

## Research

The following is a note on some Canadian, American and other studies on corporal punishment, section 43, and child abuse.

**Physical Punishment and Mental Disorders: Results From a Nationally Representative US Sample** A study by Tracie O. Afifi, Natalie P. Mota, Patricia Dasiewicz, Harriet L. MacMillan and Jitender Sareen *Pediatrics*, official journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics; published online July 2, **2012**; DOI: 10.1542/peds.2011-2947. The lead researcher, Tracie Afifi, is Professor, Community Health Sciences University of Manitoba. Physical punishment (also referred to as spanking, smacking, and corporal punishment) involves acts of hitting a child as a means of discipline. The research investigated the possible link between harsh physical punishment (ie, pushing, grabbing, shoving, slapping, hitting) and certain mental disorders in the absence of more severe child maltreatment. Data for the study came from a national US survey between 2004 and 2005. Respondents were questioned face-to-face by trained lay interviewers of the US Census Bureau and were asked: “As a child how often were you ever pushed, grabbed, shoved, slapped or hit by your parents or any adult living in your house?” The response rate was 86.7%. Respondents who reported “sometimes” or greater were considered as having experienced harsh physical punishment.

Researchers found that harsh physical punishment was associated with increased odds of mood disorders, anxiety disorders, alcohol and drug abuse/dependence, and several personality disorders after adjusting for sociodemographic variables and family dysfunction, and that if harsh physical punishment did not occur, the prevalence of certain mental disorders might have been reduced by ~2% to 7%. The researchers believe this is the first nationally representative examination of physical punishment and a range of mental disorders in the general population that may be attributable to such punishment. [Click for study.](#)

**The economic burden of child maltreatment in the United States and implications for prevention** A study by The National Centre for Injury Prevention and Control, Atlanta, Ga and RTI International, NC Fang, Brown, Florence, Mercy, p 156-165. Feb/2012 The estimated average lifetime cost per victim of nonfatal child maltreatment is \$210,012 in 2010 dollars, including \$32,648 in childhood health care costs; \$10,530 in adult medical costs; \$144,360 in productivity losses; \$7,728 in child welfare costs; \$6,747 in criminal justice costs; and \$7,999 in special education costs. The estimated average lifetime cost per death is \$1,272,900, including \$14,100 in medical costs and \$1,258,800 in productivity losses. The total lifetime economic burden resulting from new cases of fatal and nonfatal child maltreatment in the United States in 2008 is approximately \$124 billion. In sensitivity analysis, the total burden is estimated to be as large as \$585 billion. Compared with other health problems, the burden of child maltreatment is substantial, indicating the importance of prevention efforts to address the high prevalence of child maltreatment. The study is reported in Vol 36, Issue 2, Feb/**2012** issue of Child Abuse & Neglect p 156-165. [Click for study.](#)

**Physical Punishment and Childhood Aggression: The Role of Gender and Gene–Environment Interplay** Brian B. Boutwell, Cortney A. Franklin, Sam Houston State University, J.C. Barnes, University of Texas at Dallas, Kevin M. Beaver, Florida State University *AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR* Volume 37, pages 559–568 (**2011**) A large body of research has linked spanking with a range of adverse outcomes in children, including aggression, psychopathology, and criminal involvement. Despite evidence concerning the association of spanking with antisocial behavior, not all children who are spanked develop antisocial traits. Given the heterogeneous effects of spanking on behavior, it is possible that a third variable may condition the influence of corporal punishment on

**Child development.** We test this possibility using data drawn from a nationally representative dataset of twin siblings. Our findings suggest that genetic risk factors condition the effects of spanking on antisocial behavior. Moreover, our results provide evidence that the interaction between genetic risk factors and corporal punishment may be particularly salient for males. This study was conducted using data drawn from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Physical Punishment and Childhood Cohort (ECLS-B). The ECLS-B is a nationally representative sample of all children born in the United States in the year 2001. Children were sampled via birth certificates registered with the National Center for Health Statistics. [Click for study.](#)

**Physical punishment of children: lessons from 20 years of research** *Joan Durrant PhD, Ron Ensom MSW RSW published online ahead of print by the Canadian Medical Assn Journal, Feb 6, 2012. Dr. Joan Durrant is a Child-Clinical Psychologist and Associate Professor of Family Social Sciences, University of Manitoba. Ron Ensom is a social worker associated with the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario.* The researchers reviewed some 80 research papers on the effects of corporal punishment over the past 20 years and concluded that numerous studies found physical punishment increases the risk of broad and enduring negative developmental outcomes; no study has found that physical punishment enhances developmental health; most child physical abuse occurs in the context of punishment; a professional consensus is emerging that parents should be supported in learning nonviolent, effective approaches to discipline; and that section 43 of Canada's Criminal Code should be removed. For access to article, click [www.cmaj.ca/content/early/2012/02/06/cmaj.101314.citation](http://www.cmaj.ca/content/early/2012/02/06/cmaj.101314.citation) .

**Effects of a Punitive Environment on Children's Executive Functioning: A Natural Experiment** *Talwar (McGill), Carlson (University of Minnesota), Lee (University of Toronto), published in Social Development, pp 1-20, 2011.* The aim of the study is to examine the effects of a punitive vs. non-punitive school environment in 2 West African private schools in relation to the children's 'executive functioning' performance (goal-directed problem solving). The study compared grade 1 students from the same urban neighbourhood whose parents were mostly civil servants, professionals and merchants. Overall, the study found that with age, children exposed to a harsh punitive environment performed significantly worse than their counterparts in the non-punitive school, and as a result may be at risk for behaviour problems related to deficits in executive functioning. The study's authors say the results show children will immediately cease bad behaviour after physical punishment, but fail to internalize the morals or rules behind the punishment. [Click for study.](#)

**Functional Somatic Syndromes and Childhood Physical Abuse in Women: Data From a Representative Community-Based Sample**, *Esme Fuller-Thomson and others, University of Toronto, published in Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma, Vol 20, Issue 4, 2011* – Abstract: This study investigated whether childhood physical abuse was associated with functional somatic syndromes (FSS) in women while controlling for age, race, and four clusters of potentially confounding factors: (a) Other childhood adversities, (b) adult health behaviors, (c) socioeconomic status and stressors, and (d) mental health. A regional subsample of the 2005 Canadian Community Health Survey of 7,342 women was used. Women reported whether they had been diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), fibromyalgia (Fm), irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), or multiple chemical sensitivities (MCS). Fully 749 reported having been physically abused by someone close to them during their youth. When controlling for potentially confounding factors, childhood physical abuse was significantly associated with CFS (OR = 2.11; 95% CI = 1.22, 3.65), Fm (OR = 1.65; 95% CI = 1.08, 2.52), and MCS (OR = 2.82; 95% = CI 1.90, 4.17). Clinicians using reattribution and stepped care approaches in the management of FSS should assess for a history of abuse. Available online May 11, 2011.

**Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect, 2008**, *Nico Trocmé, Principal Investigator, Centre for Research on Children and Families, McGill University, published by the Public Health Agency of Canada, Oct 2010* – This is the 3rd Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect. Based on a representative sample of 15,980 maltreatment investigations by child welfare organizations in Canada in 2008, the study estimates that 235,842 maltreatment reports were investigated across the country. This is about the same number as in 2003, but nearly double the number in 1998. Unlike previous reports, this one does not estimate the number of total investigations that involve physical abuse. Instead, it estimates that of the substantiated 85,440

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maltreatment investigations, 17,212 were for physical abuse as the primary form of maltreatment. The incidents of maltreatment that begin as corporal punishment for correction will be provided when all the data is analyzed. [Click for study.](#)

**Relationships between parents' use of corporal punishment and their children's endorsement of spanking and hitting other children**, D. A. Simons and S.K. Wurtele, *University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, Dept of Psychology*, published in *Child Abuse & Neglect*, Vol 34, Issue 9, **Sept/10**, p 639-646. The aim of the study is to explore the intergenerational cycle of violence. Researchers examined the relationship between parental and children's approval of cp and the relationship between children's experience of cp and their preference for hitting to resolve interpersonal conflict. They conclude that parents who experienced frequent cp perceived it as acceptable and frequently spanked their own children. Their children, in turn, advocated spanking as a disciplinary method, and preferred aggressive conflict resolution strategies with peers and siblings. [Click for study.](#)

**Use of Spanking for 3-Year-Old Children and Associated Intimate Partner Aggression or Violence**, Catherine A. Taylor, PhD, MSW, MPH, *Tulane U and others at Wayne State U, U of Chicago, Pediatrics*, **Sept/10**, Vol 126, pp 415-424, The objective of this study was to examine associations between maternal and paternal use of corporal punishment (CP) for 3-year-old children and intimate partner aggression or violence (IPAV) in a population-based sample. Mother and father reports regarding their use of CP and their IPAV victimization were analyzed. IPAV included coercion and nonphysical and physical aggression. Approximately 65% of the children were spanked at least once in the previous month by 1 or both parents. Of couples that reported any family aggression (87%), 54% reported that both CP and IPAV occurred. The most prevalent patterns of co-occurrence involved both parents as aggressors either toward each other (ie, bilateral IPAV) or toward the child. The presence of bilateral IPAV essentially doubled the odds that 1 or both parents would use CP, even after controlling for potential confounders. [Click for study.](#)

**Infant anticipatory stress**, David W. Haley and others, *Department of Psychology, University of Toronto*, published on line **Aug 25/10** in *Biology Letters, The Royal Society*. Participants consisted of 30 mother–infant dyads with infants six months of age. The study demonstrates that human infants have the capacity to produce an anticipatory stress response based on expectations about how their parents will treat them in a specific context. This capacity to anticipate specific types of parent–infant interactions is remarkable for several reasons. First, it provides a unique window into the infant's emotional attachment to the caregiver and underscores the impact of the parent–infant relationship on the development of the stress system. Second, it suggests that the infant is neurobiologically equipped with a rather precocious set of social cognitive skills. Third, the study suggests that infants are not only sensitive to relationship disruptions but can remember them. [Click for study.](#)

**National Poll on Children's Health**, *Knowledge Network Inc. published Ap 16/10 by C. S. Mott Children's Hospital, Ann Arbor, Mich., University of Michigan Department of Pediatrics and Communicable Diseases, and University of Michigan Child Health Evaluation and Research*. A survey conducted for the C. S. Mott Children's Hospital, Ann Arbor, Mich in Jan/10 presented 1532 randomly selected parents of children age 2-17 years with a series of scenarios and asked how likely they were to use different discipline strategies with their child. The most common discipline strategies parents reported that they are "very likely" to use were: explain or reason with the child (88%), take away a privilege or something the child enjoys (70%), and time outs or grounding (59%). Many parents reported they were very likely to use more than one strategy and that they tailor their discipline to the age of the child. Less than one-quarter of parents report that they would be "very likely" to spank or paddle their children. Parents of preschool children are more likely to spank than parents of older children. Recent media reports have alerted parents to the dangers of spanking because of research indicating that young children who are spanked may grow up to be more aggressive. Results of this national study indicate that the vast majority of parents are already avoiding spanking and similar approaches like paddling. While a great deal of research attention has focused on spanking, much less has looked at the results of discussion-based or privilege-removal approaches—in terms of how kids learn and how they develop emotionally. [Click for report.](#)

6/25/2018 **Mothers' Spanking of 3-Year-Old Children and Subsequent Risk of Children's Aggressive Behaviour,** Catherine A. Taylor et al, Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, New Orleans, Published on line **April 12/10** in *Pediatrics*, Official Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics. The aim of study was to examine the association between the use of corporal punishment (CP) against 3-year-old children and their subsequent aggressive behavior. Mothers reported on aggressive behaviors by 2461 children at 3 and 5 years of age . Other key demographic features and potential confounding factors were assessed. Frequent use of CP (ie, mother's use of spanking more than twice in the previous month) when the child was 3 years of age was associated with increased risk for higher levels of child aggression when the child was 5 years of age even with controlling for the child's level of aggression at age 3 and potential confounding factors and key demographic features. The findings suggest that even minor forms of CP, such as spanking, increase risk for aggressive behavior and these findings cannot be attributed to possible confounding effects of other maternal parenting risk factors. The study concludes that primary prevention of violence could start with efforts to prevent use of CP by broader population-based efforts such as social marketing campaigns to strengthen the message that other discipline strategies should be used. [Click for study](#)

**Parent Discipline Practices in an International Sample: Associations With Child Behaviors and Moderation by Perceived Normativeness:** Gershoff, Elizabeth T. Grogan-Kaylor, Andrew and others. *Child Development*, Volume 81, Number 2, **March/April 2010**, pp. 487-502(16). This study examined the associations of 11 discipline techniques with children's aggressive and anxious behaviors in an international sample of mothers and children from 6 countries and determined whether any significant associations were moderated by mothers' and children's perceived normativeness of the techniques. Participants included 292 mothers and their 8 to 12-year-old children living in China, India, Italy, Kenya, Philippines, and Thailand. Parallel multilevel and fixed effects models revealed that mothers' use of corporal punishment, expressing disappointment, and yelling were significantly related to more child aggression symptoms, whereas giving a time-out, using corporal punishment, expressing disappointment, and shaming were significantly related to greater child anxiety symptoms. Some moderation of these associations was found for children's perceptions of normativeness.

**Spanking may lower child's IQ,** Professor Murray Straus, University of New Hampshire, Study presented **Oct 2, 2009** at the *International Conference on Violence, Abuse and Trauma*, San Diego. Murray Straus is one of North America's foremost child psychology experts. His study finds that corporal punishment slows the development of mental ability, particularly in younger children age 2 to 6. Corporal punishment was defined for the study as hitting a child, usually on the buttocks, at least 3 times a week. 93% of mothers hit their 2-4-year-olds an average of 3.6 times a week or 187 times a year. 12.8% hit their children a least 7 times a week. The more children were spanked, the more they fell behind in cognitive development. Not yet available on line.

**Spanking leads to aggression and lower cognitive development,** *Correlates and Consequences of Spanking and Verbal Punishment for Low-Income White, African American, and Mexican American Toddlers*, Society for Research in Child Development, **Sept 2009** Vol. 80, Issue 5. In a study funded by the National Institute of Mental Health, researchers at Duke University and the Universities of Missouri-Columbia, South Carolina, Columbia, Harvard University, and North Carolina at Chapel Hill find that spanking 1-year-olds leads to more aggressive behaviors and less sophisticated cognitive development in the next two years. Verbal punishment is not associated with such effects, especially when it is accompanied by emotional support from mothers. The study found that African American children were spanked and verbally punished significantly more than the other children in the study. The researchers looked at more than 2,500 exclusively low-income White, African American, and Mexican-American mothers and their young children, interviewing and observing them at home when the children were 1, 2, and 3 years old. All participants' family incomes were at or below the federal poverty level. [Click for link to study](#)

**15% of preschoolers in Quebec suffer from atypically high levels of depression and anxiety, August 2009.**

Researchers from the Universities of Montreal, Laval, McGill and Carnegie-Mellon, Pittsburgh find that 15% of preschoolers in Quebec suffer from atypically high levels of depression and anxiety. They interviewed mothers over a 5-year period and reported their research in the *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*. As part of the

6/25/2018 years of age. All 1,758 children were born in Québec and mothers provided information during extensive interviews on behaviour and family members. The study is the first to show that infant temperament and lifetime maternal depression can lead to a high trajectory of depressive and anxiety problems before school entry. "It is critical that preventive interventions be experimented with infants who risk developing depressive and anxiety disorders," adds Dr. Côté. "Health professionals should target such high risk children at infancy, as well as their parents, to have a long-term impact on their well-being." [Click for link to study](#)

**US research finds high rate of infant spanking by low-income mothers** Reported in the *July/09* issue of *Paediatrics*. Researchers at the Jefferson Paediatrics/duPont Children's Health Programme in Philadelphia find that among a group of 1265 mostly black, single, low-income mothers of infants up to 11 months old, 19% said they "valued" corporal punishment as a means of discipline and 14% reported spanking their infants. Mothers who suffered physical abuse or other violent experiences in childhood are much more likely to spank their infants than mothers who did not suffer these adverse childhood experiences. The researchers are concerned that parents may be unaware of the harm that can come from infant spanking, such as increased risk of behaviour problems, low self-esteem, depression, drug abuse and physical abuse of their own children. [Click for study](#)

**Child abuse victims more likely to develop cancer, Making a link between childhood physical abuse and cancer: results from a regional representative survey, July 2009** Department of Family and Community Medicine, University of Toronto, Esme Fuller-Thomson. People who were physically abused as children are 49% more likely to develop cancer as adults. Using survey results from 13,000 people in Saskatchewan and Manitoba and adjusting for other causes of cancer, the researchers were surprised to see that the association between abuse and cancer did not disappear. A possible explanation for the link is that abused children are more prone to abnormal levels of cortisol, the hormone that helps to deal with stressful situations. The study will be published in the American Cancer Society journal *Cancer*. [Click for link to study](#)

**Childhood bullying may help trigger schizophrenia.** University of Warwick, UK, *Archives of General Psychiatry, May 2009*, This British study links bullying with psychotic symptoms that may trigger schizophrenia. The authors speculate that the stress caused by severe and chronic victimization may be enough to push a vulnerable person over the edge. The study is based on assessing 6,437 young persons and included threats or acts of physical violence as bullying. It found that up to 18% of those who were severely bullied had some symptoms of psychotic behaviour. [Click for link to study](#)

**Report on Physical Punishment in the United States**, Elizabeth T. Gershoff, PhD, University of Michigan, released by Phoenix Children's Hospital, Arizona, March 2009. This is a concise review of one hundred years of social science research and hundreds of published studies on physical punishment by psychology, medical, education, social work and sociology professionals on the effects physical punishment has on children. It has been endorsed by American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Emergency Room Physicians, American Medical Association and the National Association of Counsel for Children. It concludes that physical punishment doesn't improve children's behavior in the long term, makes it more, not less, likely that children will be defiant and aggressive in the future, puts children at risk for negative outcomes, including increased antisocial behavior and mental health problems and puts children at greater risk of serious injury and physical abuse. The full report can be downloaded at [www.phoenixchildrens.com/discipline](http://www.phoenixchildrens.com/discipline).

**Genetic imprint left by child abuse - Epigenetic regulation of the glucocorticoid receptor in human brain associates with childhood abuse**, Patrick O McGowan, Aya Sasaki, Ana C D'Alessio, Sergiy Dymov, Benoit Labonté, Moshe Szyf, Gustavo Turecki & Michael J Meaney *Nature Neuroscience* 12, 342 – 348 (2009) Published online: 22 February 2009. This Montreal team, headed by Dr. Michael Meaney, McGill University, has discovered large numbers of "chemical marks" in the brains of young men who were physically or sexually abused as children and later committed suicide. These marks inhibit a key mechanism for dealing with stress. This is seen as the most convincing evidence yet that childhood abuse permanently modifies genes. The findings translate previous results from rats to humans and suggest a common effect of parental care on the epigenetic regulation of

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hippocampal glucocorticoid receptor expression. In humans, childhood abuse alters HPA stress responses and increases the risk of suicide. Neuroscientist Dr. Steven Hyman, provost of Harvard University, reviewed the paper for Nature. [Click for link to study.](#)

***Child homicide in New South Wales from 1991 to 2005***, Olav B Nielssen, Matthew M Large, Bruce D Westmore and Steven M Lackersteen, *The Medical Journal of Australia* Jan 5, 2009. The research examines 165 homicides of children in New South Wales from 1991 to 2005. Fifty-nine deaths were a consequence of child abuse, including those of five children who died from methadone overdoses. 27 child homicides had been committed during the acute phase of psychotic illness. Earlier identification and treatment of psychotic illness in mothers might result in a small overall reduction in the number of child deaths. More lives could be saved by measures that reduce the incidence of child abuse, including the prohibition of corporal punishment of children. [Click for link to study.](#)

***Speak Softly — and Forget the Stick: Corporal Punishment and Child Physical Abuse***, Parents who spank are more likely to use harsher forms of punishment, October 2008, *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, Pages 364-369, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Researchers conducted an anonymous telephone survey of 1,435 mothers in North Carolina and South Carolina in 2002 and found that 45 percent of the mothers reported they or their partners had spanked their children in the previous 12 months, 25 percent reported spanking with an object on the buttocks and 4 percent reported using harsher forms of punishment. Although some surveys show evidence of a modest decline in spanking over the last 30 years, recent surveys show that up to 90 percent of children between the ages of 3 and 5 years are spanked by their parents at least occasionally. The researchers concluded that parents who report spanking children with an object and parents who frequently spank children are much more likely to report other harsh punishment acts consistent with physical abuse. [Click for link to study.](#)

***Protection of Children from Physical Maltreatment in Canada: An Evaluation of the Supreme Court's Definition of Reasonable Force***. Joan Durrant, Nico Trocmé, et al. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, Jan, 2009. In 2004, the Supreme Court of Canada set out seven criteria to distinguish *reasonable* from *abusive* corrective force with children. We tested the validity of those criteria by mapping them onto a nationally representative data set of substantiated cases of physical abuse. The Court's criteria defining reasonable force actually characterized the majority of cases of child physical maltreatment in Canada. These cases were more likely to be characterized by the use of spanking in the family than by each of the criteria set out by the Supreme Court. One in five cases was not characterized by any of the Court's criteria, and virtually none were characterized by all of them. The findings provide stronger support for abolishing physical punishment than for legal attempts to narrow its definition. [Click for study.](#)

***Identifying Victims: Child Abuse and Death in Canadian Families***, Sally Mennill, Veronica Strong-Boag, Canadian Bulletin of Medical History, Vol 25:1 (2008), p 311-333. This study by two doctoral candidates at UBC reviews the history of child abuse deaths in Canada, concentrating on the deaths of Kim Anne Poppen, Mathew Vaudreuil, and Sophia Lynn Schmidt at the hands of their mothers. The mothers' lives of childhood abuse, poverty, disability and discrimination are examined and the conclusion reached that addressing long-standing inequalities in the lives of women offers better prospects for children than 'messing with the mechanics of child welfare'. Click <http://www.cbmh.ca/index.php/cbmh/article/view/985>

***Unreasonable Force: New Zealand's journey towards banning the physical punishment of children***, Beth Wood, Ian Hassall, George Hook, *Save the Children New Zealand*, 2008 This 288 page paperback traces New Zealand's successful struggle to end legal approval of physical punishment of children. Written by 3 principle activists who spearheaded this movement for legal reform, it includes chapters on children's rights, legal issues, public attitudes, the roles of religion and the media. It also describes how advocates developed a successful strategy to promote Green Party MP, Sue Bradford's bill to repeal s. 59 of its criminal law – the equivalent of our s. 43. Copies can be ordered from Save the Children NZ for \$20 plus postage at [www.savethechildren.org.nz](http://www.savethechildren.org.nz).

6/25/2018 **Spanked children more likely to have sexual problems**, Murray Straus, Co-director, Family Research Laboratory, University of New Hampshire-Durham, February 2008. This is a slide presentation to the American Psychological Assn that summarizes the results of four studies by Dr. Straus. The studies are under review for publication. In its Feb 28/08 article on his presentation, USA Today reports that according to Dr. Straus, children whose parents spank or inflict other corporal punishment on them are more likely to have sexual problems later in life, such as a greater chance of physically or verbally coercing a sexual partner, engaging in risky sexual behavior or engaging in masochistic sex, including sexual arousal by spanking.

**Cultural Norms for Adult Corporal Punishment of Children and Societal Rates of Endorsement and Use of Violence**, Jennifer E. Lansford and Kenneth A. Dodge, Duke University, N Carolina. *Parenting: Science and Practice*, Vol. 8, No. 3, May/08: pp. 1-24d. The aim of the study is to test the hypothesis that societal rates of corporal punishment of children predict societal levels of violence, using data retrieved from the Standard Cross-Cultural Sample of anthropological records. These include 186 cultural groups representing diversity of language, economy, political organization, descent, and historical time. It found that more frequent use of corporal punishment was related to higher rates of inculcation of aggression in children, warfare, and interpersonal violence. The findings are consistent with theories that adult violence becomes more prevalent where cp is frequent. They held for inculcation of aggression in children and warfare after controlling for demographic, socioeconomic, and parenting confounds. [Click for study.](#)

**The science of Early Childhood Development: Closing the Gap Between What We Know and What We Do**, Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University, Nov, 2007 This 16-page report presents a critical review and consensus on what leading neuroscientists and other experts know about the architecture of the developing brain in early childhood years. One of the key concepts known is that toxic stress from circumstances such as physical or emotional abuse alters brain chemistry that disrupts the developing brain and may lead to physical illness and mental health problems such as depression, anxiety and adult lifestyles that undermine well-being. Creating the right conditions for early childhood development is likely to be more effective and less costly than addressing problems at a later age.

**The case against corporal punishment of children: Converging evidence from social science research and international human rights law and implications for U.S. public policy**. Gershoff, Elizabeth T.; Bitensky, Susan H. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*. Vol 13(4), Nov 2007, 231-272. Although support for corporal punishment of children remains widespread in the United States, there is a substantial body of research from psychology and its allied disciplines indicating corporal punishment is ineffective as a disciplinary practice and can have unintended negative effects on children. At the same time, there is a growing momentum among other countries to enact legal bans on all forms of corporal punishment, bolstered by the fact that the practice has come to be regarded as a violation of international human rights law. The authors summarize these developments in research and law as well as the current legal status of corporal punishment of children in the United States. They conclude with 4 proposed program and policy strategies to reduce the use of corporal punishment in the United States by both parents and school personnel.

**Parental Corporal Punishment Predicts Behavior Problems in Early Childhood**, Matthew K. Mulvaney and Carolyn J. Mebert, September 2007, *Journal of Family Psychology*, Volume 21, Issue 3, p. 389–397

Two professors from the University of New Hampshire, USA examined data from over a thousand families who have been participating in a national study, the *National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development*. Tracking back to 1991, they found that corporal punishment was associated with poor behavior in children at the age of three and then again at the ages of six and seven, even when differences between families in terms of ethnicity, income, parenting styles, and earlier use of corporal punishment have been taken into account. They therefore conclude that corporal punishment is a definite problem and that teachers, counselors, doctors and others working with children and parents need to do more to discourage it. They also caution that the impact of corporal punishment might be aggravated as children grow

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older because those with mental health and behavior problems are at greater risk for peer rejection and victimization than other children.

[Click here](#) for article.

***National Survey of Canadians' Knowledge of the Law on Physical Punishment of Children (Section 43 of the Criminal Code of Canada), Toronto Public Health, May 2006***

This national survey of 2450 adults for Toronto Public Health finds that only 19% of the public are aware of the January 2004 Supreme Court of Canada decision. This decision outlines various criteria to be used in deciding the scope and limits of s. 43. Of the 19%, only a small minority is aware of all these criteria. [Click here](#) for complete information

***Punitive Violence against Children in Canada, Durrant, Trocmé et al, March 2006, Public Health Agency of Canada, Technical Paper Series(42 pages)*** This paper selected substantiated child maltreatment investigations from the database of the Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect, 2003 and examined the characteristics of punitive maltreatment. Among other findings, it reports that 75% of physical maltreatment is physical punishment, biological parents account for 79% of physical punishment, and spanking was the typical form of punishment in the substantiated cases. Strategies to deal with maltreatment should focus on prevention and “delegitimize” spanking. [Click for paper](#).

**Physical punishment, childhood abuse and psychiatric disorders** Tracie O. Afifi, Douglas A. Brownridge, Brian J. Cox, Jitender Sareen Community Health Sciences, University of Manitoba, Family Social Sciences and Arthur V. Mauro Centre for Peace and Justice, Available online 28 September 2006. Physical punishment, as a means of disciplining children, may be considered a mild form of childhood adversity. Although many outcomes of physical punishment have been investigated, little attention has been given to the impact of physical punishment on later adult psychopathology. The current findings indicate that the prevalence of psychiatric disorders progressively increases as the severity of childhood adversity increases. Physical punishment during childhood was found to be positively associated with adult psychopathology (major depression, alcohol abuse or dependence, and externalizing problems). [Click for study](#).

**Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect, 2003, Trocme,**

**Tonmyr, Fallon, MacLaurin, et al 2005, Health Canada.** This study is part of a Health Canada project to collect data every 5 years on child abuse and neglect and is funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada with support from provincial and territorial governments. It tracked reports of abuse and neglect in 2003 in all provinces except Quebec and is the second such study. Findings are based on 14, 200 maltreatment investigations in a representative sample of 63 child welfare service areas across Canada (excluding Quebec). From these findings, it is estimated that 217, 319 reports of child maltreatment were investigated in Canada in 2003. Of these, 82,065 were investigations of reports involving physical abuse as the primary, secondary or tertiary reason for investigation.

As reported by the March/06 paper *Punitive Violence against Children in Canada*, 75% of physical maltreatment is physical punishment. The previous Trocme study published in 2001 finds that 69% of physical abuse reports involved inappropriate punishment. The 2005 report shows an increase of 125% reports over the 2001 study. The researchers indicate this increase may be due to improved reporting and investigation rather than an actual increase in abuse and neglect. Both reports can be read on the Public Health Agency of Canada website.

***National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth: Home environment, income and child behaviour***, February 21, 2005, Statistics Canada. This cycle of the longitudinal survey releases data on 4129 children ranging from 8–19 years of age. Information was gathered from parents about the children's behaviour at age 2-5 years and from both parents and children about the children's behaviour at age 10-13. The findings are consistent with the study released Oct 25/04.



6/25/2018 Statcan states that while the findings do not prove that punitive parenting causes aggressive behaviour, they reinforce other research showing that such parenting may lead to increased aggression and anxiety and limit pro-social behaviour. See [www.statcan.ca/](http://www.statcan.ca/) The Daily, Feb 21/05.

### **University of Michigan study finds corporal punishment detrimental to children**

Grogan-Kaylor, A. (2004). *The Effect Of Corporal Punishment On Antisocial Behavior In Children*, *Social Work Research*, 28(3), 153-164. This study by social work professor Grogan-Kaylor, U-M, analyzes data on more than 1800 children from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. Mothers were asked about their children's behaviour and the frequency of spanking in the past week. The study concludes that even minimal amounts of spanking can lead to increased likelihood of anti-social childhood behaviors, such as cheating, lying and bullying. Stronger statistical controls than in previous studies lend additional support for the idea that corporal punishment is not an effective or appropriate disciplinary strategy See: [www.news-medical.net/?id=4687](http://www.news-medical.net/?id=4687).

**Aggressive Behaviour Outcomes for Young Children: Change in Parenting Environment Predicts Change in Behaviour**, October 25, 2004, Statistics Canada. This study is based on data from the 1994 National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth conducted by Statistics Canada and Social Development Canada. Parents of about 2000 children were interviewed for behavioral and emotional information on their children when the children were 2-3 years old and again when they were 8-9 years.

The study concludes that children of parents who use physical punishment or yelling and shouting as punitive discipline are much more likely to engage in aggressive behaviours, such as fighting, bullying and meanness to others. Children in punitive environments at age 2 to 3 years scored 39% higher on a scale of aggressive behaviour than children in non-punitive homes. Children 8 to 9 years scored 83% higher. The study shows a link between childhood aggression and poor outcomes later in life, such as delinquency, crime, poor school results and unemployment. When, however, punitive parenting changes at age 2 to 3 to non-punitive parenting, children score just as low in aggressive behaviour as those in a non-punitive environment. The study was front-page news in many Canadian papers and reinforces earlier research reaching the same conclusion. See [www.statcan.ca/](http://www.statcan.ca/) The Daily, Oct. 25/04.

**Survey on Canadians' Attitudes on Section 43 of the Criminal Code, Oct/03. In 2003**, Toronto Public Health commissioned a national survey to assess Canadians' attitudes to Section 43 of the Criminal Code. The survey was conducted by Decima Research through telephone interviews in August/03 with a representative sample of 2,033 English – or French-speaking Canadians, 18 years of age or older. The results were released in Oct/03 and show that 51% of Canadians favour ending S. 43 for parents and 69% favour ending it for schoolteachers. Support for ending S. 43 for parents was 58% within the 18-34 age group and 59% among women. Those who did not strongly agree that S. 43 should be ended for parents were then asked for their opinion if:

- guidelines prevented prosecutions for mild spankings
- research showed punishment is ineffective and potentially harmful, or
- ending s. 43 would decrease child abuse.

With these qualifications, agreement rose to 60%, 61% and 71% respectively. The survey has a maximum margin of error of +/- 2.2%, 19 times out of 20. It dispels the notion that an overwhelming majority of Canadians want to retain section 43. For further information, see [www.toronto.ca/health.Survey\\_on\\_Spanking\\_Law](http://www.toronto.ca/health.Survey_on_Spanking_Law).

**The Economic Costs and Consequences of Child Abuse in Canada**, 2003, The Law Commission of Canada. This research paper, funded by the Law Commission, is a collaborative effort between the departments of Economics and Women's Studies, University of Western Ontario. It measures the economic costs of all forms of child abuse in Canada during 1998 and concludes that child abuse is not only devastating for the individual but also for society as a whole. It estimates the economic costs at \$15,705,910,047 annually, broken down as follows:

Social Services	\$1,178,062,222
Education	\$23,882,994
Health	\$222,570,517
Employment	\$11,299,601,383
Personal	\$2,365,107,683
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$15,705,910,047</b>

See the Law Commission website [www.lcc.gc.ca](http://www.lcc.gc.ca) for details.

**Quebec Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse, Neglect, Abandonment and Serious Behaviour Problems**, Tourigny, Mayer, Wright, 2003, *centre de liaison sur l'intervention et la prevention psychosociales (CLIPP), Montreal*. Studies 9,790 cases reported to Quebec's Director of Youth Protection in Oct/ Nov/ Dec 1998. Among others things, finds that 63% of substantiated physical abuse cases involved physical punishment, that fathers were most often identified as perpetrators of the abuse, and that close to one-quarter of substantiated reports concerned children previously involved with protection services. This first-ever Quebec study can be read on the Centre of Excellence for Child Welfare web site [www.cecw-cepb.ca](http://www.cecw-cepb.ca)

**Something to Cry About: An Argument against Corporal Punishment of Children in Canada**, Susan M. Turner, PhD, 2002, Wilfred Laurier University Press. Analyzes in a scholarly but readable 236 pages the philosophical basis for the belief in and opposition to corporal punishment of children and concludes that such punishment should not be justified by the law.

**The Changing Face of Child Welfare Investigations in Ontario: Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect, 1993/1998**, Trocme, Fallon, MacLaurin, Copp, 2002, *Child Welfare League of Canada, Ottawa. Funded in part by Health Canada*

Analyses child maltreatment investigations in Ontario in 1998 and finds that substantiated cases of physical abuse nearly doubled from an estimated 4,200 in 1993 to 8000 in 1998. 72% of these involved inappropriate punishment. The number of children in the care of Children's Aid Societies increased from 10,000 in 1996 to 17,000 in 1998.

**Corporal Punishment by Parents and Associated Child Behaviors and Experiences: A Meta-Analytic and Theoretical Review**. Gershoff, Elizabeth Thompson, PhD, *Child Development at Columbia University. Formerly, Associate Research Scientist, National Center for Children in Poverty, Psychological Bulletin. Vol 128(4), Jul 2002, p. 539-579. Associate Professor, Human Development and Family Services. University of Texas at Austin*. This meta-analysis is required reading for the association between parental corporal punishment and child behaviors and experiences. (A meta-analysis is a statistical technique that involves combining and analyzing the data of a number of independent studies.) Abstracts and (often) full texts of over 300 relevant works, including 63 dissertations conducted over the last 62 years, were studied for inclusion in the meta- analyses and a sample of 88 were used.

The primary conclusion from the meta-analyses is that parental corporal punishment is associated significantly with a range of child behaviors and experiences, including short – and long-term, individual and relationship-level, and direct (physical abuse) and indirect (e.g., delinquency and antisocial behavior) constructs. Although it is related with immediate compliance, corporal punishment is associated with 10 undesirable constructs.

The following points made by the author should be noted:

- To ensure the corporal punishment considered in the meta-analyses did not include possible physical abuse, studies that grouped or compared corporal punishment with techniques that knowingly would cause severe injury to the child were excluded. For the purposes of the study, physical abuse was considered to be a potential outcome of corporal punishment and corporal punishment was distinguished from physical abuse according to the definition of physical abuse provided by the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information (2000), namely:

Physical abuse is characterized by the infliction of physical injury as a result of punching, beating, kicking, biting, burning, shaking or otherwise harming a child. The parent or caretaker may not have intended to hurt the child; rather the injury may have resulted from over-discipline or physical punishment.

- Findings of correlation do not prove causation. Because these meta-analyses are based primarily on correlational studies, parental corporal punishment cannot be identified definitively as the cause of these child behaviors and experiences, with the exception of immediate compliance. Although some experimental studies of corporal punishment have been conducted (e.g. Roberts), the ethics of randomly assigning some children to be hit by their parents would be unacceptable to most institutions.
- The results from these meta-analyses do not imply that all children who experience corporal punishment turn out to be aggressive or delinquent; a variety of parent, child, and situational factors not examined here have the potential to moderate the associations between corporal punishment and child behaviors. Like the majority of statistical analyses, meta-analyses examine aggregates of people. The association between corporal punishment and the particular behaviors of any individual child may or may not follow the patterns found here. The presence of corporal punishment may make certain behaviors more likely but clearly not inevitable.
- The role of scientists in the debate over corporal punishment is to establish empirically connections between corporal punishment and potential child outcomes, particularly in longitudinal and prospective studies. By examining data and evaluating their conclusions, science progresses and society benefits. The study is an attempt to analyze systematically the existing data and theory on parental corporal punishment to inform scientific, and ultimately popular, discussion. As a society, we must separate out the emotionally charged aspects of the debate over corporal punishment so that we can knowledgeably and responsibly recommend or discourage parents' use of corporal punishment. [Click here for study](#).

***Child Maltreatment in Canada: Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect*, N. Trocme, PhD, and D. Wolfe, 2001, Health Canada.**

Studies child maltreatment investigations in Canada during 1998 and estimates there were 42,000 reports of physical abuse. Of these, 14,290 reports were substantiated. Sixty-nine per cent of these involved inappropriate punishment.

***Family Violence in Canada*, Statistics Canada, 2001.**

Reports that an average of 42 children under 18 were killed by their parents each year between 1991 and 1999. These were solved homicides – murder, manslaughter or infanticide. They did not include deaths of children where assaults by parents preceded death but were not found as the actual cause, deaths in which the cause could not be determined, accidental deaths under suspicious circumstances, or deaths resulting from criminal negligence. As a result, the annual average underestimates the actual number of deaths of children at the hands of their parents.

***Child Death Reviews and Child Mortality Data Collection in Canada*, Jan C. Wood and Jane L. Murray, 1999, Health Canada**

Acknowledges the lack of adequate national statistics on the incidence of child abuse and neglect deaths in Canada, examines the problems involved in collecting such statistics, and reports on the progress made by a Federal/Provincial/Territorial Working Group established in 1994 to study this issue. The project's objective is to recommend ways to improve collection of these statistics. The review can be read on Health Canada's web site.

***Slapping and Spanking in Childhood*, Harriet L. MacMillan, MD, Canadian Medical Association Journal, Oct. 5, 1999.**

Surveys 10,000 Ontario residents and finds that there appears to be a linear association between the frequency of slapping and spanking in childhood and a lifetime prevalence of anxiety disorder, alcohol abuse or dependence.

6/25/2018 **The Unconstitutionality of Section 43 of the Criminal Code: Children's Right to be Protected from Physical Assault, Part 1 and 11**, Sharon D. Greene, B.A., M.Sc., LL.B 1998, 41 *Criminal Law Quarterly*, 288 and 1999 41 Q.L.Q.462

The first thorough constitutional analysis of case law on section 43 and its relation to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Greene concludes that section 43 violates sections 7, 12, and 15 of the Charter and is not saved by section 1.

***Survey of Parenting Styles*, Statistics Canada, 1998.**

Surveys 23,000 parents and children in 1994 and 1996 finds that parenting styles had a bigger impact on a child's behaviour than any other factor, that children who did not have positive interaction with parents were twice as likely to have persistent behavioural problems as those who had positive interactions and that almost 27% of the children surveyed had a clinically defined behaviour or learning problem.

***"'He'll learn it on his body' ": Disciplining childhood in Canadian law*, Anne McGillivray, B.A., LL.M., 1997, 5 *The international Journal of Children's Rights*, 193**

Professor McGillivray explores the historical, legal and psychological background of the law on corporal punishment and presents a compelling argument that section 43 is a fundamental violation of children's rights and has no place in a free and democratic society.

***Corporal Punishment: Research Review and Policy Recommendations*, Joan E. Durrant, PhD, C Psych and Linda Rose-Krasnor, PhD, 1995, Health Canada and Justice Canada**

Finds that corporal punishment is associated with increased levels of aggression, is a predictor of delinquency, violence and crime in later life and a risk factor for child abuse, and concludes that section 43 should be repealed.

***Brief to Federal Ministers re: Section 43 of the Criminal Code and the Corporal Punishment of Children*, Corinne Robertshaw, BA, LLB, Repeal 43 Committee, April, 1994, Toronto**

Reviews principal judicial decisions on section 43 since 1899, developments in Europe, arguments for and against repealing section 43, including relevance of the Charter and UNCRC, and lists 18 government sponsored reports on the section. Concludes that section 43 should be repealed. Brief also sent to childcare organizations, MPs and academics concerned about section 43.

***Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect*, N. Trocme, PhD, 1994, Institute for the Prevention of Child Abuse.**

Analyses child welfare investigations in Ontario in 1993 and estimates that 4,229 substantiated and 5,426 strongly suspected cases of physical abuse were investigated. Of all substantiated cases, 85% involved discipline by corporal punishment. In suspected cases, it was difficult to distinguish between corporal punishment and abuse.

***Literature Review of Issues Related to the Use of Corrective Force Against Children*, Nanci M. Burns, MSW, 1993, Department of Justice Canada**

Reviews the literature on physical punishment and finds that overall there are strong indicators that the use of corrective force can result in a myriad of social and behavioral problems for children, adolescents and adults.

***R. v K (M): Legitimizing Brutality*, Anne McGillivray, B.A., LL.M., (1993) 16 *Criminal Reports* (4th) 125**

A powerful indictment of the 1993 Manitoba Court of Appeal decision that acquitted a father of assault on the basis of section 43. Father had kicked and hit his 8-year-old son with sufficient force to leave an imprint of sweater on the boy's skin. Professor McGillivray, University of Manitoba, Faculty of Law, concludes: "It is time to rid the criminal law of (this) unconstitutional and dangerous anachronism".

***International Perspectives on Corporal Punishment Legislation: A Review of 12 Industrialized Countries*, Nanci M. Burns, MSW, 1992, Department of Justice Canada**

Reviews the legislation in 12 European and Commonwealth countries, analyses findings, and includes appendices with details of US legislation on corporal punishment in schools and a model English bill to end the reasonable force defence.

*Assault, Working Paper 38, 1984, Law Reform Commission of Canada, Ottawa*

Section C (2) and an Appendix deal with s. 43 (14 pages). The Commission distinguishes between force used in an emergency, for safeguarding others or property, and for chastisement, and suggest that the first two are legal, with or without s. 43. It concludes that ideally a clear stand against violence should be taken and s. 43 abolished. However, the majority of Commissioners feared this would expose families to law enforcement “for every trivial slap or spanking”. While they would like to remove s. 43, they wanted a more satisfactory way of avoiding prosecutions than relying simply on prosecutorial discretion. The minority of Commissioners believed these fears unrealistic.

***Child Protection in Canada Discussion Paper, Corinne Robertshaw, BA, LLB, 1981, Health and Welfare Canada***  
Reviews provincial child protection legislation, analyses 54 deaths of children in Canada at the hands of parents/caretakers in 1977 and makes a number of recommendations, including the repeal or amendment of section 43.

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