

# POSITIVE APPROACHES TO HANDLING CHALLENGING CHILD BEHAVIORS

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STARFISH  
FAMILY SERVICES

# Agenda

- Introductions
- Define 'behavior'
  - ABCs of behavior
- Parenting Styles
- Research on physical discipline
- Food for thought
- Tough conversations (chili)
- Alternate strategies



## WHO'S IN THE ROOM?

- Who are we?
- Any specific questions you're hoping to get answered

BUILD  
TRUST  
THROUGH  
TRANSPARENCY

# WHAT makes Super Nanny SO EFFECTIVE?



# Alternate Strategies Super Nanny Keeps in Her Toolbox



- Natural consequences
- Positive reinforcement
- Labeled praises (praising positive opposites)
- Emotion identification
- Redirection
- Prevention strategies → adult behaviors



Our job is to  
understand the  
lenses our families  
see through and  
then offer alternate  
options  
**when they are  
ready.**

# There are Typically **Four** Reasons Behind Behavior

## **ACCESS:**

Child engages in behavior in order to get access to something  
(ex. cookies)



## **ESCAPE:**

Child engages in behavior in order to get out of doing something  
(ex. crib)



## **ATTENTION:**

Child engages in behavior in order to get attention from other people  
(ex. making face)



## **SELF-STIMULATION:**

Child engages in behavior that is pleasurable and feels good  
(ex. flicking)



A



B



C

ANTECEDENT comes before the BEHAVIOR followed by the CONSEQUENCE

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Jonny hits Susan.



Susan cries.



Mom yells at Jonny.

Susan steals  
Jonny's toy car.



Jonny hits Susan.



Susan cries.

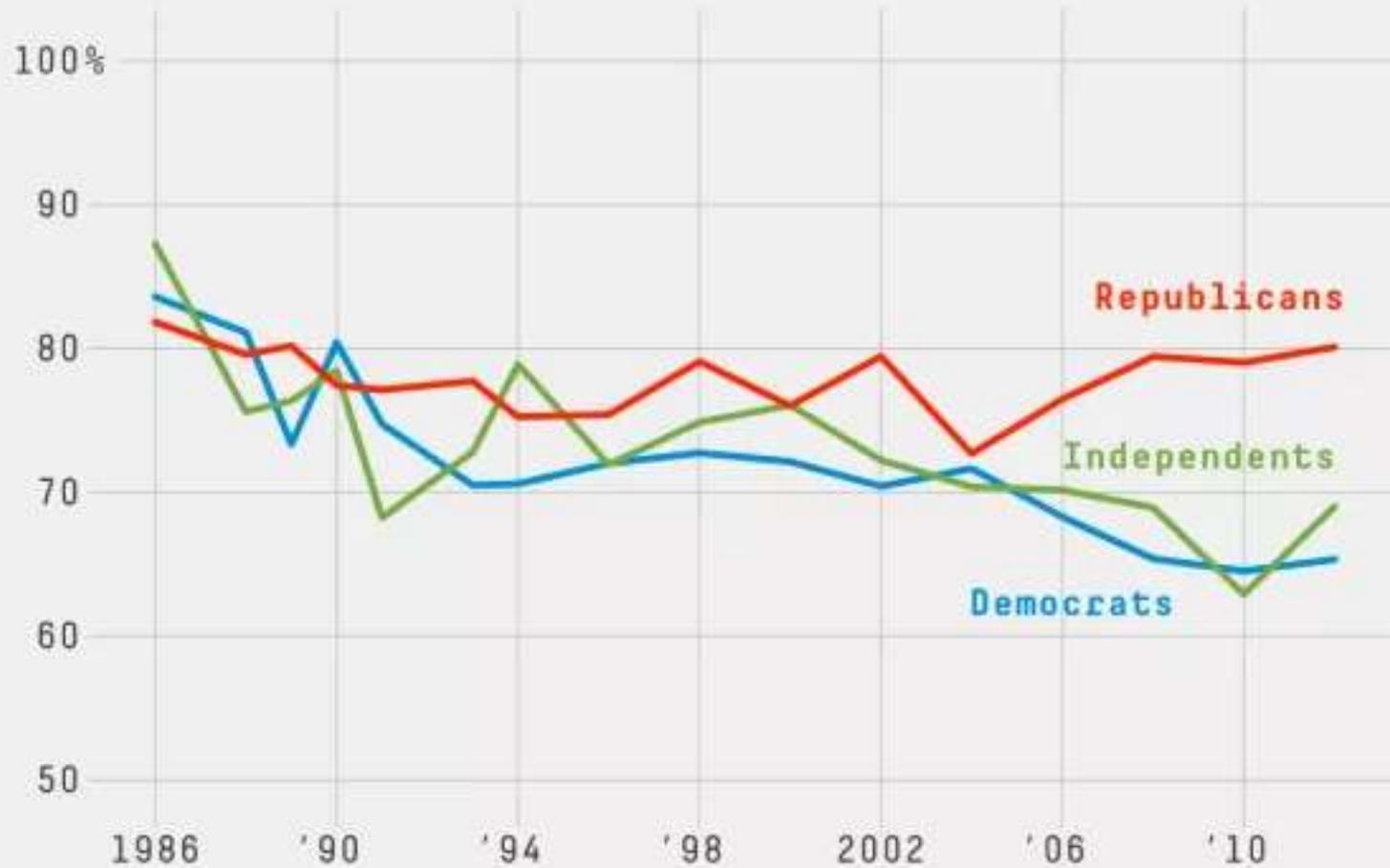
# Research on Physical Punishment

“Polls consistently show **most Americans believe spanking is an appropriate form of discipline**, although it varies by party identification, race, region and religion.”

(<http://fivethirtyeight.com/datalab/americans-opinions-on-spanking-vary-by-party-race-region-and-religion/>)

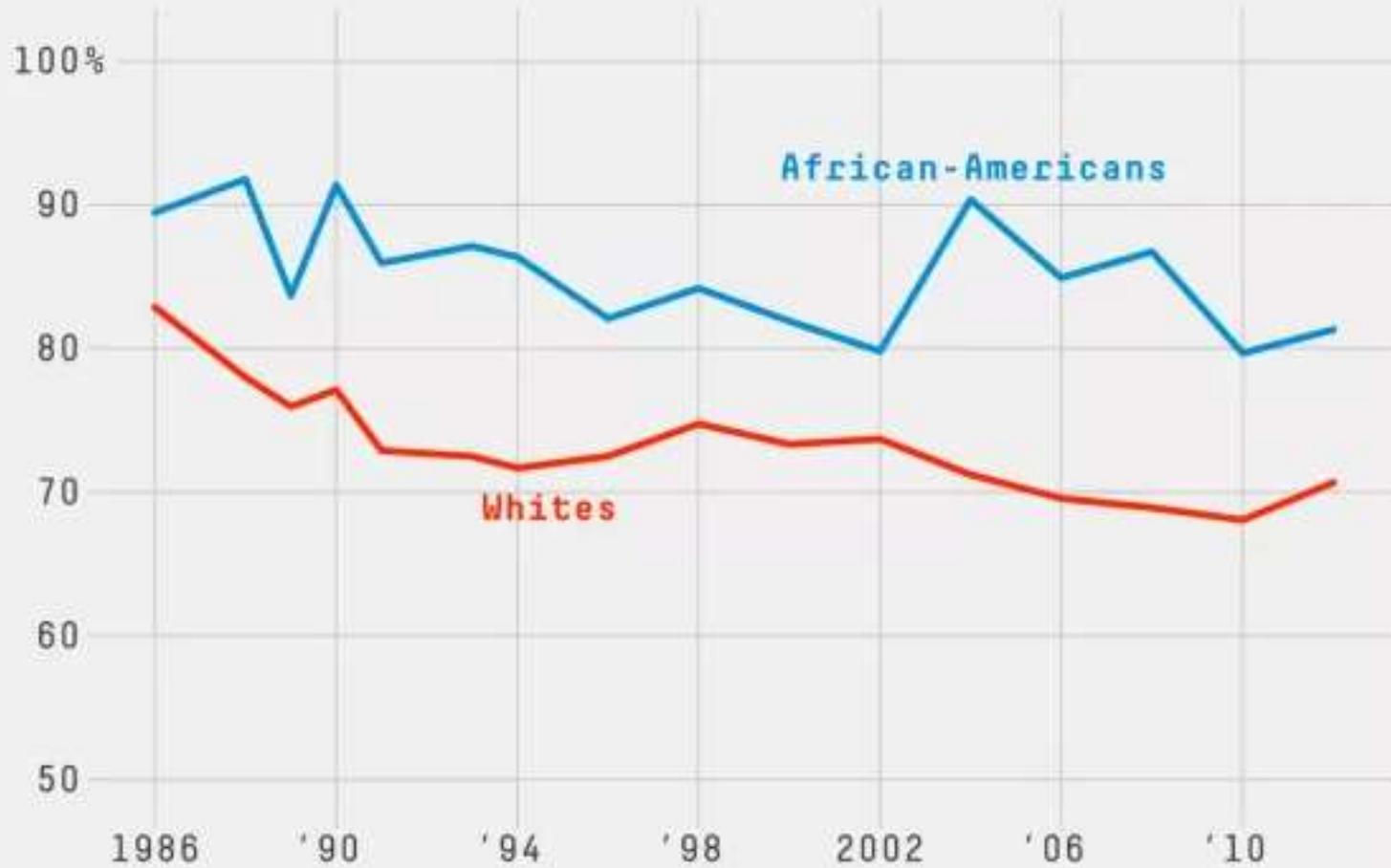
## The Partisan Gap On Spanking

Percentage agreeing that spanking is acceptable, by party



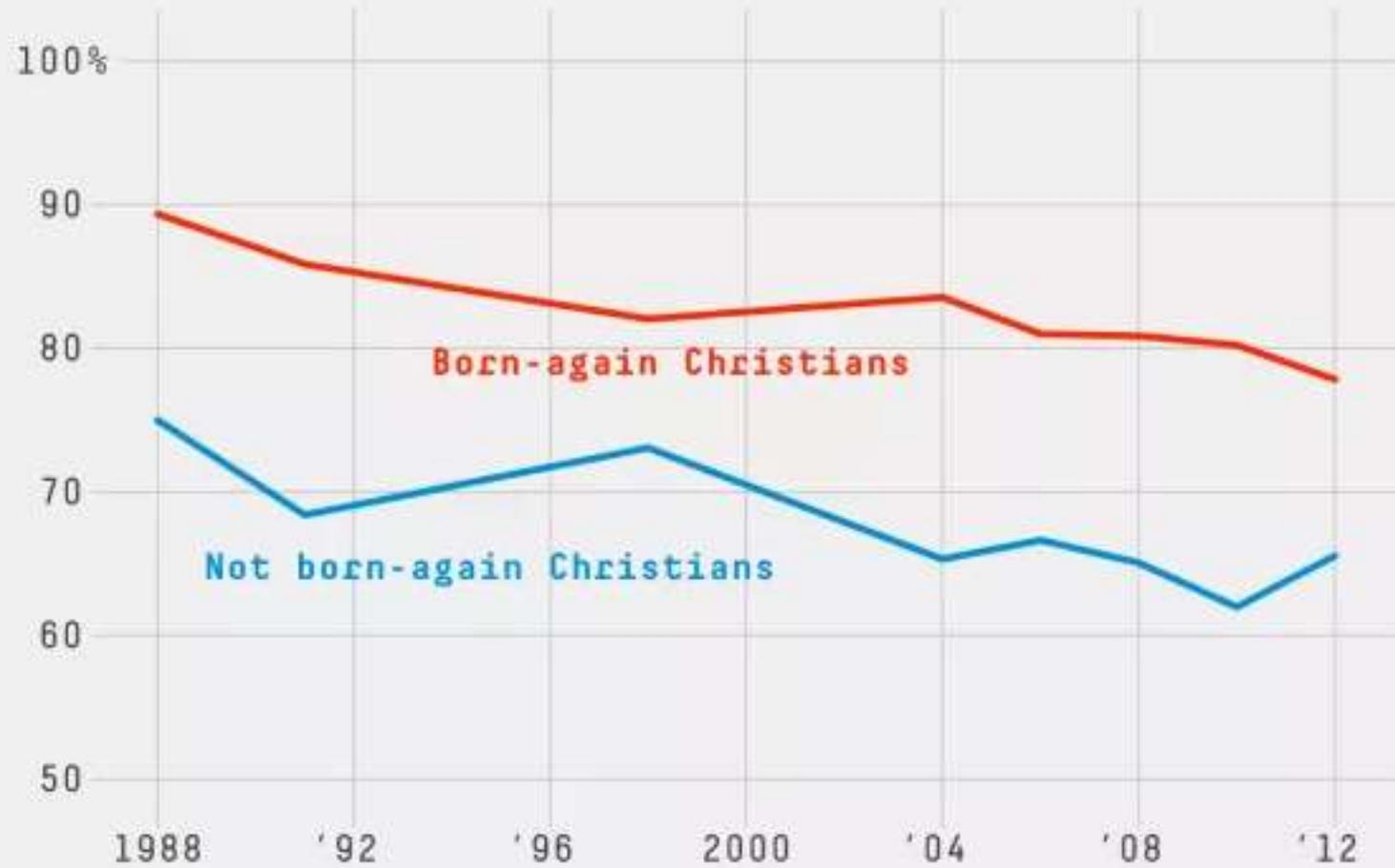
## The Racial Gap On Spanking

Percentage agreeing that spanking is acceptable, by race



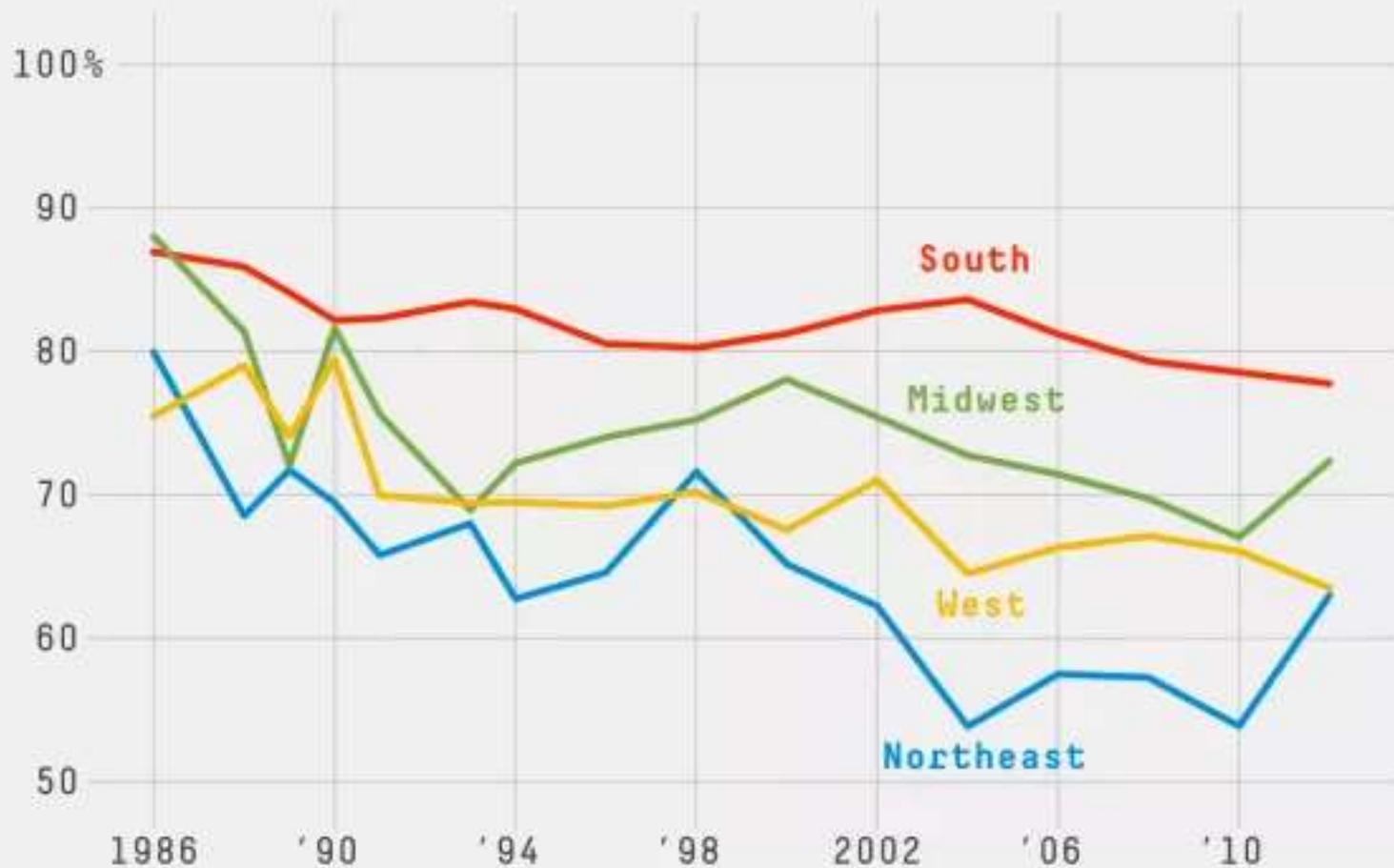
## The Religious Gap On Spanking

Percentage agreeing that spanking is acceptable, by religion

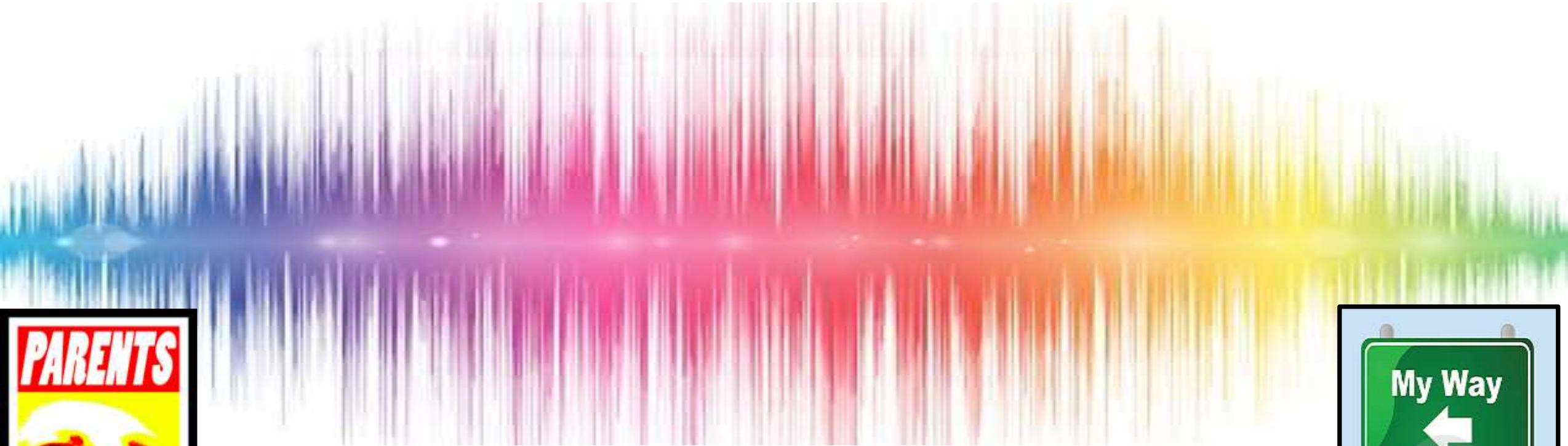


## The Regional Gap On Spanking

Percentage agreeing that spanking is acceptable, by region



# All Parenting Styles Exist on a Spectrum



# Maci Bookout on Spanking Bentley: “I’m a Firm Believer in Whipping Their Ass”



Maci Bookout sat down with MTV to film a *Getting To Know Maci* special and looked back at a scene in which she took her son, Bentley, into the bathroom of a bowling alley and spanked him.

At the time the special aired, Maci defended herself on Twitter, saying, “I got spanked as a kid for being a brat when I knew better. So questioning this is questioning my parents and I take offense to that.”



# Food For Thought: Physiology

“...**maternal warmth**, such as praising or positive reinforcement to the child, **was associated with higher rates of child prosocial behavior**. [Researchers] described children’s prosocial outcomes as ranging from feeling compassion for others to saying ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ as social competence. In contrast, **maternal spanking led to increased child aggression only—and not increased prosocial behavior.**”



# Food For Thought: Physiology

“Physical punishment should be considered a **potential source of toxic stress** that harms children’s overall development by **harming their brains.**”



# Food For Thought: Race and Culture

“It is important to recognize that despite differences across ethnic groups, there is **also large within-group variability in parents' discipline strategies**. Ethnicity is only one of a number of factors that influence parents' use of physical discipline and its effects on children's subsequent externalizing behaviors. We want to be clear that we are not advocating the use of spanking.”

(Lansford JE, Deater-Deckard K, Dodge KA, Bates JE, Pettit GS. Ethnic differences in the link between physical discipline and later adolescent externalizing behaviors. *Journal of child psychology and psychiatry, and allied disciplines*. 2004;45(4):801-812. doi:10.1111/j.1469-7610.2004.00273; McLoyd, Cauce, Takeuchi, & Wilson, 2000; Pinderhughes et al., 2000; Simons, Wu, Lin, Gordon, & Conger, 2000; Roberts & Powers, 1990.)



# Food For Thought: Race and Culture

“Other strategies such as **using time-outs, removing privileges, and rewarding desirable behaviors** may also be effective child-rearing strategies for parents. However, our results do support the position that **there are ethnic differences in long-term effects of physical discipline on externalizing behavior problems.** These findings highlight the importance both of **investigating cultural differences in research on child development** and of **cultural sensitivity** when making recommendations regarding optimal parenting practices.”

(Lansford JE, Deater-Deckard K, Dodge KA, Bates JE, Pettit GS. Ethnic differences in the link between physical discipline and later adolescent externalizing behaviors. *Journal of child psychology and psychiatry, and allied disciplines*. 2004;45(4):801-812. doi:10.1111/j.1469-7610.2004.00273; McLoyd, Cauce, Takeuchi, & Wilson, 2000; Pinderhughes et al., 2000; Simons, Wu, Lin, Gordon, & Conger, 2000; Roberts & Powers, 1990.)

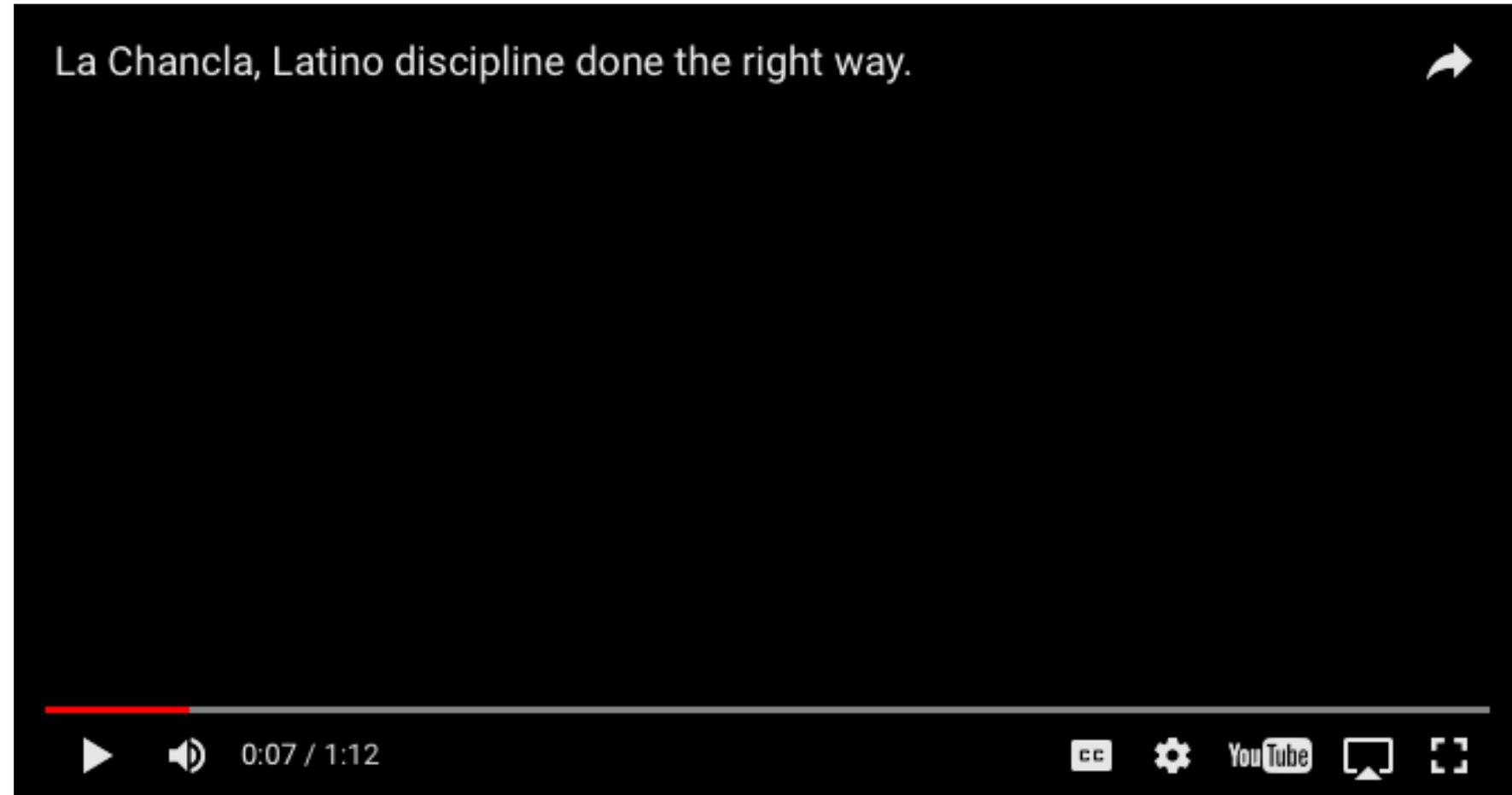


# Food For Thought: Race and Culture

"Discipline of the child tends to be punishment-oriented rather than reward-oriented. **In Arab norms**, light physical discipline and strong verbal reprimands of the child or even screaming at the child is considered proper parenting and is viewed as correcting the child's etiquette rather than being seen as violence. This **physical discipline most often is spanking, but may include slapping the face or hitting the body of the child. It must be emphasized that hurting the child by inflicting serious bruising or wounds is not acceptable in Arabic discipline.** In general, the well-being of the child is of concern and the fulfillment of educational and economic needs of the child is considered of great importance. **In early childhood, the child is predominately trained and disciplined by the mother, who sometimes spansks the child for misbehavior. The authority of the father begins to manifest itself more strongly as the child grows older.** Once the child is about age seven, it is the father who becomes the most important disciplinarian in the child's life. The child learns from an early age to obey and respect the parents and other elderly people in the family."

"In traditional Arab society the basic socialization aim pursued by the family, whether consciously or not, is to **mold the child into an obedient member of the family group, able to integrate into the working of his immediate social environment.** The growing child has to learn to subordinate his wishes to his family. He has to learn that **the interest of the family comes first**, and has to govern his actions with the family point of view in mind (Hammad, 1989)."

# La Chancla





# Food For Thought: Race and Culture

“One of the most striking aspects of the debate within Latino culture is the casualness with which corporal punishment is discussed. Strangely, **it can even hold a degree of sentimental value, tying us to family, friends, and the international community that shares in our experiences...** Lisa Fontes, Ph.D., lecturer and author of *Child Abuse and Culture: Working with Diverse Families*, sees the laughter as a sort of coping mechanism.

She offered this via email: **‘I think people from all groups joke about the punishments they’ve received because it is a way to cope with ambiguous feelings, trying to make sense of the love and loyalty they feel toward their parents, today, and also the shame, fear, and humiliation they felt when young.’**

The author of this editorial piece concludes: “as human beings living in a brave new world, it would serve us well to question. Question our traditions, question what we’ve long accepted as good and right and just. And it’s not easy. Why? **Because for change to take effect, entire patterns of thinking must be eradicated. Ceasing to believe and practice something one has always accepted as normal is no small task. Especially something so ingrained and embedded in the very fabric of a culture.**”



# Food For Thought: Race and Culture

“Some studies have shown that the effects of authoritative parenting are universal across all cultures, while others suggested that child outcomes differ depending on social and cultural contexts. **Harsh physical discipline was associated with higher externalizing problems, but only for European American children. It is interesting that, for African American children, harsh physical punishment was associated with lower aggression and externalizing scores. They suggested that lack of physical discipline by African American parents may have implied an abandonment of the parenting role. These results suggested that different styles of parenting may be adaptive, have different meanings, and may be combined in different ways for African American families resulting in more positive outcomes for children, since it allows parents to maintain the control necessary to ensure the safety of their children as they navigate an inherently racist and dangerous world.**

Parents of African American children, especially boys, use a variety of strategies to prepare their children to function in a society in which they are viewed as inferior to the majority culture. **While more harsh discipline results in less favorable outcomes for European American children, a more authoritarian style may yield more positive results for children from African American families.** Parenting in preparation for adversity is critical for parents of African American children, especially boys. The lessons learned may be difficult, but they are necessary for children to have a chance to not only survive, but thrive.”

Keyes, A. W., Smyke, A. T., Middleton, M., & Black, C. L. (2015, March). Parenting African American Children in the Context of Racism. *Zero to Three*, 27-34; Lamborn & Felbab, 2003; Querido, Warner, & Eyberg, 2002; Dornbusch, Ritter, Liederman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987; Deater-Deckard, Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 1996)



# Food For Thought: Race and Culture

“The difficulty in adopting American ways, said Patrick So, a psychotherapist for the NYC Board, largely stems from different beliefs about children. ‘In Asia, your child is considered your property and you can do whatever you want’, he said. ‘In the Western culture, it’s not the case.’

As the emphasis has shifted from keeping families together to removing children to prevent harm, the conflicts over disciplinary practices have become acute, said Edward Zigler, a Yale child psychology professor who was a founder of Head Start. **Well-meaning advice can put parents in a predicament, said social workers, since many parents know no other way to discipline children.**

‘Some Chinese kids have become addicted to drugs in foster care, and a few teenage girls got pregnant.’ said Xuejun Chi, who was a university professor in China and is now a social worker at the YMCA in Chinatown. ‘When their parents eventually get them back, they are so messed up. The parents ask, “How has the system cared for them any better than I did?”

# Some Things You Might Hear from Parents Re: Physical Discipline

"I don't want to hit her but I don't know what else to do when she has a tantrum."

"I never want to hit my children."

"A good whooping never hurt anybody"

"When they're out of control, spanking is the only thing that works"

"Spanking works better than talking"

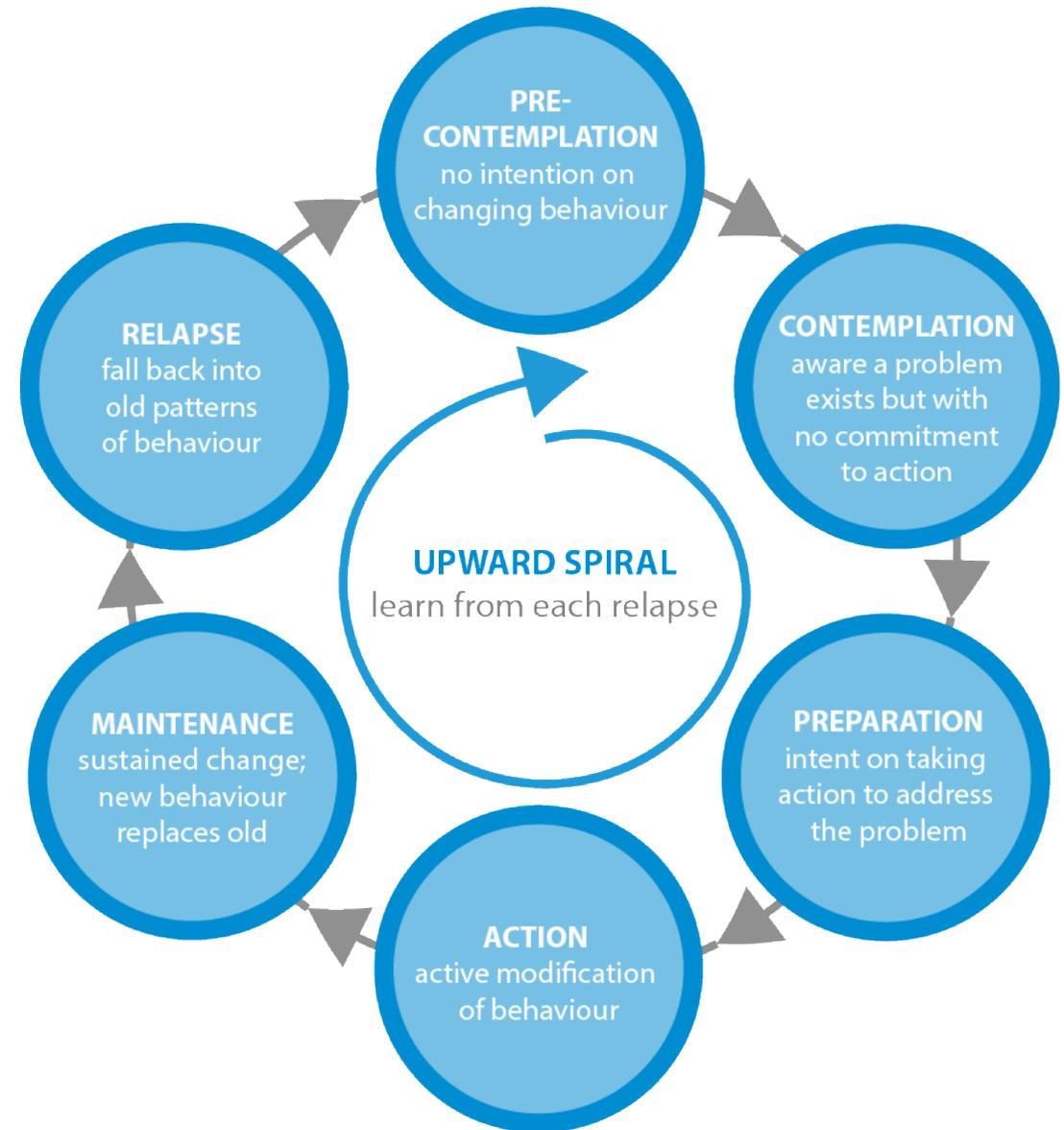
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Examples you've heard during home visits?



Which stages of change are these parents in when it comes to using non-physical discipline methods?

## STAGES OF CHANGE



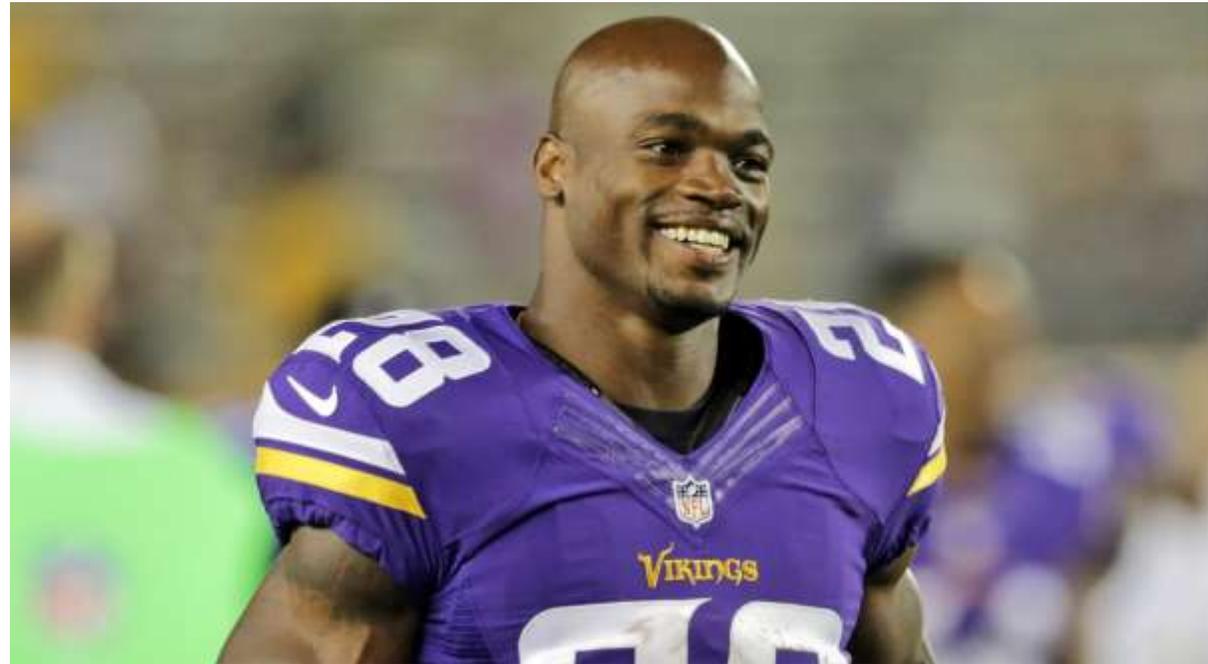
# Different Cultural Responses to Physical Discipline: Leah Messer

“You’re not going to act like this in front of people. Do you understand? I’ve had enough. I don’t know why you’re acting like this!”



# Different Cultural Responses to Physical Discipline: Adrian Peterson

"But deep in my heart I have always believed I **could have been one of those kids that was lost in the streets** without the discipline instilled in me by my parents and other relatives," he wrote. "I have always believed that the way my parents disciplined me has a great deal to do with the success I have enjoyed as a man. I love my son and I will continue to become a better parent and learn from any mistakes I ever make."



# Conversations with Parents

## Motivational Interviewing Strategies:

- Asking Permission
- Open-Ended Questions
- Looking forward, looking back
- Values Exploration
- Reflective Listening

## Be Aware of:

- Discomfort
- If don't listen some may stop telling
- Some may dig their heels in
- Feel disrespected/feel their family is being disrespected
- Cultural norms



# WHAT DOES CHILI HAVE TO DO WITH HOME-VISITING?



# CULTURAL HUMILITY, CURIOSITY, AND OPENNESS



# Alternate Strategies



Our job is to understand the lenses our families see through and then offer alternate options **when they are ready** (sound familiar??)

Let's look at our lovely handout!

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