

Combining Reasoning With Punishment

My most important studies focused on maternal disciplinary responses to misbehavior of 2- and 3-year-olds. Mothers were asked to record all occurrences of disobedience or fighting over a 4-week period. Using the Discipline Record ([Larzelere & Merenda, 1994](#)), they recorded the time of each incident and the discipline tactics they used to respond to it. The most common outcome variable was the delay until the next recurrence of the same kind of misbehavior. So, a longer the delay until the next misbehavior should show the most effective the disciplinary strategy.

One major finding was that the combined use of reasoning and punishment was more effective in delaying misbehavior recurrences than was either one alone. This was replicated for two kinds of misbehavior: fighting and disobedience. However, the evidence that this association represented a causal influence of the maternal disciplinary response on subsequent child misbehavior was stronger for fighting incidents than for disobedience incidents ([Larzelere, Schneider, Larson & Pike, 1996](#)).

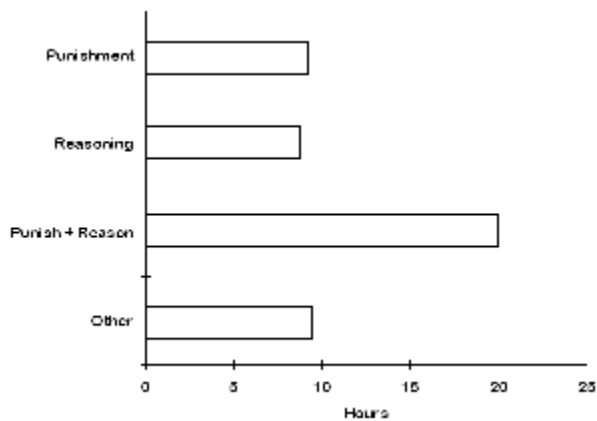


Figure 1. Mean delay until next fighting recurrence ([Larzelere et al., 1996](#)).

Questions:

- 1) Read the excerpt from an article. Do you trust the author's findings? Why or why not?
- 2) What is the chart telling you about the use of spanking and reasoning together?
- 3) Does this indicate that spanking can be an effective tool for discipline? If so, under what circumstances should spanking be used?

Document #2

Excerpt from “Spare the Rod: New Research Challenges Spanking Critics”

Conclusion

The subject of disciplinary spanking should be evaluated from a factual and philosophical perspective. It must be distinguished from abusive, harmful forms of corporal punishment. Appropriate disciplinary spanking can play an important role in the best child development, and has been found in prospective studies to be a part of the parenting style associated with the best outcomes. There is no evidence that mild spanking is harmful. Indeed, spanking is supported by history, research, and a majority of primary care physicians.

By Den A. Trumbull, M.D. and S. DuBose Ravenel, M.D. 1997

Dr. Trumbull is a board-certified pediatrician in private practice in Montgomery, Alabama. He is a member of the Section on Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Dr. Ravenel is a board-certified pediatrician in private practice in High Point, North Carolina. He served for 11 years on the pediatric faculty of the University of North Carolina, School of Medicine prior to entering private practice.

- 1) Do you trust this conclusion? Why or why not?

- 2) Isn't the **misplaced modifier** kind of funny in the title? I'm just not sure how much good it would do to spank a critic. Come up with a better title for this article.

- 3) What questions does this leave for you? How can it help you make a stronger argument for corporal punishment?

Excerpt from:

“Pro-Spanking Studies May Have Global Effect”

By Theodore Kettle

A study based on 2,600 interviews about corporal punishment (including questioning 179 teenagers about getting spanked and smacked by their parents) was conducted by Marjorie Gunnoe, professor of psychology at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Gunnoe’s **findings** were that the claims made for not spanking children don’t add up. The evidence does not support them.

Those who were spanked performed better (than those who were not spanked) in a whole series of categories, including school grades, an optimistic outlook on life, the willingness to perform volunteer work, and the ambition to attend college.

1) Do you trust this source? Why or why not?

2) What benefits does the study seem to show about “spanking” as a discipline measure?

3) How would having the entire article (or the original study) help you to make a better argument?

Document #4

Spare the Rod? Is Spanking a Child Harmful or Helpful? – Part 2 – Do studies show that spanking is an improper form of discipline? By Walt Larimore M.D.

Opposition to parents spanking their children has been growing significantly in elite circles over the past few years. And, my blogs on spanking are among the most read of those I publish. Therefore, I've decided, with the help of the research of my friends Den Trumbull, MD, S. DuBose Ravenel, MD, to look at the arguments used against spanking, to see if they hold any water. This is the second of a 12 part series. Today we'll start looking at the arguments used against spanking.

Argument #1: Many psychological studies show that spanking is an improper form of discipline.

Counterpoint:

According to an investigation by Drs. Trumbull and Ravenel, performed for the Family Research Council, researchers John Lyons, Rachel Anderson, and David Larson of the National Institute of Healthcare Research conducted a systematic review of the research literature on corporal punishment.[1]

Among their many findings, they reported that 83% percent of the 132 identified articles published in clinical and psychosocial journals were merely opinion-driven editorials or reviews or commentaries. They were not new studies using evidence.[1]

Also, most of the scientific studies had a problem because they by grouped the spanking in with abusive tactics (beating, kicking, etc.) and reported results for them all as if they were the same thing.

The best studies of appropriate, loving spanking (that EXCLUDED from the definition of spanking forms of child abuse or violence) demonstrated beneficial, not detrimental, effects of spanking.

They concluded, as do I, that there is insufficient evidence to condemn parental spanking and adequate evidence to justify its proper use.

Citation:

[1] Lyons, Dr. John S., Anderson, Rachel L., and Larson, Dr. David B., "The Use and Effects of Physical Punishment in the Home: A Systematic Review." Presentation to the Section on Bio-Ethics of the American Academy of Pediatrics at annual meeting, Nov. 2, 1993

<http://www.drwalt.com/blog/2009/09/23/spare-the-rod-is-spanking-a-child-harmful-or-helpful-%E2%80%93-part-2/>

- 1) Do you trust this blog? Why or why not?

- 2) What are the claim and opposing claim in this blog?

- 3) What evidence (if any) does the author use to support his position?