

DISENTANGLING CONTEXTS:
SOCIOECONOMIC VARIABILITY AND BLACK MOTHERS' USE OF ACTIVE
DIRECTION

by

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(Under the Direction of Margaret O. Caughy)

ABSTRACT

Developmental science research on parenting behaviors has long used white norms to define supportive parenting practices. Research that does focus on the developmental influences and trajectories of Black youth have largely used low-income households as representatives. These deficiencies in the literature have fueled a debate about whether cultural or socioeconomical contexts influence Black American parenting more. The current study took a unique approach to understanding Black mother parenting practices by using an observational measure of a cultural grounded parenting approach, Active Direction, and assessed the prevalence of use in an socioeconomically diverse sample of Black families using play interactions between mothers and their children. Findings indicated that mothers at all levels of household income, educational attainment, and single versus dual parent status used Active Direction in comparable amounts. Additionally, correlational analyses showed that there were differences in how mothers used Active Direction in conjunction with other qualities of the interaction, indicating that SES may inform how Active Direction is used. Finally, maternal educational attainment and dual parent status accounted for more variance than when household

income was included in modeling. Overall, there is evidence that Active Direction is a culturally grounded approach to parenting, and that it acts alongside other supportive parenting practices within families with lower SES indicators.

INDEX WORDS: parenting, Black American, African American, culture, parental
ethnotheories, anti-racist research

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Lauren B. Adamson. Her unwavering encouragement and ever present support started me along this path.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Black Americans hold a unique space in the cultural arena that comprises the United States. Until recently, they were the largest minority group, and a majority of Black Americans can trace their ancestry to chattel slavery. Even though Black American presence is prevalent in mainstream cultural entertainment, the components of Black culture that are valued have been largely colonized and stripped of heritage culture (see Dumais, 2006; e.g., Rodriquez, 2006). Human development research has a long history of overlooking minoritized populations, alternating between ignoring differences in sociohistorical context and in lived experiences and emphasizing (often negatively valanced) behavioral differences (Causadias et al., 2018). The cultural belief and value systems that shape the overall life experiences and development of Black children, particularly young children, are not well documented within developmental research.

The past few decades have seen broad acknowledgements of ongoing systemic oppression and the related health effects affecting Black Americans (Carter et al., 2021; Lewis, 2019). However, cultural value and belief systems embedded within socialization processes are yet to be fully explored. To better understand developmental processes, it is imperative to identify how parental motivations and goals shape their socialization behaviors. The following dissertation explores Active Direction, a culturally grounded approach to Black American parenting.

Black American Parenting

Though less overtly negative in recent years, research on Black American parenting has been wrought with unclear messaging. Much of the empirical work on Black parenting has suffered from a comparative framework, presenting findings on Black parents using a deficit lens or a prevalent negative valence compared to white groups (Suma & Caughy, 2024). Some research provides evidence that standard assumptions regarding certain behaviors and outcomes do not function as expected in Black households (e.g., authoritarian, Baumrind, 1972; discipline, Deater-Deckard & Dodge, 1997; physical intervention, Ispa et al., 2015). For example, a meta-analysis using diverse samples found that low parental sensitivity or responsiveness is positively associated with externalizing problems in children (Cooke et al., 2022). Additionally, numerous studies indicate lower use of sensitivity by Black American mothers (see Malda & Mesman, 2017). However, recent studies suggest that slight modifications in the measurement of parental contingent responsiveness alleviates discrepancies across demographic groups in positive associations with secure attachment (Stern et al., 2022; Woodhouse et al., 2020).

The inconsistent findings from research on Black parenting almost certainly stem from slavery and the racist systems that followed that created power differentials and inequities of access. Throughout developmental research, white culture silently influences the values presented as the standard, while Black cultural values are largely absent. Orienting Black American socialization practices within a culturally grounded framework can unify findings and begin to build a more cohesive body of literature of the supports Black American parents provide for their children.

Cultural Frameworks for Socialization in Black Families

Racial socialization practices encompass how parents teach their children about being Black in America and include messages emphasizing pride in Black culture and heritage. However, research on this form of cultural socialization has focused more on parents' explicit messages of racial pride (Hughes et al., 2006; Smith-Bynum et al., 2016). Hughes et al. (2006) reviewed research on ethnic racial socialization, and every measure indicated that either parents, children, or both, were asked about socialization practices. Most of these measures captured how parents provided information regarding culture, preparation for bias, promotion of mistrust, or egalitarianism. Particularly when parents are the respondents, they must be cognizant of their messages and behavior in order to respond to the questions. However, Boykin (1986) argued that many culturally grounded value dimensions have been distilled by colonization and time to the extent that parents may not even be aware how their beliefs or behaviors are culturally informed. Thus, some aspects of socialization may be passed on to children tacitly through parents' behaviors.

Black American scholars have long written of protective measures such as Du Bois's double consciousness and the "veil" (Du Bois, 1903), codeswitching (David et al., 2019; Spencer et al., 2022; White, 2011), and reinterpreting internalized racism as appropriated racial oppression (David et al., 2019). Virginia Young's field observations (1970, 1974) provide the most comprehensive and utilized account of what parenting in Black American households looks like, though there are notable issues in applicability given that all families in Young's studies were living in Southern, rural, low income households (see also, Brody & Flor, 1998).

Theoretical Frameworks

Developmental Niche

Harkness and Super (1994) proposed that every child develops within their individual home context – their developmental niche. For young children, this context is particularly important because parents are the primary influence during the early years of development. The developmental niche can interact with the outside world and vice versa, but the formative component for the child is created by the parent's socialization practices and the home environment. The parent's socialization strategies are informed by parental ethnotheories, which are the values and beliefs parents hold about what successful development should look like. Parental ethnotheories shape the way parents interact with their child; ethnotheories also shape what types of skills parents prioritize in their children. While the developmental niche shapes child development and ethnotheories contribute to the niche, it is largely culture that informs the value and belief systems that parents hold. Thus, developmental niche theory directly ties the cultural influence of the home to the successful development of the child.

Triple Quandary

"...no matter how well intentioned are our efforts, the extent to which we even implicitly work within this [Freudian-Anglo-Behaviorist] conceptual framework, the extent to which this conceptual complex frames our socialization agenda, we will not adequately capture the socialization fabric attendant to Black families." (Boykin & Toms, 1985, p. 35)

The Triple Quandary (Boykin, 1986) was theorized to capture a triad of culturally bound experiences acting on Black Americans that create a quandary, or struggle, Black parents must navigate to prioritize the value systems they will then pass on to their children. These three

cultural realms include: (1) Black culture or heritage culture that encompasses the cultural motifs passed down through the generations, (2) mainstream culture which represents the values maintained by white people and white systems, and (3) the culture of the minority which provides protection from prejudicial and oppressive systems. Boykin and Toms (1985) discussed how majority cultural influence, such as valuing good school performance, is more likely to be explicitly identified due to prevalent messaging, whereas expressions of Black culture may be present without a clear link to the motivating value or belief.

Boykin also provides a set of heritage cultural dimensions prevalent within Black American individuals and families and tied to West African values (Boykin, 1986). No other known developmental literature provides a set of Black cultural motifs let alone values that directly impact socialization and developmental processes. Boykin's cultural dimensions include spirituality, harmony, movement, verve, affect, communalism, expressive individualism, oral tradition, and social time perspective. By articulating these cultural dimensions, parental behaviors and socialization patterns related to them become culturally meaningful, filling a long-standing void that existed within research on Black families.

Triple Quandary Within the Developmental Niche

Together, the triple quandary and developmental niche create a clear roadmap to guide how one can understand how differing cultural influences affect parental ethnotheories which in turn shape the child's home experience and subsequent development. The developmental niche acts as a contextual guide to frame socialization within the early years when children are heavily reliant on their parents as the source of their information. The following study will rely heavily on Boykin's triple quandary to understand and interpret findings.

Active Direction as a Measure of Black American Parenting Approach

An observational rating item, Active Direction, was proposed as a parenting approach in Black American households with roots in protective socialization practices tied to the vestiges of slavery (Suma, Caughy, et al., 2024). Based heavily on previous field observations of Black American mothers (Brody & Flor, 1998; Young, 1970, 1974), Active Direction is the first observational item to capture the presence of a culturally specific approach to parenting by Black American parents that is not based in extant measures that have historically depicted negative or deficient portrayals of Black parenting (e.g., see LeCuyer & Swanson, 2017).

Active Direction was intentionally developed to be an anti-racist measure of Black American parenting by a team of researchers with expertise in parenting, parent-child relationships, Black American families, and observational measurement. Using videos available from an existing study of Black parents interacting with their 2.5 year old children, this team of researchers first identified discrepancies in observed parent behavior that acted in a supportive manner but were not sufficiently characterized by extant measures and which loosely depicted behaviors described by *no-nonsense parenting* (Brody & Flor, 1998). Following this meeting, an expert on observational rating item development elaborated the operational definition by reviewing more video records and conducting an extensive review of the foundational research on Black American parenting. All team members reviewed and approved the final operational definition of the new measure before data collection began.

Paramount to the operational definition of Active Direction were Virginia Young's field observations (1970, 1974) that first described a unique back-and-forth pattern between Black mothers and their children in which the mother often gave firm and terse feedback to her child while also being friendly and affectionate. Additionally, evidence that physical interventions by a

Black mother during play with her child (e.g., removing a toy) could have supportive rather than deleterious impact on parent-child interactions was also included in the final definition (Isapa et al., 2015). Active Direction blends together standard concepts of supportive behaviors (e.g., affectionate behavior, praise) with supportive behaviors that are culturally informed (e.g., guidance through succinct direction, correction, joking or teasing).

Active Direction has been documented within mother-toddler interactions in Black American households with low income (Suma, Caughy, et al., 2024). This same study indicated that Active Direction was rarely used by Hispanic mothers from low-income households. Additionally within these samples, Active Direction was associated with other supportive parenting behaviors such as scaffolding and cognitive stimulation for Black American mothers but not for Hispanic mothers (Suma, Caughy, et al., 2024). Further, recent findings indicated that high levels of Active Direction attenuate maternal sensitivity effects on child social skills (Suma, Morton, et al., 2024).

However, there is much to be learned about how Active Direction works within Black American households. For example, it is not yet clear if Active Direction reflects a cultural approach to parenting or, as Brody and Flor (1998) proposed for no-nonsense parenting, is merely a reflection of a low socioeconomic context

Overview of the Study

This dissertation addresses whether behaviors associated with Active Direction are a cultural orientation to parenting or if they reflect parenting approaches related to the family's socioeconomic context. Concerns regarding culture versus context were raised by Brody and Flor (1998) in their studies of *no-nonsense* parenting, and the previous study of cross-cultural use of Active Direction by mothers from low income households can only partially address this

concern (Suma, Caughy, et al., 2024). Given that Active Direction has a component grounded in protective parenting (i.e., monitoring the response of others for consequences), identifying how prevalent the use of this approach is across economically diverse Black American families would inform how parents at varying socioeconomic standing prepare their child for threats present in the outside world. To assess the validity of Active Direction across socioeconomically diverse Black American families, this study has three aims:

Aim 1

To describe variation in the use of Active Direction by Black American mothers across 5 income brackets: severe poverty, impoverished, working poor, working class, and middle to upper class; across 4 levels of educational attainment: less than high school, high school degree or equivalency, some college education or technical degree, four-year college degree or more; and 2 types of household structure: single mother headed versus two parents.

Aim 2

To explore how Active Direction relates to other quality indicators of the mother-child interactions such as mother scaffolding, mother calm authority, dyadic routines and rituals, and dyadic fluency and connectedness and whether these associations differ by SES characteristics.

Aim 3

To determine whether socioeconomic characteristics work together to relate to variation in Active Direction.

Hypotheses. Given the exploratory nature of this study, I do not make *a priori* hypotheses.

Extant research provides rationale for conflicting postulations. On one hand, as Brody and Flor (1998) proposed with no-nonsense parenting, Active Direction may reflect an approach to parenting utilized by low-income families. However, to this author's knowledge, their hypothesis

was never tested and may stem from the fact that both Brody and Flor and Young's original work was based on low-income families, thus lacking the economic variability to extend their findings. Other works testing cultural versus economical context influences on Black parents, children, and families routinely find that SES factors are more impactful (see Le et al., 2008). However, these studies often pit standard value and belief questionnaires or cultural proxies (e.g., religiosity) against SES indicators. None of these studies have used culturally informed parenting behaviors as the measure of culture. These studies would suggest that there would be a negative association of SES to Active Direction, with Active Direction more prevalent at lower levels of SES.

On the other hand, Active Direction, much like code-switching, is a culturally grounded protective strategy that relies on perceptions of the surrounding environment to adjust one's presentation to others. This alternation model of biculturalism says that individuals can adjust their behavior to best suit particular social contexts (LaFromboise et al., 1993). Switching between cultural contexts is a skill used by low-SES and middle-class Black women alike (DeBose, 1992). However, there is also evidence that those who use African American English and have higher levels of academic attainment use fewer dialectical features, though they are still present (Craig & Grogger, 2012). Some research indicates that Black American women who live in predominately white areas and have middle- to high-SES report increased stress and feelings of isolation due to prolonged use of code-switching and shifting cultural behaviors coupled with perceptions of separation from the Black community (Spencer et al., 2022; Terhune, 2006). These findings underscore that decreased presentation of culturally salient behaviors does not indicate a decreased preference or import for them. As applied to Active Direction, mothers with

increased exposure to diverse cultural settings and/or those who perceive heightened expectations of shifting behaviors may use altered or more diverse parenting behaviors.

Findings from these lines of work suggest that decreased prevalence of Active Direction by mothers with higher levels of SES is possible. However, it is not clear if differences, if present, would be significant in this context. It is also indeterminable if associations would be linear in nature or rather be best described by a threshold effect or other alternative association.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on the development of Black American youth has overwhelmingly focused on children and families living in low-income households, particularly those living below the federal poverty line. While many Black families do experience poverty (17.1% living below poverty; Shrider et al., 2023), overrepresentation of this group in empirical research can lead to misrepresentation about the group as a whole. Additionally, limited research on diverse economic households within the Black population has contributed to the continued SES versus culture debate (Le et al., 2008). This conflation stems largely from systemic and everyday racism and prejudices that impact economic prosperity by limiting access to safe neighborhoods, quality schools, and stable well-paying jobs (Reardon et al., 2015). Parent socialization strategies may be particularly susceptible to influences from multiple contexts. This study will explore how Active Direction – a culturally grounded approach to parenting in Black families – appears within Black families from diverse economic backgrounds.

Contexts of Socialization

Environmental and cultural contexts intermingle to inform parenting practices, making it unclear how each separately influence development (Ceballo et al., 2008; Le et al., 2008; Rogoff et al., 2018). Within studies of development, context often refers to environmental variables such as neighborhood or indicators of socioeconomic status (SES; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2023; Nunes Cauduro et al., 2021), while culture – sets of shared values and beliefs that shapes goals (Bornstein, 2015) – is relegated to racial and ethnic minority groups.

However, culture is indeed a type of contextual influence, including for those in the majority group, but there is no consensus on how to define culture nor how to distinguish it from other contextual influences (see Causadias, 2020; Ceballo et al., 2008). In U.S. based research, ethnic group and contextual information are often conflated (Hill, 2006; Hill & Witherspoon, 2011; see Quintana et al., 2006).

One way of integrating culture and SES is by understanding culture as a “system of people, places, and processes with the purpose of enacting, justifying, or resisting power” (Causadias, 2020, p. 310). This definition provides an explanation for how distinct cultures persist in the face of systemic oppressions which directly affect economic mobility and socioeconomic status. It also helps to explain how different minoritized groups (people) can have similar socialization practices (processes) but nuanced differences in parenting behaviors, expectations, outcomes, and values due to different places (via history and location; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). For example, Latinx parents are more likely to provide directions to their children based on *familismo* and *respeto* (Halgunseth et al., 2006) while Black American parents are more likely to provide directions based on *no-nonsense* parenting (Brody & Flor, 1998; see Suma, Caughy, et al., 2024).

The interrelatedness of culture and SES can also be explained using Boykin’s *triple quandary* theory (Boykin, 1986; Boykin & Toms, 1985). In short, the triple quandary theory proposes that Black parents must navigate the experiences of three cultural influences: the majority, the minority, and the heritage. With this theory, SES may play an integral role in some of the experiences within the minority culture, as it largely informs culture based on experiences of prejudice and racism. Ongoing disparities in SES indicators within Black households are induced by systemic disadvantages in access to healthcare, safe neighborhoods, high paying jobs,

quality schools and higher education, and disproportionately high interactions with police and incarceration (Carter et al., 2021; Ceballo & McLoyd, 2002; English et al., 2020; Fortuna et al., 2022; Hill, 2006; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2023; Williams-Washington & Mills, 2018). The triple quandary explains how culture will be intertwined with SES as long as systemic oppressions continue to affect Black households.

SES Influences

Many researchers have called for studies that include more economic variability within ethnic minority households to determine how SES and culture make contributions to parenting practices uniquely and in combination (Brody & Flor, 1998; Ceballo et al., 2008; Ceballo & McLoyd, 2002; Hill, 2006). To fully understand the impact of SES factors as a determinant of child development, it is important to consider how systemic oppressions affect SES factors. By including this type of sociopolitical information, the responsibility implicitly placed on Black parents to defy systemic risk factors (e.g., generational poverty, access to quality schools, healthcare) is lessened and affords the space for cultural and individual variation to inform meaning.

Household Income

Household income is the most salient predictor of child outcomes (Reardon, 2011; Sirin, 2005). Higher levels of family income are positively associated with optimal development above and beyond other common measures such as maternal education and job status. It is assumed that increases in income support development through both direct and indirect pathways. Direct pathways include food and housing security and the ability to pay for more nutritious food, safe housing, consistent healthcare, and quality daycare (Cooper & Stewart, 2021). An example of an

indirect effect of increased income is that decreased levels of parental stress affords a less chaotic home environment (Duncan et al., 2014).

For Black families, household income is also an important SES determinant of development, but increases in income do not necessarily overcome the systemic oppressions that continue to limit access of Black families to supports usually provided by higher incomes. For example, Black Americans, regardless of their financial ability, continue to face barriers accessing diverse, safe, and healthy neighborhoods due to prejudicial lending practices, redlining, segregation, and other acts of blatant discrimination (Massey & Denton, 1993; Nardone et al., 2020; Rothstein, 2017). By effectively limiting areas in which Black families can move freely, a waterfall of systemic oppressions result: difficulty accessing quality schools and high paying jobs, and increased experiences of food apartheid, neighborhood crime, and violence (Massey & Denton, 1993). Thus, even though income does positively associate with optimal development within Black families, these associations are not as strong nor consistent as in white families (Sirin, 2005).

Maternal Educational Attainment

Mother educational attainment has long been used as a convenient proxy of socioeconomic status. It has a consistently high positive association with income and job status (Reardon, 2011) as well as a multitude of positive child outcomes such as college enrollment and graduation, cognitive skills, and test scores (Choi et al., 2008; Choy, 2001; Duncan et al., 2012; Duncan & Magnuson, 2012). However, these findings are largely only applicable for white samples, with minoritized samples having a far smaller effect size for predictive and association models using any single SES indicator (Sirin, 2005).

Using maternal educational attainment as a proxy for SES may be further problematic for Black families since mechanisms underlying how attainment supports development are not particularly clear, and access to continued education is limited due to systemic oppressions (Harding, 2015; Harding et al., 2015; Letourneau et al., 2011; Schnittker, 2013; Sirin, 2005). How maternal education may influence child outcomes is not a direct path, with several indirect factors helping to shape the association. Mothers who successfully complete more schooling may have increased problem solving and research skills, may highly value education (Duncan et al., 2012), and may indicate a mother's ability to successfully navigate the school system (DiMaggio, 1982; Dumais, 2006; Ensminger & Fothergill, 2003; Gaddis, 2013). Black mothers are likely to face increased barriers to post-secondary education due to historical policy and access to quality secondary education (Harding et al., 2015). Further, research often draws an artificial cliff at a college diploma even though there is evidence that just some college experience affords much of the same benefit of a college degree (Giani et al., 2019; Harding, 2015).

Single Mother Households

Black American households are more likely to have diverse composition types rather than just a nuclear structure (Jarrett & Burton, 1999; Ruggles, 1994; Ruiz & Zhu, 2004). Homes may consist of single parents, multiple generations or extended family, and kin as well as actively participating nonresidential fathers (Cabrera et al., 2008; Julion et al., 2007). When both parents are in the home, they are likely to have an equal division of responsibilities including childrearing and earning an income (Dow, 2016; Lewis, 1975). Black families also have the highest father involvement regardless of whether the father is in the home or not (Jones & Mosher, 2013). However, much of the extant research focuses on mothering, including the

present dissertation. Further, a great majority of the studies on Black parenting focus on high-risk cohorts – single mothers with low income often living in poor urban neighborhoods– without providing much contextual information about other adults and resources that provide support within the home (Jarrett & Burton, 1999; McAdoo, 1995; Ruggles, 1994).

Cultural Influences

Culture profoundly influences the assessment of the quality of a parent-child relationship (Calzada et al., 2010; Ispa et al., 2015; Rious et al., 2019; Suma, Caughy, et al., 2024; Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2020). Culture informs every level of interaction between a parent and their child as well as how researchers capture the parent-child relationship including targeted traits and behaviors and how they interpret findings. Because of this, cultural meaning must be embedded within measurements of the parent-child relationship, and researchers must be keenly aware of how culture may inform or influence the targeted behaviors or beliefs.

Extant research on Black parenting is largely devoid of cultural influence. This may mirror psychological research on white individuals in which culture is assumed rather than considered as an influence on behavior and values (Causadias et al., 2018). However, given the colonization of Black culture during enslavement, the assumption that Black culture will influence parenting practices in the same way as in white families is woefully misguided. To avoid whitewashing Black parenting practices, it is important to understand both cultural values that may be present as well as how these values influence parental ethnotheories and parent behavior (Boykin & Toms, 1985).

The way parents socialize their children to meet development goals is influenced heavily by their parental ethnotheories – a system of values and beliefs about what successful development looks like (Harkness & Super, 1996). Value and belief systems can be influenced

by any level of a parent's ecological context (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Super & Harkness, 1986). Boykin's triple quandary theory, discussed above (Boykin, 1986), provides a way to understand how culture may operate at different levels within Black homes. Better understanding this process helps to decolonize the historically white-centered frameworks that inform interpretations of parenting practices

Heritage Culture

Heritage culture encompasses the values and beliefs passed down generationally by one's ancestors (Bornstein, 2015). Boykin provides nine interrelated dimensions that influence Black American heritage culture: spirituality, harmony, movement, verve, affect, expressive individualism, oral tradition, communalism, and social time perspective (Boykin, 1983). At minimum, affect, expressive individualism, and orality are salient to culturally sensitive interpretation of Black American parenting practices (Rious et al., 2019). *Affect*, for example, refers to being emotionally expressive, emphasizing emotions, and being sensitive to cues. Both Young (1974) and Brody and Flor (1998) describe patterns of interaction in which affect from the mother is highly variable and is monitored by the child. This type of interaction likely encourages *expressive individualism*, as the child is encouraged to act as an autonomous person. Idiosyncratic behavior as an expression of unique individualism is highly valued, potentially more than the white values of education, occupational standing, and wealth (Lewis, 1975).

Minoritized Culture

Minoritized culture is highly contextually bound, as it exists solely because of racist systems and interactions and captures the protective socialization strategies parents use to arm their children with the ability to navigate a prejudicial world. One strategy is *biculturalism*, or participating in two cultures; another is "double consciousness", a strategy akin to *codeswitching*

in which an individual switches between their home language and the dominate language to best fit their environment (Du Bois, 1903; LaFromboise et al., 1993). Children are taught to gauge the best response at an early age by monitoring the inconsistent responses of their mothers during interactions (Boykin & Toms, 1985; Valentine, 1971; Young, 1974). It is important to note that the minority culture is present no matter a family's economic level due to race-based prejudices (Dow, 2019).

Majority Culture

Majority culture refers to systems and values upheld by whiteness, and cultural racism is when the group-in-power's social norms and institutions are prioritized over all others (Jones, 1997 as cited in; Williams & Mohammed, 2009). Whiteness encompasses the power structure of white values, maintains white wealth, centers on the white experience, and supports white comfort (Gabriel, 2000). The overrepresentation of white middle-class families as well as Black low-income families in the published literature perpetuates white as "the norm" within research on parenting (Dow, 2019; Graham, 1992) However, aside from references to independence, there is very little identification of white values that inform the socialization goals of white parents.

Whiteness values that act to repress ethnic minority families appear in less direct ways. For example, Temin (2017) interprets Lewis's Theory of Capital (1954) to indicate that the ruling class continually gatekeeps upward mobility by redefining the requirements; today this moving standard revolves around educational attainment. Similarly, in the theory of cultural capital, success in school is determined by a set of socially determined criteria that are not directly linked to academic success (Bourdieu, 1977). Some of these valued qualities include a clean physical presentation, respectful behavior to teachers, participation in art and music, and positive peer interactions. A student's ability to demonstrate these desired traits is left to the

subjectivity of their teachers and is largely dictated by the overall culture of the school which may in turn be heavily influenced by white-created school system standards.

Biculturalism

The process of integrating or shifting behavioral expectations between multiple cultures has been broadly termed biculturalism, referencing that someone participates in two (or more) cultures. Code-switching, adapting language patterns to a particular social context, is a specific form of biculturalism, but adaptations in dress, appearance, and behavior are components as well. Much of the biculturalism research focuses on the beneficial aspects, such as feeling a part of a new community, and focuses on immigrants and the acculturation process (e.g., Schwartz & Unger, 2010). However, research on biculturalism practices in Black women has found consistently negative impacts stemming from use of behavioral modifications that include increased stress, burnout, and feelings of isolation (Spencer et al., 2022; Terhune, 2006). These studies have focused specifically on feelings surrounding the use of the biculturalism practice of adapting one's home behaviors with those deemed acceptable by majority culture.

Research on code-switching use by Black Americans is vast – covering prevalence of use by varying demographic categories as well as exploring associations with a variety of outcomes. Of particular relevance to the current study, dialect use is documented at all levels of SES; however, higher concentrations of dialect are consistently documented in lower SES individuals (Craig & Grogger, 2012; Washington & Craig, 1998; Weldon, 2021). Additionally, code-switching use may be linked to level of education, with college educated adults using some, but less frequent, dialect indicators (Craig & Grogger, 2012). Further, in one study, a middle-class Black woman began speaking using fewer dialectical markers but increased as the study

continued (DeBose, 1992). Indeed, Black Americans with more cultural demands imposed by educational settings seem to create fairly consistent groups of dialect users (Weldon, 2021).

Black American Parenting

In general, parenting research has long been informed by dimensions of parenting control (Baumrind, 1966) and attachment patterns (Ainsworth et al., 2015), and research involving Black parents has been no different. This approach to parenting research has routinely characterized Black parents as lacking in positive skills as well as increased use of negative one, where “negative” and “positive” were determined in the seminal studies of white children and their families (McLoyd & Randolph, 1984; Rious et al., 2019; Suma, Caughy, et al., 2024; Valentine, 1971).

Historical Perspectives on Black American Parenting

Early developmental science work on Black children focused heavily on methods of biculturalism, though that term was developed later (Boykin & Toms, 1985; Hannerz, 1969 as cited in Young, 1974; Valentine, 1971). Biculturalism is the ability to participate in white and Black cultures and is akin to *double consciousness*, which Du Bois (1903) coined to describe how Black folks must hide themselves behind a veil in white company. Young (1974) observed mothers socializing their children for reading social cues that should inform their child’s behaviors during mother-child interactions in which the mother sometimes flipped quickly from warm to hostile behavior. These interactions train children to monitor their world for acceptance or danger from those around them and adapt their behavior to be acceptable in the outside world (Brody & Flor, 1998; Young, 1974).

This early work was followed by the proliferate work of Harriet McAdoo who thoroughly studied Black families, the effects of poverty, and support systems using a strength-based lens

(McAdoo, 1981, 1982, 1995, 2002). During this time, John Ogbu developed an ecological model that incorporated contextual informers in the determinates of Black parenting (Ogbu, 1981).

Boykin's triple quandary and his cultural foundations were also developed in the 1980's (Boykin, 1983, 1986; Boykin & Toms, 1985). These presented works are by Black scholars, which represented only a small percentage of scholars at the time. It is important to note that in a review of study sample representation and findings, McLoyd and Randolph (1984) found that a majority of the studies that included Black children and families were written with a deficit lens.

Comparative Lens

Much of the extant research on Black parent-child relationship and parent socialization strategies is based on comparison to white families with middle- to upper- class incomes (Dow, 2019; Graham, 1992; Roberts et al., 2020). However, decades of research indicate that norms based on white families are not universal and thus not applicable to other ethnic groups (Baumrind, 1972; Boykin, 1986; Keller et al., 2006; Lewis, 1975; Rious et al., 2019; Stern et al., 2023). A recent systematic review of parenting observation studies highlights the deleterious effect of using a comparative framework in research with minoritized groups (Suma & Caughy, 2024). Persistent comparison to white parenting behaviors strips Black parenting of cultural meaning while also creating a false deficit narrative.

Current Directions

Current research on Black families and socialization strategies uses more culturally specific approaches. However, these efforts are a bit limited in scope and focus on two primary areas of research – racial socialization and emotion socialization (Dunbar et al., 2017; Hughes et al., 2006; Le et al., 2008). There is also a body of work being developed on adjustments to

attachment styles specific to low-income and Black families (Dunbar et al., 2022; Stern et al., 2022; Woodhouse et al., 2020).

Racial socialization is a protective practice in which parents provide messages of cultural socialization, preparation for bias, and promotion of mistrust (Hughes & Chen, 1997). These messages may begin in early childhood but become more prevalent as children age (Contreras et al., 2022). There is a vast body of work that examines how racial socialization relates to positive development outcomes directly and indirectly in adolescents (e.g., Dunbar et al., 2022; Hughes, 2003; Hughes et al., 2006; Neblett et al., 2012).

Emotion socialization research also focuses on protective parenting practices. This work centers around how mothers model emotion suppression to train their children to show strength in the face of racial adversity, particularly within interactions with authority figures such as teachers or police (Lozada et al., 2022; Stern et al., 2023; Thomas & Blackmon, 2015). This delayed or suppressed emotion by mothers is also incorporated in culturally grounded studies of attachment style. Woodhouse et al. (2020) found that by decreasing the contingency requirement for responsivity, Black mothers displayed effective levels of secure base provision to encourage secure attachment.

Much of the work on racially grounded parenting practices is based on parenting of older children or is based on parent self-report of behaviors with younger children. Little work focuses on parenting behaviors observed during early childhood, a time that is critical for parental socialization before children leave the home (Boykin, 1986; Mesman & Groeneveld, 2018)

Active Direction

Active Direction is a new observational measure of a Black American parenting that captures a global approach rather than cataloging specific behaviors (Suma et al., 2022). By

measuring a parenting approach, the item is intentionally anti-racist as it allows for the overall arc of the interaction to inform the assessment of supportiveness rather than attempting to assess decontextualized actions and language. Much like Ispa's study of physical intervention (2015), Active Direction allows the child's reaction to the parent's behavior and the flow of the interaction to inform how successful a parent's attempt is to support and helps to remove any presupposed negative valence of behaviors used by Black parents.

These behaviors include communication that is directive, corrective, and often terse or blunt. Such behaviors are commonly characterized as intrusive and lacking warmth and sensitivity in extant literature (Owen et al., 1996). However, with Active Direction, the focus is on the intention such as if a parent redirects the child to a more engaging task, guides the child to have success in their action, or provides further information about the play (Grolnick & Pomerantz, 2009). Additionally, parents may use joking or teasing, as this type of interaction may provide motivation, encourage exploration, or create feelings of affiliation (Colle et al., 2023; Mills & Carwile, 2009; Paquette, 2004) and is reminiscent of a Black interactional style seen in adolescent and adult interactions, "playing the dozens," which is a culturally grounded form of verbal sparring (Pagliai, 2009). Active Direction also allows for less contingent responsiveness, allowing children to experience a brief adverse response or struggle with task completion before moving on with their play. This type of culturally grounded emotional support is based on work that indicates the secure base provision by Black mothers may be more supportive of secure attachment than traditional measures of sensitivity (Woodhouse et al., 2020). It also relies on findings that indicate Black mothers may display less emotion to socialize children to show strength in the face of adversity (Lozada et al., 2022).

Current Study

The current study investigated whether the behaviors associated with Active Direction reflect a universal approach to parenting in Black American families, attributed to culture, or whether Active Direction is only prevalent within low-income families, as prior research has proposed. The first aim of the study is to simply describe the prevalence of Active Direction across household income levels and other proxies of SES. The second aim of the study explores how Active Direction is related to other quality indicators of mother-child interactions and whether these associations vary by SES characteristics. The third and final aim is to determine whether certain socioeconomic profiles relate to variation in the prevalence of Active Direction. I do not make *a priori* hypotheses due to the lack of extant studies on culturally informed parenting practices of Black American parents and the general dearth of research on parenting in Black families with varying levels of SES.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Studies of Mother-Child Interaction

The current study drew from three longitudinal studies that included mother-child interactions recorded during semi-structured free play. One study had a complete data set, and the other two had incomplete data that required additional observational ratings of mother-child interactions. Studies varied in overarching aim, location of data collection, context of data collection, and target age of child. However, each study collected at least 10 minutes of video-recorded mother-child interactions during semi-structured free-play. The three studies are described briefly below.

Dallas Project on Educational Pathways (DPREP)

The Dallas Preschool Readiness Project, now known as the Dallas Project on Educational Pathways, (DPREP) recruited 407 children when they were approximately 30 months old, 184 of whom had a mother who identified as Black or African American non-Hispanic, and followed them through eight waves of data collection extending into middle school. The DPREP study focused on self-regulation skill development, academic preparedness and achievement, and child behavioral adjustment over the course of early childhood into early adolescence.

Families completed screening interviews to confirm enrollment criteria which included an overall household income-to-needs ratio below two times the federal poverty level, parent racial identity, the target child aged 30 months for the initial visit, and an intent to stay in the Dallas-Fort Worth area for at least one year. The present study will utilize data from Wave 1

only (age 2.5). Data were collected in the participants' home with two research associates, one who was a middle-aged Black woman well known in the local community to conduct the parent surveys and another to conduct child aspects of the visit.

During the initial visit, mothers were invited to participate in a semi-structured play activity with their child called the Three Bags Task (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 1999). Three bags, each containing a book or toy, were placed within reach of the parent, who was instructed to go through the bags one at a time in sequential order, spending as much time as desired with each bag. Bag 1 contained a picture book (*Good Dog Carl* by Alexandra Day), and Bag 2 contained a small play kitchen with frying pan, spatula, and salt and pepper shakers. Bag 3 contained a Fisher Price Discovery Cottage – a small playhouse with human and animal characters and a vehicle. Mother-child interactions lasted approximately 15 minutes. The research assistant in charge of the interaction provided set-up and instructions, ensured the camera positioned on a tripod in front of the dyad was capturing the play area, and then left the room.

Studies of Joint Engagement Development

Another sample was drawn from two cycles of a long-standing project that focused on the development of joint engagement within typically developing toddlers and toddlers at risk for developmental delay. Specifically, two studies under this project were used for the current study – the Early Detection Project (EDP; IRB Georgia State University H97038) and the Development of Auditory Joint Engagement (AJE; IRB Georgia State University H14441 & H14442). Both studies ran in conjunction with an early detection project to screen children for risk of autism during well-child visits at participating pediatrician offices in the greater Atlanta, GA metropolitan area. Children identified at risk were not included in the current study.

Parents who indicated willingness to be contacted for research and whose child's screener form indicated no risk were contacted via telephone. Families were selected using stratified random sampling to roughly match participants to the at-risk sample on maternal education and race ethnicity, and child age and gender. Additional exclusion criteria included questions regarding preterm birth, prolonged NICU stay, pediatrician developmental concern, communication delay, and (for the AJE project) hearing concerns or persistent ear infections.

The EDP and AJE projects, hereafter referred to as the joint engagement (JE) studies, enrolled 149 and 199 children, respectively. The caregiver and child were invited to complete two to five visits at an on-campus laboratory playroom. During the visit, the dyad interacted in a semi-structured free play session, parents completed or updated demographic information, and children completed either a developmental skills or language skills assessment. The current study uses the interaction video from between 18 – 30 months when the child was closest to 24 months of age. Children from these studies were approximately 2 years old at the play visit, $M = 23.16$ months, $SD = 2.47$.

The mother-child interaction tasks used were the Communication Play Protocol (CPP; Adamson & Bakeman, 2016) and the Communication Play Protocol – Auditory (CPPA; Adamson et al., 2015) a modified version of the CPP. The CPP consists of a 5-minute free-play scene and 6 vignettes that provide a play context for the parent (e.g., visiting an art gallery and looking at pictures; exploring toys found inside a box) and targets a specific type of communication – social interacting, requesting, and commenting. Each play scene lasted 5 minutes with a research associate coming into the room to provide the next vignette description card and toys, collect the old toys, and answer any questions. Mothers were instructed to follow the card if they so chose or otherwise play as they normally would. Parents who expressed

concern over not playing with their child at home or not knowing what to do with the toys were encouraged to explore the toys with their child or to let their child play as they wished. The CPPA consisted of three of the same vignettes, one each of the communication types with 4 shorter auditory spectacle scenes alternated throughout (Adamson et al., 2021). Only the container and turn taking scenes were used in the current study.

Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development (SECCYD)

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development (SECCYD; United States Department of Health and Human Services et al., 2018) is an archived longitudinal multi-site study that focused on the associations between child care experiences and later developmental outcomes. In all, there were four phases of data collection following the children from infancy through early high school. Summary information about the study methodology, results by phase, as well as publicly available datasets are located on the NIH website at <https://www.nichd.nih.gov/research/supported/seccyd/overview>. The current study utilized data and videos collected during Phase 1 at the 24 month visit only, so description of the study from hereon will be limited to that phase.

Over 1,300 children and their families ($N = 1,364$), participated in the initial phase of the SECCYD which began in 1991. Families were recruited from hospitals at the time of birth. Inclusion criteria required mothers to be of consenting age and speak primarily English, children showed no early indications of delay nor did they have an extended hospital stays at birth, and families to intend to stay in the area for three years. Conditional random sampling ensured that there was the desired distribution in mothers' work status and that participating families were demographically representative of their area. There were 10 study site locations throughout the

United States, each located at major universities: Little Rock, AK; the greater Boston, MA area; Irvine, CA; Lawrence, KS; Chapel Hill, NC; Philadelphia, PA; Pittsburgh, PA; Charlottesville, VA; Seattle, WA; and Madison, WI.

Phase 1 included five visit time points: 1, 5, 15, 24, and 36 months of age. A detailed list of the data collection instruments used at each time point is available at https://www.nichd.nih.gov/sites/default/files/2017-09/instrument_phase1.pdf. Only families who completed the 24 month visit and who were asked about household income are included in the present study. Children were approximately 2 years old, $M = 25.54$, $SD = 1.04$; for 89 children, only month and year was recorded for birthdate, so age was calculated using the first of the month. Mother-child interactions consisted of the Three Box Task (The NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 1998) conducted in a laboratory setting.

Study Sample

The current study's sample was dictated by the presence of mother-child interaction video recordings collected when the child was close to 24 months of age during their respective studies. Only families in which the mother or mother figure (i.e., grandmothers or female legal guardians who are primary caregivers, hereafter referred to as mothers) identified as Black American or multi-racial including a Black American identity were included. However, mothers with multi-ethnic identities that included Hispanic or Latina heritage were excluded given known differences in use of Active Direction, the variable of primary interest, between Black American and Hispanic mothers (Suma, Caughy, et al., 2024). Additionally, children for whom there were identified developmental concerns such as autism, severe global delay, delays related to premature status or seizure activity, serious health concerns that resulted in protracted hospital stays, or other diagnoses indicating delay, including sub-clinical concerns, were excluded.

Participants were also excluded if there were issues with the video including videos that were missing, videos that were under 10 minutes duration, or the dyad was not visible for a significant portion of the interaction. Inclusion criteria and associated numbers across all studies contributing to the current study are provided in Table 1. The SECCYD data were further limited based on income information. Data collection procedures indicated that mothers who were unmarried and had not worked in the past year were not asked for income information, and a 0 was automatically recorded. Due to the unclear nature of the zero (i.e., true zero income or coded zero), these families were dropped ($n = 45$).

Studies did not differ on sex of child enrolled, $F(2, 305) = 1.46, p = .23$; across studies there were fewer female children, $\chi^2(1, N = 308) = 8.39, p = .004$. There were significant differences in mother and household characteristics. Almost all mothers (88%) held at least a high school diploma or equivalency, though there were differences in educational attainment across groups, $F(2, 301) = 19.50, p < .001$. The JE studies had significantly higher levels of attainment than both SECCYD and DPREP, $MD = .72$ and 1.04 , respectively, with $p < .001$ for both. SECCYD mothers had significantly more education than DPREP mothers, $MD = .319, p = .02$. There were more mother-only than dual-parent households, $\chi^2(1, N = 308) = 13.201, p < .001$. Differences in household composition were present across studies, $\chi^2(2, 285) = 44.82, p < .001$. Column proportion comparisons with Bonferroni adjustments indicated that DPREP mothers were more likely to be single parents. There were also group differences in poverty level, $F(2, 298) = 88.564, p < .001$. Post-hoc analyses using a Bonferroni test indicated that this difference was driven by DPREP, which differed from both SECCYD and JE, $MD = -1.65$ and $-1.73, p < .001$ for both, respectively, but SECCYD and JE did not differ from each other, $MD =$

+/- .08, $p = 1.0$. Descriptive data for the children, their mothers, and their households are presented in Table 2.

Measures

Demographics

Demographic information was collected during data collection in all three contributing studies.

Child Characteristics. Child demographic variables used in the current study include gender and age. Given the young age of the children, parents reported child sex (i.e., male, female) at enrollment. Child age will be calculated using the date of birth and the date of visit and reported in months. However, for some SECCYD children, birth dates were not available and age was documented was rounded down to the whole month.

Mother Characteristics. Mother demographic variables included race and ethnicity, age, relationship to child, and highest level of education completed. All adult caregivers in this study were limited to mother – whether biological, adopted, or long-term legal guardian – or grandmother, as long as the grandmother was identified as a primary caregiver.

Household Characteristics. Household variables included family structure and income-to-needs ratio. Family structure was categorized as whether the family was headed by a single mother or whether it is a dual-parent household at the time of data collection. Household income was transformed into an income-to-needs ratio by using the reported household income and dividing by the government poverty guidelines based on family size for the respective year.

Active Direction

Active Direction characterized an approach to parenting. Support for the child's actions and language are provided by mother behaviors that are succinct, or even curt, and either

directive or corrective. For example, if the child shakes the saltshaker upside down, the mother may remove the shaker from the child's hand, flip it right side up, and hand it back, or the mother may say, "Turn it. You doing it wrong." Likewise, mothers may use joking or teasing language to spur their child into action or to create a connection. An example of this might be the mother repeatedly pulling away a toy the child wants or saying, "Oh, you think you're a big girl. Go ahead then." Mothers also show instances of clear appreciation or affection for their child within Active Direction. For example, after correcting the child's egg cooking technique, the mother could say, "Let me try... Oh! Those are good eggs! Now I need some toast." Also important to Active Direction is the child's independence as afforded by the mother. The mother may allow the child to act and then use corrections and directions to offer input; the mother may also direct to lead but then allow the child to make their own decisions.

While rating Active Direction, it is important to consider the events that preceded and followed the mother's behavior. To use the example above about repeatedly removing a toy: this behavior could easily be characterized as intrusive. However, if the mother removes an object of interest, and the child responds by smiling and snatching it back, thus creating a game, this indicates reciprocity and shared enjoyment. Similarly, if a mother provides feedback (e.g., "That don't go there"), there is no reason to believe the child understands this message to be critical rather than simply informative.

Ratings of Active Direction were on a 7-point Likert-type scale. A score of 1 indicated a low rating indicative of a mother not using any Active Direction strategies. This may occur when a mother is disengaged, allows the child to act with no corrective or directive statements, or gently leads throughout the interaction. A mid-point rating of 4 indicated that a mother clearly uses Active Direction but may do so briefly or inconsistently. Other approaches to parenting may

be present, or the mother may be occasionally disengaged. To receive a rating of 4, instances of Active Direction are clear, and there are either a few elongated exemplars or several brief ones. A rating of 7 indicated consistent use of Active Direction throughout the interaction. The highest rating also indicates that the mother uses a variety of Active Direction components.

Other Observational Measures

Operational descriptions, anchors, and midpoints for all observational items are summarized in Table 3.

Scaffolding. Scaffolding measured how successfully a parent was able to extend and expand their child's experience within an interaction. Scaffolding can provide support for play activities or language. A rating of 1 indicated that a parent provided only minimum support for their child, perhaps by handing over a toy or answering a question when the child asked or pointed. A midpoint rating of 4 indicated that a parent is moderately successful in scaffolding their child's experience. There were several clear instances when the parent was able to extend (maintain a child's interest), expand (bring in additional components), or elaborate (provide additional information or context) the child's play in a way that would not have otherwise been present without the parent. A high rating of 7 was reserved for parents that consistently and continuously pushed their child's zone of development using a variety of strategies and methods.

Calm Authority. Calm Authority captured how consistently a mother leads her child through an interaction using a calm authority. This measure was originally developed as the parent component of *respeto*, a Hispanic cultural value in which children show deference and respect for their parents (Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2020). However, Calm Authority was also used by Black mothers in early interactions (Suma, Caughy, et al., 2024). A rating of 1 is indicated when the mother does not engage in any Calm Authority behaviors. These types of behaviors

may include the mother being disengaged, the mother deferring to the child, or the mother pleading with the child to follow instructions. A mid-rating of 4 is indicated by several clear uses of firm, calm leading, but the mother may also use other approaches to the interaction such as allowing the child to act independently or struggle to maintain control. A high rating of 7 is indicated by clear use of Calm Authority for most of the interaction. The mother confidently and calmly leads her child through the play interaction while skillfully adjusting to maintain her child's interest.

Shared Routines and Rituals. Routines and rituals are play scripts in which both partners know their role so that partners have a shared expectation of what will happen. An example of a routine would be counting down, “3...2...1...”, before knocking over a tower. They may also be scripted ways of interacting, such as when a parent knocks on the house door and the child responds, “knock, knock, who is it?”. A rating of 1 indicated that no routines or rituals were present during the interaction. A mid-point rating of 4 indicated the use of some shared structures, but they are either fleeting or unclear. A high rating of 7 indicated that the dyad frequently shared varied and sustained routines or rituals.

Fluency and Connectedness. Fluency and Connectedness characterized the flow of the interaction and how well the partners are able to equally contribute to the interaction in a smooth manner. Fluency and Connectedness is comprised of three components: fluency – how the interaction passes back and forth between partners; connectedness – how the partners create a sense that they are acting together in a harmonious manner, and balance – the sense that the partners are equally contributing to the interaction. A rating of one indicated that there is no interaction. This may happen if a child refuses to participate and is likely accompanied by distress. The mid-point rating of 4 indicated an interaction that is standard of an interaction with

a typically developing infant – the child may seem motivated to play with the parent (connectedness), but has difficulty maintaining attention and passing the interaction back and forth (fluency) while also relying on the parent to do the bulk of the work to keep the interaction happening (balance). The high rating of 7 indicated that the dyad equally contributed to the interaction, passing turns back and forth smoothly within the interaction, while maintaining a sense of shared engagement and general satisfaction.

Training and Reliability Procedures for Observational Items

A portion of the rating items had been completed prior to the dissertation project, although which items already rated differs by study. Table 3 summarizes previous data collection completion by study. Consistent to each training for all studies with previously rated data was the presence of K. S. as either an observer or lead observer. For DPREP, ratings were conducted as part of an overarching secondary study. K. S. led a team of two Black American female graduate students and provided training and oversight of the rating process. Training was conducted prior to data collection. Approximately 20% of each observer's assignments were double rated by K. S. Reliability meetings were held as needed but at least once every two weeks to discuss disagreements and any misunderstandings.

The EDP and CPPA studies had slightly different protocols for training and reliability assessment. The EDP had a set of gold standard ratings (ratings reached by consensus by a team of experts) for training purposes and a primary trainer who monitored the training process for new observers. Approximately 20% of assignments were from the gold standard set, and agreement and reliability statistics were monitored closely. The primary trainer was consulted if an observer was drifting away from reliable, and, on occasion, retraining ensued. K. S. monitored reliability for the EDP. The CPPA was conducted much like the DPREP study. K. S. was the

lead observer, trained observers to reliability, and then monitored reliability, again roughly 20%, for a small team of graduate student observers. Meetings to discuss reliability were conducted as assignments were completed.

For the SECCYD, a few interactions were rated during the completion of a separate study. In that study, K. S. was the trainer for two observers, one a post-doctoral student and the other a post-baccalaureate research staff. These ratings were retained for the current dissertation, $n = 5$. Once observers reached reliability, they were randomly assigned 20% overlap and discussed agreements amongst themselves. K. S. was consulted if there was confusion or disagreement on which rating was more correct and oversaw reliability calculations.

For the current dissertation, K. S. acted as the primary observer and rater for new observational rating data. A second observer, previously trained with high reliability on all items, rated a randomly selected 20% of the new interactions. Reliability statistics were reported as both weighted kappas (e.g., agreements within 1 scale point were weighted zero and disagreements more than 1 scale point were weighted one; Cohen, 1968) and as estimated accuracy for all studies. This statistic is extrapolated from the weighted kappa for easier interpretation (Bakeman, 2022). Table 4 displays the weighted kappas and estimated accuracies across observers by study and specific item. There was one anomalous reliability statistic. For the JE studies, Calm Authority had a weighted kappa of 0, with an estimated accuracy of less than 36%. Upon inspection, this statistic was likely due to limited variability in the item; within 1 agreement was 78%. For all other items by studies, weighted kappas ranged from .44 to 1.0 with estimated accuracies ranging from 77% – >99%, which indicated acceptable inter-rater reliability.

Analytic Plan

Descriptive information for Active Direction, for the full sample and for socio-economic subgroups were calculated. Given that recorded interactions were pulled from three separate studies, descriptives were tested for influence by study specific characteristics. Differences in distributions of ratings based on child age, play protocol, location of recording, and year of collection were tested to confirm data were comparable. Additionally, mother age was tested for contribution to variance. Study variables related to significant differences in ratings were used as control variables in subsequent analyses.

For all aims, household income, educational attainment, and household structure were the SES indicators used as independent variables. ANOVAs were computed to examine if and how Active Direction associated with any of the SES variables. ANOVAs were also used to determine whether there were differences in mean Active Direction across groups. Due to the exploratory nature of this study, associations were also tested for a threshold effect using a dummy variable to represent the threshold and pairing it with the independent SES variable within a regression model.

For Aim 2, correlations of Active Direction with other quality indicators of the interaction were first calculated. Correlations were then transformed into z scores, and z difference tests computed to compare whether there were significant differences in the association between interaction qualities at differing levels of SES indicators.

For Aim 3, SES proxies were entered individually in a regression model to determine the best model for the association between Active Direction and all combinations of SES proxy.

Results, whenever possible, included effect size and followed Cohen's guidelines for interpreting magnitude (Cohen, 1988). Significance level was set at a two-sided p of less than .05.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Presence of Active Direction

Active Direction ratings in the full sample utilized the entire scale 1 – 7, had a mean just below the midway point, $M = 3.31$, $SD = 1.53$, and were normally distributed. Active Direction means and distribution information for the full sample and by SES group are provided in Table 5.

There were no significant differences in mean rating of Active Direction between categories of household income, $F(4, 296) = 1.21$, $p = .31$. Adding contrast analyses to test non-linear associations did not yield any significant findings. Likewise, there were no significant differences in mean rating of Active Directions based on maternal educational attainment, $F(4, 299) = 1.20$, $p = .31$. Contrast analysis indicated no significant associations. However, there was a significant difference between single-mother and dual parent households, with single mother households have significantly higher ratings of Active Direction, $F(1, 283) = 8.93$, $p = .003$. Box plots for Active Direction by SES characteristics are in Figures 1 – 3.

Cross-study Design Variability and Covariates

The analyses above were conducted using observed data with no control variables. Given that the current study uses mother-child interactions from three studies using three different approaches to data collection, it was important to understand how those variables may affect ratings of Active Direction. This issue is exacerbated given that there are known differences in SES characteristics in each study as well. In particular, the DPREP sample had significantly

higher poverty levels, lower educational attainment, and more mother-only households compared to the other samples. To test for influence of study characteristics, data were sorted by SES proxy, and then independent *t*-tests were used to test whether there were significant mean differences in ratings of Active Direction for lab versus home context, 3 bags versus CPP protocol, and generational difference (data collected in the 1990s versus 2010s). Statistics for these analyses can be found in Table 6. There was one significant finding; the generation of study significantly affected the means for mothers with some college education, with mothers from the studies conducted in the 2010's having significantly higher Active Direction. This lone finding is not grounded theoretically or in extant research and thus will not be accounted for. Thus, no study methodology was controlled for in analyses.

Child age of enrollment also varied by study. To probe whether child age should be controlled for, bivariate correlations were conducted. Child age was significantly associated with rating of Active Direction with small positive effect, $r = .11, p = .05$. Given that study design dictated child age and there were significant differences in SES across studies, SES proxies were entered into step 1 of a regression model, and child age was entered in step 2 to further test this association. Results indicated that adding age to the model made an insignificant change of an additional 0.1% of variance explained, $F(1, 267) = .30, p = .66$. Similar insignificant findings resulted when using only a single SES variable in step 1. Thus, child age was not controlled in analyses.

Additionally, given previous findings that mothers and grandmothers differ in their use of Active Direction (Poleon et al., 2025), maternal age was tested for association with Active Direction in the current study. Bivariate correlations indicate there was a positive association with small effect, $r = .11, p = .05$. This association was probed further using regression analysis

similar to the process with child age. Findings also mirrored those of child age. When all SES proxies were entered in step 1, adding maternal age to the model resulted in an additional insignificant .01% of explained variable, $F(1, 270) = .23, p = .63$. However, after entering a single SES proxy into step 1, there were significant changes when adding maternal age to models with household income and maternal educational attainment, $F(1, 297) = 4.72, p = .03$ and $F(1, 300) = 6.80, p = .01$, respectively. Thus, maternal age was used as a covariate on remaining analyses.

Associations between Active Direction and Other Interaction Qualities

To test whether and how Active Direction related to other supportive qualities of mother-toddler interactions, partial correlations were conducted with maternal age as a control variable. The partial correlation results can be found in Table 7. For the full sample, Active Direction was only significantly associated with Routines and Rituals, $r_{ab.c}(304) = .14, p = .01$.

For household income levels, Active Direction was significantly positively associated with all other supportive interaction qualities – Scaffolding, Parent Calm Authority, Fluency and Connectedness, and Routines and Rituals all with small to medium effect, but only for mothers with household income levels at half that of the federal poverty level (see Table 7). Only severely impoverished household showed a significant association of use of Active Direction and other interaction quality indicators.

For maternal educational attainment, mothers in the lowest two groups (e.g., less than high school and high school diploma), Active Direction was significantly positively related to Scaffolding, $r_{ab.c}(30) = .18, p = .06$, small effect, and $r_{ab.c}(112) = .36, p = .04$, a medium effect size, respectively. Only for mothers with less than a high school diploma, Active Direction was also significantly positively associated with Fluency and Connectedness, $r_{ab.c}(30) = .29, p = .10$,

with a medium effect size. For mothers with a high school diploma, Active Direction was significantly positively associated with Routines and Rituals with a medium effect size, $r_{ab.c}(112) = .31, p < .001$. For mothers in single-parent households, Active Direction was positively associated with Routines and Rituals, with small effect size, $F(7,112) = 2.28, p = .02, \eta^2 = .02$.

Comparing Correlations

To further investigate how correlations of Active Direction and SES relate to one another, Fisher Z transformations were conducted. This set of analyses was in large part spurred by the finding that there were medium negative effect sizes for college degree and post-college attainment levels and Active Direction, though these associations were insignificant (see Table 7). Previous results also informed how correlations were compared; Fisher transformations used the highest risk category for each SES proxy (i.e., half or less of the federal poverty level, less than a high school diploma, and single mother household) as the comparison to higher levels.

Significant differences in correlations across SES proxy categories were varied. Scaffolding followed the most consistent pattern. For the association of Active Direction with Scaffolding by household income group, the highest two income brackets significantly differed from the lowest, $z = 3.56, p < .001$ and $z = 2.19, p = .01$. Mothers from the highest two brackets had a negative, insignificant association while mothers in the lowest bracket had a positive significant association between Scaffolding and Active Direction. Comparing associations by educational attainment indicated a similar pattern. Mothers in the three highest attainment levels (i.e., some college, college, post grad) all had negative insignificant associations, while the lowest attainment group had a positive significant association between Scaffolding and Active Direction. The difference in association between the lowest with the higher attainments was significant, $z = 1.93, p = .03, z = 2.59, p = .01$ and $z = 2.11, p = .02$. Additionally, the association

between Scaffolding and Active Direction was significantly different for mother-only compared to dual-parent households, $z = 2.65$, $p = .004$, with mother-only having a significant positive association and dual parent having an insignificant negative association.

Other patterns of differences were less consistent. At three times the federal poverty level, there were a total of three significant differences, all lower correlations than those at the lowest level: Scaffolding, Parent Calm Authority, and Routines and Rituals. For single mother households, there were also three significant differences from those with dual parents – again, all smaller correlations: Scaffolding, Fluency and Connectedness, and Routines and Rituals. For full results, see Table 8.

Modeling Socioeconomic Characteristics and Active Direction

To further explore how proxies of SES may work together to explain variance in ratings of Active Direction, multi-step regressions were conducted. SES proxies were entered into a step-wise regression, with one proxy per block. For each test, maternal age was entered in the first block as a covariate. The full model with all proxies entered explained a significant amount of variance in Active Direction, $R^2 = .05$, $F(4, 270) = 3.59$, $p = .01$. See Table 9 for regression model results.

When comparing alternative combinations of variables, models with only single-mother status and maternal education accounted for more variance, $F(1, 271) = 5.88$, $p = .02$; or $F(1, 271) = 4.87$, $p = .03$; adjusted $R^2 = .038$. The model with all variables accounted for less, adjusted $R^2 = .036$. Single-mother status and maternal education contributed similar amounts of variance when entered in the first step, $R^2 = .032$ and $R^2 = .028$. Household income contributed less, $R^2 = .008$.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Using culturally informed measures of parenting practices can promote a strengths-based perspective of minoritized family's socialization efforts. Long-standing measures and their characterizations of parenting have consistently cast Black American parents with a negative light, routinely describing Black American parents as displaying higher rates of undesirable behaviors and lower rates of positive ones. Developmental science research has been slow to adapt more culturally grounded research methods in studies on Black American families. Active Direction was developed as an anti-racist measure of a Black American parenting; it modified behavioral definitions to encompass culturally informed meaning and contextualized those behaviors within a supportive parent-child interaction. Use of Active Direction is more frequent among low-income Black mothers compared to low-income Hispanic mothers (Suma, Caughy, et al., 2024). This study sought to explore how Active Direction varies within Black American households of varying socioeconomic status and utilized early parent-child interaction videos from three longitudinal studies of child development.

Overall, Active Direction did not differ by household income nor maternal educational attainment level. It did differ by mother-only household status. This general finding supports the proposal that Active Direction is not only culturally grounded, but that higher levels of SES do not alter the amount of its use in early mother-toddler interactions. This finding counters the literature on the bicultural practice of code-switching in which individuals with lower SES use

more culturally concentrated linguistic patterns (Craig & Grogger, 2012; Washington & Craig, 1998).

Correlation analyses provided more insight into how Active Direction may function as a parenting approach within Black American households. For the entire sample, mothers who used more Active Direction also used more Routines and Rituals. While Routines and Rituals is not overtly supportive, it does indicate a degree of familiarity and ease within the interaction; mother and child are able to rely on established patterns of play to aid the interaction. Given Active Direction is an approach to parenting, higher levels of Routines and Rituals may indicate that this pattern of interaction is known, accepted, and productive for the mother-child dyad.

When SES proxies were analyzed individually, a different pattern emerged. Mothers who were more economically at risk (e.g., living well below the federal poverty line, having a high school diploma or less education, and single parenting) had significant positive associations between Active Direction and other supportive parenting qualities. This finding is exceptionally interesting in that it seems to signal that Active Direction, though present mostly equally across levels of SES proxy, functions differently at differing SES levels. For mothers with more economic disadvantage, Active Direction seems to do more work; it relates to numerous other supportive practice such as Scaffolding – a measure of productive teaching, and Fluency and Connectedness – well established as an important indicator of quality of interaction (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2015).

Correlation analysis also indicated that, at the highest levels of education, there was a negative association between Active Direction and Scaffolding with a medium effect size. Though this association was not significant, the reversal of direction is notable. Coupled with significant positive association for mothers at higher economical risk, the reverse association

with Scaffolding at low risk further supports that Active Direction functions differently for varying levels of socioeconomic status. The reversed direction for college educated mothers may indicate that mothers use other approaches to scaffold their child's behavior, while mothers with lower levels of educational attainment use Active Direction to suit multiple purposes.

More in depth consideration of correlations revealed some interesting trends. The association between Scaffolding and Active Direction differed consistently, though not constantly, at higher levels of SES. At higher levels, the correlation was smaller. This may support the theory that mothers with more resources use a greater variety of parenting approaches. It also may speak to how parents use Active Direction. Active Direction includes both a directive and corrective component. High ratings of Scaffolding indicate that a mother has successfully expanded or extended her child's experience. Mothers who use Active Direction predominantly to correct behavior may use other approaches when guiding her child's actions during play. This concept mirrors that of research on linguistic biculturalism in that mothers with higher SES use certain cultural markers but not all of them consistently (Craig & Grogger, 2012).

Results of regression analyses indicated educational attainment and single mother status explained the most variance in Active Direction, while household income contributed very little. Given that SES characteristics are often highly correlated in that single mothers are more likely to also live in low-income households, this finding may indicate single-mother status drives parenting behavior more. It is important to remember that single-mother status only indicates that the child's father is not in the home, not that the mother is the only adult present. It is not clear if a single mother would use more Active Direction due to the succinctness of communication (i.e., time constraints), performing multiple caregiver roles (i.e., acting for both parental figures), or

some other motivation. There is literature reporting that single mothers are often more strict with their children in order to promote later success (Brody & Flor, 1998; Bulanda, 2008). These values may present through behaviors captured by Active Direction such as correction, enforcing rules, and directing proper actions and behavior.

Given that mother-child interactions came from three studies that used a variety of methodological practices, it was important to determine whether study specific characteristics affected ratings of Active Direction so that they could be controlled in analyses. The following characteristics were used to describe differences in the play protocol: type (three bags versus Communication Play Protocol); location (home versus lab); and generation (the early 1990's versus the 2010's). By and large, study characteristics were not associated with ratings of Active Direction and thus were not used as covariates in any analyses.

Implications

The current study expands the research on Active Direction by indicating that the approach is not unique to low-income families, nor to mothers with low educational attainment, nor to single mothers. This rejects the long-standing proposal by Brody and Flor (1998) that “no nonsense” parenting, a description of a similar parent approach, may reflect parenting behaviors by low-income mothers and are not unique to Black American mothers. Previous research on Active Direction indicated that within low-income households, Black mothers used Active Direction while Hispanic mothers did not (Suma, Caughy, et al., 2024). These two findings combined provide support that Active Direction captures an approach to parenting that is culturally grounded.

With this interpretation, it is important to remember that Boykin's triple quandary (1986) provides a complex interpretation of Black American culture – one that includes influences from

experiences within three cultural value systems. While this study indicates SES does influence how much a mother uses Active Direction, it is clear that it is only a tiny piece of the puzzle. The average use of Active Direction by mothers in this study was just under the mid-point, indicating that most mothers did not consistently use it throughout the interaction. A mid-point rating indicates clear use of the approach which may range from several instances to a prolonged bout or two. This means that, by default, mothers are also using other approaches in their interactions with their child. How mothers pick and choose and how they balance their methods is not clear from this study nor is it described in any extant work. Future research should explore contextually bound values and beliefs systems for Black American parents to better understand working parental ethnotheories.

The current study also adds to the literature that explores the distinction between cultural context and socioeconomic context. Most of the extant work relies on measurement that was not designed to capture culturally grounded practices but rather tests whether SES can explain a significant amount of variation in the behaviors or outcomes found within Black families. By employing a culturally specific measure of parenting, measurement issues of applicability were minimized. Findings from this study can motivate behavioral research to be more considered in how culturally grounded practices, such as a parent's socialization strategies, are measured, implemented, and explained.

Limitations

While there is evidence that Active Direction is used by Black American parents at all levels of SES, it is still unclear what mechanisms promote this approach to parenting. Boykin's triple quandary tells us that multiple cultural influences are possible. Building on Young (1974) and Brody & Flor (1998), as well as making the parallel with biculturalism and codeswitching,

there is an assumption that Active Direction is a protective socialization strategy. However, it is also possible that Active Direction reflects more heritage culture – direct communication, playful interaction, verve, unique personalities within a communal structure (Boykin & Toms, 1985). Both explanations may fit, but further work needs to be conducted regarding value and belief systems in relation to the presence of Active Direction.

There are also several limitations regarding the methodology of the current study. Video records of mothers and their toddlers are hard to come by, particularly when they are recordings of Black mothers and toddlers from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds. In order to build the corpus of videos for the current study, records from previous studies were used. This limited the type and consistency of demographic information about the participants. It could be that additional SES measures may have better explained variation in Active Direction or that additional household factors needed to be controlled. These limitations speak to a broader issue in research on Black families: there is little research conducted in a systematic way that captures the experiences of Black families from diverse backgrounds.

Future Studies

Current findings can be expanded through prospective studies that collect more in-depth information about how Black American parents prioritize and emphasize certain socialization strategies, what developmental tasks they value most, and what successful childrearing looks like to them. This type of foundational work is exceptionally sparse. Future studies can also explore how Active Direction may shift over time as children age. Work on racial socialization may inform how components of Active Direction become more communication based rather than behavioral as children age. Finally, findings from the current research and from theoretical underpinnings suggest that Active Direction may fall under the umbrella of biculturalism.

However, without direct study, it is unclear if Active Direction and other types of bicultural indicators would be used within the same families or if they are independent adaptations.

Summary

The current study sought to better understand how Active Direction, a culturally grounded observational measure of parenting approach, was used by Black American mothers in interactions with their toddlers. Extant work provides little motivation on cultural influences on Black parenting, and much of the research has suggested that socioeconomic factors may be larger drivers of parenting behaviors. This study, however, found that Active Direction does indeed seem to capture a culturally motivated parenting approach, as the contribution of SES factors were minimal to none. Household proportion of federal poverty level, maternal education, and single-mother status were used as proxies of SES. Active Direction did not differ on any of these measurements. Correlation analyses added to these findings and indicated that mothers may use Active Direction in conjunction with other supportive practices differently at different socioeconomic levels, particularly with varying levels of educational attainment. Single-mother status accounted for the most variance, with maternal educational attainment close behind, and their combined contributions accounted for 5% of the variance in Active Direction ratings. Household income contributed almost nothing. Overall, the current study contributes to the literature by expanding the applicability of Active Direction as a culturally grounded measure rather than being a reflection of low SES.

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Table 1*Number of Participants and Reasons for Exclusion from Study Sample*

	DPREP	SECCYD	JE Studies
Reason for exclusion			
<i>Initial total</i>	407	1364	348
Mother non-Black Identity	-217	-1190	-213
Mother dual ethnic identity	-6	0	-2
<i>Black American Subtotal</i>	184	174	133
Child had ASD diagnosis or other developmental concern	-3	0	-96
Adult not mother, grandmother, or female legal guardian	-5	0	-2
<i>Qualifying Participant Subtotal</i>	176	174	35
No visit between 18 - 30 months	0	-36	-2
Income issue		-35	
Video too short	-2	0	0
Video missing	-2	0	0
<i>Final Total</i>	172	103	33

Note. DPREP's initial visit was at child age 30 months. The closest aged visit for SECCYD was 24 months. The JE studies had several time points between 18 - 30 months, depending on the specific study; the closest visit to 24 months was selected for data.

Table 2*Characteristics of Black American Mothers and Their Households*

Characteristic	DPREP		SECCYD		JE Studies		Total	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
<i>Caregiver race</i>								
African American	166	97%	103	100%	33	100%	302	98%
Multiracial	6	3%	0	0%	0	0%	6	2%
<i>Caregiver relationship to child</i>								
Mother	161	94%	103	100%	32	97%	296	96%
Grandmother	11	6%	0	-	1	3%	12	4%
Legal Guardian	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
<i>Child Sex</i>								
Male	94	55%	55	60%	23	71%	172	56%
Female	78	45%	48	40%	10	29%	136	44%
<i>Child race/ethnicity</i>								
Black American	158	92%	96	93%	31	91%	285	93%
Multiracial/ multiethnic	14	8%	6	5%	2	9%	22	7%
Other (white)	0	-	1	1%	0	-	1	4%
<i>Mother's educational level</i>								
Less than high school	25	15%	7	7%	1	3%	33	11%
High school/GED	76	44%	35	34%	5	15%	116	38%
Some college/ technical	53	31%	50	49%	15	45%	118	38%
Four-year college degree	11	6%	7	7%	4	12%	22	7%
Post graduate	3	2%	4	4%	8	24%	15	5%
Missing	4	2%	0	-	0	-	4	1%

	DPREP	SECCYD	JE Studies	Total				
Characteristic	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
<i>Family structure</i>								
Dual parent	35	20%	66	64%	19	58%	120	39%
Single parent	114	66%	37	36%	14	42%	165	54%
Other	20	12%	0	-	0	-	20	6%
Missing data	3	2%	0	-	0	-	3	1%
<i>Family poverty level</i> ^a								
Less than 50%	88	51%	6	6%	4	12%	98	32%
50–99%	46	27%	19	18%	4	12%	69	22%
100–199%	23	13%	31	30%	8	24%	62	20%
200–299%	10	6%	21	20%	5	15%	36	12%
≥ 300%	0	-	25	24%	11	33%	36	12%
Missing	5	3%	1	1%	1	3%	7	2%

Note. ^a DPREP poverty level was calculated using an average of W1-W4 of data collected. SECCYD used income information from the same visit as the interaction. JE used income from the closest visit to the interaction used in the present study; most were the same visit.

Table 3*JERI Rating Item Completion, Description, and Anchors*

Item (Target)	DPREP	Study ECCYD	JE	Low	Anchor Midpoint	High
				Degree to which the caregiver directs the interaction using clear, concise, and often corrective direction		
Active Direction (Mother)	Y	N	N	No use of corrective or insistent directions. May be overtly suggestive or under-involved	Intermittent use of corrective and/or insistent direction, inconsistent support but not disruptive	Consistent use of corrective or insistent direction that follows child activity and supports
Scaffolding (Mother)	Y	N	Y	How successfully the caregiver supports the child's activities and provides opportunities for learning about shared objects, events, and communications Parent does not try or is unsuccessful in extending child's experience, provides minimal support	Intermittent success/ severe brief successes, not fully extended or elaborated	Consistent support through extension and expansion of child's experience
Calm Authority (Mother)	Y	N	N	Degree to which the caregiver directs the interaction with confident calm authority		
				No use of gently firm direction	Intermittent use of confident guidance; may let child lead	Consistent calm, clear, firm, and direct guidance
Fluency and Connectedness (Interaction)	Y	P	Y	Characterization of the flow of the interaction		
				No interaction is established	Interaction lacks smoothness, largely dominated by one partner, fluency choppy	Fluid and balanced interaction; often sustained throughout
Routines and Rituals (Interaction)	Y	P	P	The frequency and quality of routines and rituals that occur during the interaction		
				No evidence of shared routines and rituals	Some clear examples not sustained, do not permeate interaction, may be repetitive; more if unclear	Sustained, varied, and nuanced routines; present throughout the interaction

Note. P = partially coding

Table 4*Rater Reliability by Study and Item*

	DPREP		SECCYD		JE studies	
	wtd K	est. acc	wtd K	est. acc	wtd K	est. acc
Active Direction	.62 - .74	86% - 91%	.61	85%	.66	85%
Calm Authority	.73 - 1.0	96% - >99%	.53	85%	0	<36%
Scaffolding	.72 - .87	94% - 96%	.76	93%	1.0	>99%
Fluency and Connectedness	1.0	>99%	.44	77%	.88	95%
Routines and Rituals	.44 - .51	78% - 82%	.55	84%	.84 - 1	95% - >99%

Table 5*Active Direction Means, Standard Deviations, and Distribution by SES Group*

	N	Min	Max	M	SD	Skewness		Kurtosis	
						Statistic	SE	Statistic	SE
Full Sample	308	1	7	3.31	1.53	0.35	0.14	-0.59	0.28
Income-to-Needs Ratio									
0-.49	96	1	7	3.57	1.48	0.04	0.25	-0.82	0.49
.5-.99	71	1	7	3.22	1.39	0.37	0.28	-0.52	0.56
1-1.99	62	1	7	3.06	1.59	0.63	0.30	0.05	0.60
2-2.99	36	1	7	3.24	1.77	0.45	0.39	-1.06	0.77
3+	36	1	7	3.25	1.68	0.56	0.39	-0.28	0.77
Maternal Ed									
< high school	33	1	7	3.82	1.78	0.08	0.41	-1.05	0.80
high school diploma	116	1	7	3.32	1.55	0.30	0.22	-0.71	0.45
some college	118	1	7	3.23	1.43	0.19	0.22	-0.63	0.44
4yr college degree	22	1	7	3.18	1.62	1.07	0.49	1.19	0.95
post bach schooling	15	1	6	2.97	1.53	0.66	0.58	-0.76	1.12
Mother only household									
no	120	1	7	2.94	1.47	0.61	0.22	-0.31	0.44
yes	165	1	7	3.47	1.49	0.27	0.19	-0.46	0.38

Table 6*Testing Effects of Contributing Study Methodologies*

		Location of play				Play protocol				Generation			
		t	df	p	d	t	df	p	d	t	df	p	d
Income	0-.49	0.55*	10	.59	0.25	-0.93	94	.35	-0.48	-0.10*	5	.92	-0.07
	.5-.99	0.09	69	.93	0.02	-1.35	69	.18	-0.69	0.60	69	.55	0.16
	1-1.99	-0.94	60	.35	-0.25	-0.25	60	.80	-0.09	1.08	60	.28	0.27
	2-2.99	-1.41	34	.17	-0.53	0.72	34	.47	0.35	0.75	34	.46	0.25
	>3	-	-	-	-	1.25	34	.22	0.45	-1.25	34	.22	-0.45
Education	< high school	1.13	31	.27	0.23	-1.89	31	.07	-1.92	0.17	31	.86	0.07
	high school	-0.01*	61	.99	0.03	-0.44*	4	.68	-0.32	0.15	114	.88	0.03
	some college	-1.86	116	.07	-0.30	-0.58	116	.57	-0.16	2.06	116	.04	0.38
	college	-1.06	20	.06	-0.45	0.93	20	.36	0.51	0.35	20	.73	0.16
	post bach	-1.35	13	.30	-0.87	1.94	13	.07	1.00	-0.80	13	.44	-0.47
Mother only	no	-0.48*	89	.63	-0.08	0.32	118	.75	0.08	0.14	118	.89	0.03
	yes	0.39*	76	.35	0.07	-0.63	163	.53	-0.18	-0.05*	48	.96	-0.01

Note. * indicates significant at $p < .05$ Levene's test F statistic. When equality of variance cannot be assumed, t statistics indicated accordingly.

Table 7
Correlations of Active Direction and Other Measures of Supportive Parenting

Interaction Quality	Full Sample	Household Income					Maternal Educational Attainment				
		0-.49	.5-.99	1-1.99	2-2.99	3+	< high school	high school	some college	4 yr college	> college
Scaffolding	0.06 (.26)	0.36 (<.001)	0.13 (.27)	0.12 (.34)	-0.33 (.05)	-0.06 (.71)	0.36 (.04)	0.18 (.06)	-0.01 (.87)	-0.36 (.11)	-0.33 (.25)
Parent Calm Authority	0.05 (.40)	0.24 (.02)	-0.06 (.65)	0.00 (.98)	0.01 (.97)	-0.30 (.08)	-0.06 (.74)	0.07 (.48)	0.04 (.68)	-0.17 (.46)	0.04 (.89)
Fluency and Connectedness	0.10 (.09)	0.26 (.01)	-0.07 (.55)	0.01 (.96)	-0.07 (.55)	0.08 (.65)	0.29 (.10)	0.14 (.15)	-0.04 (.63)	0.09 (.71)	0.16 (.59)
Routines and Rituals	0.14 (.01)	0.33 (.001)	0.14 (.24)	0.03 (.80)	0.08 (.63)	-0.06 (.74)	0.22 (.23)	0.31 (<.001)	-0.05 (.57)	-0.06 (.80)	0.07 (.82)

Note. Partial correlations and (p value) provided. Maternal age was entered as a control variable.

Table 8*Fisher Transformations Comparing Correlations from Highest Economic Risk Level*

Interaction Quality	Income Diff from 0 - .49				Education Diff from Less than High School				Diff from Single Mother
	.5 -.99	1-1.99	2-2.99	3+	High school	some college	college	post grad	dual parent
	<i>z</i> (p)	<i>z</i> (p)	<i>z</i> (p)	<i>z</i> (p)	<i>z</i> (p)	<i>z</i> (p)	<i>z</i> (p)	<i>z</i> (p)	<i>z</i> (p)
Scaffolding	1.53 (.06)	1.54 (.06)	3.56 (<.001)	2.19 (.01)	0.97 (.17)	1.93 (.03)	2.59 (.01)	2.11 (.02)	2.65 (.004)
Parent Calm Authority	1.86 (.03)	1.48 (.07)	1.17 (.12)	2.71 (.003)	-0.62 (.27)	-0.49 (.31)	0.38 (.35)	-0.34 (.37)	1.53 (.06)
Fluency and Connectedness	2.12 (.02)	1.63 (.05)	1.60 (.06)	0.91 (.18)	0.79 (.21)	2.12 (.02)	1.68 (.05)	0.73 (.23)	1.69 (.05)
Routines and Rituals	1.25 (.11)	2.25 (.01)	1.27 (.10)	1.96 (.03)	-0.44 (.33)	1.36 (.09)	0.96 (.17)	0.45 (.33)	2.66 (.004)

Table 9*Hierarchical Regression and Change in Variance*

	Model		Variance		Change Statistics			
	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	Adj <i>R</i> ²	Δ Adj <i>R</i> ²	<i>df</i>	Δ <i>F</i>	Δ <i>F p</i>
Model 1								
1. Household Income	-0.10 (.07)	-1.46	.008	.001	.001	(2, 272)	1.11	.33
2. Maternal Ed	-0.27 (.11)	-2.36*	.028	.017	.017	(1, 271)	5.58	.02
3. Mother-Only	0.51 (.20)	2.53*	.051	.036	.020	(1, 270)	6.38	.01
Model 2								
1. Household Income	-0.10 (.07)	-1.46	.008	.001	.001	(2, 272)	1.11	.33
2. Mother-Only	0.52 (.20)	2.58**	.032	.021	.021	(1, 271)	6.65	.01
3. Maternal Ed	-0.26 (.11)	-2.31*	.051	.036	.036	(1, 270)	5.32	.02
Model 3								
1. Maternal Ed	-0.28 (.10)	-2.78**	.028	.021	.021	(2, 272)	3.92	.02
2. Mother-Only	0.46 (.19)	2.43*	.049	.038	.017	(1, 271)	5.88	.02
3. Household Income	0.06 (.08)	0.73	.051	.036	.019	(1, 270)	0.54	.46
Model 4								
1. Maternal Ed	-0.28 (.10)	-2.78**	.028	.021	.021	(2, 272)	3.92	.02
2. Household Income	-0.01 (.08)	-0.17	.028	.017	-.004	(1, 271)	0.03	.86
3. Mother-Only	0.51 (.20)	2.53*	.051	.036	.019	(1, 270)	6.38	.01
Model 5								
1. Mother-Only	0.55 (.19)	2.96**	.032	.024	.024	(2, 272)	4.43	.01
2. Maternal Ed	-0.22 (.10)	-2.21*	.049	.038	.014	(1, 271)	4.87	.03
3. Household Income	0.06 (.08)	0.73	.051	.036	.023	(1, 270)	0.54	.46
Model 6								
1. Mother-Only	0.55 (.19)	2.96**	.032	.024	.024	(2, 272)	4.43	.01
2. Household Income	-0.02 (.07)	-0.29	.032	.021	-.003	(1, 271)	0.08	.77
3. Maternal Ed	-0.26 (.11)	-2.31*	.051	.036	.040	(1, 270)	5.32	.02

Note. Significant *t* indicated by* for $p < .05$ and ** for $p < .01$.

Figure 1

Box and Whiskers Plots for Distribution of Active Direction by Household Income

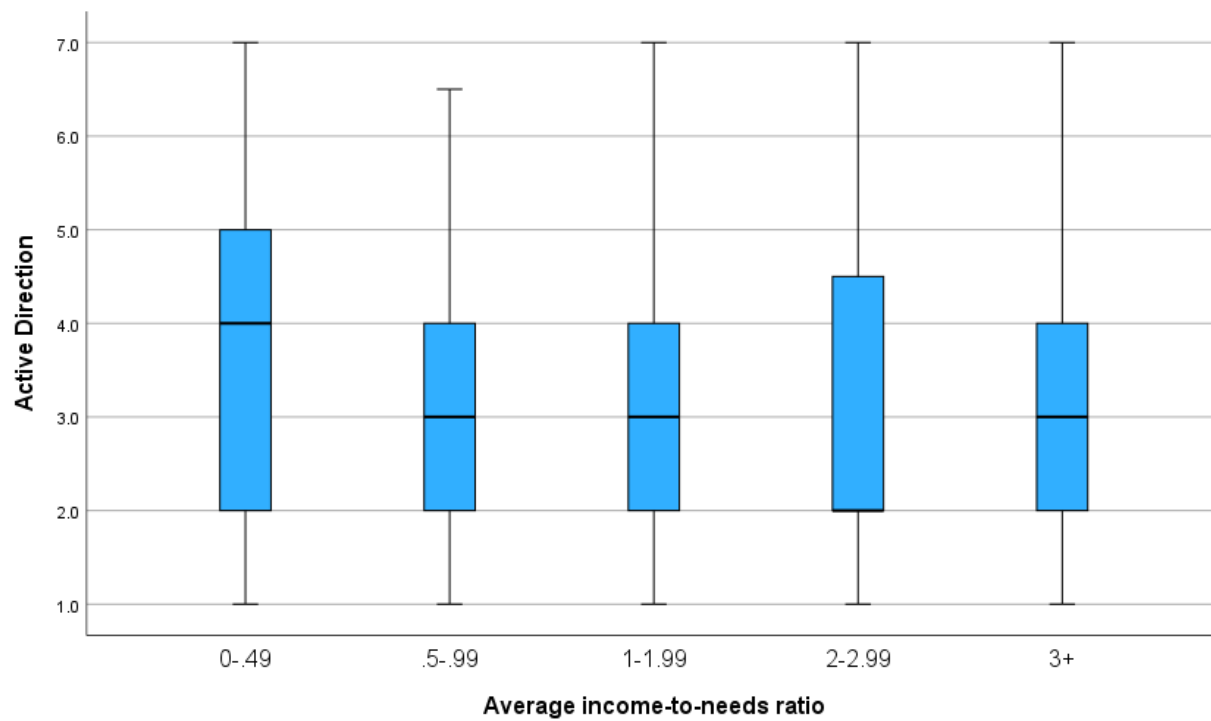


Figure 2

Box and Whiskers Plots for Distribution of Active Direction by Maternal Educational Attainment

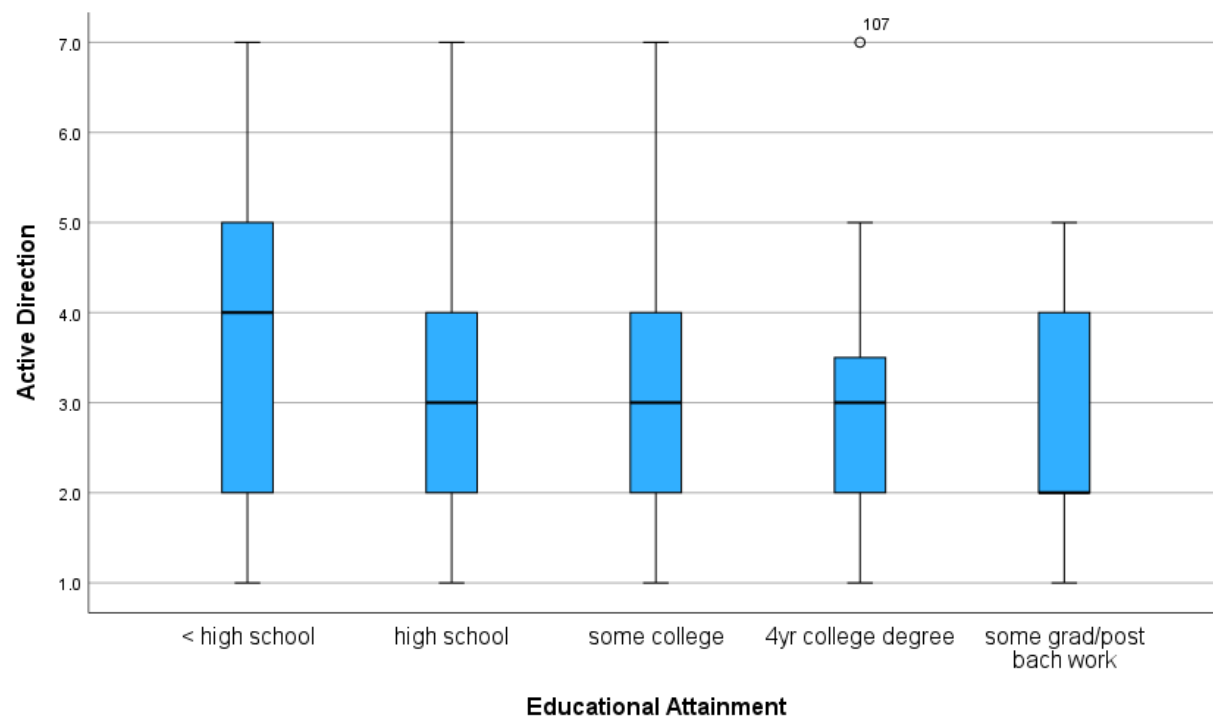


Figure 3

Box and Whiskers Plots for Distribution of Active Direction by Single-mother Household

