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Peer play is a salient context for examining social competence in preschool children. Play experiences in preschool consisting of positive, prosocial and reciprocal exchanges between peers has been associated with positive adjustment throughout development, particularly for children at risk for poor developmental outcomes associated with poverty. Given the importance of peer play, this study examines child and parenting factors that may be associated with children's peer play skills, based on models of parenting in low-income African American families. Specifically, this study examines a) the relation between emotion regulation abilities of children and peer play in the classroom and b) the influence of parenting factors, including maternal warmth and harsh discipline, on the relation between preschooler's emotion regulation and peer play competence. Using a sample of 137 African American mothers and their children attending a Head Start early intervention program, results showed that as hypothesized, emotion regulation and lability at the beginning of the preschool year were related to peer play interaction and peer play disruption at the end of the year. Study hypotheses relating parenting characteristics to the relationship between emotion regulation and peer play competence were not supported. Additional findings and implications for future research and practice are discussed.

LINKS BETWEEN MATERNAL PARENTING CHARACTERISTICS AND THE

DEVELOPMENT OF PRESCHOOL PEER PLAY COMPETENCE

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Compared to their economically advantaged peers, children living in poverty are more likely to experience socioemotional problems, such as anxiety and depression, academic difficulties, and behavioral problems, such as peer conflict and conduct disorders (Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1994, Bank; Forgratch, Patterson, & Fetrow, 1993; Bolger, Patterson, Thompson, & Kupersmidt, 1995; Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 1994; McLoyd, Jayaratne, Ceballo, & Borquez, 1994). Poverty early in life places children at greater risk for experiencing later negative outcomes associated with poverty. Almost 1 in 5 children in the United States lives in poverty and 1 in 13 lives in severe poverty (Wight & Chau, 2009). The percentage of young children living in low-income and poor families has been on the rise – increasing from the year 2000 to 2008 from 41 to 43 percent, and 18 to 22 percent, respectively (Wight & Chau, 2009). Furthermore, African American, American Indian, and Hispanic children under age 6 disproportionately live in low-income households, with 64% of black children, 64% of Hispanic children, and 69% of American Indian children living in low-income families, versus 30% of white children and 28% of Asian children (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2008). Being of a minority group exacerbates this risk, because of the many challenges associated with minority group membership such as discrimination and

acculturative stress (Swanson, Spencer, Harpalani, Dupree, Noll, Ginzburg, and Seaton, 2003; Kiang, Grzywacz, Marín, Arcury, & Quandt, 2010).

However, not all children in poverty experience a negative developmental trajectory and instead demonstrate adaptive development. Resilience has been defined as "an outcome of successful adaptation to adversity," (Zautra, Hall, & Murray, 2008, p. 42). Research on resilience seeks to identify and understand characteristics of children who overcome developmental challenges despite extreme adversity (Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker, 2000). Such research has identified children's ability to use their own attributes, including intelligence, persistence, self-control, and problem solving as a key factor of resilience (Hart, Olsen, Robinson, & Mandleco, 1997). Additionally, the presence of the supportive people in their proximal systems and close social ties has been linked to resilience (Garmezy, 1988; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Zautra et al., 2008). Identifying key factors that promote resilience throughout development is important to bettering the lives of children exposed to poverty early in life.

The transition into preschool is a time has been conceptualized as an important period when children likely develop competencies related to resilience. During preschool entry, children increasingly develop their social ties and abilities, as well as cognitive, behavioral, and emotional abilities. Growth of these areas is encouraged by the many new extra-familial demands the preschool environment brings (Anthony et al., 2005). For many children, preschool is the first time they are expected to spend an extended length of time without their caregivers in a very structured environment. Preschool, in contrast to daycare, generally follows a curriculum that requires children to follow a

2

schedule, engage in specific activities, and be attentive for sustained periods of time. Additionally, children are surrounded by peers, which causes "the nature and complexity of their social reasoning and their social behavior with peers show profound changes that signal a new phase of developmental organization" (Campbell, 2002, p. 177). Because resilience is an interactive process of child attributes and social supports, research focused on children through this formative transition will give insight to the understanding of many processes involved in resilience. This study strives to better understand social competence as a potential resiliency factor for high-risk, low-income preschoolers. The next section provides a critical overview of the construct of social competence, with an emphasis on the literature regarding ethnic minority children and social competence.

Social Competence

Social competence is conceptualized broadly as children's use of their social and communicative abilities in developing relationships with adults and children to succeed in an environment (Hart et al., 1997; Ladd & Price, 1987; Mendez, McDermott, & Fantuzzo, 2002). Raver and Zigler (1997) point out that there is no established definition of social competence to use in developmental research and program evaluation; with preschool samples, this construct has been operationalized as children's "ability to modulate their feelings, their social cognitions, and their behaviors within the context of peer interaction," (p. 363). While some researchers disagree on the specific tasks that best represent social competence, there is consensus that social competence describes the "capability to feel positively about oneself and to fit in well within a network of positive

relationships with family and peers," (Raver & Zigler, 1997, p. 364). Consistent with these conceptualizations, an emerging body of research that has examined social competence using the construct of peer plays competence because many social interactions in early childhood take place through play.

Peer Play

Peer play represents a primary context in which preschool children acquire and express social competencies (Gallagher, 1993; Coolahan, Fantuzzo, Mendez, & McDermott, 2000; Glover Gagnon & Nagle, 2004). Preschoolers achieve social competence when they successfully integrate personal attributes including temperament, language ability, and emotion regulation, to produce a successful play interaction (Farver & Branstetter, 1994; Garner, Jones, & Miner, 1994; Guralnick, 1993; Mendez, Fantuzzo, & Cicchetti, 2002). Being able to relate successfully to classmates specifically is a critical developmental task that is considered to be a primary indicator of healthy adjustment (Cicchetti, 1990). The ability to relate to others and form friendships creates more opportunities for social interactions, increases a child's likelihood of being faced with the challenges of sharing, perspective taking, problem solving, and using imagination, among others. For example, children can show competence in peer play by interacting with others in ways such as sharing toys, taking turns, and make believe. Children tend to seek out other children who have these competencies, which leads to future opportunities to practice and fine-tune these competencies (Bulotsky-Shearer et al., 2010; Denham & Holt, 1993).

Repeated interpersonal interactions that occur in peer play, especially those involving prosocial behavior or aggressive encounters, are important experiences that impact children's social development (Fisher, 1992; Ladd, Price, & Hart, 1990). Children frequently show prosocial behavior in their caring for others and through sociodramatic play interactions (Campbell, 2002). They can also display aggressive behavior in play by interrupting other children's play, verbally or physically. Campbell (2002) explains that some conflict in play is normative at the preschool age and "through conflict and its resolutions, children learn to regulate their behavior in the peer group, as they practice and internalize appropriate rules of social exchange," (p. 178). Successful navigation of these situations will further develop social competence, which will prepare the child for a broad range of interactions in the future.

Play behavior in preschool is associated with a number of child competencies both concurrently and throughout later development. In their review of play in African American children from low-income households, Bulotsky-Shearer (2010) documented the importance of developing peer play interaction during preschool, as this construct was associated with academic and social development concurrently and in first grade and beyond. In particular, they found that interactive play was associated with concurrent teacher reports of autonomy, motivation, and attention in the classroom setting, positive attitudes towards learning, classroom engagement, all of which promote learning. In contrast, negative peer interactions were associated with limited emotion regulation, aggressive behavior, and withdrawn behaviors, which are problem behaviors that interfere with learning. Furthermore, these relationships are seen throughout

development. Studies show that early interactive play is associated with receptive vocabulary, grades across disciplines, as well as test scores in math in later elementary years (Bulotsky-Shearer et al., 2010). In contrast, early negative play interactions were associated with lower expressive and receptive vocabulary, lower test scores on reading, language, and math in later elementary school years (Bulotsky-Shearer et al., 2010). These findings also support the idea that peer play is a natural context for the development of social competence for African American preschoolers specifically.

Furthermore, successful peer play facilitates the development of positive peer relations in preschool and later development. Positive peer relationships during the preschool years have been associated with positive adjustment in kindergarten as well as academic success in the elementary grades and high school, whereas poor peer relations are associated with detrimental consequences during later developmental periods, including emotional maladjustment, delinquent behavior, and school failure (Ladd, Price, & Hart, 1988; Denham & Holt, 1993; De Rosier, Kupersmidt, & Patterson, 1994; Ladd, & Troop Gordon, 2003). This study strives to better understand peer play competence as a potential protective factor for children in adverse situations, because of its associated positive developmental trajectory.

In sum, literature to date suggests that peer play competence is an important developmental outcome to examine for preschool children. A variety of child factors have been linked to preschool peer play in research with low-income and minority children. Also, peer play competence is important to understand because it predicts future

developmental success, particularly in the areas of academic and classroom learning behaviors in the early elementary school years.

Emotion Regulation

A number of studies have examined the critical role that children's emotion regulation plays in the development and expression of peer play competence. Emotion regulation has been conceptualized as "the processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions," (Gross, 1998, p. 275). Calkins and Williford (2009) write that, "'Emotion regulation processes' refer to skills and strategies that serve to manage, modulate, inhibit, and enhance emotional arousal in a way that supports adaptive social and nonsocial responses," (p. 180). Measures of lability, flexibility, situational responsively, and modulation of one's emotional arousal have been used to tap into this construct (Shields & Cicchetti, 1997). Lability, in contrast, refers to emotion dysregulation, or an inability to manage and modulate emotional arousal, which can be seen through mood swings and negative affect (Shields & Cicchetti, 1997).

Emotion regulation starts to develop in the first months of life, as infants use behaviors such as closing their eyes, turning their heads, and sucking to reduce overwhelming physical arousal or discomfort (Kopp, 1989). Throughout infancy and toddlerhood, children experience a variety of emotionally arousing situations, which provide the opportunity for emotion regulation abilities to develop, such as hunger, separation from a caregiver, and fear of new stimuli. Children learn regulation techniques through the assistance of their caregivers as well as from their own

experiences. As children's cognitive and language abilities develop in the first three years of life, so does the sophistication of their emotion regulation strategies (Kopp, 1989). Research has found that cardiac vagal tone, a correlate of emotion regulation, is stable throughout the toddler year and predicts future emotion regulation (Bornstein & Suess, 2000; Porges, Doussard-Roosevelt, Portales & Suess, 1994). Although children continue to develop their emotion regulation abilities as they grow, the foundation of this construct is established in the first years of life. By the time children reach preschool, they already have a well-developed repertoire for dealing with a range of emotionally arousing situations.

The need for emotion regulation is particularly salient for success in the preschool setting, where the presence of novel peers stimulates more emotion than parent-child interactions within the home (Raver, Blackburn, Bancroft, and Torp, 1999). Children need to be able to manage their emotions in order to appropriately respond to others in a way that promotes positive social interaction and prevents negative social interactions. Although emotion regulation and social competence are thought to be bidirectional once children are in preschool (Bulotsky-Shearer et al., 2010), when entering preschool, children bring a repertoire of regulatory abilities that they have learned from their caregiver or acquired during earlier developmental stages. In contrast, at preschool entry, children generally may not have had the opportunity to practice and develop the range of social skills needed to interact successfully with a range of peers.

In a preschool aged, middle-class Caucasian sample, Eisenberg et al. (1993) found that poor emotion regulation was associated with poor social skills, whereas emotion

regulation skills were associated with positive social skills. In a sample of Canadian preschool boys, LaFreniere (1996) found that the ability to match and sustain a peer's positive affect appears to facilitate greater cooperation and less competition from the peer during interactions. Furthermore, peers prefer children who are able to remain emotionally positive when entering peer groups to angrier and more emotionally negative children (Hubbard & Coie, 1994; Putallaz & Gottman, 1981). Calkins & Keane (2004) also found that in a diverse sample of preschoolers, those who showed higher, stable levels of vagal tone, a measure of physiological regulation, had lower levels of social problems, compared to those who had lower stable levels of vagal tone.

Furthermore, research has linked emotion regulation to peer play competence. Mendez et al. (2002) found that emotion regulation was positively correlated with peer play interaction in a sample of African American preschool children. Among samples of Head Start children, high levels of emotion regulation have also been associated with low levels of peer play disruption (Fantuzzo, Seikino, & Cohen, 2004), whereas disruptive peer play has been associated with emotional adjustment problems, such as classroom conduct problems (Coolahan et al., 2000). LaFreniere and Dumas (1996) measured social competence in a large sample of preschooler's aged 3-6, with a racial composition representative of 1993 U.S. norms, from Canada and three sites across the United States. They found that children high on the anger-aggression scale, which includes items such as "irritable, gets mad easily," tended to express their negative emotions in ways that hurt or at least disturb others, as well as function poorly in social situations.   These authors also note that although this group was the most interactive with peers, they were also the

most rejected (LaFreniere and Dumas, 1996). Children who are under controlled

emotionally, may be viewed by their peers as inappropriate and immature, which can lead

to peer rejection (Spinrad et al, 2006).

Overall, children's capacity to regulate their emotions upon preschool entry may

impact their development of peer play competence throughout the preschool years.

Although previous research has looked at these relations, most work has examined

measures from the same time point. Therefore longitudinal research with low-income

preschool samples is needed to understand how emotion regulation impacts the

development of peer play competence over time.

Parental Influence on Peer Play Competence

The relation between children's emotion regulation and social competence cannot

be looked at in isolation. Understanding how socialization agents, such as parents,

influence the development of social competence is necessary to better understand how to

promote resilience in children. Parents play a major role in their children's lives,

especially in the toddler years. Parenting has been examined using concepts such as

parenting styles, and parenting practices, such as specific disciplinary behaviors (Darling

& Steinberg, 1993). The most widely used model of parenting styles, developed by

Baumrind (1966), is based on parents' values and the beliefs about parenting and their

children and how to best convey these values and beliefs to their children (Darling &

Steinberg, 1993). The parenting style first proposed by Baumrind that has received

significant attention for leading to negative child outcomes is authoritarian parenting

(Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Baumrind, 1968). A parent who is authoritarian can be

described as being emotionally unresponsive or lacking in warmth and using harsh discipline (Baumrind, 1966). In research involving Caucasian samples, these characteristics generally were associated with each other. In contrast, research on African American families has found that harsh discipline does not always co-occur with an absence of responsiveness, and that harsh discipline does not necessarily lead to negative child outcomes. Because of this inconsistency, the present study seeks to better understand how the specific parenting characteristics of maternal warmth and harsh discipline relate to children's social outcomes in a sample of low-income African American families. To provide an understanding of these different parenting dimensions and how they have been examined, this section reviews extant literature on parental warmth and harshness, focusing on differences across Caucasian and African American samples.

A vast body of research has identified maternal warmth as an important factor for positive child outcomes throughout development. Warmth has been defined as "the expression of positive affect, affection, and admiration toward the child. It involves manifestations of fondness and enjoyment of the child carried out both spontaneously and in response to children's initiations," (Davidov & Grusec, 2006, p. 44), or more simply "parent's emotional expression of love," (Baumrind, 1996, p. 410).

Across families from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, warmth has been associated with child compliance, lower distress reactivity, the development of social reciprocity, adaptive regulation of positive affect, and peer acceptance (Grusec, 2000, Scaramella et al., 2008, Isley et al., 1999; Davidov & Grusec, 2006). In contrast, low

levels of warmth have been associated with poor peer relationships, low levels of social

competence and positive social behavior, less autonomy and compliance, externalizing

problems, hyperactivity, and disciplinary problems, (Isley et al 1999, Mistry,

Vandewater, Huston, & McLoyd, 2002, Kerr 2004). Similarly, in a sample of low

income, ethnically diverse children (57% African American, 28% Hispanic, 13% non-

Hispanic European American, and 2% Native American/Alaskan Native), aged 5-12, and

their parents (95% single mothers), Mistry et al. (2002) found that maternal warmth was

positively correlated to social competence, compliance, and autonomy, and negatively

correlated to externalizing problems, hyperactivity, and disciplinary problems in boys and

girls. Lower parental responsiveness, measured by observed warmth and praise,

predicted lower levels of positive social behavior in children.

Theoretical models drawn from past research have pointed to the mechanisms

behind these relationships. MacDonald (1992) argued that warm parents frequently

engage their children in interactions involving positive feelings and allow their children

to experience the intrinsic pleasure associated with such exchanges. Therefore, children

with warm parents should be more motivated to socialize with peers as they have come to

expect social exchanges to be pleasurable (MacDonald, 1992). Baumrind (1996)

explained "affective warmth and empathy in parents motivate children to participate in

cooperative strategies and are associated with the development in children of an

internalized moral orientation," (p. 410).

In contrast to maternal warmth, literature on parenting generally views harsh

discipline as a parenting practice that has a negative impact on children. Despite

numerous studies of harsh discipline, researchers have not established a consistent conceptualization of this term. Harsh discipline can consist of harsh physical behaviors, criticisms, and restrictive commands (Scaramella, 2008) and physical discipline, including spanking with a hand and striking with objects (Lansford, et al., 2009). Harsh discipline has been measured by frequency and severity of physical discipline (Deater-Deckard et al., 1996), use of spanking (Larzelere, 1996), an aggregate negative physical behaviors, commands, and criticisms (Scaramella et al., 2008), and as both a categorical construct and a dimensional construct (Baumrind, 1997). The lack of consistency of conceptualization may account for some of the variability in findings of child outcomes (Larzelere, 1996). The present study measures harsh discipline as a composite of frequency of spanking and attitudes towards child discipline.

Harsh discipline has been linked repeatedly to negative child outcomes throughout development, including aggression, hostile social attributions, negative emotionality, and internalizing and externalizing behaviors; however, the majority of these studies have consisted of Caucasian samples or have not looked at race as a potential moderator (Rothbaum & Weisz, 1994; Heidgerken, Hughes, Cavell, & Willson, 2004; Paulussen-Hoogeboom et al., 2008). The use of physical restraints, threats, and negative prohibitions to elicit compliance has repeatedly been linked to child noncompliance in Caucasian samples (Campbell, 2002). In their research of the influence of Caucasian mother-child relationship on child-peer interactions, Maccoby and Martin (1983) found that relationships characterized by negative maternal control and

negative affective tone leads to more aggressive, negative peer interactions (Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

Mothers' early negative parenting and use of physical punishment at age 3 has been found to predict later externalizing behavior and was associated with noncompliance at age 6 in a longitudinal study of middle class Caucasian children at risk for conduct problems and their mothers (Combs-Ronto et al., 2009). Strassberg, Dodge, Pettit, and Bates (1994) found that parental spanking was associated with higher levels of aggression in a longitudinal study of kindergarteners. The use of negative prohibitions is also associated with fewer child prosocial behaviors (Campbell, 2002).

Theoretical models explain that the increased child risk for behavior problems during later developmental periods has been attributed to exposure to frequent harsh and emotionally negative or coercive parent-child interactions during early childhood because such interactions become mutually reinforcing and model angry affect (Keenan & Shaw, 1995; Patterson Reid, & Dishion, 1998; Scaramella & Leve, 2004; Shaw & Bell, 1993; Scaramella et al., 2008). In other words, children learn to use negative emotions when interacting with others from these coercive parent–child interactions and lose their ability to regulate emotional distress (Scaramella & Leve, 2004; Scaramella et al., 2007). Such negative interactions could be especially significant during toddler years, indicating a risk factor for entry onto a maladaptive developmental pathway (Patterson et al., 1998, Scaramella & Leve, 2004). Supportive parenting exchanges during early childhood, in contrast, should promote social competence because such parenting encourages mutually supportive and responsive interactions (Scaramella et al., 2008).

However, parenting does not consist of a single construct working in isolation. Research has found that maternal warmth moderates the relationship between harsh discipline and child outcomes (McLoyd & Smith, 2002; Blandon, Keane, & Calkins, 2009; Berlin et al., 2009). The quality of the mother-child relationship in the context of both harsh discipline and maternal warmth differs from the context of harsh discipline alone. If harsh discipline occurs alongside maternal warmth, a child may not experience the same negative consequences associated with harsh discipline. A parent could use harsh discipline in response to misbehaviors, but positive affect in other interactions. The child could discriminate the different situations and learn to use positive affect in interactions, as modeled by the parent. McLoyd and Smith (2002) also found that the relationship between spanking and behavior problems was moderated by maternal emotional support in an ethnically diverse sample of 4-5 year olds. In the context of low levels of emotional support, spanking predicted children's problem behavior over time, whereas in the context of high levels of emotional support, spanking did not predict problem behavior (McLoyd & Smith, 2002).

Blandon et al. (2009) investigated the relationship between parenting characteristics, emotion regulation, and social competence in a sample of primarily Caucasian parents and their preschoolers. These authors found that maternal warmth moderated the effect of maternal control (harsh discipline) on children's emotion regulation, which in turn influenced social skills. Berlin et al. (2009) found that the effects of verbal punishment were moderated by maternal emotional responsiveness in that verbal punishment lead to positive outcomes in the context of higher maternal

emotional responsiveness in a large sample of low-income White, African American, and Mexican American toddlers. However, they also found that maternal responsiveness did not moderate the negative effect of spanking on toddlers' cognitive development and behavior problems (Berlin et al., 2009).

In considering past literature, a goal of this study was to examine if maternal warmth protects children from the potential negative effects of harsh discipline on the children's social competence disruption in a sample of low-income, African American parents of preschool children ages three to five. This hypothesis is derived from theory that suggests the enjoyment children experience from warm parent-child interactions leads them to seek out social interactions with peers (MacDonald, 1992), which could overcome the emotionally negative and coercive interactions children learn from interacting with a harsh parent (Scaramella & Leve, 2004).

Furthermore, research on the relationship between harsh parenting and child outcomes does not find the same negative child outcomes in African American samples as have been documented with in Caucasian samples. For example, Deater-Deckard et al. (1996) found that race moderated the negative outcomes associated with harsh parenting from kindergarten to third grade. More specifically, there was a significant positive correlation between harsh discipline and externalizing behavior in Caucasians, whereas this correlation was negative and nonsignificant in African Americans. However, this interaction was detected on teacher and peer reports of externalizing behavior, and not on maternal reports of externalizing behavior. Notably, every component of the harsh discipline composite score was significantly, positively correlated with externalizing

behavior in Caucasians, whereas not a single component of the harsh discipline composite score was associated with externalizing behavior in African Americans. In fact, they found slightly negative, nonsignificant correlations between these measures.

Deater-Deckard et al. (1996) offered this interpretation of their findings. "Among European American families, the presence of harsh discipline may imply an out-of-control, parent-centered household for some, whereas a lack of physical discipline among African American parents may indicate an abdication of the parenting role," (p. 1070). In fact, research on low-income African American mothers has identified different parenting profiles from those developed in Caucasian samples. McGroder (2000) found that African American mothers' parenting was most frequently categorized as "aggravated but nurturant," which she describes as mothers who "tend to demand high maturity from their preschoolers and endorse relatively coercive disciplinary strategies while sharing warm ties with their young children," (p. 764). Similarly, Brody and Flor (1998) labeled this style of parenting "no-nonsense parenting" and characterized it as "high levels of parental control, including the use of physical restraint and physical punishment that occur along with affectionate behaviors," (p. 805). Furthermore, McWayne, Owasianik, Green and Fantuzzo (2008) examined the relations between parenting styles and measures of preschool children's socioemotional and behavioral outcomes using a measure based on Baumrind's parenting styles that was validated for low-income African American parents of preschool children. They found no relations between any of the parenting styles, including authoritarian parenting, and child outcomes, indicating this classic model of

parenting may not be relevant or meaningful in African American samples (McWayne et al., 2008).

A review of research of family structure, parenting characteristics, and child developmental outcomes in African Americans supports the theory that among African Americans, firm control leads to positive child outcomes, so long as it takes place in the context of affectively positive parent-child relationships (Murry et al., 2001). African American parenting styles are adaptive, and change to meet the needs of the situation (Brody & Flor, 1998; Murry et al., 2001). For example,

> Mothers residing in dangerous neighborhoods adopt parenting strategies to ensure their children's safety by discouraging disobedience of rules, because of the potentially grave consequences…Such practices are intended to shield children and adolescents from involvement with antisocial activities, either as a victim or as a perpetrator. (Brody & Flor, 1998, p. 805).

Furthermore, in their sample of low-income African American single mothers and their children, no-nonsense parenting was associated with higher levels of child self-regulation and social competence. Additionally, they found that measures of parent practices were only associated to child outcomes through self-regulation.

It could be that the moderating effect of race in the relationship between harsh discipline and child outcomes is driven by the multiple constructs that compose these parenting styles. The difference in outcome could be moderated by maternal warmth across races, but because African American parents use harsh discipline in the context of maternal warmth more frequently than Caucasian parents (Berlin et al., 2009), race

appears to be the moderating variable. Deater-Decker et al., (1998) reported that in their

sample of African American children, physical punishment was negatively correlated

with externalizing behavior, although not significant, whereas in European American

children the correlation was positive. In another study, these authors followed a sample

of European American and African American children from kindergarten to 3rd grade and

found that maternal reports of physical discipline was associated with externalizing

behavior in European American children, but not in African American children (Deater-

Deckard, Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 1996). However, Stacks, Oshio, Gerard, and Roe

(2009) found that in their sample of Caucasian, African American, and Latino families,

spanking was correlated with aggressive child behavior for Caucasians only, but this

relation was not moderated by maternal warmth. Baumrind (1997) points to the different

contexts in which physical punishment occurs, to explain the difference between

outcomes in Black and White homes, citing Deater-Deckard and Dodge (1995) and

Deater-Deckard, Dodge, Bates, and Pettit (1995). However, research has not extended

these findings to preschool aged children.

In sum, parents play an important in their children's socialization. Given the

inconclusive findings of past research investigating the influences of harsh discipline and

maternal warmth on child outcomes in low-income African American samples, research

should further investigate these relations to better understand what parent characteristics

support the development of peer play competence in preschool.

Summary and Overview of the Present Study

In sum, young children's social competence is a key indicator of positive development during preschool and this construct is associated with positive long-term adjustment in social and academic-related areas. Furthermore, social competence is especially important for children living in low-income environments to develop because strong social ties could serve as a protective factor against the many adverse outcomes associated with high-risk environments. Given the potential influence of maternal parenting characteristics on children's development, this study examined the effect of maternal warmth and harsh discipline on the relationship between emotion regulation and subsequent social competence, over the academic year in a sample of low-income African American families with children enrolled in Head Start. The conditions that account for variation in positive and negative child outcomes are examined to determine if the combination of parenting characteristics, maternal warmth and harsh discipline, influence child peer play competence in low-income African American families.

Additionally, this study extends previous research that focused on older, school-aged children and majority samples to investigate relations among a sample of younger, ethnic minority children attending preschool. For example, although Deater-Deckard et al. (1996, 1998) used ethnically diverse, low-income samples, they looked at children age 5 through adolescence, whereas Blandon, Calkins, and Keane (2009) looked at preschoolers' transition into kindergarten, but the majority of their sample were from middle class, two parent, European American families. Because of the significant differences in development throughout stages of childhood, there is good reason to

believe that the relationships between parenting characteristics and child outcomes may differ over time, in that at some stages certain parent characteristics are more influential than at other stages.

The following questions guided this research study:

1) What is the relation between emotion regulation, lability, and classroom peer play competence?

2) Does maternal warmth moderate the relation between child emotion regulation and classroom peer play competence?

3) Does harsh discipline moderate the relation between child lability and classroom peer play disruption?

4) Does the interaction between maternal warmth and harsh discipline moderate the relation between lability and classroom peer play disruption?

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Procedure

All data were collected as part of a larger research study of parent involvement

and children's school readiness in Head Start settings conducted from 2002 through

2004. The three cohorts of participants were drawn from the southeastern United States.

All participants signed consent forms following a thorough description of the study,

measures taken to ensure confidentiality, and the risks and benefits of

participation. Mothers were informed that participation was voluntary, that they could

withdraw participation at any time, and that declining participation would not affect their

child's educational experience. Participants' names and other identifying information

were replaced with identification numbers on all measures. A trained graduate student

using a standardized interview either in person or via telephone administered study

measures to caregivers. The interview was conducted with the child's primary caregiver.

Information was collected from the same caregivers during the 2nd month of the school

year (Time 1) and again during the last month of the school year (Time 2). Teacher

ratings of child behavior were collected twice per year concurrent with data collection

from family members. Children were tested twice per year by trained graduate students or

trained assessors provided by the Head Start Quality Research Consortium evaluation

team. The sample is comprised of African American mothers and their children attending Head Start who completed all study measures.

Participants

This sample consisted of 137 African American mothers and their children aged 35-59 months (M = 46.92, SD = 6.829). In terms of mother's education level, 23.36% had some high school, 47.45% of mothers had their high school diploma, 24.82% had some college or vocational training, and 3.65% had a Bachelor's degree or graduate schooling. The majority of mothers were never married (67.2%), 16.7% were divorced or separated, and 16.1% were married. Additionally, the majority of families were classified as below the Federal Poverty Line (68.9%) and the mean annual income was $13,775 (SD = $12,189). Forty-seven percent of mothers worked full time, 21.2% worked part-time, whereas 17.5% were looking for work, and 13.9% were not in the labor force. Family size ranged from two to eight people, with 66.9% having four or fewer people in their family. Children ranged from being the first born (25.7%) to the fourth born (35.3%) in their family, with 25% second born, and 14% third born.

Measures

Demographics. Caregivers completed a brief demographic survey regarding their relationship to the student attending Head Start, their ethnicity, marital status, employment status, education level, living situation, ratio of adults to children in the household, and number of residential moves in the past five years.

Emotion Regulation. The Emotion Regulation Checklist (ERC; Shields & Cicchetti, 1997) is a teacher-rated measure assessing children's ability to control their

emotions in the classroom. The ERC contains 24 items that are rated on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = rarely/never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = often, 4 = almost always). Factor analysis yielded two factors: Lability/Negativity and Emotion Regulation. Lability/Negativity reflects emotion dysregulation, such as children's mood swings and negative affect. Items on this scale include "exhibits wide mood swings" and "is easily frustrated." Scores on this scale range from 14 to 56. Emotion Regulation reflects children's ability to react appropriately in situations and their emotional self-awareness. Items on this scale include "responds with positive emotions to neutral or friendly overtures by peers" and "can say when s/he is feeling sad, angry or mad, fearful or afraid." Scores on this scale range from 8 to 32.

Social Competence. The Penn Interactive Peer Play Scale (PIPPS) (Fantuzzo et al., 1995) is a 32-item teacher rating scale of preschool children's interactive peer play. In completing the scale, teachers are asked to indicate how frequently they have observed various peer interactive behaviors in a child during free play periods. Investigations of the reliability and validity of the teacher version (Coolahan et al., 2000) revealed three reliable dimensions. This study used two of these dimensions, play interaction and play disruption. All raw scores were converted into T-scores determined by age-based norms. The play interaction dimension consists of items describing prosocial behaviors such as comforting and helping other children, showing creativity in play, encouraging others to join play, and helping settle peer conflicts. In contrast, the play disruption dimension includes items describing behaviors such as starting fights and arguments, not taking turns, demanding to be in charge, destroying others' things, and disrupting the play of

others. Concurrent validity for the teacher version was established using conceptually

related indicators of social competence and school adaptation, including the Social Skills

Rating System (SSRS; Gresham & Elliot, 1990; Fantuzzo, Manz, & McDermott, 1998),

peer sociometrics, and direct play observation data (Fantuzzo, Coolahan, et al., 1998).

Children who exhibited high interactive play ratings received high social skill ratings

from teachers, were well liked by peers, and engaged during play sessions. Children

whom teachers rated as disruptive in play received ratings of low self-control and were

more likely to be engaged in solitary play. As Raver and Zigler (1997) recommend,

teacher reports of peer play competence were used because of teachers' observational

expertise.

     Maternal Warmth and Harsh Discipline. Parental warmth and authoritarian

parenting were measured using two scales of a parent interview developed for the

congressionally-mandated representative study of children attending Head Start known as

the Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES; Administration on

Children, Youth, and Families [ACYF], 2001). Parenting style items were derived

primarily from the Block Child-Rearing Practices Report (Block, 1965) and included one

item from the Parenting Dimensions Inventory (Power, 1993). Cronbach's α statistics

were computed although the scales contained few items. *Maternal Warmth* was

measured by the 5-item Parental Warmth scale measured mothers' tendency to be warm,

affectionate, and intimate with their children.   The study in which this measure was

validated found that Cronbach's α = .54 (ACYF, 2001). *Harsh Discipline* was computed

through summing the authoritarian scale score and the frequency of physical punishment

score. The Parental Authoritarian scale includes 3 items, "I do not allow my child to get angry with me," "I believe that a child should be seen and not heard," and "I believe physical punishment to be the best way of disciplining."   The study in which this measure was validated found that Cronbach's α = .55 (ACYF, 2001). The Frequency of Physical Punishment scale asked mothers how often in the last week they had spanked their child. Responses ranged from 0 to 10 times per week.

Hypotheses:

1) Emotion regulation will be associated with classroom peer play competence.

   a. Children with higher levels of emotion regulation will have higher levels of play interaction.

   b. Children with higher levels of lability with have higher levels of play disruption.

2) Maternal warmth will moderate the relation between child emotion regulation and classroom peer play competence.

   a. The positive relation between emotion regulation and play interaction scores will be stronger in the context of moderate to high scores of maternal warmth than in the context of low scores maternal warmth.

3) Harsh discipline will moderate the relation between child lability and classroom peer play disruption.

   a. The positive relation between child lability and classroom peer play disruption will be slightly stronger in the context of high scores of harsh

discipline, than in the context of low to moderate scores of harsh

discipline.

4) The interaction between maternal warmth and harsh discipline will moderate the

relation between lability and classroom peer play disruption.

    a. In the context of low scores of maternal warmth, high scores of harsh

discipline will be associated with a stronger negative relation between

lability and classroom peer play disruption, whereas low scores of harsh

discipline will be associated with a weaker negative relation.

    b. In the context of moderate to high scores of maternal warmth, high scores

of harsh discipline will be associated with a moderate negative relation

between lability and classroom peer play disruption, whereas moderate

and low levels of harsh discipline will be associated with no relation

between emotion regulation and classroom peer play disruption.

Preliminary Analyses

Before testing hypotheses, descriptive statistics were run for all demographic and

study variables. Analysis of variance procedures were used to evaluate whether the

means of study variables differ by any demographic variables. Pearson correlations were

also run to determine if any study variables were related to any demographic variables or

to each other.

Data Analyses:

Hierarchical regression analysis tested the hypothesis that level of fall maternal

warmth moderates the relation between fall child emotion regulation and spring child

peer play interaction as the outcome variable. At step 1, fall child emotion regulation was be added to the regression, followed by fall maternal warmth, at step 2. Lastly, at step 3, the interaction between maternal warmth and child emotion regulation was added to the equation.

Another hierarchical regression was run to test the hypothesis that fall harsh discipline moderates the relation between fall child lability and spring child peer play disruption as the outcome variable. At step 1, fall child lability was be added to the regression, followed by fall harsh discipline. Lastly, at step 3, the interaction between child lability and harsh discipline was added to the equation.

Lastly, hierarchical regression analysis tested the hypotheses that fall harsh discipline moderates the relation between fall child emotion regulation and spring peer play disruption and that maternal emotional warmth moderates this relation. At step 1, fall child lability was added to the regression, followed by fall harsh discipline and fall maternal warmth, at step 2. At step 3, all two-way interactions were entered into the equation. Lastly, at step 5, the interaction between harsh discipline, child lability, and maternal warmth was entered into the equation.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses. One-way ANOVAs showed no significant differences between participants who had complete data versus incomplete data on any study or demographics variables. Results showed some significant relations between some demographic variables and study variables.   Descriptive data for all study variables can be found in Table 1.

Child Age

Pearson correlations showed that child age was significantly correlated with peer play interaction ($r = .309$, $p < .001$), emotion regulation ($r = .254$, $p < .01$), lability ($r = -.285$, $p < .001$), and parent rules at home ($r = -.183$, $p < .05$).

Child Gender

One-way ANOVAs showed numerous significant gender differences across study variables. Boys were higher on levels of play disruption, $F (1, 135) = 8.442$, $p < .01$ (Boys $M = 51.77$, $SD = 14.92$; Girls $M = 45.30$, $SD = 10.40$), lability $F (1, 135) = 10.342$, $p < .01$ (Boys $M = 26.63$, $SD = 7.59$; Girls $M = 22.81$, $SD = 6.15$), whereas girls were higher on levels of play interaction, $F (1, 135) = 4.317$, $p < .05$ (Boys $M = 46.73$, $SD = 9.38$; Girls $M = 50.14$, $SD = 9.84$). Parents were found to use harsh discipline more with boys than with girls. Mothers reported using spanking with boys significantly more than

girls $F (1, 135) = 1.116$, $p < .05$ (Boys $M = .60$, $SD = .49$; Girls $M = .42$, $SD = .50$) and

with significantly higher frequency, $F (1, 135) = 4.888$, $p = .029$ (Boys $M = 1.47$; Girls M

$= .81$). There were also marginal differences between authoritarian parenting between

boys and girls ($F (1,135) = 3.192$, $p = .076$), with mothers of boys reporting higher levels

of authoritarian parenting than girls (Boys $M = 2.37$, $SD = .64$; Girls $M = 2.16$, $SD = .72$)

and no significant differences between boys and girls on measures of maternal warmth.

Family Characteristics

Children living in families that fall under the federal poverty line at the time of

data collection were compared to those living above the federal poverty line. Children in

families living below the federal poverty line had significantly higher levels of lability, F

$(1, 133) = 6.151$, $p < .05$, ($M = 27.17$ $SD = 8.32$; $M = 23.91$, $SD = 6.44$). Pearson

correlations showed that family income was significantly related to family size ($r = .178$,

$p < .05$) and to authoritarian parenting ($r = -.188$, $p < .05$). Children were compared on

study variables based on birth order. One-way ANOVA showed marginally significant

differences in child birth order and maternal spanking, $F (3, 132) = 2.529$, $p = .06$.

Tukey's HSD test showed that first-born children are significantly more likely to be

spanked than fourth born children ($p < .05$).

Mother Characteristics

To test the relationship between categorical demographic variables and study

variables, one-way ANOVAs were performed. One-way ANOVA showed that there was

a significant difference between levels of maternal warmth and mother's marital status F

$(3, 136) = 2.839$, $p<.05$. Tukey's HSD test was conducted to test all pairwise

comparisons, while controlling Type I error. This post hoc test showed that mothers who

are divorced show significantly lower levels of warmth than mothers who are married (p

< .05). One-way ANOVA also showed that there was a marginally significant different

between rules in the home and mother's marital status F (3, 133) = 4.085, p < .01.

Tukey's HSD test showed that mothers who were separated had more rules in the home

than mothers who were never married (p = .054). One-way ANOVA showed no

significant differences between study variables and maternal education or maternal

employment status

Study Variables

Pearson correlations showed a number of significant relationships between study

variables (see Table 2). Fall emotion regulation was significantly associated negatively

with lability and associated positively with child peer play interaction. Fall lability was

significantly associated positively with spring child peer play disruption. Fall parent

reported spanking was significantly associated negatively with fall child emotion

regulation and marginally associated positively with fall lability and spring child peer

play disruption.

Additionally, significant relationships were found among parenting variables.

Fall maternal warmth was significantly and negatively associated with measures of fall

harsh discipline, authoritarian parenting, and mother reported frequency of spanking.

Fall maternal warmth was also significantly positively associated with fall authoritative

parenting. Because the relation between authoritarian parenting and spanking was not

significant, these variables were not combined to make a composite variable for harsh

31

discipline. This lack of relation indicates that these two measures tap into distinct constructs. Therefore, analyses were performed separately to test hypotheses related to harsh discipline.

Study Hypotheses

Peer Play Interaction. To test the hypothesis that fall maternal warmth moderated the relation between fall emotion regulation and spring peer play interaction a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted with peer play interaction as the dependent variable. Because emotion regulation differed by age and peer play interaction differed by age and gender, age and gender were entered into the model first as control variables. In step two, emotion regulation was added to the model. Then maternal warmth was entered, followed by the interaction between maternal warmth and emotion regulation. Table 3 shows beta weights and significance for each step. In contrast to the hypothesis that maternal warmth moderates the relation between emotion regulation, the hypothesized interaction between maternal warmth and emotion regulation was not significant. However, a main effect of emotion regulation on peer play interaction was found ($t (132) = 5.734$, $p < .001$, showing that children with higher levels of emotion regulation at the beginning of the preschool year showed higher levels of classroom peer play interaction at the end of the year.

Peer Play Disruption. To test the hypothesis that fall harsh discipline moderated the relation between fall lability and spring peer play disruption, two hierarchical regression analyses were conducted with peer play disruption as the dependent variable. Because lability differed by age and gender and peer play disruption differed by gender,

age and gender were entered into the model first as control variables. In step two, lability was entered into the model. In the third step, mother reported frequency of spanking per week was entered into the model, followed by the interaction between lability and frequency of spanking. The second analysis was identical; however, used authoritarian parenting as the measure of harsh discipline. Table 4 shows beta weights and significance for each step in both models. These results do not support the hypothesis that measures of harsh discipline moderate the relation between lability and peer play disruption. However, results did show main effects of lability on peer play disruption (t (132) = 6.385, p < .001, indicating that children with higher levels of lability in the beginning of the preschool year show higher levels of classroom peer play disruption at the end of the preschool year.

To test the hypothesis that fall maternal warmth and fall harsh discipline interact to moderate the relation between fall lability and spring peer play disruption two hierarchical regression analyses were conducted with peer play disruption as the dependent variable. Again, age and gender were entered into the model first as control variables, followed by lability in the second step. In the third step, mother reported frequency of spanking and maternal warmth were entered into the model. In the fourth step, all possible two-way interactions between lability, maternal warmth, and mother reported spanking were entered into the model. Lastly, the three-way interaction among these variables was entered into the model. A second regression model was run, following the same steps, but with authoritarian parenting in place of maternal reported frequency of spanking. Table 5 shows beta weights and significance for each step in both

33

models. Results show no significant findings for two-way or three-way interactions in both the models predicting peer play disruption.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

Study Hypotheses

The results of this study add to the limited body of research examining the development of social competence in low income, African American preschoolers. As hypothesized, children's emotion regulation at the beginning of the preschool year is related to their peer play competence at the end of the preschool year. Specifically, children who have been developed emotion regulation competencies show higher levels of peer play interaction in the classroom, whereas children who are more emotionally labile show higher levels of peer play disruption. These findings further support the extant research that has focused on social competence in low income minority populations in the preschool years (Bulotsky-Shearer et al., 2010; Mendez et al., 2002, Cohen & Mendez, 2009; Fantuzzo, Seikino, & Cohen, 2004).

Another goal of this study was to better understand how maternal parenting characteristics might impact the relation between emotion regulation and social competence. Following a theoretical model of African American parenting, we moved away from the classic parenting style framework and looked at the constructs of maternal warmth and harsh discipline in combination with each other. The lack of support for study hypotheses about the influence of mother characteristics could be due to limited

power. It could be that the effects of parenting were too small to detect given the sample size of our study. However, our results did indicate that maternal warmth and maternal reported spanking were related to emotion regulation. Consistent with previous studies (Scaramella et al., 2008; Isley et al., 1999), mothers in this sample who model warmth with children may be supporting their emerging emotional regulation skills.   The negative relation between spanking and emotion regulation is consistent with previous research with Caucasian samples, which has found that there is a reciprocal relationship between child emotion dysregulation and the parents' use of the upper limits of punishment (Scaramella & Leve 2004; Smith et al. 2004). In other words, children who are less regulated tend to elicit more punishment from caregivers, which in turn interferes with the development of emotion regulation. However, research looking at the relation between spanking and child outcomes in African American samples has yet to explicitly investigate emotion regulation.

Several reasons can be offered for the lack of evidence for the study hypotheses involving the moderating effects of parenting on the relation between emotion regulation and peer play competence. These explanations include measurement issues, the presence of a third variable, and timing. The measure we used for maternal warmth contained five items and the measure for authoritarian parenting contained three items. It could be that the few items on these brief measures were not sensitive enough to capture the nuances of parenting characteristics to the extent that they would influence child outcomes. Additionally, the authoritarian construct was developed using Caucasian samples. The items on this measure could carry a different meaning for African American parents

(McWayne et al. (2008). As Brody and Flor (1998) and McGroder (2000) have argued, African American mothers use a different style. Although we tried to examine this by looking at different components of parenting styles instead of previously devised categories these measures may not have tapped into the constructs that best characterize African American parenting (McWayne et al., 2008). Another measurement issue involves the use of mothers' self-report. Mothers may not be aware of their own behavior as it relates to the items measuring style. For example, when responding to an item such as "My child and I have warm intimate moments together," a mother may think of one example of this behavior and respond that it describes her "exactly" even though these moments do not occur daily. Therefore, their reports may have been inaccurate.

Additionally, a third variable may have contributed to the lack of evidence for our hypotheses regarding the influence of maternal characteristics on the relation between emotion regulation and social competence. Factors such as maternal depression or mother social support may also belong in this model. For example, previous research has found that children whose mothers' have higher levels of depression have poor outcomes on measures of emotion regulation and social competence (Feng et al., 2008; Maughan, Cicchetti, Toth, & Rogosch, 2007). Researchers have studied how mother's perceptions of such stress relate to child outcomes, finding that In their review of research of African American mothers, Murry et al. (2001) found that social support not only benefits mother's psychological well-being, but also benefits children's psychological well-being. This effect could be direct in that children may develop social skills through observation their mother and the supportive person, or indirect, in that mothers may be able to use

parenting techniques that are more supportive of socioemotional development when they have the support of a friend or family member.

Consideration of timing is another key aspect to interpreting the study results. Our findings revealed that the maternal warmth and mother reported spanking were related to children's emotion regulation at the beginning of the preschool year. In turn, measures of emotion regulation predicted play competence at the end of the year. It could be that parent's influence on children's socioemotional development is most prominent before children enter preschool. During the first few years of life, a parent is typically the person with whom children spend the most time. However, when children enter preschool they spend much of the day with teachers and many peers. It could be that the most salient factors that influence children's social competence in the preschool setting are factors related to this environment. Researchers have found that children's social competence and adjustment is related to both the quality of the classroom environment and teacher behaviors (Brophy-Herb, Lee, Nievar, & Stollak, 2007). Related to the classroom environment, the peers with whom a child interacts may also influence the development of social competence. If a child is surrounded by socially competent children, he may learn positive social skills, whereas if the peers lack social abilities, a child may have difficulty further developing their own skills. The addition of other influential variables in the preschool years may decrease the direct influence parents have on their children's socioemotional development at this time, which would account for the lack of evidence of moderation during preschool entry.

Other Findings of Interest

In addition to examining dimensions of parenting style, other results involving study variables and demographic variables do inform the often controversial issue of spanking as a discipline strategy. Our findings show that mother-reported spanking is related to child birth order, which could be due to the fact that as mothers gain more experience as parents, they learn other effective parenting techniques to offset the use of physical punishment. Additionally, we found significant relationships between maternal-reported spanking and emotion regulation, and marginal relationships between spanking and lability and disruptive peer play in the classroom. However, the relationships were somewhat weak, showing that although spanking may have a negative effect on child outcomes, it may not be a clinically meaningful effect. These results further support previous findings that spanking may not have detrimental effects on child outcomes in African American families (Deater-Deckard et al., 1996; 1998).

Future research should seek to identify under what conditions spanking may be particularly harmful for this population. The mothers in this sample showed high levels of warmth and the majority of those who use spanking only reported spanking their children 1-3 times per week. Perhaps spanking in more extreme cases, where mothers spank daily, may have a different impact on children. Additionally, spanking could have a different impact in populations where children's socioemotional and cognitive abilities are less well developed, such as in the toddler years or in children with developmental delays. Lastly, spanking may have a differential effect on boys versus girls. Consistent with previous research (Deater-Deckard et al., 1996; McKee et al. 2007; Webster-Stratton

39

1996), this study found that mothers used spanking more with boys than girls.

Furthermore, some research has shown that associations between parenting

characteristics and externalizing behavior were stronger for boys than girls (see

Rothbaum & Weisz, 1994 for a review). Looking at differences in the relationships

between spanking and child outcomes may also shed light on the conditions in which

spanking could be harmful.

Future Research

The results of this study can be used to guide future research to better understand

the influence of parents on their children's socioemotional development. Future studies

would benefit from using observation measures in addition to self-report measures, to

ensure that the parenting construct of interest is measured consistently across participants.

Using observation could provide an objective, standardized measure of mothers'

behavior, whereas each mother may interpret questions about warmth differently and may

not have self-awareness of their own behaviors. Observation of a mother-child

interaction could capture how many times a mother expresses warmth towards her child

through physical contact, eye contact, and tone of voice, among others. This increased

sensitivity might show more of a range in levels of warmth among mothers, whereas the

self-report in this study consistently yielded high levels of warmth. Additionally, using

language that specifically describes a behavior and the frequency with which occurs

could help parents report this information more accurately.

The field should also work towards developing a measure of parenting

characteristics using African American samples. Previous authors have conceptualized

African American parenting styles as being different from the model developed by Baumrind (1966), describing many African American mothers as being strict disciplinarians, but also warm and responsive (Brody & Flor, 1998; McGroder, 2000). McGroder (2000) used a factor analysis of the HOME-SF to develop categories of African American parenting, which yielded different results than Baumrind's (1966) model. As McWayne et al. (2008) found, even with a measure validated for low-income African American parents, Baumrind's parenting styles were not related to child outcomes, which these authors explain could indicated that these styles are not meaningful in this population. Future work could extend these findings and develop a parent rating scale for this population, which may help researchers better identify those characteristics associated with resilient outcomes for children.

Implications for Practice and Policy

The results of this study also help to inform early childhood practice and policy. In light of the fact that parents tend to use physical discipline more with first born than subsequently born children, new parents could benefit from parenting classes that teach discipline strategies. Although spanking was not associated with major negative outcomes, it appeared to not be ideal. Spanking may also indicate a limited range of discipline strategies, such that if spanking does not work, the mother does not have another strategy to try. Therefore providing new parents with parent training that are sensitive to parents' cultural attitudes towards discipline and use of spanking can teach parents different strategy that may lead to better child outcomes (Whaley, 2000; Forehand & Kotchick, 1996). For example, Reid, Webster-Stratton, & Beauchaine

41

(2001) found that the Incredible Years Parenting Program was effective in a sample of low-income, ethnically diverse parents and preschool children for increasing positive parenting and decreasing child behavior problems.

Currently, there is a sense in many early childcare arenas that spanking is an indicator of bad parenting or even abuse. Such a negative reaction towards spanking in early childcare settings may turn parents away who would likely benefit from support. Therefore, recognizing spanking as not a "best practice," but not as a sign of parent harm could help increase parents' willingness to be involved in early childcare. As Reid et al. (2001) did, providing parent training though Head Start centers could be an excellent avenue to convey this message. Incorporating a parent training program that is sensitive to cultural attitudes towards discipline would also fit well into Head Start's model of parent involvement.

The finding that emotion regulation facilitates the development of social competence in preschool supports previous authors' recommendation that interventions that promote emotion regulation in educational setting early on is important and beneficial for children (Denham, 1998; Blair, Denham, Kochanoff, & Whipple, 2004). Research on such programs has found that such programs have been successful in reducing socially incompetent behavior (Blair et al., 2004; Bierman et al., 2008). An example of such a program is The Preschool PATHS Curriculum, which provides activities and strategies for teachers to use in the classroom that promote children's development of self-control, emotional awareness, and interpersonal problem-solving skills (Domitrovich, Greenberg, Cortes, & Kusche, 1999). The curriculum includes

teaching children about emotional understanding and expression, self-control, problem solving skills, and prosocial, friendship skills. When implemented in Head Start classrooms, this intervention has been found to be effective in improving preschool children's emotional understanding, social problem solving, and social behavior (Blair, et al. 2008; Domitrovich, Cortes, & Greenberg, 2007). Therefore, Head Start could, again, be an excellent avenue in which these skills can be taught to children early on, which children can carry on throughout development. In conclusion, given the importance of developing resilience in impoverished children in their early years of development, the present study contributes to our understanding of factors that may promote the emergence of social competence in preschool and helps to inform future research and practice.

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APPENDIX A.

EMOTION REGULATION CHECKLIST

Teacher Form

This form is designed to gather information about a child's emotions observed in your classroom. Please rate this child by circling one response, based on how you feel the child compares to his/her classmates over the past **3 months**.

1. Is a cheerful child.	Rarely/ Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
2. Exhibits wide mood swings (child's emotional mood state is difficult to anticipate because s/he moves quickly from a positive to a negative mood).	Rarely/ Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
3. Responds positively to neutral or friendly overtures by adults.	Rarely/ Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
4. Transitions well from one activity to another; doesn't become angry, anxious, distressed or overly excited when moving from one activity to another.	Rarely/ Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
5. Can recover quickly from upset or distress (for example, doesn't pout or remain sullen, anxious or sad after emotionally distressing events).	Rarely/ Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
6. Is easily frustrated.	Rarely/ Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
7. Responds positively to neutral or friendly overtures by peers.	Rarely/ Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
8. Is prone to angry outbursts / tantrums easily.	Rarely/ Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
9. Is able to delay gratification.	Rarely/ Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always

10. Takes pleasure in the distress of others (for example, laughs when another person gets hurt or punished; seems to enjoy teasing others).	Rarely/ Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
11. Can modulate excitement (for example, doesn't get "carried away" in high energy play situations or overly excited in inappropriate contexts).	Rarely/ Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
12. Is whiny or clingy with adults.	Rarely/ Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
13. Is prone to disruptive outbursts of energy and exuberance.	Rarely/ Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
14. Responds angrily to limit-setting by adults.	Rarely/ Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
15. Can say when s/he is feeling sad, angry or mad, fearful or afraid.	Rarely/ Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
16. Seems sad or listless.	Rarely/ Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
17. Is overly exuberant when attempting to engage others in play.	Rarely/ Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
18. Displays flat affect (expression is vacant or inexpressive; child seems emotionally absent).	Rarely/ Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
19. Responds negatively to neutral or friendly overtures by peers (for example, may speak in an angry tone of voice or respond fearfully).	Rarely/ Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
20. Is impulsive.	Rarely/ Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
21. Is empathic towards others; shows concern when others are upset or distressed.	Rarely/ Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
22. Displays exuberance that others find intrusive or disruptive.	Rarely/ Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always

23. Displays appropriate negative emotions (anger, fear, frustration, distress) in response to hostile, aggressive or intrusive acts by peers.	Rarely/ Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
24. Displays negative emotions when attempting to engage others in play.	Rarely/ Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always

APPENDIX B.

PENN INTERACTIVE PEER PLAY SCALE

Teacher Report

In the <u>past few months</u>, indicate how much you have observed the following behaviors in this child <u>during free play</u> by filling in the appropriate circle.

	NEVER	SELDOM	OFTEN	ALWAYS
1. Helps other children	O	O	O	O
2. Starts fights & arguments	O	O	O	O
3. Is rejected by others	O	O	O	O
4. Does not take turns	O	O	O	O
5. Hovers outside play group	O	O	O	O
6. Shares toys with other children	O	O	O	O
7. Withdraws	O	O	O	O
8. Demands to be in charge	O	O	O	O
9. Wanders aimlessly	O	O	O	O
10. Rejects the play ideas of others	O	O	O	O
11. Is ignored by others	O	O	O	O
12. Tattles	O	O	O	O
13. Helps settle peer conflicts	O	O	O	O
	NEVER	SELDOM	OFTEN	ALWAYS

	NEVER	SELDOM	OFTEN	ALWAYS
14. Destroys others' things	O	O	O	O
15. Disagrees without fighting	O	O	O	O
16. Needs help to start playing	O	O	O	O
17. Verbally offends others (name calling)	O	O	O	O
18. Directs others' action politely	O	O	O	O
19. Cries, whines, shows temper	O	O	O	O
20. Encourages others to join play	O	O	O	O
21. Grabs others' things	O	O	O	O
22. Comforts others who are hurt or sad	O	O	O	O
23. Confused in play	O	O	O	O
24. Verbalizes stories during play	O	O	O	O
25. Needs teacher's direction	O	O	O	O
26. Disrupts the play of others	O	O	O	O
27. Seems unhappy	O	O	O	O
28. Shows positive emotions during play (e.g. smiles, laughs)	O	O	O	O
29. Is physically aggressive	O	O	O	O
30. Shows creativity in making up play stories and activities	O	O	O	O
31. Disrupts class during transitions from one activity to another	O	O	O	O
	NEVER	SELDOM	OFTEN	ALWAYS

APPENDIX C.

PARENT MEASURES

New Parental Warmth Score

	Exactly	Very Much	Somewhat	Not Much	Not at All
1. *My child and I have warm intimate moments together*	1	2	3	4	5
2. *I encourage my child to be curious, to explore, and to question things*	1	2	3	4	5
3. *I am easygoing and relaxed with my child*	1	2	3	4	5
4. *I make sure my child knows that I appreciate what (he/she) tries to accomplish*	1	2	3	4	5
5. I believe physical punishment to be the best way of disciplining	1	2	3	4	5

New Parental Authoritarian Score

	Exactly	Very Much	Somewhat	Not Much	Not at all
1. *I do not allow my child to get angry with me*	1	2	3	4	5
2. *I believe that a child should be seen and not heard*	1	2	3	4	5
3. *I believe physical punishment to be the best way of disciplining*	1	2	3	4	5

Child Spanked In Last Week
Sometimes children mind pretty well and sometimes they don't.
Have you spanked your child in the past week for not minding?   YES NO
Frequency of Spanking

About how many times in the past week?   Number of times_____

APPENDIX D.

TABLES

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for All Study Variables

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Fall Measures					
Maternal Warmth	137	3.20	5.00	4.33	0.47
Authoritarian Parenting	137	1.00	4.00	2.27	0.69
Spanking (Y/N)	137	0	1	0.52	0.50
Frequency of Spanking	137	0	10	1.16	1.75
Labiltiy	137	14	48	24.85	7.19
Emotion Regulation	137	11	32	23.51	4.48
Spring Measures					
Peer Play Interaction	137	10	73	48.32	9.71
Peer Play Disruption	137	10	73	48.74	13.36

Table 2. Pearson Correlations for All Study Variables

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Fall Maternal Warmth							
2. Fall Authoritarian Parenting	-.304**						
3. Fall Spanking (Y/N)	-.088	.057					
4. Fall Frequency of Spanking the Past Week	-.189*	.090	.642**				
5. Fall Lability	-.072	-.077	.166†	.127			
6. Fall Emotion Regulation	.184*	-.054	-.182*	-.191*	-.570**		
7. Spring Peer Play Interaction	.100	.048	-.131	-.116	-.431**	.484**	
8. Spring Peer Play Disruption	-.041	-.110	.164	.090	.477**	-.111	-.329**

Note. N=137   *p<.05, **p<.01 †p<.10

Table 3. Fall Emotion Regulation and Maternal Warmth Regressed Onto End of Preschool Year Peer Play Interaction

Model	β	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1		0.12***	
Sex	.112		
Age	.191*		
Step 2			0.16***
Fall Emotion Regulation	.430**		
Step 3			0.00
Fall Maternal Warmth	.010		
Step 4			0.00
Emotion Regulation X Maternal Warmth	-.064		

Note. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.*

Table 4. Lability and Harsh Discipline Regressed Onto End of Preschool Year Peer Play

Disruption

Model 1: Authoritarian Parenting	β	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1		0.06*	
Sex	-.135†		
Age	.134†		
Step 2			0.20***
Fall Lability	.476***		
Step 3			0.01
Fall Authoritarian Parenting	-.087		
Step 4			0.00
Lability X Authoritarian Parenting	.240		
Model 2: Frequency of Spanking	**β**	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1		0.06*	
Sex	-.110		
Age	.144†		
Step 2			0.20***
Fall Lability	.520***		
Step 3			0.01
Fall Spanking	.219		

Step 4		0.00
Lability X Spanking	-.159	

Note. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

Table 5. Lability, Harsh Discipline, and Maternal Warmth Regressed Onto End of Preschool Year Peer Play Disruption

Model 1: Authoritarian Parenting	β	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1		0.06*	
Sex	-.122		
Age	.139†		
Step 2			0.20***
Fall Lability	.449***		
Step 3			0.01
Fall Authoritarian Parenting	-.117		
Fall Maternal Warmth	-.043		
Step 4			0.01
Lability X Authoritarian Parenting	.078		
Maternal Warmth X Lability	.102		
Authoritarian Parenting X Maternal Warmth	.042		
Step 5			0.01
Lability X Authoritarian Parenting X Maternal Warmth	-.085		

Model 2: Frequency of Spanking	β	ΔR^2
Step 1		.06*
Sex	-.117	
Age	.144†	
Step 2		.20***
Fall Lability	.508***	
Step 3		.01
Fall Spanking	-.043	
Fall Maternal Warmth	-.233	
Step 4		.01
Lability X Spanking	-.206	
Maternal Warmth X Lability	.001	
Spanking X Maternal Warmth	.492	
Step 5		.00
Lability X Spanking X Maternal Warmth	.088	

Note. *$p<.05$, **$p<.01$, ***$p<.001$.