The Impact of Corporal Punishment: What’s Behind the Science

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Objectives

• Understand the terminology
• Look at the science over the last 20 years related to corporal punishment
• Look at the trends in attitude related to corporal punishment over the last 20 years
• Discuss some recent interventions
Number of states that allow corporal punishment?
All 50 states allow corporal punishment
Number of states that allow corporal punishment in schools?
19 states in red permit corporal punishment in schools
Lander v. Seaver, 32 Vt. 114, 122 (Supreme Court of Vermont, 1859)

“The parent, unquestionably, is answerable only for malice or wicked motives or an evil heart in punishing his child. This great and to some extent irresponsible power of control and correction is invested in the parent by nature and necessity. It springs from the natural relation of parent and child. It is felt rather as a duty than a power. From the intimacy and nature of the relation, and the necessary character of family government, the law suffers no intrusion upon the authority of the parent, and the privacy of domestic life, unless in the extreme cases of cruelty and injustice. This parental power is little liable to abuse, for it is continually restrained by natural affection, the tenderness which the parent feels for their offspring, and affection ever on the alert, and acting rather by instinct than reasoning.”
“The schoolmaster has no such natural restraint. Hence he may not safely be trusted with all the parent’s authority, for he does not act from the instinct of parental affection.”
Discipline-to teach or instruct

Must have 3 vital elements

- a learning environment characterized by positive, supportive parent-child relationship
- a strategy for systemic teaching and strengthening of desired behaviors (proactive)
- a strategy for decreasing or eliminating undesired or ineffective behaviors (reactive) when punishment is necessary, using time outs and other alternatives to spanking or physical punishment
AAP Policy Guidance for Effective Discipline 1998

- Spanking has negative consequences and is no more effective than other forms of discipline.
- Gray area between when spanking ends and child abuse begins.
- Parents more likely to use spanking when angry, tired, depressed and stressed.
- Spanking continues into school and adolescent children: in one study 50% of 13-14 year olds were being hit an average of 8 times a year.
To the Editor

• The new discipline policy, “Guidance for Effective Discipline,”¹ of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) is seriously flawed. Despite an excellent discussion of parental nurturance and positive reinforcement strategies, the policy statement is ill-founded and unrealistic in its account of corrective strategies, especially in its critique of disciplinary spanking.
Punishment - application of negative stimulus to reduce or eliminate a behavior

- Verbal punishment
- Emotional abuse
- Corporal punishment - punishment involving physical pain:
  - Slapping and spanking to beatings and burning
  - Physical Abuse (could include corporal punishment if it leaves a skin injury lasting more than a few minutes)
Definition

According to the Gershoff's report, "Corporal or Physical Punishment is the use of physical force with the intention of causing the child to experience bodily pain or discomfort so as to correct or punish the child's behavior."

“Several recent studies reveal that the majority of parents in the United States continue to physically punish their children. By the time children reach the fifth grade, 80% have been physically punished”

Corporal punishment by American parents: national data on prevalence, chronicity, severity, and duration, in relation to child and family characteristics.

- National sample 1995
- “Use of any type of CP during the previous year”
- 35% for infants
- Peak at 94% at age 3 and 4
- Rapid decline after age 5
- Just over 50% age 12
- 1/3 at age 14
- 13% at age 17
Men aged 18-65 who agreed or strongly agreed that it is sometimes necessary to give a child a good hard spanking?
Figure 1

Percentage of Males and Females Ages 18 to 65 Who Agree or Strongly Agree that it is Sometimes Necessary to Discipline a Child with a "Good, Hard Spanking": Selected Years, 1986-2014

Figure 2

Percentage of Adults Who Agree that it is Sometimes Necessary to Give a Child a "Good Hard Spanking," by Race and Hispanic Origin, and Sex: 2014

Figure 3: Percentage of Adults Who Agree that it is Sometimes Necessary to Give a Child a "Good Hard Spanking," by Education and Sex, 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma or GED</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational/technical or some college</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Child Trends' original analysis of the General Social Survey 2014
It is sometimes necessary to give a child a spanking??
It is sometimes necessary to give a child a spanking?

42.2 % of our survey said spanking is sometimes necessary
Pre-Intervention Corporal Punishment Survey 110 responses

• 76% spanked or physically punished by parent
• 14% punished by school teacher/authority
• 84% influenced by parents about discipline
• 34% influenced by health care provider
Pre-Intervention Corporal Punishment Survey 110 responses

• 64% stated health care provider did not discuss child discipline

• 50.5% felt non-physical forms of discipline (time out, grounding etc) are more effective than spanking or other forms of discipline

• 69% of professionals would feel comfortable in intervening if overheard a child being hit or spanked?
Elizabeth Gershoff and Murray Straus

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zEp5KQkvzbY
When is Physical Punishment Most Likely to be Used Gershoff 2008

- They strongly favor it and believe its effectiveness
- They were physically punished as children
- They have a cultural background, namely their religion, their ethnicity, and or country of origin that they perceive approves physical punishment
- They are socially disadvantaged, in that they have low income, low education, or live in a disadvantaged neighborhood
When is Physical Punishment Most Likely to be Used Gershoff 2008

- They are experiencing stress, mental health symptoms, or diminished emotional well-being
- They report being frustrated or aggravated with their children on a regular basis
- They are under 30
- The child being punished is a preschooler 2-5
- The child’s misbehavior involves hurting someone else or putting themselves in danger
Physical Punishment and physical abuse are points along a continuum of violence.

- Physical punishment
- Increase risk of child abuse
- Increase risk of aggression and juvenile justice system involvement
- Impaired mental health and drug and alcohol abuse
- Increase in future domestic violence
Why is Physical Punishment Not Effective as a Discipline Technique? Gershoff 2008

• It does not teach why their behavior was wrong or what to do instead
• It can interfere with the intended message of the parent
• It teaches children to behave in a desired way in fear of being punished not because there are important positive reasons to behave appropriately
Why is Physical Punishment Not Effective as a Discipline Technique? Gershoff 2008

• It models for children that it is acceptable to use aggression to get their way, especially if they are bigger or more powerful than the other person

• Increased the likelihood that children will behave aggressively in social interactions

• It may cause children to be afraid of their parent and the fear can erode parent-child relationship

• It may teach children to link violence with loving relationships
Speak softly--and forget the stick. Corporal punishment and child physical abuse.

METHODS:
This study is a cross-sectional, anonymous telephone survey of adult mothers with children aged <18 years living in the Carolinas in 2002. The analysis was conducted in 2007. Survey responses were used to determine the association between corporal punishment (spanking, spanking frequency, and spanking with an object) and an index of harsh physical punishment consistent with physical abuse (beating, burning, kicking, hitting with an object somewhere other than the buttocks, or shaking a child aged <2 years).

RESULTS:
Mothers who report that the child was spanked are 2.7 (95% CI=1.2, 6.3) times more likely to report abuse. Increases in the frequency of reported spanking in the last year are also associated with increased odds of abuse (OR=1.03, 95% CI=1.01, 1.06). Mothers reporting spanking with an object are at markedly increased odds of reporting abuse (OR=8.9, 95% CI=4.1, 19.6).

CONCLUSIONS:
Although reported spanking increases the odds of reported physical abuse, the relationship between the reported hitting of a child with an object and reported abuse is much stronger. Reduction in this form of discipline through media, educational, and legislative efforts may reduce child physical abuse.
Prior studies report 1/3 of American families spank children as young as 10-18 months.

70% of families report spanking between 2-4 years of age.

Spanking at age 1 higher level of spanking at age 3 and spanking at age 3 associated with higher level of externalizing and internalizing behavior problems at age 5.

No association between spanking at age 1 and decreased receptive vocabulary at age 3 or 5.
Spanking and Child Development Across the First Decade of Life

Fragile Families and Child Well-Being Study (longitudinal birth cohort study of 20 medium to large US cities)

• Spanking frequency measured by mother and father at age 3 and 5

• Age 3 57% maternal spanking (12.6% => 2x/wk)
  40% paternal spanking (7.3% => 2x/wk)

• Age 5 52% maternal spanking (5.5% => 2x/wk)
  33% paternal spanking (3% => 2x/wk)
Spanking and Child Development Across the First Decade of Life

• High frequency maternal spanking at age 3 and 5 and less frequent spanking at age 5 correlated with higher level of externalizing behaviors at age 9 compared to no spanking.

• Low frequency maternal spanking and any paternal spanking- not associated with externalizing behavior.

• High frequency paternal spanking at age 5 was associated with lower receptive language at age 9.
Parental Spanking of 1 year old children and subsequent child protective service involvement

- 2010 69% of US adults support the idea that “it is necessary to discipline with a good hard spanking” This has decreased from 94% in the 1960’s
- Prior studies ~ 5 % of mothers spanked 3 month old children and 1/3 spanked children age 2 or less by a caregiver
- 2788 families 30% reported spanking 1 year old in last month
- Odds ratio of CPS report by age 5 1.36 33% greater probability of subsequent CPS involvement
Is The Use of Physical Discipline Associated with Aggressive Behaviors in Young Children?

• 372 paternal interviews
• Parents who reported using physical discipline were 2.8 times more likely to report aggressive child behaviors of hitting/kicking and throwing
Mothers’ Spanking of 3-Year Old Children and Subsequent Risk of Aggressive Behaviors

- 2461 participants (1998-2005)
- Maternal report
- Frequent use of CP (more than 2x in previous month) when child was 3
- Increased aggression at age 5 odds ratio 1.49
The risk of harm from spanking has recently been confirmed by experts at the University of Texas Austin and the University of Michigan.

The research looked at five decades of research involving 160,000 children.

“Our research shows that parents who use spanking, practitioners who recommend it and policy makers who allow it might reconsider doing so given that there is no evidence that spanking does any good for children and all evidence points to the risk of it doing harm”
Why are we still so reluctant to change?
Reasons parents use corporal punishment

• That’s what happened to me and I’m okay
Reasons parents use corporal punishment

Religion supports it: “Spare the Rod and spoil the child” This phrase is biblical in origin, but distilled through the poetry of Samuel Butler:

“Love is a Boy, by Poets styl’d,
Then Spare the Rod, and spill the Child.”
Reasons parents use corporal punishment

Don’t know what else to do. Child out of control……
Reasons child says they were hit

“I was bad”
“I don’t know”
“They don’t like me”

Then what happened..
Nothing business as usual (expected me to go play)
Didn’t talk to me the rest of day
Never Apologized
ACES

**ABUSE**
- Physical
- Emotional
- Sexual

**NEGLIGENCE**
- Physical
- Emotional
- Mother treated violently

**HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION**
- Mental Illness
- Incarcerated Relative
- Substance Abuse
- Divorce
Child Maltreatment

Physical Health  Cognitive Development

Social Development  Emotional Health
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [http://www.cdc.gov/ace/]
**Behavior**
- Lack of physical activity
- Smoking
- Alcoholism
- Drug use
- Missed work

**Physical & Mental Health**
- Severe obesity
- Diabetes
- Depression
- Suicide attempts
- STDs
- Heart disease
- Cancer
- Stroke
- COPD
- Broken bones
Human Video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=afvN6se3Yug&app=desktop
Next Step

HISTORY OF NO HIT ZONE

- 2005 - Rainbow Babies - University Hospital of Cleveland
- Hospital based No Hit Zones
- Non-hospital based No Hit Zones
- Implementation resources

DEFINITION:

An environment in which no adult shall hit another adult, no adult shall hit a child, no child shall hit an adult, and no child shall hit another child.
No Hit Zone

• 2005, Introduced at Rainbow Babies in Cleveland, OH
• Spread to several other sites across the country:
  • Kosair Children’s Hospital in Louisville KY
  • Dane County District Attorney’s Office in Madison WI
  • Children’s Mercy Hospital in Kansas City MO
  • Gunderson Health System (La Crosse, Winona, & several other cities in WI, IA, MN)
  • University of Michigan Women’s Hospital & C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital
  • Riley Hospital in Indianapolis IN
  • Florida, California, etc. Now over 30 places
Objectives

- Promote safety prevention and education of physical violence
- Contribute to a healthier safer, nonviolent environment for children and their families by eliminating physical violence
Why A No Hit Zone

• No clear guidelines for what staff should do when encountering a situation such as this.
• Help staff at by providing them with tools.
• Physical punishment can lead to more aggressive behaviors that may be considered child abuse.
• Working to prevent physical punishment could prevent child abuse.
• Parents report that they want pediatricians to talk about discipline strategies with them during office visits.
POLICY STATEMENTS
When hitting is observed, it is everyone's responsibility to intervene and communicate hospital policy.

PROCEDURE
All staff will be made aware of hospital policy that is in place to ensure and reinforce an environment of comfort and safety. Staff will identify and respond to situations that compromise the safe environment utilizing the education they are provided. If appropriate, additional intervention will be provided by appropriate staff dependent on the level of severity.
Primary Goal

- Increase parental awareness about physical and mental health risk of hitting or spanking as a form of punishment
- Promote the use of safe, healthy and effective discipline strategies that do not involve hitting
New Solution...

Being Proactive Instead of Reactive

Have Change the conversation and be a model
Holden Research

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FssvwSP87hg
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Developmental stage</th>
<th>Baby Birth to 18 months</th>
<th>Toddler 18 months -3 years</th>
<th>Preschool 3-5 years</th>
<th>Grade School 5-11 years</th>
<th>Pre-Teen and Teenager 11-18 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|                           | *Learn through all their senses  
*Uses their mouths to explore  
*Cries to communicate needs | *Explore, run, climb, and touch  
*Test limits to learn self control  
*Follow simple directions  
*Tantrums are normal | *Have great imaginations  
*Learning how to share, know right vs wrong and follow simple rules | *Developing logical thinking and want to know the reasons for things  
*Asks lots of questions  
*Greater independence but need parent support in learning how to problem solve | *Establishing self of personal identity  
*Challenge family values and rules  
*Are influenced by friends  
*Starting to form intimate relationships  
*Becoming more responsible and independent |
| Recommended discipline    | *Put unsafe things out of your baby’s reach  
*Never spank or shake a baby  
*If baby is crying, check diaper, try burping, feeding or rocking  
*You cannot spoil a baby. Hold and love your baby often | *Distract and redirect towards appropriate play  
*Use positive reinforcement to encourage behavior  
*Respond to tantrums by ignoring them(make sure they are in a safe space or respond calmly) | *Help child take a break or time out. Use 1 minute for each year  
*Use simple explanations and instructions  
*Maintain a regular routine | *Set clear expectations  
*Allow more independence  
*Take away a privilege for misbehaving  
*Express disappointment in problem behavior  
*Praise good behaviors | *Set clear rules and consequences for breaking them  
*Be consistent  
*Take the time to listen to their viewpoints and ideas  
*Use logical and reasonable consequences - be sure the punishment fits the crime |

*University of Minnesota Masonic Children’s Hospital*
Positive Parenting is a Parent Education and Support System (Triple P) aimed to:

Promote children’s healthy development

Prevent children’s social, emotional and behavioral problems

Prevent child maltreatment before DSS becomes involved

Strengthen parenting at a population level

Destigmatize seeking information and support for parents
References

13. Thompson, Richard, Kaczor, Kim et al; Is the Use of Physical Discipline Associated with Aggressive Behaviors in Young Children? Academic Pediatrics; 2017; Vol 17(1) 33-44
14. This in a no hit zone.org Gunderson National Child Protection Center