What do Chilean and Costa Rican psychologists believe and advise about parenting?

¿Qué creen y aconsejan psicólogos (as) chilenos (as) y costarricenses sobre la crianza de los (as) hijos (as)?

Pablo Javier Castro-Carrasco[1]
Paz Belén Alaniz Flores[2]
Daniela Marisol Carmona Cortés[3]
Tatiana Paulina Pizarro Rojas[4]
Camila Monserrat Soto Fernández[5]
Universidad de La Serena, Chile

Delia Tamara Fuster Barahona[6]
Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica, Costa Rica

Abstract. This research investigates the subjective theories of 12 Chilean and Costa Rican psychologists who work with children, with the purpose of describing and interpreting their explanations about child rearing. Episodic interviews were used and analyzed using a Grounded Theory model. The interviewees point out that they use their own experience and beliefs when advising parents. Results indicated that, according to the interviewees, the topics most frequently consulted by parents were children's high impulsivity and disciplining. The interviewees believe the most common parenting styles are the authoritarian and the permissive ones, the latter being associated with parents' fear and anxiety.

Keywords. Subjective theories, child-rearing, psychologist, parenting, Chile, Costa Rica.

Resumen. Este estudio investigó las teorías subjetivas de 12 psicólogos(as) chilenos(as) y costarricenses que trabajan en temáticas de infancia, a objeto de poder describir e interpretar sus explicaciones sobre la crianza. Esta investigación fue de carácter cualitativo, con un diseño metodológico descriptivo-interpretativo. Se realizaron entrevistas episódicas, analizadas utilizando el modelo de la Grounded Theory (teoría fundamentada). Los participantes señalaron usar sus propias experiencias y creencias al aconsejar a los padres y a las madres. Según los (as) entrevistados (as), los padres y las madres consultan principalmente sobre la impulsividad y disciplina de los (as) hijos (as). De acuerdo a los (as) entrevistados (as), los estilos parentales más recurrentes son el autoritario y el permisivo, este último asociado con el miedo y ansiedad de los padres y madres.

Palabras clave. Teorías subjetivas, crianza de los(as) hijos(as), psicólogo(a), parentalidad, Chile, Costa Rica.

[1]Pablo Javier Castro-Carrasco. Universidad de La Serena, Chile. Fundación América por la Infancia .Dirección Postal: Departamento de Psicología, Universidad de La Serena
Matta 147, Coquimbo, Chile. E-mail: pablocastro@userena.cl
[2]Paz Belén Alaniz Flores. Universidad de La Serena, Chile. E-mail: pazalanizf@gmail.com
[3]Daniela Marisol Carmona Cortés. Universidad de La Serena, Chile. E-mail: danielatiz@gmail.com
[4]Tatiana Paulina Pizarro Rojas. Universidad de La Serena, Chile. E-mail: tatianapaulina@gmail.com
[5]Camila Monserrat Soto Fernádez. Universidad de La Serena, Chile. E-mail: msf.camila@gmail.com
[6]Delia Tamara Fuster Barahona. Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica, Costa Rica. E-mail: tfuster_2001@yahoo.com

Introduction

As children grow older, parents apply a set of child rearing practices in order to guide and educate them, and thus allow them to integrate into society. Such practices are defined as "the process by which parent and other child rearing agents transmit and by which children acquire the prior existing competencies required by their social, economic, political and other future adult cultural tasks" (Ogbu, 1995, p. 254).

Aside from practices, raising children concerns two other processes: child rearing guidelines and beliefs about child rearing (Izzedin & Pachajoa, 2009). The present study targets the latter element, defined as every day, professional, or scientific knowledge about how a child must be raised.

Studying child rearing is fundamental, because it is closely connected with child development, the different conceptions of children, customs, and socio-historical and cultural norms (Rogoff, 2003; Super & Harkness, 1997). In addition, child rearing has been studied for centuries because it is regarded as one of the most important activities in society.

Research on parenting has focused on studying either parenting beliefs, parenting practices, or parenting styles (as developed by Baumrind, 1973). However, it is not always clear how these components of parenting are related or why the authoritarian style of parenting has negative consequences on European-American children but not on other ethnicities. As a way to explain this perplexing result, Darling and Steinberg (1993) propose that parenting style moderates the effect of parenting practices on the child.

Culture-bound differences in parenting are a topic of research interest, regarding both parental practices and beliefs. In general terms, it has been found that Latino parents living in the United States stress collectivistic socialization goals over individualistic ones (Arcia, Reyes-Blanes & Vásquez-Montilla, 2000; Delgado & Ford, 1998). By comparing parents from Greece, Cameroon, and Costa Rica, Keller et al. (2004) concluded that Costa Rican mothers practiced a combination of both distal and proximal

parenting practices. In Chile, it has been found that Chilean mothers used more restrictive control than German mothers. The difference is also observed when comparing children's regulation, as researchers have found that European children display higher levels of behavior regulation and anger-oriented emotion regulation compared to Chilean ones (Weis, Trommsdorff & Muñoz, 2016).

In various cultures, groups of so-called "experts" have been formed (Castro et al., 2013), including philosophers, psychologists, and physicians who have written about childrearing either for an academic audience or for the general public, in order to help parents achieve the goals associated with the representative models of each culture (Castro et al., 2013; Hardyment, 2007; Kojima, 1996). The current trend is to support child rearing by basing it on "what science says"; a phenomenon accompanied by an increase in child rearing experts (Lee, Bristow, Faircloth & Macvarish, 2014), some of whom are psychologists.

A number of studies have shown a connection between beliefs in several domains of parenting and the culture of those who espouse such beliefs (Ekmekci et al., 2016). Thus, people regarded as parenting experts in each culture give advice based on their professional knowledge and beliefs, both of which are culturally influenced (Hardyment, 2007).

Due to the above, we were interested in studying two groups of practitioners from two different countries (Chile and Costa Rica). Both Costa Rica and Chile are upper-middle income countries and compared to other countries in the Latin American regions, relatively developed. However, they are situated in geographically different areas (Central America and South America, respectively) and have experienced politically different historical trajectories. Therefore, differences may exist between their subjective theories (STs), attributable to their cultural contexts (Avendaño, Krause & Winkler, 1993; Catalán, 2016; Dann, 1990).

Despite the relevance of studying child rearing, only a few studies have described what types of advice these expert professionals are giving to parents

for raising their children and how this process is occurring (Castro et al., 2013).

Therefore, we are interested in understanding the beliefs about childrearing held by psychologists and how such beliefs influence the advice they provide to parents. This should be done taking into account that child rearing is a cultural activity that influences the development of children; thus, the advice provided is not only based on scientific theories but also on subjective theories linked to a specific culture.

Historical background: childrearing advice

In the early 20th Century, as media influence increased, grandparents' advice had to compete with the advice from experts since parents started to prefer practical and mechanical suggestions (Beekman, 1977), emphasizing the regularity of child rearing habits (Hulbert, 2003).

World War II also generated changes which resulted in a dichotomy in people's understanding of childrearing: on the one hand, authoritarianism, with parents exerting full control, and the Freudian view on the other, which emphasized the benefits of emotional closeness in the bond (Beekman, 1977; Borinsky, 2005; Hardyment, 2007).

Faircloth (2014) states that, nowadays, parental figures are being blamed for their inadequate child rearing practices, since there is a mass of information available on how to raise children. Thus, the different child rearing habits currently being applied are backed up by prescriptions. Within the context described, specifically, psychologists have become intermediaries between scientific psychology and parents.

For this reason, the present study is intended to shed light on the subjective theories of psychologists working with children, since today's parents often try several strategies without being able to find the response that suits the infant's needs and then resort to professional advice (Hardyment, 2007).

Professionals' subjective theories

Subjective Theories influence how professionals understand, plan, and perform actions (Keyserlingk,

Castro & Carrasco, 2013). This notion is supported by studies that have argued, specifically in the field of psychology, that these professionals, upon the basis of their experience, develop personal (subjective) theories that roughly overlap the scientific orientation or theory that guides the way they do their job (e.g. Najavits, 1997; Sandler, 1983).

The concept of subjective theories was proposed by Groeben and Scheele in 1977, based on a constructivist point of view (Catalán, 2016). The concept refers to the modes of construction of everyday knowledge (Avendaño et al, 1993). Thus, STs are a set of beliefs about oneself and one's environment that possess an argumentative structure which is at least implicit and whose functions are to explain, to predict, and to use technology; thus, they can be compared to the structure of scientific theories (Avendaño et al., 1993; Catalán, 2010, 2016; Groeben & Scheele, 1982).

Gómez and Haz (2008) note that the formal models that psychologists "acquire during their undergraduate and graduate education are a fundamental part of their professional work" (p. 54). This theoretical material contributes to the conceptual and technical framework that they will later use to support the recommendations on child rearing that they offer. However, as previously mentioned, formal models "are not the only element that affects professional performance" (Gómez & Haz, p. 54): STs have been shown to have "a strong influence on the comprehension, planning, and action dynamics of professionals" (Gómez & Haz, p. 54). In this regard, psychologists, inasmuch as they are people, cannot escape the influence of their own constructions and reconstructions in their interactions with fathers, mothers, sons, and daughters.

According to Sandler (1983), reviewing implicit theories, that is, studying how psychologists think in practice, can contribute to the development of formal theories and be especially fruitful in the case of specific populations for which theory does not exist or is considered to be incomplete.

Aims

The present study is intended to make it possible to comprehend the beliefs about childrearing held by professionals. For this reason, the study seeks to describe and interpret the explicit and implicit STs about child rearing held by psychologists who work with children and who are in contact with parents.

The specific aims of the present study were: (1) To identify the STs that the participating professionals hold regarding parenting and their relation with the advice that they give to parents and (2) To confront these professionals' STs about parenting in order to (2a) analyze potential correspondences between them and scientific theories of psychological development and (2b) analyze potential differences between the STs of Chilean and Costa Rican psychologists which can be ascribed to their cultural contexts.

Based on the above, generative questions were formulated for each specific aim, which are not included in this article due to space constraints.

Method

The present study employed a descriptive-interpretative methodological design of a qualitative nature.

Participants

The sampling procedure used was selected in accordance with *the paradigm of maximum structural variation of perspectives* (Kleining & Witt, 2001) in our design. Given that the cultural background factor was likely to have an influence on the results obtained, efforts were made to employ a heterogeneous sample. The latter was facilitated due to the participation of researchers from two distant regions of America, which made it viable to examine this specific research question.

Purposive sampling was used (Patton, 1991) and the following inclusion criteria had to be met by the participants: at least five years of professional experience as a psychologist and at least two years of experience in children's issues, including interventions with parents.

Twelve psychologists were chosen: six Chileans and six Costa Ricans. All these professionals gave their verbal and written consent to participate in this study.

Data collection

The data were collected via episodic interviews. This allowed us to access two forms of knowledge about the professionals' STs: on the one hand, the episodic narrative-knowledge used in narrations, and, on the other, semantic knowledge (Flick, 2014) probed through concrete, specific questions such as "What do you associate the word `discipline´ with?" The interviews lasted sixty minutes on average and were audio recorded.

The twelve interviews were conducted in a semistructured manner, upon the basis of an interview guide prepared by the authors. The *open questions* and *narrative incentives* (Flick, 2014) used covered eleven topical domains derived from the aims and generative questions of this study. Approximately thirty-eight questions were asked in each interview. Table 1 displays the topical domains with their questions and incentives.

Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were analyzed with Atlas.ti software, version 5.2 in order to identify the participants' STs and their subjective meanings. Some Grounded Theory procedures were used to analyze the data, by means of an inductive process intended to produce an explanatory model based on the data obtained (Strauss & Corbin, 2002).

The data were analyzed in two phases:

i) *Open coding.* In the open coding phase, the transcribed texts constituted the data to be analyzed. Upon this basis, the information obtained was examined, fragmented, and compared in order to group it into overarching core categories that resulted in a set of subjective theory codes. In this stage of the process, STs were identified in the text, following the recommendation to identify the hypotheses directly formulated by the subjects or inferred by the researchers (Catalán, 2010; Flick, 2014). In this

Table 1

Topical domains and questions included in the interview

Topical domains	Questions and narrative incentives
Punishment and discipline	What do you associate with the word "discipline"?
	In your professional experience, have you given advice related to discipline?
	Could you give us some examples?
	Do you think that not using discipline has consequences?
Socioemotional competences	Tell me, what do you think about socioemotional skills?
	Some people say it's good to stimulate these skills. Considering your experience, what is your opinion?
	How do you deal with situations in which a child has problems with his or her peers?
Overprotectiveness	What do you associate with the word "overprotectiveness"
	How do you understand overprotectiveness?
	Sometimes it's said that having overprotective parents has an impact on children. Do you think this is important?
	Can you share with me a situation in your professional practice which exemplifies what you've said to me? (a concrete episode or a typical one)
Stress in school contexts	What do you think about child stress? or
	And regarding school contexts, what has your experience been like?
Educational techniques according to values	What do you think about parenting and values? (understood as principles that orient behavior)
	Which of these statements makes more sense to you: "the child learns by him/herself?" or "the child learns from an adult"?
	Are you sometimes required to give advice on values to parents? Do you recall any situations you'd like to share with us?
Parents' educational level	What do you think about parents' educational level and forms of parenting? Could you share any experiences with us?
Parenting styles	What do you think about the parenting or child rearing styles of the parents you work with?
	Based on your experience with parents or children, what do you think about the parental style of parents today?
	Please talk to me about one situation you've experienced?
Parental role stereotypes	Parents sometimes distribute their roles. Some people recommend this. What do you think about this? Are roles distributed in the families you work with?
	Which roles could these be? Why is this done? What does it depend on? What do you tell parents about this?

Aspects that strengthen or hinder child rearing	Based on your experience, do you think that some aspects must be encouraged in child rearing? In your opinion, what elements could affect child development?
	From your point of view, what role does the family play in child rearing? What does it involve? Could you exemplify your point with a situation in which you had to talk to parents about this? What do you tell them? What does your advice consist in? Why do/did you think it was important to tell them that?
Alignment of STs with scientific theories	Do you think that what you tell parents is related to a specific psychological theory?
	If you look at your work with children and parents, what is the role played by your own beliefs or explanations about parenting?
	Do you identify with any psychological theories about parenting? Why?
Giving advice	Psychologists often give advice to parents. When you give advice, how do you do it? Why do you think it's important? (If the interviewee said that he/she did not give advice, he/she was asked "what do you do when you communicate with parents?" The meaning of this aspect for the interviewee was explored; for instance, if he/she said that he provided recommendations, guidelines, or guidance, he/she was asked: "what is a recommendation and how does it differ from advice?")
	For psychologists, what is the importance of giving advice to parents about parenting? (Here, we used the concept that the interviewee employed, for instance "orienting them", "talking to them", "guiding them")
	Do you think that the advice provided by a psychologist may be influenced by his/her own parenting experience? Have you noticed this in yourself? You can share with us a situation in which you've observed this.
Final questions	Would you like to talk about a topic you think is relevant and which we have not discussed so far?
	What topics do you think are important to discuss and parents rarely ask about?

phase, the open coding and create free quotation functions of the Atlas.ti program were used. STs were reconstructed by identifying quotations with an ST-like structure, summarizing them in the form of a theory, generally adapting them to the statements "if x, then y" or "in order to achieve y, one can do x" (Gastager, Patry & Wiedemair, 2010, p. 6). Several quotations, from one or more participants, were reconstructed by the researchers and used to form a single ST. For example, "Since parents associate discipline with punishments only, we as psychologists must `broaden their view´" (-ST Ps 3/5/6 CL-). This inductive-type procedure was jointly conducted by the second, third, fourth, and fifth authors of this article, after which the resulting STs were confirmed by the first and last authors. The process resulted in a definitive list of reconstructed STs which constituted the codes for this phase.

ii) Axial coding. Afterwards, in the axial coding process, the core categories were selected and grouped into subcategories. These core categories and subcategories emerged by grouping the multiple topics alluded to by the STs reconstructed in the previous phase, considering their thematic closeness and the relative hierarchical position of their STs. This was done in the interest that some STs were considered to be subordinated to other more general STs (which originated the levels presented in table 2). All the authors of the present article participated in this procedure, divided into two groups: one formed by the second, third, fourth, and fifth authors, and

Table 2

Categories and subcategories

Categories	Subcategories	Level 1 Subcategories	Level 2 Subcategories	Level 3 Subcategories	Level 4 Subcategories
The psychologist's work	What does the therapist do with the parents?	No advice is given	Reasons:		
			Personal assumptions		
			Parents' abilities are underestimated		
			Displaces responsibility from parents		
			Not useful for all		
		Advice is given	From personal experience	*Why is advice given?*	What is this advice on?
				Low parent tension	*High impulsivity*
				Possible therapeutic resource	*Discipline*
					Children's self-care
					Value-related issues
			From theory	Better quality of life	
				Better knowledge of human development	
				Little time to work with parents	
Subjective theories about discipline	Limits	Rigid (-)	Parenting Styles	*Influence of*	Low SEL
		Clear (+)	Authoritarian (-)	socioeducational level (SEL)	High SEL
		Absent (-)	Balanced (+)		
			Permissive (-)		Social context
				Influence of	Manner in which parents were raised
				other more important factors	
		Over-protectiveness (-)	Parents' fear and anxiety (-)		
			Underestimating children's abilities (-)		

Continues...

Discrediting (-)	Inhibits social-emotional skills
Punishment (-)	

Note. The table details the axial coding used to define categories and subcategories grouping together the STs reconstructed in the previous phase (open coding). The + sign signals factors that facilitate child rearing, while the – sign represents factors that hinder it (according to the interviewees' STs).

another composed of the first and last authors. The first team prepared a draft of the categories and subcategories identified, which was presented to the second team of researchers to obtain feedback, agree on certain decisions (researcher triangulation), and make modifications. This process gave rise to two core categories (or central phenomena) which originated the models described in later sections.

Links were identified between the subcategories, which made it possible to analyze the data interpretatively. The Results section shows the two models reconstructed using this process. The models were generated by establishing links among the STs within each core category. In this phase, the research team analyzed the two groups in the sample separately (Chile and Costa Rica), upon the basis of a prior version of the models, in order to ensure that intersubjectivity would be preserved. Table 2 details the emergent categories and subcategories identified through the analyses carried out.

Results

The following section describes the two emergent models (The psychologist's work and Subjective theories about discipline) through a relational analysis (Krause, 1995) of the core categories and subcategories that emerged (see table 2). This is complemented by some of the STs identified and quotations from the interviewees, some of which could be interpreted as STs.

The psychologist's work

Psychologists recommend, "suggest", "indicate", "broaden parents' view", "work on parents' child rearing

actions", "perform psychoeducation", "restructure", "challenge", "conduct direct interventions", and "advise". The following quotations exemplify these beliefs (Psyx and the country codes CR [Costa Rica] or CL [Chile] refer to the professional interviewed).

Psy3 CL: "I let them know that what I'm telling them is not the whole solution, I think that it's also what I show them, you can do this here, it's an open suggestion, this is one of the things that can be done..."

According to the professionals, they tend to give advice regarding issues connected with "high impulsivity" and discipline.

Psy5 CR: "It's very frequent, parents often ask about that, discipline, I mean, difficulties setting limits for children..."

On the other hand, when asked "What topics do you think would be important to address but are infrequently brought up by parents?", they mention that topics such as single parenting and families of a diverse sexual orientation are not addressed in their professional work with parents who come to them seeking help.

Some interviewees point out that they do not give advice, because this is a practice that involves the personal assumptions of each professional, underestimates the personal abilities or resources of the parents, and displaces their responsibility.

Psy3 CL: "... I think advice is like something a friend can give you, the suggestion I can make has to do with providing alternatives, not imposing them, I want to let the other person solve the issue too and use what is useful..."

Nevertheless, some professionals acknowledge that they give advice in their practice due to their personal and professional experience.

Psy5 CR: "... I feel they need to know they're not the only ones who are going through this and that helps them feel a bit less tense, and I, it's not like I share a lot of my personal life, but if I have to make use of an experience with my own children, I'll certainly use it..."

Some participants agree that, from a theoretical perspective, advice is relevant because it can be part of a systemic approach or can be adapted to the context of the family consulting the professional; in addition, more than one theory is used in a single case. Despite accepting that giving theory-based advice is valid, the professionals did not specify which scientific theories associated with childrearing could be used.

Psy3 CL: "I think there are certain theories or lines that work very well with certain types of patients and others work well with others, from a behavioral perspective, even from a cognitive or emotional one, different techniques, I could not limit myself to a single one"

The participants also mention that their own beliefs influence the advice that they give.

Psy5 CL: "As I was just telling you when we were discussing beliefs, it's a part of what you've studied but also of what you've experienced, how others raised you..."

Subjective theories about discipline

The relationships of the concept of discipline emerged as one of the issues on which psychologists are more likely to give advice. This phenomenon was reconstructed using axial coding and is connected with the STs that psychologists have about discipline.

The STs about discipline held by some of the professionals interviewed are associated with punishment, which they regard as an unsuitable means for imposing norms. An example of these STs is:

ST Psy 3/5/6 CL: "Since parents associate discipline with punishments only, we as psychologists must 'broaden their view'".

On the same subject, some professionals associate discipline with the discrediting that may occur between parents or other relatives, noting that if one parent contradicts the "norms" imposed by the other, children feel confused and find it hard to understand their limits.

> Ps2 CL: ... when the mom is raising a child and if in the same family someone discredits her, the grandmother or the grandfather for example, who constantly criticizes her and sets other norms for the child, that also affects childrearing, it becomes diffuse for the child to know 'what do I have to do, who I should I obey, what are the rules in this house

Regarding limits and discipline, according to the professionals, discipline involves setting limits, which can be rigid, clear, or absent. The professionals associate rigid limits with an authoritarian parenting style, whereas clear limits are linked with balanced parenting. A lack of limits, for the psychologists interviewed, characterizes permissive parenting.

Ps3 CL: "... discipline understood as order, that children have a clear idea of what their limits are, what the house rules are, knowing beforehand what the rules are for going somewhere..."

In the latter case, the professionals also associate a lack of "limits" with overprotection, explained by parents' fear and anxiety, a behavior that also underestimates children's capabilities.

> Psy 3 CR: ... it has to do a bit with the issue of limits, I mean, those parents believe that setting limits is to hurt the child [...] and well, in that case I do tell parents that they're actually harming them. That the child needs, well, limits in the first place, and then he or she needs to feel that he or she has the ability to manage and solve issues...

Also regarding parenting styles, the interviewees believe that child rearing today oscillates between authoritarianism and permissiveness, never reaching a point of balance. This view is supported by some

psychologists who argue that those parents may have been raised in an authoritarian parenting style, which is why they tend to be more permissive now.

ST Psy 5/6 CL: "Since parenting styles tended to be authoritarian in the past, nowadays they are permissive"

With respect to a different matter, when parenting styles and socio-educational level are compared, some interviewees state that there is an influence, while others note that, rather than the socio-educational level, the strongest influence on parenting styles is exerted by factors such as the social context and the way in which parents were themselves raised.

Psy 6 CR: "... and actually for me it's not their educational level, it has to do with the context, right... I wouldn't judge them for being unable to generate productive homes because they have low schooling rates, but their deprived social context is a stronger influence..."

The psychologists who believe that parenting styles are influenced by parents' socio-educational level state that those with a high socio-educational level are in possession of certain child rearing facilitators, such as more development alternatives, a better understanding of developmental concepts, and clearer values. On the other hand, one of the aspects that is detrimental to child rearing in this socio-educational level is the fact that children may be raised by other people.

Psy 2 CL: "... there is a directly proportional relationship, when you characterize the families in these SENAME [National Service for Minors] programs at least, you find a very high percentage in most of them [...] parents didn't finish school [...] that is enough to show you that there's a connection between their schooling and the way in which they raised their children"

According to some of the professionals, having a low socio-educational level is a factor that affects childrearing, because violence is more prevalent in this context.

Psy 5 CR: "... Yes, I think there's a connection, it's not a certain, mechanical connection, at an educational

level it's more problematic, there are more difficulties, but I do see it a lot in poorer people, educationally and socioeconomically speaking, one sees many values that are different, a different way of managing situations, other beliefs, such as more sympathy towards slightly more violent methods for educating children, than what one sees in parents of a higher educational level..."

Lastly, there is a disagreement among the professionals interviewed regarding the possibility of working on child rearing issues in contexts of extreme poverty: some of them state that it is possible if one adapts to the context, while others assert that it is not possible because there are several more pressing needs.

Psy 2 CL: "... you can't [work] on childrearing, at most you can work with the adolescent on issues such as life goals, self-care too, as I mentioned before, psychoeducation in terms of consumption, school motivation, but you can't work on childrearing"

> Psy 6 CR: I think it's not a waste of time as long as you see that the parents' are willing to do it [...] you have to try to adapt to their experience, try to identify what is useful for them... but you can do some things, the problem is that the results won't be as good as we expect, but you can achieve something, even if the improvements are small [...].

Discussion

Results show that the interviewees feel that some issues are not mentioned by their patients and that there is no consensus on how to address them, specifically, single parent families and the childrearing models of families of a diverse sexual orientation. Considering the results, it is necessary to research these issues in order to foster and optimize programs that contribute to finding alternatives that stimulate a positive coexistence among their members (Agudelo, 2005). Regarding the lack of empirical research on childrearing in single parent families, mentioned by the interviewees, a number of studies providing guidelines were found (e.g. Bos & Standfort, 2010).

In contrast, the advice that is most frequently given to parents concerns children's high impulsivity and discipline. Impulsivity is characterized by a lack of

impulse control in children, which reveals, according to one interviewee, parents' difficulties in managing their emotions and "high impulsivity" (Ps2 CL) in them. In this regard, this psychologist's professional knowledge, expressed in his ST, is in line with studies on the link between several parental traits and their children's behavior (e.g. Cabello, Gutiérrez-Cobo, & Fernández-Berrocal, 2017); specifically, the role of parents' emotions and their influence on child disruptive behavior problems has also been studied (though not in Latin America) (e.g. Stormshak, Bierman, McMahon, Lengua & Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 2000).

A second recurrent topic in the questions made by parents to the interviewees concerns discipline. The frequency of this topic as the focus of parents' inquiries is consistent with a study conducted in Chile by De la Harpe (2014), who points out that this is the topic which psychologists belonging to *Chile Crece Contigo*, a governmental system for the integral protection of children, are most frequently asked about. In our study, the professionals interviewed believe that parents associate discipline with punishment, and consider that this is a frequent but unsuitable means through which they try to set limits for their children. This notion is supported by studies that note that behavior control is effected via a disciplinary action to which families resort in order to foster their children's development (Ramírez, 2005).

In addition, some psychologists interviewed state that using discipline in child rearing involves love and affection towards children, in contrast with punishment, which, as previously mentioned, is rejected by some professionals. This reflects the presence of a general subjective theory in our interviewees, supported by cultural beliefs and a consensus in the field of psychology (affection as a central element for modeling children's behavior), but which has a low degree of sophistication (Catalán, 2010, 2014): the psychologists interviewed do not mention differences in the exercise of parental discipline connected with parents' gender or their children's age (Hallers-Haalboom et al., 2015).

The professionals also associate discipline with limits, linking rigid limits with an authoritarian parenting style, clear limits with a more balanced type of parenting, and a lack of limits with permissive parenting. This view of parents' behavior in everyday life situations with their children, as well as in decision-making or problem-solving contexts, matches the classification of parental educational styles advanced by several authors (e.g. Baumrind, 1973).

With respect to the above, it is interesting to note that the participants state that, even though nowadays the authoritarian parenting style is predominant, the permissive style is also quite recurrent, with both styles sometimes being present in one parent. This belief is partly consistent with other studies with Spanish-speaking participants. Torío, Peña and Inda-Caro (2008) found that the parents of children aged 5-8 do not have a clearly defined parenting style. A similar result was reported by Arvelo (2003), who studied Venezuelan adolescents receiving psychological care and found an oscillating style (authoritarian-permissive) in fathers.

The above constitutes another point of view according to which a parenting style can be selected. Parental discipline, despite being associated with parents' traits, is also influenced by variables linked with children's personal characteristics, such as their age (Regalado, Sareen, Inkelas, Wissow & Halfon, 2004) or temperament, along with other situational variables such as the setting, the people present, the attribution of motivations, and the emotion elicited in the parents (Ceballos & Rodrigo, 1998). This differs from the beliefs manifested by the interviewees, who mention that it is necessary to define a specific parenting style to prevent confusion in children. They prefer a balanced (democratic) child rearing style, which is characterized by a positive evaluation of children, emotional support, consistency in the application of norms, and the fostering of autonomy (Berger, 2004; Mestre, Tur, Samper, Nácher & Cortés, 2007).

The results obtained may be extended by exploring whether psychologists, when giving advice and identifying parenting styles, are influenced by the socialization goals that parents have for their children

(Darling & Steinberg, 1993). If psychologists increase the complexity of their explanations about parents' preferred styles, the subjective theories of the latter may be enriched. This could lead to advice that is better aligned with the multiple beliefs of parents regarding the aims of their parental practices.

According to the beliefs held by the psychologists who participated in this study, educational styles have wide-ranging repercussions and developmental consequences that have an effect beyond childhood. This may be proof of the deterministic view of infancy present in contemporary psychology, transmitted to parents as the suggestion that they should be excessively cautious about the possible consequences of their actions on the psychological development of their children (Borinsky, 2005).

On the other hand, overprotection is thought to be linked with fear and anxiety coming from parents, as well as with their tendency to underestimate their children's abilities, which may hinder aspects such as their socio-emotional skills. In this regard, authors have described the immediate or eventual repercussions of this excessively overprotective approach, such as a reduction in children's resilience, social skills, sense of responsibility, and self-efficacy, which limit their ability to act towards making changes in their lives (Levine, 2006; Nelson, 2010; Saavedra & Castro, 2009).

With respect to the reduction in socio-emotional skills that the interviewees associate with overprotective behaviors and a permissive parenting style, it has been observed that this style, combined with insufficient efforts to control and supervise children, is related to poor social adjustment in children's development (Arvelo, 2003; Ato, Galián, & Huéscar, 2007). This is also associated with lower levels of achievement orientation, self-regulation, social responsibility (Locke, Campbell, & Kavanagh, 2012), and a lack of self-control (Berger, 2004). Rice (2000) states that this permissive discipline results in spoiled children who have trouble respecting norms. Similarly, the benefits of parenting practices oriented towards behavior regulation have also been noted: being neither permissive nor overprotective,

they allow children to develop frustration tolerance (Aguirre-Dávila, 2015).

Regarding the interviewees' subjective theories of the association between child rearing styles and socio-educational and socioeconomic level, Ramírez (2005), in a review of child rearing practices, discovered that one of the factors most consistently connected with parents and the family's educational style is socioeconomic status, with the educational level attained by parents being the best factor for identifying parents' childrearing style. Likewise, it has been established that the family's socioeconomic status predicts its disciplinary practices and children's academic success (Jansen et al., 2012; Mokrova, O'Brien, Calkins, Leerkes & Marcovitch, 2012), which supports the interviewees' beliefs about this issue. However, a recent study carried out in Chile shows no connection between low family income and parental performance (Olhaberry & Farkas, 2012).

Other studies state that, in contexts of urban poverty, the authoritarian parenting style appears to be necessary, even functioning as a protective factor for children by facilitating their adaptation to difficult environments (Brody & Flor, 1998; Furstenberg, Cook, Eccles, Elder & Sameroff, 1999).

According to Richaud et al. (2013), socially vulnerable parents encounter several obstacles, such as low educational levels and domestic violence, which transcend their material deficits and have repercussions on their parental competences. This issue can be linked with our interviewees' theory that violence is used more frequently in socioeducationally deprived contexts. Similarly, it was found that low socioeconomic status (SES) increases the risk of parents' use of harsh punishments (Manrique Millones, Ghesquière & van Leeuwen, 2014) and that stress, anxiety, depression and depressive symptoms rates are greater in low-SES parents (Mistry, Stevens, Sareen, De Vogli & Halfo, 2007; Oliva, Montero, & Gutiérrez, 2006), even though this does not necessarily imply lower parental performance (Olhaberry & Farkas, 2012).

There are multiple theories for explaining differences between parental styles in middle and low economic levels (Ghate, Hazel, Creighton & Finch, 2003; Harris & Marmer, 1996; Jefferis, Power & Hertzman, 2002). Nevertheless, one of the key findings is that parents, when faced with stressors associated with poverty, respond differently depending on the cultural group to which they belong (Barnes, 2004; Deater-Deckard, 2004; Jansen et al., 2012; Katz, Corlyon, La Placa & Hunter, 2007), which supports the belief that parents' cultural context has a greater influence on child rearing than their socio-educational level.

The results presented so far can also be discussed in connection with three recent studies that have examined the beliefs of other professionals about child rearing.

The authors of a study conducted in the Netherlands (Ekmekci et al., 2016) show that professionals' beliefs about a specific aspect of child rearing, maternal sensitivity, correlate strongly with their educational level. Here, we find an indirect connection with our results, as some of the psychologists interviewed stress the importance of parents' educational level and socioeconomic status with respect to child rearing. In brief, differences in parenting styles associated with parents' schooling and socioeconomic status are well established in research, and some of our interviewees also incorporate this notion into their STs.

Another study on professional beliefs about parenting (Locke, Campbell & Kavanagh, 2012) specifically explored the concept of overparenting in psychologists. These researchers report a finding similar to ours: professionals believe that parents' anxiety is one of the causes of their higher-intensity parental practices (extreme levels of responsiveness associated with the permissive style). Regarding overprotectiveness, Castro-Carrasco et al. (2013), through an analysis of Latin American parenting books, identified STs that define overprotectiveness as a negative influence on child development and highlight the importance of the emotional support that parents provide.

In Latin America, Loza and Frisancho (2010) studied the beliefs of female teachers about child aggressiveness and found that these professionals attributed the origin of these behaviors to experiences at home with family. This differs from our results, as the participating psychologists, despite considering that some familial aspects influence parental discipline, also take into account elements from the wider social context where children develop.

On the other hand, most psychologists mention that they give advice on childrearing, although some of them deny using this practice as a therapeutic resource; instead, they use synonyms such as recommending, suggesting, broadening parents' view, or giving instructions. In addition, it can be inferred that the Costa Rican psychologists appear to adopt this practice more naturally with parents, without assigning a negative connotation to it, unlike the Chilean psychologists, who implicitly express that giving advice is inappropriate within their professional context. Likewise, it must be pointed out that most psychologists from both countries agree that it is impossible to ignore their own beliefs and experiences when giving advice, which makes it necessary for them to employ techniques to reduce their own biases. This is supported by other studies that show that psychotherapists combine their own experiences with the technical orientation of their profession in order to fulfill the tasks that their job involves (Moncada, 2007; Najavits, 1997; Sandler, 1983; Schön, 1983).

Thus, the Costa Rican psychologists believe that advising parents is a valid professional resource in their work with them. In this regard, based on the training experience of the first author (trainer of psychologists in Chile) and the last author (trainer of psychologists in Costa Rica), we hypothesize that this difference may spring from the education received by both groups of professionals, as Chilean professors may stress the notion that psychologists should not give "advice" (González, González, & Vicencio, 2014). Nevertheless, this is at odds with the old Chilean Health Code (1968), which states that one of the aims of the professional services of psychologists is to "advise" patients (as cited in Loubat, 2013), and with the image conveyed

by Chilean media that a psychologist is someone who "gives advice" (Reyes, 2009).

Another possible explanation for the difference found between the participating psychologists involves the contexts where they work: all the Costa Rican psychologists have some experience in educational institutions, a sphere where giving advice to parents is expected from them (Juliá, 2006), which is not the case for the Chilean participants.

The above must be more specifically researched in order to explore these hypotheses.

As a recommendation for future research, it would be relevant to study the advice that other professionals (teachers or pediatricians, for example) give to parents about the care or education of their children.

On a different subject, it is important to point out that even though a specific theory of childrearing could not be identified in the professionals interviewed, it is possible to note the presence of subjective theories that include elements belonging to the concept of "positive parenting" (Eisenberg et al., 2005; Shah, Kennedy, Clark, Bauer & Schwartz, 2016).

In brief, and in our opinion, the present study shows the importance of taking into account psychologists' beliefs about childrearing. Supported by their own subjective theories or by the scientific ones belonging to their profession, such beliefs appear to influence their task of providing parents with effective and efficient support.

Acknowledgement

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