Examining Sources of Social Norms Supporting Child Corporal Punishment Among Low-Income Black, Latino, and White Parents

Hue Trong Duong
Georgia State University, hduong13@gsu.edu

Jennifer L. Monahan
University of Georgia, jmonahan@uga.edu

Laura M. Mercer Kollar
yzq4@cdc.gov

Joanne Klevens
Universidad del Bosque

Recommended Citation
Duong, H. T., Monahan, J. L., Mercer Kollar, L. M., & Klevens, J. (2022). Examining sources of social norms supporting child corporal punishment among low-income Black, Latino, and White Parents. Health Communication, 37(11), 1413-1422. https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2021.1895418

Examining Sources of Social Norms Supporting Child Corporal Punishment among Low-income Black, Latino, and White Parents

Authors:
Hue Trong Duong (corresponding author)[1]
Jennifer L. Monahan[2]
Laura M. Mercer Kollar[3]
Joanne Klevens[3]

Author affiliations:
[1]Georgia State University, Department of Communication
[2]University of Georgia, Franklin College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Communication Studies
[3]Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention

Abstract

Child corporal punishment is a prevalent public health problem in the U.S. Although corporal punishment is sustained through parents' perceptions of social norms supporting this discipline behavior, little research has investigated where these normative perceptions come from. To fill this gap, we conducted 13 focus groups including 75 low-income Black, Latino, and White parents across five states in the U.S. Results revealed that one influential source of Black and White parents' perceived norms was their positive framing of corporal punishment experiences during childhood. Furthermore, Black parents formed normative perceptions based on identification with parents in their racial/ethnic group, while White parents did so with parents sharing the same generation. Results are interpreted in light of the false consensus effect and self-categorization theory. In contrast, Latino parents viewed their childhood experience of corporal punishment as negative and distanced their parenting practices from those practiced in their countries of origin, suggesting an influence of acculturation. Their perceived norms were likely transmitted through interpersonal communication within their social networks. These findings shed light on how social norms are formed and in turn guide parents' use of corporal punishment as a tool to discipline children.

Examining Sources of Social Norms Supporting Child Corporal Punishment among Low-income Black, Latino, and White Parents

In the United States (U.S.), at least 1 in 7 children have experienced child abuse and/or neglect in the past year (Finkelhor et al., 2015). In 2018, nearly 1,770 children died of abuse and neglect in the U.S. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2020). In 2017, child protection services carried out investigation responses involving over 3.5 million children with approximately 18% relating to physical abuse, second only to child neglect (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2019). Corporal punishment (CP) is defined as "the use of physical force with the intention of causing a child to experience pain but not injury for the purposes of correction or control of the child's behavior" (Straus, 2001, p. 4). The CDC (2020) considers CP a form of child physical abuse. The most common forms of CP behavior are spanking, grabbing a child roughly, and hitting a child with an object (Straus, 2001). A rigorous meta-analysis of 75 studies including almost 161,000 children found a consistent association between CP and increased risk of antisocial behavior, aggression, mental health problems, and negative relationships with parents (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016).

Strategies targeting CP behavior are necessary to prevent child physical abuse (Fortson et al., 2016). Preventing CP is particularly challenging due to the persistence of social norms that support CP (Klika et al., 2019; Vaughan-Eden et al., 2019). Parents believe that CP is widely implemented and approved by other parents (Klevens et al., 2019). Such normative beliefs exist at the individual and psychological level because parents likely do not have access to actual norms of the behavior (Lapinski & Rimal, 2005). To date, there has been little research investigating why and how parents from different racial/ethnic groups perceive that CP is prevalent and socially approved. Our main goal is to gain an in-depth understanding of what drives parents' perceptions that CP behavior is prevalent and highly approved in their communities. Past research shows that low-income parents reported a high risk of hitting children due to socio-economic stress and beliefs in the effectiveness of CP (Black et al., 2001; Mitchell, 2008). Thus, we conducted an analysis of 13 focus groups with low-income Black, Latino, and White parents across five states in the U.S. Understanding social norms supporting CP behavior can inform campaigns to prevent child physical abuse and promote safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments for children.

Corporal Punishment as a Communicative Behavior

While the majority of child physical abuse research conceives that CP constitutes a problematically psychological behavior, communication scholars argue that CP is a communicative behavior (Infante, 2005; Wilson et al., 2010). Specifically, they view CP as a form of non-verbal message that may produce different meanings. CP can also be viewed as a non-verbal communicative strategy for parents to gain compliance when other methods fail, particularly when parents are not able to achieve compliance with verbal persuasion (Roberto et al., 2007). CP is often accompanied by parents' verbal messages to justify the behavior or express verbal aggressiveness (Kassing et al., 2005). Accordingly, CP is a communicative behavior, which is influenced by an array of factors, including cultural norms, religious beliefs, and race/ethnicity. While CP research has gained a foothold in the social work and public health literature, little health communication research has examined this behavioral domain (Straus, 2002). Recently, scholars have suggested that communication interventions should be considered in addition to conventional social work approaches to change perceived norms surrounding CP behavior (Klevens et al., 2019; MacMillan & Mikton, 2017).

Perceived Norms of Corporal Punishment Behavior

Social norms are shared patterns of feeling, thought, and behavior in a social group (Hogg & Tindale, 2005), and exist at two levels: collective and perceived norms. Collective norms operate at the social system level and reflect the actual social codes of conduct for a behavior, while perceived norms refer to individuals' interpretations of the collective norms and thus operate at the individual level (Rimal & Lapinski, 2015). Perceived norms are further conceptualized as descriptive norms and injunctive norms (Cialdini et al., 1990). Descriptive norms describe a behavior that is considered as typical in a community. Theorists posit that when people perceive something as typical, they are likely motivated to think that it must be a sensible thing to follow because it is seen as adaptive and effective (Lapinski & Rimal, 2005). Injunctive norms, on the other hand, specify what ought to be done (Cialdini et al., 1990). People are motivated to conform to injunctive norms because failure to do so likely lead to social sanctions (Lapinski & Rimal, 2005). Both descriptive and injunctive norms are activated to fit an immediate situation where individuals infer norms from behavior of others in their perceived social groups (i.e., reference group; Hogg & Reid, 2006).

The extant literature suggests the pervasiveness of social norms supporting CP in the U.S. (Klika et al., 2019; Taylor et al., 2016). This literature largely delves into the role of collective norms, as guided by the ecological model of child maltreatment (Belsky, 1980). Researchers conceptualize norms as patterns of cognition and behavior that are typical of a social group, which influence attitudes toward child rearing (Deater-Deckard & Lansford, 2017). Scholars recently suggested examining social norms at the individual level (Klika et al., 2019; Vaughan-Eden et al., 2019). In a recent study, Klevens et al. (2019) found that the majority of parents regardless of their racial/ethnic groups believe that most other parents hit children. These parents also agree that people whose opinion they respected support spanking children for disciplinary purposes. However, research examining perceived norms surrounding CP remains scarce.

Sources of Perceived Norms Supporting Corporal Punishment

The communication literature suggests that perceived norms are not formed within a vacuum (Rimal & Lapinski, 2005). Although observation of a behavior has been well-documented as a powerful source of normative perception formation (Cialdini et al., 1990), research indicates that perceived norms can be formed through interpersonal and mass communication (Tankard & Paluck, 2016). Interpersonal communication may result in a social conversational mechanism, in which individuals often attend to and mention events that are unusual, vivid, or aberrant, which make people perceive that these events are common (Haines et al., 2005). Likewise, the social exposure concept suggests that people may form perceived norms by interacting with messages deriving from the symbolic environment (Duong & Liu, 2019; Mead et al., 2014). Thus, direct observation, interpersonal communication, and media exposure are common sources of perceived norms for health behaviors.

Unlike many other health behaviors, perceived norms supporting CP behavior might not be formed through these mechanisms for several reasons. First, hitting a child under the observation of others may lead to parents being stigmatized as child abusers. Thus, CP is largely conducted in private settings (Klevens et al., 2019). Second, parents are not willing to talk with others about hitting their children for fear of being stigmatized and reported to authorities (Fontes, 2005). Third, media reports about child abuse tend to condemn CP behavior, which likely produce non-CP norms rather than pro-CP norms. Paradoxically, perceived norms supporting CP behavior are high. CP behavior, therefore, provides an interesting circumstance to extend our understanding of how social norms are formed and function.

Differences between Racial/Ethnic Groups

Most research related to CP relies on middle-class White parents (for exceptions, see Klevens et al., 2019; LeCuyer et al., 2011). Moreover, CP studies have largely relied on cross-sectional surveys and longitudinal data to explore the associations between variables of interest (Gershoff, 2002). In the process, these studies often combine distinct racial/ethnic minority groups into one single group to compare with the White group (Taussig & Talmi, 2001). Scholars argue that when comparing low-income Black families with middle-class White families, available standards to evaluate child abuse make Black families stand out as dysfunctional, which can be seen as a sign of a poor environment for children (Fontes, 2005; Mitchel, 2008). Thus, research that provides findings specific to racial/ethnic groups are needed.

Among studies that attempt to address CP behavior in minority racial/ethnic communities, researchers found that CP behavior was more likely to be normalized in southern states -- home to many low-income Black and Latino families. For example, LeCuyer et al.'s (2011) qualitative study with a sample of southern Black mothers of young children (12-19 months) found that CP was considered normal in this group. Similarly, Taylor et al.'s (2011) qualitative data indicate that Blacks residing in southern states believe that CP is necessary for effective parenting. Regarding Latino parents, research found that 80 percent of Latinos report that they spank their children, compared to 89 percent of Blacks and 79 percent of Whites (Gershoff et al., 2012). Further, research showed that low-income Black, Latino, and White parents believe that CP is approved by parents in their communities and that other parents hit children (Klevens et al., 2019). However, little research has documented how low-income parents from these racial/ethnic groups form their normative beliefs that subsequently influence the use of CP. To fill this gap, we conducted a secondary data analysis using focus group data. Based on the aforementioned literature review, we ask the following research question:

RQ1: What are the sources of low-income Black, Latino, and White parents' perceived norms supporting CP behavior?

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited in five different states (i.e., Maine, New York, Connecticut, North Carolina, and Florida) through community-based organizations and educational centers (e.g., YMCA, Head Start Center, and early childhood center). Flyers described the focus group purpose, time, location, risks and benefits, and $50 for participation. Interested parents were screened with questions about parenthood, household income, and education level. Only parents of children of less than 6 years old were invited because research indicated that this was the most vulnerable age group for physical discipline (Wauchope & Straus, 1992). Other inclusion criteria were a household income of less than $60,000 and that the participant did not complete a degree beyond an associate's degree (with two exceptions). Parents provided their answers to these questions via phone, email, website, or printout copies attached to the flyer.

Eight to 10 parents were invited to participate in a focus group tailored based on demographics (see Table 1). Groups were separated by race/ethnicity and by mothers/fathers, making the groups somewhat homogeneous. This methodological decision was made because we anticipated that diversity in groups may not enhance discussions due to CP being a sensitive topic to discuss with outsiders. The final sample included 75 parents (Black = 30; Latino = 25; White = 20). Each focus group had 2 - 9 participants. There were more female (52%) than male participants (48%), and more participants living in urban areas (53%) than rural areas (47%). There were 4 Black focus groups (2 with Black mothers and 2 with Black fathers) and 4 White focus groups (2 with White mothers and 2 with White fathers). As for the Latino focus groups,

we conducted 5 focus groups (3 with Latino fathers and 2 with Latino mothers). Because we had a small Latino father focus group with 2 participants, we added a third focus group. Although the two focus groups with Latino fathers had small numbers of participants, this could be justifiable when the participants had intensive experience to share about the topic (Kreuger, 1988). The codebook was stabilized after 13 focus groups (Hennink et al., 2019). To help participants feel comfortable with talking about CP, only demographic data related to the screening criteria were collected. Table 1 presented participant distributions across the focus groups.

Procedures

The Institutional Review Board of the CDC approved this research protocol. Focus groups were conducted in October and November 2017 by experienced facilitators using the focus group guide (see Appendix). Facilitators were matched with the demographic features of the group based on gender, language, and race/ethnicity. Another trained research team member observed each focus group and collected data related to participants' nonverbal cues that was not captured by a recorder. At the beginning of each focus group, participants were asked to read and agree with the informed consent. Participants were then asked to discuss CP topic for about an hour. The researchers developed a focus group guide with questions aimed at investigating how parents disciplined their children and how common CP was in their communities. Examples of questions were: "How common do you think the use of physical punishment is in your community?" and "What are some common methods that you have used to discipline your child?" Latino parent focus groups were conducted and transcribed in Spanish and then translated into English, producing a final English transcription. Black and White parent focus group discussions were transcribed verbatim. Observers' notes were added to the transcripts.

Analysis

A thematic analysis approach was used to analyze the focus group data, which allowed for analyzing experiences, meanings, and the reality of participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach involved the researchers immersing in the data, indexing the data, developing the codes, coding data, identifying themes, and reviewing the themes for refinement (Bloor et al., 2001; Carey & Asbury, 2012). To do this, the first author read the full transcripts several times and inductively coded the data. The codes were then grouped into categories based on commonalities among the codes. The relationships among categories were examined to identify themes, which were defined as the overarching meanings that corresponded to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). We used two approaches to create themes. The first was based on the commonality of a theme. Commonality was counted as the repeated patterns of meanings for a theme, in terms of both the number of different participants who talked about a theme and the frequency that an individual participant mentioned it throughout the focus group. The second approach captured key and revealing ideas, which provided evidence that illuminated the connection between the literature and the research questions. The research team reviewed the transcripts and discussed the analysis to refine the themes across groups (Berg, 2001).

Findings

Major themes revealed that Black and White parents viewed their childhood experience of corporal punishment (CP) as positive and commonly shared by other parents. These parents regarded bystander interventions and media representations of parents using CP as intrusive, negative, and lacking understanding of their parenting purposes. Black parents reported a strong identification with their racial/ethnic peers. White parents discussed that parents who were about their age would approve and apply CP more often. In contrast, Latino parents disassociated their

parenting practice from that in their countries of origin. These themes are presented according to participants' racial/ethnic groups. While Black parents across the focus groups were consistent in their perspectives about CP, White and Latino parents showed some variances based on their roles (fathers and mothers) and locations (urban and rural).

Black Parents

Perceptions of Normative Pressure

Black parents discussed that the changing environment no longer supported the use of CP to discipline children and discussed how this change was not in their favor. They argued that the public view of their child discipline was judging and interfering. They particularly reacted to others' interference in their child disciplinary work at such public places as big-box and fast-food stores and schools. One Black father commented that, "Everybody is prone to think if you raise your hand to a child, you're automatically wrong." Black mothers also shared that their child disciplinary efforts in public places were often interrupted. One Black mother said:

> People always do that, like you'll see somebody walking, or if they pop their child because their child did something horrible. Somebody will jump in and be like, "Don't do that!" Like, "why would you do that?"

These mothers perceived that these reactions sent them messages of disapproval, which challenged their ability and rights of parenting. Similarly, Black parents discussed how schools interfered with their disciplinary work at home. Specifically, they indicated their skepticism of the way schools "brainwashed" their children to alter the children's understanding of CP. Black mothers even suspected that people at schools could manipulate their children to get information about family violence. One young Black mother recalled her experience at her own school where she felt that some staff members tried to search for evidence of physical abuse in her family.

> When I was in school, I remember a lady used to take me out of class and set me in a room and tried to get me to tell what was going on in my house. She was trying to ask me question "Are you sure?" They tried to make you feel comfortable enough to say "Yes."

Black parents noted that media stories about their CP behavior did not describe them positively. When one mother mentioned a video clip depicting a Black mother beating her child going viral on Facebook, other participants immediately responded by asking if the mother in the clip had been put in jail. This discussion suggested that Black parents perceived that the media's portrayal of their use of CP led to legal intervention. Thus, Black parents were aware of non-CP norms conveyed through bystander interventions and through media reports.

Resistance

Black parents resisted social pressures of not using CP because they felt that their parenting practice was misunderstood and unfairly judged. To respond to these pressures, Black parents said that they took caution not to expose their CP behaviors in public places, where others "are watching." Many parents, however, reported that they were willing to confront such a pressure. To justify their confrontation, Black parents provided three main arguments. First, they referred to their experiential knowledge with CP to argue that it was an effective disciplinary method. Second, they argued that nonphysical discipline lead to undesirable consequences. Third, they contrasted their own experience to that of their children to support their position.

In particular, Black parents told stories about how their own parents had used CP as an educational message in the families to help them be better human beings. For example, one Black father described what his mother's use of CP meant to him: "To hit a kid, it is not to hit them. It is to get their attention to stop whatever they are doing and get their focus on you and you have to direct them in whatever direction you want them to go." Another father added, "We grow up the way we did, books on the head and all of this. We are going to implement that into

our teachings with our children." Moreover, Black parents' discussions showed that the frequency of CP applied to them was high. For example, one Black mother recounted that "popping never stopped" when she was young. Other parents revealed that they were beaten repeatedly during their childhood. Despite this, very few Black parents claimed that CP was detrimental to them. Instead, several Black parents framed this experience as "it didn't hurt us in any way." One Black father said:

> *We, for the most part, were raised up with the switch. Getting physical punishment, that's what we know. And we know it worked for us. Why would we want to change something we know worked for us? We know it will work for our kids, too.*

To corroborate this point, several Black parents turned to their own childhood experience of CP to compare and contrast the differences between the effect of CP on themselves and the effect of not using CP with children nowadays. For example, one Black father said:

> *Honestly, they say that a lot of that stuff traumatizes kids, but in actuality that made me a better person because I'm not in jail right now. I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing. You can't say that beatings are always not necessarily the answer. But sometimes, some kids need that. Sometimes, we've got to be a little physical with them.*

Additionally, Black parents argued that since the children were theirs, others had no right to tell them what to do. Many Black parents shared this sentiment and said they would be ready to defy authorities to do their parenting job. One Black mother said:

> *Social Services may have to get me, but I will pop my child at Social Services. They try to call it child abuse, but you've got to teach this child. Talking is not going to get anything. These kids come out bad.*

Another Black father recounted an incident when his family was at McDonald's and their son was running through the store. The father said that he hit his son and responded to others' intervention that, "I don't give a frig what anybody thinks. That's my child! " Other Black fathers in the focus group supported his view and added that they often encountered similar situations, where they also chose to respond in a similar way.

Perceptions of Others as Outsiders

The resistance of Black parents showed the incompatibility between the non-CP norms in their surrounding environments and their normative perceptions of the behavior. Data revealed the reason why these non-CP norms had little influence on Black parents' perspective: Black parents perceived that others who disapproved of their CP behavior were outsiders. One Black mother reported that she felt like she had to "fight against *the outside* to raise *our* kids." Another mother remarked that "every culture is different," and argued that CP was part of her culture and thus outsiders should respect that borderline. Such arguments received unanimous consensus from other Black parents in the focus groups.

"*The outside*" was possibly implied by Black parents to mean institutional structures that engineered the changing child-rearing norms. The outside may also include bystanders who intervened in their child discipline efforts. By framing unsupportive others as "*the outside*" and "*they*" while calling themselves and other Black parents as "*we*" and "*us,*" Black parents possibly projected two different groups of "others." The first group were outsiders who did not understand how to raise a Black child in the Black culture and tended to judge, intervene, and mistakenly report Black parents to authorities for child abuse. Black parents contended that the "outsiders" were too accommodating to children. One Black mother commented about her experience with a parent training class: "Not to be racist, but I think they're teaching you the White way how to raise your kids. Because you know how they say White people don't discipline their kids." Several Black parents mentioned incidents where they saw White and

Latino children petulantly confronting their own caregivers. Black parents argued that ignoring children in disciplinable situations led to dire consequences for society. For instance, Black fathers discussed "those shooting boys at schools" being the result of lacking discipline at home. Black mothers discussed a video clip of a Latino boy hitting his grandmother at McDonald's and commented that the boy "was throwing up gang signs and everything."

The second group of "others" included those who understood and shared the necessity and value of using CP to discipline children to teach them how to behave, learn to respect parents, and stay away from troubles in the future. Indeed, when Black parents were specifically asked about their perceptions of their fellow Black parents' CP behavior, they assumed that other Black parents would "pinch," "whoop," and "beat" misbehaving children. Awareness of racial/ethnic group identity became even more salient for Black parents when they discussed the linkage between not using CP and the fate of Black people in the U.S. context. One Black mother explained why CP was necessary for children, to which all parents in the focus group agreed.

> *Because a lot of Black people are getting killed by cops and people are saying it is because they have no home training, so they go out in the street and do whatever they want because their parents didn't teach them at home.*

Altogether, the findings indicated that Black parents were aware of non-CP norms through interpersonal encounters with outsiders and through the media, but they resisted these norms on the basis that non-CP norms were not compatible with their circumstances, and that parents sharing the same racial/ethnic group would agree with their position.

White Parents

"He Never Hurt Me that Bad"

Several White parents commented that CP was common in their communities, but they did not discuss having seen others using CP. One White mother elaborated why she thought CP was common in her community even though few people talked about it.

> *I don't think people talk about it, except for saying, "I'm going to spank you," or something. It's a saying, but no one says to their friend, "Oh. I spanked my kid." It's very behind closed doors.*

When White fathers were asked about their perceptions of other parents' attitudes and approval of CP, they hesitated and often redirected their responses to their childhood experience of CP, which they perceived as positive and effective. White parents' discussion showed that they viewed their own parents' use of CP as effective messages that reminded them to behave well. One father said, "After one or two whippings, I never gave my father a hard time again." Another said that he still loved his dad, although his story revealed a harsh experience:

> *For all the whipping my dad gave me, he never hurt me that bad that I dislike him, or I don't love him. Like I said, I had belts. My dad got mad, and when he usually got mad, it was after a few drinks. So, he didn't know when to stop. Not one schoolteacher could have found it because it was on the places they wouldn't be looking (laugh).*

White mothers also perceived that their childhood experience of CP was positive and effective. Thus, they felt confused and lost when spanking was seen as an unforgiving parenting method. One rural White mother felt that social pressure to not spank a child made her uncertain about her parenting ability.

> *Now you listen good that kind of thing. I wasn't scared of my dad. Like I said earlier, he didn't scare me as a person… I was just scared to disobey him. I think that's a good thing. But sometimes, not that I feel like a bad mom… It's just everybody... You see it online. You see it everywhere, like "spanking's horrible." "You don't spank your kids." Like blah, blah, blah. Sometimes it makes me feel like I'm doing my parenting wrong.*

A Mediatized World and Facebook Moms

White parents discussed that people did not support CP as much as in the past and would report CP incidents or make a fuss on social media. They reflected on such incidents being posted on social media, which could "make you scared to want to even punish your kid out in public." One father commented, "Everything is mediatized, and these things don't help. Everybody takes pictures of everything." Clearly, there was a sense of discontent as to how CP was viewed and regulated today. To these White parents, this was a negative outcome because it was detrimental to their neighborhood cohesion. One mother commented that the environment around her had become "bad" because people were scared of others calling child protection services. Another father said, "When I was younger, you could go over and talk to your neighbors and they were best friends. Nowadays, people are looking out of their windows."

Similar to Black parents, White fathers said that they would resist others' interference with their use of CP. They felt that others were judgmental and did not know how tough it was to discipline a child. For example, one father showed his understanding of other parents' child disciplining efforts through his interactions in the shopping mall, "Somebody else's kid was freaking out and I had people come up to me and go, "Can you believe the way they just did that?" I'm going, "Yes, I can, actually.""

Although urban White fathers initially stated that they did not support CP, their discussion gradually revealed that they agreed that CP should be done in extreme cases, such as "running into the street." They discussed that parents had to be very careful with applying CP because children had more rights these days and "they can say whatever they want and you're done." They also discussed that they saw messages on the Internet that told them about "don't spank your kids." Furthermore, urban White fathers reported that "everybody gets involved" to stop them from even having "a good hustle type of slap" with their children. Interestingly, urban White fathers separated themselves from those parents who used CP by emphasizing that they themselves only approved CP in extreme cases. They explained that perhaps the difference between those who used more CP and those who use less CP was due to how CP was communicated in families. One father said, "You know what, I got my butt whooped as a kid, you're going to get your butt whooped as a kid."

Meanwhile, White mothers generally argued that spanking was not an abusive form of parenting. They contended that "slapping" and "spanking" were mild forms of physical discipline that served as a nonverbal message to warn children of any wrongdoings. They then discussed that parents who claimed to not beat their children actually did so at home. For example, they stated that those parents who said nice things about not hitting children on social media likely turned out to be hypocrites. When one mother told that those "Facebook moms are really good on social media, but then you go over their house or you go over to see them Facebook moms… (she shook her head)," other mothers laughed in agreement.

Some urban White mothers also discussed that they were avid consumers of online information about parenting. They said that they "Google" everything, and that the "mom websites are so informative." They also mentioned talking to their moms and friends for advice related to alternative non-physical disciplining methods. A few rural White mothers talked about the influence of religious practice. One mother told about her experience with CP and religion in context of attending a Christian school, "If we didn't do something right or whatever, they would bring us into the nursery. The pastor would hold our hand up and spank us just like that." She further said that "it was a Christian thing." Another mother commented, "a lot of Christian people feel like they have that ability to spank their child because it says so in the Bible." Thus, for White mothers, the Internet and religion might be sources of social influence for CP.

Perceptions of Generation Gap

White parents considered current changes with child-rearing practice as different from the past. Specifically, White fathers stated that those who supported CP use would be parents like themselves, or "older generation." One father commented, "The younger parents, I don't think, use it as much. I think it's a tool that's outdated to them. Older parents, I think, are more likely to." So, these fathers used age to differentiate those who approved and used CP from those who disapproved and used less CP. Thus, they discussed that younger parents were probably too distant from the conventional way of using physical discipline and could not relate to it like they themselves did. Moreover, White mothers argued that unsupportive others did not have children to help them understand parenthood's challenges. Similar to White fathers, these mothers felt that spanking was done mostly by parents born in their same generation. One mother said:

> *A lot of moms, at least in our generation or a little bit younger or a little bit older. They all understand it's not okay [for children] to act a certain way. They either spank their children behind closed doors or out in public.*

In sum, data revealed some commonalities between Black and White parents regarding the perceived positiveness of CP during childhood. However, unlike Black parents who identified with their same racial/ethnic group to project pro-CP norms of CP behavior, White parents identified with parents in their generation. Although talking with close friends and family members, seeking information on the Internet, and experiencing religious teaching were mentioned in a few instances, White parents overwhelmingly referred to their childhood experience of CP to draw their perceptions of CP norms in their communities.

Latino Parents

Negative Childhood Experience of Corporal Punishment

The majority of Latino parents talked about the differences between the non-physical discipline culture in the U.S. and the violent child-rearing practice in their countries of origin. Latino fathers discussed the child abuse law in the U.S. and stated that they agreed with the law. They also felt that public opinion was in line with the law. Their stories revealed some ways in which they came to learn about the non-CP norms in the U.S. For example, one mother told about how her family learned this through her son's interactions with his peers:

> *Because they weren't born here, we lived somewhere else. I remember there was a girl who was older than him, about 12 years old, a pretty smart girl, and she used to tell him, "In this country, your parents can't hit you because you can call the cops."*

In addition, data revealed that Latino parents regarded their childhood experience of CP as negative. They told about their own parents beating them without a clear reason. One father reflected on his childhood experience of CP:

> *You don't do that [CP] with your children; you try to be a better parent. I think that all that was previously lived, has been seen, because we come from a country where children are treated like that. I was hit if there was a problem, instead of talking about what was wrong. Our fathers used to give you a slap and said: "What's wrong with you?"*

Latino fathers reported that they wanted to distance their parenting from what they had experienced in their childhood by arguing that their parenting style was different. Specifically, they stated that they wanted to teach their children by "setting good examples," instead of hitting children like their own parents did. One father stressed how he taught his children:

> *Sometimes you see all that because our parents were not the kind of people that told us how to behave when, for example, we arrived at a place and if we didn't say hi. We got hit "you don't know how to greet me?" We tell our kids to say hi. I think all that was*

lived by us and it doesn't apply to us anymore. We try to be good parents and try to understand our children more, because we lived those experiences in a bad way.

At the beginning of the focus group discussion, urban Latino mothers reported that CP use was not acceptable. These mothers perceived using CP could make people "go to jail for doing that." For example, one urban Latino mother said:

I don't think it's right to physically punish or abuse children. I think they sometimes need a mild form of physical punishment from their mom or their dad, but not always. You first need to talk to them. You need to make them understand things, but it comes a point where a soft spank "una palmadita" from the mom or the dad might be necessary.

Another Latino mother commented that "mild spanking or a soft hit with a belt would suffice." At this point, the mothers were divided about whether or not CP was beneficial to children. One Latino mother compared her older children who had received CP and her young one who did not. The results, according to her, was that the older kids behaved better than the young one. Some other participants disapproved of the use of CP. They argued that CP would make children "get used to that and they will do the same to their future children," and "they remember bad things instead of good ones." One Latino mother said:

I've done that once to my now 19-year-old boy, but I regret having done it and I told him that I was sorry so many times. Sometimes we don't have to listen to what other people say because they often do it to make you feel bad or see the child suffer.

Interestingly, by mentioning about "what other say", she suggested social pressure on her to use CP. Simultaneously, she talked about her regret with using CP on her children. Although she was not explicit about what made her feel regret, there seemed to be a change in the way she viewed her previous use of CP compared to now. In a way, these mothers perceived that there were pro-CP norms surrounding them, and they knew that using CP was wrong and thereby wanted to resist this social pressure. Latino mothers also mentioned that other parents talked about "smacking kids in the mouth," "shaking them hard," and "slapping hard in the hand."

Most rural Latino mothers acknowledged that they had spanked their children and revealed that they did so only when their children behave disrespectfully. One mother said, "I warn him that if he's rude to me, I will slap him hard in the mouth." These rural Latino mothers argued that while their own parents' beating was harsh, their own CP behavior was not because they clearly explained to their children. One mother recounted:

Sometimes hitting them harms them more than it fixes them. They grow up with hard feelings towards you. Well, that's what they used to do with us back in the day. We got hit a lot and we grew up with hard feelings in a way, with a certain anger towards our parents. But sometimes you have to use it when necessary. And you have to make sure your kids know the reason they're being punished.

Interpersonal Communication about Disciplining Children

Despite their disapproval for applying CP with children, Latino parents still perceived that CP was prevalent in their communities. For example, rural Latino fathers reported that they thought around 60% to 80% of other parents currently hit children. When queried further, Latino parents believed parents likely engaged in conversations about child rearing within their communities. For example, Latino parents talked about people in their network discussing how to physically punish children. Rural Latino fathers talked about their co-workers, who were also parents, discussing spanking, hitting with a belt and tree sticks, and throwing flip-flops at children when "their kids don't understand" or "say bad words." These fathers also named various forms of CP in their native language (i.e., Spanish), which they heard from other parents.

Latino mothers also talked about hearing some parents "smacking kids in the mouth," "shaking them hard," and "slapping hard in the hand." Thus, they perceived that CP was not socially approved but they also perceived that CP was prevalent in their ethnic group because they had heard about these behaviors. One Latino mother remarked:

I can probably say that most of them do. Definitely most. Well, at least the ones I know, I believe most of them has spanked or slapped their kids at least once, I'm not saying they do it every day, but maybe… it's something like a ritual.

Overall, Latino parents perceived their childhood experience of CP as abusive and wanted to differentiate their child rearing practice from that of their own parents. Some Latino parents agreed with using CP to correct disrespectful behaviors. They appeared to draw CP norms through communication with other parents in their social circles.

Discussion

This study investigated the sources of perceived norms influencing CP behavior for low-income Black, Latino, and White parents. Data revealed three major points of discussion. First, Black and White parents projected pro-CP norms from their perceptions of shared positive experiences of CP during childhood. Second, these parents categorized parent groups into ingroups and outgroups when discussing social approval of CP. We employed the false consensus effect and self-categorization theory as theoretical lens to discuss these findings. Third, Latino parents' normative perceptions did not appear to be influenced by their experiences of CP, which we discussed through the lens of acculturation. Findings suggested that interpersonal communication among Latino parents might affect pro-CP norms.

The false consensus effect offers two theoretical perspectives that provide some insights into the relationship between childhood experience and normative perceptions of CP. This effect refers to a process whereby individuals perceive their own judgments and behaviors as relatively common, which results in norm perception formation (Lapinski & Rimal, 2005; Marks & Miller, 1987). The first perspective is the hypothesis of salience and focus of attention, which posits that as individuals focus their attention on a preferred position rather than considering alternative positions, they may project a consensus of others for their position (Marks & Miller, 1987; Sherman et al., 1983). Positive framing of CP during childhood may make it a preferable behavioral choice for parents, which subsequently becomes salient to guide parents' communication about how other parents would perceive and use CP. This suggests that these parents focused their attention on a pro-CP position and likely registered CP behavior as a dominant position. They then attributed similar perceptions and behavior to other parents.

A second theoretical perspective deriving from the false consensus effect concerns a motivational bias mechanism (Ross et al., 1977). Theorists explain that when experiencing a tension associated with anticipated social interactions, individuals are motivated to seek social support and rationalize the appropriateness and representativeness of their position to maintain cognitive balance (Mark & Miller, 1987). This theoretical perspective seems plausible to explain the role of childhood experience in forming CP norms for two reasons. First, in the salient context of societal pressures to abandon CP, Black and White parents likely felt motivated to justify their CP use as socially appropriate and prevalent rather than atypical and negative. Second, Black and White parents likely felt that their CP behavior was a deviation from prevailing non-CP norms and thus, perceived a threat to their self-esteem for being labelled as child abusers. This perception may trigger an even greater need to normalize their CP behavior through a projection of a considerable target population approving of and practicing the same behavior. Given the lack of compatible and accurate information related to pro-CP norms and the

salience of incompatible information about non-CP norms in contemporary U.S. context, parents' best solution to estimate the prevalence and approval of CP would be to utilize a subsample of cases that are readily and vividly available in memory (Mullen et al., 1985; Ross et al., 1977). Note that although Black and White parents talked about media stories about CP, they disagreed with how the media portrayed parents' use of CP. Only a few White urban mothers discussed that they searched for alternative disciplinary strategies on the Internet. As such, findings pointed to the possibility that the false consensus effect was the mechanism linking childhood experience of CP and pro-CP norms for Black and White parents.

Findings suggested that Black and White parents categorized the others into ingroupers and outgroupers. Ingroupers are those who are perceived by an individual to share similar traits and backgrounds, while outgroupers are those who have dissimilar attributes (Hogg & Reid, 2006). Fear of being labeled as abusers along with potential legal consequences likely motivated Black and White parents to identify with ingroupers to defend their self-concept through a pro-CP position. According to self-categorization theory (Turner, 1987), people belong to multiple social categories and thus have different social identities. These identities often compete and intersect with one another. In contentious situations linked to social identity, people are motivated to engage in categorizing themselves and similar others as belonging to the same group and perceiving dissimilar others as outgroup members. CP is a contentious issue and oftentimes regarded as a cultural behavior to parents of color (Fontes, 2005), which possibly makes social category distinction salient. When social categories are at the fore, shared similarities with ingroup members and differences from outgroup members will be accentuated, resulting in ingroup norm salience (Hogg & Reid, 2006). Ingroup norms become influential when individuals perceive an intergroup conflict for gaining a favorable social status (e.g., good parents) or avoiding a social stigma (e.g., being labeled as child abusers). As such, behaviors that are consistent with perceptions of ingroup norms are activated. Thus, self-categorization and ingroup identification may explain why ingroup pro-CP norms were more influential than non-CP norms deriving from media, social institutions, and bystander interventions.

Latino parents referred to their childhood experience of CP as negative and incompatible with the mainstream U.S. culture. Data revealed that several Latino parents expressed a strong tie with their countries of origin. This background suggested the role of acculturation, which may be a plausible explanation for why Latino parents behaved differently from the Black and White parents. Acculturation refers to a cultural and psychological adaptation process that occurs through sustained contacts between two or more cultural groups and their individual members (Berry, 2005). Research found that less acculturated Latino parents spanked their children significantly less frequently than more acculturated Latino parents (Berlin et al., 2009; Maker et al., 2005). We suspect that this might be because recent Latino immigrants perceive that their welcome in the new country depended on their being invisible and compliant to the law and dominant cultural expectations (Fontes, 2005). Thus, childhood experience of CP did not seem to influence Latino parents' perceived norms. Instead, findings suggested that interpersonal communication among Latino parents likely transmitted pro-CP norms.

Researchers have recently proposed that CP prevention interventions should leverage the influence of perceived norms (Klika et al., 2019). The CDC (2020) recommended public education campaigns to shift social norms and reframe the way people think and talk about childhood adverse experiences. Our findings revealed that ingroup norms were influential for CP behavior. Thus, normative messages should incorporate influential and salient reference groups. Furthermore, perceived norms could be misperceived due to the false consensus effect. Hence, addressing normative misperceptions through norm-based messages might be a way to reduce

pro-CP norms (Perkins, 2003). Simultaneously, campaigns should be designed to increase parents' perceptions of their ability to use alternative strategies (i.e., efficacy), and ultimately abandon using CP as a non-verbal message for behavioral compliance.

Findings suggest some avenues for future research. First, few studies have investigated how interpersonal communication might be encouraged to propagate positive parenting norms in different racial/ethnic groups. Such studies likely have much to offer because people form and modify their perceptions of group norms through communicating with ingroup members (Hogg & Reid, 2006). Second, investigating the influence of acculturation on parents' CP behavior according to their racial/ethnic groups might be a promising direction for future research. Third, although parents in this study reported that media messages promoted non-CP norms, recent studies showed that pro-CP norms could also be constructed in the media environment. For example, parents may tweet about child discipline methods (Lee et al., 2020) and posted their comments to online news stories about CP (Taylor et al., 2016). Recall that White mothers talked about information seeking using the Internet. This source of perceived norms might be influential given that norms can be shaped through interactive media (Duong et al., 2020). This is another research direction that communication theories might contribute to understanding this behavior.

This study has limitations. First, focus group methods limit the generalization of the results to a larger population. Second, social influence is a potential challenge in focus groups. For example, fear of social disapproval may work against people's desire to self-disclose particularly on such a sensitive and legal topic as CP. Alternatively, social influence within a small group of similar, comparable backgrounds provides an environment for in-depth conversations identifying useful thoughts and opinions. Additionally, participants were informed that they would be reported if they disclosed information relevant to child abuse. Because the line between child abuse and CP was delicate, some participants might be influenced by social desirability. This could particularly be an issue with the Latino sample for reasons related to acculturation and immigration status. Other limitations include self-selection (volunteering) into the study, difficulty with recruiting rural Latino fathers, and limited demographic data (e.g., no age and religion affiliation reported and unknown immigration status) that could further contextualize these findings and provide insight into generalizability.

To our knowledge, this is the first study that attempts to integrate child abuse literature with health communication theories concerning social norms. Our findings can be used as an important groundwork for prospective research using norm-based communication theories to empirically test the associations between normative sources, attitudes, perceived norms, and behavioral intentions among these racial/ethnic groups. The health communication literature is abundant with norm-based frameworks to guide the research and design of social norm intervention messages. For example, the Integrative Model of Behavioral Prediction has been widely applied to guide health campaigns (Fishbein, 2009; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011; Fishbein & Cappella, 2006), but it has rarely been utilized in child physical abuse research and campaigns. This research direction likely offers practical implications to intervention campaigns to prevent corporal punishment, and ultimately child physical abuse, in the U.S.

<div align="center">References</div>

Belsky, J. (1980). An ecological integration. *American Psychologist*, *35*(4), 320–335.

Berg, B. (2001). *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (4th ed.). Allyn and Bacon.

Berlin, L. J., Malone, P. S., Ayoub, C. A., Ispa, J., Fine, M., Brooks- Gunn, J., et al. (2009). Correlates and consequences of spanking and verbal punishment for low income White,

African American, and Mexican American toddlers. *Child Development, 80*(5), 1403–1420.

Berry, J. W. (2005). Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *29*(6), 697-712.

Black, D. A., Heyman, R. E., & Slep, A. M. S. (2001). Risk factors for child physical abuse. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, *6*, 121–188.

Bloor, M., Frankland, J., Thomas, M., & Robson, K. (2001). *Focus groups in social research*. Sage.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101.

Carey, M. A., & Asbury, J. (2012). *Focus group research.* Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). *Preventing Child Abuse & Neglect*. https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/fastfact.html

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). *Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs): Leveraging the Best Available Evidence.* https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/preventingACES.pdf

Cialdini, R. B., Reno, R. R., & Kallgren, C. A. (1990). A focus theory of normative conduct-Recycling the concept of norms to reduce littering in public places. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *58*(6), 1015–1026.

Deater-Deckard, K., & Lansford, J. E. (2017). Cultural norms and definitions of violence. In P. Sturmey (Ed.), *The Wiley handbook of violence and aggression* (pp. 1-11). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Dillard, J. P., & Shen, L. (2005). On the nature of reactance and its role in persuasive health communication. *Communication Monographs, 72*(2), 144-168.

Duong, H. T., & Liu, J. (2019). Vaping in the news: The influence of news exposure on perceived e-cigarette use norms. *American Journal of Health Education*, *50*(1), 25-39.

Duong, H. T., Nguyen, L. T. V., Vu, H. T., & Trinh, A. T. (2020). Association between online social influence and corporal punishment: An experimental study. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal, 37*(2), 163-177.

Finkelhor, D., Turner, H. A., Shattuck, A., & Hamby, S. L. (2015). Prevalence of childhood exposure to violence, crime, and abuse: Results from the national survey of children's exposure to violence. *JAMA pediatrics, 169*(8), 746-754.

Fishbein, M. (2009). An integrative model for behavioral prediction and its application to health promotion. In DiClemente, R. J., Crosby, R. A., & Kegler, M. C. (Eds.), *Emerging theories in health promotion practice and research* (pp. 216–234). John Wiley & Sons.

Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (2011). *Predicting and changing behavior: The reasoned action approach*. Psychology Press.

Fishbein, M., & Cappella, J. N. (2006). The role of theory in developing effective health communications. *Journal of Communication*, *56*, 1–17.

Fontes, L. A. (2005). *Child abuse and culture: Working with diverse families*. Guilford Press.

Fortson, B. L., Klevens, J., Merrick, M. T., Gilbert, L. K., & Alexander, S. P. (2016). *Preventing child abuse and neglect: A technical package for policy, norm, and programmatic activities*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Health and Human Services, Atlanta, GA. https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/CAN-Prevention-Technical-Package.pdf

Fréchette, S., Zoratti, M., & Romano, E. (2015). What is the link between corporal punishment and child physical abuse? *Journal of Family Violence*, *30*(2), 135–148.

Gershoff, E. T. (2002). Corporal punishment by parents and associated child behaviors and experiences: A meta-analytic and theoretical review. *Psychological Bulletin*, *128*(4), 539–579.

Gershoff, E. T., & Grogan-Kaylor, A. (2016). Spanking and child outcomes: Old controversies and new meta-analyses. *Journal of Family Psychology*, *30*(4), 453–469.

Gershoff, E. T., Lansford, J. E., Sexton, H. R., Davis-Kean, P., & Sameroff, A. J. (2012). Longitudinal links between spanking and children's externalizing behaviors in a national sample of White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian American families: Spanking and externalizing behavior. *Child Development*, *83*(3), 838–843.

Haines, M. P., Perkins, H. W., Rice, R. M., & Barker, G. (2005). *A guide to marketing social norms for health promotion in schools and communities*. National Social Norms Resource Center. East Lansing, MI.

Hennink, M. M., Kaiser, B. N., & Weber, M. B. (2019). What influences saturation? Estimating sample sizes in focus group research. *Qualitative Health Research*, *29*(10), 1483-1496.

Hogg, M. A., & Reid, S. A. (2006). Social identity, self-categorization, and the communication of group norms. *Communication Theory*, *16*(1), 7–30.

Hogg, M. A., & Tindale, R. S. (2005). Social identity, influence, and communication in small groups. In J. Harwood & H. Giles (Eds.), *Intergroup communication: Multiple perspectives* (pp. 141–164). Peter Lang.

Holden, G. W. (2020). Why do parents hit their children? From cultural to unconscious determinants. *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, *73*(1), 10-29.

Hunt, L. M., Schneider, S., & Comer, B. (2004). Should "acculturation" be a variable in health research? A critical review of research on US Hispanics. *Social Science & Medicine*, *59*(5), 973-986.

Infante, D. A. (2005). Corporal punishment of children: A communication theory. In M. Donnelly & M. Straus (Eds.), *Corporal punishment of children in theoretical perspective* (pp. 183-198). Yale University Press.

Kassing, J. W., Pearce, K. J., Infante, D. A., & Pyles, S. M. (1999). Exploring the communicative nature of corporal punishment. *Communication Research Reports*, *16*(1), 18–28.

Klevens, J., Mercer Kollar, L., Rizzo, G., O'Shea, G., Nguyen, J., & Roby, S. (2019). Commonalities and differences in social norms related to corporal punishment among Black, Latino and White Parents. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal, 36*(1), 19-28.

Klevens, J., & Whitaker, D. J. (2007). Primary prevention of child physical abuse and neglect: Gaps and promising directions. *Child Maltreatment*, *12*(4), 364–377.

Klika, J. B., Haboush-Deloye, A., & Linkenbach, J. (2019). Hidden protections: Identifying social norms associated with child abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal, 36*(1), 5-14.

Kreuger, R. A. (1988). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*. Sage.

Lapinski, M. K., & Rimal, R. N. (2005). An explication of social norms. *Communication Theory*, *15*(2), 127–147.

LeCuyer, E. A., Christensen, J. J., Kearney, M. H., & Kitzman, H. J. (2011). African American mothers' self-described discipline strategies with young children. *Issues in Comprehensive Pediatric Nursing*, *34*(3), 144–162.

Lee, J. Y., Grogan-Kaylor, A. C., Lee, S. J., Ammari, T., Lu, A., & Davis-Kean, P. (2020). A Qualitative analysis of stay-at-home parents' spanking tweets. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, *29*(3), 817-830.

MacMillan, H. L., & Mikton, C. R. (2017). Moving research beyond the spanking debate. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, *71*, 5–8.

Maker, A. H., Shah, P. V., & Agha, Z. (2005). Child physical abuse: Prevalence, characteristics, predictors, and beliefs about parent-child violence in South Asian, Middle Eastern, East Asian, and Latina Women in the United States. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *20*(11), 1406–1428.

Marks, G., & Miller, N. (1987). Ten years of research on the false-consensus effect: An empirical and theoretical review. *Psychological Bulletin, 102*(1), 72-90.

Mead, E. L., Rimal, R. N., Ferrence, R., & Cohen, J. E. (2014). Understanding the sources of normative influence on behavior: The example of tobacco. *Social Science & Medicine*, *115*, 139–143.

Mitchell, L. (2008). *Corporal punishment and low-income mothers*. Cambria Press.

Mullen, B., Atkins, J. L., Champion, D. S., Edwards, C., Hardy, D., Story, J. E., & Vanderklok, M. (1985). The false consensus effect: A meta-analysis of 115 hypothesis tests. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *21*(3), 262-283.

Perkins, H. W. (2003). *The social norms approach to preventing school and college age substance abuse: A handbook for educators, counselors, and clinicians*. Jossey-Bass.

Rimal, R. N., & Lapinski, M. K. (2015). A re-explication of social norms, ten years later. *Communication Theory*, *25*(4), 393–409.

Roberto, A. J., Carlyle, K. E., & Goodall, C. E. (2007). Communication and corporal punishment: The relationship between self-report parent verbal and physical aggression. *Communication Research Reports*, *24*(2), 103–111.

Ross, L., Greene, D., & House, P. (1977). The "false consensus effect": An egocentric bias in social perception and attribution processes. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *13*(3), 279-301.

Sherman, S. J., Presson, C. C., Chassin, L., Corty, E., & Olshavsky, R. (1983). The false consensus effect in estimates of smoking prevalence: Underlying mechanisms. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *9*(2), 197-207.

Straus, M. A. (2001). *Beating the devil out of them: Corporal punishment in American families and its effects on children*. Transaction Publishers.

Straus, M. A. (2002). Communicating the no-spanking message to parents. *Journal of Family Communication*, *2*(1), 3–5.

Tankard, M. E., & Paluck, E. L. (2016). Norm perception as a vehicle for social change. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, *10*(1), 181–211.

Taussig, H. N., & Talmi, A. (2001). Ethnic differences in risk behaviors and related psychosocial variables among a cohort of maltreated adolescents in foster care. *Child Maltreatment*, *6*(2), 180–192.

Taylor, C. A., Al-Hiyari, R., Lee, S. J., Priebe, A., Guerrero, L. W., & Bales, A. (2016). Beliefs and ideologies linked with approval of corporal punishment: A content analysis of online comments. *Health Education Research*, *31*(4), 563–575.

Taylor, C. A., Hamvas, L., & Paris, R. (2011). Perceived instrumentality and normativeness of corporal punishment use among Black mothers. *Family relations*, *60*(1), 60-72.

Turner, J. C. (1987). A self-categorization theory. In J. C. Turner, M. A. Hogg, P. J. Oakes, S. D. Reicher, & M. S. Wetherell (Eds.), *Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory* (pp. 42–67). Basil Blackwell.

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, Children's Bureau (2019). *Child maltreatment 2017.* https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/child-maltreatment-2017

Vaughan-Eden, V., Holden, G. W., & LeBlanc, S. S. (2019). Commentary: Changing the social norm about corporal punishment. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal, 36*(1), 43-48.

Wauchope, B. A., & Straus, M. A. (1992). Physical punishment and physical abuse of American children: Incidence rates by age, gender, and occupational class. In Straus, M. A. & Gelles, R. J. (Eds), *Physical violence in American families: Risk factors and adaptations to violence in 8,145 families* (pp. 133-148). Transaction Publishers.

Wilson, S. R., Norris, A. M., Shi, X., & Rack, J. J. (2010). Comparing physically abused, neglected, and nonmaltreated children during interactions with their parents: A meta-analysis of observational studies. *Communication Monographs*, *77*(4), 540–575.

Table 1
Distribution of Focus Group Participants Based on Race/Ethnicity, Sex, And State

Focus group number	Location and Race/ethnicity	Sex of Parent	City, State	Number of participants
1	Urban Black	Male	Brooklyn, New York	8
2	Urban Black	Female	Brooklyn, New York	8
3	Urban Latino	Male	Bushwick, New York	8
4	Urban Latino	Female	Bushwick, New York	7
5	Rural Latino	Male	LaBelle, Florida	2
6	Rural Latino	Female	LaBelle, Florida	5
7	Rural Latino	Male	LaBelle, Florida	3
8	Rural White	Male	Oxford County, Maine	6
9	Rural White	Female	Oxford County, Maine	5
10	Rural Black	Male	Windsor, North Carolina	5
11	Rural Black	Female	Windsor, North Carolina	9
12	Urban White	Male	New York City Metro	4
13	Urban White	Female	New York City Metro	5

Appendix: Focus Group Discussion Guide

A. Welcome, informed consent, and ground rules (15 minutes): Welcome. Thank you all for coming. What you think is very important to us. The main reason we are having this discussion today is to get your thoughts and opinions on ways parents manage children's behaviors between ages 0 and 5. I know you all have a lot of information and personal experiences to offer. [Repeat some key points in the informed consent as was provided to participants].

At times, I may have to either gently interrupt and/or change the direction of the discussion so we can cover everything in the time we have. We're interested in all your ideas and comments. There are no right or wrong answers, and it is okay to have differences in opinions. We welcome both positive and negative comments. The goal of today's session is not to reach consensus, but to hear diverse perspectives. Everything you tell us is valuable. You don't have to answer every question, but I do want to hear from everyone, so I might call on you at some point.

B. Disclosures: We will be taping the session so we can go back and listen again and not miss anything. But these tapes will be destroyed after we finish the work on our messages. To be able to hear from everyone, it is important that you speak loudly and clearly, and we ask that you speak one at a time, please.

C. Confidentiality: I want to emphasize that the discussion today will remain confidential. To guard your privacy, we will ask that you not tell us your name and that you not share what others had to say in this discussion after we are done here. Your comments will be kept private and will only be used to develop messages for parents like yourselves.

Please have in mind that this is destined to be a discussion on the topic and those that surround your beliefs, not your practices as individuals. It is important to tell you that we're obliged by law to inform the authorities in the event that we hear something that may harm a child or others. We don't want to reach this point, so if I feel that someone is divulging something, I will try to interrupt so you can keep having an open discussion about your opinions on corporal punishments. As a reminder, this is a safe and confidential space. We really appreciate your willingness to participate. Your opinion is very valuable to us and the community."

D. Additional notes: Finally, you'll notice some sheets of paper, pens, and envelopes on the table in front of you. If at any time you have a thought, opinion, or idea that you'd prefer not to share with the full group, please write it down and place it in the envelope. We'll collect these envelopes at the end of our discussion so these ideas will remain anonymous. Please do not write your name or initials on the paper or envelope.

E. Warm up and Introduction: Please tell us how many children you have, the ages of your children, and something funny your child does. I'll start with myself [moderator introduces himself or herself].

[*Main discussion (around 40 minute)*]*:* Before we begin talking about child behavior management, what common situations come up where you have to manage your children's behaviors?

- What sort of methods do you think parents use to discipline their children?

- What sort of physical punishment do you think parents use to discipline their children?

- Probe specific languages used around physical punishment and/or how parents define physical punishment.

- How common do you think the use of physical punishment is in your community? Why or why not?

- What are some common methods that you have used to discipline your children?

- For parents in your community that use physical punishment, how old are their children when they start?

- What are some reasons parents have for hitting children?

- Do you think that parents in your community think that physically punishing children is an acceptable way to manage children's' behavior?

- What about the parents who don't physically punish their children? What reasons do they have?

- Ask probing questions where appropriate.

F. Clearing house questions: Ask if participants have last words, questions, or any things they feel they missed in the discussion.
Thank the participants for their time and contribution to the discussion.
G. Provide departure instructions.