, 2004; Nelson, 1999).

There is growing recognition that the preschool years might be an especially important time for the development of these social scripts and working models, due in part to the representational and cognitive advances that accompany children's increasing ability to use language (Thompson, Laible, & Ontai, 2003). Children's growing language sophistication allows them not only to reflect upon and remember their past experiences but also to discuss their past experiences with caregivers and others. As a result, children's early social scripts and working models are likely not only shaped as a result of their direct experiences, and thus primary representations of those events, but also influenced by the secondary representations of those events created in discourse with others (Nelson, 1996). Thus, discourse with others shapes not only children's memories of early attachment experiences with parents but also their understanding of those experiences, as children are able to reflect upon their previous experiences with the assistance and insight of caregivers.

Conversational stories about shared personal experiences start as soon as children are capable of producing language, and one of the primary purposes of sharing previous experiences with others is social (Hyman & Faries, 1992; Reese, 2002). Initially, it is parents who provide the narrative structure for these past conversations (Fivush, 1993; Hudson, 1990; Nelson, 1996). Preschool children, however, ultimately internalize the narrative structure of these conversations with caregivers and use that structure to recall their memories of personal experiences as well as to

guide their subsequent conversations with caregivers (Farrar, Fasig, & Welch-Ross, 1997; Nelson, 1996). Thus, out of these shared conversations, children are not only learning how to discuss the past but also learning about which events are worthy of repetition and about their role in those events (Miller, Potts, Fung, Hoogstra, & Mintz, 1990).

As a result, there is good reason to believe that the content of these early conversations about the past affect a child's representation of those experiences and, as a result, the child's social and emotional understanding. Researchers have argued that the discussion of emotion during reminiscing might be especially influential for a child's socioemotional understanding (Fivush, 1993; Welch-Ross, Fasig, & Farrar, 1999). By highlighting the emotional relevance of particular events, mothers not only promote psychological understanding of the past but also provide an evaluative framework with which to reflect upon personal experiences (Laible, 2004a; Welch-Ross, 2001; Welch-Ross et al., 1999). Furthermore, conversations about a child's emotional experiences after the fact likely provoke the child's reflective thinking on issues raised during these conversations, because the emotion present in the original situation has dissipated and no longer interferes with the processing of the parental messages (Laible, 2004b; Laible & Thompson, 2000). Discourse with parents ultimately helps children to understand aspects of their daily experiences that are not necessarily obvious or explicit, including emotions, intentions, and motives (Thompson et al., 2003).

Researchers have argued, however, that it is not just the content of discourse that is important for fostering emotional and relational understanding but also the style (Laible, 2004a, 2004b; Thompson et al., 2003). For example, researchers have discovered that mothers vary in the amount of detail and in the richness of discourse they use when they discuss the past with their children (Fivush & Fromhoff, 1988; Hudson, 1990; Reese & Fivush, 1993; Reese, Haden, & Fivush, 1993). *Elaborative* mothers tend to provide rich background detail about the event being discussed and tend to ask a lot of novel, complex, and typically open-ended questions of the child. In contrast, mothers who are *repetitive* tend not to add much background to the event discussed and tend to ask a lot of repetitive "yes/no" types of questions. Research suggests that maternal elaborative style is a fairly stable characteristic of a mother and that the children of elaborative mothers have more detailed memories of their past experiences than the children of repetitive mothers (Fivush & Fromhoff, 1988; Hudson, 1990; McCabe & Peterson, 1991; Reese & Fivush, 1993; Reese et al., 1993).

Drawing on the work on mother-child discourse and autobiographical memory, it seems plausible to expect that the style of maternal reminiscing affects the child's developing emotional and social understanding

(Laible, 2004a). Thus, mothers who discuss the child's past experiences in an elaborative manner, providing rich and emotion-laden detail about the event in question, likely have children who have not only a better memory of their past experiences but also better socioemotional understandings than those children whose mothers use a more repetitive style (Laible, 2004a; Welch-Ross, 1995). In addition, there is good reason to believe that mothers who use more elaborative styles in other contexts as well, such as when reading a storybook laden with emotional themes, might also promote psychological understanding. Because storybooks often contain lessons about emotion and morality, researchers have argued that mothers can help children understand these elusive concepts by elaborating on the storybook themes (Laible, 2004b).

The Role of Affect

Although researchers have found preliminary support for the idea that the style and content of mother-child discourse relate to a child's socioemotional understanding (for a review see Thompson et al., 2003), relatively little research has examined how the emotional quality of these narratives might also contribute to a child's socioemotional development. This is unfortunate, because it seems likely that the emotional tone of the discourse is also important in fostering or inhibiting socioemotional understanding. For example, it seems plausible that emotional and relational understanding is enhanced when emotion is discussed in the context of shared positivity. Children's willingness to participate in discourse with parents and to internalize parental messages is likely enhanced in the context of warm, supportive interactions. In contrast, maternal expression of negative affect in the context of discourse may interfere with a child's construction of understanding and his or her internalization of the parental message. Thus, for instance, in the context of anger or rejection, a parent's discussion of emotion may not enhance understanding. This is consistent with Hoffman's (1983, 1984) idea that a child's internalization is not enhanced in discipline encounters when the child's own affect is too arousing to allow him or her to process the message being conveyed by the parent. Outside of discipline encounters, however, Hoffman's ideas have not yet been tested.

Finally, it is also possible that mother-child affect might interact with emotional discourse to promote relational and emotional understanding. Researchers have speculated that one way that children learn about emotion is through their exposure to parents' expressions of emotion (Halberstadt, 1986; Halberstadt, Fox, & Jones, 1993). Parental emotional expressiveness directly relates to a child's socioemotional development through the processes of modeling and contagion (Halberstadt, 1986; Halberstadt

et al., 1993), and as a result, children's affective experiences may mirror their parents'. Thus, households that are deficient in emotional expressiveness may inhibit the development of emotional expressiveness and competence (Denham, Zoller, & Couchoud, 1994). As a result, the children of parents who are more muted in their emotional expressiveness may have a harder time constructing an understanding of emotion than those with expressive parents, unless this lack of expressiveness is accompanied by the open and frequent discussion of emotion (Denham et al., 1994). Thus, for children with less expressive parents, discourse about emotional experiences may help to compensate for the lack of emotional expressivity in the family.

Context

In addition, research examining the role that context might play in influencing the relations between parent-child discourse and socioemotional development is lacking. Despite this, there are several reasons to believe that the influence of parent-child discourse might vary across different contexts. First, researchers have found quite striking differences in the nature of parent-child discourse across contexts (Haden & Fivush, 1996; Hoff-Ginsberg, 1991; Kuersten-Hogan & McHale, 2000), including differences in syntactic complexity, lexical diversity, elaboration, and emotion talk. Given these differences, it seems likely that some contexts, especially those that evoke rich emotional discourse, might be more influential than others for promoting socioemotional development. In addition, some theorists have argued that discourse in the context of reminiscing might be more influential for certain aspects of socioemotional development, such as self-understanding and relational understanding (Laible, 2004b). Researchers have made this argument because of the close link between narrative discourse and the formation of autobiographical memories (Hudson, 1990; Nelson, 1996). These theorists have argued that memory talk between mothers and children, particularly that which centers on relational issues, might facilitate the formation of internal working models related to the self and relationships (Bretherton, 1993; Reese, 2002; Thompson et al., 2003).

Current Study and Hypotheses

Therefore, the goal of this study was to examine how both affect and discourse in two contexts (during a storybook reading and a reminiscing conversation) predicted aspects of socioemotional development. Both contexts were designed to elicit the discussion of emotion between the mother

and the child, and both tasks were coded for the style and content of mother-child discourse. In addition, both tasks were coded for the emotional quality of the narratives. Unlike most previous research, emotion talk was also coded separately by valence. This was done because researchers have speculated that parents might socialize negative emotions differently, especially depending on the gender of the child (Fivush, 1991). In addition, researchers have found that talk about negative emotions between mothers and children is more sophisticated than talk about positive emotions, involving more frequent discussion of the causes of emotions, more talk about others, and more sophisticated linguistic skills (Hudson, Gebelt, Haviland, & Bentivegna, 1992; Lagattuta & Wellman, 2002). As a result, talk about negative emotions might be more likely to foster emotional and relational understanding than talk about positive emotions. The effects of discourse and affect were examined on three outcomes: emotional understanding, representations of relationships, and aggression. These three aspects of socioemotional development were selected because of their theoretical links to discourse and affect. In addition, researchers have found links between either discourse or affect and these three aspects of socioemotional development, but no one study has considered both variables simultaneously (see Brown & Dunn, 1996; Denham et al., 1994; Laible, 2004b).

In general, it was expected that high levels of shared positivity in the dyad and the discussion of emotion, particularly negative emotion, would relate to high levels of socioemotional competence. In addition, maternal elaboration in both contexts was expected to be related to high levels of emotional understanding, prosocial representations of relationships, and more positive social behavior. Given the lack of empirical research with regard to the context of discourse, no a priori hypotheses were made about this variable.

Methods

Participants

Fifty-one preschool children between the ages of 3 and 5 years and their mothers took part in the study (M age = 52.80 months, SD = 8.69). Mothers were recruited through the help of several local preschool associations in a large southern city. Children were predominantly Caucasian (84%) and were almost equally split by gender (26 girls, 25 boys). Mothers ranged in age from 27 to 47 years (M age = 36.0, SD = 4.87), and 78% of the mothers had a college degree or more. Mothers received small monetary payments for their participation in the study, and children were given a small toy for their help.

Overview

Mothers and children took part in an approximately one-hour video-recorded laboratory session. At the lab, mothers and children engaged in 10 minutes of free play as a warm-up task. Mothers and children then completed the two discourse tasks in the following order: the reading of a wordless storybook and a reminiscing task. Finally, children completed a measure of affective perspective-taking and representations of family relationships, while mothers completed maternal reports of the child's social competence.

Storybook Reading

Mothers were asked to elicit the child's help in creating a story from a wordless storybook entitled *Frog on His Own*, by Mercer Mayer. Mothers were asked to provide the child with as much support and guidance as they thought he or she needed to accomplish the task. The storybook contains the story of a pet frog who escapes a little boy in the city park, only to create mischief for park patrons before being rescued by the little boy. The book provided the dyad with a rich opportunity to discuss emotions.

Reminiscing Task

The two conversations about the child's past emotional experiences were elicited following a procedure similar to Laible and Thompson (2000). After the free play and storybook reading, the researcher informed the mother that she was interested in conversations between mothers and their children about the child's past emotional experiences. Mothers were asked to think about two events in the past week involving both herself and her child, one in which her child experienced a positive emotion and one in which the child experienced a negative emotion. Mothers were also asked to select one-time events rather than routine events. They were instructed to sit comfortably with their child in the playroom and to attempt to elicit his or her memory about the event as naturally as possible. The length of the interview was determined by the mother, who was asked to notify the researcher when the conversation ended. Conversations lasted for an average of 100.66 conversational turns ($SD = 43.0$ conversational turns).

Discourse Coding

From the transcripts, all references to emotions were identified and coded (following a coding schema adapted from Dunn & Munn, 1987; Kuebli,

Butler, & Fivush, 1995).¹ References to emotions included words referring to “prototypical” emotional states (e.g., *mad*, *angry*, *sad*, *happy*) as well as words indicative of emotional states (e.g., *crying*, *laughing*, *screaming*). In addition, once a reference to an emotion was identified, the speaker who made the reference and the valence of the emotion (i.e., positive, negative, or neutral/unclear) were also coded. Maternal and child references to neutral emotions were rare and thus were not included in any subsequent analyses. Mother and child talk about particularly valenced emotions were highly correlated (r 's ranged from .29 to .50, p 's < .05), and thus these scores were summed by task (reminiscing task versus storybook reading) to provide one index of mother-child talk about negatively valenced or positively valenced emotions.²

In addition, the mother-child conversations about the child's past emotional experiences and the storybook reading were coded for the amount of elaboration. Elaborative ratings were assigned based on criteria used in previous empirical research (Laible, 2004a). Transcripts were rated on a 5-point scale (1 = low, 5 = high) depending on the amount of background detail and description the mother provided and the quality of open-ended questions she asked. Odd-numbered anchor points for the elaborative ratings were as follows: 1 (little or no background detail or storybook material discussed and the questions asked of the child are not open-ended); 3 (moderate background detail or storybook material discussed and a mixture of open-ended and yes/no questions); 5 (high levels of background detail or storybook material discussed and predominantly open-ended questions).

Two coders independently coded 15 common transcripts. Cohen's κ 's on the identification of emotion from the transcripts were adequate (for reminiscing task: .88 for positive emotion, .89 for negative emotion; for storybook: .91 for positive emotion, .90 for negative emotion). Average intra-class correlations between the two raters on the amount of maternal elaboration were also adequate (.92 for the reminiscing task, .84 for the storybook task).

1. Although coding was originally done separately across the two reminiscing tasks (i.e., the past positive and past negative events), these scores were highly correlated and the pattern of the relations with measures of socioemotional development was similar. As a result, these codes were collapsed across events.

2. Mother talk about emotion and child talk about emotion also exhibited a similar pattern of relations with measures of socioemotional competence. Keeping them separate in regression models creates problems with colinearity, which is why they were summed. Generally, mothers are considered the architects of these conversations, and they were the ones who were most likely to initiate conversation about emotion (at about a 12:1 ratio).

Coding of mother-child affect. The affective exchange between the mother and child during the videotaped laboratory dyadic discourse tasks was coded using criteria we adapted from Gini, Oppenheim, and Sagi (2003). This coding process was designed to tap the mother's emotional engagement, the child's emotional involvement, and the emotional quality of the dyadic discourse. A brief description of this coding appears in Table 1. A second coder re-coded 15 of the videotapes to establish reliability. Reliability between the two coders on each of the dimensions was adequate. Average intraclass correlations between the two raters on the story-book affect codes were all higher than .88 (except for intersubjectivity, which was .75). In addition, average intraclass correlations between the two raters on the reminiscing task were all higher than .87 (except for quality of communication, which was .77).

In order to reduce the number of variables, these codes were submitted to a principal-components factor analysis by task with varimax rota-

Table 1. Coding of the Affective Quality of Mother-Child Narratives

Maternal affect and involvement:

1. *Maternal warmth/positive affect/interest.* This referred to the amount of genuine warmth and enthusiasm expressed by mothers to the child. This was rated from 1 (little/no warmth) to 5 (high warmth/enthusiasm).
2. *Maternal rejection/hostility.* This is the degree to which mothers rejected or expressed hostility toward the child. Scores ranged from 1 (no hostility) to 5 (high hostility).

Child affect and involvement:

1. *Child warmth/positive affect/cooperation.* This referred to the amount of genuine warmth and enthusiasm expressed by the child to the mother during the task. This was rated from 1 (little/no warmth) to 5 (high warmth/enthusiasm).
2. *Child anger/hostility.* This is the degree to which the child expressed anger or hostility toward the mother during the task. Scores ranged from 1 (no hostility) to 5 (high hostility).

Dyadic measures:

1. *Dyadic intersubjectivity.* This code reflected the sense of togetherness, shared meaning, and unity in the narrative. Dyads who were rated high (i.e., that receive codes of 4-5) on this dimension appeared to be "on the same page" with ideas, thoughts, etc. Dyads rated low (i.e., that receive scores of 1-2) did not share instances of focus, attention, and interest.
 2. *Mutuality of communication.* This code reflected the degree to which the dialogue between mothers and children was fluent, smooth, lucid, and emotionally open. Scores ranged from 1 (poor communication) to 5 (mutual, fluent communication).
-

tion. Two roughly parallel factors emerged from both factor analyses and were retained for subsequent analyses. The factor for the storybook task was labeled “shared positivity during the storybook reading” ($\lambda = 3.96$, 66.14% of the variance), on which maternal warmth (.86), child warmth (.76), intersubjectivity (.88), and quality of the dyadic communication (.71) all loaded positively. Maternal (-.85) and child anger (-.85) loaded negatively. The factor retained from the factor analysis of the reminiscing affect codes was labeled “shared positivity during reminiscing” ($\lambda = 3.80$, 63.47% of the variance). Similar to the storybook factor, maternal warmth (.82), child warmth (.74), dyadic intersubjectivity (.90), and dyadic quality of communication (.91) loaded positively on the factor. Maternal (-.74) and child anger (-.63) loaded negatively.

Measures of Socioemotional Development

Emotional understanding. To assess their level of emotional understanding, children took part in an affective perspective-taking task developed by Denham (1986). Overall, this task has shown good concurrent and predictive validity in assessing emotional understanding in preschool children (see, e.g., Brown & Dunn, 1996, Laible & Thompson, 1998). In the first part of the task, children’s ability to distinguish facial expressions of emotion was assessed. Each child examined four felt faces on which expressions of happiness, sadness, anger, and fear were drawn, and the researcher asked the child to indicate the face that reflected each of the four target emotions. Following this, each child was asked to determine the emotion that each face represented. For both tasks, each child received 2 points for the correct identification of each emotion or 1 point for identifying a face with the correct positive-negative valence. At the end of the task, the researcher corrected the child on any faces that he or she misidentified.

Following this, each child saw hand puppets enact 20 vignettes that were accompanied by both visual and vocal cues by the experimenter (e.g., a big smile and joyful voice when displaying a happy outcome). In 8 of the 20 vignettes (labeled the stereotypical stories), the puppet was shown to feel the same way most people would feel in this situation. In the other 12 vignettes (labeled the nonstereotypical stories), the puppet was depicted as feeling the opposite way the child would feel under the same circumstance. Each of the “nonstereotypical” puppet vignettes was customized to the child’s expected responses (mothers had previously filled out a forced-choice questionnaire that asked them to predict how their child would probably feel in each of the 12 circumstances portrayed in the vignettes).

At the end of each of the 20 vignettes, each child was asked, "How did the puppet feel?" and was then asked to attach the proper felt face to the puppet to indicate the puppet's emotion. Again, each child received 2 points for each correct answer or 1 point for identifying the correct positive-negative valence. The scores on the 20 vignettes were summed, and, following Denham (1986), this score was summed with that of the previous task (i.e., identifying the emotions on the felt faces) to serve as an index of emotional understanding.

Representations of relationships. In order to assess representations of relationships, children were administered a shortened version of the MacArthur Story-Stem Battery (MSSB) (see Oppenheim, Nir, Warren, & Emde, 1997). The MSSB is designed to assess a child's ability to resolve relationship-oriented conflicts, and it is believed to assess a child's representations of relationships (Bretherton, 1990; Laible & Thompson, 2002). The researcher explained to the child that for this game, she would make up some stories using the dolls and that the child would finish each story. Following the introduction, a warm-up story was presented and the child was encouraged to tell a story by manipulating the dolls. The stems were presented in a spirited manner, and each story stem ended with the prompt, "Can you show me what happens next?" Nondirective and clarifying prompts—for example, "What else happens?"—were used to assist the child's narratives. The experimenter moved to the next story only after the child had addressed the main conflict presented in each stem or had indicated that he or she was finished with the story. Examples of the story stems included in the shortened measure were one in which a child spills juice on the floor and one in which a child disobeys a parent's request to stay away from a hot stove and burns his or her finger.

Children's verbal responses to the doll stories were transcribed from the videotapes. Any actions that children made with the dolls were also briefly summarized in transcripts (e.g., two dolls embracing). Using a system developed by the MacArthur Narrative Workgroup (see Oppenheim et al., 1997), coders (who were blind to the child's narrative and affect scores) coded the transcripts. Two independent coders coded 20 common transcripts to establish reliability of coding. Percent agreement between the two coders on each of the coded themes appears in parentheses below. Cohen's κ for the measure was .77. Overall content themes were as follows:

1. personal injury (80%): a character was physically hurt, and the focus was on the injury and not the aggression
2. aggression (83%): a character made destructive or hostile gestures

3. affection (100%): a character was displayed as hugging, kissing, or being praised
4. affiliation (75%): characters participated in a positive activity together
5. empathy/helping (83%): a character or the child identified with or demonstrated an understanding of the thoughts and feeling of another or helped another with a task
6. reparation/guilt (80%): a character made amends or displayed feelings of guilt
7. atypical negative responses (82%): the child displays disorganized or very unusual responses with a clear negative tone

Because children often presented more than one theme in narratives, a story stem could receive more than one coded content theme. Content themes in each category were summed across all the six narratives to provide an overall frequency of each theme per transcript. In order to reduce the number of content themes, two composite content themes were formed by summing themes based on conceptual similarity (following Oppenheim et al., 1997): (a) a prosocial composite ($M = 2.98$; $SD = 1.41$) that included empathy/helping, reparation/guilt, affiliation, and affection; and (b) an aggressive composite ($M = 2.78$; $SD = 1.75$) that included aggression, personal injury, and atypical negative responses.

In addition to content themes, story completions were coded for coherence (again following Oppenheim et al., 1997) on a 10-point scale. The odd-numbered anchor points were as follows: 1 (story is fragmented with a shifting story line); 3 (child understood conflict but did not offer resolution, and part of the story was incoherent); 5 (child understood the conflict and handled it by simplifying the story); 7 (child understood the story and offered resolution, but the story was short with no embellishment); 9 (child understood conflict, offered an embellished resolution, and there were no incoherent segments) (Oppenheim et al., 1997). A composite score of narrative coherence was formed by averaging the scores across each of the six narratives ($M = 5.06$; $SD = 1.34$). The average intraclass correlations between the two raters on 15 transcripts was .92.

In order to reduce the number of MSSB variables, these three codes (prosocial themes, aggressive themes, and coherence) were submitted to a principal-components factor analysis. One factor emerged and was retained for subsequent analyses ($\lambda = 2.16$, 71.94% of the variance) and was labeled "positive representations of relationships." Prosocial themes (.88) and coherence (.88) loaded positively on the factor, and aggressive themes loaded negatively (-.77).

Aggression. Mothers also completed a modified version of the aggression subscale on Ladd and Profilet's Child Behavior Scale (Ladd & Profilet, 1996). The measure was developed for use by teachers to report on preschool children's social behavior and was adapted for use by parents in this study. Parents were asked to rate the 7-item subscale on a 3-point scale (1 = doesn't apply to 3 = certainly applies). A sample item was "fights with other children or siblings." Internal consistency on the scale was adequate ($\alpha = .79$).

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Relations

Descriptive statistics for all of the measures appear in Table 2, and bivariate relations among the variables appear in Table 3. There were several relations between the style and emotional content of mother-child discourse across the two contexts. Maternal elaboration was significantly correlated across the two tasks. Mothers who elaborated during the reminiscing task were also likely to elaborate during the storybook reading. In addition, maternal elaboration during the storybook reading was also related to the dyad's discussion of negative affect during reminiscing. Mothers who frequently elaborated during the storybook reading also frequently discussed negative emotions with their children during reminiscing. The levels of shared positivity in both tasks were strongly correlated. High levels of shared positivity during the storybook reading were associated with high levels of shared positivity during the reminiscing task. Other significant relations were found among discourse, affect, and child socioemotional development; they are discussed below in the regression models.

Gender and Context Differences

In order to examine gender and context differences in the variables, a series of *t* tests were conducted. The only difference found between boys and girls was in maternal reports of aggressive behavior, where boys ($M = 1.45$) were rated as being slightly higher on aggressive behavior [$t(50) = 1.96, p = .05$] than girls ($M = 1.19$). There were no differences between the genders in other aspects of socioemotional development or in discourse or affect.

With regard to context, mothers and children were more likely to discuss positive emotion during reminiscing ($M = 10.57$) than during the storybook reading ($M = 5.80$) [$t(50) = 4.28, p < .05$]. No other differences were found across context.

Table 2. Descriptive Data

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range
Shared positivity during reminiscing	0	1.0	-2.74–1.60
Discussion of negative emotion during reminiscing	10.07	7.77	0–35
Discussion of positive emotion during reminiscing	10.57	6.44	3–38
Maternal elaboration during reminiscing	3.62	1.07	1–5
Shared positivity during storybook reading	0	1.0	-3.21–1.27
Discussion of negative emotion during storybook reading	9.18	5.67	1–30
Discussion of positive emotion during storybook reading	5.80	4.89	0–22
Maternal elaboration during storybook reading	3.66	.90	1–5
Emotional understanding	47.22	8.03	20–56
Positive representations of relationships	0	1.0	-2.41–1.93
Aggression	1.33	.31	1–2.29

Regression Models Predicting Socioemotional Development

In order to predict socioemotional development, a series of hierarchical regression models were built using the affect and discourse elements from each of the discourse tasks. Age was entered on the first step of all models as a control, since age is consistently related to aspects of social cognitive development (see Thompson, 1998). Gender was also included as a control in the models predicting aggression, not only because other researchers have found support that boys are more physically aggressive than girls (see Coie & Dodge, 1998, for a review) but also because, in this study, mothers rated boys higher on aggressive behavior.

Discourse variables were entered on the second step of all models. Models were built separately by context in order to compare the pattern of relationships between discourse variables and affect across the contexts. In addition, interactions between the discourse variables and shared posi-

Table 3. Bivariate Relations

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Shared positivity during reminiscing	—	.37**	.38**	.19	.55**	.17	.13	.46**	.32*	.55**	-.18
2. Discussion of negative emotion during reminiscing	—	—	.42**	.13	.24*	.02	.17	.34*	.28*	.29*	-.31*
3. Discussion of positive emotion during reminiscing	—	—	—	.01	.34*	.01	.03	.24	.17	.18	.01
4. Maternal elaboration during reminiscing	—	—	—	—	.48**	.23	.23	.38**	.30*	.37**	-.18
5. Shared positivity during storybook reading	—	—	—	—	—	.22	.24	.53**	.19	.66**	-.29*
6. Discussion of negative emotion during storybook reading	—	—	—	—	—	—	.61**	.34*	.14	.19	.06
7. Discussion of positive emotion during storybook reading	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.35*	-.04	-.04	.07
8. Maternal elaboration during storybook reading	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.10	.44**	-.16
9. Emotional understanding	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.30*	.04
10. Positive representations of relationships	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	-.19
11. Aggression	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

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

Table 4. Regression Models Predicting Emotional Understanding

Step and variables	β at final step using reminiscing variables	β at final step using storybook elements
1. Age	.47**	.48**
2. Shared positivity	.16	.18
Maternal elaboration	.31*	.01
Discussion of negative emotion	.07	-.03
Discussion of positive emotion	.05	.18

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Total $R^2 = .39$ [$F(5,45) = 5.68$; $p < .01$] for reminiscing

Total $R^2 = .30$ [$F(5,45) = 3.94$; $p < .01$] for storybook reading

tivity were explored on the third step of all models. In general, no interactions were found, and thus they are not discussed here. The one exception, however, was for predicting emotional understanding from the reminiscing variables; this interaction is discussed below.

In the models predicting emotional understanding (see Table 4), the addition of age on the first step of both models significantly increased the amount of systematic variance accounted for in the models ($\Delta R^2 = .22$, $\Delta F(1, 49) = 13.4$, $p < .01$). Only the addition of the discourse and affect variables from the reminiscing task increased significantly the amount of systematic variance in accounting for emotional understanding ($\Delta R^2 = .17$, $\Delta F(4, 45) = 3.12$, $p < .05$). Both age and maternal elaboration made significant independent contributions in predicting emotional understanding. Older children and children whose mothers were elaborative in the reminiscing task scored high on emotional understanding.

In addition, there was a significant interaction between the dyad's discussion of negative emotion and shared positivity during reminiscing in predicting emotional understanding ($\Delta R^2 = .09$, $\Delta F(1, 44) = 3.27$, $p < .05$). To determine the pattern of the interaction, the relationship between emotional understanding and the discussion of negative emotion was graphed at one standard deviation above, at one standard deviation below, and at the mean of shared positivity (see Figure 1). For dyads where shared positivity was high, mother-child discussion of negative emotion was unrelated to emotional understanding in children ($\beta = .03$, $p > .05$). For dyads where the shared positivity was average ($\beta = .33$, $p < .05$) or low

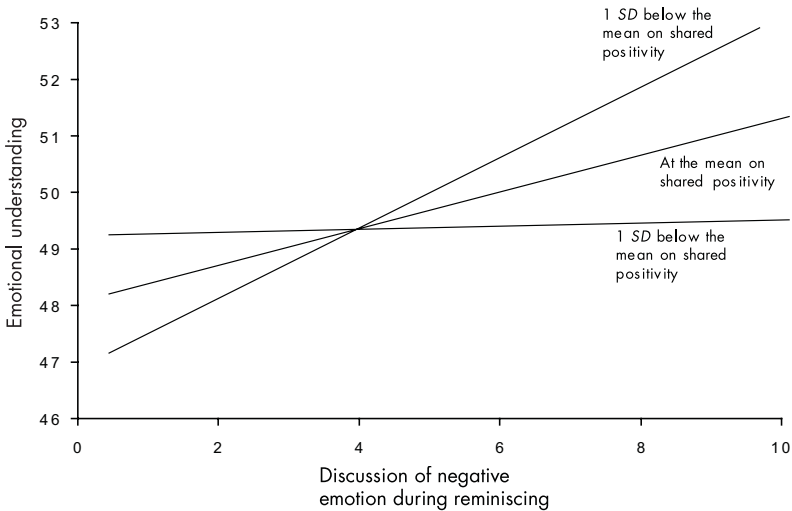


Figure 1. The relationship between the dyad's discussion of negative emotion during reminiscing and the child's level of emotional understanding at one standard deviation above, one standard deviation below, and at the mean of shared positivity.

($\beta = .66, p < .05$), the discussion of negative emotion in the dyad was associated with increases in emotional understanding.

In the models predicting positive representations of relationships (see Table 5), the addition of age on the first step of both models failed to significantly increase the amount of systematic variance in both ($\Delta R^2 = .02, \Delta F(1, 49) = .78, p > .05$). The addition of the discourse and affect variables on the second step of both models increased significantly the amount of systematic variance accounted for in the models (reminiscing: $\Delta R^2 = .38, \Delta F(4, 44) = 6.82, p < .01$; storybook reading: $\Delta R^2 = .46, \Delta F(4, 44) = 9.66, p < .01$). For the model using the reminiscing variables, both maternal elaboration and shared positivity made significant independent contributions to the model. Children from dyads where the level of shared positivity was high during reminiscing and whose mothers elaborated frequently were likely to represent relationships positively. In the model using the storybook discourse elements, both the discussion of positive and negative emotion, as well as shared positive affect, made independent contributions to the model. However, two of the variables were the result of suppressor effects (i.e., the dyad's discussion of positive and negative emotions) and thus were not interpretable. In dyads where shared positivity during the storybook reading was high, children were more likely to represent relationships in a prosocial manner.

Table 5. Regression Models Predicting Positive Representations of Relationships

Step and variables	β at final step using reminiscing variables	β at final step using storybook elements
1. Age	.09	.05
2. Shared positivity	.48**	.70**
Maternal elaboration	.28*	-.03
Discussion of negative emotion	.06	.27*
Discussion of positive emotion	-.05	-.34*

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Total $R^2 = .39$ [$F(5,45) = 5.64$; $p < .01$] for reminiscing

Total $R^2 = .49$ [$F(5,45) = 8.45$; $p < .01$] for storybook reading

In the models predicting aggression (see Table 6), the addition of age and gender on the first step of both models did not increase significantly the amount of systematic variance accounted for in both models ($\Delta R^2 = .08$, $\Delta F(2, 48) = 1.99$, $p > .05$). The addition of the discourse and affect variables increased significantly the amount of variance accounted for in the model with the reminiscing discourse elements only ($\Delta R^2 = .17$, $\Delta F(4, 44) = 2.68$, $p < .05$). The only variable to make a significant independent contribution to the model was the discussion of negative emotion in the dyad. The more frequently mothers and children discussed negative emotion during the reminiscing task, the less likely children were to be rated by their mothers as aggressive.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to examine in two different contexts how both mother-child affect and discourse predicted socioemotional understanding. The findings suggest that both discourse and affect are important predictors of socioemotional understanding but that the pattern of relations depends to some extent on the context of the discourse. The emotional tone of the interaction between mother and child during both narrative discourse tasks, including the amount of mother-child warmth, intersubjectivity, and communication, was an important predictor of the child's socioemotional development. High levels of warmth, intersubjectivity, and communication between mother and child during both the reminiscing task and the storybook task were associated with the child's prosocial and coherent representations of family relationships. Similarly, high levels of

Table 6. Regression Models Predicting Aggressive Behavior

Step and variables	β at final step using reminiscing variables	β at final step using storybook elements
1. Age	-.15	-.09
Gender	-.26*	-.32*
2. Shared positivity	-.06	-.43*
Maternal elaboration	-.14	.16
Discussion of negative emotion	-.40*	.05
Discussion of positive emotion	.27	-.04

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Total $R^2 = .24$ [$F(6,44) = 2.30$; $p = .05$] for reminiscing

Total $R^2 = .12$ [$F(6,44) = 1.22$; $p > .05$] for storybook reading

shared positivity during the reading of the wordless storybook were associated with less aggressive behavior. High levels of shared positivity, intersubjectivity, and communication in the dyad likely create an interpersonal environment that facilitates a child's willingness to attend to, process, and accept parental messages in the context of discourse. In addition, consistent with previous research, high levels of positive affect also likely promote the child's construction of positive working models of relationships (Laible et al., 2004).

Aspects of mother-child discourse were also important in predicting socioemotional development, although almost exclusively in the context of the reminiscing task. In particular, the children of mothers who elaborated during the reminiscing task scored higher on emotional understanding and were more likely to have coherent, prosocial representations of relationships than were children whose mothers were more repetitive. This finding is consistent with previous research (Laible, 2004a; see Thompson et al., 2003) which finds that maternal elaboration, especially in the context of reminiscing, facilitates a child's socioemotional understanding, likely because it promotes a child's reflective thinking upon those issues discussed in the context of reminiscing. Maternal elaboration in the context of reminiscing also promotes the formation of strong secondary representations of significant emotional and interpersonal events, which likely facilitates the child's understanding of his or her past experiences.

More research, however, is clearly needed in order to understand what facets of elaboration are important in promoting a child's understanding. Thus, for example, researchers need to examine whether it is just the provision of new information in general that is important for fostering social and emotional understanding, or whether it is, more specifically, maternal elaboration on emotional or relational themes.

In addition, the dyad's discussion of negative emotion during the reminiscing task was associated with fewer reports of aggressive behavior by mothers. It seems likely that the dyad's open discussion of negative affect promotes the child's humanistic understanding of the consequences of the child's behavior on others, particularly when these conversations focus on the child's aggressive or unruly behavior—a frequent topic of conversation in the lives of young children. Furthermore, the discussion of negative emotions by the dyad may also help the child to regulate his or her own negative affect, which in turn has been associated with more competent social behavior and less aggressive behavior (Denham, 1998). Thus, discourse about negative emotions might help children learn how to negotiate their social relationships and manage their own affect (Lagattuta & Wellman, 2002).

Interestingly, the dyad's discussion of negative emotion during the reminiscing task also predicted emotional understanding, although this depended on the emotional quality of the reminiscing. For dyads where the level of shared positivity was high during reminiscing, the discussion of negative affect was unrelated to a child's level of emotional understanding. In contrast, for dyads where the levels of shared positivity in the dyad were average or low, the discussion of negative emotion was extremely important in promoting emotional understanding. This interaction suggests that for dyads where the affective quality of past narratives is muted, the discussion of negative emotion may be crucial for a child's development of emotional understanding. Young children are more likely to have difficulties in distinguishing among different negative emotions (Laible & Thompson, 1998), and as a result, frequent discourse about negative emotion in particular may help children to understand negative emotions, especially in dyads where the emotional quality of the discourse is low.

Future research might also want to consider examining in more detail how mothers discuss emotion during reminiscing, including examining the variety of emotions discussed and how mothers discuss emotion (e.g., do they discuss causes or consequences of emotion?). Researchers may especially want to consider more specifically the types of emotions that are discussed in the context of reminiscing (e.g., anger versus sadness). Researchers have found that the ways in which mothers and fathers discuss

particular negative emotions with children varies by gender (Fivush, 1991). Part of the reason why this study found no differences in discourse by gender may have to do with the fact that this type of detailed coding was not done on mother-child talk about emotion. In addition, future researchers might want to examine the unique contributions that mothers and children make to these emotion-laden conversations. Unfortunately, because of problems with colinearity, this study was limited in its ability to consider the unique contributions that mother and child discourse had in predicting socioemotional development. Finally, future researchers may also want to consider examining separately the influences of mother-child discourse in positive versus negative reminiscing contexts. Although this study found no differences in the amount of elaboration or frequency of emotion references across the two reminiscing conversations, others have found differences (see, e.g., Sales, Fivush, & Peterson, 2003).

Clearly, this study's findings suggest that it is important to consider the context of discourse when examining the relations among discourse, affect, and socioemotional development. This finding is consistent with other recent studies that have found differences in the nature of mother-child discourse across task (e.g., Haden & Fivush, 1996; Hoff-Ginsberg, 1991; Kuersten-Hogan & McHale, 2000; Laible, 2004b). Consistent with these studies, this study found few connections between the quality of discourse across contexts, although there was some consistency within contexts (e.g., the discussion of positive and negative emotions within discourse tasks was correlated). Especially intriguing was the fact that the style and emotional content of mother-child discourse seemed to be most predictive of socioemotional development during the reminiscing task. Although more research is clearly needed to determine why discourse in the reminiscing task was particularly important, this finding is not inconsistent with some theorizing (Fivush & Vasudeva, 2002; Reese, 2002; Thompson et al., 2003). Researchers in the autobiographical memory literature have argued that narrative discourse might be especially important for socioemotional development because of the links between this discourse and a child's memory for personal experiences. As a result, early mother-child reminiscing, especially about previous shared emotional experiences, may help to shape a child's internal working models.

In addition, this study found some support for the idea that mothers were more likely to talk about emotion in the context of reminiscing than in the context of reading a storybook with rich emotional themes. Mothers and children discussed positive emotions more frequently during the reminiscing task than when reading the storybook, even though the story-

book provided the dyad with rich opportunities to discuss emotion.³ Researchers have argued that one of the primary purposes of sharing previous experiences with others is social (Hyman & Faries, 1992; Reese, 2002); as a result, it is probably not surprising that emotion-laden discourse is a frequent part of reminiscing. Discussing emotion in the context of reminiscing likely provides the child with an evaluative framework in which to interpret and understand his or her past experiences (Fivush, 1993). Mother-child reminiscing that centers on the emotional relevance of aspects of the child's past experiences likely underscores the personal meaning of those events, the child's role, and the role of others in those experiences (Welch-Ross et al., 1999).

Obviously, given the small and homogeneous sample, it is important that these findings be replicated in a larger and more diverse sample. Research has suggested that the content and structure of parent-child conversations, especially during reminiscing, differ between cultures (see, e.g., Mullen & Yi, 1995). For example, Wang and her colleagues (Wang, 2004; Wang, Leichtman, & Davies, 2000) have found that Chinese mothers are less likely to discuss emotion and are less elaborative with their children during reminiscing than European American mothers are. Researchers have speculated that these differences in discourse are related to differences in the socialization goals of each culture (Mullen & Yi, 1995; Wang, 2004). In addition, given the fact that child outcome measures were assessed concurrently with the discourse measures in this study, it is impossible to determine the direction of the effects, and thus causal interpretations from this study must be made cautiously.

References

- Bowlby, J. (1980). *Attachment and loss: Vol. 3. Loss: Sadness and depression*. New York: Basic.
- Bretherton, I. (1990). Open communication and internal working models: Their role in the development of attachment relationships. In R. A. Thompson (Ed.), *Socioemotional development: Nebraska Symposium on Motivation* (Vol. 36, pp. 57–113). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Bretherton, I. (1993). From dialogue to internal working models: The co-con-

3. However, it is important to realize that we cannot rule out the possibility that mothers discussed emotion more during reminiscing as a result of the order of the tasks. Mothers always read the storybook first and engaged in the reminiscing conversations second. Thus, the high frequency of emotion talk during the reminiscing task may be accounted for by the fact that this task was last.

- struction of self in relationships. In C. A. Nelson (Ed.), *Memory and affect in development: Minnesota Symposium on Child Psychology* (pp. 237–264). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Brown, J., & Dunn, J. (1996). Continuities in emotional understanding from 3 to 6 years. *Child Development, 67*, 789–802.
- Coie, J., & Dodge, K. (1998). Aggression and antisocial behavior. In W. Damon (Editor-in-Chief) & N. Eisenberg (Vol. Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology: Vol. 3. Social, emotional, and personality development* (5th ed., pp. 779–862). New York: Wiley.
- Denham, S. (1986). Social cognition, pro-social behavior, and emotion in preschoolers: Contextual validation. *Child Development, 57*, 194–201.
- Denham, S. (1998). *Emotional development in young children*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Denham, S., Zoller, D., & Couchoud, E. (1994). Socialization of preschoolers' emotion understanding. *Developmental Psychology, 30*, 928–936.
- Dunn, J., & Munn, P. (1987). Development of justification in disputes with mother and sibling. *Developmental Psychology, 23*, 791–798.
- Farrar, M., Fasig, L., & Welch-Ross, M. (1997). Attachment and emotion in autobiographical memory development. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, 67*, 389–408.
- Fivush, R. (1991). Gender and emotion in mother-child conversations about the past. *Journal of Narrative and Life History, 1*, 325–341.
- Fivush, R. (1993). Emotional content of parent-child conversations about the past. In C. A. Nelson (Ed.), *Memory and affect in development: Minnesota Symposium on Child Psychology* (Vol. 26, pp. 39–77). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Fivush, R., & Fromhoff, F. (1988). Style and structure in mother-child conversations about the past. *Discourse Processes, 11*, 337–355.
- Fivush, R., & Vasudeva, A. (2002). Remembering to relate: Socioemotional correlates of mother-child reminiscing. *Journal of Cognition and Development, 3*, 73–90.
- Gini, M., Oppenheim, D., & Sagi, A. (2003). *Negotiation styles in mother-child narrative co-construction at age 7.5 years: Associations with early patterns of attachment*. Paper presented at the Society for Research in Child Development's Biennial Conference, April 2003, Tampa, Florida.
- Haden, C., & Fivush, R. (1996). Contextual variation in maternal conversational styles. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 42*, 200–227.
- Halberstadt, A. (1986). Family socialization of emotional expression and nonverbal communication styles and skills. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51*, 827–836.
- Halberstadt, A., Fox, N., & Jones, N. (1993). Do expressive mothers have expressive children? The role of socialization in children's affect expression. *Social*

Development, 2, 48–65.

- Hoff-Ginsberg, E. (1991). Mother-child conversations in different social classes and communicative settings. *Child Development*, 62, 782–796.
- Hoffman, M. (1983). Affective and cognitive processes in moral internalization. In E. T. Higgins, D. Ruble, & W. Hartup (Eds.), *Social cognition and social development: A sociocultural perspective* (pp. 236–274). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hoffman, M. (1984). Empathy, its limitations, and its role in a comprehensive moral theory. In W. Kurtines & J. Gewirtz (Eds.), *Morality, moral behavior, and moral development* (pp. 283–302). New York: Wiley.
- Howe, N., Aquan-Assee, J., Bukowski, W., Lehoux, P., & Rinaldi, C. (2001). Siblings as confidants: Emotional understanding, relationship warmth, and sibling self-disclosure. *Social Development*, 10, 439–454.
- Hudson, J. (1990). The emergence of autobiographical memory in mother-child conversation. In R. Fivush & J. Hudson (Eds.), *Knowing and remembering in young children* (pp. 166–196). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hudson, J., Gebelt, J., Haviland, J., & Bentivegna, C. (1992). Emotion and narrative structure in young children's personal accounts. *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, 2, 129–150.
- Hyman, I., & Faries, J. (1992). The functions of autobiographical memory. In M. Conway, D. Rubin, H. Spinnler, & W. Wagenaar (Eds.), *Theoretical perspectives on autobiographical memory* (pp. 207–221). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer.
- Kuebli, J., Butler, S., & Fivush, R. (1995). Mother-child talk about past emotions: Relations of maternal language and child gender over time. *Cognition and Emotion*, 9, 265–283.
- Kuersten-Hogan, R., & McHale, J. (2000). Stability of emotion talk in families from the toddler to preschool years. *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 16, 115–121.
- Ladd, G., & Profilet, S. (1996). The Child Behavior Scale: A teacher-report measure of young children's aggressive, withdrawn, and prosocial behaviors. *Developmental Psychology*, 32, 1008–1024.
- Lagattuta, K., & Wellman, H. (2002). Differences in early parent-child conversations about negative versus positive emotions: Implications for the development of psychological understanding. *Developmental Psychology*, 38, 564–580.
- Laible, D. (2004a). Mother-child discourse about a child's past behavior at 30 months and early socioemotional development at age 3. *Merrill Palmer Quarterly*, 50, 159–180.
- Laible, D. (2004b). Mother-child discourse in two contexts: Factors that predict differences in the quality and emotional content of the discourse and the consequences of those differences for socioemotional development. *Develop-*

- mental Psychology*, 40, 979–992.
- Laible, D., Carlo, G., Torquati, J., & Ontai, L. (2004). Children's representations of relationships as assessed in a doll story completion task: Links to parenting, social competence, and externalizing behavior. *Social Development*, 13, 551–569.
- Laible, D., & Thompson, R. (1998). Attachment and emotional understanding in preschool children. *Developmental Psychology*, 34, 1038–1045.
- Laible, D., & Thompson, R. (2000). Mother-child discourse, attachment security, shared positive affect, and early conscience development. *Child Development*, 71, 1424–1440.
- Laible, D., & Thompson, R. (2002). Early parent-child conflict: Lessons in emotion, morality, and relationships. *Child Development*, 73, 1187–1203.
- McCabe, A., & Peterson, C. (1991). Getting the story: A longitudinal study of parental styles in eliciting narratives and developing narrative skill. In A. McCabe & C. Peterson (Eds.), *Developing narrative structure* (pp. 217–254). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Miller, P., Potts, R., Fung, H., Hoogstra, L., & Mintz, J. (1990). Narrative practices and the social construction of self in childhood. *American Ethnologist*, 17, 292–311.
- Mullen, M., & Yi, S. (1995). The cultural context of talk about the past: Implications for the development of autobiographical memory. *Cognitive Development*, 10, 407–419.
- Nelson, K. (1981). Social cognition in script framework. In J. Flavell & L. Ross (Eds.), *Social cognitive development: Frontiers and possible futures* (pp. 97–118). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Nelson, K. (1996). *Language in cognitive development: The emergence of the mediated mind*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Nelson, K. (1999). Event representations, narrative development, and internal working models. *Attachment and Human Development*, 1, 219–252.
- Oppenheim, D., Nir, A., Warren, S., & Emde, R. (1997). Emotion regulation in mother-child narrative co-constructions: Associations with children's narratives and adaptation. *Developmental Psychology*, 33, 284–294.
- Reese, E. (2002). Social factors in the development of autobiographical memory: The state of the art. *Social Development*, 11, 124–142.
- Reese, E., & Fivush, R. (1993). Parental styles of talking about the past. *Developmental psychology*, 29, 596–606.
- Reese, E., Haden, C., & Fivush, R. (1993). Mother-child conversations about the past: Relationships of style and memory over time. *Cognitive Development*, 8, 403–430.
- Sales, J., Fivush, R., & Peterson, C. (2003). Parental reminiscing about positive and negative events. *Journal of Cognition and Development*, 4, 185–209.

- Schank, R., & Abelson, R. (1977). *Scripts, plans, goals, and understanding*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Stormshak, E., Bellanti, C., & Bierman, K. (1998). The quality of sibling relationships and the development of social competence and behavioral control in aggressive children. *Developmental Psychology, 32*, 79–89.
- Thompson, R. (1998). Early sociopersonality development. In W. Damon (Editor-in-Chief) & N. Eisenberg (Vol. Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology: Vol. 3. Social, emotional, and personality development* (5th ed., pp. 25–104). New York: Wiley.
- Thompson, R., Laible, D., & Ontai, L. (2003). Early understandings of emotion, morality, and self: Developing a working model. In R. V. Kail (Ed.), *Advances in child development and behavior* (Vol. 31, pp. 139–172). San Diego: Academic.
- Wang, Q. (2004). The emergence of cultural self-constructs: Autobiographical memory and self-description in European American and Chinese children. *Developmental Psychology, 40*, 3–15.
- Wang, Q., Leichtman, M., & Davies, K. (2000). Sharing memories and telling stories. American and Chinese mothers and their 3-year-olds. *Memory, 8*, 159–177.
- Welch-Ross, M. (1995). An integrative model of the development of autobiographical memory. *Developmental Review, 15*, 338–365.
- Welch-Ross, M. (2001). Personalizing the temporally extended self: Evaluative self-awareness and the development of autobiographical memory. In C. Moore & K. Lemmon (Eds.), *The self in time* (pp. 97–120). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Welch-Ross, M., Fasig, L., & Farrar, M. (1999). Predictors of preschoolers' self-knowledge: Reference to emotion and mental states in mother-child conversation about past events. *Cognitive Development, 14*, 401–422.