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Parental Styles of Interaction during Reminiscing and Play: Relations to Children's Attachment

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Parental Styles of Interaction during Reminiscing and Play: Relations to Children's Attachment

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M.A., Emory University, 2008

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A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
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By: Widaad Zaman

Sensitive parenting is key to the development of attachment in infants and children. Yet, what sensitive parenting constitutes may differ greatly between mothers and fathers, and attachment research has failed to systematically take this into account, focusing primarily instead on the antecedents of mother-child attachment, and generalizing to the father-child bond. However, studies suggest that mothers and fathers differ in their overall patterns of conversations and play with young children (e.g., Leaper, Anderson & Sanders, 1998), and these differences may result in differential relations to children's attachment (e.g., Grossmann et al., 2002). Yet, no study has directly compared maternal and paternal reminiscing and play in relation to children's attachment. Here, I examined how differences between maternal and paternal might differentially relate to children's attachment. Parent-child dyads from 47 families with a four-year old child reminisced about a happy, sad, peer conflict, parental conflict, playground and special outing experience of the child, and engaged in 10 minutes of free play. Narratives were coded for cognitive elaboration and joint engagement; play interactions were coded for parental intersubjective and challenging play. Children completed the MacArthur Story Stem Battery for attachment. Mothers were found to be more elaborative and engaged with children than fathers, regardless of the type of event being discussed. Mothers were also more consistently elaborative and engaged with daughters than sons across discussions about negative experiences. There were surprisingly no differences between maternal and paternal quality of play, and no relations between maternal reminiscing, play and attachment. However, fathers' elaborative and engaged reminiscing about happy and play experiences, and their intersubjective and challenging play were related to sons' attachment security. Results suggest that gender differences in parental interactions with children may reflect and contribute to qualitatively different representations of the mother and father as attachment figures.

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Table of Contents

Parental Styles of Interaction during Reminiscing and Play: Relations to Children's Attachment

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Abstract

Sensitive parenting is key to the development of attachment in infants and children. Yet, what sensitive parenting constitutes may differ greatly between mothers and fathers, and attachment research has failed to systematically take this into account, focusing primarily instead on the antecedents of mother-child attachment, and generalizing to the father-child bond. However, studies suggest that mothers and fathers differ in their overall patterns of conversations and play with young children (e.g., Leaper, Anderson & Sanders, 1998), and these differences may result in differential relations to children's attachment (e.g., Grossmann et al., 2002). Yet, no study has directly compared maternal and paternal reminiscing in relation to children's attachment, and limited research has examined parental play in relation to attachment. In this research, I examined differences between maternal and paternal reminiscing and play, and how these differences might differentially relate to children's attachment. Parent-child dyads from 47 families with a four-year old child reminisced about a happy, sad, peer conflict, parental conflict, playground and special outing experience of the child, and engaged in 10 minutes of free play. Narratives were coded for parental styles of cognitive elaboration and joint engagement, and play interactions were coded for parental intersubjective and challenging play. Children completed the MacArthur Story Stem Battery for attachment. In the first study, mothers were found to be more elaborative and engaged with children than fathers, regardless of the type of event being discussed. Mothers were also more consistently elaborative and engaged with daughters than sons across discussions about negative experiences. In the second study, there were surprisingly no differences between maternal and paternal quality of play, and no relations between maternal reminiscing, play and attachment. However, fathers' elaborative and engaged reminiscing about happy and play experiences, and their intersubjective and challenging play were both related to sons' attachment security. Results suggest that gender differences in parental interactions with children may reflect and contribute to qualitatively different, yet equally important, representations of the mother and father as attachment figures.

Parental Styles of Interaction during Reminiscing and Play: Relations to Children's Attachment

From Freud to Bowlby to Ainsworth, attachment researchers have long dominated the study of parent-child interactions and relationships, attempting to explain the unique bond that defines an individual's foremost interpersonal relationships. Yet, as valuable as it has been, research in attachment is limited in one important way: the almost exclusive focus on samples of primary caregiving mothers and their children, leading to the assumption that characteristics defining the mother-child relationship, such as sensitive caregiving (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1988) and talk about the past (e.g., Laible, 2004), are most important for attachment. Studies on attachment to other than the mother are infrequent, and specifically, research on infant-father attachment is conspicuously lacking. Thus, characteristics that may be unique to the father-child relationship, such as sensitive and challenging play (Grossman et al., 2002), are rarely considered in the assessment of the child's attachment. Yet, as reviewed below, there are reasons to believe that mother-child and father-child attachment have their foundations in different aspects of the parent-child relationship.

The primary objective of this research is to examine and compare two important aspects of the parent-child relationship and their relations to the quality of attachment in young children – that is, joint conversations about the past (co-constructed reminiscing) and joint free play between parents and children. It is hypothesized that maternal reminiscing but not paternal reminiscing, and father-child play but not mother-child play will be related to the quality of attachment in children. To begin to explore these hypotheses, I will first define attachment as it is primarily used. Next, I will review the extensive research on mother-child reminiscing to establish its importance in children's attachment, and then review the limited literature

comparing maternal and paternal interactions with children to provide a foundation for my argument that maternal and paternal behaviors are differentially related to child attachment status.

Operationalizing and Measuring Attachment

What is attachment? Among the first psychologists to propose the idea that the infant-mother bond is the most special and significant relationship in a child's life was Freud (1940), who claimed that this first relationship laid the groundwork for all future relationships. While Freud's psychoanalytic theory of infant-mother attachment focused largely on the child using the mother as a source for reducing biological drives such as hunger, social learning theory emphasized the pairing of the mother with the infant's gratification so that she is eventually valued in her own respect, giving rise to an attachment bond (see Corter, 1974). However, seminal experiments by Conrad Lorenz and Harry Harlow, showing that ducklings, goslings and baby rhesus monkeys became attached to objects that did not provide them food, demonstrated without a doubt that feeding was unnecessary for the formation of attachment bonds (Bowlby, 1988). In fact, Harlow's monkeys invariably sought comfort from a soft terry cloth doll over a wire doll who had fed them all their lives.

Similar to the work of Lorenz and Harlow, John Bowlby's ethological theory of attachment stressed that the infant's goal in the attachment relationship is to seek security and comfort in the attachment figure. The attachment bond has been described by Bowlby and Ainsworth (in Cassidy, 1999) as an affectional bond formed between two individuals, distinct from other relationships in that it is emotionally significant, persistent across the lifespan, involves a specific non-interchangeable person, and one individual in the bond wishes to maintain proximity with the other person. Therefore, the most notable feature of an affectional

bond is the distress one individual feels upon involuntary separation from the other (Ainsworth, 1989). An *attachment bond* differs from other *affectional bonds* in that one individual seeks security in the relationship with the other person, most evident in the relationship of an infant with the primary caregiver. Importantly, an attachment bond is not dyadic; it is the bond that one individual has for another who is perceived as stronger and wiser; a bond in which the security and comfort sought is not reciprocated. The focus of this research will be specifically the infant-parent *attachment relationship*, not the general *affectional relationship*.

Attachment behaviors in infants. Around the 7th or 8th month of life, when stranger and separation anxiety become evident in infants, the typical response to unfamiliar individuals is visible fear, and orientation or movement away from those individuals. On the other hand, infants orient and move towards their attachment figures, verbally protesting or following when separated from them. Such behaviors have been termed proximity seeking or approach behaviors, and are the basis for which individual differences in attachment are classified (Bowlby, 1969). These behaviors go hand in hand with exploration or secure-base behaviors (Bowlby, 1969), first observed by Ainsworth (1967) in Ugandan infants. Virtually as soon as infants are able to move on their own, they make further and further excursions away from their mothers, all the while maintaining sight of her. Interestingly, infants left by themselves venture either very little or not at all, whereas infants with a primary caregiver who find security in their attachment figures are confident enough to venture away from that person, knowing that when the need arises, they can return to the safety of their secure base, that is, the attachment figure.

There are thus two primary purposes of the attachment figure for the infant: first, as a safe haven in times of distress. An infant who feels security in the attachment figure will inevitably find comfort in that person in times of distress, thereby deactivating the attachment

system, and allowing for the second purpose of the attachment figure to step in: as a secure base from which to explore the environment. This pattern of predictable infant behaviors in attachment-relevant scenarios was the foundation for Ainsworth's Strange Situation Procedure (Ainsworth et al., 1978), by which children's quality of attachment could be measured. Importantly, every individual has an attachment bond to another, but the quality of that bond may vary, so that one who feels security in their attachment figure is said to be securely attached, whereas one who feels insecurity is said to be insecurely attached.

The strange situation procedure. The strange situation was built on Bowlby's (1969) idea that an infant's normal reaction to distress would be comfort-seeking from the attachment figure. The strange situation (Ainsworth et al., 1978) is a widely used and validated procedure involving eight short, mildly stressful episodes in which infant and mother are separated from and reunited with each other in an unfamiliar laboratory setting. Based on the notion that infants should seek comfort when their mothers return, their quality of attachment to the parent is classified into one of four categories. First, securely attached infants seek proximity to and contact with the mother, maintain contact with her by protesting when released, greet her return with a smile or cry, and express little or no resistance to, or avoidance of, the mother (Solomon & George, 1999). The securely attached infant therefore uses the mother as a safe haven in times of distress. Second, insecure avoidant infants show little distress upon separation from the mother, and conspicuously avoid proximity to or interaction with her during the reunion episodes; interest is instead with the toys. Third, insecure resistant infants exhibit a simultaneous need for contact with and resistance from the mother. They seek proximity and even attempt to maintain it, but actively resist comfort by displaying anger. Finally, insecure disorganized/disoriented infants (Main & Solomon, 1989; 1990) express a disorganized pattern of behaviors that lack a specific goal, intention or

explanation, such as fear, confusion, interrupted movement, freezing, and disorientation upon return of the mother.

This classification system gave rise to decades' worth of reliable and consistent research on attachment. However, because the strange situation uses attachment behaviors as the basis for classification, research using the procedure is limited to infancy, and beyond infancy, the measurement of attachment becomes challenging, as the attachment system becomes less and less behavioral and more and more representational.

The representation of attachment. Bowlby (1969) has argued that attachment experiences are organized into an internal working model, which develops and reforms over time to represent and reflect the attachment experiences of the individual. Thus, the internal working model is a set of expectations that the child develops about the attachment figure that are grounded in prior experiences with that individual, and knowing whether or not he or she will be accessible and responsive in stressful situations. These internalized expectations then direct the pattern of behaviors that will emerge in attachment-relevant scenarios, such as when separated from the parent. In older individuals, these expectations may be less obvious in behavioral responses, and more manifest in conversations with and about the attachment figure, or in reactions to attachment situations involving other people.

The concept of the internal working model gave rise to several important developments, one of which was the marriage of attachment research to narrative psychology. From the beginning, narratives about the past have been thought to be critical to a child's quality of attachment. Bowlby (1969) argued that what caregivers tell their children about early attachment experiences and related emotions is profoundly important for the development of the internal working model. Narratives about attachment-related experiences may therefore allow insight into

an individual's internal working model, and in particular, parent-child narratives about the child's past experiences may not only reflect the child's quality of attachment to the parent, but may in fact contribute to the quality of attachment. In fact, a distinguishing feature between parent-child dyads in which the child is secure versus insecure is the extent to which they are able to discuss a wide range of internal states freely and openly, with secure dyads expressing and discussing more emotions, thoughts and feelings (Etzion-Carasso & Oppenheim, 2000). Theorists have argued that talk about past events, in particular, may be critical for the attachment relationship and the development of a coherent internal working model of attachment, because narratives are the ways in which individuals derive meaning from their experiences (Bruner, 1987).

The Importance of Parent-child Narratives about the Past

Narrative researchers argue that translating the experiences of one's lives into stories that are told and retold permit their interpretation and reinterpretation, such that new meaning is created by weaving the events of an experience together into a coherent whole, connecting past, present, and future, and organizing experiences in terms of this connectedness (Fivush & Nelson, 2006; McAdams, 1992). Similarly, Pennebaker and Stone (2003) have argued that narratives allow individuals to create a coherently structured story about their experiences by integrating thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Thus, narratives about the past provide unique insight into individuals' mental representations of their world, including their attachment representations. It is therefore not surprising that individuals' autobiographical narratives have been implicated in their psychological well-being, particularly in the understanding of their emotional experiences, such that more emotionally rich narratives of personal events are associated with better overall well-being (e.g., Pennebaker, 1988).

Researchers argue that from early childhood, parents who help their children create more coherent, elaborative narratives about their experiences may be helping them to construct a more elaborated, coherent sense of self across development (Fivush, 2007). Thus, parent-child reminiscing, and in particular, mother-child reminiscing, has been shown to be important for children in a number of ways, including the development of narrative skills, memory for past experiences, well-being, and children's attachment security, each of which will be discussed in turn.

Styles of maternal reminiscing. Between the ages of 3 and 5 years, children become increasingly able to engage in conversations about their past, and to provide descriptions of their own internal state, such as their emotions and cognitions. Yet, they still rely on adults to help them structure their experiences into coherent, elaborated narratives (Fivush, 2007), and parents who are able to do this better contribute to their children's developing narrative skills. In fact, mothers who have different styles of elaboration during reminiscing have been shown to differentially impact their children's narratives. Fivush and others (Fivush & Fromhoff, 1988; Hudson, 1990; Nelson & Fivush, 2004) have distinguished between mothers who have a high elaborative compared to a low elaborative style during reminiscing with children. Mothers who are high elaborative tend to talk frequently about the past, and in longer, more detailed ways which extend and elaborate upon the events of the narrative, whereas mothers who are low elaborative spend less time talking about the past with their children, and even when they do, they ask few and redundant questions that do not contribute to the development of the story. These maternal styles of reminiscing have been found to be consistent over time as children get older (Reese, Haden & Fivush, 1993), and over siblings (Haden, 1998), but importantly, do not extend over different conversational contexts, such as free play or caregiving activities, nor

correlate with mothers' level of talkativeness (Haden & Fivush, 1996; Hoff-Ginsburg, 1991), suggesting that reminiscing is a unique context in which mothers are able to provide the scaffolding necessary to help build their children's narrative skills.

Maternal reminiscing and children's narratives. When mothers are more elaborative during joint reminiscing, their children also tend to provide more detailed, coherent narratives about their experiences, both concurrently and over time. For example, Reese and Fivush (1993) showed that when parents display a more elaborative style when reminiscing with their 40-month old children, these children are able to provide longer, more elaborate, and more evaluative memories about their past. Fivush and Fromhoff (1988) similarly showed that high elaborative but not high repetitive mothers (that is, mothers who simply repeat questions without embellishment) had children who also elaborated more in their narratives with their mothers.

Longitudinally, Fivush (1991) has found that parents who are more elaborative in talking with their children at age 2½ years have children who, a year later, are also more elaborate in their independent conversations with a researcher than the children of parents who were less elaborative a year earlier. Similar relations have been found by Reese, Haden and Fivush (1993). Additionally, in a long-term follow-up study, Peterson and McCabe (2004) found that mothers who elaborated on neither context nor content in reminiscing about a shared event had children who produced impoverished independent narratives months later. Peterson and colleagues later taught these very mothers how to elaborate on specific narrative variables, and found that children whose mothers were taught to encourage more context elaboration were embedding their narratives in more elaborated spatial-temporal contexts two years later (Peterson, Jesso & McCabe, 1999). However, children whose mothers were taught to encourage more content-rich narratives provided more information and produced more elaborative narratives later on,

implying a causal relation between a mother's ability to effectively co-construct stories with her child, and the child's ability to later independently construct coherent and elaborate narratives.

Children have also been found to structure their personal narratives in much the same way their parents do when reminiscing about past events, providing the same quality of narrative in terms of evaluations and orientations, and quantity of memory information as their parents (Cleveland, Reese & Grolnick, 2006; Haden, Haine & Fivush, 1997). Sales and Fivush (2005) have also shown that when talking about stressful experiences related to children's asthma, mothers who include more emotions and explanations during conversation with children have children who also include more emotions and explanations in their narratives. In other words, during joint conversations about the past, children appear to internalize the reminiscing styles of their parents, and these styles become manifested both in their joint and independent narratives.

Maternal reminiscing and children's memory. More elaborative mothers not only aid their children's developing narrative skills, but also their memory for later events. In particular, mothers who are rated as more elaborative while discussing past joint experiences with their children have children who remember more both immediately after the event and several months later (Reese, Haden & Fivush, 1993). Children of mothers who are trained to elaborate more on specific aspects of a laboratory event also recall more embellished details of the event immediately and later than do children of untrained mothers (Boland, Haden & Ornstein, 2003). Likewise, Cleveland and Reese (2005) and Cleveland, Reese and Grolnick (2006) have shown that children whose mothers provide high structure to their shared narratives (that is, these mothers ask more elaborative, open-ended questions) and support their autonomy in the dialogue (that is, these mothers take their children's lead) give the most memory information in shared conversations compared to children whose mothers were supportive but provided low structure,

were controlling but provided high structure, or were controlling and provided low structure. This was similarly true at age 5 ½ years, particularly for mothers who provided high structure (Cleveland & Reese, 2005).

Also in the long term, Reese and Newcombe (2007) showed that when mothers were taught to provide more elaborative narratives, their children were able to provide richer (including the use of more narrative descriptions, actions and evaluations) and more accurate memories of their past over time than the children of untrained mothers. Additionally, when mothers were more elaborative while talking about a stressful event that required emergency room treatment for the child, children were able to remember more of the event later and to include additional details not provided before (Peterson, Sales, Rees & Fivush, 2007; Sales, Fivush & Peterson, 2003). Thus, maternal reminiscing is important for both children's developing ability to talk about their personal experiences in coherent, elaborated ways, and their increasingly accurate memory of those experiences.

Maternal reminiscing and child well-being. When mothers are able to provide the scaffolding necessary for children to construct their autobiographical narratives, they may simultaneously be influencing their children's psychological and behavioral outcomes. Elaborative maternal reminiscing has been linked to children's concurrent well-being on several measures. Sales and Fivush (2005) asked mothers and their 8- to 12-year old children with asthma to discuss one chronic stressful experience and one acutely stressful experience related to the child's asthma. Interestingly, whereas children's own narrative variables did not correlate with their well-being, mothers whose chronic stressor narratives were more emotionally rich had children who displayed fewer internalizing and externalizing behavioral symptoms. Similarly,

mothers who included more explanations in conversations with their children had children who exhibited fewer externalizing behavioral symptoms.

Mothers' coping styles for children's asthma-related illnesses have also been correlated with their reminiscing style, and this has in turn been related to children's own coping styles. That is, mothers who cope more effectively with their children's asthma tend to be more engaged, emotionally expressive, and explanatory while discussing a chronic parent-child conflict, and, in turn, their children show more flexible coping for their illness (Fivush & Sales, 2006). Perhaps in the process of helping their children construct more elaborate and explanatory narratives, mothers may give their children the tools necessary to cope with negative experiences and to regulate their emotions, which then contribute to their overall well-being (Fivush, 2007).

Maternal reminiscing and child attachment. That children's ability to cope with negative experiences and regulate their emotions is related to maternal reminiscing is consistent with research linking attachment to elaborative maternal talk about the past. Sensitivity is proposed as the primary factor mediating the connection between maternal talk and attachment. Ainsworth et al. (1978) and Bowlby (1969) both argued that maternal sensitivity was the key to children forming secure attachment bonds to the mother. Broadly defined, sensitivity involves interpreting an infant's signals correctly, responding to those signals promptly, consistently, and with affection, accepting and cooperating with the infant's activities, and being psychologically and physically available to the infant (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1988). Bowlby (1988) notes that "sensitive, loving care" provides infants with the confidence that others will respond when they are in need, and importantly, increases their self-reliance and independent explorations. But a caregiver who responds to the infant's needs unwillingly, and with irregularity and tardiness, is likely to have an infant who either ignores the caregiver, or

constantly clings to them. This concept of sensitivity is linked to maternal reminiscing about emotional events, because mothers who are more sensitive give their children the confidence to express and discuss their emotions freely, and they respond to their children's emotions appropriately (Etzion-Carasso & Oppenheim, 2000). On the other hand, insensitive mothers either ignore their children's attempt to talk about specific emotions, respond to them inappropriately, or only respond to selected emotions, but dismiss others.

Studies linking maternal reminiscing to attachment are compelling. For example, Laible (2004) asked mothers and their preschool children to talk about some of the child's past emotional experiences, and found that concurrent attachment security was related both to maternal elaboration in the narrative, and to the dyad's discussion of negative emotions in the narrative. In particular, mother-child dyads in which the child was classified as securely attached via the Attachment Q-Sort (a methodology in which parents sort items reflecting attachment behaviors that are characteristic or not characteristic of their child) discussed negative emotions more frequently, and mothers of secure children were more likely to be elaborative during reminiscing. The discussion of negative emotions may be particularly important for children during reminiscing because negative events present a problem to be resolved. More specifically, negative emotions that highlight relationship issues, such as sadness and anger, are likely to activate the child's attachment system. Mothers of secure children may be more likely to respond to their children's feelings of sadness with appropriate care that is neither deficient nor overstimulating, thus teaching them how to cope with their loss. Similarly, mothers who are comfortable talking with their children about anger may be teaching them how to prosocially resolve conflicts with others, and these children may in turn foster more secure representations of relationships (Laible, 2004). Mothers of secure children may therefore be particularly sensitive to

their children's needs when discussing events that involve negative emotions, and may elaborate more on these types of events in order to help their children work through their emotions. This in turn may allow the child to develop a representation of the mother as a secure base.

Fivush and Vasudeva (1995) have similarly shown that mothers who are more elaborative while talking about the past with their children are more likely to report secure mother-child bonds using the Attachment Q-Sort. Additionally, mothers from securely attached dyads (in which the child is rated as securely attached) have been shown to be more elaborative and evaluative when reminiscing, whereas mothers from insecurely attached dyads are less likely to follow up their children's talk with elaborative statements (Fivush & Reese, 2002). Instead, they often repeated their own previous questions, provided fewer memory cues to help their children, and followed their own story agenda rather than collaborate with the child to construct the narrative. Therefore, it may be that when mothers and children are able to talk more openly and elaborately about emotional experiences, the child develops a representation of the attachment figure as available and comforting, especially during negative situations, and their internal working model of attachment becomes richer (Fivush & Reese, 2002).

Alternatively, it may be that a secure mother-child dyad is able to talk about and deal with emotions in more appropriate ways, and elaborate emotional narratives simply reflect this security. In support of this idea, studies have shown that children's quality of attachment during infancy is related to maternal reminiscing years later. Main (1995) found that when children were securely attached during infancy, their conversations with their mothers at age 6 years were more fluent, included more emotions, and focused on a wide range of topics. When children were insecurely attached during infancy, their conversations at 6 years contained frequent pauses, and were restricted to impersonal conversational topics that were not elaborated upon.

The mothers of these children often dominated and took the lead in the conversation. Consistent with these findings, Etzion-Carasso and Oppenheim (2000) classified mother-child dyads when children were 4.5 years as either open or non-open in their communication patterns. Open dyads were characterized by coherent and fluent conversations, attunement of the mother to the child, structured dialogues that were of interest to the child, and both parties' genuine interest and enjoyment in talking to each other. The children in these dyads, particularly boys, were more likely to have been classified as securely attached in the strange situation at age 12 or 16 months-old. Non-open dyads were characterized by the mother's lack of attunement to the child, incoherent, broken dialogues, boredom of one party, poor organization and structure to the dialogue, and open signs of anger and rejection of the child to the mother's suggestions. The children in these dyads were more likely to have been classified earlier as insecurely attached.

Oppenheim and others have also shown that when mothers and children are asked to co-construct narratives about the child's past emotional experiences (including happy, sad, mad and scared), as well as narratives about attachment-related scenarios, such as separation and reunion between a parent and child, children's early attachment classification in the Strange Situation is related to how emotionally-matched or non-matched their narratives are at ages 4.5 and 7.5 years. That is, when both mother and child were actively involved in the construction of the narrative, both accepted and showed patience towards each others' ideas, and the mother encouraged structure, organization and elaboration of the narrative, children were more likely to be classified as securely attached earlier. On the other hand, when narratives were poorly organized, one partner dominated the conversation or did not display interest in the conversation, and when mothers failed to guide the child towards an elaborative, expressive narrative, children were more likely to be classified as insecurely attached during infancy (Oppenheim, Koren-Karie

& Sagi-Schwartz, 2007). This pattern of relations between mother-child co-constructed narratives and attachment during infancy has also been demonstrated in middle-school children (Gini, Oppenheim & Sagi-Schwartz, 2007). These studies all suggest a striking and robust connection between mother-child talk about the past and children's quality of attachment either concurrently or years earlier.

As already discussed, more elaborate co-constructed narratives are vital to children's own independent narratives later on, which may reflect their mental representation of attachment. Securely attached children, whose mothers are more elaborative during reminiscing, have been found to contribute more during reminiscing with their mothers than insecurely attached children (Fivush & Reese, 2002). Further, children who are able to co-construct more emotionally coherent narratives with their mothers during the pre-school period go on to tell more coherent attachment narratives later in the school years (Oppenheim, Nir, Warren & Emde, 1997). These children also display less aggression in their narratives, and are rated by their mothers as exhibiting fewer behavior problems. Clearly, maternal reminiscing is crucial to children's developing ability to emotionally regulate negative situations, and especially those involving attachment themes. While elaborative reminiscing may be reflective of secure attachment to the mother during infancy, it may also contribute to increasingly sophisticated internal working models of attachment as the child grows older and the attachment system becomes a more representational than behavioral system.

In summary, the literature demonstrates compelling empirical evidence linking maternal reminiscing and children's quality of attachment, and this relationship is supported and predicted by both attachment theory and reminiscing theory. The relations between reminiscing and attachment remain robust regardless of the attachment measure used (the Strange Situation or the

Attachment Q-Sort), and regardless of when attachment is measured (years earlier or concurrently with reminiscing). However, two striking limitations emerge from the existing literature.

First, elaborative style has typically been captured as a global construct, assessing the parent's use of elaborative statements and open-ended questions against their repetitive statements and 'yes-no' questions (e.g., Fivush & Fromhoff, 1988). However, Fivush, Haden and Reese (2006) have argued that the concept of an elaborative style is a more complex one that needs to be deconstructed. Theoretically, researchers have talked about elaborative style in both cognitive (that is, parents' questions and statements that allow the story-line to progress) and emotional terms (attunement, engagement and negotiations between parent and child that contribute to an elaborative narrative they both agree upon). Cognitive elaboration may be particularly important in helping children learn the forms of narrating the past, and how to construct coherent and detailed narratives of what occurred (Fivush et al., 2006). Joint engagement and negotiations between parent and child may be more critical to helping the child understand the function, or value, of sharing the past. By sharing different feelings, interpretations and viewpoints about the experience, children may be learning how to evaluate their experiences, as well as understanding that different people may have different perspectives on the same event (Fivush & Nelson, 2006). Therefore, in this set of studies, we explicitly examined these two aspects of an elaborative style, by constructing new coding schemes to independently assess the level of cognitive elaboration and joint engagement during parent-child reminiscing. Importantly, if parents differ in how they generally elaborate with children (Reese et al., 1996), then mothers' and fathers' elaborative styles might also be expected to vary on both

the cognitive elaboration and joint engagement dimensions, and these differences may result in differential relations to children's attachment.

Another conspicuous limitation of the reminiscing research is its emphasis on reminiscing between mothers and children. Whereas maternal reminiscing has been extensively studied, there are few studies on paternal reminiscing, and none at all dealing with its effects on children's well-being and attachment. Yet, important differences in how parents communicate and interact with their children on a daily basis suggest that mothers and fathers may differentially impact child well-being and attachment. It is these differences that lay the foundation for the present set of studies.

Different Patterns of Parental Conversations

Generally speaking, mothers and fathers differ a great deal when in conversation with their children. Mothers tend to be more talkative with their children and use different language forms during interactions than fathers, and have been shown to be better able to adjust their speech to the child's level of language development than fathers (Harrison & Magill-Evans, 1996). Infants tend to vocalize more during play interactions with their mothers, and mothers vocalize more than fathers during these interactions, suggesting a conversational pattern between mothers and infants while playing (Weinraub & Frankel, 1977). In terms of the actual content of their speech, fathers and mothers differ in the types of phrases they direct towards their infants. In a meta-analysis of numerous studies on talkativeness of parents, Leaper, Anderson and Sanders (1998) found that, across studies, mothers tended to talk significantly more than fathers, and they used more supportive (praises and approvals) and negative (criticisms and disapprovals) speech than fathers, while fathers used more directive (imperative statements and direct suggestions) and informing (descriptions, explanations or opinions) speech than mothers.

These general patterns of conversational styles between mothers and fathers when speaking with their children strongly suggest that maternal and paternal styles of reminiscing may also differ. Therefore, mother-child and father-child talk about the past should vary as a function of the gender of the parent, reflecting their more general parental conversational styles.

Maternal and paternal reminiscing. Indeed, the limited studies comparing mother-child and father-child reminiscing indicate that mothers and fathers differ on how elaborative and emotional they are. When reminiscing is focused on shared, unique experiences, mothers tend to be more elaborative and less repetitive than fathers across the pre-school period. In a longitudinal study from 40- to 70-months of age, Reese and Fivush (1993) and Reese et al. (1996) found that mothers and fathers did not differ in their overall use of elaborations over time, but fathers used more repetitive statements during reminiscing than mothers. In addition, mothers increased in their use of elaborative statements over time, but fathers did not, suggesting that mothers were less repetitive and increasingly more elaborative than fathers across the preschool period. Similarly, in a sample of pre-adolescents in which the family as a whole discussed past positive and negative events together, Fivush, Marin, McWilliams, and Bohanek (2009) demonstrated that mothers were more elaborative than fathers in their use of both factual and emotional statements about positive and negative family experiences. When reminiscing is focused on highly emotional events, or when task instructions specifically ask parents to focus on the emotional aspects of the child's experiences, Fivush, Brotman, Buckner and Goodman (2000) found that mothers talked more than fathers when reminiscing with four-year olds, used significantly more emotions words, and discussed the causes of emotions more with their children.

Gender differences between mothers and fathers while reminiscing are analogous to more pervasive gender differences in how adults narrate their autobiographical memories. Adult women tell longer, more vivid, and more detailed autobiographical narratives than do men (Fivush & Buckner, 2003; Thorne & McLean, 2002; Niedzwienska, 2003). Women's narratives also tend to be imbued with more internal state language such as affect and emotions than the narratives of men (Bauer, Stennes & Haight, 2003). Consistent with gender theory, women report valuing and practicing the act of reminiscing about the past more than men, making reminiscing a stereotypically feminine activity (Ross & Holmberg, 1990). Further, because women generally talk more about their feelings during reminiscing than men do, and include more internal states into their narratives, emotional reminiscing in particular is considered especially stereotypically female (see Brody & Hall, 1993, and Fischer, 2000, for overviews). Thus, mothers and fathers might be especially likely to differ on elaborative style when reminiscing about emotional experiences (see Fivush & Zaman, in press, for full theoretical arguments).

Interestingly, mothers and fathers also differed depending on whether the child is a daughter or son, such that daughters are more likely to hear evaluative, elaborative (Reese et al., 1996; Reese & Fivush, 1993), social-affiliative (Buckner & Fivush, 2000), and emotionally-laden (Fivush et al., 2000) narratives about the past than sons from both mothers and fathers. Specifically in terms of emotions, parents tend to discuss sadness more with daughters than sons, but emphasize anger with sons over daughters (Adams, Kuebli, Boyle & Fivush, 1995; Bird & Reese, 2006; Fivush, 1991; Fivush, Brotman, Buckner & Goodman, 2000).

Thus, overall, mothers appear more focused than fathers on helping their children recall details of their past experiences, particularly experiences that may trigger emotional reactions.

Moreover, mothers may be more concerned than fathers with helping their children to understand and cope with emotional experiences, thereby incorporating more explanations of emotions into their narratives (Fivush et al., 2000). Emotional experiences activate the attachment system of the child, particularly negative experiences dealing with sadness and conflict, and mothers who are better able to help their children work through and regulate their negative emotions are more likely to have children who are securely attached (Laible, 2004). Thus, gender differences between parents on reminiscing tasks about emotional experiences may have implications for the child's representation of the mother and father as attachment figures. In this set of studies, I explored this possibility by comparing how mothers and fathers talk about particular emotional experiences that are likely to activate the attachment system of preschoolers, specifically sad, and conflict experiences.

Different Patterns of Parental Play

Not only do parents differ during conversations with their children, patterns of play between parents and children also tend to vary extensively. Play has been defined by Garvey (1990) as a voluntary, intrinsically motivated activity done for pleasure. For our purposes, parent-child play can be thought of as exploration of the environment that often brings enjoyment to both parties. It should be noted that, at least earlier in childhood, although mothers actually play with their children more than fathers do because they spend comparatively more time with them, as a proportion of the total amount of parent-child interactions, play is much more prominent in father-child interactions (Lamb & Oppenheim, 1989). Hence, whereas nurturing caregiving may provide the primary context for the development of the mother-child relationship, the cornerstone for the development of the father-child relationship appears to be play.

During home and laboratory free play observations, American fathers are seen as engaging in more vigorous, physically stimulating, unusual, and unpredictable interactions with their infants, such as rough-and-tumble play (Lamb, 2002), while mothers are more likely to initiate fantasy play (Lamb & Oppenheim, 1989), and conventional games, such as pat-a-cake, or games involving toys (Lamb & Lamb, 1976). On a similar note, Yogman (as cited in Lamb, 2002) noticed that mothers engaged their infants in more visual games utilizing distal motor movements designed to maintain visual attention, but fathers utilized more tactile and limb-movement games designed to arouse the infant.

Interestingly, when infants become bored, mothers tend to prolong their use of toy play, whereas fathers shift from toy play to more physical play (Parke & Tinsley, 1981), displaying more sensitivity to the child's needs. Weinraub and Frankel (1977), who observed mothers and fathers in a laboratory free play session with their 18-month old infants, found that the interaction styles of mothers and fathers formed distinct clusters of behaviors. Mothers' play interactions clustered around more nurturing, supportive behaviors, with more verbal interactions, while fathers' play interactions clustered around roughhousing behaviors, more distant observation of children's independent play (although still an open source of reference when the child needed help), and instruction-giving during shared play.

A general pattern thus emerges, of mothers having a more nurturing, verbal relationship with their infants, both during reminiscing and play activities, and fathers having a more tactile, physical relationship with their infants. These differences are suggestive of the influence that various parent-child interactions may have on the child's development. In particular, whereas maternal reminiscing may be more typical of the mother-child relationship, and may elicit the

sensitivity necessary for secure attachment, paternal play, which is central to the father-child relationship, may play a parallel critical role in the child's attachment.

Father-child play and attachment. Research suggests that while sensitivity during caregiving is robustly related to infant-mother but not infant-father attachment (see De Wolff & van Ijzendoorn, 1997, and van Ijzendoorn & De Wolff, 1997 for meta-analyses), sensitivity during play may have a more profound impact on infant-father but not infant-mother attachment, particularly when measured during joint free play. The defining play of the father-child relationship over the mother-child relationship is rough-and-tumble, physical play. Indeed, when sensitivity is rated based on home observations of play interactions between 3-month old infants and their parents, highly positive play (a composite measure of sensitivity, warmth, reciprocal playfulness, activeness of the parent, and appropriately encouraging achievement) is significantly and positively related to secure infant-father attachment when infants are 12 months old (Cox et al., 1992). The correlation between secure infant-mother attachment and positive play failed to reach significance. Similar findings have been reported by Goossens and van Ijzendoorn (1990) who measured parental sensitivity on Ainsworth's sensitivity rating scale, from very insensitive to very sensitive, during a free play laboratory session between Dutch infants and their parents. They obtained no relations between sensitivity during play and infant-mother attachment, but for infant-father attachment, the correlation was positive.

To further distinguish between caregiving and play sensitivity, Grossmann and colleagues (2002) compared parents' sensitivity ratings when their children were 24 months, to children's attachment representation at 6, 10 and 16 years. Security at 24 months was assessed using the strange situation, at age 10 using the Attachment and Current Relationships Interview, a narrative procedure assessing children's coping skills with disappointments and challenges, and

at age 16 using an adapted version of the Adult Attachment Interview, a narrative procedure for assessing adolescents' and adults' current views of attachment (see Grossmann et al., 2002). Parental sensitivity was measured during a home observation of joint free play between each parent and the child, using the Sensitive and Challenging Interactive Play scale (SCIP; see Grossmann et al., 2002), which measures the extent to which parents challenge the child to play in more mature ways, cooperate with the child, take the child's perspective when explaining material, provide information in accordance with the cognitive ability of the child, motivate the child, and make suggestions that are accepted by the child. Whereas maternal play sensitivity was not associated with any measure of the child's attachment representation later on, paternal play sensitivity at 24 months significantly and positively correlated with children's security at ages 10 and 16, and negatively correlated with adolescents' insecure ratings. Thus, when 10-year olds and adolescents are rated as more secure, they were more likely to have had positive play interactions with their fathers at age 24 months that included sensitive, responsive, cooperative, and appropriately challenging play. Interestingly, none of these relations emerged for mothers' play sensitivity and attachment, but infants who were assessed in the strange situation as securely attached to their mothers had mothers who were more sensitive during caregiving.

It thus appears that when sensitivity is elicited in interactions that are more characteristic of the father-child relationship, such as physical play, sensitivity is related to infant-father attachment but not infant-mother attachment. These findings point toward an intriguing suggestion that maternal emotional support, in the form of sensitive and elaborative reminiscing, and paternal sensitive play assume important but distinct roles in children's attachment representation, with each contributing uniquely from childhood to adolescence. Hence in the

current research, I compared these two types of parental interactions and their relations to children's attachment representation.

Father-child play and the internal working model. That different parent-child interactions may contribute differently to children's attachment is supported by the idea of an internal working model. The notion of an internal working model presumes that early experiences become internalized into a representational system that comprises expectations of the attachment figure's accessibility and responsiveness, and beliefs about one's deservingness of such care (Bowlby, 1969). Since these various representations derive from past experience with the attachment figure, and the child's relationship with each parent is centered on different types of interactions, it is possible that different working models may develop regarding mothers and fathers. Specifically, if fathers respond with appropriate encouragement and sensitivity during play, and mothers with sensitivity and comfort during times of distress, different beliefs about the respective roles of father versus mother will cause the child to behave differently towards each parent, particularly when in a distressed versus exploration situation.

In order for an infant to use the caregiver as a source of comfort in times of distress, the infant must feel security in that individual (Bowlby, 1988). Similarly, in order for an infant to explore the environment, a sense of security must be felt (Bowlby, 1988). Therefore, children whose fathers are more sensitive during play and exploration may form expectations of their fathers as a secure base from which they can freely and confidently explore the environment. Pruett (1992), for example, described babies cared for primarily by their fathers as expecting that their curiosity, persistence, or challenging behavior would be tolerated, even appreciated by the adults in their environment, and their expectation that play would be rich, exciting and reciprocated was widespread. Hence, infants whose fathers engage in more challenging and

sensitive play with them may come to expect that persistent exploration is accepted and even rewarded, and may find no fear in challenge, because they know that the father will always be available when protection is needed, just like securely attached infants know that the mother will always be available when emotional comfort is needed.

In line with this interpretation, in three separate studies, Lamb (1976a, 1976b, 1977) distinguished between affiliative behaviors (including smiling, vocalizing, looking, laughing and proffering toys) and attachment behaviors (including proximity seeking, touching, approaching, seeking to be held, fussing and reaching), and found that affiliative behaviors were far more likely to be directed towards fathers than mothers, whereas attachment behaviors were more often directed towards mothers than fathers. These results remain robust in both home observations and laboratory settings, and both when parents are together and when they are alone with the infant. Additionally, infants respond to play initiated by fathers with much more positive affect, such as smiling, than they do when play is initiated by mothers (Clarke-Stewart, 1978; Lamb, 1977). Even more fascinating, upon reunion with the parent in a strange situation, Lamb (1976a) found that 67% of children attempted to engage their fathers in play, while a considerably less 14% attempted to engage their mothers in play. Hence, not only do infants appear to prefer their mothers over their fathers for more comfort-seeking, and their fathers over their mothers when engaged in play activities, but they are also much more likely to want to resume play with the father than the mother after a stressful separation, suggesting the use of the father as a playmate and a base for exploration over and above the mother. These differences were evident both when the infant was separated from and reunited with one parent at a time, and when separated from and reunited with both parents at the same time.

Moreover, Kerry (2000) found that during joint pretend play with their fathers, infants who were securely attached played at significantly higher levels than infants who were insecurely attached to their fathers, suggesting that infants who experience security and comfort in their fathers feel freer to explore the environment. Interestingly, the fathers of insecurely attached infants were more likely to remain uninvolved in their children's play for long periods of time. On the other hand, infants who were securely attached to their mothers initiated more social than play interactions during joint free play. Thus, it seems that children form different expectations about their mothers and fathers, which are then reflected in their later interactions with them. If this is indeed the case, then different patterns of parent-child interactions should relate differently to children's attachment representation when compared.

The Current Research

The present set of studies sought to build upon the above findings by examining two distinct aspects of parent-child interactions that have been related to attachment – reminiscing about past experiences, and joint free play. Both types of interactions have been shown to influence the child's attachment differently depending on whether they involve mother or father. With this in mind, the present research expanded upon the existing literature in several ways.

First, as discussed above, maternal reminiscing has been consistently related to secure attachment in children, as well as other aspects of child well-being; however no studies have examined the relations between paternal reminiscing and attachment. In study one, I explored gender differences in parental reminiscing styles with four-year old children. In particular, because mothers and fathers have been shown to differ while reminiscing about emotional experiences, we asked mother-child and father-child dyads to discuss four past emotional experiences of the child that focused on happy, sad, and two conflict events (conflict with peer

and conflict with parent). As discussed before, distress emotions like sadness and conflict are more likely to activate the attachment system because they present the child with a problem to be resolved with the help of the attachment figure. On the other hand, happiness does not activate the attachment system because happy events do not present a problem to be resolved; thus, they have been less implicated in the relations between maternal elaborative style and attachment (Waters & Zaman, 2005). Therefore, happy events provide a control when comparing mothers and fathers. I also examined differences between mothers and fathers when reminiscing about play experiences. Research indicates that maternal reminiscing about emotional events and father-child play are related to children's attachment. However, there are no studies examining parent-child conversations about past play experiences. Reminiscing about play activities has mostly been done in the context of pretend play (e.g., Boland, Haden & Ornstein, 2003), and these studies have never compared mothers and fathers, let alone examined relations to attachment. Therefore, we asked mother-child and father-child dyads to reminisce about a special outing they shared, as well as their last trip to the playground together.

In line with Fivush et al.'s (2006) explanation of elaborative style, narrative coding focused on a cognitive elaboration style and a joint engagement style of reminiscing about the past. I hypothesized that mothers and fathers will differ in reminiscing styles, such that mothers will be more elaborative and engaged during narrative co-construction with children than fathers, regardless of the type of event being discussed. Given previous research, I also expected that both parents would be more elaborative when discussing emotional events, particularly sad events, with daughters than with sons.

In more exploratory analyses, I examined how consistent parents were in reminiscing styles. Fivush et al. (2009) demonstrated that fathers of pre-adolescents were more consistent

than mothers in their elaborative style across conversations about positive and negative family experiences. Therefore, I examined how consistently elaborative and engaged mothers and fathers were while reminiscing about different kinds of emotional and play experiences, and how parental consistency might differ depending on the gender composition of the dyad. No specific predictions were made about these set of analyses since studies have never examined consistency in parental elaborative style with preschoolers across different types of events.

In study two, I examined how different parental styles of reminiscing and play may relate differently to children's representation of attachment. Although free play has been related to infant-father attachment, no such relations have been found for infant-mother attachment. Moreover, only three studies have found these relations (Cox et al., 1992; Goossens & van Ijzendoorn, 1990; Grossmann et al., 2002), and all have used the strange situation, which only assesses attachment in infancy, and importantly, is coded with the features of secure infant-mother, not infant-father, attachment in mind. Thus, mother-child and father-child dyads engaged in 10 minutes of free play with a set of novel toys. In line with Grossmann et al.'s (2002) coding of parent-child play, parental quality of play was coded for intersubjective and challenging play. Intersubjective play captured how attuned to the child the parent was during play, and challenging play captured how much the parent encouraged the child to be creative in the use of the toys. Given previous research on father-child compared to mother-child play, I hypothesized that fathers would be more intersubjective and creative during play than mothers.

Children's attachment was assessed using the MacArthur Story Stem Battery (MSSB; see Emde, Wolf & Oppenheim, 2003), which consists of a series of story stems or beginnings that elicit family-relevant themes such as separation from and reunion with parents, response to injury, and conflict. Children's stories are presumed to reflect their mental representations or

internal working models of attachment relationships. Hence, coding is based on the child's knowledge of the attachment script in seeking help or comfort from the parent, reflected in their narratives about the dolls. Bowlby (1988) argued that the attachment script describes a sequence of events in which the caregiver (1) supports the child's exploration, (2) remains available and responsive and serves as a resource as necessary; (3) the child encounters an obstacle or threat and becomes distressed; (4) either the child retreats to the caregiver or the caregiver goes to the child; (5) the difficulty is resolved or removed; (6) proximity and/or contact with the caregiver effectively comforts the child; (7) the child (possibly with the caregiver's assistance) returns to constructive play (or ends play comfortably and makes a transition to another activity). Familiarity with and access to this script is fundamental to attachment behaviors during infancy, and serves as the basis for the development of internal working models of attachment.

With respect to relations to between maternal and paternal reminiscing, play, and attachment, I predicted that whereas maternal elaborative and engaged reminiscing would be related to higher attachment scores in children, paternal intersubjective and challenging play would be related to higher attachment scores in children. On the other hand, I did not expect to find relations between paternal reminiscing and attachment or maternal play and attachment.

Running head: GENDER IN NARRATIVES

Gender Differences in Elaborative Parent-Child Emotion and Play Narratives

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Abstract

Reminiscing about the past is an everyday activity that has implications for children's developing memory and socioemotional skills. However, little research has systematically examined how mothers and fathers may differentially elaborate and engage their daughters and sons in reminiscing. In this study, we asked 42 broadly middle-class, mostly Caucasian mothers and fathers from the same families to reminisce about a happy, sad, peer conflict, parental conflict, playground and special outing experience with their 4-year-old child. Narratives were coded for parental styles of cognitive elaboration and joint engagement. Results indicated that mothers are both more elaborative and engaged with children than fathers are, especially about negative emotional and positive play experiences. Further, mother-daughter dyads were consistently elaborative and engaged across discussions about negative emotional experiences. Thus, mothers are helping children to reflect on and deal with negative emotions more than fathers.

Gender Roles in Elaborative Parent-Child Emotion and Play Narratives

We spend much of our social time sharing our past experiences with others, and this sharing often takes the form of narrative reminiscing. Even from early childhood, mothers scaffold reminiscing about the past with pre-school children, long before these children are even able to fully participate themselves (Nelson & Fivush, 2004). Reminiscing with others about the past allows us to interpret our experiences by weaving the events together into a coherent whole, connecting past, present, and future (Bruner, 1990; Fivush & Nelson, 2006; McAdams, 1992), and it is through adult-structured reminiscing that children begin to learn the forms and functions of narrating the past (Fivush, Haden & Reese, 2006). Notably, much research has shown that this process is gendered, with females narrating more elaborate and emotional autobiographical narratives than males (see Fivush & Buckner, 2004, for a review), and this may be true even in the way parents reminisce about the past with children.

A great deal of research has now established that mothers differ in how they scaffold reminiscing about the past with children along a dimension of elaboration (Fivush & Fromhoff, 1988; Reese & Fivush, 1993), and these differences have been implicated in multiple aspects of children's development, including the development of narrative skills, memory for past experiences, emotional well-being, and children's attachment security (e.g., Boland, Haden & Ornstein, 2003; Fivush, 1989; Fivush & Sales, 2006; Laible, 2004). Importantly, there is some suggestion that mothers may be more elaborative than fathers, and that parents are more elaborative when reminiscing with daughters compared to sons, particularly about negative emotions (Reese & Fivush, 1993; Reese, Haden & Fivush, 1993; 1996). However, only two studies have directly compared mothers and fathers on elaborative style, and no studies have systematically examined how elaborative style may vary across a variety of different kinds of

experiences. In particular, based on the larger literature on differences between maternal- and paternal-child interactions discussed in more detail below, there is reason to hypothesize that mothers and fathers would differ specifically while reminiscing about emotional and play experiences. Thus, the major goal of this study was to directly compare mothers' and fathers' elaborative reminiscing with daughters and sons about different types of emotional and play experiences. In order to more fully motivate the study, we begin by first summarizing the research on individual differences in reminiscing style, followed by an exploration of why reminiscing might be expected to vary by gender. Finally, we review the scant research on gender differences in parental reminiscing, with a specific focus on elaborative style.

Individual Differences in Parental Reminiscing

As pre-school children become increasingly able to engage in conversations about their past, they rely on adults to help them structure their experiences into coherent, elaborated narratives, and parents have been shown to differ in their ability to do this, although the vast majority of this literature has focused on mothers. Fivush and colleagues have distinguished between mothers who have a high elaborative compared to a low elaborative style during joint mother-child reminiscing (Fivush & Fromhoff, 1988; Hudson, 1990; Nelson & Fivush, 2004). High elaborative mothers tend to talk frequently about the past, and in more detailed ways that extend and elaborate upon the events of the narrative. These mothers ask mainly open-ended questions to the child (e.g., "Why did that make you happy?") in a way that moves the story forward and allows the child's version of the story to be told. On the other hand, low elaborative mothers spend less time talking about the past with their children, and even when they do, they ask few and redundant questions that do not contribute to the development of the story. They ask primarily 'yes-no' questions that promote their own version of the story (e.g., "You were happy,

weren't you?"). Although a more limited database, these different elaborative styles have also been demonstrated in fathers (Reese & Fivush, 1993).

Maternal styles of reminiscing appear to be consistent over time as children get older (Reese, Haden & Fivush, 1993), and across siblings (Haden, 1998), but importantly, do not extend to different conversational contexts, such as free play or caregiving activities, nor does it correlate with mothers' level of talkativeness (Haden & Fivush, 1996; Hoff-Ginsburg, 1991). These data suggest that reminiscing about the past is a unique context in which parents provide the scaffolding necessary to help build their children's narrative skills, and some parents may do this in more effective ways than others. Notably, more elaborative mothers have children who, over the course of childhood and development, display better autobiographical narrative skills (Fivush, 1989; Fivush & Fromhoff, 1988; Peterson & McCabe, 2004; Peterson, Jesso & McCabe, 1999; Reese & Fivush, 1993; Reese, Yan, Jack & Hayne, 2010), higher levels of emotional understanding and well-being (Bird & Reese, 2006; Fivush & Sales, 2006; Sales & Fivush, 2005), and more secure attachment relationships (Fivush & Vasudeva, 1995; Fivush & Reese, 2002; Gini, Oppenheim & Sagi-Schwartz, 2007; Laible, 2004; Oppenheim, Koren-Karie & Sagi-Schwartz, 2007).

Clearly, individual differences in how mothers reminisce with children have implications for children's development. However, the literature is limited in its examination of fathers in the reminiscing context, even though more general stylistic differences in how mothers and fathers interact with children would predict gender differences in the reminiscing context as well.

Why Expect Gender Differences in Reminiscing?

Different patterns of parental conversations. Generally speaking, mothers and fathers differ a great deal in language interaction with their young children. Mothers tend to be more

talkative and use a greater variety of language forms than fathers, and are better able to adjust their speech to the child's level of language development than fathers (Harrison & Magill-Evans, 1996). Infants also vocalize more during play interactions with mothers than with fathers, and mothers vocalize more than fathers during these same interactions, suggesting a conversational pattern between mothers and infants while playing (Weinraub & Frankel, 1977). Parents also differ in actual conversational content. Mothers tend to use more supportive (praises and approvals) and negative (criticisms and disapprovals) speech than fathers, while fathers use more directive (imperative statements and direct suggestions) and informing speech (descriptions, explanations or opinions) than mothers (see Leaper, Anderson & Sanders, 1998, for a meta-analysis).

In addition to differences in general conversation styles, mothers also engage their children in more verbal kinds of play than fathers do. Garvey (1990) has defined play as voluntary, intrinsically motivated activities that result in pleasure. Both in the lab and at home, American fathers engage their children in more vigorous, physically stimulating, unusual, and unpredictable play, such as rough-and-tumble play (Lamb, 2002), while mothers are more likely to initiate fantasy play (Lamb & Oppenheim, 1989), and conventional games, such as pat-a-cake, or games involving toys (Lamb & Lamb, 1976). Weinraub and Frankel (1977) found that the interaction styles of mothers and fathers during play clustered into distinct patterns of behaviors, with mothers displaying more nurturing, supportive behaviors, imbued with more verbal interactions, whereas fathers engaged in more roughhousing behaviors, distant observations of children's independent play (although still an open source of reference when the child needs help), and instruction-giving. An overall pattern thus emerges of mothers having a more verbal relationship with children and fathers having a more tactile, physical relationship.

These broad stylistic differences between mothers and fathers during conversations and play may be related to parental differences in reminiscing contexts as well. Therefore, parent-child talk about the past may be expected to vary as a function of the gender of the parent, reflecting mothers' and fathers' more general interaction styles with children.

Gender Differences in Reminiscing Styles

We begin by noting that research directly comparing mothers and fathers on elaborative reminiscing is very limited (although one study has examined parental differences in use of emotion language when reminiscing with preschool children; Fivush, Brotman, Buckner & Goodman, 2000). In the only study of preschool children to compare mothers and fathers on elaborative reminiscing style, children were followed from 40- to 70-months, reminiscing with mother at four separate time points, and with father at the earliest and latest time points, about a shared, unique experience. Reese & Fivush (1993) and Reese et al. (1996) found that mothers and fathers did not differ in their overall use of elaborations over time, but fathers used more repetitive statements during reminiscing than mothers. In addition, mothers increased in their use of elaborative statements over time, but fathers did not, suggesting that mothers were less repetitive and increasingly more elaborative than fathers across the preschool period. Similarly, in a sample of pre-adolescents in which the family as a whole discussed past events together, Fivush, Marin, McWilliams, and Bohanek (2009) demonstrated that mothers were more elaborative than fathers in their use of both factual and emotional statements about positive and negative family experiences.

The finding that mothers may be more elaborative than fathers is in accord with more general gender differences in how adults narrate their autobiographical memories. Adult women tell longer, more vivid, and more detailed autobiographical narratives than do men (Fivush &

Buckner, 2003; Thorne & McLean, 2002; Niedzwienska, 2003). Women's narratives also tend to be imbued with more internal state language such as affect and emotions than the narratives of men (Bauer, Stennes & Haight, 2003), and mothers talk more about emotions than fathers while reminiscing about emotional experiences of the child (Fivush et al., 2000). Consistent with gender theory, women report valuing and practicing the act of reminiscing about the past more than men, making reminiscing a stereotypically feminine activity (Ross & Holmberg, 1990). Further, because women generally talk more about their feelings during reminiscing than men do, and include more internal states into their narratives, emotional reminiscing in particular is considered especially stereotypically female (see Brody & Hall, 1993, and Fischer, 2000, for overviews). Thus, mothers and fathers might be especially likely to differ on elaborative style when reminiscing about emotional experiences (see Fivush & Zaman, in press, for full theoretical arguments).

Intriguingly, elaborative reminiscing also differs depending on the gender of the child. In the longitudinal study by Fivush and colleagues, forty month old daughters were more likely than sons to hear elaborative narratives about the past from both parents, and mothers in particular were more elaborative with daughters than with sons across all four assessments (Reese & Fivush, 1993; Reese et al., 1993; Reese et al., 1996). Fathers, on the other hand, were particularly more repetitive with sons than with daughters (Reese et al., 1996). Furthermore, in studies that examine only mothers, differences by gender of child emerge in a variety of reminiscing contexts, including reminiscing about unshared, unique experiences (Reese & Newcombe, 2007) , reminiscing about sad, angry, and scared emotional experiences (Fivush, Berlin, Sales, Mennuti-Washburn & Cassidy, 2003), and reminiscing about positive and negative experiences (Sales, Fivush & Peterson, 2003). Although not all studies have confirmed gender of

child differences (Farrant & Reese; 2000; Haden, Ornstein, Rudek & Cameron, 2009; Kulkofsky, Wang & Kim Koh, 2009; Laible & Song, 2006; Laible, 2011; 2004; Melzi, Schick & Kennedy, 2011; Peterson, Sales, Rees & Fivush, 2007; Wang, 2006; 2007), when differences do emerge, regardless of the context, they are always in the direction of mothers being more elaborative with daughters than with sons. Further, gender of child differences in how mothers reminisce specifically about sad, angry and scared experiences suggest that negative emotional experiences elicit certain gender schemas, consistent with the idea that emotional reminiscing is a feminine activity (Brody & Hall, 1993, and Fischer, 2000). Thus, gender differences may be especially likely to emerge during reminiscing about emotional experiences.

Clearly then, gender is an important factor in reminiscing that needs to be considered in more depth. The existing research on parental gender differences in elaborative reminiscing is limited in several ways. First, much of the research on individual differences in elaborative style examines only mothers and children, and rarely are fathers included in these samples. Thus, we compared both mothers and fathers from the same families in this study. Second, different types of events have never been considered when comparing mothers' and fathers' elaborative reminiscing styles. Given the research reviewed above, we expected that mothers and fathers might differ specifically when reminiscing about emotional and play experiences. Therefore, we examined several kinds of emotional and play conversations here.

A third and more exploratory objective is to more closely examine the construct of elaborative reminiscing. Elaborative style has typically been captured as a global construct, weighing the parent's use of elaborative statements and open-ended questions against their repetitive statements and 'yes-no' questions (e.g., Fivush & Fromhoff, 1988). However, Fivush et al. (2006) have argued that the concept of an elaborative style is a complex one that needs to

be deconstructed. Theoretically, researchers have talked about elaborative style in both cognitive (that is, parents' questions and statements that allow the story-line to progress) and emotional terms (attunement, engagement and negotiations between parent and child that contribute to an elaborative narrative they both agree upon). Cognitive elaboration may be particularly important in helping the child learn the forms of narrating the past, helping children to construct coherent and detailed narratives of what occurred (Fivush et al., 2006). Joint engagement and negotiations between parent and child may be more critical to helping the child understand the function, or value, of sharing the past. By sharing different feelings, interpretations and viewpoints about the experience, children may be learning how to evaluate their experiences, as well as understanding that different people may have different perspectives on the same event (Fivush & Nelson, 2006). Thus, in this study, we explicitly examined these two aspects of an elaborative style, by constructing new coding schemes to independently assess the level of cognitive elaboration and joint engagement during parent-child reminiscing. Importantly, if parents differ in how they generally elaborate with children (Reese et al., 1996), then mothers' and fathers' elaborative styles might also be expected to vary on both the cognitive elaboration and joint engagement dimensions.

The Current Study

Our primary objective in this study was to compare maternal and paternal reminiscing styles on the dimensions of cognitive elaboration and joint engagement when discussing past emotional and play experiences with pre-school children. We expanded the existing literature in three major ways. First, we asked both mothers and fathers to reminisce with children about four different specific past emotional experiences of the child. Previous research found that mothers elaborate more with daughters than sons when reminiscing about sad, angry and scared

experiences (e.g., Fivush et al., 2003). In addition, in these studies in which mothers select the events to discuss, angry events typically fall into two categories: a time when the child was angry or upset with a friend, or a time when the child was angry or upset with the parent. Qualitative impressions of these two different types of narratives suggest that it may be useful to examine them separately. Therefore, we asked mothers and fathers to reminisce with their children about four specific emotional experiences: a time the child was happy and sad, a peer conflict and a parental conflict. Second, since mothers have been argued to have a more verbal, and fathers a more tactile, relationship with children (Weinraub & Frankel, 1977), we expanded the types of events that parents are asked to talk about to explore differences in parental styles of reminiscing about experiences that are more characteristic of the father-child relationship. Reminiscing about play experiences has mostly been studied in the context of pretend play, and these studies have only sampled mothers (e.g., Boland, Haden & Ornstein, 2003). Thus, we also asked mothers and fathers to reminisce about shared play experiences. Third, we developed new coding schemes to separately examine the cognitive elaboration and joint engagement aspects of an elaborative reminiscing style. Overall, we predicted that mothers would be more elaborative and engaged than fathers, especially about emotional experiences.

In addition to the major questions addressed regarding parental reminiscing style, we also compared how parents reminisce with daughters versus sons. We predicted that parents would be more elaborative and engaged with daughters than sons, especially when discussing emotional experiences. Finally, we conducted exploratory analyses to examine parental consistency in elaboration and joint engagement across different kinds of events. Fivush et al. (2009) demonstrated that fathers of pre-adolescents were more consistent than mothers in their elaborative style across conversations about positive and negative family experiences. Therefore,

we examined how consistently elaborative and engaged mothers and fathers were while reminiscing about different kinds of emotional and play experiences, and how parental consistency might differ depending on the gender composition of the dyad. Since studies have never examined consistency in parental elaborative style with preschoolers across different types of events, this section of our analyses was completely exploratory in nature, and we therefore made no specific predictions.

Method

Participants

Forty-seven children and their parents were recruited into the study from the Emory University Child Study Center that maintains a database of families, contacted through mailings, fliers and advertisements, willing to participate in research. Parents gave fully informed consent and children gave verbal assent for participation in the study, as approved by the Emory University Institutional Review Board. Parents received a $50 Visa gift certificate for their participation and children received a coloring book on one visit and a stamp activity set on the other. Four families were dropped from the analyses because they did not complete the second half of the study, and one family was dropped because the father was blind. Of the 42 remaining families, 21 of the children were females.

At the time of the first home visit, children from the 42 remaining families ranged in age from 4 years 0 months, to 5 years 2 months, with a mean age of 4 years 6 months. Families consisted of between 0 and 4 siblings, ranging in age from 16 months to 20 years. All families were opposite gender, two-parent families. Of the 42 families, 40 were biological, one was blended and one was adopted. Forty families spoke English as their first language, one family

spoke Hindi as their first language, and one spoke Spanish as their first language. However, in all cases, both parents and children were fluent in English, and all data were collected in English.

The sample was primarily Caucasian, with 35 mothers self-identifying as White or Caucasian, three as Black or African American, three as Mixed, and one as Asian. Thirty-one fathers identified themselves as White or Caucasian, five as Black or African American, four as Latino, Mexican or Hispanic, one as Mixed, and one as Asian.

The parents in our sample were highly educated. Three mothers reported completing some college, 19 had an undergraduate degree, 19 had a post-graduate degree, and one did not report level of education. Two fathers reported completing high school, six had some college education, 15 had an undergraduate degree, 18 had a post-graduate degree, and one did not report this information.

Procedure

This study was part of a larger program of research investigating the relations between parental reminiscing, play and children's attachment and well-being. Only the procedures relevant to the current study will be discussed.

Participants were visited twice in their homes by one of two trained female researchers. During one of those visits, the mother and child took part in the study, and during the other, the father and child participated, the order of which was counterbalanced. At each visit, parent and child were asked to reminisce about four past emotional experiences of the child (happy, sad, a conflict with a peer, and a conflict with the parent in the dyad), and two past play interactions they experienced together (the last time they visited the playground together, and a special outing they engaged in together). The order in which emotional and play narratives were elicited was counterbalanced.

To ensure that the dyad reminisced about all emotional events, parents were presented with four index cards in random order, on each of which was written either 'happy', 'sad', 'conflict with you', or 'conflict with peer.' The researcher prompted for the narratives by saying: "On each of these cards is a description of the events I'd like the two of you to talk about. I'd like you to talk about these events as you normally would if they just came up in conversation. Remember, you are talking *together* about experiences that *[name of child]* has had that involve the words on the cards. There are no time limits, and no right or wrong way to do this. You may begin at any time."

Play narratives were selected to assess differences in reminiscing styles between mothers and fathers when reminiscing about events that are more typical of the father-child relationship. Parent and child were asked to reminisce about two past play interactions in which they engaged together: "I would like you to talk *together* about the last time you and [*name of child*] visited the playground," and "I would like you to talk *together* about a special outing you shared/engaged in *together* recently." The order in which the two play narratives were elicited was counterbalanced.

In all cases, the experimenter left the room or sat in a corner provided by the family while the dyad reminisced, so as not to influence the process or content of story-telling.

Coding

All narratives were audiotaped, transcribed verbatim, and then checked for accuracy before coding. Narrative coding was done from the transcripts. We developed two 5-point coding schemes (from 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest possible score) to capture parental reminiscing styles on two dimensions: cognitive elaboration and joint engagement. Refer to Table 1 for details on each point in the coding scheme, and Appendix A for sample narratives.

Cognitive Elaboration. The elaboration coding scheme is based on Fivush and Fromhoff's (1988) assessment of high and low elaborative mothers described in the introduction, and adapted from the global coding of elaboration in Laible (2004). Parents scoring on the low end of the scale asked mainly 'yes-no' questions (e.g., "You liked that, didn't you?" or "Did we go to Chucky Cheese yesterday?"), provided the child little opportunity to contribute his or her own version of the story, rejected the child's independent contributions to the narrative, and was repetitive in asking questions until the child provided a satisfactory answer. Parents scoring on the high end of the scale asked mainly open-ended questions (e.g., "How did that make you feel" or "What did we do yesterday that made you happy?"), confirmed and then elaborated on the child's independent contributions to the narrative, and rather than asking repetitive questions when the child did not remember, these parents moved the conversation forward by contributing new details to prompt the child.

Joint Engagement. We defined joint engagement as the extent to which parent and child were on the same page while telling the story, and the quality of negotiation between parent and child when there was disagreement. On the low end of the scale, parent and child reported completely different versions of the story, showed little acknowledgement for each other's perspective or memory of the event, and there appeared to be a general lack of cohesiveness in the story. There were also low-scoring stories in which one party contributed the entire story, while the other simply agreed or disagreed. On the other hand, on the high end of the scale, both parent and child were invested in the telling of the story, there was consistency and harmony in the telling of the story, and disagreements were resolved through negotiation and reflection, rather than negation of the other's perspective.

Reliability. Two trained coders, blind to the gender of the parent and child, independently coded 25% of all narratives for reliability, and reached an intra-class correlation of 0.76 (p = 0.001) for cognitive elaboration and an intra-class correlation of 0.91 (p = 0.001) for joint engagement. The remaining narratives were divided between the two coders to be coded.

Results

The results are presented in three sections. We first provide descriptives on the narratives parents and children chose to reminisce about. Next we examine possible gender differences between mothers and fathers, followed by correlational analyses examining consistency in how dyads talk about different types of events.

Narrative Description

Children and their parents discussed a wide variety of emotion narratives. Discussions about happy experiences typically centered on the child receiving a new gift or toy, or on special outings, celebrations or activities in which the child or family engaged. Sad experiences were more variable, and topics were generally about the child not being able to have his/her own way or the parent disciplining the child, the child getting sick or hurt, a death or loss in the family, a peer conflict, or negative emotions experienced by the child, including missing a loved one, frustration or emotional hurt. Peer conflict narratives dealt mainly with issues of sharing, play fighting or teasing, physical confrontations, arguments or disagreements, or being told on by a friend. Parental conflicts were either about the child's disobedience, the child not having his or her own way, disciplining by the parent, or arguments between parent and child. As was expected, playground experiences focused on the last time the parent and child visited a playground together, whether it was a private or public playground, and special outing experiences almost always focused on some family outing, such as a vacation, or a trip to an

activity center, including museums and children's fun centers like Chuck E. Cheese. A rough count of the narrative topics divided by gender of parent suggested no noticeable differences between the types of experiences mothers compared to fathers reminisced about.

In order to examine overall differences in length of conversations, we counted the number of words used by parents and children in each conversation. The question of whether length is a meaningful variable in its own right or a variable that needs to be controlled for in analyses of reminiscing style is controversial. Although some theorists have argued that higher levels of elaboration may be no more than increased amount of information (e.g., Bauer et al., 2005), other theorists have argued that because this is an untimed task, length is itself an interesting variable, and that both length and elaboration are indices of more in depth reminiscing (see Fivush, Bohanek, Zaman & Grapin, in press, for a full discussion). Based on previous theory and data, we decided to examine length of conversation in an initial series of analyses to determine if and how to include length in the main analyses on elaboration and joint engagement.

Parents' average word use per narrative type by gender of child is presented in Table 2. A repeated measures analysis of variance with type of narrative (happy, sad, conflict with peer, conflict with parent, playground and special outing) and parent's gender as repeated measures, and gender of child as a between subjects factor revealed a main effect of narrative type (F (5, 36) = 10.73, p = .001), and a 3-way interaction between narrative type, gender of parent and gender of child (F (5, 36) = 3.95, p = .01). Follow-up analyses indicated that there was only one narrative type on which parents varied by length. Specifically, mothers talked more with their daughters during discussions about a special outing than fathers did with their daughters (t (1, 20) = 3.61, p = .002), but there were no differences between parents for other event types, nor

did mothers and fathers differ in word use when talking to their sons. In addition, mothers talked more with their daughters than with their sons when reminiscing about a parental conflict (t (2, 40) = 2.47, p = .02). Fathers, on the other hand, did not speak more with either sons or daughters on any event type. Given minimal differences in word use between mothers and fathers, we did not control for number of words in subsequent analyses.

Gender Differences in Cognitive Elaboration and Joint Engagement

Preliminary analyses revealed that cognitive elaboration and joint engagement were correlated for mothers but not fathers, such that mothers who were more elaborative with their children, also tended to be highly engaged in the story-telling process (correlation coefficients ranged from .17 to .63 across event types, with many significant correlations), but elaborative fathers were not necessarily also highly engaged (correlation coefficients ranged from -.06 to .34, with no significant correlations). Therefore, although cognitive elaboration and joint engagement are clearly related to each other, at least for mothers, they appear to be measuring distinct aspects of reminiscing style.

Cognitive Elaboration. Mean elaboration scores by gender of parent and child are shown in the first two panels of Table 3. In order to examine possible differences in parental elaboration by gender of parent and child, a mixed model ANOVA with type of narrative (happy, sad, conflict with peer, conflict with parent, playground and special outing) and parent's gender as repeated measures, and gender of child as a between subjects factor, was conducted. There was a main effect of narrative type (F (1, 35) = 3.53, p = .01), a main effect of parent's gender (F (1, 39) = 11.28, p = .002), and an interaction between narrative type and parent's gender (F (1, 35) = 3.65, p = .009). Follow-up analyses comparing mothers and fathers revealed that mothers were more elaborative than fathers on peer conflict conversations (t (1, 40) = 2.15, p = .04),

playground conversations (t (1, 40) = 3.28, p = .002) and special outing conversations (t (1, 40) = 3.29, p = .002). There was also a trend for mothers to be more elaborative than fathers in conversations about happy experiences (t (1, 40) = 1.69, p = .09). There were no effects of child gender, suggesting that in these data, parents do not elaborate differently with daughters compared to sons.

Joint Engagement. Mean joint engagement scores by gender of parent and child are shown in the last two panels of Table 3. A mixed model ANOVA with type of narrative (happy, sad, conflict with peer, conflict with parent, playground and special outing) and parent's gender as repeated measures and gender of child as a between subjects factor was conducted to examine differences in joint engagement in different- and same-gender dyads. Results yielded a main effect of narrative type (F (5, 36) = 5.07, p = .001), an interaction between narrative type and parent's gender (F (5, 36) = 2.43, p = .04), and an interaction between narrative type and gender of child (F (5, 36) = 2.57, p = .03).

For the narrative type by gender of parent interaction, follow-up paired samples test indicated that mother-child dyads (M = 2.88) were more engaged than father-child dyads (M = 2.38) particularly when discussing sad experiences (t (1, 41) = 2.31, p = .03). Mother-child dyads (M = 3.02) also tended to be more engaged than father-child dyads (M = 2.60) when discussing a recent special outing (t (1, 41) = 2.06, p = .05). There were no differences between dyads when reminiscing about happy, conflict, or playground experiences.

For the narrative type by gender of child interaction, follow-up analyses on mothers compared to fathers revealed that, when discussing a parental conflict, parents were overall more engaged with sons (M = 3.05) than with daughters (M = 2.48; t (1, 40) = 2.08, p = .04). In contrast, when reminiscing about a special outing, there was a trend for parents to be more

engaged with daughters (M = 3.02) than with sons (M = 2.60) (t (1, 40) = 1.83), p = .08). There were no differences in how engaged parents were with sons compared to daughters for happy, sad, peer conflict and playground narratives.

Therefore, to summarize, mothers were overall more elaborative than fathers when reminiscing with children, particularly about happy, peer conflict, playground, and special outing experiences. Mother-child dyads were also more engaged than father-child dyads during sad and special outing narratives. Interestingly, parents were more engaged with sons than daughters on parental conflict narratives, but more so with daughters than sons on special outing narratives.

Consistency in Cognitive Elaboration and Joint Engagement

Cognitive elaboration. The second set of analyses examined whether parents were consistent in their elaborative style across different event types. Pearson's correlations are displayed in Table 4. As can be seen, the pattern of significant correlations suggest that mothers who were elaborative when talking with their daughters about one negative event were also elaborative when talking about other negative events; that is, sad, peer conflict and parental conflict experiences. On the other hand, elaborative mothers were rarely consistent across event type when reminiscing with their sons. A very similar pattern emerged for father-daughter compared to father-son dyads. Fathers who were more elaborative when discussing sad events with their daughters were also more elaborative when discussing a peer conflict and a parental conflict. However, while some significant relations were seen in how consistent fathers were in elaborations with sons, there is no clear pattern that emerges.

Finally, we were interested in how consistently mothers and fathers from the same family reminisced with a daughter versus a son. These analyses yielded no significant correlations,

suggesting that elaborative mothers and fathers do not come from the same families, regardless of the child's gender.

Joint Engagement. Table 5 displays Pearson's correlations for joint engagement. As with cognitive elaboration, mother-daughter dyads who were more engaged when discussing one negative emotion narrative tended to be consistently so across other negative emotion narratives (sad, per conflict and parental conflict), but there were no clear trends for mother-son dyads. Intriguingly, this pattern was reversed for father-child dyads. There was little consistency in joint engagement for father-daughter dyads across event types, but father-son dyads who were high in joint engagement were generally consistent across event type.

Finally, when examining joint engagement between parents of the same family, for parents of daughters, mothers and fathers were similarly engaged when discussing a peer conflict ($r = .44$, $p = .05$) and a special outing ($r = .36$, $p = .10$). However, there were no significant relations between mothers and fathers of sons from the same family for any event type.

Thus, in summary, for both cognitive elaboration and joint engagement, mothers with daughters were consistent in their reminiscing style across narratives that focused on negative experiences of the child. Similarly, fathers of daughters were also consistent in cognitive elaboration, but not in joint engagement, across negative narratives. On the contrary, fathers with sons appear to be less consistent in cognitive elaboration, but more consistent in joint engagement, than fathers with daughters across event type. Finally, mothers with sons were rarely consistent in either cognitive elaborations or joint engagement.

Discussion

Research on parent-child reminiscing has failed to systematically examine differences between mothers' and fathers' styles of elaborative reminiscing, although the literature would

suggest such differences (Reese & Fivush, 1993; Reese et al., 1993; Reese et al., 1996). The results of our study confirm parental gender differences in reminiscing style, and extend them to both the cognitive and, to a lesser extent, the emotional aspect (joint engagement), of an elaborative reminiscing style. Importantly, we extend these gender patterns to different kinds of past emotional and play experiences. Interestingly, unlike past research (Fivush et al., 2003; Sales et al., 2003), we found few differences in reminiscing style due to gender of child. Finally, there was consistency in parental styles of cognitive elaboration and joint engagement, but this varied as a function of the gender composition of the dyad and the type of event being discussed. Each set of results will be discussed in turn.

Gender Differences in Reminiscing Style

In line with the findings of Reese et al. (1996), we found that mothers were more elaborative than fathers when reminiscing with pre-school children about a happy experience. Additionally, we demonstrated that mothers elaborated more than fathers across a variety of experiences, especially a peer conflict and play experiences. Mothers and children were also more engaged with each other when reminiscing than fathers and children were, especially about a sad and special outing experience. Thus, mothers seem to be overall more invested than fathers in helping their children work through and talk about their experiences, regardless of the specific type of experience. This is consistent with gender theory that women value the act of reminiscing about the past more than men (Ross & Holmberg, 1990), and as a result, they engage in more detailed, elaborated reminiscing, and become more skilled at it over time than men (Fivush & Buckner, 2003; Fivush & Zaman, in press). Furthermore, emotional reminiscing is especially stereotypically female (see Brody & Hall, 1993, and Fischer, 2000, for overviews), with females generally imbuing their autobiographical narratives with more internal state language, such as

affect and emotions, than males (Bauer, Stennes & Haight, 2003). Therefore, when parents are asked to talk about emotional experiences with children, such a context may elicit gender schemas to a greater extent than talk about everyday experiences (Fivush & Zaman, in press). That mothers are more elaborative than fathers during talk about happy and peer conflict experiences, and more engaged with children during talk about sad experiences, is consistent with other studies demonstrating that mothers include more emotion terms, and discuss and explain the causes of emotions more than fathers both while reminiscing about every day, positive experiences (Kuebli & Fivush, 1992), and about a variety of negative emotional experiences (Fivush, Brotman, Buckner & Goodman, 2000). Mothers thus seem to be helping their children work through and understand emotional experiences more than fathers are, and this is reflected in more elaborated narratives about such experiences, in which both parent and child are equally engaged, and attuned to each other, during the telling of the story.

Moreover, when reminiscing is centered on negative events, such as conflict and sad experiences, more elaborated, engaged narratives may reflect the mother's effort to help her child deal with difficult emotions in more effective ways. Fivush and colleagues and Laible have argued that more elaborative reminiscing about these kinds of negative emotional experiences help children to think about, work through, and deal with difficult emotions in more beneficial ways (Fivush & Vasudeva, 1995; Fivush & Reese, 2002; Laible, 2004). Mothers who ask open-ended questions such as "Why were you upset?" and "What can we do about that next time?", and then expand upon the child's answers, allow the child the opportunity to reflect on his/her feelings, explain them, and then come up with solutions for dealing with those emotions in the future. Importantly, more elaborative reminiscing about past negative, but not positive, emotional experiences is related to better emotional well-being (Sales et al., 2003) and more

secure attachment relationships (Fivush & Vasudeva, 1995; Fivush & Reese, 2002; Laible, 2004).

Similarly, mothers who are more engaged with children in the telling of the narrative, allowing for more negotiations during disagreements, and validating the child's independent contributions, may implicitly communicate to children that their own version, perspective and feelings about the experience matter, and are just as important as the parent's. Not surprisingly then, Oppenheim and colleagues have shown relations between securely attached children during infancy and dyadic intersubjectivity during the pre-school years, which they define as cognitive and emotional attunement and engagement between mother and child during reminiscing interactions (Etzion-Carasso & Oppenheim, 2000; Gini, Oppenheim & Sagi-Schwartz, 2007).

Intriguingly, although play interactions are more characteristic of the father-child relationship (Weinraub & Frankel, 1977), we found that mothers were more elaborative than fathers when reminiscing about a trip to the playground and a special outing, and mothers and children were also more engaged with each other than fathers and children were during conversations about a special outing. This suggests that even though fathers may be more engaged in physical play with children, when it comes to conversations about such play, mothers are more engaged, and invested in helping their children recall and talk about the details of these experiences. Further, this is consistent with the data showing that even during the act of play, mothers verbalize more with children than fathers do (Weinraub & Frankel, 1977).

Gender differences in maternal and paternal reminiscing styles may have important implications for children's developing narrative skills. Theory and research suggests that children learn the skills and values for reminiscing by participating in parent-guided reminiscing

about the past (Fivush, 2007), so any differences in how children experience their mothers versus fathers reminiscing might be internalized. More specifically, when girls and boys experience their mothers and fathers reminiscing differently, they may implicitly begin to associate certain aspects of remembering the past with being female or being male, and subsequently integrate these aspects into their own narratives in ways that might mirror the narrative style of the same-gender parent. Therefore, over time, the autobiographical narratives of girls should become more elaborated than those of boys. Indeed, research shows that by the time they are four years old and able to fully engage in reminiscing tasks, girls are telling longer, more detailed, and more elaborated narratives during reminiscing than boys (Farrant & Reese, 2000; Fivush, Haden, & Adam, 1995; Reese & Fivush, 1993; Reese et al., 1996; 1993; Sales, Fivush & Peterson, 2003). Thus, girls and boys are beginning to narrate gendered autobiographical narratives from a very young age, and these gender patterns endure into middle-childhood (Pasupathi & Wianryb, 2010). Further, as Pasupathi and Wainryb (2010) have recently shown, these gender differences are accentuated in effect size during adolescence, when children begin to more frequently narrate personal experiences, and weave them into a life story (Fivush, Bohanek, Zaman, & Grapin, in press; Fivush, Bohanek & Zaman, 2011; Habermas & Bluck, 2000; Pasupathi & Wainryb, 2010; Zaman & Fivush, 2011).

Gender differences in children's own narratives would suggest that mothers and fathers not just reminisce differently from each other, but also with daughters compared to sons. Yet, contrary to past research (e.g., Reese & Fivush, 1993; Reese et al., 1996; 1993), we found few differences in how parents reminisced with daughters compared to sons. In fact, there was no difference in how parents elaborated with daughters versus sons on any of the narrative events, and only two significant effects for joint engagement. Specifically, parents were more engaged

with sons than daughters when discussing a parental conflict, but more engaged with daughters than sons when discussing a special outing. The greater consistency across studies in differences between maternal and paternal reminiscing styles, as compared to differences in how parents reminisce with daughters versus sons, suggests that children may be more exposed to gendered ways of reminiscing through modeling their parents. This, in turn, implies that children may be learning how to narrate in both female- and male-stereotyped ways, but adopt their same parent model for their own reminiscing. Some suggestion that this is the case comes from research asking adolescents to narrate both their own personal experiences and to tell stories about their parents' experiences as children (Zaman & Fivush, 2011). Adolescent females and males tell gendered personal narratives, with females providing more elaborated and more emotional narratives than males, but when telling stories about their parents, both girls and boys tell stories about their mothers that are more elaborated and emotional than stories about their fathers. These patterns indicate that adolescents both know and can use female and male models of narrating, but choose to tell their own personal narratives in gendered ways. Clearly, more research is needed to elucidate this process.

Consistency in Elaborative Style

In addition to differences in how mothers and fathers reminisce with children, we also found interesting patterns of consistency in reminiscing style across event types depending on the gender composition of the dyad. Specifically, elaborative mother-daughter dyads were consistently elaborative across discussions about negative emotional experiences, that is, sad, peer conflict and parental conflict, but there was very little consistency in mother-son dyads across different types of events. The same pattern held for elaborative father-daughter dyads. Thus, it seems that both mothers and fathers are consistent in socializing their daughters to talk

about and elaborate more about their experiences, and specifically their negative emotional experiences. These types of consistent socialization messages may have a more general impact on gender identity across development.

Similarly, mothers and daughters, but not mothers and sons, were more engaged with each other than fathers and daughters while reminiscing about negative experiences. Mothers and daughters thus seem to connect over the act of reminiscing about the past, conveying to girls the value of reminiscing as a feminine activity, especially about emotional experiences. Through such gendered interactions, girls may be learning a more distinct and consistent pattern of talking about emotional experiences than boys (Fivush, 1998), and this may explain findings that over time, girls produce more elaborate, emotional narratives than boys (Farrant & Reese, 2000; Fivush et al., 1995; Haden, Haine & Fivush, 1997). Indeed, mother-son dyads were rarely consistent on cognitive elaborations and joint engagement. In contrast, engaged father-son dyads were generally engaged across all types of events, suggesting that fathers and sons connect, and are attuned to each other, during reminiscing, more so that fathers and daughters regardless of the type of event. Clearly, these patterns suggest something unique and special about same-gender dyads during reminiscing, but more research is needed to elucidate the meaning of these patterns.

Limitations and Conclusions

This was the first study to systematically examine differences in how mothers and fathers reminisce with pre-school children about different kinds of emotional and play experiences. Yet, several weaknesses must be highlighted. First, our participants were primarily middle-class, Caucasian-Americans, and research suggests that parents from different populations, such as

Chinese-Americans and Latino-Americans, may display different gender patterns while reminiscing with young children (e.g., Melzi, Schick & Kennedy, 2011; Wang & Fivush, 2005). Future studies are very much needed to examine maternal and paternal differences in elaborative style across different kinds of populations.

Second, our study examined only one age group of children, and therefore does not allow an examination of how mothers and fathers may differ in elaborative style over time, or with children of different ages. Thus, studies that follow parents and children over time are needed. In addition, we did not elicit independent narratives from these children. However, how girls differ from boys as they begin to tell their own narratives, in relation to maternal and paternal differences during early reminiscing, is an essential area of research needed to understand how gender differences in reminiscing may influence children's developing narrative skills and the gender roles they begin to adopt. Similar research is currently underway in a New Zealand sample (see Reese, Yan, Jack & Hayne, 2010 for details). Further, we do not examine here how children contribute to reminiscing conversations with parents, and may thus elicit gender differences from parents, and this is essential to understanding the bi-directional nature of gender differences.

Despite these shortcomings, we demonstrate clear differences in how mothers and fathers reminisce about the past with children across different kinds of experiences, both in the cognitive and emotional aspects of elaboration. We also establish consistency in maternal reminiscing style with daughters. These results are intriguing, and a necessary first step to better understanding how parents socialize gender roles to girls and boys through narratives about the past, and how girls and boys may then incorporate these roles into their own narratives and their own lives.

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Table 1

Coding for Cognitive Elaboration and Joint Engagement

	Cognitive Elaboration	Joint Engagement
1	Parent asks mainly yes-no questions; restricts child's contributions.	Parent and child report different versions of the story or disagree on everything
2	Parent may ask some open-ended questions, but most questions are yes-no.	Shared attention between parent and child, but no negotiation when there's disagreement.
3	Parent uses a balance of open-ended and yes-no questions, and few repetitive questions.	Shared attention between parent and child, and absolute agreement on everything without any negotiation.
4	Most questions are open-ended with a few yes-no questions.	Parent and child negotiate disagreements in the process of creating shared meaning, but fail to get there.
5	Parent asks mainly open-ended questions, confirms and elaborates on child's contributions.	Disagreements are resolved through negotiations; there is a sense of shared meaning and understanding.

Table 2

Mean (standard deviation) Number of Words Used by Parents by Gender of Child

	Mothers		Fathers	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Happy	183.10 (101.85)	183.10 (122.38)	140.24 (49.94)	177.00 (130.28)
Sad	189.86 (174.25)	161.14 (95.12)	237.10 (351.97)	141.19 (77.07
Peer Conflict	236.86 (105.89)	238.71 (184.37)	206.57 (211.30)	194.38 (85.71)
Parental Conflict	218.29 (90.26)	146.48 (98.25)	217.43 (85.71)	175.76 (113.76)
Playground	342.62 (207.45)	386.14 (224.69)	399.05 (180.22)	309.81 (212.07)
Special Outing	414.29 (231.11)	305.24 (187.68)	204.81 (109.82)	311.29 (284.51)

Table 3

Means (standard deviations) for Cognitive Elaboration and Joint Engagement by Gender of Child and Parent.

	Elaboration - Mother		Elaboration - Father		Engagement - Mother		Engagement - Father	
	Girl	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl	Boy
Happy	2.81 (1.17)	2.90 (1.09)	2.38 (1.02)	2.52 (1.17)	3.05 (1.24)	3.24 (.94)	3.42 (1.08)	3.19 (1.21)
Sad	2.95 (.92)	3.19 (.98)	3.38 (.97)	3.29 (.90)	3.05 (1.12)	2.71 (1.06)	2.19 (.98)	2.57 (.98)
Con Peer	3.24 (1.00)	3.48 (1.17)	2.76 (.94)	3.10 (.83)	3.00 (1.18)	2.52 (.93)	2.52 (1.17)	2.67 (1.06)
Con Parent	3.14 (1.11)	3.10 (1.00)	2.76 (.83)	2.95 (.97)	2.86 (1.24)	3.05 (1.12)	2.10 (1.26)	3.05 (.97)
Playground	3.29 (.64)	3.10 (1.37)	2.33 (1.06)	2.67 (.86)	3.10 (1.09)	2.86 (1.42)	3.52 (.93)	3.10 (1.00)
Sp Outing	3.90 (.83)	3.42 (1.16)	3.09 (1.37)	2.67 (1.28)	3.24 (1.18)	2.81 (1.08)	2.81 (.93)	2.38 (.86)

Table 4

Correlations and p-values for Cognitive Elaboration by Gender of Parent and Child

Elaboration Mom-Girls	Happy	Sad	Conflict with peer	Conflict with parent	Playground
Sad	.084, p=.717				
Conflict with Peer	.47, p=.03*	.40, p=.07*			
Conflict with Parent	.14, p=.55	.40, p=.07*	.24, p=.30		
Playground	-.12, p=.59	.02, p=.92	.05, p=.85	.22, p=.34	
Special Outing	.14, p=.56	-.20, p=.38	.15, p=.52	.07, p=.76	.05, p=.82
Elaboration Mom-Boys					
Sad	.25, p=.27				
Conflict with Peer	.04, p=.87	.27, p=.24			
Conflict with Parent	.10, p=.66	-.22, p=.83	.22, p=.35		
Playground	.54, p=.01*	.25, p=.28	-.09, p=.69	-.19, p=.41	
Special Outing	-.01, p=.98	-.21, p=.37	.21, p=.36	.01, p=.98	.32, p=.16
Elaboration Dad-Girls					
Sad	-.05, p=.82				
Conflict with Peer	-.06, p=.81	.49, p=. 03*			
Conflict with Parent	-.24, p=.29	.43, p=.05*	.31, p=.18		
Playground	-.26, p=.26	.31, p=.18	.18, p=.43	.55, p=.01*	
Special Outing	-.03, p=.91	-.03, p=.90	.06, p=.81	.24, p=.30	.11, p=.62
Elaboration Dad-Boys					
Sad	.37, p=.09*				
Conflict with Peer	.05, p=.83	-.12, p=.65			
Conflict with Parent	.42, p=.05*	.07, p=.75	.13, p=.58		
Playground	.13, p=.56	-.39, p=.08*	.05, p=.84	.40, p=.07*	
Special Outing	.26, p=.26	.09, p=.71	.22, p=.34	.35, p=.12	.03, p=.90

Table 5

Correlations and p-values for Joint Engagement by Gender of Parent and Child

Engagement Mom-Girls	Happy	Sad	Conflict with peer	Conflict with parent	Playground
Sad	-.04, p=.87				
Conflict with Peer	.07, p=.77	.49, p=.02*			
Conflict with Parent	-.09, p=.69	.37, p=.10*	.48, p=.03*		
Playground	.03, p=.89	.37, p=.10*	.27, p=.24	.57, p=.01*	
Special Outing	-.01, p=. 97	-.09, p=.71	.22, p=.35	.06, p=.80	.33, p=.14
Engagement Mom-Boys					
Sad	.07, p=.76				
Conflict with Peer	.19, p=.40	.16, p=.49			
Conflict with Parent	.46, p=.04*	.01, p=.96	.12, p=.61		
Playground	.29, p=.21	.24, p=.30	.17, p=.45	.29, p=.21	
Special Outing	-.002, p=1.0	.26, p=.26	.06, p=.81	.38, p=.09*	.08, p=.73
Engagement Dad-Girls					
Sad	-.13, p=.58				
Conflict with Peer	-.11, p=.64	.24, p=.35			
Conflict with Parent	-.29, p=.20	-.02, p=.95	.54, p=.01*		
Playground	.11, p=.62	.27, p=.24	.24, p=.29	-.17, p=.45	
Special Outing	-.11, p=.62	.04, p=.86	-.18, p=.43	-.41, p=.06*	.06, p=.78
Engagement Dad-Boys					
Sad	.45, p=.04*				
Conflict with Peer	.13, p=.58	.001, p=1.0			
Conflict with Parent	.33, p=.14	.44, p=.05*	.50, p=.02*		
Playground	-.02, p=.95	.09, p=.68	-.30, p=.19	.31, p=.18	
Special Outing	.02, p=.92	.38, p=.09*	.25, p=.27	.22, p=.35	-.04, p=.85

Appendix A

Low Elaborative (Medium Engaged) Parent

Parent: What makes you sad? Does anything make you sad?

Child: No.

Parent: You know what sad means?

Child: No.

Parent: It means when, let's say you wanna go outside and we don't wanna go outside to watch you so you have to stay in the house. Do you be feeling sad then?

Child: Uh huh.

Parent: You think so?

Child: Uh huh.

Parent: Is that why you cry?

Child: Uh huh.

Parent: 'Cause you wanna get your way?

Child: Uh huh.

Parent: Yeah? So whenever you're sad do normally you cry?

Child: Uh huh.

Parent: Do you know why you're cryin'?

Child: Because you said no one can watch me outside and I said, "You can watch me." And you said, "I don't wanna go outside."

Parent: And that made you sad?

Child: Uh huh.

High Elaborative (Highly Engaged) Parent

Parent: This one says being sad. We have to talk about a time when you were sad.

Child: We didn't go to Fernbank.

Parent: That's right, yesterday when we didn't go to Fernbank. That made you sad? Yeah. I was kinda sad too 'cause I really thought it'd be fun to go. But it didn't work out did it? Do you remember why?

Child: No.

Parent: No? I think there two things. Who was keeping you?

Child: Elan.

Parent: Elan kinda overslept on his nap, right?

Child: Yeah.

Parent: And by the time he got up it was late, so we didn't have time to really get lunch before

Child: And I had an accident.

Parent: You had an accident. You're right. And we didn't wanna go to Fernbank if you were having an accident. And do you know what else there was?

Child: What?

Parent: What'd [Parent] really want to do yesterday?

Child: I don't know

Parent: What did [Parent] do all afternoon?

Child: [Parent] wanted to watch football.

Parent: [Parent] really wanted to watch the football game didn't [Parent]?

Low Engaged (High Elaborative) Parent

Parent: Alright, the next one, help me think of a time when you were sad. I'm having trouble thinking about that. When is a time that you were sad? Sometimes you get sad when you think about heaven, right?

Child: No –

Parent: Just the other day you were sad when you talked about heaven because you said you didn't want to go to heaven. That made you sad, but we talked through it and we said it's gonna be a happy place. Why is it gonna be happy?

Child: Because I don't want to die.

Parent: I know you don't want to die but we know that when you do, we're gonna see a lot of people. You're gonna see your grandpa's that you never met, you're gonna see one of your grandma's that you've never met.

Child: No, there's only one grandma in heaven.

Parent: Right, I said one of your grandma's. So it will be a happy place, right? But you do kind of get sad when we talk about that.

Highly Engaged (Low Elaborative) Parent

Parent: Did you see a puppy the last time we went to the park?

Child: Hmm?

Parent: The puppy?

Child: Yeah, I wanted to pet it.

Parent: You did pet it.

Child: Yep, and I was so dirty. I was!

Parent: Did you have fun?

Child: I was!

Parent: Do you remember you got on the swing? You and (name) were on the swing and I was pushing you?

Child: Really high.

Parent: Mmhmm.

Child: Like, weeee! Wooo! Weee! Wooo! Weee!

Parent: Do you like going high in the big girl swing?

Child: Yeah, I like going really, really high. Like this, weee! Wooo! Woooo! Weee!

Parent: What about the rock climbing wall? Do you remember we raced up the wall?

Child: Yeah.

Parent: Who won?

Child: Yeah, you tried to beat me.

Parent: Yeah, because we were racing.

Child: And I was losing. I can't, and I was taking 30 points. I was taking 30 points to get up that wall.

Parent: But you got up top. You went all the way up and then you came down. Do you remember?

Child: Yeah, I was telling you I was gonna fall down.

Parent: But you didn't.

Child: Yeah.

Parent: You did a good job.

Running head: REMINISCING, PLAY AND ATTACHMENT

Parent-Child Patterns of Reminiscing and Play: Relations to Children's Attachment

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Abstract

Attachment research has focused almost exclusively on aspects of the mother-child relationship that may be related to children's quality of attachment, neglecting critical aspects of the father-child relationship that may play a distinct, but parallel role in children's attachment. In this study, we examined how different patterns of maternal and paternal reminiscing and play were differentially related to children's attachment. Forty-two pre-school children and their parents participated. Parent-child dyads reminisced about a happy, sad, peer conflict, parental conflict, playground and special outing experiences. They also engaged in 10 minutes of free play with novel toys, and children completed the MSSB attachment narratives. Reminiscing narratives were coded for cognitive elaboration and joint engagement, and play interactions were coded for intersubjective and challenging play. Results indicated no relations between maternal reminiscing or play and children's quality of attachment. However, fathers who were more elaborative and engaged while reminiscing about happy and play experiences, and more intersubjective and challenging during free play had sons with higher attachment script scores. Results suggest that play interactions and conversations are a cornerstone for the development of father-child attachment, particularly in boys.

Parent-Child Patterns of Reminiscing and Play: Relations to Children's Attachment

Attachment research has dominated the study of early parent-child relationships, showing robust relations between early attachment to parents and a whole host of later developmental outcomes (see Thompson, 1999, for an extensive review). Yet, research in attachment is limited due to its almost exclusive focus on samples of primary caregiving mothers and their children, leading to the assumption that features that are more typical of the mother-child relationship, such as sensitive caregiving (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1988) and reminiscing about the past (e.g., Laible, 2004), are most critical to attachment. Aspects of the father-child relationship that may be related to attachment, such as sensitive and challenging play, have only been examined in a couple of studies (Grossman et al., 2002). There are reasons to expect that attachment in children is related to different aspects of the mother-child and father-child relationship. Specifically, mothers and fathers differ a great deal in their typical interaction with children (e.g., Leaper, Anderson & Sanders, 1998; Weinraub & Frankel, 1977). Further, maternal elaborative reminiscing, but not play, has been related to children's secure attachment (e.g., Fivush & Reese, 2002; Laible, 2004), whereas paternal play, but not reminiscing, has been related to secure attachment (Grossman et al., 2002). Thus, the primary objective of this research was to examine and compare two important aspects of the parent-child relationship and their relations to the quality of attachment in young children.

In particular, we examined how mothers and fathers reminisced about the past, and engaged in a free-play session, with their pre-school aged children, and how these very different types of interactions might relate to children's quality of attachment. To begin to explore this question, we first give a brief overview of attachment theory to motivate why it may be implicated in reminiscing and play. Next, we review the research on mother-child reminiscing in

relation to attachment. Finally, we examine how mothers and fathers generally vary in interaction with children, and thus, why these different interaction patterns might relate differently to attachment in children depending on the gender of the parent.

Attachment and the Internal Working Model

Ainsworth (1989) suggested that an attachment bond was characterized by the sense of security one individual feels in the relationship with another person, most evident in the relationship of an infant with the primary caregiver. Around the 7th or 8th month of life, when stranger and separation anxiety become evident in infants, they typically respond to unfamiliar and stressful situations by orientating towards the attachment figure, and verbally protesting upon separation (Bowlby, 1969). These behaviors go hand in hand with exploration or secure-base behaviors, in which the infant begins to make further and further excursions away from the attachment figure, all the while maintaining sight of her, and often checking back in (Ainsworth et al., 1978). The attachment figure thus serves two primary purposes. First, the infant uses the attachment figure as a safe haven in times of distress; an infant who feels security in the relationship will inevitably find comfort in that person when faced with stressful situations, thereby deactivating the attachment system. When comfort is sought and received, the attachment figure can now fulfill another purpose, as a secure base from which the child explores the environment.

This pattern of predictable infant behaviors in the presence of the attachment figure was the foundation for Ainsworth's Strange Situation Procedure (Ainsworth et al., 1978), involving eight short, mildly stressful episodes in which infant and mother are separated from and reunited with each other in an unfamiliar laboratory setting. Based on the notion that infants should seek comfort when their mothers return, and be confident enough to explore in the presence of the

mother, their quality of attachment to the parent is classified into three broad categories. The securely attached infant seeks proximity to and contact with the mother, protesting when she leaves, greets her return with a smile or cry, and expresses little resistance to the mother's comfort (Solomon & George, 1999). The insecure avoidant infant shows little distress upon separation from the mother, and conspicuously avoids interaction with her during the reunion episodes; interest is instead with the toys. Finally, the insecure resistant infant exhibits a simultaneous need for contact with and resistance to the mother. These infants seek proximity, and even attempt to maintain it, but actively resist comfort from the parent by displaying anger.

Beyond infancy, Bowlby (1969) theorized that attachment experiences are organized into an internal working model, which develops and reforms over time to represent and reflect the attachment experiences of the child. The internal working model is therefore a set of expectations that the child develops about the attachment figure that are grounded in prior experiences with that individual, and knowing whether or not he or she will be accessible and responsive in stressful situations. These internalized expectations direct the pattern of behaviors displayed in attachment-relevant scenarios, such as when separated from the parent. In older individuals, these expectations may be less obvious in behavioral responses, and more manifest in conversations with and about the attachment figure, or in reactions to attachment situations involving other people.

Bowlby (1969) argued that personal narratives may be critical to the development of the internal working model, and in particular, what caregivers tell their children about early attachment experiences and related emotions may result in different qualities of representation of the attachment figure as a secure base. Thus, the quality of joint parent-child narratives may not only reflect the child's quality of attachment to the parent, but also contribute to the quality of

the child's attachment representation. Talk about the past in particular may be critical to the development of a coherent internal working model because reminiscing narratives allow individuals to derive meaning from their experiences (Bruner, 1987).

Mother-child Reminiscing and Attachment

Narrative researchers theorize that narratives about the past permit the interpretation and reinterpretation of the experience, allowing new meaning to be created by weaving the events of the experience together into a coherent whole, connecting past, present, and future (Fivush & Nelson, 2006; McAdams, 1992). Pennebaker and Stone (2004) have similarly argued that narratives allow individuals to create a coherently structured story about their experiences by integrating thoughts, feelings and behaviors, thus providing unique insight into the mental representation of their world, including their attachment representation. Importantly, more coherent narratives of the past have been implicated in psychological well-being, particularly in the understanding of emotional experiences (e.g., Pennebaker, 1988).

Thus, from early childhood, when parents help their children create more coherent, elaborated narratives about their experiences, they may in fact be helping them to construct a more coherent, elaborated sense of self across development (Fivush, 2007). Aspects of maternal reminiscing style shown to be important for narrative development and well-being in children (Boland, Haden & Ornstein, 2003; Fivush, 1989; Fivush & Sales, 2006) have also been related to more secure attachment in children. In particular, more elaborative maternal reminiscing, in which mothers talk frequently about the past, and in longer, more detailed ways that extend and elaborate upon the events of the narrative (Fivush & Fromhoff, 1988; Nelson & Fivush, 2004), have been correlated with children's concurrent attachment security using the Attachment Q-Sort (Fivush & Vasudeva, 1995; Fivush & Reese, 2002; Laible, 2004). These findings are particularly

apparent when discussions of the past center on negative emotional experiences. Negative emotions often highlight relationship issues, such as sadness and anger, and are thus likely to activate the child's attachment system. Laible (2004) has argued that mothers of secure children may be more likely to respond to feelings of sadness with the appropriate care that is neither deficient nor over-stimulating to the child, thus teaching them how to cope with this difficult emotion. Similarly, mothers who are comfortable talking with their children about anger may be teaching them how to pro-socially resolve conflicts with others, and these children may in turn foster more secure representations of relationships (Laible, 2004). Mothers of secure children may therefore be particularly sensitive to their children's needs when discussing events that involve negative emotions, and may elaborate more on these types of events in order to help their children work through their emotions (Fivush & Reese, 2002).

In addition to elaborative maternal reminiscing, research has also linked a particular style of emotional attunement between mother and child during reminiscing to children's attachment security. Specifically, Oppenheim and colleagues have found that when mothers and children co-construct narratives about the child's past emotional experiences (including happy, sad, mad and scared), children's early attachment classification in the Strange Situation is related to how matched or non-matched their narratives are at 4.5 and 7.5 years. That is, when both mother and child were actively involved in the construction of the narrative, both accepted and showed patience towards each other's ideas, and the mother encouraged structure, organization and elaboration of the narrative, children were more likely to have been classified as securely attached earlier. On the other hand, when narratives were poorly organized, one partner dominated the conversation or did not display interest in the conversation, and when mothers failed to guide the child towards an elaborative, expressive narrative, children were more likely

to have been classified as insecurely attached during infancy (Oppenheim, Koren-Karie & Sagi-Schwartz, 2007). This pattern of relations has also been demonstrated for middle-school children (Gini, Oppenheim & Sagi-Schwartz, 2007).

These studies thus suggest a striking connection between maternal styles of reminiscing about the past and children's quality of attachment, either concurrently or years earlier. In particular, studies highlight two aspects of maternal reminiscing style that may be especially critical to children's quality of attachment: an elaborative style of reminiscing, in which the mother helps the child to expand and reflect upon details of the experience, and emotionally matched reminiscing, in which the mother and child are attuned to each other. Importantly, these two aspects of reminiscing appear most critical to quality of attachment during discussions about negative emotional experiences, alluding to the importance of negative emotions in activating the attachment system, and the ability of more elaborative and attuned mothers to helping their children deal with these emotions.

In summary, the literature demonstrates compelling empirical evidence linking maternal reminiscing and children's quality of attachment, and this relationship is supported and predicted by both attachment theory and reminiscing theory. The relations between reminiscing and attachment remain robust regardless of the attachment measure used (the Strange Situation or the Attachment Q-Sort), and regardless of when attachment is measured (years earlier or concurrently with reminiscing). However, a striking limitation of this research is its emphasis on reminiscing between mothers and children. Whereas maternal reminiscing has been extensively studied, there are few studies on paternal reminiscing, and none at all examining its relations to children's attachment. Yet, important differences in how parents generally interact with children

suggest that maternal and paternal reminiscing may be differentially related to children's attachment.

Different Patterns of Parental Interactions

Conversations. Mothers and fathers differ a great deal in how they interact with young children, both during conversations and in play. In conversational interactions, mothers are generally more talkative with children, and use different language forms, than fathers (Harrison & Magill-Evans, 1996). Even during play interactions, infants vocalize more with mothers, and mothers reciprocate with more vocalizations than fathers, suggesting a conversational pattern between mothers and infants (Weinraub & Frankel, 1977). Leaper, Anderson and Sanders (1998) found that, across many studies and contexts, mothers talked significantly more than fathers, and used more supportive and negative speech than fathers, while fathers used more directive and informing speech than mothers.

Specific to reminiscing contexts, mothers are overall more elaborative and engaged with pre-school children than fathers are, regardless of whether the event is about a positive, negative, or play experience (Reese & Fivush, 1993; Zaman & Fivush, under review), and they also include more emotion words, and discuss the causes of emotions more with children than fathers do (Fivush, Brotman, Buckner & Goodman, 2000). Thus, mothers appear more concerned than fathers with helping their children understand, reflect on, and cope with emotional experiences (Fivush et al., 2000). Since emotional experiences activate the child's attachment system, particularly negative emotional experiences, and mothers who are more elaborative and attuned are more likely to have children who are securely attached (Fivush & Reese, 2002; Fivush & Vasudeva, 1995; Laible, 2004; Oppenheim et al., 2007), gender differences between mothers and

fathers may have implications for how maternal and paternal styles of reminiscing differentially relate to children's attachment.

Play. Parents also differ a great deal in how they play with children. Garvey (1990) defines play as voluntary, intrinsically motivated activities that bring pleasure. Although mothers actually play with children more than fathers do, play is much more prominent in father-child interactions as a proportion of the total amount of time spent with child (Lamb & Oppenheim, 1989). Hence, play is the characteristic feature of the father-child relationship. Both in the home and in the lab, American fathers engage in more vigorous, physically stimulating, unusual, and unpredictable interactions with their infants, such as rough-and-tumble play (Lamb, 2002), while mothers are more likely to initiate fantasy play (Lamb & Oppenheim, 1989), and conventional games, such as pat-a-cake, or games involving toys (Lamb & Lamb, 1976). Yogman (as cited in Lamb, 2002) also noticed that mothers engaged their infants in more visual games utilizing distal motor movements, but fathers utilized more tactile and limb-movement games.

Interestingly, when the child becomes bored, mothers prolong their use of toy play, whereas fathers shift from toy play to more physical play, displaying more sensitivity to the child's needs (Parke & Tinsley, 1981). Weinraub and Frankel (1977) found that the interaction styles of mothers and fathers with 18-month old children formed distinct clusters of behaviors. Mothers' play interactions clustered around more nurturing, supportive behaviors, with more verbal interactions, while fathers' play interactions clustered around roughhousing behaviors, more distant observations of children's independent play (although still an open source of reference when the child needed help), and instruction-giving during shared play.

A general pattern thus emerges, of mothers having a more verbal relationship with children, and fathers having a more tactile, physical relationship. These differences are

suggestive of the influence different parent-child interactions may have on the child's development. In particular, whereas maternal reminiscing may be more typical of the mother-child relationship, and may elicit the sensitivity necessary for secure attachment, paternal play may have a parallel role in the child's attachment.

Father-child play and attachment. Indeed, research suggests that father-child play is related to infant-father attachment, but mother-child play is not related to infant-mother attachment. Cox, Owen, Henderson and Margand (1992) demonstrated that highly positive paternal play (a composite measure of sensitivity, warmth, reciprocal playfulness, activeness of the parent, and appropriately encouraging achievement) is related to secure infant-father attachment, but positive maternal play is not related to infant-mother attachment. Goossens and van Ijzendoorn (1990) similarly rated parent-child free play interactions on parental sensitivity and found significant relations between paternal play sensitivity and infant-father attachment, but no relations between maternal play sensitivity and infant-mother attachment.

Further, Grossmann and colleagues (2002) compared parents' sensitivity ratings when children were 24 months, to children's attachment representation at 6, 10 and 16 years, using the Sensitive and Challenging Interactive Play scale (SCIP; see Grossmann et al., 2002), which assessed the extent to which parents challenged the child to play in more mature ways, cooperated with the child, took the child's perspective when explaining material, provided information in accordance with the cognitive ability of the child, motivated the child, and made suggestions that were accepted by the child. Whereas maternal play sensitivity was not related to children's attachment at any time point, paternal play sensitivity at 24 months was correlated with children's attachment security at ages 10 and 16, and negatively correlated with adolescents' insecure ratings.

In summary, when sensitivity is elicited in interactions that are more characteristic of the father-child relationship, such as physical play, it is related to infant-father attachment but not infant-mother attachment. These findings point toward the intriguing idea that maternal reminiscing and paternal play assume important but distinct roles in children's attachment representation.

That different parent-child interactions may play different roles in children's attachment representation is supported by Bowlby's notion of an internal working model. If early experiences become internalized into a representational system that comprises expectations of the attachment figure (Bowlby, 1969), and those early experiences differ depending on the gender of the attachment figure, then different working models may develop for mothers and fathers. Specifically, if fathers respond with appropriate encouragement and sensitivity during exploration of the environment, and mothers with sensitivity and comfort during times of distress, different beliefs about the respective roles of fathers versus mothers will lead to different expectations about each parent. Therefore, in this study, we compared parental reminiscing and play in relation to children's quality of attachment.

The Current Study

Given what we reviewed above, our primary objective was to examine how different maternal and paternal reminiscing and play styles may relate differentially to children's quality of attachment. Although studies have found relations between maternal reminiscing and attachment (e.g., Fivush & Reese, 2002), and paternal play and attachment (e.g., Grossmann et al., 2002), the reverse has not been found. Further, these dimensions of parental interactions have never been studied in mothers and fathers from the same families.

Pre-school mother-child and father-child dyads reminisced about six types of emotional and play experiences. Emotional experiences were selected in line with research demonstrating the importance of reminiscing about negative emotional experiences for children's attachment security. Thus, we asked dyads to talk about a happy, sad, conflict with peer and conflict with parent experience. We were also interested in how maternal and paternal reminiscing about play experiences might relate differently to children's attachment, since reminiscing is more characteristic of mother-child interactions and relates to children's attachment, but play is more characteristic of father-child interactions and relates to children's attachment. Hence, dyads were asked to talk about the last time they visited the playground together, and a special outing they engaged in together.

In keeping with the reminiscing literature, parents were assessed on cognitive elaboration and joint engagement. Elaborative reminiscing has shown the most consistent pattern of relations to children's attachment, but Fivush, Haden and Reese (2006) have argued that an elaborative style can be dissected into both a cognitive style of questioning and elaborating on the child's responses, as well as an emotional style of engaging and validating the child's version of the story. This emotional aspect of elaboration is similar to Oppenheim's coding of emotionally matched and non-matched narratives (Oppenheim et al., 2007), but captures more of how the parent and child are engaged with each other during the telling of the story. Hence, we called this dimension joint engagement.

Finally, mother-child and father-child dyads engaged in about 10 minutes of free play with a set of novel toys. We defined parent-child play here as the voluntary exploration of the toys in a way that brings enjoyment to both parties. Similar to Grossmann et al.'s (2002) coding of parental play styles, we assessed parents on how much they validated the child's choice of

activity, which we called intersubjective play, and how much they challenged the child to engage in creative play, which we called challenging play.

Children's attachment was assessed using the MacArthur Story Stem Battery (MSSB; see Emde, Wolf & Oppenheim, 2003), which consists of a series of story stems or beginnings that elicit family-relevant themes such as separation from and reunion with parents, response to injury, and conflict. Children's stories are presumed to reflect their mental representations or internal working models of attachment relationships. Hence, coding is based on the child's knowledge of the attachment script in seeking help or comfort from the parent, reflected in their narratives about the dolls. Bowlby (1988) argued that the attachment script describes a sequence of events in which the caregiver (1) supports the child's exploration, (2) remains available and responsive and serves as a resource as necessary; (3) the child encounters an obstacle or threat and becomes distressed; (4) either the child retreats to the caregiver or the caregiver goes to the child; (5) the difficulty is resolved or removed; (6) proximity and/or contact with the caregiver effectively comforts the child; (7) the child (possibly with the caregiver's assistance) returns to constructive play (or ends play comfortably and makes a transition to another activity). Familiarity with and access to this script is fundamental to attachment behaviors during infancy, and serves as the basis for the development of internal working models of attachment.

Given the empirical evidence presented above, we predicted that whereas elaborative and engaged maternal reminiscing would be related to children's quality of attachment, paternal intersubjective and challenging play would be related to children's quality of attachment. However, paternal reminiscing and maternal play would not be related to children's attachment.

Method

This study was part of a larger program of research investigating the relations between parental reminiscing, play, and children's attachment and well-being. Only the methods relevant to the current study will be discussed.

Participants

Forty-seven children and their parents were recruited into the study from the Emory University Child Study Center that maintains a database of families, contacted through mailings, fliers and advertisements, willing to participate in research. Parents gave fully informed consent and children gave verbal assent for participation in the study, as approved by the Emory University Institutional Review Board. Parents received a $50 Visa gift certificate for their participation and children received a coloring book on one visit and a stamp activity set on the other. Four families were dropped from the analyses because they did not complete the second half of the study, and one family was dropped because the father was blind. Of the 42 remaining families, 21 of the children were females.

At the time of the first home visit, children from the 42 remaining families ranged in age from 4 years, 0 months to 5 years, 2 months with a mean age of 4 years, 6 months. Families consisted of between 0 and 4 siblings, ranging in age from 16 months to 20 years. All families were opposite gender, two-parent families. Of the 42 families, 40 were biological, one was blended and one was adopted. Forty families spoke English as their first language, one family spoke Hindi as their first language, and one spoke Spanish as their first language. However, in all cases, both parents and children were fluent in English, and all data were collected in English.

The sample was primarily Caucasian, with 35 mothers self-identifying as White or Caucasian, three as Black or African American, three as Mixed, and one as Asian. Thirty-one

fathers identified themselves as White or Caucasian, five as Black or African American, four as Latino, Mexican or Hispanic, one as Mixed, and one as Asian.

The parents in our sample were highly educated. Three mothers reported completing some college, 19 had an undergraduate degree, 19 had a post-graduate degree, and one did not report level of education. Two fathers reported completing high school, six had some college education, 15 had an undergraduate degree, 18 had a post-graduate degree, and one did not report this information.

Procedure

Participants were visited twice in their homes by one of two trained female researchers. During one of those visits, the mother and child took part in the study, and during the other, the father and child participated, the order of which was counterbalanced.

Reminiscing task. At each visit, parent and child were asked to reminisce about four past emotional experiences of the child (happy, sad, a conflict with a peer, and a conflict with the parent in the dyad), and two past play interactions they experienced together (the last time they visited the playground together, and a special outing they engaged in together). The order in which emotional and play narratives were elicited was counterbalanced.

To ensure that the dyad reminisced about all emotional events, parents were presented with four index cards in random order, on each of which was written either ‘happy’, ‘sad’, ‘conflict with you’, or ‘conflict with peer.’ The researcher prompted for the narratives by saying: “On each of these cards is a description of the events I’d like the two of you to talk about. I’d like you to talk about these events as you normally would if they just came up in conversation. Remember, you are talking *together* about experiences that *[name of child]* has had that involve

the words on the cards. There are no time limits, and no right or wrong way to do this. You may begin at any time."

Play narratives were elicited after all emotion narratives were completed, using the following prompts: "I would like you to talk *together* about the last time you and [*name of child*] visited the playground *together*," and "I would like you to talk *together* about a special outing you shared/engaged in *together* recently." The order in which these two narratives were elicited was counterbalanced. *Free play task.* After the reminiscing task, parent and child were given one of two novel sets of toys. Each set contained non-themed toys that do not imply a story line. Set A included three finger puppets (a hippopotamus, a fish, and a bear), a plastic toy stroller, a pair of plastic toy pliers, a plastic toy elephant, a plastic music tube, and plastic linking beads. Set B included three finger puppets (a mermaid, astronaut dog, and rabbit), a plastic teacup and saucer, a plastic toy hammer, a plastic toy giraffe, a magnifying glass with cards, and chenille craft pipe cleaners. Parents from the same families always received different sets of toys to prevent the child from engaging in scripted play, and whether mother or father received Set A or Set B toys was counterbalanced. Parent and child were instructed to play with any of the toys they liked, and to use them in whatever way they liked for about 7 to 10 minutes.

During both tasks, the experimenter left the room or sat in a corner provided by the family, so as not to influence the process or content of story-telling or play. *Attachment task.* Using a "family" of dolls matched to the child's ethnicity (a mother, a father, a same-sex child, a same-sex younger sibling, and a grandmother), toy furniture, and other props to stimulate interest and involvement, the researcher presented the child with a series of brief story stems one at a time. The child was then asked to finish each story by showing and telling the experimenter what happens next (Emde, Wolf & Oppenheim, 2003).

Each story presents a dilemma or issue to be resolved. Although the MSSB traditionally consists of thirteen story stems, only five are directly relevant to issues of attachment (see Bretherton & Oppenheim, 2003): Spilled Juice (in which the child in the story spills juice on the family table), Hot Gravy (in which the child in the story burns his/her finger with hot gravy after not listening to the mother), Parents' Trip (in which the parents take a trip for several days and the children in the story stay with the grandmother), Parents' Return (in which the parents return from their trip), and Park Outing (in which the child in the story falls off a rock in the park). Because coding the Spilled Juice story involved assessing parents' disciplining methods, we opted to eliminate this story from children's final attachment score. Table 1 displays the four story stems we used, as well as a warm-up and wrap-up story, a short description of each, and the family members present in the story. Appendix A displays a sample prompt used by the experimenters to elicit the stories.

Responses on the MSSB have been linked to theoretically related measures, such as Strange Situation attachment classifications during infancy (Bretherton, Ridgeway, & Cassidy, 1990). Buchsbaum and Emde (1990) have established consistency in children's responses whether the task is done at home or in the laboratory. Oppenheim, Emde and Wamboldt (1996) have also examined cross-situational consistency for two items in the MSSB, and found modest correlations between children's scores on the original MSSB items and alternate attachment story stems (correlations ranged from $r = 0.23$ to $r = 0.31$).

Vocabulary task. Because the attachment task relies to some degree on children's verbal abilities, children's language was assessed using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, version IV (PPVT IV; Dunn & Dunn, 2007), a widely used and standardized measure that assesses receptive vocabulary and screens verbal ability in children ages two years all the way to

adulthood. The PPVT IV has shown excellent test-retest reliability by age and grade for individuals ranging from ages 3 years to 12 years, and is highly correlated with both general language skills and IQ (Dunn & Dunn, 2007). The researcher presented a series of pictures to the child. There were four pictures to a page, and each was numbered. The researcher stated a word describing one of the pictures, and asked the child to either point to the picture, or say the number of the picture that the word describes.

Coding

Reminiscing task. All narratives were audiotaped, transcribed verbatim, and then checked for accuracy before coding. Narrative coding was done from the transcripts. We developed two 5-point coding schemes (from 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest possible score) to capture parental reminiscing styles on two dimensions: cognitive elaboration and joint engagement. Refer to Table 2 for details on each point in the coding scheme.

The elaboration coding scheme is based on Fivush and Fromhoff's (1988) assessment of high and low elaborative mothers, and adapted from Laible (2004). Parents scoring on the low end of the scale asked mainly 'yes-no' questions (e.g., "You liked that, didn't you?" or "Did we go to Chuck E. Cheese yesterday?"), provided the child little opportunity to contribute his or her own version of the story, and was repetitive in asking questions until the child provided a satisfactory answer. Parents scoring on the high end of the scale asked mainly open-ended questions (e.g., "How did that make you feel" or "What did we do yesterday that made you happy?"), elaborated on the child's independent contributions to the narrative, and rather than asking repetitive questions when the child did not remember, these parents moved the conversation forward by contributing new details to prompt the child.

The joint engagement coding scheme was developed based on Fivush, Haden and Reese's (2006) argument that elaboration is not just a cognitive style of asking questions and expanding upon children's contributions, but also attunement, engagement and negotiations between parent and child. Thus, we captured joint engagement as the extent to which parent and child were on the same page while telling the story, and the quality of negotiation between parent and child when there was disagreement. On the low end of the scale, parent and child reported completely different versions of the story, showed little acknowledgement for each other's perspective or memory of the event, and there appeared to be a general lack of cohesiveness in the story. There were also low-scoring stories in which one party contributed the entire story, while the other simply agreed or disagreed. On the high end of the scale, both parent and child were invested in the telling of the story, there was consistency and harmony in the telling of the story, and disagreements were resolved through negotiation and reflection, rather than negation of the other's perspective.

Free play task. The first 5 minutes of the parent-child play interactions were coded off of the video tapes. Parents were assessed on two dimensions: intersubjective and challenging play, adapted from the Sensitive and Challenging Interactive Play scale (SCIP; Grossmann et al., 2002). Specific scale descriptions are presented in Table 3.

Intersubjective play was coded on a 1- to 5-point scale (with 1 being the lowest possible score), and referred to the extent to which the parent was on the same page with the child, following in on the child's play initiatives, and expanding or elaborating upon them. Parents scoring on the high end of the scale allowed the child to take the lead in deciding what game to play and followed in and elaborated on the child's initiations. For example, if the child picked up a specific toy, the parent might ask: "What do you want to do with that?", or if the child picked

up a finger puppet, the parent might pick up the other and initiate a game. Both parent and child were oriented, focused and involved in the same game, and when the child became fussy or disinterested, a high scoring parent would redirect the child's attention to specific toys. Parents scoring on the low end of the scale were directive, often setting the rules for the game themselves without acknowledging the child's initiations. Alternatively, the parent and child may engage in parallel play, and when the child became bored, the parent made no attempt to reengage the child.

Challenging play, also coded on a 5-point scale, referred to how the parent encouraged the child to use the toys in creative ways, to think about different uses for the toys other than the traditional uses, as well as how the parent taught the child and encouraged physical exploration of the toys. On the high end of the scale, parents offered alternative and creative ways of using the toys, often teaching the child something new, or demonstrating how to do something the child could not do on her own. For example, the parent might say: "Well you know, we can also use this to build", or the parent might encourage the child to look at a variety of different objects under the magnifying glass, rather than just the cards provided. This type of challenging parent still allows the child to take the lead though. For example, they may suggest that pipe cleaners can be used for building, but then lets the child decide what to build. On the low end of the scale, parents tend to stick to traditional uses of the toys, e.g., having a tea party with the teacup and saucer. These parents continue to play with the toys in the way the child initiates without challenging the child in any way, or teaching something new to the child.

Attachment task. Children's verbalizations during the attachment task were transcribed verbatim and used for coding in conjunction with their use of the dolls from the video tapes. The hot gravy and park outing stories were each given separate attachment scores, and the parental

separation and reunion stories were coded together and given a single score. Coding was based on an adapted version of the scriptedness scale by Waters, Rodrigues and Ridgeway (1998), who argue that attachment stories reflect a cognitive model of thinking about attachment-related scenarios based on the individual's internal working model of attachment. Based on the attachment script described in the introduction, we developed a 7-point scale, with 1 being the lowest possible score, to measure how children use the adults in their environment as a secure base from which to seek comfort and explore their environment. On the low end of the scale, narratives contained odd attachment content, such as cruel punishment from parent, parent ignoring hurt child but instead directing attention to sibling, or child displaying extreme anger to parent by throwing a chair or hitting. A narrative scoring in the middle of the scale was event-focused, with no use of the parent as a secure base, but no odd content. On the high end of the scale, most or all of the above attachment script was mentioned in the narrative in some form or the other. Sample attachment narratives are presented in Appendix B.

Reliability.

Two trained coders, blind to the gender of the parent and child during narrative coding, independently coded 25% of all narratives and video tapes for reliability. For narratives, an intra-class correlation of 0.76 ($p = 0.001$) was reached for cognitive elaboration, and 0.91 ($p = 0.001$) for joint engagement. For the free play videos, an intra-class correlation of .78 ($p = .003$) was reached for intersubjective play, and .91 ($p = .001$) for challenging play. For MSSB narratives, an intra-class correlation of .86 ($p = .001$) was reached. The remaining transcripts and video tapes were coded by one of the two trained researchers.

Results

The results are presented in three sections. First, we present qualitative descriptive data on the types of stories parents and children chose to discuss. Next, we present correlational data on the relations between parental reminiscing styles and children's attachment, and finally, on the relations between parental quality of play and children's attachment.

Narrative Description

Children and their parents discussed a variety of emotion narratives. Discussions about happy experiences typically centered on the child receiving a new gift or toy, or on special outings, celebrations or activities in which the child or family engaged. Sad experiences were more variable, and topics were generally about the child not being able to have his/her own way or the parent disciplining the child, the child getting sick or hurt, a death or loss in the family, a peer conflict, or negative emotions experienced by the child, including missing a loved one, frustration or emotional hurt. Peer conflict narratives dealt mainly with issues of sharing, play fighting or teasing, physical confrontations, arguments or disagreements, or being told on by a friend. Parental conflicts were either about the child's disobedience, the child not having his or her own way, disciplining by the parent, or arguments between parent and child. As was expected, playground experiences focused on the last time the parent and child visited a playground together, whether it was a private or public playground, and special outing experiences almost always focused on some family outing, such as a vacation, or a trip to an activity center, including museums and children's fun centers like Chuck E. Cheese. A rough count of the narrative topics divided by gender of parent suggested no noticeable differences between the types of experiences mothers compared to fathers reminisced about.

Preliminary analyses indicated that maternal and paternal styles of reminiscing and play were not correlated to each other. Therefore, mothers and fathers who reminisce in more

elaborated and engaged ways with children do not necessarily also involve their children in more intersubjective and challenging play.

An average of children's three individual attachment scores was used to conduct correlational analyses between reminiscing, play and attachment. Girls' mean attachment score was 4.02, ranging from 2.17 to 6.00, and a standard deviation of 1.10. The intra-class correlation across girls' three individual attachment scores was .50, suggesting slight consistency in girls' attachment scores. Boys' mean attachment score was 2.89, and ranged from 1.00 to 5.33, with a standard deviation of 1.55. The intra-class correlation across boys' three individual attachment scores was .83, suggesting strong consistency in boys' attachment scores.

It should be noted that we also divided children into a secure and insecure group based on their average attachment score (above and below 3.5 respectively), consistent with other ways of scoring attachment using the MSSB story stems (see Apetroia & Waters, 2011). We conducted analyses of variance on parental reminiscing and play styles with attachment category as a grouping variable, and found that the results were virtually identical to the correlational data presented below. Hence, we concentrate here only on the correlational data. Further, using the secure and insecure categories as a grouping variable, a *t*-test on children's language performance on the PPVT indicated no statistical difference between secure and insecure children's language abilities. Thus, we do not control for children's language in any further analyses.

Reminiscing and Attachment

Previous analyses of this dataset comparing mothers and fathers on cognitive elaboration and joint engagement are reported in Zaman & Fivush (under review), and suggest that more

elaborative mothers also tend to be more engaged with children, but there was no relation between cognitive elaboration and joint engagement for fathers. Moreover, Zaman and Fivush (under review) found that mothers are both more elaborative and engaged with children than fathers are on both emotional and play experiences, and that elaborative and engaged mothers, but not fathers, are consistently elaborative and engaged with girls, but not boys, across reminiscing about different kinds of negative emotional experiences.

Because we were specifically interested in reminiscing contexts that may activate attachment in children, we considered it best to examine the mean elaboration and engagement scores for the three negative narratives and the two play narratives, rather than examining all six event types separately. Hence, to assess whether or not maternal and paternal styles of reminiscing about positive (happy narrative), negative (mean score of sad, peer conflict and parental conflict narratives), and play (mean score of playground and special outing narratives) experiences were related to children's attachment, we conducted a series of Pearson's correlations split by the child's gender. Results are presented in Table 4. Overall, results suggest few relations to attachment. For mothers, more elaborative and engaged reminiscing was not related to either daughters' or sons' attachment scores. Similarly, for fathers, an elaborative and engaged style of reminiscing was not related to daughters' attachment score. However, fathers who were more elaborative and engaged while reminiscing about happy experiences had sons with higher attachment script scores, and similarly, when fathers were more engaged while reminiscing about play experiences, their sons were more likely to have higher attachment script scores.

Play and Attachment

Preliminary analyses revealed that intersubjective and challenging play styles were correlated to each other for both mothers (r = 3.0, p = .05) and fathers (r = .60, p = .001). Mothers and fathers who are more intersubjective with children while playing are also more likely to engage them in challenging and creative play. Thus, while clearly related to each other, these two aspects of parental play still appear to capture distinct aspects of the style of free play in which mothers and fathers engage their children.

Mothers' mean intersubjectivity score was 3.35 (*sd* = .81), and their mean challenging play score was 3.42 (sd = .85). Fathers' mean intersubjectivity score was 3.49 (*sd* = 1.05), and their mean challenging play was 3.37 (*sd* = 1.11). There was no statistical difference between maternal and paternal play scores. A series of Pearson's correlations, split by the child's gender, were conducted to examine the relations between maternal and paternal quality of free play and children's attachment. As is evident in the bottom two rows of Table 4, results suggest no relations between maternal challenging and intersubjective play and sons' attachment scores. However, mothers who were more challenging during play were more likely to have daughters with lower attachment script scores. For fathers, there were no relations between intersubjective and challenging play and daughters' attachment score. But when fathers were more intersubjective and challenging, their sons were more likely to have higher attachment script scores.

In summary, overall, we found almost no relations to children's attachment as a function of maternal styles of reminiscing and play. However paternal elaborative and engaged reminiscing, specifically about positive experiences, as well as paternal intersubjective and challenging play, were both related to more secure attachment representation in sons, but not daughters.

Discussion

Attachment research has focused almost exclusively on aspects of the mother-child relationship that may be related to children's quality of attachment, neglecting critical aspects of the father-child relationship that may play a distinct, but parallel role in children's attachment. Hence, we examined here how different patterns of maternal and paternal reminiscing and play were differentially related to children's attachment. In general, we failed to replicate previous findings that maternal reminiscing style is related to children's attachment, but intriguingly, we found that the ways in which fathers reminisced about positive experiences was related to sons' quality of attachment. Moreover, we found that, for the most part, whereas maternal quality of play is not related to children's attachment, paternal quality of play was, but only for sons. We discuss significant findings first, before turning to a discussion of the non-significant results.

Consistent with past findings (Cox et al., 1992; Goossens & van Ijzendoorn, 1990; Grossmann et al., 2002), our results indicated that fathers who engaged their children in more intersubjective and challenging play were more likely to have securely attached children. However, unlike previous research, these results only held for securely attached boys, and what fathers did during play was not related to daughters' quality of attachment. Our findings are supported by Bowlby's (1988) concept of an internal working model of attachment. That is, in order for an infant to use the caregiver as a source of comfort in times of distress, the infant must feel security in that individual (Bowlby, 1988). Similarly, in order for an infant to explore the environment away from the secure base, a sense of security must be felt in that base (Bowlby, 1988). Therefore, children whose fathers are more attuned to them during play (manifested in more intersubjective play), and challenge them with more creative kinds of exploration, may

form expectations of their fathers as a secure base from which they can freely and confidently explore the environment.

Along these lines, Kerry (2000) found that during joint infant-father pretend play, infants who were securely attached to their fathers played significantly more than infants who were insecurely attached, suggesting that infants who experience security in the father-child relationship feel more at ease exploring the environment. Interestingly, fathers of insecurely attached infants were more likely to remain uninvolved in the child's play for long periods of time. Similarly, Pruett (1992) found that the infants of primary-caregiving fathers expected that their curiosity, persistence, and challenging behaviors would be tolerated and even appreciated by the adults in their environment. Hence, children whose fathers involve them in more intersubjective and challenging play may come to believe that these kinds of explorations are accepted and even rewarded, perhaps because they expect that the father will be open and always available during these activities. This expectation may be a marker of the representation of the father as a secure base, just like securely attached children readily expect that the mother will always be available when emotional comfort is needed. Hence, children whose fathers are more intersubjective and challenging during play appear to have ready access to a secure script of the parent as an attachment figure.

Further, these data highlight the importance of play to the father-child over the mother-child relationship. Likewise, Lamb (1976a, 1976b, 1977) distinguished between affiliative behaviors (smiling, vocalizing, looking, laughing and proffering toys) and attachment behaviors (proximity seeking, touching, approaching, seeking to be held, fussing and reaching), and found that affiliative behaviors were far more likely to be directed towards fathers than mothers, whereas attachment behaviors were more often directed to mothers than fathers, whether

children were studied in a home or laboratory setting, and whether both parents were together or alone with the infant. Infants also responded to play initiated by fathers with much more positive affect, such as smiling, than they did when play was initiated by mothers (Clarke-Stewart, 1978; Lamb, 1977). Moreover, upon reunion with the parent in Ainsworth's Strange Situation, Lamb (1976a) found that 67% of children attempted to engage their fathers in play, while a considerably less 14% attempted to engage their mothers in play. Thus, not only do infants appear to prefer their fathers over their mothers during play activities, but they are also much more likely to want to resume play with the father than the mother even after a stressful separation, suggesting the use of the father as a playmate and as a base for exploration, over and above the mother.

As to why relations between paternal play and attachment were found only for sons and not daughters, is an intriguing question that necessitates additional research. Attachment research has traditionally found little to no effects of the child's gender on quality of attachment, although all of this research has focused on mother-child attachment. Hence, it may be that the father-son attachment relationship is unique compared to the father-daughter or mother-son relationships, and may be more defined by certain kinds of play interactions. Sons, rather than daughters, may come to represent their fathers as a secure base depending on expectations formed during play.

Another intriguing possibility is that fathers who engage in more intersubjective and challenging play may have a more secure attachment representation themselves, which gives them the tools to engage their sons in more beneficial play. Just as reminiscing about the past has been proposed as a mechanism by which security of attachment is transferred from mothers to their children (Oppenheim & Waters, 1995), perhaps play is the mechanism by which security of attachment is transferred from fathers to children across generations, and especially the same-

gender child. Through intersubjective and challenging play, secure fathers send the message to their sons that even though they challenge them to think and play in creative ways, they are still open, available, and attuned when the time comes, and this in turn leads the child to represent the father as a secure base.

Interestingly, consistent with the above interpretation, we also found that fathers who were more elaborative and engaged during happy and play reminiscing conversations had sons with higher attachment script scores. This is in contrast to previous research linking maternal elaborative reminiscing about negative emotional experiences to children's attachment (e.g., Fivush & Reese, 2002). Thus, fathers who are focused on helping children reconstruct details, and who validate the child's perspective about these kinds of experiences, have sons who are more securely attached. Perhaps then, when fathers' reminiscing is more centered on fun, play experiences, it may serve a similar purpose as high quality father-child play itself does for the child's representation of the attachment figure as a secure base. Elaborative and engaged reminiscing about these kinds of experiences may reflect father-son pairs that already tend to engage in more intersubjective and challenging play, and the child may come to expect that just as their explorations are encouraged during play, their unique perspective on their experiences are validated during reminiscing about similar kinds of experiences.

Intriguingly, there was a significant negative correlation between maternal challenging play and girls' attachment representation, such that greater challenging maternal play was related to lower secure base scores in girls. This suggests that mothers who challenge their children to novel and unique ways of interacting with toys, or teach children something new about a toy during play, have girls with a representation of the attachment figure as unsupportive and unavailable. Why this might be case is unclear to us, and clearly warrants further investigation.

Despite the relations between paternal reminiscing and children's attachment, and unlike previous research (Fivush & Reese, 2002; Fivush & Vasudeva, 1995; Laible, 2004; Oppenheim et al., 2007), we did not find relations between maternal reminiscing style and children's attachment. Fivush and colleagues and Laible have argued that more elaborative reminiscing reflects the mother's attempt to help her child deal with difficult emotions, and this may reflect the child's status as securely attached, or alternatively lead to a more secure representation of the mother as comforting during stressful situations. It is unclear to us why we did not replicate these findings. However, we do note that both Fivush and Reese (2002) and Fivush and Vasudeva (1995) captured maternal reminiscing style using an utterance-by-utterance coding of elaboration, weighing the mother's use of open-ended questions and elaborative statements against her use of repetitive questions and statements. Further, although Laible (2004) has found relations to attachment using a global coding of elaborative style like we did, our coding scheme may differ in important ways. In particular, because we distinguished between cognitive elaboration and joint engagement, aspects of an elaborative style critical to attachment that may have been captured using Laible's coding scheme may not have been captured adequately in ours. Thus, before further analyses of these data, we plan to recode cognitive elaboration and joint engagement using an utterance-by-utterance coding system.

Limitations and Future Directions

This was the first study to examine relations between parental styles of reminiscing and play in relation to children's attachment in mothers and fathers of the same families. Yet, several weaknesses must be highlighted. First, our participants were primarily middle-class, Caucasian-Americans, and this may have implications both in terms of how parents reminisce and play with

children, and in terms of the quality of children's attachment. Future studies are very much needed to examine these relations across different populations.

Second, our study is correlational in nature and therefore does not allow an examination of how parental styles of reminiscing and play may relate to children's attachment across development. Further, it is not clear from correlational data whether or not paternal reminiscing and play contribute to more secure representations in boys, or whether a certain quality of reminiscing and play between father-son dyads is simply a marker of an already securely attached child. Studies that follow parents and children longitudinally are necessary to understand how the internal working model develops with changes in the parent-child relationship over time, and also how reminiscing, play and attachment interact over time to contribute to each other. Further, we do not examine here how children contribute to reminiscing and play with parents, and may thus elicit certain behaviors from parents, and this is essential to understanding the bi-directional nature of the development of attachment in children.

Despite these shortcomings, we present evidence that whereas maternal play is not related to children's attachment, paternal intersubjective and challenging play, and paternal elaborative and engaged reminiscing about positive experiences, are critical to the representation of the secure base, at least in pre-school boys. Play is the defining feature of the father-child relationship, and may be a cornerstone to the development of attachment in children, especially in sons. In particular, the father who is attuned to the child during play, and who allows for more creative explorations, may be facilitating and nurturing the child's expectation that the attachment figure is both open and available as a secure base from which to explore the world.

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Table 1.

Descriptions of the MSSB Story Stems

	Story Stem	Characters	Description
	Warm-up	Entire family	Birthday party for target child
1.	Hot Gravy	Entire family but Grandma	Target child touches hot gravy pot
2.	Parents' Trip	Entire family	Mom and Dad leave for a trip
3.	Parents' Return	Entire family	Mom and Dad return from trip
4.	Park Outing	Entire family but Grandma	Target child falls off rock at park
	Wrap-up	Entire family	Family fun

Table 2

Coding for Reminiscing Narratives

	Cognitive Elaboration	Joint Engagement
1	Parent asks mainly yes-no questions; restricts child's contributions.	Parent and child report different versions of the story or disagree on everything
2	Parent may ask some open-ended questions, but most questions are yes-no.	Shared attention between parent and child, but no negotiation when there's disagreement.
3	Parent uses a balance of open-ended and yes-no questions, and few repetitive questions.	Shared attention between parent and child, and absolute agreement on everything without any negotiation.
4	Most questions are open-ended with a few yes-no questions.	Parent and child negotiate disagreements in the process of creating shared meaning, but fail to get there.
5	Parent asks mainly open-ended questions, confirms and elaborates on child's contributions.	Disagreements are resolved through negotiations; there is a sense of shared meaning and understanding.

Table 3

Coding for Free Play Interactions

	Intersubjective Play	Challenging Play
1	Parent doesn't attempt to engage child in specific game or task with toys, but sifts through toys one at a time; OR parent and child parallel play with different toys.	Parent sits back and watches child play; offers help only when child asks; no novel input is made by the parent.
2	Parent directs/leads/sets rules for game while rejecting/not accepting or following in on the child's leads.	Parent discourages new exploration of toys and play with body, e.g., "Let's not spin that in case it hits anyone," OR "That wouldn't work …"
3	Parent is directive, and sets rules for game, but child is on task and oriented to same toys as parent.	Parent suggests an alternative way of playing with a toy, but doesn't follow in when child doesn't show interest.
4	Parent and child are oriented to same task, but not communicating with each other.	Parent consistently challenges child, BUT only verbally, not by showing child.
5	Parent follows in on child's lead; expands upon it; both are on task for entire 5 minutes.	Parent offers creative ways of playing with toys; teaches child to do something with a toy child is interested in.

Table 4

Pearson's Correlations between Reminiscing, Play and Attachment

	Mothers		Fathers	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Cognitive Elaboration to MSSB				
Positive Narrative	.27 (.24)	.02 (.94)	.13 (.57)	.43 (.05)*
Negative Narratives	.06 (.79)	-.15 (.52)	.09 (.69)	.37 (.10)
Play Narratives	-.12 (.60)	-.04 (.88)	-.21 (.36)	.27 (.24)
Joint Engagement to MSSB				
Positive Narrative	.36 (.11)	.12 (.60)	-.18 (.44)	.67 (.001)**
Negative Narratives	.08 (.73)	.07 (.76)	.14 (.53)	.30 (.19)
Play Narratives	.09 (.67)	-.31 (.18)	.15 (.52)	.42 (.06)*
Intersubjective Play to MSSB	-.06 (.79)	.16 (.48)	.04 (.88)	.55 (.01)**
Challenging Play to MSSB	-.48 (.03)**	.02 (.95)	.28 (.22)	.49 (.02)**

Appendix A

MSSB Sample Story Prompt: Birthday Party

Sit opposite the child at a table with the props in the middle.

Props: Table, chairs, birthday cake.

Characters: Mom, Dad, Sib 1, Sib 2 (both must be same gender as target child's gender), Grandma and family dog.

Interview:

Exp to child: You know what? It is Susan/George's birthday and Mom made her/him this beautiful cake (bring out cake). It's time for the party!

Exp for Mom: "Come on Grandma and Dad, Jane/Bob and Susan/George, it's time to celebrate Susan/George's birthday!

Exp to child: Can you get the family ready at the table? (Wait until the family is at the table). Show me and tell me what happens now.

Let the child play with the figures or tell a story yourself if the child is in need of help. But this should not be done for subsequent story stems.

Ideas for prompts to get the child involved:

1. Exp to child: Show me how they eat the cake/blow out the candles.
2. Exp to child: What might Susan/George say about her/his beautiful cake?
3. If the child wants to sing 'happy birthday, join them and sing along.

Appendix B

Odd Attachment Content Narrative

EXP: So in the next story mom's making dinner and dad and Bob are at the table and George is helping mom at the stove. Mom says, "We're going to have a really great dinner, but it's not ready yet. Don't get too close to that stove." And George says, "Oh, but it smells so good and it looks so yummy I don't wanna have to wait. I want some now. Ow! I burned my hand and it hurts!" What happens next?

Child: (Loud noises) Then he gets up and xxxx.

EXP: What just happened?

Child: He just tossed the chair at his mom.

EXP: Huh?

Child: He just tossed the chair at his mom.

EXP: He tossed the chair at his mom? Do you really think that happened in this story?

Child: Yes.

EXP: Yes?

Child: Yes. (Unintelligible) in the stove.

EXP: In the stove? What else happens? Does anything else happen?

Child: Nothing else.

EXP: Nothing else? That's the end? Is that the end of the story? Yes? Okay. That's the end of the kitchen stories.

Secure Base Content Narrative

EXP: The family in this next story is going to the park. So here's the family at the park. Susan says, "Oh, look, see that high rock? I'm going to climb right up to the very top." And the mom says, "Oh, really? Be very careful." [Susan falls off rock]. So show me and tell me what happens now.

Child: Um, the mommy says are you okay? And she says yes. And she gets up and they both start to climb but they can't climb up so dad picks them up, and he picks her up and they sit on the big rock. And then, and then they watch them and then they decide to climb up on the rock, too. And then they get back down and they fall and they hurt themselves, so they say, are you okay? And they stand up. Um, and they play, actually they, um, go up um, in the playground and down and then they hop on the rock again and then they climb up and then they get down, um, and watch them play.

Discussion

Research has shown that sensitive parenting is key to the development of attachment in infants and children. Yet, what sensitive parenting constitutes may differ a great deal between mothers and fathers. Indeed, previous research has noted that mothers and fathers differ greatly in their overall patterns of conversations and play with young children (e.g., Leaper, Anderson & Sanders, 1998; Weinraub & Frankel, 1977), and whereas mothers' sensitivity during caregiving is important for children's attachment, it is fathers' sensitivity during play that may be important for children's attachment (Grossmann et al., 2002). Thus, empirical evidence suggests key differences between the mother-child and father-child relationships that may result in differential relations to attachment. In this research, I hypothesized that differences in the mother-child and father-child relationships play distinct, yet equally important, parallel, roles in children's development. Thus, I examined two aspects of the parent-child relationship believed to be critical to children's attachment: reminiscing and play (Fivush & Reese, 2002; Laible, 2004; Grossmann et al., 2002). In the first study, I present evidence that mothers and fathers differ in how they interact with children in the reminiscing context, particularly in cognitive elaboration and joint engagement, regardless of whether the event was about a positive, negative or play experience. In the second study, I demonstrate that whereas mothers' quality of reminiscing and play are not related to preschool children's attachment, fathers' reminiscing and play are both related to sons' attachment security, but not daughters'. I discuss each set of findings independently before presenting an integrative discussion.

Study One: Parental Gender Differences in Reminiscing

Consistent with previous research by Fivush and colleagues (Reese, Haden & Fivushm 1996), mothers and fathers differed a great deal in reminiscing style across a variety of experiences. Mothers were more cognitively elaborative with children than fathers were, regardless of the gender of the child, particularly when reminiscing about happy, peer conflict and play experiences. In addition, mothers were more engaged with children than fathers were while reminiscing about sad and special outing experiences. Our results suggest that mothers and fathers have different goals while reminiscing with children, in that mothers are more focused than fathers on extracting details about the experience and helping children to work through and understand emotional experiences. These findings allude to the distinct ways in which mothers and fathers interact with children, and thus, may reflect broad differences in the mother-child compared to the father-child relationship. Further, the results of this study confirm more general stylistic differences in the ways mothers and fathers generally converse with their young children (Leaper, Anderson & Sanders, 1998). Differences in how mothers and fathers co-reminisce with children may stem from more pervasive gender differences in how females compared to males narrate their autobiographical memories, or alternatively, they may explain why females and males come to narrate their autobiographies in different ways.

That parental gender differences in reminiscing may stem from more general differences between men and women is consistent with gender theory, that women value the act of reminiscing about the past more than men (Ross & Holmberg, 1990), thus engaging in more detailed, elaborated reminiscing, and becoming more skilled at it over time than men (Fivush & Buckner, 2003; Fivush & Zaman, in press). Hence, when parents are asked to talk about past experiences with children, the context of reminiscing alone may elicit certain gender schemas. To this end, study one demonstrated that, even though play interactions are a more

stereotypically paternal context that defines the father-child relationship in childhood (Weinraub & Frankel, 1977), when it comes to reminiscing about play experiences, mothers were still more elaborative than fathers about a trip to the playground and a special outing, and mothers and children were more engaged with each other than fathers and children were during conversations about a special outing.

In addition, because women generally report experiencing more emotions than men, and talking about their emotions more than men do, emotional reminiscing in particular is argued to be especially stereotypically female (see Brody & Hall, 1993, and Fischer, 2000, for overviews). In fact, research finds that females consistently imbue their autobiographical narratives with more internal state language, such as affect and emotions, than males do (Bauer, Stennes & Haight, 2003). Thus, when parents are specifically asked to reminisce about emotional experiences, gender schemas may permeate the narrative to a greater extent than when asked to talk about everyday experiences (Fivush & Zaman, in press). Indeed, mothers in study one were more elaborative than fathers during talk about happy and peer conflict experiences, and more engaged with children during talk about sad experiences, consistent with other findings that mothers include more emotion terms, and discuss and explain the causes of emotions more than fathers, both while reminiscing about every day, positive experiences (Kuebli & Fivush, 1992), and about a variety of negative emotional experiences (Fivush, Brotman, Buckner & Goodman, 2000). Perhaps then, stemming from their own gender schemas activated in a stereotypically feminine task, mothers may be more invested in helping children work through and understand their experiences than fathers are, and this is reflected in more elaborated narratives, in which both mother and child are equally engaged and attuned to each other during the telling of the story.

Alternatively, though not contradictory to the above arguments, gender differences in maternal and paternal reminiscing may serve an important function in the development of children's narrative skills, and the gender schemas they come to internalize and subsequently integrate into their own autobiographies. Fivush (2007) and Fivush and Nelson (2004) argue that children learn the skills and values for reminiscing by participating in parent-guided reminiscing about the past; therefore differences in how children experience their mothers versus fathers reminiscing might come to be internalized by the same-gender child and used as a model for narrating one's own past. Specifically, when girls and boys experience their mothers and fathers reminiscing differently from each other, they may implicitly begin to associate certain aspects of remembering the past with being female or being male, and subsequently integrate these aspects into their own narratives in ways that might mirror the narrative style of the same-gender parent. Certainly, research shows that by the time they are four years old and able to fully engage in reminiscing tasks, girls are telling longer, more detailed, and more elaborated narratives during reminiscing than boys (Farrant & Reese, 2000; Fivush, Haden, & Adam, 1995; Reese & Fivush, 1993; Reese et al., 1996; 1993; Sales, Fivush & Peterson, 2003). Thus, girls and boys are beginning to narrate gendered autobiographical narratives from a very young age, and these gender patterns endure into middle-childhood, becoming accentuated during adolescence (Pasupathi & Wianryb, 2010), when children begin to more frequently narrate personal experiences, and weave them into a life story (Fivush, Bohanek, Zaman, & Grapin, in press; Fivush, Bohanek & Zaman, 2011; Habermas & Bluck, 2000; Pasupathi & Wainryb, 2010; Zaman & Fivush, 2011).

Differences in how mothers and fathers reminisce about the past with children may have important implications not just for how children come to narrate their own autobiographies in

gendered ways, but also for more ubiquitous aspects of well-being and development. That is, mothers' and fathers' distinct interaction styles with children may result in differential relations to children's well-being. Maternal elaborative and emotionally matched reminiscing about negative emotional experiences in particular has been related to children's quality of attachment, both concurrently and during infancy (Fivush & Reese, 2002, Fivush & Vasudeva, 1995). When reminiscing is centered on negative events, such as conflict and sad experiences, more elaborated, engaged mother-child narratives may reflect the mother's effort to help her child deal with difficult emotions in more effective ways. Fivush and colleagues and Laible have argued that more elaborative reminiscing about negative, but not positive, emotional experiences help children to think about, work through, and deal with difficult emotions in more beneficial ways (Fivush & Vasudeva, 1995; Fivush & Reese, 2002; Laible, 2004). Mothers who ask open-ended questions such as "Why were you upset?" and "What can we do about that next time?", and then expand upon the child's answers, allow the child the opportunity to reflect on his/her feelings, explain them, and then come up with solutions for dealing with those emotions in the future, and importantly, these mothers have children with higher levels of well-being and more secure attachment relationships (Fivush & Reese, 2002; Fivush & Vasudeva, 1995; Laible, 2004). Similarly, mothers who are more engaged with children in the telling of the narrative, allowing for more negotiations during disagreements, and validating the child's independent contributions, may implicitly communicate to children that their own version, perspective and feelings about the experience matter, and are just as important as another's, and these mothers also tend to have children with more secure attachment relationships (Etzion-Carasso & Oppenheim, 2000; Gini, Oppenheim & Sagi-Schwartz, 2007).

Cleary then, maternal reminiscing is vital to children's attachment. Yet, no studies have examined the relations between paternal reminiscing and attachment, a critical area of research given the differences demonstrated above between mother's and fathers' reminiscing styles. On the other hand, studies have shown relations between paternal styles of play and children's later attachment, though the same relations have not been found with regard to mothers' play. Thus, in study two, I examined how parental gender differences in both reminiscing and play contexts might result in differential relations to children's quality of attachment.

Study Two: Differential Relations to Attachment

Contrary to past research (Fivush & Reese, 2002; Fivush & Vasudeva, 1995; Laible, 2004; Oppenheim et al., 2007), there were no relations between maternal reminiscing style and children's quality of attachment, but intriguingly, the ways in which fathers reminisced about happy and play experiences was related to sons' quality of attachment. The inability to replicate previous findings relating maternal reminiscing style to children's attachment may stem from the differences in elaboration coding in this study compared to others. Both Fivush and Reese (2002) and Fivush and Vasudeva (1995) employed an utterance-by-utterance coding of maternal elaboration, weighing the mother's use of open-ended questions and elaborative statements against her use of repetitive questions and statements. Laible (2004) used a global coding of maternal elaborative style, but did not distinguish between cognitive elaboration and joint engagement. Thus, I reserve making conclusions about the non-significant results until further coding and analyses of the data are conducted.

However, interesting relations emerged for paternal reminiscing and attachment security in sons, such that fathers who were more elaborative and engaged during reminiscing about happy and play experiences had sons with higher attachment script scores. Thus, although

mothers are more elaborative and engaged with children during reminiscing in general, it is only paternal elaborative and engaged reminiscing that relates to sons' attachment security. Interestingly, previous research has only linked maternal elaborative reminiscing about negative, but not positive, emotional experiences to children's attachment (e.g., Fivush & Reese, 2002; Laible, 2004), suggesting that maternal and paternal reminiscing play distinctive roles in the child's attachment representation. When mothers are focused on helping children discuss, work through and resolve negative emotions, this may reflect a more secure attachment relationship to the mother, or alternatively, it may lead to a more secure representation of the mother as available and supportive during stressful situations (Fivush & Reese, 2002). However, perhaps when fathers are more focused on helping their sons recall the details of positive, fun experiences in which they were both involved, it may serve a similar purpose as elaborative and emotionally-matched mother-child reminiscing about negative emotional experiences does for the child's attachment representation. Elaborative and engaged reminiscing about positive experiences may reflect a father-son relationship in which the child is already securely attached, or it may be that these children come to expect that their unique perspective on their play experiences are validated during reminiscing, and this may foster a representation of the father as a secure base for exploration.

Consistent with the above interpretation, fathers, but not mothers, who engaged their children in more intersubjective and challenging play, were more likely to have securely attached sons, despite the lack of difference between maternal and paternal styles of play. Thus, father-child reminiscing about play experiences and actual play interactions may serve similar functions in contributing to, or reflecting, the child's representation of the father as a secure base. Bowlby (1988) argued that, just as the infant must feel security in the attachment figure in order to use

that individual as a source of comfort in times of distress, the infant must likewise feel security in the attachment figure before confidently using that individual as a secure base for exploration of the environment (Bowlby, 1988). Sons whose fathers are more attuned to them during play (manifested in more intersubjective play), and challenge them with more creative kinds of exploration, may form expectations of their fathers as a secure base from which they can freely and confidently explore the environment. In fact, Kerry (2000) found that during joint infant-father pretend play, infants who were securely attached to their fathers played significantly more than infants who were insecurely attached, suggesting that infants who experience security in the father-child relationship feel more at ease exploring the environment. Similarly, Pruett (1992) found that the infants of primary-caregiving fathers expected that their curiosity, persistence, and challenging behaviors would be tolerated and even appreciated by the adults in their environment. Hence, children whose fathers involve them in more intersubjective and challenging play may come to believe that these kinds of explorations are accepted and even rewarded, perhaps because they expect, based on prior experiences, that the father will be available and supportive to them during these activities. This expectation may be a marker for the representation of the father as a secure base, just like securely attached children readily expect that the mother will always be available when emotional comfort is needed. Hence, sons whose fathers are more intersubjective and challenging during play appear to have ready access to a secure script of the parent as an attachment figure.

An alternative possibility, that may also factor into the above interpretation, is that fathers who engage in more intersubjective and challenging play may have a more secure attachment representation themselves, which gives them the tools to engage their sons in more beneficial play. Just as reminiscing about the past has been proposed as a mechanism by which security of

attachment is transferred from mothers to their children (Oppenheim & Waters, 1995), perhaps play is the mechanism by which security of attachment is transferred from fathers to children across generations, and especially the same-gender child. Through intersubjective and challenging play, secure fathers send the message to their sons that even though they challenge them to think and play in creative ways, they are still attuned, available and supportive when the time comes, and this in turn leads the child to represent the father as a secure base.

Further, these data highlight the importance of play to the father-child over the mother-child relationship. Lamb (1976a, 1976b, 1977) distinguished between affiliative behaviors (smiling, vocalizing, looking, laughing and proffering toys) and attachment behaviors (proximity seeking, touching, approaching, seeking to be held, fussing and reaching), and found that affiliative behaviors were far more likely to be directed towards fathers than mothers, whereas attachment behaviors were more often directed to mothers than fathers, whether children were studied in a home or laboratory setting, and whether both parents were together or alone with the infant. Infants also responded to play initiated by fathers with much more positive affect, such as smiling, than they did when play was initiated by mothers (Clarke-Stewart, 1978; Lamb, 1977). Moreover, upon reunion with the parent in Ainsworth's Strange Situation, Lamb (1976a) found that 67% of children attempted to engage their fathers in play, while a considerably less 14% attempted to engage their mothers in play. Thus, not only do infants appear to prefer their fathers over their mothers during play activities, but they are also much more likely to want to resume play with the father than the mother even after a stressful separation, suggesting the use of the father as a playmate and as a base for exploration, over and above the mother.

General Discussion

The results of this research demonstrate clear differences in how mothers and fathers reminisce with children, as well as differential relations to children's attachment based on the gender of the parent and child, and the type of interaction in which the dyad is engaged. Gender differences in how mothers and fathers interact with children are critical not just to understanding differential effects on children's development, but also point to a critical need to study each parent-child relationship in its own right, rather than generalizing from one parent to the other. If mothers and fathers interact differently with children, each parent-child relationship is therefore qualitatively different from each other, and should relate to and shape aspects of children's development in distinct ways.

Specific to attachment, study two indicated that, to some extent, the antecedents to secure attachment in children may change depending on the gender of the parent, thus making the attachment bond to each parent qualitatively different. A more general implication of these findings is that, across development, qualitatively distinct attachment relationships to each parent should predict differential aspects of long-term outcomes. In particular, if fathers are expected to respond with appropriate encouragement and sensitivity during play, and mothers with appropriate sensitivity and comfort during distress, then different beliefs about the respective roles of fathers versus mothers should no doubt result in different internal working models of each as an attachment figure, and these models may influence maturity and growth in distinct ways. Both theory and research are suggestive of a qualitative difference between mother-child and father-child attachment, and the distinct impact each may have on development. In his conceptualization of attachment, Bowlby distinguished between safe haven and secure base for exploration (Bowlby, 1969), with safe haven being the use of the attachment figure to seek comfort in times of distress, and secure base being the use of the attachment figure as a base for

exploring the environment. The results of the present studies, supported by past findings, indicate that attachment to mothers and fathers may differ along these two dimensions, such that mothers may serve an important function in emotion regulation, manifested in their focus on helping children elaborate upon, work through, and resolve emotionally difficult situations, whereas fathers may serve a more important role in areas of development that relate to play and exploration. Thus, while the primary attachment purpose of mothers is as a safe haven in times of distress, the primary attachment purpose of fathers may be as a base for exploration (see Grossmann et al., 2002, and Grossmann, Grossman, Kindler & Zimmermann, 2008, for similar arguments).

In line with Bowlby's theory, infant-father and infant-mother attachment appear to develop under different circumstances. Mothers have been shown to spend more time caring for their infants, while fathers spend more time playing with their infants (e.g., Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004; Roopnarine, Fouts, Lamb & Lewis-Elligan, 2005). Even when they do engage in the same activities, the quality of those activities systematically differs (e.g., Harrison & Magill-Evans, 1996; Leaper et al., 1998; Lamb & Lewis, 2004). Hence, the essence of the father-child relationship is physical play, while that of the mother-child relationship is caregiving and social play. Therefore, if infant-mother attachment develops around the role of the mother as a caregiver (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1969), it is certainly possible that infant-father attachment develops around the role of the father as a playmate, and as suggested by the results of study two, particularly for sons. Thus, different mother-child and father-child interactions may be the precursors to distinct, but equally important, aspects of the child's internal working model of each parent as an attachment figure, and these different models may in turn be implicated in distinct aspects of child development.

For example, limited research comparing developmental outcomes due to mother-child and father-child attachment finds that security in the mother-child relationship predicts different outcomes than security in the father-child relationship. Infants who are securely attached to their fathers and at the same time insecurely attached to their mothers show substantially greater sociability to a strange clown in their homes (Main & Weston, 1981). Similarly, Lamb, Hwang, Frodi & Frodi (1982) found that the security of infant-father attachment was more closely related to stranger sociability in the strange situation than the security of infant-mother attachment, and infants who were securely attached to their fathers were more sociable than infants who were insecurely attached. The same was not found with mothers, and in fact, the display of secure base behaviors with mothers does not predict later stranger sociability (Bridges, Connell & Belsky, 1988). Rather, Suess, Grossmann and Sroufe (1992) observed that secure infant-mother attachment predicted 6-year olds' levels of play concentration (low distractibility and a balanced emotional state), and autonomous conflict resolution with peers during school (solving problems alone without turning to teachers), but secure infant-father attachment predicted less negative affect during play (friendliness, happiness and enthusiasm). Hence, mother-child attachment appears more critical to emotion and conflict resolution in children, whereas father-child attachment seems pertinent to the development of social skills, in keeping with the idea of the role of the mother as a caregiver and the role of the father as a playmate. Further, differences in the mother-child and father-child relationships may endure into adolescence, when both boys and girls report higher affect towards their mothers than their fathers, rely more on their mothers for emotional support than their fathers (Patterson, Field & Pryor, 1994), and open up and share more with their mothers than their fathers (Stafford, 2004). Therefore, if we assume that mother-child and father-child attachment were the same, then they might be expected to serve the same

function in child development, but empirical evidence suggests that they don't, implying that the relationships must be fundamentally different from each other, at least for the developing child.

Correlation between mothers and daughters – explain.

Limitations, Future Directions and Conclusions

This is the first set of studies to systematically examine differences between maternal and paternal reminiscing and play in relation to children's attachment. However, some limitations must be pointed out. First, our sample consisted entirely of middle-class, two-parent families, in which both parents were highly educated, and the majority of whom were Caucasians. A different sample may certainly yield different results both in terms of how mothers compared to fathers interact with children, and in terms of how different interaction patterns differentially relate to children's attachment. Thus, future studies must sample from more diverse populations.

Second, this study was correlational in nature, and sampled children from only one age group; therefore, the data do not permit an examination of how parental interactions change across development, or an understanding of the directionality of effects with respect to play and attachment. Longitudinal studies are critical to determining how children's stage of development contribute to changes in mothers' and fathers' interaction styles over time, and how these differences may then contribute differently to the representation of attachment. Further, only by following parents and children at specific time points across development can one determine how reminiscing and play may differentially contribute to children's attachment, and in turn, how children's attachment status may change parental styles of reminiscing and play.

Finally, we acknowledge that both the reminiscing and attachment tasks were narrative tasks that may tap into a more general style of telling stories, and thus any correlations between the two may be interpreted in light of this. However, since our focus in these studies were on

parental reminiscing, not children's reminiscing, in relation to children's attachment representation, and since we only found relations between reminiscing and attachment for fathers and sons, it is unlikely that the two tasks are correlated simply because of a more general narrative style.

Despite these limitations, the results of these studies demonstrate compelling evidence that mothers and fathers differ in how they generally interact with children, particularly in the reminiscing context, and that these differences relate in distinct ways to children's quality of attachment, particularly for sons. That mothers and fathers differ in interaction with children is important to consider when investigating aspects of parental interactions that contribute to specific developmental outcomes in children. In particular, if reminiscing and play relate differently to children's attachment for mothers and fathers, then it is quite possible that the mother-child and father-child attachment bonds are qualitatively distinct, but equally important, relationships that stem from these more pervasive differences in how mothers and fathers interact with children. Moreover, these differences may have important implications for children's development. The results of study one are suggestive of how differences in mother-child and father-child reminiscing may stem from more ubiquitous gender differences between males and females, as well as the impact these differences may have on girls' and boys' developing gender identity, reflective of the roles the same gender parent models in interaction with the child. The results of study two indicate that different parent-child relationships contribute to, and reflect distinct aspects of the child's attachment representation. Thus, how mothers and fathers interact differently with children, and how these differences influence children's development in distinct ways is a critical area for future research.

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