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"I Was Really, Really, Really Mad!" Children's Use of Evaluative Devices in Narratives About Emotional Events[1]

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Children (ages 3, 5, and 8 years, mostly White and middle-class) were asked to tell personal experience narratives about a time when they had been happy, surprised, and mad. Their explicit emotion labels as well as their use of linguistic forms of evaluation to convey emotion were assessed. Five-year-old boys were the most likely to explicitly label anger, while gender and age differences in explicit emotion labels were absent for the other two emotions. However, children used many more linguistic devices for providing evaluation than explicit emotion labels in their narratives. They also provided more with age, and they used more evaluative devices when talking about anger-arousing events than about happy or surprising events. The few gender differences suggested that 3-year-old girls may acquire earlier mastery of evaluative devices than do boys, especially references to emotional states.

KEY WORDS: narrative; emotion; evaluation; language; stories.

Gender differences in the expression of emotion have been well documented in adults (Brody, 1999). However, as persuasively argued by Brody, research results are substantially affected by both context and measurement tool. Less research has focused on gender differences in emotional expression in children. They begin to talk about emotions by as early as 18 months of age (e.g., Dunn, Bretherton, & Munn, 1987; Miller & Sperry, 1987), and Dunn et al.'s study documenting talk about ongoing or present events found

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that girls as young as 24 months talked more about emotions than did boys (Dunn et al., 1987). Cervantes and Callanan (1998) likewise found a gender difference favoring girls at age 2, although none in 4-year-olds. In contrast, other studies assessed parent–child conversations about past events, and they found no difference in 2-year-olds but robust gender differences at older ages favoring girls (Adams, Kuebli, Boyle, & Fivush, 1995; Buckner & Fivush, 1998; Kuebli, Butler, & Fivush, 1995). Thus, findings on gender differences in children's emotion talk are mixed, but complicating factors are the differences in methodology between studies. For example, the content of conversations varies: talk about the present situation versus talk about past events. Studies also differ in developmental design, that is, cross-sectional versus longitudinal, as well as in the ages of the children and in how they operationally define emotion talk.

The predominant context for assessing children's emotion talk has been parent–child conversations, and there may be differences in how parents talk to girls and boys. Some studies have found that parents talked more about emotion to preschool-aged daughters than to sons (Adams et al., 1995; Dunn et al., 1987; Fivush, 1991, 1993; Kuebli et al., 1995; Kuebli & Fivush, 1992; Reese & Fivush, 1993). Moreover, the particular emotion being discussed played a role, because parents discussed sadness more frequently and elaborately with daughters whereas they discussed anger more with sons. (There were no gender differences in discussions of happiness.) In contrast, others have found little gender difference in how much parents talked about emotion with girls versus boys (Cervantes & Callanan, 1998; Denham, 1998; Denham, Cook, & Zoller, 1992; Dunn, Brown, & Beardsall, 1991), and a meta-analysis of gender differences in how parents socialize girls and boys found few statistically significant differences in parental behavior on the basis of child gender (Lytton & Romney, 1991).

One of the limitations of this body of research is that it focuses almost exclusively on how *parents* bring up and structure talk about emotions in parent–child conversations. As Fivush (1998) pointed out, researchers also need to examine how *children* themselves initiate and structure emotion-talk with their parents. In addition, in order to develop a good understanding of the range of children's emotional expression, it is necessary to expand the context of research to include children's talk with nonparents, including in situations where children themselves largely drive the content of the conversations.

In most of the studies analyzing parent–child conversations where the child was at least 2 years of age, the conversational partners constructed *narratives* about events, either fictional stories (Cervantes & Callanan, 1998) or stories about personal experience (e.g., Adams et al., 1995; Burger & Miller, 1999; Farrar, Fasig, & Welch-Ross, 1997; Fivush, 1991; Kuebli et al.,

1995; Kuebli & Fivush, 1992; Miller & Sperry, 1987; Reese & Fivush, 1993). Narration provides a good context for studying children's language because this genre appears early (Eisenberg, 1985; McCabe & Peterson, 1991; Miller & Sperry, 1987). It is particularly suitable as a context for studying children's linguistic representation of emotion because a majority of children's narratives are affectively valenced (Miller & Sperry, 1987; Peterson & McCabe, 1983). In the studies cited above, children and their parents talked about emotionally positive events like going to a special place or getting a present as well as emotionally negative events like getting injured. Miller and her colleagues in fact argue that affective factors play a critical role in the development of narrative talk (Burger & Miller, 1999; Miller & Sperry, 1987).

Analyses of emotion by investigators in the above studies of parent–child narration often focused on counting emotion labels or simply tabulating the amount of speech that focused on an emotional state. However, there are additional ways of looking at emotion in narratives. In fact, confining analyses to emotion labels may significantly underestimate the emotional expressiveness of narratives, particularly for non-middle-class speakers (Burger & Miller, 1999; Labov & Waletzky, 1967/1997). Thus, we need to take a closer look at various kinds of emotional expression and develop a more fine-grained analysis of it. One approach to studying affect in narration was proposed by Labov and Waletzky (1967/1997). (But see Biber & Finegan, 1989, and Kernan, 1977, for yet other approaches.) Labov and Waletzky see narratives as fulfilling two separate functions, one of which is *reference*, that is, telling the listener what happened. The second function is of more relevance to the current study, namely *evaluation*, that is, telling the listener what the events meant, the narrator's emotional reaction to the events she is relating, and in general the speaker's attitude about the narrated events. To quote Fivush (1993, p. 44), "Evaluation provides the emotional tone and texture of an experience. The evaluation informs both the listener and the self what the personal meaning of this particular event is."

Labov and Waletzky developed a list of evaluative devices that all convey evaluation in some way or another. These evaluative devices include not only explicit references to emotion but also more subtle ways in which emotion is conveyed. For example, one important technique of evaluation is to suspend the action of a narrative. On the surface, devices such as expressing cognitions and using repetition may not necessarily appear evaluative. However, Labov and Waletzky maintain that they are indeed evaluative because they suspend narrative action, thereby calling attention to that part of the narrative. (For an extended discussion of evaluation, see Labov, 1982, and Labov & Waletzky, 1967/1997.) A large body of research now exists that is based on Labov and Waletzky's seminal methods of narrative analysis (for an overview see Volume 7 [1997], *Journal of Narrative and Life History*).

The current study extended this tradition of narrative analysis by exploring the evaluative techniques used by children when they were asked to talk about emotional events. Such events are explicitly emotionally toned, and in this study we analyzed the ways in which children provided "emotional tone and texture" to their narratives about these events by means of evaluative techniques.

As an example of the range of evaluative expression proposed by Labov and Waletzky, consider this sentence, produced by a preschooler during this study: "I was really, really, really mad!" This sentence not only conveys emotion by using the emotion label "mad," but it also conveys emotion by the use of several other devices. The word "really" is gratuitous and serves little function but to emphasize or intensify the importance of the word it modifies. The repetition of "really" three times in the sentence gives considerable additional importance to the subsequent word "mad." Furthermore, the exclamation mark conveys the child's use of phonological stress when he uttered this sentence. Thus, this single short sentence conveys evaluative or emotional information via four different devices, only one of which is a label for an emotion. Other devices that convey evaluation are judgments ("He's bad"), references to cognitive states ("I wanted that"), reported speech ("He said, 'Go to bed, you'"), negatives, because saying what did *not* happen emphasizes what did ("I didn't do it"), hedges indicating when the speaker is unsure ("Looks like I'm in trouble, I suppose"), and onomatopoeia ("It went ⟨BANG⟩").

The frequency of use of these evaluative devices have been found to increase substantially with age (Peterson & McCabe, 1983), especially references to cognitive states (Bamberg & Damrad-Frye, 1991; Bamberg & Reilly, 1994) and references to speech (Ely & McCabe, 1993). Furthermore, the variety of devices used by children increased with age. However, younger children were more likely to use repetition and phonological stress than older children (Peterson & McCabe, 1983).

Gender differences in the frequency of most evaluative devices appear to be minimal or have not been reported. However, elementary school-aged girls did report considerably more speech of others during their descriptions of past events than did elementary school-aged boys (Ely & McCabe, 1993), and 8-year-old girls' narratives contained more emotion labels than did those of boys (Buckner & Fivush, 1998). In contrast, boys were found to be somewhat more likely to incorporate sound effects or onomatopoeia as well as gratuitous terms into their narratives (Peterson & McCabe, 1983). However, the sorts of narratives to be assessed may need to be expanded in order to get a better understanding of whether boys and girls differ in their use of evaluative devices.

The above investigations on children's use of evaluative devices analyzed either children's narratives about a range of past personal experiences

or their storytelling when given a wordless picture book to "read." However, it is difficult to assess gender differences in these studies because the topics of the children's narratives differed so much. For example, the corpus of narratives analyzed by Peterson and McCabe (1983) and later by Ely and McCabe (1993) was derived from conversations in which narratives about approximately 20 potential topics were elicited by a researcher, and yet other topics were spontaneously volunteered by the children. The narrative topics varied widely, from emotionally positive events like getting presents and having a party, to negative events like getting injured or stuck with a needle, to potentially more neutral events like what one did on vacation. In all of these studies, children sometimes did and sometimes did not talk about explicitly emotional events. Although one fruitful area of future investigation may be gender differences where children's conversations are unconstrained, another illuminating direction of investigation is gender differences in the use of evaluative devices when children are asked to recall events that explicitly elicited emotion.

This latter direction, namely narratives about explicitly emotional events, has been little studied and is the focus of the current investigation. After all, if evaluative devices convey emotional tone and texture, how do children use them when specifically discussing highly emotional events? Hudson, Gebelt, Haviland, and Bentigegna (1992) were the first to analyze the structure of children's narratives when they were explicitly asked to talk about events that elicited different emotions. They asked 4-year-olds to tell them about a time when they were very happy, mad, and scared. Hudson et al. (1992) found that the structure of the children's narratives differed depending upon the emotion about which they were talking. Children emphasized the crisis events that caused fear when they were talking about a time when they were scared, the resolution of the event that precipitated anger, and they were more likely to be descriptive about a "moment-in-time" that elicited happiness rather than providing a plotted story about the events. In terms of the types of evaluative devices that the children used, the investigators presented information only about what they termed "internal responses," which included both labels of emotions as well as references to cognitive states. They found that 4-year-old girls were more likely to use these devices than were boys.

In another study of children's narratives about emotion-arousing events, Peterson and Biggs (1998) asked 2–13-year-old children to recall a trauma injury that was serious enough to necessitate a trip to the hospital Emergency Room. The children were recruited at the hospital and interviewed within a few days of their injury. The injuries caused considerable emotional distress in most children, even hysterical screaming in some. Interestingly, the investigators found that at all ages, as the degree of emotional distress

increased, the coherence of the children's accounts as well as the use of evaluative devices decreased. That is, extreme distress led to a decrease in affect in the children's accounts. No gender differences were discerned.

These studies form a good beginning for the analysis of children's narratives about emotion-laden events. However, Hudson et al. limited the range of evaluative devices they analyzed, and Peterson and Biggs limited their study to narratives about just one event. The present study extended the exploration of how children talk about explicitly emotion-arousing events by analyzing a range of evaluative devices in narratives about three quite different emotions. We selected a positive emotion ("Tell me about one time when you were very happy"), a negative emotion (very mad), and an emotion that is neither positive nor negative (very surprised). There is growing realization in the field that "all emotions are not created equal" (Fivush, 1998), and in fact narratives about emotions that have the same valence may be quite different. For example, narratives about the negative emotion of fear may be quite different from those about anger. In the current study, for a negative emotion we chose anger because it is the one for which gender differences have most consistently been found.

The analysis of children's narratives was done in two ways. First, the narratives were coded in ways that parallel several earlier investigations of emotion in children's talk, namely by counting emotion labels. Such labels are perhaps the purest representation of emotion. Second, the more extensive coding strategy of analyzing children's use of evaluative devices was applied. Although evaluative devices include emotion labels, they are more encompassing because they incorporate a considerable amount of other forms of evaluative information.

We hypothesized that emotion labels and the total use of evaluative devices would both increase in the children's narratives with age. In terms of particular evaluative devices, we predicted that references to cognitive states and to speech would increase, parallel to findings of previous research. In terms of gender differences, the gender-differentiated language of parents to children that was found by Fivush and her colleagues would suggest that gender differences should increase with age, parallel to what they found. However, other research suggests that although gender differences were present in very young preschoolers, they disappeared with age (Cervantes & Callanan, 1998). Thus, no a priori hypotheses about gender differences in the use of emotion labels or in overall use of evaluation by the two genders was proposed, although girls were predicted to refer more to speech. In terms of differences between narratives about the three emotions of happiness, anger, and surprise, Fivush (1991) found that mothers spent more time discussing anger with boys than with girls, and mothers were more likely to both accept and discuss anger and retaliation by sons whereas they were

instead more likely to focus their daughters' attention on ways to repair relationships if negative emotions were expressed. As a consequence, we expected a gender difference in children's narratives about anger, with boys labeling the emotion of anger more as well as incorporating more evaluation into these stories. We had no a priori predictions about narratives focusing on the emotions of happiness and surprise.

METHOD

Participants

Sixty children (twenty 3-, 5-, and 8-year-olds, with gender equally represented in each age group) were randomly selected from 82 children participating in a larger study on emotion and narrative. The children were predominately White and were recruited from three local daycare centers and a primary school that were identified as mostly middle-class by daycare directors and school administrators. Consent was obtained from the children's parents as well as from the children themselves.

Procedure

One of two female interviewers, after developing rapport in their classrooms by participating in all classroom activities for a week, invited the children individually to go to a separate room for story-telling. Each child participated in two different sessions, one focusing on eliciting personal experience narratives and the other on collecting fantasy stories. The two sessions were separated by 1–2 weeks and were conducted by the same interviewer. Children were assigned in counterbalanced order such that half of the children had the personal narration session first and the remainder had the reverse. Only data from the personal experience sessions are considered here. During the narrative session, drawing materials were provided and both the children and interviewer sat at a small table, drawing, to minimize distractions and build rapport. Sessions lasted approximately 20 min and were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed. Coding was done from the transcripts.

To elicit personal experience narratives, the technique used successfully by Peterson and McCabe (1983) was followed: the interviewer first recounted a very brief personal anecdote about a time when she experienced a target emotion. These included the following: "One time my uncle came to visit me, and guess what? He gave me a loony (a Canadian dollar coin). I was so Happy." "One time I was building a tower out of blocks, and my brother

came in and knocked it down. I was so Angry." "One time I went to visit my uncle who lives on a farm. He has this barn there, with chickens in it. Once when I was there, I saw a chick hatch out of an egg, and I was really Surprised." Then, following Hudson et al. (1992), the interviewer said, "Well, I was so X [emotion] that time. How about you? Tell me all about one time when you were feeling X. What happened that time when you were feeling so X?" The order of the last two sentences was randomly interchanged with each different emotion prompt so that neither the action question or the request for information about an emotional state would overshadow the other. Following Peterson and McCabe (1983), the investigators encouraged children to continue by repeating verbatim the children's last statement when they paused, or by using nondirective prompts such as "yeah," "Umm hmm," and "tell me more." The investigator waited for the child to terminate the narrative and then asked, "Anything else about that time?" After each narrative, the two drew and talked, and then the investigator provided the prompt for another emotion. The order of the emotions was counterbalanced across children.

Data Coding

Not every child provided a narrative about each emotion; missing narratives were because children claimed to not recall a relevant event or they only provided a narrative that was identical to the experimenter-modeled one. Such narratives were not included because they could be merely imitation. For prompts where a narrative was provided, false starts and off-topic comments such as "I want the yellow marker" were deleted from analysis. Narrative clauses were defined as subject–verb propositions, and all narrative clauses in children's narratives about the emotion-eliciting events were scored.

The narratives were first searched for emotion labels.[3] Emotion labels were instances in which children gave a label to an emotional state. Examples of such labels are the following: "scared, mad, angry, happy, excited, surprised, shocked." Second, the narratives were searched for the presence of nine evaluative devices. All evaluative devices contained in these narratives (excluding off-topic comments) were coded. These included the following, selected from Peterson and McCabe (1983). (See the initial part of the paper, above, for other examples of these devices.)

Emotional states or frames of mind: This category included not only emotion labels such as "I *hated* him" "I was so *excited*" but it is more encompassing

[3]We are indebted to Tracy Ropson for these data; these were collected as part of her undergraduate Honor's Thesis research.

than mere labels because it included emotion-signaling actions, for example, "I was *crying*," "then she *smiled* at me."

Cognitive and perceptual states: These interrupt the action of the event by providing information on the speaker's internal cognitive or perceptual processes, such as his intentions, desires, hopes, hypotheses, predictions, and so forth. For example, "I *believed* her when she said she was sorry." "I got *confused*."

Speech of participants: These suspend action by reporting dialogue taking place during the described events. "He *said* that he was really surprised." "Mom *told* me 'stop that.'"

Hedges: These indicate when the speaker is unsure. "It was *probably* him who did it." "He *seemed to be* growling."

Negation: These are indications of what did not happen. Because there are many possibilities of what did not happen, specifying a nonoccurrence is evaluative. For example, "I *never* said that." "She *didn't* fall."

Intensifiers, gratuitous terms, or qualifiers: These serve little function but to emphasize, intensify, or qualify the word(s) they modify. They give no information on their own. "I was *some, some* happy." "It was *pretty* cold out." "Me *big* fall down." "*Boy*, was he in trouble."

Onomatopoeia or *sound effects*: These provide emphasis through representations of sounds heard during the event: "The bird was calling, *pip, pip, pip*." "Then she went ⟨*screams*⟩."

Repetition of words: This emphasizes the importance of the words being repeated: "I ate, *ate, ate*." "I was very, *very* surprised."

Idea repetition: This is the repetition of an idea (not words only) for emphasis. It stresses the importance of the expressed idea because it is stated multiple times, sometimes using different words. "It was pretty fun. . . . *It was really fun*." "So he tried to hit me. . . . *So he came at me, hitting*."

To obtain interscorer reliability, two investigators independently scored evaluative forms in 20% of the narratives (with equal representation of each age group). Reliability was established separately for each evaluative device. Percentage agreement between the two coders averaged 96%, with a range between 88 and 100% agreement.

RESULTS

Children's production of narratives was first assessed, including both the number of narratives provided as well as their average length. Next, the number of emotion labels in the narratives were analyzed, comparing gender, age, and type of narrative (i.e., about events eliciting happiness, anger, or surprise). Finally, children's use of evaluative devices was assessed in two

ways: irrespective of narrative length, and controlling for length. This is because some evaluative devices may be relatively unaffected by narrative length. For example, it may often be unnecessary to label one's cognitive or emotional state more than once, regardless of whether the events that precipitated that reaction took 2 or 10 clauses to describe. In contrast, longer narratives provide more opportunities for the insertion of other devices such as intensifiers. We know of no empirical studies that differentiate evaluative devices on the basis of potential sensitivity to narrative length, and so we first analyzed mean *frequency per narrative* of evaluative devices, and then we checked to see if any age changes in evaluation were attributable to the fact that older children provided longer narratives (i.e., explored evaluative *density per narrative clause*).

Number and Length of Narratives

Although all 8-year-olds provided narratives about all three emotions, this was not the case for younger children, especially 3-year-olds. Table I lists the total number of narratives provided for each emotion by children in each age and gender group. A 3 × 2 (Age × Gender) chi-square was nonsignificant for the number of narratives provided. Thus, children in each group equivalently produced narratives.

However, narrative length increased with age. An ANOVA (Age × Gender) calculated the number of clauses per emotion narrative. Age was significant for happy narratives, $F(2, 52) = 3.52$, $p \leq .05$, for surprise narratives, $F(2, 49) = 5.40$, $p < .01$, and for anger narratives, $F(2, 46) = 14.34$, $p < .001$. Planned comparisons showed that for happy narratives, those of 3-year-olds were shorter than those of both older groups, which did not differ.

Table I. Total Number of Narratives as Well as Mean Length (and *SD*) for Each Emotion According to Age and Gender

	3 year old		5 year old		8 year old		
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	All
Number of narratives							
Happy	9	9	10	10	10	10	58
Surprise	8	8	10	9	10	10	55
Angry	7	8	9	8	10	10	52
All	24	25	29	27	30	30	165
Length of narratives							
Happy	6.3 (2.7)	7.0 (3.6)	9.8 (6.1)	12.1 (8.1)	10.4 (6.4)	16.2 (13.6)	10.4 (8.1)
Surprise	6.9 (3.7)	7.2 (2.5)	10.2 (4.9)	7.0 (3.7)	19.9 (20.0)	13.4 (7.0)	11.1 (10.3)
Angry	5.4 (1.9)	6.1 (3.0)	8.9 (4.1)	7.3 (3.5)	14.6 (6.2)	17.8 (11.0)	10.6 (7.5)
All	6.2 (2.8)	6.8 (3.0)	9.6 (4.9)	9.0 (6.0)	14.9 (12.8)	15.8 (10.6)	10.7 (8.7)

Table II. Total Number of Explicit Labels for Emotions in Narratives About Events Eliciting Happiness, Surprise, and Anger[3]

	All narratives		Happy		Surprised		Angry	
Age (years)	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
3	14	20	3	5	5	6	6	9
5	27	12	5	4	7	4	15	4
8	19	21	4	5	5	5	10	11
All ages	60	53	12	14	17	15	31	24

For surprise and anger narratives, 3- and 5-year-olds produced narratives that were equivalent in length, and shorter than those of 8-year-olds.

Emotion Labels

While telling about the events that had elicited target emotions, children sometimes provided a label for an emotion. The total number of emotion labels by each age and gender group is shown in Table II. Overall, boys provided 60 emotion labels across all types of narrative, and girls provided 53 labels. To compare children in the six Age × Gender groups, summing across the three emotion narratives, a 3 × 2 chi-square calculation was done. The production of emotion labels was different in the six Age × Gender groups, $\chi^2(df = 2) = 6.52$, $p < .05$. Specifically, 5-year-old boys as a group produced more emotion labels and 5-year-old girls as a group produced less than would be expected by chance. (See Table II.) Inspection of the data showed that these findings were not because only a few children provided almost all of the labels; rather, emotion labels were widely distributed, with most children producing only one or sometimes two emotion labels.

To explore whether a similar pattern was shown for all three emotion-eliciting narratives, a separate chi-square calculation (for the six Age × Gender groups) was done on the number of emotion labels in each. For narratives about happy events, a chi-square calculation could not be done because half of the six Age × Gender cells had frequencies of less than 5, but inspection of the data suggests that there were no differences between groups. In other words, both boys and girls at all three ages infrequently produced emotion labels about happy experiences. For narratives about surprise, the chi-square calculation was nonsignificant; different age and gender groups produced emotion labels to an equivalent degree. In contrast, the groups of children differed when talking about anger-eliciting experiences, $\chi^2(df = 2) = 6.23$, $p < .05$. Inspection of Table II shows this is due to the 5-year-olds. Five-year-old boys as a group used about three times as many emotion labels as did girls at this age when they were talking about anger. In

fact, this group of 5-year-old boys used more emotion labels during these narratives than did boys in either of the other age groups or than did girls at any age. In other words, 5-year-old boys were the most likely to talk about how mad they were when recounting anger-arousing events, but this propensity to label their emotions when they were angry did not carry over to labeling happiness or surprise when talking about other sorts of emotion-arousing experiences.

Children have many ways of indicating emotional response other than by providing an emotion label. We turn next to their use of evaluative devices. Unlike emotion labels, which were relatively rare, children often used evaluative devices. Thus, hereafter we report the mean frequencies of evaluative devices per group rather than total raw frequencies, as in the case of emotion labels.

Frequency of Evaluative Devices per Narrative

Table III shows the mean number of evaluative devices per narrative that children used in their narratives, summing across all nine forms of evaluation. The children's average use per narrative of all forms of evaluative devices, irrespective of emotion, was analyzed by means of a 3 × 2 (Age × Gender) ANOVA. The number of evaluative devices in the children's three narratives were averaged to derive the data analyzed here. For those children with missing narratives, their remaining narratives were averaged so that analysis included all children. Children produced more

Table III. Mean Number of Evaluative Devices Produced for All Narratives, as well as the Mean Number of Evaluative Devices Produced for Narratives About Each Type of Emotion

Age	All narratives	Happy	Surprised	Angry
3 year				
Boys	2.7	3.7	2.8	1.6
Girls	4.5	4.4	4.4	4.8
All children	3.6	4.1	3.6	3.2
5 year				
Boys	5.4	5.4	4.4	6.3
Girls	4.4	4.0	3.1	6.1
All children	4.9	4.7	3.8	6.2
8 year				
Boys	9.7	5.1	11.2	12.8
Girls	10.3	9.8	8.4	12.6
All children	10.0	7.4	9.8	12.7
All ages				
Boys	5.9	4.7	6.1	6.9
Girls	6.4	6.1	5.3	7.8
All children	6.2	5.4	5.7	7.4

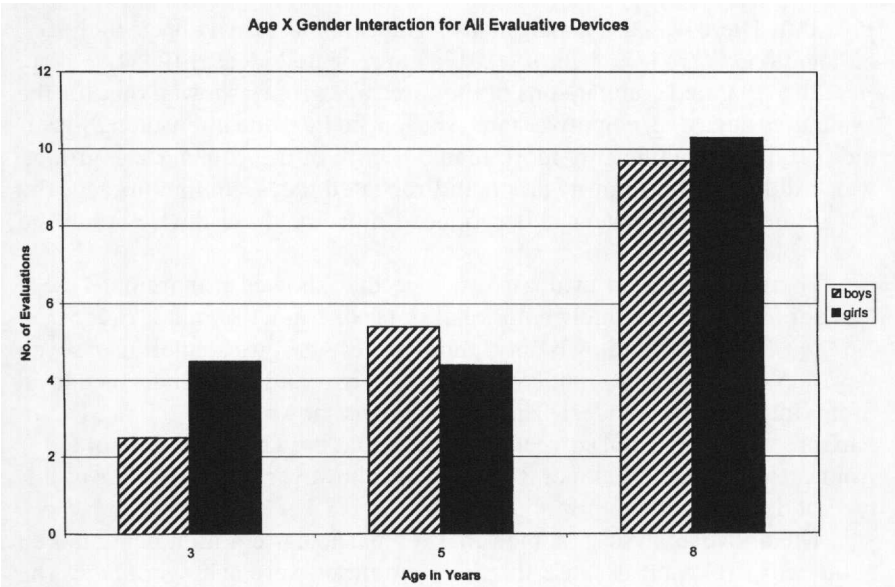

Fig. 1. Age × Gender interaction for the mean number of evaluative devices (summing across all forms) used per narrative by the children.

evaluative devices per narrative with age, $F(2, 54) = 9.11$, $p < .001$. Planned comparisons showed that 8-year-olds provided more evaluations per narrative ($M = 10.0$) than did children in the two younger age groups ($Ms = 3.6$ and 4.9, respectively), which did not differ. The factor of gender was nonsignificant. Interestingly, there was a marginal Age × Gender interaction, $F(2, 54) = 3.07$, $p < .07$, with girls providing more evaluations at 3 years but not at older ages. This interaction is shown in Fig. 1. Although it only approached significance, it suggests the possibility that 3-year-old girls may develop skill in using evaluative forms at a younger age than do boys.

The use of each of the nine individual evaluative forms per narrative (irrespective of emotion) was also analyzed. A series of Age × Gender ANOVAs was calculated on the use of seven of the evaluative devices, averaging over all of the children's narratives. (ANOVAs were not calculated on the use of sound effects or word repetition because few children used these devices, although those few that used them sometimes used them frequently.) Using Bonferoni correction for significance levels, children produced significantly more of the following evaluative devices with age: cognitive states, $F(2, 54) = 8.12$, $p < .001$, speech, $F(2, 54) = 12.78$, $p < .001$, hedges, $F(2, 54) = 10.44$, $p < .001$, and intensifiers, $F(2, 54) = 11.32$,

$p < .001$. There was also a marginally significant increase with age in the use of negation, $F(2, 54) = 4.75$, $p = .013$, and repeated ideas, $F(2, 54) = 4.56$, $p = .015$. Planned comparisons of the three age groups showed that for the evaluative devices of cognitive states, speech, hedges, and intensifiers, 8-year-olds produced significantly more than did both of the younger age groups, which did not differ. For negation and repeated ideas, contiguous ages did not differ although 8-year-olds produced more of these devices than did 3-year-olds.

There was also an evaluative device that showed a marginal Age × Gender interaction, namely emotional states or frames of mind, $F(2, 54) = 2.67$, $p = .032$. This finding is only tentative, because the calculation of seven ANOVAs could lead to family-wise Type I error and the significance level of this interaction is modest. This interaction is shown in Fig. 2. Paired comparisons with Bonferoni correction showed that boys and girls did not differ from each other at either 5 or 8 years of age; however, boys used less of this type of device than did girls at age 3.

The above analyses assumed that the particular emotion being talked about was irrelevant because the three emotions were averaged. Does the emotion being talked about make a difference in terms of whether there are age or gender effects in children's use of evaluation? To answer this question, an ANOVA was calculated on the mean number of evaluative

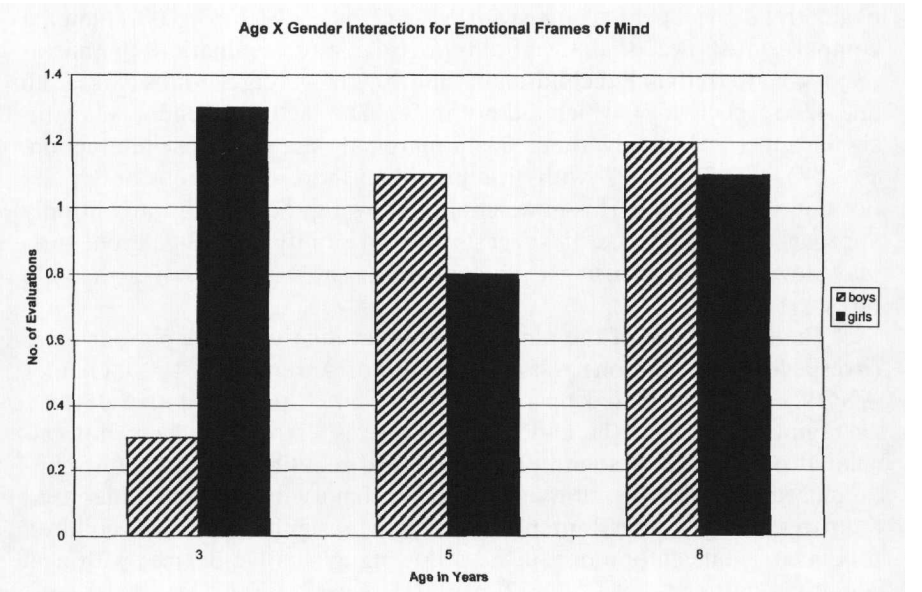

Fig. 2. Age × Gender interaction for the mean use per narrative of emotional frames of mind.

devices per narrative with age and gender the between-subjects factor and emotion (happy vs. surprise vs. anger) the within-subject factor. Because some children did not produce a narrative about all three emotions, this analysis was calculated two ways. The ANOVA was calculated with missing values, and it was repeated with all children dropped from the analysis who did not produce narratives for all three emotions. Results of both analyses were similar so the *F*s from the analyses that included all children will be reported.

Consistent with the above analyses, older children produced more evaluative forms, but the variable of interest here was the impact of the particular emotion being discussed. The emotion mattered, $F(2, 148) = 3.54$, $p = .029$. Planned comparisons showed that children produced more evaluation when talking about anger ($M = 7.4$) than about either happiness or surprise (Ms = 5.4 and 5.7, respectively, ps $< .05$), which in turn did not differ.

There was also a significant Age × Emotion interaction, $F(4, 148) = 2.90$, $p = .021$. To explore this interaction, we did follow-up ANOVAs on the narratives about each emotion separately, with the factors of age and gender. For narratives about happiness, there were no significant effects. In contrast, for narratives about both surprise and anger, children produced more evaluative devices with age, $F(2, 49) = 7.24$, $p > .01$, and $F(2, 46) = 8.11$, $p < .001$, for surprise and anger narratives, respectively. Planned comparisons for both emotions indicated that 8-year-olds produced more evaluations than did either 3- or 5-year-olds, who in turn did not differ.

In summary, children were more evaluative when talking about experiences that elicited anger than about happy or surprise experiences. In addition, children at all ages provided similar numbers of evaluations when narrating about happiness whereas they provided more evaluations with age when discussing surprise and anger. The total amount of evaluation did not differ between boys and girls except marginally for 3-year-olds. Thus, boys and girls were mostly similar in how they provided evaluation when discussing emotion-eliciting events.

Density of Evaluative Devices per Narrative Clause

A consistent theme in many of the above findings is a significant age effect. However, children also produce longer narratives with age, which in turn provides them with more opportunities to insert evaluation. Thus, the next analyses control for the length of the children's narratives by assessing the density of evaluation per narrative clause. Because the analyses reported above suggested that the type of emotion being elicited by an event was important, these data were run in three separate (happiness, surprise, and

Table IV. Mean Usage of Each Evaluative Form per Narrative Clause for Narratives About Happiness, Surprise, and Anger

	Age of children (years)					
	3		5		8	
Evaluative form	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Happiness narratives						
Emotion	.04	.16	.11	.10	.08	.03
Cognition	.00	.06	.03	.03	.03	.04
Speech	.00	.02	.01	.00	.04	.06
Hedges	.02	.00	.04	.01	.03	.08
Negatives	.01	.14	.05	.04	.07	.06
Intensifiers	.14	.23	.20	.10	.18	.19
Sound effects	.00	.00	.00	.01	.00	.00
Repeat ideas	.00	.04	.04	.00	.03	.02
Repeat words	.26	.03	.02	.00	.00	.00
Surprise narratives						
Emotion	.02	.30	.10	.13	.08	.06
Cognition	.03	.00	.01	.03	.07	.09
Speech	.00	.00	.03	.02	.07	.12
Hedges	.00	.00	.00	.00	.11	.07
Negatives	.04	.04	.09	.02	.05	.04
Intensifiers	.26	.10	.17	.21	.19	.21
Sound effects	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Repeat ideas	.00	.11	.04	.01	.04	.07
Repeat words	.01	.04	.00	.02	.00	.04
Anger narratives						
Emotion	.09	.24	.19	.11	.10	.10
Cognition	.00	.07	.02	.01	.04	.04
Speech	.02	.01	.01	.07	.10	.06
Hedges	.00	.00	.06	.05	.10	.11
Negatives	.05	.25	.08	.13	.12	.10
Intensifiers	.07	.13	.27	.22	.25	.20
Sound effects	.00	.00	.00	.00	.01	.02
Repeat ideas	.04	.13	.09	.07	.08	.07
Repeat words	.00	.00	.00	.08	.01	.00

anger) MANOVAs, with age and gender the between-subjects factors and the nine types of evaluative devices the dependent variables.

The mean use per narrative clause of each of the nine evaluative forms by children in their three narratives is shown in Table IV. On average, children used approximately one evaluative device per two narrative clauses for narratives about happiness and surprise, and approximately one evaluative device per one and a half narrative clauses for anger narratives. Inspection of Table IV shows that children most frequently evaluated all three narratives by adding intensifiers and describing emotional states or frames of mind. For the happiness and anger narratives, the use of negatives was also frequent. In contrast, children seldom used sound effects or repeated individual words to add evaluation.

The MANOVA calculated for narratives about happy experiences had no significant effects. That is, both boys and girls at all three ages had an equivalent density of evaluation in their narrative clauses about happy events. For narratives about surprise, there was a significant effect of age, Wilks Approximate $F(20, 80) = 2.27$, $p < .01$. Follow-up univariate tests indicated that the use of references to cognitive states, speech, and hedges increased with age, $F(2, 49) = 4.68$, $p < .05$, $F(2, 49) = 8.33$, $p < .01$, and $F(2, 49) = 7.81$, $p < .01$, for the three evaluative forms, respectively. (See Table IV.) For all three, planned comparisons showed that the age effect was due to the 8-year-olds using these forms more than children in either of the younger groups, which in turn did not differ. There was also a marginally significant main effect for gender, Wilks Exact $F(10, 40) = 1.77$, $p < .10$. One significant univariate ANOVA contributed to this: girls' ($M = 0.16$) narratives about surprise had a higher density of references to emotional states than did boys' narratives, $M = 0.07$, $F(1, 49) = 5.28$, $p = .026$. There was no Age × Gender interaction.

For narratives about anger, there was a marginally significant effect of age, Wilks Approximate $F(20, 80) = 1.70$, $p < .10$. Univariate tests showed age increases for references to speech, hedges, and intensifiers, $F(2, 46) = 4.90$, $p < .05$, $F(2, 46) = 5.20$, $p < .01$, and $F(2, 46) = 4.85$, $p < .05$, respectively. Planned comparisons revealed a parallel developmental course for speech and hedges. For both, 8-year-olds produced more of these forms than did 3-year-olds (Ms = 0.08 vs. 0.02 for speech and Ms = 0.10 vs. 0.00 for hedges). The 5-year-olds were intermediate and differed from neither age group. The developmental pattern was different for intensifiers and qualifiers, however. Five-year-olds used more of these forms than did 3-year-olds (Ms = 0.12 vs. 0.02), but usage was equivalent between 5- and 8-year-olds.

In summary, the density of evaluation in narratives about happy experiences did not differ depending upon the gender or age of the narrator. However, if children were narrating about surprise or anger experiences, their narratives became more densely packed with some forms of evaluation as they got older. For both emotions, narratives became more densely packed with hedges and references to speech, whereas intensifiers became more dense with age in narratives about anger and references to cognitive states increased in density in narratives about surprise. In addition, girls seemed to have a higher density of references to emotional states than did boys in their narratives about surprise.

DISCUSSION

The emotional meaning or texture of narrated events can be conveyed in language via overt labels for emotions or by a range of other means that

are often more subtle, such as the forms of evaluation proposed by narrative researchers (Labov & Waletzky, 1967/1997). Older children were expected to use both types of mechanisms more than did younger children for conveying emotion, and potential gender-differentiated uses of both mechanisms were of particular interest. A further question was whether the type of emotion being talked about made a difference.

Children use a range of ways for conveying the emotional framework of their narratives about personal experiences, as can be seen in the following narratives:

Happy experience (3-year-old boy)

C: Once upon a time when I was, when I was *really, really happy*, my bike was *all* sticky *sorta*, and my dad bought some oil to put on it and then it wheeled all the way, *all the way* and the back wheel could turn and *turn* and *turn*. 'Cause mine's a two wheel bike. Mine *can't* go up the hills. Only my little two wheel bike. But, 'cause we were all the way at the Avalon Mall, right by my house, and it was right there, I was doing, I was going, and they're having dinner in there, and you know what? They were playing, we were playing and I was Batman and my dad was Robin, and my sister was the Catwoman, and I was trying, I was riding in the middle except it worked.

E: Really?

C: And we were *happy* to ride bikes there.

Surprise experience (8-year-old girl)

E: Was there ever one time when you felt really surprised?

C: When my dad bought me my new bike.

E: Tell me about it.

C: Well, like I was with him, but it had, it's like it's, some people *says* it's purple and some people *says* it's blue.

E: Yeah. One of those.

C: *It looks blue to me.* And I was going with my dad and in his white sports car and he was going to buy me a new bike and when we went into the bike shop there was *so* many, like I was going to choose it. There was so many I *couldn't* even choose. And then we went over where those bikes I just told you about were and I said, he *asked* me if I wanted one of those and I *said* "yes," and I got on it to see if it was the right size for me and it was. And so I got that one and just to see if I knew how to ride it already,

out in the parking lot, like where the cars are, well, there was this empty space where cars *aren't* allowed to park. And I start and I rided my bike a little bit right there. And I knew how to ride it.

Anger experience (5 year-old-boy)
E: Tell me about a time when you were mad.

C: Yesterday.

E: Yesterday you were mad?

C: Yeah. Yeah, when I was *bad*, and I *was going to tell* my mom.

E: You were gonna tell your mom, yeah?

C: Yeah, by accident I did it, and I got *so mad* 'cause my mommy *didn't* listen to me. And I told my dad and he *didn't* listen, and I came, and I went up to my bedroom. And I *almost cried.*

E: And you almost cried? Yeah?

C: Yeah. I was *so mad* my face *turned red.*

E: Your face turned red?

C: Yeah. And also *green.*

E: And you also turned green? Yeah?

C: And that's all.

Children sometimes overtly label their emotional state, as the 3- and 5-year-olds quoted above did when talking about happy and anger experiences. In assessing children's use of emotion labels, it is important to note that we provided the children with such labels by specifically requesting them to tell us about a time when they were very happy, very surprised, or very mad. Thus, it was unnecessary for them to specify their emotions during the events they described because their stories were about target emotions. Nevertheless, children provided some labels for their emotions anyway. In particular, 5-year-old boys labeled their anger when they were talking about a time when they had been mad. In the "anger" narrative above, the child talked about how he was "so mad" because his mom wouldn't listen, presumably to his explanation that what he had done was unintentional or accidental, and he also described how he was "so mad" his face changed color. As another example, another 5-year-old boy recounted how his brother had kicked his lego construction and then said he had gotten "really super mad," and then after describing his father's punishment of his brother, he terminated

his narrative with the closing statement, "And boy was I angry!" (Note, however, that each of these examples of emotion-labeling is accompanied by additional evaluative devices.)

The greater propensity of 5-year-old boys to label the emotion of anger (and the lesser likelihood of 5-year-old girls to do so) was consistent with the findings of Fivush (1991), although the concordance of findings was not complete because 3-year-olds did not differ. Fivush found that mothers of preschoolers talked about anger more with their sons than with their daughters. Furthermore, mothers of sons were more likely to accept comments about anger and retaliation by their sons than were mothers of daughters. Daughters instead were encouraged to focus on ways of repairing relationships. Thus, preschool-aged boys in this sample may have been taught that it is acceptable to talk about how angry they were, whereas preschool-aged girls may have been given messages about the inappropriateness of this sort of talk. However, by the time children were 8 years old this gender differentiation in overt labels of anger had disappeared. Perhaps parents are less likely to impose gender-differentiated standards at this age (Lytton & Romney, 1991). Alternatively, perhaps by this age both girls and boys have learned that it is acceptable to acknowledge anger, although what one does about it may be different depending upon gender. Nevertheless, 5-year-old boys talked about how mad they were and 5-year-old girls did not. As well, children of both genders were more likely to label anger than any other emotion.

Although one can argue that emotion labels are perhaps the purest representation of emotion, all of the evaluative devices convey emotional information or texture, albeit some in more subtle ways. (For a discussion of this issue, see Labov & Waletzky, 1967/1997). And children are clearly using a multiplicity of ways to convey emotion in their narratives. Although children produced an average of less than one emotion label in each emotion narrative, they simultaneously embedded their narratives within a web of evaluation, averaging an evaluative device in at least half of their clauses. Descriptions of anger-arousing experiences in particular had a lot of evaluative devices embedded in them.

In terms of differences between age groups, no developmental differences were discerned in children's use of evaluation when relating happy experiences even though the narratives of older children were longer. However, older children used more evaluative devices when relating surprise or anger events. This increased use of evaluative devices was not simply due to 8-year-olds having longer narratives, because the density of several forms of evaluation also increased. That is, not only were there more evaluations per narrative, but there were also more of some types of evaluation per narrative clause for older children.

One of the evaluative devices that showed increased use with age (both for frequency per narrative and density) for surprise and anger narratives was references to speech. This is consistent with work by Ely and McCabe (1993) who showed systematic age increases in the use of this device, although they also found that it was more likely to be used by girls than by boys. The use of hedges also showed a developmental increase in narratives about two of the three emotions. This device requires children to be aware of their own state of mind and of its uncertainty in some situations. For surprise narratives, references to cognitive states also increased, consistent with work by Bamberg and his colleagues (Bamberg & Damrad-Frye, 1991; Bamberg & Reilly, 1994). All three of these devices require some degree of cognitive sophistication, because one needs to encode speech acts rather than behavior and to consider the process of thinking per se to represent uncertainty and cognition. A vast literature suggests that children's theory of mind increases substantially with age (Wellman & Gelman, 1998), and references to cognition and uncertainty require a theory of mind. Another device that increased with age (for anger narratives) was intensifiers and/or qualifiers. Increases in the use of this device may be related to children's increasing vocabulary, and in particular adjectives and adverbs.

A conspicuous feature of our findings was the rarity of gender differences. For the most part, both boys and girls used evaluative devices similarly often, and in similar ways. That is, both genders were equally likely to convey evaluative information via a range of linguistic devices when they were talking about emotion-eliciting events. However, a couple of gender differences were noted. For narratives about anger only, 5-year-old boys were particularly likely to label themselves as "mad" or "angry." The only other specific evaluative device that hinted at gender differences was "references to emotional states or frames of mind." The density of references to such emotional reactions was higher for girls than for boys in narratives about surprise, and younger girls used more of these evaluative devices than did boys when all three of their emotion narratives were combined.

On the surface, the gender differences we found in emotion labels (favoring boys) and references to emotional states (favoring girls) seem contradictory because they are so closely related. Although it is true that emotion labels would be included in the evaluative category of "references to emotional states," this category is more inclusive of emotional reactions than just overt emotion labels. In the example narrative about anger quoted above, the child not only provided two emotion labels, he also talked about the emotional reactions of crying and his face turning colors. As other examples, an 8-year-old girl who saw her orthodontic retainer go down the drain described her reaction as "Oh my God!" Another 8-year-old girl described her response to getting hurt as "I started screaming." All of these

convey emotional reaction, although in ways other than an explicit label of an emotional state. And girls may be more likely to use this evaluative device than are boys.

The only other analyses that suggested gender differences involved 3-year-olds. Overall, 3-year-old boys seemed to produce fewer evaluative devices than did 3-year-old girls, and the Age × Gender interaction for emotional frames of mind (combining the data from all narratives) suggested a gender difference only for 3-year-olds. These data suggest the possibility that girls may show more control of evaluative forms, particularly those describing emotional reactions, than do boys by the time they are 3 years of age, and that boys may not show comparable control of these devices until older. These results are parallel to those of Cervantes and Callanan (1998) who looked at the emotion language of children between 2 and 4 years of age and found a substantial gender difference in the 2-year-olds that had all but disappeared by age 4. Thus, girls seem to show an earlier mastery of the linguistic evaluative devices that convey emotion. This may be because parents seem to talk about emotions more to their very young girls than to their boys (Adams et al., 1995; Dunn et al., 1987; Fivush, 1991, 1993; Kuebli et al., 1995; Kuebli & Fivush, 1992; Reese & Fivush, 1993), and thus girls have more opportunity to hear and to acquire the appropriate linguistic forms. However, with the passage of time, boys have sufficient exposure to emotion language to catch up in their mastery of evaluative forms.

In summary, this study for the most part documented gender similarity, not gender difference, in how children evaluated their narratives about events that elicited the emotional reactions of happiness, surprise, and anger. The one evaluative device that hinted at gender difference, namely references to emotional frames of mind, is the one that is consistent with other research suggesting that girls talk about emotion more than do boys (Adams et al., 1995; Buckner & Fivush, 1998; Dunn et al., 1987; Kuebli et al., 1995). But it should not be forgotten that emotional reactions are conveyed by means of all of the evaluative devices, as argued by theorists such as Fivush (1993), Labov (1982; Labov & Waletzky, 1967/1997), and Peterson and McCabe (1983). That is, all of the evaluative devices together provide the evaluative texture and meaning of the events being described. And, gender differences were relatively rare. In addition, girls may acquire earlier competence in using evaluative forms than do boys.

There are a number of important differences between this study and others that find more robust gender differences. First, emotion is voluntarily inserted into the conversations in most other studies rather than children being specifically told to talk about emotion-arousing events. It may well be the case that girls are more likely to voluntarily insert emotional information into discourse about a range of topics, as asserted by Buckner and

Fivush (1998). These authors found that not only did girls talk about emotion more, they were also more likely to embed the people they talked about within a web of relationships. In the present study, in contrast, both boys and girls were equivalently instructed to talk about emotional events. Thus, the gender differences found by others may be more related to girls' greater likelihood of spontaneously including emotional information in discourse than their linguistic mechanisms of conveying evaluative/emotional perspectives on events once an emotion topic is specifically introduced into the conversation.

A second difference may be the specific emotions that were targeted. Fivush and her colleagues (Adams et al., 1995; Fivush, 1991; Kuebli & Fivush, 1992) found that girls were more likely to talk about sadness, and that parents in turn were more likely to focus on sadness when talking to their daughters than to their sons. This emotion was not included in the present study, and there may well have been more gender differentiation if it had been. Anger has also been shown to be talked about differently by parents to girls than to boys (Fivush, 1991), and in fact anger is one emotion in this study where gender differences were found, at least for the labeling of emotion.

There is yet a third difference between this study and others that may account for the divergent results. This study focused on evaluative devices that are often more subtle ways of conveying emotion than is the more explicit emotion talk that is often the focus of research. It may be that it is in explicit emotion talk rather than in linguistic devices for conveying emotion via evaluation that girls and boys differ. This does not mean that girls and boys emphasize the same sorts of issues when discussing emotion, or even spontaneously introduce emotion-laden topics into their conversation equivalently. However, this study suggests the possibility that emotion-talk differences between girls and boys may be characterized more in terms of *what* and *how much* rather than *how*. In other words, differences may reside more in the topics they choose to talk about and the frequency of doing so rather than the linguistic devices they use to embed their narratives within an emotional framework.

Future work should address itself to children's use of emotion labels versus evaluative devices in conversations that are more free-ranging and in which children have more control over the topics discussed. In addition, gender differences in narratives about emotions other than the ones here should be explored. Furthermore, the language of children who are older should be investigated. Most important, it should be kept in mind that children can convey emotional information by a range of linguistic techniques, and investigations of emotion in language should not be limited to counting emotion labels.

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