

- 40% of those contacted agreed to take part in the survey.
- The final sample was weighted by education and religion to better reflect the demographics of the NI parent population.

RATIONALE AND AIMS

While the previous research provides basic information on physical discipline in Northern Ireland, there are, however, still a number of important gaps in our current knowledge which need to be addressed. In relation to research involving parents, the international literature clearly highlights that parents make use of a wide range of disciplinary practices and the frequency of physical discipline use is an important component of practice. However, to date, Northern Ireland surveys have tended to focus on 'physical discipline' generally, rather than the full range of disciplinary tactics and have not considered specific time frames or the frequency with which parents use physical discipline. The literature also highlights that attitudes towards physical discipline can be an important predictor in its use and that parental perceptions of the outcomes of physical discipline are strongly associated with its use. However, exploration of parental attitudes toward physical discipline in Northern Ireland has been limited to general questions asking if parents view this as an effective or acceptable form of discipline.

In relation to research with children and young people, it was encouraging to note that important inroads have been made by the voluntary sector in exploring the experiences, views and attitudes of this group. Based on this, it was decided that the research undertaken by NICCY, NSPCC (NI) and Barnardo's (NI) should focus on a survey of Northern Ireland parents. Nevertheless, research exploring the disciplinary experiences of different groups of children and young people involving larger sample

sizes and investigating the relationship with outcomes, would be a useful addition to this body of work in the future.

The main aim of the parent survey was identified as:

To examine the prevalence and incidence of a range of disciplinary practices and attitudes towards physical discipline use with a representative sample of parents of children aged 0–10 in Northern Ireland.

It was also considered important to try to explore the context of physical discipline use in terms of parents' emotional state and the perceived emotional state of their child. As such, a secondary aim of the research was identified as:

To explore parents' perceptions of their own emotional state and that of their child when they administer physical discipline.

INCLUSION CRITERIA

Non parents were excluded from the survey because parents obviously have the main responsibility for disciplining their children and, while other family members such as grandparents might administer physical discipline, this is likely to be much more limited. Those with parental responsibility for a child living within their household or parental responsibility for a child they had been in contact with in the past year were also included in the definition of a parent in order to capture the views of cohabiting partners and non-resident fathers. Parents of children outside the age range 0–10 years were excluded from the study because the research literature clearly shows that age is an important aspect of physical discipline use with children aged 10 and under being more likely to experience physical discipline than those over 10. Although previous research also highlights that very young children are less likely to experience

physical discipline, this group was considered essential to include because of the physical vulnerability of babies and infants to this type of discipline.

Those aged under 16 were excluded from this survey because of the small number of parents who are 15 and under in Northern Ireland and because of ethical issues around parental consent for younger age groups.

SURVEY METHOD

The need for a representative survey of parents across Northern Ireland was identified from the outset of the project and a range of survey methods considered. A postal survey was discounted on the basis that this method usually results in low response rates rarely able to be generalised to the population (de Vaus, 1996) and because a sampling frame of parents of children aged 0–10 was not readily available. In comparison, telephone surveys usually benefit from higher response rates and can be carried out quickly and relatively inexpensively (Becker & Bryman, 2004). Random digit dialling can help to reduce sampling bias and enable interviewers to engage with respondents and clarify any issues while still maintaining confidentiality (de Vaus, 1996). Although there is some debate as to what extent telephone surveys are appropriate for researching sensitive issues (Thomas & Purdon, 1994), the review of the research literature indicated that telephone interviews have been successfully used in this type of research (Straus et al, 1998). Equally, initial screening questions can easily be included at the start of the telephone interview to apply the research criteria.

Face-to-face interviews also tend to have much higher response rates than postal surveys, as well as higher response rates than telephone surveys (Becker & Bryman, 2004). The interaction between the interviewer and participants can also allow for

longer more complex lines of questioning and although confidentiality and dealing with sensitive questions can be issues with this method, these can be minimised by the use of computer assisted personal interviewing (de Vaus, 1996). However, face-to-face surveys are much more expensive and time consuming than either postal or telephone surveys, an expense which rises exponentially when the survey focuses on a specific segment of the population.

Based on these methodological considerations and the limited resources and time available for this particular project, telephone survey methods were selected as the most appropriate. The project was put out to tender and Research & Evaluation Services (RES) Belfast, an independent research company, was awarded the tender and commissioned to carry out the survey on behalf of NICCY, NSPCC (NI) and Barnardo's (NI).

SAMPLING AND DATA COLLECTION

Using random digit dialling, interviews were completed with a random sample of 1,000 parents of 0–10 year olds across Northern Ireland. On contact by telephone, the selection of the respondent was controlled on a quota basis by local government districts (LGD) and by gender. The LGD quota was derived from 2001 census data while the gender ratio was set at 60% female/40% male, in order to maximise the responses from fathers while still allowing for a higher proportion of lone mother households. Each respondent was asked to comment on their disciplinary responses to one child in their family aged 0–10. If they had more than one child in this age group, a child was randomly selected by asking the respondent to provide information in relation to the child whose next birthday it was.

RES implemented the survey using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). This system

Table 2.5: Response to survey

Completed questionnaire	1,000
No answer	1,484
Refused	1,448
Fail respondent age qualification	53
Agreed to participate but were ineligible	2,451

allows the interviewer to fulfil the quota obligations of the survey and also to achieve the total number of respondents as required for the entire project. The overall response for the survey was 40%, calculated by dividing the total number of completed interviews with the number who refused (see Table 2.5).

QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

Given the sensitive nature of the questions contained within the survey and the need to encourage honest responses, it was felt that the term 'physical discipline' provided a broad catch-all which did not have the same negative connotations of the term 'physical punishment' or the association with educational settings of the term 'corporal punishment'. As such the term 'physical discipline' was used throughout the survey and hence throughout the rest of the report.

The in-depth literature review identified a range of validated research measures which have been used internationally to measure the prevalence of physical discipline/punishment and public attitudes toward it.

The Northern Ireland Physical Discipline Prevalence Study measured the following:

The prevalence and frequency of physical discipline

As highlighted in the research considerations section, the majority of studies in the literature review had used the original Conflict Tactics Scale

(CTS) or the updated Conflict Tactics Scale Parent to Child version (CTSPC) to measure the prevalence and frequency of a range of disciplinary tactics. The CTS was developed by Straus (1973) to measure partner and family violence. However, it has also been extensively used to investigate child abuse in a variety of different countries and in numerous research settings (Straus et al, 2003), including general population surveys conducted by telephone. Permission to make minor amendments to the CTSPC (e.g. changing spanking to smacking) was granted by Western Psychological Services and 1,030 copies of the measure purchased for use within the survey.

The core of the CTSPC measure consists of twenty two self report items that ask about the frequency of specific non-violent and violent parent-child interactions that have occurred in the past year (Straus et al, 2003). These twenty two items are grouped into three scales which measure non-violent discipline, psychological aggression and physical assault (minor, severe and extreme). (For further details of the reliability and validity of the CTSPC in relation to this study, see Appendix 7). This enables the identification of not only the lifetime and past year prevalence rates of a range of disciplinary tactics but the frequency with which they have been used by parents. A supplemental scale measuring four discipline strategies used in the past week was also included.

Perceived outcomes of physical discipline

A seven-item scale based on Durrant et al's research (2003) was included in the questionnaire after permission had been granted by the author.

This measures the positive and negative perceptions parents have about the outcomes of physical discipline. In Durrant et al's (2003) study, each item is measured on a five-point scale. For the purpose of this survey a seven-point scale was used to enable respondents to have a greater range of responses and match the format of other scales used in the questionnaire. The three items measuring positive outcomes to physical discipline and three measuring negative outcomes can be added together to give composite perceived negative and positive outcome indices. (For further details of the reliability of this measure, see Appendix 7).

Emotional context of physical discipline use

Three questions looking at aspects of parental emotional state when they administer physical discipline (feeling frustrated, feeling out of control, upset afterwards) and three looking at the perceived emotional state of children when they receive physical discipline (painfulness, feeling upset, feeling afraid), were included in the questionnaire. While parents and children might experience a much broader range of emotional states (e.g. anger, stress, guilt etc.), the need to keep the survey questionnaire relatively brief, coupled with the fact that this was not the primary focus of the survey, meant that only a limited number of questions could be included. These questions were selected from a questionnaire on attitudes towards physical discipline provided by Dr George Holden of the University of Texas, an academic with considerable experience in this field (Holden, 1990; Holden et al, 1995; Holden et al, 1997; Holden, 2002). Although not a scale, they were chosen because they were considered to represent the strongest and most common emotional states experienced when physical discipline is used.

Demographic and other information

The survey included questions on a range of demographic information including parent age, parent gender, parent religion, marital status, family income, highest educational qualification, number of

children in family, child age, child gender, child disability status and child special educational need status (See Table 2.6 for overview of sample characteristics). Parents were also asked a number of questions to establish if they had received information on alternatives to physical discipline from a range of common professional sources such as GPs, health visitors, social workers and parent education programmes. They were also asked to specify any other sources of information they had received information from.

Pilot

The full questionnaire was piloted with 30 respondents to check for both ease of response and respondent understanding of the questions. On the basis of this pilot, the introduction was reworded and some minor amendments made.

DATA ANALYSIS

Analysis was carried out using the statistical software package SPSS for Windows Version 13.0. The analysis was conducted by researchers in NICCY, NSPCC (NI) and Barnardo's (NI). It took the form of providing frequency tables for each of the individual variables, calculating composite scores and preliminary statistical analysis of the relationship between the overall physical discipline/assault scale and key demographic and other outcome variables.

Although it was not possible to collect demographic information on those who refused to take part in the survey, comparison with available census data (2001) provides some information in this area. While the census does not focus specifically on parents of 0-10 year olds, it does provide key demographic information on parents of children aged 0-15 (including those with dependent children aged 16-18 in further education). As Table 2.6 shows, the demographics of the parent sample is very similar to the profile of parents in Northern Ireland provided

by census data across a range of variables. Nevertheless, the comparison does show large differences in the distribution of educational attainment, as well as some substantial differences in religious break down, suggesting Catholics and those with lower educational attainment were less likely to participate. To correct for these discrepancies, the sample was weighted by education and religion to reflect the demographics of the Northern Ireland parent population.

ETHICS

Given the sensitive nature of this research, ethical concerns, in particular informed consent and confidentiality, were key considerations. At the beginning of the survey, respondents were explained the purpose of the survey, the organisations on whose behalf it was being carried out and how long it would take to complete. At no time were the interviewers aware of the names or contact details of respondents and participants were also assured that all their responses were completely confidential. Indeed, one of the key reasons for selecting telephone survey methods was the high degree of confidentiality this type of survey provides, as well as the control the interviewee has over the process (if they no longer wish to take part they can simply hang up). It was also recognised that the subject of the survey might raise issues for participants, particularly those that reported high levels of physical discipline use coupled with frustration and feelings of being out of control. At the end of the survey all respondents were provided with a contact number for the Parents Advice Centre Parent Helpline in order to address any concerns or questions they might have about parenting.

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE SURVEY

Despite the obvious sensitivities of investigating physical discipline, the final response rate for this survey was 40%. While this is lower than response rates reported for telephone surveys generally, it should be noted that it was not possible to ascertain how many of those who refused to take part were eligible to participate to begin with. Given the high numbers of respondents who agreed to take part but were found to be ineligible, it is likely that many of those who refused were ineligible also.

It is always difficult to achieve reliable and honest answers when conducting research into sensitive issues, particularly when some of the behaviours under investigation include those that may constitute an unlawful offence. While the use of telephone survey methods facilitate respondent confidentiality and enable respondents to have more control over their participation than other survey methods, it is likely that some did not admit to incidents of discipline use, particularly physical discipline. Indeed this difficulty has been recognised by Straus et al (2003) who comment that:

"Despite the ability of the CTSPC to elicit information from parents on physical abuse and despite the evidence that the CTSPC is not confounded with social desirability response set, it is best to regard the results of the CTSP as lower-bound estimates. This is because even with the best designed instrument in the world not every parent will be willing or able to divulge such information" (p.86).

These limitations notwithstanding, the survey provides a valuable overview of the disciplinary practices of parents of children aged 0–10 and is representative of this population in Northern Ireland. It highlights not only the prevalence rates of a wide range of behaviours but the frequency with which they are used, parents views on the outcomes of the

physical discipline and the emotional context in which they use it.

2.3 SURVEY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the Northern Ireland Physical Discipline Study. It should be noted that this is the preliminary analysis which focuses more on physical discipline than any of the other forms of discipline measured in the survey. This is the first stage in the analysis process, with further analysis intended at a later stage.

Key Points

- The survey results showed an overall rate of lifetime physical discipline use of 47% and 2% for 'severe' physical discipline/assault and 45% and 1.7% for past year use.
- Parental income, educational status and religion were shown to be factors associated with physical discipline use.
- A majority of parents do not think that physical discipline increases respect, teaches obedience or leads to the learning of acceptable behaviours.
- A substantial proportion of parents used physical discipline even though they considered it to be ineffective and to have potentially negative outcomes for their children.
- Parents were often frustrated when they administered physical discipline and often felt guilty and regretful afterwards.
- A significant minority of parents in Northern Ireland reported feeling always or frequently out of control when they had used physical discipline with their children.
- Overall, two thirds of parents could not recall receiving any advice on the alternatives to physical discipline.

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

According to 2001 census data, there are approximately a quarter of a million children aged 0–10 within the Northern Ireland population. However, an accurate profile of the parents of these children is more difficult to achieve. Statistics from the Department of Social Development (McKeown, 2006) provide data on the overall numbers of parents/carers, indicating that at June 2006 there were 150,841 households in Northern Ireland with a child/children aged 0–10⁷. While the census does not provide demographic data specifically on parents of 0–10 year olds, it does provide key demographic information on parents of children aged 0–15 (including those with dependent children aged 16–18 in further education). This section presents the demographics of the parents who participated in this study and the children on whom they were asked to report their use of discipline. Where possible, sample parent characteristics are compared with those of the wider Northern Ireland parent population.

Individual parent/child characteristics
Table 2.6 provides an overview of the individual parent and child characteristics. It shows that a vast majority of respondents (99%) were biological parents, 0.6% were step-parents and 0.4% identified themselves as cohabiters. Of the parent group, 98.4% lived with their children while the remaining one mother and fifteen fathers did not live with their child(ren) but had access within the past year. The gender ratio decided upon from the outset of the study was maintained, with 60% of those interviewed being female and 40% male. In terms of age, only a very small proportion of parents were under 25 (3.2%), 9% were aged 25–29, 19% were aged 30–34, 29% were aged 35–39, just over 36% aged 40–49 and approximately 3% were aged 50+.

As described in the survey methods section, parents with more than one child aged 0–10 were asked to

⁷ This was calculated using Child Benefit statistics – this is a universal benefit given to all those bringing up:

- A child aged under 16
- A young person under 19 (under 20 in some cases) who is either studying in full-time non-advanced education (A level or equivalent) or on an approved training programme
- A 16 or 17 year old who recently left school or training and registered for work or training with the Careers Service or Connexions Service, or similar.

report on their use of physical discipline with the child whose next birthday it was. Of these children, half were female and half were male. Approximately half were aged 7–10, a third were aged 3–6, with the remainder being aged 0–2. Only a small minority had a statement of educational need (4.3%) or were registered disabled (2.2%).

Family/community characteristics

Over a third of parents were educated to degree/HND level or higher, roughly half had some form of secondary level educational qualification and one tenth had no formal educational qualification (See Table 2.7). Forty per cent of families had an annual income of less than £20,000,

Table 2.6: Characteristics of parents/families surveyed

INDIVIDUAL PARENT CHARACTERISTICS		% of sample	% of Census data ⁸
Relationship to child	Parent	99	-
	Step-parent	0.6	-
	Cohabitee	0.4	-
Gender (n=1000)	Male	40	44
	Female	60	56
Age (n=1000)	16–19	0.3	0.6 (under 19)
	20–24	2.9	3.4
	25–29	9	9
	30–34	19.3	18.4
	35–39	29.2	23
	40–49	36.5	34
	50 +	2.8	11.6
INDIVIDUAL CHILD CHARACTERISTICS			
Gender (n=1000)	Male	50.3	-
	Female	49.7	-
Age (n=1000)	0–2	16	-
	3–6	33.1	-
	7–10	50.9	-
Registered disabled (n=1000)	Yes	2.2	-
	No	97.8	-
Statement special educational need (n=1000)	Yes	4.3	-
	No	95.7	-

⁸ A dependent child according to census data is a person in a household aged 0–15 (whether or not in a family) or a person aged 16–18 who is a full-time student in a family with parents.

just over a quarter (26%) had an income of £20,000–29,999, 16% had an income of £30,000–39,999 and almost one in five (19%) had incomes of £40,000 or more. A majority of the sample was either married or living as married

(85%) while the remainder was either single, divorced, separated or widowed. Approximately 41% of the parents identified their community background as Catholic, 45% as Protestant and 14% as having another or no religion.

Table 2.7: Family/community characteristics

FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS			
		%	%
Marital status (n=999)	Single (never married)	8.6	9.4
	Divorced	2.2	4.0
	Widowed	0.3	1.1
	Separated	3.5	5.4
	Married/living as married	85.4	80.0
Household income (n=714)	Less than £10,000 per annum	17.5	-
	£10,000–£19,999 per annum	22.5	-
	£20,000–£29,999 per annum	25.5	-
	£30,000–£39,999 per annum	15.8	-
	£40,000– £49,999 per annum	7.6	-
	£50,000+ per annum	11.1	-
Highest educational qualification (n=992)	First degree BTEC (higher), BEC (higher), TEC (higher), HNC, HND or equivalents or higher	35	17.4
	GCE, A Level, GSCE, CSEs or equivalents	55.3	48.5
	No formal qualification	9.7	34.1
No. of children in household (n=1000)	1	22.4	-
	2	40.1	-
	3	23.9	-
	4	9.6	-
	5+	4	-
COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS			
Community background (n=1000)	Member of the Protestant community	44.9	51.1
	Member of the Catholic community	40.7	46.5
	Other (including none)	14.4	2.4

THE PREVALENCE AND FREQUENCY OF DIFFERENT FORMS OF DISCIPLINE

Results

Non-violent discipline

The CTSPC (Straus et al, 1998) defines four behaviours which constitute non-violent discipline. These include explaining why something is wrong, giving the child something else to do, taking away privileges and putting them in 'time out'.

Overall, rates of non-violent discipline were higher than rates of psychological aggression or physical discipline/assault, with almost all parents reporting the use of some form of non-violent discipline either in the past year (97.4%) or ever (97.6%) (see Table 2.8). The most common form of discipline within this category, as well as overall, was explaining that something was wrong. This had a past year prevalence rate of 95.8% and was also the most frequent form of non-violent discipline, with parents reporting using it an average of 17.3 times in the past year. Giving the child something else to do instead of what they were doing, putting the child into 'time out' and taking away privileges/grounding were all prevalent forms of non-violent discipline with 73% having used 'time out' 10 times in the past year, 71% having taken away privileges or grounded their child 12 times in the past year and 71% having given them something else to do 11 times in the past year.

Psychological aggression

Overall, psychological aggression was the second most common type of discipline with 78.9% of parents having used it in the past year and 79% reporting ever using it. However, it was the most frequently used form of discipline with parents reporting using it 38.4 times in the past year. Shouting, yelling or screaming at the child was the most common form of psychological aggression with 67.5% of parents reporting having ever used it and 67.4% in the past year. This was also the most

frequently used form of psychological aggression with parents reporting an average use of 13 times per year. Threatening to spank or hit the child without actually carrying out the threat was the second most common form of psychological aggression and the sixth most common form of discipline overall, with 52.4% of parents having ever used it and 52.1% having used it in the past year. Other forms of psychological aggression were much less common; 20.5% of parents reported ever swearing or cursing at the child, 16.6% reported ever calling them dumb or lazy and 4.9% reported ever threatening to throw them out of the house (last year prevalence rates of 20.5%, 14.3% and 4.9% respectively). The frequency of these behaviours was also less than shouting/yelling but tended to be similar to reported frequencies for threatening to smack.

In relation to past week use, 27.7% of parents reported shouting, yelling or screaming at their child in the week preceding the survey.

The prevalence and frequency of physical discipline/assault

Overall, physical discipline/assault was the least common form of discipline, although this had been used at some time by almost half of parents (47.4%) and 44.8% in the past year. On average parents who used physical discipline in the past year reported doing so 8 times. 'Minor' physical discipline accounted for almost all of the prevalence of the overall physical discipline/assault scale, with 44.8% of parents reporting using it in the past year an average of 7.7 times and 47.5% ever. The most common forms used were smacking the child on the bottom with a bare hand (34.8% ever) and slapping the child on the hand, arm or leg (27.4% ever). The other various forms of 'minor' physical discipline were used significantly less than the first two with 2.4% of parents reporting having ever hit their child on the bottom with a belt, hairbrush, stick or other object, 2.3% having ever shaken their children when they were aged 2 or over, 1% having ever

pinched their child and 1% having ever slapped their child on the face, head or ears. In relation to weekly use, 4.3% of parents reported having smacked their child on the bottom with a bare hand and 5.1% had slapped their child on the hand, arm or legs.

The survey results showed that 1.9% of parents had ever used some form of severe or extreme assault/discipline. All but one of the 18 parents in this group (94%) had also used some form of 'minor' physical discipline. A total of 1.7% of parents reported using this type of discipline in the past year. On average this was used 4 times in the past year. There were no reported incidences of hitting a

child with a fist or kicking them hard, beating them up, shaking a child under the age of 2, grabbing a child around the neck and choking them, burning or scalding on purpose or of threatening them with a knife or a gun. The most common prevalence of severe physical discipline/assault administered by parents was hitting some other part of the body (besides the bottom) with a belt, a hairbrush or a stick. Fifteen out of the 1,000 parents questioned said they had done this within the past year and 16 indicated that they had carried it out at some stage in the past. Two parents claimed that they had thrown or knocked down their child, one in the past year and one sometime in the past.

Table 2.8: Summary of prevalence rates different forms of discipline

DISCIPLINE TYPE	PREVALENCE RATES			
	PAST WEEK %	PAST YEAR %	EVER %	FREQUENCY OF USE IN PAST YEAR %
NON-VIOLENT DISCIPLINE	-	97.4	97.6	20.4
Explained why something was wrong	-	95.8	96.1	17.3
Gave him/her something else to do instead of what he/she was doing	-	69.2	70.7	11.2
Took away privileges or grounded him/her	-	71.2	71.4	9.5
Put in 'time out' (or sent to room)	23.5	72.1	73.1	11.6
PSYCHOLOGICAL AGGRESSION	-	78.9	79	38.4
Shouted, yelled or screamed at	27.7	67.4	67.5	12.9
Threatened to smack or hit but did not actually do it	-	52.1	52.4	8.6
Swore or cursed at them	-	20.4	20.5	6.5
Called him/her stupid or lazy or some other name like that	-	14.3	16.6	7.3
Said you would send him/her away or kicked him/her out of the house	-	4.9	4.9	5.1
PHYSICAL DISCIPLINE/ASSAULT	-	44.8	47.4	7.9

MINOR (PHYSICAL DISCIPLINE)	-	44.8	47.4	7.7
Smacked on bottom with bare hand	4.3	32.5	34.8	5.3
Slapped on the hand, arm or leg	5.1	26.4	27.4	5.6
Slapped on the face, head or ears	-	1	1	4.7
Hit on the bottom with a belt, a hairbrush, a stick or some other hard object	-	2.2	2.4	4.5
Pinched him/her	-	0.9	1	3.1
Shook him/her (child aged two and older)	-	2	2.3	3.3
SEVERE AND EXTREME (PHYSICAL MALTREATMENT)	-	1.7	1.9	4.1
Shook him/her (child aged under two)	-	0	0	0
Hit some other part of the body besides the bottom with a belt, a hairbrush, a stick.	-	1.6	1.7	4
Hit with a fist or kicked hard	-	0	0	0
Threw or knocked down	-	0.1	0.2	- (1)
Beat up, that is you hit him/her over and over as hard as you could	-	0	0	0
Grabbed around neck and choked	-	0	0	0
Burned or scalded on purpose	-	0	0	0
Threatened with a knife or gun	-	0	0	0

DISCUSSION

The results for the Northern Ireland Physical Discipline Prevalence Study, in keeping with other UK prevalence research, shows that physical discipline is part of a wider parental repertoire of disciplinary practices, with non-violent forms of discipline, such as explaining and time out, being the most commonly used, followed by psychological aggression such as shouting, yelling etc. and then physical discipline. Nevertheless, a substantial proportion of parents, almost half, reported having ever used physical discipline with their child. The Northern Ireland study found lower rates of physical discipline use compared to other UK research. For example, 47% for 'minor' physical discipline and 2% for 'severe' physical discipline/assault was noted in the current study compared with English and Welsh figures (Ghate et al, 2003) of 71% for 'minor', 16%

for 'severe' and 1% for 'very severe'. This may be related to the different research methods used, with Ghate et al (2003) using computer assisted self interviewing with participants rather than telephone interviews. However, the Scottish Executive research (Anderson et al, 2002) also used this methodology but found rates in line with the Northern Ireland study of 51% of parents having ever used some form of physical discipline in the past year. Equally, the findings are also in keeping with previous Northern Ireland studies which have identified parental use of physical discipline at 45% (OLR, 2001) and 48% (NSPCC, 2000).

The Northern Ireland Physical Discipline Prevalence Study expands on previous research by providing information on the range of physical discipline practices used by parents of 0–10 year olds in Northern Ireland, highlighting that smacking on the

bottom with a bare hand and slapping on the hand, arm or leg are the most common forms. While extreme forms of discipline were much less common, extrapolation of the results to the overall population would indicate that close to 3,000 households in Northern Ireland have used 'severe' physical discipline/assault and over 72,000 have used some form of 'minor' physical discipline. In a majority of cases this will have been in the past year.

This figure is likely to be an underestimation for two key reasons:

- 1] Firstly, given the sensitive nature of the information sought, it is likely that a number of parents who took part in the survey had used physical discipline but did not report it.
- 2] As the figures provided by the Department of Social Development (2006) are based on the person receiving Child Benefit, non-resident parents, in particular fathers, will not be included in the overall figure.

FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE PHYSICAL DISCIPLINE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Results

In order to further examine the characteristics of families in Northern Ireland who use physical discipline, a variety of statistical tests were carried out. Chi square analyses were carried out between both lifetime use and past year use of physical discipline and a range of categorical variables including parental gender, parental religion, child gender, child disability status, child special educational need status and the marital and educational status of the parent. Non-parametric Kendall's tau-b analyses were carried out on the ordered categories of parental income and independent sample t-tests were carried out with parent and child age, the number of children in the household, as well as both the positive and negative outcome scales. Independent sample

t-tests, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVAs) and correlations were carried out with the same variables in order to ascertain their relationship with the frequency of physical discipline use in the past year.

Individual parent/child characteristics

There was no significant relationship between either lifetime or past year use of physical discipline and parent gender. Likewise, parental gender did not appear to be related to the frequency of physical discipline use in the past year.

Results from independent sample t-tests showed no significant relationship between parent age and either lifetime or past year physical discipline use. Similarly, there was no relationship between frequency of physical discipline use in the past year and parental age.

Results from the chi square analyses showed no significant relationship between child disability status or special educational needs status and either lifetime or past year physical discipline use. Independent samples t-tests also indicated no difference between frequency of physical discipline use in the past year with regard to disability but did show a significant difference with regard to educational needs status, $t(48.6) = -4.779$, $p < .001$, with parents reporting increased frequency of physical discipline use with children who do not have a statement of educational need.

No significant relationships between child gender and either lifetime or past year use of physical discipline were found. Equally, there were no gender differences in relation to the frequency of physical discipline use.

Results from independent t-tests showed no significant relationship between child age and either lifetime or past year use of physical discipline. However, as previous research has shown that the relationship between child age and

physical discipline use is not always linear, the continuous child age variable was recoded into a three category variable of children aged 0–2, 3–6 and 7–10. Chi square analyses showed a highly significant relationship between child age and past year use of physical discipline [χ^2 (df2, $N = 971$) = 16.408, $p < .001$] with 32.8% of the parents of children aged 0–2 having used physical discipline in the past year compared with 53% of parents of children aged 3–6 and 43.3% of children aged 7–10. One-way ANOVAs showed no significant difference in the frequency of physical discipline use in the past year between age groups.

Family/community characteristics

Results from chi square analysis showed a significant association between both lifetime [χ^2 (df2, $N = 970$) = 6.567, $p = 0.037$] and past year physical discipline use [χ^2 (df2, $N = 971$) = 6.910, $p = 0.032$] and parental education, with 41.7% of parents with no formal qualifications having ever used physical discipline in comparison with 50.3% of those with a secondary level qualification and 50.6% of those with a degree, BTEC, HND or equivalents. Equally, 39% of parents with no formal educational qualifications reported using physical discipline in the past year compared with 48.2% of those with a secondary level qualification and 46.7% of those with a degree, BTEC, HND or equivalents. As the nature of the relationship was different to that found in much of the previous research, further examination and analysis was conducted.

Examination of the percentages and residual values in the chi square analysis for both past year and lifetime use of physical discipline indicated that the middle group, those parents with some form of secondary level education qualification, had engaged in physical discipline more than those with no education or higher levels of education. Findings would also indicate that the proportion of those with no formal education qualifications was significantly lower than expected. Those in the

highest educational category did not appear to contribute greatly to the significant result. A similar pattern was evident with regard to past year use, again highlighting that the significant result is largely due to a higher number of those with a secondary level educational qualification using physical discipline and lower levels of those with no formal qualification using physical discipline.

In the research literature older parents tend to use physical discipline less. Examination of the profile of parents in both the middle and no formal qualification group showed that there were more parents aged 40+ in the no formal education qualification category. Exclusion of this age group from chi square analysis indicated no significant relationship between educational and either past year or lifetime use of physical discipline use, suggesting that parental age was a contributory factor to the previous significant relationship. Previous research (Bardi et al, 2001) has also shown that gender can impact on the relationship between education and physical discipline. Similarly, splitting the sample by gender and running the chi square analysis again showed a significant association between education and past year physical discipline use for fathers [χ^2 (df2, $N = 401$) = 8.046, $p = 0.018$] but not for mothers. A similar pattern was noted with regard to lifetime use of physical discipline, although this was only approaching significance [χ^2 (df2, $N = 402$) = 5.037, $p = 0.081$].

Kendall's tau-b analyses found a significant relationship between family income and past year use of physical discipline [$\tau\text{-}b$ ($N = 712$) = -0.84 $p = 0.011$]. There was a general tendency for physical discipline to decrease with increasing income, with 57% in the lowest income band having used physical discipline compared with 42% in the highest. Nevertheless, the relationship did not always appear to be linear, with less parents in the £20,000–29,999 income band (41%) having used physical discipline in the past year than either the £30,000–39,999 (49%), £40,000–49,999 (44%) or

£50,000+ (42%) income bands. Similarly, analysis also yielded a significant relationship between lifetime use of physical discipline and income [$t_{\text{au-b}}$ ($N = 711$) = -0.066 $p = 0.047$]. Again a similar trend was evident, with 57% of parents in the lowest income band having used physical discipline in the past year compared with 46% in the highest income band. Nevertheless, again the relationship did not always appear to be linear, with less parents in the £20,000–29,999 income band (45%) having used physical discipline in the past year than either the £30,000–39,999 (51%), £40,000–49,999 (48%) or £50,000+ (46%) income bands. One-way ANOVAs showed no significant differences between the frequency of physical discipline use in the past year and family income or parental education status.

Results from the independent t-test analysis showed no significant relationship between the number of children in the household and either measure of physical discipline. Equally, there was no significant correlation between frequency of physical discipline use and the number of children in the household.

Chi square analyses showed no significant relationship between marital status of the parent and either lifetime or past year use of physical discipline. However, results from an independent samples t-test showed a significant difference with regard to the frequency of physical discipline use in the past year, [$t(105.91) = -1.993, p = .049$], with married/living together as married parents reporting increased physical discipline use.

Chi square analyses⁹ showed a significant relationship between both lifetime and past year use of physical discipline and parental religion, with 52.3% of Protestants reporting having ever using physical discipline compared with 42% of Catholics [χ^2 ($df1, N = 966$) = 10.092, $p = .001$]. Similarly, 48.1% of Protestants reported having ever using physical discipline compared with 41.2% of Catholics [χ^2 ($df1, N = 966$) = 4.705, $p = .030$].

⁹ This includes Protestant and Catholic categories only – the other/no religion category was excluded as the numbers within the sample were too small for analysis.

Results from an independent samples t-test showed no significant difference between frequency of physical discipline use in the past year and parent religion.

Discussion

Analysis identified a number of factors which have an association with parental lifetime and past year use of physical discipline. These included child age, educational need status, parental education, religion and family income. The finding that children aged 3–6 were more likely to have been physically disciplined mirrors that of the international research which has consistently found a non-linear relationship between child age and physical discipline (Gershoff, 2002). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that physical discipline was still used by a third of parents with children aged 0–2, a concerning finding given the physical vulnerability of this group. However, the results also showed that parents were less likely to use physical discipline with children who had a statement of special educational needs.

The relationships between parent education, income and physical discipline use are not unexpected and are also in keeping with the research literature. However, in the Northern Ireland study the relationship between education and physical discipline seemed to follow a different pattern, with a smaller proportion of parents with no formal educational qualifications reporting physical discipline use in comparison to parents with some form of secondary educational qualification. Further analysis indicated that other influencing factors such as gender and parental age play a role in this relationship, suggesting that education may not be the main influencing factor. While the relationship between income and physical discipline showed a tendency for increased use in lower income bands, results also indicated that fewer parents with a family income in the middle range of £20,000–29,000 had used physical discipline than any other income groups, either higher or lower.

This would suggest that the relationship between income and physical discipline use is not a linear one and would support the argument that families at both ends of the income scale may experience different pressures that may make them more likely to use physical discipline: at the lower end of the income scale families are more likely to suffer financial worries and concerns; at the higher end work-related stress and pressures may be more likely.

With regard to religion, the Northern Ireland study also echoed the findings from the literature review, highlighting that those affiliating themselves with the Protestant faith are more likely to have used physical discipline than those parents who affiliated themselves with the Catholic faith. Previous Northern Ireland research (Murphy-Cowan & Stringer, 2001) has shown parents who defined themselves as fundamentalist Protestants as opposed to mainstream Protestants or Catholics, reported greater use of physical discipline than either of the other groups. As such, it is likely that this group accounts for the association found in the Northern Ireland Physical Discipline Prevalence Study.

Although no relationship was found between lifetime and past year physical discipline and marital status, parents who were married or living as married parents reported more frequent physical discipline use than other groups. A similar pattern has been found in previous UK research which has suggested that relationship stress experienced by partnered mothers may account for this difference (Nobes & Smith, 2002).

physical discipline never or infrequently led to increased respect for parents. This compared to under a quarter who thought this was sometimes the case and 10% who thought this always or frequently happened. Three in five thought that it never or infrequently resulted in the learning of acceptable behaviour, compared with one in five thinking this sometimes happened and under one in five thinking this was always or frequently the result. More than half thought that physical discipline never or infrequently led to increased obedience, a quarter reported that this was the case sometimes and less than one in five that this was always or frequently the outcome (see Table 2.9).

Just under half of parents thought that physical discipline never or infrequently led to physical injury, with a quarter reporting that this was sometimes the case and another quarter reporting that this was always or frequently the case. Two in five thought that physical discipline never or infrequently resulted in long-term emotional upset for the child, compared with a quarter who thought that this sometimes happened and a third who thought that this was always or frequently the case. A third of parents perceived physical discipline as resulting in increased child aggression either never or infrequently. This compares with just over a quarter of parents who thought that this happened sometimes and two in five who thought this occurred always or frequently. Overall, less than one in five parents thought that physical discipline never or frequently resulted in parental guilt or regret, a quarter thought that this was sometimes the case and three in five thought this was frequently or always the case.

PARENTAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS PHYSICAL DISCIPLINE

Results

The individual results from the attitude scale highlighted that two thirds of parents thought that

Table 2.9: Parent’s perceptions of the outcomes of physical discipline

Outcome	Never %	Infrequently %	Sometimes %	Frequently %	Always %
Increased respect for parents (n = 955)	42	25	22.5	8	2.5
Learning of acceptable behaviour (n = 972)	38.7	21.5	22.8	13.1	4.2
Increased obedience of child (n = 964)	34.4	21	26.6	13.9	4.2
Physical injury of child (n= 941)	32	16.7	25.4	18.6	7.2
Long-term emotional upset of child (n = 969)	25.7	14.5	23.9	26	9.9
Increased child aggression (n = 966)	19.4	12.5	27.1	29.1	11.9
Parental guilt or regret (n = 973)	9.7	5.7	24.9	35.9	23.9

Composite scores of parents’ perceptions of the positive and negative outcomes of physical discipline were created and analysed for their relationship with lifetime and past year use of physical discipline using independent samples t-tests. These showed highly significant differences, with parents who had ever used physical discipline scoring higher on the positive outcomes scale, $t(907) = -11.844, p < .001$ and lower on the negative outcomes scale, $t(885) = 6.824, p < .001$, than parents who had never used it.

Analyses also showed similar differences in relation to past year physical discipline use, with parents who had used physical discipline in the past year scoring higher on the positive outcomes scale, $[t(907) = -11.034, p < .001]$ and lower on the negative outcomes scale, $[t(885) = 6.414, p < .001]$, than parents who had not used it in the past year. Likewise, there were small but significant correlations between the frequency of physical discipline use in the past year and both the positive and negative outcome indices. Parents who had higher scores on the positive outcome index tended

to use physical discipline more frequently, [$r(409) = -0.203$ $p < .001$] and those with higher scores on the negative outcome index tended to use physical discipline less frequently, [$r(398) = -0.171$ $p = .001$].

However, further exploration of parents' perceptions of the outcomes of physical discipline highlighted a less than straightforward relationship between views and practices. As can be seen from Table 2.10, of the parents who had used physical discipline in the past year, 54% also thought that physical discipline infrequently or never led to increased respect for parents, 44.9% that it never or

infrequently led to the learning of acceptable behaviour and 40.7% that it never or infrequently led to increased obedience. Equally, of these parents, 20.5% thought that physical discipline frequently or always led to physical injury of the child, 26.2% to long-term emotional upset and 32.8% to increased child aggression. They had, however, still used physical discipline in the past year. Fifty seven per cent of parents who had used physical discipline in the past year also thought that it frequently or always led to parental guilt or regret.

Table 2.10: The outcome perceptions of parents who have used physical discipline in the past year

Outcome	Never %	Infrequently %	Sometimes %	Frequently %	Always %
Increased respect for parents (n =)	23.1	30.9	32	11.3	2.3
Learning of acceptable behaviour (n =)	21.3	23.6	29.3	19.8	5.9
Increased obedience of child (n =)	19.8	20.9	35.7	17.3	6.2
Physical injury of child (n =)	37	21.1	21.4	15.8	4.7
Long-term emotional upset of child (n =)	33.1	1123.7	21.2	5	
Increased child aggression (n =)	23.2	16.8	27.4	26.4	6.4
Parental guilt or regret (n =)	11.4	5.9	25.1	35.1	22.3

Discussion

On the whole, parents in Northern Ireland do not perceive physical discipline in a positive light. A majority indicated that it rarely increases respect for parents, the learning of acceptable behaviours or increased obedience. Equally, a majority thought that it frequently or always resulted in parental guilt, a third thought that it frequently or always increased child aggression, a quarter thought that it frequently or always caused long-term emotional upset in children and two in five thought that it frequently or always resulted in physical injury to the child. Indeed, parents’ perceptions of the outcomes of physical discipline use, in many ways, mirrored those of the literature review, indicating that a majority of parents themselves recognise the negative aspects of physical discipline use.

Not surprisingly, there was evidence of a strong relationship between attitudes and physical discipline use, with those reporting a more negative attitude toward physical discipline being less likely to have used it and, if they had used it, to do so less frequently. However, the relationship between attitudes and physical discipline use was not always a straightforward one, as evidenced by the fact that many of the parents who reported negative outcomes from physical discipline had also used it the past year. While the experience of using

physical discipline is likely to have influenced some parents to have negative attitudes towards it, it is also likely that some parents continue to use physical discipline as a ‘last resort’ despite the fact they do not believe it to be effective or have positive outcomes for children.

CONTEXT OF PHYSICAL DISCIPLINE USE

Results

Parents who reported having ever used physical discipline were asked three additional questions to measure their perceptions of the emotional state of their child when they physically disciplined them. These were measured on seven-point Likert scales which were later recoded to five-point scales.

More than two in five parents perceived their child as always or frequently upset when they administered physical discipline, compared with one in ten who thought that they were sometimes upset and just under half who thought they were infrequently or never upset (see Table 2.11). Just under one in ten thought that their child was frequently or always afraid, compared with one in twenty who thought that they were sometimes afraid and roughly nine in ten who thought that they were never or infrequently afraid.

Table 2.11: Parents’ perceptions of how frequently their child is upset or frightened when they have physically disciplined them

Outcome	Never %	Infrequently upset %	Sometimes upset %	Frequently %	Always %
Child is upset (n=458)	17.9	28.8	10.4	14.7	28.2
Child feels afraid (n = 448)	61.8	24.1	5.1	6	3

Table 2.12: Parent’s perceptions of how painful the physical experience of physical discipline is for their child (n = 450)

Not at all painful (%)	Not very painful (%)	Moderately painful (%)	Painful (%)	Very painful (%)
48.2	39.4	6.2	4.9	1.4

Table 2.13: Parents’ perceptions of their frustration after their child has misbehaved and right before they physically discipline them (n = 455)

Not at all frustrated (%)	Not very frustrated (%)	Moderately frustrated (%)	Frustrated (%)	Very frustrated (%)
16	26	9.1	23.3	25.7

Parents were also asked about their perceptions of how physically painful their children found the discipline; 6.3% thought that it was painful or very painful, 6.2% that it was moderately painful and 87.6% that it was not very painful or not at all painful (see Table 2.12).

Parents who reported having ever used physical discipline were also asked three additional questions to measure their perceived emotional state after their child had misbehaved and before they physically disciplined them. These were also measured on a seven-point Likert scale which was later recoded to a five-point Likert scale.

Almost half of parents (49%) reported being frustrated or very frustrated right before they had used physical discipline, 9% reported being sometimes frustrated and the remaining reported being not very or not at all frustrated (see Table 2.13).

Parents were asked how frequently they had felt upset just after they had administered physical discipline. Sixty-three per cent reported being

always or frequently upset afterwards, compared with 9.4% who thought that they sometimes felt upset and 28% who thought they were infrequently or never upset (see Table 2.14). Twelve per cent reported feeling always or frequently out of control just before they administer physical discipline, compared with 5.2% who reported sometimes feeling this way and 85% who reported infrequently or never feeling this way.

Discussion

The research literature stresses the importance of establishing the context of physical discipline use in order to provide a clearer understanding of the circumstances in which physical discipline is administered. While not a central focus of this study, the Northern Ireland Physical Discipline Prevalence Study provides some useful information on the emotional context of physical discipline use. Four out of five parents thought that physical discipline caused some level of upset in their child and two out of five thought that it caused some degree of fear. Just over half thought that it caused some level of pain, although only a few felt that the

Table 2.14: Parents’ perceptions of how often they feel upset or out of control right after they have physically disciplined their child

Outcome	Never %	Infrequently or very infrequently %	Sometimes %	Frequently or very frequently %	Always %
Parent feels upset (n = 453)	13.6	14.5	9.4	20.7	41.8
Parent feels out of control (n = 455)	69.5	15.2	5.2	8.5	3.4

physical discipline they administered was painful or very painful. Four out of five parents reported some degree of frustration when they used physical discipline, with half reporting being frustrated or very frustrated. Equally, four out of five parents reported some level of personal upset when they used physical discipline and three in ten reported some degree of feeling out of control. These findings suggest that physical discipline in Northern Ireland occurs in the context of high levels of psychological arousal, with frustration being a major precursor and the physical discipline itself usually causing pain, fear and emotional upset for the child. Of particular concern is the finding that one in ten parents feel frequently or always out of control when they administer physical discipline. Overall, it would appear that the context in which physical discipline is administered is a far cry from the controlled and loving smack which is frequently cited as the optimum method of delivering physical discipline.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON ALTERNATIVES TO PHYSICAL DISCIPLINE

Results

Parents were asked if they recalled receiving information on the alternatives to physical discipline from a range of professional sources. Table 2.15 illustrates that the single most common professional source was a health visitor (18.2%). Ten per cent of parents recalled receiving information from parent education programmes, 8.7% identified other professional sources, 3.3 % identified GPs and 3.2% social workers. Overall, 66.4% could not recall receiving advice and information from any professional source. Within the ‘other professional source’ category, information from schools, teachers or classroom assistants, either from working in these occupations or through the direct provision of information, was the most common. This was followed by leaflets/magazines and then television/radio (e.g. programmes such as Supernanny). Very small numbers of parents also identified a range of different professional sources such as family centres, child minders, child psychologists etc.

Table 2.15: Professional sources of information parents recall receiving advice or information from on alternatives to physical discipline*

Source of information	%
A health visitor	18.2
A GP	3.3
A social worker	3.2
A parent education programme	10.1
Other professional source	8.7

* Some parents cited more than one source

No significant association was found between parents' recollections of receiving advice and either parental gender or marital status. However, analysis did show a significant association between receipt of information, parental religion¹⁰ [χ^2 (df1, $N = 968$) = 6.179, $p = 0.013$] and educational status [χ^2 (df1, $N = 973$) = 8.226, $p = 0.016$]. With regard to religion, 58% of Protestants recalled receiving advice in comparison with 42% of Catholics. In education, 41% of parents with degrees, BTECs, HNDs or equivalents recalled receiving information in comparison to 35% of parents with a secondary education qualification and 29% of parents with no formal qualifications.

Kendall tau-b analyses also indicated a relationship between receipt of information and family income [$\tau\text{-}b$ ($N = 715$) = -0.106 $p = .001$], showing a trend towards more families in lower income bands recalling receiving advice and information on the alternatives to physical discipline from professionals (50% in under £10,000 group v 28% in £50,000+ group). However, this trend was always linear and further analysis of residuals suggested that the under £10,000 income group appeared to make a significant contribution to this association.

Chi square analyses indicated a significant association between having received information on the alternatives to physical discipline and both past

year and lifetime physical discipline use by parents. Overall, 44.7% of parents who could not recall receiving advice on physical discipline alternatives had ever used physical discipline in comparison with 52.9% of parents who did recall receiving advice [χ^2 (df1, $N = 970$) = 5.931, $p = 0.018$]. Similarly, 42.2% of parents who could not recall receiving advice on physical discipline alternatives had used physical discipline in the past year in comparison with 50.2% of parents who did recall receiving advice [χ^2 (df1, $N = 970$) = 5.568, $p = 0.018$]. Independent t-tests showed a difference between those who recalled receiving information and those who did not in terms of their frequency of physical discipline use [t (591.191) = -2.175 $p=0.030$]. Those who recalled receiving advice on alternatives had used physical discipline more frequently in the past year than those who could not recall such advice.

Independent samples t-tests did not show a significant relationship between the receipt of advice/information on alternatives to physical discipline and parents' perceptions of the positive and negative outcomes of physical discipline. However, results for the negative outcome scale were approaching significance, with those who had recalled receiving advice having more negative attitudes than those who could not [t (887) = -1.743, $p = .082$].

¹⁰ Excluding the 'other religion' category.

Discussion

Only a third of parents could recall receiving advice on the alternatives to physical discipline, with health visitors and parent education programmes being the most common sources. The results suggested that women were more likely to report having received advice/information on this issue, as well as those with higher educational attainment. Conversely, Protestants were more likely to recall receiving advice and information than Catholics, as were those with family incomes under £10,000, a finding which may be related to lower income families having greater contact with professionals and services which provide disciplinary information. While the analysis also showed a significant association between receiving advice/information on the alternatives to physical discipline and physical discipline use, the relationship did not follow the expected pattern, with those who had not received advice/information reporting lower levels of both lifetime and past year physical discipline than those who did not recall receiving such advice. This finding might be related to a number of factors. For example, parents may have used physical discipline in the past but stopped using it or reduced their use on receiving advice on the alternatives; or parents who use physical discipline more frequently have been singled out by professionals to receive advice on the alternatives. Equally, it is not clear if the advice/information on physical discipline was delivered within the context of an anti-physical discipline message or within the context of limited physical discipline within a broader discipline strategy. Due to the focused nature of this survey and the limited time available in telephone surveys generally, it was only possible to explore parental access to advice and information at a very general level. In future research it would be useful to examine the relationship between disciplinary practices and attitudes in much greater depth.

KEY FINDINGS

Discipline use in Northern Ireland

- Almost all parents have used non-violent discipline (98%) while four out of five have used some form of psychological aggression (79%).
- Just under half of parents (47%) had used some form of physical discipline: all reported use of 'minor' physical discipline and 2% reported that they had also engaged in 'severe' or 'extreme' physical discipline/assault at some time.
- Results indicate that parents are more likely to have used physical discipline with children aged 3–6 in the past year than with those aged 0–2 or those aged 7–10. Nevertheless, 33% of parents of children in the 0–2 age group had used physical discipline in the past year.
- Parents are less likely to use physical discipline with children who have a statement of educational needs.
- Generally, parents with a higher family income tend to use physical discipline less than those with lower incomes. However, the fact that those in the middle income brackets had the lowest rates of physical discipline use suggests different factors: financial pressures at the lower end and work-related stress at the upper end may influence the relationship between physical discipline use and income.
- Parents with no formal educational qualifications were less likely to have used physical discipline than those with some form of secondary level educational qualification. This appeared to be more related to other factors such as parental age and gender.
- Parents from a Protestant background are more likely than those from a Catholic background to use physical discipline.

Parental perceptions of outcomes

- Approximately three in five parents think that physical discipline never or infrequently has positive outcomes such as teaching acceptable behaviour and increasing respect and obedience.

- Two thirds of parents perceive physical injury to be a potential outcome of physical discipline.
- Three quarters of parents perceive long-term emotional upset and two thirds perceive physical injury as a potential risk of physical discipline use.
- Three in five parents thought that feelings of guilt or regret are frequently or always an outcome of physical discipline use.
- The more parents perceived physical discipline to have negative outcomes the less likely they are to use it. However, the relationship between attitudes and behaviour is not always clear cut and the results indicate that substantial numbers of parents who have a negative attitude to physical discipline still use it.

Emotional context of physical discipline

- Overall, two in five parents who had administered physical discipline thought that their child was at some time afraid of them, with one in five reporting this frequently or always.
- Overall, 82% of parents who had administered physical discipline thought that their child was at some time upset by this, with more than two in five reporting this outcome either frequently or always.
- Although a majority of parents (88%) reported that the physical discipline they administered was not at all or not very painful, 12% considered it to be moderately to very painful.
- A majority of parents (84%) reported some degree of frustration when they administer physical discipline, with half describing themselves as frustrated or very frustrated.
- Three in five parents reported being frequently or always upset after they administer physical discipline.
- Three in ten parents reported some degree of feeling out of control when they have administered physical discipline, with 12% reporting this frequently or always and 5% sometimes.

Sources of information on alternatives to discipline

- Almost one in five parents recalled receiving advice on the alternatives to physical discipline from a health visitor and one in ten from some form of parent education programme.
- Overall, two thirds of parents could not recall receiving any advice on the alternatives to physical discipline.
- Parents who recalled receiving advice on the alternatives to physical discipline were more likely to have used physical discipline than those who could not. This is likely to be influenced by a number of factors such as the parent's past disciplinary history, the nature of the discipline message received and the reason why the parent was provided with such information to start with.
- There was a significant relationship between the receipt of information and perceived outcomes, with those parents who recalled receiving advice on the alternatives to physical discipline tending to view its outcomes more negatively.

2.4 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The 'smacking debate' in Northern Ireland, as in the rest of the UK, has been characterised by controversy and increasingly polarised standpoints. For some people, smacking is considered a parental right and a necessary means of teaching children right from wrong, while for others it is a harmful practice which violates children's rights and legitimises the use of violence. The term 'smacking' itself, means different things to different people and is used to cover a broad range of punitive and disciplinary behaviours ranging anywhere from a 'wee tap on the hand', a 'slap round the back of the legs', to a 'cuff round the head'.

The range of perspectives on physical discipline use can be usefully summarised as:

- The children's rights perspective, based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, which seeks to protect children and young people from all forms of physical force or violence including, but not limited to, smacking. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has been very clear that this includes all forms of corporal punishment and that States which permit the continued existence of legal provisions that allow some degree of violence against children are in clear violation of their obligations under the UNCRC - "children's rights to life, survival, development, dignity and physical integrity do not stop at the door of the family home, nor do States' obligations to ensure these rights for children" (Pinheiro, 2006:12). This position is informed by, rather than directly reliant on, research evidence and in addition by human rights violations.
- The research perspectives which encompass the anti, conditional and pro-corporal punishment positions. These positions tend to be based on the weight of research evidence, in particular the anti and conditional stances, as the pro-corporal punishment perspective [the belief that it is beneficial to spank and not to do so is detrimental to child outcomes] has little in the way of evidence to support it and is rarely found in academic journals. Whilst involving a strong moral position, the anti-corporal punishment perspective is based on the understanding that any form of violence towards a child, including spanking, is harmful for short and long-term development. By contrast, the conditional corporal punishment argues that the evidence does not support a wholesale ban on all types of physical discipline and that spanking, for certain age groups, does not contribute to negative outcomes.

In recent decades there has been an increasing recognition and acceptance of the children's rights

perspective with many European countries moving toward fulfilment of their obligations under the UNCRC by completely outlawing the use of physical discipline within the home. Indeed the introduction of such legislation, particularly in the Swedish context, has been widely attributed to a reduction in public support for physical discipline as well as a decrease in its use. While there has been some debate as to precisely when public support started to decline in Sweden, it is clear that various legislative reforms triggered public discussion and resulted in broad attitudinal change.

Within the UK, although all jurisdictions have been involved in public consultation, none has yet implemented a full ban, despite repeated criticism from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. Currently in Scotland it is illegal to hit children with implements, shake them or hit them on the head. In England and Wales and, more recently, Northern Ireland, the defence of reasonable chastisement has been removed for more serious assaults on children but has been retained for the offence of common assault. While this has come under some criticism for adding further confusion to the debate, it is positive to note that, in Northern Ireland, its implementation will be strongly linked with the development of a positive parenting strategy to support parents. Though this investment in positive parenting is certainly a welcome development, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child is unambiguous in its position that until such developments are accompanied by an outright ban on the use of physical discipline within the home, the Northern Ireland Assembly and the other devolved administrations remain in clear violation of their obligations under the UNCRC.

In light of these recent debates, varied perspectives and public consultations, NICCY, NSPCC (NI) and Barnardo's (NI) undertook a comprehensive review of the literature in this field in order to better understand the prevalence of physical discipline, factors which influence its use, associated child

outcomes and the views and attitudes held by parents, children and professionals. All three organisations take a children's rights perspective on this issue and support educative legislative reform accompanied by the promotion of positive parenting and parent education. Given this, it was decided that the review should utilise the most transparent methodology possible. While resource and time constraints only enabled a review of research literature published between 2000 and 2005, the inclusion of a number of systematic and comprehensive reviews covering much wider time periods facilitated coverage of all the key issues and arguments associated with this debate. As part of the review process, the three organisations also identified a lack of detailed baseline information with regard to the incidence and prevalence of a range of disciplinary practices in Northern Ireland. To address this gap the organisations also designed and commissioned a prevalence survey with 1,000 parents of children aged 0–10 across Northern Ireland.

From the outset it was clear that the review encompassed a wide range of literature which looked at an assortment of different practices and behaviours. Variety in terminology was also evident with a number of different terms used across research studies and even within individual studies. NICCY, NSPCC (NI) and Barnardo's (NI) all consider the use of language in this area to be an important issue and are of the view that the term 'physical punishment' more accurately reflects the use of physical force with children, whilst the term 'physical discipline' might potentially be construed as normalising this behaviour and giving it a degree of respectability. However, the term 'physical discipline' was adopted for research purposes as a generic expression to cover a range of terms which are frequently used to refer to this issue, such as 'physical punishment', 'corporal punishment', 'corporal discipline', 'smacking', 'spanking' and 'hitting'. The core rationale for the application of this terminology is directly related to its use within the survey element of the research.

Whilst few studies included in the review provided an explicit definition of physical discipline, many use standardised research measures such as the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) or the updated Conflict Tactics Scale Parent to Child version (CTSPC) to measure the prevalence of a range of disciplinary behaviours in parent populations. The CTS is an internationally recognised and validated research measure which was also utilised by the research team in the survey element of the project. The CTS attempts to provide a framework for examining the different degrees of discipline used by parents by categorising certain types of physical discipline use as 'ordinary' or 'minor' and others as 'severe' physical discipline or assault. This differentiation can be contentious as it can be argued that there is no clear line between physical discipline and abuse and that any attempt to draw one is arbitrary and subjective. Whilst this is inevitably the case, there remains a need for researchers to use some form of measurement which recognises the different behaviours parents engage in and the different risks these might pose to children. The terminology used throughout the report reflects the ways in which the research community have attempted to address methodological concerns and lack of consistency with regard to the available research in this field. As such, it should be understood that these categorisations are research defined rather than organisationally defined.

From the review findings it is evident that physical discipline is commonly used by parents across a number of Western and European countries, although, as expected, rates of 'severe' physical discipline/assault are much smaller. However, variations between countries clearly exist, a finding often associated with whether or not the country has legislation which outlaws physical discipline. National UK research found high rates of physical discipline use, with 71% of parents of 0–12 year olds having ever used 'minor' physical discipline, 16% 'severe' physical discipline/assault and 58% and 9% having used 'minor' physical discipline and

'severe' physical discipline/assault in the past year. Scottish research found lower rates of physical discipline with 51% of parents of children aged 0–15 reporting the use of some kind of physical discipline in the past year. The results from the Northern Ireland study were more in line with the Scottish findings showing that, overall, 47% had ever used 'minor' physical discipline and 2% had ever used 'severe' physical discipline/assault. This equated with 45% using 'minor' physical discipline in the past year and 1.7% using 'severe' physical discipline/assault in the past year. Differences between the Northern Ireland survey and UK research results may be attributable to differences in methodology as well as differences in time periods in which the fieldwork took place. Nevertheless, they highlight that physical discipline is used by almost half of parents, findings which are in keeping with previous Northern Ireland research.

What emerged very clearly from the research review was the complexity of the circumstances and factors which influence parental attitudes towards physical discipline and their decisions to use it. As with any other parenting practice, the use of physical discipline does not happen in isolation but is, instead, influenced by a multiplicity of factors which interrelate in a number of different ways. As such, it is important to take an ecological approach in which the family is seen as part of a multi-level system; children and parents are studied in the context of the family environment and the family is understood in the context of its community and the larger society. The review highlighted a variety of factors that influence physical discipline use at different levels of this model. Individual parent and child factors which emerged included: parent age, gender, child age and gender, child disability and behaviour, maternal mental health and parental experience of physical discipline and/or abuse in childhood.

Family factors which appeared to be a significant influence included the number of children living in

the household, socio-economic status and poverty, marital conflict and domestic violence and lack of social support. While research into community level factors was scarce, the available material also indicated a link between violent and high crime neighbourhoods and increased 'minor' and 'severe' parent-to-child physical aggression.

Cultural/societal factors in the form of ethnic and/or religious practices which support physical discipline use and the legal acceptability of physical discipline in a number of Western and European countries were also regarded as having an important role to play. While the Northern Ireland Physical Discipline Prevalence Study measured only a small range of potentially influencing factors, the results confirmed what the international literature has demonstrated, highlighting parental income, educational status and religion as factors associated with physical discipline use.

In relation to the impact of physical discipline, this review tried to unpick the key research-based arguments which have emerged in the form of the anti-corporal punishment and conditional corporal punishment debate. While acknowledging the methodological flaws of much of the physical discipline literature, in particular its lack of discrimination between physical discipline and abuse and its reliance on correlational data to make causal links, it still remains clear that physical discipline is linked with a range of negative outcomes. It is apparent that physical discipline alone does not cause these outcomes but is influenced by the interaction of a range of individual, parental and contextual factors. Nevertheless, it has been shown to contribute to a range of behavioural and cognitive problems for children including increased child aggression and anti-social behaviour, increased mental and emotional problems and increased risk of physical abuse in childhood. Where harsh or excessive (but not abusive) physical discipline is used, or where it is administered along with a degree of parental anger, or within a hostile or punitive style of

parenting, the evidence for detrimental outcomes for children is even clearer.

It is also worth noting that there are many similarities between the anti-corporal punishment and conditional corporal punishment perspectives, with both agreeing that harsh and frequent use of physical discipline is damaging to children. Indeed, the conditional perspective only supports the controlled use of spanking, defined as an open-handed smack, administered to the bottom, arms or legs, to be used with children aged 2–6, infrequently and as a back-up to other, milder disciplinary techniques. Whether parents would gain any practical benefit from guidance based on this highly prescriptive definition of non-harmful physical discipline remains unclear. Indeed, both the research literature and the Northern Ireland survey findings would suggest that parents regularly use physical discipline with children outside the age groups recommended by the conditional position and in situations when they feel angry and stressed.

Moreover, the literature on public/parental attitudes suggests that parents generally hold negative attitudes towards physical discipline and perceive it to be ineffective. The Northern Ireland Physical Discipline Prevalence Study also revealed that parents tend to concur with these research findings, indicating that a majority do not think that physical discipline increases respect, teaches obedience or leads to the learning of acceptable behaviours. What emerged from this study was a picture of parents using physical discipline, often when they considered it to be ineffective and to have potentially negative outcomes for their children: more often than not in situations in which they felt frustrated just before they used it and guilty and regretful afterwards. Very concerning is the fact that a significant proportion of parents in Northern Ireland reported feeling always or frequently out of control when they use physical discipline with their children. Bearing this in mind, advising or advocating spanking only under certain conditions is unlikely to be helpful and could potentially leave some children at risk of harm.

The review also highlighted that attitudes do not always equate with actions, with a substantial numbers of parents reporting having used physical discipline in the past year despite holding largely negative attitudes toward it. This contradiction also held true in Northern Ireland, a disparity which is likely to be linked with the use of physical discipline as an action of last resort in situations of stress or pressure. This is supported by research which has shown that high levels of parenting stress in parents who approve of the use of physical discipline is associated with increased risk of physical child abuse potential. The fact that physical discipline is still lawful in Northern Ireland may also mean that it remains part of the discipline repertoire of parents even though they do not necessarily approve of its use.

Indeed, the absurdity of trying to establish a safe level of physical discipline use is unlikely to resolve the lack of consensus which appears to surround some professional views and approaches to this issue. The potential for professional attitudes about the use of physical discipline to influence decision-making processes in relation to physical abuse is also a concerning finding and one which highlights the need for greater clarity in this area.

Another important and often overlooked element in this debate, is the voice of children and young people themselves. Although research with this group is in short supply, what is available illustrates that children are clearly hurt and upset by parental physical discipline use and wish for it to stop. While older young people and young adults are more ambiguous in their responses, as with other groups, attitudes and views are strongly linked with childhood disciplinary experiences. This would indicate that when parents use physical discipline, this decision not only impacts on their own child but potentially their grandchildren also.

Overall, the clear message which emerges from the research literature is the complexity of parent-child

interactions and the myriad of factors which can influence the disciplinary choices parents make. While there is evidence to support the view that legislative reform can change public attitudes and help to reduce the incidence of physical discipline, it is unlikely to provide a total solution on its own. Likewise, both the literature and the findings from the Northern Ireland Physical Discipline Prevalence Study also suggest that simply making parents aware of alternative non-violent disciplinary techniques will not be enough to end physical discipline, although it may reduce the frequency with which it is used. Instead, what is required and also for the UK to meet its obligations under the UNCRC, is a multi-level preventative approach which embraces a comprehensive positive parenting strategy linked with educative rather than punitive legislative reform.

The research findings lend themselves to a number of policy recommendations which might provide the beginnings of a framework to take forward such a

strategy. Recommendations to the UK government and devolved assemblies are outlined in Figure 1 and, while by no means exhaustive, provide what we hope is a useful starting point for further discussion and development. Given that careful monitoring of trends and evaluation of awareness campaigns and education initiatives will be a key element of any approach taken, Figure 1 also sets out a number of future research and information requirements. Clearly there is not just one, simple solution to changing parental attitudes and ending physical discipline use in the UK. The sheer complexity of the many factors which influence the lives of children, parents and families dictates that a multi-layered approach driven by government has the greatest potential to change attitudes and behaviour. This is not just about legal reform or resources, but rather the political will to try to secure widespread cultural change across the UK so that children in all jurisdictions are protected from violence and harm.

RECOMMENDATIONS UNIVERSAL PROVISION

Educative Legislative Change

Legislative reform plays a pivotal role in sending a message to any society that the physical discipline of children is unacceptable. The UK government and devolved assemblies should go beyond qualified legal reform and introduce an outright ban on the physical discipline of children. This should be linked with increased awareness of children's rights in all jurisdictions and should be viewed as largely educative, providing a framework from which to secure attitudinal change rather than prosecution of parents.¹¹

A Public Parent Education Awareness/Information campaign

The UK government and devolved assemblies should run a universal public/parent information campaign aimed at providing advice and information on positive parenting techniques and alternatives to physical discipline to the general population. Such a campaign should be creative in its planning and approach, seeking the views of children, parents/carers and professionals and making use of existing information resources alongside developing new ones where appropriate. The campaign adopted should encompass a multimedia approach which would include a variety of delivery opportunities such as the production of leaflets, parenting handbooks, commercial

¹¹ Barnardo's supports a full legislative ban on physical punishment provided there are adequate legal safeguards in all four jurisdictions of the UK to prevent unnecessary prosecutions. The NSPCC believes all forms of physical punishment should be illegal. NICCY, with the support of the Children's Commissioners for England, Wales and Scotland, supports an unconditional ban on the physical punishment of children.

campaigns, videos etc. Much of this could be delivered through key professionals currently providing advice and information to parents such as health visitors, midwives, GPs, social workers etc. As the research shows, there is a need to ensure consistency of core messages. These messages might include the ineffectiveness of physical discipline approaches, potential risks to children and the parent-child relationship and information on the alternatives that have been shown to be effective.

Professional Training and Guidance

In addition to information resources providing clear and consistent positive parenting messages, it is essential that professionals themselves also provide a consistent approach. Professional bodies and associations for those working with children and families need to provide a clear steer with regard to their position on positive parenting and physical discipline, through explicit policies which do not condone the use of physical discipline. Training for these professionals, both pre and post-qualifying, should include coverage of positive parenting and the alternatives to physical discipline use. Such training might also usefully encourage examination of individual views and consideration of how they might impact on practice. Equally, the development of guidance for professionals on how to approach and discuss this issue is also likely to be important given the sensitivities and difficulties around the subject matter.

Parent Education Programmes

The UK government and devolved assemblies need to develop clear and unambiguous family support strategies which include positive parenting as a key component. These strategies must be accompanied by targets, action plans and have dedicated funding which supports comprehensive parenting education programmes in each jurisdiction. The action plans should be developed through a variety of creative approaches using the range of existing professionals, evaluated programmes, information and technology to deliver better outcomes for children.

TARGETED PROVISION

The review highlights that there are a number of factors which are likely to influence parents/carers to use physical discipline more frequently or severely (see overleaf). Given the wide range of these factors, it is likely that physical discipline use is often a manifestation of a variety of inter-related difficulties a family may be experiencing. As such, an integrated approach to support and intervention is clearly required. Currently targeted support and interventions for families are provided through a variety of initiatives and settings, both voluntary and statutory, e.g. Sure Start, Parentcraft, family centres etc. Current provision might be improved by:

- Having a coherent and co-ordinated family support strategy which is strongly linked to positive parenting and which clearly sets out how targeted support and interventions will be provided to parents/families with more specific needs.
- Training for professionals providing targeted services for children and their families in order to increase recognition of the importance of parental discipline strategies to a child's functioning and family life and increase awareness of positive parenting concepts and disciplinary alternatives.

- Making the assessment of parental use of disciplinary strategies routine across all childcare services. The various assessment models currently in use and development across the UK (e.g. the DoH Assessment Framework and the Common Assessment Framework) all contain sections which allow for the exploration of a parent's/carers ability to set boundaries and provide guidance for their children.
- Development of a range of more in-depth parent education programmes which promote positive parenting and are tailored for groups with specific needs/difficulties (see overleaf).

Parent Factors

- Younger parent/caregiver
- Female parents for minor/ordinary physical discipline and male parents for more severe forms
- Poor maternal physical health
- Maternal drug and alcohol user/abuser and alcohol user/abuse
- Highly emotionally aroused (angry, upset, frustrated)
- Mental health difficulties
- Personal experience of physical discipline/abuse, particularly parents who do not view their own childhood abuse as abusive
- Inconsistent use of a variety of other discipline strategies
- Poor engagement with child
- Positive attitude towards/ endorsement of physical discipline use

Child Factors

- Aged 1-5
- Male child
- Dangerous or destructive misbehaviour and rule violation
- Repeated misbehaviour despite verbal warnings
- Behavioural problems
- Poor health/ developmental delay, disability
- Genetic make up – e.g. children who are temperamentally high in activity level, low in self regulation, high in aggressive tendencies or children described by parents as fussy or irritable

Family Factors

- Higher numbers of children
- Single parent
- Marital conflict/violence
- Lower levels of support
- Lower socio-economic group
- Higher levels of work related stress

Community/Cultural Factors

- Deprivation/ disadvantage
- High murder rates and violence
- Lower levels of friends and family living in the neighbourhood (neighbourhood level social support)
- Member of an ethnic group which is more likely to endorse physical discipline use
- Member of a religious group (most likely fundamentalist) which is more likely to endorse physical discipline use
- Resides in region, area of a country in which there tends to be greater support for physical discipline
- Resides in a country where physical discipline is legal

FUTURE RESEARCH AND INFORMATION NEEDS

- Continued surveying of parental discipline practices and attitudes across the UK in order to monitor trends and assess the potential impact of legislative reform, as well as the success of public awareness campaigns and intervention.
- Mapping of existing parent information resources and services.
- Reviewing what works in relation to dissemination of discipline messages to parents/the public.
- Reviewing what works in relation to the impact of various parent education programmes on parent, family and child outcomes.

Appendices

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APPENDIX 1: REVIEW INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA

Inclusion Criteria

1. Original or review article published in referenced journal, or commentary on specific research/review article.
2. Published between 2000 and 2005.
3. Article which focuses on: the prevalence of physical discipline; the characteristics of parents/families who use physical discipline; the impact/outcomes of physical discipline for children; and/or the views or attitudes of parents/children/professionals towards physical discipline.
4. Articles relating to research within Western and European countries.

Exclusion Criteria

1. Not a peer reviewed journal article, e.g. conference paper, book, book section, article in professional magazine, letters, abstracts or editorials etc.
2. Published before year 2000.
3. Publications with no, or limited, relevance to the research questions. These included physical discipline in schools, education and associated legislation, interventions with parents/professionals, positive parenting, international legislative context and debate and overviews of anti-smacking campaigns.
4. Articles relating to research within non-Western and European countries, e.g. Australia, Nigeria, Korea, India, Caribbean etc.

APPENDIX 2: EXAMPLE OF COMPLETED DATA EXTRACTION FORM

ID - 114 Author - Ispa, J. M.

Title - Talking about corporal punishment: nine low-income African American mothers' perspectives

Corporate author Publisher ISBN

Journal - Early Childhood Research Quarterly Volume - 19 Issue - 3

Year - 2004

Prevalence/characteristics categorisation -

Impact categorisation -

Views categorisation - 3 - Parents/US

Source - WOS Hard copy status - Have

Abstract

Type of publication - Primary Research

Key issues in literature - Some summary of Gershoff/Baumrind impact debate - highlights flaws in research and comments on growing body of evidence that mild or moderate physical punishment is not in itself predictive of internalising or externalising problems in children- instead the meanings ascribed to it by parents and children appear to be crucial - these meanings seem to depend on parental warmth accompanying physical punishment and family ethnicity or socio-cultural context. Acknowledges that while some studies have not found any moderating impact of warmth or ethnicity on child outcomes, many studies have consistently found that African American families show evidence of the benign or beneficial consequences of corporal punishment when it is accompanied by warmth - different outcomes for different groups. Also discusses difficulties in terminology re physical punishment and the range of terms used - highlights lack of categorisation by implement used or body part hit - little discussion with parents themselves on what behaviours they consider to warrant corporal punishment.

Quantitative/Qualitative - Qualitative only Total sample size - 9

Is it a population based study eg prevalence study - No

Sample details/characteristics - All mothers were unmarried, African Americans with incomes at or below the federal poverty guidelines - at the start of the study their mean age was 19.3 (range 15-24) and at that time one was pregnant with her first child and the others each had one child under the age of 13 months. Four mums had completed high school. Over the course of the study, four gave birth to additional children and two graduated from high school.

Methodology details – All mums had applied for acceptance into mid-western inner city Early Head Start programmes that were part of the 17 research sites participating in the national Early Head Start evaluation. All nine mums were randomly assigned to the programmes (a total of 193 families were assigned to either a programme group or a comparison group). The programme group received child development services, including information relating to typical infant/toddler milestones and guidance regarding parenting practices and family support services in the form of home visits. The first six mothers chosen to receive an invitation to participate in this research were selected randomly from the pool of mothers in the programme group – it was noted that all these mothers had already given birth and all were 18+. One mother from those still pregnant was then randomly selected and two from among those who were younger than 18. The data is drawn from semi-structured interviews with mothers – interviews conducted wherever mothers wished – each interview lasted between 1 and 4 hours – a total of 8 of the mothers participated in 12 interviews over the course of 5 years – 1 mum completed only 7 before the researchers lost touch with her – two person teams conducted the interviews (one to help with child – one to interview parent).

Definition of physical/corporal punishment – None given, aim was to explore with parents

Where valid measures used? – No

List valid measures used – N/A

Type of analysis used (e.g. multiple regression etc.) – Qualitative with NUDIST software

Key prevalence findings & recommendations – Study highlights the importance of understanding vocabulary used in relation to PP – could be linked in with the importance of clear definitions in prevalence surveys and public attitudes. The mums used several words to describe CP – popping, tapping, whopping, spanking, hitting and smacking. Popping and tapping were used as synonyms and their meaning was clearly differentiated from whopping. Spanking, hitting and smacking were looser and more variable. Mothers made it clear that popping and tapping were referred to as little slaps on the arm, hand, buttocks or head (hand most popular) – children were popped for mild to moderate misbehaviours that were repeated despite prior admonitions, such as toddlers touching something fragile, ignoring requests to pick up toys or doing something dangerous. All nine mothers reported using this method of discipline and most believed it to be effective. Whippings however, entailed striking a child more than once, usually on the buttocks with an open hand, a brush or belt. It was described as a more severe form of discipline with hard hits and was used by some of the mothers when misbehaviour was deemed more serious, when mothers thought children knew better or as a last resort when other methods of discipline had failed. Mothers whopped their toddlers as a last resort, they did not like doing it and at times expressed regret for doing it. Spanking as a term was less exact and appeared to be used interchangeably with popping – however when asked about how they differ, two of the mums said that spanking would be equivalent to two or more poppings – one said she used the terms spanking and whopping interchangeably – the other mothers said that spanking was a ‘whopping on the butt’. However, three other mums made a point of telling the researchers that spanking was not as severe as whopping – overall it appeared to be somewhere in between a popping and a whopping. Six of the mums also used the word ‘hit’ – for one, this meant a forceful spank and she would not use it – the other five mothers used it to refer to any degree of force, from a tap on the hand to a spanking on the buttocks. Three of the mothers talked about smacking – this involved a single hard hit to the hand, thighs or buttocks.

Key characteristics findings & recommendations – The study highlights how violence in the local neighbourhood and environment may be a factor in using CP – mums believed it was their duty to prepare

children for the world of their neighbourhoods: early sex, drug use and criminal activity were pervasive and strict discipline was needed to prevent delinquency: the violence prevalent in the neighbourhoods was common amongst children and the children would need to understand physical force and be prepared to use it. This study very much conveyed discipline as a source of tension and confusion, with mothers trying to navigate the world of mainstream professional child development 'experts' and the world of their family members and neighbours who argued for the benefits of PP.

Key views findings & recommendations – See key prevalence comments. The study also looked at who else was permitted to administer CP and found that mothers did not want relatives who did not accept responsibility for nurturing their children to physically discipline them - relatives had to earn the right and trust of the mother - this seemed to point to CP being carried out in the context of warm environments. The teaching of the Early Head Start programme is to discourage the use of CP and promote positive discipline. The main reasons for mothers continuing to use CP despite this message were: they did not think that children learned from positive discipline as they wished and, after attempting these, they resorted to CP; the other adults in the mothers' and children's lives continued to believe in the effectiveness of CP, even after some mums had tried to convince them otherwise - other relatives continued to counsel for the use of CP, even a paediatrician was reported as providing this advice; mothers looked back on their own and other friends and relatives upbringings and concluded that CP was ultimately to the child's benefit - young people's involvement in crime and other delinquent behaviours was considered to be the result of a lack of discipline; mothers' beliefs about the nature of small children were also a clear factor, that it was natural for toddlers to test limits and such behaviour must be corrected early on or it will escalate - these are beliefs not typically endorsed by the child development establishment; it is also important to consider the dangerous environment in which the families lived - mums believed it was their duty to prepare children for the world of their neighbourhoods: early sex, drug use and criminal activity were pervasive and strict discipline was needed to prevent delinquency: the violence prevalent in the neighbourhoods was common amongst children and the children would need to understand physical force and be prepared to use it. This study very much conveyed discipline as a source of tension and confusion, with mothers trying to navigate the world of mainstream professional child development 'experts' and the world of their family members and neighbours who argued for the benefits of PP.

Strength & limitations of study design – Very small numbers – not representative of African American population or any other population – on the other hand, the study provides great depth and insight.

Relevance to prevalence/characteristics section – 3 (medium relevance)

Relevance to views section – 4 (very relevant) **Relevance to impact section** – 1 (no relevance)

Does impact reviewer have a copy? – No

APPENDIX 3: OVERVIEW OF CANADIAN, SWEDISH, ITALIAN AND UK PRIMARY RESEARCH STUDIES INCLUDED IN SECTION 1.2

Authors/Study Details

Findings

CANADA

Ateah (2003) – Questionnaires administered to 436 undergraduate students at two Canadian universities and community members from British Columbia.

75% received physical discipline as a child. Of these, 60% said that this had been from both parents.

Sample Size – 436

Of those who received physical discipline:

Research Time Frame – lifetime as well as different age groups when a child.

84% reported being spanked
63% being slapped on the body
37% being slapped on the head
12% being shaken
18% being whipped
34% being hit with an object.

Ateah & Durrant (2005) – Examined physical discipline use with a sample of mothers of three year-old children living in Winnipeg, Canada. Selection took place through a mixture of random and convenience sampling from an initial random sample provided by the Manitoba Government Health Department. A total of 423 respondents were sent letters resulting in a final sample of 110, giving a response rate of 26%. All the mothers took part in face-to-face interviews, with physical punishment being measured through maternal reporting.

59% of mothers had used physical discipline:
88% of incidents involved spanking or slapping
6% involved grabbing their child's shoulders
The remainder was accounted for by single incidents of dragging, pushing and spraying child's face with water.

Sample Size – 110

Research Time Frame – past two weeks

SWEDEN

Durrant et al (2003) – Compared physical discipline use by Swedish & Canadian mothers. 97 Swedish mothers were randomly selected from the population register from the city of Goteborg and 102 Canadian mothers were drawn from day centres and university classes in the Niagara Region of Ontario and in Winnipeg, Manitoba. In Canada, a questionnaire pack was left with each mother to be completed and returned by mail - in Sweden, the mothers completed the questionnaire on site but out of the sight of the interviewer.

55% of Swedish mothers reported never using physical discipline, compared with 30% of Canadian mums.

Similar numbers used it less than once a week (47 v 43%)

18% of Canadian mothers reported using physical discipline 1-2 times per week, compared with 2% of Swedish mums.

Sample Size – 199

Research Time Frame – lifetime and past week

ITALY

Bardi et al (2001) – Survey of parents using a random sample of 6250 pupils from kindergartens and primary schools from seven Tuscany provinces (children aged 3–12). A questionnaire derived from the Conflict Tactics Scale was sent to all the families of the sampled children (response rate approx 50%).

Sample Size – 2388

Research Time Frame – past year

Average regional incidence of minor violence - 768 per 1,000 children

Average regional incidence of severe violence rate was 83 per 1,000 children.

UNITED KINGDOM

Ghate et al (2003) – First ever nationally representative survey of 1250 mothers and fathers of children aged 0–12, across Britain. The survey used Computer Assisted Personal (and Self) Interviewing (CAPI/CASI) to ensure the fullest and frankest answers. Disciplinary acts were measured using the Misbehaviour Response Scale (MRS), an adaptation by the authors for the UK context of the widely used American Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS; Straus et al 1998). Child behaviours were measured using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman 1997).

Sample Size – 1200

Research Time Frame – lifetime and past year

Anderson et al (2002) – A nationally-representative, probability sample of 692 parents in Scotland. All respondents were interviewed in their own home. The questionnaire used a mix of interviewer-administered sections and Computer Assisted Self Interviewing (CASI), with the latter used primarily for questions about behaviours and experiences.

Sample Size – 692

Research Time Frame – lifetime, past year and past week

71% of parents had ever used minor physical discipline

16% had used severe physical discipline

1% had used very severe physical discipline

58% had used minor physical discipline in the past year

9% had used severe physical discipline in the past year

1% had used very severe physical discipline in the past year.

APPENDIX 4: PRIMARY RESEARCH STUDIES INCLUDED IN SECTION 1.3

PARENT CHARACTERISTICS	NO RELATIONSHIP	NATURE OF RELATIONSHIP
<p>Younger parent/ caregiver</p>	<p>Not predictive for minor or severe physical discipline – Dietz (2000) Eamon (2001b)</p>	<p>INCREASES physical discipline Predictive of physical discipline in families with and without wife abuse but not PA – Tajima (2002) Predictive for physical discipline and PA – Tajima (2000) Predictive of spanking for 4–35 months – Regalado et al (2004) Predictive for single mothers of 4–8 year-olds – Eamon & Zuehl (2001) Predictive – Xu et al (2000) Associated – Koenig et al (2002) Associated – Little (2002) Predictive of ‘minor’ physical discipline – Bardi et al (2001) Association – Walsh (2002) Association (not linear) but not predictive- Wissow (2001) Associated but not predictive of frequency of for partnered mothers – Nobes & Smith (2002) Associated – Thompson & Pearce (2001) Predictive – Molnar et al (2003) Association between adolescent motherhood and greater risk of child abuse potential – de Paul & Domenench (2000)</p> <p>DECREASES physical discipline Predictive – (Eamon, 2001a)</p>
<p>Female parent</p>	<p>Murphy-Cowan & Stringer (2001) Wissow (2001) Kerr (2004)</p>	<p>INCREASES physical discipline Association with physical discipline frequency but not physical discipline prevalence or severe physical discipline – Mahoney et al (2000) Predictive of maternal physical discipline with young children – Xu et al (2000) Predictive of ‘minor’ physical discipline – Mammen et al (2002) Predictive of ‘minor’ physical discipline only – Dietz (2000) Association with ‘minor’ physical discipline but not predictive – Bardi et al (2001) Predictive – Molnar et al (2003)</p>

Male parent	Wissow (2001) Kerr (2004)	INCREASES physical discipline Predictive with older children – Xu et al (2000) Predictive of severe physical discipline – Mammen et al (2002) Predictive – Sorbring & Palmerus (2004)
Poor physical health	For physical discipline or PA – Tajima (2000)	INCREASES physical discipline Maternal health predictive of 'minor' and severe physical discipline – Bardi et al (2001)
Drug and alcohol user/abuser	For physical discipline or PA – Tajima (2000) For physical discipline or PA in families with and without wife abuse – Tajima (2002)	INCREASES physical discipline Maternal use predictive of severe physical discipline – Bardi et al (2001)
Highly emotionally aroused (angry, upset, frustrated, stressed)		INCREASES physical discipline Frustration and aggravation with child predictive of spanking – Wissow (2001) Parental frustration predictive of spanking – Regalado et al (2004) Maternal stress predictive – 'minor' and severe physical discipline – Bardi et al (2001) Parental stress predictive of PA but not physical discipline – Tajima (2000) Maternal anger – Ateah & Durrant (2005) Parental stress predictive in families without wife abuse for physical discipline and PA – Tajima (2002)
Mental health difficulties	Mental health status – Xu et al (2000) Depression – Collins-Vezina et al (2005)	INCREASES physical discipline Depression associated but not predictive of severe physical discipline – Banyard et al (2003) Depression predictive of physical discipline – Chung et al (2005) Depression predictive of 'minor' physical discipline – Mammen et al (2002) Depression predictive of spanking – Wissow (2001) Maternal depression predictive – Eamon (2001a) Poverty predictive of physical discipline but mediated by maternal depression for single mothers of 4–8 year-olds – Eamon & Zuehl (2001) The effect of poverty on PD use is mediated by its

		<p>link with maternal depression, which in turn is linked with marital conflict – (Eamon, 2001a)</p> <p>Mental health predictive for frequency of physical discipline and severity of physical discipline for partnered mothers –Nobes & Smith (2002)</p> <p>Maternal Dissociative symptoms predictive of physical discipline – Collins-Vezina et al (2005)</p>
<p>Personal experience of physical discipline/abuse</p>	<p>CSA and maltreatment – Collins-Vezina et al (2005)</p> <p>Physical discipline – Ateah & Durrant (2005)</p>	<p>INCREASES physical discipline</p> <p>History of PA associated with severe physical discipline but not predictive – Banyard et al (2003)</p> <p>Being hit as a teenager predictive for physical discipline and PA in families without wife abuse – Tajima (2002)</p> <p>Being hit as a teenager predictive of physical discipline and PA – Tajima (2000)</p> <p>History of CSA or PA associated with spanking – Wissow (2001)</p> <p>Greater PD history predictive of PD use and to escalation of PD – Bower-Russa et al (2001)</p> <p>Mother’s history of severe PD with physical damage associated with high risk of child abuse potential – adolescent mothers with this history also at greater risk than adult mothers – de Paul & Domenench (2000)</p> <p>DECREASES physical discipline</p> <p>Predictive of ‘minor’ physical discipline – Dietz (2000)</p>
<p>Use of other disciplinary strategies</p>	<p>Knowledge of physical discipline alternatives – Ateah & Durrant (2005)</p>	<p>INCREASES physical discipline</p> <p>More use of non-coercive strategies associated – Thompson & Pearce (2001)</p> <p>DECREASES physical discipline</p> <p>More non-coercive strategies – Wissow (2001)</p> <p>More non-coercive strategies associated – Thompson et al (2002)</p>
<p>Engagement with child</p>		<p>INCREASES physical discipline</p> <p>Engaging in more activities in and outside home associated for lone mothers– Nobes & Smith (2002)</p>

		DECREASES physical discipline Nurturing practices associated – Wissow (2001)
Positive attitude toward physical discipline		INCREASES physical discipline Associated – Durrant et al (2003) Associated – Thompson & Pearce (2001) Predictive – Ateah & Durrant (2005)
CHILD CHARACTERISTICS	NO RELATIONSHIP	NATURE OF RELATIONSHIP
Older child	Ateah & Parkin (2002)	<p>INCREASES physical discipline Association – Little (2002) Association with spanking – Wissow (2001) Predictive – Regalado et al (2004) Predictive of severity of physical discipline with both single and partnered mothers – Nobes & Smith (2002) Predictive – Kanoy et al (2003)</p> <p>DECREASES physical discipline Predictive of physical discipline prevalence and frequency for fathers and mothers and severe physical discipline for mothers and not for fathers – Mahoney et al (2000) Predictive of ‘minor’ physical discipline – Dietz (2000) Association – Walsh (2002) Association – Little (2002) Being under 1 and over 14 predictive of physical discipline in families with or without wife abuse and being over 14 predictive of PA in families with wife abuse – Tajima (2002) Predictive for physical discipline but not PA for children under 1 and 14+ – Tajima (2000) Association with ‘minor’ and severe physical discipline, only ‘minor’ predictive – Bardi et al (2002) Predictive for frequency of physical discipline of partnered mothers – Nobes & Smith (2002) Predictive of parent-to-child aggression – Molnar et al (2003) Predictive in children aged 10–12 – Eamon (2001b)</p>

<p>Male child</p>	<p>Regalado et al (2004) Little (2002) Ateah & Parkin (2002) Kerr et al (2004)</p>	<p>INCREASES physical discipline Predictive of frequency of physical discipline – Nobes & Smith (2002) Predictive for mothers re physical discipline prevalence and frequency and severe physical discipline for mothers and associated with physical discipline prevalence and frequency for fathers – Mahoney et al (2000) Association – Little (2002) Association – Wissow (2001) 'Minor' and severe physical discipline – Dietz (2000) Predictive of physical discipline and PA –Tajima (2000) Predictive in families without wife abuse for physical discipline but not PA – Tajima (2002) Association but not predictive – Bardi et al (2001) Predictive – Molnar et al (2003) Predictive – Kanoy et al (2003) Predictive – Eamon (2001b)</p>
<p>Child behaviour</p>		<p>INCREASES physical discipline Destructive, rule violating, or dangerous behaviour associated – Bower-Russa et al (2001) Maternal perception of intentionality and seriousness of misbehaviour predictive – Ateah & Durrant (2005) Annoying/unsafe behaviour associated – Thompson & Pearce (2001) Repetition of misbehaviour associated – Bower-Russa et al (2001) Repetition of misbehaviour associated – Palmerus & Jutengren (2003)</p>
<p>Genetic factors</p>		<p>INCREASES physical discipline Genetic and environmental factors predictive of physical discipline use, but mainly environmental factors for PA – Jaffee et al (2004) Genetic influences associated with physical discipline use – Wade & Kendler (2000)</p>
<p>Health/Disability</p>	<p>Deaf child – Brubaker & Szakowski (2000) Health Status – Regalado et al (2004)</p>	<p>INCREASES physical discipline Deaf children association – Knutson et al (2004) Developmental risk associated but not predictive – Regalado et al (2004)</p>

FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS	NO RELATIONSHIP	NATURE OF RELATIONSHIP
<p>Higher numbers of children</p>	<p>Koenig et al (2002) Bardi et al (2001) Dietz (2000) Tajima (2000)</p>	<p>Premature birth and poor health associated with 'minor' and severe physical discipline, premature birth predictive of 'minor' physical discipline only, poor health predictive of severe physical discipline – Bardi et al (2001)</p> <p>INCREASES physical discipline Predictive for single mothers of 4–8 year-olds – Eamon & Zeuhl (2001) Predictive – Xu et al (2000) Associated for parents of older children – Walsh (2002) Predictive of severity of physical discipline – Nobes & Smith (2002) Associated – children in home younger than index child – Thompson & Pearce (2001) Predictive – Eamon (2001b)</p>
<p>Single parent</p>	<p>Koenig et al (2002) Marital status – Walsh (2002) Wissow (2001) Dietz (2000)</p>	<p>INCREASES physical discipline Female single parent predictive – Molnar et al (2003) Association for female single parent but not predictive – Mahoney et al (2000) Associated but not predictive of spanking – Regalado et al (2004) Eamon (2001b)</p> <p>DECREASES physical discipline Association (when fathers counted) re frequency and severity – Nobes & Smith (2002)</p>
<p>Marital conflict/violence</p>	<p>Dietz (2000)</p>	<p>INCREASES physical discipline Associated with PA and broader physical discipline but not predictive – Banyard et al (2003) Wife abuse predictive for physical discipline and PA, marital discord predictive for physical discipline but not PA – Tajima (2000) Pre-natal marital conflict predictive but not when concurrent marital conflict accounted for – Kanoy et al (2003) Spousal abuse predictive of spanking with under fives – Xu et al (2000)</p>

		<p>Association with more severe physical discipline – Nobes & Smith (2002)</p> <p>Marital conflict predictive – Eamon (2001a)</p> <p>The effect of poverty on PD use is mediated by its link with maternal depression, which in turn is linked with marital conflict (Eamon, 2001a)</p>
Low levels of support	<p>Social support – Nobes & Smith (2002)</p>	<p>INCREASES physical discipline</p> <p>Help with childcare predictive in under fives and 5–18 year-old age groups – Xu et al (2000)</p> <p>DECREASES physical discipline</p> <p>Help with housework predictive in under fives and 5–18 year-old age groups – Xu et al (2000)</p> <p>Social support from family members predictive – Molnar et al (2003)</p>
Low income	<p>Mahoney et al (2000)</p> <p>Ateah & Parkin (2002)</p> <p>Tajima (2000 & 2002)</p>	<p>INCREASES physical discipline</p> <p>SES predictive – Molnar et al (2003)</p> <p>Poverty predictive of physical discipline by single mothers of 4–9 year-olds but mediated by maternal depression – Eamon & Zuehl (2001)</p> <p>Association for partnered mothers – Nobes & Smith (2002)</p> <p>Predictive of parents with children aged 5–18 – Xu et al (2000)</p> <p>Associated – Koenig et al (2002)</p> <p>Association with 'minor' and severe physical discipline but predictive of 'minor' only – Bardi et al (2001)</p> <p>Predictive of severe physical discipline – Dietz (2000)</p> <p>Predictive – Weinberg (2001)</p> <p>Association for parents of older children – Walsh (2002)</p> <p>Association (not linear) but not predictive – Wissow (2001)</p> <p>Associated but not predictive – Regalado et al (2004)</p> <p>SES associated with physical discipline prevalence and chronicity and suspected maltreatment – Deater-Deckard et al (2003)</p> <p>Poverty predictive – Eamon (2001b)</p> <p>The effect of poverty on PD use is mediated by its link with maternal depression, which in turn is linked with marital conflict – (Eamon, 2001a)</p>

		The effect of poverty on PD use is mediated by its link with maternal depression – (Eamon & Zuehl, 2001)
Unemployment	Regalado et al (2004) Koenig et al (2002) Wissow (2001)	<p>INCREASES physical discipline Predictive of severe physical discipline but not 'minor' – Bardi et al (2001) Association for frequency and severity of PD with partnered but not lone mothers – Nobes & Smith (2002) Unemployment in past five years predictive – Molnar et al (2003)</p> <p>DECREASES physical discipline Predictive for parents of children under 5 – Xu et al (2000)</p>
Lower levels of education	Regalado et al (2004) Koenig et al (2002) For husband education and physical discipline or PA – Tajima (2000) Husband's education and physical discipline or PA in homes with or without wife abuse – (Tajima, 2002)	<p>INCREASES physical discipline Associated with severe physical discipline by fathers – Bardi et al (2001) Predictive of severe physical discipline – Dietz (2000) Association for parents of younger children – Walsh (2002) Association (not linear) but not predictive – Wissow (2001) Predictive of physical discipline – Xu et al (2000) Maternal education predictive – Eamon (2001b) Maternal education predictive – Eamon (2001a)</p> <p>DECREASES physical discipline Lower paternal education indirectly effects PD by decreasing marital conflict – Eamon (2001a) Associated with 'minor' physical discipline by fathers – Bardi et al (2001)</p>

NEIGHBOURHOOD/ COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS	NO RELATIONSHIP	NATURE OF RELATIONSHIP
Deprivation/ disadvantage, high murder rates and violence, decreased social support		INCREASES physical discipline Deprivation/disadvantage, high murder rates, decreased social support associated - Molnar et al (2003) High levels of violence linked with physical discipline use - Ispa & Halgunseth (2004)
CULTURAL/NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS	NO RELATIONSHIP	NATURE OF RELATIONSHIP
Region		INCREASES physical discipline Residing in south of USA predictive of severe physical discipline - Dietz (2000)
Black/African American parent	Molnar et al (2003) Eamon (2001b)	INCREASES physical discipline Predictive of spanking - Regalado et al (2004) Predictive with older children - Xu et al (2000) Predictive - Wissow (2001) Predictive of 'minor' physical discipline & severe - Dietz (2000) Association with physical discipline prevalence and suspected maltreatment - Deater-Deckard et al (2003)
Latino /Hispanic parent	Eamon (2001b)	DECREASES physical discipline Predictive of physical discipline in families with and without wife abuse but not PA - Tajima (2002) Predictive for physical discipline but not PA - Tajima (2000)
Protestant parent		INCREASES physical discipline Associated with physical discipline prevalence and severity - Murphy-Cowan & Stringer (2001) Predictive - Xu et al (2000)
Nationality/legal reform		INCREASES physical discipline American nationality associated for fathers - Jutengren & Palmerus (2002) Legislation which sanctions physical discipline associated with increased PD - Bussmann (2004) Canadian nationality associated - Ateah & Durrant (2005)

APPENDIX 5: REVIEWS AND PRIMARY RESEARCH STUDIES INCLUDED IN SECTION 1.4

META-ANALYSIS AND SYSTEMATIC/LITERATURE REVIEWS

Reference	Outcome(s) measured	Definition/measurement of PP used
<p>Larzelere, R. & Kuhn, B.R. (2005) Comparing child outcomes of physical punishment and alternative disciplinary tactics: A meta-analysis.</p>	<p>Outcome variables were grouped into four categories – compliance, antisocial behaviour, conscience or resistance to temptation and positive behaviours, competencies or emotions.</p>	<p>Distinguishes four types of physical punishment. Conditional (limited specific conditions), customary (how parents typically use pp), overly severe (excessive, e.g. use of object), predominant (parents primary discipline method). To be included, study must have included one of these and one alternative discipline tactic.</p>
Study and method details	Conclusion	
<p>Investigates the differences between effect sizes of pp and alternative disciplinary tactics for child outcomes in 26 studies.</p> <p>Children aged less than 13.</p>	<p>Results indicated that effect sizes significantly favoured conditional spanking over 10 of 13 alternative disciplinary tactics. It compared most favourably when used as a response to defiance in 3–4 year-olds or as a back-up to time out for clinically oppositional 2–6 year-olds. Outcomes producing beneficial results from conditional spanking – all disruptive behaviour problems including antisocial behaviour and defiance (not just compliance). Also compared favourably when defined as controlled, not used in anger. Customary physical punishment yielded effect sizes equal to alternative tactics, except for one large study favouring pp. Only overly severe or predominant use of pp compared unfavourably with alternative disciplinary tactics. Highlights the need for better guidance/information on what constitutes effective use of physical discipline – if used effectively within a warm family environment it will not lead to negative child outcomes.</p>	

Reference	Outcome(s) measured	Definition/measurement of PP used
Horn, I.B. et al (2004) Non-abusive physical punishment and child behaviour among African American children: a systematic review. (Article 125)	Measurable data on child outcome measures for children aged 0–14. E.g. social competence, Children’s Depression Inventory, child adjustment, verbal intelligence, aggression, antisocial behaviour.	Non-abusive physical punishment – self-reported use or observation of ‘spanking’ or physical punishment. All based on parental report or observation, e.g. HOME inventory, Parenting Dimensions Inventory, aggression subscale of CTS.
Study and method details	Conclusion	
Searched 1970–2000, seven relevant studies. All used lower SES and/or urban AA families. Three cross-sectional studies and four longitudinal studies.	Remains inconclusive. Total of three negatives, three positives and one neutral outcome. Three cross-sectional studies found detrimental outcomes, one cross-sectional found beneficial outcomes. Two longitudinal studies reported positive outcomes, one longitudinal found no independent effect. Study design and rural versus urban differentiated beneficial and detrimental outcomes, with rural studies tending to find beneficial behavioural outcomes. In all longitudinal studies, AA children had beneficial or neutral outcomes. Authors place more weight on the findings of the longitudinal studies (which are beneficial or neutral) as cross-sectional studies cannot establish causal relationships.	
Reference	Outcome(s) measured	Definition/measurement of PP used
Gershoff, E.T. (2002) Corporal Punishment by parents and associated child behaviours and experiences: A meta-analytic and theoretical review. (Article 101)	Eleven child behaviours and experiences – included immediate compliance, moral internalisation, aggression, delinquent and anti-social behaviour, mental health and adult abuse of own child.	Straus (1994a) definition. Actions that would knowingly cause severe injury were excluded.
Study and method details	Conclusion	
Eighty-eight studies were included, totalling 36,309 participants. Publication ranged from 1938 to 2000. Conducted separate meta-analysis for each dependent variable.	Corporal punishment was associated with all 11 constructs highlighting detrimental impact, with the exception of immediate compliance. Results included higher levels of aggression and lower levels of moral internalisation and mental health.	

Reference	Outcome(s) measured	Definition/measurement of PP used
<p>Larzelere, R. (2000) Child outcomes of non-abusive and customary physical punishment by parents: an updated literature review.</p> <p>(Article 84)</p>	<p>Had to contain a child outcome variable for which beneficial versus detrimental outcomes were reasonably unambiguous. Mainly compliance, antisocial behaviour, aggression and disruptive behaviour.</p>	<p>One measure at least of non-abusive or customary physical punishment by parents. Excluded studies dominated by severity or abusiveness. Also excluded cross-sectional studies, as pp had to precede the time period for the child outcome measure. Average age of child when spanked had to be younger than 13 (excluded most retrospective studies).</p>
Study and method details	Conclusion	
<p>38 studies included in review – 32% predominantly beneficial child outcomes, 34% predominantly detrimental outcomes and 34% neutral or mixed. (Only 16 of Gershoff's 92 studies qualified).</p>	<p>6 studies using clinical samples (4 RTCs) and three sequential-analysis studies found beneficial outcomes. Five of the 8 longitudinal studies found predominantly detrimental outcomes (primarily due to overly frequent use). One study only found that pp increased fighting and only in one sub-group. 6 clinical studies found spanking effective in enhancing milder disciplinary tactics. Larzelere criticises studies finding detrimental outcomes for methodological flaws, including overly frequent use of pp.</p>	

Reference	Outcome(s) measured	Definition/measurement of PP used
<p>Paolucci, E.O. & Violato, C. (2004) A meta-analysis of the published research on the affective, cognitive and behavioural effects of corporal punishment.</p> <p>(Article 126)</p>	<p>Affective outcomes (psychological damage, low self esteem, low empathy), cognitive outcomes (academic impairment, suicidal thoughts) and behavioural outcomes (fighting, aggression, antisocial behaviour, compliance).</p>	<p>Used definition of disciplinary spanking as 'physically non-injurious and as administered with an open hand to the extremities or buttocks, with the intention of modifying behaviour'. Very clear that techniques which constitute abuse (slapping face, kicking, and beating) were excluded.</p>
Study and method details	Conclusion	
<p>70 studies published between 1961 and 2000. Also considered 19 potential moderator variables – includes frequency, parent-child relationship, experiences of child abuse and family depression.</p> <p>40 convenience samples, 17 retrospective, 30 cross-sectional.</p>	<p>Again, criticises studies for methodological flaws. Their analyses suggest small negative behavioural and emotional effects for corporal punishment and almost no effect on cognition. Analyses of frequency or age of first experience, relationship of person administering and the discipline technique had no effect on effect size outcome. (There was insufficient data about a number of these variables). Authors suggest that exposure to corporal punishment does not substantially increase risk to youth of developing affective, cognitive or behavioural pathologies. Highlights that single risk factors (such as pp) are not good predictors of negative outcomes, but the accumulation of multiple risk factors over time causes the most damage.</p>	

Reference	Outcome(s) measured	Definition/measurement of PP used
Whaley, A.L. (2000) Socio-cultural differences in the developmental consequences of the use of physical discipline during childhood for African Americans		
Study and method details	Sample details	Conclusion
Literature review		Positive correlation between physical punishment and disruptive disorders found in research of European American children does not appear to be generalisable to AA. Suggests spanking by Black families is more a consequence than a cause of problem behaviours in children.

Reference	Outcome(s) measured	Definition/measurement of PP used
Baumrind, D. et al (2002) Ordinary physical punishment: Is it harmful? Comment on Gershoff (2002). (Article 100)	As with Gershoff.	
Study and method details	Sample details	Conclusion
Literature review and re-analysis of the studies included in Gershoff's meta-analysis.		Argues that the bias and confounds in Gershoff's meta-analysis limit causal inferences on the detrimental effects of pd. Claims that the undesirable outcomes found were the result of harsh/inept parenting, but that the harmful effects of physical abuse and extreme punishments are clear. Ban on spanking not justified by Gershoff's evidence.

PRIMARY RESEARCH STUDIES

Reference	Outcome(s) measured	Definition/measurement of PP used
<p>Lansford, J. et al (2004) Ethnic differences in the link between physical discipline and later adolescent externalizing behaviours.</p>	<p>Child externalising behaviours (7) – difficult temperament, unadaptable, resistance to control, aggression, violence, school trouble, police trouble. Used CBCL and Youth Self-Report Version and reactive and proactive aggression questionnaires. Adolescent Behaviour Questionnaire.</p>	<p>Very clear focus on milder forms of physical punishment. Age five in-depth interview asked what forms they used and frequency. Discipline rated on five-point scale. Grades 6 and 8 – rated three types of discipline according to frequency.</p>
Study and method details	Sample details	Conclusion
<p>Longitudinal study. Children followed from Kindergarten (age 5) to Grade 11 (age 16). Mothers reported on PP at age 5, age 11, age 13; mothers and young people reported on externalising behaviours age 16.</p>	<p>Representative community sample of 585 children followed from age 5-16. US, European American (84%) and African American (16%). 50/50 male/ female</p>	<p>Experience of PD in first five years and early adulthood is associated with higher levels of externalising behaviour problems for European Americans aged 16, but lower levels of problem behaviour for African Americans. Results consistent for boys and girls. Suggests the context in which spanking occurs is important.</p>

Reference	Outcome(s) measured	Definition/measurement of PP used
<p>Eamon, M. & Zuehl, R.M. (2001) Maternal depression and physical punishment as mediators of the effect of poverty on socio-emotional problems of children in single-mother families.</p>	<p>Socio-emotional problems measured using two behavioural indicators, Behaviour Problems Index; Externalising (e.g. disobedience, bullying, and destructiveness) and internalising (e.g. worrying, crying, anxiousness).</p>	<p>Limited – asked mothers frequency in past week. One item from the HOME-SF (modification of HOME Inventory).</p>
Study and method details	Sample details	Conclusion
<p>Longitudinal design. Testing a mediation model of the effect of poverty on socio-emotional problems.</p>	<p>National sample of 4–9 year-olds in single-mother families; data extracted from National Longitudinal Survey of Youth in 1992 and 1994.</p>	<p>Effect of poverty on socio-emotional problems mediated by maternal depression and mother's use of PP. Study highlighted a direct effect between physical punishment and children's socio-emotional problems; total effect of physical punishment is statistically significant.</p>

Reference	Outcome(s) measured	Definition/measurement of PP used
<p>Mahoney, A. et al (2000) Mother and father self-reports of corporal punishment and severe physical aggression toward clinic-referred youth.</p>	<p>Externalising behaviour problems using the Child Behaviour Checklist.</p>	<p>Corporal punishment – acts of physical aggression commonly viewed as legitimate forms of discipline with relatively low risk of physical injury. Severe physical aggression – tends to be perceived as excessively harsh and have higher likelihood of physical injury. Used CTC-Parent-Child, 1998).</p>
Study and method details	Sample details	Conclusion
<p>Cross-sectional study. Data gathered as part of screening process upon admission to clinic.</p>	<p>359 mothers and 140 fathers of clinic-referred youth (aged 2–17).</p>	<p>Parents reported greater use of CP compared to rest of population. Twice as likely to use CP with children aged 13–17. Use of CP declined as child got older but use of severe aggression did not. Use of CP increased as parental perceptions of child’s deviant behaviour increased – the CP may be exacerbating the antisocial behaviour. Connection needs examined.</p>

Reference	Outcome(s) measured	Definition/measurement of PP used
<p>Koenig, A. et al (2002) Negative caregiver strategies and psychopathology in urban, African-American young adults.</p>	<p>Child aggression in first grade. Mental health of young adults (included psychopathology, suicidal ideation and suicide attempt). Used Teacher Observation of Classroom Adaptation-Revised (TOCA-R, 1991) in First Grade, Life Events Questionnaire-Adolescent Version (LEQ-A, 1972) for young adults.</p>	<p>Frequency of eight caregiver discipline strategies (adapted from CTS). Divided into three groups – low/moderate/high exposure. Included being threatened with weapon, hit hard enough to cause bruising / bleeding.</p>
Study and method details	Sample details	Conclusion
<p>Follow-up study of young people involved in the evaluation of a school-based intervention. Assessed in First Grade (1985/86 or 86/87), again in Grade 6, with follow-up in 1999–2001 when they were 18–20 years-old.</p>	<p>1,197 African American children/ young adults in Baltimore.</p>	<p>Increased reports of negative strategies were associated with increased rates of adult psychopathology, suicide ideation/attempt. Child aggression also linked to negative caregiver strategies. Number of pathways explored no definitive causal link.</p>

Reference	Outcome(s) measured	Definition/measurement of PP used
<p>Eamon, M.K. (2001a) Antecedents and socio-emotional consequences of physical punishment on children in two-parent families.</p>	<p>Fourteen indicators of internalising (e.g. worrying, withdrawing, sadness, dependency) and 16 indicators of externalising problems (e.g. disobedience, cruelty, bullying), measured by Behaviour Problems Index.</p>	<p>One item from the HOME-SF; measured PP as the number of times the mother reported spanking child in past week (0, 1, 2 or more than 2).</p>
Study and method details	Sample details	Conclusion
<p>Data from 1992 and 1994 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. Standardised assessment tools used. Testing a structural model derived by the author.</p>	<p>1,397 4–9 year-olds and mothers. US, 834 non Hispanic, 246 Black and 317 Hispanic.</p>	<p>Frequent use of PP was directly related to children's socio-emotional problems (as were maternal depression and marital conflict). Children who are spanked more frequently, exhibit more socio-emotional problems. Causal ordering not established.</p>

Reference	Outcome(s) measured	Definition/measurement of PP used
<p>Herrenkohl, R. & Russo, M.J. (2001) Abusive early child rearing and early childhood aggression.</p>	<p>Child Aggression (as rated by school teacher using Achenbach child behaviour inventory)</p>	<p>Assessed both physical discipline and quality of the mother-child relationship. Discipline severity – 39 item questionnaire, including physical and emotional methods. Physical methods included spanking through to abusive (burning, hitting to cause bruising).</p>
Study and method details	Sample details	Conclusion
<p>Longitudinal study of maltreated and non-maltreated children assessed as preschoolers and again at school age.</p>	<p>Five groups of children to represent those from abusive families (144), from neglectful families (105), and a range of SES backgrounds (208).</p>	<p>Severity of physical discipline at school age but not pre-school age relates to aggression at school age. Early school age is when harsh physical discipline most powerfully influences development of aggressive behaviour. Suggests a difference in the developmental stage at which different features of harsh parenting exert their influence.</p>

Reference	Outcome(s) measured	Definition/measurement of PP used
Slade, E.P. & Wissow, L.D. (2004) Spanking in early childhood and later behaviour problems: A prospective study of infants and young toddlers.	Behaviour problems near time of entry to school (Behaviour Problems Index).	Spanking frequency in past week.
Study and method details	Sample details	Conclusion
Children younger than two followed up four years later, after they had entered school. Questionnaires and observation.	Ethnically diverse sample of 1966 children, aged 0–23 months (and their mothers) at baseline.	White non-Hispanic children who were spanked more frequently before age two were substantially more likely to have behaviour problems (after controlling for other factors). For Hispanic and Black children, no statistically significant or consistent findings.
Reference	Outcome(s) measured	Definition/measurement of PP used
Grogan-Taylor, A. (2004) The effect of corporal punishment on antisocial behaviour in children.	Children's behaviour problems (anti-social behaviour) using Behaviour Problems Index.	Part of the Home Observation Measure of the Environment (HOME) Inventory. Number of times mother had spanked child in past week.
Study and method details	Sample details	Conclusion
Non-experimental design and data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth.	Used data from 1994, 1996 and 1998. 1,811 children aged between 4 and 14 years (average age 10). 50/50 male/female, 20% Latino, 29% African American and 51% White.	Corporal punishment had an effect in increasing children's antisocial behaviour despite strong controls. Increases in use of corporal punishment were not associated with increases in the level of children's anti-social behaviour, suggesting that even low levels of PD can have an impact. No evidence for differences in effect across racial and ethnic groups.

Reference	Outcome(s) measured	Definition/measurement of PP used
Espelage, D.L. et al (2000) Examining the social context of bullying behaviours in early adolescence.	Bullying behaviours (authors created a five-item Bullying Scale based on literature review and other tools).	Family physical discipline – students asked what happened at home when they broke a rule. Two groups: 1) seldom or never spanked, slapped or hit and 2) sometimes, often or always spanked, slapped or hit. (One of 7 familial and adult and contextual influences measured).
Study and method details	Sample details	Conclusion
Cross-sectional survey in one large middle school as part of an evaluation of a violence prevention study.	Sixth, seventh and eighth graders in US, diverse SES. 558 sample size, mainly white.	Young people who were sometimes or more frequently physically disciplined and those who spent their time without adults were more likely to bully other students. Family physical discipline was significantly associated with bullying.

Reference	Outcome(s) measured	Definition/measurement of PP used
<p>Bugental, D.B. et al (2003) The hormonal costs of subtle forms of infant maltreatment.</p>	<p>Child reaction to stressful situations. Toddler Behaviour Assessment Questionnaire – to assess levels of difficulty and fearfulness scores. Child cortisol production measured through saliva collection.</p>	<p>Maternal use of corporal punishment during infancy (under 1). Defined as non-abusive corporal punishment. Used Conflict tactics Scale (1979). Separated non-abusive CP from abusive in the results. (also measured mothers' emotional availability).</p>
Study and method details	Sample details	Conclusion
<p>Initial measures obtained from mothers when child aged one. Salvia samples taken during child's second year. Children exposed to the 'Strange Situation' as a stressor (Ainsworth et al, 1978) and second saliva test taken 20 minutes later. Elevation in levels of cortisol used as an indicator of hormonal reactivity to stress.</p>	<p>44 mothers of toddlers who had been identified during pregnancy as at risk for future child maltreatment. 89% Latino, low SES.</p>	<p>Infants who received frequent corporal punishment showed high hormonal reactivity to stress. Suggests that these hormonal responses may alter the functioning of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis in ways that, if continued, may foster risk for immune disorders, sensitisation to stress, cognitive deficits and social-emotional problems. Early use of corporal punishment leaves children more susceptible to effects of stressful events with possible reduction in their ability to cope with future life events.</p>

Reference	Outcome(s) measured	Definition/measurement of PP used
<p>Eamon, M.K. (2001b) Poverty, parenting, peer and neighbourhood influences on young adolescent antisocial behaviour.</p>	<p>Antisocial behaviour at ages 12–14 years, a composite of four items from the Behaviour Problem Index, as rated by their mothers. Behaviours included – how often they bully, are cruel or mean, break things on purpose, cheat or lie.</p>	<p>Physical punishment measured by one item in the HOME-SF – the number of times a mother reported spanking their child in past week, once or more, or none.</p>
Study and method details	Sample details	Conclusion
<p>Data extracted from National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 1992 and 1994.</p>	<p>963, 10–12 year-old children, assessed for anti-social behaviour (asb) two years later, when they were 12–14.</p>	<p>(Most relevant to impact only) Children who were spanked exhibited higher levels of antisocial behaviour (asb). Although pp is the only parenting practice that was related to both poverty and asb, it was not an important mediator of the effect of poverty on children's asb. Where there are more neighbourhood problems, mothers' use of pp moderates or buffers the effect from this. Suggests that when environmental risk is high, parenting practices that are firmer result in lower levels of youth asb.</p>

Reference	Outcome(s) measured	Definition/measurement of PP used
<p>Fine, S.E. et al (2004) Anger perception, caregivers' use of physical discipline and aggression in children at risk.</p>	<p>Teacher reports of aggressive behaviours in Third and Fifth Grade (Teacher version of Child Behaviour Checklist).</p>	<p>Measured caregiver reports of 'harsh discipline' when children were in Third Grade, CP subscale of the Parent-Child CTS. Includes hitting with object, pinching and shaking.</p>
Study and method details	Sample details	Conclusion
<p>Longitudinal study – children assessed at age 4–5, in Third Grade aged 8– 9 and again in Fifth Grade aged 10–11. Children and caregivers interviewed individually, caregivers also completed assessment battery. Teachers completed forms.</p>	<p>87 children and their caregivers from economically disadvantaged families. 72% African American, 21% European American, 5% Hispanic and 2% Other.</p>	<p>Relationship between caregiver reports of physical discipline and later aggression was direct and positive, indicating that children who experienced more pd were more likely to exhibit aggressive behaviours over time.</p>

APPENDIX 6: NORTHERN IRELAND SURVEYS INCLUDED IN SECTION 2.1

Authors/study details	Sample size	Time frame	Findings
NSPCC (2000) – A survey which consisted of 1,000 face-to-face interviews with adults in NI. The survey was implemented using a probability based random sample, utilising probability proportionate to size. For each of the 26 LGDs a random sample of individuals was drawn, with the number drawn determined by the population of the LGD in relation to the total Northern Ireland population.	1,000	Lifetime	48% of parents had used physical discipline in the past
NISRA (2001) – A face-to-face survey of 1,000 adults. The sample was drawn from a list of addresses taken from the Valuation and Lands Agency list and stratified by region. Individuals were randomly selected within households.	1,000	Lifetime	48% of parents had used physical discipline in the past
Devine & Lloyd (2005) – Paper draws on data from Wave 3 (2003) of the Northern Ireland Annual Household Panel Survey (NIHPS). In common with other national household panels, Waves are set at annual intervals. The initial sample for Wave 1 of NIHPS consisted of an equal-probability sample of 3,170 addresses drawn from the Valuation and Lands Agency list of addresses. The list of private addresses was stratified into three regions. NIHPS sought to interview all adult members of each household (persons 16 and over). 1,979 NI households participated in Wave 1. All individuals enumerated in these households (irrespective of age) became part of the longitudinal sample. All those survey respondents who were parents were asked a range of questions about the six oldest children aged under 16 years living in their household.	There were 1,629 responses in relation to children living in responding NIHPS households.	Lifetime (general)	61% reported that they never spank or slap their child

<p>NSPCC (2003) – Telephone survey of 1,000 adults in NI. In the first instance, the Royal Mail’s Postal Address File (PAF) was used as the sampling frame for the survey. A simple random sample of 1,000 addresses, with telephone numbers, was selected across all 26 local government districts in Northern Ireland. This was supplemented with a further 1,000 random numbers generated by rotating the last digit of each of the initial telephone numbers. On contact by telephone, the selection of the respondent was controlled on a quota basis by gender and age group.</p>	<p>1,000</p>	<p>N/A</p>	
<p>Murphy-Cowan & Stringer (2001) – Survey of 371 Northern Irish parents of children aged 4–6 selected from a cross section of schools covering each of the five Education and Library Board areas. The response rate was 37%.</p>	<p>371</p>	<p>Lifetime</p>	<p>91% had smacked their children</p>

APPENDIX 7: RELIABILITY OF SURVEY MEASURES

CTSPC

A problem with the original CTS, and one hoped to be remedied by the CTSPC, was that of low internal consistency reliability. Internal consistency reliability refers to the extent to which scale items represent different dimensions of the same underlying construct assessed by the scale. Scales with higher internal consistencies tend to be more reliable, with alpha coefficients of 0.70 or higher considered to represent adequate reliability. The alpha coefficients from seven analyses of the CTS data averaged 0.58 for the overall Physical Assault scale and 0.68 for the Psychological Aggression scale (Straus & Hamby, 1997).

However, alpha coefficients of the CTSPC, taken from a telephone survey of 1,000 American parents (Straus et al, 1998), remained relatively low. The alpha coefficient for the overall physical assault scale = 0.55, psychological aggression = 0.60, and non violent discipline = .70. The alpha coefficient for the severe physical assault subscale was near zero (-0.02).

In this study, although the alpha coefficient for the non violent discipline scale was good (0.69), it was lower for the psychological aggression scale (0.57) and the physical assault scale (0.45). However, it is important to note that lower values are considered acceptable for the CTSPC because, unlike most other tests for psychological characteristics, it measures a wide range of relatively independent behaviours which are grouped together in broad categories. The extremely skewed distributions of the CTSPC drastically lowers the correlation between items, resulting in lower alpha coefficients.

"The universe of parent to child aggression includes common acts such as spanking as well as much rarer forms of abuse, such as burning. Although there may be an occasional parent who has not only hit a child with a belt, but also choked, burned and stabbed them in the past year, even the most abusive parents have probably not perpetrated all of these acts of violence. Yet, they all fall into the category of physical assault" (Straus et al, 2003, p54).

In terms of validity, the Conflict Tactics Scale is one of the most commonly used measures of physical discipline available, and is widely considered to be a valid measure of a range of disciplinary practices.

Perceived outcomes of physical discipline

Durrant et al (2003) reported alpha coefficients for the positive outcome index of .71 and 0.78 for the Swedish and Canadian samples, respectively. Alpha coefficients for the negative outcome index were reported as .79 and .87 for the Swedish and Canadian samples, respectively. Similarly, the alpha coefficients for this survey were .85 for both the positive and negative outcomes indices, also indicating high internal reliability.

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