

# **Research Evidence of the Negative Child Outcomes Linked with Corporal Punishment**

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**In recent years, I have used research to answer three basic questions:**

**Does corporal punishment “work”?**

**Do effects of corporal punishment vary by culture?**

**Is corporal punishment distinct from abuse?**

# Does CP “Work”?

- **CP does not make children more compliant in the short term (5/5 studies).**
- **CP does not foster long-term compliance or internalization of morals (11/11 studies).**
- **CP does not reduce aggression, defiance, or antisocial behavior (37/37 studies).**

*From: Gershoff, E. T., & Grogan-Kaylor, A. (2011). Corporal punishment by parents and its consequences for children: New meta-analyses and old controversies. Manuscript in preparation.*

# **Do Effects of CP Vary by Culture?**

**A common argument is that, because rates of CP vary across cultures, the effects of CP vary according to how “normative” it is**

**(Deater-Deckard & Dodge, 1997).**

**Although several studies in the US found the effects of CP were different for Black and White families, many later studies failed to replicate these findings.**

# Do Effects of CP Vary by Culture?

## *Study 1: Across Cultures in the US:*

**In a longitudinal, nationally representative sample of 11,044 American children, we found that CP predicted *increases* in child behavior problems from age 5 to age 8 equally across White-, Black-, Hispanic-, and Asian-American groups.**

*From: Gershoff, E. T., Lansford, J. E., Sexton, H. R., Davis-Kean, P., & Sameroff, A. J. (2011, in press). Longitudinal links between spanking and children's externalizing behaviors in a national sample of White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian American families. Child Development.*

# Do Effects of CP Vary by Culture?

## *Study 2: Across Countries:*

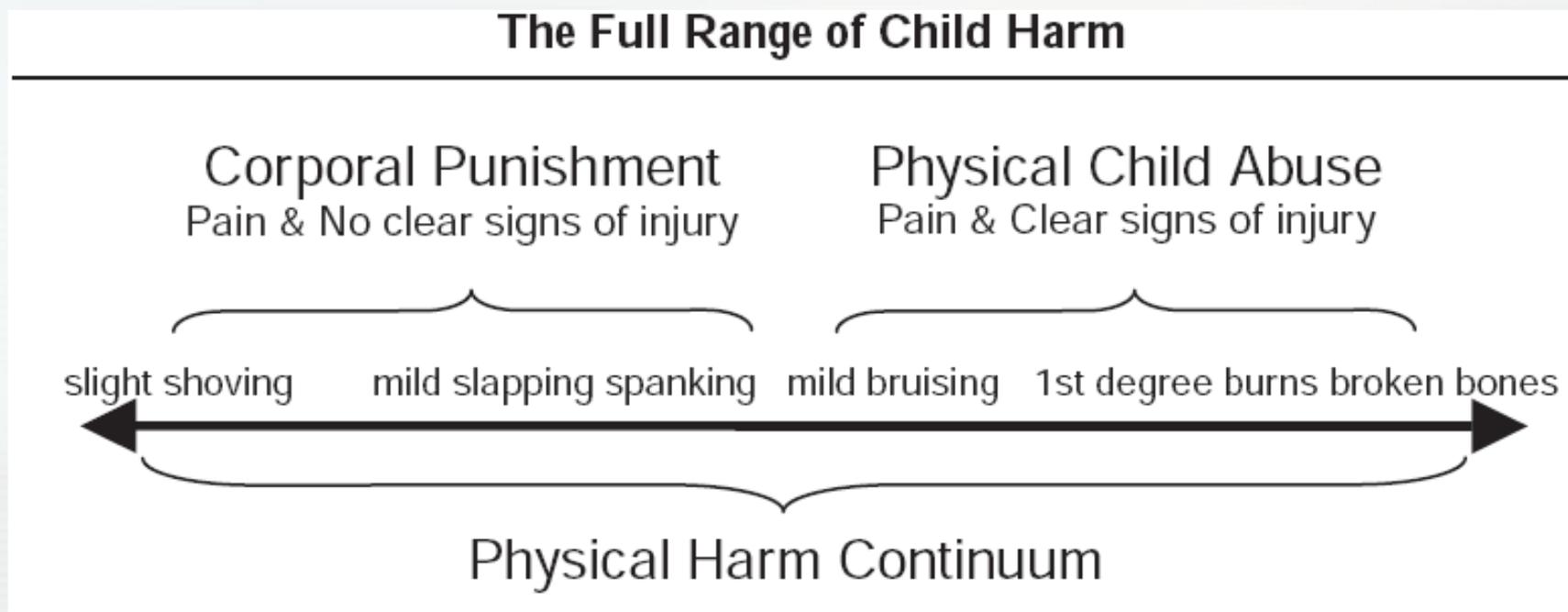
**Comparing mothers and their children across China, India, Italy, Kenya, Philippines, and Thailand, we found that corporal punishment (and yelling) predicted more child aggression across all countries.**

**If children believed CP was normative in their community, the CP-aggression link was slightly smaller, but still significant.**

*From: Gershoff, E. T., Grogan-Kaylor, A., Lansford, J. E., Chang, L., Zelli, A., Deater-Deckard, K., & Dodge, K. A. (2010). Parent discipline practices in six countries: Frequency of use, associations with child behaviors, and moderation by cultural normativeness. *Child Development, 81*, 480-495.*

# Is CP Distinct from Abuse?

- **Academics have argued about whether there is a continuum of violence against children.**



*From: Dussich, J. P. J., & Maekoya, C. (2007). Physical child harm and bullying-related behaviors: A comparative study in Japan, South Africa, and the United States. International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 51, 495-509.*

# Is CP Distinct from Abuse?

**In a study based in North Carolina, parents who spanked their children were 3 times more likely, and parents who hit with an object were 9 times more likely, than parents who do not use these methods to report also engaging in potentially abusive behaviors such as kicking, beating, burning, or shaking (Zolotor et al., 2008).**

# Is CP Distinct from Abuse?

**Interviews with physically abusive parents reveal that as many as 2/3 of their abusive incidents began as attempts to change children's behavior or to "teach them a lesson." (Kadushin & Martin, 1981)**

**A 2003 review of child maltreatment cases in Canada determined that 3/4 of substantiated physical abuse cases involved parents' intention to corporally punish their child. (Durrant et al., 2006)**

# Is CP Distinct from Abuse?

- **CP is associated with a greater risk of physical abuse (13/13/studies).**
- **In studies that looked at both CP and abuse, the negative effects of CP were on average only slightly smaller than those for physical abuse (effect sizes of .33 vs. .42).**

# So to revisit the three basic questions:

Does corporal punishment  
"work"?

**No.**

Do effects of corporal  
punishment vary by  
culture?

**No.**

Is corporal punishment  
distinct from abuse?

**No.**

Please feel free to contact me  
with any questions:

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