

Early Head Start 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Follow-Up Study  
Videotaped Maternal-Child Interaction  
(*Italics = Read Aloud*)

I. SCRIPT

**Activity 1: Disagreement Task**

*These cards contain different topics that kids and parents often disagree about, such as homework, chores, television and so on (**show cards, but don't give them yet**). I would like you to go through these cards and choose your **TOP THREE AREAS** of disagreement or difficulty. After you've found your top three, talk together about each one and try to resolve some of your disagreements. We'd like to hear from both of you. You may not have time to thoroughly discuss all three issues but you will have 8 **MINUTES** to try to make some progress. Do you have any questions?*

**Give cards to child.**

*I'll come back in when the time for this activity has ended. You can begin now.*

**Start timer for 8 minutes. Leave room after the first 30-60 seconds if it is apparent they understand the task. Stay within earshot if possible.**

**PROBE (if parent or child ends the task early):** *Can you talk a little more about one or more of your disagreements? You have some extra time.*

**When time is up, enter and say,**

*Time is up for this activity. [CHILD'S NAME], can you tell me how you solved some of your problems? (**stay in room and allow child to respond**)*

*Thank you both so much for your willingness to discuss these issues. All families have conflict and it is normal. We know it is sometimes hard to talk about conflict and appreciate you taking the time to do so. This next activity is one that many families find entertaining...*

**Activity 2: Stacrobats**

**Place the blue Stacrobat standing firmly in the black base and place it in between parent and child.**

*The next activity is called Stacrobats. The object of the game is to stack as many of these pieces onto the structure without letting them touch the table or fall. Let me demonstrate with the first piece.*

**Hold the second Stacrobat so that it is parallel to the table. Firmly attach him to the first one by placing the leghole through the curved head of the first piece. The second piece should still be parallel to the table, as though it is lying on its back with hands and feet outstretched.**

*Now, I'm going to give you 3 minutes to get as many Stacrobats on the structure as possible without having them fall over or touch the table. Do you have any questions? Ready, set, go. (start timer)*

**When time is up, enter and say,**

*Thank you so much. You guys did a great job.*

## II. MATERIALS

- One set of Family Issues cards (laminated, 3" by 5" cards with a single "family issue" statement on each card). The following topics should be written on the cards (15 in each set):

1. Friends or classmates
2. Playing computer, video games
3. TV
4. Respect for others
5. Honesty or lying
6. Manners
7. Sports or after-school activities
8. Eating habits
9. Getting up in the morning or to school on time
10. Chores
11. Pets
12. School, homework
13. Clean room
14. Personal appearance
15. Fighting with sisters or brothers

The set of cards should be shuffled between each mother-child dyad to prevent any set order of presentation of the cards.

- The Stacrobats game, made by Ravensburger (available from Amazon.com), which is a stacking game with plastic pieces shaped like elves that hook on to one another. There are 33 pieces and a base, but not all pieces are necessary so long as there is a minimum of about 20.

- Stopwatch, video camera, signboard, pen.

### III. VIDEOTAPING

- The activities should be conducted at a low table, approximately 24” by 36” and 36” high. Chairs should be provided for the mother and the child. The location of the camera should be indicated to the parent and child and they should be asked to orient themselves so that they can be seen by the camera. A clock should be present in the room, visible so that parent and child can check the time if they wish.
- Use the tripod to get a relatively straight angle view of the parent and child wherever they position themselves. Keep both the parent and child in view. Film enough in (visually) to be able to see facial expressions, but not so close that you miss gestures, body position changes, etc. Try to get both partners’ facial expressions simultaneously; this is best achieved if mother and child are situated at right angles from each other. Make sure the camera is turned on so that the interaction is filmed from the moment the parent and child begin the disagreement task.
- As part of the set-up procedures, film a sign on which you have written the subject ID and date. The sign should appear before the videotaped interaction.
- Labels for the tapes will be provided.

### IV. SCALES (all 7-point scales)

#### CHILD

#### 1. Positive Regard

Corresponds to:

- “Affection Towards Parent” from Maternal-Child Discussion Task in 5<sup>th</sup> grade wave of NICHD SECC.
- “Warmth/Support” from Maternal-Child Discussion Task in GBHDS.

This scale reflects whether there was a substantial period of positive regard and sharing of happy feelings of the child toward the mother during the discussion and the Stacrobats game. Although the child also might become angry or avoid the mother elsewhere in the session, a high rating still could be given if some portions of the session met the criteria of this scale. The criteria of this scale are evidences that the child approached and attempted to share positive affects with the mother. In addition, affection toward the mother includes the ability of the child to elicit positive expression from the mother such that a continued reciprocal interaction can be maintained. It is not the intensity of expression that is particularly relevant, but rather the frequency with which the child shares positive affect – looking at mother, making eye contact and smiling, sharing successes and other “approach” behavior affectively. At the lower end of the scale, the child may direct a few positive expressions to the mother and may elicit a positive expression in return. However, he or she does not sustain a “bout” of shared expressions with the mother.

#### 2. Negative Regard

Corresponds to:

- “Negativity towards Parent” from 3-Bag task at prior waves of the EHS Study.

- “Negativity” from Maternal-Child Discussion Task in 5<sup>th</sup> grade wave of NICHD SECC.
- “Hostility/Aggression” from Maternal-Child Discussion Task in GBHDS.

This scale assesses the overall level of externalizing negative affect demonstrated by the child. Externalizing negative affect can be anger, hostility, frustration, or oppositional defiance. Specific behaviors that demonstrate this can include: a) repeatedly disagreeing with mother in a disrespectful manner; b) using sarcasm or interrupting parent; c) using annoying tone of voice; d) bossy demands; e) name calling; f) throwing things; g) back-talk; h) goofing around in a noncompliance manner; i) using an angry tone of voice; j) hitting or kicking; k) glowering face; l) showing anger or resistant expression; m) being unreasonably demanding or critical; n) losing his/her temper; o) gloating. The lower end of this scale is characterized by an absence of negative affect behaviors; the child may express internalizing negative affect, positive affect, or little affect at all.

The degree to which the child negatively regards his/her mother should reflect the quality of the mother-child relationship in general, as well as any aggression and hostility evoked by the Disagreement Task (and possibly Stacrobats). The degree to which the child experiences a high level of negative arousal in response to feeling threatened by his/her mother may interfere with his/her executive functioning, which is responsible for inhibiting aggressive responses (Zillmann, 1988). Thus children who tend to show lower levels of negative regard may have fewer obstacles to the kind of self-regulating behavior needed to resolve socially threatening situations.

### 3. Perspective-Taking

Corresponds to:

- “Listener Responsiveness” from Maternal-Child Discussion Task in GBHDS.

This scale assesses the extent to which the child attunes to, acknowledges and legitimizes the mother’s perspective during the discussion. Specific behaviors include repeating back to the mother, nodding, or otherwise confirming what has just been said. The higher end of this scale is characterized by: a) the ability to paraphrase, rather than merely repeat, what the mother has said; b) statements acknowledging the legitimacy of the mother’s desires, needs, reasons, or motives (e.g., “I can see why you would want that”); c) an attempt to view the situation from the mother’s point of view.; d) an attempt to balance the competing interests of the mother and child, or to reframe the problem as one of non-competing interests. The child who scores high on this scale must demonstrate sensitivity to the mother’s needs, moods and reasoning. The child who scores low on this scale communicates only his/her own interests and does not stop to consider the mother’s interests.

Children's ability to take another person's perspective has been associated both cross-sectionally and longitudinally with decreased aggressive behavior (Miller & Eisenberg, 1988; Brooks-Gunn & Zahakavitch, 1989) and increased prosocial (helping and sharing) behavior (Eisenberg, 1991).

### 4. Engagement

Corresponds to:

- “Sustained Attention” from 3-Bag task at prior waves of the EHS Study.
- “Persistence” from Maternal-Child Discussion Task in 5<sup>th</sup> grade wave of NICHD SECC.
- “Passivity” (reverse-coded) from Maternal-Child Discussion Task in GBHDS.

This scale measures the extent to which the child is involved in the discussion and Stacrobats game. At the low extreme, the child shows no engagement, refuses to become involved, and either flees or spends her/his time in off-task activities. At the high end, the child is actively engaged with both the discussion and the game, and works either directly on her/his own or through the mother’s mediating suggestions (regardless of how good the child or mother’s skills really are). Engagement does not necessarily indicate enjoyment or lack of frustration. The child may be responsive or not to the mother’s directions as long as s/he shows engagement with the tasks. The observer should consider this rating to reflect the child’s engagement regardless of the degree to which mother was instrumental in fostering it.

This scale is expected to tap self-regulation, since some degree of effortful control will be required to sustain involvement in both tasks. The Disagreement Task has the potential to be frustrating and even embarrassing, particularly if the mother is controlling, didactic or punitive. The Stacrobats game requires planning and motor control in order to avoid toppling the structure. In addition, some children may find it difficult to sit still and concentrate on these tasks for 10 minutes without a break. Therefore, both tasks will require that the child exercise control over his/her impulses, emotion and attention.

## 5. Defiance

Corresponds to:

- “Defiance” from Maternal-Child Discussion Task in GBHDS.

This scale measures the extent to which the child actively disobeys or ignores the mother. It also measures the extent to which the child is unwilling to cooperate. At the high end of this scale, the child ignores his/her mother's directives and/or engages in activities contrary to the mother's requests. It is important to consider nonverbal communication such as facial expression, body posture and actions (e.g., simply walking away), verbal communication (e.g., "No!"), and emotional expressions (e.g., yelling, inappropriate laughter, eye-rolling). At the low extreme of the scale, the child does not display any instances of unwillingness to comply with the mother's requests. In between the two scale poles, the score is determined by the frequency and intensity of defiant behaviors. Ignoring requests, ignoring directives, actively engaging in prohibited activities, showing reluctance to comply, making negative statements, and requiring multiple reminders should all be considered indications of defiance.

Defiance may reflect oppositional behavior, which was found by Nagin and Tremblay (1999) to be specifically predictive of theft rather than physical aggression. In addition, defiance aimed at the mother is likely to reflect insecure attachment, which in turn places the child at increased risk of antisocial behavior (van Ijzendoorn, 1997).

## 6. Use of Reasoning

Corresponds to:

- “Justification” from Laible & Thompson, 2002

This scale assesses the child's use of reasoning to justify her position on one or more of the topics of disagreement during the discussion task. The use of reasoning is a strategy for putting an end to the conflict caused by the disagreement by *resolving* the conflict through persuasion. To change the mother's mind, the child explains the rationale behind his/her position on the topic of disagreement. For example, a child could justify his position on bedtime as a source of disagreement by arguing that an older sibling was allowed to have the desired bedtime when s/he was his/her age. As another example, in discussing how the child treats his/her younger sibling, the child could say that the mother is unaware of what the younger sibling does to provoke him/her.

When facing social problems, aggressive children and youth are deficient at problem definition, goal selection, information seeking, prediction of consequences and generation of multiple solutions (Dodge, 1980; Richard & Dodge, 1982; Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 1990; Slaby & Guerra, 1988; Guerra & Slaby, 1990). All of these skills are marshaled in the service of reasoning, a strategy children will draw on to varying degrees with their mothers during the Disagreement Task. The high-scoring child will be able to explain his/her position on an issue through the use of logic and clarification. Although this skill is important in the context of the family, a child who reasons with his/her mother should be more likely to do so with peers, given the continuity in children's conflict resolution skills with parents and peers (Putallaz, 1987).

## MOTHER

### 1. Positive Regard

Corresponds to:

- “Positive Regard” from 3-Bag task at prior waves of the EHS Study.
- “Supportive Presence” from Maternal-Child Discussion Task in 5<sup>th</sup> grade wave of NICHD SECC.
- “Warmth/Support” from Maternal-Child Discussion Task in GBHDS.

A mother scoring high on this scale expresses positive regard and emotional support to the child. She should show general involvement in the interaction and affirm the child as a person. A mother scoring low on this scale fails to provide supportive cues; she might be passive, uninvolved, aloof, or otherwise unavailable to the child. Such a mother also might give observers the impression that she is more concerned about her own adequacy rather than concerned about the child's emotional needs. A potential difficulty in scoring this scale is the need to discount messages of parents that seemingly are supportive in verbal content but are contradicted by other aspects of the communication; signs of such questionable support are improper timing of support, mismatch of verbal and bodily cues, and failure to have the child's attention in delivering the message.

The parenting literature shows that authoritative parenting – the combination of warmth, responsiveness, involvement, autonomy granting, inductive discipline, and expectations of

maturity – is associated with greater prosocial behavior and lower antisocial behavior in children and adolescents (Baumrind, 1967; Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Kochanska, 1991; Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991). With respect to positive regard in particular, Putallaz (1987) found that more popular first graders had mothers who demonstrated greater positive affect with them in an observed interaction.

## 2. Negative Regard

Corresponds to:

- “Negative Regard” from 3-Bag task at prior waves of the EHS Study.
- “Hostility” from Maternal-Child Discussion Task in 5<sup>th</sup> grade wave of NICHD SECC.
- “Hostility/Aggression” from Maternal-Child Discussion Task in GBHDS.

This scale reflects the mother’s expression of anger, discounting or rejecting of the child or the child’s ideas. A mother scoring high on this scale would clearly and overtly reject the child, blame her/him for mistakes, and otherwise make explicit the message that she does not support the child emotionally. A rejecting mother may also show some supportive presence (and the inconsistency of her behavior would be revealed by these two scores). Given the low frequency and the clinical relevance of rejecting one’s child during a videotaped session, any events which are clearly hostile should be weighted strongly in this score. A mother scoring low on this scale may or may not be supportive, but she does not blame or reject the child.

The rationale for measuring the mother’s positive regard also applies to measuring her negative regard. In addition, Hastings and colleagues (Hastings, Zahn-Wexler, Robinson, Usher, & Bridges, 2000) found that among 5-year-old children, those whose mother scored higher on negative affect scored lower on a scale of interpersonal responsibility two years later.

## 3. Perspective-Taking

Corresponds to:

- “Sensitivity” from 3-Bag task at prior waves of the EHS Study.
- “Respect for Child’s Autonomy” from Maternal-Child Discussion Task in 5<sup>th</sup> grade wave of NICHD SECC.
- “Listener Responsiveness” from Maternal-Child Discussion Task in GBHDS.

This scale assesses the extent to which the mother attunes to, acknowledges and legitimizes the child’s perspective during the discussion. Specific behaviors include repeating back to the child, nodding, or otherwise confirming what has just been said. The higher end of this scale is characterized by: a) the ability to paraphrase, rather than merely repeat, what the child has said; b) statements acknowledging the legitimacy of the child’s desires, needs, reasons, or motives (e.g., “I can see why you would want that”); c) an attempt to view the situation from the child’s point of view; d) an attempt to balance the competing interests of the mother and child, or to reframe the problem as one of non-competing interests. The mother who scores high on this scale must demonstrate sensitivity to the child’s needs, moods and reasoning. The mother who scores low on this scale communicates only his/her own interests and does not stop to consider the child’s interests.

The mother's ability to take the child's perspective should reflect her sensitivity to the child's needs and emotions, and a willingness to validate the child's individuality. Mothers' use of perspective-taking during discipline encounters (discussing the effects of their child's actions on others) is an instantiation of inductive reasoning, one of the features of authoritative parenting described above, and has been found to result in greater internalization of parental values among children (Hoffman, 1983).

#### 4. Engagement

Corresponds to:

- “Detachment” from 3-Bag task at prior waves of the EHS Study.
- “Passivity” from Maternal-Child Discussion Task in GBHDS.

This scale measures the extent to which the mother gets involved in the discussion and Stacrobats game. At the low extreme, the mother shows no engagement, refuses to become involved, leaves or spends her time in off-task activities. With the discussion task, the mother would not participate in selecting the topics for discussion, but would merely observe the child doing so. A very unengaged mother may avoid discussion of the topics by claiming that none of the topics are sources of disagreement, failing to state her opinion or doing so quietly, hesitantly and without making eye contact with the child. A very unengaged mother may mumble, smile or laugh inappropriately when the child expresses hostility or non-compliance. A very unengaged mother may refuse to play Stacrobats because she does not like to play games or says she cannot understand the rules. At the high end, the mother is actively engaged with both the discussion and the game. She participates in selection of the topics for disagreement and in the discussion itself. She is willing to learn how to play Stacrobats and becomes engaged in the game with her child.

Engagement corresponds to the detachment scale used in previous waves, which may be an indication of neglect. Adolescents whose parents are neglectful are at particularly pronounced risk of antisocial behavior (Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1994).

#### 5. Dominance

Corresponds to:

- “Intrusiveness” from 3-Bag task at prior waves of the EHS Study.
- “Dominance” from Maternal-Child Discussion Task in GBHDS.

This scale assesses the mother's attempt to dominate or control the discussion and the Stacrobats task. Dominant behaviors include lecturing the child, criticizing the child, interrupting the child, changing the subject, and failing to respond to the child's questions, wishes or comments. Other strategies include changing the subject, going on to the next topic, opting out of the activity or simply ending the task. A highly dominant mother usually automatically takes the Family Issues cards out of the child's hands at the beginning of the discussion task. She may unilaterally decide that a topic is worth considering as one of the top 3 areas of disagreement even when the child says it is not. She may also be unable to accept directions or tips from the child on how to stack pieces during the Stacrobats game. At the low end of this scale, the mother allows the child to direct the flow and pace of the discussion task. She accepts that a topic is an area of disagreement if the child



says it is. During the discussion task, she lets the child speak freely until s/he feels s/he has been heard. During Stacrobats, she plays as an equal partner with the child rather than trying to control the action by taking the pieces out of the child's hand, undoing the child's last move, making up rules or directing the child how to play.

Dominance is an age-appropriate version of the Intrusiveness scale used in past waves, which assessed the degree to which the mother controlled the child's play. Here, this scale will reflect the degree to which the mother controls the discussion by grabbing the cards out of the child's hands, choosing the topics for discussion unilaterally, changing the subject, etc. Overcontrolling behavior is an authoritarian parenting technique that conveys mistrust in the child's judgment and thus fails to promote independent thought and behavior. In Putallaz's (1987) study cited above, children who were less popular had mothers who displayed more controlling behavior during an observed interaction task.

## 6. Use of Reasoning

Corresponds to:

- “Justification” from Laible & Thompson, 2002

This scale assesses the mother's use of reasoning to justify her position on one or more of the topics of disagreement during the discussion task. The use of reasoning is a strategy for putting an end to the conflict caused by the disagreement by *resolving* the conflict through persuasion. To change the child's mind, the mother explains the rationale behind her position on the topic of disagreement. For example, a mother could justify her position on bedtime as a source of disagreement by explaining that when the child stays up after 9 pm s/he has a hard time getting up in time for school in the morning. As another example, in discussing how the child treats his/her younger sibling, the mother could say she has concerns about both children's safety when they wrestle or fist fight.

Since maternal use of reasoning is associated with prosocial behavior in children, it may be key to understanding whether the program group is at lowered risk of adolescent antisocial behavior. With a sample of children aged 6-13, FitzGerald and White (2003) found that mothers who used reasoning about others' feelings (i.e., perspective-taking) to discipline their children had children who themselves demonstrated greater perspective-taking, which was in turn associated with more prosocial behavior and less aggression. With a sample of 6th and 7th graders, Krevans and Gibbs (1996) found that children whose parents used inductive reasoning rather than power-assertive discipline displayed more prosocial behaviors. However, these two studies were cross-sectional and thus need replication.

## 7. Use of Coercion

Corresponds to:

- “Aggravation” from Laible & Thompson, 2002

This scale assesses the mother's use of coercion, or force, to support her position on one or more of the topics of disagreement during the discussion task. The use of coercion is a strategy for putting an end to the conflict caused by the disagreement by merely cutting it off through the exercise of parental authority. The mother scoring high on this scale reminds the child that she is the mother

and that the child is obliged to obey her. At the highest extreme, the mother uses physical force to subdue the child. More commonly used coercive techniques include: a) assertions of power (e.g., "Because I'm the mother, that's why"; b) threats of violence; c) threats of withholding (e.g., "If you don't practice violin I'm going to take your Game Boy away"); d) simple prohibitions and commands (e.g., "You are not allowed to play with Jimmy anymore"; e) indications of unwillingness to listen (e.g., "That's the end of this discussion. We're done talking about this.").

This scale is meant to capture power-assertive techniques consistent with the authoritarian parenting typology (Baumrind, 1967). Research has demonstrated that parents who use such strategies during conflicts with their children generally fail to imbue their children with their stated values. According to Hoffman (1983), forceful discipline induces anxiety and fear in children that interferes with their ability to process the underlying message. Moreover, children who are forced to comply with their parents' wishes are likely to attribute that compliance to their parents' use of power rather than internal factors such as their own beliefs and values.

## DYAD

### 1. Mutuality

Corresponds to:

- "Mutuality" from 3-Bag task at prior waves of the EHS Study.
- "Felt Security/Affective Mutuality" from Maternal-Child Discussion Task in 5<sup>th</sup> grade wave of NICHD SECC.

This scale assesses the level of emotion exchanged and reciprocated between mother and child during the discussion and the Stacrobats game. The high-scoring dyad demonstrates synchrony between the interests, energy levels and affective states of the mother and child. The mood is harmonious. The mother and child enjoy each other's company. There is an emphasis on joint attention, or mutual focus. The high end of the scale is characterized by a mother and child working toward a common goal who are responsive to each other's cues and who share the same affect. Both parties should demonstrate a genuine concern and positive regard for one another. The low end of the scale is characterized by a mother and child who are engaged in different or parallel activities, strive towards different goals, make little eye contact, demonstrate different emotional states, and generally fail to reflect each other's emotions back to one another. Note that energy or activity level is not a determining factor in this scale. For example, both a high-energy dyad and a relatively calm dyad could be given high scores as long as they seem "in sync" throughout the interaction. If the energy level of the dyad seems mismatched, however (e.g., a calm child with an excited parent), the dyad would not be considered synchronous.

Criss, Shaw and Ingoldsby (2003) observed 10-year-old boys and their mothers during a disagreement task nearly identical to ours. Each dyad's synchrony was rated according to its degree of reciprocity, give and take, harmony and joint attention. Results showed an association between this synchrony and the aggressiveness of the child's responses to a problem-solving task, even after accounting for the child's antisocial behavior at age 8. Among younger children, Kochanska has shown that children whose relationship with their mother is characterized by cooperation and mutual positive affect are more likely to internalize prosocial norms (Kochanska, 1997; Kochanska & Murray, 2000).

## 2. Competitiveness

This scale assesses the degree to which the mother and child turn Stacrobats into a competitive game. Examples of competitive behaviors include: a) voluntarily choosing colors; b) counting how many pieces each player has put on; c) trying to distract or intimidate the other player in the hope of making them topple the structure; d) criticizing the other player's performance; e) trying to invoke rules that would disqualify the other player; f) gloating as the winner or expressing shame as the loser at the conclusion of the game; g) appearing anxious because of a serious desire to win. Examples of non-competitive behaviors include: a) ignoring the colors of the pieces; b) ignoring turn-taking rules; c) providing advice or guidance to each other on the best possible moves; d) praising the other player's performance; e) failure to identify a winner or loser at the end of the game; f) expressing amusement rather than disappointment or frustration when the structure topples over. The overall level of competitiveness between the dyad, by itself or in combination with other factors such as parent negative regard, may serve as a risk factor for child aggression or antisocial behavior.

Key:

EHS = Early Head Start Study

NICHD = NICHD Study of Early Child Care, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade wave

GBHDS = Girls and Boys Health and Development Study

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