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Finally, we need to conduct our research in a much more fine-grained fashion. It may not be the amount of time spent talking about emotion that is critical, but the way in which emotion is talked about. In my own research, it is not a question of whether specific emotions are discussed (although this does play a role), but, more important, the way in which specific emotions are discussed. Are parents and children focusing on the emotional state itself or on the causes and consequences of the emotion? Are they discussing intensity of emotional experience or trying to dismiss the importance of emotions? Are they talking only about the child's emotions or are they including discussion of other people's emotions and how they are interrelated? What is the function of the conversation? Is the parent trying to control the child's emotional experience and expression or to understand and empathize? Many of the most intriguing findings that Eisenberg discusses rely on studies that have begun to address some of these questions. Until we begin to analyze the way in which parents and children coconstruct emotional experience and expression in this kind of detail, I do not believe we will be able to fully appreciate how, or the extent to which, emotions are socialized.

Eisenberg et al.'s review is impressive in setting out our current state of knowledge about the socialization of emotion and its limitations. I have tried to highlight some of the methodological challenges that face us as we continue to chart this critical developmental process.

Note

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Constructs and Processes in Parental Socialization of Emotion

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The target article by Eisenberg, Cumberland, and Spinrad represents a new direction in the socialization literature. Their review is timely given the resurgence of interest in emotion and emotional competence. In our view, the authors' most important contribution is their attempt to link disparate research areas that inform our understanding of the socialization of emotion. In doing so, they also expose issues that need more research attention. In this commentary, we address four issues. First, we discuss conceptual defini-

tions of parental emotion-relevant socialization behaviors (ERSBs) and suggest that these behaviors may share considerable overlap with core parenting practices identified in the socialization literature (e.g., Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Second, we discuss potential reciprocal relations among parental ERSBs, and child emotional arousal and emotion regulation. Third, we argue that family emotional climate (e.g., marital conflict) plays a major role in children's behavioral and social competence and should be explicitly added

to the exogenous variables in the model. Last, we discuss the need for more specific models focused on the determinants of parental ERSBs.

In our view, the field of emotion socialization would benefit from more discussion and empirical exploration about whether constructs like parental ERSBs and emotion coaching (Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1996) are distinct from core parenting practices identified in the socialization literature, and whether ERSBs account for unique variance in child outcomes. We agree that ERSBs encompass specific parenting practices and that these practices are distinct from the global, affective tone of the parent-child relationship, which is often assessed with measures of parental warmth. We believe, however, that there is likely to be considerable overlap between ERSBs and emotion coaching and specific parenting practices that reflect acceptance, behavior control, and democratic parenting.

Acceptance reflects responsiveness to the child and includes nurturance, support, kindness, and acceptance of the child's feelings and thoughts. Behavior control reflects demandingness of the child and includes limit setting and communication and enforcement of standards. Democratic practices involve respect for the child's feelings and views and include reasoning, induction, and scaffolding, which attempt to work with the child's understanding to make corrections and discipline meaningful. Democratic parents are also unlikely to control their children with guilt or anxiety induction (for detailed description of parenting practices, see Baumrind, 1978, 1991; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Schaefer, 1959, 1965).

We wonder if parental ERSBs would be highly correlated with acceptance, behavior control, and democratic practices. For example, suppose a child is angry at a peer because the peer took away a toy, and the child retaliates by hitting. The child's mother might say, "I understand why you're angry, I'd be angry too. It's not nice when someone grabs your toy. But we don't hit even when we're angry. What else could you do when that happens to you and you get angry?" This answer reflects labeling of emotions, validation of the child's feelings, and shaping of emotion regulation, which can be defined as parental ERSBs or emotion coaching. A mother doing this, however, would also score high on measures of acceptance, behavior control, and induction, and low on psychological control (note that she did not say, "When you hit it makes me very sad."). In future research, it is important to address the issue of the uniqueness of ERSBs, especially when specific theoretical linkages between ERSBs and child outcomes are being articulated. If ERSBs are viewed as distinct, discriminant validity between ERSBs and other parent practices must be established. We also need to know whether ERSBs add to our prediction of child competence beyond core parenting

practices. Doing this would also help to integrate the literature on parental socialization of emotion with the wealth of extant research on socialization in general.

Our second area of concern focuses on the placement of ERSBs, arousal, and regulation in Eisenberg et al.'s model. As the model is depicted, parental behavior is an antecedent of arousal and regulation. We agree that parental behavior precedes arousal and regulation, but parental behavior also follows the child's arousal and regulation. Although it is difficult to depict such reciprocal relations (and even more difficult to examine them empirically), it is important to discuss these connections. For instance, a child who reacts with intense fear to a novel situation may elicit certain sets of ERSBs, whereas another child who responds to novelty with mild caution may hardly elicit an ERSB at all. Likewise, children's regulatory capacities may affect ERSBs such that children with adequate regulatory skills may not require as much socialization as those who have difficulty in modulating their reactivity.

Eisenberg et al. point out several important predictors of ERSBs, arousal, and regulation. An important domain, however, has been ignored in their model—familial emotional climate, which can be conceptualized as the global affective tone within the family, or as more specific aspects of functioning such as degree of marital conflict. For instance, it has been argued (Cummings, 1998; Cummings & Davies, 1996; Davies & Cummings, 1994, 1998) that marital conflict can affect children's arousal and emotion regulation directly by reducing their "felt security" and by creating a context in which maladaptive regulatory strategies develop. Even during infancy, increased marital conflict affects infants' organization of attachment behavior such that infants whose parents are more openly hostile show more disorganized attachment behaviors with both mothers and fathers (Owen & Cox, 1997). Such disorganized behavior is considered to be maladaptive and has been linked with increased aggression later in childhood (Lyons-Ruth, Connell, Grunebaum, & Botein, 1990). The effect of marital conflict might also be indirect (mediated through ERSBs), as parents in conflict are likely to be less sensitive or emotionally available to their children (see Cummings, 1998; Davies & Cummings, 1998; Jouriles, Pfiffner, & O'Leary, 1988; Owen & Cox, 1997). Thus, marital conflict may affect children's socioemotional competence at multiple levels.

We close our commentary by suggesting that more attention needs to be directed to the determinants of parents' socialization of emotion. Although researchers have directed much attention to the description and measurement of parenting practices and the effects of different practices on children, we know little about the factors that account for individual differences in parenting (Belsky, 1984). It would be helpful at this

point if we understood more about how child characteristics, parental psychological resources, and environmental stress and support affect parental ERSBs, especially in nonclinical, nonreferred samples. It is quite likely that, to understand these connections, we will need to specify smaller submodels that focus on process. For instance, Gondoli and Silverberg (1997) found that the effect of mothers' emotional distress on their responsiveness to their adolescent children was indirect and was mediated by mothers' sense of their efficacy in the parenting role and their ability and willingness to take their child's perspective. Also, in a sample of toddlers, mothers' use of guidance versus control in directing their children was predicted by toddlers' temperamental negative reactivity (Braungart-Rieker, Garwood, & Stifter, 1997). Eisenberg et al. attempt to link together diverse variables and processes that play a role in the socialization of emotion. What is needed now is careful specification and testing of smaller pieces of the big picture.

Note

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What Do We Call the Outcome of Emotional Socialization?

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Eisenberg, Cumberland, and Spinrad offer an important contribution to our understanding of emotional socialization. First, their article presents a rich, contextual synopsis of the literature on the socialization of emotion. Eisenberg et al. compile the findings into a descriptive summary of the research conducted in this area. Second, the researchers reduce the complexity of findings by using key explanatory variables. The iden-

tified variables are then incorporated by these researchers into an organizing model. Third, in presenting a model of emotional socialization, Eisenberg et al. provide not only a description, but also a characterization of the state of the literature. These authors allow readers to see the holes in the research base and provide several valuable insights about how these holes can be eliminated.