# Coding scheme for mother-child emotion talk

Qi Wang

Cornell University

This coding scheme included most of the variables we coded for mother-child conversations of shared emotional experiences that were reported in the following papers. Each study used a different coding scheme to address relevant research questions. Please contact Qi Wang for additional information concerning the coding variables in a particular paper.

Wang, Q. (2013). Chinese socialization and emotion talk between mothers and children in native and immigrant Chinese families. *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, *4*(3), 185-192. doi:10.1037/a0030868

Wang, Q., Doan, S. N., & Song, Q. (2010). Talking about internal states in mother-child reminiscing influences children's self-representations: A cross-cultural study. *Cognitive Development, 25,* 380-393. doi:10.1016/j.cogdev.2010.08.007

Fivush, R. & Wang, Q. (2005). Emotion talk in mother-child conversations of the shared past: The effects of culture, gender, and event valence. *Journal of Cognition and Development, 6, 4,* 489-506. DOI:10.1207/s15327647jcd0604_3

Wang, Q. & Fivush, R. (2005). Mother-child conversations of emotionally salient events: Exploring the functions of emotional reminiscing in European American and Chinese Families. *Social Development, 14, 3*, 473-495. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9507.2005.00312.x

Wang, Q. (2001). 'Did you have fun?' American and Chinese mother-child conversations about shared emotional experiences. *Cognitive Development, 16(2),* 693-715. doi:10.1016/S0885-2014(01)00055-7

℧ Coding is performed in the original languages.

℧ Propositions, defined as subject-verb constructions, are used as the coding unit. Each unique or implied verb in an independent clause forms a new propositional unit. For example, "He swung and swung" was one proposition, whereas "He swung and laughed" was two.

℧ Frequencies for mothers' and children's conversation variables are tabulated separately for each of the two emotional events discussed.

☿ Three coding schemes are employed, each focusing on the emotional, cognitive, and social characteristics of mother-child memory conversations respectively. They are neither mutually exclusive nor exhaustive. Within each coding scheme, however, coding variables are mutually exclusive. A few variables (e.g., types of emotional events mothers chose) are coded by the classification of the themes.

### *Narrative emotional content*

1. Utterances about children's emotions are coded as 1) mothers' statements or questions concerning their children's emotional response about an object, person, or the event itself; 2) children's statements of their own emotional response about an object, person, or the event itself. These utterances were further coded into two mutually exclusive subcategories:

   a. *Attributions:* Mothers' utterances that ascribed emotional states or reactions to their children; children's utterances that ascribed emotional states or reactions to themselves (e.g., M: You were very happy, weren't you?; /C: I got mad.).

   b. *Explanations:* Mothers' utterances about the causes of their children's emotions; children's utterances about the causes of their own emotions (e.g., M: The bad dream scared you; or why were you scared? /C: I cried because Jimmy grabbed my dolly away.).

2. Mothers' and children's comments on other people's emotional responses are coded into the same subcategories of *attributions* and *explanations* as in 1 (e.g., M: Dad got mad, didn't he?; / C: The teacher was happy.). This variable also included comments on emotions of communal groups (e.g., We had lots of fun.).

3. Emotional events mothers chose to discuss with their children were categorized into two mutually exclusive types:

a. *Personal theme*: Conversations focusing on individual emotional experiences of children that were caused by objects or events in the environment (e.g., winning a race or losing a toy).

b. *Social theme*: Conversations focusing on social interactions during which other people either caused children's emotions or shared emotions with children (e.g., being visited by a friend or being scolded by an adult).

** For each of the two events discussed, use a short title to describe the theme (e.g., "death of a family member," "birthday party," "injury," etc.).

** For the negative event, record the specific negative emotion the mother chose to talk about (e.g., fearful event, sad event, or angry event).

4. Emotional resolutions that mothers provided at the end of conversations about negative emotional events are coded using categories adapted from the classification scheme of Fivush (1993):

a. *Reassurance:* Resolutions to reassure or comfort children that everything was all right (e.g., M: It's really nothing to be scared about in the pool. Daddy was there, and you've got a big floater.).

b. *Reestablishment of relationship:* Resolutions to reestablish harmonious relations with the person who caused a negative emotion (e.g., M: Dad didn't let you step in the water because he was worried you might get a cold. He loves you.).

c. *Moral lesson:* Resolutions to teach children the appropriateness of their emotional experience or behavior (e.g., M: <u>You shouldn't cry when getting a shot. Be brave!</u>).

d. *No resolution*.

### *Narrative cognitive style*

1. *Elaborations:* Mothers' comments which either introduced a topic for discussion, moved the conversation to a new aspect of the event, or added information about a particular aspect; children's utterances which either requested new information, moved the conversation to a new aspect of the event, or provided new information about the past event being discussed (e.g. M: <u>Do you remember going to the dinosaur museum</u>?; C: <u>Yeah, I saw a baby dinosaur</u>.).

2. *Repetitions:* Mothers' comments that either repeated the exact content or the gist of their own previous utterance or tried to elicit memory information from children but provided no new information; children's utterances that either repeated their own or their mothers' previous utterances or took a legitimate turn without adding any new information (e.g., M: What do you remember about Caldman Farm? <u>What do you remember?</u>; C: <u>I don't know.</u> ).

3. *Evaluations*: Mothers' utterances that confirmed, negated, or questioned children's previous statement; children's utterances that confirmed, negated, or questioned mothers' previous statement. Head nods or shakes that could be inferred from mothers' subsequent comment are also coded (e.g., M: <u>Yes, you're right</u>. <u>The dumpster is green</u>; C: <u>Um-hum</u>.). The mother's response should be coded as two evaluations.

Additional coding for narrative style:

**Code <span style="color:blue">Mother'</span> Elaborations into 3 sub-categories:**

    a.  Memory questions: open-ended questions that ask the child to provide information about the event under discussion, including all wh- questions (e.g., "What did we do after you got a shot?") and "Do you remember X?" questions (e.g., "Do you remember going to Myer's Park?").

       Memory questions also include open-ended "statements" such as "Tell me about the apple-picking."

    b.  yes-no questions: questions that only require the child to confirm or deny the information provided by the mother (e.g., "Did you swim in the lake?).

    c.  memory statements: mother' utterances that provide new information about the memory event without calling for a response (e.g., "Uncle Tang brought you a nice present,"

       Note: Mother's questions such as "You ate chocolate ice cream, right?", when it's in the context where the mother expects the child to respond, it is coded as yes-no question. If it is just figurative and does not require the child's response, it is coded as memory statement.

**Code <span style="color:blue">child's</span> Elaborations into 3 sub-categories:**
    a.  *Memory question:* the child's questions about the memory event, including both open-ended and yes-no questions (e.g., "When was that, mama?"). *(Because the frequency of this code is low, we combine the types of questions)*

    b.  yes-no response: the child responds "yes" or "no" to the mother' questions and does not provide any further memory information.

    c.  memory response: the child responds with at least one new piece of information about the memory event (e.g., Mother asks, "What did you see at the zoo?" and child responds, "<u>monkeys</u>").

    Exp: M: Did Sarah go with you?
         C: yes. And Tommi. (one yes-no response, one memory response)

*Narrative social content*

1. *Didactic talk:* Mothers' and children's statements or questions about moral standards, social norms, or behavioral expectations (e.g., M: <u>Why shouldn't children talk to each other in the class?</u>; C: <u>Because they should listen to the teacher.</u>).

2. *Autonomous talk:* Mothers' statements or questions about children's personal preferences or judgements regarding an object, person, or the event itself; children's expressions about their own personal preferences or judgements (e.g., M: <u>What did Blake want to do?</u>; C: <u>I wanted to take the rocks home</u>.).

3. *Interaction scenario talk*:  Mothers' and Children's utterances about instances that involved social interactions or group activities (e.g., M: <u>We went to Disney together</u>; C: <u>Nanna gave me a big hug</u>).

4.  The number of times mothers and children mentioned the child and other people in their conversations was counted respectively.  An "*other/self ratio*" was then calculated for each participant.

> *Note: We, us, our (objects, e.g., house) , and ours are coded twice, one for self-mention, one for other-mention.  Our (people, e.g., uncle) is coded as referring to others.  Animals should not be coded as other-mention.

### *Narrative volume*

Two variables are adopted to measure the volume of memory talk: 1) the total number of conversational turns taken by mothers and children; and 2) the total number of propositions in mothers' and children's speech.  Utterances that are not related to the event being discussed are excluded (e.g., discussion about the tape-recorder).

### *Nominated events*

1. Number of events mothers nominated for positive and negative emotions, respectively.

2. Code each event as either "personal" or social." Use a short title to describe the specific theme (e.g., "death of a family member," "birthday party," "injury," etc.).

3. For the negative events, record the focal emotion (e.g., fearful event, sad event, or angry event).