

The Impact of Maternal Parenting Style and Methods of Support/Positive Disciplining on Child Well-Being and Irritability at 12 Months: A Comparison Between Black and Non-Latino/a/e/x White (NLW) Children

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Background

- Parents who report higher stress are found to have a harder time regulating their emotions due to access to fewer resources and lower support, which impacts their choice of responding or withdrawing from their child.¹
- Infants may interpret their mother's emotional reactions as directed at them, which could lead to emotional dysregulation and behaviors like irritability, frustration, crying, and anger in children over time.¹
- Parents who have been observed using positive parenting strategies have also reported better parent-reported child socio-emotional development, fewer behavioral issues, and lower aggression.^{2,3}
- Black mothers are at greater risk of experiencing stressors and adversities, which are found to be linked to mother-observed child negative externalizing behaviors during mother-infant interactions.^{4,5}
- Researching this topic is crucial, as mothers found to be less likely to respond sensitively to chronic irritability may later develop harsher forms of discipline or less sensitive responses to distressing situations.^{7,8}
- For families facing challenges, institutional changes are needed to ensure equal access to resources to create a quality home environment that supports child development.³

Objectives

This investigation aims to:

- Examine how support/positive discipline provided by birthing individuals impacts their infant's irritability at 12 months.
- Investigate the racial disparity in the support and discipline infants receive from their maternal figure.

Methods

Race

- Participants were asked to report their race in a demographic questionnaire 12 months after they gave birth.

Support/Positive Discipline

- Select subscales from the Comprehensive Early Childhood Parenting Questionnaire (CECPAQ), a 54-item measure with 2 subscales: support, which includes 13 items, and positive discipline, which includes 4 items, for the 12-month survey.

- Support (sensitivity, responsiveness, affection)**
 - ex. "I am able to calm my child when s/he is irritable"
- Positive Discipline**
 - ex. "I explain to my child why s/he is being punished or restricted"

- The questions that corresponded to the specific subscale were summed and calculated separately.

Irritability

- A subsection of the Survey of Wellbeing of Young Children (SWYC), Baby Pediatric Symptom Checklist (BPSC), administered in the 12-month survey.
- Around 12 months, birthing individuals were asked four questions on a scale of 0 (Not a Lot) to 2 (Very Much):

- "Does your child cry a lot?"
- "Does your child have a hard time calming down?"
- "Is your child fussy or irritable?"
- "Is it hard to comfort your child?"

- The sum of these 4 questions calculated the score for irritability.

Results: Sample Demographics

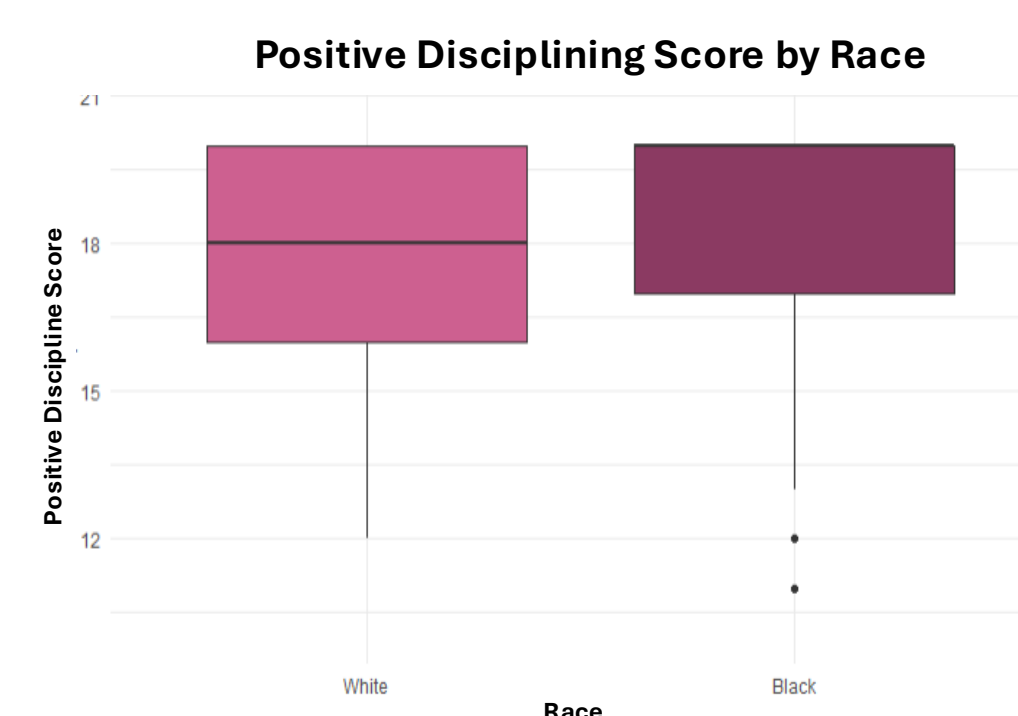
- A total of 191 Black and NLW mother-infant dyads were examined at 12 months.

Table 1. Sample Demographics

	NLW Individuals	Black Individuals
<i>n</i>	94	97
Child's age in months, <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	13.1 (0.75)	14.1 (2.02)
Mothers age in years, <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	35.0 (5.42)	31.5 (5.97)
Marital status (% married)	92.6	30.9
Secure housing status (% with secure housing)	95.7	95.9

Results: Box and Whisker Plot

Figure 1:

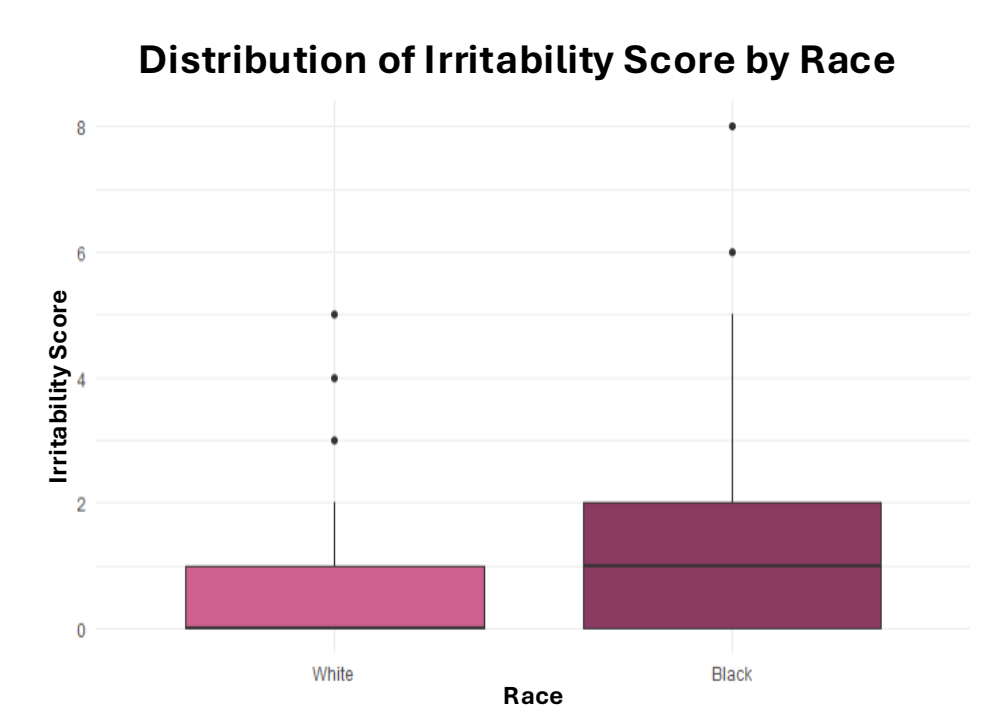


Significant Difference

$$t = -2.93, p < .01$$

The average positive discipline score for NLW was 17.6, and for Black participants was 18.6

Figure 2:

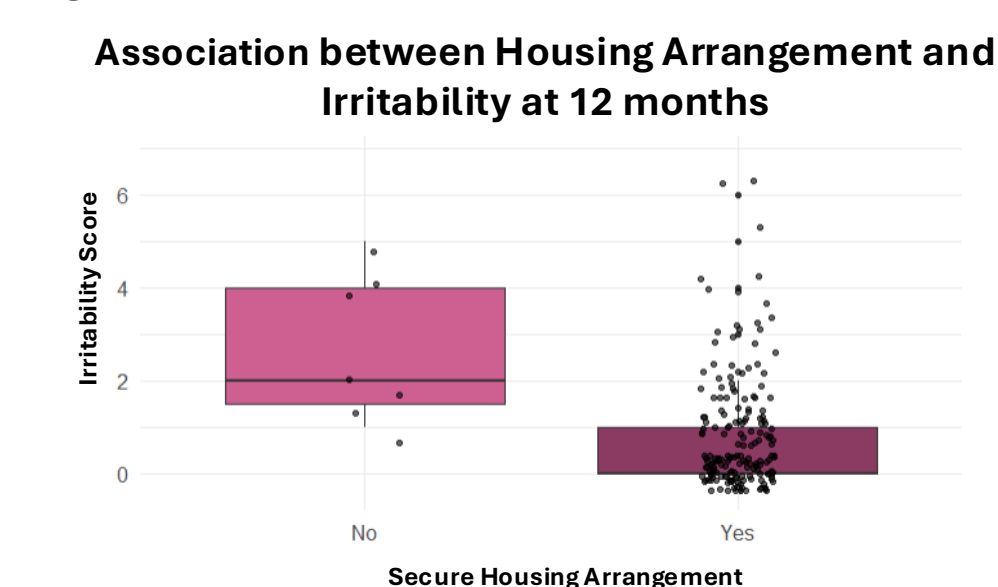


Significant Difference

$$t = -3.67, p < .01$$

The average child irritability score for NLW was 0.60, and for Black participants was 1.30

Figure 3:

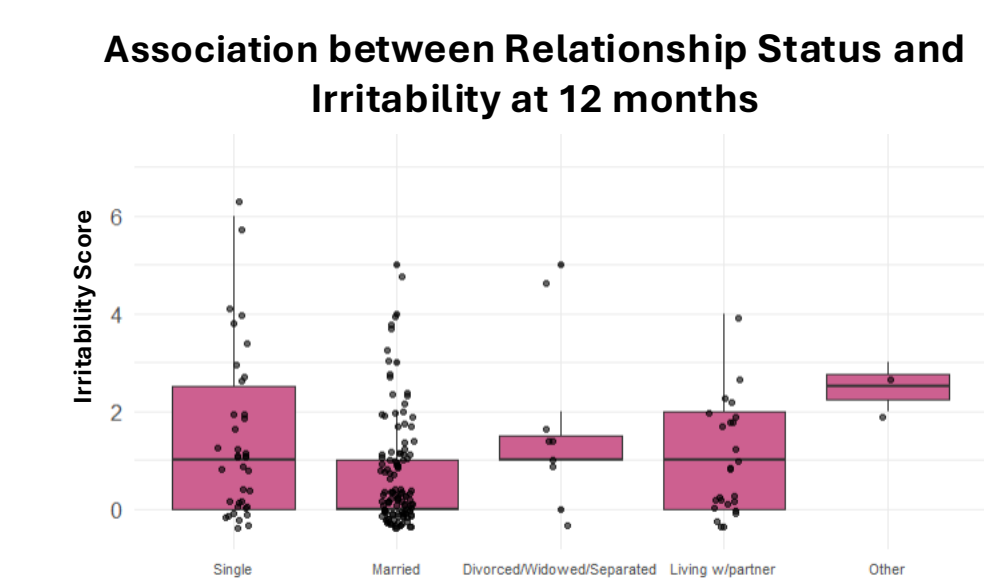


Marginally Significant Association

$$B = -0.98, SE = 0.50, p = .05$$

On average, irritability scores decreased by 0.98 points.

Figure 4:



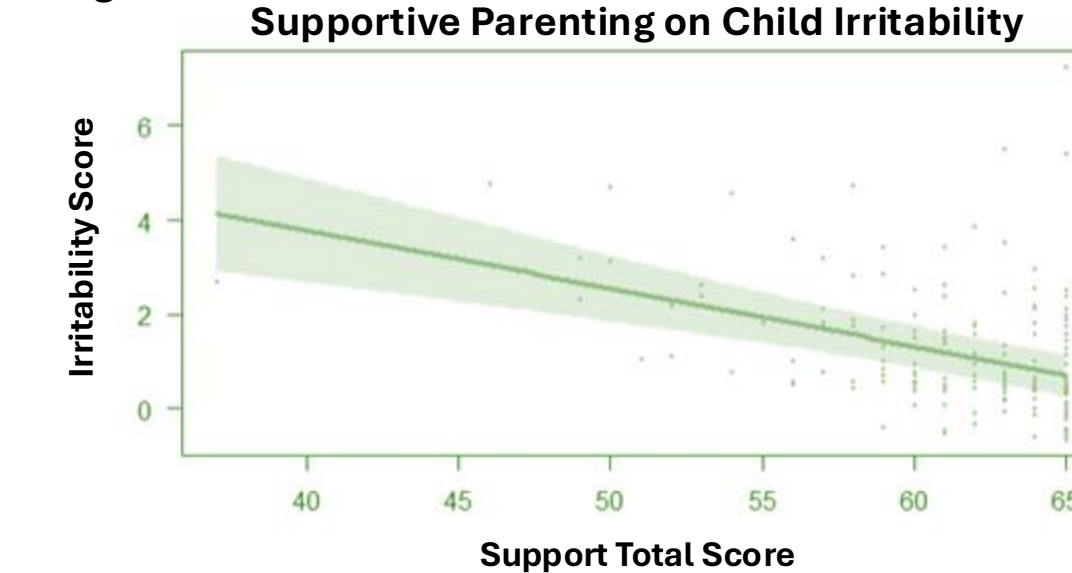
Significant Association

$$B = -.60, SE = .29, p < .05$$

On average, irritability scores decreased by 0.60 points.

Results: Linear Regression

Figure 5:



Significant Association

$$B = -0.12, SE = 0.02, p < .001$$

Results

- Figure 1:** Black mothers scored **significantly higher** than NLW mothers for positive discipline.
- Figure 2:** Black infants scored **significantly higher** than NLW infants for irritability at 12 months.
- Figure 3:** There was a **significant association** between the housing arrangement and irritability, adjusting for support score, positive discipline, mother's age, mother's race, and relationship status.
 - For moms with a secure housing arrangement, the **irritability score decreased on average by 0.98 points** compared to those who did not.
- Figure 4:** The average irritability score for **married mothers decreased by 0.60** compared to single mothers.
- Figure 5:** There is a **significant association** between supportive parenting total score and irritability score after adjusting for positive discipline, mother's age, mother's race, and relationship status.
 - Mothers who scored **higher** in supportive parenting had children with **lower** reported irritability at 12 months.
- There was **no significant difference** in the total score for supportive parenting between Black and NLW mothers (no plot shown).
- There were no significant interactions by race for positive discipline or support on irritability.**

Discussion

- Limitations:** The results may have been influenced by social desirability bias, as participants may have answered in a way that would make them look more favorable. Additionally, among the black moms at 12 months, 15% of them were missing data for income and education.
- Future:** A longitudinal study with a larger cohort should examine the impact of early positive discipline on the development of irritability in older children by gathering responses from teachers as children reach new developmental milestones.
- Importance:** This research emphasizes the necessity for policies and support systems that tackle housing stability and promote effective parenting practices to ensure the well-being of infants, irrespective of their racial backgrounds.

References



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