

The Relationship between Parenting Style and Moral Reasoning on Adolescent Helping Behavior

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Abstract

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People often wonder what influences the behaviors of teenagers. Research suggests that parenting style may be influential in the choices of adolescents. Helping behaviors in young children seem to also be influenced by moral reasoning, suggesting there could be a connection between all three of these factors. As a result, this research looked at the relationship between parenting style and moral reasoning on adolescent helping behaviors. Participants aged 12-18 filled out surveys assessing parenting style and moral reasoning and completed a behavioral assessment. Results revealed that there was no significant relationship between parenting style and helping and moral reasoning. This could provide the framework for further research into the influences on adolescent helping.

The Relationship between Parenting Style and Moral Reasoning on Adolescent Helping Behavior

Adolescence is an important time of life that is marked by numerous life changes, whether people enjoy it or not. There are physical, cognitive, emotional, and social changes (Hart & Carlo, 2005). There are added responsibilities and expectations from parents, teachers, and peers. Yet adolescents are often regarded as moody, unhelpful, and unpleasant to be around. Many people claim that adolescents are lacking basic morals and manners in comparison to adults; however, these changes do not happen overnight. Helping and most other behaviors are highly influenced by factors outside of the control of the adolescent. Helping is a multi-step process: acknowledge the need for help and correctly analyze the situation, then make the choice to help (Latane & Darley, 1968). There are many factors that could foster the development of such a process. One of these is moral reasoning. Additionally, children know what their parents teach them, so the strategies employed by different parenting styles could affect the levels of both helping behavior and moral reasoning.

There are typically three types of parenting styles referred to in research: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. They differ from each other in their range of structure, communication, and support. Permissive parents tend to have few boundaries and let the children set their own rules, whereas authoritarian parents have many boundaries and allow for little discussion if there are disagreements. Authoritative parenting employs a medium style between these two, with boundaries and communication (Gonzalez, Greenwood, & WenHsu, 2001). Because of the very different approaches to parenting, it is not surprising that children behave in different ways. It is natural for people to adapt to their environment, changing how they act to fit

the expectations of the people around them. With each of these parenting styles having different expectations for the children, parenting style may play an important role in a child's life. In fact, parenting style has been tied a range of different behaviors and internal characteristics.

The spectrum of influence of parenting style is vast and often underrated. Parenting style impacts a child in almost every area of their life, including the simple things like handling daily internal problems like self-esteem (Martínez & García, 2008). This study looked at adolescents aged 15-18 in Brazil. Using a survey, they were separated into four parenting groups: authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent, and neglectful. After assessing self-esteem, the research found that participants from authoritarian or neglectful homes had the lowest self-esteem scores. Surprisingly, the adolescents that came from indulgent homes had the highest self-esteem scores. With scores almost as high as those were adolescents with authoritative parents.

Aside from simple internal factors, parenting style also affects large things like how we perform academically (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987; Kerr, Stattin, & Ozdemir, 2012; Stright & Yeo, 2014). Using different methodologies, all of these studies found similar results. After assessing the dominant parenting style used in the home, they looked at that information in relation to school performance. Consistently, children and adolescents with permissive and authoritarian parents had lower grades than those with authoritative parents. This does not imply that parenting style is related to levels of intelligence, but is more likely to suggest that parenting style is related to motivation.

Even more serious than school performance, research indicates that parenting style is related to our sexual decisions (Sylvester, 2014). This research looked at the relationship between self-esteem, parenting style, parental monitoring, and sexual behavior. Aligning with

their hypotheses, the results revealed that those with low self-esteem, low parental monitoring, and low parental authoritativeness reported much higher sexual risk behaviors. Because the previously mentioned research showed the relationship between parenting style and self-esteem, this research only emphasizes even more the power of parenting.

More importantly, how we are raised sets the foundation of what we perceive as right and wrong and how we ultimately interact with others. Carlo, McGinley, Hayes, Batenhorst, and Wilkinson (2007) found a relationship between parenting practices and sympathy in children. Sympathy was a factor that influenced how the children perceived and behaved toward other people. Georgiou & Stavrinides (2013) also found a relationship between parental practices and behaviors toward others. Their research looked on the other side of the spectrum, at bullying behavior. They found that children and parents that had a lot of conflict at home were much more likely to be both bullies and the victims of bullies. Also, parental styles that did not foster safe disclosure from their children were the most clear predictor of a child being a bully. The differences in parenting at home in both of these studies led to differences in the way their children treat others.

Clearly parenting styles play an important role in the development of children, not only for how they behave at home, but also for how they behave with others both in private and in public. As shown above, this relates to both negative and positive behaviors. One of the most common positive behaviors that is often overlooked is helping. It is done so frequently that it is often forgotten, but this behavior exhibited by one person can affect multiple others. Helping behavior affects the person helping, the person being helped, and potentially any witnesses, making it quite influential.

The importance of parenting on helping behavior in early life can be seen by a study by Altay and Gure (2012). Studying preschoolers in different educational settings, they assessed parenting style and prosocial behavior. Measuring only the maternal style, the results revealed that children with authoritative mothers displayed more prosocial behaviors than those with permissive parenting. Helping is one type of prosocial behavior, along with things like sharing, empathy, other things that benefit others without directly benefiting the giver. This suggests that there may be a similar relationship when research focuses solely on helping behavior, instead of the broad category of prosocial behaviors. Because of results like this, most of the research focus has settled on young children.

An additional look at prosocial behaviors was done by Ladd (1999). Looking at an older population than the previous study, he examined the effect of social status on prosocial behaviors. Identifying children that were liked by their peers and those that were neglected by their peer, he found a pattern. The children that were liked were, in general, much more helpful to others. On the other hand, the children that were largely neglected by their peers exhibited antisocial behaviors and were not helpful to others. This shows that the amount of acceptance and support that a child gets can affect his or her behavior.

Parenting styles differ in the amount of support and outward affection that a child receives. It makes sense that this could be interpreted in a similar fashion as the peer acceptance and support. Perhaps children whose parents use a parenting style rich in support and acceptance also display more prosocial behaviors, like helping, as opposed to children whose parents employ a parenting style lacking in the areas of support and acceptance.

Warneken and Tomasello (2014) looked at altruism in 20-month-old toddlers. Instead of looking at internal factors, they decided to look at external ones. When they helped, the toddlers were presented with either extrinsic rewards (treats) or intrinsic rewards (praise). Most people would assume that such young children would not be able to have a preference for such things or that they would gravitate toward material prizes because it is easier to grasp mentally. The results of this study were surprising. They found that the children that were extrinsically rewarded stopped helping after a few trials, but children that were intrinsically rewarded continued to help trial after trial. These results would suggest that children may help less if they are constantly given things. There could be a direct relationship with this action and parenting styles because certain parenting styles smother their children with gifts and physical rewards.

While some parents use gifts to encourage behaviors, others choose to set an example to encourage behaviors. Bryan and Test (1967) brought a rush of interest with their pivotal study finding that models matter. Their studies involved two common helping opportunities of different intensities: seeing someone on the side of the road with a flat tire and walking past a Salvation Army bell ringer. In both of these cases, if a participant saw someone else model the helping behavior, they were more likely to help themselves. Those that saw someone helping a woman change a tire were much more likely to stop and help the next person on the road. Those that saw someone donate were much more likely to donate. This landmark experiment showed that whether or not a person helps is affected to a large degree by the people around them. Though the person is unaware of this influence, it still creates a significant difference. These models unintentionally change the behaviors of the people. This relates directly back to the relationship between parent and child. One of the most important roles of a parent is to be a

model. Just like the models in the study above, parents can influence the behavior of their children.

Because it seems that parenting style and parents probably play an important role in helping behavior, many would assume that the parent has to actively encourage a child to help in order to facilitate the behavior. According to Warneken and Tomasello (2013), this is not necessarily the case. They studied the helping behavior of two-year-olds. In some cases, the child's parent was in the room: being passive, pointing out the need for help, encouraging the child to help, or telling the child to help. In other cases, the child's parent was not in the room at all. The results showed that the presence of the parents did not have any effect on the child's behavior. They did not have to tell the child what to do or offer encouragement for them to help; the child did it regardless.

Because adults do not spend a lot of time assessing whether or not to help someone, many assume that helping is a natural response, especially for children. One study (Hepach, Vaish, & Tomasello, 2013) found results contradictory to this assumption. Working with three-year olds, they found that there is one factor that largely determines whether and how quickly a child responds by helping. In their study, the children were exposed to an adult acting distressed. The adults reacted appropriately, overreacted, or reacted to no stimulus. The children that saw the adult react appropriately were more likely to help in a later instance and help more quickly than children in the other situations. This reveals that children have to analyze the situations before deciding to help, showing that helping is not an inherent action. Many factors influence a child's choice to help.

Similar to the previous study, more research has been done to see how children differentiate when and when not to help. The results of Brooker and Poulin-Dubois' (2013) study challenge those mentioned above. In this study, 18-month-olds were exposed to two types of adults: those that correctly labeled objects and those that did not. They were then tested on word-learning tasks, imitation tasks, and helping tasks. The only task that was not affected by the adult behavior was the helping behavior. The children that were told the incorrect name for a familiar object were just as likely to help the adult as those that were told the correct name. The results on the other tasks show that the children could tell a difference in the adult because it affected their abilities in other areas, but not helping behavior. This shows there is something that happens between 18-months and three years that causes a child to analyze situations differently.

Many behaviors simply develop with age, making it possible that helping behavior develops in a similar fashion. One study (Stanhope, Bell, & Parker-Cohen, 1987) looked at the influence of child temperament and their helping behavior. The results found that preschoolers that were socially adapted, social, or outgoing all had higher occurrences of helping. This study reveals that individual differences in temperament are a determining factor of helping behavior. An unintentional finding in this study was that there was a positive correlation with helping and age; the older the children were, the more they helped. The research identified a relationship between helping and age, but failed to relate it also to parenting.

Parenting influences more than helping behavior, it also may affect moral reasoning. Moral reasoning is the justification of decisions, why a person believes something is right or wrong. There are traditionally three levels with two stages in each level, totaling six stages of moral reasoning (Berger, 2003). Level one is called preconventional moral reasoning. At stage

one, a person makes a decision solely to avoid punishment. This is often employed by children when obeying their parents. People in the second stage make their decisions for personal gain. It is an “I’ll scratch your back if you scratch mine” mentality. After those two stages, people move on to level two, known as conventional moral reasoning. This is where people start to include social influences on their decision making. At stage three, people make their decisions in order to get social approval. Decisions are shaped by social norms and societal expectations. They are frequently concerned with how they appear to other people and worry that their decisions will show them in a negative light to others. When a person enters the fourth stage of moral reasoning, they become concerned with laws. They make their decisions based on what is just, even if that involves some personal sacrifice.

Then comes level three, called postconventional moral reasoning. Most adults do not enter into this level or rarely use it for all of life’s decisions. At stage five, abstract thinking about the rules and laws of society is developed. They are looked at as a social contract, necessary to follow because of an agreement, but they become null if one side does not follow through. The highest and rarest stage is stage six. A person in this stage would base his decision making on what is best for everyone. Situations are no longer looked at individually, but instead there is a universal set of principles that governs right and wrong. Some of these principles may even go against the rationalization of the former stages. As a person develops into higher stages of moral reasoning, they employ more abstract thinking and take into consideration the implications of actions to everyone around them. They go from avoiding punishment and seeking personal gain to self-sacrifice and doing what is best according to a universal set of principles

that may or may not line up with some of their own beliefs about their own situation requiring a decision.

Clearly, this is a very complex area of study and because of that, many tests have been created. Most of them only assess the first two levels of moral reasoning, with a person being scored with being at stages 1-4 (Levine, 1976). This is because the first four stages are the most common and many successful, high-functioning adults never make it past stage four. When a person does reach level three, they normally employ it only for some situations, going back and forth from level two to level three reasoning.

One study (Malti, Eisenberg, Kim, & Buchmann, 2013) tracked the development of moral reasoning as influenced by parental support. Over the course of three years, the researchers recorded the children's sympathy, moral reasoning, and moral emotion attributions while repeatedly measuring the parental support. The results revealed that children who had high parental support displayed a consistently higher level of moral reasoning throughout the experiment. In fact, children with high parental support displayed the highest levels of sympathy, moral emotion attribution, and moral reasoning. These results suggest that the amount of support present in the parents is related to many parts of the child's personality. Parental support varies depending on the type of parenting style, but it obviously shapes the child in many ways.

Sometimes parenting style is not enough to shape moral reasoning. Moral reasoning is something often overlooked and taken for granted. Typically it develops in stages, maturing from simple to abstract concepts and explanations. There are many factors that can permanently affect a person's moral reasoning. A study done by Shulman and his colleagues (2012) conveys this point with their study of participants with Autism Spectrum Disorder. They compared the

reactions to moral dilemmas in children with and without ASD. It was found that children with ASD were unable to use and understand abstract rules in discerning the correctness of an action. The children without ASD were also able to imagine situations where a previously unacceptable behavior may be acceptable. This shows the development and variance of moral reasoning among children. The ability to discern what is right and wrong in different situations could also show that many children have the ability to read a situation and react accordingly.

Usually, moral reasoning development increases with age, causing many people to assume that it continues to develop into college whether that is due to age or education. A study done by Nather (2013) found results contrary to this thought. This study measured the moral reasoning of college students, using education level as an independent variable. There were no significant differences between freshmen and seniors in college. One of the explanations for this is that moral reasoning is finished developing by the time a person enters college. This would suggest that adolescence is a critical period to reach full moral reasoning potential.

One possible reason that moral reasoning may finish developing fairly early in life is a connection between moral reasoning and intelligence. A study done by Eisenberg-Berg (1979) looked at this exact relationship. Working with high school students, she evaluated their level of prosocial moral reasoning, level of intelligence, and political ideology. She looked specifically at prosocial moral reasoning, which involves making choices in which some outcomes benefit others, while taking self-sacrifice. Interestingly, she found a positive relationship between level of intelligence and level of moral reasoning, but only in males. It seems that the moral reasoning in the females in this study was related to liberal attitudes, instead of intelligence. This supports the thought that moral reasoning typically increases with age because intelligence tends to follow

that same pattern. However, this also shows that there may be gender differences in the development of such things, meaning that the factors that highly influence moral reasoning in males may differ from the influential factors in females. Another interesting point to consider is that this research went further than most, looking at a very narrow type of moral reasoning. Perhaps, things like sociopolitical attitudes only affect prosocial moral reasoning because they are more closely related than general moral reasoning.

Another study that suggests that adolescents should be of primary concern in regard to moral reasoning is one done by Eisenberg and Hand (1979). These researchers were using preschoolers as participants. Using naturalistic observation, they observed the prosocial behaviors of these preschoolers like helping and sharing and also determined their level of moral reasoning. There was a positive relationship between several of the behaviors and moral reasoning, but there was no clear connection with helping behavior specifically. This does not mean that a relationship does not exist, but could suggest that preschoolers are not at a high enough moral reasoning level to affect this behavior. Research done with an older population, like adolescents, could reveal if there is indeed a relationship.

After many years of working primarily with preschoolers and very young children, another study (Eisenberg, Cumberland, Guthrie, Murphy, & Shepard, 2005) looked at a very important age range. Young adults ages 15-26 were tracked and repeatedly measured on their moral reasoning and prosocial behaviors, including self-reported helping. The results revealed that moral reasoning generally increased with age. Further, this study had interesting results concerning helping behavior. Early in the study, helping behavior decreased and then continued to increase with age. This could suggest some sort of developmental fluke with helping behavior.

Again, this study looked only at self-reported helping, so the methods could have been improved with a different approach, such as an actual behavioral assessment.

Some researchers (Paciello, Fida, Tramontano, Cole, & Cernigli, 2013) took a slightly different approach to look at the relationship between moral reasoning and helping. Working with adolescents aged 16-19 years, they found that higher levels of moral reasoning were related to the propensity to help. Propensity to help is a self-assessment of the likelihood of a person to help. That and helping behavior are two different things, but this suggests a strong chance of there being a positive relationship. Though self-reports are frequently used, there seems to be a relationship present between moral reasoning and helping behavior.

Further research expands this relationship to delinquency. Raaijmakers, Engels, and Van Hoof (2005) did a longitudinal study on young adults aged 15-23 years. They tracked moral reasoning and delinquent acts. Their results revealed that as age increased, so did the moral reasoning levels of the participants. Along with this rise in moral reasoning, there was a drop in delinquent behavior. This research reveals several things: first, moral reasoning can increase with age and second, there is a negative correlation between moral reasoning and delinquency. This correlation cannot prove causation, so there may be other factors influencing these relationships, like parenting style for example. Delinquency and helping behavior are not exact opposite behaviors, so research done on helping could reveal if there is a similar relationship.

The research shows that there is clearly some sort of relationship between parenting style and moral reasoning, moral reasoning and helping behavior, and helping behavior and parenting style; however, there has been little to no research looking at all three factors in conjunction with each other. Further, most of the research done in these areas is with young children. While there

is much to learn from toddlers, preschoolers, and elementary school children, there could be even more to be learned from adolescents. Adolescence is a time of great change and development physically, mentally, and emotionally. Because of this and the difference in individual rates of maturation, there is a much greater variety of behaviors in adolescents. The current study looked at the relationship between parenting style and moral reasoning on adolescent helping behavior.

During the study, participants completed surveys about parenting style and moral reasoning and were given a helping behavior assessment. It was predicted that moral reasoning would increase with age, the older adolescents showing higher levels. The second hypothesis was that moral reasoning would be positively correlated with helping behavior. The third hypothesis was that adolescents with greater authoritative parents would score higher on helping behavior; whereas, adolescents with greater authoritarian or permissive parents would score lower on helping behavior. Similarly, the fourth and final hypothesis was that adolescents with greater authoritative parents would score higher on moral reasoning; whereas, adolescents with greater authoritarian or permissive parents would score lower on moral reasoning.

Method

Participants

The participants in this study were junior high and high school students at various junior high and high schools in Southwest Missouri. There were 81 total participants, 35 were male and 39 were female, with seven participants failing to report gender. The age of participants ranged from 12 to 18, with the mean age being 15.6 years, ($SD = 20.6$). Participants were obtained by volunteering after hearing the researcher present a brief synopsis of the project.

Both self-consent and parental-consent forms were obtained by all participants under the age of 18. School grade level was also collected. Of the 81 participants, 14 were in the seventh grade, ten were in the eighth grade, two were in the ninth grade, four were in the tenth grade, 11 were in the eleventh grade, and 39 were in the twelfth grade. One participant failed to report his or her grade level. Additionally, information about ethnicity was collected. Of the participants, 72 were Caucasian, three were African-American, two were Hispanic, one was Native American, one was Indian, and two failed to report their ethnicity.

Materials

Two surveys were administered in this study, one to measure parenting style and the other to measure moral reasoning. The Sociomoral Reflection Measure-Short Form Objective (Brugman, Basinger, & Gibbs, 2007) was used to measure moral reasoning. This survey (see Appendix A) consists of ten statements and questions that cover different moral dilemmas. Each scenario is followed by three parts. The first part asks the participant how important they find this scenario (*very important, important, or not important*). The second part asks the participant which of the options they would choose as a reason for the scenario's importance. Each choice displays a different stage of moral reasoning. The third part asks the participant to identify which of the choices is closest to the reason they would actually give.

For example, one question is "How important is it for people to keep promises, if they can, even to someone they hardly know?" To this question, there are four possible scenarios, each at a different stage of moral reasoning. The response that would reflect a stage one was, "Because otherwise the person will find out and beat you up or do something bad to you." This is a clear reflection of level one because the sole motivation for keeping the promise is to avoid

punishment. The stage two response to this question is, "Because you just might run into that person again sometime." This shows level two reasoning because it is only concerned with personal gain, even coming across as a bit selfish. A person at the third level of moral reasoning would choose this option, "Because then you can feel good about yourself and keep from giving the impression that you are a selfish person." In this response, the person is concerned with societal impressions and gaining social approval above all else. The highest stage response offered to this question was, "Because it is important for the sake of your own integrity as well as the respect of others." The emphasis on doing what is right and just in regards to other people is what sets this stage apart.

To this survey, four demographic questions were added. Information about gender, age, school grade, and ethnicity were collected. This survey fit the needs of the students because it was at a reading level that participants from age 12-18 could comprehend. It was found to be reliable with a Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.768. Each answer was directly related to a stage of moral reasoning, making the decision process more clear. The participants could score at one of the first four stages of moral reasoning found in the preconvention and convention levels.

For scoring, only the third part of each question was used. The first two parts were to challenge the participant to consider different options and explore different moral reasoning levels. Through this process, they were able to narrow down which of the options they would actually use had they been in the described scenario. The participants' scores were derived by using the mode from their responses. This was done so that the levels would be whole numbers and represent the most frequent level of moral reasoning present in the individual.

The Parental Authority Questionnaire (Buri, 1991) was used to assess parenting style. This survey (see Appendix B) is comprised of thirty statements that the participant ranks with a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The participants were asked how much the statement applied to their parenting situation. There were an equal number of questions assessing permissive (e.g. “My parents have always felt that what children need is to be free to make up their own minds and to do what they want to do, even if this does not agree with what their parents might want.”), authoritative (e.g. “My parents gave me direction for my behavior and activities as I was growing up and they expected me to follow their direction, but they were always willing to listen to my concerns and to discuss that direction with me.”), and authoritarian (e.g. “My parents have always felt that most problems in society would be solved if we could get parents to strictly and forcibly deal with their children when they don’t do what they are supposed to do.”) parenting styles, giving an indication as to the dominant style employed in the home.

Though the test was originally written to be used to determine the maternal parenting style only, the researcher modified it to be applied to all caregivers in the participant’s life, whether that was one or more parents, grandparents, or other guardians. This survey had a Cronbach’s Alpha score of 0.768 for permissive parenting, 0.777 for authoritative parenting, and 0.823 for authoritarian parenting. Scores for this survey were derived by summing the responses for each of the three parenting styles, so that each person had three scores: one for permissive parenting, one for authoritative parenting, and one for authoritarian parenting.

Procedure

Prior to any data collection, the researcher received permission from various school districts. This was an involved process, starting with contacting the superintendent of each school district. At this point, the superintendent was given a detailed description of the project and asked if they would be willing to let their district participate. Of the ten school districts contacted, only six responded. Three of these districts decided not to participate in the study because there was not sufficient time in the daily school schedule, they were uncomfortable with questions about parenting style, or their district did not allow for student research. Three school districts decided to participate in this study.

After permission was granted by the superintendent, the researcher was tasked with also gaining permission of specific teachers. These teachers were also given a detailed description of the project along with a description of the students needed as participants. General classes were chosen for the study to ensure a representative sample of students would be given the opportunity to participate. After gaining permission from the teacher, the researcher scheduled multiple days to visit the classes and conduct the research.

On the first day, the researcher went into classrooms and gave a brief summary of the study. This summary included the fact that the study was looking at the relationship between parenting style, moral reasoning, and helping behavior. Brief descriptions of each of these variables were given. They were ensured that participation was voluntary and confidential and would likely bring no adverse side effects. Then, informed consent papers (see Appendices C-E) were distributed. There were more than 300 informed consent papers passed out to potential participants. With only 81 returned, there was a 27% response rate from the students. Most of the

participants were under the age of 18, so they were asked to take the consent forms home to get a parent's signature and bring it back on a designated date, ranging from two days to one week after they were originally distributed.

Due to requests from one of the school districts, there were two different procedures employed from this point forward. At one school, the second visit to the classroom began with the researcher collecting the consent forms. During this process, the helping behavior assessment took place. Individually, the participants came into a hallway to turn in their consent forms. They were then assigned a participant number to keep track of corresponding helping and survey scores. A folder used to hold participants' consent forms was placed on a stool, relatively close to the floor. Participants placed their papers in the folder and wrote their names next to the assigned number. Meanwhile, the researcher pretended to write something. She dropped the pen that she was using on the ground, making a soft exclamation of surprise. The pen landed within arm's reach of the participant, but did not present an immediate need because the researcher made no immediate move to retrieve it. If the participant had not picked up the dropped pen after several seconds, the researcher picked it up. The helping behavior, or lack thereof, was then recorded.

After all helping behavior assessments were completed, the researcher left the blank surveys with the teacher to administer at a time more convenient for them. Along with the surveys, the table with the participant names and numbers was also left, ensuring that the participant received the survey with the participant number that corresponded with the helping behavior assessment. Teacher instructions (see Appendix F) were attached to all of these materials. These instructions gave the teachers a prompt to read, reminding the participants of the

nature of the research and telling the participants that they could leave the study at any time. The teachers then distributed and collected the surveys, which the researcher picked up at an appointed time. After this part of the study was completed, the tables with the participants' names and numbers were destroyed to protect anonymity.

For the other two schools, the procedure was largely the same, just done over two days instead of three. The second visit to these schools started with the researcher collecting the informed consent forms. Then, the researcher distributed the surveys to the participants and waited in a hallway for the participants to finish. As the participants finished the surveys, they individually came into the hallway to turn it in. Exactly like the participants in the other school, they placed their paper in a folder placed on a stool. As they did so, the researcher pretended to write something and dropped her pen on the floor, within arm's reach of the participant. After several seconds, the researcher picked up the pen if the participant had not already done so. Then, the helping behavior was recorded next to the participant number that corresponded with the number on the participant's surveys.

The surveys took on average 15-20 minutes to complete, taking longer for the younger participants than for the older ones. The participants had no trouble comprehending the surveys, but many of the younger students asked for the meaning of ethnicity found in the demographic questions. The researcher explained that it was another word for race and all confusion went away. This is reassuring because it showed that if the participants had a problem understanding something found on the surveys, they had no fear in asking for help. Once all materials were collected, the researcher gave all of the participants a debriefing form (see Appendix G), answered any questions that they had, thanked them for their participation, and left.

Results

Data was collected from 81 participants, but seven were discarded when the data was analyzed for gender because they failed to report. All 81 participants were included in analyses that disregarded gender, including the ones analyzing behavior. Of these participants, 35 participants displayed the helping behavior, while 46 participants did not.

It was hypothesized that adolescents' moral reasoning would be positively related with age; older adolescents would have higher moral reasoning. To test this hypothesis, a Pearson's correlation coefficient was conducted. The hypothesis was not supported. The Pearson's correlation coefficient between age and moral reasoning was not significant at the .05 level, $r(72) = .206, p = .074$.

The second hypothesis was that there would be a positive relationship between moral reasoning and helping; as moral reasoning increased, so would helping behavior. A Chi Square was administered to test this hypothesis. The Chi Square test revealed that there was no relationship between moral reasoning and helping behavior, $X^2(3, N = 81) = 3.52, p = 0.32$. There were 46 participants found at the highest level of moral reasoning. Of those 46, 18 participants displayed helping behavior and 28 did not. There were 28 participants found at the third level of moral reasoning. Of those 28, 12 participants exhibited helping behavior whereas 16 did not. At the second level of moral reasoning, there were five participants. Three of them helped and two did not. Likewise, there were only two participants found at the lowest level of moral reasoning. Both of those participants displayed helping behaviors.

The third hypothesis was that there was a relationship between parenting style and helping behavior, that participants with high authoritative parental scores would display higher

rates of helping than participants with high permissive parental scores or high authoritarian parental scores. Traditionally a logistic regression would be the statistic of choice, but because the researcher did not actually manipulate any variables and the distribution of participants helping and not helping was reasonably equal, a t-test was decided upon for the sake of simplicity.

An independent samples t-test resulted in no significant differences at the .05 level on permissive parenting, $t(75) = -.866$, $p = 0.389$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.10$. The mean for those that helped was 23.33 and the standard deviation was 6.85, while the mean for those that did not help was 22.11 and the standard deviation was 5.50. Similarly, the test resulted in no significant differences at the .05 level on authoritative parenting, $t(75) = .389$, $p = 0.698$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$. The mean for those that helped was 34.70 and the standard deviation was 7.56, while the mean for those that did not help was 35.32 with a standard deviation of 6.43. Likewise, an independent samples t-test resulted in no significant differences at the .05 level on authoritarian parenting, $t(75) = -.237$, $p = 0.813$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.001$. The mean for those that helped was 34.27 with a standard deviation of 8.27, while those that did not help had a mean of 33.86 with a standard deviation of 6.86. These results discount the hypothesis that there is a relationship between parenting style and helping behavior.

The fourth hypothesis was the relationship between moral reasoning and parenting style. It was predicted that participants with high parental authoritativeness scores would have higher moral reasoning scores than those with high permissive or authoritarian scores. A Pearson's correlation coefficient was run to analyze the hypothesis. Much like the preceding data, the Pearson correlation found no significant relationships at the .05 level on permissive parenting,

$r(79) = -.143, p = .202$; authoritative parenting, $r(79) = -.020, p = .861$; or authoritarian parenting $r(79) = -.010, p = .930$.

Discussion

At first glance these results may seem completely inconclusive, but there can still be much information gleaned. As with any research, there are limitations and areas of improvement that could possibly have affected the results. In this study, sample size is one of those limitations. With only 81 participants and some of those not providing all demographic information, the sample size is very small.

One issue with the sample size was the spread of ages; it was very unbalanced. There were considerably less participants that fell in the middle of the age range (14-16). Over half of the participants were between the ages of 17 and 18. That being said, the analysis regarding age and moral reasoning was approaching significance ($p = .074$). Finding such a result with an unbalanced sample would suggest that with a larger, balanced sample there may be a relationship that could be found. This would not come as a surprise because previously stated research has found a positive correlation between age and moral reasoning (Eisenberg, N., Cumberland, A., Guthrie, I., Murphy, B., & Shepard, S., 2005; Raaijmakers, Q., Engels, R., & Van Hoof, A., 2005).

The range of moral reasoning scores was also very limited. There was an average moral reasoning score of 3.5. Of the 81 participants, 46 displayed level four moral reasoning, 28 displayed level three, five for level two, and only two for level one. Well over half of the participants performed at the highest level of moral reasoning, which did not give the research a fair look at the trends found in the lower three levels of moral reasoning. Perhaps with a broader

age range of samples, a greater variety of moral reasoning would be seen which would have affected many of the analyses. With such small numbers, it is difficult if not impossible to compare the groups.

This research also did not align with previous research because different researchers have found a connection between moral reasoning and parenting (Malti, Eisenberg, Kim, & Buchmann, 2013), and moral reasoning and helping (Eisenberg, Cumberland, Guthrie, Murphy, & Shepard, 2005; Paciello, Fida, Tramontano, Cole, & Cernigli, 2013). It is possible that with an even distribution of moral reasoning, this study would have yielded similar results.

An additional limitation regarding the sample size was the lack of cultural variety. All of the participants came from southwest Missouri, which may prevent the findings from being generalized beyond the region. For example, information about ethnicity was collected, but the vast majority identified as Caucasian and prevented the researcher from analyzing ethnicity against the data. The ethnicities represented in this study do not accurately reflect the array of ethnicities found in the United States. Had the study been conducted elsewhere in the country, a more diverse sample could have been used, which would have allowed for further statistical analysis.

The question of ethnicity may be important because it can influence parenting style. One study (Keller, et al., 2005) looked at parenting styles in different regions across the world. They observed and monitored mothers and fathers in Germany, Costa Rica, and Cameroon. This was a perfect sample because these countries differ in many ways including government styles, social expectations, and cultural history. The researchers did find differences in parenting styles between the different countries. In Germany, more play and conversation were emphasized,

while in Cameroon there was more touch and physical manipulation used in parenting. This research shows that clearly culture can influence the way a parent does things and therefore how a child is brought up.

It is no surprise that parenting varies across the world, but it also varies in the United States. There are immeasurable cultural influences in the United States and many have unique techniques when it comes to raising a family. This can be seen in a study done by Varela and colleagues (2005). In this study, parenting styles of non-Latino Americans, Mexican Americans, and Mexicans were compared using the same parenting style measure employed in the current research. Further supporting previous research, they found that there is a difference in parenting style between the cultures. Non-Latino parents tend to display less authoritarian parenting. Interestingly, Mexican American parents displayed even more authoritarian parenting than their Mexican counterparts. This clearly reveals that even within the United States, cultural influences can affect parenting styles. With the Mexican American population being so large in the United States, it has to be included in research samples for the data to be generalized. In the current study, there was little to no ethnic variety, which could have further limited the amount of parenting styles presented and explained the frequency of similar styles. Because of the past research, it would appear that cultural background could also influence parenting style, a factor that was overlooked in this study.

Additionally concerning parenting styles, there were few participants that reported a clear parenting style over another. For the majority of participants, scores on two of the parenting styles were very close, making it impossible to determine a dominant parenting style. Initially, having a very high score on both authoritative and authoritarian parenting, for example, did not

make sense. With further thought, it can be seen that it is possible that this occurred because the participants were asked to consider both parents when answering the survey. Had mothers and fathers been assessed differently, results may have been different. This could be due to different parenting styles being employed by the mother and father. According to research (Shek, 2000), mothers and fathers at times have different parenting tendencies which can affect the relationship and perception of the parent with the child.

One last issue that is difficult to control for is the parenting styles present. Because almost all of the participants were under the age of 18, parental consent was required for participation. Only the participants whose parents agreed to let them participate and signed the paper could be a part of this study. This may have further limited the sample. Perhaps parents that exhibit a certain parenting style were more or less likely to allow their child to participate in the study, which would have narrowed the parenting styles present in this study.

Even with these potential flaws, this research shed light on some important issues. Most of the research done in this field has been centered around toddlers and preschool-aged children. This study aimed to branch out and work with adolescents because it is such a time period of change. Adolescence is an ideal age group to look at because there should be more variance in moral reasoning. What little research has been done with adolescents has shown mixed results, similar to the present study. Perhaps that is why there was such a shift to children, but when limiting the participants to young children, the range of moral reasoning is severely limited. Participants in this study were found at all levels of moral reasoning, given there were many more in the upper ranges. This allowed for more analysis of moral reasoning and its relationship to the other factors that previous research with younger participants simply did not allow. Future

research should look at an even wider range of ages to ensure there would be a fair representation of all moral reasoning levels present. Perhaps with a true sample of all stages, many of the questions regarding moral reasoning could be addressed.

Further, this research did something that others have failed to do. It looked at the relationship of parenting style, moral reasoning, and adolescent helping behavior in conjunction with each other. All of the previously stated research shows that there are relationships between different combinations of these factors, but never have all of these been examined at the same time. Helping behavior is something that a person exhibits on different levels every day, so it is an important part of daily life and if possible, should be optimized. Similarly, there have been countless connections drawn between parenting style and different facets of life. No parent wants to be a detriment to their children, so much research has been devoted to proper parenting and its benefits. Finally, moral reasoning is the driving factor in decision making. A solid knowledge and understanding of right and wrong is crucial, especially as a person matures and transitions in to an adult life where the decisions are more complex and have larger long-term implications. Clearly, these three factors play a huge role in the lives of everyone and deserve a thorough examination.

This study has opened the door for much future exploration. In addition to addressing and/or correcting the previously mentioned shortcomings (sample size, moral reasoning variety, and ethnic variety), new questions arise with the results of this study. These results bring up the idea that perhaps parenting style does not play as influential a factor as previously thought. Research should be done to discover what factors, if any, actually influence helping behavior. Traditionally, adolescence is seen as a time of rebellion. Many parents feel like their adolescents

do not listen to them, follow their rules, or heed their advice. Another common worry with parent is their child's group of friends. They seem to think that if their adolescent is choosing not to listen to the parents, they may be listening to their friends. Because of this, peers may have a large influence on the behaviors of adolescents. Perhaps peer influence has a greater impact on helping behavior than parental influence.

This study found no relationship between moral reasoning and helping behavior, but the helping behavior studied was subtle helping. The participants were simply picking up a dropped pencil. This calls for an immediate reaction; this requires little to no conscious thought. This ensured that the participant was not trying to make an impression on the researcher or display altruism. It was simply measuring the natural reaction of the participation. This is only one kind of helping behavior. There are more, all varying in level of personal commitment, possible benefits, and amount of danger involved. One study (Thalhofer, 1971) found a difference in a group of adults. Participants in this study read scenarios where they were asked to provide help. Some were led to believe that they were the only people capable of providing the help. Others were told that they were able to help someone avoid harm. The results found that there was a difference between these types of helping. This shows that there are different, measureable types of helping behavior. Future research should look at some other types of helping to see if parenting style or moral reasoning impact more involved types of helping. This would make sense because the person would have to employ more moral reasoning than was done in the current research.

This study found no relationship between moral reasoning and parenting style on adolescent helping behavior. Looking at a largely unresearched population, many questions have

arisen from the results of this research. Addressing some of the flaws with this study, this should be repeated to see if similar results are found. Other future research could and should increase upon the age range looked at as well as the range of moral reasoning, find a way to use a dominant parenting style, and expand to look at different types of helping behavior.

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Appendix A

Demographics

Please fill in the blanks or circle one of the options.

Age: _____
 Grade: 7 8 9 10 11 12 (circle one)
 Gender: MALE / FEMALE (circle one)

Ethnicity: _____

Sociomoral Reflection Measure-Short Form Objective

Instructions

In this questionnaire, we want to find out about the things that you think are important for people to do and especially **WHY** you think these things (like keeping a promise) are important. Please try to help us understand your thinking by choosing the answers that best match how you think. Also, please answer each question.

Example

I. How important is it to eat healthy, do you think? Very important
 Important
 Not important

II. If you had to give a reason WHY it is IMPORTANT to eat healthy, what reason would you give? For each statement below, check the box saying if it is "Close" or "Not Close" to your thinking. If the reason is too hard to understand, then just cross "Not sure."

Is this close to a reason

you would give?

- A. Because else you would become ill. Yes
 No
 Not sure
- B. Because your parents would like you to eat healthy. Yes
 No
 Not sure
- C. Because you will get old. Yes
 No
 Not sure
- D. Because eating healthy helps to live in a healthy environment. Yes
 No
 Not sure

III. Of the reasons given, which one is the **closest** to the reason you would give? A B C D

1. Think about when you've made a promise to a friend.

- I. How important is it for people to keep promises, if they can, to friends?
- Very important
 - Important
 - Not important

II. If you had to give a reason WHY it is IMPORTANT to keep a promise to a friend if you can, what reason would you give?

Is this close to a reason you would give?

- A. Because your friend may have done things for you and you need friends.
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure

- B. Because friendships as well as society must be based on trust.
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure

- C. Because otherwise that person won't be your friend again.
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure

- D. Because otherwise you would lose trust in each other.
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure

III. Of the reasons given, which one is the **closest** to the reason you would give? A B C D

2. What about keeping a promise to a person you hardly know?

- I. How important is it for people to keep promises, if they can, even to someone they hardly know?
- Very important
 - Important
 - Not important

II. If you had to give a reason WHY it is IMPORTANT to keep a promise to a person you hardly know, what reason would you give?

Is this close to a reason you would give?

- A. Because otherwise the person will find out and beat you up or do something bad to you.
 - Yes
 - No

- Not sure
 - B. Because then you can feel good about yourself and keep from giving the impression that you are a selfish person. Yes
 No
 Not sure
 - C. Because it is important for the sake of your own integrity as well as the respect of others. Yes
 No
 Not sure
 - D. Because you just might run into that person again some time. Yes
 No
 Not sure
- III. Of the reasons given, which one is the **closest** to the reason you would give? A B C D

3. How about keeping a promise to a child?

- I. How important is it for parents to keep promises, if they can, to their children? Very important
 Important
 Not important

II. If you had to give a reason WHY it is IMPORTANT for parents to keep promises to their children, what reason would you give?

Is this close to a reason you would give?

- A. Because parents want their children to keep promises, so parents should keep promises too. Yes
 No
 Not sure
- B. Because parents should never break promises. Yes
 No
 Not sure
- C. Because children must understand the importance of reliability or consistency. Yes
 No
 Not sure
- D. Because otherwise the children would lose faith in their parents. Yes
 No
 Not sure

III. Of the reasons given, which one is the **closest** to the reason you would give? A B C D

4. What do you think about telling the truth?

I. In general, how important is it for people to tell the truth?

- Very important
- Important
- Not important

II. If you had to give a reason WHY it is IMPORTANT for people to tell the truth what reason would you give?

Is this close to a reason you would give?

A. Because people should always tell the truth.

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

B. Because honesty is the best policy.

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

C. Because lies catch up to you sooner or later.

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

D. Because honesty is a standard that everyone can accept.

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

III. Of the reasons given, which one is the **closest** to the reason you would give? A B C D

5. Think about when you've helped your mother or father.

I. How important is it for children to help their parents?

- Very important
- Important
- Not important

II. If you had to give a reason WHY it is IMPORTANT for children to help their parents; what reason would give?

Is this close to a reason you would give?

A. Because parents help their children, so children should help their parents

- Yes
- No

- Not sure
- B. Because it's nice for children to help their parents.
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure
- C. Because that is what a family is all about.
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure
- D. Because parents sacrifice so much for their children.
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure

III. Of the reasons given, which one is the **closest** to the reason you would give? A B C D

6. What if a friend needs help and may even die, and you're the only person who can save him or her?

- I. How important is it for a person (without losing his or her own life) to save the life of a friend?
- Very important
 - Important
 - Not important

II. If you had to give a reason WHY it is IMPORTANT for a person to save the life of a friend; what reason would you give?

Is this close to a reason you would give?

- A. Because it's your friend, who might be an important person.
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure
- B. Because you would feel close to your friend, and would expect that your friend would help you
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure
- C. Because the friend may have done things for you, so you should do a favor for the friend, if you want your friend to help you in the future.
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure
- D. Because a friendship must be based on mutual respect and cooperation.
 - Yes
 - No

Not sure

III. Of the reasons given, which one is the **closest** to the reason you would give? A B C D

7. What about saving the life of a stranger?

I. How important is it for a person (without losing his/her own life) to save the life of a stranger? Very important
 Important
 Not important

II. If you had to give a reason WHY it is IMPORTANT for a person to save the life of a stranger; what reason would you give?

Is this close to a reason you would give?

- A. Because the stranger is a person who wants to live. Yes
 No
 Not sure

- B. Because you should always be nice. Yes
 No
 Not sure

- C. Because people must help each other. Yes
 No
 Not sure

- D. Because life is precious and it is inhuman to let anyone suffer. Yes
 No
 Not sure

III. Of the reasons given, which one is the **closest** to the reason you would give? A B C D

8. People are not allowed to take away things that belong to others.

I. How important is it for people not to take things that belong to other people? Very important
 Important
 Not important

II. If you had to give a reason WHY it is IMPORTANT for people not take things that belong to other people, what reason would you give?

*Is this close to a reason
you would give?*

- A. Because stealing gets you nowhere, and you are taking too much of a risk.
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure

- B. Because it is selfish and heartless to steal from others.
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure

- C. Because living in society means accepting obligations and not only benefits.
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure

- D. Because stealing is bad, and you will go to jail if you steal.
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure

III. Of the reasons given, which one is the **closest** to the reason you would give? A B C D

9. People have to obey the law.

- I. How important is it for people to obey the law?
 - Very important
 - Important
 - Not important

II. If you had to give a reason WHY it is IMPORTANT for people to obey the law; what reason would you give?

*Is this close to a reason
you would give?*

- A. Because the law is there to follow, and people should always obey it.
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure

- B. Because otherwise everyone will be stealing from everyone else and nothing will be left.
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure

- C. Because otherwise the world would go crazy, and there would be chaos.
 - Yes
 - No

- Not sure
- D. Because laws make society possible, and otherwise the system would break down.
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure

III. Of the reasons given, which one is the **closest** to the reason you would give? A B C D

10. What should a judge do with some who breaks the law?

- I. How important is it for judges to send people who break the law to jail?
 - Very important
 - Important
 - Not important

II. If you had to give a reason WHY it is IMPORTANT for judges to send people who break the law to jail, what reason would you give?

- Is this close to a reason you would give?*
- A. Because if they take the risk and get caught, then they go to jail.
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure
 - B. Because they must have known that what they did was wrong.
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure
 - C. Because they must be prepared to be held accountable for their actions.
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure
 - D. Because they did something wrong and judges should never let them go free.
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure

III. Of the reasons given, which one is the **closest** to the reason you would give? A B C D
(cross one)

Appendix B

Parental Authority Questionnaire

Instructions: Please read each of the following statements and write the number on the line that best describes your relationship with your primary caretaker as you have been growing up. This can be one or multiple parents, grandparents, stepparents, or whoever raised you. Use the following scale as a guide for all of the statements.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. _____ While I was growing up, my parents felt that in a well-run home the children should have their way in the family as often as the parents do.
2. _____ Even if their children didn't agree with them, my parents felt that it was for our own good if we were forced to conform to what they thought was right.
3. _____ Whenever my parents told me to do something as I was growing up, they expected me to do it immediately without asking any questions.
4. _____ As I was growing up, once family policy had been established, my parents discussed the reasoning behind the policy with the children in the family.
5. _____ My parents have always encouraged verbal give-and-take whenever I have felt that the family rules and restrictions were unreasonable.
6. _____ My parents have always felt that what children need is to be free to make up their own minds and to do what they want to do, even if this does not agree with what their parents might want.
7. _____ As I was growing up, my parents did not allow me to question any decision they had made.
8. _____ As I was growing up, my parents directed the activities and decisions of the children in the family through reasoning and discipline.
9. _____ My parents have always felt that more force should be used by parents in order to get their children to behave the way they are supposed to.
10. _____ As I was growing up, my parents did not feel that I needed to obey rules and regulations of behavior simply because someone in authority had established them.
11. _____ As I was growing up, I knew what my parents expected of me in my family, but I also felt free to discuss those expectations with them when I felt they were unreasonable.
12. _____ My parents felt that wise parents should teach their children early just who is boss in the family.
13. _____ As I was growing up, my parents seldom gave me expectations and guidelines for my behaviors.
14. _____ Most of the time as I was growing up, my parents did what the children in the family wanted when making family decisions.

15. _____ As the children in my family were growing up, my parents consistently gave us direction and guidance in rational and objective ways.
16. _____ As I was growing up, my parents would get very upset if I tried to disagree with them.
17. _____ My parents feel that most problems in society would be solved if parents would not restrict their children's activities, decisions, and desires as they are growing up.
18. _____ As I was growing up, my parents let me know what behavior they expected of me and if I didn't meet those expectations, they punished me.
19. _____ As I was growing up, my parents allowed me to decide most things for myself without a lot of direction from them.
20. _____ As I was growing up, my parents took the children's opinions into consideration when making family decisions, but they would not decide for something simply because the children wanted it.
21. _____ My parents did not view themselves as responsible for directing and guiding my behavior as I was growing up.
22. _____ My parents had clear standards of behavior for the children in our home as I was growing up, but they were willing to adjust those standards to the needs of each of the individual children in the family.
23. _____ My parents gave me direction for my behavior and activities as I was growing up and they expected me to follow their direction, but they were always willing to listen to my concerns and to discuss that direction with me.
24. _____ As I was growing up, my parents allowed me to form my own point of view on family matters and generally allowed me to decide for myself what I was going to do.
25. _____ My parents have always felt that most problems in society would be solved if we could get parents to strictly and forcibly deal with their children when they don't do what they are supposed to do.
26. _____ As I was growing up, my parents often told me exactly what they wanted me to do and how they expected me to do it.
27. _____ As I was growing up, my parents gave me clear direction for my behaviors and activities, but they were also understanding when I disagreed with them.
28. _____ As I was growing up, my parents did not direct the behaviors, activities, and desires of the children in the family.
29. _____ As I was growing up, I knew what my parents expected of me in the family and they insisted that I conform to those expectations simply out of respect for their authority
30. _____ As I was growing up, if my parents made a decision in the family that hurt me, they were willing to discuss that decision with me and to admit it if they had made a mistake.

Appendix C

Dear parents,

Hello! My name is Aubrey Cooley and I am a senior at Missouri Southern State University. I will be graduating in December with a degree in psychology. In order to graduate with honors and to earn my psychology degree, I have to do a senior thesis research project. My project is looking at the relationship of parenting style and moral reasoning on helping behavior. There are many approaches to parenting, making it possible that different techniques could have different effects on the rate at which children develop their sense of right and wrong. I have been working on this project for several months already and I will present my findings at the end of the semester. After I graduate I am going to pursue a career working with children, so I decided to do my research with them as well.

Given that your child is not yet 18 years of age, parental permission is required for them to participate in my study. If you decide to allow your son/daughter to participate in this study, your child will be asked to complete basic demographic questions (e.g., age, gender) and two surveys. The first survey will determine their perception of your parenting style. The second will assess their level of moral reasoning. The whole process is expected to take around 25 minutes. The results will then be compared with children of varying ages to see if there are differences. Participation is voluntary and all information will be completely confidential.

Because my research only involves surveys and observation, there are no expected adverse effects from participating in this study. However, if your child experiences any negative effects, you may contact the MSSU Advising, Counseling, and Testing Center at 417-625-9324, my research advisor Dr. Holly Hackett at Hackett-h@mssu.edu or 417-625-9835, or me at cooleya003@mymail.mssu.edu.

By signing below, you are acknowledging that you have read this parental permission consent form, that you are aware of what is being asked of your child in this study, that you are giving permission for your child to be a participant in my research, and that you are the parent/guardian with legal authority to give consent.

Signature

Date

Printed name

Thank you for helping me with my research!

Aubrey Cooley

Appendix D

Dear student,

Hello! My name is Aubrey Cooley and I am a senior at Missouri Southern State University. I will be graduating in December with a degree in psychology. Right now, I am working on a research project. My project is looking at the relationship between types of parenting, moral reasoning (knowing right and wrong), and helping behavior.

If you decide that you want to be a part of my study, you will be asked to answer some basic questions, like your age and gender. Then, you will fill out two surveys. The first one will measure your parents' type of parenting. The second will measure your knowledge of right and wrong. The whole process should take around 25 minutes. It is your choice to participate and all of your answers will be kept confidential. If you choose to stop participating at any time during the study, there will be no negative consequences.

You are under 18 years old, so your parents also have to give you permission by signing the attached form. Because you will only be filling out surveys, it is not expected that you will experience any side effects from the study. However, if you so, you or your parents may contact the MSSU Advising, Counseling, and Testing Center at 417-625-9324, my research advisor Dr. Holly Hackett at Hackett-h@mssu.edu or 417-625-9835, or me at cooleya003@mymail.mssu.edu.

By signing on the line below, you are agreeing to participate in my study.

Signature

Date

Printed Name

Thank you helping me with my research!

Aubrey Cooley

Appendix E

Dear student,

Hello! My name is Aubrey Cooley and I am a senior at Missouri Southern State University. I will be graduating in December with a degree in psychology. In order to graduate with honors and to earn my psychology degree, I have to do a senior thesis research project. I have been working on this project for several months already and I will present my findings at the end of the semester.

My project is looking at the relationship of parenting style and moral reasoning on helping behavior. If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete basic demographic questions (e.g., age, gender) and two surveys. The first survey will determine your perception of your parents' parenting style. The second will assess your level of moral reasoning. The whole process is expected to last around 25 minutes. The results will then be compared with children of varying ages to see if there are differences. Participation is voluntary and all information will be completely confidential.

Because my research only involves surveys and observation, there are no expected adverse effects from participating in this study. However, if you experience any negative effects, you may contact the MSSU Advising, Counseling, and Testing Center at 417-625-9324, my research advisor Dr. Holly Hackett at Hackett-h@mssu.edu or 417-625-9835, or me at cooleya003@mymail.mssu.edu.

By signing below, you are acknowledging that you have read this consent form, that you are aware of what is being asked of you in this study, and that you are giving your permission to be a participant in my research..

Signature

Date

Printed name

Thank you for helping me with my research!

Aubrey Cooley

Appendix F

Teachers,

Before you hand out the surveys:

You have been given a table that has the students who turned in permission slips on it. Next to the names is a survey number. It is very important that the student receives the survey with the corresponding number on it. Only students who have turned in the permission slips may fill out the surveys.

After handing out the surveys to the appropriate students, please read this statement:

“Please take time to fill out these two surveys. It does not matter which one you do first, but please answer all of the questions to the best of your ability. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and if you choose to quit at any time during the surveys, there will be no penalty. It is not for a grade and you won’t get anything for doing these surveys, but your help is appreciated. Remember that all of your answers will be kept confidential. Your name will not be on the surveys, so nobody will know your answers. After you finish both surveys, please turn them in to me.”

Thank you so much for allowing my research to be done in your classroom. You have been incredibly helpful and I am very grateful!

Thank you,

Aubrey Cooley

Appendix G

Dear student,

Thank you so much for participating in my study! Your participation is greatly valued and will be kept anonymous and confidential. For my study, I was looking at the effect of moral reasoning and parenting style on helping behavior.

Because my research only involves surveys and observation, there are no expected adverse effects from participating in this study. However, if you experience any negative effects, you may contact the MSSU Advising, Counseling, and Testing Center at 417-625-9324, my research advisor Dr. Holly Hackett at Hackett-h@mssu.edu or 417-625-9835, or me at cooleya003@mymail.mssu.edu.

Thank you for your help,

Aubrey Cooley