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Exploring the Role of Race in How Children Conceptualize Parental Discipline

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## Abstract

### Exploring the Role of Race in How Children Conceptualize Parental Discipline

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This study aims to explore the role of race in how children conceptualize parental discipline. Prior literature in the field of child studies suggests that parental disciplinary strategies play a role in child success and that differences in parental discipline vary by race. Due to the fact that most research in this field is conducted on the parents of White middle-class children, it is important to gain perspectives from two fundamentally understudied populations: children and children *of color*, specifically. For the study, I surveyed a racially diverse sample of 100 college students aged from 18 to 24 years and interviewed 20 of the students from this sample. In the survey, participants answered questions about their childhood experiences with their caregivers' disciplinary strategies. Through the interviewing process, participants received the opportunity to provide a more in-depth perspective on how they conceptualize their parents' discipline. Results from the surveys and interviews were analyzed and coded by the co-PI and principal investigator of this study. Findings obtained from the qualitative and quantitative data of this study suggest that race plays a mediating role in influencing how children of different racial backgrounds attributed their parents' race as an external factor influencing discipline. However, results did not show a mediating effect of race on other types of attributions related to other external factors, such as religion or socioeconomic status. This finding sheds more light on the way that race and discipline interact with each other in family environments and child-rearing strategies.

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## **Introduction**

This research aims to investigate the role of race in the way that children conceptualize parental discipline. Given that discipline has been shown to be a critical component of parenting that is linked as an indicator of children's success in the forms of academic performance, mental well-being, social adjustment, and delinquency, further research in the field of child studies is paramount. Existing studies also indicate notable racial variations in parenting philosophies. However, there is a dearth of research conducted from the child's viewpoint that demonstrates how children respond to and make sense of their parents' disciplinary approaches. Furthermore, there is a significant lack of research that focuses on understanding how race influences these children's views and perceptions of their parents' discipline. Much of the previous literature incorporates the perspectives of white, middle-class parents; thus, there is an essential need for studies on parental discipline that incorporate a racially diverse range of children's perspectives. By examining children's perspectives on parental discipline across various racial backgrounds, this research has the potential to inform policies and programs aimed at reducing racial disparities in child outcomes and enhancing parent-child relationships within diverse racial groups. The findings from this study will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the role of race in shaping parent-child dynamics, paving the way for more effective interventions and support mechanisms for families across different racial contexts. By addressing this fundamental gap in child-parenting literature, this study will provide fresh and valuable insights on how race intersects with parenting and child development.



## **Background and Research Gaps**

In the field of child studies, a substantial body of research has been dedicated to exploring how race and ethnicity relate to parenting practices. Before delving into why it is important to investigate the relationship between race and parenting practices, however, it is crucial to first familiarize ourselves with various styles of parental discipline that exist and to understand why parental discipline is a significant topic for research.

### *Styles of parental discipline*

When referring to parental “discipline,” I utilize Barbara Howard’s definition of discipline: parental strategies that are designed “...to allow the child to fit into the real world happily and effectively” (1991:1352). In my survey, I reword this as discipline meaning: “a punishment or act used to correct behavior.”

To describe the type of discipline each respondent experienced as a child, I utilize Diana Baumrind’s conceptualizations of the three different “styles” of parental discipline: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive (1971:22-24).

Authoritarian parenting is characterized by having a high level of demandingness and a low level of responsiveness. An authoritarian parent “...values obedience as a virtue and favors punitive, forceful measures to curb self-will at points where the child's actions or beliefs conflict with what [she] thinks is right conduct” (1971:22). Such parents expect obedience and conformity; are strict and controlling; and often use punishment as a method for discipline. I describe this disciplinary style as “strict” in the survey.

Authoritative parenting is characterized by having high levels of both responsiveness and demandingness. An authoritative parent “...values both expressive and instrumental attributes,

both autonomous self-will and disciplined conformity. Therefore, [she] exerts firm control at points of parent-child divergence, but does not hem the child in with restrictions. [She] recognizes her own special rights as an adult, but also the child's individual interests and special ways" (1971:22). Such parents set reasonable expectations for their child's behavior; are nurturing and supportive; and provide guidance and direction for their child, while also allowing for their child's independence and autonomy. I describe this disciplinary style as "balanced" in the survey.

Permissive parenting is characterized by having a high level of responsiveness and a low level of demandingness. A permissive parent "...makes few demands for household responsibility and orderly behavior. [She] presents [herself] to the child as a resource for [him] to use as [he] wishes, not as an active agent responsible for shaping or altering his ongoing or future behavior. [She] allows the child to regulate [his] own activities as much as possible, avoids the exercise of control, and does not encourage [him] to obey externally-defined standards" (1971:23). Such parents are more lenient in enforcing rules for their child and often avoid confrontation; are nurturing and indulgent; and often set few rules or expectations for their child, allowing them to make their own decisions without much guidance. I describe this disciplinary style as "lenient" in the survey.

#### *Outcomes associated with different styles of parental discipline*

A pivotal study by Steinberg et al. (1992:1266) sheds light on the impact of parenting practices on adolescent outcomes. Through self-reported questionnaire data collected from an ethnically and economically heterogeneous sample of approximately 6,400 American adolescents aged 14-18 years, the researchers found that authoritative parenting styles lead to

higher school performance and stronger school engagement than non-authoritative parenting styles. When parents employ authoritative practices, such as higher levels of acceptance, supervision, and granting of psychological autonomy, their children tend to exhibit higher grade-point averages, lower school misconduct, and a higher valuing of and commitment to school.

Despite the fact that this study was conducted in 1992, its findings remain consistent with more recent research. Cooper et al. (2017:966), after reviewing eight research studies conducted in the 2000s, found that dysfunctional discipline practices have been “linked with a variety of negative outcomes in children and is positively correlated with parent-reported stress.” In the study, dysfunctional discipline constitutes a variety of disciplinary actions or behaviors that are undesirable or harmful to children’s development; three well-known types of dysfunctional discipline include laxness, overreactivity, and hostility. Negative outcomes associated with this disciplinary style include poorer mental health and well-being, increased aggression, poorer academic and cognitive functioning, and problems with conduct.

A separate literature review by Amato and Fowler (2002:703) also demonstrates the importance of effective parenting behaviors. The authors found that “the optimal combination of parental behavior involves a high level of support, a high level of monitoring, and the avoidance of harsh punishment.” This combination often results in “higher school grades, fewer behavior problems, less substance use, better mental health, greater social competence, and more positive self-concepts” (703). Having examined the evidence supporting the claim that parenting strategies have a direct link to child outcomes and success, we can go a step further and investigate the relationship between parenting strategies and *race*.

### *Racial differences in disciplinary strategies*

From their literature review, Cooper et al. (2017:966) found notable racial and ethnic differences in parenting strategies. They aimed to examine the relationship between parent-reported stress, parental attributions of children's behavior, and dysfunctional discipline -- specifically looking at how these factors vary by race. After surveying a sample of 234 low-income, racially/ethnically diverse adult caregivers, they found that race/ethnicity functioned as a differential moderator in the context of dysfunctional discipline. Stress was positively associated with overreactivity and hostility (dysfunctional discipline practices), consistent with previous research.

The study's mediational analyses suggested that increased caregiver stress is linked to increased negative attributions of their child's behavior, as well as higher rates of dysfunctional discipline practices. These findings held true across race/ethnicity and align with previous research. The study found that race/ethnicity functioned as a differential moderator; racial/ethnic groups differed in their relation among attributions and dysfunctional discipline. Dysfunctional discipline was explained by blaming/intentional attributions in African Americans and by both stable *and* blaming attributions in Caucasians.

Similar to Cooper et al., Silveira et al. (2020:663)'s study also aimed to "examine whether the relationship between ethnicity and parental discipline practices is consistent across contexts." Their study revealed that Black parents in the United States were more likely to employ harsh physical discipline, while ethnic minorities in the United Kingdom were more likely to use harsher physical discipline than White parents. Conversely, "Hispanic parents and parents from a general Other ethnic category were less likely to use harsh verbal discipline in the

United States than White parents are, and Black and Asian parents were less likely than White parents to use harsh verbal discipline in the United Kingdom” (665).

Across both countries, they found that White parents were more likely than other ethnic groups to use timeout as a disciplinary measure. In the UK, Black and Asian parents were less likely to discuss with children. In the US, White and Asian parents were less likely to engage in discussions with their children as discipline -- whereas Hispanic parents had higher odds of engaging in discussion. These findings led the authors to conclude that “ethnic minority parents are likely resorting to harsh physical parenting practices to socialize their children into conforming to social norms that may protect them from negative repercussions in society” (668).

The results of the study “suggest that ethnic differences exist across disciplinary strategies and that there are important, persistent patterns across social contexts” (668). Silveira et al. (2020) also noted a finding consistent with other research, indicating that parents of all ethnic backgrounds "are more likely to use harsh disciplinary techniques when they are more economically marginalized and experience higher levels of stress" (658). The authors suggested that this could be attributed to a lack of access to "human and social capital that might encourage more positive parenting practices" (658).

Furthermore, the study highlighted that the use of harsh discipline was found to be more prevalent amongst less educated parents, indicating a potential lack of awareness regarding the harmful consequences of such techniques and the existence of alternative, more effective disciplinary methods. Importantly, this article supports the claim that differences in parenting strategies by race/ethnicity are evident.

Despite the substantial body of research that indicates that there *is* a direct relationship between parenting practices and race, it is important to acknowledge an alternative perspective in

the literature. Amato and Fowler (2002:703) present an opposing view, suggesting that “a common core of parental behaviors is associated with positive child outcomes, irrespective of race, ethnicity, family structure, or class.”

To investigate this further, Amato and Fowler (2002:712) utilized parent self-reported survey data from the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH) to assess whether the dimensions of effective parenting identified in prior research mainly benefit children from relatively advantaged families (White, two-parent; middle-class families) or if these benefits extend to children in diverse families defined by race, ethnicity, family structure, and socioeconomic status.

Their findings, with a few exceptions, indicated that parenting practices did not significantly interact with parents' race, ethnicity, family structure, education, income, or gender in predicting child outcomes. A core of common parenting practices, such as warmth and supportiveness, appeared to be linked with positive outcomes for children across diverse family contexts. These results align with prior literature indicating that children tend to perform best when parents exhibit supportive behaviors and refrain from harsh punishment, regardless of factors such as race, socioeconomic status, gender, family structure, or poverty status. Notably, the use of harsh punishment was found to be "positively associated with adjustment, negatively associated with grades, and positively associated with behavior problems" (720).

Interestingly, the authors observed that these parental practices did not vary significantly based on factors such as educational background, race, marital status, or gender. These results suggest that the association between parenting practices and children's functioning does not appear to vary significantly with race or ethnicity. This mixed collection of findings underscores

the necessity for research that delves into the child's perspective, as many of these studies have relied on data reported by parents, which may introduce biases or self-justifications.

Some studies even suggest that the outcomes of different parenting styles vary across family contexts; in one large-scale study (Steinberg 2004:1058), for example, it was found that “authoritative parenting was positively associated with school grades among White and Latino adolescents but not among Asian or African American adolescents.” This suggests that it is not just parenting that affects child outcomes -- but also how the children respond to that parenting, which can be different for children of different racial groups.

Additionally, Amato and Fowler's literature reviews highlight a prevailing trend where the majority of studies in child studies literature have predominantly focused on samples of White, two-parent, middle-class families -- a sentiment echoed by Navarro-Cruz et al. (2021). This observation provides further justification to why it is important to study the effect (if any) that race has on how children conceptualize parental discipline. In my research, I hope to address this limitation in our understanding of discipline choices by other cultural groups by seeking perspectives from both *multiracial* and *child* perspectives in the field -- thereby offering a more comprehensive and nuanced examination of discipline choices within diverse cultural contexts.

I hope to address this tension in the literature with my research by offering a unique and essential perspective that can help answer this question. While the debate on whether there exist differences in parenting strategies based on race remains unresolved, the insights from the aforementioned studies prompt me to consider how children of diverse racial backgrounds, experiencing varied parenting styles, may respond differently to these strategies. These studies, however, predominantly focused on examining differential parenting strategies from the parent's perspective. Therefore, it becomes crucial to investigate how children interpret and understand

their parents' behaviors. Through conducting interviews, I will be able to hear from the perspectives of children themselves to determine if children's reception to their parents' disciplinary practices vary by race. After all, it is not the parenting strategies alone that automatically result in these behaviors -- it also involves how children absorb and make sense of these parenting strategies, which subsequently influences their behaviors. If children are subjected to dysfunctional forms of discipline, it raises pertinent questions: Do they empathize with their parents' stressors, such as potential unemployment, marital discord, or cultural displacement, which may contribute to these dysfunctional strategies? Do they agree with these approaches? Do they comprehend the reasons behind their parents' frustrations or anger towards them? These questions are central to understanding the dynamics of parent-child relationships and how children navigate and make sense of disciplinary practices within their familial contexts.

### *Attribution Theory*

For my study, I will adopt Cooper et al.'s framework, originally used to describe parental attributions of children's behaviors, and adapt it to assess child attributions of parents' behaviors.

In their study, the authors define parental attributions as "...the causal explanations that parents create for their child's behavior" (2018:967). These attributions encompass how parents perceive the reasons behind their child's actions or behaviors, such as whether they attribute such behaviors to internal stimuli (such as the child's personality or intentions) or external stimuli (such as situational or environmental factors or influences). Negative parental attributions "typically involve viewing the child's misbehavior as caused by internal factors that are stable and intentional" (2018:967), often leading to the use of harsh and dysfunctional forms of



discipline. Therefore, I will define child attributions as the explanations that children create for their parents' behaviors and disciplinary techniques.

Parental attributions are categorized as internal, stable, or blaming/intentional. Internal attributions refer to the belief that a child's behavior is caused by internal factors, such as the child's abilities, intentions, or personality. Stable attributions refer to the belief that a child's behavior is caused by a factor that is unchanging or stable over time. Blaming/intentional attributions refer to the belief that a child's behavior is caused by the child intentionally misbehaving to upset them.

As mentioned in their study, these attributions serve as a strong mediator in the relationship between one's parenting beliefs and one's parenting practices; parental attributions can influence parents' disciplinary strategies and their responses to their children's behaviors. If a parent perceives mischievous behavior as intrinsic to a child's personality, for example, they may be less inclined to modify their disciplinary approach.

Similarly, a parent's response to a child receiving a poor grade may vary based on their attribution. If they attribute the grade to the child's lack of effort (an internal factor within the child's control), they might be more inclined to administer punishment. Conversely, if they attribute the grade to external factors beyond the child's control, such as a difficult test, they may be less likely to administer punishment. Moreover, if the parent views poor grades as a stable trait that will persist over time, they may be less inclined to enforce discipline. Conversely, if they view poor grades as an unstable issue, such as the child having a temporary difficulty at school due to external circumstances, the parent may be more willing to intervene and provide assistance.

Cooper et al.'s study builds upon Weiner's Attributional model (1985), which provides a framework for understanding parental attributions. Bussanich et al. elaborate on this model, explaining that parental attributions encompass three key dimensions: locus of control, stability, and controllability (2017:644).

Locus of control pertains to “whether the behavior is believed to be internal (i.e., a reflection of the child's personality trait or skill) or external (i.e., influenced by the child's environment)” (2017:644). Stability refers to “beliefs about the permanence of the cause of the behavior, ranging from unstable (temporary and likely to pass) to stable (persistent and likely to continue)” (2017:644). Controllability, on the other hand, involves “beliefs about the extent to which the behavior is within the child's control, ranging from uncontrollable (child cannot alter) to controllable (child can alter)” (2017:644).

These dimensions collectively contribute to how parents perceive and interpret their child's behavior, which in turn influences their disciplinary strategies and responses.

*Thus, I argue that child attributions of their parents' disciplinary techniques or behaviors also influence their response to such discipline. This includes factors such as whether they choose to carry the discipline on to their own children, whether they internalize lessons from the discipline, and whether they harbor resentment towards such practices.*

These child attributions may differ by race due to a variety of factors, including cultural norms, societal expectations, historical context, and family dynamics. As mentioned before, different racial and ethnic groups often have distinct cultural norms and values that influence parenting styles and disciplinary approaches. For instance, white children may not receive the same racial socialization as children of color from their parents. This lack of racial socialization may lead white children to believe that their parents' disciplinary strategies are within their

control and not influenced by external factors. As a result, if they attribute their parents' harsh discipline to a trait such as their personality, they may feel more resentful towards them. On the other hand, children from cultures that commonly employ physical or harsh discipline may not resent their parents for using techniques that are prevalent within their culture. Children growing up in such households may not resent their parents as they understand that the use of a specific harsh disciplinary technique is a generational practice deeply rooted in their culture. They may perceive this technique as a reflection of their parents' attempts to raise them well within the cultural context.

Overall, understanding how children attribute their parents' disciplinary strategies based on race provides valuable insights into the complex relationship between culture, race, and parenting. These attributions can shape children's attitudes towards their parents and their own behaviors, highlighting the importance of considering diverse perspectives in studies of parental discipline.

#### *Additional factors to consider that may influence children's attributions*

Santa-Sosa et al. (2014:1537)'s study provides valuable insights that can serve as a guide for generating interview and survey questions related to discipline strategies and children's attributions of these strategies. While the primary focus of the study was to identify relevant ethnocultural factors (ECFs) in the context of child physical abuse, these factors are applicable to research on parental discipline as well.

Drawing inspiration from this study, I incorporate various topics into my interview and survey questions that may shed light on differences in parenting strategies. These topics include inquiries about parent immigration status, the influence of religion on parenting approaches, the

role of racial socialization and its impact on which parenting strategies parents decide to use when preparing their children for racial discrimination, the role of parents within their cultural context, shared dominant values within their culture, and intergenerational transmission of parenting practices.

In the study by Santa-Sosa et al., the authors presented three case vignettes depicting families with diverse ethnocultural backgrounds. Through these vignettes, they illustrated different techniques aimed at addressing specific ECFs, such as race and ethnicity, immigration history, acculturation, spiritual and religious beliefs, culture of origin, and sociocultural contexts related to parental beliefs and practices regarding child discipline. Upon reviewing the detailed vignettes on each family's circumstances (from the parents' perspectives), I identified additional questions that require exploration from the child's viewpoint. For instance, in vignette 1, the mother outlined three goals for her child: (1) to be a good Muslim; (2) to secure a good job and family; and (3) to care for his parents. It is crucial to understand how the *child* conceptualizes these goals, as the researchers in the study focused solely on the parents' perspectives. Through surveys and interviews, we can delve into whether the child is inclined or disinclined to adopt these religious, economic, and familial values if the form of discipline directed towards him is unfavorable.

After reviewing the other vignettes, I generated additional questions that warrant exploration. For instance, if a parent's country of origin significantly differs from that of the child, can the child comprehend the parent's challenges in reconciling their cultural beliefs with mainstream U.S. norms? If the parent's disciplinary strategies are rendered unfavorable by the child, is the child less likely to adopt the values the parent aimed to instill through discipline? If the parent themselves was also disciplined with these unfavorable disciplinary methods as a child,

does the child feel less compelled to rebel against such strategies? How do children of color make sense of their parents' racial socialization efforts? These questions, inspired by insights from parental interviews, remain unanswered and necessitate further research focusing on children's beliefs and perceptions.

Santa-Sosa et al.'s work also offers a valuable child-centric lens through which I plan to interpret my findings. Their research, as highlighted in the literature, indicates that the use of physical discipline is often shaped by parents' cultural beliefs. Additionally, they found that "the negative impact of physical discipline appears to be attenuated for children from some ethnocultural groups." *One possible explanation they suggest is the perceived cultural normativeness of acceptable disciplinary practices within specific ethnocultural groups, which could moderate the effects of physical discipline on child outcomes.* This perspective implies that cultural beliefs and norms play a significant role in how disciplinary practices are perceived and experienced.

Therefore, in interpreting my findings, I will consider how different racial and cultural contexts may influence children's conceptualizations of parental discipline. This lens allows for a deeper understanding of the nuances in disciplinary experiences across diverse racial and cultural backgrounds, aligning with the insights provided by Santa-Sosa et al.

Lastly, Santa-Sosa et al. highlight a crucial reason why researching the role of race in the conceptualization of parental discipline is essential: "Some studies have found more favorable perceptions of harsh discipline practices among parents, and underreporting of child abuse among Asian American subgroups." This demonstrates why it is of critical importance to study how children perceive their parents' disciplinary strategies -- if Asian American children, for example, perceive abusive strategies in a more favorable light, they may be less inclined to seek

support. Therefore, it is imperative to examine how children from diverse ethnocultural backgrounds interpret their parents' disciplinary methods. Building on this insight, my aim is to determine whether interviewees and survey respondents of different racial backgrounds hold varying perceptions regarding the harshness or effectiveness of physical discipline.

Another study that I draw inspiration from to generate additional survey and interview questions is Navarro-Cruz et al. (2021:322)'s qualitative research on "how Latina mothers from the Western United States with young children make decisions about disciplining their children." The authors look at Latino families' discipline choices comprehensively by analyzing their "practices, labor histories, education, and social networks as valued contributions to their parenting" (330). Although the researchers interview Latina mothers only, we can apply the same questions that they asked to mothers and see how children make sense of them.

For instance, Navarro-Cruz et al. found that Latina mothers' discipline choices were influenced by their upbringing, education, and work history. The specific discipline techniques they employed, whether it was having discussions, implementing time-outs, establishing reward and removal systems, using spanking, or ignoring, were selected based on the child's behavior, age, and temperament. These findings prompt a range of questions that warrant exploration. How do children navigate evolving expectations for their behavior as they grow older? Which discipline techniques do children favor and for what reasons? Will these children carry on these disciplinary techniques when they become parents? Additionally, how do children perceive and react to the various forms of discipline they receive? These questions aim to shed light on children's perspectives on parental discipline and how it shapes their attitudes and behaviors.

A similar study by Doyle (2015:754) seeks perspectives from a significantly understudied group in the U.S. context: African American fathers. Doyle's qualitative investigations with

African American fathers aimed to "provide a broader understanding of the gendered, cultural, and social contexts that influence their parenting" (757). Specifically, Doyle focused on "how fathers describe their efforts to promote healthy behaviors and emotions, as well as positive coping in their at-risk, preadolescent sons" (758). Through this study, four interrelated themes about African American fathers' parenting emerged: managing emotions, encouragement, discipline, and monitoring.

This research article is particularly unique because it centers on fathers' perspectives, a departure from the common focus on mothers' roles in parenting (as seen in the previous study). As noted by the author, "Fathers play an important role in families and have both direct and indirect effects (e.g., via their relationships with the youths' mothers) on youths' well-being" (757). Catering to the racial component of my research question, the study highlights that "The importance of these roles varies by context and evolves over time and across racial and cultural groups." Understanding the impact of fathers on children's conceptualization of parental discipline is essential; for instance, some children may reside in matriarchal households where they might regard their mother's parenting more seriously.

This research not only provides insights into a gendered perspective often overlooked in parenting studies but also offers a glimpse into how African American fathers commonly choose to parent their children. The authors also emphasize a critical detail that underscores the importance of researching parenting styles overall: "The prevalence and extent of African American fathers' involvement in parenting offers an opportunity to engage them in prevention interventions for at-risk youth that may enhance fathers' capacity to buffer their children against negative outcomes." This is particularly significant for marginalized youth groups at high risk for adverse outcomes.

Moreover, this study prompts questions about respondents' experiences with different parenting techniques implemented by mothers and fathers, and which techniques they value or learn more from. Exploring these aspects can provide valuable insights into how children perceive and respond to diverse parenting strategies within their families.

Lastly, it is important to note that there *have* been studies that have sought children's perspectives on discipline. Hyder and Willow (1998) provide a unique report on young children's views and experiences of smacking, while Dobbs and Duncan (2004) investigated the views of ten children from New Zealand regarding the use of physical discipline. The authors refer to "smacking" as a form of physical discipline that involves hitting or slapping a child as a form of punishment.

Both studies found that children were strongly opposed to smacking. They expressed that it hurts physically and emotionally, is morally wrong, and makes them feel unloved by their parents. Children cited reasons for being smacked, including being violent, naughty, or disobedient. They also mentioned that they do not smack adults because they fear retaliation, feel sad and fearful that they will get smacked again, and believe that adults refrain from smacking each other because they are big and know better, and because they love and care for each other. Additionally, half of the children stated they would not use smacking when they are adults.

A limitation of these studies is the lack of racial and ethnic diversity in the samples. The majority of children interviewed were white, with one study conducted in the UK and the other in the Netherlands. Despite this limitation, these studies provide strong justification for my decision to interview college students aged 18 to 24 years. Hyder and Willow (1998) found that children they spoke to were capable of clearly articulating their feelings about physical punishment -- despite how much we often underestimate children's abilities. Similarly, Dobbs



and Duncan (2004:2456) noted that the children in their study had powerful insights and showed considerable understanding of their own and other people's behavior and feelings, expressing themselves articulately. Thus, it would not be a fruitless endeavor to seek child perspectives.

For my study, students in the 18 to 24 age range are suitable as they are old enough to reflect on their childhood experiences and make sense of them, yet not too old to have forgotten significant aspects of their childhood. By the ages of 18 to 24, individuals have also reached a level of cognitive development that allows them to better analyze and contextualize their experiences. With the additional factor of being in college, individuals may be better able to articulate their experiences and relate their experiences to their race, socioeconomic class, or other key factors that may have influenced their childhood growing up.

The aforementioned studies also highlight the importance of seeking *children's* perspectives on parental discipline. According to Hyder and Willow (1998:455), "For too long one voice has been missing in the debate about children and physical punishment - the voice of children themselves, and particularly younger children." They also noted that research found that "seven-year-olds who are subject to more serious physical punishment are more likely to suggest smacking as a parental response to dealing with various situations." This is troubling to consider when taking into consideration the intergenerational transmission of parental techniques.

In conclusion, both studies found that "...children's reports of physical discipline are at odds with adult assumptions on the effects of the use of physical discipline" (Dobbs and Duncan 2004:2473). Therefore, it is vital to seek insights on parental disciplinary strategies from the individuals who experienced these varying disciplinary strategies as children and who are also young enough to recall and retain these memories and thought processes. We can consider these

individuals experts on the matter, as their lived experiences offer valuable insights for the field of child studies.

Through conducting in-depth interviews for this study, we can achieve a more nuanced understanding of children's conceptualizations of their parental discipline by moving beyond simple attributions to uncover the underlying rationales behind these attributions. If a child attributes their parents' harsh discipline to an external factor such as race, for example, an underlying rationale for this attribution could be the perception of cultural expectations and stereotypes related to their racial identity. The child's rationale might be: "My parents are strict because they believe that as an Asian, I should excel academically and behave perfectly. They are worried that if I don't meet these expectations, I'll bring shame to our family and community. So, they use harsh discipline to push me to meet these high standards." In this scenario, the child's attribution of their parents' harsh discipline to race is rooted in the cultural expectations and stereotypes prevalent in society. Moving past simply attributing their parents' harsh discipline to their race, we can understand *why* they make this external attribution.

### **Research Question**

The central question guiding my research is: "How does race play a role in the way that children conceptualize parental discipline?" Building on existing literature, which demonstrates the impact of parental disciplinary strategies on children's development, self-esteem, academic achievement, and mental well-being, I aim to investigate how race intersects with these dynamics.

Previous studies have highlighted racial disparities in parenting philosophies. African American parents, for instance, have been cited to use racial socialization practices to prepare their children for navigating race-based challenges in America (Doyle, 2015:754). However, a notable limitation in much of this research is its adult-centric focus, often overlooking or excluding the perspectives of the recipients of parental discipline: the children themselves.

To address this gap, I conduct surveys and interviews with individuals from various racial backgrounds to gain insights into their retrospective experiences with parental discipline. While individuals aged 18 to 24 fall within the category of young adults, they are still actively reflecting on their upbringing and may maintain a dependent or "childlike" role within their families. As mentioned in the background, these individuals are capable of offering a valuable "child" perspective on their parents' disciplinary approaches.

By employing this methodology, my goal is to gain a deeper understanding of how children interpret and respond to their parents' disciplinary methods. From these insights, I will explore whether race contributes to divergent conceptualizations of parental discipline. Additionally, the parent-child relationship may serve as a significant factor in how the child interacts with authority figures later in life, defines attitudes toward filial piety, and perceives instances of abuse. Through my research, I propose that one of three findings will emerge:

Hypothesis 1: I hypothesize that race **significantly influences** children's conceptualizations of parental discipline.

Hypothesis 2: Race **moderately influences** children's conceptualizations of parental discipline.

Hypothesis 3: Race **does not significantly influence** children's conceptualizations of parental discipline.

## Methods

### *Recruitment*

Approval for this study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Emory University prior to recruitment. All participants provided informed consent before participating in the study. To garner participant interest, I initiated contact with 178 professors via email from Emory University, Georgia State University, and Georgia Tech. The emails contained detailed information about the study, a PDF of a recruitment flyer, a QR code directing participants to the online survey, and a request for circulation among listservs and students in professors' classes. The study was more ambiguously described as being “designed with the goal of gaining a better perspective on how children make sense of their parent’s discipline,” so as to not cue to respondents the study’s focus on race.

To be eligible for participation, individuals had to meet the following criteria: being an English-speaking college student between the ages of 18-24 attending Emory University, Georgia State University, or Georgia Tech. Various professors disseminated the email and recruitment flyer via organization listservs and amongst their classes. Atlanta was selected as the primary research site for recruiting participants due to its convenience and my familiarity with the area, having been born there and currently attending school in Atlanta. Additionally, Atlanta offers a diverse range of students across various socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, and gender backgrounds.

Participants interested in opting for a 1-on-1 interview via Zoom were able to indicate their interest on the survey form and provide their contact information. I then reached out to these individuals using the provided contact information to schedule Zoom interviews at their convenience.

### *Sample*

The surveying sample consisted of 100 college students from Emory University, Georgia State University, and Georgia Tech University in the metro-Atlanta area between the ages of 18 to 24 ( $M = 21.18$ ,  $SD = 1.72$ ). Within this sample, 42% ( $n=42$ ) identified as male, 39% ( $n=39$ ) identified as female, 16% ( $n=16$ ) identified as non-binary or transgender, and 3% ( $n=3$ ) chose to not disclose their gender identity. Racially, 46% ( $n=46$ ) identified as White or Caucasian, 22% ( $n=22$ ) identified as Black or African American, 19% ( $n=19$ ) identified as Asian or Pacific Islander, 12% ( $n=12$ ) identified as Hispanic or Latino, and 1% ( $n=1$ ) identified as Native American or Alaska Native. Additionally, 8% ( $n=8$ ) of respondents identified as multi-racial.

The interviewing sample consisted of 20 college students from Emory University, Georgia State University, and Georgia Tech University in the metro-Atlanta area between the ages of 18 to 24 ( $M = 21.00$ ,  $SD = 1.75$ ). Within this subsample, 45% ( $n=9$ ) identified as female, 30% ( $n=6$ ) identified as male, and 25% ( $n=5$ ) identified as non-binary or transgender. Racially, 35% ( $n=7$ ) identified as White or Caucasian, 30% ( $n=6$ ) identified as Asian or Pacific Islander, 25% ( $n=5$ ) identified as Black or African American, and 10% ( $n=2$ ) identified as Hispanic or Latino. None of the respondents in this subsample identified as multi-racial.

For the demographic breakdown of the interviewees quoted in the following results section, please refer to Table 1 below for details on their race and gender. Note that each interviewee was assigned a pseudonym to ensure respondent confidentiality.

**Table 1:** Interviewee Demographic Information

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Demographic Information</b>
Alyssa	White female
Megan	White female
Alexis	White female
Hank	White male
Rufus	White transgender male
Jax	White non-binary individual
Derpina	White non-binary individual
Selena	Black female
Sophia	Black female
Devon	Black male
Bryce	Black male
Porter	Black non-binary individual
Murrin	Asian female
Lucy	Asian female
Sunny	Asian female
Jon	Asian male
Troy	Asian male
Kaytra	Asian transgender individual
Diana	Latina female
Danny	Latino male

### *Data Collection*

All data was collected through the survey questionnaire and 1-on-1 interviews. The survey (Appendix 1) included demographic questions for the participant and their caregivers, along with questions about their childhood experiences with parental discipline. Participants were informed on the survey that they had the right to skip any question they felt uncomfortable answering. Out of the 100 participants who completed the survey, 20 opted for 1-on-1 interviews. Each interview was semi-structured and lasted for about 30 minutes via Zoom. With the interviewees' consent, the sessions were recorded, transcribed, and then coded for thematic analysis. Recordings were deleted after transcription to ensure confidentiality. Since demographic data was already gathered from the surveys, the interviews focused on open-ended questions about participants' childhood experiences. Questions were tailored based on the participants' survey responses. For instance, if a respondent indicated a belief in using physical discipline on the survey, more probing questions about this belief were asked during the interview. All data collection was anonymous for the survey, and contact information obtained from interested interviewees was deleted after the interviewing process was completed. To protect participant confidentiality, names, locations, and other identifiable information in both the survey and interview data were replaced with pseudonyms. A coding system was used to track the data over time, with codes excluding any personal identifiers. The file linking codes to participant identifiers was securely stored separately from the data.



## *Measures*

### *Socio-demographics*

Participants self-reported their and their parents' demographic data in the survey questionnaire. Race was coded as White or Caucasian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Asian or Pacific Islander, Native American or Alaska Native, and Multi-racial or Biracial in both the surveys and interviews. When coding for race, the 8 respondents who identified as multi-racial were re-coded as one race. Respondents who identified as multi-racial and Black or African American were coded as Black or African American/Multi-racial due to the one-drop rule and for the purposes of analysis. Studies have indicated that "...the one-drop rule is an important factor shaping racial identity, particularly for multiracial Americans with black ancestry" (Khana, 2010:96). According to this rule, anyone with even a "drop" of Black blood is considered Black. Therefore, while respondents may internally identify as multiracial, they were coded as Black or African American/Multi-racial because that is how they are "treated" by others in society. In concordance with this coding practice, the one respondent who identified as Middle Eastern was recoded as white. Individuals that identified as being both White or Caucasian and Hispanic or Latino were recoded as Latino/Multi-racial. Respondents who identified as Native American or Alaska Native were excluded from the analysis due to insufficient representation in the sample.

In addition to indicating their race in an open-ended question, respondents also provided information on their school, age, gender identity, income, level of education, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, immigration status, and family structure in the survey.

### *Disciplinary Techniques*

In my survey, I define discipline as “a punishment or act used to correct behavior.” With this definition in mind, there are several disciplinary techniques that parents can employ to go about satisfying this goal. In the survey, respondents were presented with the following options to describe the techniques their parents used for discipline: spanking, slapping, taking something away, setting a rule, giving extra chores, humiliating/shaming, ignoring, raising their voice, throwing things, grabbing or shaking, threatening to kick them out, putting them in time out, grounding them, giving them a warning, rewarding them for not misbehaving, and having a conversation with them. Refer to Table 2 below for definitions of these disciplinary techniques.

**Table 2:** Definitions of Disciplinary Techniques

<b>Disciplinary Technique</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Spanking	Being struck, either with the hand or with an alternative instrument, to cause physical pain -- whether it be light or harsh (Navarro-Cruz et al., 2021:915)
Slapping	Being struck with the flat part of the hand
Taking something away	“Taking away of TV or computer time and removal of certain privileges such as playing outside or with friends” (Navarro-Cruz et al., 2021:915)
Setting a rule	Communicating a set of guidelines that dictate procedures to be followed in a particular context
Giving extra chores	Giving an unpleasant task as a punishment
Humiliating/shaming	Committing an action that diminishes one’s self worth
Ignoring	“To not acknowledge the behavior so as to inform the child that they will not receive attention for their actions” (Navarro-Cruz et al., 2021:915)
Raising their voice	Speaking more loudly, especially to convey anger or intimidate

Throwing things	Using force to direct an object towards another person
Grabbing or shaking	Taking physical hold of someone and either maintaining this hold (grabbing) or moving them back and forth (shaking)
Threatening to kick them out	Making a verbal warning to force someone to leave their home
Putting them in time out	“Removing the child from the environment where misbehavior has occurred and placing the child in a neutral area for a set time” (Navarro-Cruz et al., 2021:915)
Grounding them	A disciplinary action that restricts someone from partaking in certain privileges or actions
Giving them a warning	Communicating what will happen if a certain action is repeated without enforcing the consequence at the moment
Rewarding them for not misbehaving	“Giving praise, playtime, monetary compensation, and even food” for committing an act or behavior one wants repeated (Navarro-Cruz et al., 2021:915)
Having a conversation with them	“Conversation, communication, reasoning, and explaining rules among others -- often used to explain to the child how their behavior was inappropriate” (Navarro-Cruz et al., 2021:915)

To define the majority of these techniques, I will refer to Navarro-Cruz et al.'s definitions. They refer to “spanking” as being struck, either with the hand or with an alternative instrument, to cause physical pain -- whether it be light or harsh (2021:915). “Taking something away” is named “removal of toys” in their study, and is defined as the “taking away of TV or computer time and removal of certain privileges such as playing outside or with friends” (2021:915). They define “ignoring” as “to not acknowledge the behavior so as to inform the child that they will not receive attention for their actions” (2021:915). “Time-out” is defined in their study as “removing the child from the environment where misbehavior has occurred and placing the child in a neutral area for a set time” (2021:915). “Rewarding them for not misbehaving” is named “rewarding good behavior” in their study and is defined as “giving praise, playtime, monetary

compensation, and even food” for committing an act or behavior one wants repeated (2021:915). “Having a conversation” is named “discussion” in their study and is defined as “conversation, communication, reasoning, and explaining rules among others -- often used to explain to the child how their behavior was inappropriate” (2021:915).

The following terms were not defined in their study but were included in the questionnaire, so I provide my own definitions: “slapping” refers to being struck with the flat part of the hand; “setting a rule” refers to communicating a set of guidelines that dictate procedures to be followed in a particular context; “giving extra chores” refers to giving an unpleasant task as a punishment; “humiliating/shaming” refers to committing an action that diminishes one’s self worth; “raising one’s voice” refers to speaking more loudly, especially to convey anger or intimidate; “throwing things” refers to using force to direct an object towards another person; “grabbing or shaking” refers to taking physical hold of someone and either maintaining this hold (grabbing) or moving them back and forth (shaking); “threatening to kick one out” refers to making a verbal warning to force someone to leave their home; “grounding” refers to a disciplinary action that restricts someone from partaking in certain privileges or actions; “giving a warning” refers to communicating what will happen if a certain action is repeated without enforcing the consequence at the moment.

### *Disciplinary Styles*

To describe the type of discipline each respondent experienced as a child, I utilize Diana Baumrind’s conceptualizations of the three different “styles” of parental discipline: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive (1971:22-24). In the survey, a “strict” disciplinary style refers to her definition of authoritarian parenting; a “balanced” disciplinary style refers to her definition of

authoritative parenting; a “lenient” disciplinary style refers to her definition of permissive parenting.

*Child attributions of parents’ behaviors*

To code themes for the ways in which children conceptualize their parents’ behaviors, I ask the following questions in the survey:

1. Do you feel like your parents’ religious or spiritual practices influence their parenting styles?
2. Do you feel like your parents’ race plays a big role in how or why they discipline you?
3. To what extent do you believe that your parent's racial identities impacted which disciplinary strategies your parents chose to use?
4. Do you believe that race plays a significant role in shaping attitudes related to parental discipline?
5. What do you think your parents’ motivations are for disciplining you the way you do? (Why do you think they punish you this way? ie: career success, being a religiously “good” person, etc)
6. Were your parents ever stressed with work or anything else when you were growing up? (Ie: another sibling)
  - a) If you marked "Yes" to the last question, do you think this had any effect on how they discipline you? (Did they discipline you more or less when they were stressed?) Do you feel like your parents’ stress plays a role in how or when they discipline you?

To code themes for the ways in which children conceptualize their parents’ behaviors, I ask the following questions in the interviews:

1. What are your parents like? Describe them in any way you’d like.
2. Overall, how would you describe your experience with your parents' discipline? Are there any specific memories that stick out to you?
3. Would your parents ever mention religion in their discipline with you? If they did, what kinds of things would they mention?
4. Would your parents ever mention your gender in their discipline with you? If they did, what kinds of things would they mention?
5. Would your parents ever mention race in their discipline with you? If they did, what kinds of things would they mention?

6. Do you think your family's income growing up affected how you were disciplined?
7. Would your parents discipline your siblings differently than they did you? If they did, what was different?
8. What would you normally get disciplined for as a child?
9. Would your parents ever explain to you why they were disciplining you?
10. As you've grown older, has the method they have chosen to discipline you with changed? If it has changed, how so?
11. What are your thoughts on physical discipline?
12. If you were to raise a child, how would you discipline them if they did something you did not agree with?
13. Would your parents ever mention how they were disciplined growing up?
14. Do you think your parents' race had any effect on the way they chose to discipline you?
15. Would you notice children of different races being disciplined differently?
16. If you could change anything about your parents' discipline, what would you change and why?

These questions yielded both internal/external attributions of disciplinary styles and the justification that respondents used for these attributions.

### *Coding and Analysis*

A mixed-methods approach utilizing both qualitative and quantitative data from the surveys and interviews was employed for the analysis. Data from the survey that was not obtained from open-ended questions was utilized for quantitative analysis in SPSS Statistics. Data from the survey that was obtained from open-ended questions, along with data from the interview transcripts, were used for qualitative analysis. Themes from the qualitative data were identified systematically using an inductive approach. Codes were then developed using an iterative process. The codebook was refined in an ongoing process; once additional codes no longer emerged, the codebook was finalized.

For the qualitative analysis, responses were coded according to which category they attributed their parents' disciplinary techniques to: (1) locus of control: internal or external; (2)

stability: stable or unstable; and (3) controllability: intentional or unintentional attributions. The following codes build on Weiner's Attributional model, but have been adapted to focus on the child's perspective for the purposes of this study.

Internal attributions were coded when the child believed their parent's behavior or disciplinary technique was caused by internal factors such as the parent's abilities, intentions, or personality. Responses coded as “internal attributions” had further subcodes for the internal factors that the child attributed such behavior to: personality and disability or mental illness.

External attributions were coded when the child believed the parent's behavior or disciplinary technique was caused by external factors like stress, environment, upbringing, socioeconomic status, level of educational attainment, race, etc. Responses coded as “external attributions” had further subcodes for the external factors that the child attributed such behavior to: race, immigration status, socioeconomic status, gender, religion, age, and relationship problems.

Stable attributions refer to the belief that the *parent's* behavior is caused by a factor that is unchanging or stable over time. Unstable attributions refer to the belief that the *parent's* behavior is caused by a factor that is changing or unstable over time.

Intentional attributions refer to the belief that a *parent's* harsh disciplinary technique or behavior is caused by the *parent* intentionally acting in such a way to upset them (and not just for the purpose of discipline). Unintentional attributions refer to the belief that a *parent's* harsh disciplinary technique or behavior is *not* caused by the *parent intentionally* acting in such a way to upset them.

Due to the lack of significant findings, the following codes were dropped from the qualitative analysis: (2) stability: stable or unstable; and (3) controllability: intentional or

unintentional attributions. These codes did not contribute meaningfully to the analysis of parental disciplinary attributions as perceived by the children.

## **Findings**

### *Internal Attributions*

After analyzing and coding the qualitative data obtained from the interviews, a pattern emerged where white respondents were more likely to attribute their parents' disciplinary strategies to internal factors compared to respondents of color. Nearly all respondents, regardless of race, utilized external attributions when describing their parents' discipline. Among the white respondents who cited internal attributions, three mentioned their parents' personalities as internal factors influencing their disciplinary style.

Alyssa recounted a time when her father disciplined her in an unfavorable manner:

I now realize that my dad has a lot of insecurities. In that public place, where his daughter was yelling at him... I think he was worried about how others perceived him as a parent. He wanted me to come and hug him, even though I was upset, to show everyone he was a good parent. But it was a hurtful form of discipline. He completely ignored my emotions and did what he thought would make him look better... I remember confronting my dad once when he said hurtful things about the person I was dating. After we broke up, I brought it up to him, telling him it was really hurtful and unnecessary. He felt bad about it... I think he sees himself as a thoughtful person, so when I pointed out something he said that hurt me, he felt guilty. My mom, on the other hand, is different. She is open to criticism and doesn't get offended easily.

In Alyssa's narrative, she attributes her father's disciplinary choices to a characteristic of his personality - his insecurity. To her, if her father was not insecure, he probably would have chosen a less "inconsiderate" form of discipline. It would also be easier for her to have a discussion with him about changing certain forms of discipline that he employs if he were not so



insecure -- unlike her mother, who she describes as being open to criticism and easier to talk to about such matters.

Similarly, Megan and Alexis also attribute the effectiveness of their parents' discipline to their personalities. Both described their mothers as being good at communicating -- because of this internal trait, they found it easier to learn lessons and understand the reasons behind their discipline.

Two other white respondents also attributed their parents' disciplinary approaches to internal factors, specifically their parents' mental illnesses/disabilities. Jax shared that they believed that their mother's borderline personality disorder dictated much of their discipline (or, as they describe it, abuse):

Not to demonize people with borderline personality disorder, but that was the main reason that she had such extreme rage... I could never justify her behavior just because I never did anything that warranted it... You could distinguish her externalizing her internal feelings and projecting them onto you. I could feel what she was saying was not lining up with what I did or what happened. It was about how she felt and I could look at what she was saying and talk to her and realize that she was talking about herself... I realized it wasn't about me at all. I could be a different person and kid and have the same exact things be happening.

This excerpt illustrates Jax's understanding of their mother's behavior, attributing it to her borderline personality disorder and noting the disconnect between the punishment they received and their actions. Jax highlights how their mother's discipline seemed to be about her own feelings of guilt and shame, rather than their behavior. In this, their experience with their mother's discipline hinged entirely on her mental illness.

Rufus shared that he grew up with only his father, who is disabled and thus spent much time with him at home. When asked if he could change anything about the way he was disciplined growing up, he shared this:

I think the main thing I'd change would be my dad's reactivity because he has a disorder and anxiety issues. I know that factors into a lot. If he was already tense, he would react -- but it's also yelling and nothing crazy. If I could alter anything, I guess I'd make it so that he could think through his discipline, including verbal discipline, and have more of a controlled reaction to things.

In this, he is attributing his father's uncontrollable reactivity to his anxiety disorder.

The three respondents of color that utilized internal attributions were Selena, Jon, and Lucy. All three mentioned their parents' personalities as the basis for their internal attributions. Selena, for example, shared that she would always understand why what she did was wrong because her parents are very good at communicating -- an internal trait that allows her to better understand and receive her parents' discipline. Jon mentioned that he would primarily receive discipline for safety reasons, as his parents were "...really careful people." For instance, if he rode his bike near a lake, they would become upset and discipline him -- in this, he is attributing their careful nature (an internal trait) to the reasons for his discipline. Lucy, when asked what she would change about how her parents disciplined her growing up, shared the following: "I think there were some ways they were immature or out of touch with their own emotions. Like there were times when they would be more restrictive without giving a reason why, and I think it had to do a lot with their immaturity." In this, their approach to discipline (characterized by increased restrictiveness and an expectation for obedience without explanation) was attributed to an internal trait of their personalities -- immaturity.

#### *Race as an external attribution*

In terms of external attribution distribution, the vast majority of respondents of color attributed their parents' disciplinary strategies to race, while very few white respondents made

this attribution. This distribution is corroborated by findings from the quantitative analysis conducted in SPSS Statistics. When examining the role of race in parental discipline (“Do you feel like your parents’ race plays a big role in how or why they discipline you?”), a cross-tabulation with race revealed that Black (72.2%), Latinx (77.8%), and Asian (57.9%) respondents were significantly more likely to answer "Yes" compared to whites (20%) (Table 3). This result was statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ) and aligns with qualitative findings. Regarding external attribution distribution, only 28.6% of white respondents attributed their parents’ external attributions to race, whereas 92.3% of respondents of color did so.

**Table 3:** Cross-tabulation of race with the “role of race” variable.

**raceroleindisc \* newrace Crosstabulation**

			newrace				Total
			White	Black	Latinx	Asian	
raceroleindisc	No	Count	32	5	4	8	49
		% within newrace	80.0%	27.8%	22.2%	42.1%	51.6%
	Yes	Count	8	13	14	11	46
		% within newrace	20.0%	72.2%	77.8%	57.9%	48.4%
Total		Count	40	18	18	19	95
		% within newrace	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

### Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	23.914 <sup>a</sup>	3	<.001
Likelihood Ratio	25.367	3	<.001
N of Valid Cases	95		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 8.72.

We can look further into the interviewees' responses to gain further rationale as to *why* they believe race played a big role in their parents' discipline. Among the white respondents, Alexis and Hank mentioned race as an external attribution factor. Alexis explained:

My ethnic friends had much harsher and physical punishments than my white friends. My white friends would normally be yelled at or grounded, which I don't think is harsh enough. I don't think white people in general get enough discipline. Like if they don't do chores, nothing happens. But my ethnic friends would get punished too harshly for what they did, I think.

Hank briefly shared a similar sentiment: "My parents are both very white (laugh), so I imagine they discipline me the same way most white people stereotypically discipline their children."

Although they do not explicitly refer to how their race impacted their personal experiences with parental discipline, it is apparent that they believe their race significantly influenced the disciplinary methods their parents chose to employ during their upbringing.

The 12 respondents of color who attributed their parents' external attributions to race offered valuable insights into their perceptions of how their parents' race influenced their disciplinary experiences.

Amongst Black respondents,

Bryce shared:

Outside of the Black race, they tend to have less harsh punishments, like going to your room. Most Black parents, in my experiences from friends and peers from high school or middle school, had a similar type of experience getting spanked or getting something they want taken away.

Sophia reflected:

I just believe that particular methods that my parents disciplined me with are associated with being an African American in the South. They would get spanked, too. As a kid, I would hear about other races being disciplined as well, but not as much spanking.

Porter commented: “White people do not get they ass beat ever. I notice children of color getting spanked or slapped way more often.”

These responses highlight their belief that their parents' race influences the disciplinary techniques employed, particularly noting the prevalence of harsher and more physical disciplinary methods among Black parents.

Amongst Asian respondents,

Jon highlighted the confrontational nature of discipline in East Asian cultures:

I feel like in East Asia, parents are more likely to engage in confrontational discipline versus in America -- like harsh physical discipline, even verbally abusing or humiliating or really harsh scolding... Sometimes it makes the child feel like the parents are their enemy to some extent, but I never felt this way. With my childhood friends from China, I feel like physical discipline and verbal abuse are more frequent than I would imagine.

Sunny shared an observation regarding her racial community's disciplinary practices:

My [racial] community commonly uses physical, verbal, and psychological discipline. So the guilt a child would feel for messing up was a main aspect of ensuring that they wouldn't mess up again. With other races, I see that there is either a higher emphasis on a parent's feelings towards a child's behavior and whether the parent was disrespected. Sometimes I notice that some races place more trust in a child's ability to understand things than others.

Lucy spoke about the cultural pressure for academic achievement:

I would often score high -- but not high enough -- on tests, so I was told I had to do better because as an Asian, I would always be perceived as smart anyways... I think... in Korea, physical or harsh discipline is the norm, but here -- especially in this generation -- “discipline” can border abuse. Discipline and abuse definitely have a really fine line.

Kaytra contrasted various racial parenting approaches and emphasized the expectation to adhere to a more rigid standard within the Asian community:

...we'd discuss how white parents would just "let their kids do whatever" and how that was a bad way to raise kids... In contrast, I noticed my friends of color having much more strict parental relationships. My close friends were Muslim, Egyptian, and Korean, and all three of us had pretty restrictive things like curfews, not allowed to have sleepovers, mostly being confined to staying home or going out with family, pressure to sustain good grades and prep for good colleges... I wasn't close with many other Koreans, but my mom was. I heard a lot of stories secondhand about similar strict upbringings, and she definitely passed judgment on parents who were looser, cared less about their kids getting into like ivy leagues... I heard a lot of "White kids get ahead by doing x, y, and z. So you should do the same." My mom especially saw it as a skill that white kids would often just demand what they wanted--a better grade, an internship, etcetera--and saw it as a minus that I was not like that... I have always been pretty clearly queer... She wouldn't be like "Well since we're Asian we have to be like them," or whatever, but there was definitely a sense of "We have to fit into this Korean community," and race was definitely on her mind.

These quotes illustrate diverse perspectives within the Asian community regarding disciplinary practices. Many pointed out a strong emphasis on academic performance and instilling guilt; common usage of confrontational and harsh disciplinary practices in East Asian cultures; and the strict adherence to rules expected within Asian households contrasted to the perceived leniency towards other racial groups. Kaytra's insights into comparisons with white parenting styles underscore the pressures to conform within the Asian community, where academic achievement and career success are often prioritized. This range of experiences sheds light on how Asian children interpret their parents' strict disciplinary methods and reasons for discipline, such as having high academic expectations. They articulate these interpretations through the lens of cultural norms, academic pressures, and the fine line between discipline and potential abuse.

This qualitative finding for Asian respondents is further supported by quantitative findings when examining values learned from parental disciplinary strategies (“Have you taken on any of the values your parents reflected in their disciplinary strategies?”). From the cross-tabulation, it was found that Asian (26.4%) respondents were more likely than white (14.6%), Black (11.1%), and Latinx (0.0%) respondents to report "No" when asked if they adopted these values (Table 4). Although not statistically significant ( $p=.457>0.05$ ), this finding aligns with qualitative data. Notably, 100% of Asian interviewees attributed their parents’ external attributions to their parents’ race and 100% of these respondents were also critical of and/or likely to reference their racial culture’s high expectations and harsh disciplinary techniques in their responses. This suggests that Asian respondents, who were more likely to report "No" to adopting their parents' values in disciplinary strategies, may already feel constricted by the high expectations and harsh disciplinary techniques prevalent in their racial culture. This awareness of the cultural norms within their race, especially regarding the heavy emphasis on valuing academics, could contribute to their more general reluctance to adopt their parents' values.

**Table 4:** Cross-tabulation of race with the “values learned” variable.

**valueslearned \* newrace Crosstabulation**

		newrace						Total
		White	Black	Latinx	Asian	Multiracial	NAIAN	
valueslearned	Count	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
	% within newrace	0.0%	5.6%	5.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%
No	Count	6	2	0	5	1	0	14
	% within newrace	14.6%	11.1%	0.0%	26.3%	33.3%	0.0%	14.0%
Yes	Count	35	15	17	14	2	1	84
	% within newrace	85.4%	83.3%	94.4%	73.7%	66.7%	100.0%	84.0%
Total	Count	41	18	18	19	3	1	100
	% within newrace	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.816 <sup>a</sup>	10	.457
Likelihood Ratio	12.370	10	.261
N of Valid Cases	100		

a. 13 cells (72.2%) have expected count less than 5.  
The minimum expected count is .02.

Amongst Latinx respondents,

Diana shared:

...when white parents hear you use a swear word, they would wash your mouth with soap -- or maybe that's not even a real punishment... I feel like Hispanics are a bit more physical when it comes to punishments. My parents would pull my ear, pinch me, yell at me, and take away privileges for small stuff.

Danny shared a similar sentiment: “Basically there was a pretty prevalent belief that white people didn't get disciplined effectively or as harshly as Latinos.”

These quotes echo sentiments shared by the Black and Asian respondents above -- white people do not get disciplined as effectively or harshly as other racial groups.

Overall, these respondents believe that their parents' race highly influences the severity of their discipline, the types of discipline they experienced, and the reason behind the discipline



(ie: academic expectations). There was a prevalent belief shared by both white respondents and respondents of color that white people do not get disciplined as effectively or harshly as other racial groups.

The prevailing belief amongst respondents that attributed their parents' discipline to race -- that white individuals receive less severe and more lenient disciplinary strategies -- is supported by the quantitative analysis conducted using SPSS statistics. Cross-tabulations of the variable describing parental disciplinary styles ("How would you describe the disciplinary style used by your parental figures when you were growing up?") with race revealed that Black (35.3%), Latinx (50.0%), and Asian (50.0%) respondents were more likely to report strict disciplinary styles compared to white respondents (19.5%) (Table 5). Although not statistically significant ( $p=.019 > 0.05$ ), this corresponds with qualitative findings indicating that interviewees of color often experienced harsher disciplinary techniques.

**Table 5:** Cross-tabulation of race with the “discipline style used” variable.

**discstyleused \* newrace Crosstabulation**

		newrace					
		White	Black	Latinx	Asian	Total	
discstyleused	Balanced	Count	24	11	8	9	52
		% within newrace	58.5%	64.7%	44.4%	50.0%	55.3%
	lenient	Count	9	0	1	0	10
		% within newrace	22.0%	0.0%	5.6%	0.0%	10.6%
	strict	Count	8	6	9	9	32
		% within newrace	19.5%	35.3%	50.0%	50.0%	34.0%
Total		Count	41	17	18	18	94
		% within newrace	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	15.161 <sup>a</sup>	6	.019
Likelihood Ratio	17.946	6	.006
N of Valid Cases	94		

a. 4 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.81.

To further understand child perceptions based on these findings, a quantitative analysis was conducted, examining the relationship between race and the “grateful” variable. As gratitude reflects how individuals perceive and interpret their upbringing, gratitude was operationalized as the sentiment towards parental disciplinary strategies -- whether one feels grateful for or resentful of their parents’ disciplinary techniques (“Are you grateful for or resentful of their disciplinary strategies?”). When exploring this variable in relation to race, it was found that white respondents (19.5%) were least likely to indicate resentment compared to 27.8% of Black respondents, 27.8% of Latinx respondents, and 26.3% of Asian respondents (Table 6). Although not statistically significant in chi-square tests ( $p=.723>0.05$ ), this result aligns with qualitative findings where white interviewees tended to form fewer negative attributions for their parents' disciplinary methods. These findings suggest that white respondents may harbor less resentment

towards their parents' disciplinary strategies, possibly influenced by the perception that other racial groups experience more severe forms of discipline.

**Table 6:** Cross-tabulation of race with the “grateful” variable.

**grateful \* newrace Crosstabulation**

		newrace					
		White	Black	Latinx	Asian	Total	
grateful	Grateful	Count	14	6	7	7	34
		% within newrace	34.1%	33.3%	38.9%	36.8%	35.4%
	Neither	Count	13	5	6	7	31
		% within newrace	31.7%	27.8%	33.3%	36.8%	32.3%
	Prefer not to say / unsure	Count	6	2	0	0	8
		% within newrace	14.6%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%	8.3%
	Resentful	Count	8	5	5	5	23
		% within newrace	19.5%	27.8%	27.8%	26.3%	24.0%
Total		Count	41	18	18	19	96
		% within newrace	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

### Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.164 <sup>a</sup>	9	.723
Likelihood Ratio	8.878	9	.449
N of Valid Cases	96		

a. 7 cells (43.8%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.50.

I now turn to other reasons for external attributions, focusing first on religion.

### *Religion as an external attribution*

Religion played a significant role as an external attribution for many of the interviewees, particularly among the white respondents.

Derpina shared: “Growing up, my mom was Southern Baptist Protestant Christian and there, you do not talk back. You're a child, so you don't have any say on what's going on -- or you're a girl, so these are the things you're supposed to do.”

Alexis shared: “My mom always tried to teach me religious values to teach me how to be a good person. She would remind me of things like treating others how you want to be treated and some other stuff I forgot. I would always hear about it at church.”

Hank shared: “...they would try to teach me how to become a good Christian. It all felt very constricting for me and like I had to check off boxes to be a good son for them.”

Amongst respondents of color,

Sunny shared: “Education in my culture is very intertwined with religion and social status. I was told that the better you are as a student, the better your character is because in my culture your grades quantify your discipline, personality, and piousness.”

Bryce emphasized the significance of religious teachings:

Religion played a big role. I'm not sure if that'd affect how they did it, but it would affect why. If I lied to my mother for some reason, she would bring up the 10 commandments and say, “Children are supposed to honor their parents. You're meant to follow this and because of what you did, you didn't follow this commandment...Like with the commandments in Christianity, if my brother hit me or something, my mom might have brought up some kind of metaphor happening in the Bible that may have been a metaphor for respecting your brother or family.

These quotes vividly illustrate how interviewees believe religion was a guiding force in the disciplinary strategies of their parents. Religious teachings served as a moral framework for behavior, providing a set of principles for understanding right from wrong, influencing *how* parents approached discipline, as well as *why* (ie: to instill religious values such as honesty or respect). Derpina's upbringing, for example, instilled strict values of respect and obedience,

particularly emphasizing traditional gender roles. This environment expected children, particularly girls, to conform without question, demonstrating the impact of religious beliefs on parents' disciplinary approaches. Hank's experience also demonstrates how the pressure to conform to specific religious standards created a sense of constraint for him, suggesting that disciplinary measures were tied to religious teachings about morality and righteousness. Many respondents also mentioned that their parents often quoted the Bible when explaining the reasons for their discipline, showing how they observed that their parents' religious beliefs directly influenced their disciplinary practices.

When statistical tests were conducted to investigate the impact of religious or spiritual practices on parenting styles ("Do you feel like your parents' religious or spiritual practices influence their parenting styles?"), it was revealed that Black (82.4%) and white (41.5%) respondents were more likely to respond with "Yes" compared to Latinx (27.8%) and Asian (36.8%) respondents (Table 7). This result is statistically significant ( $p=.002$ ) and partially supports the qualitative findings; a majority of white interviewees attributed their parents' external attributions to religion, while the only interviewees of color who did so identified as Black. From this, we can infer that white and Black children are much more likely to receive and perceive a direct influence of religious or spiritual practices on their parents' disciplinary styles.

**Table 7:** Cross-tabulation of race with the “influence of religion” variable.

**religiousreason \* newrace Crosstabulation**

			newrace				Total
			White	Black	Latinx	Asian	
religiousreason	No	Count	21	0	11	7	39
		% within newrace	51.2%	0.0%	61.1%	36.8%	41.1%
	Prefer not to say / unsure	Count	3	3	2	5	13
		% within newrace	7.3%	17.6%	11.1%	26.3%	13.7%
	Yes	Count	17	14	5	7	43
		% within newrace	41.5%	82.4%	27.8%	36.8%	45.3%
Total		Count	41	17	18	19	95
		% within newrace	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	20.381 <sup>a</sup>	6	.002
Likelihood Ratio	26.019	6	<.001
N of Valid Cases	95		

a. 3 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.33.

*Socioeconomic status as an external attribution*

Among the interviewees, I found notable evidence of financial external attributions being made from both white respondents and respondents of color.

From white respondents,

Megan reflected on her upbringing, attributing her parents' disciplinary approach to their focus on work:

In my household, both of my parents were very focused on their work...in the same way richer parents take on a more passive role in their lives... If my dad was the only parent working in the house or if my mom had more time to spend with me at home, maybe my discipline would have been different... I'd say it's more passive because they're less focused on me and more on their job.

Rufus highlighted the influence of his low-income background on his father's expectations for his academic success:

...I think a lot of it relating to schoolwork was because I was raised with this expectation; I did well at school from an early age. He was like, "You're gonna go to college and gonna go for free, and it's gonna be amazing." That's the bar that was set for me, and I think that's why he was so specific about my schoolwork and my work habits because he wanted me to succeed in education and financially. Because of that, I think being from a low-income background definitely influenced that because I couldn't afford college; I'd have to rely on aid or a loan, and a loan would suck. I think that was a big factor.

Hank shared: "...my parents came from an affluent household and my mom had time to stay at home with me, which resulted in her having more opportunities to teach or discipline me when needed. It was overbearing, though, and I felt like I needed space from them."

From interviewees of color,

Troy reflected on his experiences:

...I think a lot of it relating to schoolwork was because I was raised with this expectation. I did well at school from an early age. They wanted me to succeed in education and financially...being from a low-income background...I think my family's economic class might have affected why they disciplined me... That makes them want us to be more successful and to be able to earn money and to live a better life than them, so we can have a better life than what they gave us.

Diana shared:

The only thing I could think of was not eating junk food on the weekend. There's five kids and buying junk food once a week is pretty expensive so one of our punishments would be that we couldn't eat out. We never got allowances, so they couldn't really take anything away from us besides junk food and our phones because we didn't really go out and we didn't have anything extra that they could take away.

Devon shared:

I think in general poorer people don't have the education and resources to find more effective ways to discipline their children... Because of my parent's divorce, it caused my mom a lot of stress and additional trauma income wise. Probably leading to her being irritated frequently, which reflected her draconian ways of disciplining my siblings and I.

These respondents point to their families' income levels as influencing various aspects of how their parents disciplined them. The reasons for discipline, the methods employed, and the frequency of discipline were all shaped by the family's financial situation. Many respondents from low-income families indicated that their parents placed a strong emphasis on academic success due to their economic circumstances. They believed that the goal of achieving financial stability was a significant motivator for their parents' discipline, leading to strict measures aimed at ensuring educational achievement and future financial security. There were not any corresponding variables present in the survey to conduct statistical analyses for this attribution.

### *Parental upbringing as an external attribution*

Parental upbringing as an external attribution was mentioned by several interviewees across racial backgrounds.

Amongst white respondents,

Megan reflected on her mother's approach to discipline:

It was more when I was old enough to ask, "Why did you discipline in this way," that my mom would say, "When my mom disciplined me, she was very cold, so I don't want to be that way." This is why my mom decided to take on the idea of explaining something wrong versus making me feel like the bad part of the situation...my mom described her relationship with her mom. She said she doesn't feel open communicating with her own mom. It was something she wanted to foster between us, and taking on less of being a strong authority figure and being somewhat like an older sister or friend and walking through why you shouldn't do something.



Alexis recounted her mother's experiences: "...my mom mentioned that her mom disciplined her too much. Like one time she said she had to walk home from school in a plastic bag... I feel like they tried to do better than their parents by not hitting me."

Rufus shared:

He vaguely shared how he was disciplined as a child; his dad did corporal punishment. A couple of times he would bring it up to prove a point about me doing something wrong. Like if I said something rude, he'd say, "My dad would have smacked me for that." As a point of example, he would reference that, but he never hit me.

In this, we can see that these white respondents understand the reasoning behind their parents' choice of discipline methodology -- their parents wanted to do better for them.

From respondents of color,

Diana reflected: "They have that mentality of 'because I went through worse this is nothing'. And they think because it happened to them it's ok that they do the same to us."

Danny shared: "Their parents disciplined them harshly, and they said they ended up fine. And that I will too."

Jon shared: "My father said his dad was harsh to him, so his father is very demanding. He had high standards, and if he failed to meet his standards, his dad would get angry and would scold him. So he did not want to do the same to me."

Lucy shared: "I remember complaining that my mom was harsh on us and she just said that she had to endure far worse when she was younger."

These responses are interesting because not all respondents of color spoke about their parents' upbringing in a positive light, unlike white respondents. While some echoed similar sentiments to the white respondents, viewing their parents' experiences as a benchmark for

improvement, others viewed their parents mentioning their own harsh upbringing as “justifications” for their harsh forms of discipline. Many respondents of color expressed both frustration and understanding towards their parents' harsh disciplinary methods, attributing them to generational traditions and/or the belief that enduring hardship builds character. There were not any corresponding variables present in the survey to conduct statistical analyses for this attribution.

#### *Educational attainment as an external attribution*

Educational attainment as an external attribution was a factor mentioned by some interviewees of color, but not by any of the white respondents.

Jon rationalized: “I think my parents' educational level influenced [my discipline] more than economic class. The more educated you are, the more willing you are to use logic and reasoning and less to engage in simple punishments, such as physical punishments. Education level matters much more.”

Selena shared insights regarding her mother's psychology background: “I think [the kind of disciplinary techniques employed] depends on the parent, like my mom was a psych major, so it's a lot different for our family. Since my mom is a psychology major, she also knows the effects that come with bad discipline styles.”

Sophia discussed the impact of her parents' lack of mental health awareness: “A lack of understanding and education on mental health was more of an influence [on their discipline]. They don't believe in mental illness so they did not recognize the way their mental illness impacted them and then impacted their discipline with me. They didn't understand why I was behaving a certain way and blamed it on me instead like it was in my control.”

These quotes illustrate the belief that educational attainment can affect the quality of discipline and methods of discipline used (ie: reasoning and conversation over physical punishments, like spanking). Jon and Selena suggest that parents with higher education levels may prioritize reasoning and communication in discipline. Conversely, a lack of education in mental health can lead to misunderstandings and potentially harmful disciplinary approaches, as Sophia notes. There were not any corresponding variables present in the survey to conduct statistical analyses for this attribution.

#### *Immigration status as an external attribution*

Immigration status emerged as a significant external attribution for three Asian interviewees, shedding light on how they believe their parents' experiences as immigrants influenced their disciplinary approaches.

Troy reflected:

...I think a lot of [my discipline] relating to schoolwork was because I was raised with this expectation.... They wanted me to succeed in education and financially... That makes them want us to be more successful and to be able to earn money and to live a better life than them, so we can have a better life than what they gave us. My parents were both born in China, and they immigrated here.

Murrin shared:

I think just being from a third world country, it's already hard because of how much your parents expect you to be. And just being an Asian race, we're seen as hard working immigrants and that's what my parents always put upon me too and how they disciplined me. They were probably also stressed with issues they had in our home country and that pressure from my grandparents and uncles in Bangladesh... They would say that they worked hard to bring me here and that they feed me and buy me clothes just for me to act like an "American" and be a disgrace.

Lucy added to this narrative, reflecting on the expectations placed on immigrant families: “I think that in some senses, especially earlier on as an immigrant and an Asian family, there were expectations that we had to do or be better than someone who was born in the U.S. because we would never be enough.”

These responses highlight how the interviewees believe that their parents’ status as immigrants significantly influenced the ways they were disciplined and the reasons behind it. Troy, Murrin, and Lucy shared insights into how their immigrant parents' high expectations were shaped by the desire for them to have a better life in their new country. For example, Troy's upbringing reflected the expectation to excel in education and financially succeed, driven by the family's low-income background and immigrant experience. Similarly, Murrin recounted the pressure placed on her to uphold the image of hardworking Asian immigrants, instilled by her parents who had faced challenges in their home country. Lucy further emphasized the expectation for immigrant families to excel beyond those born in the U.S., illustrating how the pressure to succeed academically and financially was intertwined with their immigrant status. In this, we can see how these children make sense of their parents’ harsh discipline and/or high expectations. There were not any corresponding variables present in the survey to conduct statistical analyses for this attribution.

#### *Gender as an external attribution*

Two interviewees, both male, shared that they believe their parents’ gender had an effect on the method with which they chose to discipline them (gender as an external attribution). Danny shared: “I think my dad was wary of using physical discipline on my sister as much as me because she's a girl.” Devon shared a similar sentiment: “When I was younger and before my

parents divorced, my dad would only spank me and not my sisters. My dad didn't want to hit girls and my baby brother was too young for spankings.”

These accounts shed light on how gender norms and attitudes towards discipline shaped parental approaches, leading to differential treatment based on the gender of the child. They also show that the child is aware of how their or their parents' genders can affect how or why they are disciplined. There were not any corresponding variables present in the survey to conduct statistical analyses for this attribution.

#### *Relationship problems as an external attribution*

Two interviewees shared that they believe their parents' relationship problems had an effect on the frequency with which they were disciplined (relationship problems as an external attribution).

Devon shared:

Because of my parent's divorce, it caused my mom a lot of stress and additional trauma income wise. Probably leading to her being irritated frequently, which reflected her draconian ways of disciplining my siblings and I.

Murrin shared: “[They were probably stressed with] ...issues they had in our home country and that pressure from my grandparents and uncles in Bangladesh. So when they were stressed with that, I think they punished us more. There were not any corresponding variables present in the survey to conduct statistical analyses for this attribution.

#### *Age as an external attribution*

1 interviewee, Sunny, shared that she believed her parents' methodology and reasoning for discipline changed as they got older (attributed to age): “My parents are much older and have less stamina for yelling and whatnot so my siblings get away with way more things. My parents

are too tired to fight my siblings and I think they feel guilty for being harsh on me.” There were not any corresponding variables present in the survey to conduct statistical analyses for this attribution.

## Discussion

This study aimed to examine the extent to which race plays a role in how children conceptualize their parental discipline by exploring the perspectives of a sample of racially diverse students aged 18 to 24. First, I hypothesized that race would significantly influence children's conceptualizations of parental discipline. Findings from this study indicate that race played a significant role in influencing how children of different racial backgrounds attributed their parents' race as an external factor influencing discipline. However, our results did not show a mediating effect of race on other types of attributions related to other external factors like religion or socioeconomic status. Therefore, findings from this study best support hypothesis 2: race **moderately** influences children's conceptualizations of parental discipline. In this, race impacts child attribution in specifically racialized contexts, such as when attributing their parents' disciplinary methods to cultural norms within their racial community, but not when considering other external factors like socioeconomic status. The findings of this study also contribute to the ongoing discourse in the field of child studies by either bolstering or contradicting findings from related studies.

### *Race and Discipline*

Race played a moderating role in specific racialized contexts. Children of color perceived that their parents' race influenced their discipline, while white children did not. Many Black

respondents also shared the belief that their parents' race influenced the disciplinary techniques employed, particularly noting the prevalence of harsher and more physical disciplinary methods among Black parents. Asian respondents pointed to cultural messaging within their race, emphasizing academic performance, confrontational disciplinary practices, and strict adherence to rules within Asian households.

Nearly all respondents of color believed that disciplinary practices within their culture were much harsher compared to the perceived leniency and inefficacy that white children received in their discipline. This pattern suggests a potential difference in how children of different racial backgrounds perceive the reasons behind their parents' disciplinary actions. It was also revealed that children of color are acutely aware of the cultural norms within their race. Overall, respondents believed that their parents' race highly influenced the severity and types of discipline they experienced, as well as the reasons behind the discipline (e.g., academic expectations). Both white respondents and respondents of color shared a prevalent belief that white people do not receive discipline as effectively or harshly as other racial groups.

The minority of white respondents who believed their parents' race affected their discipline growing up also perceived that their parents' race resulted in them being treated with less harsh or physical discipline than their peers of color. These findings suggest that white respondents may harbor less resentment towards their parents' disciplinary strategies, possibly influenced by the perception that other racial groups experience more severe forms of discipline.

The observed racial variations in discipline align with previous research by Cooper et al. and Silveira et al. (2020), which found that Black parents in the United States were more likely to employ harsh physical discipline. In our study, Black children similarly reported experiencing stricter disciplinary styles compared to their white counterparts. The qualitative data provided

further insights into the experiences of Black respondents, who often attributed their parents' harsh/physical discipline techniques to their parents' race and the cultural norms within their racial community.

Contrary to Santa-Sosa et al.'s observation that "Some studies have found more favorable perceptions of harsh discipline practices among parents, and underreporting of child abuse among Asian American subgroups," Asian respondents within this study were actually less likely to hold favorable perceptions of harsh disciplinary practices common within their culture. The qualitative data revealed that Asian respondents believed that there is a strong emphasis on academic achievement and obedience, as well as a common usage of harsh disciplinary techniques, common within their race's culture. Many were critical of these expectations and norms for their discipline, with one respondent even mentioning the "fine line" between discipline and abuse prevalent in Asian cultures. Quantitative findings supported this, showing that Asian respondents were more likely to report "No" to adopting their parents' values in disciplinary strategies, indicating a reluctance to perpetuate these strict methods.

Regardless of race, nearly all respondents utilized external attributions when describing their parents' discipline. Their rationales for these attributions did not differ significantly across race. For example, in terms of religion, all respondents shared common experiences of their parents referencing the Bible when disciplining them, using religious teachings as a moral framework for behavior. While Black and white respondents were more likely to report feeling their parents' religious or spiritual practices influenced their parenting styles, it is important to note that this may not solely be due to their perception of greater influence; members of other racial groups in the survey could have grown up in non-religious households, influencing their



decision to mark “No” when asked if they believe religion played a major role in influencing their parents’ discipline.

### *Socioeconomic Status and Discipline*

Regarding socioeconomic status as an external attribution, rationales for such attributions did not differ significantly by race; instead, they varied more based on income level and parental immigration status. Many respondents from low-income families with immigrant parents rationalized that their parents’ income level influenced why they were disciplined -- their parents placed a strong emphasis on achieving academic success as a means to rise above their current economic circumstances. Respondents from higher-income families, on the other hand, were more likely to rationalize that their parents’ income level influenced the frequency of their discipline. One respondent from an affluent household shared that she believed her parents played a less active role in her discipline due to their busy work schedules. Another from a well-off family mentioned that he believed his mother was able to stay at home more due to their financial status, resulting in more opportunities for her to discipline him.

Silveira et al. (2020) noted a consistent finding in parental discipline research: parents of all ethnic backgrounds "are more likely to use harsh disciplinary techniques when they are more economically marginalized and experience higher levels of stress" (658). In this study, respondents from low-income backgrounds frequently mentioned their parents' emphasis on achieving academic success as a means to attain financial stability. However, qualitative data from the study contradicts this finding as respondents did not mention a higher likelihood of harsh disciplinary techniques being used; instead, they discussed a higher expectation for their academic success as a result of their economic situation. This suggests that while there is a

strong emphasis on academic achievement, the use of harsh disciplinary methods may not be as prevalent as expected in low-income families. It is important to note the small sample size in this study, however, so this finding should be interpreted with caution.

### *Parental Upbringing and Discipline*

When examining parental upbringing as an external attribution, race played a moderate role in influencing how children perceive the impact of their parents' upbringing on their own discipline. This influence may stem from the cultural context in which one's race is situated. White respondents were more inclined to view their parents' upbringing as a means to improve upon their own discipline, with parents drawing from their experiences with their own parents. While many respondents of color shared this perspective, seeing their parents' own experiences as a benchmark for improvement on the discipline they employ, others diverged by not highlighting their parents' upbringing as positively influential on their discipline. Many respondents of color viewed their parents mentioning their own harsh upbringing as "justifications" for their disciplinary actions and expressed a mix of frustration and understanding toward their parents' disciplinary methods, attributing them to generational traditions or the belief that enduring hardship builds character. Given that respondents of color already perceive their parents' race as a factor influencing their discipline, this could explain why their own parents' upbringing is discussed in a different light compared to white respondents. They might perceive the cultural tradition of employing physical discipline as a generational practice, which could be seen as a justification for their own use of harsh discipline.

### *Educational Attainment and Discipline*

Silveira et al. (2020) highlighted a trend where the use of harsh discipline was more common among less educated parents, indicating a potential lack of awareness regarding the harmful consequences of such techniques and the availability of alternative, more effective disciplinary methods. This study's qualitative data echoes this finding, with many respondents expressing the belief that higher levels of parental educational attainment correlate with less frequent use of physical punishments and dysfunctional disciplinary techniques. When considering educational attainment as an external attribution, rationales did not vary significantly by race. Across all racial backgrounds, respondents who mentioned this attribution believed that higher levels of education influenced the quality and methods of discipline used by their parents. They rationalized that parents with higher education levels were more inclined to use reasoning and less harsh forms of punishment, while those with lower education levels were more likely to resort to harsh disciplinary methods. Additionally, respondents noted that a lack of education, whether related to discipline or mental health awareness, could contribute to the use of more harmful disciplinary techniques.

### *Immigration Status and Discipline*

Regarding parental immigration status as an external attribution, it is challenging to determine whether race mediated response outcomes. Only three Asian respondents made attributions related to parental immigration status. Given the small sample size of 20 students, it is possible that students of other races did not have parents who were immigrants, making it difficult to draw conclusions. However, all three of these Asian respondents believed that their parents' status as immigrants led to harsher discipline and higher expectations placed upon them.

### *Gender and Discipline*

When considering gender as an external attribution, only two respondents made this attribution, making it challenging to draw conclusions related to race. However, it is noteworthy that both of these respondents identified as males. They expressed the belief that they experienced more physical discipline than their sisters due to their parents' gender (e.g., their dad did not want to discipline girls) and their own gender. This finding parallels how respondents of color believed that their parents' race influenced their discipline while growing up. If children are more likely to experience harsher discipline based on factors such as race or gender, they may be more inclined to attribute their parents' discipline to these factors due to the negative outcomes associated with them.

### *Relationship Stress, Age, and Discipline*

When examining parental relationship problems and age as external attributions, there were few interviewees who made such attributions, making it challenging to draw generalizable conclusions about whether race mediated these responses. However, it was observed that some respondents believed that their parents' relationship problems affected the frequency of their discipline. If they were more stressed due to marital problems or family problems, respondents would report higher frequencies of being disciplined.

When looking at age as an external attribution, one respondent mentioned that her parents' disciplinary methods and reasoning changed as they aged. They displayed less stamina for harsh disciplinary techniques like yelling or spanking and expressed feelings of guilt about their past disciplinary actions. This suggests that parents' relationship dynamics and age can

influence their approach to discipline, potentially impacting how their children perceive and experience disciplinary practices.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Several limitations should be noted in the methodology of this research, affecting its generalizability and potential biases. Firstly, the survey questions focused on participants who grew up with two parental figures (where one figure serves as the mother figure and the other serves as the father figure), which may not represent those with different family structures. Additionally, the sample size (n=100) is too small to be generalizable or to obtain statistically significant results. It is important to note that this study utilized a convenience sampling method, which means that participants were not randomly selected from a larger population. This non-probability sampling method reduces the generalizability of the findings beyond the specific group of participants included in the study. To improve response rates, future researchers could consider offering incentives for completing the survey, as many participants found the length (about 20 minutes) cumbersome. Conducting the surveys and interviews with a larger population and with a random sample could help in securing more robust findings. It is also crucial to acknowledge the underrepresentation of Native American populations in the study, highlighting the need for more inclusive sampling in future research.

Furthermore, the study sampled from college students in Atlanta, Georgia, who are likely to have regular access to the internet and digital devices. These students were also more active in checking their school emails. Therefore, the findings may not apply to children in other geographical regions or those from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Students with special associations to their childhood experiences may also introduce a sampling bias by being more

inclined to participate in the survey. For example, interviewees who have a strong desire to share intense emotional experiences from their past may be more motivated to take the survey. This self-selection bias could impact the data collected, as those with particularly negative or intense experiences may be overrepresented in the sample. It is important to consider this potential bias when interpreting the results, as they may not fully represent the broader population's experiences with parental discipline.

The use of self-reported data in the assessments also introduces potential answering biases and social desirability effects, despite efforts to ensure participant anonymity. Moreover, the data coding was performed by a single coder, which may have led to overlooking certain slang or concepts used by participants of different races. Additionally, interviewees might feel more comfortable disclosing information to an interviewer of the same race, impacting the depth of responses.

Lastly, the study employed a cross-sectional design, limiting the ability to track changes in child conceptualizations of parental discipline over time. Future research could build upon these findings by employing a longitudinal design to explore how these perceptions evolve throughout childhood and adolescence. This study was conducted with young adult participants, not with children, due to time constraints and IRB guidelines. Future research involving children and adolescents would be valuable to track how their conceptualizations of parental discipline evolve as they grow older.

## Conclusion

Once again, it is important to note why research focused on parental discipline matters; parental discipline serves as a crucial aspect for a child's development, shaping their behavior, self-perception, and overall well-being. The results from this study shed light on the relationship between race and parental discipline, offering valuable insights into how children of different racial backgrounds perceive and interpret their parents' disciplinary strategies.

In this study, we found racial variations in how children conceptualize parental discipline. A significant majority of respondents of color believed that their parents' race played a substantial role in how and why they were disciplined. Respondents of color, particularly Black, Latinx, and Asian individuals, often described experiencing stricter and harsher forms of discipline compared to white respondents, aligning with previous research on racial disparities in discipline practices. They often attributed these harsh methods to their parents' race and cultural norms within their racial community. These findings contribute to our understanding of how race influences (interpretation of and response to) parental discipline, highlighting the diverse experiences children have based on their racial backgrounds.

Moreover, this study offers a nuanced perspective by focusing on the child's viewpoint. As of right now, most of the literature within child studies is adult-centric and excludes the population it is studying, which can potentially lead to self-justifying narratives. It is crucial for us to develop a better understanding of how young children make sense of their discipline growing up, as it can profoundly impact their mental well-being and sense of self during a pivotal stage of development. The child's perspective provides depth and complexity to our understanding of parental discipline, showing that children not only experience discipline differently based on their race but also interpret it through cultural norms, academic pressures,

and familial expectations. For example, respondents of color were keenly aware of the cultural norms within their race, leading them to attribute their parents' discipline to factors like race and gender. This nuanced understanding challenges simplistic narratives and underscores the importance of considering the child's perspective in studies of parental discipline. By centering the child's viewpoint, we gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of young individuals, offering valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and parents alike. Understanding how children perceive and internalize their parents' discipline allows us to provide more tailored support and interventions.

In conclusion, this study highlights the complex relationship between race and parental discipline by showing how children of different racial backgrounds interpret and experience their discipline in varied ways. Moving forward, research and interventions should continue to prioritize the child's viewpoint, recognizing its impact on children's mental well-being and self-development. As we strive for more equitable and effective disciplinary practices, the voices and experiences of children must remain central.



## **Appendices**

### **APPENDIX A: Survey Instrument**

## Parental Discipline Survey

- The **purpose** of this survey is to **gain a better perspective on how children make sense of their parents' discipline**.
- The first section of this survey will ask questions to **determine your eligibility** in the study. If eligible, the next set of questions will ask you about your experiences as a child with parental discipline.
- At the end of the survey, you may opt to participate in a **1-on-1 interview via Zoom** with an interviewer from the study to talk about your experiences in more depth.
- Participation in this survey is highly appreciated; **participants have the right to not answer a question they are uncomfortable with answering** and can also withdraw participation in the survey at any time. Participant responses will be incredibly valuable in better understanding child perspectives on parental discipline. Providing accurate and honest responses to these questions will help ensure data quality. All data collected from this survey will be **kept confidential**.
- If you have any **questions or concerns**, feel free to contact the co-PI of the study via email at amy.nguyen2@emory.edu or via phone at 678-577-8566. Once again, thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

\* Indicates required question

### Section 1: Eligibility

The following questions will help determine your eligibility to participate in the study.

What is your age? \*

- Under 18 years of age
- 18 years of age
- 19 years of age
- 20 years of age
- 21 years of age
- 22 years of age
- 23 years of age
- 24 years of age
- Over 24 years of age

Do you currently attend Emory University, Georgia Tech, or Georgia State University? \*

- Yes: Emory University
- Yes: Georgia Tech
- Yes: Georgia State University
- No

Are you proficient in understanding and communicating in English? \*

Yes

No

Do you fall into any of the following categories: adults unable to consent, pregnant women, prisoners, cognitively impaired individuals, or individuals with impaired decision-making capacity? \*

Yes

No

Ineligible to Participate

Unfortunately, you do not meet the eligibility requirements to participate in this study. Thank you for your time and feel free to reach out with any questions to the co-PI.

Obtaining Consent

Please review the following document using the link below. This document will explain the study overview; explain our data collection practices; and provide contact information in the case that you have any questions regarding your participation in this study. Once you have finished reviewing the document, please indicate whether or not you consent to participating in this study. \*

Consent document

link: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ZHbCXJ35MxmNaVkGR3P15-Hoh-bQf1Gf/edit?usp=sharing&oid=118066125307045607842&rtpof=true&sd=true>

- Yes, I consent to participating in this study.
- No, I do not consent to participating in this study.

## Section 2: Background Information

Congratulations! You are eligible to participate in this study and will carry on to the next section. The following questions will ask you for your background information.

What is your gender identity? \*

- Female
- Male
- Transgender
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say / unsure
- Other:

What is your race? Check all that apply. \*

- White or Caucasian (Eg: German, Irish, English, Italian, Polish, French, etc)
- Black or African American (Eg: African American, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somalian, etc)
- Hispanic or Latino (Eg: Puerto Rican, Mexican, Colombian, Honduran, Guatemalan, Venezuelan, etc)
- Asian or Pacific Islander (Eg: Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, etc)
- Native American or Alaska Native (Eg: Navajo nation, Blackfeet tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Native Village or Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, etc)
- Multi-racial or Biracial
- Other:

Are you of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin? \*

- No
- Yes
- Prefer not to say / unsure
- Other:

What is your annual income? \*

- Less than \$20,000
- Between \$20,000-\$35,000
- Between \$35,000-\$50,000
- Between \$50,000-\$65,000
- Between \$65,000-80,000
- More than \$80,000
- Prefer not to say / unsure

Growing up, what was your household income? \*

- Less than \$20,000
- Between \$20,000-\$35,000
- Between \$35,000-\$50,000
- Between \$50,000-\$65,000
- Between \$65,000-80,000
- More than \$80,000
- Prefer not to say / unsure

What is the highest level of schooling that you have completed? \*

- High school diploma/GED or less
- Some college, no degree
- Associate's degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Graduate degree or higher

What is your estimated current GPA?

Your answer

What is your religion or religious affiliation (if any)? \*

- Christian: Catholic
- Christian: Protestant
- Muslim
- Hindu
- Buddhist
- Jewish
- Mormon
- Atheist
- Agnostic
- Other:



What is your sexual orientation?

- Heterosexual/Straight
- Homosexual/Gay/Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Pansexual
- Asexual
- Prefer not to say / unsure
- Other:

What country were you raised in?

Your answer

What country do you currently live in?

Your answer

What is your primary language?

- English
- Spanish
- Chinese
- French
- German
- Other:

Who were you primarily raised by as a child?

- Both parents
- Single mother
- Single father
- Stepparent(s)
- Grandparents
- Other:

Were you raised by a foster figure or an adoptive parent?

- Yes, by a foster figure
- Yes, by an adoptive parent
- No
- Other:

What is your parents' marital status?

- Married
- Divorced
- Separated
- Widowed
- Never married
- Other:

Married Parents

Is this marriage their first marriage or have they been married before?

- First marriage
- Married before
- Other:

### Section 3: Parent Background Information

The following questions will ask you questions about the background of your parent(s).

Are you the first child your parental figure has raised?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Demographic Questions for Mother Figure

What was the race of the person who served as your primary **mother** figure during your childhood?

- White or Caucasian (Eg: German, Irish, English, Italian, Polish, French, etc)
- Black or African American (Eg: African American, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somalian, etc)
- Hispanic or Latino (Eg: Puerto Rican, Mexican, Colombian, Honduran, Guatemalan, Venezuelan, etc)
- Asian or Pacific Islander (Eg: Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, etc)
- Native American or Alaska Native (Eg: Navajo nation, Blackfeet tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Native Village or Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, etc)
- Multi-racial or Biracial
- Prefer not to say / unsure
- Mother figure was not present during childhood.
- Other:

What country was your primary mother figure born in? Put "NA" if this does not apply to you or "unsure" if you are unsure.

Your answer

What is the highest level of schooling that your primary mother figure completed?

- High school diploma/GED or less
- Some college (no degree) or trade school
- Associate's degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctorate or professional degree
- Prefer not to say / unsure

If they attended college, what did they major in?  
Put "NA" if they did not attend college.

Your answer

What is your primary mother figure's current job?

Your answer

What is your primary mother figure's religion or religious affiliation (if any)?

- Christian: Catholic
- Christian: Protestant
- Muslim
- Hindu
- Buddhist
- Jewish
- Mormon
- Atheist
- Agnostic
- Prefer not to say / unsure
- Other:

Demographic Questions for Father Figure

What was the race of the person who served as your primary **father** figure during your childhood?

- White or Caucasian (Eg: German, Irish, English, Italian, Polish, French, etc)
- Black or African American (Eg: African American, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somalian, etc)
- Hispanic or Latino (Eg: Puerto Rican, Mexican, Colombian, Honduran, Guatemalan, Venezuelan, etc))
- Asian or Pacific Islander (Eg: Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, etc)
- Native American or Alaska Native (Eg: Navajo nation, Blackfeet tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Native Village or Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, etc)
- Multi-racial or Biracial
- Prefer not to say / unsure
- Other:

What country was your primary father figure born in? Put "NA" if this does not apply to you or "unsure" if you are unsure.

Your answer



What is the highest level of schooling that your primary father figure completed?

- High school diploma/GED or less
- Some college (no degree) or trade school
- Associate's degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctorate or professional degree
- Prefer not to say / unsure

If they attended college, what did they major in?  
Put "NA" if they did not attend college.

Your answer

What is your primary father figure's current job?

Your answer



How would you rate your agreement to the following statement?

"I feel comfortable with my mom."

Please respond on the 5-point Likert scale, where 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

How would you rate your agreement to the following statement?

"I feel comfortable with my dad."

Please respond on the 5-point Likert scale, where 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

To what extent do you share parts of your life (ie: update on social life, school, issues, etc.) with your **parents**?

- Not at all
- Very little
- Somewhat
- A lot
- Completely

To what extent do you share parts of your life (ie: update on social life, school, issues, etc.) with your **mom**?

- Not at all
- Very little
- Somewhat
- A lot
- Completely

To what extent do you share parts of your life (ie: update on social life, school, issues, etc.) with your **dad**?

- Not at all
- Very little
- Somewhat
- A lot
- Completely

Which parts of your life do you commonly share with your parents?

- Social Life (e.g. relationships with friends, family, or romantic partners)
- Academics (e.g. school work, application,s academic goals)
- Career (e.g. job search, interviewing, career planning)
- Health (e.g. physical and mental health concerns)
- Finance (e.g. debt, expenses, income, budgeting)
- Hobbies (e.g. music, art, entertainment)
- Spirituality or Religiosity (e.g. practices, beliefs, prayers)

Are there any parts of your life that you avoid sharing or discussing with your parents? If so, why?

Your answer

How many siblings do you have?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- Other:

Siblings

If you have more than one sibling, please answer the questions below about your oldest sibling.

What age is your sibling?

- Under 18 years of age
- 18-24 years of age
- 25-34 years of age
- 35-44 years of age
- 45-54 years of age
- 55-64 years of age
- 65 or older years of age

What is your sibling's gender identity?

- Female
- Male
- Transgender
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say / unsure
- Other:

What race is your sibling?

- White or Caucasian (Eg: German, Irish, English, Italian, Polish, French, etc)
- Black or African American (Eg: African American, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somalian, etc)
- Hispanic or Latino (Eg: Puerto Rican, Mexican, Colombian, Honduran, Guatemalan, Venezuelan, etc))
- Asian or Pacific Islander (Eg: Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, etc)
- Native American or Alaska Native (Eg: Navajo nation, Blackfeet tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Native Village or Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, etc)
- Multi-racial or Biracial
- Prefer not to say / unsure
- Other:

Is your sibling biologically related to you?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say / unsure

Section 5

During your childhood, was there anyone else living in your household (excluding your mother figure, father figure, or sibling(s))?

- Yes
- No



If there was someone else living in your household, what was their relationship to you (ie: aunt, uncle, grandparent, family friend, etc.)?

- Aunt
- Uncle
- Grandmother
- Grandfather
- Family friend
- There was not anyone else living in our household.
- Other:

If there was someone else living in your household, how would you describe your relationship with them growing up? For example, did they give you a lot of orders? What did you guys do together?

Put "NA" if this does not apply to you.

Your answer

As a child, did your parents discipline or punish you when you did something they didn't like? (Discipline is a punishment or act used to correct behavior.)

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say / unsure

If they did discipline you, what would they discipline you for? Please put "NA" if this does not apply to you.

Your answer

How would your parents discipline you? Please select all that apply.

- Spank you
- Slap you
- Take something away from you
- Set a rule
- Give you extra chores
- Humiliate / shame you
- Ignore you
- Raise their voice at you
- Throw things at you
- Grab or shake you
- Threaten to kick you out
- Put you in time out
- Ground you
- Give you a warning
- Reward you for not misbehaving
- Have a conversation with you
- Discipline was not used
- Other:

Please rank the following disciplinary strategies from most favorable (1st) to least favorable (5th). \*

	Raise their voice at you	Slap you	Reward you for not misbehaving	Ignore you	Have a conversation with you on why what you did was wrong
1st	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2nd	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3rd	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4th	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5th	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Do you believe that parents should use physical punishment (such as spanking) as a form of discipline?

- Yes
- No

Do you believe that parents should use verbal punishment (such as yelling or threatening) as a form of discipline?

- Yes
- No

What would your preferred method of discipline be for yourself? Why?

Your answer

If you had to choose one way to discipline your child, how would you discipline them?

- Physical Punishment
- Verbal Punishment

Would you ever pretend to agree with your parents or lie in order for them to stop punishing you?

- Yes
- No

Have you ever felt scared or anxious when your parents disciplined you?

- Yes
- No

How often did your parents discipline you *when you misbehaved*?

- Every time
- Almost every time
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

On average, how frequently were you disciplined by your parents in a typical week?

- 0 times per week
- 1-2 times per week
- 3-4 times per week
- 5-6 times per week
- 7 or more times per week

Do you understand why your parents discipline you when you misbehave?

Yes

No

If you marked "Yes" to the last question, please elaborate on your understanding. If you marked "No," put "NA."

Your answer

Have there been times where you avoided doing something just because you didn't want to face punishment, but not because you truly thought what you were doing was considered wrong?

Yes

No

Have you ever felt like the way your parents disciplined you was too harsh for what you did?

Yes

No

If you marked "Yes" to the last question, what did they do that was too harsh? If you marked "No," put "NA."

Your answer

What did you do to receive this harsh punishment? Put "NA" if this question does not apply to you.

Your answer

What do you think would have been an appropriate punishment? Put "NA" if this question does not apply to you.

Your answer

Why do you think your parents think that disciplining you in the way(s) they did was effective?

Your answer



When you were being disciplined, did you ever argue with your parents?

Yes

No

If you did argue with them, do you think your arguing got through to them? How did they respond to your arguing? Put "NA" if you did not argue.

Your answer

If you did not argue with them, did you ever want to? If you wanted to, what prevented you from arguing? Put "NA" if you did argue.

Your answer

If you disagreed with the way your parents disciplined you, did you say anything to them about it?

Yes

No

If you did, how did they respond? If you didn't, put 'NA.'

Your answer

If you didn't and disagreed, was there a reason why you didn't mention anything about it to them? If you did, put "NA."

Your answer

Do you feel like the way your parents disciplined you caused you to see them in a different light?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
- Prefer not to say / unsure

Are you grateful for or resentful of their disciplinary strategies?

- Grateful
- Resentful
- Neither
- Prefer not to say / unsure

Do your parents still discipline you?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say / unsure

If your parents still discipline you, is there a difference between how they discipline you now vs. how they disciplined you when you were younger? If so, what is the difference? Put "NA" if they no longer discipline you.

Your answer

When your parents disciplined you, did they explain why they were doing so / did they give you a reason as to why what you were doing was wrong?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say / unsure

When you get in trouble with your parents, what normally happens? How do your parents react?

Your answer

Were you ever disciplined for reasons relating to school?

- Yes
- No

What values do you think your parents most reflected in their disciplinary strategies?

- Obedience
- Respect
- Politeness
- Honesty
- Anti-Laziness
- Gender roles
- Familism
- Discipline
- Other:

Have you taken on any of the values you mentioned in the previous question?

- Yes
- No

Do you feel like your parents' religious or spiritual practices influence their parenting styles?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say / unsure

Have your parents ever called you disrespectful?

- Yes
- No

If they have called you disrespectful, what made them do so? If they have not called you disrespectful, put "NA."

Your answer

Would you ever cry when you were being disciplined?

- Yes
- No

If so, why did you cry? Put "NA" if this does not apply to you.

Your answer

Which parent do you think disciplines you more?

- Mother figure
- Father figure
- Equal amount of discipline from both
- Other:

Which parent do you think disciplines you *more effectively*? Meaning, you learned more from it?

- Mother figure
- Father figure
- Equal amount of discipline from both
- Other:

Why were they more effective?

Your answer

Does one parent discipline you more about one specific kind of action? (For example, one parent might punish you for something related to school and another parent might punish you for something related to your attitude.)

Yes

No

If so, what topics does your mother discipline you more on and what topics does your father discipline you more on? Put "NA" if you answered "No" to the last question.

Your answer

Did your parents ever mention race in their reasoning for disciplining you? (I.e. mentioning that you shouldn't "feed into" a certain racial stereotype.)

Yes

No

Do you feel like your parents' race plays a big role in how or why they discipline you?

Yes

No



To what extent do you believe that your race impacted your relationship with your parent growing up?

- No influence
- Moderate influence
- Significant influence

To what extent do you believe that your parent's racial identities impacted which disciplinary strategies your parents chose to use?

- No influence
- Moderate influence
- Significant influence

Do you believe that race plays a significant role in shaping attitudes related to parental discipline?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

If you marked "Yes" or "Maybe" to the last question, please explain why you think that is. If you put "No," put "NA."

Your answer

What do you think your parents' motivations are for disciplining you the way you do? (Why do you think they punish you this way? ie: career success, being a religiously "good" person, etc)

Your answer

Do you think your parents' disciplinary strategies affected your self esteem or your mental health? How has it affected how you view yourself? Do you think they shaped parts of your personality or core values?

Your answer

Which ways do you think your parents could improve their disciplinary strategies?

Your answer

Do you notice any similarities between how you interact with your parents and how you interact with authoritative figures, such as teachers or adults?

- Yes
- No

If you marked "Yes" to the last question, what similarities have you noticed?

Your answer

Were your parents ever stressed with work or anything else when you were growing up? (I.e: another sibling)

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say / unsure

If you marked "Yes" to the last question, do you think this had any effect on how they discipline you? (Did they discipline you more or less when they were stressed?) Do you feel like your parents' stress plays a role in how or when they discipline you?

Your answer

Did your parents reward you for good behaviors?

- Yes
- No

If they did, what kind of behaviors did they reward you for (ie: saying they are proud of you for getting an A)? Put "NA" if you marked "No" to the last question.

Your answer

How would they reward you? Put "NA" if this question does not apply to you.

- Material incentives (money, food, etc)
- Verbal praise (compliments, etc)
- Physical affection (hug, high five, etc)
- Other:

Do you have friends whose parents discipline or reward them differently?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say / unsure

If so, how differently do their parents discipline or reward them? Are there different reasons? Different punishments/rewards?

Your answer

Do you think your parents' disciplinary strategies were effective?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say / unsure

In your parents' culture or family, how were kids traditionally disciplined?

Your answer

Did your parents agree or disagree with this traditional way of disciplining children?

- Agree
- Disagree
- Prefer not to say / unsure

What reasons did they give for agreeing or disagreeing?

Your answer

Do your parents ever reference or talk about how their parents disciplined them?

Yes

No

Do you get where your parents are coming from in how or why they choose to discipline you?

Yes

No

Prefer not to say / unsure

What have you learned (if anything) from your parents' discipline?

Your answer

How would you describe the disciplinary style used by your parental figures when you were growing up? Please choose one of the following options that best describes your experience:

- I experienced strict disciplinary actions from my parental figures.
- I experienced lenient disciplinary actions from my parental figures.
- I experienced balanced disciplinary actions from my parental figures.

If you were a parent, how would you discipline your child differently than how your parent disciplined you? Why?

Your answer

If there is anything else you'd like to mention about how you make sense of your parents' disciplinary practices, please note so here.

Your answer

We understand that some of the questions in this survey deal with sensitive topics that may elicit feelings of emotional or psychological distress. If this is the case, please feel free to reach out to the following resources for help. No response to this question is necessary!

- For Emory University students: counseling and psychological services are available at [counseling.emory.edu](https://counseling.emory.edu) or 404-727-7450.
- For Georgia State University students: the Georgia State Counseling Center is available at [counseling.gsu.edu](https://counseling.gsu.edu) or 404-413-1640.
- For Georgia Tech students: Georgia Tech's Center for Mental Health Care & Resources is available at [mentalhealth.gatech.edu](https://mentalhealth.gatech.edu) or 404-894-2575.

Feedback for this survey is highly appreciated, but not necessary. You may provide any feedback regarding your experience in taking this survey here.

Your answer

Congratulations! You have made it to the end of this survey. Would you like to participate in a 1 on 1 interview via Zoom to share more about your experiences with parental discipline? Participation in these interviews is greatly appreciated, but not mandatory.

- No
- Yes

Interview Contact Information



Thank you for your desire to participate in the interview segment of this study. \*  
Please provide an email, phone number, or other form of contact so that the co-PI  
can reach out to you and schedule an appointment.

Your answer

## **APPENDIX B: Interview Guide**

### *GAINING INFORMED CONSENT*

1. Hi, (interviewee name)! My name is Amy Nguyen and I am a senior undergraduate student at Emory University majoring in sociology. I'll be interviewing you today for the research study. In order to gain informed consent, I'll first begin by introducing you to the study overview. Does this sound good?
2. [Review of the consent document, as attached in the IRB submission, will take place here]

### *DATA QUESTIONS*

1. Okay, so I'll get started with the interview. I'll be asking you more about your family life. I'll begin by asking, "What are your parents like?" Describe them in any way you'd like.
2. Overall, how would you describe your experience with your parents' discipline? Are there any specific memories that stick out to you?
3. Would your parents ever mention religion in their discipline with you? If they did, what kinds of things would they mention?

4. Would your parents ever mention your gender in their discipline with you? If they did, what kinds of things would they mention?
5. Would your parents ever mention race in their discipline with you? If they did, what kinds of things would they mention?
6. Do you think your family's income growing up affected how you were disciplined?
7. Would your parents discipline your siblings differently than they did you? If they did, what was different?
8. What would you normally get disciplined for as a child?
9. Would your parents ever explain to you why they were disciplining you?
10. As you've grown older, has the method they have chosen to discipline you with changed? If it has changed, how so?
11. What are your thoughts on physical discipline?
12. If you were to raise a child, how would you discipline them if they did something you did not agree with?
13. Would your parents ever mention how they were disciplined growing up?
14. Do you think your parents' race had any effect on the way they chose to discipline you?
15. Would you notice children of different races being disciplined differently?
16. If you could change anything about your parents' discipline, what would you change and why?
17. Do you have any questions for me?

**Parental Discipline Research Study:**

We want to learn more about your experiences!

# Research Participants Needed



This research study is conducted at Emory University and designed with the goal of gaining a better perspective on how children make sense of their parent's discipline. We are searching for participants that are willing to answer questions about their childhood experiences for our online survey. The survey will take an estimated 20 minutes to complete. Participants in the survey may opt to participate in a 1 on 1 interview via Zoom to talk about their experiences in more depth. If you are interested, please scan the QR code below or visit the following link to participate and learn more: <https://forms.gle/JmR1LCwBPXMZHot7>



## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

We're looking for:

- English-speaking college students between the ages of 18-24 from the campuses of Emory University, Georgia Tech, and Georgia State University

## WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Contact the Co-PI of the study:

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**APPENDIX D: Email Template***Email subject line:*

Nguyen Request for Circulation of Research Participant Recruitment Flyer

*Email text:*

Good morning, Dr. [Last name]!

I hope this email finds you well! My name is Amy Nguyen and I am currently an undergraduate senior at Emory University pursuing an honors thesis in the Sociology Department.

For my thesis, I am conducting a research study designed with the goal of gaining a better perspective on how children make sense of their parent's discipline. To study this, I am asking undergraduate students (ages 18-24) to fill out an online survey that will ask questions about their childhood experiences. The survey will take an estimated 20 minutes to complete.

Participants in the survey may opt to participate in a 1 on 1 interview via Zoom to talk about their experiences in more depth. If they are interested in participating, they can scan the QR code in the flyer or visit the following link to participate and learn more:

<https://forms.gle/JmR1LCwBPXMZHiot7>.

I am emailing in the hopes that you may be able to support this initiative by sharing my recruitment flyer and the survey link with undergraduate students in your classes/department listserv! I need a large enough sample size to conduct statistical analyses and draw generalizable

conclusions, so I would greatly appreciate your support! I have attached the survey flyer to this email.

Please reach out to me at amy.nguyen2@emory.edu if you have any questions! Thank you so much for taking the time to read this email.

[Attachment of recruitment flyer in both PDF and JPG format]

Best regards,

Amy Nguyen

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