Mommy, Will You Read to Me? Cultural Effects on Story Time Between Mothers and Infants

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INTRODUCTION

Cultural Differences in Black and White Mothers

Parenting Strategies → Higher school GPA associated with authoritative parenting for white children[4] and authoritarian parenting for black children[5]

Socialization Priorities → Racial socialization is an important aspect of child-rearing for black parents[6], and may start as early as 12 months[1]

Narrative Styles → Black women are more likely than white women to discuss values while storytelling[3]

Story time provides an age appropriate medium for parents to introduce language and communicate values to children.[2]

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Do black and white mothers differ in the narrative themes they communicate during a story time task?
      a) Do themes vary based on the infant's age?

PARTICIPANTS

N = 75 mother-infant dyads from the Southeastern US

- Black mothers (*N*= 26), White mothers (*N*= 49)
- Mothers' average education & income:
    o 4 year degree, $50,000-$59,000
- Infants between 10-22 months old
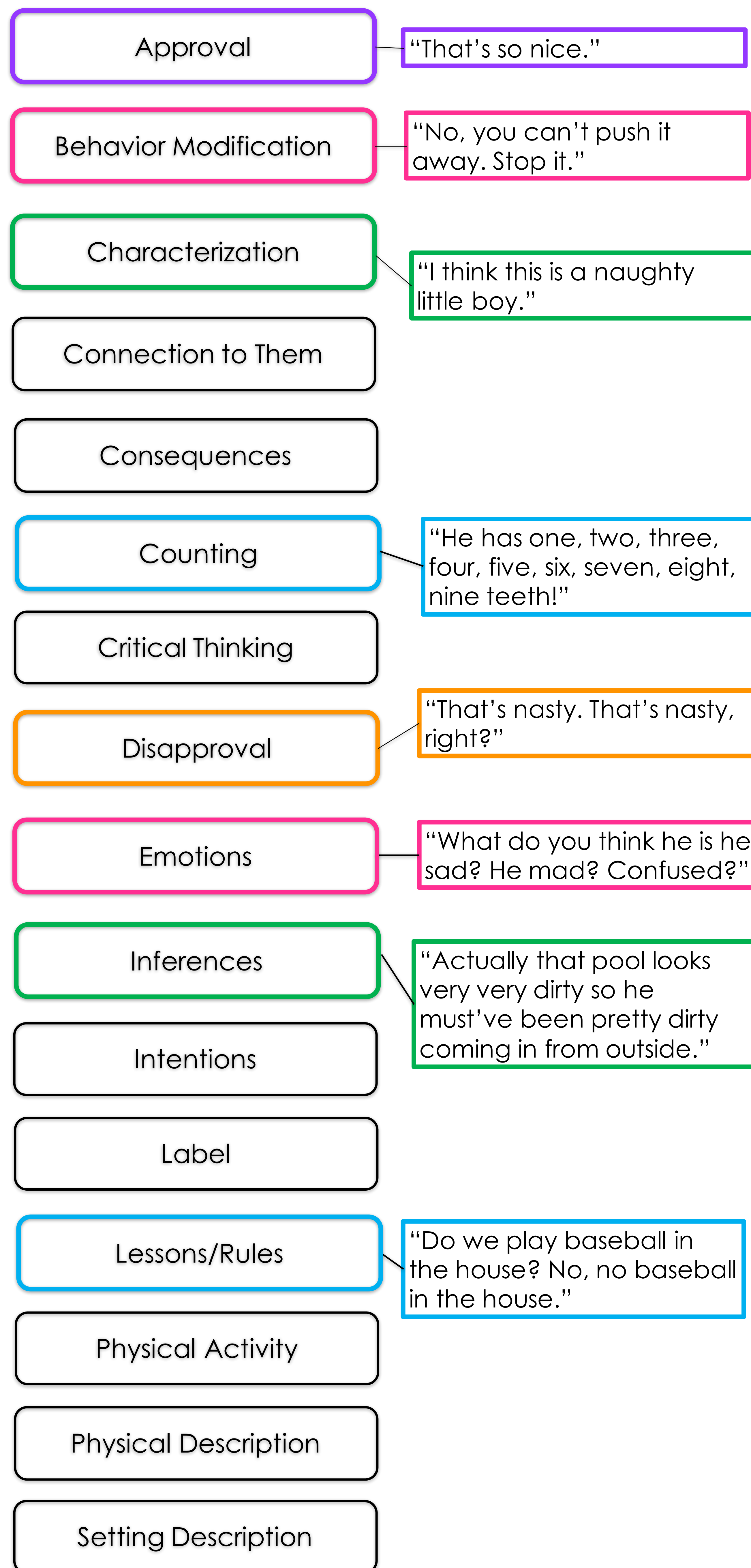   o Male (*N*= 40), Female (*N*= 35)

METHODS

Participants read a wordless version of *No, David!*

- Interactions were recorded and transcribed
- Coding themes developed through focus survey and open coding
- Coding by three raters – interrater reliability of 80%
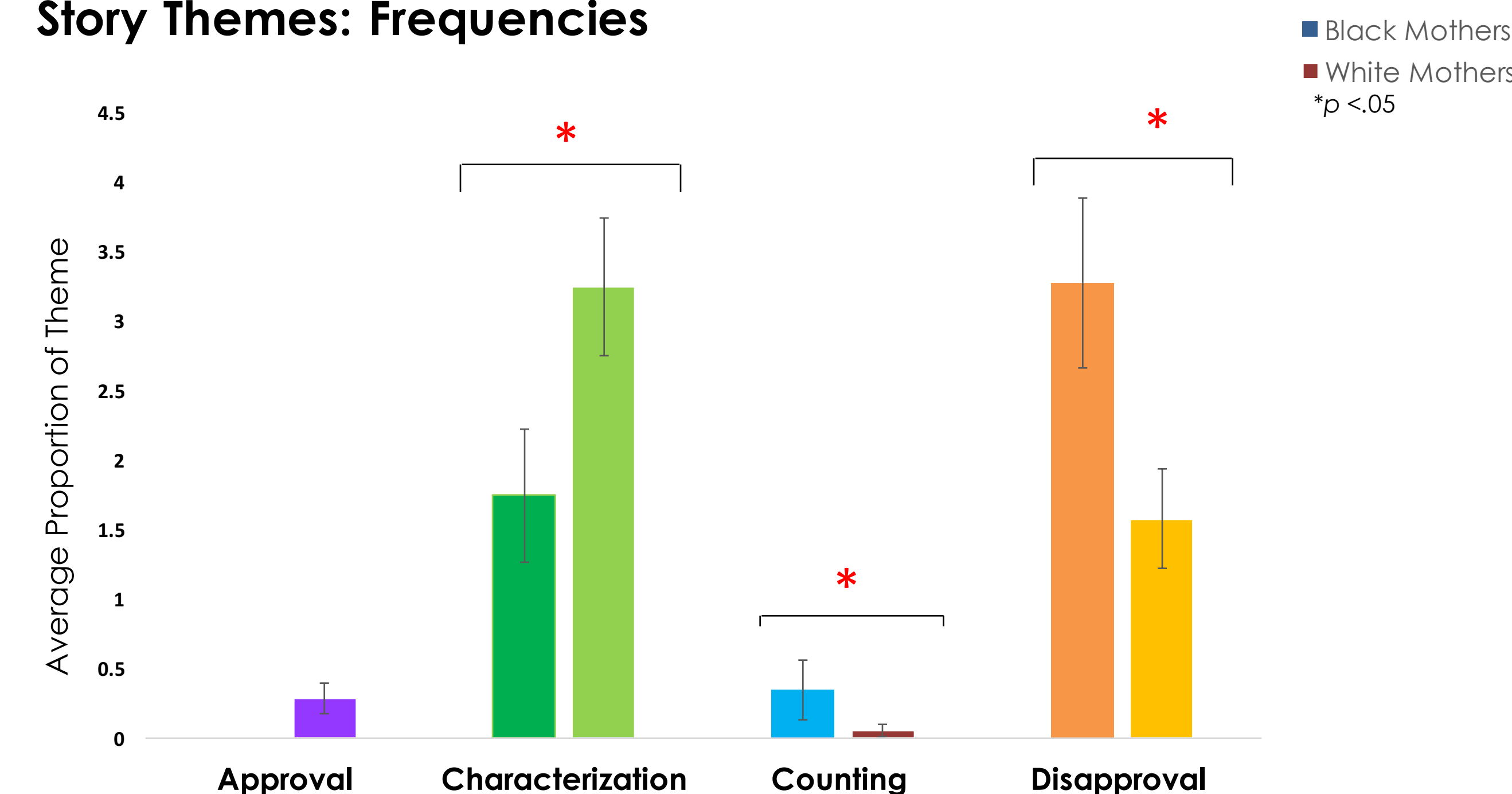- Exploratory factor analyses and ANOVAs of story time interactions
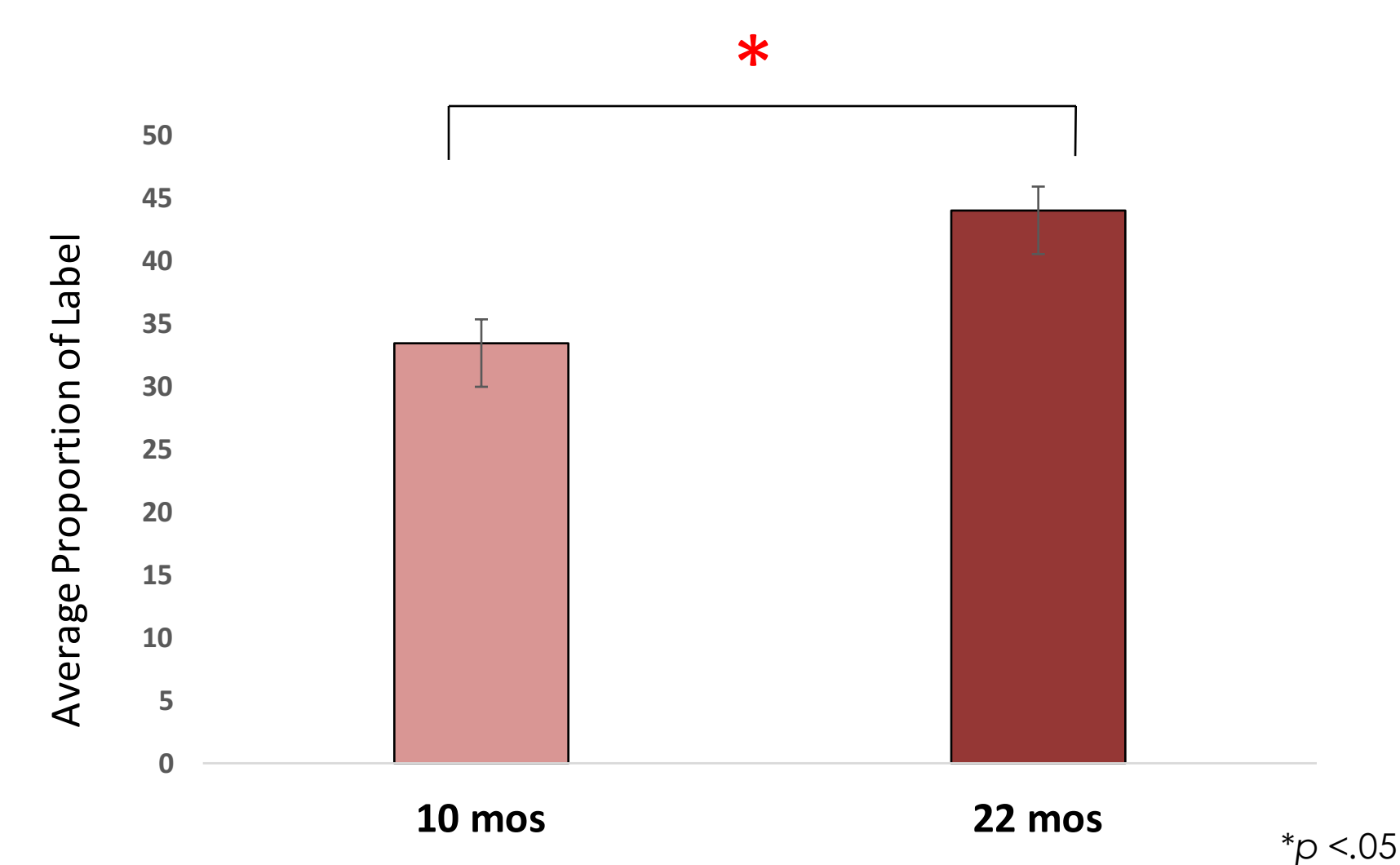
CODING SCHEME

Approval	"That's so nice."
Behavior Modification	"No, you can't push it away. Stop it."
Characterization	"I think this is a naughty little boy."
Connection to Them	
Consequences	
Counting	"He has one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine teeth!"
Critical Thinking	
Disapproval	"That's nasty. That's nasty, right?"
Emotions	"What do you think he is he sad? He mad? Confused?"
Inferences	"Actually that pool looks very very dirty so he must've been pretty dirty coming in from outside."
Intentions	
Label	
Lessons/Rules	"Do we play baseball in the house? No, no baseball in the house."
Physical Activity	
Physical Description	
Setting Description	

RESULTS

Story Themes: Frequencies

- White mothers (*M* = 0.29, *SD* = 0.78) used significantly more *Approval* than black mothers (*M* = 0, *SD* = 0, *p* = .07), and significantly more *Characterization* (*M* = 3.25, *SD* = 3.40) than black mothers (*M* = 1.75, *SD* = 2.43, *p* < .05).
- Black mothers (*M* = 0.35, *SD* = 1.05) used significantly more *Counting* than white mothers (*M* = 0.06, *SD* = 0.31, *p* < .05), and significantly more *Disapproval* (*M* = 3.28, *SD* = 3.13) than white mothers (*M* = 1.58, *SD* = 2.51, *p* < .05).

- Mothers of 22 month old infants (*M* = 44.07, *SD* = 13.4 3) used *Label* significantly more than mothers of 10 month old infants (*M* = 33.46, SD = 9.93, p < .05).

DISCUSSION

- Black mothers used more critical behavioral themes during story time, likely due to the responsibility of racial socialization.
- Important to understand how mothers use culture-specific approaches to educate/communicate relevant messages; especially for development of programs to improve literacy, achievement, and prosocial outcomes.

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