

Christie-Mizell, Andre, Erin Pryor, and Elizabeth Grossman. 2008. "Child Depressive Symptoms, Spanking, and Emotional Support: Differences between African American and European American Youth." *Family Relations* 57:335-350.

PRIMARY ARGUMENT: The authors argue that depressive symptoms in children are linked both to spanking, although this trend fades over time, and emotional support offered by parents; however, the impact of emotional support is much more significant in African American children than European American children.

IMPORTANT DEFINED CONCEPTS:

- Stress Process Model: the process through which people cope with stressors (in this case, spanking). Stressors inhibit the individual's ability to adapt, but moderators can help reduce or eliminate the impact of these stressors on people's health.
- Emotional Support: A psychosocial resource that buffers the individual from stress through high levels of emotional reassurance and parental warmth provided by the child's mother.
- Depressive Symptoms: indicators of depression that include frequent feelings of sadness and hopelessness, low self-esteem, loss of interest or enjoyment in activities, poor concentration, social isolation, suicidal ideation, and eating or sleeping pattern changes.

PRIMARY FINDINGS:

1. There is a positive relationship between spanking and depressive symptoms in children, and this trend persists regardless of race. However, this effect of spanking is not sustained over time. It can potentially induce depressive symptoms, but not always maintain them.
2. Regardless of race, emotional support and depressive symptoms have a negative relationship; the more emotional support displayed by parents, the less depressive symptoms that present themselves in children.
3. European American children maintained a negative relationship between emotional support and depressive symptoms over time, while African American children did not. Factors that shape mental health differ by culture, which this can be attributed to along with European American mothers tending to offer more emotional support.
4. Regardless of race, spanking is not moderated by emotional support. While emotional support does impact depressive symptoms, it does not soften or counter the effects on depressive symptoms that spanking has.

KEY QUOTE: "The results provide support for the Stress Process Model and mixed support for our first hypothesis that predicted a positive relationship between spanking and depressive symptoms. In the cross-sectional models, spanking was a stressor that was equally associated with depressive symptoms for African Americans and European Americans; however, in the change models, spanking was not a factor that was significantly related to depressive symptoms, and this finding diverges from our Hypothesis 1." (345)

QUESTION: It is said that the implication of spanking has racial differences. How do racial minorities understand physical discipline differently than their white counterparts? Does the normalization of spanking create less risk for mental harm? Should alternative behavior correction strategies be emphasized towards racial minorities? Or is it a lasting cultural phenomenon?