

“Violence by children against mothers in relation to violence between parents and corporal punishment by parents.”

CP71

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Children hitting mothers is a type of violence that has largely been ignored in research on violence against women. It is sometimes mentioned in clinical studies of battered women within the conceptual framework of a son following the battering example of the father. This pattern might also apply to children in the general population because many of them also have the example of a father who physically assaults their mother (Gelles and Straus, 1988; Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz, 1980). Consistent with that hypothesis, a study of a general population sample by Cornell and Gelles (1982) found that sons were more likely to hit mothers who were victims of partner violence.

The objective of this research is to further investigate child-to-parent violence (CPV), especially violence against mothers, and whether violence by fathers against mothers is associated with an increased probability of children hitting their mother. We will first present data on the percent of children who physically attack mothers and fathers and how this differs for boys and by girls, and for children of different ages. Then the relation of CPV to two aspects of violence by parents will be presented: violence between parents, and violence by parents against children in the form of corporal punishment and also more severe violence against children. The extent to which CPV is unique to the victimization of women will be investigated by examining both child-to-mother and child-to-father violence.

The theoretical basis for expecting a link between CPV and these two aspects of violence by parents includes social learning theory, reciprocal-coercion theory, and feminist theory. We believe that the processes leading to CPV identified by these theories are complementary. Social learning (Bandura, 1971; Bandura and Walters, 1959) is part of the process because children growing up in violent households witness violence between the parents. Thus, children have models of violent behavior to follow in dealing with their parents. Reciprocal-coercion is likely to be part of the process leading to CPV because many children are victims of coercive violence by parents in the form of corporal punishment. Patterson and colleagues found that corporal punishment tends to be part of a more general pattern of coercive social

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relationships. This sets in motion an escalating pattern of increasingly coercive interaction in which the child who is the object of coercion tends to become resentful, hostile, coercive, and ultimately physically violent to the parent (Patterson, 1982; 1995). Feminist theory identifies socially structured encouragement of violence by males and the unequal division of childcare and household tasks that put mothers at greater risk of being physically attacked by children (Renzetti and Curran, 1999: 165; Rossi and Rossi, 1990).

In addition to helping to understand violence toward women, information on CPV is also important because there is a clear cultural norm, which defines, hitting parents as a particularly outrageous behavior. Consequently, the rate of CPF provides information on the degree to which an important cultural norm concerning the family is observed and violated. Many parents, upon experiencing CPV, feel shame or distress. Ironically, because it is such a severe normative transgression, CPV is more likely than other misbehavior to result in violence by parents in the form of corporal punishment (Sears, Maccoby, and Levin, 1957).

DEFINITION OF VIOLENCE

The research reported in this article focused entirely on physical violence, defined as an act carried out with the intention or perceived intention of causing another person to experience physical pain or injury (Gelles and Straus, 1979; Straus and Gelles, 1992). Even when restricted to intra-family relationships, there are many different types of violence which, although they share the elements specified in this definition, also differ in important ways. For example corporal punishment is intended to cause physical pain, but not injury, whereas the same act if it results in injury to the child is classified as physical abuse.

A related issue is whether hitting a parent by a toddler should be classified as violence. It can be argued that physically aggressive acts by young children should not be considered violence because the probability of injury is very low. This may have been the reason Cornell and Gelles (1982) excluded children under 10 from their research on CPV. However, injury is not a necessary element for behavior to be classified as violence. Among violent couples in the general population, a slap by a male partner rarely results in injury (Stets and Straus, 1990). Because it can be assumed that a child who kicks or bites a parent wants the parent to experience pain, the lack of injury does not remove CPV by young children from the category of violence. CPV by young children is also important because it may be a socialization experience that carries over into adolescence and adulthood in the form of violence toward dating partners and spouses. In addition, as noted previously, CPV by young children, although it rarely causes physical injury, may be a source of emotional distress to parents.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON CHILD-TO-PARENT VIOLENCE

Prevalence of CPV

Table 1 identifies nine studies that reported rates of CPV, starting with the highest rate. These rates vary from 7% to 96%. Examination of the characteristics of the studies indicates the following sources of these large differences in rates:

TABLE 1

Prevalence Child-To-Parent Violence

<u>Study</u>	<u>Sample type and Age</u>	<u>Reporting Period</u>	<u>CPV Rate</u>
Sears et al., 1957	Kindergarten children	Since birth	96%
Evans & Warren-Sohlberg, 1988	Police reports involving 12- 18 year old children	Official reports with no period specified	56%
Mahoney & Donnelly, 2000	Referrals to community mental health agency. 1 1-18 (mean= 14.2)	Past year	Boys 43% Girls 41%
Langhinrichsen-Rohling & Neidig, 1995	Poor youth in job corps. Mean age =18	Lifetime	Boys 32%, Girls 29.5%
Agnew & Huguley, 1989	National survey of 1 1-18 year olds	Past 3 years	Three year recall 21%(9.2% “non-trivial” CPV)
Kratcoski, 1985	11 th and 12 th graders and “youth” injustice system	Past year	Moderate frequency 19%; High frequency 2%
Straus et al., 1980	National survey of 3- 17	Past year	18%
Peek et al., 1985	10 th , 11 th , and 12 th grade boys	10 th grade: past 3 yrs 11 th & 12 th grade: past 1/2 yrs.	10 th =11% 11 th =7% 12 th =7%
Brezina, 1999	National Survey of 10 th and 11 th grade boys	Past 1 & 1/2 yrs	10 th =11%; 11 th =7%
Cornell & Gelles, 1982	National survey of 10- 17	Past year	11% boys, 7% girls

1. The older the child, the lower the prevalence of CPV.
2. The longer the time frame of recall, the higher the prevalence of CPV.
3. The rate of CPV is higher in samples of delinquent youth.

Although taken together, these studies indicate a decrease in CPV with age, no single study has reported the prevalence rate of children of each age over a large age range, such as the range from 3-17 covered in this study.

Correlates of CPV

Table 2 summarizes the results of 16 studies of CPV. Although we will comment only on the studies that examined the issues investigated in the present study, the entire table is

TABLE 2

Previous Studies of the Correlates of Child to Parent Violence

<u>Study</u>	<u>Sample</u>	<u>CPV Measure</u>	<u>CPV Correlates</u>
(Agnew and Huguley 1989)	1972 National Survey of Youth: 1,395 11-18 year old boys and girls	Chronicity of parents "hit" during a 3-year recall period	CPV higher for mothers than fathers, for high-status fathers; and for Caucasian children. Son's age related to father CPV; to delinquent friends; to less attachment to parents; and to lowered beliefs in probability of police sanction. Corporal punishment not related to CPV.
(Brezina 1999)	National sample 1,886 boys in 10 th grade, and 1 1/2 yrs later.	How often mothers or fathers were "hit" in past 1 1/2 yrs (5=very often)	Corporal punishment during the 10 th grade was associated with an increased likelihood of CPV a year later age.
(Charles 1986)	Child/adolescent psychiatric patients (200 inpatients, 100 outpatients)	Case studies of all aggressive behavior by the children	CPV more likely by Caucasian children and sons. Younger daughters more likely to inflict injury because they were more likely to hit parents with objects. CPV co-occurred with marital conflict and parent minimization of abuse by children.
(Cornell and Gelles 1982)	1975 NFVS*31.5 mothers & 293 fathers with children between ages 10-17	CTS * * overall violence, severe violence, and severe violence multiplied by violence chronicity (called violence severity)	CPV more likely toward mothers; toward fathers by sons; toward clerical worker fathers (high violence severity); toward blue-collar fathers (moderate severity); within middle-range family income (high severity). Severe CPV increases with son's age; more likely with presence of school delinquency.
(Evans and Warren-Sohlberg 1988)	73 police reports involving 12- 18 year-olds living with a parent	(1) Threats of assault, (2) threats to use a weapon, (3) assault, and (4) property damage	CPV more likely by sons, toward mothers; with increased child age; with prior contact with police and social services; with prior cases of domestic violence in the family. Roughly half of CPV incidents related to conflicts over "home life."

(Harbin and Madden 1979) (Hartz 1995)	28 families in psychiatric care. Majority of youth ages 13-24. 96 11 th and 12 th graders	Case descriptions of verbal aggression, property damage, and injurious violence CTS** verbal aggression and minor/severe violence	CPV more likely by sons; with marital competition leading to lack of parental authority, with parental psychological denial of abuse by children. High parent to child aggression related to CPV toward mothers; CPV more likely by Caucasian children.
(Hotaling, Straus, and Lincoln 1990) (Kolko et al. 1993)	1985 National Family Violence Survey: 2,688 children living with both parents 162 mothers of 6-13 year olds. Half were boys. 35% psychiatric care patients	“Physical fights with adults in the house.” CTS** Violent acts measured were not specified, though verbal aggression was included	CPV more likely with the presence of parent to child aggression; with the presence of parent-to-parent violence. Score on the Child Abuse Potential test is not significantly related to CPV.
(Kratcoski 1985)	295 11 th /12 th graders (75% male), half involved in the justice system	CTS ** One measure included both verbal aggression and minor/severe physical violence	CPV more likely with presence of parent to child violence; parent-to-parent violence; sibling violence; with greater delinquent peer group activity; with lower family integration.
(Langhini chsen-Rohling and Neidig 1995)	Poor youth (mean age 18) in the Job Corps: 337 males, 137 females	CTS lifetime prevalence. Minor and severe violence combined	CPV more likely with presence of parent-to-child aggression; more likely by sons in relation to parent-to-parent violence; CPV less likely by daughters in relation parent-to-parent violence.
(Mahoney and Donnelly 2000)	379 adolescents referred to community mental health agency	CTS** past year	The more corporal punishment or the more severe aggression by either parent, the more CPV. No relation to CPV; gender of child, income, single parent, child age (except boys hitting fathers)
(Larzelere 1986)	1975 NFVS*1139 child ages 3-17	CTS** minor and severe violence combined.	More frequent corporal punishment, the more CPV. Discussion with child lowers, but does not eliminate the correlation.

(Meredith, Abbott, and Adams 1986)	304 parents of children ages 3 to 18	CTS** regarding violence against the oldest child; minor and severe violence combined.	CPV more likely with greater parent to child aggression, with greater parent-to-parent violence.
(Peek, Fischer, and Kidwell 1985)	1966 Youth in Transition Survey: 1545 in 10 th , 11 th , and 12 th grade.	Chronicity of fathers or mothers "hit" (e.g. 5=very often);	Fathers more likely to experience CPV; CPV more likely with a punitive or non-strict parenting style, corporal punishment; lower emotional attachment to and agreement with parents; lower parent-to-parent agreement; lower child religiosity.
(Sears, Maccoby, and Levin 1957)	379 mothers with kindergarten -age child	Any current or previous CPV	CPV more likely with greater permissiveness of CPV by parents.
(Straus and Hotaling 1980)	1975 NFVS* children age 3-17, N=1139	CTS** minor and severe violence combined	CPV more likely with greater parent to child aggression; with greater parent-to-parent violence, and most likely with both.

* 1975 = 1975 National Family Violence Survey. This is the sample used for this article, but the sub-samples vary.

** CTS = Conflict Tactics Scales using a one-year recall period.

included because we think the table provides a generally useful guide to research on CPV and the findings of that research.

Sex of Parent And Child And CPV. Of the five of the studies in Table 1 that compared boys and girls, four found more boys than girls hit parents. One study found no difference **between** boys and girls. Of the four studies that compared mothers and fathers, three found that mothers were victims of CPV **more** often than fathers, while one found that fathers were victims more often. Of the three studies that examined sex of child by sex of parents, one found that sons were more likely to hit mothers and two found that **sons** are more likely to hit fathers. These differences in findings indicate that further research is needed.

Violence By Parents And CPV. Four studies in Table 2 examined the relation of corporal punishment to CPV. Three found corporal punishment is associated with CPV, while one found no relation. Five studies measured parent-to-child violence in a way that did not permit **distinguishing** between corporal punishment and physical abuse. All five found that parent-to-child violence was related to CPV. In addition to the studies in Table 2, there has been research on children who have murdered their parents (For example Heide, 1992; Mones, 1991) and these have found that almost all have been victims of severe violence by the

murdered parent. In respect to the effect of witnessing Violence Between Parents, all six studies that examined this issue found a relationship with CPV. The present study carries the research one step further by investigating the separate and combined effects of parent-to-parent and parent-to-child violence.

Hypotheses

The aspects of social learning theory and reciprocal-coercion theory summarized in the introduction, and the studies summarized in the previous section, led to the following hypotheses:

1. Mothers are more likely than fathers to be victims of CPV. This hypothesis is based on research showing that despite a trend toward more equal sharing of family responsibilities, mothers do much more childcare and are therefore more exposed to the risk of CPV. In addition, because they do more childcare, mothers are likely to administer corporal punishment and therefore also more likely to be victims of CPV. Finally, the greater size and strength of fathers may be a stronger deterrent of CPV for fathers.

2. The younger the child, the more likely he or she is to perpetrate CPV. This hypothesis is based on a large body of research which shows that violence declines with increasing age, starting with toddlers and continuing into the adult years.

3. Boys are more likely to engage in CPV than girls, and the difference is greatest for violence toward mothers. This hypothesis is based on the many studies showing that males are more physically aggressive than females.

4. Violence between the parents, either by the husband or by the wife, or both, is associated with a greater rate of CPV. This hypothesis is derived from social learning theory.

5. The more parent-to-child violence, either in the form of corporal punishment or severe violence to the child, the greater the rate of CPV. This hypothesis is based on both social learning theory and reciprocal-coercion theory.

6. CPV is most prevalent among children who both witness violence between parents and who are also victims of violence by parents either in the form of corporal punishment or more severe violence.

METHODS

Sample

The data are from the 1975 National Family Violence Survey (Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz, 1980). These data were obtained by in-person interviews of a national probability sample of 2,143 married or cohabiting individuals between the ages of 18 and 69. Respondents were randomly selected so that approximately half were male and half were female. This study

analyzed the data for the 1,023 couples who had a child between age 3 and 17 living at home for whom data was available on all the variables needed for this analysis. When there was more than one child at home, one child was randomly selected as the focus of the interview. Interviews lasted approximately one hour. Interviewers were instructed to insure as much privacy to the respondent as possible. For example, if others were present in the household, interviewers were instructed to conduct the interview in another room or in a quiet space. The response rate was 65%, which is close to the 70% rate of other national opinion polls at the time (Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz, 1980). Comparison to census data shows that this sample is representative of American families with regard to such demographic characteristics as the age, sex, occupation, and income of the parent interviewed and ethnic group (Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz, 1980). However, caution is still needed because the lowest response rates were in both dangerous and extremely affluent neighborhoods. Also, single parent households and divorced parents were not included. Another limitation is that most severely violent individuals were less likely to participate (Straus, 1990b). A more complete description of the sample and how it was selected is in Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz (1980).

Violence Measures

The violence data for this study was obtained from the Physical Aggression or violence scale of Form N of the Conflict Tactics Scales or CTS (Straus, 1990a; Straus, 1990c; Straus et al., 1996). The CTS for parent-child relationships begins "Children often do things that are wrong, disobey, or make their parents angry. We would like to know what you have done when your (SAY age of referent child) year old child, did something wrong or made you upset or angry." The CTS for couple relationships begins "No matter how well a couple gets along, there are times when they disagree, get annoyed with the other person, want different things from each other, or just have spats or fights because they are in a bad mood, are tired, or for some other reason. Couples also have many different ways of trying to settle their differences. This is a list of things that might happen when you have differences. Please tell me how many times you did each of these things in the past year, and how many times your partner did them in the past year. These introductions are intended to put the focus on acts intended to cause physical pain.

The CTS is designed so that it can obtain data on all possible dyadic combinations of family members. The CTS variables for this study are husband-to-wife violence, wife-to-husband violence, parent-to-child violence, and child-to-parent violence (CPV). CPV is the dependent variable in this study.

There are eight Physical Assault items in CTS form N: 1. Threw something at him/her/you; 2. Pushed, grabbed, or shoved him/her/you; 3. Slapped him/her/you; 4. Kicked, bit, or hit him/her/you with a fist; 5. Hit or tried to hit him/her/you with something; 6. Beat him/her/you up; 7. Choked him/her/you; 8. Used a knife or fired a gun. These eight items were used to create the following measures.

Child-to-Parent Violence (CPV) This is the dependent variable in all analyses. If the parent reported that the child had engaged in one or more of the acts of physical assault against them in the previous 12 months, the child is classified as violent toward the parent

and assigned a code of 1. A code of zero was assigned if the child had done none of the behaviors in the Physical Assault scale. Because the data are for violence by the child against the parent who was interviewed, the gender of the respondent parent enables us to distinguish between violence against mothers and violence against fathers.

Parental Violence Types. Most parent-to-child violence is in the form of legal and socially permitted corporal punishment. Consequently, it was necessary to develop a measure that differentiated between this social legitimate type of parental violence and the more severe assaults on children that can be considered “physical abuse” (See Straus, 2001, Chapter 1 for a conceptual analysis of the distinction between corporal punishment and physical abuse). In addition, repeated use of corporal punishment, although legal, nonetheless represents an increment in the amount of violence in the Lives of children that needs to be examined separately because research shows that corporal punishment has many harmful side effects such as an increased probability of depression (Straus, 2001, Chapter 5), violence against dating and marital partners (Simons, Lin, and Gordon, 1998, Straus and Yodanis, 1996b), and CPV itself (Brezma, 1999). We therefore classified the parent who was interviewed into one of the following four types:

1. No-Violence: No instance of any of the eight CTS Physical Assault items in the past year.
2. Low Frequency Corporal Punishment: The parent used CTS items 1,2, or 3 once or twice in the past year, but did not engage in any of the more severe assaultive acts (CTS items 4,5,6,7, and 8).
3. More Frequent Corporal Punishment: Corporal punishment used three or more times, but none of the severe assault items were used.
4. Severe Assault: The parent reported using CTS items 4,5,6,7, or 8 one or more times in the previous 12 months. This can be interpreted as a measure of physical abuse.

Marital Violence Types. The CTS asks each respondent about violence toward their partner and also about violence by the partner toward them in the previous 12 months. This data were used to classify the couples into four types:

- I. Neither Violent are the cases in which neither the husband nor the wife engaged in any of the eight acts of physical assault in the CTS during the 12 months up to the survey.
2. Husband-To-Wife Only are the cases where there was husband-to-wife violence but no wife-to-husband violence.
3. Wife-To-husband Only are the cases with wife-to-husband violence but no husband-to-wife violence.
4. Both-Violent were the families where both partners engaged in one or more of the eight

physical assault items. Among the 1,024 couples, 84% were in the Neither Violent category. Of the 149 families where one or the other of the partners were violent, 30% were Husband-Only, 23% were Wife-Only, and 48% were in the Both Violent category. Thus, both partners were violent in almost half the maritally violent families.

Demographic Data

The age and sex of the child, the sex of the parent interviewed, and family socioeconomic status were included in the analysis of covariance described in the next section. The socioeconomic status (SES) measure was created by factor analysis of the education, income, and occupational prestige scores of the respondent and respondent's partner. This resulted in a single factor that explained 53 percent of the variance in the six items. The communalities for the six items were .70, .62, .64, .57, .44, and .21. The factor score was used as the measure of family SES.

Data Analysis

For the descriptive analysis of the rates of CPV by boys and girls, by age of child, and by sex of parent, cross-tabs with a chi-square test were used. To test the theory that CPV reflects violence by the parent, analysis of covariance was used with the following independent variables. Parent-to-Child Violence Type using the 4 categories described above, Marital Violence Type using the 4 categories described above, Sex of child (girl = 1, boy = 0) and Sex of parent (Mother = 1, Father = 0). Two covariates were included in the model: the age of the child (one-year age intervals) and family socioeconomic status. The ANCOVAs were computed using the regression approach option in SPSS/PC, namely "All effects are assessed simultaneously, with each effect adjusted for all other effects in the model: (Norusis, 1992:257). Thus, the test for each independent variable controls for the other independent variables. The means were adjusted to control for the other independent variables. Tests were computed for all possible two-way interactions of the independent variables.

RESULTS

Prevalence of Child-to-Parent Violence

Mothers and Fathers. Fourteen percent of the fathers and 20.2% of the mothers in this national sample reported being hit by the referent child during the 12 months preceding the interview. This is a 42% higher rate of violence against mothers than fathers (chi-square = 7.02, $p < .01$), thus supporting Hypothesis 1.

Age of Child. Figure 1 shows that, as hypothesized, young children have the highest rates of CPV. About a third of children in the 3 to 5 year old age group were violent to a parent during the 12-month period covered by this survey, and this declines to about one out of ten for children ages 14 to 17 (chi-square = 72.01, $p < .01$). The decline with age applies to violence against mothers as well as against fathers.

Boys and Girls. Figure 2 shows that both boys and girls are more likely to be violent

Figure 1
Percent of Children Who Were Violent to a Parent
By Age of Child

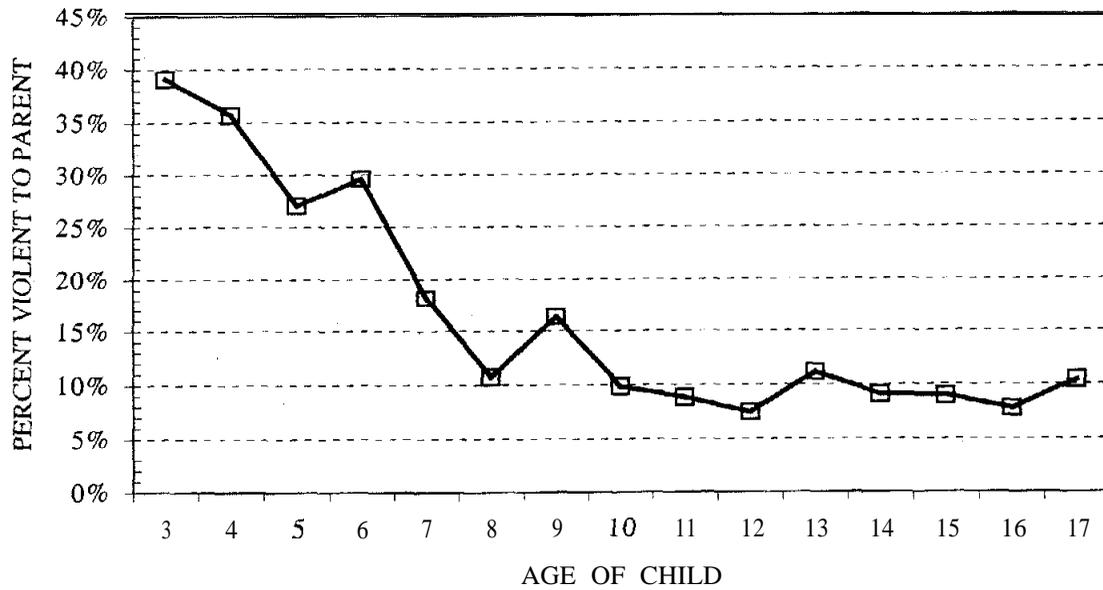
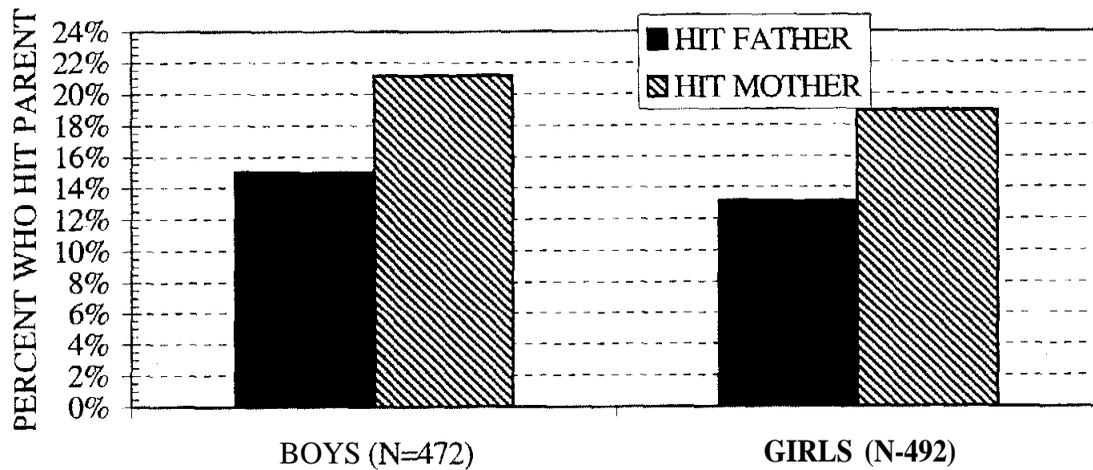


Figure 2
Percent of Boys and Girls
Who Hit Mothers and Fathers



towards mothers than fathers (chi-square for boys = 3.70, $p < .03$ Fisher one tailed exact test; chi-square for girls = 3.17, $p < .05$). Although Figure 2 also shows the hypothesized tendency for boys to have a higher rate of CPV than girls, the difference is not huge enough to be statistically significant.

Test of Violence Begets Violence Theory

Violence Between Parents. Table 3 presents the results of the analysis of covariance to

test the theory that violence by children against their parents reflects violence by the parents. Two aspects of violence by parents were examined: violence between the parents, and violence by parents toward the child.

TABLE 3

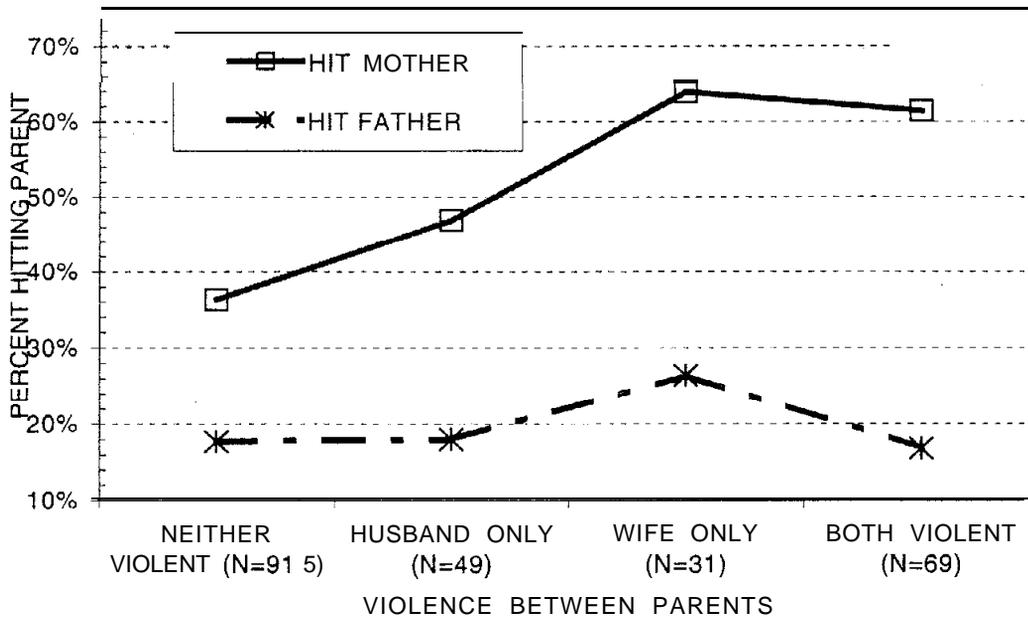
Analysis of Covariance of Child-To-Parent Violence

Source of variance	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Main Effects					
Violence between parents	10075.592	3	3358.531	2.704	.044
Parent-to-child violence	28670.312	3	9556.771	7.695	.001
Sex of parent	7095.874	1	7095.874	5.713	.017
Sex of child	755.721	1	755.721	.608	.436
Covariates					
SES scale	2941.138	1	2941.138	2.368	.124
Age of Child (4 groups)	14573.319	1	14573.319	11.734	.001
Interactions					
Sex of parent X Violence between parents	11135.604	3	3711.868	2.989	.030
Sex of parent X Sex of child	1185.838	1	1185.838	.955	.329
Sex of parent X Parent-to-child violence	315.960	3	105.320	.085	.968
Sex of child X Parent-to-child violence	4740.459	3	1580.153	1.272	.283
Sex of child X Violence between parents	1579.832	3	526.611	.424	.736
Parent-to-Child Viol. X Viol, between parents	12808.804	9	1423.200	1.146	.327
Adjusted R Squared = .130					

The first row of Table 3 shows that there is statistically significant main effect for the relationship between violence by the parents towards each other and CPV. In addition, the first row under Interactions shows a significant interaction with the sex of the parent. The rates graphed in Figure 3 indicate the nature of this interaction. They show that violence between the parents is strongly related to children hitting mothers but not to children hitting fathers.

Another interesting result in Figure 3 is that the highest rates of CPV toward mothers is for children in families where the mother has hit the father but the father has not hit the mother ("Wife Only" in Figure 3) and for children growing up in "Both Violent" families. This suggests that, contrary to the general belief that fathers are the key role model for learning to be violent, witnessing a mother physically attack a father may be a more powerful model for intra-family violence than is witnessing a father attack a mother. If other research confirms this finding, it will be important to design studies to investigate why mother's violence is a more powerful model.

Figure 3
 Percent of Children Hitting Mothers and Fathers,
 By Violence Between Parents



Overall, Figure 3 shows both a higher rate of violence toward mothers than fathers, and that children witnessing violence between the parents is associated with violence toward mothers but not with violence toward fathers.

Figure 4
 Percent of Children Who
 Hit Mothers and Fathers By
 Amount of Parent-to-Child Violence

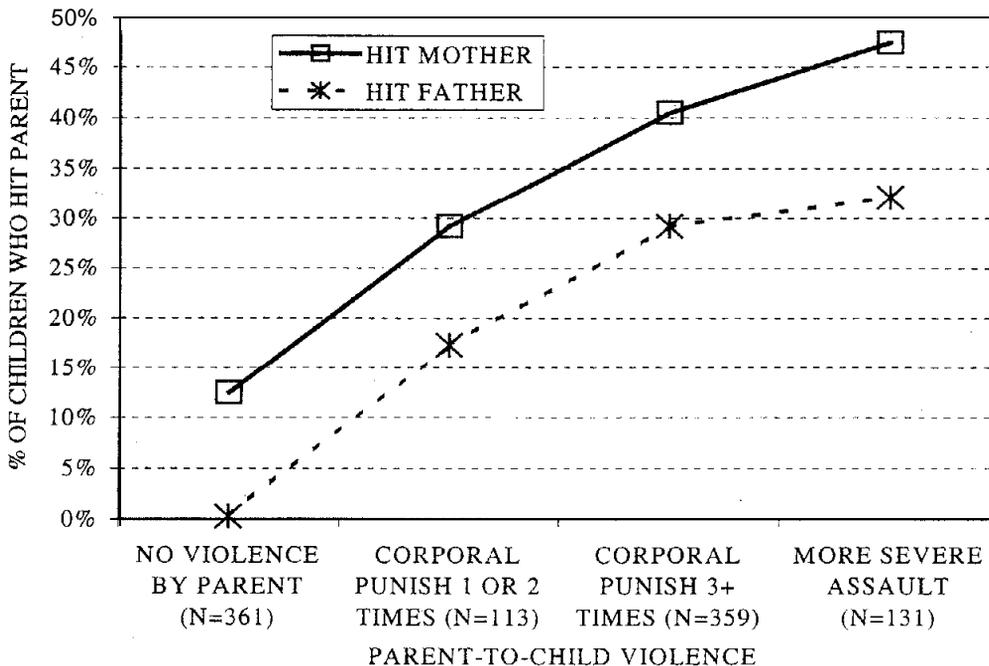
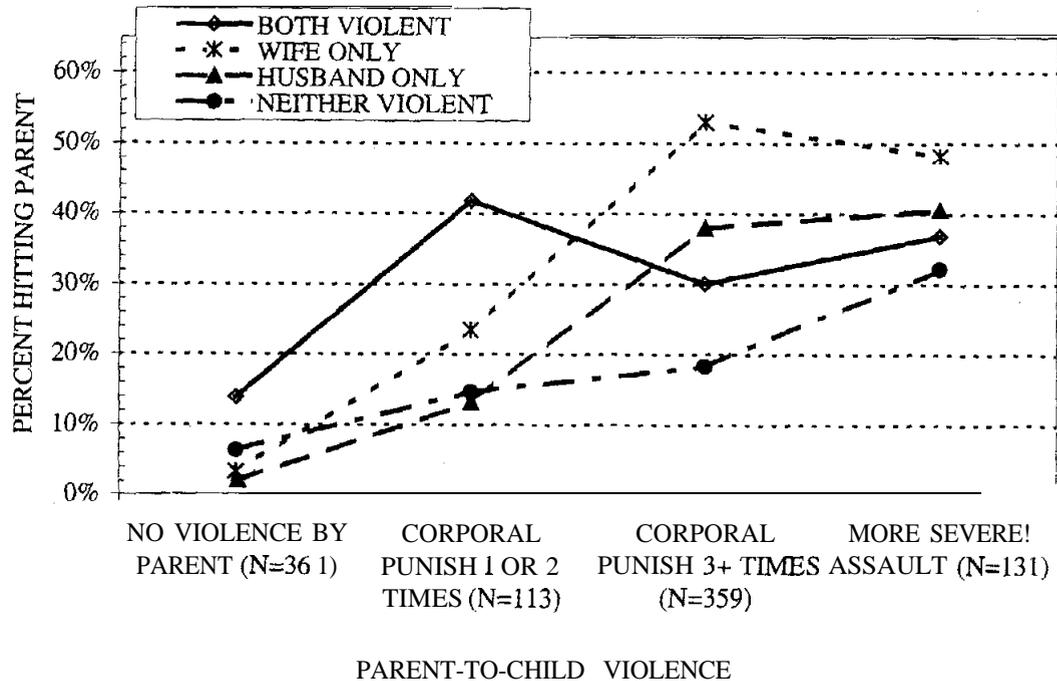


Figure 5
Percent of Children Hitting
Parents, By Violence Between Parents
and Parent-to-Child Violence



Parent-to-Child Violence. The F test in the second row of Table 3 and the rates graphed in Figure 4 reveal an extremely strong relation between violence by parents toward children and children being violent to parents. As in all other analyses, the rates of violence toward mothers are higher than for violence toward fathers, but the link to violence by the parent is parallel for violence to mothers and fathers.

Parent-to-Child Versus Parent-to-Parent Violence. Of the two aspects of violence by parents examined in this study, being a victim of violence by parents is more strongly related to CPV than is witnessing violence between the parents. For example, Figure 4 shows that, of the mothers who did not use corporal punishment in the previous 12 months, 13% were hit by their child that year. This rate more than doubles to 30% with one or two instances of corporal punishment. The rate rises further to 40% with three or more instances of corporal punishment in the last year. It is important to remember that this 40% rate applies to mothers who used only ordinary corporal punishment. If the mother went beyond this and engaged in more severe attacks on the child, such as hitting with an object, punching, or kicking, the rate becomes even higher (47%).

Combined Effect. The last row under interactions in Table 3 shows that there is not a significant interaction between the two types of violence by parents. Because there is a main effect for violence between the parents and also for parent-to-child violence, the combined effect is additive, i.e., there is a cumulative effect. This can be seen in Figure 5. The left side of Figure 5 shows that when there is no parent-to-child violence, the rate of CPV is very low, with the exception of children growing up in families where both the father and the mother

violent toward each other. At the right side of Figure 5, all the rates for children who have been severely attacked by a parent are above 30% regardless of whether there was violence between the parents. Finally, Figure 5 shows that even one or two instances of corporal punishment is associated with an increase in CPV, again regardless of whether there was violence between the parents.

DISCUSSION

Limitations

Before discussing the results and their implications, the limitations of the findings need to be identified. First, as is usually the case with cross-sectional research, causal direction cannot be established. For example, although it is plausible that parent to child violence increases the likelihood of CPV, it is just as plausible that CPV is likely to increase violence by parents. However, the reverse causal direction is less likely for the finding that witnessing violence between parents is associated with violence by children against mothers.

There are also potential problems with the validity of the data. With a one-year referent period, there are likely to be gaps in what was remembered. Since marital violence is a sensitive topic, it is likely that some parents underreported. In addition, some parents may have been ashamed to admit that their child had hit them. These reporting differences could affect some of the results. For example, the rate of child-to-father violence may be lower for fathers because fathers may experience being hit by a child as less severe than mothers might experience it, and fathers may therefore be less likely to recall it having happened.

Another limitation is that the data for this study were gathered 25 years ago and the rates of CPV may have changed since then. However, it is less likely that the degree of association between the six independent variables and CPV has changed because these associations may represent enduring social processes that apply regardless of the absolute level of CPV.

Prevalence of CPV

This study of a nationally representative sample of American children, like other studies, found very high rates of violence toward parents, especially violence toward mothers, and by preschool children. Although the rate declines drastically with age, it remains at about 10% from ages 10 to 17. There are a number of possible explanations for the decrease with age, starting with the fact that as children mature, they have increasing control of their behavior. In addition, 15 parents use corporal punishment less as children grow older (Straus, 2001; Straus and Stewart, 1999) and this may help reduce the amount of CPV. On the other hand, as children grow older, they acquire the physical skills to carry out more severe assaults on parents. Consequently, when Cornell and Gelles (1982) examined severe CPV among adolescents, they found that it increased with age for boys.

The Higher Rate of Violence Against Mothers

We suggest that at least part of the explanation for the higher rate of violence by children

against mothers than fathers is rooted in the subordinate status of women and gender role stereotyping. As a result, mothers spend more time on housework and childcare than fathers. Mothers are therefore more likely to be victims of CPV on a simple "time at risk" basis. In addition, because they spend more time with children, mothers will more often be in the role of disciplinarian. In a society in which the cultural and statistical norm includes spanking (i.e. hitting) children "when necessary," this usually means that mothers do more hitting of children (Straus, 2001; Straus and Stewart, 1999), thus further increasing the risk of children attacking them. Mothers are also less likely to have leisure time at home to spend with children because they must attend to more household chores (Renzetti and Curran, 1999: 165). This pattern tends to hold true even today (Dryden, 1999; Goldscheider and Waite, 1991; Rossi and Rossi, 1990). The combination of more often being in the role of disciplinarian and less often in the role of playmate may make mothers more likely to be placed in the role of the "bad guy" and create resentment toward mothers that further increases the risk of mothers being physically attacked by a child.

The results of the multivariate analysis were for the most part consistent with this gender role interpretation. It found that parent-to-child violence, either by the mother or the father is associated with an increased probability of CPV. The multivariate analysis also found that the rate of hitting mothers is higher when there is violence by either or both partners, but the rate of hitting fathers was higher only for violence by the mother toward the father. Both parent-to-child and parent-to-parent violence contribute to explaining CPV.

Witnessing Violence And Being A Victim Of Violence By Parents

Although both parent-to-child and parent-to-parent violence are significant risk factors for CPV, they are manifested in different ways. Each increment in the amount of parent-to-child violence, starting with even one or two instances of corporal punishment in the previous 12 months, was associated with a substantial increase in the percent of children who hit mothers and fathers. However, violence between the parents was almost unrelated to the rate of violence against fathers by children. On the other hand, violence against mothers was associated with all three types of violence between parents, but especially to the Both Violent and Wife-to-Husband Only types. Over 60% of the children who witnessed these types of violence between their parents were violent to the mother during the year of this study. These are disturbing and puzzling findings and research is needed to understand the processes that produced these results.

Conclusion

It is widely recognized that a major risk factor for violent behavior is the example that takes place when children witness fathers hitting mothers. The results of this study indicate that, in addition to witnessing violence by fathers against their mothers, another process explaining violence against mothers takes place in the form of the example set by mothers hitting fathers, and by mothers hitting children. Over 90% of children age 3-5 in the US are hit by mothers, and about the same percent by fathers (Straus and Stewart, 1999). These are pervasive and powerful models. In addition, the reaction of children to being the recipient of violence by mothers also risks creating resentment and anger on the part of children and

setting in motion a pattern of mutually coercive acts including CPV (Patterson, DeBaryshe, and Ramsey, 1989). Moreover, the effects of corporal punishment go beyond childhood to increase the probability of violence toward a partner later in life (Simons, Lin, and Gordon, 1998; Straus and Yodanis, 1996a). We conclude that violence against women, like almost all other violence, begins at home.

The finding that parent-to-child violence, including ordinary corporal punishment, has a consistent relationship to CPV regardless of the gender or age of the child has an important policy implication for prevention of violence toward women. It suggests that steps to end violence against women cannot be limited to efforts to focusing directly on wife beating. "Primary prevention" (Cowen, 1978) is also needed in the form of steps to help parents set an example of non-violence by avoiding use of corporal punishment. The evidence from recent longitudinal studies indicates that a policy of no-spanking, in addition to increasing the probability of a well-behaved and well-adjusted child (Straus, 2001) can have the added benefit of helping to prevent violence against women in the family.

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