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SOCIALIZATION INTO SINGLE-PARENT BY CHOICE FAMILY LIFE

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Abstract

This paper examines family interactions between mothers and children in single-parent by choice (SPBC) families in Spain. The data is part of a larger multi-sited ethnographic study focused on emergent family structures that examined families formed by women who began their family projects through adoption or assisted reproduction. Single-mothers by choice formulate various socialization goals that are tied to the complexities of their non-conventional family project. These goals are also realized in daily conversation, particularly when families talk about future events in their lives. Our findings expand existing family language socialization research in Western contexts, which has primarily focused on conventional two-parent families, and invite developing a stronger dialogue between family language socialization research and current debates on changing kinship structures in post-industrial societies.

Keywords: Single-Parenthood by Choice - Family Interaction - Language Socialization - Micro-ethnography

Heading: Single-Parent Family Socialization

Socialización a la vida familiar en familias de madres solteras por elección

Resumen

Este trabajo examina interacciones entre madres e hijos/as en familias de madres solteras por elección (MSPE) en España. Los datos provienen de una investigación etnográfica multi-lugar más amplia centrada en modelo familiares emergentes que estudió a familias formadas por mujeres solas que han comenzado su proyecto familiar a través de la reproducción asistida o la adopción. Las madres solteras por elección formulan varias metas de socialización que están ligadas a las complejidades y demandas de su proyecto familiar no convencional. Estos objetivos también se plasman en conversaciones cotidianas, especialmente cuando las familias hablan sobre eventos futuros en su vidas. Nuestros resultados amplían la investigación sobre socialización lingüística familiar en contextos occidentales, que se ha centrado principalmente en familias bi-parentales convencionales, e invitan a desarrollar un diálogo más fructífero entre la investigación sobre socialización lingüística familiar y los debates actuales en torno a cambios en los patrones de parentesco en sociedades post-industriales.

Palabras clave: Maternidad en solitario por elección - Interacción familiar - Socialización Lingüística - Micro-etnografía

Language socialization research was established and has flourished through a commitment to cross-cultural comparative research and attention to cultural and contextual diversity (Ochs and Schieffelin 2012). Seminal studies focused on non-Western and non-dominant communities, among other things, as a counterbalance to the methodological shortcomings and ideological presuppositions of early developmental psycholinguistic studies (Ochs and Schieffelin 2008) and since then research has expanded to numerous cultural, institutional and interactional scenarios as linguistic socialization contexts (Duff and Hornberger 2008; Duranti, Ochs and Schieffelin 2012). One of these strands has focused on family socialization in Western and industrialized contexts and examines routine and day-to-day interactions between parents and children as sites for the construction of family life and children's acculturation into a variety of social values. The literature is cross-nationally rich, covering data from the United States (e.g. Tannen, Kendall and Gordon 2007; Ochs and Kremer-Sadlik 2013), Israel (e.g. Blum-Kulka, 1997), several European countries (e.g. Perregaard 2010; Tulviste, Mizera, de Geer and Tryggvason 2002; Sterponi 2009) or various locations in Asia (e.g. Clancy 1999; Miller, Koven and Lin 2012) and shows how children are socialized through family interactions to gender values and norms, morality, paid work, literacy, political orientation or family roles, among other socialization processes (Ochs and Taylor 1996; Sterponi 2003; Paugh 2005; Snow and Beals 2006; Gordon 2004; Pontecorvo, Fasulo and Sterponi 2001).

Yet, an overview of language socialization studies focused on family life in Western cultural contexts suggests that a series of decisions behind much of this literature have created a portrait of how and where family linguistic socialization occurs in Western families that seems to disregard the attention to diversity that

was part of the impetus of earlier language socialization research. First, the vast majority of family language socialization studies conducted in industrialized contexts have focused on two-parent (and often middle-class, dual-earner homes) heterosexual couples and their biological offspring (i.e. all the references cited above). While this is a perfectly legitimate research decision, this over-representation of certain family configurations in detriment of other family experiences does not acknowledge the variety of paths through which family projects, filial relations and family experiences are constructed in contemporary post-industrial societies (e.g. Beck-Gernsheim 2003; Hertz 2006; Rivas 2009; Marre and Briggs 2009) - and reflects even less the cultural and socio-economic diversity within these societies. More importantly, this focalization on certain types of families has also canalized in particular directions the issues and processes that are relevant for the research agenda in studies of family language socialization in Western contexts. For example, in a series of well known papers that in many respects have been taken as the blue-print for subsequent research - including ours- Ochs and Taylor (1993, 1996) talk about the "father knows best" dynamic in processes of language and gender socialization during meal-time conversations. Their work rests on a powerful theoretical-methodological position about linguistic socialization:

(...) we offer a window into how family hierarchies are constituted in day-to-day family life. Our position is that family exchanges do not simply exemplify gender relations otherwise shaped by forces outside the family but, rather, are the primordial means for negotiating, maintaining, transforming and socializing gender identities. Certainly from the point of view of the child, routine moments of family communication are the

earliest and perhaps the most profound medium for constructing gender understandings (...) (Ochs and Taylor 1996: 100).

This statement and the findings it generated contain various conceptual layers that need to be unpacked. It incorporates an ontological-theoretical proposition about the role of day-to-day interaction in the constitution of social life that is valid for many research problems. It also directs this approach to a particular socialization domain (gender roles and identity) that could easily be replaced by other topics (e.g. morality, work values, family roles, etc.) without disrupting the underlying conceptual apparatus. Yet, it lends support to an analysis of a particular dynamic in the families under study -involving husbands in relation to their wives vis a vis. their children- that plausibly can only occur within particular family configurations and within particular socio-cultural and economic realities. Quite obviously in single-parent households primarily led by women who construe their family life by de-problematizing the absence of a "father" (Hertz 2006; Jociles and Rivas 2010), this particular dynamic does not make much sense. Nor would this dynamic unfold in similar ways in a variety of non-traditional family configurations (e.g. divorced families, families headed by same-sex couples, blended families, etc.). However, to our knowledge, not much work has examined how linguistic socialization processes materialize in non-conventional family configurations in Western post-industrial contexts (cf. Fogle 2012).

Second, with notable exceptions, family language socialization studies of the type discussed so far have often focused on mealtime and dinner time conversations as the central site for family linguistic socialization (Larson, Branscomb and Wiley 2006, Blum-Kulka 2008). Again, there are good reasons to

support this decision. On one hand, across national contexts the cultural importance of meal sharing as a central family moment has been underscored. On the other hand, focusing on mealtimes simplifies greatly the technicalities of producing good quality audio and video recordings of interaction and may facilitate access to participants in a research space that poses many methodological and ethical challenges. However, this over-reliance on mealtimes as 'the' family socialization moment does not seem to be aligned with the various strands of research that discuss the changing patterns in time-use and the organization of daily routines in which many middle-class families in industrialized societies seem to be immersed (e.g. Daly 2001, Ochs and Kremer-Sadlik 2013) and which, for example, have identified activities such as transportation, media consumption or daily chores as equally important socialization moments in some families (Poveda, Morgade and González-Patiño 2012; Noy 2012). Yet, many family language socialization studies seem to fall short from having participants themselves define when 'quality family time' takes place and document these moments - rather than have researchers select the moments of family interaction to be documented based on their own theoretical and technical preferences. In the project we present in this paper, participants themselves were aware of these complexities and of the serendipitous quality of family time. In fact, as illustrated in the extract below (used with permission), this attribute of family life was offered as a reason to decline participation in the study:

Extract 1: E-mail response (original in Spanish)

I have been reading carefully the proposal and, I am sorry, but I am afraid I would not feel comfortable. I have thought about it over and over but I feel

I would not be natural or sincere; it is difficult for me to share our intimacy with images and sound. Especially, because those moments in which we 'do' family time are very intimate, such as when I put my daughter to bed, when we hug and talk or in other unusual moments...

Third, many of the studies of mealtime interactions reviewed so far have focused on conversational narratives -often, but not always, defined conventionally as the recapitulation of past experiences (Labov 1972) - as the primordial genre in family linguistic socialization dynamics. Needless to say that there is vast empirical and theoretical support for this assumption and it would be absurd to put it into question (Miller, Koven and Lin 2012). But it also seems that this virtually monographic interest in conversational narratives emerges as a presupposed convention and perhaps not sufficient attention has been paid to the possibility that other linguistic resources might also be put into action by parents and children to accomplish their socialization goals, even in ritualized events such as mealtime conversations.

This is the context against which we planned our study of daily interactions in Spanish single-parent by choice (SPBC) families - defined, as explained below, as families formed by single women who become mothers through adoption or assisted reproduction (Jociles and Medina 2013; Hertz 2006). As part of a larger three-year ethnographic project focused on the construction of SPBC families in Spain we understood that gaining a fuller picture of socialization processes in single-parent families would also require documenting daily interactions in these families. Our goal was to examine if and how a number of central issues in the construction of parenthood and childhood in single-parent families by choice which had emerged as very relevant in interviews with parents

and children, observations of interactional spaces between single-parents (both virtual and face-to-face) and media and technical documents about single-parent families also emerged in mundane conversations and routine activities between parents and children. Specifically, at least three interrelated socialization goals that emerged in the ethnographic data as important to SPBC families could potentially come to life in daily interaction in powerful ways:

(a) In SPBC families the mother-child dyad is the central social unit of the family and this unit is not defined by the absence of a father. Yet, this dyad is immersed in a system of social relations relevant to the child which may include other significant adults, children and, particularly, a network of other SPBC families (Poveda, Jociles and Rivas 2011; Jociles, Poveda and Rivas 2013).

(b) Single-mothers build a family project that is highly reflexive where numerous aspects of their experience are collectively scrutinized and discussed. Among the topics that are addressed by single-parents is children's agency and children's role in the construction of their single-parent family project and how it can be made visible in family life - growing out of the concern that it is mothers who 'choose' to be single-parents and not children who 'choose' to be conceived or adopted by a single-mother (Jociles, Rivas and Poveda 2012; cf. Hertz 2006).

(c) In contrast to what, at least in Spain, is reported in relation to other family configurations that are made possible through the same "procedures" (adoption or assisted reproduction), single-parent families tend to have a policy of open disclosure. Explicit discussion of children's origins and the processes involved in the constitution of their family

project is an important aspect of socialization into a single-parent by choice family (Jociles, Rivas and Poveda 2014).

This paper examines how these dimensions of SPBC family life become part of children's linguistic socialization and how they are realized in daily family interactions. To do this we collected a set of family conversations that would allow developing an analysis strongly grounded in the theoretical and methodological principles of the family linguistic socialization studies discussed so far. Yet, given the issues raised above, we started out with an alternative set of methodological decisions and conceptual precautions. We made an effort to avoid using the literature on family interactions in two-parent homes as a the normative referent, which would facilitate discussing interactions in single-parent families in terms of what they 'lack' or 'cannot achieve' in interaction. In light of our ethnographic data and discussions of changing patterns of family time-use and routines, we specifically transferred the task of selecting what constitutes 'family time' and what are the relevant family socialization spaces to participants. Finally, although we did start out assuming that the recapitulation of past events (i.e. narratives) would play an important role in family interactions we soon discovered that other discursive activities had both a quantitative and qualitative relevance in family conversations that deserved attention.

METHODOLOGY

Our larger multidisciplinary study on the construction of single-parent families by choice in Spain targeted single women and men who formed or planned to form their family projects through assisted reproduction, adoption or permanent foster care (in the case of single men). The study recruited participants in three regions in Spain (Madrid, Valencia and Catalonia) and included semi-structured

interviews with 104 single-parents (91 women and 13 men), 34 professionals and consultants of various types in the fields of adoption or assisted reproduction and the collection of visual materials and interviews with 15 children. The study also involved extensive participant observation in virtual spaces where single-parents participate, collective activities of single-parent by choice associations and institutional activities in assisted reproduction clinics and public/non-for profit adoption agencies. Finally, the study examined in detail legislative, technical and research documents relevant to single-parenthood in Spain, as well as various media reports that covered this topic in Spain during the years of the study.

For the collection of interactional data we contacted families who had participated in previous stages of the study (i.e. either children or parents had been interviewed in previous stages of the study and often both). In this telephone, face-to-face or electronic petition we presented the main goals of the interactional study and if they were interested in participating we delivered the materials and instructions for this part of the study. Participating families were given digital audio-recorders and asked to record at least two events in their family routines in which they considered they were 'doing being a family' (original in Spanish: *momentos en los que hacéis familia*). We also asked, if possible, to take photographs of these events or the settings where the conversations took place and to provide a brief written summary of when, where and why the recordings were made when these were returned either by mail or in hand to researchers.

Five families agreed to participate in this part of the project. All families were headed by middle-class single-mothers, four from the Madrid region and one from Valencia region (although the recordings of one of the Madrid families took place between July-September when the family had relocated to Valencia for the

summer). Four children (including a pair of fraternal twins) were conceived through assisted reproduction (AR), two siblings were biological offspring from the same 'known donor' (KD) and another mother had one adopted child (AD) and a daughter from a previous relationship. All the participating children were between 3-8 years of age at the time of the recordings.

Recordings were collected between April 2011 and August 2012 and lasted approximately between 30 to 120 minutes across families. Families recorded between 7-11 events and, as we show below, the settings are varied and include meals (breakfasts, snacks and dinner), traveling in cars, bathing time, games and crafts at home, storytelling, bedtime routines or homework. In this paper a simplified version of the transcription conventions developed in conversation analysis (Jefferson 2004) is used for the excerpts that are presented and analyzed.

INTERACTIONAL TOOLS FOR SOCIALIZATION INTO SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES BY CHOICE

Our first intuition was to start out by examining conversational narratives, based on a relatively conventional definition of narrative as temporally organized talk about past events (Labov 1972), as the interactional space for socialization into family roles and experiences. However, with the initial coding aimed at identifying these discursive sequences we discovered that talking about future events in family life occupied a much more visible place in the data. In quantitative terms, across the transcripts we identified at least 122 discursive sequences in which the topic of talk was temporally displaced from the present activity and context and of these 77 (63%) focused on future courses of action and events¹.

Developmental psycholinguists have paid attention to talk about the future

as a cognitive and linguistic achievement in children (Snow 1977; Atance and O'Neill 2001) and parent-child conversations about future events have been examined in terms of their cognitive implications for children (Hudson 2002). However, to our knowledge, the role this type of interactional focalization can play in children's family socialization and the construction of different family roles has not been examined in much detail within linguistic socialization research. As advanced above, a good deal of family linguistic socialization research tends to focus on conversational narratives, choosing mealtimes as the privileged moment for recounting the events of the day and the "mutual exchange of stories and ideas by adults and children" (Blum-Kulka 2008: 96-97). Drawing on a traditional definition of narrative, the opposition between past events and future possible scenarios would point towards different discursive genres but this opposition is misleading and does it fit well with current discussions of narrative (e.g. De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2012; Ochs and Capps 2001) or even of the definitions of narrative talk used in some studies of family conversations (Snow and Beals 2006). In fact, the tools developed within narrative analysis can be productively applied to analyze conversations about future events and scenarios. For example, Bauman (1986, 2004) has examined in detail how the dynamic relationship between the narrated events (the context, time and actions of the story) and the narrative event (the context, time and participants in the telling of the story) plays a role in the configuration of participants' identities. Given the visibility of talk about projected future events, whether distant or most immediate, in the single-parent families we have studied, the question then is if this focus on future events also plays a role in their present construction of family identities and/or emerges as a linguistic tool in relation to some of the socialization goals we

advanced in the introduction.

Our analysis suggests that this is indeed the case. In the excerpts and discussion below we will show how conversational projections into participants' future courses of action or life-scenarios opens up interactional opportunities through which some of the socialization goals of single-parent families by choice are brought to life in daily conversations. Through conversations about the future children can explore the system of family social relations that are presently relevant and will continue to be relevant in their lives. In conversations about future courses of action involving children and their mothers, children's agency and their role in family decision-making is actively negotiated. Finally, talk about family future plans and changes can also create opportunities to discuss the origin and procedural specificities of these women's single-parent family project. These three broad socialization and ideological goals are intertwined and may be achieved simultaneously during the same episodes of interaction. Yet, to facilitate the discussion, in the following sub-sections we illustrate and analyze how certain features and affordances of talking about future events during daily conversations can contribute to the construction of a particular family experience and of the roles children and adults play in SPBC families.

The Family System through Time

A first feature of talk about the future that is relevant to how mothers and children construe their family life is that, from the point of view of the child's expected life-course, the "future" encompasses an extended time scale spanning talk about events taking place minutes, weeks or years after the conversational event (cf. Lemke 2000). More importantly for our goals, this flexibility allows participants to discuss and negotiate what social relations are currently relevant in their lives

and project their place in the proximate or distant future.

Extract 2: *Vacation the week after next*

Participants: Ana (mother, AR) and Juan (5 years old). Setting: Sitting at the kitchen table while Juan has breakfast. Ana sounds very sleepy, yawns frequently and talks slowly. Recording: December 2011.

1 Ana: (...) do you know that not next week (.) the other (.) we are going
on vacation?

*¿tú sabes que la semana que viene no (.) la otra (.) nos vamos
de vacaciones?*

2 Jua: where?

¿a dónde?

3 Ana: to (Daniel)

a (Daniel)

4 Jua: with who?

¿con quién?

5 Ana: say someone (2)

di alguien (2)

6 Jua: XXX-

7 Ana: -no::↓ of the mommies

-no::↓ de las mamis

8 Jua: Montse

Monste

9 Ana: Montse:: in fact (.) is thinking about it (.) say another one

Montse:: justo (.) está dudando (.) a ver otra

10 Jua: XXX

11 Ana: what?

¿qué?

13 Jua: Maripaz

Maripaz=

14 Ana: =Maripaz

Maripaz

15 Jua: (who?)

(¿quién?)

16 Ana: Marga Aitor's mother (be careful)

Marga la mamá de Aitor (cuidado)

17 Jua: (who else?)

(¿quién más?)

19 Ana: we will be like:: like forty or fifty people

vamos de-vamos como:: como cuarenta o cincuenta personas

20 Jua: more than a hundred?

¿más de cien?

21 Ana: no like fifty

no como cincuenta

(...)

This episode starts with a question by the mother in which an up-coming vacation trip is announced (line 1). With the time-frame established, the introduction of the topic leads to a quick sequence of orientation questions in which the child attempts to establish the 'where' and 'who' of the trip (lines 2 and 4). Yet, Ana responds to Juan's second question with an additional initiation in which the child is invited to enlist other participants in the vacation trip (line 5).

Juan's first unintelligible answer is corrected by his mother and replaced by an alternative set of participants (line 7). The critical issue for analysis here is Ana's chosen label: she describes the pool of companions as 'the mommies' *las mamis* and simultaneously puts into motion two processes. First, the label opens up a categorization mechanism in which, in terms of membership categorization (Sacks 1972, Schegloff 2007), a collection of motherhood categories is introduced. Although the label is generic (i.e. 'the mommies'), in interaction it is in fact used to single-out a particular set within this collection: those belonging to the association of single-mothers by choice to which Ana is affiliated. Throughout the multiple question-answer sequence which follows, Juan and Ana only recall individual members of the association as part of the vacation group (lines 8-17). Ana belongs to this association and through this conversational categorization the type of family project it represents for Ana and Juan permeates their talk. Second, illustrating a socialization goal of SPBC families that is explicitly articulated during interviews and in other materials (Poveda, Jociles and Rivas 2011), the importance of the wider social network formed by other single-parent families in children's lives is reinforced. They spend vacation time together as a group and form a support network with which children are intimately acquainted (lines 14-16). Additionally, SPBC families are part of a numerous community, at least in terms of the magnitudes that are relevant to children (lines 19-21) - and being part of a critical mass of similar families is in itself seen as especially relevant for mothers as part of the process of 'normalizing' children's experiences in single-parent families (Poveda, Jociles and Rivas 2011; Jociles, Rivas and Poveda 2012).

While talk about children's relatively immediate future helps highlight one feature of how single-parent family are defined (i.e. how these families are part of

larger support network), conversations about the more distant future may underscore other dimensions of how family projects are construed. Conversations that move participants into the distant future help shape the role of the mother-child dyad in the configuration of single-parent families.

Extract 3: *When I grow up*

Participants: Clara (mother, AR), Jorge and Sonia (twins, 4 years old).

Setting: The car, in the morning driving to school. Recording: April 2011.

1 Cla: (...) Cesar is still at school because Cesar gets out later (.) since he is older he gets out later

*César está en el cole todavía, porque César sale más tarde (.)
como es mayor sale más tarde.*

2 Jor: when I grow up I will get out late

Yo cuando sea mayor voy a salir tarde

3 Cla: [of course

[claro

4 Son: [and when I grow up I will get out late with my aripla::ne=

[y cuando yo sea mayor voy a salir tarde con mi avión:::n=

5 Cla: =in your plane, Sonia? are you going to work a lot in your plane

Sonia?

*=¿en tu avión vas a salir tarde, Sonia? ¿vas a trabajar mucho en
tu avión, Sonia?*

6 Son: ye::s

sí::

7 Cla: are you going to be a pilot?↑=

¿vas a ser pilota?↑=

8 Son: =airplane pilot?

=*pilota de avión*

9 Cla: uf:: great! you are going to take us from one place to another

¡uf:: que bien! nos va a llevar de un lado a otro

10 Son: (no)

(*no*)

11 Jor: wherever we go!=

¡a donde vayamos!=

12 Cla: sure, you will take me and Jorge on a trip, ok Sonia?=
=*claro, a Jorge y a mí nos llevas de viaje, ¿vale Sonia?*=

13 Son: =no! I will take you and Jorge to-to-I to the park

=*¡no! a Jorge y a ti yo le-le llevo al parque*

(...)

This segment opens with Jorge making a statement about his life as an adult (line 2) that is tied to Clara's previous utterance (line 1). This claim is expanded by his sister, who is sitting next to Jorge in the back seat of the car, with a format tied turn (Goodwin 1990) that includes Jorge's utterance and an extension in which she specifies her form of transportation (line 4). The linguistic construction of her turn ('my airplane') is quickly uptaken by her mother to establish a professional future and spell out the role Sonia will to play within aviation: airplane 'pilot' *pilota* - produced with an unconventional feminine gender suffix introduced by the mother and recycled by Sonia (lines 7-8: *pilot-a*).

This professional specification and its linguistic construction clearly is part of gender socialization work in the family, however, what we want to highlight here is how this theme also allows family members to establish temporal

continuities in terms of their family relational system. In the present, Sonia and Jorge's family unit is composed of Clara and her two children and in the future this system will continue to be relevant (lines 9-11). In the present, joint activity and family time is often structured by transportation needs while Clara drives her children to school, to their grandparents home or to other errands (e.g. Noy 2012; Barker 2009), very much like the conversation taking place in Excerpt 3. As construed by Clara, this joint activity and system of relations will continue in the future, although then Sonia will be in charge of transportation and the means to do so will be different - something the mother playfully frames as a relief from the family chore (line 9: 'uff great!' ;*uff que bien!*). Interestingly, Sonia also finds a way to outline the temporal continuities between the present and the future in terms of who will be the family unit and what they will be doing together. From Sonia's perspective the activities in the future will be very much the same as those taking place in the present: when she grows up she will be in charge of flying her brother and mother to the park (line 13). In other words, while moving the topic of conversation away from the immediate surroundings and materiality of the vehicle (cf. Goodwin and Goodwin 2012) and into the distant future, Jorge, Sonia and Clara explore some of the features of their present family unit and the relations and activities that bond them together.

Negotiating Children's Agency in Family Life

A second feature of talking about future events that reflects the socialization goals of single-parents by choice is how it facilitates developing children's agency in their daily lives (cf. Fogle 2012). Announcing and discussing a future course of action means, whether explicitly or implicitly, contemplating alternative paths. The child or the mother may introduce a candidate activity into the conversation

but, as a joint project, this requires some form of acknowledgment by interlocutors. Indeed, for the purposes of construing children's involvement and decision making capability, acceptance of an activity proposed by their mother is potentially an agentic act as any other (Ahearn 2001). However, for the purposes of interactional analysis, children's agency is made visible better when parental plans are resisted and children formulate alternative courses of action. Additionally, non-compliance with mother's proposal can be discursively shaped in various ways. It can be articulated more implicitly through non-acknowledgement of adult's proposals or children may forcefully collide with maternal plans, as in the following extract:

Extract 4: *Night walk*

Participants: Samuel (3 years old) and Paula (mother, AR). Setting: Having dinner in a vacation home in Valencia. Recording: August 2011.

(...)

1 Sam: I want to go to the poo-I-mean to the park

quiero ir a la pis-a-osea a parque

2 Pau: yes now when you are finished having dinner we are going to go for a little walk and to the park, ok?

sí ahora cuando acabes de cenar vamos a ir a dar un paseíto y al parque ¿vale?

(3)

3 Sam: no::! for a little walk no! to the park

¡no::! a dar un paseíto ¡no! al parque

4 Pau: and not for a little wa::lk?

y a dar un paseí::to, ¿no?

5 Sam: no::

no::

6 Pau: why::?↑=

¿por qué::?↑=

7 Sam: =I don't want to!=

=¡que no quiero!=

8 Pau: =a little bit (...)

=un poquito (...)

9 Sam: no:: (2) I don't want to (.) I don't want to go for a little walk

no:: (2) no quiero (.) no quiero a dar un paseíto

10 Pau: why not?

¿por qué no?

11 Sam: because no=

porque no=

12 Pau: =its very nice to go for a little walk in the sea-side walk=oh and

let's see! if they sell movies (.) for exa::mple mmh Kung Fu Panda

=que es muy agradable ir al paseíto de la playa=¡ah y vamos a

ver! si venden alguna peli (.) por eje::mplo:: mmh Kung Fu Panda

13 Sam: no

no

14 Pau: ¿no?↑

no?↑

15 Sam: no the-one'ith the wolf

no la-lel lobo

16 Pau: the one with the wolf? which one is the one with the wolf? I don't

know that one↑ which one is it?

¿la del lobo? ¿cuál es la del lobo? no me la se yo esa↑ ¿cuál es?

(...)

In this episode during a dinner conversation between Paula and Samuel, it is the child who actively attempts to set the agenda for the evening. While eating he announces he wants to go to the park (line 1), a petition his mother acknowledges but rephrases into a two-part plan that includes going for a night stroll in the village's sea-side walk and then to a park (line 2). However, this reformulation is quickly responded to and Samuel emphatically rejects the additional activity - going for a 'little walk' *paseíto* (line 3). This leads to a negotiation sequence between mother and child in which the mother attempts to accommodate into the nightly outing a part that she might also find pleasurable: going for a walk in the popular sea-side walk and not only to a children's playground. Yet, in the exchange sequence the child consistently and stubbornly opposes this effort across several attempts by the mother (lines 3-11). This leads Paula to change her strategy. First, she provides a positive assessment (from her perspective) of the night stroll part. Second, she expands this initial qualification by adding a new activity during the night walk that the child might find appealing (line 12): Paula suggests they could also see if the street vendors they might come across in the sea-side walk sell movies Samuel might like and even suggests a possible movie she and Samuel could look for (*Kung Fu Panda*).

This alternative plan might turn out to be attractive to Samuel and, if accepted, it would involve retracting from the resolute resistance he has maintained so far to any plan other than going to the playground after dinner. However, Samuel finds a way to diffuse this dilemma and continues to present

himself as active designer of how the family will spend the evening's remaining leisure time. He reacts with a direct negation (line 13), which results in a clarification request by the mother (line 14), given the semantic ambiguity regarding what is specifically negated - i.e. going for a night-walk, going to street vendors, the choice of movie, all of the above, etc. Samuel's response determines that what he proposes is to look for an alternative movie ('the one with the wolf', line 15). This implicitly acknowledges his acceptance of the alternative plan set out by his mother, but leads to an additional series of exchanges (not transcribed) in which Samuel attempts to take the lead in relation to how the details of the evening outing are planned - for example, by determining what films they will seek out when they meet street vendors.

In short, talking about future plans -especially, as in the extract above shows, immediately upcoming options for family leisure time- provides opportunities for children to emerge as active agents in family decision-making processes. This contributes to construe children as engaged parties in their family life and realizes in interaction the socialization goal of single-mothers by choice of giving visibility and voice to their children in their shared family project.

Discussing the Construction of a Single-Parent Family Project

In most of the instances we have presented so far single-parenthood as a structural feature of family life does not appear as an explicit conversation topic. However, there are occasions in which the singularities of the single-parent project are discussed explicitly and become topics of conversation much beyond the categorization process and inferential work that unfolded in Extract 2. These issues become the explicit topic of conversation when mothers discuss children's origins (and related issues such as the 'absence of a father') with their children or

other interlocutors. In the cases we have investigated, where forming a family involves complex relationships with an array of institutions, professional discourses and bureaucratic or biomedical procedures, these conversations involve complex accounts which mother's have reflexively designed and worked on intensely.

Previous work in our project and other research shows that discussions of children's origins and of the particular ways in which their family project is configured are often construed as narratives (Jociles, Rivas and Poveda 2014, Kirkman 2003). Mothers construct and present to their children complex narratives, which may combine personal and literary elements and are formulated in the canonical narrative past tense, of their origins. However, as we also show here, since families are dynamic systems and mothers may be embarked in projects such a second pregnancy or planning a new adoption, talking about these future family transitions can also become an opportunity to explore the origins and specific characteristics of their family experience. Further, since these accounts involve children as interlocutors who will play a role in how these future transitions unfold, their interactional shaping and content is much more indeterminate, open to negotiation and co-constructed with children. This again contrasts with how 'origin narratives' are constructed, where what is often foregrounded are the motivations and circumstances of yet-to-be mothers (Jociles, Rivas and Poveda 2014), and supports the idea that more 'spontaneous' conversational interaction provides specific socialization opportunities to discuss the nature of the single-parent project.

Conversations around future changes in the family allow incorporating children into the challenges and complexities involved in the paths to motherhood

we have investigated. Thus, while women's 'first' pregnancy or adoption is construed as an individual experience (albeit, often lived through with the support of a network of other single-mothers, friends and family), subsequent attempts to extend the family are construed as shared experiences between mothers and children. The following lengthy extract of a conversation between a mother and her daughter about plans to adopt a third child illustrates the array of issues that emerge in these types of interactions:

Extract 5: *Adopting another child*

Participants: Belmar (mother, AD), Andrea (9 years old) and Basil (2 years old). Setting: Belmar and Andrea are bathing Basil, who hardly speaks but splashes frequently. Recording: March 2012.

(...)

1 Bel: if Basil already sleeps in his room↑ then the baby↑ (.) will sleep in the crib↓ (.) in my [room]

si Basil duerme ya en su habitación↑ pues el bebé↑(.) dormirá en la cuna↓ (.) en la mía

2 And: no:: with him (.)

no:: con él (.)

3 Bel: I don't think so the first year [he/she] probably in my room=

no creo el primer año igual está en mi habitación=

4 And: =the first year=

=el primer año=

5 Bel: =yes=

=sí=

6 And: >(later) with him<

>(después) ya con él<

7 Bel: of course, later with him [yes but at the beginning its better that

he/she i::s-

claro después ya con él [sí pero al principio es mejor que este::-

8 And: [yes

[si

9 And: -and when are we going (to take) the paperwork?

-¿y cuándo vamos (a llevar) los papeles?

11 Bel: the paperwork?

¿los papeles?

12 And: ye::s the paperwork

sí:: los papeles

13 Bel: but why are you suddenly in such a hurry? ((laughs))

pero ¿por qué tienes tanta prisa de repente? ((risas))

14 And: I don't know (.) >because the boy is getting old<

no sé (.) >porque el niño se nos hace mayor<

15 Bel: what do you mean he is getting old? which? (.) him?

¿cómo que se nos hace mayor? ¿cuál? (.) ¿él?

16 And: no::! the other boy

¡no::! el otro niño

17 Bel: the other boy? but if first we have to (but first we have to)-(&)

¿el otro niño? pero si primero hay que (pero si primero)-(&)

18 And: -even if he is not born yet he is getting old!

-¡aunque no hay nacido todavía, que se nos hace mayor!

19 Bel: (&) first we have to take the paperwork (.) they they have to

interview us (.) then they have to decide that yes we can have
another child=

*(&) primero hay que llevar los papeles (.) luego que nos hagan las
entrevistas (.) luego que decidan que sí que podemos tener otro
niño=*

20 And: =I think that we can, if we chose one that is a month old, when
they decide to bring it (Basil) will already be six right? (.)

*=yo creo que sí podemos, si lo elegimos de un mes, cuando lo
quieran traer (Basil) ya tendrá seis ¿no? (.)*

21 Bel: if we ask the he is young, younger than Basil which would be (.) the
normal thing, that he is younger=

*si pedimos que sea pequeño, más pequeño que Basil que sería (.) lo
normal, que sea más pequeño=*

22 And: =less than a year

=menos de un año

23 Bel: then (.) we will have to see when we go well (.) what child they (.)

assign °I don't know°, but all this supposing that::t supposing that
they say that we can Andrea, [°which I don't know°

pues (.) habrá que ver cuando:: vayamos pues (.) que niño nos (.)

*asignan, °no se° pero esto suponiendo que:: suponiendo que nos
digan que sí que podemos Andrea, [°que no lo sé°*

24 And: [no: (.) with Basil they said yes!

[no: (.) ¡con Basil nos dijeron

que sí!

25 Bel: I know::w but now-now its three of us=Basil don't take of the tap

ok? don't take it off, don't take it off (...)

*ya:: pero ahora ya somos-ahora ya somos tres=Basil no quites el
tapón ¿vale? no lo quites, no lo quites (...)*

26 And: so? can't we be four?

¿y qué? ¿no podemos ser cuatro?

27 Bel: well (they have to tell us) (.) they have to decide (they) the social
worker and the psychologist (.) it's not the same- (...)

*pues (nos lo tienen que decir) (.) lo tienen que decidir (ellas) la
trabajadora social y la psicóloga (.) no es lo mismo- (...)*

28 Bel: (...) it's not the same taking care of two than taking care of three-
taking care of two than taking care of three (...)

*(...) no es lo mismo cuidar de dos que cuidar de tres-cuidar de dos
que cuidar de tres (...)*

This episode illustrates well how mother and daughter discuss a central feature of their SPBC family project and how to do so in conversation they situate themselves in three different future temporal frames. At the opening of the conversation (lines 1-8), uptaking Belmar's initiative (line 1), they move forward to an imagined future in which the family has successfully adopted a second infant (and third child in the family). Here they start by discussing what would be the best sleeping arrangements in the family when the new adopted child was brought home - assuming the child arrived as an infant and a special organization would be necessary during this first year (lines 1 and 4).

This discussion of the practicalities of the imagined first year of family life with a new adopted infant leads Andrea to turn to a previous future moment related to the extremely complex and time-consuming bureaucratic process of

completing an international adoption in Spain (line 9), which can take years to be completed and has very uncertain outcomes especially for single parents (Poveda, Jociles and Rivas 2013). Andrea's shift is glossed in a colloquialism, 'take the paperwork' *llevar los papeles*, which suggests she is already familiar with the adoption procedure and is even socialized into the dynamics of dealing with bureaucratic institutions - Basil's adoption was recently completed and Andrea has been an integral part of the process during the years it took for the process to be completed successfully. However, from the mother's perspective, Andrea seems to misconstrue the complexities that are involved, assuming that it is relatively straightforward and only a matter of timing (lines 14-18). This leads to a step-by-step account by Belmar of the adoption process and of all the procedures they will have to go through once again if they decide to embark in a second adoption (lines 19-24). This overview is closed with an assessment of the outcome in which the uncertainties are stressed and the possibility that the suitability assessment for this adoption may be unsuccessful is left quite open (line 23) - something which is more than possible in the Spanish adoption system, particularly in the case of single-parents and potentially more so within this particular complex family project (Bermejo and Casalilla 2009).

This potential negative outcome is rejected by Andrea (line 24), which moves interlocutors to a third more generalized future time frame in which, if the second adoption were to be successful, the demands of the newly extended family becomes the focus of conversation. It is important to highlight how this temporal shift also explicitly brings to focus the 'single-parent headed' aspect of their family. Until now, this second adoption project and the family decision-making activities behind it have been construed as a joint effort between Andrea and

Belmar - something that also highlights Andrea's agency and active role in family life. Linguistically, this involved sustaining the account in the first person plural, which in Spanish is incorporated in verbal morphology, and, in fact, this is the collective definition of family which Andrea's puts forward when she challenges that their project could be questioned by Spanish child protection authorities (line 26: 'can't we be four?' *¿no podemos ser cuatro?*). In contrast, when Belmar attempts to reproduce the mindset of the psychologist and social worker who would be in charge of assessing her petition, she highlights what she interprets will be the relevant issue: that she will be the individual care-taker of three children (line 28: 'it's not the same taking care of two than taking care of three' repeated twice in her turn).

This move displaces Andrea from the role of co-decision maker in the family to the role of care-recipient and indirectly, in combination with the preceding conversation, presents mother and daughter with two alternative portraits of their family project. One, which they are co-constructing for themselves, in which joint collaboration by all capable family members is stressed and a second representation, presented as a projection of what Spanish adoption authorities would highlight, in which single-motherhood is underscored. This articulation of competing portraits of their family project also summarizes another aspect of the interactional work achieved so far. The review of the steps involved in the second adoption allows participants -more visibly Andrea- to position (Korobov 2001) themselves with respect to these alternative projections, tying family micro-interactional dynamics to larger social and institutional ideologies in relation to family diversity and single-parenthood (cf. Medina 2013; Poveda, Jociles, Rivas and Villaamil 2013).

In summary, other pieces of data of our project drawn from observations, interviews and visual materials already established what type of family project single-mothers attempt to articulate and how children understand their family system. Here we have shown how some of the features of what it means to be part of a SPBC family are enacted in daily interactions and, as shown, are particularly susceptible of being worked through in conversations about future events involving family members. In the final discussion we highlight some of the implications of our findings from a language socialization perspective and discuss further some of the methodological decisions that underpin our analysis.

DISCUSSION

Language socialization research "examines how young children and other novices, through interactions with older and/or more experienced persons, acquire the knowledge and practices that are necessary for them to function as, and be regarded as, competent members of their communities" (Garrett and Baquedano-López 2002: 341). In this paper the communities under study are families formed by single-women who decide to build a family on their own through adoption or assisted reproduction. As part of this project, these women face particular challenges and express concerns that are relatively specific to their type of family project and which they articulate as socialization goals for their children. The data we have presented attempts to show how these goals emerge and are brought to life in a variety of interactional scenarios which constitute children's daily activity in their families - and not only special occasions and pre-organized events in which these goals may also be pursued (Poveda, Jociles and Rivas 2011; Alonso 2012). More accurately, what our findings show are multiple instances in which children and mothers engage each other into their particular family project and in

which children emerge as active protagonists in the joint construction of their family experience. In other words, while the socialization goals we identified at the onset of the paper are reflexively articulated by mothers in various ways, their interactional unfolding clearly supports a view of socialization as a bi-directional and mutually constructed process in which children socialize their mothers into family roles as well (Pontecorvo, Fasulo and Sterponi 2001, Fogle 2012).

To recapitulate, mothers and children in conversation can explore how their family system, which has at its center a parent-child dyad embedded in a network of social relations (Poveda, Jociles and Rivas 2011; Jociles, Poveda and Rivas 2013), is structured in the present and might continue to evolve in the future (Extracts 2, 3 and 5). Daily conversation also provides opportunities to discuss the complex procedures (for adoption mostly bureaucratic and biomedical in the case of assisted reproduction) that are part of forming a single-parent family and, even present what might be the ideological imperatives that mediate the construction of this type of family project (Extract 5). Finally, across all extracts, we see how children in these family projects are given a protagonist role within their families. The first two socialization processes are quite explicitly tied to the structure and characteristics of the SPBC families we have studied and we could probably claim they are quite specific to single-parent families by choice and even the Spanish context. For example, conversations that underscore the relevance of other single-parent families and participation in an associative movement as a significant element of children's family experiences seems to be something that plays an important role in Spanish SPBC families (Poveda, Jociles and Rivas 2011) but is not reported to be a part of the social support networks single-mothers by choice in the United States build (Hertz and Ferguson 1998). Additionally, explicit

discussion of the various institutionalized (bio-medical or bureaucratic) processes and actors (health professionals, psychologists, biological families of the country of origin, donors, etc.) who play a role in the formation of single-parent family projects seems to be something that happens openly more often in single-parent families than in two-parent heterosexual families formed through adoption or assisted reproduction. Yet, how these elements are pieced together is very much mediated by the particular constraints of Spanish legislation and professional practice regarding adoption (Jociles and Charro 2008) or assisted reproduction (Álvarez 2006), more generally and particularly for the case of single mothers. For example, as our larger research project has shown, professionals (which includes law experts, psychologists, social workers or adoption consultants) in the field of adoption in Spain scrutinize intensely and raise many concerns regarding adoption by single women (Poveda, Jociles and Rivas 2013; Poveda, Jociles, Rivas and Villaamil 2013; Medina 2013). This, tied to normative constraints in various countries regarding adoptions by single individuals, makes the process of adoption by single parents in Spain much more cumbersome and uncertain than for heterosexual couples and these concerns are openly discussed with children (Extract 5).

In contrast, creating spaces for children's agency in family interaction is most probably not exclusive or more relevant to SPBC families than to other (middle-class) family configurations (Blum-Kulka 2008). However, our claim is that while supporting children's agency might be something that is visible in the interactional order of a variety of families, the role it plays in children's family socialization might be different for each family - as well as the particular linguistic ways through which children's agency is expressed in interaction. For

the SPBC families we have studied, as advanced in the introduction, underscoring children's agency plays a role in filiation and the co-construction with children of a single-parent family project. SPBC identity is defined by the presence of children (as opposed to adult's sexual orientation or identity or the couple's marital status) and while single-mothers have actively constructed this as their individual and responsible choice they, simultaneously, raises concerns about children's roles in this decision (Jociles, Rivas and Poveda 2012). Open and candid discussion of children's origins, whether adopted children's biological families and relatives or the different "figures" involved in assisted reproduction (Poveda, Jociles and Rivas 2011; Jociles, Rivas and Poveda 2014), requires substantial involvement and co-participation on the part of children and contributes to this. Our claim is that allowing children to be decision-makers on more mundane issues such as those we have presented in the extracts above also contributes to construe children as co-participants in the single-parent by choice family project. Noticeably, Fogle's (2012) study of linguistic socialization in adoptive families (one of which was headed by a single-parent) pays central attention to children agency in family discourse for reasons that are mostly compatible with our argument. Thus, even though the literature on family linguistic socialization in diverse family configurations in Western contexts is scarce, there is some convergence in terms of underscoring children's agency in daily interaction in non-conventional families as a process tied to constructing non-conventional family projects.

To conclude, more generally, our analysis points towards the need for two separate strands of research to begin a dialogue. On one hand, sociological, anthropological and even psychological research on changing family dynamics and emerging kinship structures in late modern societies (e.g. Inhorn and

Birenbaum-Carmeli 2008, Palacios and Brodzinsky 2010) should pay much more attention to interactional dynamics, with the appropriate methodological apparatus, to begin to understand how family experience is actually played out in daily life. This would involve not relying only on what is reported in interviews, surveys or observations that are not amenable to sequential analysis of interaction and incorporate procedures typical of micro-ethnographic and linguistic socialization research of the type reviewed in the introduction. On the other hand, family linguistic socialization studies in industrialized contexts need to move beyond middle-class two-parent families and attempt to grasp how linguistic socialization dynamics unfold across the variety of configurations that are part of contemporary family life and how linguistic practices contribute to enact family diversity. This would contribute to make relevant the language socialization perspective not only to linguistic anthropological or sociolinguistic research on families but also to broader cross-disciplinary discussions about changing kinship and family processes in late modern societies. Our paper addresses one particular crossing of these two traditions by focusing on single-parenthood by choice in Spain -but similar claims could be made for a variety of family experiences (cf. Fogle 2012)- and illustrates the potentials of this dialogue. On one hand, we show the richness of daily interaction as an empirical space to understand the construction of non-conventional family projects. On the other hand, we uncover particular linguistic socialization processes that have not been reported in previous studies, primarily focused on two-parent heterosexual families, and expand our understanding of how and where family linguistic socialization takes place.

NOTES

1. Nevertheless, these figures should be interpreted only as a general indicator.

The size of recorded corpus for each participant family is very different, the recordings were made in a variety of contexts and the length of the discourse unit is quite flexible (from a couple of turns to several minutes of focused conversation). Thus, obtaining systematic quantitative indicators from the data is complicated.

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