

There is No Sound Scientific Evidence to Support Anti-Spanking Bans

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Annotated Studies Documenting the Relevant Scientific Evidence

Note: Key definitions are listed at the end of this document.

A. Reviews of Scientific Studies on Physical Discipline

1. Executive summary of Larzelere & Kuhn (2005) meta-analysis.
2. Larzelere, R. E., & Kuhn, B. R. (2005). Comparing child outcomes of physical punishment and alternative disciplinary tactics: A meta-analysis. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 8 (1), 1-37. <http://www.springerlink.com/content/k0x4468k255187qg/>

This is the most current and up-to-date review of the scientific studies on child outcomes of corporal punishment. This is the only scientific review that

- a. compares the child outcomes of corporal punishment vs. alternative disciplinary tactics that parents could use instead,
- b. distinguishes among the outcomes of four types of corporal punishment (overly severe, predominant usage, customary spanking, and conditional spanking [which is optimal]), or
- c. corrects for pre-existing differences in outcomes, by comparing outcomes of corporal punishment with alternative disciplinary tactics.

The outcomes of corporal punishment compared unfavorably with alternatives only when used too severely or as the primary disciplinary method. The optimal usage, called conditional spanking, led to better child outcomes than 10 of 13 disciplinary tactics, generally with 2- to 6-year-old children. This shows that the optimal use of nonabusive spanking is to enforce milder disciplinary tactics when children are defiant. Only one alternative (Roberts' room time out) has been shown to reduce defiance in pre-delinquents as effectively as conditional spanking, and that alternative would also be banned by some extreme anti-spanking laws that ban all use of force to correct children's behavior. Such extreme bans would thereby prohibit some of the most effective psychological treatments for young pre-delinquent children and for physical child abusers (e.g., Parent-Child Interaction Therapy). The review also found that the outcomes of customary spanking did not compare either favorably or unfavorably with any alternative disciplinary tactic, except that customary spanking reduced substance abuse more than

nonphysical punishment in one study. See the full meta-analysis or its executive summary above for more details.

3. Larzelere, R. E. (2000). Child outcomes of non-abusive and customary physical punishment by parents: An updated literature review. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 3 (4), 199-221. (<http://ipsapp007.lwwonline.com/content/getfile/4578/4/1/fulltext.pdf>)

The first review that emphasized the newer longitudinal studies that take into account the initial child differences on the outcome variable, e.g., with statistical adjustments. Overall, studies that adjusted for pre-existing differences in children found mostly beneficial outcomes of nonabusive spanking for children up to 6 years old, but mostly detrimental outcomes for children 7 or older.

4. Benjet, C., & Kazdin, A. E. (2003). Spanking children: The controversies, findings, and new directions. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 23, 197-224.

This article compares and contrasts the two major reviews of corporal punishment at the time: Larzelere (2000) above and Gershoff's (2002) review. Dr. Kazdin is the incoming president of the American Psychological Association. He personally opposes spanking, but was fair in his comparisons in this article. This published comparison clearly shows that there are at least two viable scientific perspectives on spanking, the 100% anti-spanking viewpoint and the conditional spanking viewpoint represented by Drs. Larzelere and Baumrind. The Larzelere-Kuhn meta-analysis (2005) above was partly motivated by Benjet and Kazdin's recommendation that studies compare corporal punishment with alternative disciplinary tactics directly.

5. Baumrind, D., Larzelere, R. E., & Cowan, P. A. (2002). Ordinary physical punishment: Is it harmful? Comment on Gershoff (2002). *Psychological Bulletin*, 128, 580-589.

A commentary on the literature review by Dr. Elizabeth Gershoff, which is the scientific review cited most often by 100% anti-spanking advocates. This commentary notes that 65% of its studies are contaminated by overly severe measures of corporal punishment (e.g., beatings, slapping the face), which limits its ability to determine the outcomes of nonabusive spanking. Further, Gershoff's reliance on correlations renders her meta-analysis inconclusive as to the causal effect of spanking. That is, her meta-analytic statistics cannot tell whether spanking causes increased antisocial behavior and other problems or whether the child's misbehavior causes parents to use more frequent disciplinary enforcement of all kinds. If the latter, then it may be that the child's level of misbehavior is the cause of detrimental outcomes rather than the parents' disciplinary responses to that misbehavior. Gershoff acknowledges the causal inconclusiveness of her meta-analysis as its "first and foremost" limitation (p. 550).

6. Larzelere, R. E. (1996). A review of the outcomes of parental use of nonabusive or customary physical punishment. *Pediatrics*, 98(4), 824-831. Proceedings of the Scientific Consensus Conference on Corporal Punishment that invited this review and Diana Baumrind's response to it: <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/results?vid=2&hid=117&sid=36c0289a-7fbc-446a-9f48-4dca187ee788%40sessionmgr2>

The first review of relevant scientific studies on corporal punishment in at least 17 years. Invited for the only scientific consensus conference ever held on outcomes of corporal punishment, the Short- and Long-Term Effects of Corporal Punishment, co-sponsored by the American Academy of Pediatrics. The title of Dr. Diana Baumrind's response summarizes the main point of this review: "A Blanket Injunction Against Disciplinary Use of Spanking is Not Warranted By the Data." She still holds to that conclusion, as indicated by her enclosed letter.

There have been two other recent reviews of the relevant literature. Paolucci & Violato (2004) concluded "corporal punishment does not substantially increase the risk to youth of developing affective, cognitive, or behavioral pathologies" (p. 197). In a review of 7 studies of African-Americans, Horn et al. (2004) concluded that "nonabusive physical punishment appears to be associated with positive and negative outcomes for African-American children" (p. 1167), depending on the study.

B. Letters to Professional Journals about Corporal Punishment

The following letters concisely summarize the relevant scientific evidence about disciplinary spanking in response to publications about the topic in those professional journals.

7. Larzelere, R. E. (2004). Scientific evidence on smacking. *BMJ: British Medical Journal* (eletter at <http://bmj.bmjournals.com/cgi/eletters/329/7476/1195>).

8. Larzelere, R. E. (2001, May). We need the full picture on both smacking and vaccinations [Letter to the editor]. *Archives of Diseases in Childhood*, 84, 450. <http://adc.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/84/5/450e>

9. Larzelere, R. E. (2000). Weak evidence for a smacking ban [letter]. *BJM: British Medical Journal*, 320, 1538-1539. (www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/320/7248/1538/a)

10. Larzelere, R. E. (1999). To spank or not to spank (letter to the editor). *Pediatrics*, 103, 696-697. <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/103/3/696?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=spanking&andorexactfulltext=and&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&sortspec=relevance&resourcetype=HWCIT>

11. Larzelere, R. E., Baumrind, D., & Polite, K. (1998). Two emerging perspectives of parental spanking from two 1996 conferences. *Archives of Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine*, 152, 303-305. <http://archpedi.ama-assn.org/issues/v152n3/ffull/plt0398-2.html>

C. Overview of Parental Discipline

12. Larzelere, R. E. (2001). Combining love and limits in authoritative parenting. In J. C. Westman (Ed.), *Parenthood in America* (pp. 81-89). Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press. (<http://parenthood.library.wisc.edu/Larzelere/Larzelere.html>)

This invited chapter summarizes an overview of parental discipline that can reconcile conflicting scientific conclusions about it, in a manner consistent with Dr. Diana Baumrind's authoritative parenting. The conditional sequence model suggests that parents should prefer preventive disciplinary methods and non-aversive verbal disciplinary responses to misbehavior, such as disciplinary reasoning. When children refuse to comply with appropriate verbal disciplinary responses, then nonphysical punishment can be used to enforce the verbal tactics. If children's defiance persists when nonphysical punishment is administered, then nonabusive spanking is one of two back-ups shown to have maximal effectiveness in enforcing nonphysical punishments such as time out with 2- to 6-year-olds. When used in this manner, parents can phase out the stronger methods of disciplinary enforcement, relying more on milder disciplinary tactics and on disciplinary reasoning. This model is consistent with several lines of evidence, some of them counter-intuitive otherwise. It implies that effective disciplinary enforcement tactics are crucial to the effectiveness of the entire disciplinary system, especially for temperamentally difficult children who push the limits more aggressively.

13. Larzelere, R. E., Sather, P. R., Schneider, W. N., Larson, D. B., & Pike, P. L. (1998). Punishment enhances reasoning's effectiveness as a toddler disciplinary response to toddlers. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 60(2), 388-403. Summary: www.jewishworldreview.com/cols/Horn072998.html <http://www.fatherhood.org/articles/wh072898.htm> Article: <http://www.jstor.org/cgi-bin/jstor/printpage/00222445/ap020140/02a00090/0?frame=noframe&dpi=3&userID=8b4e8a3b@okstate.edu/01cc99331600501b6b991&backcontext=table-of-contents&backurl=/cgi-bin/jstor/listjournal/00222445/ap020140%3fframe%3dframe%26dpi%3d3%26userID%3d8b4e8a3b@okstate.edu/01cc99331600501b6b991%26config%3djstor&action=download&config=jstor>

This study shows that the effect of disciplinary reasoning by itself on the inhibition of disruptive behavior problems for 2- and 3-year-olds depends upon whether mothers enforce disciplinary reasoning with punishment at least 10% of the time. Children whose mothers enforce disciplinary reasoning with punishment show the steepest decrease in disruptive behavior problems during the next 20 months. Those whose mothers rarely enforce reasoning with punishment show the greatest increase in disruptive behavior during that same time. This was demonstrated in 9 of 10 analyses for nonphysical punishment (time out, privilege removal), in 4 of 10 analyses for physical punishment (spank, slap toddler's hand), and in only 1 of 10 analyses for forced compliance, as a non-punishment alternative to enforce disciplinary reasoning. To my knowledge, this is the only direct comparison in scientific studies that favors nonphysical punishment over nonabusive spanking in 2- to 6-year-olds, and this finding is consistent with my conditional sequence model above.

D. Definitive Evidence on Nonabusive Spanking for Defiant 2- to 6-Year-Olds

14. Roberts, M. W., & Powers, S. W. (1990). Adjusting chair timeout enforcement procedures for oppositional children. *Behavior Therapy*, 21, 257-271.

This is the fourth in Roberts' series of randomized clinical studies on enforcement procedures necessary for defiant 2- to 6-year-olds to cooperate with time out, which is crucial for the most effective clinical treatments for young children with clinically disruptive disorders (conduct

disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, i.e., pre-delinquents). In the series of 4 studies, Roberts and his students showed that an effective enforcement procedure was essential for the effectiveness of this clinical treatment. His studies showed that a new “barrier method” (sometimes called “room time out”) was as effective as the traditional two-swat spank enforcement that had taught to parents by clinical psychologists for the previous 20 to 25 years. The spank enforcement worked when the barrier method did not, and vice versa. This shows that parents need more disciplinary enforcement options, not fewer options, so they can match the disciplinary enforcement to the child and situation and can have other alternatives to turn to when the first option is ineffective.

Unfortunately, extreme anti-spanking bills not only ban spanking, but also Roberts’ barrier method and his third best alternative (physically holding). This means that extreme anti-spanking bills also ban several clinical treatments that use those disciplinary enforcements, including treatments with repeated scientific evidence that they can help parents prevent young defiant children from growing up to become delinquents and life-long criminals. One of those banned clinical treatments has shown that it can reduce recurrences of parental physical abuse from 49% charges in typical parenting classes to 19% over a 2 ½ year period (Chaffin et al. [2004], summarized in my submission to the UN Global Study on Violence Against Children below).

If the standards for medical treatments were used to evaluate evidence about spanking, Roberts’ four studies would be the only ones that would be considered, and they all show spanking to be one of the two most effective disciplinary enforcements with defiant 2- to 6-year-olds. All studies with evidence against nonabusive spanking would be dismissed by medical research standards, because their research methods cannot clarify what causes what, and they rarely clarify the presenting symptoms or the appropriate dosage. Together, Roberts’ four studies show that an effective disciplinary enforcement such as nonabusive spanking is essential for defiant 2- to 6-year-old children to cooperate with time out, which in turn was necessary for their parents to regain normal levels of cooperation from them. Roberts’ studies also show that, at some point, banning disciplinary enforcements will undermine the ability of parents and psychologists to prevent young defiant children from growing up to be delinquents and lifelong criminals.

E. The Questionable Success of Sweden’s Spanking Ban

15. Larzelere, R. E., & Johnson, B. (1999). Evaluations of the effects of Sweden’s spanking ban of physical child abuse rates: A literature review. *Psychological Reports*, 85, 381-392.

This is a review of all available evidence in English concerning the success of Sweden’s 1979 spanking ban in reducing physical child abuse. There was no evidence that any measure of physical child abuse had decreased as a result of the spanking ban. Two studies by anti-spanking authors reported some Swedish child abuse rates that were from 2 to 5 times higher than equivalent rates in the USA. Swedish criminal records showed nearly a 6-fold increase in physical child abuse from 1981 to 1994. The major conclusion was that we need more objective evaluation of spanking bans to inform other countries considering them. Support for mild spanking had decreased more than had problematic usage of corporal punishment, suggesting the possibility that the ban had inadvertently eliminated milder types of disciplinary enforcement that could have stopped an escalating discipline incident before it escalated to abuse.

16. Larzelere, R. E. (2004). *Sweden's smacking ban: More harm than good*. Essex, England: Families First. www.christian.org.uk/pdfpublications/sweden_smacking.pdf

This is an update of a response to Dr. Durrant's posting on a listserv of professionals in child maltreatment research. It compares and contrasts the conclusions of Larzelere and Johnson (1999) vs. Durrant (1999) about the success of Sweden's spanking ban. On three of four issues, they were using the same data sources, so the booklet explains how they often arrived at contradictory conclusions. Dr. Durrant never responded to the original posting on the listserv of child maltreatment professionals, but she has critiqued the 2004 booklet recently.

17. Larzelere, R. E. (2005). *Differentiating evidence from advocacy in evaluating Sweden's spanking ban: A response to Joan Durrant's critique of my booklet "Sweden's smacking ban: More harm than good"*. Unpublished manuscript, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK. <http://people.biola.edu/faculty/paulp/rdurrantl.75.pdf>

This paper is a point-by-point response to Durrant's critique of Larzelere's (2004) comparison of how they arrived at contradictory conclusions from the same data.

18. Beckett, C. (2005). The Swedish myth: The corporal punishment ban and child death statistics. *British Journal of Social Work*, 35(1), 125-138.

This article exposes the "Swedish myth" that annual child abuse fatalities in Sweden are usually zero and never more than one. He shows that this conclusion is based on the narrowest definition of child abuse fatalities ever used, a unique definition that is never mentioned in public repetitions of this Swedish myth. He traces the source of this Swedish myth back to Durrant's (1999) article.

19. Two Swedish newspaper articles stating that the annual number of child abuse fatalities in Sweden is seven to nine, substantially higher than the annual incidence of 0 or 1 that Joan Durrant consistently reports (the Swedish myth above).

20. Roberts, J. (2000). Changing public attitudes towards corporal punishment: The effect of statutory reform in Sweden. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 24, 1027-1035.

This article shows that Swedish attitudes about spanking were not changed after their 1979 spanking ban, but changed before that ban, contradicting another of Durrant's (1999) major conclusions.

21. Wittrock, U. (1995). Barnmisshandel, 1984-1994 [Violent crimes against children, 1984-1994]. *KR Info*, 1-6.

An English translation of some of the crucial data interpreted differently by Larzelere & Johnson (1999) and by Durrant (1999). This Swedish report was translated into English so that people can decide for themselves which conclusion is more justified by the data. I welcome anyone to take on this task and contact both Dr. Durrant and me to determine how both of us arrived at the

conclusions we did. Countries considering a similar spanking ban need unbiased interpretations of data relevant to the effects of previous spanking bans.

22. Statistics Sweden. (1996). *Spanking and other forms of physical punishment* (No. Demography, the Family, and Children 1996:1.2). Stockholm: Author.

A study commissioned in Sweden, partly because of “various signs of increased violence and a positive attitude toward spanking” (p. 5). Its data are also interpreted differently by Durrant (1999) than by Larzelere and Johnson (1999) and Roberts (2000).

23. Palmerus, K., & Scarr, S. (1995). *How parents discipline young children. Cultural comparisons and individual differences*. Paper presented at the biennial conference of the Society for Research in Child Development, Indianapolis, IN.

A paper showing that, after its spanking ban, Swedish parents used fewer recommended alternative disciplinary tactics than parents in USA or Bermuda (e.g., reasoning, behavior modify), but more frequent undesirable alternatives (e.g., coercive verbal, physical restraint).

24. Haeuser, A. A. (1988). *Reducing violence towards U.S. children: Transferring positive innovations from Sweden*: Unpublished manuscript. (Available from author, School of Social Welfare, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 53201).

A report of the second professional visit to Sweden by the co-founder of EPOCH-USA. Her conclusions include the following: The actual ban was against “aga”, which implies more severity than a mild spanking, but less severity than child abuse. It was a law without any specified penalties. In contrast to her 1981 visit, most professionals in 1988 agreed that mild spanking was banned as well as *aga*. She noted that Sweden respects experts, quoting a Swedish journalist that “regionally and municipally employed experts have taken over large parts of the family’s previous functions.” (p. 12). Most Swedish professionals thought that physical child abuse had not decreased in the 7 years after their spanking ban, but that “attention has progressed from physical child abuse to sexual abuse to spouse abuse and as of 1988, to mobbing, which is youth gang violence” (p. 19). “In 1981 . . . parents had not . . . found constructive alternatives to physical punishment. For most parents the alternative was yelling and screaming at their children . . . In 1988 . . . nearly all parents reported that when necessary, a parent holds a child still by firmly grasping the upper arms and with eye contact while the child is thus immobilized, talks to the child about changing his/her behavior. . . . A few parents agreed with some professionals that occasionally the immobilizing arm hold might be slightly painful but they do not define this as physical punishment since the intent is to get the child’s attention” (p. 22). Note that forceful holding by both shoulders would be criminalized by the more extreme anti-spanking bills being proposed today (e.g., New Zealand), unless such action would be permitted between adults who disagree with each other in public. “I had to conclude that parents might not be sufficiently involved in their children’s lives either to use or not use physical punishment. . . . one reason the birthrate is so low in Sweden is because Swedish parents spoil children, and coping with more than one or two children would be too difficult . . . Again, I had to question the importance of the 1979 law and the issue of physical punishment in this milieu since a society which makes few demands of children has little reason to punish them, physically or otherwise” (p. 23). By 1988,

however, several authorities agreed that “parents now dare to be parents [and] grown up” (p. 23). She noted that by 1988 parents were setting limits more and “one professor of education noted that ‘feia uppfostran’ [free upbringing] was a longstanding ‘experiment that did not work’” (p. 24). In 1988 she observed a new phenomenon in which “Toddlers and young children for whatever reason often hit their parents, not so hard to inflict pain but continuously enough to be clearly annoying” (p. 25). Her only statistic on physical child abuse was that known to Swedish police, which was reported as 6.5 per 1,000 children, which she compared favorably to the USA rate of 9.2 or 10.7 per 1,000 (p. 34). However, the USA rate actually included sexual and emotional abuse and cases known to any professional, not just to police. After adjusting for these factors, the Swedish rate was at least three times as high as the rate of physical child abuse known to American police or sheriffs (see Larzelere & Johnson, 1999, above).

25. Gelles, R. J., & Edfeldt, A. W. (1986). Violence towards children in the United States and Sweden. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 10, 501-510.

This study interviewed a representative sample of over 1,000 Swedish parents one year after their 1979 spanking ban. The most surprising result was that 3% of Swedish parents reported beating up their child in the year following the spanking ban, a rate more than twice as high as the rate in the United States of America.

26. Excerpts from Janson, S. (2001). *Barn och misshandel: En rapport om kroppslig bestraffning och annan misshandel i Sverige vid slutet av 1900-talet [Children and physical abuse: A report about corporal punishment and other physical abuse in Sweden at the end of the 20th century]* (SOU 2001:18). Stockholm: Statens Offentliga Utredningar.

These tables from a Swedish book document the following:

The number of annual child abuse assaults against children under 7 years old in Swedish criminal records continued to rise a little after 1994, but leveled out at about 6 times as many cases as in 1981.

The percentage of Swedish children who think their parents have the right to use any kind of disciplinary enforcement continues to fall, so that in 2000, only 31% of 10- to 12-year-olds thought that parents had the right to ground them and only 53% thought that parents had the right to withhold their allowance. My Swedish-American translator said this explains the frequent reports of young people fighting and setting fires as reported in Swedish newspapers.

F. Studies Showing That a Selection Bias Undermines The Strongest Causal Evidence Against Customary Spanking

27. Larzelere, R. E., Kuhn, B. R., & Johnson, B. (2004). The intervention selection bias: An under-recognized confound in intervention research. *Psychological Bulletin*, 130, 289-303. <http://content.apa.org/journals/bul/130/2/289.html>

This article shows that interventions selected by parents or professionals to correct a problem are often associated with detrimental outcomes subsequently, if compared with a group that did not

need that corrective intervention. Examples include spanking, mental health treatment for suicide risk and sex abuse, and hospitalization. To arrive at the correct conclusion about whether the intervention is effective or counterproductive, the research must adjust for the fact that at-risk cases are more likely to be selected for the corrective invention. Otherwise many evaluations will be biased against corrective interventions.

28. Larzelere, R. E., Ferrer, E., & Kuhn, B. R. (submitted). Validity of causal inferences from passive longitudinal analyses of corrective interventions: Accounting for selection and regression artifacts.

This paper replicates the strongest type of evidence against customary spanking, but shows that the same type of analyses yield equally strong evidence against all corrective interventions by parents and professionals, including nonphysical punishment, psychotherapy, and *Ritalin*. Alternative types of analyses reverse the bias so that professional interventions no longer appear detrimental, but then all parental interventions only appear beneficial (spanking only marginally so). Running all the analyses after reversing the temporal order of the data supports the conclusion that all these apparent effects are actually due to statistical artifacts, based on the fact that artifacts operate just as well in either temporal direction, whereas causal influences can only operate forward in time. We believe that this generalizes to most analyses of corrective interventions in typical longitudinal studies, if all the data come from one source (e.g., parental reports; see Larzelere & Smith, 2000, below). This renders the strongest causal evidence against customary spanking questionable. When the outcome is based on another information source, the analyses may be able to overcome these statistical artifacts. Gunnoe and Mariner (1997) below is the only known longitudinal analysis of customary spanking that uses a non-parental source for the outcome while adjusting for pre-existing differences in aggression. It shows both beneficial and detrimental effects of customary spanking, depending upon the age, sex, and ethnicity of the child.

29. Larzelere, R. E., & Smith, G. L. (2000, August). *Controlled longitudinal effects of five disciplinary tactics on antisocial behavior*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Washington DC.

This paper replicates Straus's strongest causal evidence against customary spanking, but shows the same apparently detrimental outcomes of all four types of nonphysical punishment and for taking a child to a psychiatrist. All apparently detrimental effects disappeared after controlling more completely for pre-existing child differences.

30. Larzelere, R. E. (2003, March). *The difficulty of making valid causal inferences from passive longitudinal designs*. Invited presentation at the conference "The Future of Longitudinal Studies," Berkeley, CA. (<http://ihd.berkeley.edu/larzelere.htm>)

This invited presentation summarizes the difficulty of making causal conclusions from longitudinal data, using the example of customary spanking vs. alternatives that parents could use instead.

G. Child Outcomes of Physical Discipline Vary by Ethnicity

31. Larzelere, R. E. (2005, March). *Children and violence in the family: Scientific contributions*. (a submission to the UN Global Study on Children and Violence, on behalf of the American College of Pediatricians). Unpublished manuscript.

This paper makes the case that science and advocacy must work closely together to achieve the goal of minimizing violence against children. Because drugs for pets get evaluated more systematically than interventions to reduce child abuse, most popular prevention and treatment programs for abuse have been widely adopted only to prove to be ineffective. In the case of physical discipline and milder types of disciplinary enforcement, scientific evidence is needed to determine how best to encourage optimal authoritative parental discipline while protecting children from abuse. Without adequate scientific evidence, well-intentioned advocacy efforts are at risk of becoming a means by which the powerful impose their parenting values on the underprivileged with the worst kind of cultural insensitivity. The paper concludes by quoting Dr. Murray Straus, the leading researcher advocating spanking bans, about the unpredictability of such social changes, even to the point of sometimes being disastrous. Therefore both supporters and critics of spanking bans support unbiased scientific evaluations of the intended and unintended effects of major policies affecting children, such as spanking bans. Children should not be victimized by unproven social experiments, regardless how well-intentioned they may be.

32. Polaha, J., Larzelere, R. E., Shapiro, S. K., & Pettit, G. S. (2004). Physical discipline and child behavior problems: A study of ethnic group differences. *Parenting: Science and Practice*, 4, 339-360.

This study is consistent with several other studies that find ethnic differences in the child outcomes of physical discipline. Whenever the child outcome is based on a source of information other than the parent, studies find significant ethnic differences between African-Americans and non-Hispanic European-Americans in the apparent effect of physical discipline on child aggression. In those studies, physical discipline reduces subsequent aggression in African Americans and rarely increases subsequent aggression. One possible explanation is that physical discipline has more beneficial effects when children perceive it as an indication of legitimate parental authority out of concern for the child, rather than as an indication of illegitimate parental authority and rejection of the child.

33. Gunnoe, M. L., & Mariner, C. L. (1997). Toward a developmental-contextual model of the effects of parental spanking on children's aggression. *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*, 151, 768-775.

This is the only published longitudinal study of aggression outcomes of customary spanking that (a) controlled statistically for pre-existing differences in aggression and (b) used a source other than the parent for the aggression outcome. The authors concluded prominently, "For most children, claims that spanking teaches aggression seem unfounded" (p. 768). They found that customary spanking *reduced* subsequent aggression in 4- to 7-year-olds, in African-American, and in girls. In contrast, it increased subsequent aggression in 8- to 11-year-olds, and in European-Americans. This study often gets cited as supporting a spanking ban, but such

summaries of the study are based on inconclusive correlations, not its stronger evidence of possible causal effects of spanking.

H. Effective vs. Counterproductive Disciplinary Enforcement Methods

34. Larzelere, R. E., Schneider, W. N., Larson, D. B., & Pike, P. L. (1996). The effects of discipline responses in delaying toddler misbehavior recurrences. *Child and Family Behavior Therapy, 18* (3), 35-57.

<https://www.haworthpress.com/store/ArticleAbstract.asp?sid=DJTMPRBTUTM88LTN3WBU863T3LV58B3C&ID=71017>

In this study, Larzelere and colleagues attempted to discover what parents of preschoolers should use instead of spanking when they are told not to spank. It turned out that the combined use of reasoning and punishment led to the longest delays until recurrences of common toddler misbehaviors. That combination was optimal whether the form of punishment was physical (spanking, or slapping a child's hand) or nonphysical (time out, or privilege removal). In either case the combination of reasoning and punishment was more effective than either punishment alone or reasoning alone. The rare three-way combination of reasoning, nonphysical punishment, and physical punishment was the most effective combination of all in delaying misbehavior recurrences.

35. Mahoney, A., Donnelly, W. O., Lewis, T., & Maynard, C. (2000). Mother and father self-reports of corporal punishment and severe physical aggression toward clinic-referred youth. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 29*(2), 266-281.

This is the only study known to me that has distinguished among the outcomes of various types of corporal punishment, ranging from an open-handed spank to beating up a child. The type of corporal punishment most consistently associated with later clinical referrals (usually for behavior problems) was "slapped on face, head, and ears." Types of corporal punishment that never predicted increased rates of clinical referrals preschoolers or pre-adolescents include "Spanked bottom with bare hand"; "Slapped hand, arm, or leg"; "Hit on bottom with hard object"; and "Pinched." This is the type of careful discriminations that are necessary to distinguish effective vs. counterproductive types of disciplinary enforcement.

34. Larzelere, R. E., Silver, C., & Polite, K. (1997). Nonabusive spanking: Parental liberty or child abuse? *Children's Legal Rights Journal, 17*(4), 7-17.

An attorney and two psychologists summarize scientific evidence about nonabusive spanking and relate that evidence to legal standards relevant to balancing issues about child abuse with protecting family autonomy from unwarranted interference by the state.

I. Supporting Letters

37. Dr. Diana Baumrind, renowned psychologist responsible for showing the superior child outcomes of authoritative parenting compared to the extremes of authoritarian and permissive parenting.

38. Dr. Peter Nieman, principal author of the Canadian Paediatric Society’s official statement, “Effective Discipline for Children,” from 1994 through 2003.

39. Dr. Mark Roberts, author of the only four randomized clinical trials of spanking and alternatives to enforce time out in clinically defiant 2- to 6-year-old children.

J. Definitions

I will use the definitions of corporal punishment and spanking from the only scientific consensus conference on corporal punishment, co-sponsored by the American Academy of Pediatrics in 1996:

Spanking [called *smacking* in some countries] was “defined as:

- a. physically non-injurious;
- b. intended to modify behavior; and
- c. administered with an opened hand to the extremities or buttocks.”

Corporal punishment [or *physical punishment*] is a broader term, “defined as bodily punishment of any kind, is a form of discipline, and spanking is a form of corporal punishment.

Our 2005 meta-analysis distinguished among the following four types of corporal punishment:

Conditional spanking is defined as nonabusive physical punishment (e.g., 2 open-handed swats to the buttocks) used when young children (e.g., 2 to 6 years old) respond defiantly to milder disciplinary tactics.

Customary spanking is defined as typical usage, usually measured by how frequently it is used, without specifying or emphasizing how severely it was used.

Overly severe corporal punishment is used to categorize studies that measured corporal punishment by its severity, at least in part. Examples include shaking, severe spankings, hitting the face or head, beating up, spanking with an implement, or spanking when a parent was out of control due to anger.

Predominant use of corporal punishment is used when corporal punishment is the primary method of discipline used, including nonabusive spanking.

Other terms:

Nonabusive spanking is used to emphasize the fact that this type of spanking excludes any abusive uses of corporal punishment.

Physical discipline is used to refer to normative corporal punishment used to correct children’s behavior.