The Coping with Children's Negative Emotions Scale (CCNES): Psychometric Properties and Relations with Children's Emotional Competence

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SUMMARY. The *Coping with Children's Negative Emotions Scale* (CCNES) is an increasingly used self-report instrument consisting of six subscales that reflect different ways parents respond to their young children's negative emotions. However, psychometric testing of this scale has not been conducted. In two studies, we examine its psychometric properties. In the first study, 101 parents (mostly mothers) completed the CCNES and a variety of other scales. The results reveal that the CCNES is internally reliable and has sound test-retest reliability and construct va-

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Richard A. Fabes and Nancy Eisenberg were funded in part by a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health (1 R01 HH55052). Parts of this manuscript are based on the Master's thesis of the second author. The authors express their appreciation to all of the parents and children who contributed to this project.

[Haworth co-indexing entry note]: "The Coping with Children's Negative Emotions Scale (CCNES): Psychometric Properties and Relations with Children's Emotional Competence." Fabes, Richard A. et al. Co-published simultaneously in *Marriage & Family Review* (The Haworth Press, Inc.) Vol. 34, No. 3/4, 2002, pp. 285-310; and: *Emotions and the Family* (ed: Richard A. Fabes) The Haworth Press, Inc., 2002, pp. 285-310. Single or multiple copies of this article are available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service [1-800-HAWORTH, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. (EST). E-mail address: docdelivery@haworthpress.com].

lidity. Factor analysis of the structure of the CCNES suggests that there may be only four rather than six subscales. In the second study, we examined the predictive validity of the CCNES to 36 children's emotional competence (decoding and expressiveness). The supportive subscales (positively) and parental distress (negatively) predicted children's decoding, whereas emotional encouragement (positively) and nonsupportive parenting (negatively) predicted children's expressiveness. It was concluded that the CCNES is a reliable and valid instrument and that further research and refinement of its use is needed.

KEYWORDS. Parental coping, negative emotions, socialization of emotion

Although a number of researchers (Baumrind, 1989; Greenberger & Goldberg, 1989), theorists (Dix, 1991; Patterson, 1982; Wahler & Dumas, 1987), and clinicians (Anastopoulos & Barkley, 1989; Barkley, 1985) have been interested in how parents respond to their children's negative behaviors, relatively little focus has been placed on parental responses to children's negative emotional displays (Fabes, Leonard, Kupanoff, & Martin, 2001). Even when there has been interest, most of the interest has been limited to whether children's emotions should be encouraged or restricted. For example, Tomkins (Tomkins, 1962, 1963) hypothesized that parental acceptance rather than suppression of children's negative emotions would be beneficial to children. Likewise, Leavitt and Power (1989) observed day care workers and parents and noted how the emotional expressions of preschoolers often were minimized. They postulated that this lack of emotional encouragement leads to decreased emotional understanding. Similarly, Buck (1984) hypothesized that children punished for affect expressions learn to hide their outward expression of emotions but become physically aroused in situations that involve emotion. Halberstadt and colleagues (Halberstadt, 1983; Halberstadt, 1986; Halberstadt, Cassidy, Stifter, Parke, & Fox, 1995) argued that greater parental emotional expressiveness would lead to greater expressiveness in children. Beyond acceptance and restrictiveness of children's emotions, however, we know relatively little about how parents respond to children's negative emotions and the con-

sequences of these responses for children's socio-emotional outcomes. The purpose of the present paper is to examine the psychometric properties of a scale designed to fill the gap in this literature–namely, the *Coping with Children's Negative Emotions Scale* (CCNES; Fabes, Eisenberg, & Bernzweig, 1990a).

Studying parents' reactions to children's negative emotions is important because it is in the family that children first express their needs and desires, and where socialization of this communication first takes place (Eisenberg, Cumberland, & Spinrad, 1998; Fabes et al., 2001). For example, Malatesta and Haviland (Malatesta & Haviland, 1982) found that parents' emotional responses to their children were related to affect expression in children as young as 3 to 6 months of age. Moreover, Dunn and colleagues (Dunn, Bretherton, & Munn, 1987) found that mothers' references to feeling states when children were 18-months-old were positively correlated with children's references to feeling states at 24 months. These results suggest that how parents' respond to children's negative emotions influences children's abilities to cope with their own (and others') emotional states.

Children's expressions of negative emotion provide an important context in which the effects of emotion socialization on social and emotional competence can be examined. Due to the aversive nature of negative emotions, parents often are motivated to react to them using negative control strategies (such as punishment). This may be due, in part, to a belief that children's expressions of negative emotions are used for manipulation, are reflective of poor character, and are harmful to children. For example, Gottman (1997) suggests that parents who perceive children's negative emotions to be aversive tend to punish children or trivialize the negative emotion in order to quickly put a stop to their expressions. Putting a stop to children's negative emotions, in turn, removes the aversiveness of the negative emotional reactions.

MEASUREMENT OF PARENT RESPONSES TO CHILDREN'S NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

Currently, there are very few measures available to measure emotion socialization and/or how parents respond to children's negative emotions. Halberstadt (1986) developed the *Family Expressive Questionnaire* (FEQ) that is an inventory designed to assess the emotions expressed by one's family. A second instrument, the *Parent Attitude Toward Children's Expressiveness Scale* (PACES) (Saarni, 1985) ex-

amines the degree to which parents are permissive or restrictive towards children's emotional expressiveness. In both cases, these measures focus primarily on whether or not a parent is encouraging or restrictive of negative emotional expressions (either through their own emotions or through their responses to children's emotions). However, neither of these scales provide information regarding the various ways that parents go about encouraging or discouraging children's negative emotional expressions. Moreover, these measures do not allow parents to describe the variety of behaviors they may use when responding to children's negative emotional states.

THE COPING WITH CHILDREN'S NEGATIVE EMOTIONS SCALE

In response to these issues, Fabes and colleagues developed the *Coping with Children's Negative Emotions Scale* (CCNES) (Fabes et al., 1990a) that is designed to assess how parents typically respond to young children's (preschool or early elementary school) negative emotions. This self-report scale presents parents with 12 hypothetical scenarios in which their child is upset or angry (the CCNES and its scoring is available on-line at *http://www.public.asu.edu/~rafabes/GUEST.HTM#ccnes*). These hypothetical situations represent common emotionally evocative events that young children are exposed to. Parents are asked to rate the likelihood of responding to the scenario in each of six possible ways–with each of the six responses representing theoretically different ways of responding to children's negative emotions.

These six subscales delineate different responses that a parent might engage in when exposed to their young children's negative emotions. *Problem-focused responses* reflect the degree to which parents help the child solve the problem that caused the child's distress. In contrast, *emotion-focused responses* reflect the degree to which parents respond with strategies that help the child feel better (i.e., comfort or distract the child). These two types of coping responses reflect the basic distinction made by stress and coping theorists (Folkman & Lazarus, 1990; Lazarus & Folkman, 1991) between coping responses designed to address the source of stress (problem-focused coping) versus those designed to address the emotional distress (emotion-focused coping). Evidence suggests that parents who cope with children's negative emotions in supportive ways contribute positively to the development of children's social and emotional competence (Eisenberg, Fabes, Schaller, Carlo, &

Miller, 1991; MacDonald & Parke, 1984; Roberts & Strayer, 1987). Although both problem-focused and emotion-focused responses to children's negative emotions contribute to children's outcomes in similar ways, we distinguish between the two because parents indicate that they do not use these two responses to the same extent. For example, parents are considerably more likely to utilize problem-solving strategies in response to children's distress than they are to use comforting or distracting (Roberts & Strayer, 1987). Moreover, problem- and emotion-focused strategies have been found to vary in their effectiveness depending on the degree of control present in the situation. In situations where there is some degree of control, problem-focused strategies generally are more effective, whereas emotion-focused coping responses are more effective when the situation involves low degrees of control (Altshuler & Ruble, 1989).

Actively encouraging children's expression of negative emotions is reflected in the *Expressive Encouragement* subscale. This subscale reflects the degree to which parents are accepting of children's negative emotional displays. Parental encouragement of children's expression of negative emotions has been found to be related to children's perspective-taking and empathy (Bryant, 1987), complex thinking about emotionally expressive behavior (Saarni, 1989), and the ability to decode other's emotions (Halberstadt, 1986).

Two subscales focusing on nonsupportive coping responses also are included on the CCNES. The first, the *Minimization Reactions* subscale, reflects the degree to which parents discount the seriousness of their children's emotional reactions or devalue their problem or distressed responses. As such, it represents one of the ways in which a parent may attempt to restrict or limit children's expression of negative emotions. The second nonsupportive subscale, the *Punitive Reactions* subscale, represents the degree to which parents use verbal or physical punishment to control children's negative emotional display. Minimization responses represent the more subtle and less overtly controlling methods of attempting to limit children's negative emotional displays. Both types of nonsupportive coping responses have been found to be related to children's non-optimal outcomes, such as lower levels of empathic and social responsiveness (Eisenberg et al., 1991; Fabes et al., 2001; Roberts & Strayer, 1987) and increased anxiety (Buck, 1984). Although parents report using these nonsupportive responses relatively infrequently, their use generally undermines children's social and emotional competence (but perhaps not to the same degree).

Thus, current research and theory suggest that parents who use negative control strategies when their children express negative emotions have children who do not regulate their emotions or behaviors effectively (Denham, Mitchell-Copeland, Strandberg, Auerbach, & Blair, 1997; Fabes et al., 2001). Additionally, the use of nonsupportive strategies to control children's negative emotions teaches children to suppress negative emotions, which in turn, increases their negative emotional arousal and anxiety (Gross & Levenson, 1993). When parents succeed at suppression, the child tends to "store" the negative emotion until a time when a similar circumstance arises. Thus, a pattern of stored and released negative emotion is created over time and is thought to result in more intense expressions that children have difficulty regulating (Buck, 1984).

A final possible response that parents have to children's expression of negative emotions is that parents may become distressed themselves. The amount of distress a parent experiences is important because of its effects on their socializing behaviors. Those parents who become distressed when their children express negative emotions are likely to focus on their own discomfort rather than on the needs and conditions of their children (Fabes, Eisenberg, & Miller, 1990b; Fabes et al., 2001). When parents feel such distress, they may have trouble calming down, may feel emotionally disorganized, and may "fly off the handle" when faced with children's negative emotional displays (Gottman, 1997). These parents are unlikely or unable to support their children through a negative emotional experience and, instead, are more likely to intensify their efforts to control their children's negative emotional expressions by punishing or minimizing them. In turn, children who are punished for expressions of negative emotion tend to suppress that emotion until they lose control. Thus, parents who become emotionally overaroused due to children's negative affectivity and rely on punishing and minimizing responses to achieve relief from the aversive exposure do so at the cost of socializing children to suppress emotion until it is released in highly intense and dysregulated ways (Buck, 1984; Tomkins, 1962). As a result, the child may display decreased social and emotional competence.

The CCNES is a self-report instrument that allows researchers to examine these issues. Evidence from studies that have included the CCNES generally support these theoretical assumptions (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1994; Eisenberg, Fabes, Carlo, & Karbon, 1992; Eisenberg et al., 1992b; Eisenberg, Fabes, Shepard, Guthrie, Murphy, & Reiser, 1999; Fabes et al., 2001; Smith & Walden, 1996). Although these studies have

found adequate internal reliability of the subscales of the CCNES, to date there has not been any attempt to assess the broader psychometric properties of the CCNES. The primary purpose of this paper is to examine the general psychometric properties. We conducted two studies in which we addressed the reliability and validity of the CCNES. In the first study, we examined the internal consistency, test-retest reliability, factor analytic structure, and concurrent and construct validity of the CCNES. In the second study, we examined the differential predictions of the subscales of the CCNES to young children's emotional decoding and expressiveness.

STUDY 1

In the first study, we examined the reliability and validity of the CCNES. We did this by recruiting parents (mostly mothers) of young children to fill out a variety of questionnaires (see below). A subset of these parents completed the CCNES twice (for test-retest assessment).

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample consisted of 101 parents, primarily mothers (96 mothers and 5 fathers) of 3- to 6-year-old (mean age = 56.4 months) children enrolled in 27 private preschools in the east valley of the Phoenix metropolitan area. The sample consisted of primarily middle-class Caucasian mothers who had an average of 2.05 children. Of these participants, 86% were Caucasian, 9% Hispanic, 3% Black, 1% of Asian heritage, and 1% of mixed origin. Family income ranged from $4,000 to $140,000 (mean income = $47,000). Mean level of parental education was 15 years (range = 11 to 20 years *SD* = 2.1).

Procedures

Parents' participation entailed completing a survey battery that consisted of the CCNES (Fabes et al., 1990a), a demographics questionnaire, the *Parent Attitude Toward Children's Expressiveness Scale* (PACES) (Saarni, 1985), the *Parental Control Scale* (PCS) (Greenberger, 1988), the *Parent Affect Test-Anger* (PATa) (Linehan, Paul, & Egan, 1983),

and the *Interpersonal Reactivity Index* (IRI) (Davis, 1983). Because responses on any self-report inventory may be influenced by the degree to which a respondent answers in a socially desirable fashion, an index of social desirability (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964) also was included.

Twenty-seven preschools were randomly selected from those listed in the telephone directory. After receiving permission from each participating school, a letter introducing the study was distributed to all parents at the preschools. This letter contained an informed consent form for interested parents to sign and return. One hundred and eighty parents provided initial permission and were subsequently given the packet of questionnaires (randomly ordered) to be completed and returned via collection boxes at each school. From these 180 parents, 101 useable forms were returned (56%). Forty-four of these 101 parents were chosen at random, contacted by telephone, and sent a copy of the CCNES to complete a second time approximately four months after the original administration. Data from 35 parents (75%; 7 did not return the survey and 2 were unusable) were available to establish test-retest reliability. Retest parents were similar in overall characteristics to the larger sample (i.e., no significant differences in child's age, parent's education, or parent's annual income were found).

Measures

In addition to the CCNES, several measures were included in the current study to determine concurrent and construct validity. A brief synopsis of each of the scales used in the current investigation for these purposes follows.

Coping with Children's Negative Emotions Scale (CCNES; Fabes et al., 1990a). The CCNES consists of six 12-item subscales that assess separate parental coping responses in response to young children's negative emotions. For each question, a hypothetical scenario is presented in which the respondent's child feels upset (i.e., "If my child is panicky and can't go to sleep after watching a scary TV show, I would . . . "). Six possible responses that could be made by the parent are provided (i.e., "Remain calm and not let myself get anxious," "Talk to my child about ways to make it hurt less.") Utilizing a 7-point scale ranging from "very unlikely" (1) to "very likely" (7), the parent was asked to rate the likelihood of responding to the scenario in each of the six possible ways. These subscales (corresponding to the six previously discussed) reflect six qualitatively different responses to children's negative emotional expressions: Problem-Focused Reactions (PRF), Emotion-Focused Re-

actions (EFR), Expressive Encouragement (EE), Minimization Reactions (MR), Punitive Reactions PR), and Distress Reactions (DR).

Parent Attitude Toward Children's Expressiveness Scale (*Saarni, 1985; PACES*). The PACES provides a measure of how accepting or controlling a parent is regarding their child's emotional expressions. PACES is a 20-item, multiple choice scale (i.e., "If my school age child starts to giggle during a funeral, I would . . . "). For each item, parents select one response from four options ranging in degree from permissive to controlling (i.e., "smile understandingly at my child," "ignore it," "frown at my child," "frown and also tell my child to be quiet"). The options are treated as a 4-point scale in which high scores reflect a more controlling attitude towards children's expression of emotions. PACES was designed for use with parents of children between the preschool and older adolescent ages. Modifications to the original format changed "my school age child" to "my preschooler." Positive relations between the PACES (reflecting restrictive/controlling responses) and the nonsupportive subscales of the CCNES (PR, MR, and DR) were expected. The reverse was expected for the supportive subscales (EE, EFR, PFR).

Parental Control Scale (*Greenberger, 1988; PCS*). This measure is used to identify the amount of disciplinary control a parent exerts over a child. The PCS is a 39-item scale in which parents respond to each item on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" (i.e., "I have to keep my child's natural curiosity firmly in check," "I don't set limits on what my child can eat," "A well-raised child is one who doesn't have to be told twice to do something.") Three subscales consisting of 13 items each assess Harsh, Firm/Responsive, and Lax Control. Harsh parenting on the PCS was expected to be positively related to PR and MR and inversely related to EE, EFR, and PFR. Because the supportive responses of EFR and PFR reflect an authoritative style of parenting (Baumrind, 1989), we expected EFR and PFR (and perhaps EE) to be positively related to Firm parenting. MR and PR were considered to be reflective of authoritarian parenting and thus expected to be positively related to Harsh parenting.

Parental Anger. Parents' angry responses to children's behavior were assessed through the use of the Parental Anger subscale of the Parent Affect Test (PATa) (Linehan et al., 1983). The PATa assesses a parent's tendency to become angry and express angry emotions. For each item (i.e., "If my child starts crying when I punish him/her, I would . . . ," "If I ask my child to do something and he/she gets really angry, I would . . . ," "If my child talks back to me, I would . . . "), a 7-point scale ranging from "very unlikely" to "very likely" is used for parents to rate the like-

lihood that they respond in each of four different ways. Parents respond with the degree to which they "feel angry," "feel tense," "want to yell at child," and "want to send child to room." Higher scores reflect greater anger. Once again, we expected the nonsupportive responses (DR and PR) to be positively related to PATa and the supportive indexes (EFR, PFR, EE) to be negatively related.

Interpersonal Reactivity Index (*Davis, 1983; IRI*). The IRI is a 28-item scale used to measure four separate aspects of empathy (seven items each). The three scales most relevant to the present investigation were used (the Fantasy Empathy scale–which assesses the degree to which individuals respond empathically to the emotions or actions of fictitious characters–was not used). The Perspective-Taking (PT) subscale assesses the tendency to adopt the point of view of another (i.e., "I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective."). The Empathic Concern (EC) subscale assesses the tendency to experience "other oriented" feelings of warmth, compassion, and concern for another (i.e., sympathy–"I often have tender concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.") In contrast, the Personal Distress (PD) subscale measures "self-oriented" feelings of personal unease and discomfort in reaction to the emotions of others (i.e., "When I see someone who badly needs help in an emergency, I go to pieces."). We expected a positive relation between PD on the IRI and DR on the CCNES. Moreover, we expected perspective-taking and empathic responding to be positively related to the supportive CCNES subscales and negatively related to the nonsupportive subscales.

Social Desirability. A subset of 25 items from Crowne and Marlowe's (1964) Social Desirability true-false questionnaire was used to identify the degree to which individuals conform to societal norms in their responses (i.e., "No matter who I'm talking to, I'm always a good listener," "I never hesitate to go out of my way to help someone in trouble," "I never resent being asked to return a favor."). One point is scored for each response in the socially desirable direction. The higher the score received, the greater the tendency to describe oneself in favorable terms.

RESULTS

Analysis of the psychometric properties of the CCNES consisted of first examining the internal consistency of the subscales of the CCNES (and the other scales). We next examined the test-retest reliability. Fol-

lowing this, we examined the relations among the subscales of the CCNES and the degree to which the subscales were related to social desirability. Next, relations of scores on the CCNES to demographic and child characteristics were examined. Finally, we explored the concurrent and construct validity of the subscales of the CCNES by examining the relations of the subscales to theoretically similar measures.

Assessment of Internal and Test-Retest Reliability of the CCNES

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, ranges, and the internal reliability alphas for the CCNES and the other measures used in this study. The internal reliability for the scales of the CCNES were within acceptable limits. The reliability estimates ranged from .69 for the Punitive Reactions subscale to .85 for the Expressive Encouragement subscale. Reliability estimates for the other study indexes were comparable, with the Parental Control and PACES indexes showing the lowest levels of internal reliability (see Table 1).

TABLE 1. Means and Standard Deviations for Measures Used in Study 1

Measure	Mean	*SD*	Range	α
CCNES				
Distress Reactions	2.41	.79	1.00-4.18	.70
Punitive Responses	2.01	.60	1.00-4.08	.69
Minimization Responses	2.24	.70	1.00-4.75	.78
Expressive Encouragement	5.32	.79	3.50-6.92	.85
Emotion-Focused Responses	5.48	.74	3.75-6.92	.80
Problem-Focused Responses	6.01	.66	4.36-7.00	.78
Interpersonal Reactivity Index				
Empathic Concern	4.10	.52	3.86-5.00	.69
Perspective Taking	3.73	.70	1.71-4.57	.83
Personal Distress	2.33	.77	1.14-4.57	.82
Social Desirability	13.45	4.85	3-23	.83
Parent Affect Test–Anger	3.08	.95	1.02-5.75	.94
Parental Control				
Harsh	31.61	7.86	17-52	.68
Firm	69.85	7.22	52-90	.59
Lax	39.10	8.10	16-57	.63
PACES	32.27	4.82	17-40	.60

Test-retest reliability for the 35 participants who completed the CCNES twice (separated by four months) revealed that respondents' answers on the CCNES were significantly correlated from Time 1 to Time 2, *r*s(33) = .62, .83, .77, .56, .57, and .77, all *p*s < .01 for the distress, punitive, minimization, expressive, emotion-focused, and problem-focused subscales, respectively. Tests of mean differences from Time 1 to Time 2 revealed significant differences only for the punitive and problem-focused subscales. Specifically, scores on PR were significantly lower at Time 2 than they were at Time 1 (*M*s = 2.10 and 1.95, *SD*s = .66 and .65 for Time 1 and Time 2 PR scores, respectively; paired $t(34) = 2.24$, $p < .05$). A similar pattern was found for the PRF subscale (*M*s = 6.05 and 5.83, *SD*s = .64 and .63 for Time 1 and Time 2 PR scores, respectively; paired $t(34) = 2.88$, $p < .01$).

Relations with Social Desirability

To determine the degree to which parents' CCNES scores were influenced by social desirability, the relations of the subscales of the CCNES to the index of social desirability were computed. As can be seen in Table 2, social desirability was significantly related only to the DR subscale of the CCNES. Specifically, mothers whose responses tended to reflect greater levels of social desirability also tended to report lower distress when exposed to their children's negative emotions. Thus, only one of the six subscales of the CCNES was related to social desirability. In contrast, four of the eight correlations of the other study indexes were related to social desirability (see Table 2). Similar to the CCNES, the index of personal distress on the IRI was significantly inversely related to social desirability. Additionally, social desirability was significantly positively correlated with empathic concern, perspective taking, and harsh parental control.

Relation of CCNES to Parent and Child Demographics

To examine the degree to which the subscales of the CCNES varied as a function of the characteristics of our sample, we conducted correlations and tests of mean differences. For the parent demographic indexes, only maternal education was significantly correlated with subscales of the CCNES (paternal education, family income, maternal and paternal age, and family size were not significantly correlated with any CCNES subscale). Specifically, maternal education was positively correlated with DR and EE, *r*s(99) = .21 and .24, *p*s < .05, respectively.

TABLE 2. Relations with Social Desirability

Measure	Correlation with Social Desirability
CCNES	
Distress Reactions	−.52**
Punitive Responses	−.15
Minimization Responses	−.19
Expressive Encouragement	.07
Emotion-Focused Responses	.01
Problem-Focused Responses	.15
Interpersonal Reactivity Index	
Empathic Concern	.25*
Perspective Taking	.37**
Personal Distress	−.39**
Parent Affect Test–Anger	−.20
Parental Control	
Harsh	.11
Firm	.32**
Lax	−.16
PACES	.06

*Note. df*s = 100. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Thus, mothers who were more educated tended to report experiencing more distress when exposed to their children's negative emotions and to be more encouraging of children's expressions of emotions than were mothers who were less educated. Given the number of correlations computed, however, these relations may be due to chance. Examination of the relation of scores on the CCNES to children's age, gender, ethnicity, and family structure (single-parent, dual-parent, etc.) did not reveal any significant differences.

Interrelations of Parent Measures

Subscales of the CCNES. Table 3 presents the interrelations among the six subscales of the CCNES. As can be seen in Table 3, the supportive parental responses of Emotion-Focused Reactions (EFR), Problem-Focused Reactions (PFR), and Expressive Encouragement (EE) were significantly, positively correlated with one another. Likewise, the

TABLE 3. Relations Among CCNES Subscales

	DR	PR	MR	EE	EFR	PFR
Distress Reactions (DR)		.32**	.32**	.02	−.01	−.14
Punitive Responses (PR)			.64***	−.15	−.18	−.24*
Minimization Responses (MR)				−.16	.12	−.01
Expressive Encouragement (EE)					.36**	.54***
Emotion-Focused Responses (EFR)						.65***
Problem-Focused Responses (PFR)						

Note. *df*s = 100. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

nonsupportive parental reactions of Minimization Reactions (MR), Punitive Reactions (PR), and Distress Reactions (DR) were significantly, positively related with each other.

Interestingly, the positive subscales of the CCNES generally were not significantly, inversely related with the negative subscales of the CCNES. Thus, the positive and negative subscales do not appear to represent a linear continuum from positive to negative parental reactions. Instead, they appear to represent distinct factors. Moreover, the strength of the interrelations among positive and negative subscales varied. To examine the distinctive qualities of the subscales, we conducted a principal components factor analysis (with Varimax rotation) using each parent's six subscale scores as the variables in the analysis. The analysis revealed four factors with Eigenvalues greater than .5 (accounting for a total of 90% of the variance). A .5 Eigenvalue was used because the scree plot fit better using that level (and because it was a conceptually better fit as well). The first factor accounted for 37% of the variance and consisted of MR and PR. The first factor appears to reflect a pattern of harsh negative and nonsupportive responses to children's negative emotions. The second factor accounted for an additional 26% of the variance and consisted of EFR and PFR. This factor reflects supportive responses focused on helping the child cope with the negative emotional response and its cause. The third factor accounted for 17% of the variance and was made up of EE. The final factor accounted for another 10% of the variance and was made up of DR.

Relations of the CCNES to other parent indexes. The interrelations of the CCNES to the other parent indexes are presented in Table 4. Inspection of this table reveals patterns that generally provide construct validity for the subscales of the CCNES. For the *Interpersonal Reactivity Index*

(IRI), self-reported empathic concern and perspective taking were significantly, positively related to EFR, PRF, and EE (see Table 4). In contrast, empathic concern was inversely related to MR and PR. Moreover, perspective taking was inversely related to MR. Thus, parents who are empathic, sympathetic, and relatively better perspective takers tend to respond more supportively and less harshly when their children express negative emotions. Consistent with our prediction, the DR subscale of the CCNES was positively related to the distress scale of the IRI.

Parental anger, as indexed by the PATa, was significantly positively related to the three negative response subscales of the CCNES (MR, PR, DR). As such, parents who reported feeling more anger when children do something wrong or are annoying also reported responding harshly and with distress when exposed to children's negative emotions.

Relations of the subscales of the CCNES with the Harsh, Firm, and Lax subscales of the *Parental Control Scale* revealed several significant correlations. Specifically, Harsh parenting was significantly positively correlated with PR and MR. Additionally, Harsh parenting was inversely related to EE. Thus, parents who tend to report harsh parenting practices also tend to report harsh responses to their children when their children express negative emotions. Lax parenting was positively related to DR and MR. Parents who perceived themselves as Lax in control also tended to be higher in DR and MR. Firm parental control was significantly positively related to the supportive parenting subscales of EFR, PFR, and EE. Moreover, Firm parenting was inversely related to DR. These results suggest that the subscales of the CCNES are related to parents' general perceptions of their level of parental control and responsiveness.

There also were two significant findings for the relations of the CCNES with the *Parent Attitude Toward Children's Expressiveness Scale* (PACES; see Table 4). Higher parental control of children's expressiveness (i.e., high scores on the PACES) was related to greater punitive and minimization responses on the CCNES.

DISCUSSION

The results of Study 1 confirmed that the CCNES has good internal and test-retest consistency. Moreover, the interrelations of the subscales of the CCNES with other parent-related indexes also confirmed that the CCNES is generally a valid instrument that relates to theoretically simi-

TABLE 4. Relations of CCNES Subscales to Parent-Report Indexes

	Interpersonal Reactivity Index				Parental Control			
CCNES	Empathic Concern	Perspective Taking	Personal Distress	Parent Affect Test–Anger	Harsh	Firm	Lax	PACES
Distress Reactions	−.09	−.17	.38**	.32**	−.12	−.32**	.22*	−.19
Punitive Responses	−.30**	−.17	.07	.42***	.34**	−.12	.08	.26**
Minimization Responses	−.32**	−.26**	.24*	.29**	.37***	−.03	.22*	.23*
Expressive Encouragement	.45***	.22*	−.06	−.02	−.32***	.23*	.04	−.17
Emotion-Focused Responses	.23*	.22*	.01	−.06	−.10	.26**	.07	.07
Problem-Focused Responses	.43***	.25*	.15	−.06	−.15	.25*	−.08	.18

Note. *df*s = 100. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

lar constructs. The issue that remains unresolved is the degree to which the CCNES consists of six or four relatively distinct subscales. The interrelations among the subscales and the factor analysis revealed that the subscales reflecting supportive parental coping responses (PFR and EFR) may reflect a singular subscale. Similarly, the subscales reflecting nonsupportive parental coping with children's negative emotions (MR and PR) also may reflect a singular subscale. Although the subscales of the CCNES reflect theoretically different aspects of parental coping with children's negative emotions, parents may not necessarily distinguish among these. It may be that these distinctions are too subtle for parents to make, or that parents in fact distinguish these but when they occur they tend to co-occur such that the subscales are relatively difficult to distinguish. Certainly more research is necessary, particularly in the prediction of outcomes for children. Thus, our next step was to conduct a study to determine if the subscales of the CCNES differentially predict children's emotion-related outcomes.

STUDY 2

The purpose of this study was to examine the degree to which parents' scores on the CCNES predicted children's emotional competence at decoding (i.e., interpreting) and expressing emotional states. This study addressed the validity of the CCNES in differentially predicting these two important aspects of children's emotional competence. Based on the literature previously reviewed, we expected that children whose parents respond in generally supportive ways to their negative emotional states and conditions would be better at correctly interpreting and identifying emotions than children whose parents respond in nonsupportive or distressed ways. We expected this relation to be stronger for EFR than PFR responses because of the theoretical and empirical link between emotionally supportive parenting and children's empathy, sympathy, and perspective taking (Denham & Grout, 1993; Denham, Zoller, & Couchoud, 1994; Fabes et al., 1990b). Moreover, because harsh parental coping responses are thought to teach children the need to suppress emotional states, children's emotional expressiveness is expected to be inversely related to the nonsupportive parenting subscales of the CCNES, but positively associated with parental encouragement of emotional states.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample consisted of 36 mothers of preschool children enrolled to two classrooms at a university-affiliated child care center. None of the participants was involved in Study 1 and the sample consisted of primarily middle-class Caucasian mothers; 87% were Caucasian, 9% Hispanic, 3% Black, and 1% Asian. Family income ranged from $10,000 to $200,000 (median income = $55,000). Mean levels of maternal and paternal education were 17.5 and 17.8 years (*SD*s = 2.4 and 2.5 years), respectively (range = 12 to 22 years). The children (16 boys and 20 girls) ranged in age from 48 to 76 months (mean age = 58.9 months, *SD* = 8.6 months).

Procedures

Decoding task. Based on the procedures used by Denham and colleagues (Denham, McKinley, Couchoud, & Holt, 1990), cloth puppets with neutral facial expressions were used to enact 8 vignettes. The vignettes involved common everyday situations that elicit emotions (e.g., getting a present, having a nightmare, having someone break a favorite toy, etc.). Each vignette was accompanied by standardized vocal and visual affective cues emitted by the puppet/experimenter. After seeing each vignette, children were asked to pick the proper face for the puppet from the available choices (happy, sad, angry, afraid, surprised, or nothing–children had been tested prior to beginning to make certain they understood how to use the faces). Faces were selected in answer to the question, "How does the puppet feel?" Decoding scores were created by giving the child 2 points for each correct choice, 1 point for identifying the correct positive/negative affective valence of the emotion but not actually identifying the correct emotion (e.g., selecting the sad instead of the angry face), and 0 for a totally incorrect choice.

Expressiveness. During the time the child was engaged in the decoding task, two observers watched the child's facial expressions and rated the child's expressiveness using a scale from 1 (none) to 7 (very high). The observers were instructed to base their ratings on the degree to which children expressed both positive and negative emotions. The observers were trained to use both the frequency and the intensity of the children's emotional expressions. These observations were made from behind a one-way mirror and the observers could not hear what the child

said. Thus, the ratings were based primarily on the facial expressions of the child. The coders independently rated each child and the interrater reliability correlation for the two observers was quite high, $r(34) = .81$, $p < .001$. Given the high degree of reliability, the average of the two ratings was used as each child's expressiveness score.

RESULTS

The means and standard deviations for the indexes included in Study 2 are presented in Table 5. Comparisons of these means to those for the CCNES in Study 1 reveal comparable levels and patterns of responses (e.g., that parents endorsed more positive than negative coping responses). Moreover, the alpha coefficients for each of the subscales of the CCNES generally were comparable (although higher) to those in Study 1, ranging from .71 (PR) to .87 (EFR).

There were no significant sex differences found in the subscales of the CCNES and age of the child correlated only with PFR, $r(34) = .46$, $p < .005$. Thus, parents were more likely to report using problem-focused coping responses when dealing with older rather than younger children's negative emotions.

Children's scores on the decoding and expressiveness tasks were moderately correlated with each other (see Table 6). Tests for sex differences also revealed no significant differences. Not surprisingly,

TABLE 5. Means and Standard Deviations for Measures Used in Study 2

Measure	Mean	*SD*
CCNES		
Distress Reactions	2.73	.51
Punitive Responses	1.89	.81
Minimization Responses	2.18	.81
Expressive Encouragement	5.44	.96
Emotion-Focused Responses	5.51	.75
Problem-Focused Responses	5.75	.67
Decoding Task	1.18	.14
Expressiveness Task	4.25	1.48

Note: $N = 36$.

TABLE 6. Partial Correlations (controlling for age) of the CCNES with Decoding and Expressiveness Tasks: Study 2

Measure	Decoding	Expressiveness
CCNES		
Distress Reactions	−.57***	−.02
Punitive Responses	−.12	−.40*
Minimization Responses	−.19	−.24+
Expressive Encouragement	−.10	.62***
Emotion-Focused Responses	.42*	−.13
Problem-Focused Responses	.38*	−.01
Decoding		.39*

Note: *df*s = 33.
+$p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

older children tended to score at least marginally higher than younger children on the expressiveness and decoding tasks, *r*s(34) = .43 and .31, *p*s < .005 and .06, respectively.

To examine the predictions regarding the relations of the CCNES to children's emotional decoding and expressiveness performance, we computed partial correlations (controlling for age). The results of these analyses are presented in Table 6 and reveal differential patterns of interrelations. As predicted, children's decoding performance was positively correlated with PFR and EFR and inversely correlated with DR. Thus, children whose parents were supportive when they expressed negative emotions were relatively able to decode others' emotions, whereas children whose parents tended to become upset and distressed when exposed to their children's negative emotions were relatively unable to decode others' emotions. For the expressiveness task, children whose parents were encouraging of their emotional expressions tended to score relatively high, whereas parents who were punitive or minimized when children expressed negative emotions were at least marginally lower on spontaneous emotional expressiveness.

DISCUSSION

The results of Study 2 add further confirmation to the reliability and validity of the CCNES. In this study, the subscales of the CCNES were

differentially related to young children's emotion-related competencies. Specifically, children's ability to accurately decode others' emotions was related to supportive parenting responses (EFR and PFR) and inversely related to parental distress. In contrast, children's observed expressiveness was positively related expressive encouragement and inversely related to punitive coping responses. These findings suggest that parental responses to children's negative emotions appear to have important consequences on children's emotional expressiveness and decoding. The findings also suggest that specific parental responses have individuated effects. Supportive parental responses to children's negative emotions promote children's readiness to learn about others' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in emotional contexts (Eisenberg et al., 1998), whereas parents who are easily distressed when exposed to children's negative emotions may undermine their children's ability to decode others' emotions by interfering with their ability to deal effectively and supportively with their children's negative emotions. We did not, however, find the expected stronger findings with EFR than PFR, again suggesting that these scales may not be tapping different aspects of parents' reactions to children's negative emotions.

Parental encouragement of emotion was, not surprisingly, related to children's observed expressiveness. This finding is consistent with evidence that parents who are accepting and supportive of the expression of emotions have children who are expressive and emotionally competent (Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1996). In contrast, parents who are not supportive have children who are relatively unexpressive. Although these children may not express emotions overtly, they may become internally dysregulated and have difficulty managing emotions–a hypothesis that is consistent with existing data and theorizing (Buck, 1984; Fabes et al., 2001).

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The overall patterns of findings from both of the studies in this paper reveal that the CCNES is psychometrically sound and predicts in accordance with theoretically and empirically derived relations. Measurement of reliability and validity of the CCNES and its subscales were well within the acceptable ranges and test-retest analyses revealed little difference in the mean scores over a 4-month period of time. Even when statistical differences were found in the test-retest analyses, the magnitude of the differences was small and may not reflect meaningful differ-

ences. As such, the CCNES appears to tap parents' tendencies to use different coping responses when exposed to children's negative emotions and these generally are stable across time. Concurrent validity analyses revealed that the subscales of the CCNES generally related in logical ways to other measures with similar or same constructs.

Examination of the relation of the CCNES to demographic variables revealed few significant findings. These data suggest that responses on the CCNES did not vary by sex of child, age of child, or by family/parental characteristics. As such, it appears that the CCNES is a scale that can be used to examine emotion-related socialization responses in a wide variety of contexts and with a wide variety of families. Of course, the reliability and validity of use of the CCNES with families from different backgrounds and from different countries or cultures will depend on the assessment of its psychometric properties in these different contexts.

Compared to some of the other scales used in this study, the CCNES had fewer relations with social desirability. Only the distress subscale was related to social desirability (negatively). These findings add further support for validity and reliability of the CCNES. However, an important step in determining the validity of the CCNES is to relate parents' responses to observed parenting behaviors. Until that is done, the degree to which the CCNES reflects true parental behavior is uncertain.

Although the CCNES is comprised of six theoretically distinct subscales, the data in this study suggest that the CCNES may consist of only four empirically distinct subscales. Given the overlap between EFR and PFR, these subscales are not clearly differentiated from one another and it is likely that they may tap a single supportive parental response dimension. Similarly, the subscales of MR and PR appear to tap nonsupportive, harsh parental responses. Further research with children of other ages and with a more diverse sample of parents may reveal more distinct relations for these subscales. Thus, researchers can consider examining the relation among the subscales to see if reducing the number of subscales to four is appropriate and conceptually sound.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

There are several important caveats to the present research. First, the reliability and validity of the CCNES were tested almost entirely with mothers. Unfortunately, there were too few fathers in the present

studies to separate out for comparisons. Thus, we do not know if the CCNES holds together in the same way for fathers as it does for mothers. Nor do we know how the combined parenting practices of fathers and mothers work to affect children's outcomes. Furthermore, the sample used in these studies were volunteers and we cannot be certain the degree to which these findings generalize to other groups of parents or children.

Although the scenarios used in the CCNES represent realistic and varied contexts for the expression of young children's negative emotions, the scenarios include a variety of children's emotions to which parents may respond (e.g., fear, anger, embarrassment, etc.). The subscales do not reflect how a parent responds to different emotions–they reflect generalized responses to the aggregate of children's negative emotions. Parents likely respond differently to different emotional states and use different strategies depending on whether the child is expressing one negative emotion versus another. For example, parents may be less likely to tolerate the expression of anger in their children than they are of fear or sadness (Casey & Fuller, 1994). As such, parental supportiveness likely varies for different types of negative emotional expressions. How parents respond to different emotions in their children, and how these differential responses play out in emotion socialization, is an important topic for future research.

The fact that we did not find any sex differences in parents' responses to the CCNES may be a function of the aggregated way in which the CCNES groups parents' responses across the different emotions. Other researchers have found that parents hold differential expectations for boys and girls and respond differently to their sons and daughters–encouraging sons to control emotions like fear and sadness, but not necessarily anger (Birnbaum & Croll, 1984; Casey & Fuller, 1994). Researchers who are interested in these kinds of questions may want to group certain items in the CCNES together according to the type of negative emotion expressed.

In summary, the CCNES appears to be a valuable tool for examining the ways parents respond to children's negative emotions and how these responses influence children's social and emotional outcomes. The scale (available on-line at: *http://www.public.asu.edu/~rafabes/GUEST.HTM#ccnes*) is psychometrically sound and provides researchers with an instrument that can readily be used to collect rich and predictive data related to parents' responses to children's negative emotions. Moreover, given the relatively few measures that exist, the CCNES is one of the more reliable and valid instruments. Certainly, more testing of the

psychometric properties of the CCNES is needed, but the initial results appear promising and contribute to an increase in our understanding of the complexities that parental responses and parental emotions play in influencing children's emotion socialization.

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