

The Association between Emotional Expression and the Type of Information Children Report about Parental Abuse: The Role of Emotional Support

PhD Research Proposal

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Presentation Sections

- Scientific Background
- Study Rationale
- Method
- Consultation and Discussion





Emotions



Memory

Scientific Background - Memory and Emotions

- Emotional system as separate "primitive and inferior" from cognitive abilities

Past

Research

- Imaging studies of people who had a head injury (fMRI)
- Laboratory studies

- No significant differences in terms of early development
- Emotional system provided stronger input to the cognitive system than vice versa - superior

Present

Scientific Background - Memory and Emotions

- What kind of association between Emotions and Memory? Stronger, The same, Weaker, Indelible?



Emotional events are remembered more strongly than neutral events

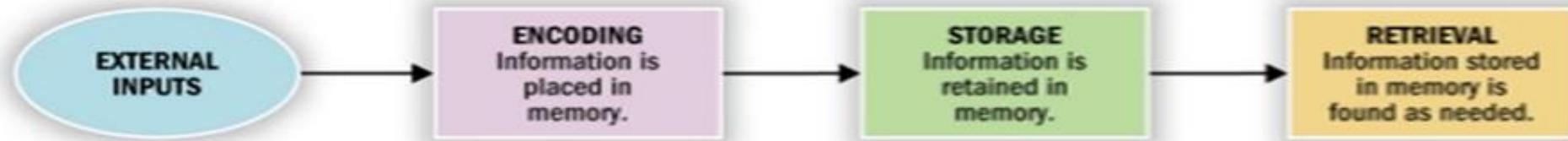
- Necessary for survival
- Durability - memories could be less accurate over time
- Emotions related to events vary over time, depending on cognitive evaluations conducted after the event (Levine, 1997; Levine, Whalen, Henker &

Jamner, 2004)

Emotions in Cognitive Theory

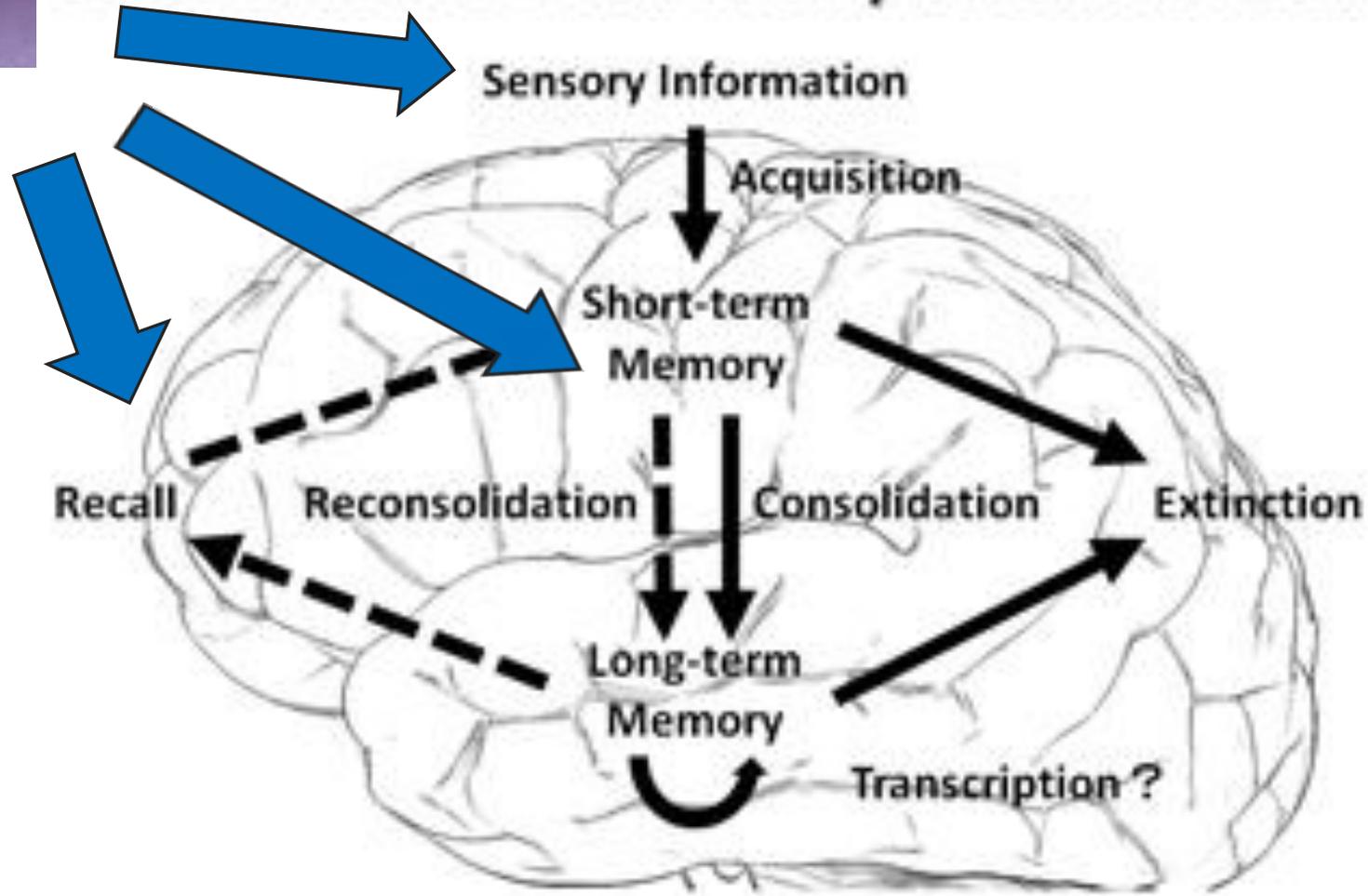
- **Change in mental status** entails concerted physiological, cognitive and behavioral responses and changes in levels of consciousness
- People respond with different emotions, depending on their **perceptions of how they are achieving their goals or of obstacles that stand in their way** (Lazarus, 1991; Arnold, 1960; Simon, 1967)
- Help **coordinate thoughts and actions** and enable a person to **respond effectively** to various situations and to changes in the environment (Clore & Palmer 2009; Damasio, Everitt & Bishop, 1996; Dolan, 2002)

The Memory Process





Conversion of Memory Information



Valence of Emotion and Memory

Positive emotions	Negative emotions
'Broaden-and-build' theory (Fredrickson, 2001; 2004)	"Warning signals" - adaptive mechanism designed to support the organism in order to survive
Associated with semantic, conceptual processes	Encoding and consolidation carried out in conjunction with sensory and visual areas Functioning of the amygdala is stronger
Increase and span attention Heuristic strategies to process information use pre-existing general knowledge combined with details of the memory	Direct cognitive processes gather information systematically Vividness of the memory



Emotional expression among children who have been abused

Why is emotional expression beneficial?

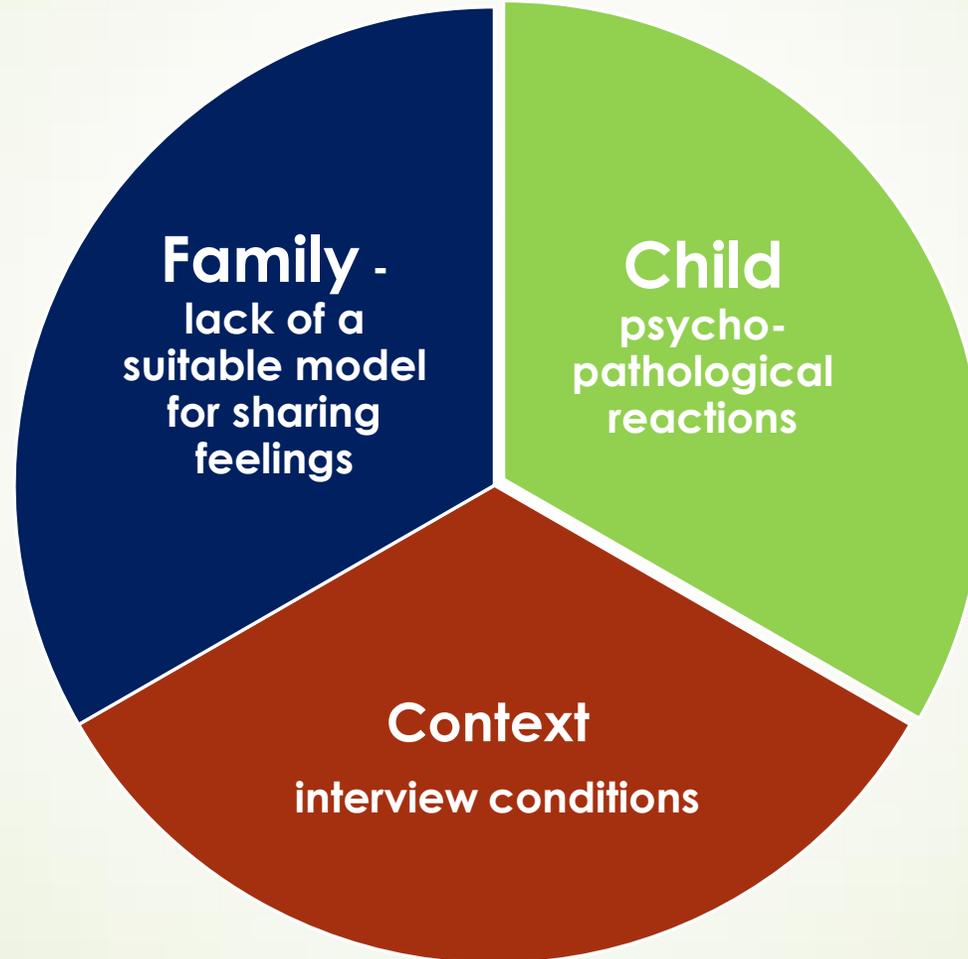
- Psychological coping
- Beneficial health habits
- Cognitive skills
- Adjusted legal and administrative decisions

Emotional expression

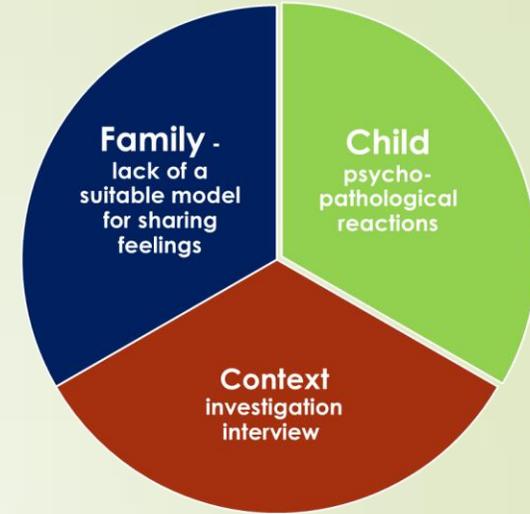


- Children rarely express their feelings spontaneously when describing past events, and their expressions are short and sporadic
- The more stressful the experience, the more limited the language the children used (Peterson & Biggs, 1998; Fivush et al., 2003a; Bahrick, et al., 1998; Parker, Bahrick, Fivush, & Johnson, 2006)
- Minimal amount of **nonverbal facial emotions** while reporting about abuse (Sayfan et al., 2008; Katz, Hershkowitz, Malloy, Lamb, Atabaki & Spindler, 2012; Castelli & Goodman, 2014)

Emotional expression among children who have been abused



Socio-emotional conditions and the quality of testimony



Emotional support during an interview :

- Improves accuracy of reporting; reduces their suggestibility
- Reduces anxiety
- Increases the commitment of the children and their motivation to talk about the abuse they experienced
- Encourages emotional expression (in laboratory studies)

Socio-emotional conditions and the quality of testimony

- The **forensic protocol** of the NICHD (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development) instituted a number of changes to strengthen the trust and cooperation of the child with the interviewer by encouraging techniques
- Improve the **dynamics** (Hershkowitz, Lamb, Katz and Malloy, 2013)
- **Reduce** the children's **reluctance**
- **Richness** of testimony
- Increase **disclosure rate** (Hershkowitz, Lamb & Katz, 2014)



Study Rational

- ▶ A rich and reliable testimony is necessary in order to initiate legal procedures and treatment
- ▶ Abused children have unique need for emotional support
- ▶ Support contributes to reduced stress, improves their cognitive abilities and enriches their testimony
- ▶ Encouraging emotional dialogue promote memory retrieval (in lab only)
- ▶ The relationship between **support, children's emotional expression** and the **quality of their testimony** has not been examined yet



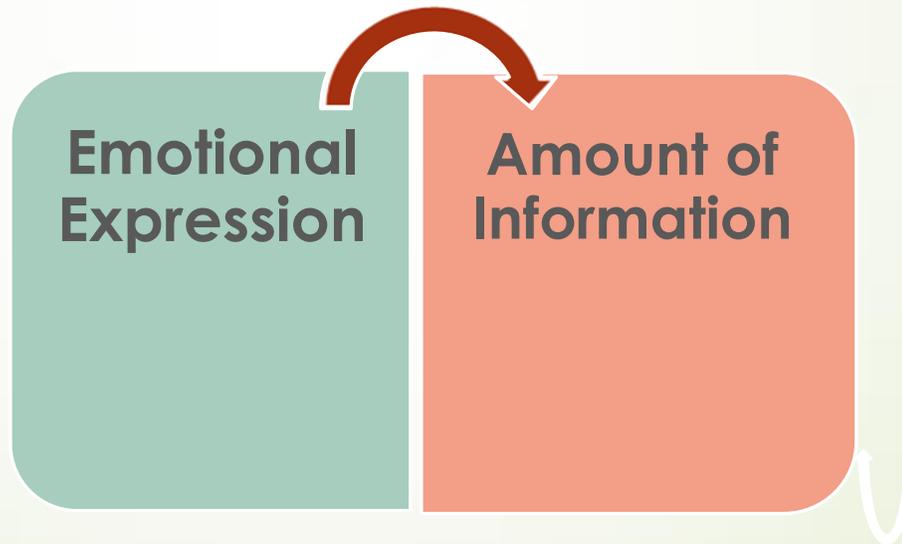
Research hypotheses

- A. The prevalence of emotional expression will decrease as the investigation progresses from neutral topics to topics related to abuse.



B. The relationship between emotional expression and the type of legal information that children relay

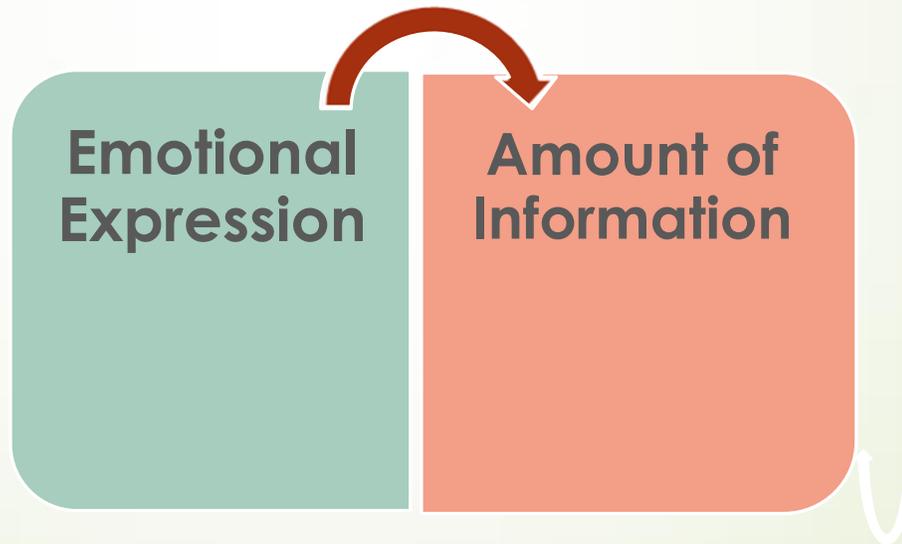
1. At the essential part of the interview, the amount of emotional expression from the event will be positively related to the amount of information



B. The relationship between emotional expression and the type of legal information that children relay

This relationship (B1) will depend on the nature of the emotion: it will be stronger with negative emotions than with positive

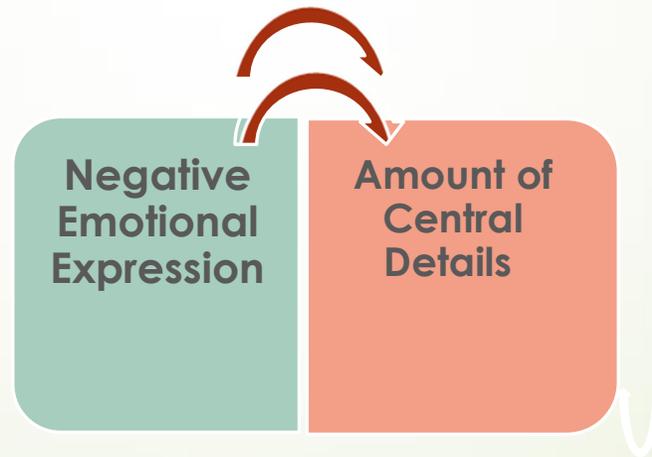
Negative > positive



B. The relationship between negative emotional expression and the type of legal information that children relay

3. A direct connection will be found between the expression of negative emotions from the event to the amount of central details

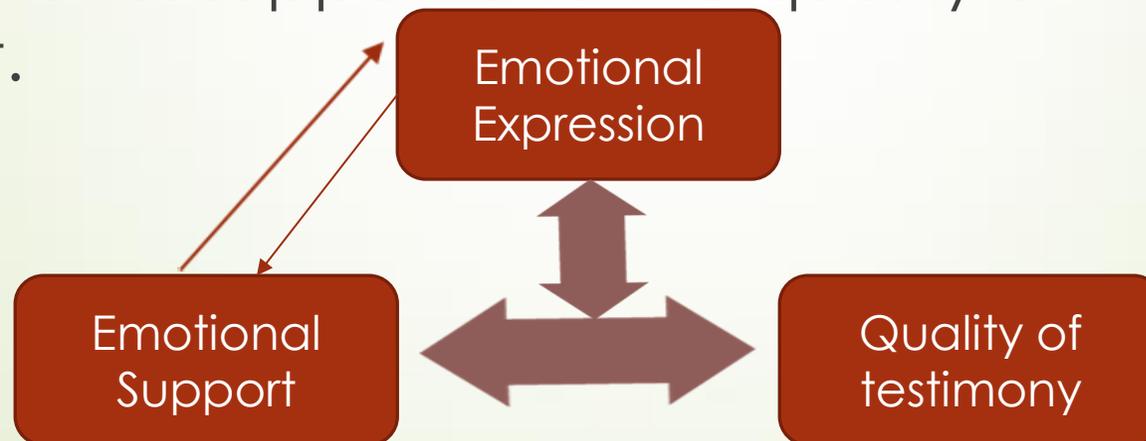
4. The relationship (3) will be strengthened as the time elapsed between the event and retrieval increases.



Research hypotheses



- **C. The connection between emotional support from the interviewer, expression of emotion and type of information**
- 1. Emotional support following the child's expressions of emotion, will increase the incidence of emotional expression
- 2. The amount of emotional expression will mediate the relationship between emotional support and the quality of information that children report.





Method

Sample

- Interviews of 200 children, 6 to 13 years old
- Suspected of being victims of physical abuse by family members
- Interviews will be conducted by professional child interviewers from the Ministry of Welfare and Social Services
- All cases will be substantiated by external evidence



Method

➤ Research tools

- The revised NICHD forensic interview protocol (Lamb et al., 2008; Orbach et al., 2000)
- Structured interview protocol for all phases of the forensic interview
- The revision of the guide to its supportive version included changes (structure and techniques)



Method

➤ Data coding

- Interview videos will be transcribed. Interviewer and child utterances will be coded for each conversational turn
- The coding scheme will include 4 sections: Interviewer's support scheme, Child amount of details, Testimony coherence and nonverbal behavior
- Transcript coding will be performed by two coders who will establish reliability on a separate group of transcripts, prior to coding for the study

Method

- ▶ **A. Interviewer's support scheme** modified and elaborated (Hershkowitz et al. 2006; Hershkowitz et al. 2013; Ahern et al., (in press) **Child's reluctance** - will include omissions, resistance, and denials.
- ▶ **B. Child's amount of details** - The amount of details coding relies on a technique first developed by Yuille and Cutshall (1986, 1989) and elaborated by Lamb et al. (1996). Details were defined as words or phrases identifying or describing individuals, objects.
- ▶ **C. Coherence**- Based on the conceptual multi-dimensional model suggested and empirically tested by Reese and colleagues (2011), consisting of three dimensions: chronology, context and theme

Typology of emotions expressed during forensic interviews

- Emotions experienced during the event /during the investigation
- Verbal/nonverbal*
- Valance: positive/negative
- Basic / complicated (fear/shame)
- Levels of intensity (“very scared” / “a little afraid”)
- Spontaneous/reactive to support



Discussion and Consultation – Focus on Methods



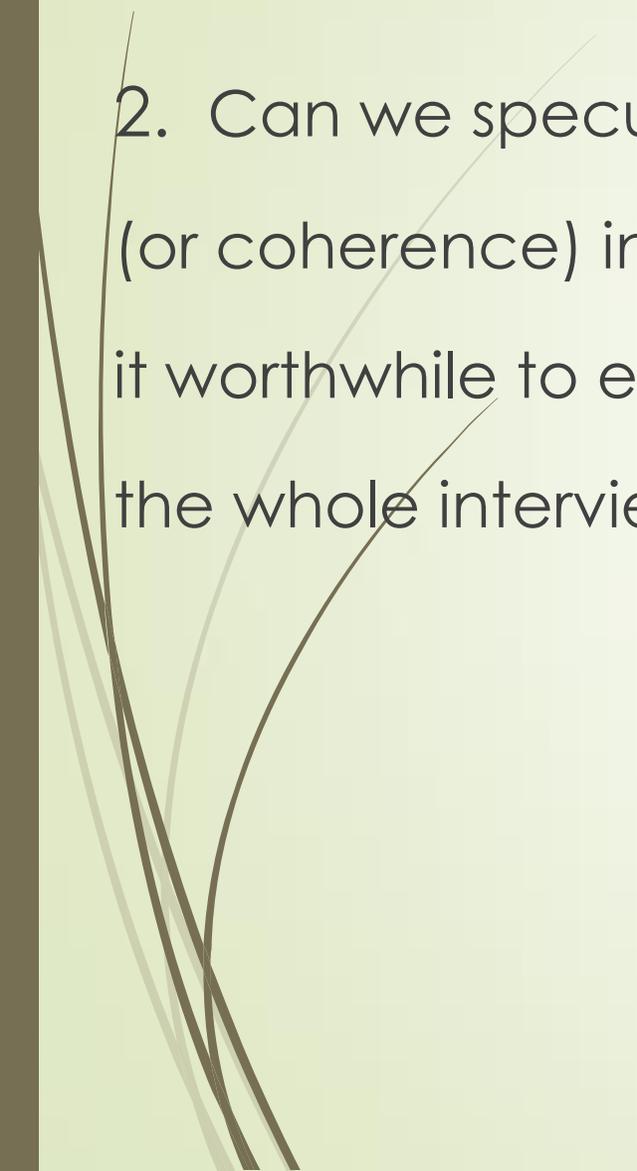
1. Emotional Expression as a retrospective appraisal or as an authentic emotion: Nonverbal Emotional Expression (NVEE) reflects emotion here and now; Verbal Expression (VE) can differ based on the meaning of the sentence or by the preceding question

** “How did you feel?”; “I was sad” - verbal (appraisal); the child is crying – authentic emotion “here and now”

Combining the VE and NVEE in one study? separating ?



2. Can we speculate about the connection between emotions and details (or coherence) in terms of the direction of the hypothesis? And if so, how? Is it worthwhile to examine the interaction locally, rather than as summary of the whole interview.



Thank You!



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