

ABSTRACT

SIBLEY, PATSY ANNE. Exploring Ignoring: Mothers' Nonreactive Responses to Boys' and Girls' Negative Emotions and Children's Socioemotional Outcomes. (Under the direction of Amy G. Halberstadt, Ph.D.).

Parents' responses to children's negative emotions have been described as one of the most influential avenues of direct emotion socialization available to parents (Eisenberg, Cumberland, & Spinrad, 1998; Jones, Eisenberg, Fabes, & MacKinnon, 2002; Nelson, O'Brien, Blankson, Calkins, & Keane, 2009). Less studied, however, are parents' nonresponses, that is, parents' decisions to not respond to their children's negative emotions, and the outcomes that may result from their nonresponses. To address this gap in the literature, an additional subscale was created and added to an existing questionnaire assessing parents' reactions to children's negative-submissive and negative-dominant emotions. Mothers of 116 third-grade children filled out this questionnaire, and teachers rated these children's social skills. Results showed that European American mothers reported ignoring dominant emotions more than submissive emotions, whereas African American mothers responded more consistently across emotion type. Children's social outcomes in school were affected by maternal nonsupportive responses only when used in conjunction with maternal ignoring. Specifically, mothers who were low in nonsupportive parental responses but high in ignoring had children whose teachers rated them as more socially skilled and as having fewer problem behaviors than children whose mothers were low in nonsupportive responses and low in ignoring. Overall, results suggest that parents may ignore children's negative emotion at rates that differ by emotion type and child race; ignoring may also differentially affect children based on other types of parental reactions habitually used by their parents.

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Exploring Ignoring: Mothers' Nonreactive Responses to Boys' and Girls' Negative Emotions
and Children's Socioemotional Outcomes

by
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DEDICATION

To my family, the strange and varied bunch that you are, for your continued support and enduring ability to put up with me.

BIOGRAPHY

Patsy Anne Sibley was a nomad long before entering academia. After a childhood spent in Jackson, Mississippi, she moved to Tuscaloosa, Alabama where she received a B.A. in Psychology from her beloved alma mater, the University of Alabama, in May of 2007. An interlude in “the real world” took her to Atlanta, Georgia for several years where she developed a passion for questioning social expectations and assumptions regarding issues of gender. This personal passion was channeled into academic purpose when she moved to Raleigh, North Carolina to enter the doctoral program in Lifespan Developmental Psychology at North Carolina State University under the direction of Dr. Amy Halberstadt where her academic journey continues.

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Introduction

During middle childhood, parents and children alike are less likely to display and experience negative emotions during parent-child interactions than they were in early childhood, as emotional outbursts, temper tantrums, and coercive behaviors decline (Collins, Madsen, & Susman-Stillman, 2002; Newson & Newson, 1976; Patterson, 1982). Parents expect children to become more capable and responsible during this developmental period, and the strategies that they adopt to influence their children's behavior change as children's social and emotional competence increases (Lamb & Lewis, 2005; Maccoby, 1984; 1992). These parental expectations are not unwarranted, as children show significant age-related increases in self-regulation from early childhood to middle childhood, making them more capable of monitoring their own behavior, directing their attention, and regulating their emotional states (Raffaelli, Crockett, & Shen, 2005).

During this same developmental period, children are becoming more cognitively complex and are increasingly able to process multiple thoughts and emotions simultaneously (Harter, 1983; Wintre & Vallance, 1994). Thus, their emotion-related experiences are growing in complexity as expectations of their behavior are also changing. It is likely that parents are still needed to help children regulate their emotional experiences and expressions during this time of change, and that how they react to children's expressions of negative emotions continues to be of importance in relation to children's levels of social competence.

Socialization of Negative Emotions

Learning to cope with negative emotions is more difficult for children than learning to cope with positive emotions (Ramsden & Hubbard, 2002). Further, how parents respond to their children's negative emotions has been described as one of the most influential and important avenues of direct emotion socialization available to parents (Eisenberg, Cumberland, & Spinrad, 1998; Jones, Eisenberg, Fabes, & MacKinnon, 2002; Nelson, O'Brien, Blankson, Calkins, & Keane, 2009). For example, how parents react to the expression of negative emotions may affect the likelihood of children acknowledging and expressing negative emotions in the future (Eisenberg et al., 1988), whether they appraise situations and respond to them physiologically as being threatening or distressing (Eisenberg, 1998; Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1997), and how successful they are in peer relationships (Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1997).

By responding to children's negative emotions in positive, encouraging ways, parents may be acknowledging children's negative emotions and may in so doing also help to teach children to tolerate and regulate their own emotions (Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1997; Tomkins, 1991). In contrast, parents' punitive and minimizing responses may focus only on reducing the outward expression of negative emotions without providing regulation strategies or modeling how to deal with negative emotions (Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1997; Tomkins, 1991). In this view, rewarding parental responses would therefore result in children who exhibit more positive socioemotional outcomes, whereas punitive parental responses would result in children who lack coping skills and are unable to regulate their own emotions (Eisenberg, Fabes, & Spinrad, 2006). Other theorists have similarly suggested that parents

who respond to children's negative emotional experiences with positive support help their children to manage distress and cope with stressful situations successfully, which may foster the development of strong social skills (Dusek & Danko, 1994; Hardy, Power, & Jaedicke, 1993; Skinner & Well-born, 1994).

Empirical support for this theoretical framework is widespread, showing that positive parental socialization responses, such as problem-focused and emotion-focused responses are associated with children who show less anger expressions in peer conflicts and more socially competent behavior in school-age children (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1994; Eisenberg, Fabes, Carlo, & Karbon, 1992; Eisenberg et al., 1996). In direct contrast to these positive socialization responses, minimizing and dismissive parental responses are associated with negative childhood outcomes (Gottman et al., 1997). Specifically, punitive and minimizing parental reactions have been linked to lower social and emotional competence in children (Denham, 1993; Eisenberg et al., 1996, 1999; Jones, Eisenberg, Fabes, & MacKinnon, 2002).

There is an additional strategy, however, that bears consideration.

Ignoring as a Parenting Tool

Anecdotally, parents often report choosing to ignore their children when they are behaving in a way that they deem inappropriate. This technique is often touted by parenting manuals as a way to avoid reinforcing the child's inappropriate actions (e.g., Heininger & Weiss, 2001; Hall & Hall, 2007; Latham, 1994), a technique that is based in evidence from behaviorist psychology. For example, operant conditioning includes ignoring as a viable way to avoid reinforcing an action that the parent does not wish to see continue. Operant

conditioning, at its core, is concerned with the modification of voluntary behaviors, which generally increase when reinforced and decrease when punished or ignored (Skinner, 1953; 1974). Within the context of this framework, parental ignoring could be understood as negative punishment, in which positive stimuli (the parent's attention) is removed in response to a behavior that is targeted for extinction (Skinner, 1974).

Social learning theory further demonstrated that behavior does not have to be directly reinforced in order to increase (Bandura, 1977; Bandura & Walters, 1963). Rather, children will increase certain behaviors after they see others being rewarded for the same actions (e.g., Bandura et al. 1961, 1963). Other behaviorist studies demonstrated in more naturalistic settings that although almost all young children engage in aggressive behavior, aggressive acts increase when rewarded or receiving of attention, but decrease when ignored or sanctioned by an adult (Patterson et al., 1967). These observations led to the conclusion that parents may inadvertently reward their children's negative behavior at home by attending too often to their outbursts and the subsequent advice to use ignoring as a parenting technique to decrease aggressive behavior.

Skinner's operant conditioning principles, Bandura's principles of social learning theory, and Patterson's extension thereof continue to be highly influential today and are incorporated into most parenting manuals and therapeutic parent management training programs (e.g., Asmussen, 2011; Hembree-Kigin & Bodiford-McNeil, 1995; Kazdan, 2005) by teaching parents to reward positive child behaviors and ignore or punish negative ones. The technique of ignoring unwanted behavior has been shown to be effective in

extinguishing aggressive behaviors (Pinkston, Reese, LeBlanc, & Baer, 1973), children's whining (Endo, Sloane, Hawkes, & Jenson, 1991), and bedtime refusal (Reid, Walter, & O'Leary, 1999). However, as a parenting technique, ignoring has been studied only as a response to very specific behaviors enacted by children to elicit attention from parents. Parental ignoring in response to other situations, such as emotional expressions, has not previously been considered.

Parental Ignoring and Emotions

Ignoring children's emotions, also termed "selective nonresponding", has very rarely been examined in the research literature, despite being well-described in parenting manuals. When researchers do consider ignoring as a parenting strategy, it is usually grouped with dismissive or neglectful forms of parenting, the assumption being that ignoring was simply another form of minimizing and dismissing children's emotions (Gottman, 1997; Magai, 1996). Gottman and colleagues (1997), for example, very briefly mention ignoring as a tacit form of dismissal, whereas Magai (1996) includes ignoring children's negative emotions under the umbrella of neglectful parenting. Certainly, parental ignoring of children's negative emotions could manifest itself as one aspect of an overall parenting style that is maladaptive or neglectful. However, planned ignoring has long been touted as a viable way for parents and teachers to eliminate or reduce children's undesirable behaviors (Sheuermann & Hall, 2008). For example, when a teacher ignores inappropriate behaviors or strong negative emotions (such as anger) in the classroom, it is intended to demonstrate to the child that these actions will not elicit favorable reactions (Alberto & Troutman, 2006). Similarly, some

parents may use ignoring as a response tactic to avoid reinforcing the expression of negative emotions and their related behaviors. In these instances, rather than using overt and straightforward strategies (e.g, punishment or direct encouragement) to influence children's emotional expressions, parents may at times use a more subtle form of socialization pressure by attending more closely to emotional expressions that they deem as being acceptable or desirable while ignoring others (Chaplin, Cole, & Zahn-Waxler, 2005).

These disparate views of ignoring would each, theoretically, lead to different social outcomes. If, as Gottman proposes, ignoring is simply another form of minimizing and dismissing children's negative emotions, then the use of ignoring by parents should lead to more negative social outcomes. On the other hand, according to proponents of planned ignoring, the use of ignoring children's negative emotions should reduce the expressions of negative emotions and lead to more positive socioemotional and behavioral outcomes (Gable, Hester, Rock, & Hughes, 2009). It is difficult to hypothesize which view is more likely to be supported, as few theorists, and no empirical studies, have considered ignoring as a parental reaction to children's negative emotions with its own unique outcomes. Thus, the first goal of the current study is to reintroduce the concept of parents' nonreactions as a separate and viable strategy utilized by parents in response to children's emotional expressions. Due to the paucity of research in this area, my first goal is to gather parents' reports on their use of ignoring as a response to their children's negative emotions, to compare parents' use of this response with other widely studied responses, and to identify whether ignoring can indeed be

considered as its own, unique parenting strategy, or whether it should continue to be subsumed under minimizing and neglectful categories of parenting strategies.

Emotion Socialization by Gender

Parents also socialize children's emotions differently according to children's gender. Even before children can speak, adults appraise and respond to children's emotional expressions differently depending on the gender of the child (e.g., Condry & Condry, 1976). For example, mothers display a greater variety and a greater intensity of facial expressions of emotion with daughters than sons in their first year of life (Malatesta, Culver, Tesman, & Shepard, 1989). Mothers converse and interact more with girl children than with boy children, even when the children are as young as six months (Clearfield & Nelson, 2006), and mothers talk more about emotion with their girl children than with their boy children (Dunn, Bretherton, & Munn, 1987; Fivush, 1989; Leaper, Anderson, & Sanders, 1998). This pattern of interactions may help girls develop the higher level of social and emotional fluency that is often stereotypically expected of them and for boys to develop the greater sense of autonomy that is culturally expected of them (Kilmartin, 2000; Shields, 2002).

Parents' gender-based differences in responding to children's emotions are particularly strong for children's negative emotions. For example, parents use more anger-related words with boys than with girls and discuss sadness more with girls than with boys (Adams, Kuebli, Boyle, & Fivush, 1995; Chaplin, Cole, & Zahn-Waxler, 2005; Fivush, 1989; Fivush, Broman, Buckner, & Goodman, 2000). In fact, parents focus on sadness more with

girls than with boys even though girls are not talking more about sadness than boys, indicating that this difference is not directly elicited by child differences, but instead may be a function of the parents' beliefs about gender differences (Fivush, Brotman, Buckner, & Goodman, 2000). In regards to anger, parents are more accepting of expressions of anger by boys than by girls (Birnbaum & Croll, 1984). Additionally, mothers respond in reinforcing ways (with attentive concern) to their young sons' expressions of anger, but tend not to respond to daughters' expressions of anger (Radke-Yarrow & Kochanska, 1990). Thus, there is some empirical evidence that parents attend more closely to children's emotional expressions when they are seen as being gender role-consistent.

As noted above, parents use more anger-related words with boys than with girls and discuss sadness more with girls than with boys. Not yet studied is the other side of this relationship, that is, parents' choice to ignore emotion expressions that are not gender role-consistent. Given the differences in emotion socialization that are seen by gender, the type of negative emotionality and the sex of the child may be relevant to parents' ignoring of their children's emotions. Parents may be more responsive to girls' expression of emotions that reflect vulnerability (distress, anxiety, sadness), and to boys' emotions that are more interpersonally threatening (anger, frustration, hostility). Thus, I predict that mothers will ignore girls' expressions of dominant emotions relatively more than boys' expressions of dominant emotions, and boys' expressions of submissive emotions relatively more than girls' expressions of submissive emotions. Therefore, although I do not anticipate a main effect for type of emotion (that is, I do not expect that mothers will ignore dominant emotions more or

less than submissive emotions), I do predict that parents' tendency to ignore their children's negative emotions will depend on the type of negative emotion being expressed and child gender. Thus, this is the second aim of the study.

Further, because ignoring has not been well studied, we also do not know whether it has independent effects on children's socioemotional well-being or skill. A basic assumption in the study of parents' socialization strategies is that parents' choice of strategies matter for children's social outcomes. As noted above, there is increasing support for this assumption for previously examined strategies (Eisenberg, Cumberland, & Spinrad, 1998; Jones, Eisenberg, Fabes, & MacKinnon, 2002; Nelson, O'Brien, Blankson, Calkins, & Keane, 2009), however we do not know yet whether ignoring matters. It may be that ignoring tends to co-occur with other strategies, such as minimizing strategies, as has been previously theorized, and that studying ignoring as an independent parenting style holds no added value. Alternatively, ignoring may occur independently of other strategies, and may carry its own weight, independent of the effects of the other strategies. Thus, my third, and final, aim is to examine whether considering ignoring as a parenting style provides unique predictive information for children's development of social skills and problem behaviors, above and beyond the information provided by minimizing and punitive parenting responses.

The Present Study

As outlined, parental socialization and its effects on children's social outcomes have been widely studied in recent years, with the exception of parents' nonreactive responses to their children's negative emotions. That is, parents may actively choose not to respond to

children's negative emotions at all, rather than using overt and straightforward strategies (e.g., punishment or minimizing) to influence children's emotional expressions. Ignoring may be influenced by child gender in that parents may attend more closely to children's emotional expressions when they are gender role-consistent and may ignore those that are gender role-inconsistent. Additionally, considering ignoring as a parenting strategy, separate from other parenting strategies and reactions, may provide additional information regarding parents' socialization of children's emotions and children's socioemotional development.

My hypotheses are as follows:

- 1) Mothers will report using ignoring as a valid and unique socialization strategy in response to children's expressions of negative emotions.
- 2) The relationship between emotion type and mothers' use of ignoring will depend both on the child's gender and on whether or not the emotional expression in question is gender-role consistent. Specifically, mothers will report ignoring boys relatively more often when they are expressing sadness than when they are expressing anger, and they will report ignoring girls relatively more often when they are expressing anger than when they are expressing sadness.
- 3) Maternal ignoring will provide unique information regarding children's social outcomes and children's problem behaviors, above and beyond that provided by minimizing and punitive parenting responses. See Figure 1 for the conceptual model that outlines these aims and hypotheses.

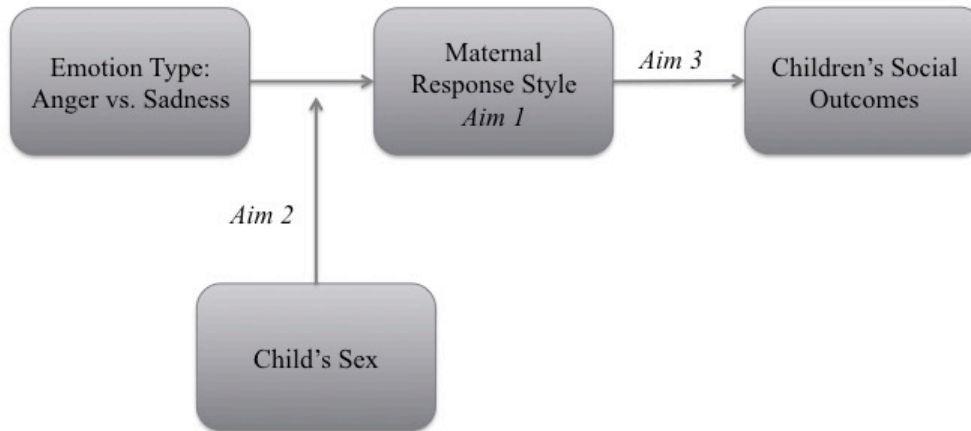


Figure 1. Visual depiction of the predicted relationships between maternal ignoring, child sex, and children's social outcomes.

Method

Participants

Participants for the current study were 116 mother-child dyads drawn from a sample recruited for a larger, longitudinal study ($n=127$) and an additional sample of mother-child dyads recruited to supplement that sample ($n=76$). Families who were part of the longitudinal sample were recruited through the Durham Child Health and Development Study (DCHDS), an investigation of development that has followed children from the age of 3 months through third grade (Cox, Reznick, & Ornstein, co-PIs). Exclusion criteria for participation in DCHDS included birth complications, multiple births, premature birth greater than one month, parental plans to leave the community within three years, and maternal age under 18 at the time of child's birth. The 76 additional families were recruited primarily through

flyers, referrals, and social media. Every effort was made to maintain the racially mixed and socioeconomically balanced nature of the study sample.

The 127 mother-child dyads from the longitudinal sample did not differ from the 76 supplemental mother-child dyads on family income ($p = .69$). However, the latter sample included children who were significantly older ($M_{Age} = 8.84$) and mothers who had significantly more years of education ($M_{Education} = 15.20$) than children and mothers in the original sample of 127 ($M_{Age} = 8.70$ and $M_{Education} = 13.50$; $p = .012$ and $p < .001$, respectively). Based on mothers' reports of child race, 117 of 203 mother-child dyads were African American (53.8% female), 82 (41.5% female) were European American, and 4 (25% female) were bi-racial.

The current study is primarily interested in mothers' nonreactive responses to children's negative emotions, which I began to assess several months into data collection. Therefore, only a portion of the total sample completed data on the variables of interest. The final sample for the current study consisted of 116 mother-child dyads with complete data for the revised version of the parental response scale. Of the 58 families from the DCHDS sample who participated in the current study, 43 (58% female) were African American and 16 (50% female) were European American. 58 of the newly recruited families are also included in the current sample: 36 (53% female) were African American and 22 (23% female) were European American. Mothers who completed the nonreactive responses questionnaire did not differ from mothers who did not complete it on total household income or child's age ($ps = .71$ and $.85$, respectively). However, mothers in this sample did differ

based on education, with mothers who completed the nonreactive responses questionnaire having significantly higher educational achievement ($M_{Education}=14.32$) than mothers who did not complete this questionnaire ($M_{Education}=13.85$).

After receiving parental consent to contact them, children's teachers were also recruited to participate in the current study. Those teachers who agreed to participate were mailed packets of questionnaires. Pre-stamped and addressed envelopes were included in the packets to increase the likelihood of them being returned. Completed questionnaire packets were obtained from 100 (85.5%) of the current sample's teachers.

Procedure

Mothers were contacted for an initial screening to ensure that they met the requirements for the study. After this initial screening, a packet of questionnaires was mailed to the family's home, and mothers were asked to complete this packet before their arrival at the lab. The questionnaire assessing mothers' responses to their children's negative emotions was included in this original packet of questionnaires. Mother-child dyads were then invited into the lab to complete additional questionnaires and to take part in several dyadic tasks. After obtaining informed consent from the mothers and assent from the children, mothers and children completed several questionnaires not germane to this study. Mothers and children were then asked to participate in dyadic tasks, followed by more questionnaires that were completed individually. Mothers' use of ignoring in response to their children's negative emotions was assessed during the second battery of questionnaires. Mothers were also asked for consent to contact the children's teachers for additional information regarding the

participating child. If they were willing to consent to this part of the study, mothers provided their child's teacher's name and contact information. Finally, demographic information was collected from mothers via computer at the end of the protocol. Mothers were thanked and paid \$50 for their participation and reimbursed for their travel to the lab. The total session length for the study as a whole was approximately two hours, with time for a break and a snack at the one-hour mark. All tasks were administered by trained research assistants in a standard order across all participants. Research teams were mixed race and mixed gender whenever possible.

Children's social skills were assessed via teacher ratings in the spring of third grade. Questionnaire packets were mailed to the school of consenting teachers with a self-addressed, stamped return envelope, and teachers were asked to return them upon completion. Teachers who completed and returned the questionnaires were sent \$25 as compensation for their participation.

Measures

Coping with Children's Negative Emotions Scale (CCNES; Fabes, Eisenberg & Bernzweig, 1990; modified by Stelter & Halberstadt, 2013). The CCNES (see Appendix A for the revised version used in the current study) is a parent response questionnaire used to measure parents' reactions to children's negative emotions. Mothers responded to hypothetical situations that centered on their children's expression of negative emotions. "If my child loses some prized possession and reacts with tears, I would: ..." Mothers then rated each of eight possible responses.

Because the original CCNES is primarily focused on children's distress, fear, and sadness (e.g., "If my child loses some prized possession and reacts with tears, I would..."), and includes only one item on anger ("If my child becomes angry because he/she is sick or hurt and can't go to his/her friend's birthday party, I would..."), Stelter & Halberstadt (2013) modified the scale by adding five additional items that involve situations evoking children's frustration or anger (e.g., "If my child throws his/her pencil or crumples up his/her paper in frustration while working on his/her homework assignments, I would...") and altering one item slightly to identify anger more clearly as the target emotion. The final scale given to participants in the current study contained 16 items; ten from the original CCNES developed by Fabes, Eisenberg, & Bernzweig (1990) and six that were either altered or developed by Stelter & Halberstadt (2013).

Mothers rated each of eight possible responses they might have to the 16 vignettes, using 7-point Likert scales (1 = *Very Unlikely*, 7 = *Very Likely*). There are eight types of parental responses: problem-focused responses revolve around attempting to solve the problem that is leading to the negative emotions (e.g., "help my child think of places he/she hasn't looked yet"). Emotion-focused responses are parental responses that focus on distracting the child from the emotional experience or providing comfort (e.g., "distract my child by talking about happy things"). Emotion encouraging consists of parental responses that focus on encouraging the child to experience and express their negative emotions (e.g., "encourage my child to talk about his/her anger"). Minimizing reactions involve parents devaluing or dismissing children's negative emotions (e.g., "tell my child that he/she is

overreacting”). Punitive reactions involve parents punishing children for the expression of negative emotions (e.g., “tell him/her that’s what happens when you’re not careful”). Distress reactions consist of reactions in which parents focus on their own emotional reaction to their children’s expressions of negative emotions (e.g., “feel uncomfortable and embarrassed myself”). Two additional response types that were not part of the original CCNES were written and included at the time of this study. Nonverbal communication reactions consist of reactions in which parents do not verbally respond to their children’s negative emotions but communicate their feelings through nonverbal looks (e.g., “give my child a firm look to indicate that s/he needs to stop now”). Ignoring responses are when parents choose not to respond to their children’s negative emotions (e.g., “ignore my child’s outburst and continue what I was doing”). The original CCNES, which included six of these response styles, has demonstrated good internal consistency, reliability over time, and construct validity (e.g., Eisenberg et al., 1999; Fabes et al., 2002).

Following Fabes et al. (2002) and McElwain, Halberstadt, & Volling (2007), we combined minimizing and punitive reactions to create a nonsupportive reactions composite score ($\alpha=.91$). We found minimizing and punitive reactions to be strongly correlated, $r(191) = .77, p < .01$, further indicating that considering them jointly as part of a single parental reaction style is justified. Similarly, problem-focused and emotion-focused reactions were combined to create a supportive reactions composite score ($\alpha=.90$). These two forms of supportive parental reactions were also strongly correlated, $r(191) = .62, p < .01$, indicating that considering them jointly as part of a single parental reaction style is justified. These

composites were consistent with a validation study in which a principal components factor analysis of the six original subscales yielded a four-factor solution; punitive and minimization reactions loaded on the first factor and problem-focused and emotion-focused coping loaded on the second factor (Fabes et al., 2002). Distress reactions, emotion encouraging responses, and nonverbal reactions were not considered further as they are less germane to the interests of the current study.

Mothers completed the original version of the CCNES as part of a packet of questionnaires that was completed at home prior to arrival at the lab. During the second half of their lab visit, mothers completed the CCNES – R, a second version of the same questionnaire that included two new response options. In completing the CCNES-R, mothers were asked to use the same 7-point Likert scales ranging from very unlikely to very likely to indicate the likelihood that they would choose to ignore their children's negative emotions; items were averaged to create the ignoring subscale. Internal reliability for this subscale was .86. Additionally, an 11-item subscale was calculated to assess mothers' ignoring of children's submissive emotions (IgnoreSub; $\alpha = .80$) by averaging maternal responses to item stems referencing children's submissive emotions (e.g., sadness, anxiety, worry), and a 5-item scale was calculated to assess mothers' ignoring of children's dominant emotions (IgnoreDom; $\alpha = .68$) by averaging maternal responses to item stems referencing children's dominant emotions (e.g., anger).

Social Skills Rating System - Teacher (SSRS-T; Elliott, Gresham, Freeman, & McCloskey, 1988). The SSRS-T (see Appendix B) is a teacher report measure assessing two

domains of the target child's social behavior with peers in the classroom (Social Skills and Problem Behaviors) and one domain of academic competence. The Social Skills and Problem Behaviors were used for the present study. The Social Skills domain is made up of three subscales, with 10 items each. Using a 3-point scale (0 = never, 1 = sometimes, 2 = very often), teachers report on children's frequency of: Assertion (e.g., initiating social behaviors, asking others for information, introducing oneself, responding to actions of others; $\alpha=.89$), Cooperation (e.g., helping others, sharing materials, complying with rules/directions; $\alpha=.93$), and Self-control (e.g., appropriate responses to teaching, turn-taking, compromise; $\alpha=.93$). To assess the child's total social skills score, the mean is taken of all 30 items across the three domains. The Problem Behaviors domain is comprised of three subscales, with 6 items each: Externalizing (e.g., peer conflict, outbursts of anger; $\alpha=.94$), Internalizing (e.g., low self-esteem, loneliness, anxiety in groups; $\alpha=.88$), and Hyperactivity (e.g., impulsivity, disruptive behavior, succumbs to distraction; $\alpha=.89$). To assess the child's total problem behaviors score the mean was taken of all 18 items across the three domains. The SSRS has demonstrated evidence of internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and construct validity (Gresham & Elliott, 1990; Burchinal, Roberts, Zeisel, & Rowley, 2008) and invariance for African American and European American populations (Decker, Dona, and Christenson, 2007).

Results

The overarching goal of these analyses was to assess mothers' use of ignoring as a socialization strategy in response to their children's negative emotions. As part of achieving

this goal, a new subscale of the CCNES was created to capture mothers' use of ignoring as a parental response. First, I provide descriptive statistics to examine characteristics of the newly developed ignoring subscale and the frequency with which mothers report using ignoring as a strategy, in comparison to their reports of using nonsupportive responses, a CCNES subscale that has previously been well supported (Aim 1). Second, I assess whether mothers differentially utilize ignoring by emotion type and child gender (Aim 2). Third, I examine whether mothers' use of ignoring responses, mothers' use of minimizing and punishing responses, or the combination of these maternal responses predicts children's school outcomes in terms of their social skills and problem behaviors (Aim 3).

Aim 1: Exploring Ignoring

Descriptive statistics in Table 1 demonstrate that the ignore variables are reasonably distributed and somewhat similar to other reported maternal reactions to children's negative emotions. Some of the CCNES and the SSRS scales are significantly skewed, however this is not surprising, given the nature of the variables. Nonsupportive parenting responses such as minimizing and punishing are often shown to be less prevalent than supportive parenting responses (Fabes, 2002), so positively skewed results were expected. Similarly, the subscales of the SSRS are expected to be skewed, as teachers report low numbers of problem behaviors, leading to positive skew in this variable, and high numbers of prosocial behaviors, leading to negative skew in the social skills variable (Elliott, 2008). According to parameters set forward by Kline (2011), all variables fall within an acceptable range and are not considered to be problematically kurtotic.

Table 1

Descriptive Characteristics for Maternal Reactions and Children's Social Outcomes

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	Skew	Kurtosis
Maternal Reactions					
Ignore Total	2.39	0.88	1.00 – 5.44	0.97 (.23)	1.08 (.45)
Ignore Dominant	2.45	1.04	1.00 – 6.40	0.97 (.23)	1.10 (.45)
Ignore Submissive	2.37	0.91	1.00 – 5.00	0.93 (.23)	0.89 (.45)
Nonsupportive	2.56	0.82	1.28 – 5.25	1.08 (.23)	1.28 (.45)
Supportive	5.25	0.80	3.22 – 7.00	-0.06 (.23)	-0.01 (.45)
Children's Social Outcomes					
Social Skills	1.44	0.41	0.27 – 2.00	-0.78 (.24)	-0.08 (.48)
Problem Behaviors	0.43	0.36	0.00 – 2.00	1.16 (.24)	1.53 (.48)

As shown in Table 2, the two ignoring subscales were significantly correlated with each other, and with the total ignoring score. Ignore total and ignore submissive (but not ignore dominant) were significantly, positively correlated with nonsupportive maternal responses. No relationships were found between the ignore subscales and the supportive maternal responses, therefore these types of responses will not be considered further.

Table 2

Correlations Among Mothers' Reactions to Children's Negative Emotions and Children's Social Skills and Problem Behaviors in School

	Maternal Reactions					Child Outcomes	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Maternal Reactions							
1. Ignore Total	-						
2. Ignore Dom	.85**	-					
3. Ignore Sub	.96**	.67**	-				
4. Nonsupportive	.30**	.16	.34**	-			
5. Supportive	-.01	.01	-.02	-.13	-		
Child Outcomes							
6. Social Skills	.09	.08	.09	-.06	-.16	-	
7. Prob Behavior	-.08	-.03	-.10	-.02		-.77**	-
					.27**		

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$. $N=116$

A one-sample t -test showed that the mean level at which mothers endorsed ignoring their children's expression of negative emotions ($M = 2.39$, $SD = .87$) was significantly different from 1, $t(115) = 16.97$; $p < .001$; $d = 3.16$ meaning that mothers do not report being "very unlikely" to use ignoring in response to children's negative emotions. A series of paired samples t -tests showed that mothers tended to provide nonsupportive responses ($M = 2.57$, $SD = .82$) more than ignoring ($M = 2.39$, $SD = .87$) children's expression of negative emotions; $t(110) = -1.82$, $p = .07$; $d = -.18$. However, when children's negative dominant and negative submissive emotions were considered separately, unique patterns emerged for each

emotion type. Mothers were significantly more likely to respond to their children's negative dominant emotions with nonsupportive reactions ($M = 3.66, SD = .98$) than to ignore them ($M = 2.45, SD = 1.03$); $t(110) = -9.35, p < .001; d = .89$, whereas with negative submissive emotions parents were significantly more likely to use ignoring ($M = 2.37, SD = .90$) than to respond with nonsupportive responses ($M = 2.06, SD = .87$); $t(110) = 3.18, p < .01; d = .31$.

This means that mothers endorsed ignoring as a parental response at a similar level to that seen with nonsupportive responses when all types of negative emotions are considered together. However, when dominant and submissive negative emotions are considered separately, mothers appear more likely to use nonsupportive responses than ignoring responses with children's negative dominant emotions and more likely to use ignoring responses than nonsupportive responses with children's negative submissive emotions. Clearly, ignoring is a parenting response that warrants further research attention, and that must be considered in relation to the type of emotion being expressed.

Aim 2: Ignoring by Emotion Type and Gender

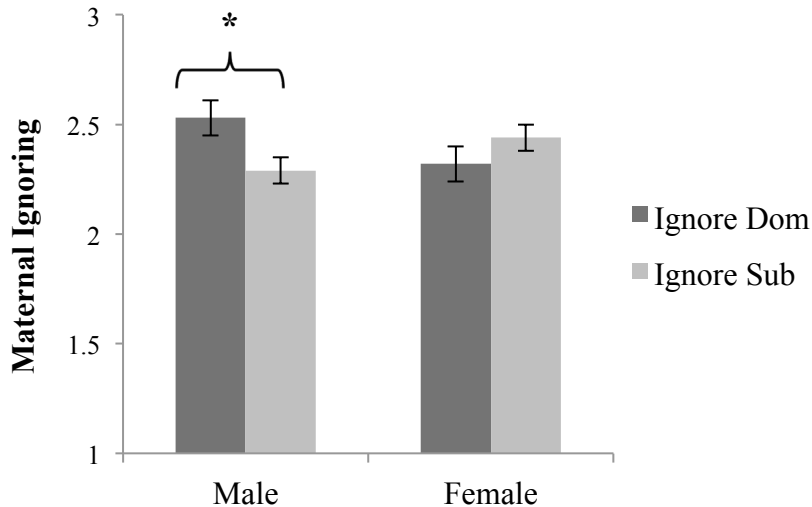
The second aim of the current study was to explore whether mothers report choosing to ignore children's negative emotions more often depending on type of emotion (dominant or submissive) being expressed and in relation to the gender of the child. The means and standard deviations for mother's reported use of ignoring by both gender and race are included in Table 3.

Table 3

Means and standard deviations for ignoring by type of emotion, gender, and race.

Emotion Type	African American		European American	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Ignore Dominant	2.31 (1.02)	2.26 (0.84)	2.83 (1.32)	2.54 (0.99)
Ignore Submissive	2.15 (0.90)	2.51 (0.93)	2.46 (0.92)	2.20 (0.90)
N	33	44	25	13

A 2-factors (emotion type x gender) repeated measures ANOVA was run with emotion type (negative dominant and negative submissive) as the within-subjects factor and gender as a between subjects factor in the model. Mothers' frequency of ignoring children's negative dominant and negative submissive emotions did not vary significantly, $F(1, 113) = .87, p = .35, \eta^2 = .01$. The main effect of gender was not significant, $F(1, 113) = .03, p = .85, \eta^2 = .00$. The interaction between emotion type and gender was significant, $F(1, 113) = 6.27, p = .01, \eta^2 = .05$, but not in the predicted direction. Post-hoc analyses with a Bonferroni adjustment revealed that although mothers did not differentiate between dominant and submissive negative emotions with their daughters, $F(1, 113) = 1.22, p = .27, \eta^2 = .01$, they did ignore sons' negative dominant emotions more than their negative submissive emotions, $F(1, 113) = 5.96, p = .02, \eta^2 = .05$. This relationship is depicted in Figure 2.



Note^a: *significant contrast at $p = .05$.

Note^b: Observed range for maternal ignoring values is from 1 – 6.40.

Figure 2. Emotion type by gender interaction in maternal ignoring.

Because the relationship between gender and ignoring was the opposite of what was predicted, I considered whether race might function as a moderating factor in the relationship between emotion type and child gender. Therefore, the repeated measures ANOVA was rerun with race included in the model. As shown in Table 3, neither main effect was significant, as before, but the interaction of emotion type and gender was no longer significant. Despite the nonsignificant interaction effect for gender and emotion type, pairwise comparisons were run in an exploratory way. These did show that the significant difference between mothers' responses to boys' negative emotions remained, with mothers ignoring boys' dominant negative emotions ($M = 2.53$, $SE = .14$) significantly more than boys' submissive negative emotions ($M = 2.28$, $SE = .12$); $F(1, 111) = 6.85$, $p = .01$; $\eta^2 = .06$.

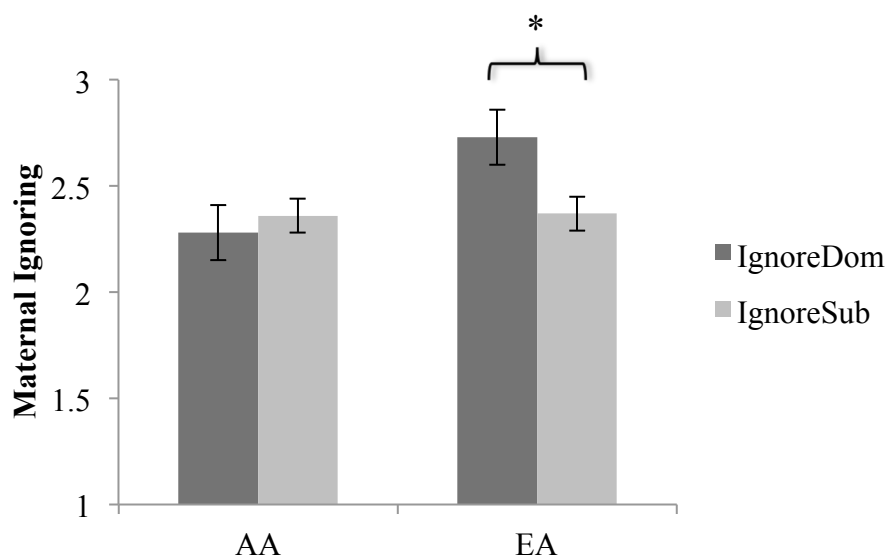
Table 4

Results of RMANOVA for maternal ignoring by gender, race, and emotion type

	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
Gender	0.12	.73	.001
Race	1.19	.28	.01
Emotion Type (ET)	3.90	.05*	.03
Gender x Race	1.36	.25	.01
ET x Gender	1.94	.17	.02
ET x Race	6.49	.01*	.06
ET x Gender x Race	1.43	.24	.01

*Note:** = $p < .05$.

In addition, a significant two-way interaction between emotion type and race was found. Post-hoc analyses with a Bonferroni adjustment showed that European American mothers were more likely to report ignoring dominant negative emotions ($M = 2.69$, $SE = .18$) than submissive negative emotions ($M = 2.33$, $SE = .16$), $F(1, 111) = 7.43$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .06$, whereas African American mothers showed no differences in ignoring dominant negative emotions ($M = 2.28$, $SE = .12$) and submissive negative emotions ($M = 2.33$, $SE = .11$), $F(1, 111) = .26$, $p = .61$, $\eta^2 = .002$. This interaction is depicted in Figure 3.



Note^a: *significant contrast at $p = .05$.

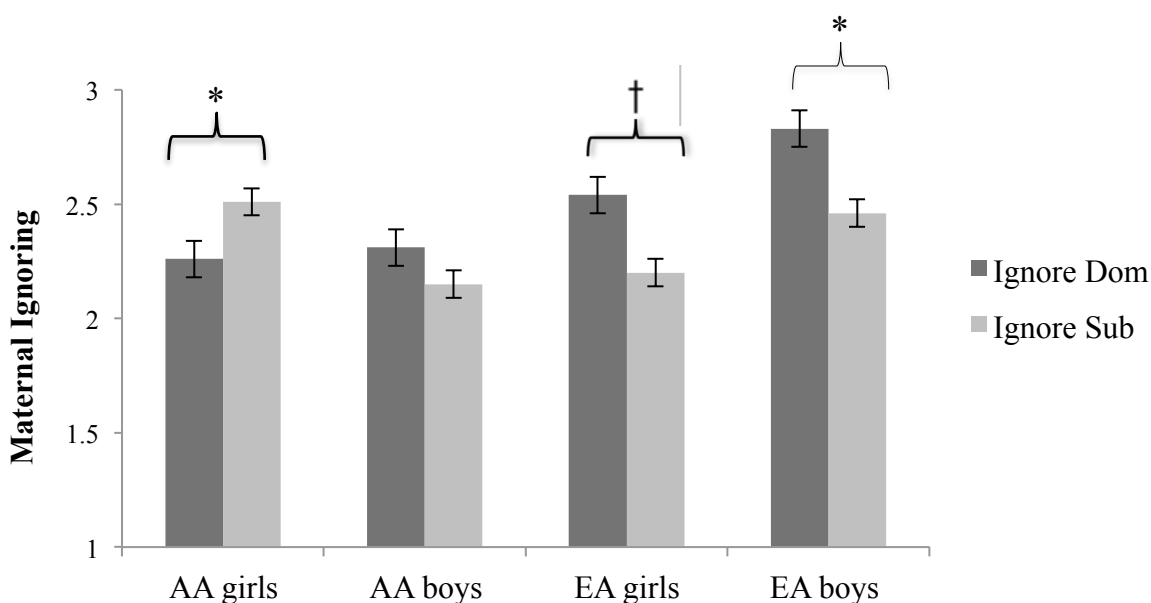
Note^b: Observed range for maternal ignoring values is from 1 – 6.40.

Figure 3. Emotion type by race interaction in maternal ignoring.

The three-way interaction between emotion type, gender, and race was not significant. However, pairwise comparisons among the three variables were run in an exploratory way, and these showed that mothers reported significant differences in their use of ignoring for both EA boys and AA girls. Specifically, for AA girls, mothers reported being significantly more likely to ignore submissive negative emotions ($M = 2.51$, $SE = .14$) than dominant negative emotions ($M = 2.26$, $SE = .16$), $F(1, 111) = 4.67$, $p = .03$, $\eta^2 = .04$. However, for EA boys, mothers reported being significantly more likely to ignore dominant negative emotions ($M = 2.83$, $SE = .21$) than submissive negative emotions ($M = 2.46$, $SE = .18$), $F(1, 111) = 5.91$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2 = .05$. The comparison for EA mothers of girls showed a

trend toward ignoring dominant negative emotions ($M = 2.54, SE = .29$) more than submissive negative emotions ($M = 2.20, SE = .25$), $F(1, 111) = 2.58, p = .10, \eta^2 = .02$. AA mothers of boys did not report differential levels of ignoring for dominant ($M = 2.31, SE = .18$) and submissive negative emotions ($M = 2.15, SE = .16$), $F(1, 111) = 1.42, p = .24, \eta^2 = .01$.

As this three-way interaction was not significant, it is difficult to reliably interpret the comparisons between groups. The graph of these patterns has been included in Figure 4 for descriptive purposes, as the primary goal of this study is to explore patterns that might exist in mothers' use of ignoring as a socialization strategy.



Note^a: † $|=p < .10$, * $|=p < .05$.

Note^b: Observed range for maternal ignoring values is from 1 – 6.40.

Figure 4. Emotion type by gender by race interaction in maternal ignoring.

Aim 3: Ignoring and Children's Social Outcomes in School

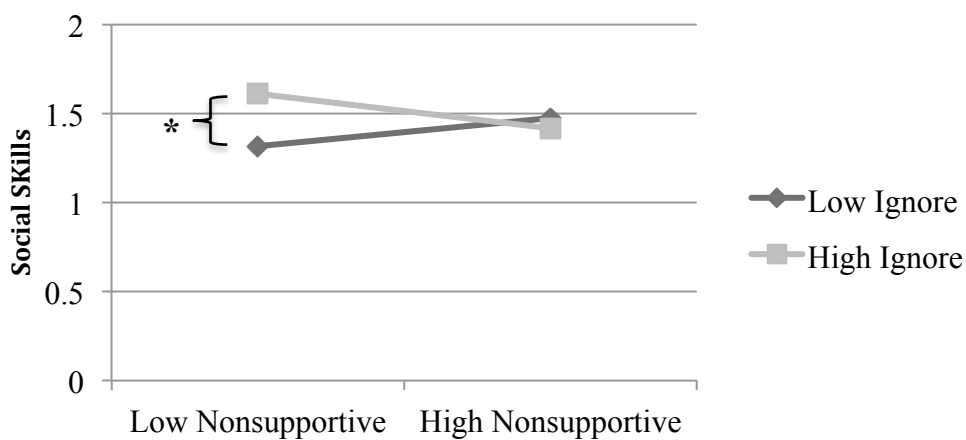
Multiple linear regression analysis was used to test whether children's social skills, as rated by their teachers, could be predicted by mother's use of ignoring and mother's use of nonsupportive responses to their children's expressions of negative emotions. Results shown in Table 5 indicate that neither the use of ignoring alone nor nonsupportive responses alone was predictive of children's social skills. However, the interaction of these two types of maternal responses was predictive of children's social skills. To explore this interaction, a simple slopes analysis was performed (Aiken & West, 1991). As displayed in Figure 5, when mothers reported low nonsupportive responses to children's negative emotions, the degree to which they ignored children's negative emotions mattered: low nonsupportive responses accompanied by high ignoring responses was associated with children's greater social skills, whereas low nonsupportive responses accompanied by low ignoring as well was associated with children's weaker social skills. When mothers reported high use of nonsupportive reactions to their children's negative emotions, however, whether they were high or low in ignoring did not significantly affect their children's social skills ratings. Simple slope analyses were performed following the method suggested by Preacher, Curran, and Bauer (2006) and confirmed that significant differences in the relationship between ignoring and social skills were found at lower levels of nonsupportive reactions, $t(97) = 1.93, p = .05$, but not for higher levels of nonsupportive reactions, $t(97) = 1.25, p = .21$.

Table 5

Maternal ignoring and nonsupportive responses predicting children's social skills

	Model 1			Model 2		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Ignore	0.05	0.05	0.11	0.07	0.05	0.14
Nonsupportive	-0.05	0.06	-0.09	-0.01	0.06	-0.02
Interaction				-0.13	0.05	-
R ²		0.01			0.08*	0.27**

Note. * $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.



Note: *significant contrast at $p = .05$.

Figure 5. Interaction of maternal ignoring and nonsupportive responses to children's negative emotions predicting children's social skills.

Finally, multiple linear regression analysis was used to test whether children's social problem behaviors, as rated by their teachers, could be predicted by mothers' use of ignoring and nonsupportive responses to their children's expressions of negative emotions. As seen in Table 5, ignoring, when considered alone, was not predictive of children's problem behaviors, nor were nonsupportive responses predictive when considered alone. However, the interaction of ignoring and nonsupportive responses was significantly predictive of children's problem behaviors. To explore this interaction, a simple slopes analysis was performed (Aiken & West, 1991).

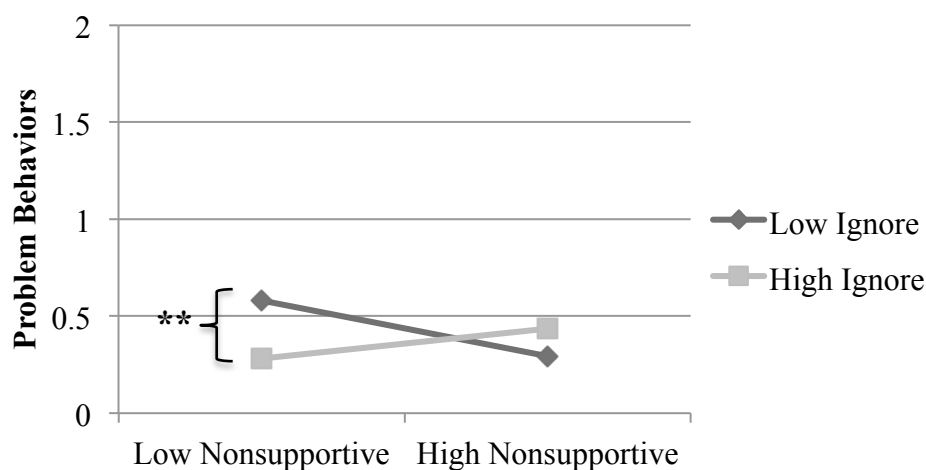
Table 6

Maternal ignoring and nonsupportive responses predicting children's problem behaviors

	Model 1			Model 2		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Ignore	-0.03	0.05	-0.07	-0.05	0.04	-0.11
Nonsupportive	0.001	0.05	0.001	-0.04	0.05	-0.09
Interaction				0.16	0.04	0.37***
R ²		0.004			0.13**	

Note. * $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p < .001$.

As can be seen in Figure 6, for mothers who reported high levels of nonsupportive responses to their children's negative emotions, whether they reported high or low use of ignoring did not significantly impact the child's level of problem behaviors. However, for mothers who reported low levels of nonsupportive responses to their children's negative emotions, the level at which they also used ignoring significantly affected their children's problem behaviors. Specifically, mothers who reported low levels of nonsupportive responses to their children's negative emotions and low levels of ignoring, had children whose teachers reported that they exhibited higher levels of problem behaviors than mothers who reported low levels of nonsupportive responses and high levels of ignoring. In fact, mothers who reported high levels of ignoring and low levels of nonsupportive responses had children with the lowest reported levels of problem behaviors. Simple slope analyses were performed following the method suggested by Preacher, Curran, and Bauer (2006) and confirmed that significant differences in the relationship between ignoring and problem behaviors were found at lower levels of nonsupportive reactions, $t(97) = 2.64, p = .01; d = 0.54$, but achieved only trend level significance at higher levels of nonsupportive reactions, $t(97) = 1.77, p = .08; d = 0.36$.



Note: **significant contrast at $p=.01$.

Figure 6. Interaction of maternal ignoring and nonsupportive responses to children's negative emotions predicting children's problem behaviors

Discussion

Exploring Ignoring

This study provides a starting point for the examination of parents' ignoring children's negative emotions. First, mothers do report using ignoring as a strategy in response to their children's expressions of negative emotions. In fact, they report using ignoring at levels that are just slightly lower than other, more well-studied, parenting responses. Although ignoring has not been previously considered as a parental response to children's negative emotions, mothers' use of this strategy suggests that ignoring warrants further study as a valid parental response of its own.

These results also show that the submissive versus dominant nature of children's emotion affects mothers' ignoring of children's negative emotions. Mothers were more likely

to use nonsupportive responses than ignoring in response to children's negative dominant emotions, whereas in response to negative submissive emotions, mothers were more likely to ignore than to minimize or punish their children. This finding may reflect that mothers view anger as a more powerful emotion that should not be ignored but instead must be actively addressed in some way. Research on peer relations has previously indicated that children who frequently express anger and who behave aggressively are more likely to be rejected by their peers (Cole, Dodge, & Kupersmidt, 1990). In this context, expressions of dominant negative emotions may be viewed by mothers as too risky or threatening to go unaddressed. Alternatively, submissive emotions (e.g., sadness and anxiety) may be viewed as less powerful emotions that are more easily ignored or addressed in passive ways. As will be noted below, however, this broad statement may need to be modified in consideration of children's gender and race.

Ignoring by Emotion Type, Gender, and Race

Although I predicted that mothers would be more likely to ignore negative emotion expressions that were *not* gender-role consistent, mothers tended to ignore the negative emotions that were relatively *more* gender-role consistent. Specifically, mothers of boys reported ignoring dominant negative emotions (e.g., anger and frustration) more than submissive negative emotions (e.g., sadness and anxiety). It may be that mothers of boys use ignoring to avoid reinforcing a behavior that they view as being undesirable. This approach is in line with suggestions from many popular parenting manuals that are based on principles of operant conditioning and learning theory (e.g., Asmussen, 2011; Hembree-Kigin & Bodiford-

McNeil, 1995; Kazdan, 2005). Alternatively, mothers could be choosing to ignore their boys' dominant negative emotions simply because anger is viewed, within Western culture, as a highly masculine expressive trait that does not require comment or intervention.

Stereotypical expectations regarding gender and emotion are deeply embedded within Western society, with the widely held belief being that men experience more anger and aggression and women experience more sadness and anxiety (Brody, 1997). These stereotypic expectations may be even more restrictive for boys than they are for girls, as boys report a higher likelihood than girls to conceal negative emotions and expect more negative parental reactions to their negative emotions (Fuchs & Thelen, 1988; Zemen & Shipman, 196). Although these stereotypes regarding emotion expression do not always hold as true, it is possible that beliefs regarding how boys and girls are "supposed to act" could be affecting how mothers respond to their boys' negative emotions. So, if a boy's expression of anger is viewed as acceptable and expected within accepted masculine norms, then perhaps mothers do not feel that these expressions require intervention. However, within this same framework of masculine expectations, submissive negative emotional expressions such as crying or showing anxiety may be perceived as more problematic in 8- and 9- year old boys (Kilmartin, 2000; Shields, 2002) and be viewed as expressions that cannot be ignored.

These gender findings became particularly interesting, and were somewhat eclipsed, when findings also emerged regarding differences in the use of ignoring by race. European American mothers reported ignoring their children's negative emotions more often than African American mothers, overall, although this difference was not significant until the type

of emotion being ignored was also considered. European American mothers were more likely to ignore dominant negative emotions than submissive negative emotions, whereas African American mothers show similar patterns in their usage of ignoring regardless of child gender. It is possible that this pattern is rooted in mothers' level of familiarity with mass market parenting literature. As was previously discussed, many of the parenting books and manuals that are produced for new parents include sections and recommendations on when and how to ignore your children (e.g., Heininger & Weiss, 2001; Hall & Hall, 2007; Latham, 1994). It is possible that European American mothers are more familiar with this literature, or perhaps more apt to put stock in parenting experts, than African American mothers and have therefore adopted this strategy on the recommendation of these manuals. It is also possible that African American mothers may be aware that their children face very specific cultural stereotypes and expectations, and that they must prepare their children to act and react to their negative emotions in specific ways. Within this cultural context, negative emotions would need to be very specifically coached and responded to, rather than dealt with passively as is seen with ignoring.

Although the three-way interaction between race, gender, and emotion type was not significant, the patterns in the data will be discussed for exploratory purposes, in an effort to further our understanding of the use of ignoring as a parental response and a mechanism of emotion socialization. When both gender and race are considered as factors, patterns that were not previously visible emerge. Specifically, European American mothers seem to show similar patterns for ignoring their boys and their girls, with mothers reporting that they are

more likely to ignore dominant negative emotions. This tendency to ignore was stronger for boys, with only a trend for the girls, but the patterns are similar. However, African American mothers of girls show a different pattern from African American mothers of boys, and in fact from all three other groups, with African American mothers of girls reporting that they are more likely to ignore submissive negative emotions than dominant negative emotions. If, in fact, mothers are using ignoring children's negative emotions as a way to reduce the expression of unwanted or undesirable emotional expressions, then this treatment of African American girls' submissive emotions makes sense in the context of larger cultural factors. There is a significant body of work surrounding the raising and socializing of African American girls that emphasizes that African American girls are specifically raised to be assertive, powerful, and resistant (Fordham, 1990; Way, 1995; Ward, 1996). This is quite a different vision of femininity than the version sold to European American girls that idealizes traits such as cooperation, gentleness, and compassion (Bem, 1974; Shields, 2002). An African American mother trying to instill such qualities as assertiveness and powerfulness may choose to ignore expressions of more submissive emotion, such as sadness and anxiety, in hopes of reducing their prevalence, whereas an European American mother might choose instead to ignore expressions of negative dominant emotions, such as anger and frustration, more in hopes of reducing their prevalence.

Ignoring and Children's Social Skill and Problem Behavior Outcomes in School

Finally, the current study's third aim was to connect the use of ignoring as a maternal response to children's negative emotions to children's social outcomes and to show that

ignoring should be considered, not as a subset of a nonsupportive parenting style, but as a valid parenting response in its own right. Results from Aim 3 of this study showed that the consideration of ignoring as a parental response, in addition to considering the more widely studied nonsupportive parental responses, provided additional predictive ability in both children's social skills and children's problem behaviors.

For example, nonsupportive maternal responses to children's negative emotions were predictive of children's social skills in the classroom only when considered at varying levels of ignoring. Children whose mothers were low in nonsupportive parenting responses differed in both their social skills and their number of problem behaviors based on the level at which their mother also used ignoring as a response to their negative emotions. Specifically, mothers who were low in nonsupportive parental responses but high in ignoring had children whose teachers rated them as more socially skilled and as having fewer problem behaviors than children whose mothers were low in nonsupportive responses and low in ignoring.

These findings, when taken together, suggest that, previous conceptions that considered ignoring of children's negative emotions as simply one aspect of a neglectful parenting style may have been overly simplistic in their consideration of the ways in which parents use ignoring as a parenting tool (Gottman, 1997; Magai, 1996). Ignoring children's emotions may not necessarily function in negative ways at all and, in fact, in certain situations could lead to more prosocial outcomes for children.

One shortcoming of the current study, which is related to the size of the sample (N=116), is the inability to consider more possible combinations of supportive parenting,

nonsupportive parenting, and ignoring due to issues of power. It may be the case that these mothers, who are using ignoring relatively more often, using nonsupportive responses less often, and have children with higher social skills, are employing ignoring in conjunction with more supportive parenting behaviors, leading to stronger social outcomes for their children. It is highly possible that ignoring, when used as part of a parenting style that also includes supportive responses to children's negative emotions may function to instill a sense of autonomy in children regarding their ability to regulate their own emotions and handle their own emotional problems. Perhaps there is a group of parents who selectively use ignoring only when they believe that their children are emotionally equipped to handle the situation at hand on their own. This type of positive, selective ignoring may lead to strong social outcomes and deserves further study in a larger, longitudinal sample where the interactions among types of parenting responses can be tracked and considered in relation to children's outcomes.

Similarly, although I now know that mothers who report low usage of ignoring and low usage of nonsupportive responses have children whose teachers rate their problem behaviors as higher and their social skills as lower, I am faced with the unique problem of knowing only what these mothers do *not* report doing (they are not ignoring and they are not minimizing or punishing). I am still only able to hypothesize about what it is that I think they *are* doing. Given the pattern of social outcomes, it is possible that this group of mothers may be failing to respond to their children's negative emotions at all, or they may be particularly bad at reflecting on their own parenting responses and reporting on them.

Limitations

Several limitations of the current study, including the sample size and my ability to make conclusions regarding other types of parenting that may be involved, have already been discussed. Although the study has many strong points, it also has a few more limitations that must be noted. For instance, our measure of maternal ignoring was self-report, which assumes that mothers are able to accurately reflect on their own parenting responses and report on their socialization behaviors. Maternal ignoring was also assessed at a different time than minimizing and punishing responses were measured. It is possible that asking mothers to report on these two types of parenting responses at different times may have affected mothers' answers in some way. Another important limitation is that we still don't know *why* mothers choose the responses that they do. Now that it has been established that mothers report using ignoring with some frequency, knowing why may be an important next step to considering how parents' responses to their children's negative emotions function as socializing mechanisms.

Finally, the current study chose to consider the patterns and outcomes associated with maternal ignoring of children's emotions in middle childhood, whereas much of the previous research considering ignoring has focused on parents' use of ignoring to extinguish specific unwanted behaviors in early childhood. This developmental period was chosen as a particularly important time to consider parental socialization behaviors as negative emotional experiences within the parent-child dyad shift, and children show increases in self-regulation and emotional competence (Collins, Madsen, & Susman-Stillman, 2002; Lamb & Lewis,

2005; Maccoby, 1984; 1992). During this time of change and heightened expectations, parents' reactions, or nonreactions, to children's negative emotions may be of particular importance. However, there is some evidence that the use of ignoring to extinguish unwanted specific behaviors may be more effective in early childhood than in middle childhood (Herbert et. al, 1975; Pinkston, Reese, LeBlanc, & Baer, 1973; Reid, Walter, & O'Leary, 1999). It is possible, then, that ignoring may also be more effective in early childhood as a general parenting strategy and as a response to children's negative emotions than it is in middle childhood. Future research should consider the levels at which mothers report using ignoring as a parenting response across the span of early childhood, middle childhood, and adolescence in order to ascertain how mothers patterns of using ignoring change, as well as how the associated outcomes of maternal ignoring may change depending on the developmental stage at which it is employed.

Conclusions

In sum, the results of this study suggest that ignoring is a strategy that mothers are aware of using and in fact use with some frequency, and just slightly less than minimizing and punishing responses. Further, mothers employ this strategy differentially depending on the race of their family and the gender of the child in question, suggesting that this strategy may be affected by cultural beliefs about child rearing. Finally, ignoring children's negative emotions may not be an inappropriate parenting response and may not lead to more negative outcomes, as was previously assumed by many theories on parenting. In fact, ignoring, in conjunction with low levels of nonsupportive responses may lead to more positive outcomes.

It may be the case, then, that mothers choose to ignore their children's negative emotions for very specific reasons, and these reasons for why mothers choose to ignore their children's negative emotions warrant further study.

Although this study has limitations, it also has strengths, including assessment of a parenting response style not previously tested, and evidence supporting its importance based on independent reports of socialization behavior provided by mothers and children's school behaviors provided by teachers. That mothers' differential use of ignoring when combined with other socialization behaviors predicts children's social skills and problem behaviors in school suggests the potential power of mothers' choice to ignore as a an additional strategy in their parenting toolbox.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Coping with Children's Negative Emotions Scale - Revised (Fabes, Eisenberg &**Bernzweig, 1990; modified by Stelter & Halberstadt, 2013 and for the current study)**

REVISED Parent Attitude/Behavior Questionnaire

Instructions: In the following items, please indicate on a scale from 1 (very unlikely) to 7 (very likely) the likelihood that you would respond in the ways listed for each item. Please read each item carefully and respond as honestly and sincerely as you can. For each response, please circle a number from 1-7.

Response Scale:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Very Unlikely		Somewhat Likely			Very Likely	
1. If my child becomes angry because he/she is sick or hurt and can't go to his/her friend's birthday party, I would:							
a.	encourage my child to express his/her feelings of anger and frustration	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
b.	send my child to his/her room to cool off	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
c.	tell my child not to make a big deal out of missing the party	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
d.	help my child think about ways that he/she can still be with friends (e.g., invite some friends over after the party)	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
e.	just wait until he/she calms down	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
f.	soothe my child and do something fun with him/her to make him/her feel better about missing the party	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
g.	get angry at my child	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
h.	give my child a look to keep him/her in line, but not say anything	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
2. If my child falls off his/her bike and breaks it, and then gets sad and cries, I would:							
a.	Do nothing about my child's crying and deal with the bike	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
b.	remain calm and not let myself get anxious	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
c.	tell my child it's ok to cry	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
d.	Say nothing, but give my child a look that expresses my feelings about that behavior	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
e.	help my child figure out how to get the bike fixed	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
f.	tell my child to stop crying or he/she won't be allowed to ride his/her bike anytime soon	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
g.	comfort my child and try to get him/her to forget about the accident	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
h.	tell my child that he/she is over-reacting	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
3. If my child loses some prized possession and reacts with tears, I would:							
a.	tell him/her that's what happens when you're not careful	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
b.	tell him/her it's ok to cry when you feel unhappy	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
c.	get upset with him/her for being so careless and then crying about it	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
d.	give my child a firm look to show my disapproval	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
e.	let my child cry it out but be around if my child wants me	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
f.	tell my child that he/she is over-reacting	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
g.	help my child think of places he/she hasn't looked yet	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
h.	distract my child by talking about happy things	1	2	3	4	5	6 7

4. If my child is afraid of injections/shots and becomes quite shaky and teary while waiting for his/her turn to get a shot, I would:

- | | | | | | | | | |
|----|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. | tell him/her not to embarrass us by crying | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| b. | tell him/her to shape up or he/she won't be allowed to do something he/she likes to do (e.g., watch TV) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| c. | not say anything but wait for my child calm down on his/her own | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| d. | talk to my child about ways to make it hurt less (such as relaxing so it won't hurt or taking deep breaths). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| e. | comfort him/her before and after the shot | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| f. | Say nothing, but give my child a look that expresses my feelings about that behavior. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| g. | tell my child not to make big deal of the shot | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| h. | encourage my child to talk about his/her fears | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

5. If my child is going over to spend the afternoon at a friend's house and becomes nervous and upset because I can't stay there with him/her, I would:

- | | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. | tell my child to quit over-reacting and being a baby | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| b. | feel upset and uncomfortable because of my child's reactions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| c. | tell the child that if he/she doesn't stop that he/she won't be allowed to go out anymore | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| d. | encourage my child to talk about his/her nervous feelings | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| e. | ignore my child's reaction and continue with the plan | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| f. | distract my child by talking about all the fun he/she will have with his/her friend | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| g. | give my child a firm look to indicate that this behavior is not appropriate | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| h. | help my child think of things that he/she could do so that being at the friend's house without me wasn't scary (e.g., take a favorite book or toy with him/her) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

6. If my child is participating in some group activity with his/her friends and proceeds to make a mistake and then looks embarrassed and is about to cry, I would:

- | | | | | | | | | |
|----|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. | tell my child that he/she is over-reacting | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| b. | tell my child to straighten up or we'll go home right away | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| c. | do nothing about the situation and let my child deal with the situation on his/her own | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| d. | tell my child that I'll help him/her practice so that he/she can do better next time | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| e. | feel uncomfortable and embarrassed myself | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| f. | comfort my child and try to make him/her feel better | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| g. | encourage my child to talk about his/her feelings | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| h. | give my child a firm look to show my disapproval | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

7. If my child is about to appear in a recital or sports activity and becomes visibly nervous about people

watching him/her, I would:

- | | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. | help my child think of things that he/she could do to get ready for his/her turn (e.g., to do some warmups and not to look at the audience) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| b. | remain calm and not get nervous myself | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| c. | give my child a firm look indicating that I expect my child to control his/her behavior | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| d. | encourage my child to talk about his/her nervous feelings | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| e. | suggest that my child think about something relaxing so that his/her nervousness will go away | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| f. | tell my child that if he/she doesn't calm down, we'll have to leave and go home right away | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| g. | not do anything | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| h. | tell my child that he/she is being a baby about it | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

8. If my child receives an undesirable birthday gift from a friend and looks obviously disappointed after opening it in the presence of the friend, I would:

- | | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. | tell my child that he/she is over-reacting | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| b. | give my child a firm look to indicate it is time to change his/her behavior | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| c. | encourage my child to express his/her disappointed feelings | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| d. | tell my child that the present can be exchanged for something the child wants | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| e. | just ignore my child's facial expression | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| f. | try to get my child to feel better by doing something fun | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| g. | scold my child for being insensitive to the friend's feelings | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| h. | NOT be annoyed with my child for being rude | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

9. If my child is panicky and can't go to sleep after watching a scary TV show, I would:

- | | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. | not do anything different from any other night | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| b. | tell him/her to go to bed or he/she won't be allowed to watch any more TV | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| c. | tell my child that he/she is over-reacting | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| d. | do something fun with my child to help him/her forget about what scared him/her | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| e. | encourage my child to talk about what scared him/her | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| f. | get upset with him/her for being silly | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| g. | help my child think of something to do so that he/she can get to sleep (e.g., take a toy to bed, leave the lights on) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| h. | give my child a firm look that expresses how I feel about that reaction | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

10. If my child is playing with other children and one of them calls him/her names, and my child then becomes tearful, I would:

- | | | | | | | | | |
|----|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. | comfort him/her and play a game to take his/her mind off the upsetting event | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| b. | help my child think of constructive things to do when other children tease him/her (e.g., find other things to do) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| c. | not get involved | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| d. | give my child a look until s/he realizes that crying is not an appropriate behavior | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | |
| e. | tell my child to behave or we'll have to go home right away | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| f. | feel upset myself | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| g. | tell my child not to make a big deal out of it | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| h. | encourage him/her to talk about how it hurts to be teased | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

11. If my child yells and kicks the shopping cart when he/she cannot have a toy when we are grocery shopping, I would:

- | | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. | give my child a firm look to indicate that s/he needs to stop now | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| b. | ignore my child until he/she calms down | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| c. | get angry/upset with my child | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| d. | tell my child that he/she will be sent to his/her room when we get home from the store | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| e. | tell my child that he/she can use some of his/her allowance money for the toy | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| f. | tell my child that he/she is being immature and that the toy is silly | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| g. | tell my child that it is okay to have strong feelings when you don't get something you want | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| h. | distract my child by talking about a fun activity we could do later that day | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

12. If my child begins to cry because he/she has just learned that his/her first pet has died, I would:

- | | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. | give her/him a look to indicate it is time to stop crying right now | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| b. | tell my child that is what happens when pets are not taken care of | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| c. | help my child in having a small funeral for the pet | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| d. | stay calm and not show my child that I am sad | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| e. | let my child finish crying and be around if he/she needs me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| f. | encourage my child to talk about his/her sad thoughts and feelings | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| g. | distract my child by talking about a fun activity we can do together | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| h. | tell my child that the pet was old anyways so he/she should not be that sad | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

13. If my child becomes angry because he/she has to go to afterschool tutoring instead of a fun activity, I would:

- | | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. | encourage my child to talk about his/her anger | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| b. | say nothing, but give my child a look to keep them in line | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| c. | not respond to my child's reaction | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| d. | help my child think of things he/she could do to have fun after tutoring | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| e. | become upset with my child | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| f. | comfort my child and try to get him/her to think about doing something fun after tutoring | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| g. | tell my child he/she is overreacting and that the activity will not be much fun | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| h. | tell my child that he/she will not be allowed to attend the next fun activity either | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

14. If my child yells and throws a game piece after losing a game he/she was playing, I would:

- | | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. | tell my child that he/she is overreacting and being a sore loser | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| b. | help my child to practice the game so he/she will do better in the next game | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| c. | tell my child that sometimes people feel angry when they lose | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| d. | ignore my child's outburst and continue what I was doing | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| e. | send my child to his/her room to calm down | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| f. | stare at my child until s/he apologizes or comes back to play the game politely | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| g. | suggest that my child try doing something fun on his/her own | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| h. | not be annoyed with my child for being angry | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

15. If my child is presenting his/her book report in class that day and becomes nervous and upset about speaking in front of the class, I would:

- | | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. | tell my child to quit over-reacting | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| b. | distract my child by talking about all the fun he/she will have talking about what he/she has learned | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| c. | feel upset and uncomfortable because of my child's reactions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| d. | give my child a firm look that expresses how I feel about their reaction | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| e. | tell my child that if he/she doesn't stop that he/she will not get to play his/her favorite game after school | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| f. | not address my child's anxiety | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| g. | encourage my child to talk about his/her nervous feelings | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| h. | help my child think of things that he/she could do so that speaking in front of the class will not be as scary (e.g. look at his/her friends or read from a script) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

16. If my child throws his/her pencil or crumples up his/her paper in frustration while working on his/her homework assignments, I would:

- | | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. | tell my child that getting angry isn't going to help get his/her homework done any faster | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| b. | become angry with my child | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| c. | tell my child that he/she cannot go anywhere until his/her homework is finished | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| d. | ignore my child's outburst | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| e. | tell my child it is okay to get angry and frustrated when things are challenging | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| f. | give my child a firm look to put an end to the outburst | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| g. | comfort my child and try to get him/her to forget about his/her frustrations | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| h. | help my child to finish his/her homework | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Appendix B

Social Skills Rating System - Teacher (SSRS-T; Elliott, Gresham, Freeman, & McCloskey, 1988)

Social Skills Rating System – Teacher Version

1

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY								
How Often?								
C	A	S			Never	Sometimes	Very Often	
			1	Controls Temper in conflict situations with peers.	0	1	2	
			2	Introduces herself or himself to new people without being told.	0	1	2	
			3	Appropriately questions rules that may be unfair.	0	1	2	
			4	Compromises in conflict situations by changing own ideas to reach agreement.	0	1	2	
			5	Responds appropriately to peer pressure.	0	1	2	
			6	Says nice things about himself or herself when appropriate.	0	1	2	
			7	Invites other to join in activities.	0	1	2	
			8	Uses free time in acceptable way.	0	1	2	
			9	Finishes class assignments within time limits.	0	1	2	
			10	Makes friends easily.	0	1	2	
			11	Responds appropriately to teasing by peers.	0	1	2	
			12	Controls temper in conflict situations with adults.	0	1	2	
			13	Receives criticism well.	0	1	2	
			14	Initiates conversations with peers.	0	1	2	
			15	Uses time appropriately while waiting for help.	0	1	2	
			16	Produces correct schoolwork.	0	1	2	
			17	Appropriately tells you when he/she thinks you have treated him/her unfairly.	0	1	2	

			18	Accepts peers' ideas for group activities.	0	1	2	
			19	Gives compliments to peers.	0	1	2	
			20	Follows your directions.	0	1	2	
			21	Puts work materials or school property away.	0	1	2	
			22	Cooperates with peers without prompting.	0	1	2	
			23	Volunteers to help peers with classroom tasks.	0	1	2	
			24	Joins ongoing activity or group without being told to do so.	0	1	2	
			25	Responds appropriately when pushed or hit by other children.	0	1	2	
			26	Ignores peer distractions when doing class work.	0	1	2	
			27	Keeps desk clean and neat without being reminded	0	1	2	
			28	Attends to your instructions.	0	1	2	
			29	Easily makes transition from one classroom activity to another.	0	1	2	
			30	Gets along with people who are different.	0	1	2	
C	A	S		SUMS OF HOW OFTEN COLUMN				