

Narrative development across cultural contexts

Finding the pragmatic in parent-child reminiscing

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Children learn the pragmatic conventions of storytelling during family reminiscing. This chapter discusses differences in narrative development and narrative practices observed during reminiscing in two different cultural groups: children from mainstream, white, Anglo, middle-class families and Latino children and their families. Our review indicates both groups differ with respect to the way they structure, contextualize and evaluate their narratives. Different from European communities, Latinos deemphasize the chronological structuring of their stories. Children in both cultures learn to contextualize information within a narrative, but Latinos emphasize the contextualization of characters, usually their relatives. Both groups introduce evaluation while storytelling, through the use of different strategies. Implications of these differences for the educational context are pointed out.

In order to use language efficiently, children deploy not just their semantic and syntactic knowledge, but they must also learn the pragmatic conventions of their communities, i.e. a set of communication rules that are acquired in conversation throughout childhood and are an essential element of successful social interactions. The study of developmental pragmatics, according to Ninio and Snow (1996), focuses on how children learn the rules of appropriate and effective participation in conversation. These pragmatic skills are part of our communicative competence (Hymes, 1972) and include awareness of how to take the floor in conversation, what can be said and what cannot be said in particular contexts, and how to respond appropriately to an interlocutor. Yet, explicit reference to pragmatic frameworks, the wealth of knowledge that facilitates successful participation in conversation, is a rare event. They are learned implicitly early on in social interactions at first at home and then in the broader world the child encounters as social horizons expand. Given their implicit, contextually-dependent nature, they are also particularly difficult to quantify (see Norbury, this volume; Norbury & Sparks, 2013).

From a very young age, children demonstrate an understanding of some of the basic pragmatic rules that facilitate conversation (see Cameron-Faulkner, this volume; Stephens & Matthews, this volume), and an early use of pragmatic knowledge on behalf of other language acquisition processes, such as word learning (see Grassman, this volume). However, with the advent of extended discourse during the preschool years, new challenges emerge, and the link between language and pragmatics takes a new turn.

Narrative is a dominant form of extended discourse. Personal narratives, the retelling of meaningful, real past events, are a uniquely human way of making sense of our lives (Bruner, 1986), and thus an ideal place to examine pragmatic development. While telling a story, the narrator is immersed in the constant task of assessing the listener's state of mind and choosing appropriate linguistic forms to convey a story. Thus, narrative relies heavily on the use of decontextualized language, or the ability to map words onto memories or thoughts rather than relying on the immediate context to support conversation (Reese, 1995; Snow, 1983). The general pragmatic challenge in developing narrative skills is to determine how much shared knowledge can be assumed and how explicit and complete the narrative needs to be in order for the audience to understand the story (Ninio & Snow, 1996).

At about two-and-a-half years of age, children begin to narrate past events with caregivers (Miller & Sperry, 1988), and this seems to be the case in many cultures in the world (Miller, Potts, Fung, Hoogstra, & Mintz, 1990). Around this same time, children also produce what Labov and Waletzky (1967) considered the minimum for a narrative: two clauses joined by a temporal marker. Moreover, children at this age are also able to include evaluations to mark their own perspective on the events (Miller & Sperry, 1988; Peterson & McCabe, 1983).

Despite this early ability for storytelling, becoming a competent narrator is a prolonged process that extends into the school years, due to the multiple, embedded demands. These demands involve not only mastery of different skills in the cognitive dimension (Karmiloff-Smith, 1985; Nilsen & Fecica, 2011), but also entail knowledge about the specific devices each language makes available to users in order to regulate the distinction between new and given information (Hickmann & Hendricks, 1999; Hickmann, Hendricks, Roland, & Liang, 1996). At the pragmatic level, children are faced with three specific challenges as they develop narrative skills (Ninio & Snow, 1996; Serra, Serrat, Solé, & Aparici, 2000). First, they must learn to produce structured units of extended discourse; second, they need to learn that the audience may know little to nothing about the events being told; and third, children need to consider the possibility that the listener may interpret the story events differently than they do.

Children acquire the linguistic forms their parents utilize with them in daily conversations (Vygotsky, 1978), and narrative development is not an exception in

this process. Those dimensions of narrative embedded in parents' contributions to reminiscing (or conversations about past, personal events), are then adopted by children in independent story telling (McCabe & Peterson, 1991; Peterson & McCabe, 1992). While reminiscing with their caregivers, children are pressed by these pragmatic considerations to learn cultural and linguistic conventions for: (1) structuring events into reports that make sense to others in their cultural group; (2) providing contextualizing elements needed to convey background information that is unknown to the audience; and (3) including markers of evaluation to convey the narrator's perspective on the events being communicated. All of these components of narrative reflect the pragmatic considerations that undergird language learning, and form the invisible web connecting the acquisition of language to socialization within particular socio-cultural groups.

During conversation, children are not only learning vocabulary and syntax, but they are also acquiring the tools they need to become full members of their culture (Küntay, Nakamura, & Şen, this volume; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1986). In that sense, culture organizes and gives meaning to interactions between caregivers and children and this is especially the case in parent-child discourse. Narrative practices such as reminiscing constitute the arena in which children learn and practice the necessary linguistic skills for narrative development; at the same time, reminiscing is a context in which children acquire the cultural knowledge necessary to become competent members of their community.

Based on the idea that narrative development is an important arena for the acquisition of pragmatic and cultural knowledge, the goal of this chapter is two-fold. First, we review evidence on how children glean knowledge related to the pragmatic challenges involved in narrative development in two different cultural groups: children from mainstream, white, Anglo, middle-class families and children and families from a Latino cultural background¹. Second, we review evidence of family practices in reminiscing in an attempt to better understand how differences observed in narrative development emerge in these two cultural groups. By comparing what we know about these learned dimensions of discourse across cultures we hope to uncover what may be universal processes in the pragmatics of narrative development and what appear to be distinct patterns specific to a cultural group.

1. Although we use the term Latinos in a general way, representing Spanish-speaking people in many parts of the world, we acknowledge the differences that exist within this group. The ideas developed here constitute an attempt to create awareness of the differences in the developmental trajectory of narrative between a group that is experiencing rapid growth around the world and the mainstream group usually described in the literature.

Narrative practices in white, middle-class, Anglo families

An extensive body of research has documented the narrative practices of White, middle-class, Anglo caregivers as they talk with their children about past events (Fivush & Fromhoff, 1988; McCabe & Peterson, 1991; Reese & Fivush, 1993; Reese, Haden, & Fivush, 1993). A pervasive finding in this literature is that the narrative contributions of adults are aimed at stimulating the child's ability to tell stories that focus on and extend a single event. Narrative development within this cultural group tends to encourage the ability to tell independent stories that are tightly organized and centered on a single and clearly identifiable topic (Michaels & Cook-Gumperz, 1979). This style has important implications for school success, where topic-centered narratives are the preferred discourse genre, and knowledge and acquaintance with this privileged style facilitates communication and learning (Heath, 1983; Michaels, 1981).

Exploration of the narrative practices of Anglo, middle-class caregivers indicates that there are important individual differences in the discursive styles parents use while reminiscing with their children. Some parents use an elaborative style in conversation (also labeled topic-extending style) characterized by many open-ended questions, meeting responses with confirmations of the child's utterances or adding more detail about the event. Specifically, these caregivers facilitate conversations about past events by asking open-ended questions (e.g. "What did we do at grandma's house today?") and adding evaluative comments ("We were so happy to go.") to facilitate the child's reconstruction of an event memory. In contrast, others used a low-elaborative style (also, topic-switching style) in which they talked about the past with their children by probing for specific parts of a memory by asking just a few questions, predominantly yes/no questions, or by repeating questions so that the child will provide the parent's notion of a specific answer.

Findings from this body of research documented a critical relationship between maternal elaborative style and child memory, language, and literacy development in White, middle-class, Anglo families. Specifically, results showed that children of parents who use the highly elaborative style displayed more robust memory, language, and literacy skills, told longer stories of personal experience, and became skilled narrators early on (for a review, see Fivush, Haden, & Reese, 2006). It is not surprising, then, that such a robust context for children's learning is also an important source for acquiring pragmatic skills, though this has been less explicitly explored in these studies. Clearly, children are doing more than learning to string a series of events together while reminiscing with their parents. The first pragmatic challenge, learning to structure units of extended discourse, can be observed in parents' use of elaborative questions to help children focus on and extend a single event, nurturing the development of a

topic-centered style (Michaels, 1981) of narration, which is important for learning to structure a narrative so that it will be intelligible to an audience, in this case, from mainstream, middle-class backgrounds. It is as though parents' use of the elaborative style while reminiscing with their children serves as a rehearsal space for developing pragmatic/discursive skills children need to succeed in academic settings (Sparks, 2008).

Research on reminiscing in middle-class families that has focused on the facilitating nature of the different kinds of elaborative questions and comments used by parents also provides insight into how children master the second pragmatic challenge, the ability to contextualize the events being told. For instance, Peterson and McCabe (1994) followed mothers and children between the ages of 26 and 43 months recording naturally occurring talk about past events as well as collecting researcher-elicited narratives of personal experience from the children on a monthly basis. Analyses of the data focused on the mother's use of questions to elicit orientations, information on the 'who, what, when and where' of the event discussed. Results revealed clear developmental progressions for the use of information that orients the audience to the spatio-temporal context of the story in the children's independent narratives at the final time point; children's spontaneous use of contextualizing elements describing when and where the event took place in their independent narratives was highly correlated with their mother's use of questions which specifically elicited contextualizing information at the mid and final time point of the study. These results suggest that parents' use of elaborative questions alert the child to specific aspects of a memory representation that are unknown to the audience. In that sense, mother's elaborative strategies may be increasing children's awareness that listeners know little about the event and at the same time encourage them to include contextualizing elements in their narratives to orient the listener to the context of the story.

In another semi-experimental study, Haden, Haine, and Fivush (1997) examined possible differences in the use of questions and comments that elicit orientations and evaluations provided by mothers and fathers in past event conversations with their children. This study provides evidence for reminiscing as a context in which children may be learning about the third pragmatic challenge, that the audience may have their own interpretation of the story, making the use of evaluative comments to convey the narrator's perspective an essential dimension of narrative. In this study, families were visited when children were 40 months of age and then 70 months of age. At the initial time point, mothers and fathers talked separately with their children about shared past events and an unfamiliar researcher elicited personal narratives from the child. An important finding was that mothers and fathers were equally elaborative with their children; however, mother's earlier evaluative comments predicted children's use of evaluation in their independent

narratives at 70 months. Thus, mothers who used more evaluative comments had children who used more evaluation in their later narratives. Children's earlier ability to provide evaluative comments also predicted their later use of evaluative devices in their independent narratives, but there was no way for the researchers to test whether mother's earlier evaluations contributed to children's evaluative comments at the study's first time point. Perhaps, as children listen to their mother's evaluative comments, they become increasingly aware of the need to provide their own perspective on the story events. This is one way for children to learn that the use of evaluation to convey their sense of the significance of events is a critical element of a well-crafted story.

Altogether, this evidence suggests that reminiscing conversations provide a context for acquiring pragmatic knowledge, which results in learning to use culturally specific dimensions of narrative. For example, parent's elaborative questions are used to help children structure a topic-centered style of narrative (Michaels, 1981) and to learn the value of including orientations to ground the story in place and time. Moreover, parent's use of evaluative comments may increase children's awareness that a conversation partner can interpret story events differently than they do. This insight may then inspire children to use evaluation in their own stories to communicate their perspective on events. These dimensions of narrative, learned while reminiscing with parents, are fundamental elements in the development of mature forms of storytelling (Labov & Waletzky, 1967) in white, middle-class communities.

Narrative practices in Latino families

Knowledge about the developmental trajectories and individual differences in narrative development for populations outside the white, middle-class, Anglo community is still limited (though see Bliss & McCabe, 2008; Bliss, McCabe, & Mahecha, 2001). Among those few efforts, particular attention has been given to the narrative practices of Latinos (see McCabe, Bailey, & Melzi, 2008), and findings suggest that Latinos, both adults and children, structure their personal narratives in substantially different ways than the topic-centered narrative style favored in the Anglo community.

For instance, Riessman (1987) analyzed interviews conducted by a middle-class, Anglo adult with two women talking about their marital separations – a middle-class, Anglo woman and an English-speaking, working-class, Puerto Rican woman. While the interviewer considered the Anglo narrative to be coherent and temporally structured, the Puerto Rican narrative was found to lack chronological sequence. Moreover, multiple confusions emerged during the interview with

the Puerto Rican participant, as well as attempts by the interviewer to get her to construct a chronologically ordered narrative.

Evidence from studies analyzing the narratives of Latino children from working-class families indicate that they organize their stories differently from the narratives observed in mainstream groups. These differences can be observed in the pragmatic challenges children encounter in learning narrative and include: (1) a de-emphasis on the temporal and sequential features of narrative structure; (2) a special emphasis on contextualization and (3) a special emphasis on evaluation (Cheathan & Jiménez-Silva, 2011; Silva & McCabe, 1996). Rodino, Gimbert, Pérez, and McCabe (1991) found that the narratives of Latino children do not focus on a chronologically organized description of the actions involved in the event. In this study, an utterance-by-utterance analysis of personal narratives told by 6- and 7-year old African-American, Anglo-American and Latino children was completed. Results showed that Latino narratives included fewer temporally linked clauses describing the actions involved in the event than the African American and the Anglo narratives. Instead, Latino narratives included descriptions of single actions, not sequences of actions, and those descriptions were preceded and followed by contextualizing utterances and evaluations. This being so, a good portion of the Latino narratives in this study did not even meet the minimal Labovian criterion of including at least two temporally linked clauses (Labov & Walesky, 1967).

The de-emphasis on the temporal and sequential aspect of Latino narratives was also highlighted by Uccelli (2008), who compared the personal narratives of Spanish-speaking Andean preschoolers and first graders and their English-speaking Anglo-American counterparts. Both groups were able to construct sequential narratives, organized according to the logical succession of events and both groups also told non-sequential narratives, where the line of the story departs from a linear succession of events. In the most typical pattern of non-sequential narratives in both groups, called partial departures, children used reported speech and short abstracts that did not disrupt the logical succession of events in a drastic way. In the less frequent type of non-sequential narratives, called full departures, the logical sequence was drastically violated through the introduction of flashbacks and foreshadowing. Interestingly, this latter kind of non-sequential narrative was more common among the older children from the Andean sample, supporting Rodino et al.'s (1991) findings and suggesting "a cultural/linguistic model of narrative development" (p. 187) where structuring of the events in a temporal and sequential manner does not play the central role that it does in other cultural groups, such as the Anglo community.

The construction of temporally coherent narratives in Latinos is downplayed by the inclusion of contextualization and evaluation. Rodino and colleagues (1991)

found that contextualizations were more common in Latino than Anglo narratives. Moreover, Silva & McCabe (1996) have pointed out that these descriptions usually revolve around family topics, mainly descriptions including the names and characteristics of the characters of the stories, usually relatives. Moreover, they contend that while these inclusions may be considered tangential by the naïve interlocutor, their fundamental role in narrative production becomes evident after considering the high value placed on family relationships among Latinos.

Rodino et al. (1991) also demonstrated that Latino narratives include more evaluative clauses than African-American and Anglo narratives. Above and beyond their higher frequency, Uccelli (2008) also found distinctive features in the forms of evaluation introduced in Latino narratives. In her corpus, Andean narratives included different anecdotes within the boundaries of a single narrative (e.g., a vaccination, a surgery and a visit to the doctor within a single narrative) more often than the Anglo narratives. Uccelli observed that this multianecdotal narrative strategy is used as a structural device in the service of evaluation, where parallel anecdotes of the past and possible events of the future are included at specific points in the narrative in order to emphasize multiple perspectives on the significance of a story. Based on this, Uccelli concluded that evaluation in Latino narratives not only takes place at the level of the clause, but also at the level of the narrative.

Altogether, these results suggest that Latino children's narrative style is similar to the topic-associating style previously identified in the narratives of African-American children (Michaels, 1981; Michaels & Cook-Gumperz, 1979). Topic-associating narratives are characterized by a lack of chronological sequence and by implicitly connecting a series of personal anecdotes with diverse timing, location and characters within the same narrative. In terms of the first pragmatic challenge, learning to structure units of extended discourse, it is clear that Latino children do not emphasize the chronological organization of the story. As for the second pragmatic challenge, learning to contextualize the events being told, Latino narrators emphasize the contextualization of characters, usually relatives, by including descriptions of family members and their relationship with them. This emphasis on the description of relatives may reflect the socialization goals that are thought to characterize parenting in the Latino community. These goals are oriented towards encouraging the development of an interdependent self, for whom group relationships, particularly family relationships (Rosabal-Coto, 2008) are deemed especially important (Harwood, Miller, & Irizarry, 1995; Harwood, Schölmerich, & Schulze, 2000; Keller, 2007), more so than values encouraging an independent, contained, autonomous self. The third pragmatic challenge, learning to convey the narrator's perspective, is expressed differently in Latino narratives, where evaluation is observed at the level of the clause and at the level of narrative, through the use of flashback and foreshadowing of multiple events.

A close look at the scaffolding strategies Latino adults use while reminiscing with their children indicates that Latino children are learning something very different about the first pragmatic challenge – the need to produce a structured unit of discourse. Unlike Anglo caregivers, Latino adults do not encourage the child's ability to independently produce units of discourse with a clear organizational focus, but instead emphasize the conversational function of storytelling. For instance, Eisenberg (1985) analyzed conversations about the past between two Spanish-speaking immigrant, working-class, Mexican-heritage two-year-old girls and their caregivers. Her results indicated that neither the adults nor the children appeared concerned about following a logical sequence of events that conformed to the experience. The conversations consisted of a collection of statements relevant to the same topic, “motivated by a sense of “And what else?” instead of a sense of “And then what?”” (p. 195).

Along the same lines, Melzi (2000) compared the elicitation styles of Spanish-speaking, working-class, Latino immigrants in the United States and English-speaking, Anglo-American mothers from working-class families while reminiscing with their 4-year-olds. Her results indicated that Anglo-American mothers used more closed-ended questions and repetitions than Latino mothers, and Latino mothers used more open-ended questions, more back-channeling, and included more initiations than the Anglo mothers. Similar to Eisenberg's result, Melzi (2000) found that Latino mothers used significantly more generic elaborations such as “Tell me more?” and “What else?” In line with their interest in stimulating the conversational ability of children, Melzi concluded that Latino mothers prefer the use of strategies such as open-ended and generic questions, back-channeling and initiations to encourage the child to occupy the role of main narrator, with control over the story's organization. In contrast, Anglo-American mothers emphasize the organizational aspect while reminiscing, as reflected in their provision of closed-ended questions, which model important content for the child to include in the story, as well as their use of repetitions as attempts to invite children to provide information and details while producing a topic-centered story.

These findings were replicated in a sample of Peruvian and Anglo-American well-educated, middle-class mothers and their preschoolers (Melzi, Schick, & Kennedy, 2011). In the former group, Melzi and colleagues found a predominance of the *elicitor* style. Peruvian mothers frequently used child-directed questions to promote their children's participation in the conversation, to encourage the child's contribution and to maintain the flow of the conversation. Moreover, these mothers themselves provided little spontaneous narrative contributions. In clear contrast, most of the Anglo-American mothers used a *constructor* style. They used child-directed questions, though to a lesser degree than elicitors, more provision of maternal spontaneous narrative contributions than elicitors, and fewer attempts to

continue the flow of the conversation. Based on these results, Melzi and colleagues suggest that while Anglos showed an interest in maintaining a balance between eliciting information from their children and providing information themselves, Peruvians encouraged their children to act as the main narrators, with mothers adopting the role of the audience.

In sum, this evidence indicates that Latino caregivers place an important emphasis on the social learning involved in narrative practice. Different from Anglo mothers, who emphasize the organizational aspect of reminiscing, Latino mothers play the role of elicitors and yield the floor of the conversation to their children, in an attempt to encourage their conversational skills. This high value placed on participation in conversation can also be linked to the interdependent cultural orientation that predominates within the Latino community (Harwood, Miller, & Irizarry, 1995; Harwood, Schölmerich, & Schulze, 2000; Keller, 2007). Social abilities, such as being a proficient conversationalist, constitute an important tool for these children in order to develop good, positive relationships with the other members of their group.

The pragmatics of narrative development across cultural contexts: Some final remarks

We reviewed evidence on how children glean knowledge related to the pragmatic challenges involved in narrative development in Latino and the Anglo communities. We also attempted to find sources of pragmatic learning in narrative development in the context of reminiscing in two cultural groups: White, middle-class, Anglo families and families from a Latino cultural background. Our goal was to uncover universal processes in the pragmatics of narrative development as well as distinct patterns specific to each of the two cultural groups. It seems clear that reminiscing conversations serve as a platform for the child to acquire pragmatic knowledge. As they participate in reminiscing with caregivers, all children learn that representing past events in conversation with parents is a culturally valued activity (Peterson & McCabe, 1994), that recalling past events with their parents is part of daily routines in which young children are expected to partake (Fivush et al., 2006), and that particular types of stories can be told in conversations with family members (Miller, et al., 1990). Additionally, all children encounter the three pragmatic challenges as they learn to tell personal stories while reminiscing with parents, but the way they learn to formulate narrative discourse in response to new pragmatic understanding is culturally specific.

The first pragmatic challenge: Narrative structure. This is the dimension of narrative in which the greatest differences may be observed in the two groups. The

research indicates that children in both groups learn to structure narratives in very different ways. Anglo, white, middle-class children learn that a topic-centered narrative that elaborates on a single topic, unfolds within a linear framework, and conveys the perspective of the narrator on the events, is a preferred narrative form. Parental styles of talking about the past also enforce this particular kind of narrative, especially through the use of the elaborative style of reminiscing, which emphasizes the organizational dimension of storytelling. From the evidence presented here, it is clear that Latino children learn to tell stories that do not follow a linear path, but instead include different events revolving around a single topic. Results from research on the way Latino caregivers reminisce with their children also support the development of this kind of narrative, given their focus on the conversational rather than the organizational function of reminiscing.

This kind of narrative that includes several events related to a broad theme has often been portrayed as deficient because it does not conform to the high-point structure described by Labov and Walesky (1967), where a single event is developed and evaluated. Nevertheless, research on narrative development in diverse cultural settings has revealed that these kinds of stories are far from reflecting limitations, but instead portray the sophisticated strategy of linking different events within a general theme (Reese, 2013). Presumably, as Latino children enter school, they learn to tell topic-centered narratives that are the canonical form of academic discourse. However, there has been little research that has charted how children's narratives shift from a preferred cultural form to the topic-centered narratives expected at school. This line of study is needed in order to understand how easy or difficult it may be to acquire a different set of pragmatic expectations for telling a good story, and what kind of instruction is necessary to make this transition a smooth one for children from nonmainstream backgrounds.

The second pragmatic challenge: Contextualizing information. As children learn that their audience may know little about the story event, they also understand that contextualization is a key element in the production of decontextualized narratives, as it is at the heart of providing information about the characters, time, and location of an event. A lack of contextualization can make a story unintelligible. Children in both cultures learn to value contextualizing information within a narrative, but perhaps for different purposes. While the Anglo-American mothers value and encourage the inclusion of description during reminiscing in an attempt to stimulate the child's ability to formulate organized and informative narratives, Latinos prefer the use of description in their narratives as a way to introduce information about their own families (Silva & McCabe, 1996). The inclusion of this information can be understood as especially relevant for Latinos, given the importance of the family group.

The third pragmatic challenge: Evaluating the story. Evaluation is an essential dimension of narrative for creating an engaging story that will maintain the interest of others. The audience always wants to know the significance of story events, which a narrator provides with evaluative comments. Both Latinos and Anglo-Americans introduce evaluation while storytelling, though the strategies used varied between the groups. First, Rodino and colleagues (1991) found that Latino children included more evaluative clauses in their narratives than Anglo-American children. Moreover, Uccelli (2008) observed that for Latinos evaluation takes place at the level of narrative structure, and not only at the level of the clause, through the inclusion of flashbacks and foreshadowing. In contrast, Anglo, middle-class children have learned the importance of evaluations about the facts of the events in discussion, which can be observed in conversations with caregivers from two-and-a-half years of age (Miller & Sperry, 1988). More systematic research is needed to explore how Latino children acquire this particular use of evaluation and whether their stories continue to place an emphasis on evaluative comments after they enter school and begin to learn other forms of narrative.

In our current linguistically and culturally heterogeneous world, understanding the ways children from different cultural backgrounds acquire and incorporate pragmatic knowledge in their narratives is relevant for educational and clinical purposes. The kind of comparative analysis undertaken here not only incorporated a review of the findings about the different ways children from two cultural groups introduced pragmatic knowledge into their narratives, but also explored how these differences are enforced through the narrative practices preferred in each group and the cultural values underneath these preferences. As yet, only the elaborative style, aimed at stimulating a topic-centered narrative style, has been thoroughly examined and found to predict multiple positive outcomes for children from mainstream families (Fivush et al., 2006). If we are to make strides towards uncovering universal and unique features of narrative and pragmatic learning across cultural contexts, then we need more research that explores the benefits of narrative practices for child outcomes in families from diverse cultural groups (e.g., Sparks, 2008; Sparks, Carmiol & Ríos, in press). This kind of research will stimulate the development of new approaches to understanding narratives in educational and clinical settings.

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