

European-American and African-American Mothers' Emotion Socialization Practices Relate Differently to Their Children's Academic and Social-emotional Competence

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Abstract:

The current study examines whether the relation between mothers' responses to their children's negative emotions and teachers' reports of children's academic performance and social-emotional competence are similar or different for European-American and African-American families. Two hundred mothers (137 European-American, 63 African-American) reported on their responses to their five-year-old children's negative emotions and 150 kindergarten teachers reported on these children's current academic standing and skillfulness with peers. Problem-focused responses to children's negative emotions, which have traditionally been considered a supportive response, were positively associated with children's school competence for European-American children, but expressive encouragement, another response considered supportive, was negatively associated with children's competence for African-American children. The findings highlight the need to examine parental socialization practices from a culturally specific lens.

Keywords: emotion socialization | academic performance | social-emotional competence | ethnicity

Article:

Introduction

Parents' socialization of children's emotions has been linked to important aspects of children's well-being, including children's social, emotional, and academic competence (Cunningham, Kliewer, & Garner, 2009; Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1997; Hooven, Gottman, & Katz, 1995). Parental response to children's negative emotions has been identified as one important emotion socialization strategy (Eisenberg, Cumberland, & Spinrad, 1998). Because coping with a negative emotion, such as sadness, anger, or fear, is a difficult task for children (Ramsden & Hubbard, 2002), it is important for parents to assist children in handling distressing experiences. In their responses to their children's negative emotions, parents provide valuable information to their children about appropriate emotional displays and successful coping strategies. This

information may be particularly relevant for children toward the end of the preschool period and the beginning of the school-age years, as children at this stage have only recently begun to regulate autonomously (Sroufe, 1996) while using these skills in a new socially and behaviorally challenging school setting.

Parents vary in the ways they respond to children's negative emotions; thus, researchers have strived to identify characteristics of parents that are related to positive emotion socialization practices (e.g., Eisenberg et al., 1998; Wong, McElwain, & Halberstadt, 2009). Culture and ethnicity have been identified as relevant parent characteristics, as these factors influence parents' goals, beliefs, and practices regarding their children's socialization (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Cole & Tan, 2007; Super & Harkness, 1986). Ogbu's (1981) cultural-ecological perspective suggests that the competencies a cultural subpopulation values will translate to the socialization practices used by caregivers. In other words, cultural groups support children's adaptation to the larger society by enacting shared socialization practices that maintain order, accomplish goals, and promote culturally defined skills (Cole & Tan, 2007; Ogbu, 1981). This suggests that emotional competence may not be defined in the same way for all children. The same child behavior may be viewed as adaptive or maladaptive depending on the demands different groups encounter on an everyday basis (Ogbu, 1981). Specifically, children's expression of negative emotion may lead to a successful outcome in one cultural context but not in another (Halberstadt, Denham, & Dunsmore, 2001). In the USA, ethnic minority families often develop an adaptive culture in response to historical and current demands that influences daily family process as well as children's developmental competencies (García Coll et al., 1996). These perspectives are used to inform the current investigation of relations between European-American and African-American mothers' emotion socialization practices and children's academic and social-emotional competence.

In research with predominantly European-American samples, certain parental responses to children's negative emotions have been described as more or less supportive than others (Eisenberg et al., 1998; Fabes, Poulin, Eisenberg, & Madden-Derdich, 2002). 'Supportive responses' by parents invite children to explore their feelings by encouraging the child to express emotions or helping the child understand and cope with an emotion-eliciting situation. These responses have been found to be related to high socioemotional and academic competence including children's emotion understanding, friendship quality (McElwain, Halberstadt, & Volling, 2007), and achievement in math and reading (Hooven et al., 1995). Other responses, such as minimizing the child's emotional experience, punishing the child, or becoming distressed by the child's emotional display, have been described as 'unsupportive' of children's negative emotions as they send messages to the child that the display of negative feelings is not appropriate or acceptable. These responses have been linked to internalized negative affect in the child and disorganized behaviors during emotion-evoking situations, presumably because of an inability or unwillingness to express negative feelings (Roberts & Strayer, 1987).

In ethnically diverse samples, research has revealed that both low- and high-income African-American mothers engage in emotionally supportive behaviors that provide children with information about emotions and assist them in managing distress (Bocknek, Brophy-Herb, & Banerjee, 2009; Garner, 2006). However, mothers' responses to their children's negative emotions tend to differ between African-American and European-American mothers. African-American parents have been found to respond to their children's displays of negative affect with less explanation and encouragement and more control and reprimand than European-American

parents (Nelson, Leerkes, O'Brien, Calkins, & Marcovitch, 2012). For example, African-American parents report being more likely to minimize their children's emotionally distressing experiences and punish children for such displays compared with European-American parents (Halberstadt, Craig, Lozada, & Brown, 2011).

These reported ethnic differences in emotional suppression, defined as the conscious inhibition of emotional expression during arousal (Gross & Levenson, 1993), have been explored in previous research. Whereas suppression as a regulatory strategy has been linked to negative consequences such as impaired communication, increased blood pressure, lower social support, and lower relationship closeness among European-Americans (Butler et al., 2003; Gross & John, 2003), these links appear to be moderated by culture. Ethnic minority groups with more collectivist values are thought to suppress more often in a variety of situations, and this strategy does not appear to be linked to negative emotional, cognitive, or relational consequences to the same degree (Butler, Lee, & Gross, 2007; Gross & John, 2003). For example, less emotional expression in the mother-child relationship has been associated with internalizing problems among European-American children, but not among African-American children (Vendlinski, Silk, Shaw, & Lane, 2006).

This may be explained by theoretical (Cole & Tan, 2007; Ogbu, 1981) and empirical (Nelson et al., 2012) work suggesting that these ethnic differences are culturally adaptive. Negative emotional displays from African-Americans are more likely to be viewed as aggressive and threatening from the majority culture (Kang & Chasteen, 2009; Stevenson, Herrero-Taylor, Cameron, & Davis, 2002). And as Boykin (1986) suggests, African-American families must develop defense mechanisms in response to this discrimination. Despite their traditional cultural influences that value emotional expression, African-American families have been influenced by a history of oppression that has led them to value emotional self-control and limited self-disclosure (Plasky & Lorion, 1984). Empirical results have demonstrated that race differences in mothers' emotion socialization practices can be partially explained by African-American mothers' tendency to believe that their children should not display negative emotions and that they will likely receive negative social consequences for such displays (Nelson et al., 2012).

Research from the parental control literature has provided support for the idea that seemingly 'maladaptive' parenting practices may actually be adaptive among African-American families. Physical discipline has been linked to negative outcomes, such as externalizing problem behaviors, for European-American children but not for African-American children (Deater-Deckard, Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 1996; Lansford, Deater-Deckard, Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 2004). This finding is primarily explained by the fact that physical discipline is used more frequently, and therefore considered more normative, among African-American families than European-American families (Dodge, McLoyd, & Lansford, 2005). Additionally, African-American children are more likely to interpret this normative behavior as a way that parents show that they love and care for them, particularly in dangerous neighborhoods where misbehaviors carry more serious consequences (Harrison-Hale, McLoyd, & Smedley, 2004; Mason, Walker-Barnes, Tu, Simons, & Martinez-Arrue, 2004).

Based on the theoretical support and parallels to the behavioral control literature, it is plausible that ethnic differences in parents' emotion socialization practices are culturally adaptive for children. That is, different socialization practices support children's adaptation to the larger society by encouraging behaviors that enable children to be competent and successful in

response to the tasks and demands that the ethnic group faces on an everyday basis (Cole & Tan, 2007; Ogbu, 1981). However, no studies to date have compared the relations between parents' emotion socialization practices and children's well-being for African-American and European-American families.

The current study aims to fill a gap in the literature by examining one widely studied aspect of emotion socialization, parents' responses to their children's negative emotions. These responses are thought to provide children with important information about the appropriate situations and ways in which they can express their feelings in front of others (Eisenberg et al., 1998). Children who have learned to express their negative emotions competently are likely to have more successful interactions with peers and are able to understand and control their emotional reactions in the classroom, enabling them to better attend to the academic demands of school. Previous research has supported these associations, finding that better emotion understanding and an ability to regulate negative feelings is related to greater social competence with peers in the classroom setting (Blair, Denham, Kochanoff, & Whipple, 2004; Miller et al., 2006) and that these social-emotional skills are related to better academic outcomes (Kress, Norris, Schoenholz, Elias, & Seigle, 2004; Linares et al., 2005). Although few studies have examined the association between emotion socialization and children's academic outcomes, we consider both academic and social-emotional aspects of children's competence in the current study as each is an important indicator of success in formal schooling. We rely on teachers' reports of children's academic and social-emotional well-being to take into account children's behavior in a setting outside of the home and to avoid potential mono-reporter bias in parents' responses. Our research question was as follows: Do specific emotion socialization practices relate to children's competent behavior similarly or differently for European-American and African-American children?

Method

Participants

The participants in this project were part of a larger longitudinal study of early cognitive and emotional precursors to school success. Children were recruited from childcare centers and preschools in a mid-sized Southeastern city when they were three years old. Measures for the current study were available from the five-year visit for 228 families (87 percent retention rate from the age of three). The only significant measured difference between families who continued and those who did not have data available at the age of five was that families lost to attrition were more likely to be minority, $\chi^2(1, N = 263) = 3.89, p < .05$.

Given the goal of the current study, only families with a mother and target child who were both African-American or both European-American were included in the current sample. The final sample included 200 families, one third ($N = 63$) of whom were African-American. Families were diverse in terms of income and education. A quarter of European-American families had income-to-needs ratios less than 2.0, indicating low income, 59 percent had ratios of 2.0–5.0, and 16 percent had ratios greater than 5.0. Median education of European-American mothers was a four-year college degree, with 10 percent completing a high school degree or less and 29 percent having attended some college. European-American mothers were 36 years old on average; 52 percent of the European-American children were female. Almost 48 percent of African-American mothers were low income (ratios less than 2.0), 44 percent were middle income (ratios between 2.0 and 5.0), and 8 percent were high income (ratios greater than 5.0). Median education

for African-American mothers was also a four-year college degree, with 8 percent completing a high school degree or less and 38 percent having attended some college. African-American mothers were 34 years on average, and 51 percent of their children were female.

Teacher reports on children's academic performance and social-emotional competence were available from 150 of the 200 participants (104 European-American, 45 African-American). All teachers were female, 70 percent were European-American, 23 percent were African-American, and their mean age was 41.25 years ($SD = 11.05$ years). Teachers had 14.71 years of experience on average, and their median educational attainment was some graduate work. There was no difference in years of experience, $t(139) = -.06, p = .95$, educational attainment, $t(145) = 1.35, p = .18$, or ethnicity, $F(1, 144) = .39, p = .53$, between the teachers reporting on European-American students and those reporting on African-American students. Children were 5 years old when kindergarten teachers completed questionnaires. European-American children were 71.20 months on average ($SD = 4.30$), ranging between 63 and 82 months, and African-American children were 70.04 months on average ($SD = 4.23$), ranging between 63 and 80 months. Chi-square and t -test analyses revealed that children with teacher data did not differ from children without teacher data in terms of race, $\chi^2(1, N = 200) = .46, p = .50$, gender, $\chi^2(1, N = 200) = 2.36, p = .12$, or income-to-needs, $t(197) = -1.12, p = .26$. In terms of the classroom environment, European-American children were more likely to be in classrooms with a higher number of White peers, $t(139) = 6.97, p < .01$, whereas African-American children were more likely to be in classrooms with a higher number of Black peers, $t(139) = -6.86, p < .01$.

Procedure

When children were five years old, mothers provided written consent and completed questionnaires during a laboratory session during which children were videotaped while engaging in multiple tasks irrelevant to the current study. Families received \$80 for the visit and children selected a toy as thanks for their participation. Written parent consent to contact children's current kindergarten teachers was also obtained. Pending parent permission, kindergarten teachers were contacted through email and phone and given the opportunity to complete questionnaires regarding the study child's school behavior with paper and pencil or online. Teachers completed the forms in the spring semester so that they had ample time to observe the child in their classroom. Teachers received \$40 for completing questionnaires.

Measures

Demographics. Mothers completed a demographic questionnaire including child gender and ethnicity, maternal age, parents' marital status, and family income. Ethnicity was recoded as 0 (European-American) and 1 (African-American), and child gender was recoded as 0 (female) and 1 (male).

Maternal Response to Children's Negative Emotions. Mothers reported on their responses to their children's negative emotions using a revised version of the coping with children's negative emotions scale (CCNES; Fabes, Eisenberg, & Bernzweig, 1990). The CCNES includes 12 common situations in which the child is distressed (e.g., *If my child loses some prized possession and reacts with tears, I would ...*). Mothers were asked to rate the likelihood that they would respond in each of six possible ways on a 7-point scale (1 = *very unlikely*, 7 = *very likely*). The measure has demonstrated adequate reliability and validity among European-American and African-American samples (Fabes et al., 2002; Smith & Walden, 2001). Revisions to the original

CCNES measure include slight wording changes to the vignettes in order to add items that address parent response to children's anger.

The measures yield a likelihood for six possible responses, or six subscales: expressive encouragement (e.g., *tell him/her it is OK to cry when you feel unhappy*), emotion-focused reactions (e.g., *distract my child by talking about happy things*), problem-focused reactions (e.g., *help my child think of places he or she has not looked yet*), minimization reactions (e.g., *tell my child that he or she is overreacting*), punitive reactions (e.g., *tell him or her that is what happens when you are not careful*), and distress reactions (e.g., *got upset with him or her for being so careless and then crying about it*). Internal reliability (Cronbach's alphas) for each subscale for the whole sample, for European-American (EA) mothers, and for African-American (AA) mothers is as follows: expressive encouragement $\alpha = .90$ (EA $\alpha = .91$, AA $\alpha = .89$), emotion-focused reactions $\alpha = .78$ (EA $\alpha = .78$, AA $\alpha = .78$), problem-focused reactions $\alpha = .86$ (EA $\alpha = .84$, AA $\alpha = .87$), minimizing reactions $\alpha = .81$ (EA $\alpha = .78$, AA $\alpha = .85$), punitive reactions $\alpha = .69$ (EA $\alpha = .67$, AA $\alpha = .73$), and distress reactions $\alpha = .63$ (EA $\alpha = .65$, AA $\alpha = .55$).

Children's Academic Performance and Social-emotional Competence. Teachers reported on children's academic performance and social-emotional competence using the Mock Report Card (Pierce, Hamm, & Vandell, 1999). The measure of academic performance was obtained from the current school performance subscale that asks teachers to rate the child's academic grades. The child's performance is rated on a 5-point scale [*1 = below (child is performing below grade level)*, *5 = excellent (child is performing beyond grade level)*] in each of six subjects: reading, oral language, written language, math, social studies, and science. Ratings on the six subjects were averaged to create the current school performance score. The measure of children's social-emotional competence was obtained from the social skills with peers subscale assessing teachers' judgments of children's competence during social interactions with peers in the classroom (e.g., *is aware of the effects of his or her behavior on others; refrains from overimpulsive responding*). The seven items come from the teacher checklist of peer relations (Coie & Dodge, 1988) and are rated on a 5-point scale (*1 = very poor*, *5 = very good*). Both subscales have demonstrated adequate reliability and validity in samples of European-American and African-American children (Pierce et al., 1999; Vandell & Pierce, 1998). In the current sample, internal reliability for the current school performance subscale and the social skills with peers subscale was .95 (EA $\alpha = .95$, AA $\alpha = .94$) and .95 (EA $\alpha = .96$, AA $\alpha = .93$), respectively.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Descriptive statistics and correlations among study variables can be seen in Tables 1 and 2. The parent response to negative emotions subscales were correlated in the expected direction; *supportive* responses (i.e., expressive encouragement, emotion-focused, and problem-focused responses) were negatively correlated with *non-supportive* responses (i.e., minimizing, punitive, and distress responses) for both European-American and African-American families. There were no significant relations between mothers' responses to children's negative emotions and teachers' reports of children's academic performance or social skills for European-American families. Expressive encouragement responses were negatively correlated with both child outcomes for African-American families. As expected, children's social-emotional competence and academic performance were highly positively correlated among both groups.

Table 1. Descriptive Information about Study Variables

Variable	European-American			African-American			<i>t</i>
	<i>M (SD)</i>	Range	<i>N</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	Range	<i>N</i>	
Expressive encouragement	5.53 (1.00)	2.36–7	137	5.15 (1.09)	2.82–7	63	2.50*
Emotion-focused	6.01 (.67)	2.91–7	137	5.90 (.72)	4.27–7	63	1.10
Problem-focused	6.16 (.65)	3.73–7	137	5.89 (.80)	3.82–7	63	2.54*
Minimizing	2.16 (.67)	1–4.18	137	2.36 (.84)	1–4.82	63	–1.82
Punitive	1.92 (.60)	1–4	137	2.03 (.74)	1–3.91	63	–1.11
Distress	2.52 (.65)	1–4	137	2.34 (.58)	1.27–3.82	63	1.87
Academic performance	3.75 (.87)	1–5	104	3.79 (.82)	2.33–5	45	–.29
Social-emotional competence	3.76 (.92)	1.14–5	104	3.45 (.78)	1.43–5	45	1.95

* $p < .05$.

Table 2. Correlations among Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Expressive encouragement		.49**	.43**	-.13	-.26**	-.28**	-.03	-.05
2. Emotion-focused	.56**		.65**	-.01	-.14	-.19*	-.03	.02
3. Problem-focused	.60**	.76**		-.17	-.17*	-.24**	.12	.14
4. Minimizing	-.27*	-.04	-.11		.55**	.24**	-.06	.08
5. Punitive	-.25*	-.33**	-.37**	.70**		.29**	.02	.08
6. Distress	-.05	-.28*	-.42**	.27*	.59**		.10	.14
7. Academic performance	-.30*	-.11	-.06	.02	-.05	.02		.63**
8. Social-emotional competence	-.42**	-.07	-.16	.13	.09	.06	.54**	

Note: Correlations above the diagonal are for the European-American sample, and those below the diagonal are for the African-American sample.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

To further explore the role of within-group economic diversity, we assessed whether ethnicity and income interacted to predict maternal response to negative emotions or children's academic and social competence. Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted with the relevant main effects entered in the first block and the interaction term entered in the second block. The ethnicity-by-income interactions were non-significant. Thus, family income-to-needs ratio was simply included as a covariate in all analyses due to the moderate correlation between ethnicity and income $r = -.26$, $p < .01$. The child's age in months at the time of kindergarten teachers' questionnaire completion was also included as a covariate in the analyses. Child age was correlated with both mothers' emotion-focused responses, $r = .17$, $p < .05$, and teachers' reports of social-emotional competence, $r = .18$, $p < .05$.

Multiple Group Models

Multiple group models were estimated using path analysis in the AMOS v.18 software. This formal test of moderation provided superior information to the preliminary correlations because of the inclusion of controls and the ability to test effects of specific responses above and beyond others. Additionally, fit indices provided an indication of how well the full model fit the data, an advantage of structural equation modeling over individual regression analyses (Kline, 2005). The full study sample was included in the analyses ($N = 200$), and maximum likelihood estimation was used to account for missing teacher data, which was missing completely at random (MCAR) according to Little's MCAR test, $\chi^2(15, N = 200) = 10.79$, $p = .77$. Maximum likelihood estimation uses all available information when fitting the model to each observation without

imposing discrete values and is a preferred approach to handle missingness for MCAR datasets (Widaman, 2006).

The first multiple group analysis addressed the research question of whether maternal responses to children's negative emotions related to teacher's reports of the child's academic performance and social-emotional competence similarly for both European-Americans and African-Americans. Two models were compared; one model had all structural weights (path estimates from emotion socialization to school behavior) constrained to be equal across ethnic groups, and the other model had unconstrained structural weights. Only the structural weights were constrained, as the relations between the constructs were the aspect of the model that was of interest in the current study. Family income-to-needs ratio and child age were included as controls in all models. All maternal responses to negative emotion subscales were allowed to covary, as were the error terms for academic performance and social-emotional competence, as there were likely unmeasured characteristics of the teachers that influenced their ratings of students' school behavior.

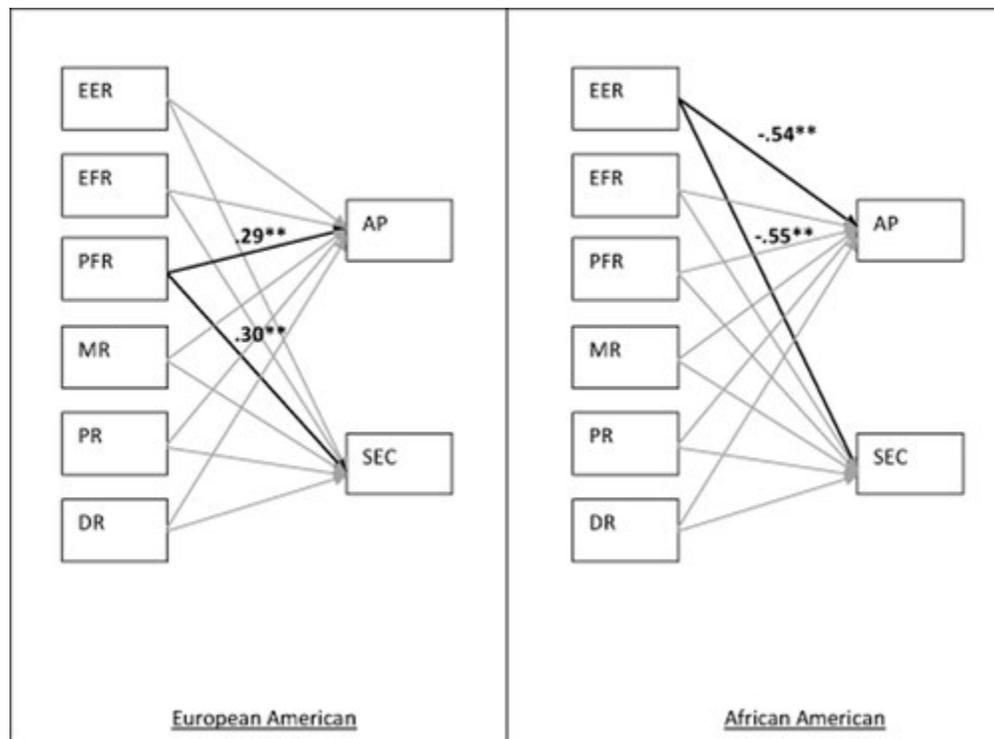


Figure 1. Unconstrained Model of Maternal Response to Children's Negative Emotions Predicting Children's Academic Performance and Social-emotional Competence at Kindergarten. *Note:* EER = Expressive encouragement responses. EFR = Emotion-focused responses. PFR = Problem-focused responses. MR = Minimizing responses. PR = Punitive responses. DR = Distress responses. AP = Academic performance. SEC = Social-emotional competence. Model controls for family income-to-needs ratio and child age in months on the outcome variables. Standardized estimates are displayed for significant paths (bolded) only. ** $p < .01$.

The results revealed that the constrained model fit significantly worse than the unconstrained model according to the chi-square difference test, $\chi^2(10) = 19.06, p < .05$. This means that the associations between maternal response to children's negative emotions and teachers' reports of

children's school behavior significantly differed between European-American and African-American families. Overall, the unconstrained model fit the data well, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) (90 percent confidence interval) = .05 (.01–.07), comparative fit index (CFI) = .96, $\chi^2(42) = 60.24, p = .03$. RMSEA values smaller than .10 and CFI values near 1.0 are considered satisfactory (Bentler, 1990; Browne & Cudeck, 1993). Although a non-significant chi-square value is preferred, this statistic is highly dependent on sample size and should be used in conjunction with other indices to evaluate fit (Kline, 2005); thus, as a whole, the model was determined to fit the data adequately. The unconstrained path model is illustrated in Figure 1.

Of the covariates included in the model, child age was significantly related to both dependent variables among European-American children. European-American mothers' problem-focused responses were positively related to teacher reports of their children's academic performance and social-emotional competence. African-American mothers' expressive encouragement responses were negatively related to teacher reports of their children's academic performance and social-emotional competence. All other paths between mothers' emotion socialization practices and both academic performance and social skills were non-significant.

Discussion

In the current study, we found that European-American and African-American mothers' responses to their children's negative emotions were associated in different ways with children's academic performance and social-emotional competence. In other words, race moderated the relation between emotion socialization and children's well-being. Specifically, helping the child address the problem causing the distress was related to better academic performance and more skillful interactions with peers among European-American children whereas encouraging the child to express his or her negative emotions was related to poorer academic performance and less skillful peer interactions among African-American children.

These findings emphasize the importance of considering the child's cultural context when evaluating the benefits of parents' emotion socialization strategies. Helping the child to address the distressing problem and encouraging his or her negative expression are considered *supportive* responses in the literature (Fabes et al., 2002); however, *how* supportive these practices are for children's development may actually depend on the cultural context. For European-American mothers, the problem-focused response models a proactive approach for children that encourages them to accept and resolve their negative feelings. This strategy was shown to be beneficial for European-American children in the classroom setting as they completed schoolwork and interacted with peers. This proactive approach to negative emotions was significantly less common among African-American families and did not have the same benefits for African-American children's well-being, possibly due to the fact that publicly acknowledging the child's distress in order to solve the problem may be fundamentally at odds with African-American mothers' socialization goals to suppress negative feelings so as not to be perceived negatively in the broader social context. Support for this interpretation is provided by previous findings that African-American mothers of preschoolers tend to believe that it is less acceptable for their children to display negative feelings and that their children, particularly their boys, will experience more negative social consequences by doing so compared with the emotion beliefs held by European-American mothers' (Nelson et al., 2012).

Similarly, encouraging children to express their feelings when distressed is associated with negative child outcomes in African-American families. This is consistent with previous theory

and research that suggests African-American children face more discrimination from the majority culture when they display negative emotions (Kang & Chasteen, 2009; Stevenson et al., 2002), and this prejudice has encouraged African-Americans to adapt by controlling their emotional displays and self-disclosure (Boykin, 1986; Plasky & Lorion, 1984). It is possible that African-American children whose mothers encourage them to express their negative emotions are perceived to be less competent by their teachers because of their tendency to act outside of the social norms for their ethnic group. In the current study, children tended to be in classrooms with significantly more same-race peers, which may speak to teachers' expectations for certain behaviors within ethnic groups.

This finding has both basic and applied implications. It suggests that emotion socialization researchers should avoid placing value labels on parenting practices and should instead consider the potential value of practices within a specific cultural or ethnic context. Although emotional suppression has been associated with negative social and cognitive consequences among European-Americans, the same consequences have not been demonstrated across cultures (Butler et al., 2007). Secondly, as interventions to increase parents' positive emotion socialization practices gain popularity (e.g., Havighurst, Wilson, Harley, Prior, & Kehoe, 2010), researchers and clinicians should consider culturally specific interventions, as opposed to a 'one-size-fits-all' policy.

There are a number of strengths of the current study. Most importantly, this research is among the first to investigate ethnic differences in the relation between emotion socialization practices and children's well-being within an economically diverse sample of European-American and African-American families. Secondly, we utilized kindergarten teachers' reports to better understand children's behavior outside of the home environment rated by a non-family member. These reports are developmentally relevant to the goals of the current study, as kindergarteners are faced with new social and cognitive demands in the classroom that test their recently developed ability to regulate autonomously. And thirdly, we included two important aspects of children's competence at the start of formal schooling, one of which (academic performance) is rarely studied in relation to emotion socialization. Interestingly, the findings were consistent across these outcomes, emphasizing the expansive influence some emotion socialization practices may have on children's well-being, and the fact that children perform better in school when they are able to control their negative emotions and interact appropriately in social situations with peers.

Some limitations and directions for future research are noteworthy. We were only able to consider mothers' responses to children's negative emotions. Fathers, grandparents, siblings, and other caregivers likely provide other socialization messages that may or may not be similar to mothers' responses, and it is possible that they affect children differently. Future research should consider the combined messages that children receive. Secondly, although the measures used in the current study have demonstrated validity in diverse samples, measurement invariance across ethnic groups has yet to be established and is an important direction for future research. A third limitation is that internal reliability was low for the distress reactions subscale of the CCNES. Removing the subscale from the analyses did not alter the significance of paths or the model fit in the unconstrained model; nonetheless, results concerning these reactions should be interpreted with caution. And finally, the current study does not consider the within-group variability that is also important to understand. It is likely that emotion socialization messages are not being delivered in the same way by all parents within each ethnic group, and variability in the

messages and how they are interpreted by children within a specific racial group is worthy of future exploration. In addition to ethnicity, future research should consider parents' and children's ethnic identity, racial socialization, and perception of discrimination to elucidate cultural context.

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